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Continued French meddling in Mexico almost led to a post-Civil War confrontation with the United States.

The continued presence of a handpicked French puppet emperor in Mexico, which had so worried the Lincoln administration during the Civil War, remained a sore point with American political and military leaders after the Union victory in 1865. Almost as soon as he had accepted Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Virginia, in April of that year, General Ulysses S. Grant turned his attention to Mexico and Emperor Maximilian of Austria, who now sat as pretender to the Mexican throne.

That May, Grant dispatched Maj. Gen. Phil Sheridan, to southern Texas to keep an eye on the "very saucy and insulting" French. Sheridan was instructed to monitor the Mexican-American border and also provide secret aid and comfort to Mexican nationalist Benito Juarez, whom Maximilian had supplanted as ruler of the country four years before.

It was delicate task, particularly for a general as naturally combative as Sheridan, and it was further complicated by the fact that Secretary of State William Seward, a national hero in the wake of his near-fatal wounding during the Lincoln assassination plot, adamantly opposed either overt or covert involvement in Mexican affairs.

The French presence in Mexico, which Grant found particularly galling, had begun within weeks of the outbreak of the American Civil War, when French, English, and Spanish forces landed in Mexico in

response to Juarez's provocative moratorium on his nation's foreign debts. The English and Spanish soon left, but 40,000 of French Emperor Napoleon III's best troops stayed behind to prop up his chosen representative, Archduke Maximilian, the younger brother of Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I.

Sheridan, with Grant's tacit support, was primed and ready to cross the Rio Grande and push the French out of Mexico singlehandedly. A golden opportunity soon presented itself when Imperialist General Tomas Mejia, commanding Maximilian's forces at Matamoros, refused to hand over several pieces of captured Confederate artillery, which Sheridan maintained belonged by rights to the American government. Threats and counterthreats flew back and forth, and the situation grew so ominous in the summer of 1865 that President Andrew Johnson and his cabinet openly discussed the chance of war with France. Maximilian, already overburdened by military challenges from Juarez and his rebel forces, finally ordered Mejia to return the disputed artillery, "varnished over," sneered Sheridan, "with Imperial apologies."

A second potential flash point arose a few months later when a party of American filibusters made an unauthorized foray across



the border to Bagdad and were promptly captured by government forces. Under the emperor's longstanding "black flag" decree, anyone caught fighting against the empire could expect to be summarily executed. Again, American troops poised for a strike across the border to recuse their straying countrymen but backed off at the last moment when the men were spared.

Finally, in April 1866, Napoleon III grudgingly began pulling French troops out of Mexico. Unfortunately for Sheridan, the withdrawal did not come soon enough to prevent the death of his friend and longtime chief of scouts, Major Henry Young, who was killed "by a party of ex-Confederates and renegade Mexican rancheros" while attempting to cross the Rio Grande into Mexico on a reconnaissance mission.

The withdrawal of French forces soon led to the fall of Maximilian's cardboard government. In June 1867, Juarez and the nationalists captured the Austrian pretender and, despite a last second appeal for mercy from the American government, executed Maximilian before a peasant firing squad. Neither Grant nor Sheridan, who habitually referred to Maximilian as "the Imperial buccaneer," evinced much regret at the emperor's passing.

Roy Morris Jr.

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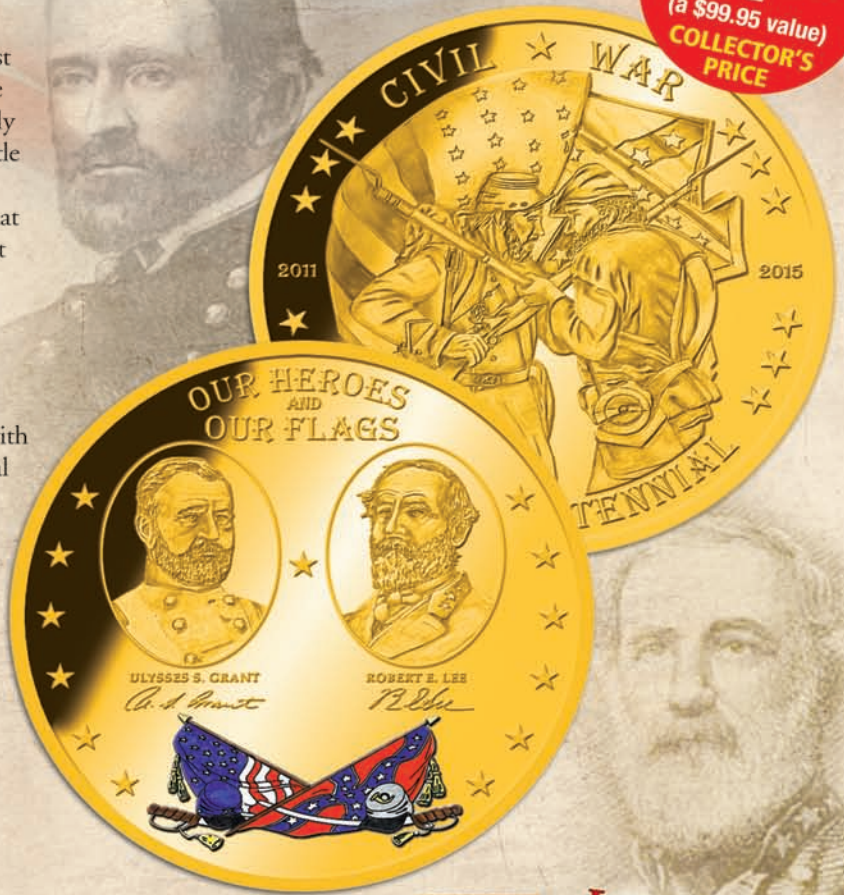
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When Union General Joseph Mansfield fell at Antietam, he became the oldest general on either side to be killed in combat.

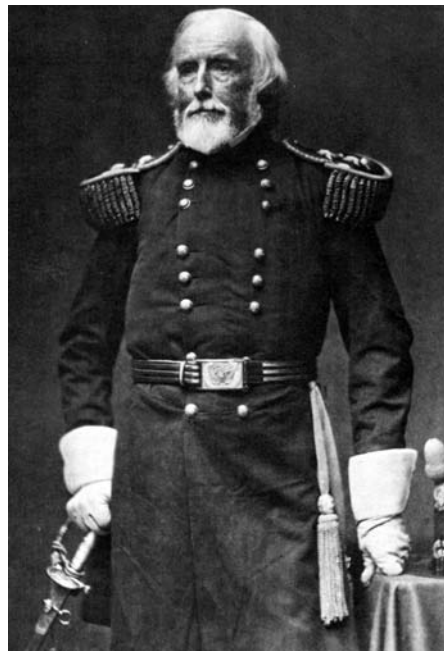
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For more than 45 years, Joseph Mansfield prepared himself for the ultimate test of a soldier—high command in time of war. After a long and successful career marked by bravery in the field and rapid promotion during the Mexican War, celebrated achievements as a military engineer, and a distinguished tenure as inspector general of the U.S. Army, the moment he had waited for all his life arrived early on the morning of September 17, 1862, near Sharpsburg, Maryland.

Mansfield, a descendant of the first English colonists and the youngest of five children, was born to Henry Mansfield, a prosperous Connecticut East Indies trader, and his wife, Mary Fenno Mansfield, at New Haven, Connecticut, on December 22, 1803. Just months after his birth, his mother was granted a divorce on grounds of adultery after she discovered her husband openly living with a woman in St. Croix, Virgin Islands. Soon afterward, the family moved to Middletown so that Mary could be close to her family.

Lieutenant Colonel Jared Mansfield, an uncle and professor at the new military academy at West Point, began lobbying for young Joseph's admission, writing frequently to President James Monroe and



Secretary of War John C. Calhoun. In 1817, still shy of his 14th birthday, Joseph was accepted to the academy, the youngest member of his class and one of the youngest ever admitted to West Point. Graduating second of 40 in the class of 1822, he was commissioned in the prestigious Army Corps of Engineers just before his 19th birthday.

ABOVE: Union troops under Maj. Gen. Joseph Mansfield exchange fire with Confederates defending the Cornfield at Antietam in this sketch by Alfred R. Waud for *Harper's Weekly*. By then, Mansfield had already been mortally wounded. **LEFT:** Mansfield spent months in Washington politicking for a field commission. He got his wish when he was given command of XII Corps two days before Antietam.

With America planning long-term defenses to give teeth to the Monroe Doctrine, such a commission was a dream assignment for the bright young engineer. Mansfield spent the next quarter-century as a military engineer, mostly building coastal fortifications along the South Atlantic and Gulf coasts. He met his greatest challenge in 1830 when he was dispatched to Georgia to take over the construction of Fort Pulaski. A massive, five-sided stone edifice with mounts for 150 cannons, the fort was built on Cockspur Island at the mouth of the Savannah River to protect the city of Savannah from naval attack. One of the first junior officers assigned to Mansfield's command was another recent West Point honors graduate, 2nd Lt. Robert E. Lee, who was responsible for preliminary site development and design. For more than 14 years, Mansfield supervised the major construction project.

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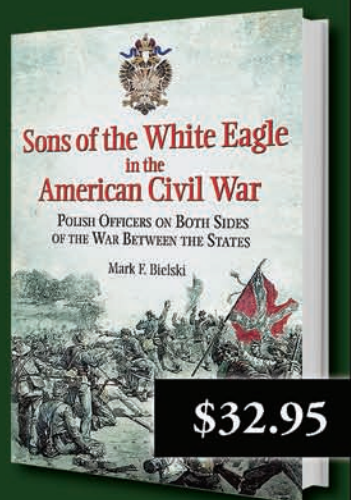
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Thanks to his familiarity with the Texas coast as a result of his frequent expeditions to locate suitable supply depot locations, Mansfield was appointed head engineer of General Zachary Taylor's Northern Army at the outbreak of the Mexican War in 1846. Accompanying Taylor on the march across the disputed territory between the Nueces and Rio Grande Rivers, Mansfield's first major assignment was the construction of Fort Texas (later renamed Fort Brown), a star-shaped, earthen fort opposite Matamoras, near present-day Brownsville, built to anchor the American position on the Rio Grande.

Several weeks after the opening skirmishes of the war, Taylor marched his main force to the coast to secure his supply lines, leaving behind several officers, including Mansfield, and 500 men to defend the fort. Mexican gunners opened their assault on May 3, 1846, and for six days kept the fort under siege and artillery fire. With no relief in sight, the Americans boldly took the offensive. Mansfield led a band of soldiers out of the fort and blew up Mexican fortifications, bolstering morale. Taylor's subsequent victories at Resaca de la Palma and Palo Alto forced a Mexican withdrawal. Mansfield was brevetted major for "gallantry and distinctive service" in defending the fort. He was not modest about his achievements, observing in a letter to his wife, Louisa, that General Taylor owed his success "more to my opinions before the battles of Palo Alto & Resaca than to any other circumstances."

That September, during the approach to the city of Monterrey, Taylor's army came under artillery fire that halted its advance. Mansfield, accompanied by a squadron of dragoons and a company of Texans, led a small group of engineers forward to conduct a reconnaissance of the Mexican defenses. Such assignments were typical for the engineers of the time, whose training, drafting, and map-making skills made them invaluable to their commanders for conducting intelligence and planning missions. Mansfield's field observations were crucial to the final attack plan, and on September 23, 1846, he personally led a column of vol-

unteers, with a sword in one hand and a spyglass in the other. Seriously wounded in the leg, he was brevetted to lieutenant colonel for "gallant and meritorious conduct." Visited daily by Taylor during his five-month convalescence, Mansfield recovered sufficiently to act as an adviser during the Battle of Buena Vista on February 23, 1847. He was brevetted yet again, this time to colonel, becoming one of a very few officers who received three brevets during the war, a list that included Robert E. Lee, George McClellan, and Joseph Hooker.

In spite of his record, however, Mansfield remained a captain in the engineers, the result of reductions in the Army and a glacially slow system of advancement. On May 28, 1853, Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, impressed by Mansfield's work on the board of engineers and a witness to Mansfield's courage in Mexico, promoted the 50-year-old captain to colonel and inspector general of the Army, with responsibility for the vast territory west of the Mississippi. It was a rare instance of an officer jumping several ranks in contravention of the normal seniority rules. General-in-Chief Winfield Scott, Taylor's rival during the Mexican War, opposed the move, viewing Mansfield as a "Davis man," but the new inspector general proved to be both effective and independent in his duties.

For the next eight years, Mansfield was one of the most traveled men in the country. He toured the New Mexico Territory, the Division of the Pacific, the Departments of Texas, Utah, California, and Oregon, and finally returned to Texas, where he remained until that state voted for secession. After a danger-filled journey back to the capital, Mansfield was placed in command of the Department of Washington on April 27, 1861, and three weeks later he was named one of the first of the newly authorized brigadier generals in the Regular Army.

With responsibility for the defense of Washington and its environs, Mansfield put his vast expertise on defensive fortifications to work, supervising the planning and construction of the entire system of earthwork installations that protected the

capital throughout the Civil War. One of his most important decisions was to seize and fortify the southern bank of the Potomac, especially Arlington Heights, without waiting for orders and over General Scott's objections.

In August 1861, Mansfield was assigned to the Department of Virginia, first commanding a brigade at Norfolk, then a division at Suffolk. It was essentially occupation duty, boring and routine, except for one dramatic moment. While on duty at Newport News, Virginia, on March 8, 1862, Mansfield witnessed one of the great moments in naval history when the ironclad CSS *Virginia* (better known as the *Merrimack*) savaged the Union fleet, sinking the USS *Cumberland* and capturing the USS *Congress*. Personally directing the shore batteries and the riflemen of the 20th Indiana Volunteers, Mansfield ran between the exposed positions with his white head bared, inspiring his men and helping to rescue *Cumberland's* survivors. The encounter was not without some risk, as Mansfield



Library of Congress

At the Battle of Monterrey in the Mexican War, Mansfield's skill as an engineer contributed mightily to General Zachary Taylor's victory.

described in a letter to his wife: "I came very near being killed again. I had just dismounted & stepped into my room to write a telegram to Genl Wool when a large shell from the *Merrimack* went through smashing everything before it & knocking down

my chimney & stopped just behind my chair as I was writing. Fortunately it did not burst & I was saved again."

Mansfield was serving as military governor of Norfolk when Maj. Gen. George McClellan selected him to command XII

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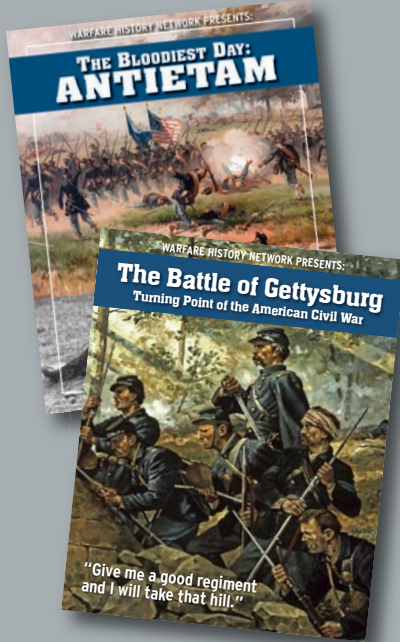
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Corps, formerly Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Bank's II Corps in the Army of Virginia, in the aftermath of Maj. Gen. John Pope's defeat at Second Bull Run. Mansfield was seized with a premonition of impending disaster. At the close of a visit with Navy Secretary Gideon Welles, an old friend from Connecticut, he took his leave, declaring, "We shall probably never meet again." Just hours before departing Washington on September 13, 1862, Mansfield penned a brief note to his old West Point teacher Sylvanus Thayer "to say that if I never see you again, that I have not forgotten your inestimable favors to me."

Arriving on the eve of what everyone expected would be a great battle, Mansfield was completely unacquainted with his hastily assembled staff. In the two days that preceded the battle, he did not impress the officers in his corps. Although well aware of his reputation and struck by Mansfield's distinguished physical appearance, senior division commander Brig. Gen. Alpheus S. Williams described him in a letter to his daughters as "a most veteran-looking officer, with head as white as snow," but also as "a most fussy, obstinate officer." Mansfield, for his part, seemed overwhelmed by his responsibilities, and perhaps in compensation intervened often in the movement and deployment of brigades, regiments, and batteries, bypassing the chain of command and causing even more than the normal confusion in the ranks.

The ordinary soldiers of the corps, however, had a distinctly positive reaction to their new commander, whose genuine enthusiasm and warm personality outweighed his apparent inexperience in leading combat troops. Hit hard during the Second Bull Run campaign, the men needed all the encouragement they could get. Williams's 1st Division had lost nearly all its field officers, and its ranks were so reduced that several of the old regiments mustered only 100 men. Five new regiments had been added, all green and barely three weeks away from home. In the rapid marches from Frederick, Maryland, many had been lost to straggling and desertion. Altogether, XII Corps numbered 12,300

soldiers, including noncombatants, and contained 22 regiments of infantry and three batteries of light artillery. It was the smallest corps in the Army of the Potomac.

After receiving orders just after midnight on September 17 to support Hooker in his dawn attack, Mansfield's men crossed Antietam Creek via the upper bridge at 2 AM and bivouacked on the Hoffman and Line farms, about a mile behind Hooker's left. Because of the nearness of the enemy, the men were ordered to lie down with their arms; but few were able to sleep, including the commander. Mansfield moved constantly among his troops, waking Williams several times with new directions before finally spreading his blanket near a fence corner close to the Line house, where he was able to get a few hours of fitful sleep.

At the first explosion of cannon fire at daybreak, Mansfield led his corps toward the sounds of battle without waiting for food or coffee. He had no idea what his mission was—general support of Hooker, exploitation of a breakthrough, or defense against a possible Confederate counterattack. McClellan had issued no specific instructions. From the moment they started to move, his men were under fire from four batteries of Confederate artillery sited on the plateau opposite the Dunker Church. Slowed by the cannon fire, the advance was even more confused because of Mansfield's frequent pauses for unit detachments and reattachments, although none of the halts was long enough to allow the men to boil their much-needed coffee.

Reflecting attitudes developed over a lifetime in the Regular Army, Mansfield had little confidence in the volunteers and ordered his men deployed in "column of regiments in mass." In such a formation, regiments were deployed 10 ranks deep, instead of two ranks as in the conventional line of battle. Williams's division was on the right and Greene's was on the left, with the line extending from farmer David R. Miller's house on the Hagerstown Pike southeast across the Smoketown Road.

From the first, Mansfield seemed to be everywhere, riding up and down the line, shouting encouragement to his men and



Soldiers from the 3rd Massachusetts Heavy Artillery pose beside their guns at Fort Stevens, one of a series of earthwork fortifications erected by Mansfield to protect Washington, D.C., from Confederate attack.

generally behaving like a junior commander whose blood was up. While at first he appeared to the men as “a calm and dignified old gentleman,” he soon seemed “the personification of vigor, dash and enthusiasm,” riding “with a proud, martial air and full of military ardor.” By 6:30 AM, the head of his lead column had reached the middle of an open field west of John Poffenberger’s woods, and Mansfield rode forward to personally reconnoiter the ground. Williams then ordered Brig. Gen. Samuel W. Crawford’s brigade of regulars and green Pennsylvania men to abandon the massed formation and deploy into line of battle. At the same time, Mansfield was informed that I Corps was hard pressed and needed immediate help.

Riding back to his command, Mansfield saw Crawford’s men maneuvering and immediately ordered Williams to halt the deployment. Even though the men were still under intense artillery fire, he ordered them again to mass in dense columns. Williams protested, but Mansfield refused to allow the men to spread out in the open field, repeating once again his concerns that if the green volunteers were deployed in line they would be impossible to control and might break and run.

Mansfield planned to move his corps via the Smoketown Road to the northwest corner of the Cornfield and into the East Woods and renew the attack against the left of the Confederate line held by Maj. Gen. Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson. The earlier

attack by Hooker’s I Corps had nearly broken through, dissolving only after terrible losses. Another push might crack the weakened enemy line, and the old soldier was determined to make the attempt at the head of his corps. Ignoring his staff, Mansfield personally guided the veteran 10th Maine Volunteers to its position in the van of Crawford’s brigade as it entered the East Woods. He then turned back to guide the green 128th Pennsylvania to the field.

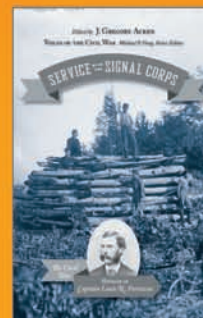
Astride his horse on a knoll just behind the front line, Mansfield paused with a group of officers and watched the rest of Crawford’s brigade move into position. As soon as his men opened fire, however, Mansfield spurred his mount and rode up to the front rank of the 10th Maine. Fearing that they were shooting at Hooker’s men retreating through the East Woods from the carnage of the Cornfield, he started screaming, “Stop, you are firing into our own men!” The Maine veterans, whose colonel had just been felled by Rebel sharpshooters, insisted that the men to their front were the enemy.

Sergeant E.J. Libby and Private Thomas Waite, standing close by, told Mansfield that “we were not firing at our own men for those that were firing at us from behind the trees had been firing at us from the first.” Other members of Company K also pointed out that the men facing them—veterans of the 21st Georgia and 4th Alabama Regiments—were dressed in gray and were

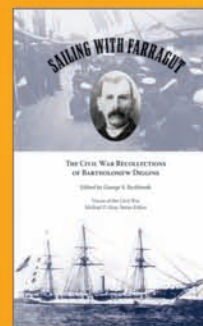
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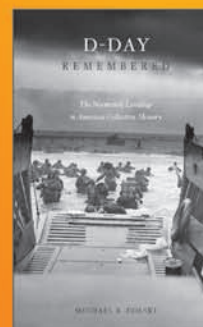
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Black Thursday at S

With Confederate forces in full retreat after the fall of Petersburg, alert Union forces charged through a gap in the Rebel column, capturing 8,000 soldiers at Saylor's Creek. "My God!" said Robert E. Lee. "Has the army dissolved?"



Standing steadfast by their colors, soldiers in the 18th Georgia Battalion exchange fire with troops from the 121st New York during the final Union assault at Saylor's Creek. The Georgians suffered 60 percent casualties in their futile last stand. Painting by Keith Rocco.

Sayler's Creek



Four hundred Confederate sailors and marines, their small arms loaded and ready, awaited their orders. Some men had their cutlasses within easy reach. Their commander, Navy Flag Officer John Randolph Tucker, watched as the enemy approached within pistol shot. Tucker, excited but confused, shouted, “Prepare to repel boarders!” These Rebel tars were in strange waters indeed on April 6, 1865. Far from the briny blue Atlantic, Tucker’s quarterdeck was a spot of high ground overlooking a small Virginia stream called Sayler’s Creek. Wading and splashing through the creek, the Federals’ boarding party was the vanguard of Maj. Gen. Horatio Wright’s VI Corps infantry.

The odd spectacle of Wright’s foot soldiers facing cutlass-wielding Confederate sailors reflected the extreme circumstances leading to the Battle of Sayler’s Creek. After months of siege warfare, the Army of Northern Virginia was driven from its fortifications around Richmond and Petersburg at the beginning of April. General Robert E. Lee’s army, cast from its moorings just as surely as Tucker and his seadogs,

BY DAVID A. NORRIS

reacted to a whirlwind of disasters unfolding around it. The men needed time to catch their breath, reorganize their scrambled units, and forge new plans in the quickly unraveling Confederacy. And time was the one thing that Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant and his cavalry leader, Maj. Gen. Phil Sheridan, intended to deny them.

After the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864, Grant had proved to be a different kind of general for the Union’s Army of the Potomac. There were no more long stretches of idling in camp and no more withdrawals after defeats. Constant pressure punctuated with frequent attacks kept Lee’s army hemmed in against Richmond. The Confederates settled in behind a complex and

steadily lengthening system of earthworks stretching more than 20 miles south from Richmond to Petersburg. For months, they held out as Union assaults failed to make a lasting breach of the defenses. Then, on April 1, Sheridan's cavalry and Maj. Gen. G.K. Warren's V Corps poured through a break in the Confederate lines at Five Forks. The sudden Union surge threatened the Southside Railroad, Lee's last link with supplies from the south, as well as Petersburg itself.

After previous Union victories, the Confederates had always managed to extend or adjust their lines. After Five Forks, however, this was no longer possible. Lee telegraphed President Jefferson Davis on the morning of Sunday, April 2, "I see no prospect of doing more than holding our position here till night. I am not certain that I can do that. If I can I shall withdraw tonight north of the Appomattox. I advise that all preparation be made for leaving Richmond tonight."

Lee's fateful message reached Davis at 10:40 AM, when a courier found him attending a service at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Opening the message, Davis stood up. Richmond socialite Sallie Brock Putnam heard whispers flying through the congregation when the president "walked rather unsteadily out of the church." Soon, the sexton moved among the pews, summoning other government officials. Those who remained worried about the mysterious but obviously dire news that had driven Davis out into the street. Their fears were confirmed when the minister ended the service with an announcement that Lt. Gen. Richard S. Ewell, commander of the Confederate troops at Richmond, was ordering all of his men to report to duty as soon as possible.

With the fall of Petersburg, Richmond was doomed. Lee had to abandon the shelter of his entrenchments and take his outnumbered and outgunned army into the open. In a dispatch sent to Richmond later on April 2, Lee informed Davis that his troops would leave Petersburg and Richmond that night. Lee's only chance for keeping a Confederate army in the field was to

unite his men with General Joseph E. Johnston's Army of the South in North Carolina. Johnston commanded a hodgepodge of survivors of the battered Army of Tennessee as well as garrison troops and scattered field commands drawn in from Georgia and the Carolinas. This new army had lost the Battle of Bentonville in Johnston County, North Carolina, on March 21. But, Johnston's force was still together after retreating in good order.

Ewell led the forces out of Richmond. Behind them, mobs of looters broke into civilian shops and government storehouses. Fires set under Army orders to destroy government-owned supplies quickly spread out of control, melding with other fires started by looters. Smoke and flames swirled from a growing conflagration that consumed much of the capital city.

Major Generals Joseph B. Kershaw and



Union Sergeant Joshua P. Graffam, left, of the 1st Maine Cavalry was killed at the Battle of Dinwiddie Court House a week before Saylor's Creek. His regiment was part of Maj. Gen. George Crook's cavalry division. RIGHT: A Confederate artillerist from the Richmond Howitzers fought as infantry at Saylor's Creek after escaping from Petersburg.

Custis Lee led their divisions of Ewell's forces to the south bank of the James River across a pontoon bridge. Then they turned west to follow the Genito Road before picking up the path of the Richmond & Danville Railroad. Moving to the north of Ewell's infantry on a roughly parallel route was a long wagon train. Ewell's command included a mixed lot of garrison troops and part-time emergency units comprised of government clerks and other employees. Accompanying them was Tucker's uniquely mixed unit.

For some weeks, Tucker had led a force of sailors and marines who manned batteries at Drewry's Bluff. Most of his men came from ironclads or other vessels lost over the last few months when the ports of Savannah, Charleston, and Wilmington fell to the Union. Tucker's unit was styled the Marine Brigade. Amid the despair and





Overwhelmed Confederates surrender after Brig. Gen. Henry Davies's men intercept a wagon train bound from Richmond near Paines Crossroads. The Federals destroyed 200 wagons and captured five guns and numerous prisoners.

confusion afflicting the army, the soldiers found the Marine Brigade an amusing spectacle. Tucker's men answered their officers' commands with the traditional maritime reply of "Aye, aye, sir," inducing the foot soldiers to call them the "Aye-Ayes." Officers gave nautical-style commands, ordering the men to march to port or starboard rather than left or right. They wore naval uniforms, and some of the men carried naval cutlasses.

The largest contingent of Confederates included the troops under Lt. Gen. James Longstreet, who streamed out of the Petersburg works. They headed west, marching roughly parallel to the north bank of the Appomattox River. Maj. Gen. John B. Gordon commanded the rear guard. On a separate road went another massive wagon train. Another part of the Southern army, under Maj. Gen. William Mahone, evacuated the fortifications north

of Petersburg, leaving behind the heavy artillery they had manned for two years. Mahone marched on a course that would merge his troops with the main army.

When the Union Army commanders learned that the Confederate works around Petersburg were empty, part of the army moved to take possession of Richmond. Grant sent five corps of infantry and Sheridan's cavalry to catch up with and delay the retreating Rebels. Swift pursuit was an ideal job for Sheridan's cavalry. Early in the war, the Confederate cavalry far outclassed the Union Army's horsemen. Gradually, however, the Union cavalry gained polish and professional skill, while the superiority of the Southern cavalry faded. Southern cavalry horses were tired and short of food; their dire condition was aggravated by the sudden and disorganized retreat from Petersburg. Lee's overstretched cavalry could little to interfere with Sheridan or his three division commanders, Brig. Gen. Thomas Devin and Maj. Gens. George Crook and George Armstrong Custer.

Events were spinning out of control for

Lee. Perhaps 30,000 men were left under his command after the final battles around Petersburg. Including the two massive wagon trains, they were divided into five major sections. He had to keep ahead of Sheridan long enough to unite his scattered troops and also find some way of feeding them. To meet both objectives, Lee ordered his troops to rendezvous at Amelia Court House, 40 miles west of Richmond. Because this spot was on the still operating Richmond & Danville Railroad, orders went out to transport some of the government's reserve food and supplies to Amelia Court House. With the army resupplied, the troops would march south toward North Carolina.

Sheridan's cavalry dogged the Confederates with constant skirmishing and a large clash at Namozine Church on April 3. Exhaustion, lack of sleep, and hunger plagued Lee's troops. Private Carlton McCarthy of the Richmond Howitzers remembered marching all day on April 3 and 4. Awakened before dawn on April 5, his comrades moved out "stumbling, bumping against each other, and sleeping

while they walked.” At any brief halt, the men fell to the ground and slept until their officers woke them again. “Those first on their feet,” wrote McCarthy, “went stumbling on over their prostrate comrades, who in turn would be awakened.” After long hours of marching, McCarthy’s unit learned that their division had issued its last remaining rations. No food could be

almost unendurable pain.”

Hungry Confederates straggled into Amelia Court House on April 4 and 5. But, although some ordnance shipments had arrived, there was no food. In the last hours before leaving Richmond, the necessary orders to the Commissary Department had miscarried, and 350,000 rations slated for transfer to Amelia Court House

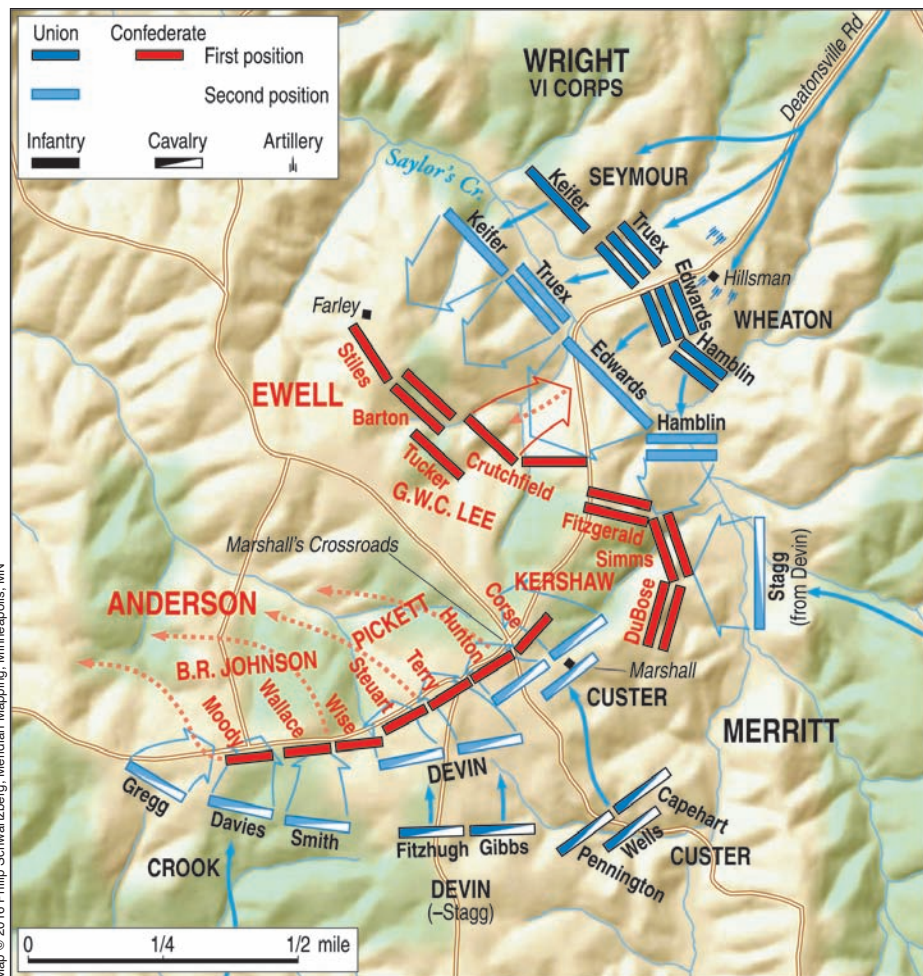
ers asking for “such meat, beef, cattle, sheep, hogs, flour, meal, and provender that can be spared.” Soldiers were sent out with wagons to fill with what supplies they could impress, but little could be found in the sparsely populated surroundings. While the foraging parties continued their fruitless work, the delay allowed Union infantry to close the gap between the two armies.

After months of hard work and insufficient feed, the army’s draft animals were nearly broken down during the forced march to Amelia Springs. Artillery horses were in such pitiable shape that they could carry only a fraction of the army’s ordnance stocks. Nearly 100 caissons, loaded with nearly three-quarters of the Army of Northern Virginia’s artillery shells, were set afire and blown up, leaving gunners with only the limited supplies of ammunition packed in their limbers.

Another disaster struck the Southern army that day. Brig. Gen. Henry E. Davies of Crook’s division intercepted the wagon train from Richmond before it could reach the Confederates. Davies destroyed 200 wagons, ambulances, and caissons, dealing another heavy blow to an enemy that was already dangerously low on supplies. Also on April 5, the Confederates discovered that their route to the south was blocked by Union troops at Jetersville, seven miles to the southwest. Lee decided against forcing a way through the enemy entrenchments. Instead, he moved toward the west, hoping to regroup and find supplies at Farmville, 25 miles away.

The Confederates broke camp well before dawn on April 6, and for a time their move went undetected. Soon, however, the Federals resumed the chase. II and VI Corps followed Lee down the Deatonville Road. At 8 AM, the 1st Maine Cavalry was mounted and on the move. Brigade commander Charles H. Smith was heard to say, “Today will see something big in the crushing of the rebellion.”

Custer, Devin, and Crook followed a parallel course to the south of the Rebels, aiming to draw ahead and block their path until the foot soldiers could catch up. As



ABOVE: Fatal gaps in the Confederate columns attempting to escape from Virginia into North Carolina were exploited by their relentless Union pursuers. A final stand in the boggy bottomland around Saylor’s Creek resulted in the capture of eight Confederate generals and 7,700 men. **RIGHT:** A Union attempt to block the Confederates from crossing the Appomattox River by burning the High Bridge was foiled by the quick-charging cavalry of Maj. Gen. Thomas Rosser. During the fight, Brig. Gen. James Dearing became the last Confederate general killed in the war.

found, except by robbing the horses. Each man was issued two ears of corn originally intended as horse feed. McCarthy recalled, “It was parched in the coals, mixed with salt, and eaten on the road. Chewing the corn was hard work. It made the jaws ache and the gums and teeth so sore as to cause

were never shipped out of Richmond. Neither did orders reach Danville or anywhere else from which stockpiles of commissary supplies could have been shipped.

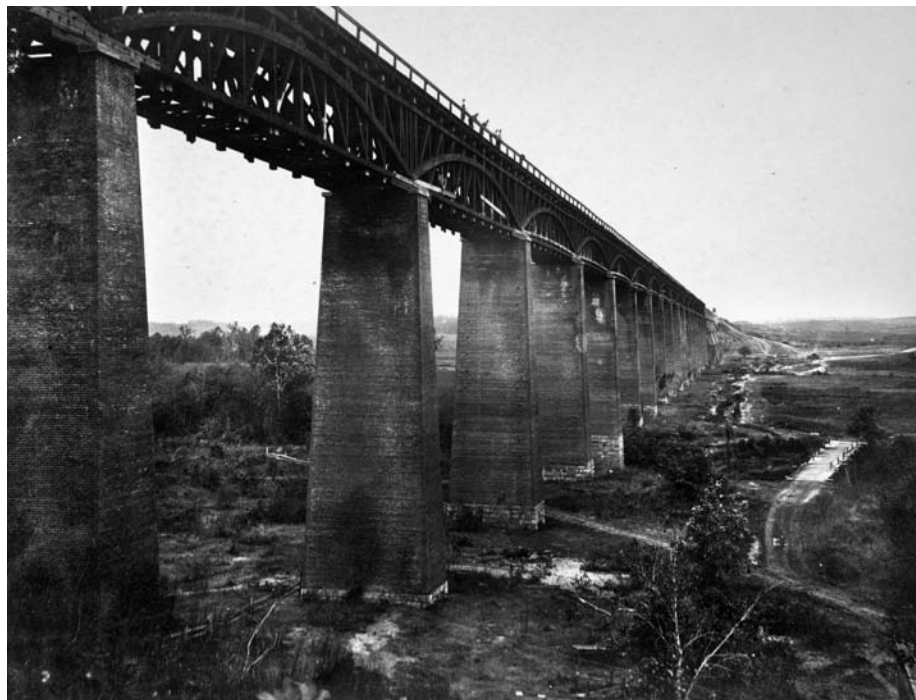
Lee had intended only a brief halt at Amelia Court House. Now he was forced to wait. He issued an appeal to local farm-

the troopers rode over high ground, they could see Lee's train moving along through gaps in the woods. Mile by mile, the blue-coats drew ever closer to the enemy wagons. For the soldiers of both sides, marching feet, trampling hooves, and rolling wagon wheels churned the rain-softened Virginia soil into mud. The soggy ground made for a fatiguing march for the Federals, but the rainfall affected the Confederates far more as it slowed the escape of their dwindling number of supply wagons.

Longstreet led the way for the Confederates, heading toward Farmville along the Deatonsville Road. Behind Longstreet's men were Mahone's followed by those of Anderson and Ewell. Gordon's command served as a rear guard and protection for the wagon train. It was imperative that the army keep moving, and push well ahead of the Union forces lest the Confederates find their way blocked once again.

Disturbing news reached Longstreet that 900 Union soldiers were ahead of them, intent on burning the High Bridge. Destruction of the 2,500-foot span of the Southside Railroad, which crossed the Appomattox River, would block the way to Farmville. Longstreet ordered Maj. Gen. Thomas Rosser's cavalry to protect the bridge. Rosser stopped the Federals in time to save the span, capturing most of the raiding party. One of Rosser's officers, Brig. Gen. James Dearing, was mortally wounded in the battle. Dearing would be the last Confederate general killed in action during the war.

Union scouts spotted the Confederate wagon train and the accompanying troops a few miles west of Amelia Court House near the small community of Deatonsville. Under Sheridan's plans, if one division hit the Rebels from the south, the others were to move to the left and try to get in front of the enemy, striking them at some weak point in the line. Crook's division attacked late in the morning, when the wagon train was near Holt's Corner. About 11:30 AM, Smith ordered the 1st Maine Cavalry to leave the road, form a column of fours, and charge through the woods to hit the enemy train. Only a few steps from the



Brigade commander Charles H. Smith was heard to say,
**“Today will see something big
in the crushing of the rebellion.”**

road, the troopers found themselves in a swamp, their horses sinking in the ground to their knees at every step. Getting out of the swamp forced the horsemen to ride single file along the few navigable pathways.

Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan P. Cilley, too impatient to wait until the entire regiment emerged from the swamp, ordered an advance. Their way blocked by a fence they could not ride over, the men dismounted. More troopers joined them, but they were in the open and exposed to heavy fire, while trees and woods sheltered the Confederates guarding the wagons. Unable to accomplish anything, Cilley's regiment pulled back. Elsewhere, the rest of Crook's horsemen also found the Rebel wagons well protected. Devin and Custer moved to the west while Crook remained to distract the Confederates.

While Anderson fended off the enemy cavalry at Holt's Corner, some of the Confederate wagons were sent ahead to join Longstreet. During the delay caused by

Crook's attack, a gap of two miles had grown between Anderson and the rest of the column. The wagons were rolling unprotected between the vanguard and rear of the army. Anderson's troops resumed their march, reaching Little Saylor's Creek, a small but troublesome stream with steep banks 50 miles west of Richmond. Although often spelled "Sailor's" Creek, the stream actually was named for a local settler named Saylor. After the recent rains, the creek was overflowing its banks into the surrounding bottom lands.

Riding to get in front of Anderson, Custer's troopers spotted the nearly unprotected wagon train. Colonel Alexander C. M. Pennington's brigade hit the wagons as they rolled down the road, sweeping through a thin skirmish line of guards and captured the train. Another three supply wagons were lost, along with, 800 draft animals, 10 guns, and a number of prisoners.

One mile past Little Saylor's Creek, Anderson came within sight of Custer's

troopers and the smoke of burning supply wagons. Anderson halted at Marshall's Crossroads, his two divisions taking up positions north of the Deatonville Road and throwing together a line of entrenchments. After some shuffling of units, Maj. Gen. Bushrod Johnson held the right and Maj. Gen. George Pickett held the left. Meanwhile, the main body of the Confederate Army was several miles west at Rice's Station, a stop on the Southside Railroad. Longstreet and Lee were unaware of the peril facing the detached portion of the army, and the beleaguered Anderson was unable to get word to them.

While Anderson prepared for battle, Ewell and Gordon were still some distance behind. Ewell ordered the remaining wagons to leave the Deatonville Road near Holt's Corner. They took a side road that led to the Jamestown Road, which ran alongside the Appomattox River on the route to Farmville. Brig. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys's II Corps was close behind Gordon and the Confederate rear guard, and Wright's VI Corps was following Humphreys. Maj. Gen. Frank Wheaton, one of Wright's division commanders,

reported that his troops pushed with "the greatest haste, much of the march over plowed fields and rough ground." To forestall the capture of the wagons, Gordon followed the train. Ewell never learned that his rear guard had left the Deatonville Road, assuming that Gordon still shielded him.

Humphrey's troops turned north to follow Gordon, but Wright's VI Corps stepped into their place to confront Ewell. Learning of Wright's approach, Ewell halted west of Little Saylor's Creek. On high ground overlooking the stream, the Confederates prepared a hasty defensive line running perpendicular to and across the Deatonville Road. Little Saylor's Creek was about 300 yards in front of the Confederates, with brush pines between and a cleared field beyond it. On the left was Custis Lee, with the Richmond troops, and on the right was Kershaw. Between and slightly behind them, the Marine Brigade waited in reserve.

Accompanying Ewell was Colonel Stapleton Crutchfield, who had become famous as Stonewall Jackson's chief of artillery during the Shenandoah Valley campaign. Following the Battle of Chan-

cellorsville on May 2, 1863, Crutchfield was seriously wounded in the friendly fire that fatally wounded Jackson. After Crutchfield returned to duty, he commanded a battery of the Richmond defenses until the capital was evacuated. Now his heavy artillery brigade was attached as infantry to Custis Lee's division.

While Ewell's men waited, Major Andrew Cowan readied 20 guns of VI Corps' artillery brigade on high ground near the Hillsman house. At 5 PM, Cowan's guns opened up what the major called "a most effective fire" at a range of about 800 yards. Cowan reported later that "prisoners stated that it was the most terrific fire they were ever exposed to." All of Ewell's guns had been dispatched with the wagon trains, and the Confederates could do nothing except lie down and let the enemy shells pass over them. Cowan's only casualties were two wounded gunners.

West of Saylor's Creek, Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt arrived to take command of the divisions of Custer, Devin, and Crook. Merritt and VI Corps had the Rebels hemmed into an open triangle that pointed to the east. Anderson's men, facing south toward



Merritt's cavalry, formed the southern leg of the triangle. Facing northeast toward VI Corps, Ewell's men formed the opposite side. Although the two Confederate forces were not far apart, there was a gap of several hundred yards between Anderson's left and Ewell's right. The base of the triangle was open to the west, but the best escape route was blocked by Crook's cavalry. Brig. Gen. J. Irvin Gregg's men, dismounted, held the Deatonville Road. Also dismounted, the 1st Maine Cavalry and the rest of Smith's brigade were deployed to Gregg's right. Davies's brigade waited on horseback.

While Johnson and Pickett turned back several attacks by Merritt, Ewell rode a mile to the rear of his line to confer with Anderson. The latter proposed trying to break through the Union cavalry while Kershaw and Custis Lee held off VI Corps. Meanwhile, Anderson launched an attack, but the effort failed and the men were driven back to their entrenchments. Ewell and Anderson parted, each riding back to his troops.

About 5 PM, Merritt's divisions pushed against the Confederate line along the Deatonville Road, while Custer broke through Pickett's division at Marshall's Crossroads. Hardest hit were two commands on Pickett's left, those of Brig. Gens. Montgomery Corse and Eppa Hunton. Both generals were taken prisoner along with a large portion of their men. Elsewhere, Pickett's regiments crumbled away.

Without Pickett's division in place, Bushrod Johnson came under fire on his left. Crook's dismounted men turned Johnson's right and rushed into the entrenchments, while Davies's brigade charged on horseback and rode into the enemy works. Beset on their front and both flanks, Johnson's brigades broke. Many of Johnson's men reached safety with the main body of the army, but the greater portion of Pickett's division was cut off and captured. Another 2,600 Confederates, 300 wagons, and 15 guns fell into Union hands.

As the Union cavalry attacked at Marshall's Crossroads, Wright's bombardment lashed the Rebels at Little Saylor's Creek for half an hour. When the big guns ceased fire,



ABOVE: A sketch by battlefield artist A.R. Waud shows Maj. Gen. George Armstrong Custer preparing for his third charge of the day. Custer, like most of the Union commanders, felt that the war could be ended with one last push. **OPPOSITE:** Waud sketched several of the concluding actions at Saylor's Creek. Here, Confederates in the rear guard raise their rifles in surrender to onrushing Union cavalry at Amelia Court House.

the divisions of Truman Seymour and Frank Wheaton stepped forward, pushing into the flooded bed of the creek. The 7,000 Federals slogged through water up to four feet deep, carrying their muskets and cartridge boxes high above their heads.

On the Union right, Wheaton's men moved in a broad, single line to cover as much of the front as possible. Their advance was irregular and disordered because of the swampy terrain. Lt. Col. John Harper of the 95th Pennsylvania reported that at the bank of the stream "some little delay took place, it being difficult to cross in some parts." Staff officer Lt. Col. Miles L. Butterfield noted that Wheaton's division shifted some distance to its left to find a fordable passage of the creek. Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Hamblin's brigade, on Wheaton's extreme left, crossed the stream, climbed onto the opposite bank, and reformed their ranks before hitting the Confederate line.

Some distance to Hamblin's right, Colonel Oliver Edwards's brigade crossed the creek and moved headlong toward Custis Lee's division. To their left, Commodore Tucker was within sight of the approaching Federals and ordered his men

into action. Holding their fire until the enemy was within 100 yards, the Confederates delivered two volleys that broke up and threw back the Union advance. The retreating Yankees also took friendly fire from the guns near the Hillsman House.

Carried away by the sight of their fleeing foes, some of Ewell's men counterattacked, Crutchfield leading his former artillerists. The jubilant Confederates chased their enemies as far as the bank of the creek. Lt. Col. Joseph C. Hill, commander of the 6th Maryland Union Infantry, and several of his men were captured. The countercharge soon went too far. Now far from their entrenchments, the Confederates were within easy range of case shot hurled from Cowan's guns. Some men of Edwards's brigade were armed with Spencer rifles, and they poured in a concentrated and rapid fire. Those Confederates who could rushed back to their line. Among the dead left behind was Crutchfield, killed by a bullet through his head.

Wright's troops readied themselves for another charge. This time, Colonel William S. Truex's brigade got behind Custis Lee and turned his left flank. As Lee's men scattered, more Union troops

overlapped Kershaw's right and got behind him. Nearly surrounded, a few of Kershaw's men got away as their formation disintegrated. With Pickett's left flank broken and scattered at Marshall's Crossroads, the way was open for Merritt's cavalry to attack Ewell's now isolated corps from the rear. Above Little Saylor's Creek, the Confederates saw blue-coated infantry engulfing their front and flanks and enemy cavalry rushing in from behind.

Ewell saw that further resistance was hopeless. Twenty years later, a Union veteran writing for the *National Tribune* stated, "I might add that Ewell came near losing his life while looking for an officer of equal rank to surrender to." Colonel

rendered to cavalry officers. Amid a flurry of competing claims, Cameron saw his distinction of capturing a lieutenant general fall into dispute, but he was partially placated by being promoted to second lieutenant after the battle. Taken prisoner with Ewell were about 2,800 men including five generals: Kershaw, Dudley M. DuBose, James P. Smith, Seth Barton, and George Washington Custis Lee.

After the rest of Ewell's command was captured or scattered, the Marine Brigade still held on. No orders to withdraw ever reached them. Later, Tucker drily explained that "he had never been in a land battle before, and that he had supposed that everything was going well."

Tucker knocked the barrel aside.

Keifer returned with a white flag, accompanied by a Confederate officer who confirmed that Ewell and the rest of his men were prisoners. At last, the Marine Brigade surrendered. One of the Yankees, surprised at seeing captives in naval uniforms, asked, "Good heavens! Have you got gunboats 'way up here, too?" Some of the naval officers broke their swords rather than hand them over to their captors, but Tucker handed his sword over to Keifer. Years later, the Union general returned the sword to Tucker.

Gordon, in command of the army's rear guard, sniped and sparred with Humphreys's II Corps all day. With Gordon was the cavalry of Maj. Gen. William Henry Fitzhugh Lee. Another son of the commanding general, he was known as Rooney Lee to avoid confusion with a cousin, Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee. When the VI Corps attacked, Gordon was about two miles downstream from where Ewell was overrun. At this place, called the Double Bridges, the Jamestown Road crossed Little Saylor's Creek and Saylor's Creek just above their confluence. With two narrow spans surrounded by soft, soggy ground, the Double Bridges was a tight bottleneck to squeeze through with a retreating wagon train. Humphrey's corps was fast approaching.

The two armies confronted each other near the Double Bridges on the Lockett Farm. Gordon arranged his men east of the creek, while behind him the drivers tried to get their wagons out of danger. The Federals formed on a rise behind the Lockett House. Maj. Gen. Nelson Miles's division held the Union right and Maj. Gen. Gersham Mott held the left. Soon the Federal skirmishers approached, taking cover when the Virginians opened fire and the main battle line came within sight.

Gordon's men fell back, taking cover behind the wagons. As the enemy pushed in the flanks and front, Captain Lorraine F. Jones shouted, "Boys, take care of yourselves!" Jones then planted himself against a pine, and, as his men rushed by him, emptied every chamber of his revolver at the enemy and then reluctantly make his



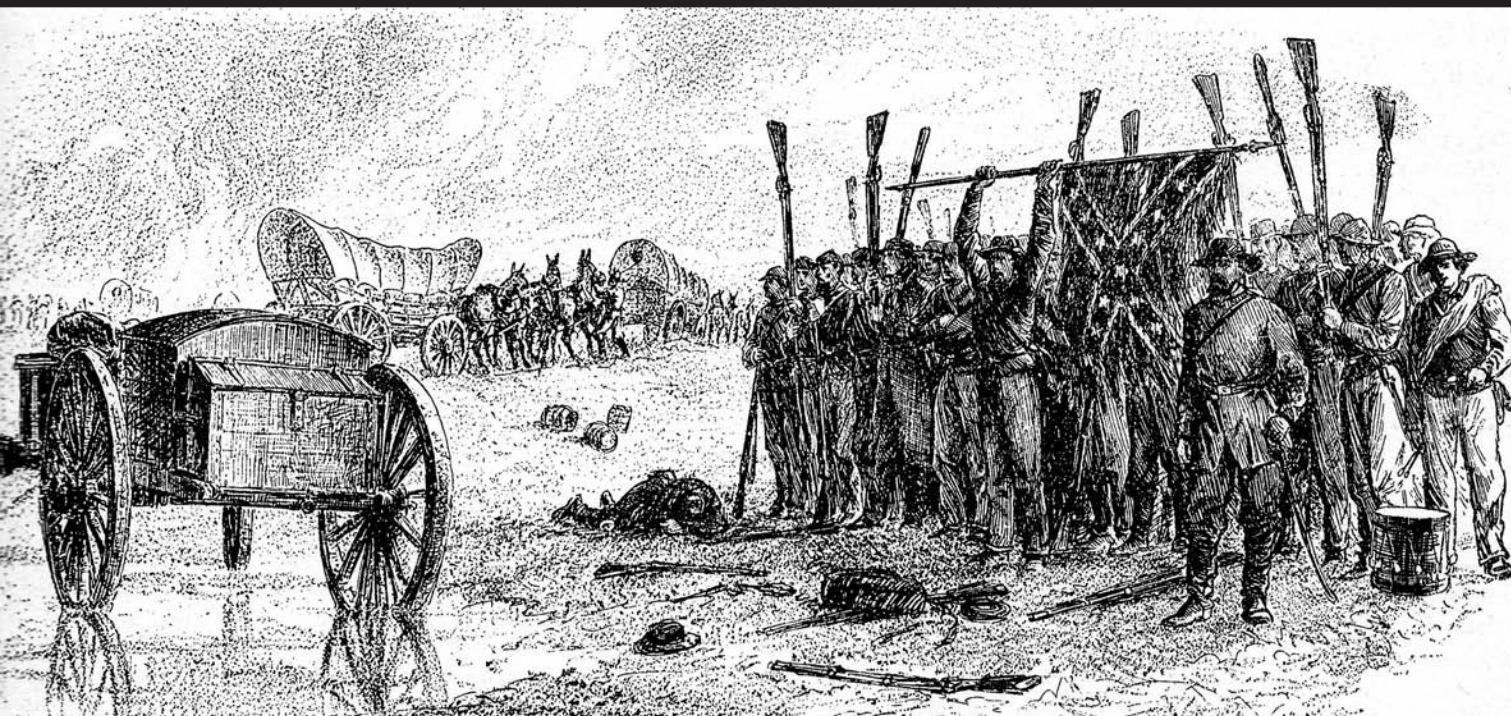
Waud sketched this chaotic scene as Confederate supply wagons scatter during an attack. Few if any supplies made it through to Robert E. Lee's hungry, footsore, and dispirited men on the withdrawal to Appomattox.

Thomas S. Allen of the 5th Wisconsin reported that Ewell approached Sergeant Angus Cameron, in command of a squad of five men in the regiment's skirmish line. Ewell asked Cameron if there was an officer present. No one of higher rank was on hand, so the Confederate lieutenant general surrendered the remnant of his corps to a Union sergeant.

Soon after the surrender of Ewell and his staff, wrote Allen, "a squad of cavalry came up and claimed the prisoners and took possession of them." Elements of Custer's cavalry claimed to have captured Ewell, and Ewell claimed that he had sur-

The steadfast discipline and determination shown by the Marine Brigade impressed soldiers of other commands, blue and gray. Union Brig. Gen. Truman Seymour wrote that they "fought with peculiar obstinacy."

Informed by an officer that one Rebel unit was still fighting, a disbelieving Brig. Gen. Joseph Warren Keifer rode out to see for himself. He found the Marine Brigade by accidentally running into them. Thinking quickly, Keifer pretended to be a Southern officer and ordered them forward. The sailors followed Keifer for a short distance, but became suspicious. One man, close to Keifer's horse, raised his musket to fire, but



Lieutenant General Richard Ewell's men invert their muskets and lower their Confederate battle flag at the end of the Battle of Saylor's Creek. "My God," said Robert E. Lee, "has the army dissolved?"

way down the hill. Gordon managed to hold on until dark. He got away with part of his force but at the cost of abandoning the wagon train. The Confederates lost another 1,700 prisoners along with 300 supply wagons and 70 ambulances at Lockett's Farm and the Double Bridges.

Meanwhile, the advance of the Army of Northern Virginia was only a few miles east of Farmville. Lt. Col. Charles S. Venable found Robert E. Lee riding with Mahone and delivered the bad news that the Federals had captured the supply train. Lee replied, "Where is Anderson? Where is Ewell? It is strange I can't hear from them." Then Lee said to Mahone, "I have no other troops. Will you take your division to Sailor's Creek?"

The three officers then rode back toward the battlefield. When they reached the top of a rise overlooking Harper's Farm, Mahone saw that "the disaster which had overtaken our army was in full view, and the scene beggars description—hurrying teamsters with their teams and dangling traces (no wagons), retreating infantry without guns, many without hats, a harm-

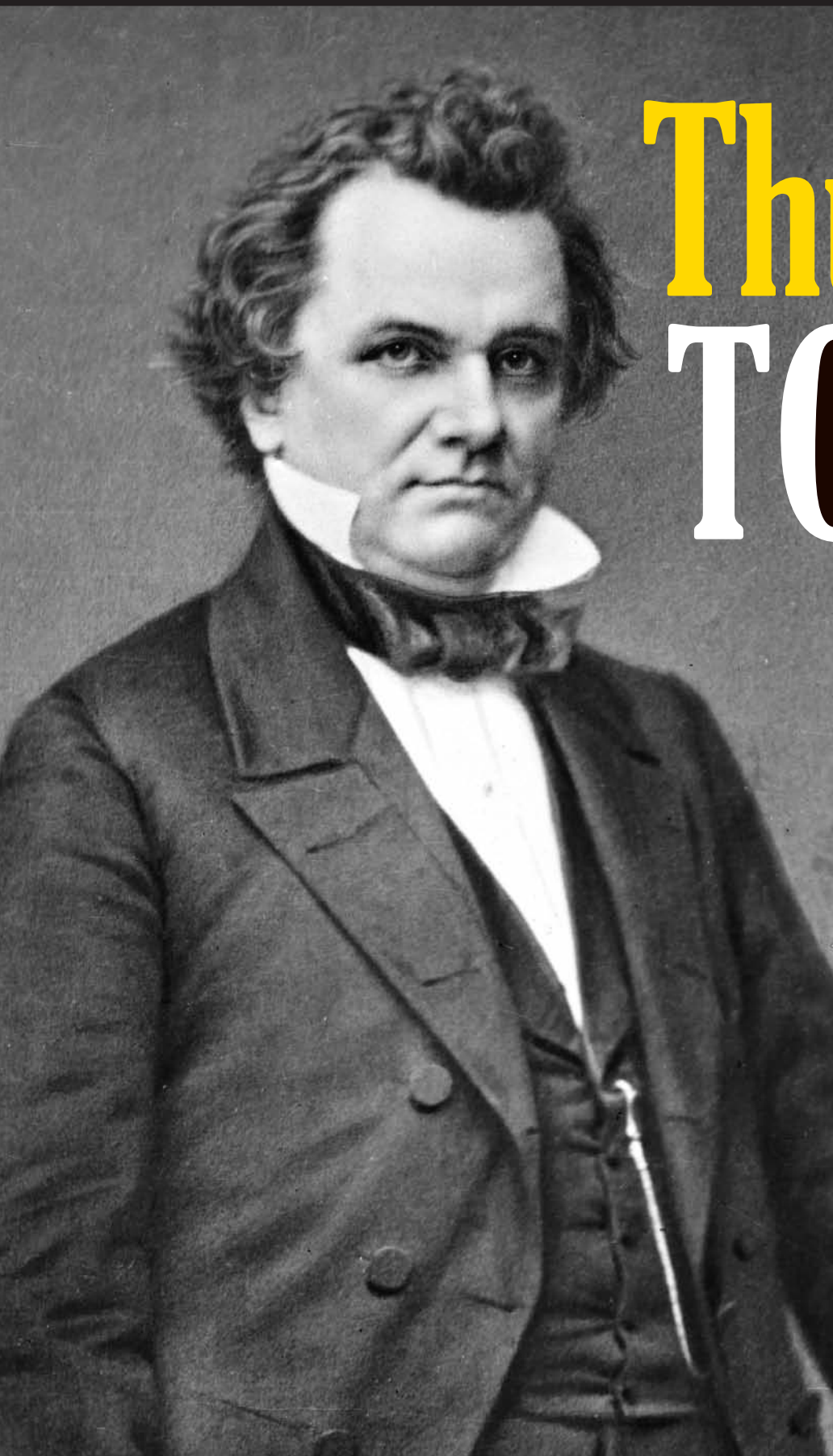
less mob, with the massive columns of the enemy moving orderly on. At this spectacle, Lee straightened himself in his saddle and, looking more the soldier than ever, exclaimed, as if talking to himself, 'My God! Has the army dissolved?'"

Mahone assured Lee, "No, general, here are troops willing to do their duty." Lee replied, "Yes, general, there are some true men left. Will you please keep those people back?" As Mahone prepared his division to make a stand, some of the fleeing soldiers halted and gathered around Lee, who was on horseback holding a battle flag. Mahone took the flag from the commander and carried it to his troops. Blocking further Union advances and providing a rallying point for the scattered soldiers streaming from the battlefield, Mahone temporarily stopped the torrent of disasters besetting the army. In all, the Union Army had captured nearly one-quarter of the Army of Northern Virginia. Besides losing 7,700 men as prisoners, the Confederates lost another 1,100 men killed or wounded. Eight generals, including Ewell, were captured. Total Union losses were only 1,180.

Late on the night of April 6, Lieutenant John S. Wise, a courier sent by Jefferson Davis, went looking for Lee. It was well

past midnight when he located the commander. Lee stood next to an ambulance, in which an aide sat writing by lantern light. On the ground a camp fire of fence rails was burning low; a distracted Lee stared into the burning embers. Wise reported that Davis wanted news about Lee's plans. "Have you any objective point, general, any place where you contemplate making a stand?" asked Wise. "No," replied Lee. "I shall have to be governed by each day's developments." Then Wise heard Lee say, a touch of resentment raising his voice, "A few more Sailor's Creeks and it will all be over."

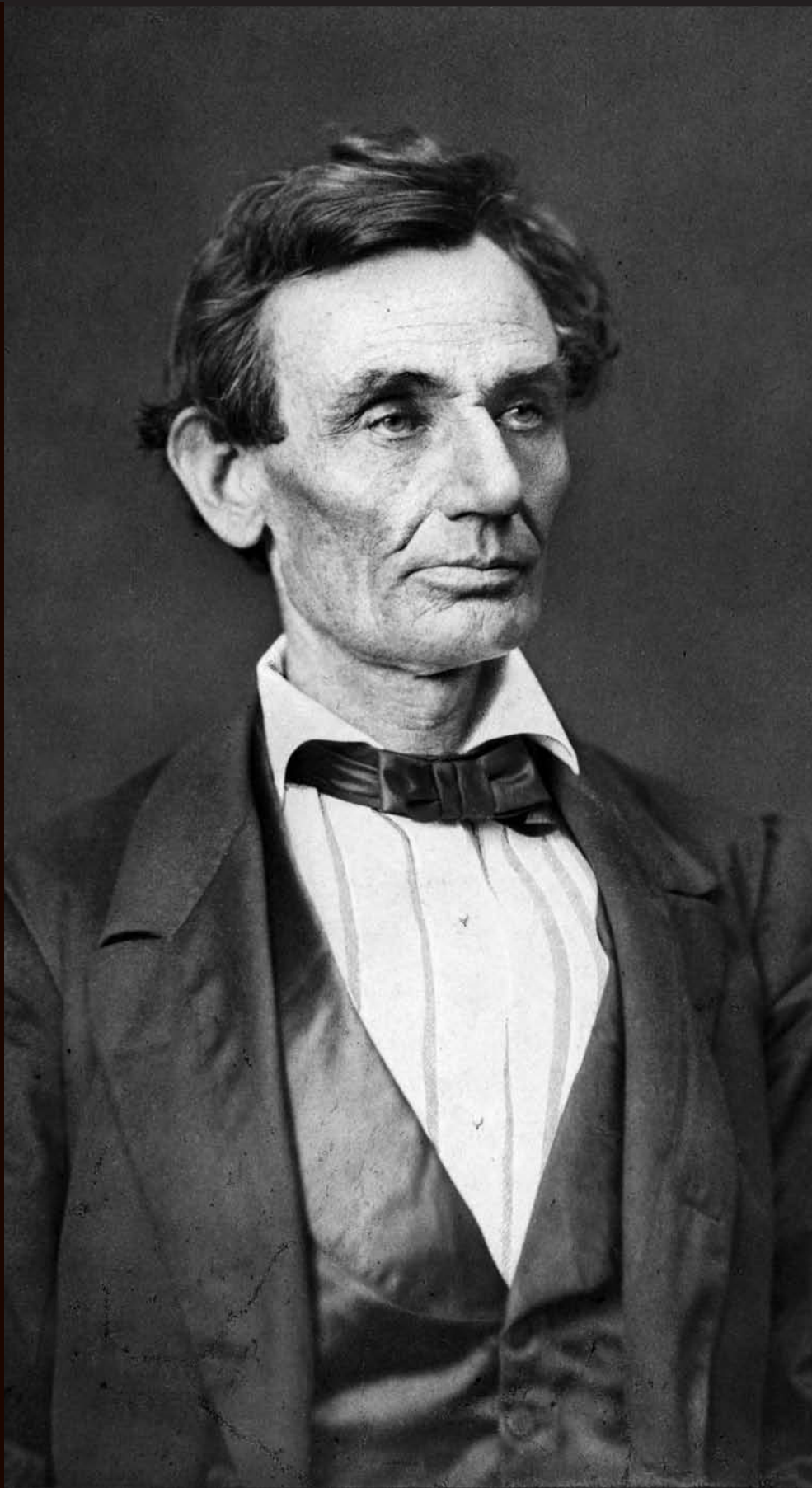
About that same time in the Union camps, a confident Sheridan reviewed the day's events. He wrote Grant late on April 6, "If the thing is pressed, I think that Lee will surrender." After Lincoln read the battle reports and Sheridan's statement, he ordered Grant, "Let the thing be pressed." Three days later, the much diminished Army of Northern Virginia was trapped at Appomattox Court House. With Union cavalry again in front of them and enemy infantry moving to surround them from the rear, Lee bowed to the inevitable and surrendered to Grant on April 9. The Civil War, to all intents and purposes, was over. □



Thunder TONES

Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln had been personal and political opponents for 20 years when they clashed for Douglas's Illinois Senate seat in 1858. Their heated debates would quickly capture the attention of the nation.

By Roy Morris Jr.



The two men facing each other across the debate stage at Ottawa, Illinois, on the afternoon of August 21, 1858, were no strangers to one another. Indeed, Senator Stephen Douglas and former one-term congressman Abraham Lincoln had been personal and political opponents—and more or less friendly neighbors—for the better part of two decades. But in ways neither man could imagine, their rivalry was about to grow exponentially and capture the attention of an increasingly divided nation. They would speak to each other, and the rest of the country, in “thunder tones,” as Lincoln would report. And everyone hears thunder when it rolls.

Few political opponents had ever known each other as well or as long as Douglas and Lincoln. Almost from the time they arrived in their adopted home state of Illinois, 16 months apart, in 1831-

1832, they had been fated to be rivals on the local, state, and national scene. Lincoln, who was four years older, got there first, literally washing up on the shore of the tiny village of New Salem in the spring of 1831. Residents of the little village awoke one late April morning to see a tall, homely young man sweating mightily in the middle of the Sangamon River, striving to dislodge his makeshift flatboat from its grounding on a dam in the river's shallows.

By the simple but ingenious method of drilling a hole in the boat's foredeck and shifting barrels of goods to the rear, the boat was tipped over the dam and back into the river. Lincoln and his three companions went on their way, but two months later he returned and settled down in New Salem, where he quickly struck townsfolk as “a very intelligent young man.” Lincoln had made his first significant public impression.

Douglas's arrival in Illinois 19 months later

LEFT: Abraham Lincoln said of this photograph, taken in 1860 in his adopted hometown of Springfield, Ill., “That looks better and expresses me better than any I have ever seen.” It was the Lincoln the North would elect president that fall. **FAR LEFT:** Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas, photographed during the 1860 presidential election by famed photographer Mathew Brady, seems every inch “the Little Giant.”

was considerably less dramatic. He simply rolled into Jacksonville, the seat of Morgan County, aboard a stagecoach in the middle of the night on November 2, 1833. Not yet 21, Douglas had less than \$5 in his pocket when he arrived. Like Lincoln, he was following the well-worn path of young men seeking their fortunes on the westward frontier. The chance to reinvent himself in new surroundings was particularly appealing to both Lincoln and Douglas, each of whom was leaving behind a less-than-idyllic home life. Lincoln and his hard-working taciturn father, Thomas, had always had a distant relationship, and by the time he left home, the younger Lincoln had developed

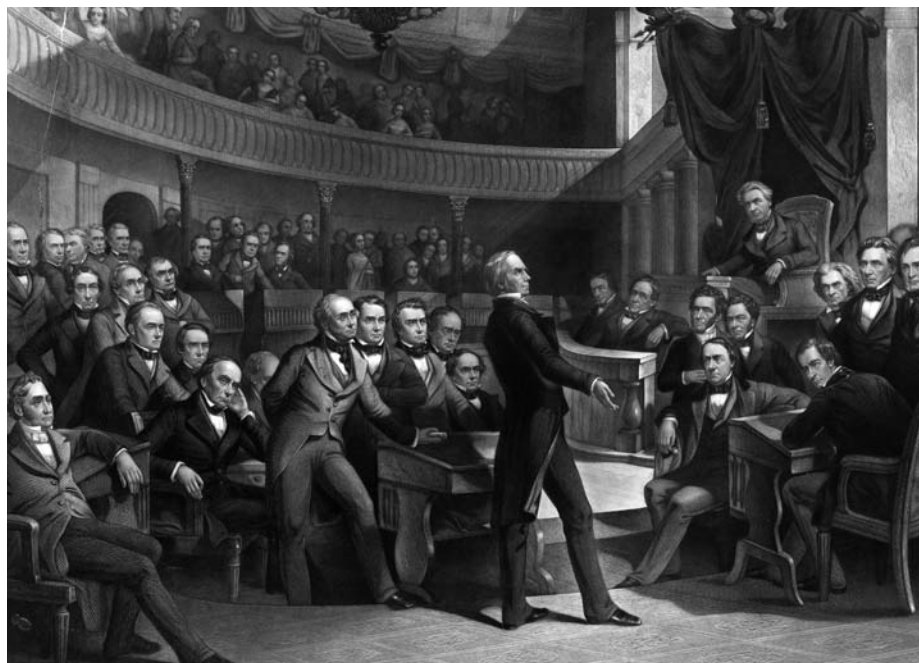
responded, “On my way to Congress.” He immediately set out to back up his words, winning election as state’s attorney for the First Judicial District in Illinois in 1834 by a mere four votes and bragging in a letter home that he was “doing as well in my profession as could be expected of a boy of twenty-one.”

One of the new legislators Douglas met in the halls of the state capital at Vandalia was Abraham Lincoln, who had won his own first election (on his second try) to the legislature. Exactly when and how the two men met is unknown. Lincoln later recalled vaguely in 1859 that it had taken place “twenty-two years ago.” Douglas never

strong president but also, conversely, a system based on states’ rights. In the South, of course, the major states’ right was the right to own slaves. On that issue the two parties were fated to do battle.

By the time Lincoln and Douglas became politically active in the late 1830s and 1840s, the issue of slavery was a settled fact. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 had outlawed the expansion of slavery into new territories above the 36th Parallel, with the exception of Missouri. The compromise held until the Mexican War, conducted by Democratic President James K. Polk, greatly added to American territories in the West. Whigs, including then-Congressman Abraham Lincoln, opposed the war as a naked power grab by Southern slave owners to expand their reach. A new compromise, in 1850, allowed the recently acquired territory of California to enter the Union as a free state but also put into place a federal Fugitive Slave Law that required Northerners to assist in the return of runaway slaves to their Southern owners. One of the leaders of the Compromise of 1850 was Stephen Douglas, then serving as a U.S. senator.

Lincoln’s opposition to the Mexican War led to his defeat after only one term in Congress. He returned to the private practice of law in his adopted hometown of Springfield, Illinois, while Douglas ascended to the heights of power in the Senate. Douglas also called Springfield home, and he and Lincoln crossed swords several times in the decade prior to the 1850 Compromise. Besides their usual political differences, the two men were also rivals for the hand of a vivacious young Springfield debutante, Kentucky-born Mary Todd. The bright, talkative Mary was a more compatible match for Douglas than she was for the awkward, plain-spoken Lincoln. She and Douglas flirted across Springfield drawing rooms and went on long, chatty walks together. But as a lifelong Whig and a family friend of party leader Henry Clay, Mary could not commit to the Democrat Douglas. “I liked him well enough, but that was all,” she said later. Instead, she married Lincoln in November 1842. It was a marriage



Kentucky Senator Henry Clay, shown addressing Congress, helped craft the Compromise of 1850 with fellow Senator Stephen Douglas. It held for only four years.

a lifelong aversion to physical labor and a thirst to explore the “wider and fairer world” beyond the borders of their Indiana farm.

Douglas, whose own physician father had died when he was two months old, had grown up in Vermont and upstate New York, where he took an early interest in politics and studied law with the leading Democratic politician in Canandaigua, New York, before setting out for the West to seek his fortune. When his mother asked when she would see him again, Douglas

mentioned a first meeting at all. From the start they were on opposite sides of the aisle: Lincoln was a Whig and Douglas was a Democrat. Whigs, primarily northern and Midwestern in origin, were the party of small shop owners, manufacturers, entrepreneurs, and tradesmen; Democrats, the party of Andrew Jackson, centered their strength in the agrarian South. Whigs favored a weak president, a powerful Congress, and a centralized government that provided a solid infrastructure for interstate trade and commerce. Democrats wanted a

based at least as much on political as romantic grounds, but against all odds, it endured for nearly a quarter of a century.

Following his failure to win reelection to Congress, Lincoln concentrated on his legal career, becoming a highly paid corporate lawyer for a number of Eastern and Midwestern railroads. Meanwhile, Douglas rose to nearly the summit of national politics, becoming the leading Democrat in the Senate and barely losing his party's presidential nomination to dark horse candidate Franklin Pierce in 1852. As a spokesman himself (and investor) for powerful railroad interests, Douglas championed a new transatlantic railroad. The proposed line he favored would cross the then unincorporated Nebraska Territory en route from Lake Superior to Puget Sound, Washington. "It is utterly impossible to preserve that connection between the Atlantic and the Pacific," Douglas complained, "if you are to keep a wilderness of two thousand miles in extent between you." Southern Democrats, however, were in no hurry to create another territory north of the Missouri Compromise line. Missouri Senator David Atkinson, a leading opponent, succinctly spelled out the Southern position. They were willing to see Nebraska "sink in hell" before allowing it to enter the Union as a free state.

Douglas, seeking a way around the opposition—and also a way to protect his recent purchase of 6,000 acres at the Illinois terminus of the proposed route—sponsored a bill to divide the territory into two parts—Nebraska and Kansas. In theory, this would create a new free state, Nebraska, and a new slave state, Kansas, based on the preferences of their closest neighbors—Iowa and Missouri. It would leave the ultimate decision in the hands of the residents, a move Douglas termed "popular sovereignty." He reluctantly accepted an amendment to his proposed bill that would repeal the Missouri Compromise in the new territories, although he warned that the change would "raise a hell of a storm."

That storm was not long in coming. The day after he introduced his Kansas-Nebraska bill in the Senate, a group of abo-



TOP: This ersatz log cabin was assembled from logs said to have come from the cabin in which Abraham Lincoln grew up. **BELOW:** The birthplace of Stephen Douglas in Brandon, Vermont, as depicted in a somewhat bucolic print in 1859, one year after his famous debates with Lincoln.



litionist lawmakers released a statement condemning Douglas's proposal as "a gross violation of a sacred pledge; a criminal betrayal of precious rights; part and parcel of an atrocious plot to exclude from a vast unoccupied region immigrants from the Old World and free laborers from our own states, and convert it into a dreary region of despotism inhabited by masters and slaves." Douglas, they said, was hatching a monstrous plot to spread "the blight of slavery" across the land and "subjugate the

whole country to the yoke of a slaveholding despotism." Douglas responded that he was merely attempting to insure the survival of "a great principle of self-government," to "allow the people to legislate for themselves upon the subject of slavery."

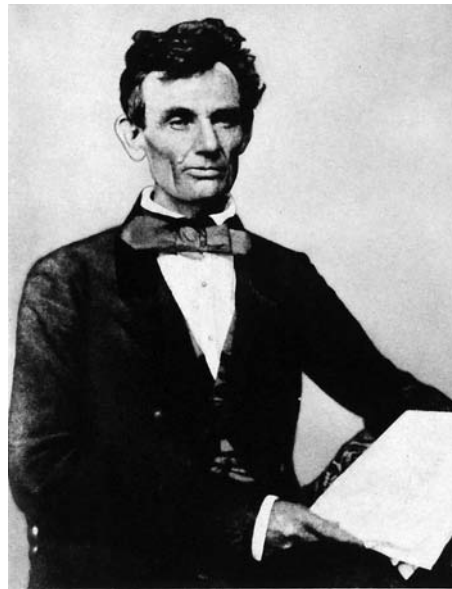
The bill was approved by Congress in May 1854 and signed into law by Democratic President Franklin Pierce. Abraham Lincoln, traveling on legal business when the bill passed, pronounced himself "thunderstruck and stunned. This took us by sur-

prise. We reeled and fell in utter confusion. But we rose each fighting, grasping whatever he could reach—a scythe—a pitchfork—a chopping axe, or a butcher’s cleaver.” His figurative language would soon become literal, as supporters and opponents of the new bill rushed into Kansas Territory to decide whether it would be slave or free.

“Bleeding Kansas,” as it soon became called, saw an explosion of violence between the two sides that presaged a wider conflict between the two increasingly intractable regions of the country. The worsening crisis spelled the end of the Whig Party, which was torn in half by the slavery issue, and the rise of a new Republican Party focused entirely in the North. Lincoln soon became a leader of the new party, receiving the nomination to run against his old rival Stephen Douglas for Douglas’s Senate seat in 1858. Lincoln cemented his leadership with an instantly famous speech accepting the party’s nomination. The “House Divided” speech, as it became known, warned that “a house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other.”

When Douglas heard that the Republicans had nominated Lincoln, he was concerned but not surprised. “I shall have my hands full,” he told Pennsylvania newspaper editor John W. Forney. “He is the strong man of his party—full of wit, facts, dates—and the best stump speaker, with his droll ways and dry jokes, in the West. He is as honest as he is shrewd, and if I beat him my victory will be hardly won.” After some delay, the two men agreed to engage in a series of debates in all but two of the state’s county seats.

Under guidelines set down by Douglas, as the incumbent, he and Lincoln would meet seven times over the course of the next seven weeks. The first debate was slated for Ottawa, 80 miles southwest of Chicago in the north-central part of the state. It was



ABOVE: A somewhat disheveled Lincoln sports a gigantic bow tie in this 1858 photograph, believed to have been made the day after Lincoln’s first campaign speech for Douglas’s Senate seat. **OPPOSITE:** Lincoln speaks while Douglas listens during one of their seven debates across Illinois in 1858. Douglas won the election, but the vast amount of publicity helped put Lincoln on the national stage.

reliable Republican territory and as such presented Lincoln with the opportunity to get his campaign off to a running start. On August 20, the day before the scheduled debate, huge crowds of people began flocking into the little town (population 9,000), which sat between the Fox and Illinois Rivers. Men, women, and children poured into town on foot, horseback, wagons, railroad trains, and canal boats blazing with partisan political banners. By eight o’clock on the morning of the debate, Ottawa’s population had tripled, with the huge crowds kicking up clouds of dust until Ottawa looked like “a vast smoke house” in the evocative words of a *Chicago Tribune* correspondent.

The two candidates arrived separately. Lincoln came by train from Chicago, pulling in at noon to the Rock Island depot, where he was met by Ottawa mayor Joseph O. Glover and escorted to Glover’s home by a half-mile-long parade of supporters. Douglas entered town from the west, his elegant private carriage drawn by six white horses. Like Lincoln he opted to freshen up before the debate,

checking into the Geiger House while his supporters marched back and forth in front of the hotel, hurraing their hero with loud cheers and improvised music.

The audience crammed into Lafayette Square an hour before the scheduled 2 PM starting time. There were no chairs and few trees, and the late summer sun pounded down mercilessly on everyone. Vendors sold water and lemonade; more potent liquid refreshments were also available. The stage, a simple platform of unfinished wood, was topped by a flimsy awning. No one had thought to guard the stage, and it took a good 30 minutes to clear a space for the candidates and local dignitaries. Meanwhile, village clowns dangled precariously from the awning to the delight of the crowds. In short order the awning gave way, toppling the miscreants into the laps of the front-row crowd. Everyone enjoyed the spectacle.

The candidates arrived a few minutes later and climbed with difficulty onto the stage. Lincoln, wearing a simple dark suit, sat at the end of the front row, a worn carpetbag filled with notes and copies of old speeches at his feet, while Douglas stepped to the front of the stage. He was dressed, planter-style, in a wide-brimmed white hat, ruffled shirt, light trousers, and dark blue coat with polished buttons. Under the agreed upon format, Douglas would speak first for an hour, Lincoln would have 90 minutes to respond, and Douglas would conclude with a 30-minute rebuttal. The order would alternate for each subsequent debate.

Having faced Lincoln many times in the past, Douglas confidently took the offensive. Like a skilled prosecuting attorney confronting a petty defendant, Douglas threw a series of sharp questions at his obviously startled opponent, demanding to know Lincoln’s positions on the Fugitive Slave Act, the slave trade in general, the admission of new states to the Union, and popular sovereignty in the territories. Introducing a theme that would run through the debates, Douglas raised the doleful specter of black citizenship, charging that the Republicans favored bestow-

ing immediate and full civil rights on African Americans, a move he warned would “cover our prairies with [black] settlements and turn this beautiful state into a free Negro colony.” Douglas accused Lincoln of believing that black men were “his equal, and hence his brother. I do not regard the Negro as my equal, and positively deny that he is my brother or any kin to me whatever.”

Thrown off balance by Douglass’s aggressive opening gambit, Lincoln offered a weak rebuttal, denying that he had conspired to form a new abolitionist party in Illinois and reading a long, boring excerpt from his old speech in Peoria. Douglas, he charged, was attempting to twist Lincoln’s beliefs into “a specious and fantastic arrangement of words, by which a man can prove a horse chestnut to be a chestnut horse.” As for the charge that Lincoln believed in racial equality, Lincoln frankly asserted; “I have no disposition to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which in my judgment will probably forever forbid their living together on terms of respect, social and political equality.”

Besides their pronounced political differences, the candidates presented diametrically opposite public faces. Douglas was all clenched fists and high dudgeon, shouting out accusations in his surprisingly deep, mellow voice. Lincoln, although much taller, had a comparatively higher, shriller voice and presented a much less polished stage presence, fumbling with his glasses—“I am no longer a young man”—and bending awkwardly at the knees before suddenly springing upward in an ungainly but compelling gesture of emphasis. Three times during Douglas’s speech Lincoln attempted to interrupt him, causing fellow Republican committeemen on stage to hiss: “What are you making such a fuss for? Douglas didn’t interrupt you, and can’t you see the people don’t like it?” With some difficulty, Lincoln managed to rein in his temper.

After the debate, supporters carried Lincoln off on their shoulders, his long underwear comically showing beneath his pulled-

up pant legs. The partisan press judged the outcome along predictable party lines. The Democratic-leaning *Chicago Times* judged Douglas’s “excoriation of Lincoln” to have been “so severe that the Republicans hung their heads in shame,” while Republican newspapers thought Lincoln had appeared “high toned” and “powerful” in the face of the senator’s “boorish” assaults. Prominent New York editor Horace Greeley anointed the debate nothing less than “a contest for the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of Satan.” A well-known founder of the Republican Party, he left no doubt about which kingdom Lincoln belonged to.

Lincoln was sufficiently worried about his performance in Ottawa to convene a meeting of his brain trust in Chicago a few

ing, perhaps unnecessarily, “You are dealing with a bold, brazen, lying rascal and you must fight the devil with fire. Give him hell.” Another supporter, Charles Ray, urged, “Charge, Chester! Charge! Do not keep on the defensive. We must not be parrying all the while. We want the deadliest thrusts. Let us see blood follow any time [Douglas] closes a sentence.”

The second debate took place on August 27 at Freeport, six hours by train from Chicago and a few miles from the Illinois-Wisconsin border. The candidates arrived to the already standard salvos of cannon fire and shouting supporters. It was a damp, overcast day, but 15,000 spectators—twice the town’s population—flocked into a vacant lot near the banks of the Pecatonica



Private Collection / Peter Newark American Pictures / Bridgeman Images

days later. While pronouncing himself reasonably satisfied with the outcome of the debate—“The fire flew some, and I am glad to know I am yet alive”—he invited suggestions on how he could improve his performance. *Chicago Tribune* editor Joseph Medill, a longtime supporter, urged Lincoln to be more aggressive. “Don’t act on the defensive at all,” Medill advised. Instead, “Hold Doug up as a traitor and conspirator and a pro-slavery bamboozling demagogue.” Medill told Lincoln to “put a few ugly questions” of his own to Douglas, not-

River, where another crude wooden platform had been erected between two trees. Lincoln again arrived first, sitting atop a Conestoga wagon accompanied by an honor guard of humble farmers to emphasize his rural roots. Douglas walked over the square from his room at the Brewster House hotel. Along the way a watermelon rind arced through the crowd and struck Douglas on the shoulder as he mounted the stage. He threatened to leave at once.

Lincoln, going first, said he wanted to respond to Douglas’s “seven distinct inter-



This period image gives a romanticized view of the two longtime rivals. Neither they nor their crowds were quite so well dressed or well behaved as they are shown to be here.

rogatories” from the previous debate. He denied favoring repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law, the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, the prohibition of slave trade between the territories, or the admission of new slave states to the Union. He supported the right of people within a new state to draft “such a constitution as they may see fit,” but he also supported the right of Congress to prohibit slavery in all territories. Finally, he waffled on the question of whether he opposed acquiring new territories unless slavery was first prohibited within their borders. “I would or would not oppose such acquisition,” he said weakly, “according as I might think such acquisition would or would not aggravate the slavery question among ourselves.” He demanded to know if Douglas believed that the people of a new territory could legally exclude slavery within its own borders “prior to the formulation of a state constitution.”

As Lincoln, Douglas, and all discerning

listeners immediately understood, this was the crux of the entire campaign. By championing the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Douglas had gone on record as supporting popular sovereignty. But conflicting pro- and anti-slavery constitutions had been presented in Kansas, and President James Buchanan—against Douglas’s advice—had recognized the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution (so named for the town in which the pro-slavery legislature was sitting). “Kansas,” said Buchanan, “is therefore at this moment as much a slave state as Georgia and South Carolina.” Douglas had denounced the state constitution as “a fraudulent submission” and “a violation of the fundamental principle of free government.” Kansas remained, for the time being, an unincorporated territory.

Now, answering Lincoln’s interrogation, Douglas reiterated his view that the people of a territory already “have the lawful means to introduce slavery or exclude it as

they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere unless it is supported by local police regulations. Those police regulations can only be established by the local legislature, and if the people are opposed to slavery they will elect representatives to that body who will by unfriendly legislation effectually prevent the introduction of it into their midst.” He was only stating the obvious, but Douglas’s “Freeport Doctrine” would come back to haunt him by comprehensively alienating southern Democrats—as Lincoln had cannily foreseen.

From Freeport the candidates traveled to Jonesboro, in the southernmost part of the state, nicknamed Egypt after its best-known town, Cairo (pronounced, frontier-style, Kay-Ro). Jonesboro was safe territory for Douglas and the Democrats—Republican presidential nominee Jon C. Fremont had won less than four percent of the vote in the last election—but it was also small and isolated, with only 800 residents. Further depressing turnout that day was the fact that the state fair was underway at nearby Centralia, and many local farmers had opted to view giant rutabagas and corn-fattened hogs rather than stick around to listen to the two senatorial candidates. Only about 1,500 people turned out for the debate, which devolved into a question of whether or not Lincoln and other like-minded politicians were secretly campaigning beneath “the black flag of Abolitionism.” “Suppose Mr. Lincoln should die, what a horrible condition would they be in,” Douglas conjectured—allowing Lincoln to steal a laugh from the pro-Democratic crowd by loudly groaning at the sheer horror of such a thought. Lincoln uncharacteristically concluded his own remarks with 10 minutes to spare, leading the *Chicago Times* to comment afterward, “We fancy he has had enough of Egypt, and certainly Egypt has had enough of him.”

Three days later Lincoln was on friendlier soil at Charleston in the extreme eastern corner of the state. Indeed, he was something of a favorite son, having immigrated to Coles County from nearby Indiana at the age of 19. His widowed stepmother, Sarah

Bush Johnston Lincoln, still lived in a log cabin in the area. An enormous 80-foot-wide banner hung across Main Street, showing the young Lincoln driving an oxcart into the village during “Abe’s Entrance to Charleston Thirty Years Ago.” Another banner showed a giant Lincoln clubbing a cringing Douglas into submission with his mighty fists. Douglas, unmused, threatened to leave at once after he saw the offending poster but rallied his forces behind a brass band and a parade of 32 pretty young women representing the 32 states in the Union. Lincoln also led a wagonload of pretty girls down the street—it seemed to be the theme of the day—under the banner, “Girls Link-on to Lincoln.”

A huge crowd of nearly 15,000 people attended the debate at the agricultural society fairgrounds. Noting an enormous Democratic banner decrying “Negro Equality,” Lincoln began his remarks with an apocryphal question he said “an elderly gentleman” had asked him about whether Lincoln was really in favor of “social and political equality of the white and black races.” He was not, Lincoln said, adding that physical differences “will forever forbid the two races living together upon terms of social and political equality.” He added, in a lame attempt at humor, “I do not understand that because I do not want a Negro woman for a slave I must necessarily want her for a wife. My understanding is that I can just leave her alone.” He suggested that since Douglas seemed to be so worried about intermarriage, he should give up his Senate seat and return to the state legislature, which was the only governing body that could legally change Illinois’s existing miscegenation laws. Douglas responded drolly that he was glad to have Lincoln’s advice on the subject.

The largest crowd of the debates assembled at Galesburg in the northwestern part of the state. An estimated 15,000-20,000 people braved an “Arctic frost” of biting winds and cold rain to see the candidates make their usual entrance by train and buggy. The two were driven to Knox College, the site of the debate, in side-by-side carriages. The stage had been moved to a



A political cartoon from the presidential race of 1860 shows a long-legged Lincoln easily outdistancing Douglas—something he did in the election itself.

spot alongside the college building to shield the candidates—but not the crowd—from the wind, forcing the guests of honor to climb through a first-floor window onto the stage. (Lincoln quipped, “Well, at last I have gone through college.”) Galesburg was an old stop on the Underground Railroad, and most of the crowd consisted of pro-Lincoln college students.

The strong wind made it hard for the speakers to be heard—or even to speak. Douglas took a throat lozenge before taking his turn on stage and politely offered another to Lincoln. He reminded the crowd that Lincoln had spoken out against racial equality at Charleston after favoring it at other stops. “His creed don’t travel,” Douglas scoffed. Lincoln denied that he had been inconsistent, noting, “I have always maintained that in the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, [blacks] were our equals.” He contrasted his position to Douglas’s legalistic insistence on property rights over human rights. “He insists, upon the score of equality, that the owner of slaves and the owner of horses should be allowed to take them alike to new territory

and hold them there,” said Lincoln. “That is perfectly logical if the species of property is perfectly alike, but if you admit that one of them is wrong, then you cannot admit any equality between right and wrong. I believe that slavery is wrong. There is the difference between Judge Douglas and his friends and the Republican Party.”

Six days later the campaign pulled into the Mississippi River town of Quincy on the extreme western edge of the Illinois-Missouri border. Boats steaming downriver from Hannibal, Missouri, and upriver from Keokuk, Iowa, swelled the turnout to nearly 15,000 people. After several days of heavy rain, the day of the debate broke sunny and cool. Lincoln was escorted to the debate site by yet another parade of supporters, this group pulling a horse-drawn model of the USS *Constitution* piloted for some reason by a live cartoon, the symbol of the now extinct Whig Party. The stage in Washington Square was made of large pine boards, and before Lincoln could begin his remarks the railing gave way, sending dozens of local dignitaries

Continued on page 98

Red River Ruin

Politician-general Nathaniel Banks's grand design to capture Shreveport floundered in the sandy mud of the treacherous Red River in the spring of 1864. Union Admiral David Porter, too, was left high and dry.

BY MICHAEL E. HASKEW

Nathaniel Banks was a political creature, and with his country in the throes of civil war, he now held the politically obtained rank of major general in the Union Army. Three terms as Republican governor of Massachusetts and a tenure as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives may have been impressive in the halls of government, but Banks's qual-



ifications for military command were nonexistent.

With no military experience, Banks took the field in the Shenandoah Valley in the spring of 1862 and received his first lesson in tactics from Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, who delivered a thorough thrashing to Banks, taking so many wagons and such great stores of supplies

that the Confederates mockingly dubbed the neophyte Union commander "Commissary Banks." The following year Banks muddled through the siege and eventual Union victory at Port Hudson, Louisiana, on the Mississippi River. Now, in the spring of 1864, the 47-year-old political appointee was in command of the Department of the Gulf, based at New Orleans. He hadn't



learned much in the interim.

By the third year of the Civil War, the Union had gained the upper hand over the Confederacy, but the casualty lists were seemingly endless. Powerful Copperhead politicians in the North called for peace overtures, and Southern pride and combativeness were as robust as ever. Adding a political dimension to the continuing con-

flict, 1864 was an election year, and when the voters, civilian and military, cast their ballots that November, the world would know the results of a referendum on the administration of Abraham Lincoln and his conduct of the war.

Amid the jumble of political uncertainty, unfinished military business remained, and the Trans-Mississippi West was coming

Clambering over felled trees, Union troops under Brig. Gen. Joseph A. Mower capture the Confederate stronghold at Fort DeRussy, one of their few successes in the Red River campaign.

sharply into focus. While the U.S. Navy had maintained a tight blockade of major Southern coastal cities throughout the war, the ports of Mexico were beyond its reach. Ships laden with cargoes of arms, ammu-

nition, medicine, and other precious supplies regularly made landfall in Mexico and offloaded contraband that was hauled overland across the Rio Grande to Texas and eventually into the waiting hands of needy Confederates. In return, Texas cotton was shipped to Europe in trade.

Cotton still wielded considerable influence on the Northern economy as well. The raw material needed to fuel the economically vital textile mills of New England was scarce. The mill owners, their looms virtually idle, were heavily invested in the political scene, and they called long and loudly for the seizure of the cotton fields of East Texas. In that regard, Lincoln and Banks shared common ground. Lincoln courted the support of the wealthy business owners as he stood for reelection. They were also a critical component of Banks's constituency, and the ambitious general was intent on running for the presidency himself sometime in the future.

Lincoln and his military advisers also worried about the presence of a foreign army near the Texas frontier—not the Mexican Army but a French expeditionary force sent there by Emperor Napoleon III. It was possible, though unlikely, that the

Admiral David Dixon Porter's Union fleet arrives in Alexandria at the start of the joint Army-Navy campaign to capture Shreveport and move into East Texas.

French would intervene in the war on the side of the Confederacy, attempt to annex parts of the American Southwest, or regain control of at least a portion of the territory that constituted the old Louisiana Purchase. To dissuade the French from interfering in the war and to capture the much-needed cotton for northern mill owners, it would be necessary for the Union Army to invade East Texas.

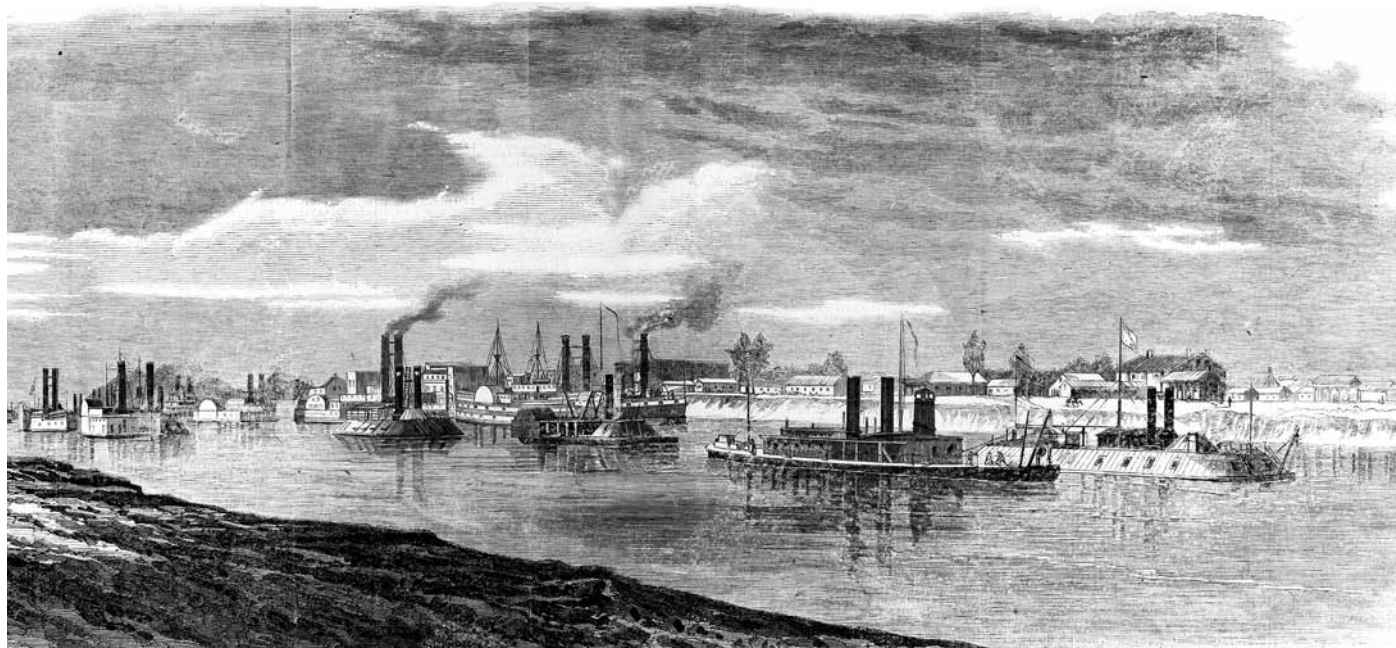
With Port Hudson already occupied, Maj. Gen. Henry Halleck, titular commander of all Union armies in the field, determined that the most logical route for such an invasion was a westward thrust from neighboring Louisiana. A prerequisite to such an offensive was the capture of the city of Shreveport, capital of Confederate Louisiana and the hub of a vital military and manufacturing cluster that included arms production and port facilities on the Red River, a shallow and sometimes treacherous stream that meandered more than 1,300 miles from headwaters in the Texas Panhandle through scrub land, bayou, and swamp to a confluence with the Atchafalaya and Mississippi Rivers. Even during peacetime, the land was inhospitable. Conducting a sophisticated military campaign there would be a daunting task indeed. One Confederate soldier who knew the region well said with disdain, "I would not give

two bits for the whole country."

Banks had long believed that a successful military expedition would enhance his prospects for the presidency, while a failure would doom his aspirations for the White House. Because of that, Banks considered a campaign through Red River country too risky, but unrelenting pressure from Lincoln and Halleck had already forced him to act. In the autumn of 1863, he had made three separate alternative attempts to establish a substantial Union presence in Texas. Offensive actions at Sabine Pass, along Bayou Teche, and at Brazos Santiago near the mouth of the Rio Grande had ended either in failure or only limited success.

Nevertheless, Lincoln remained fixated on East Texas, and Banks's final attempt to evade a campaign on the Red River in favor of a move eastward against the port city of Mobile, Alabama, was rebuffed by the president despite the support of Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, who commanded the Military Division of Mississippi and would soon succeed Halleck as overall Union military commander.

Early in 1864, planning began for the largest combined Army-Navy offensive of the war. The ensuing Red River campaign was destined to become a costly, protracted exercise in frustration and futility that battle-hardened, pragmatic Maj. Gen. William

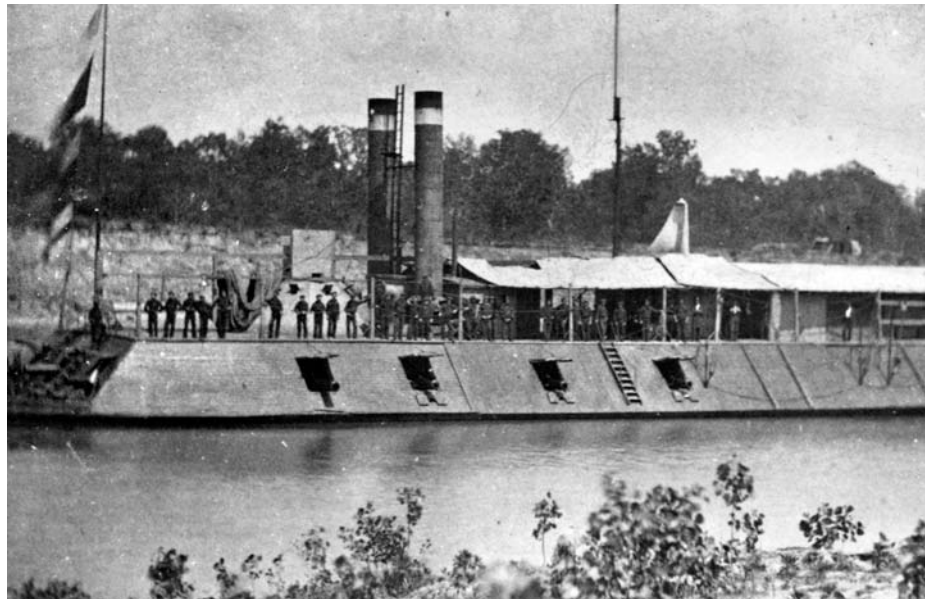


Tecumseh Sherman would assess, pithily but accurately, as “one damn blunder from beginning to end.”

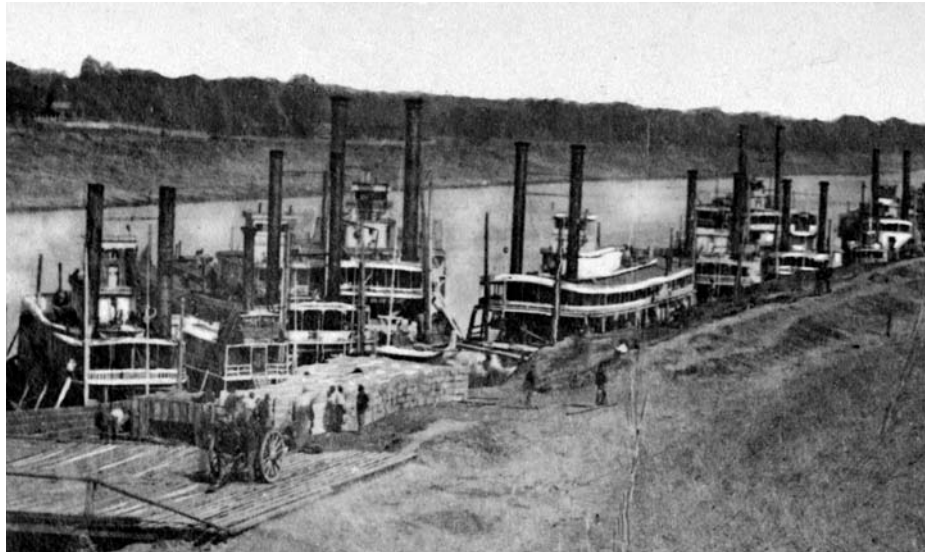
The blueprint for the Red River campaign called for cooperative action between 20,000 Union soldiers of the XIII and XIX Corps under Banks, a powerful flotilla of ironclads, tinclads, wooden warships, and transports mounting more than 200 guns under the command of Admiral David Dixon Porter (who had also expressed concerns of his own about the potential success of the operation). In addition, there would be 10,000 soldiers of the XVI and XVII Corps from the Army of the Tennessee. These last forces, battle-tested veterans under Brig. Gen. Andrew Jackson Smith, were on loan for the Trans-Mississippi operation and due back with Sherman in April to take part in the looming Atlanta campaign. Banks was told that he could also count on an additional 15,000 Union troops slated to march from Little Rock under the command of Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele and join in the effort to capture Shreveport.

With such a powerful force marshaled for the offensive, Banks’s optimism began to rise. He believed that Confederate resistance would be minimal leading up to the actual assault on Shreveport and that the entire operation could be accomplished in about four weeks despite the complexity of the plan. Moving north from the vicinity of New Orleans, Banks would lead the largest force to the railroad junction at Brashear City. From there he would march to Opelousas and then on to Alexandria to rendezvous with Smith’s command and Porter’s flotilla, numbering more than 60 boats. Smith and Porter, in the meantime, would follow the Red River to Alexandria and deal with any enemy resistance encountered during the advance. Once the campaign was underway, Steele would move southeast from Little Rock.

The plan was flawed from the outset. There was no actual unity of command. Each of the three independent Union forces could, in effect, operate autonomously as the tactical situation unfolded. The commands were also widely separated, with



ABOVE: Alert Union crewmen stand vigil atop their well-maintained gunboat on the Red River. **BELOW:** Union ships docked at Alexandria while waiting for their infantry counterparts to arrive.



more than 400 miles between the northern and southern elements at the outset of the campaign, making it difficult to maintain reliable communications. Most disturbing was the fact that Porter emphasized firepower and seemed to discount the deeper draft of heavier warships. The shallow Red River would prove to be a formidable obstacle to riverine operations.

Nevertheless, on March 7 the vanguard of the Union offensive, a cavalry division, rode forward. Three days later, Smith’s veterans left Vicksburg aboard transport ships headed for the Red River. On March 12, a powerful task force joined the mission from

Porter’s Upper Mississippi Fleet, including the monitors *Osage* and *Neosho*, each mounting big 11-inch guns; the armored gunboats *Carondelet*, *Essex*, and *Eastport*; and light tinclads *Cricket* and *Fort Hindman*. The heavy gunboat *Lexington* made an impressive sight while underway, and a host of auxiliary and supply vessels, including the hospital ship *Woodford*, rounded out the largest concentration of naval might thus far assembled in the western theater of the war. Shortly after the warships weighed anchor, *Eastport* ran aground on a sandbar, an early harbinger of troubles to come.

For months, Maj. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith, commander of the Confederate Trans-Mississippi Department, had observed the growing Union activity in and around Louisiana. As the immediate threat began to materialize, Smith ordered troops into position and fortifications prepared to resist the coming offensive. He also prepared to demolish a dam that would divert water from the main course of the Red River to another streambed and had an old steamboat scuttled below the dam to block the river.

A central figure in the Confederate defensive effort was Maj. Gen. Richard Taylor, commander of the Western Dis-

infantry formations landed at Simsport on the Red River. After establishing a joint Army-Navy supply base there, a coordinated attack was planned on Fort DeRussy, the principal Confederate defensive position in the area. Walker, outnumbered, pulled most of his troops temporarily out of harm's way, leaving only a token garrison of 300 men to defend the earthworks. On March 14, Porter's gunboats pounded the position, and a Union infantry division under Brig. Gen. Joseph A. Mower captured Fort DeRussy in a swift assault that suffered only 38 casualties and netted scores of Rebel prisoners.

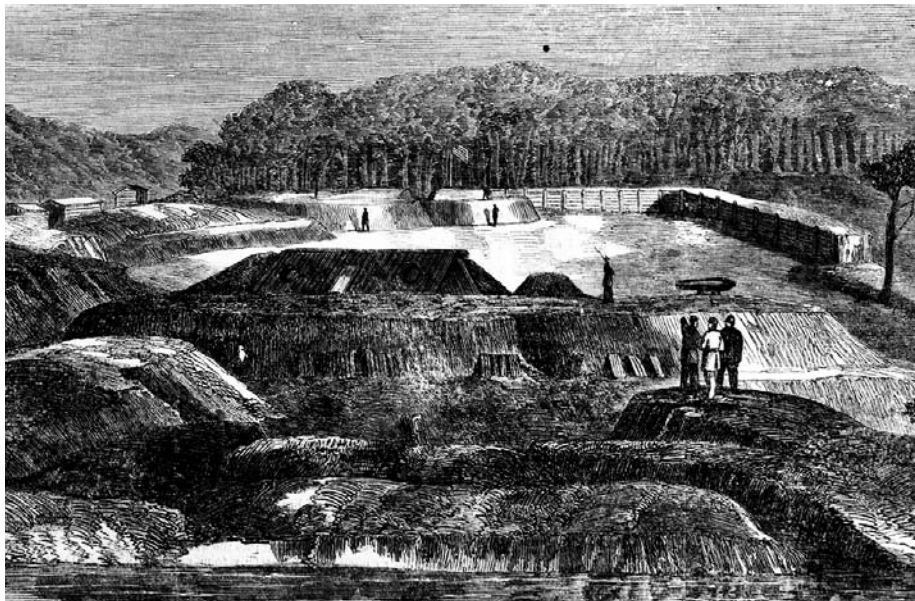
Capitalizing on his momentum, Porter

waited for another four days before Banks's cavalry arrived. Three days later and a week overdue, his footsore infantrymen, fatigued by their difficult march through the swamps of the Bayou Teche, reached the city. Banks arrived in Alexandria aboard a steamboat named *Blackhawk*, the same as Admiral Porter's tinclad flagship. Porter was obviously irritated by Banks's tardiness and was further annoyed by the apparent appropriation of his flagship's moniker. Banks, in turn, was irate that Navy personnel had helped themselves to much of the cotton he had promised to northern businessmen accompanying him on the steamboat.

Whatever cooperative spirit had previously existed between Banks and Porter quickly eroded. Further complicating matters, the seasonal rise of the Red River, which usually occurred in the winter, had not materialized. Always hazardous, the tortuous course of the river would probably be impassable at numerous points. Banks correctly concluded that without Porter's naval support the campaign would have to be abandoned—and with it his hopes for the presidential election of 1864. At first Porter declined to participate further, even though he had once boasted that he would go “wherever the sand is damp.” Banks, however, demanded that the admiral continue his mission. Porter reluctantly agreed, muttering that he would do his best even if “I should lose all my boats.”

Oddly enough, the first vessel the admiral ordered up the river was *Eastport*, the heaviest of his ironclads, which promptly became wedged between jagged rocks. It took three days of backbreaking labor to free *Eastport* while other vessels squeezed past, their keels dragging sluggishly through the mud of the river bottom. The hospital ship *Woodford* struck a partially submerged rock with such force that her hull was compromised and the ship sank, taking costly medical supplies with her.

While Porter foundered, the audacious Mower, a Vermont carpenter before joining the Army to serve in the Mexican War and embarking on a military career, struck again. A mixed bag of rain and sleet pelted



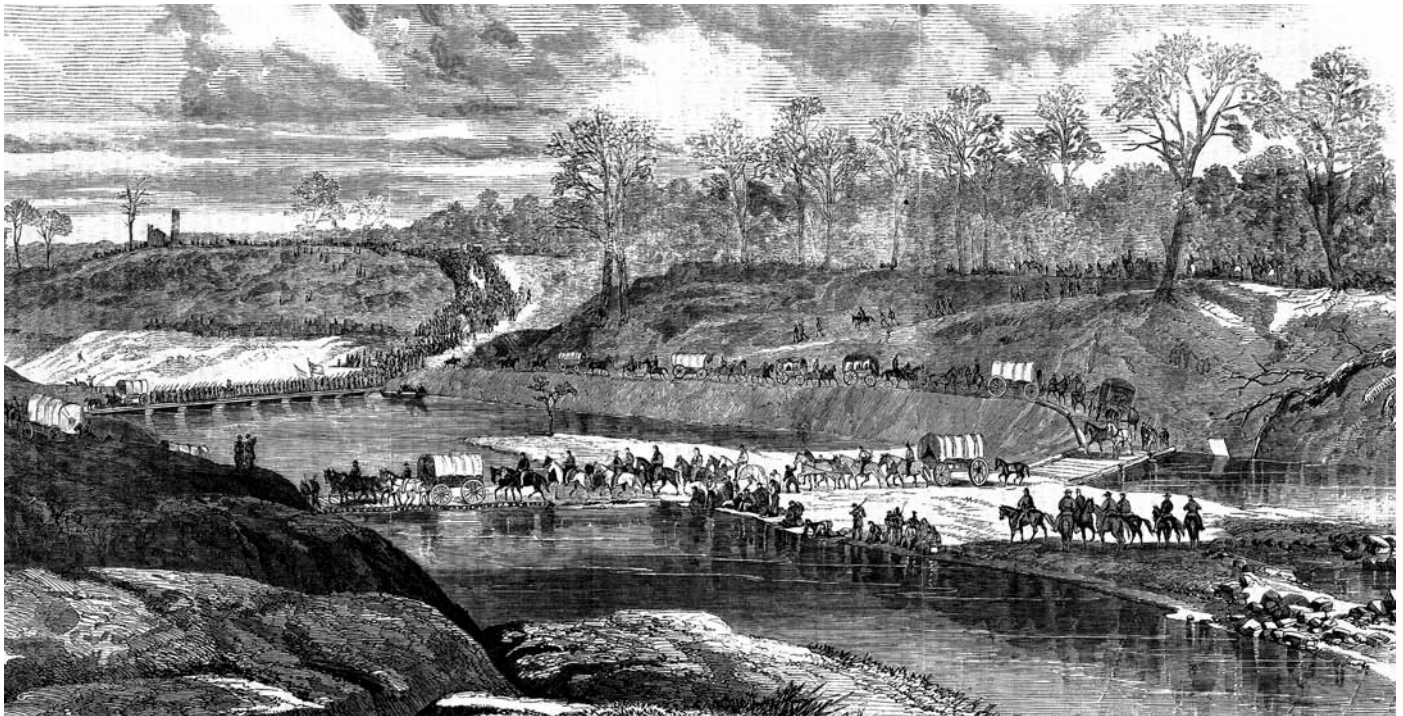
The elaborate earthen works at Fort DeRussy proved surprisingly easy to capture, thanks mainly to hasty removal of all but 300 Confederate defenders.

trict of Louisiana and the son of former President Zachary Taylor. Under Taylor's command in Louisiana were a division of Texas infantry led by Maj. Gen. John Walker and an independent Texas brigade under Camille Polignac, a young French officer fighting for the Confederacy. Smith ordered Taylor to harass the Federal advance, slowing it as much as possible, and instructed Texas cavalry under Brig. Gen. Thomas Green to hurry to Taylor's aid. Smith also ordered Maj. Gen. Sterling Price to move with several divisions against Steele in Arkansas.

On March 12, Union General Smith's

sent *Osage* ahead to Alexandria, and as the bulk of the Union land and naval forces drew up, the city surrendered. Taylor was already gone. Some spoils were taken, and a correspondent for *Harper's Weekly* watched as “our gunboats seized over 4,000 bales of cotton, and vast quantities were still coming in. Two steamers, with 3,000 bales of cotton, were burned by the Rebels to prevent their falling into our hands.”

Despite these early successes, the Union timetable was beginning to unravel. Although Porter and Smith had reached Alexandria at the appointed time, they



Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks's army crosses the Cane River on March 31, 1864. The rugged bayous and alligator-haunted swamplands were a "howling wilderness," said one Massachusetts cavalryman.

Mower as he moved toward Henderson's Hill, more than 20 miles northwest of Alexandria. With a brigade of cavalry, an artillery battery, and six regiments of infantry, Mower struck the drowsing camp of the 2nd Louisiana Cavalry, capturing 250 Confederate horsemen, many of their mounts, and four artillery pieces. Taylor was temporarily blinded by the loss of his cavalry and forced to pull back another 40 miles up the Red River to Natchitoches.

Banks remained concerned about the level of protection afforded by Porter's big guns and refused to move forward without naval support, squandering an opportunity for a more rapid overland advance. While at Alexandria, Banks received an unwelcome message from Grant specifying that Smith's troops were to be returned to Sherman by April 15 if it became apparent that Shreveport would not fall before that date. Realizing that time was becoming as much of an enemy as the terrain or the Confederates, Banks, Smith, and Porter set out once more up the Red River.

Taylor abandoned Natchitoches as the

Federals approached, and on April 3 Union troops reached high ground at Grand Ecore, 50 miles farther upriver. Smith's troops left their waterborne transportation, and Banks found himself at a crossroads in more ways than one. While Porter asserted that a reconnaissance along the river, estimated to take three days, was the best course of action, Banks disagreed. He argued that Shreveport could be reached with four days of hard marching and that Smith was scheduled to return to Sherman's command in less than two weeks.

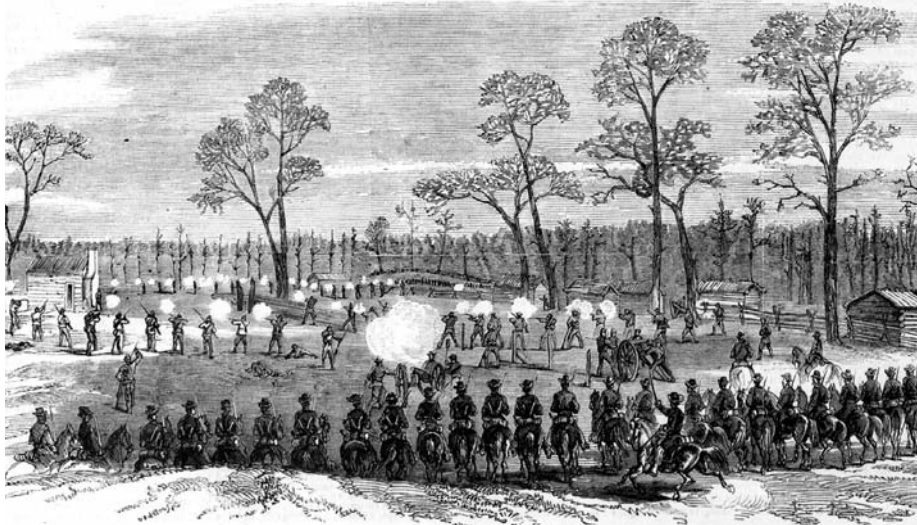
Banks decided to send Porter upriver to Springfield Landing, just below Shreveport, along with 2,300 men to provide some security against Confederates who were sure to harass Porter's boats from both sides of the riverbank. Meanwhile, Banks and Smith would march from Grand Ecore toward their objective on the Shreveport-Natchitoches Stagecoach Road. There were no reliable maps of the area at hand, but Banks accepted the risk of his troops marching away from the Red River and the protection of Porter's guns.

Banks soon became painfully aware that the Stagecoach Road was extremely narrow—in some areas little more than a dirt path. The countryside was increasingly

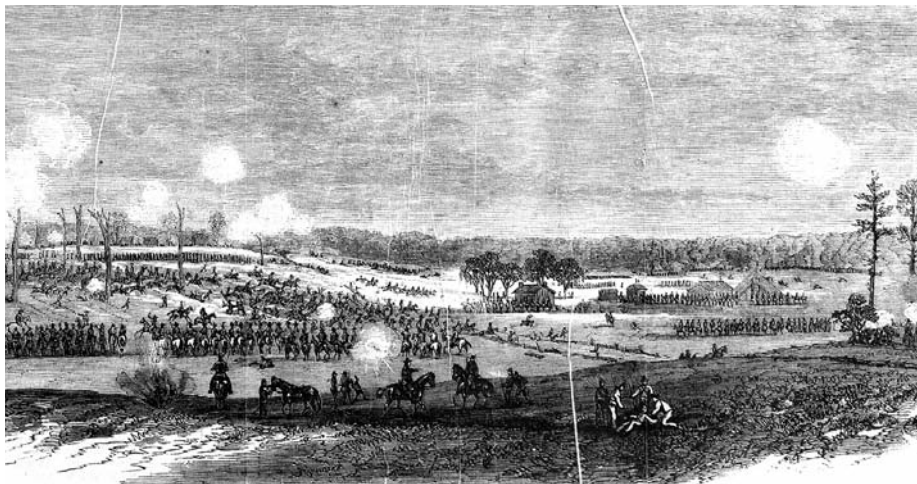
inhospitable, with thickets and brambles interrupted by ditches and ravines. One Massachusetts cavalryman called it a "howling wilderness." Nevertheless, on April 6 Banks set out, his men turning away from the river. The column stretched more than 20 miles with troops, horses, artillery pieces, and roughly 1,000 wagons streaming westward toward Los Adaes, where Brig. Gen. Albert L. Lee's cavalry screen, 4,000 inexperienced horsemen who were recently converted from infantry, turned north onto the Stagecoach Road. Banks hoped to rendezvous with Porter at Springfield Landing on Loggy Bayou on April 10.

Compounding the problems of rough terrain and poor roads, the Union force marched in an ill-advised sequence. Behind Lee's cavalry came 300 heavily laden wagons, at times slowing the pace to little more than a crawl. Behind the wagons came more than three divisions of foot soldiers, then another 700 wagons. Smith's troops, the most experienced of the infantrymen, brought up the rear of the column. When Lee proposed that the infantry be allowed to pass around the wagons where it might support his cavalry, his request was denied.

Lee broke camp at Pleasant Hill on the



ABOVE: Brigadier General Albert Lee's untested cavalry withstood a surprise Confederate attack at Wilson's Farm on April 7. **BELOW:** Outnumbered 2-to-1, Maj. Gen. Richard Taylor put up a strong defense at the Battle of Sabine Crossroads near Mansfield on April 8.



morning of April 7. Just three miles into the day's advance, his troopers were struck hard by four regiments of Green's Texas cavalry at Wilson's Farm. When Federal reinforcements arrived, the attackers melted away. Before dusk, another Rebel cavalry charge took place and was repulsed at Carroll's Mill. The message was clear—Taylor was no longer falling back. His entire army was probably nearby, spoiling for a fight after a 200-mile retreat.

In fact, Taylor's full complement included Green's cavalry, Walker's Texas division, and a division of Louisiana troops under the command of the grandly named Brig. Gen. Jean Jacques Alexandre Alfred Mouton, nearly 9,000 men altogether. At Keatchie, 20 miles away, were 4,400 more

Confederate soldiers, two divisions of Sterling Price's command, Arkansas and Missouri troops led by Brig. Gens. Thomas Churchill and Mosby Parsons. Taylor was still outnumbered 2-to-1, but he was determined to fight at Sabine Crossroads, three miles southeast of the town of Mansfield. The Confederate line was three quarters of a mile long astride the Stagecoach Road. From the concealment of thick woods, an open killing zone 1,200 yards long and 800 yards wide stretched from a point where the road emerged from the tree line.

Early on April 8, Lee was again on the move. Along the crest of a ridge to his front, he spotted Confederate cavalry, which hastily retired after he gave orders to engage. Union horsemen galloped after

the enemy troopers, and when Lee reached the crest of the ridge he saw Taylor's battle line. When probing attacks against the Confederate left held by Mouton's Louisianans proved fruitless, Lee withdrew, deployed his two accompanying artillery batteries, and requested reinforcements.

Major General William B. Franklin, commander of XIX Corps, ordered Brig. Gen. Thomas Ransom to move his XIII Corps forward and sent along an additional infantry brigade to assist. Ransom, however, was restricted by Lee's wagon train and struggled to reach the dismounted Union cavalrymen. By 3:30 PM, approximately 4,800 Union troops were on the field, including two brigades of Colonel William Landram's 4th Division.

Taylor had chosen his ground well to invite a Union attack. Although he enjoyed a temporary numerical superiority he waited several hours for one to materialize. At 4 PM, after Landram had completed his final troop dispositions, Taylor could wait no longer. He ordered his own assault. Mouton's men charged into the open ground and assailed Landram's line amid a storm of rifle and cannon fire. The Confederates fell back, regrouped, and came on again. Conspicuously gallant, Mouton was one of several Confederate officers who rode on horseback during the attacks. He was also among 11 of his command's 14 officers killed in the span of 20 minutes. The division took 700 casualties in half an hour of fighting, losing one-third of its men.

Polignac assumed command of Mouton's ravaged division and Taylor sent elements of Green's dismounted cavalry against Landram's exposed right flank while Walker's Texans and more of Green's dismounted troopers struck Landram's left. As both Union flanks began to buckle, Landram realized he was in danger of being surrounded. Walker's soldiers captured three Union artillery pieces and turned them on their former owners, who began to withdraw in disorder. In a flash, the retreat became a confused stampede of soldiers and horses running for the rear. Lee later lamented, "In 20 minutes our line was just

crumbling everywhere and falling back.”

Half a mile behind their first line, the fleeing Union soldiers ran into a defensive cordon of 1,300 men from the 3rd Division under Brig. Gen. Robert Cameron. They filtered through, and Cameron managed to stand for about an hour before his stopgap line ruptured. Hundreds of Union soldiers were then streaming away from the fight, running headlong into Lee’s wagons and leaving them behind to fall into the hands of Taylor’s onrushing Rebels.

Two miles beyond the unfolding debacle, the 1st Division of XIX Corps was rapidly marching toward the sound of the guns. Its commander, Brig. Gen. William Emory, a combat veteran and West Point graduate, was unfazed by the mob running past him. Emory formed his men in a line at Pleasant Grove along a ridge behind a small stream known as Chapman’s Bayou. Taylor’s Confederates were disorganized and breathless by the time they reached Emory’s line, and their uncoordinated attacks were easily repulsed. After less than 30 minutes the Rebel onslaught was stopped.

Darkness fell and Banks, who had shown considerable valor as he tried to gain control of his retreating troops, counted the cost. The Union force had lost 2,200 soldiers killed or wounded, more than 200 wagons, and 20 artillery pieces. Still, Banks

initially wanted to hold his ground and bring up Smith’s veterans to renew the battle the next day. His lieutenants, however, advised an organized withdrawal to Pleasant Hill, where Banks could find Smith with relative ease. The distance was about 14 miles, and by the following morning the Union position around the town was consolidated.

While Banks withdrew, the Confederates happily pillaged the abandoned Union wagons, and by dawn Taylor realized that the enemy had pulled back. Quickly he put Green’s cavalry on the road toward Pleasant Hill, with Churchill and Parsons marching hard behind them. Polignac led Mouton’s former command of Louisianans, and Walker’s Texans, flush with victory, followed.

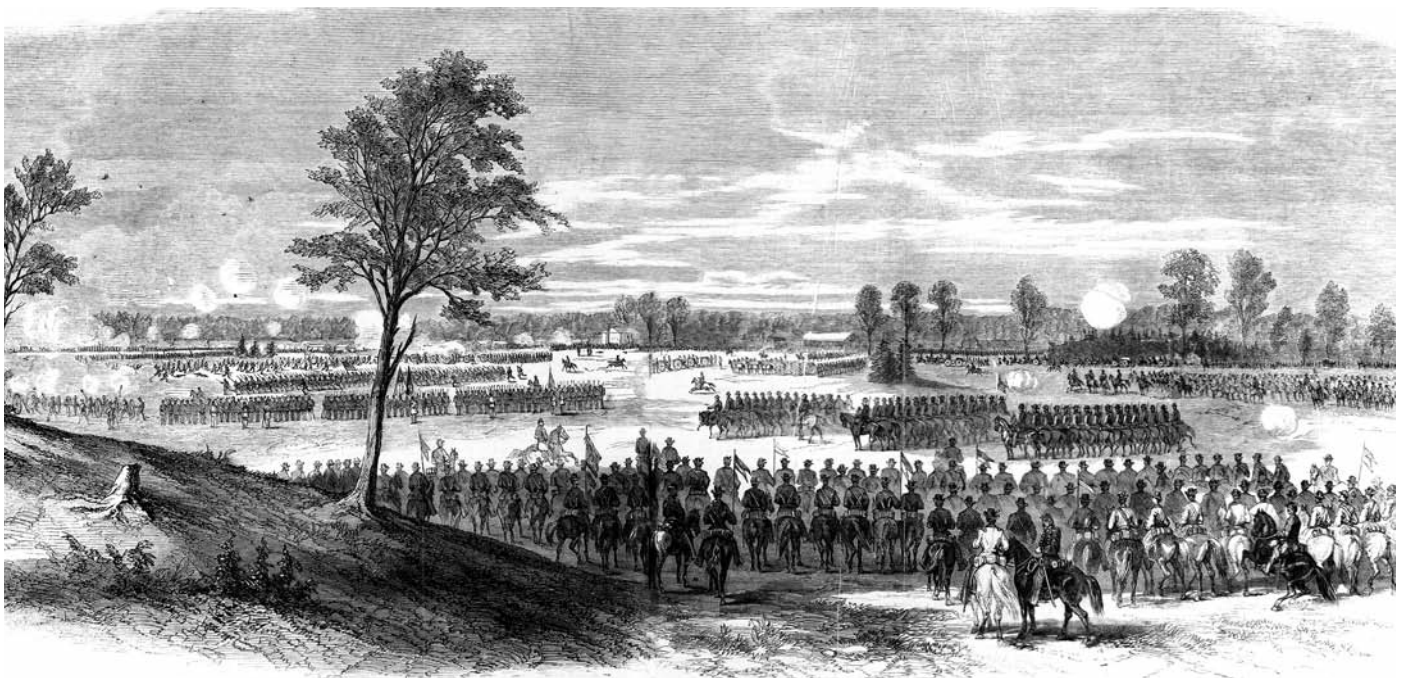
The Confederates wasted little time, spurred on by Taylor’s belief that he was fighting only the now-battered XIX Corps. By 9 AM, Green’s horsemen were within a mile of Pleasant Hill, and from a plateau outside the town they could see Banks and Smith in line between two hills that guarded their flanks with soggy marshland to their front. The Confederate infantry began filtering into the area, tired and parched with thirst. The Missouri and Arkansas soldiers had tramped nearly 50 miles in two days.

While Taylor surveyed the situation, he allowed the winded infantrymen to rest for a couple of hours. At midday, an artillery duel erupted between a dozen Confederate howitzers, many of them captured during fighting in New Mexico the previous year, and a Union battery occupying one of the hills to Taylor’s left. The Rebel fusillade eventually drove the New York battery from its position, and the Confederate commander ordered another attack.

Elements of Churchill’s division moved against the Union left while the big guns were still dueling, charging into a brigade from Emory’s division led by Colonel Lewis Benedict. Momentarily the Union line held, but Churchill managed to slip to the right and outflank Benedict, who was shot dead in the melee. The defense fell apart, and the retreating Union soldiers ran for the dozen or so buildings in the town of Pleasant Hill. Banks’s center was now vulnerable, and Walker, Polignac, and Green, his horsemen again fighting as infantry, dashed into the gap.

Shortly after Churchill attacked, Green ordered elements of his cavalry to charge across the muddy slough and slash into the

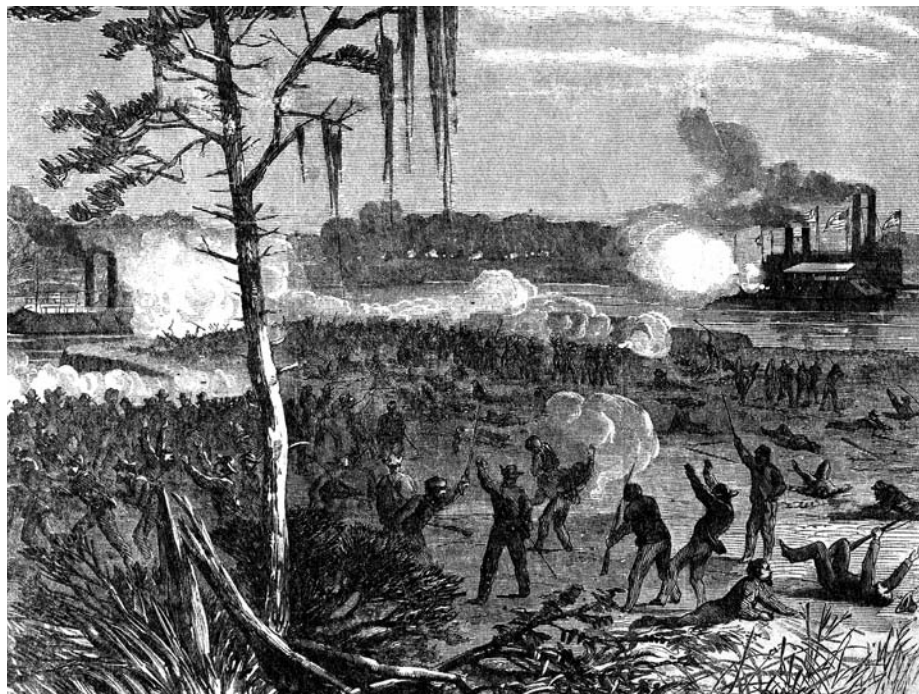
Union forces attack in improbable good order during the Battle of Pleasant Hill on April 9. The Federals won a tactical victory, but panicky commanders fumbled away their advantage.



center of the Union line. The charge soon came to grief as the Rebel riders were caught by flanking fire from an adjacent wooded area. Meanwhile, the rapidly deteriorating situation on his left brought Banks to the brink of disaster. Churchill's troops were nearly into the town itself and threatened his rear. Whooping as they continued to charge, the Rebels took little notice of the long blue line of Smith's veterans on their right. At an order, they rose up and delivered a punishing volley, followed by a charge that pushed Churchill's surprised troops back into Walker's men,

and another 1,000 had been lost at Sabine Crossroads the previous day. Although Banks had suffered nearly 1,400 casualties on April 8 and lost nearly 4,000 men in the two battles, the Union had greater numbers available to renew the fight.

As the clock reached midnight, Kirby Smith arrived from Shreveport. A bit unnerved by the situation, he later reported, "Our repulse was so complete and our command was so disorganized that had Banks followed up his success vigorously he would have met but feeble opposition to his advance on Shreveport."



Porter's ships exchange fire with Confederate defenders lying in wait on the banks of the Red River. Snipers took a heavy toll on the Union gunboats.

who were battling in the center of the Union position. The resulting combat was brutal, hand-to-hand at times, but as daylight began to fade Rebel resolve ebbed as well. Some of the weary Confederates fled in disarray.

Taylor took tactical control and ordered the bulk of his command to retire to the vicinity of a small stream six miles to the rear. Other soldiers stayed on the battlefield throughout the night, collapsing where they stood and finding fitful sleep. Taylor had lost more than 1,600 killed, wounded, or captured during the momentous day,

Banks held another council of war, and Andrew Jackson Smith was virtually alone among the Union officers favoring a stand and renewal of battle the next day. He believed that a major victory had been won in spite of the fact that he never agreed with Banks's troop dispositions or his conduct of the battle once the shooting began. Smith considered Banks incompetent and even suggested to General Franklin that the Banks be arrested.

In a show of "military democracy," Banks allowed the majority to rule and subsequently ordered a withdrawal. Three

days later, the last Union soldier had trudged back to Grand Ecore. Shamefully, Banks failed to gather his dead and left his wounded on the field at Pleasant Hill. He threw up earthworks, sent a message to Porter asking for the fleet to join him with much-needed supplies, and waited.

Taylor and Kirby Smith had been at odds since the beginning of the prolonged defense of northern Louisiana. Taylor believed Smith had withheld the vital reinforcements from Price's command for too long. Now he was convinced that with Banks separated from Porter's gunboats and his supplies running low, he could bag both the Union Army and Navy contingents if his superior would allow him to pursue Banks to Grand Ecore. Kirby Smith, however, would have none of it. Despite the fact that the tactical draw at Pleasant Hill had become a strategic victory for the Confederacy with Banks's retreat, Smith ordered the divisions of Walker, Churchill, and Parsons to return to Sterling Price to counter Steele's Union forces moving from Arkansas.

Taylor was furious. Left with only about 5,000 troops, comprised largely of Green's cavalry and Polignac's depleted division, the best he could do was slow Banks down should the Union commander continue to fall back from the Red River country or resume the offensive.

Meanwhile, Porter reached Loggy Bayou unmolested but facing the hulk of the scuttled steamer that Smith had set across the Red River above the landing. When word of Banks's defeat at Sabine Crossroads and his retreat from Pleasant Hill reached the admiral, Porter became alarmed. Without Banks and his infantry, the Union flotilla was in danger of being cut off and captured in the confines of the river. Porter ordered his fleet to retire from Loggy Bayou. Navigation was nearly impossible in the shallow waters, and the need for speed caused several unfortunate incidents. Confederate snipers took potshots at anyone who moved on the deck of a Federal gunboat, and Porter fretted while his flagship pulled the ironclad *Chillicothe* free after it had run up on a submerged log. The big gunboat

Lexington and the smaller warship *Rob Roy* collided, and the transport *Emerald* ran aground on the sandy riverbank.

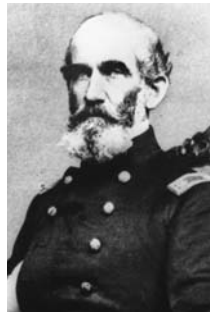
At Blair's Landing, 45 miles up the river from Grand Ecore, a Confederate battery of four guns and 2,500 cavalymen under the dashing Texas horseman Thomas Green lay in wait for Porter, hoping to bag the entire flotilla. On April 12, Green's artillery and rifles opened fire on the transport *Hastings*, tied to the shore while undergoing repairs to her damaged wheel. The captain of *Hastings* cast off to escape the heavy enemy fire, and *Osage*, dispatched to assist the transport, ran aground. Once again, Porter was in the thick of the action as his flagship *Blackhawk* jerked the monitor free.

Confederate shells pounded the transports *Alice Vivian*, *Emerald*, and *Clara Bell*, while *Lexington*, *Rob Roy*, and *Osage* fired their heavy guns in a heated exchange with the Rebel cannons. The fight lasted two harrowing hours before the Confederates were compelled to retire. When it was over Porter ruefully wrote, "The woodwork of the *Blackhawk* and *Osage* was so pitted with bullet holes that it is no exaggeration to say that one could not place the hand anywhere without covering a shot mark."

The Confederates too were not unscathed, losing seven men, including one towering presence, the gallant Green, who had been decapitated by a Union shell. Taylor approvingly noted, "His death was a public calamity and mourned as such by the people of Texas and Louisiana."

When the last of Porter's flotilla reached Grand Ecore on April 15, one New York infantryman observed, "The sides of some of the transports are half shot away, and their smokestacks look like huge pepper boxes." Miraculously, although battered, no Union ships had been lost during the arduous trek.

To the north, Steele's expedition from Little Rock had gotten off at a glacial pace, departing on March 23, a full 10 days after Grant had ordered the advance to commence. Harried by Confederate cavalry, Steele constantly worried about supplies as he crossed country that was devoid of



Opposing generals in the Red River campaign included, clockwise from top left, Alfred Mouton, Richard Taylor, Joseph Mower, Frederick Steele, Andrew Smith, and Albert Lee.

potential food and water. A rendezvous with a force of 5,000 troops from the Army of the Frontier under Brig. Gen. John M. Thayer marching from Fort Smith, Arkansas, did not materialize until several days after the appointed time. When the two forces finally did unite, supplies were scarce, and Steele was forced to detour through heavy rain and over roads that turned to rivers to the town of Camden, Arkansas, on the Ouachita River.

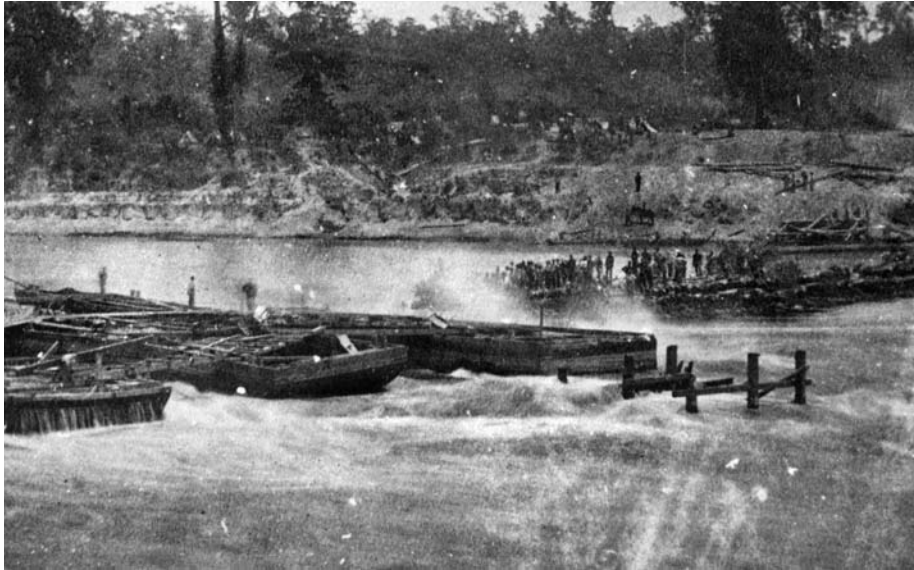
Steele and Thayer slogged into Camden on April 16 and promptly sent out foraging parties to fill nearly 200 wagons with much-needed provisions. As they returned to Camden two days later, the Federals were overwhelmed by marauding Rebel cavalry under Brig. Gens. John Marmaduke and Samuel Maxey. Some of

Maxey's troopers were Choctaw Indians, and the hapless Union foragers included several African American soldiers from Thayer's 1st Kansas Regiment. When the one-sided fight was over, every single wagon was put to the torch. Dead and wounded Union soldiers lay scattered about. Later, the Confederates were accused of murdering the black troops while the Choctaws were denounced for allegedly scalping some of their victims.

Steele, suffering from indecision, had been idle at Camden for a week when he discovered the infantry divisions of Churchill, Parsons, and Walker drawing near Camden and received the distressing news of Banks's defeat at Sabine Crossroads. On April 25, Steele suffered another stunning blow when 1,600 troops escorting a train of supply wagons to Pine Bluff were set upon by 2,500 Rebel cavalymen. A staggering 1,300 Union soldiers were killed, wounded, or captured in the day-long battle at Marks' Mill.

Steele concluded that his position at Camden was hopeless and that continuing south toward Banks was probably a journey toward further disaster. He ordered a general retirement to Little Rock. The retreating Federals fought off harassing Rebel cavalry and marched to Jenkins Ferry on the Saline River. Heavy rains slowed the effort to cross the river, and the next morning Kirby Smith ordered Churchill's men to assault a heavily defended line of breastworks not far from the banks of the Saline. The ill-advised attack cost Smith about 1,000 killed or wounded, while Steele suffered another 700 casualties. Three days after the Battle of Jenkins Ferry, Steele's tattered ranks trudged back into Little Rock, their harrowing ordeal having accomplished nothing.

After their rendezvous at Grand Ecore, Porter and Banks remained at odds. Banks considered a renewal of the drive on Shreveport, but he finally realized that the prospects for success were virtually nil. The Red River was becoming shallower by the hour, and Sherman was impatiently demanding the return of his troops. Porter



ABOVE: Union workers waded into the water to complete an improvised dam across the Red River. The dams raised the water level high enough to allow Porter's ships to retreat. **RIGHT:** A soldier from the 120th Ohio Regiment in happier days. Some 300 soldiers from the regiment were captured on board the *City Belle*. **OPPOSITE:** Destruction of the U.S. transport *John Warner* by Confederate batteries on May 4. The Union boats were sitting ducks in the shallow water.



wanted to extricate his flotilla from the confines of the Red River, and Banks knew that he could not proceed northward again without the support of the gunboats. On April 19, the retreat to Alexandria began. Smith's Army of the Tennessee troops brought up the rear of the Federal column, burning Confederate warehouses full of supplies and plundering homes and businesses along the route.

Taylor was as aggressive as his limited resources allowed, sending cavalry ahead of Banks to harry the enemy and setting a trap at Monett's Ferry on the Cane River. Green's cavalry, now under the command of Brig. Gen. John A. Wharton, pressed the Union rear, and Taylor ordered his infantry to march toward flanking positions on both the left and right of Banks's command.

As Emory's division, leading the Federal withdrawal, reached a steep embankment along the river, his soldiers ran into dismounted Rebel cavalry blocking their line of march. Banks sent some of Emory's troops on a two-mile march to the right, where they were forced to wade across the shallow river as alligators slithered into the brackish water, then countermarch to strike the flank of the entrenched Confederate horsemen.

The Confederate commander, Brig. Gen. Hamilton Bee, was duped into believing that he was on the verge of being flanked and ordered his 2,000 troops to withdraw. Bee's blunder allowed Banks to extricate himself from the jaws of Taylor's trap and proceed to Alexandria. Furious at the failure, Taylor continued his relentless pursuit and drew his troops close to the city. Banks ordered the preparation of two defensive lines and waited for word of Porter's progress.

The troubles for the naval flotilla were far from over. Just below Grand Ecore, the gunboat *Eastport* hit a Confederate mine and sank in shallow water. Sailors worked for hours manning steam pumps and patching the hull with timbers, eventually refloating the vessel. *Eastport's* guns were removed to lighten its load and placed aboard a raft that was towed by the tinclad *Cricket*, which took up a rearguard position. *Eastport* was taken under tow by the transport *Champion No. 5*, but the following evening the hapless gunboat ran aground again. Another day was lost as sailors worked to free the warship. Their satisfaction was short-lived. Just two miles farther downstream, *Eastport* stuck fast on a snare of logs and rocks.

While the tinclad *Fort Hindman* labored in vain to free *Eastport*, Rebel sharpshooters peppered the decks of both ships. Finally, Porter faced the inevitable. *Eastport* would never complete the journey down the unforgiving Red River. While the rest of the flotilla pressed on to Alexandria, the admiral ordered eight barrels of gunpowder set beneath each casemate to blow the ship to pieces rather than allow her to fall into enemy hands. The shattering explosion nearly swamped the launch Porter was aboard as he observed the disheartening proceedings.

With his flag now aboard *Cricket*, Porter sailed on with only *Fort Hindman* and another tinclad, *Juliet*, and the transports *Champion No. 3* and *Champion No. 5*. They traveled 15 miles and ran a gauntlet of enemy cannons and rifle fire from 200 Rebel infantrymen and four guns downstream. Artillery shells raked the vessels, and 48 sailors aboard *Cricket*, over half its crew, were killed or wounded. Each of the ships took shell hits and casualties. One shell ruptured the boiler aboard *Champion No. 3*, scalding to death 100 newly freed slaves who had come aboard from surrounding plantations.

On the morning of April 27, as the rid-

dled warships tried to get underway again, the Rebel guns opened up once more, pounding *Juliet* and *Fort Hindman*. *Champion No. 5* was abandoned, and *Champion No. 3* was thoroughly wrecked. *Osage* came up to render assistance, and *Fort Hindman* and *Juliet* managed to survive.

When Porter finally reached Alexandria, he was further dismayed to learn that the Red River had fallen to a depth of just over three feet and that the water level was continuing to drop. After sending the shallow draft gunboats below the town, Porter faced the real prospect that his deep-draft ironclads, requiring seven feet of water for passage, would have to be destroyed.

Just when it appeared that Porter might have to abandon or set fire to the largest warships in his fleet, an unlikely source presented a solution to the admiral's predicament. Lt. Col. Joseph Bailey, an engineer from Wisconsin serving on Franklin's staff, suggested that his troops could build dams along the course of the Red River, sufficiently raising the water level to allow the deep-draft vessels to pass. Porter was willing to try anything. He blurted, "If damming the river could do any good we should have been out of this long ago!"

Bailey set 3,000 men, many of them loggers from New York and Maine, to the task

of dam building, and the water level quickly rose, allowing the Union ships to traverse the shallow rapids and shoals. While the dams were being constructed, the Confederates continued to batter Porter's vessels, setting the transport *Emma* on fire and capturing *City Belle* and the 300 soldiers from the 120th Ohio Regiment who were unluckily on board at the time.

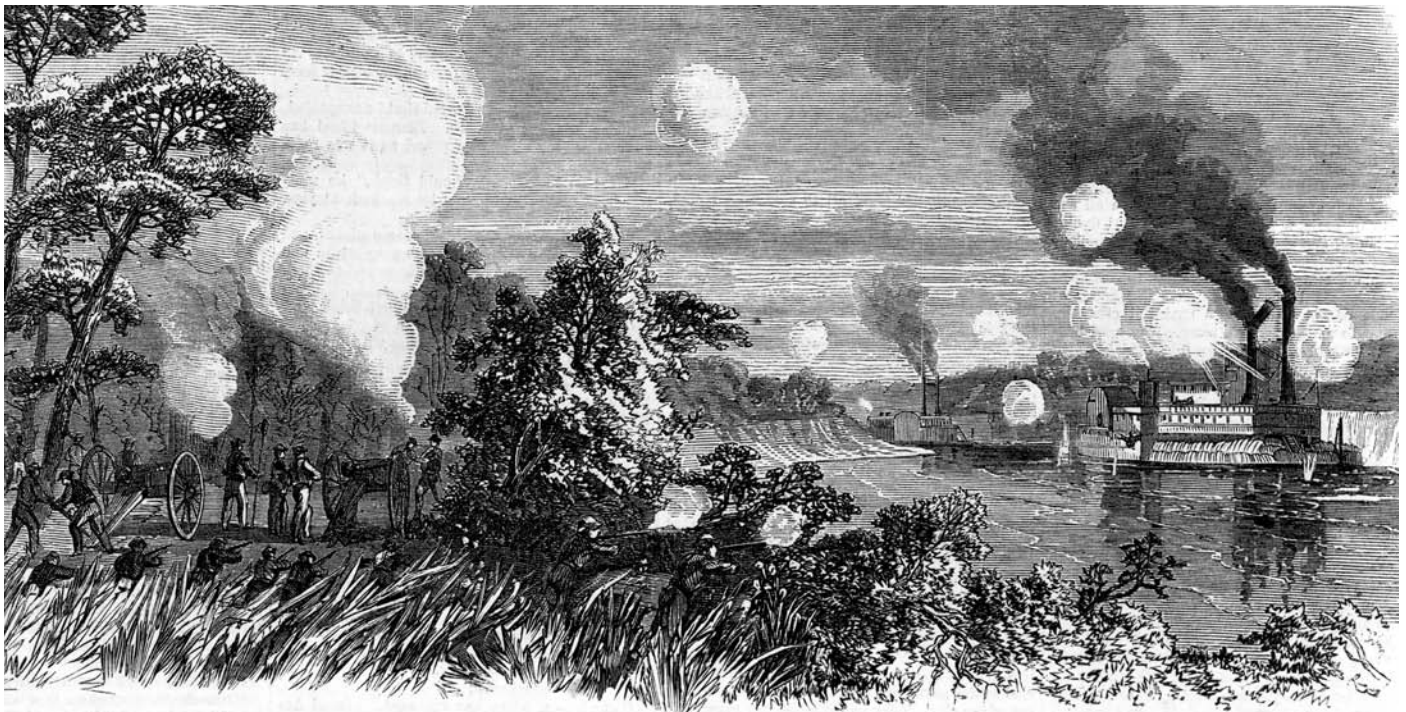
By mid-May, Porter was on the move toward Alexandria, and Banks had already pulled out of the city. Taylor grew more frustrated with each passing day. His army was too small to halt the Union retreat. Nevertheless, he was determined to harass Banks to the bitter end. At the town of Mansura on May 16, two lines of battle faced one another, and another artillery duel ensued. When Banks ordered Smith's battle-hardened veterans to attack, Taylor withdrew. Two days later at Yellow Bayou, Mower proved his worth as a field commander once again as his rear guard turned on the pursuing Rebels and fought them to a standstill. Taylor had shot his bolt. Yellow Bayou was the last Confederate attempt to interfere with the Union retirement.

While Mower bought time, the vanguard of Banks's dispirited, depleted, and roughly handled army reached Simsport on the Atchafalaya River. Bailey solved another

problem that allowed the Union force to complete its withdrawal to the relative safety of the river's far bank. He recommended that Porter's transports be lashed together to create a bridge across the waterway. Men and wagons were soon safely on the other side. When Mower crossed on May 20, the disastrous Red River campaign was over—and with it any aspirations Nathaniel Banks may have had for the White House. Adding to his misery, Banks was met at Simsport by Maj. Gen. Edward R.S. Canby, his new boss, whom Lincoln had recently installed as the commander of the new Military Division of West Mississippi.

The abortive Red River campaign had cost the Union Army 8,000 casualties, 3,700 horses, nine vessels, and 57 artillery pieces. Shreveport remained in Confederate hands, and an upcoming offensive against the port of Mobile was delayed for 10 months. Sherman had to initiate his Atlanta campaign without Smith's veterans.

Porter's reputation had suffered as well. After reaching the safety of the Mississippi River, he penned a classic line of understatement: "I am clear of my troubles, and my fleet is safe out in the broad Mississippi. I have had a hard and anxious time of it." To say the least. □



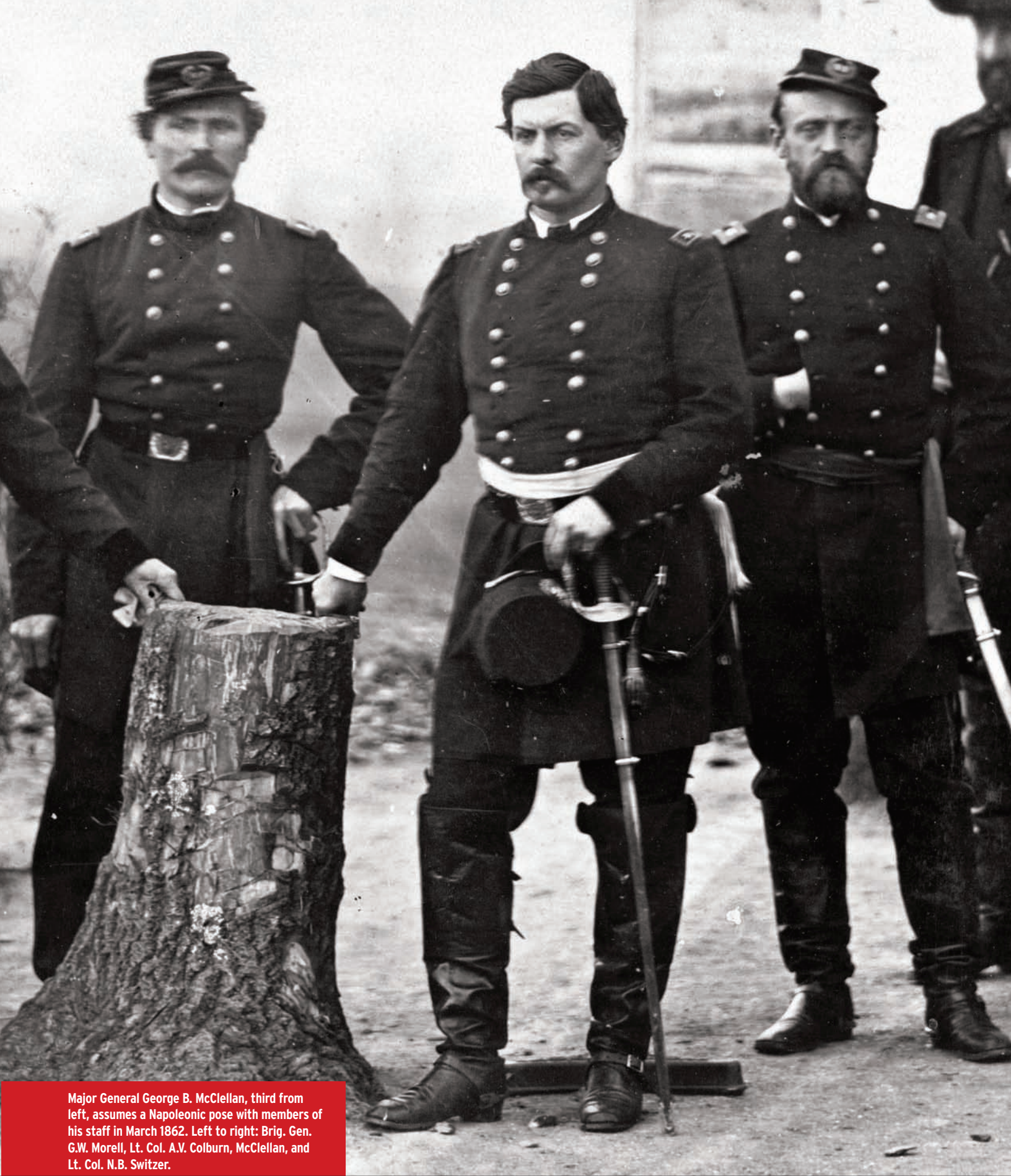
McClellan's UNEXPLOITED VICTORY

On June 26, 1862, Robert E. Lee launched the first of what would become known as the Seven Days Battles, attacking Maj. Gen. George McClellan's exposed right flank at Mechanicsville. Things did not go as planned. **By John Walker**

After an almost uninterrupted, four-month-long string of Union successes beginning in early 1862, followed by the advance of a 100,000-man enemy army to the eastern outskirts of its capital at Richmond, Virginia, the Confederacy suddenly found itself in a life-or-death struggle for its very survival. By mid-June, Maj. Gen. George McClellan had deployed five Union infantry corps within six miles of the city, one north of the rain-swollen Chickahominy River and four on the south side, backed by an imposing array of big guns.

On the Confederate side, General Robert E. Lee, benefitting from McClellan's sluggish advance up the Peninsula between the York and James Rivers, had in a matter of weeks managed to concentrate his outnumbered forces and improve the defenses around the city. Convinced that he couldn't win a war of attrition or mount a successful defense of Richmond fighting from behind breastworks, the audacious Lee devised an elaborate plan: he would shatter the Union right flank north of the Chickahominy, threaten the Army of the Potomac's line of supply—the Richmond and York River Railroad running back to White House





Major General George B. McClellan, third from left, assumes a Napoleonic pose with members of his staff in March 1862. Left to right: Brig. Gen. G.W. Morell, Lt. Col. A.V. Colburn, McClellan, and Lt. Col. N.B. Switzer.



Landing on the Pamunkey River—and force McClellan to evacuate his works east of the city to defend his vital supply line.

Although Lee had performed superbly in the Mexican War—he was brevetted three times and deemed by Commander-in-Chief Winfield Scott to be the “best soldier he had ever seen in the field”—Lee had yet to command a large army in the field. He had assumed his current command only days earlier, after General Joseph E. Johnston was wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines. Lee had inherited a loose-knit army composed of Johnston’s First Manassas veterans, the original Peninsula defensive force commanded by Maj. Gen. John Magruder, and a mixture of untested reinforcements mostly from Georgia, Virginia, and the Carolinas, which he named the Army of Northern Virginia. With his new forces, Lee moved to drive the huge Union juggernaut—the largest army ever assembled on the North American continent to that point—from in front of the Confederate capital.

After the Union defeat at the First Battle of Bull Run (or First Manassas, as it was known in the South), President Abraham Lincoln summoned McClellan east to take

command of the Army of the Potomac. A talented, energetic officer only 34 years of age, McClellan initially enjoyed the adulation of the press and politicians who dubbed him “the young Napoleon.” He first experienced warfare in 1847 during Scott’s siege of Vera Cruz during the Mexican War. In 1855 McClellan was a member of a military commission sent to Europe by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis to study military developments there and observe firsthand the fighting in the Crimea. There he gained further insights into the logistics of transporting allied forces by sea, a portent of his amphibious movement during the Peninsula campaign of 1862. After serving under incompetent political generals and witnessing the relief of his mentor, General Scott, by President James K. Polk in 1848, McClellan had developed a thorough contempt for civilian control and management of wars.

After resigning his commission in 1857 and becoming superintendent of two Midwestern railroads, McClellan first displayed the extraordinary organizational skills that eventually led to a commission to organize Ohio regiments for the Union when the Civil War erupted in 1861. In June and July

of that year, McClellan led a small army to two modest victories that secured control of much of the region that soon became the Union state of West Virginia, successes that brought the call to Washington, D.C., five days after the Bull Run disaster. Few observers were aware that McClellan had been conspicuously absent from the field during much of the fighting in western Virginia, preferring instead to allow subordinates to make crucial battlefield decisions. Nevertheless, a skilled and meticulous organizer, McClellan molded the Army of the Potomac into a huge, well-disciplined fighting force, and when he finally led it on campaign, he had his soldiers’ unquestioned loyalty and affection.

As the autumn days slipped by and the Army of the Potomac did nothing to drive off Confederate outposts 25 miles from Washington, the honeymoon ended and McClellan’s shortcomings began to manifest themselves. He consistently overestimated the strength of enemy forces confronting him, using these flawed figures as a reason for inaction, and his lethargy, arrogance, and political convictions injected a poison into relations between the Lincoln administration and the army

that persisted for almost three years. McClellan made no secret of his profound contempt for abolitionists, radical Republicans, and newspapermen who began criticizing his inactivity in the fall of 1861. Privately, he expressed his disdain for Lincoln.

Most Northerners were unaware of the growing distrust between the army commander and the administration when McClellan landed on the Peninsula and began his advance in April 1862. His amphibious turning movement gained him the strategic initiative and an almost 4-to-1 advantage over his foe at that point, yet McClellan almost immediately ceased offensive operations. Instead of smashing through thinly manned Confederate defenses at Yorktown, he instead conducted a month-long siege of the city and spent much of his time sending numerous telegrams to the War Department, complaining about his dire need for more men and matériel, wet roads, and an enemy he now numbered at 200,000 men.

Lee, meanwhile, was acting with his customary dispatch, trading space for time, improving Richmond's defenses, concentrating his forces by recalling Maj. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson and his men back to Richmond from the Shenandoah Valley, and sending Brig. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart on a cavalry reconnaissance on June 12 to locate McClellan's right flank. Stuart found the enemy flank hanging in the air, not anchored on any natural barriers such as water or hills. Lee had earlier sent three full brigades to beef up Jackson's Valley army for a possible new offensive toward Washington, but when Jackson claimed he would need even more men to mount such an offensive and hold any captured ground, Lee decided instead to bring the entire 24,000-man force back to Richmond.

After Seven Pines, McClellan sat passively on the outskirts of Richmond for almost a month, but by mid-June he had finally advanced his 94,000 effectives to the city's gates. Brig. Gen. Fitz John Porter's V Corps, 27,000 strong, was positioned north of the Chickahominy holding high ground overlooking the small hamlet

of Mechanicsville, while those of Brig. Gens. Samuel Heintzelman, Erasmus Keyes, Edwin Sumner, and William Franklin, numbering 67,000 men in all, remained south of the river. Believing his army outnumbered, McClellan's objective now was to advance just a bit farther west, capture Old Tavern on the Nine Mile Road, entrench, and begin a classic siege. When Richmond fell, the war would be won. McClellan's intelligence chief, Allan Pinkerton, was a competent railroad detective but an abysmal intelligence officer; in June 1862 he estimated that the Confederates in and around Richmond numbered at least 180,000—and McClellan believed him.

To get approval to carry out his bold but risky counteroffensive, Lee convinced Confederate President Jefferson Davis that McClellan would use his vast force to fight

ernment was preparing to flee Richmond if necessary—Lee believed the stakes were high enough to warrant the gamble.

Central to Lee's plan of operations was maneuver; Jackson would furtively return from the Valley (Lee sent orders for him to do that on June 16) and advance southeasterly around the reported enemy right flank near the headwaters of Beaver Dam Creek, his left protected by Stuart's 2,000 troopers. Upon Jackson's arrival in the area, he would still be at least seven miles from Lee's main force. Therefore, early in the morning on June 26, Brig. Gen. Lawrence Branch's brigade of Maj. Gen. Ambrose Powell Hill's division moved up the Chickahominy to the river crossing at Half Sink, where he would establish contact with Jackson upon the latter's arrival at the Brook Turnpike. Then, after notifying Hill of Jackson's presence, Branch



ABOVE: Mechanicsville, Virginia, photographed in 1862, was a small hamlet on the high ground overlooking the Chickahominy River. Brig. Gen. Fitz John Porter's 27,000-man V Corps was stationed there. **OPPOSITE:** A lone Union sentry guards a temporary wooden bridge built by industrious engineers over the Chickahominy River. Army tents are in the distance.

a "war of outposts," moving inexorably from position to position while his big siege guns pounded Richmond into rubble. Lee outlined an intricate scheme that would send three-quarters of his army, under cover of darkness, north of the river, leaving 23,000 defenders to repulse McClellan's main force south of the river should he discover what Lee was up to and mount an attack on the capital. Considering the direness of the situation—the gov-

would lead his brigade down the river on a parallel route with Jackson's men, brushing aside any threat to Jackson's right. When Hill was certain that Branch and Jackson were on the move, he would lead his other five brigades, 11,000 strong, across the Chickahominy at Meadow Bridge, pivot, and drive eastward toward Mechanicsville, two miles away.

After Hill's troops moved through that city, the Mechanicsville Bridge would be

uncovered, allowing the divisions of Maj. Gens. James Longstreet and Daniel Harvey Hill (who would be waiting with Lee at the Mechanicsville Bridge just south of the Chickahominy) to cross and fall in behind the surging Confederate tide, Longstreet backing up Jackson and D.H. Hill supporting A.P. Hill. With vast enemy columns advancing on his front, flank, and rear, Porter would be forced to abandon his position to avoid encirclement and annihilation. Implicit in Lee's scheme was that no major confrontation take place until Union forces east of Beaver Dam Creek had been flushed from their positions. After the carnage at Seven Pines, Lee wanted no more assaults against entrenched enemy positions.

There were profound risks inherent in Lee's plan. To begin with, Porter's V Corps occupied a formidably strong defensive position, one that Confederate engineers had scouted weeks earlier and determined to be almost impregnable. Beaver Dam Creek, a tributary of the Chickahominy, was a swampy body of water, waist deep in places, running north-south through a wide, deep ravine a mile east of Mechan-

icsville. Both banks were covered by thick underbrush and trees that Porter's men had fashioned into formidable abatis. On the west side of the creek lay an open plain swept by six Union batteries, 32 guns in all, placed in earthen parapets so as to bracket all potential approaches.

Along with the natural obstacles, McClellan had massive reserves of men available. Five regiments of riflemen of Brig. Gen. John Reynolds's brigade of Brig. Gen. George McCall's 8,000-man Pennsylvania Reserve Division were deployed in a roughly north-south line astride Old Church Road northeast of the village, defending 60-foot-high slopes east of Beaver Dam Creek. On their left, Brig. Gen. Truman Seymour's brigade was dug in astride Cold Harbor Road, manning the high ground north and south of Ellerson's Mill just north of Cold Harbor Road east of the creek. The grist mill's deep pond and mill-race formed natural barriers to any troops advancing on a west-to-east line. Brig. Gen. George Meade's brigade was deployed in reserve to their rear. Porter's other two divisions, those of Brig. Gens. George Morell and George Sykes, almost

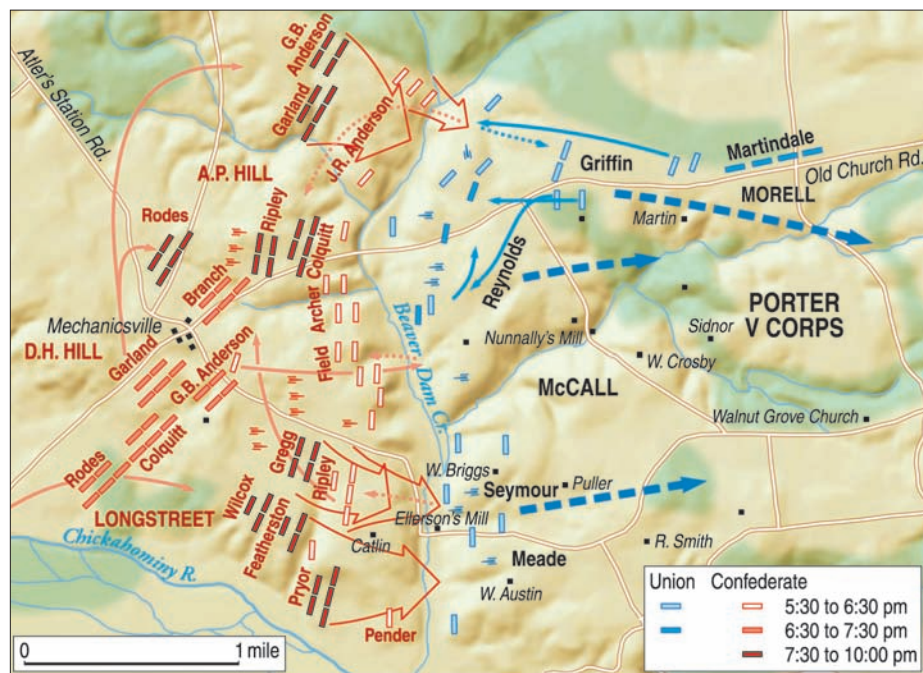
20,000 men, held an L-shaped line south and east of McCall's division.

By sending six of his 10 divisions north of the Chickahominy, Lee would only have the four small divisions of Maj. Gens. John Magruder and Benjamin Huger left to defend the city. Lee was risking everything—his army, his capital, perhaps even his country's survival. By splitting his army to gain an advantage at a critical point, he was employing a classic Napoleonic tactic. But Bonaparte himself might have balked at attacking a heavily manned defensive force astride a rain-choked river backed by giant siege guns, less than seven miles from his own country's capital.

As usual, McClellan grossly underestimated his opponent; he told Lincoln that he actually preferred fighting Lee to Joseph E. Johnston. "Lee is cautious and weak under grave responsibility, wanting in moral firmness when pressed by heavy responsibilities," McClellan asserted, "and is likely to be timid and irresolute in action." Events would soon test the accuracy of his claims.

The success of Lee's plan depended entirely on Jackson's timely arrival. After his reinforced Valley army had begun the 100-mile trek to Richmond on June 18, first by rail, then on foot, Jackson on the night of the 22nd rode nonstop for 14 hours, arriving at the capital for an afternoon conference the next day with Lee, Longstreet, and the two Hills. Jackson's chief-of-staff, Major Robert Dabney, was ordered to keep Jackson's columns moving steadily forward in Jackson's absence but proved unequal to the task. Inaccurate maps, straggling, muddy roads, and poor staff work slowed the column's progress. After fighting six minor engagements and marching more than 500 miles in less than two months, the Valley veterans were understandably fatigued.

When the meeting ended, Jackson immediately rode back and rejoined his army, which had reached Beaver Dam Station in Hanover County, 30 miles from Beaver Dam Creek. Upon arrival Jackson discovered to his regret that only the vanguard of his army was present; the rest was strung



ABOVE: Ever aggressive General Robert E. Lee divided his army at Mechanicsville, leaving only four of 10 divisions to guard Richmond. It was a gamble even Napoleon might have thought twice about taking. **OPPOSITE:** McClellan and his staff survey the fighting at Mechanicsville on June 26, 1862. In the distance is the turnpike to Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. It was the first of the Seven Days Battles.



out for 15 miles northwest on muddy roads broken by swollen streams. Physically and mentally fatigued himself, the redoubtable Jackson had only 48 hours to get his entire force to its assigned position near Richmond, 30 miles away, in time to meet Lee's timetable. According to Lee's General Orders No. 75, Jackson was to spend the next night at "some convenient point west of the Virginia Central Railroad," then move at 3 AM on June 26 toward his objective, Pole Green Church near Hundley's Corner northeast of Richmond. When he passed the railroad on the morning of the 26th, Jackson was supposed to communicate his location to Branch and continue advancing. Nowhere in Lee's somewhat ambiguous orders was there a specific mention of, or location for, an anticipated battle.

In scorching heat and adverse conditions, the June 25 march proved extremely arduous. Jackson and his men arrived west of Ashland at sundown, still six miles short of their objective, Slash Church. That night, Stuart and his 2,000 cavalrymen arrived with a three-gun battery to deploy on Jackson's left for the next day's march. To compensate for the six-mile shortfall,

Jackson assured Lee that he would have his troops on the road by 2:30 AM.

By dawn on June 26, Jackson had managed only eight hours of sleep in the previous four days, had fallen feverishly ill, and bore little resemblance to the energetic tactician of the recently concluded Valley campaign. Brig. Gen. William Whiting's lead division, with Brig. Gen. John Bell Hood's Texas Brigade in the vanguard, moved out on time, but it was well after 8 AM by the time Jackson's main force—seven infantry brigades and nine artillery batteries—got underway. Food and ammunition wagons bogged down and couldn't keep pace, and the scarcity of fresh water in the Ashland area forced soldiers to scour the countryside in search of springs or wells. Once the Confederate column was finally on the road, Jackson pushed his men forward as best he could, but one delay after another impeded his progress.

Four abreast, the troops pushed forward over poor, muddy, unfamiliar roads. Their maps were woefully inadequate, and reports of enemy sightings brought the column to frequent halts. The column wound down Ashcake Road past Slash Church

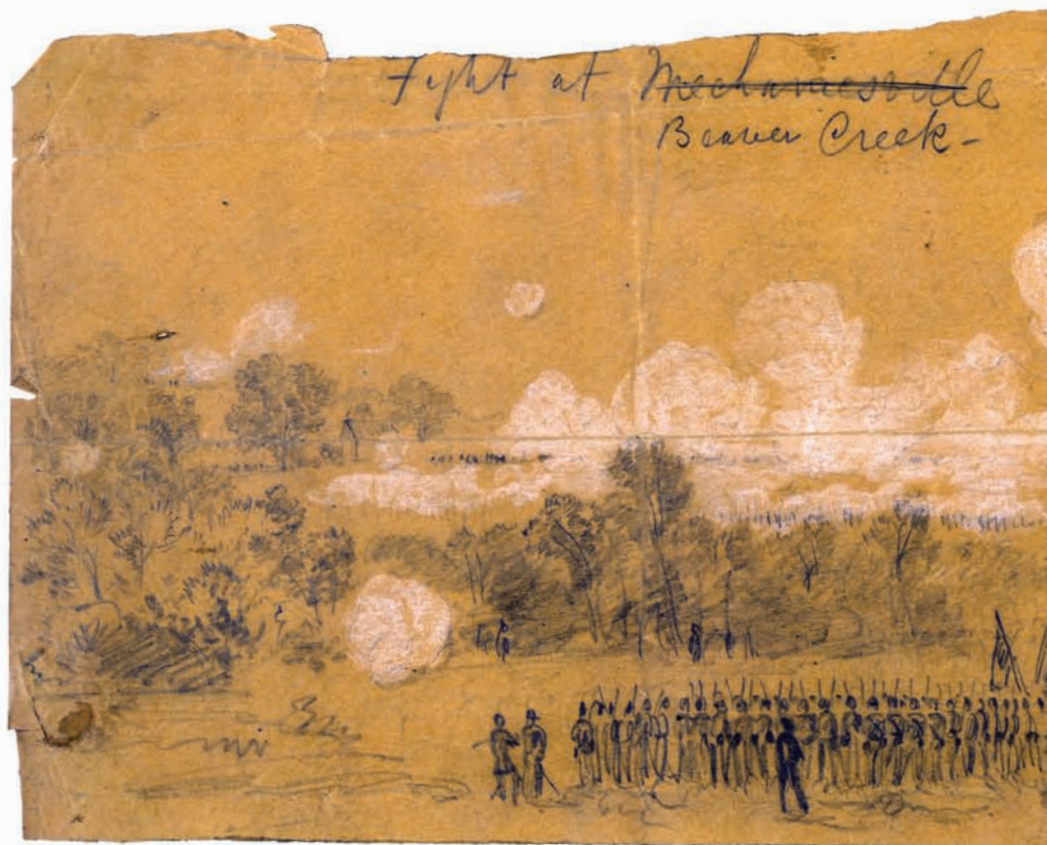
and reached the Virginia Central Railroad around 9 AM, six hours behind schedule. Jackson dutifully informed Branch of his position by mounted courier, had a quick meal with his men, and resumed the march. The inexperienced Branch, in a costly blunder, failed to convey Jackson's message to A.P. Hill, as ordered. Instead, upon receipt of the message, Branch and his North Carolinians, marching downriver on Jackson's right, encountered a sizable force of Union cavalry and pickets. A vigorous skirmish ensued. The delay meant that Branch would arrive too late to take part in any action near Mechanicsville that day. Jackson's and Ewell's columns continued slogging ahead on parallel roads.

By 10 AM, Jackson and Ewell had cleared the railroad. In the lead, Ewell turned to the right three-quarters of a mile past the tracks, pushing southward toward Shady Grove Church. Jackson continued for another mile and then turned right in the direction of Pole Green Church. Destroyed bridges, makeshift barricades, and enemy sniper fire continued to slow Jackson's progress. Jackson sent Branch a second note at 10 AM, informing him the

Valley army was now two miles beyond the railroad and pressing ahead (again Branch failed to forward the message to other commanders). The two dispatches constituted the sum of all communication between Jackson and anyone in the Army of Northern Virginia that day. At 3 PM, Hood's Texans skirmished briskly with Union cavalry near Totopotomoy Creek, then had to repair the bridge after the withdrawing Federals destroyed it.

Around 5 PM, having advanced 16 hard miles, Jackson arrived at his objective, Pole Green Church adjacent to Hundley's Corner. Seeing not another soul at Hundley's Corner, either civilian or military, Jackson sensed that something was terribly amiss. The sound of gunfire three miles to the south made it clear that an engagement of some kind was underway. Jackson's and Ewell's forces were still strung out along two different roads with their rear guard five miles farther behind (none of the troops in the rear element could hear the sounds of battle emanating from the south). No word from Lee had arrived. In Jackson's mind, he had obeyed his instructions and stood ready to take part in any further advance toward Cold Harbor, which he understood to be the overall objective of Lee's movement. His aide, Major Dabney, recalled, "Jackson appeared to me anxious and perplexed. My surmise was and is that he was every moment hoping and waiting for some definite signal from Lee, and that having reached Hundley's Corner and still with no definite instructions, he considered the risk was too much to go further."

Having assumed Jackson's approach would so threaten Porter that the Union general would retire without offering battle, Lee had charted Jackson's movement on a faulty map that placed Pole Green Church near the headwaters of Beaver Dam Creek. The church, however, was actually almost three miles north of the creek's northern edge. At Hundley's Corner, Jackson was in no position to turn Porter out of his works. Jackson ordered his men into bivouac in a state of semi-readiness, but failed to notify Lee or any-



one else of his army's arrival. With almost three hours of daylight remaining and the sounds of battle to the south growing more intense, Jackson's failure to inform Lee of his presence at Hundley's Corner was an inexplicable lapse, especially for one of the Confederacy's most aggressive and experienced battlefield commanders.

At 3 PM, having heard nothing from Branch or Jackson, A.P. Hill, Jackson's old West Point classmate, ran out of patience. Richmond was in jeopardy, he wrote later, and any delay "would hazard the failure of the entire plan." The always aggressive Hill crossed the Chickahominy and initiated Lee's offensive on his own. Surely, Hill thought, Jackson would be present by the time he made contact. With Brig. Gen. Charles Field's 2,000-man brigade of untested Virginians in the lead, followed in turn by those of Brig. Gens. James Archer, Joseph Anderson, Maxcy Gregg, and Dorsey Pender, Hill crossed Meadow Bridge and rapidly drove enemy pickets from his front.

The Federals began falling back toward

Mechanicsville, a small crossroads cluster of houses that lay in the open surrounded by tilled fields, with Hill's men in pursuit. Pender's and Gregg's brigades swung to the right to provide flank protection for Hill's main thrust, which was now surging across the open fields toward Mechanicsville. East of the village, a six-gun Union battery opened up, exacting a considerable toll on the men of Field's vanguard, while sharpshooters hidden behind a ridge opened fire as well.

Lee, watching from the bluffs south of the river near the Mechanicsville Bridge, saw Confederate troops advancing through the shell-swept village and observed, "Those are A.P. Hill's men." Lee had not intended that there be any real fighting at Mechanicsville, but here was Hill, fighting his way eastward against stronger than expected resistance. Lee quickly ordered Maj. Gens. James Longstreet and D.H. Hill to put their divisions into action.

Lee accompanied D.H. Hill's troops as they crossed the Chickahominy and proceeded up the Mechanicsville Turnpike,

between McCall's division and the rebels under Jackson



with Longstreet's division following. A.P. Hill's troops were securing Mechanicsville when Lee arrived and learned to his dismay that he had attacked without Jackson. Lee was now in an extremely difficult situation: two-thirds of his army was north of the river, battle had been joined, Union forces were consolidating east of Mechanicsville behind Beaver Dam Creek, and Richmond was left virtually unguarded. Although he desperately wanted to avoid a clash with entrenched Federals, Lee decided there was nothing to do but continue the assault.

With the sun starting its descent and President Jefferson Davis and his entourage now on hand to watch the battle, A.P. Hill eagerly led three full brigades—those of Anderson, Archer, and Field—eastward, planning to strike hard at Porter's right where he believed Jackson would momentarily appear. Anderson's troops moved obliquely in that direction and deployed north of Old Church Road with a lone artillery battery in support. Archer's brigade followed and took up

positions astride Old Church Road on Anderson's right. Field then posted his brigade on Archer's right, south of Old Church Road. Gregg, Pender, and Branch remained uncommitted. As Hill's men deployed in lines of battle and went forward, McCall's batteries on the high ground behind Beaver Dam Creek opened fire, dividing their attention between the attacking lines of infantry and a few Confederate batteries that were soon silenced with heavy loss.

As the Confederates moved down the slope and neared the creek, McCall's troops prepared for action. A Pennsylvania private remembered his major encouraging him and his comrades to "give them hell, or get it ourselves." Reynolds rode along the line pointing out targets to his Pennsylvania regulars, exhorting, "Look at them, boys, in the swamp there, they are as thick as flies on gingerbread. Fire low, fire low." His riflemen waited until the attacking line was within 100 yards before opening up. One Pennsylvania private recalled that "the enemy charged

Union artillery fires over the heads of advancing Union infantry belonging to Brig. Gen. George McCall's 8,000-man Pennsylvania Reserve Division. One major implored his men to "give them hell, or get it ourselves."

bayonets on us three times, but we cut them down. I fired until my gun got so hot that I could barely hold it in my hands. We piled them up by the hundreds, making a perfect bridge across the swamp." McCall later described the assault: "At about 3 PM, the enemy's lines were formed in my front and the skirmishers rapidly advanced, delivering their fire as they approached our lines. They were answered by my artillery and a rather general discharge of musketry. The Georgians rushed with headlong energy against the Second Regiment, only to be mowed down by the steady fire of that gallant regiment, whose commander soon sent to the rear some seven or eight prisoners taken in the encounter."

"We fought under many disadvantages," color-bearer Martin Ledbetter of the 5th Alabama Battalion recalled. "It



Discarded knapsacks, blankets, shovels, and other gear lie behind quick-firing Pennsylvania reserves fighting behind earthworks near Ellerson's Mill. Battlefield sketch by Alfred Waud.

was with great difficulty that we made our way through the entanglement of tree tops, saplings, vines, and every other conceivable obstruction, under a heavy fire." Within an hour, hundreds of dead and wounded Confederate soldiers blanketed the terrain west of Beaver Dam Creek. As the fighting intensified along the mile-long front on both sides of Old Church Road, A.P. Hill was in the middle of it, hatless, begrimed, and oblivious to danger as he urged his men forward by personal example. He failed, however, to utilize the concentrated firepower of his division's nine artillery batteries to contest the enemy's guns.

On the far left, despite the withering fire, some of Anderson's 35th Georgia troops doggedly fought their way across the 12-foot-wide creek and established a beachhead of sorts, giving the men of the 2nd Pennsylvania some anxious moments. One Union officer who faced the Georgians remembered, "At one time they attacked

our right and center at the same time, boldly pressing on their flags until they nearly met ours, when the fighting became of the most desperate character, the flags rising and falling as they were surged to and fro by the contending parties." When some of Reynolds's infantrymen ran out of ammunition, McCall sent forward two fresh regiments, the 4th Michigan and 14th New York of Brig. Gen. Charles Griffin's brigade. Meade brought up his four regiments into line as well.

Under infantry fire and enemy cannon firing double-shotted canister into their ranks at close range, the men of the 35th Georgia were hard pressed to hold their small piece of captured ground. Men of the 14th and 49th Georgia Regiments struggled mightily to come up in support of their comrades but were driven back with appalling losses. Without reinforcements and ammunition resupply, the survivors of the 35th Georgia later fell back across the creek under cover of darkness. On their right, the men of Archer's and Field's brigades, loading and firing as they advanced, also suffered terribly under the withering storm of "shot and shell. Neither

brigade came close to making a dent in the Union line.

With three of A.P. Hill's brigades stalled in front of the Union center and right and still no sign of Jackson, Lee decided a little after 6 PM to send another of Hill's brigades to test the Federal left near Ellerson's Mill. The assignment fell to Pender's brigade, supported by a brigade of D.H. Hill's division that had arrived on the field, commanded by Brig. Gen. Roswell Ripley. By the time the divisions of D.H. Hill and Longstreet arrived, there was too much confusion and too little daylight remaining for Lee to effectively deploy and utilize them. Pender, one of the Confederacy's most promising young officers—he was awarded a battlefield promotion to brigadier by Davis for his actions at Seven Pines—led his exposed units across the broad plateau and down the slope toward the creek. As his four North Carolina regiments and a battalion each of Virginians and Arkansans neared Ellerson's Mill, they felt the sting of more than a dozen Union cannons and supporting infantry fire. A lone Virginia battery boldly came forward and was shattered, losing 42 of 92 men.

Of the suicidal advance, Confederate Colonel Porter Alexander wrote, “A more hopeless charge was never entered upon.

When Ripley came up, he sent his 2nd Arkansas Battalion ahead as skirmishers in Pender’s front, directly into the face of enemy defenders entrenched above Ellerson’s Mill. Two of his regiments, the 44th Georgia and 1st North Carolina, attacked on Pender’s right, while the 48th Georgia and 3rd North Carolina advanced on the left. McCall later wrote of the failed Confederate assault, “After a time, a heavy column was launched down the road to Ellerson’s Mill, where a determined attack was made. I had already sent Easton’s battery to Gen. Seymour, and I now moved the Seventh Regiment down to the extreme left, apprehending that the enemy might attempt to turn that flank by crossing the stream below the mill. Here, however, the Reserves maintained their position and sustained their character for steadiness in splendid style, never losing a foot of ground during a severe struggle with some of the best troops of the enemy, fighting under the direction of their most distinguished general. For hour after hour the battle was hotly contested, and the rapid fire of our artillery, dealing death to an awful extent, was unintermitted.”

Limping back from the creek under ruinous fire, the walking wounded brought news of the attack’s failure. The always caustic D.H. Hill said later, “The result was, as might have been foreseen, a bloody and disastrous repulse.” The 44th Georgia made it to the creek’s western bank and fought bravely for almost two hours, finally running out of ammunition and losing 361 men killed or wounded of the regiment’s 514 members. The 1st North Carolina lost 133, including its colonel, lieutenant colonel, major, six captains, and 10 lieutenants. Of the 14,000 Union soldiers engaged at Beaver Dam Creek, only 361 became casualties; the Confederates suffered 1,484 casualties. Ripley’s brigade suffered the worst, losing a staggering 575 men killed, wounded, or missing, about 60 percent of its strength.

Around sunset, Griffin’s brigade arrived

on the field and took up a supporting position to Reynolds’s rear. Porter wisely extended his right flank, dispatching Brig. Gen. John Martindale’s brigade to a point behind Reynolds’s position, where he could guard against any enemy approach over the road from Hanover Court House. There, Martindale skirmished briefly with some of Jackson’s advanced pickets. Nightfall brought an end to the infantry fighting, although artillery and sniper fire continued for several hours.

In their first major encounter, Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia had suffered a severe repulse, Lee managing to get less than a fourth of his available troops into action and then only in costly, piecemeal frontal assaults against entrenched enemy positions. Mechanicsville was the worst fiasco committed by either side since Ball’s Bluff back in October 1861, this time with the lopsided casualty figures reversed. McClellan wired Secretary of War Edwin Stanton that evening: “Victory today complete and against great odds. I almost begin to think we are invincible.”

As night fell on June 26, the capture of Richmond was unquestionably within McClellan’s reach. Porter’s reinforced V Corps, now more than 30,000 strong, held near-impregnable positions north of the Chickahominy, backed by concentrated artillery batteries. McClellan commanded 67,000 fresh troops south of the river opposite 23,000 Confederates, many of them green reinforcements, while Lee’s bloodied forces north of the river were scattered and disjointed. There had been no word from Jackson since morning and no one knew his whereabouts. McClellan had two golden opportunities: he could exploit the victory by heavily reinforcing Porter north of the river, go on the offensive there, and destroy the enemy’s army. Or, as several of his subordinates implored him to do, McClellan could instruct Porter to hold the river crossings while he himself attacked south of the river, with almost a 3-to-1 numerical superiority, and captured the enemy’s capital.

Instead, McClellan did neither. After another day of combat, the bloodbath at

Gaines’ Mill—Lee’s only tactical victory of the Seven Days, won at horrendous cost—McClellan abandoned all thought of making a stand or going on the offensive. Incredibly, the Young Napoleon wired Washington on June 28 that he was under attack by superior numbers on both sides of the Chickahominy. “I have lost this battle because my force was too small,” he wired Stanton. “The government must not and cannot hold me responsible for the result. If I save this army now, I tell you plainly that I owe no thanks to you or any other persons in Washington. You have done your best to sacrifice this army.” An astounded colonel in the telegraph office deleted the final two sentences before transmitting the dispatch to Stanton.

McClellan ordered Porter to protect the river crossings while he prepared for a “change of base,” a euphemism for retreat, to the James River. The Army of the Potomac conducted a skillful fighting retreat that severely punished the attackers, especially at Malvern Hill on July 1, but despite continued pleas by his subordinates to use that victory as a springboard for a counteroffensive, McClellan continued the retreat. By abandoning the York and Richmond Railroad, he effectively lost the ability to mount and maintain a siege of Richmond and surrendered the initiative to Lee. By July 2, the bloodied but still combat effective Army of the Potomac was more than 20 miles from Richmond, at Harrison’s Landing on the James River. Within weeks, McClellan would evacuate the Peninsula.

The Seven Days replaced Southern despair with renewed hope. “The almost funereal pall which has hung around our country since the fall of Fort Donelson, seems at last to be passing away,” declared the *Richmond Examiner* on July 4. “From out of gloom and disaster of the past, the martial spirit has emerged, and the superior skill and valor of our men over our brutal foe is incontestably established.” Somehow, McClellan had managed to turn victory into defeat. It would not be the last time he accomplished that questionable feat. □

Wheeler's 1863 SEQUATCHIE VALLEY RAID



A Union army trapped in southeastern Tennessee faced starvation with only one tenuous line of resupply remaining to it. And Confederate opponents were determined to eliminate this last path of deliverance.

By Arnold Blumberg

During the evening of September 20, 1863, the following message reached Washington and was given to the president of the United States: "We have met with a serious disaster; extent not yet ascertained. Enemy overwhelmed us, drove our right, pierced our center, and scattered troops every-



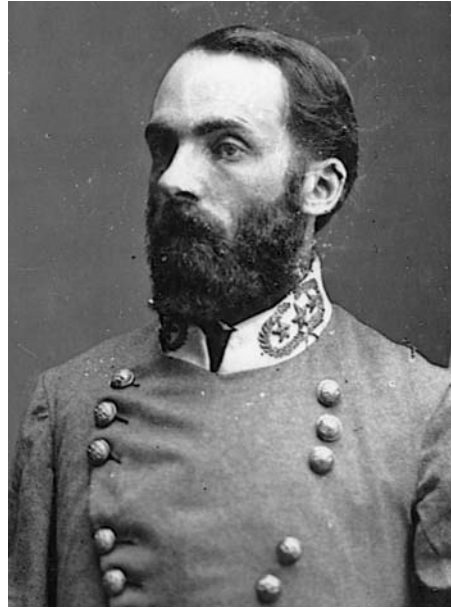
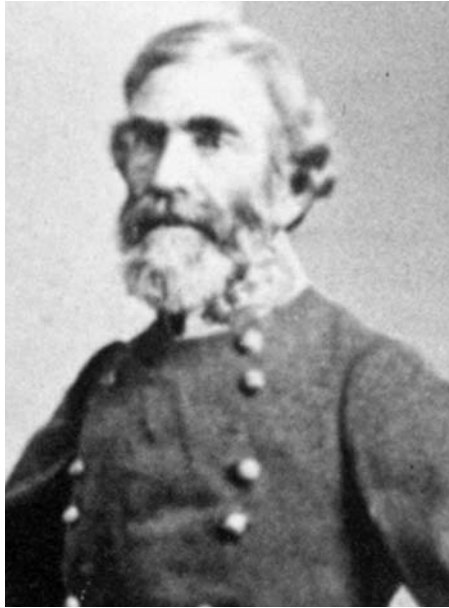
Federals shoot at Rebel cavalymen attempting to overwhelm a supply train. The deeper Union armies penetrated into the Southern heartland, the longer and more vulnerable their supply lines. Confederates went after them with gusto and not just to hurt Northern armies; they could luxuriate for a time on the food, clothing, and ammunition they captured.

where. Thomas, who had seven divisions, remained intact at last news. Granger, with two brigades had gone to support Thomas. Every available reserve was used when the men stampeded. Burnside will be notified of the state of things at once, and you will be informed. Troops [Confeder-

ate] from Charleston, Florida, Virginia, and all along the seaboard are found among the prisoners. It seems that every available man was thrown against us.”

The author of this gloomy telegram was Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans, commander of the Federal Army of the Cum-

berland. His missive was the first report sent by him to his civilian superiors regarding the defeat of his army at the Battle of Chickamauga. But even before Rosecrans’ rather passive announcement had been sent, the authorities back east had received a much more graphic account of the recent



TOP LEFT: Braxton Bragg. TOP RIGHT: Joseph Wheeler. BOTTOM LEFT: Charles A. Dana. BOTTOM RIGHT: William Rosecrans. OPPOSITE: Federals hold their position on the last day of the Battle of Chickamauga, but they eventually retired to Chattanooga and tried to endure a siege.



Union military setback. Sent by Charles A. Dana an hour before the Army commander wired his first news of the battle, it was highlighted with such phrases as “Chickamauga is as fatal a name in our history as Bull Run.... Our soldiers turned and fled. It was wholesale panic. Vain were the attempts to rally them. Our wounded are all left behind.... Enemy not yet arrived before Chattanooga.”

Of the two preliminary statements, those of Rosecrans and Dana, concerning the

fight of September 19-20 outside Chattanooga, Tenn., the latter was given more attention and credibility. Charles A. Dana, a former managing editor for Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune*, had found favor with the secretary of war, Edwin M. Stanton, early in the national conflict. A supportive editorial Dana had penned in 1862 when Stanton was appointed to the War Department earned the out-of-work newspaperman (he had been forced to resign from the *Tribune* that same year)

first a job as Stanton’s personal aide, and then his assistant secretary of war from 1863 to 1865. As such he was used as what had been termed during the French Revolution a Representative of the People on Mission, or in the future Stalinist Russia, the People’s Commissar. And like his French and Soviet equivalents, Dana roved from Union army to Union army—first U.S. Grant’s and then Rosecrans’, to keep tabs on the officers assigned therein. Regarded as a “bird of evil omen” by the Northern officer corps, the assistant secretary could make or break a soldier’s career by the simple use of a pen or telegram.

Having an informer at his headquarters was bad enough, but Rosecrans was unaware of the animosity held toward him by Secretary of War Stanton. Dating back to early 1862 when Rosecrans dared to advise the self-assured secretary on matters of national military strategy, and continuing during the former’s middle-Tennessee campaign of 1863, Stanton developed such a loathing for the Army commander that he looked forward to any opportunity to remove him from leadership of the Army of the Cumberland. The loss at Chickamauga, and a bold Confederate cavalry raid thereafter—all underpinned by Dana’s increasingly scathing opinion of Rosecrans’ fitness to lead any friendly military force—would give Stanton his chance.

By nightfall of September 20, 1863, the last remnants of the once ever-victorious Army of the Cumberland, now reduced to about 35,000 effectives (from an original force of 58,000), slipped away from the bloody field of Chickamauga in northern Georgia and into the entrenchments surrounding Chattanooga 10 miles northwest. Not until two days later did the Rebel Army of Tennessee, reduced from a pre-Chickamauga strength of about 66,000 men to 47,500, advance to the gates of the city. It should have been no surprise that the Army of Tennessee tamely and slowly followed up its victory at Chickamauga, for its leader was Braxton Bragg.

Naturally disputatious, and driven by



Minnesota Historical Society

the need to attend to every small detail no matter how irrelevant, Bragg was also tense, arrogant, and a martinet. Never able to get along with subordinates, he lacked the determination to carry through his plans and shrank from decision making. In the words of the late Civil War scholar Bruce Catton, “Braxton Bragg was as baffling mixture of high ability and sheer incompetence as the Confederacy could produce.”

True to form, the 46-year-old North Carolina native and West Point graduate did not exploit the situation created by his victory by rushing the disorganized and dispirited Union defenders out of their fortified camp while they were isolated from any friendly aid. Instead, Bragg spent the week of September 23-29 throwing Confederate pickets around the southern circumference of Chattanooga, thus initiating a blockade of the city and the enemy army that had taken refuge in it. Instead of waging aggressive war upon the foe, Bragg spent most of this period attacking his sub-

ordinate commanders with a determined effort to rid his army of them.

In the meantime, Rosecrans’ resolve to hold on to Chattanooga rose and fell with the passage of each day. On the 22nd he wired the administration in Washington, “We are about thirty thousand brave and determined men; but our fate is in the hands of God....” The next day he wrote to President Lincoln directly: “We hold this point, and I cannot be dislodged except by very superior numbers and after a great battle.” And on October 3 Rosecrans suggested to Mr. Lincoln that if his army could remain in Chattanooga, thus forcing the enemy to abandon its present position outside the city, Washington should offer a general amnesty to all Confederate officers and soldiers as a way to end the war!

The president, having previously ordered that Chattanooga remain in Union hands, was shocked by Rosecrans’ idea. Again the leader of the Army of the Cumberland seemed to be hedging on whether he could

hold the city, and further poking his nose into political matters by recommending amnesty for the Rebels. It was about this time that Lincoln decided Rosecrans would have to be replaced, but the time was not yet right. His removal would have to wait until Ohio, Rosecrans’ home state, voted in mid-October for a new governor—either the pro-war Republican John Brough or the anti-war Democrat Clement Vallandigham. Congressional seats were also at stake, and Rosecrans’ support of the administration had been long and vocal, going so far as to encourage his soldiers to vote for the continuation of the war effort.

As the political maneuvering in both camps played out, Bragg finally realized that his Northern adversary was not going to oblige him by evacuating his toe-hold in southeast Tennessee just because he was semi-surrounded and under siege. Bragg, seeking some way out of the current impasse, sought advice from his Army corps commanders. Of the number of sug-

gestions put forward, the most promising seemed to originate from Lt. Gen. James Longstreet. Longstreet's command, an infantry corps of about 14,000 men, had been loaned to Bragg's army in September in order to resist Rosecrans' advance on Chattanooga. Consisting of about a third of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, it had been accustomed to victory and was responsible for delivering the decisive blow at Chickamauga. Having participated in Lee's daring flank marches against the Federal armies in the East during 1862 and 1863, it was natural for "Old Pete" to recommend such a move to pry the Bluecoats out of their fortified position at Chattanooga.

Longstreet's plan was that the army cross to the north bank of the Tennessee River above the Union-held city and cut Rosecrans' communications and supply lines leading back to Nashville. Being thus isolated from reinforcements and provi-

sions, Longstreet reasoned the enemy would have to abandon Chattanooga or starve in place. The South Carolinian, reflecting the aggressive strategic vision of his superior, Lee, argued that once the Federals were on the move Bragg could strike once more, destroying them and thus reclaiming middle Tennessee for the South. That done, the Army could then march upon Burnside's Yankee force at Knoxville and free the "Volunteer State" from the Northern aggressor.

At first receptive to Longstreet's bold plan, Bragg then rejected it. First, it was too daring for Bragg's liking; second, his army did not have the transport and supplies needed to head north away from its base of operations; and third, he was suspicious of Longstreet's motives, fearing that it was all a scheme to replace Bragg with the plan's designer as the head of the Army of Tennessee. As a result, Bragg took a middle course in order to eliminate Rosecrans and

his men. He would keep his foot soldiers near Chattanooga to continue that town's investment while sending a large cavalry force to sweep into the enemy's rear area and destroy his remaining supply line. Severed from foodstuffs and reinforcements, the Army of the Cumberland would wither on the vine from lack of subsistence and the means to defend itself. Although a half-measure, the critical situation the Northern army was in held some hope that Bragg's idea would work. Further, it came to the Southern general's attention that by late September Union reinforcements from Grant's army in Mississippi and Meade's Army of the Potomac were being sent to save Rosecrans. Thus time was running out for the South to retake Chattanooga. Bragg knew he must set in motion an operation that would so panic his weakened foe that it would cause them to abandon the prize they stubbornly held—the strategically vital Chattanooga area.

CONFEDERATE WESTERN CAVALRY

The Southern cavalymen who fought in the American Civil War between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River were in many respects like their counterparts in the East and in other ways very different.

Cavalry was employed in tasks suited to its unique ability for rapid movement. Conducting scouts to find and gather intelligence about the enemy, screening the army when in camp and on the march, acting as the advance in forward movements and the rear guard during retreats, and raiding enemy lines of communications were the daily fare of all cavalry during the conflict. Regulations for camp and field tactics, as well as unit organization (i.e., companies, squadrons, and regiments) were almost the same in both theaters of war, and for that matter applied

to Northern and Southern troopers since the two sides used updated versions of "Old Army" prewar manuals.

Like their brothers-in-arms in the East, Western troopers used similar equipment. Grimsely and McClellan saddles were widely employed, and felt hats with large brims to keep the rain out of the face, as well as to carry food for man and beast, were favored. Wool uniforms with double-seated pants and short coats became the preferred attire for all mounted men during the war.

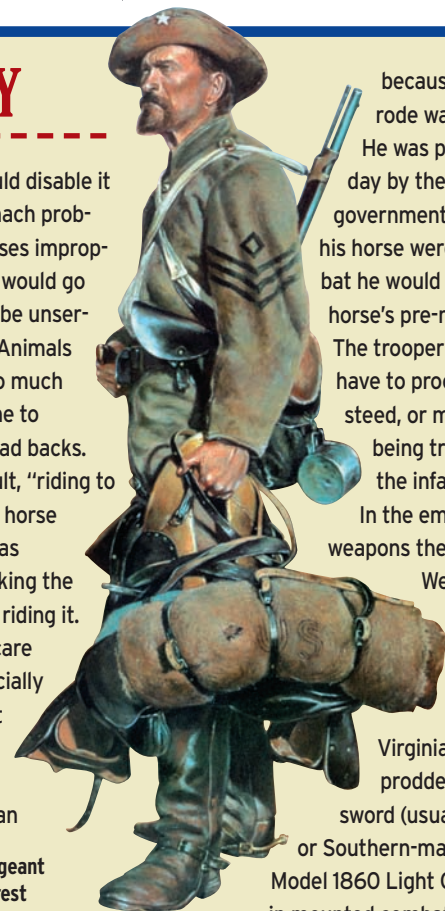
In regard to the trooper's "second self," i.e., his horse, good maintenance of the creature was essential. It had to be constantly well groomed to keep its body free from oils that could cause sores and thus disease. A horse had to be fed properly; too much water or

grass would disable it with stomach problems. Horses improperly shod would go lame and be unserviceable. Animals ridden too much were prone to develop bad backs. (As a result, "riding to war" on a horse would be as much walking the mount as riding it.

Horse care was especially important to the Southern cavalryman

A first sergeant under Forrest carries Confederate cavalry equipment.

Painting by Don Troiani, www.historicalartprints.com



because the animal he rode was his property. He was paid 40 cents a day by the Confederate government for its use. If his horse were killed in combat he would be paid the horse's pre-muster value. The trooper would then have to procure another steed, or mule, or risk being transferred to the infantry.

In the employment of weapons the Eastern and Western Confederate cavalries differed. Unlike the horsemen in Virginia, who were prodded to use the sword (usually a captured or Southern-made copy of the Model 1860 Light Cavalry Saber) in mounted combat, the boys in the West preferred the revolver,

The city of Chattanooga in 1863 was the county seat of Hamilton County, Tenn., with a population, according to the U.S. Census of 1860, of 2,545. Sitting in a large horseshoe bend of the Tennessee River, the town is overlooked to the southwest by the 1,800-foot Lookout Mountain, and on its southeast flank by the 600-foot, 15-mile-long Missionary Ridge.

First settled in 1835, and long referred to as Ross's Landing, in 1839 it was incorporated as a town, and in 1851 the name was changed to Chattanooga. The name supposedly comes from the Greek phrase for "rock that comes to a point," which aptly describes the narrowing of Lookout Mountain as it nears the city.

The first 15 years of its existence saw city residents eking out a living transporting goods and people on the Tennessee and smaller area rivers. But by the 1850s the tiny river port began to boom. In less than a decade Chattanooga grew to be a major

Southern transportation hub. Four railroad lines converged on the city by 1860—the Chattanooga & Nashville, connecting the Midwest with the lower South by way of Nashville; the Memphis & Charleston, linking West Tennessee with South Carolina; the Western & Atlantic, running to the Atlantic ports; and the East Tennessee & Georgia, uniting Richmond, Va., with the Deep South via Knoxville. Besides the rail lines, local resources of iron, lead, coal, and copper added to the local economic attractiveness.

By the third year of the war, Chattanooga's residents, then about 5,000, thought their isolated mountain location would shield them from the ravages of the coming conflict. On the contrary, the town's position on the Tennessee River and the rail lines radiating from it made the place the "Gateway to the South." Occupation by the Union would sever the supply artery that helped feed the Confederate

armies in the East via the Lower South. Its railways would allow Federal forces to build up massive power for a drive into Georgia and beyond. Hence the reason for the Union advance on the city by Rosecrans, as well as Lincoln's demand that it be held, and Bragg's attempt to retake it after the Battle of Chickamauga.

The Army of the Cumberland lay under siege in Chattanooga from late September to November 1863, but the first month—October—was the worst. From almost the start the Army was confined to a semicircle of land close around Chattanooga itself. The Confederates held the high ground from the north of Missionary Ridge adjacent to the Tennessee River southwest to Rossville. From there Rebel entrenchments dotted the flat lands of Chattanooga Valley, extended westward to Lookout Mountain, and on to Lookout Valley and Raccoon Mountain. A line of rifle pits was also dug at the base of Mis-

shotgun, and sawed-off muskets or carbines. The most popular sidearms were the 1851 Colt 36-caliber Navy revolver or the Colt 45-caliber Army revolver.

In addition, battle tactics differed in the Western cavalry. In the East troopers would attempt to charge their enemy using the saber, backed up by handguns. Mounted action was the favored method of meeting and defeating the enemy, and this trend did not end until the campaigns of 1864. Then dismounted fighting became almost as current as mounted charges. In the West, almost from the start of the war, Confederate cavalry fought on foot as much as in the saddle. Nathan Bedford Forrest's fight at Parker's Cross Roads (December 31, 1862), big victory at Brice's Cross Roads (June 10, 1864), and the battle at Tupelo (July 13-15, 1864) are a few examples of the Western Confederates' success fighting on foot.

Cavalry operations in the West tested cavalry commanders' ability more so than in the East. The vastness of the area involved compared to Virginia required more endurance, more planning, more fighting, and certainly as bold a leadership as was found on the Atlantic seaboard.

Of all the mounted operations conducted throughout the war, the most strategically significant took place in the West. Prominent examples are Earl Van Dorn's Holly Springs, Miss., raid on in late December 1862; Nathan Bedford Forrest's destruction of Abel Streight's "Mule Brigade" in April-May 1863; Wheeler and Jackson's ride in July 1864; Wilson's Selma, Ala., expedition in March and April 1864; and the most important foray of the conflict, Grierson's raid through central Mississippi during April and May of 1863.

Van Dorn's thrust at and destruction of U.S. Grant's forward

base of supply in Mississippi—combined with a simultaneous strike at the Federal supply sources in West Tennessee by Nathan Bedford Forrest—forced Grant to retreat, thus saving Vicksburg (Grant's objective) from falling into Union hands for another six months.

Forrest's chase after Abel Streight's Union mounted infantry raiders through North Alabama and Georgia was a masterpiece of endurance and dogged determination, and kept the vital Western & Atlantic Railroad from Union destruction. The pursuit of Yankee troopers under Stoneman and McCook around Atlanta by Rebel horse soldiers led by Wheeler and Jackson secured the Confederate lifeline to that city, and resulted in one of the most crushing defeats of any cavalry force during the Civil War.

James Wilson's 12,000-man mounted corps' raid (it was more

like a full-scale invasion) into Alabama to seize the cities of Selma and Montgomery—and points east—closed the war in the West.

Colonel Benjamin Grierson's April-May dash through Mississippi (encompassing almost the entire length of the state) proved to Grant that not only was the Confederacy a hollow shell in that part of the world, but that his army could operate in the area east of the Mississippi River for a reasonable time without the need of a formal supply line leading back to his main base at Memphis. Grierson's exploit, referred to as the "greatest thing ever done" during the war, led to the solution Grant had been looking for in his quest to capture the Confederate river fortress of Vicksburg. Once the city fell into Union hands, the river was denied to the enemy and the Confederacy was fatally split in two.

sionary Ridge. Perched on these eminences, and sheltered by earthworks, Southern musket and artillery fire swept the entire zone between the mountain ranges and the city. To the rear of Rosecrans' army flowed the Tennessee River—fast, wide, and deep. The Federal force holed up in Chattanooga had only one viable supply route back to Nashville, its sole source of equipment and food. Union soldiers controlled Bridgeport—the point at which the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad crosses to the south side of the Tennessee River—but Southern possession of Lookout and Raccoon Mountains west of Chattanooga commanded the railroad, the river, and the shortest and best wagon roads both north and south of the Tennessee between the city and Bridgeport. Although the distance between the two places is only 26 miles, the Confederate blocking units from Bragg's command required that all supplies to the Army of the Cumberland be hauled by a circuitous route north of the river, and over such mountainous terrain that the actual distance involved was 60 miles.

The Union lifeline started at Nashville, ran down the tracks of the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad to Stevenson, Ala., and ended its rail trip at Bridgeport. From there all material was convoyed in wagons northeast up the Sequatchie Valley to the town of Jasper, and then on mountain trails (referred to by many who used them as little more than "pig paths") leading over Warden's Ridge to the pontoon bridge that spanned the Tennessee River to Chattanooga. The rocky and uneven byways and trails making up this triangular course were so poor that it took a loaded wagon 10 days to make the 60-mile journey, and that was in dry weather. When it rained the paths turned into ribbons of flowing mud, halting all movement by horse-drawn vehicles. Further, the route through the Sequatchie Valley traversed the counties of Marion, Rhea, and Bledsoe, areas that had been stripped bare of forage and feed for the teams of mules and horses pulling needed supplies. As a result, many draught animals did not survive the trip,

and the wagons and goods they pulled had to be destroyed or abandoned before reaching the besieged Federals. For the same reason, cattle herds driven through the valley were decimated by starvation before ever getting to Chattanooga. Those that did survive were so thin and malnourished they were called "beef dried on the hoof," more bone than meat. Finally, the Sequatchie River, running down the full length of Walden's Ridge and emptying into the Tennessee at Jasper, provided another steep and muddy obstacle to movement in the valley.

Meanwhile, the suffering of the men of the Army of the Cumberland grew. As the weeks went by rations were cut and then cut again. The half rations the men lived on included hard bread and the little beef

“We are about thirty thousand brave and determined men; but our fate is in the hands of God.”

that got through to the city. Because food was the priority item coming across the Sequatchie Valley, clothes and shoes to replace old and worn-out ones were not to be had. Overcoats and blankets for the coming cold-weather season were unavailable, as were horseshoes, saddles, and horse blankets or anything else that could make a mule or steed serviceable.

Food took precedence even over ammunition. It was calculated by General Ulysses S. Grant that by late October the Army would not possess enough small-arms bullets or artillery shells to fight more than one day's action. Fuel for the soldiers was in very short supply. After fences and houses in the city had been torn down and used as firewood, the only other available wood to be found was on the north side of the Tennessee. But the lack of enough

workable horseflesh prevented this vital resource from being moved across the river once it was cut. The same cause stopped the transport of the wounded and the artillery. The death of 10,000 mules and horses by starvation during the siege partially immobilized Chattanooga's garrison. With such losses in animals, and the weakened condition of the troops owing to lack of food, it is doubtful if the Army of the Cumberland could have made a successful retreat from Chattanooga, even if the Rebels had allowed it.

Having a fair idea of the serious straits his opponents were in, and determined to make the situation worse, Bragg issued orders to his cavalry commander, Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler, on September 27 to "cross the Tennessee River and press the enemy, intercept and break-up all his lines of communication and retreat." In short, Wheeler was to eliminate the Sequatchie Valley corridor and make the isolation of Rosecrans' army complete.

"Fighting Joe" Wheeler had been Bragg's cavalry commander since July 1862—first in Bragg's Army of Mississippi, and then in the newly formed Army of Tennessee, again under Bragg. Born in Augusta, Ga., on September 10, 1836, he was educated in Connecticut and went on to enter the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1854. Graduating with the class of 1859, Wheeler ranked 18th in a class of 22. Assigned to the Regiment of Mounted Rifles (the future U.S. Third Cavalry Regiment) in New Mexico, the young lieutenant resigned his commission in early 1861 and joined the Confederate Army in April of that year. First serving in the artillery and then made colonel of an infantry regiment, Wheeler returned to cavalry duty on Bragg's insistence. He would be a horse soldier for the rest of the war, proving to be one of the Confederacy's best commanders of mounted troops.

Before starting his raid around Chattanooga, Wheeler first cleared Lookout Mountain of enemy troops in order to allow Rebel pickets to occupy that strategic height. During this operation Wheeler explained to Bragg that his command was



Rebels held this view of Chattanooga from Lookout Mountain. They had their enemies in a very tight place.

not up to an extended foray into the Sequatchie Valley. Ever since Rosecrans had advanced into middle Tennessee starting with his successful Tullahoma Campaign of late June 1863, right up to the Battle of Chickamauga in late September, Wheeler's cavalry had been in constant action with the enemy, whether scouting, performing picket duty, or acting as the rear guard for Bragg's force. Almost four months of hard riding and close contact with Bluecoat riders had taken its toll on the Rebel cavalry by way of broken-down horses, equipment lost or in need of repair and, of course, the utter fatigue of the men.

The condition of his outfit did not augur well for the success of the assignment handed Wheeler, but even worse was to hinder the effort. Along with his weakened divisions, led by Brigadiers John A. Wharton and W.T. Martin, Bragg ordered that General Nathan Bedford Forrest take three brigades from his command to go along with Wheeler. At this point in the war Wheeler and Forrest were bitter enemies. A botched raid on Dover, Tenn., in February 1862, where Wheeler was in charge and Forrest was his subordinate, ended in a costly defeat for the Gray raiders. Forrest, who had been opposed to the plan Wheeler had devised for the operation,

swore after the fight that "[I] would be in [my] coffin before I'll fight again under your command."

After arguing with Bragg that his men were not up to the task he had given them, Forrest threatened the Army leader with physical violence, and ended his tirade against Bragg by declaring Bragg "was unfit to command an army," vowing never to serve under him again. Fortunately for all concerned, Forrest very soon after was given an independent command by none other than President Jefferson Davis, thus removing him from the authority of both Bragg and Wheeler for good.

Although Forrest would not be going on the Sequatchie Valley excursion, his now leaderless cavalry under Brig. Gen. H.B. Davison and Colonels John S. Scott and George B. Hodge would be taking part. Like Wheeler's troopers, Forrest's three former brigades had performed rigorous service during the Chickamauga Campaign and they and their mounts were in no condition to make the proposed long march. But again ignoring the facts about the state of his cavalry, Bragg ordered Forrest's former troops to rendezvous with Wheeler's men on the south side of the Tennessee River at Cottonport, 35 miles northeast of Chattanooga.

September 30 saw the juncture of Wheeler's and Forrest's commands at Cottonport. Wheeler quickly realized that Forrest had not been exaggerating about the state of his men. As he later reported, "The three brigades from General Forrest were mere skeletons, scarcely averaging 500 effective men each. They were badly armed, and had but a small supply of ammunition, and their horses were in horrible condition, having been marched continuously for three days and nights without removing saddles. The men were worn out, and without rations." Further, Forrest's subordinates voiced their opinion that not only were their troopers not up to the mission, but also that the men resented having to again serve under Wheeler. "Fighting Joe" listened to the complaints and rejected them. He spent the rest of the day weeding out those soldiers who were patently unfit for duty, and consolidated Forrest's men into one brigade under General Davidson.

That evening, led by the 4th Tennessee Cavalry Regiment, Wheeler's 4,000 troopers and six artillery pieces splashed across the Tennessee River. Dispersed by a charge of the 3rd Alabama Cavalry, supported by artillery, the Yankee picket and two cannon defending a wooded area on the north bank fled the scene. Thus, the Confederates were across the river with only trifling losses and Wheeler spent most of October 1 making further plans. He and the men set off that evening, but gained only 10 miles before a heavy rainstorm made the roads so muddy and the going so difficult that the Graycoats were ordered into bivouac. Meanwhile, the Federals, hearing of the enemy river passage, beefed up their patrols along the Tennessee. Also, three regiments of infantry along with artillery were sent to Anderson's Cross Roads in the Sequatchie Valley to protect the trains.

Late on October 2, the Confederates were camped on the crest of Walden's Ridge with a clear view of the Sequatchie Valley below. That night the cavalry commander gathered his officers around him to detail his plan for the morrow. Reporting to the assembled group that a Federal

wagon train was only six miles distant down in the valley, Wheeler proposed to take 1,500 men and destroy the enemy convoy. In the meantime, Wharton would pass on to McMinnville about 35 miles northwest. Wharton and Martin protested the division of force in the face of an enemy of unknown strength, but Wheeler held fast, repeated his orders, and finished by saying he would unite with them at McMinnville “tomorrow night, if I am alive.”

At the time Wheeler was outlining his course of action to his men, Brigadier George Crook, in charge of the pursuit of the Rebels, reported to his superior that the Confederates had passed Walden’s Ridge and that he expected to catch up with them the next day.

By 3 AM on the 3rd, Wheeler and his detachment headed down onto the valley floor. The rest of his command under Wharton moved toward McMinnville six hours later. After traveling about six miles, Wheeler’s force came upon 32 enemy wagons each pulled by six-mule teams. In the fading dark the Rebels charged their prey, eliminated the train guard, and captured the whole outfit. After securing his first prize, Wheeler moved on at a rapid pace. One hour later his men saw an amazing sight.

Before them the Confederates beheld an enormous number of white canvas-topped Union wagons stretching for miles along the rutted rocky path that passed for a road. Fanned out along both flanks of the wagon train was a protective screen of cavalry and infantry. Wheeler immediately formed his troopers for battle and sent them forward at the charge.

Colonel John T. Morgan’s 51st Alabama Mounted Infantry struck the wagon guards head on, but was soon thrown back by enemy rifle fire. Seeing this reverse, Wheeler rode up to Colonel A.A. Russell’s 4th Alabama Cavalry Regiment and shouted to Russell to retrieve the day. According to a young trooper of Forrest’s command who took part in this assault, “As soon as our line could be formed, we rode forward at full speed, and receiving a volley at close quarters, were successful in riding and capturing the entire escort

within a few minutes.” The struggle had included revolver and rifle fire, swordplay, and hand-to-hand combat along the entire length of the wagon train. After the Unionists threw down their arms in surrender, Wheeler counted the booty: 1,200 officers and enlisted men taken prisoner, along with 800 wagons stocked with provisions, and 4,000 mules.

The next eight hours saw the Confederates burning all the captured wagons and material carried therein that could not be used or spirited off. Along the 10-mile wagon column the Graybacks were ordered to saber or shoot as many of the mules as possible in order to prevent the Federals from hauling away any of the supplies that remained on the field. All through the day the explosion of fired ammunition wagons could be heard in Chattanooga, 20 miles away.

After the orgy of destruction ended, Wheeler’s detachment regrouped and headed for McMinnville. In their wake came their Federal pursuers: Crook and mounted infantry riding into the valley from Walden’s Ridge; General Robert B. Mitchell and Colonel Edward W. McCook rushing up the valley from the direction of Chattanooga.

After traveling most of the 3rd, the next day, October 4, Wharton’s men prepared to capture the Federal supply depot at McMinnville as they awaited Wheeler’s appearance. By noon, after a Confederate demand for the town’s capitulation, the garrison commander, Major Michael L. Patterson, surrendered. As a result, the Rebels bagged 587 men, 250 horses and mules, a railroad train, and huge amounts of stores. Wheeler’s force reached the town that day, and the united command left McMinnville after sending south their recently acquired spoils. Between October 5 and 6 Wheeler feinted toward the heavily garrisoned town of Murfreesboro, tore up railroad track, and burned every bridge he came to spanning the Stones and Duck Rivers. Wartrace was reached and more supply trains were taken at Christiana and Fosterville townships.

This two-day rampage ended with the

Gray riders encamping for the evening (the 6th) near Shelbyville, Tenn., about 20 miles south of Murfreesboro: Davidson’s three brigades three miles west of the town; Martin’s division two miles west of Davidson; and Wharton’s another two miles west of Martin—all north of the Shelbyville-Farmington Road. Wheeler had warned Davidson to be on the lookout for the Federals and to fall back if attacked. For some reason Davidson chose to ignore Wheeler’s directive.

The smoke from the burning Federal dumps at McMinnville was still rising in the sky on October 5 when Crook and his 3,500 men entered that place. After a brief stay they continued their chase and caught up with Wheeler’s rear guard on the Murfreesboro Road about two miles beyond McMinnville. A frontal assault, supported by a surprise rear attack of the 2nd Kentucky (Union) Cavalry Regiment, scattered the Rebel battle line. Nightfall ended the pursuit of the beaten foe. Mitchell and Crook finally combined eight miles from Shelbyville on the 6th.

On October 7 the Federals learned of Davidson’s location and moved toward him, Colonel Miller’s Lightning Brigade of mounted infantry in the van. The first clash occurred between them and Scott’s Confederate unit. The Rebels were routed after they failed to budge Miller and his men with a mounted, and then a dismounted, charge. Davidson, hearing of Scott’s defeat, put his men in motion toward Farmington, leaving Colonel Hodge to hold off the onrushing enemy. Hodge was pressed back steadily toward Farmington and later reported: “For five and a half hours, over seven miles of country the unequal contest continued.” The wooded terrain near that hamlet was unsuitable for mounted action, so the Federals fought on foot. By battle’s end Hodge’s brigade was “cut to pieces and slaughtered” and four cannon were taken by the repeated dismounted charges of the Lightning Brigade. Davidson would have suffered even graver losses if an order by Crook to Colonel Minty’s Brigade to make a flanking attack on the Confederate right



Wheeler's raid to disrupt supplies for the besieged Federals in Chattanooga comes to a high point when they capture a huge wagon train in the Sequatchie Valley.

early during the fight had been carried out. (Minty denied ever receiving the order and remained in camp during the contest.) The action ceased when the Union troopers were checked by the timely appearance of Martin's Division, sent by Wheeler to succor Davidson.

On the morning of October 8 the pursuit of the Confederates resumed, but Wheeler had marched all night of the 7th, passing southwest through Pulaski, Tenn., in order to outdistance his opponents. Reaching the ford at Muscle Shoals, Ala., on the Tennessee River at sundown on the 9th, he got the remnants of his force over the boulder-strewn crossing just as the lead elements of the Federals (the 7th Pennsylvania Cavalry) reached the north bank. Wheeler was the last man to cross to the south shore, wet and dispirited. By October 16, the Rebel raiders were back with Brigg's army.

Was Wheeler's Sequatchie Valley Raid a success? On the one hand the feat netted the Confederates over 2,000 prisoners,

nearly 1,000 enemy wagons, and hundreds of mules destroyed, as well as millions of dollars of enemy property captured or burned. Nine days after the conclusion of the expedition, and partly due to it and his inability to prevent the raid or capture its participants, General Rosecrans was relieved of command of the Army of the Cumberland. Further, on account of the raid, scores of Union troops and animals in the besieged Chattanooga garrison starved from lack of supplies destroyed by Wheeler's action. (After the destruction of the great wagon train the troops in Chattanooga were forced to go on quarter rations for days.)

Looking at Wheeler's exploit from another view, it can be argued that it was a failure in both a tactical and strategic sense. First, the Confederates lost between 2,000 and 2,500 men killed, wounded, or taken prisoner, losses that added up to more than those of their opponents. Second, the wastage of the raid in horseflesh and loss of experienced troopers would never be replaced by Wheeler's command. A larger force of Confederate cavalry would appear in the West for the Atlanta

Campaign, but the quality of the new men and horses was below that of what had gone before.

On the strategic side of the ledger, the raid failed in its primary purpose—to ensure that the Army of the Cumberland would leave Chattanooga or starve. With the opening of the "Cracker Line" on October 27, 1863, the supply problems of the city's garrison were solved. Another failure of the mission was the lack of any real and permanent damage to the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad, the main supply artery for any Federal forces operating south of Nashville. Again, on the strategic level, the plight of the Army of the Cumberland, partly due to Wheeler's raid wrought momentous changes in the conduct of the war in the West by the Lincoln administration, not beneficial to the Confederates. Troops were rushed to East Tennessee, which gave the Federals lasting advantage in numbers; and Grant was placed in charge of all Northern forces in the area, thus ensuring a competent leader and unified command structure, which in time doomed the Confederacy to defeat in the Western theater. □

Union General William T. Sherman and his army cut loose from Atlanta in November 1864 and began cutting a wide swath of destruction across central Georgia. The “March to the Sea” would instantly become legendary. **BY WILLIAM STROOCK**

On September 3, 1864, a triumphant Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman telegraphed Washington, “Atlanta is ours and fairly won.” Ironically, Sherman, renowned for his tenacious fighting style, had won the city through ingenuity. Rather than directly assault Atlanta’s fortifications, he had marched south-southwest and fought a campaign of maneuver



Union Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, seated on horseback at right, calmly oversees the 1864 siege of Atlanta in this period painting by well-known illustrator Thure de Thulstrup.

Sherman's

against Confederate General John Bell Hood. On September 1, when Sherman took the town of Jonesboro, 10 miles south of Atlanta, he cut the city's last remaining rail link. However strong Atlanta's defenses may have been, Confederate forces risked another Vicksburg-like catastrophe if they remained in the city. Withdrawal was Hood's only option.

Sherman now controlled all of northern Georgia. In his postwar memoirs, he set the scene concisely: "By the middle of September, matters and things had settled down in Atlanta, so that we felt perfectly at home. The telegraph and railroads were repaired, and we had uninterrupted communication to the rear. The trains arrived with regularity and dispatch and brought

us ample supplies." Sherman had more than 200,000 troops in his overall command around Atlanta, with slightly more than 80,000 fighting men divided into five corps, four infantry and one cavalry. These were commanded by an unspectacular but competent cadre of generals.

While he had triumphed at Atlanta, Sherman still faced several daunting prob-



March to the Sea



The day before leaving Atlanta, these Union troops left a going away present for hard-pressed Southerners—another bit of twisted railroad tracks known as “Sherman bowties.”

lems. The first was logistical. He was at the end of a long supply line stretching hundreds of miles north to Chattanooga and beyond to Nashville. It was extremely vulnerable to attack, as Sherman’s Confederate counterpart, John Bell Hood, soon proved. With his army of 35,000 men, Hood began operating in the area of Palmetto on the Chattahoochee River, southwest of Atlanta, and demonstrating against Union garrisons along Sherman’s lines of communication. Hood himself had an excellent line of communication running back to Florence, Alabama, from any part of which he could confront Sherman directly or harry the roads and rail lines in his rear.

While Sherman consolidated his strength, Confederate President Jefferson Davis railed against him. With Southern morale collapsing in the face of Sherman’s victory, Davis toured Georgia making grand speeches to a shell-shocked populace. Sherman received reports of speeches

in which Davis claimed the Confederate Army was taking decisive action and boasted that Sherman would soon retreat from Atlanta as Napoleon had from Moscow. “The fate that befell the Army of the French Empire in its retreat from Moscow will be re-acted,” Davis told the people of Macon. Meanwhile, Davis said, Hood and the fearsome cavalry raider Nathan Bedford Forrest would be acting against Sherman’s vulnerable communications and moving into central Tennessee.

This is exactly what Hood did, for two reasons. First, with Confederate morale collapsing, Hood reasoned that a series of short, sharp offensives could only improve the situation. “Something was absolutely demanded,” Hood wrote in his report to Secretary of War Judah Benjamin. Second, Sherman’s forces were so numerically superior to Hood’s that the latter could only take some peripheral action. “Thus I determined upon consultation with the corps commanders to turn the enemy right flank and attempt to destroy his communications and force him to retire from Atlanta.”

In early October Hood sent a division

under Maj. Gen. Samuel G. French against the Union garrison at Allatoona, threatening to massacre the troops there. This ploy had already worked for Forrest, who scared the Union garrison at Athens into surrendering. French sent a letter to the Union commander calling for him to “avoid the needless effusion of blood.” Fortunately for the Union cause, the garrison commander, Brig. Gen. John M. Corse, was made of sterner stuff and replied, “We are prepared for the ‘needless effusion of blood’ whenever it is agreeable to you.” Union troops repelled French’s attack. Corse himself was shot in the face but seemed almost cheerful about his wound. “I am shot a cheek-bone and an ear, but am able to whip all hell yet!” he wrote Sherman.

On October 12, Hood followed up his Allatoona adventure with a raid on Resaca, where he tried the same ploy. “I demand the immediate and unconditional surrender of the post and garrison under your command,” Hood wrote to the Federal commander, Colonel Clark R. Weaver. “If the place is carried by assault, no prisoners will be taken.” Weaver replied defi-

antly, "In my opinion I can hold this post. If you want it, come and take it." Hood, after being bloodied at Allatoona, withdrew of to the west. This was accompanied by a raid on Forrest's part into central Tennessee. While Forrest damaged roads and chewed up rail lines, Sherman was unconcerned. In reference to Forrest he wrote, "But, as usual, he did his work so hastily and carelessly that our engineers soon repaired the damage."

While Hood and Forrest were doing little long-term damage to Sherman, their raids were having the desired effect of driving him to distraction and delaying further offensive action. Hood's attacks forced him to scatter his army along his lines of communication from Atlanta to Chattanooga. Sherman would have liked nothing better than to catch and engage Hood, but in the aftermath of the Allatoona and Resaca raids, Hood showed that he could slip away at will. Sherman was reluctant to give chase, knowing that would wear down his army and open up his lines of communication to further harassment.

Frustrated by the continuing back and forth, Sherman looked for ways to seize the initiative. By October 10, while Hood and Forrest were conducting the Tennessee and Resaca raids, Sherman was toying with a radical idea. He wrote Grant, "It will be a physical impossibility to protect the roads, now that Hood, Forrest, Wheeler, and the whole batch of devils are turned loose." He argued that rather than stay put in northern Georgia he should cut his communications and march southeast for Savannah. "Until we can repopulate Georgia, it is useless for us to occupy it," Sherman reasoned, "but the utter destruction of its roads, houses, and people will cripple their military resources." He concluded famously, "I can make this march and make Georgia howl!"

While the Allatoona raid seems to have made up Sherman's mind, he had been considering a march out from Atlanta ever since Hood began his harassing operations. "As soon as Hood had shifted across from Lovejoy's to Palmetto, I saw the

move in my 'mind's eye,'" he recalled, "and after Jeff. Davis's speech at Palmetto, of September 26th, I was more positive in my conviction, but was in doubt as to the time and manner."

Sherman tested his idea of living off the land. When Hood demonstrated against Dalton on October 13, Sherman severed his supply line and chased Hood down the Chattooga Valley, "drawing our supplies of corn and meat from the farms of that comparatively rich valley and of the neighborhood." At the same time, Maj. Gen. Henry Slocum, one of Sherman's unspectacular but competent generals, dispatched a foraging party east from Atlanta. Sherman wrote that Slocum's foragers had

they can live, we should not starve." Sherman ordered copies of the 1860 census and examined these to determine his general route through Georgia. In 1860 the state had produced more than 50 million pounds of rice and raised more than two million hogs. Sherman planned a march through the "Black Belt," a fertile stretch of land running through the north central part of the state. The Black Belt accounted for four-fifths of Georgia's annual cotton production (726,000 bales in 1860). Plundering the region would be a devastating economic blow. This area was also extremely vulnerable, as African Americans accounted for 55 percent of the population. In the coastal region, slaves made up 59 percent of the



Sherman at the peak of his power in the fall of 1864. With the capture of Atlanta behind him, he was prepared to risk everything on an audacious march through south-central Georgia to the Atlantic coast.

brought back "large trains of wagons to the east, and brought back corn, bacon, and all kinds of provisions, so that Hood's efforts to cut off our supplies only reacted on his own people."

These two maneuvers convinced Sherman that his plan for marching through Georgia and living off the land was feasible. "Georgia has a million inhabitants," he said. "If

population. Georgia's largest city was Savannah, with more than 22,000 residents. Recently occupied Atlanta was only the state's fourth largest city with a population of 9,554. Other important cities were Augusta (12,493) and Columbus (9,631). Macon, with 8,247 people, was the state's fifth largest city.

Sherman's grand idea was about more

than simply outsmarting Hood. He felt that from Atlanta he could march to the sea and rip out the heart of the Confederacy. The march would create a dead zone that split the Confederacy in two. By marching through Georgia, Sherman felt he could strike a blow to Confederate morale from which the South could not recover. Sherman was greatly amused by Jefferson Davis's grand proclamations in the aftermath of the Atlanta campaign. "I am convinced the best results will follow from out defeating Jeff. Davis's cherished plan of making me leave Georgia by maneuvering," he told Grant. The chance to embarrass the Confederate president was too great to resist.

His correspondence with Grant was the first part of Sherman's planned campaign to convince Grant and the Lincoln administration in Washington to approve his march to the sea. Grant initially was skeptical. He had his own issues to worry about. In Virginia he was opposite Robert E. Lee at Petersburg, after having fought three battles, losing two of them, and taking 100,000 casualties in the process.

With Atlanta in flames behind them, Sherman's XIV and XX Corps march south. Each man carried a musket, 40 rounds of ammunition, a tin cup, and a haversack. The rest they would scavenge along the way.

Grant's reputation had never really recovered from this phase of the war. The public was outraged at the heavy effusion of blood. Sherman's taking of Atlanta in September saved not only Grant but Abraham Lincoln's flagging reelection campaign.

Even as he telegraphed Grant on October 10 with his idea of moving east to the sea, Sherman was already making preparations. He trimmed his army of unnecessary personnel and equipment, sending them back to his base at Chattanooga. Sherman then assigned the department's chief quartermaster to oversee the repair of rails along the Chattanooga-Atlanta line. To secure the line he dispatched Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas and the IV Corps to garrison the key towns of Nashville, Chattanooga, and Decatur, Georgia.

During this time, Hood remained in a position to harass Sherman's communications, while Forrest executed a daring river raid in western Tennessee in which he captured or sank several Union supply ships. Sherman telegraphed the full details of Forrest's raid and Hood's current position and once again made his case for an expedition to the sea. Grant, never afraid to bring about a major battle, replied that he thought since Hood was easily located in his north, this was the time and place for

Sherman to attack and remove Hood's menace once and for all. "If you can see a chance of destroying Hood's army, attend to that first, and make your other move secondary," Grant advised. Sherman replied that he believed he simply couldn't catch up to Hood, whose army was smaller and leaner. Sherman pointed out that he had "reduced baggage" and was prepared to move in any direction, "but I regard the pursuit of Hood as useless." Sherman assured Grant that he was prepared to battle Hood if necessary, but as long as he was forced to hold on to Atlanta, "my force will not be equal to this."

On November 2, Grant finally telegraphed Sherman saying in part, "I do not see that you can withdraw from where you are to follow Hood without giving up all we have gained in territory. I say then, go on as you propose." A few days later, Sherman sent Grant his formal plan of march. Grant replied on November 7, "I see no reason for changing your plan. Should any arise, you will see it, or if I do I will inform you."

In a later communication to Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, Sherman articulated his thinking and grand strategy. "I attach more importance to these deep incursions into the enemy's country," he wrote. Sherman said that the war in America differed



from European warfare in that “we are not only fighting hostile armies, but a hostile people. And must make old and young, rich and poor, feel the hard hand of war, as well as their organized armies.” He talked of the Georgians’ faith in Davis being shaken and looked forward to doing the same to the people of the Carolinas.

While Georgia was the breadbasket of the Confederacy, Sherman understood that the army he took with him through the state must be lean and trim to facilitate fast movement. “The most extraordinary efforts had been made to purge this army of non-combatants and of sick men,” he wrote. He systematically purged the sick, lame, lazy, and generally unnecessary men from his force around Atlanta, reducing his numbers from about 81,000 men to just over 60,000. He took a rapier to the artillery train as well, reducing the compliment to 65 guns and 200 shells for each, and slashing the wagon complement so that each of his four columns was reduced to a mere 800 wagons, enough for foraging and a rolling supply train, but no more. Drawn by a team of four horses, each wagon could haul about 2,500 pounds.

Sherman took along a 20-day supply of rations, beef on the hoof, and five days of forage for the horses and cattle. Each man carried a musket, 40 rounds of ammuni-



As it moved through Georgia, the Union army attracted throngs of escaping slaves seeking their freedom. Sherman, focused on his military objectives, tried to discourage their intrusive presence.

tion, a tin cup, and a haversack. Theodore Upson, a private with the 100th Indiana, described the trimmed-down accoutrements carried by the rank and file on the march: “All a good many carry is a blanket made into a roll with their rubber ‘poncho’ which is doubled around and tied at the ends and hung over the left shoulder,” said Upson. “Of course, we have our haversacks and canteens, and our guns and cartridge boxes with 40 rounds of ammunition. Some of the boys carry 20 more in their pockets.”

Sherman organized his army into two wings. The right, commanded by Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard, 34, and the left commanded by Slocum, 37. Both generals held Sherman’s full confidence. Sherman described his wing commanders as “both comparatively young men, but educated and experienced officers.” Howard had XV and XVII Corps, totaling seven divisions, while Slocum commanded XIV and XX Corps, totaling six divisions. Each corps would march more or less independently of each other and Sherman. Each corps had with it a swinging pontoon bridge, 900 feet long. Sherman held Brig. Gen. Judson Kilpatrick’s cavalry division in reserve and would use it over the course of the campaign to keep Confederate cavalry and skirmishers at bay.

Sherman chose his path well, relying on

the intricate series of roads in Georgia to facilitate the movement of each corps. The corps would march in unison but function as semi-independent forces with their own self-contained supply train. That supply train would be augmented by Sherman’s foraging scheme whereby skirmisher parties, the soon-to-be infamous “bummers,” would scout ahead. Each brigade assembled a foraging force of men and wagons under the command of a picked officer to supervise the effort. The columns were to avoid picking up stragglers and refugees at all costs, although able-bodied freedmen could be co-opted and organized into pioneer battalions.

Sherman took steps to limit the destruction wrought on private property. His Special Field Order No. 20 read in part: “To Corps commanders alone is entrusted the power to destroy mills, houses, cotton-gins, etc. In districts and neighborhoods where the army is unmolested, no destruction of such property should be permitted.” Sherman did make exceptions for certain individuals. On November 20, Sherman was riding with XX Corps when it encountered the plantation owned by Confederate General Howell Cobb, commander of Cobb’s Legion and former secretary of the treasury in the Buchanan administration. Sherman sent a message back to the local division commander, Jefferson C. Davis, instructing

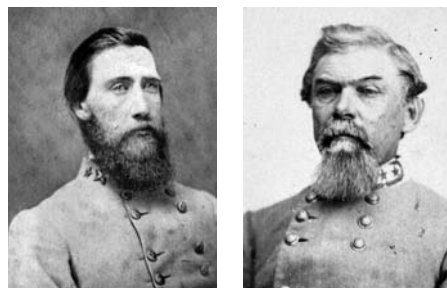


him to “spare nothing.” This was part of Sherman’s overall policy of harsh measures to those who fought back. When the army encountered resistance in the form of guerrillas or bushwhackers, or if the locals destroyed infrastructure prior to the army’s arrival, Sherman mandated that “commanders should order and enforce a devastation more or less relentless.”

There was also the issue of what to do with Georgia’s slaves. Nearly 446,000 African Americans lived in Georgia, the overwhelming majority of them (all but 0.03 percent) slaves. Sherman, frankly, wanted nothing to do with them. The slaves, however, were very interested in Sherman, which became evident as early as the army’s arrival in Covington. Upon entering the town, Sherman found “the negroes were simply frantic with joy. Whenever they heard my name, they clustered about my horse, shouted and prayed in their particular style.” Sherman became a messianic figure to the new freedmen. Even Sherman was moved by the outpouring of joy, although he did not welcome it. Outside of Covington he met with a group of freedman and told them in no uncertain terms that “we wanted the slaves to remain where they were, and not load us down with useless mouths.”

Indiana Private Upson encountered slaves on a personal level and found that “despite all discouragements we have a large following though General Sherman has tried in every way to explain to them that we do not want them.” Upson wrote of freedman ecstatic with joy at the mere rumor of Sherman’s riding nearby and described a group of freedman mistaking a grizzled bummer for the general and “marched along the side of the road singing their songs till someone told them the truth.”

As the army departed Atlanta, the military facilities in and around the city were systematically demolished. Sherman put his chief engineer, Colonel Orlando M. Poe, in charge of the destruction. Poe destroyed utterly the facilities of the Georgia Railroad, including a machine shop that the Confederates had been using as a



Clockwise from top: A Union color sergeant defiantly waves a tattered American flag on the roof of Georgia’s state capitol in Milledgeville, November 22, 1864. Opposing generals in the Atlanta campaign: Oliver O. Howard, William Hardee, John Bell Hood, and Henry Slocum.

artillery depot. The resulting explosion caused a considerable conflagration. “The fire also reached the block of stores and the depot, and the heart of the city was in flames all night,” claimed Sherman.

Sherman was not maintaining commu-

nication with his northern Georgia base, but he did go to great efforts to ensure it was secure against Hood’s army. He left General Thomas in Nashville with two corps, a cavalry brigade, and a third corps en route from Missouri. He expected the Confederates to strike. Thomas had one division at Decatur, one at Murfreesboro, and one at Chattanooga, all linked by a rail patrolled rail line. Thomas, for his part, was supremely confident. “I have no fears that [General P.G.T.] Beauregard can do us any harm now,” he told Sherman, “and, if he attempts to follow you, I will follow him as far as possible.”

On November 16, Sherman’s army of 62,000 men set out. Behind them, Atlanta was “smoldering and in ruins,” wrote Sherman unapologetically, “the black smoke rising high in the air, and hanging like a pall over the ruined city. Away off in the distance, on the McDonough road, was the rear of Howard’s column, the gunbarrels glistening in the sun, the white-topped wagons stretching away to the south; and right before us the Fourteenth Corps, marching steadily and rapidly, with a cheery look and swinging pace, that made light of the thousand miles that lay between us and Richmond.”

The men, too, were in high spirits as they set out on a great unknown adventure. They sang verse after verse of “John Brown’s Body,” and Sherman reported that “never before or since have I heard the chorus of ‘Glory, glory, hallelujah!’ done with more spirit, or in better harmony of time and place.” Most thought they were destined for Richmond, not the sea. Sherman had no fixed point in mind. “Savannah was most desirable,” he thought, “but I kept in mind Port Royal, South Carolina, and Pensacola, Florida, as alternatives.” His only fixed object was the Atlantic Ocean.

During the first phase of the march, Sherman travelled with XIV Corps in Howard’s wing, making Lithonia on the first night. In keeping with his streamlined approach, Sherman’s personal headquarters consisted of one sparsely furnished wagon—all frills of command had been ruthlessly eliminated

to set a an example for the other officers. Sherman described vividly the initial acts of destruction on the march. "The whole horizon was lurid with the bonfires of rail-ties," he wrote, "and groups of men all night were carrying the heated rails to the nearest trees, and bending them around the trunks." Sherman thought the destruction of the railway particularly important and liked to personally oversee the effort. XIV Corps camped at Covington the second day out with Union troops marching to band music with colors unfurled. Recalled Sherman, "The white people came out of their houses to behold the sight, in spite of their deep hatred of the invaders." The slaves, biding their time, kept mostly to themselves.

On the left, XX Corps entered Madison, which lay on the rail line linking Augusta with Atlanta. This movement by Slocum's wing conveyed the false impression that Sherman's next target was Augusta, indi-

Union cavalry under Brig. Gen. Judson Kilpatrick drive away Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler's harassing Confederates at Waynesville, Georgia, on December 2, 1864.

cating that Sherman was marching to link up with Grant in Virginia. On the right, Howard's wing was moving more or less in a straight line toward Macon. After taking Macon he could pivot left toward Milledgeville to cover the move to Augusta. But rather than move on Augusta, XIV Corps pivoted right toward Milledgeville, then the capital of Georgia.

For the next week the army marched without incident, encountering no organized resistance whatsoever. Slocum's left wing converged on Milledgeville, entering the state capital on November 23—exactly one year after Sherman's less than stellar performance at Missionary Ridge overlooking Chattanooga. Southern civilians were easier to overawe than Maj. Gen. Patrick Cleburne's veterans had been at Missionary Ridge. "The first stage of our journey was, therefore, complete, and absolutely successful," said Sherman.

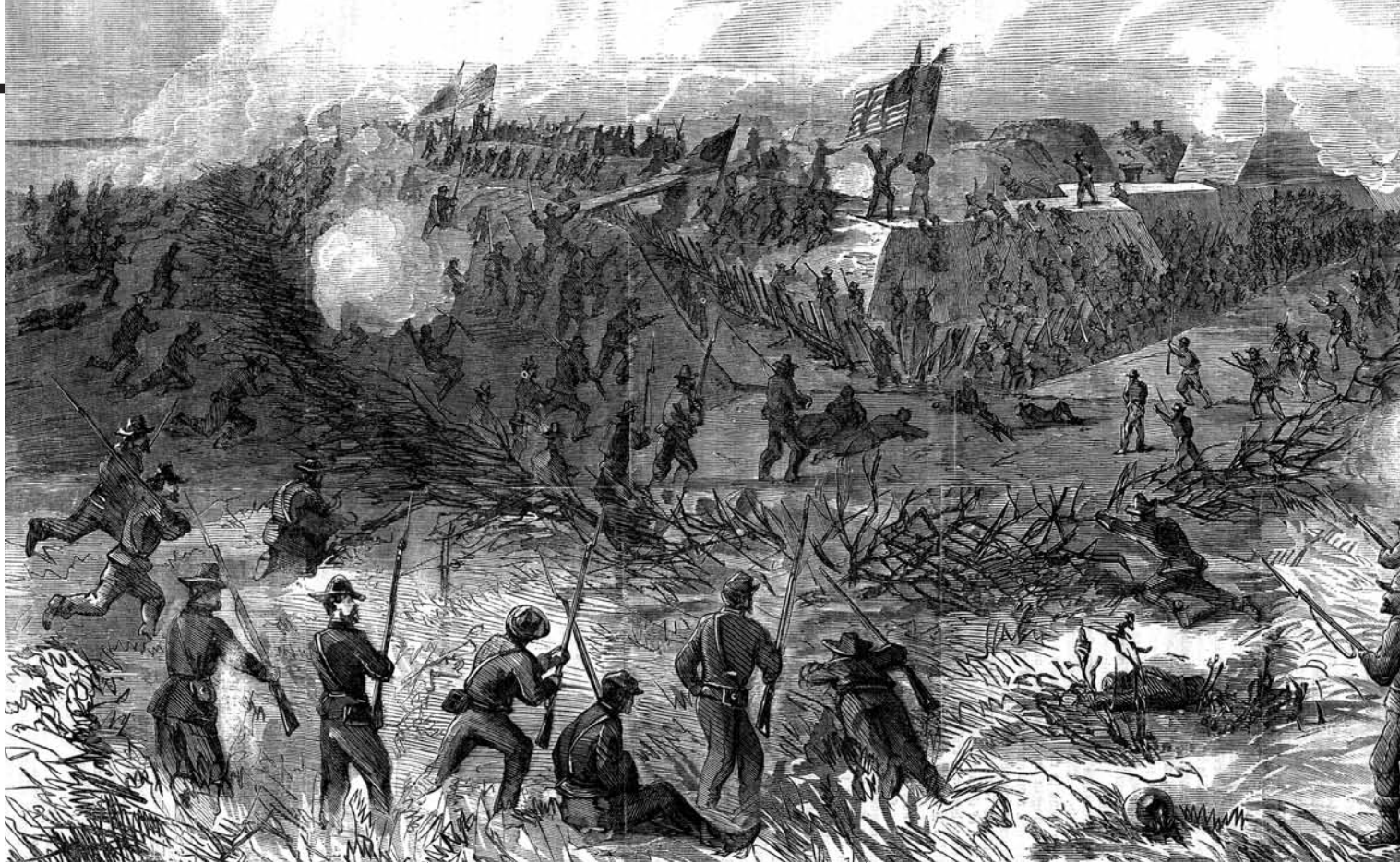
After destroying all military facilities and convening at the capital, a mock assembly was held to repeal Georgia's orders of secession and rejoin the Union. The left

wing marched out of Milledgeville on November 24. "I was not present at these frolics," Sherman wrote "but heard of them at the time and enjoyed the joke."

While Sherman was at Milledgeville, Confederate Lt. Gen. William Hardee, one of the Georgia governor's advisers, scraped together 3,000 poorly trained state militia and attacked Howard's rear guard at Griswoldville, on the Central Georgia Railroad nine miles north of Macon. Howard's veterans were well positioned on a hill with their flanks protected by swampland and a clear line of fire over breastworks to the front. The Georgia militia made three charges, each one easily devastated by the skilled Union infantry, before retreating to Macon and leaving 600 casualties on the field. Union losses were one-tenth that number. Upon examining their victims, the Federal troops saw with a mixture of sorrow and regret that the attackers had consisted almost entirely of old men and boys.

At Milledgeville, an even more horrible sight confronted the Federals. While they were celebrating Thanksgiving Day with





a feast, their meal was interrupted by the arrival of several escaped prisoners from the Confederate prison camp at Andersonville, which lay 80 miles to the southwest. The sight of the walking skeletons aroused rage and bitterness in Sherman's men, who were furious that their comrades had been allowed to slowly die from starvation in the midst of what was clearly rich farmland. The sight hardened the Federals' hearts and made their destructive work that much easier to commit. Once again, Sherman committed his wishes to paper, issuing standard orders for his bummers "to forage liberally on the country. To this end, each brigade commander will organize a good and sufficient foraging party, under the command of one or more discreet officers, who will gather, near the route traveled, corn or forage of any kind, meat of any kind, vegetables, corn-meal, or whatever is needed by the command, aiming at all times to keep in the wagons at least ten days' provisions for his command, and three days' forage."

Both the left and right wings tacked

nearly due east, Slocum's left aiming for Millen, Howard's right for Louisville. By this maneuver Sherman once again used Augusta as a foil to fool the Confederates. East of Louisville lay Waynesboro, with a direct rail link to Augusta. While the march maintained its standard 15 miles per day, Sherman this time faced organized resistance in the form of Joseph Wheeler and his 3,000 cavalry. To counter Wheeler, Sherman transferred Kilpatrick's cavalry from the right to the left wing. Wheeler daily harassed Howard's wing, skirmishing constantly with Kilpatrick's cavalry. Kilpatrick gradually pushed Wheeler back through Waynesboro by December 2. The next day Sherman marched into Millen with XVII Corps. Slocum and XX Corps were four miles north and XIV Corps was a further 10 miles north demonstrating against Augusta. This completed the second leg of Sherman's journey. He was two-thirds of the way to Savannah.

Sherman now pivoted left, heading straight for the Georgia coast. There could be little doubt now that Savannah was his ultimate target. Within the city General

Hardee, whom Sherman called "a competent soldier," rallied the populace and dug an intricate series of earthworks to defend against attack. The corps converged on Savannah, arriving at its outskirts on December 9 and 10. Having avoided a frontal assault on Atlanta, Sherman had no intention of launching one on Savannah. He did detach one division to take Fort McAllister, on Ossabaw Sound, which was preventing him from linking up with naval vessels lying offshore with new supplies for the Federal troops. The fort was taken by direct assault, under Sherman's eye, by Sherman's old 2nd Division, which he had commanded at Shiloh. Watching alongside Howard from the roof a nearby rice mill, Sherman exulted, "They're on the parapet! They took it, Howard. I've got Savannah!"

Sherman made contact with the fleet, boarded the steamer *Dandelion*, and sent a brief message to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, the first anyone in the North had heard from Sherman in a month. Sherman still had the ultimate capture of Savannah to think about. On December 17 he sent a



of Georgia and its dazed residents.

The next day Sherman sent an immensely satisfying telegram to President Lincoln. “I beg to present you as a Christmas-gift the city of Savannah.” Relieved and grateful, Lincoln responded, “When you were about to leave Atlanta for the Atlantic coast, I was anxious, if not fearful; but, feeling that you were the better judge, and remembering ‘nothing risked, nothing gained,’ I did not interfere. Now, the undertaking being a success, the honor is all yours; for I believe none of us went further than to acquiesce. It is indeed a great success. Not only does it afford the obvious and immediate military advantage, but, in showing to the world that your army could be divided, putting the stronger part to an important new service, and yet leaving enough to

riedly into Germany to fight the famous battle of Blenheim, military history has recorded no stronger marvel than this mysterious expedition of General Sherman’s route against an unknown undiscoverable enemy.”

Confederate Captain Robert E. Park of the 12th Alabama Infantry privately begged to differ, writing in his diary, “Attila, Genseric and Alaric were not more cruel to the conquered Romans than the brutal Sherman has been to the defenseless, utterly helpless old men, women and children of pillaged and devastated Georgia.” All four leaders, it went without saying, were victorious.

To the end of his life Sherman remained unapologetic. Writing to an old comrade a decade and a half later, he noted, “I never feel disposed to apologize for or excuse

LEFT: Union infantry attacks Fort McAllister on the outskirts of Savannah. Sherman’s old 2nd Division carried the works as their commander watched proudly from the roof of a nearby rice mill. BELOW: The view of Ossabaw Sound from inside Fort McAllister after its capture. Before Sherman could storm Savannah, Lt. Gen. William Hardee evacuated the city on December 21.

letter to Hardee demanding the city’s capitulation. In his exhortation Sherman intentionally mimicked Hood at Allatoona and Resaca, offering liberal terms but also threatening, “Should I be forced to resort to assault, or the slower and surer process of starvation, I shall then feel justified in resorting to the harshest measures, and shall make little effort to restrain my army.” Hardee was unimpressed and vowed defiance. Sherman reluctantly made plans to take Savannah by storm and conducted personal reconnaissance of its environs in preparation.

In the end Hardee evacuated the city on the night of December 21, marching north over a pontoon bridge across the Savannah River and wrecking the navy yard before departing. “I was disappointed that Hardee had escaped with his army,” said Sherman, “but on the whole we had reason to be content without the substantial fruits of victory. Entering Savannah, he jotted down, “Here terminated the ‘March to the Sea.’” Behind that bland statement, Sherman and his bummers had done more than \$100 million in damages to the State



vanquish the old opposing force of the whole, Hood’s army, it brings those who sat in darkness to see a great light.”

The *London Times*, couching its praise in a comparison its readers could understand, noted of Sherman’s feat, “Since the great Duke of Marlborough turned his back upon the Dutch and plunged hur-


anything. Those people made war on us, defied and dared us to come south to their country, where they boasted they would kill us and do all manner of horrible things. We accepted their challenge, and now for them to whine and complain of the natural and necessary results is beneath contempt.” □

“Put the Boys In”

BY PEDRO GARCIA



Cadets from Virginia Military Institute, led by 20-year-old Captain Benjamin A. Colonna, race past Bushong's Farm to fill a gap in the Confederate line at New Market. Painting by Keith Rocco.



After Union General Franz Sigel moved into the Shenandoah Valley in the spring of 1864, Confederate forces fell back to New Market. On May 15, Confederate General John C. Breckinridge ordered an attack.

As the Civil War continued in the spring of 1864, a Shenandoah Valley resident lamented, “Our prospects look gloomy, very gloomy.” Those prospects dimmed even further when the relentless new Union general in chief, Ulysses S. Grant, orchestrated a concerted scheme of simultaneous advances. “My primary mission,” Grant declared, “is to bring pressure to bear on the Confederacy so no longer [can] it take advantage of interior lines.” Grant focused on the key Southern cities of Atlanta and Richmond. While Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman drove into Georgia, Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks would advance into Louisiana and southern Arkansas. Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. George G. Meade would lead the Army of the Potomac against its old nemesis, Robert E. Lee, in Virginia.

In support of the drive on Richmond, Grant called for a move from western Virginia into the Shenandoah Valley to divert attention from Meade's effort, tying down much-needed Confederate troops. One of the richest and most productive regions in the South, the Shenandoah, called "the Breadbasket of the Confederacy," is cradled between the Allegheny and Blue Ridge Mountains. Approximately 125 miles long, the valley stretches from Martinsburg, West Virginia, to Staunton in southern Virginia. The headwaters of the Shenandoah River rise 10 miles below Staunton and flow northward to its confluence with the Potomac River at Harpers Ferry. The topography of the countryside gives rise to some odd local terminology. Because the river flowed from south to north, the northern end is referred to as the Lower Valley and the southern end as the Upper Valley. Hence, to travel north was considered going

With the 1864 presidential election looming, Abraham Lincoln had specifically asked the War Department to give Sigel an important and visible command. Sigel's influence with the burgeoning German community in St. Louis had been instrumental in electing Lincoln in 1860. The military commander's resume was mixed, at best, at this stage of the war. His military reputation was in almost inverse proportion to his political usefulness and ability to attract recruits. "I'm going to fight mit Sigel," German recruits would boast. When the war broke out, Sigel was commissioned a colonel in the 3rd Infantry Regiment in St. Louis. He got off to a bad start at the Battles of Carthage and Wilson's Creek, but despite his poor showings Sigel was promoted to brigadier general, further underscoring his prominence as a political general.

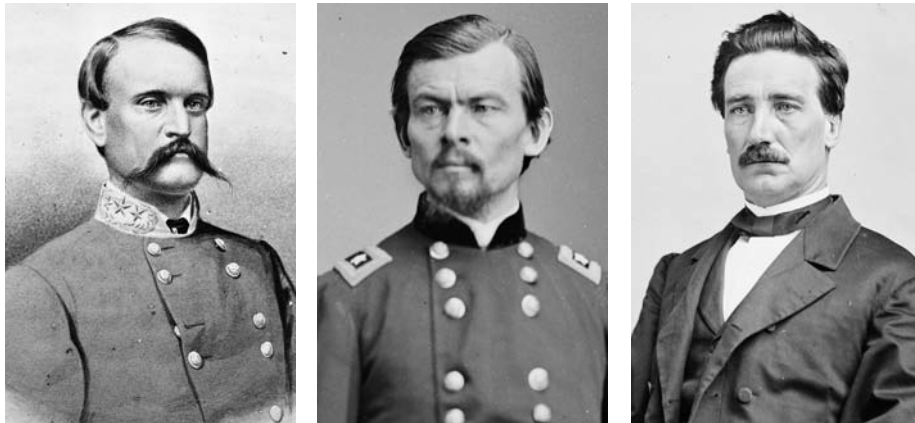
Sigel redeemed himself to a degree at

Sigel was more or less forced on Grant. Well aware of the German's deficiencies, Grant sought to limit his involvement without creating a political fuss. He ultimately decided to give Sigel an administrative and logistical support role, with troops in the field to be commanded by Ord. The attack on the railroad was given first priority, while Sigel's role was largely diversionary. Grant explained Sigel's part in the campaign to Sherman. "I don't expect much from Sigel's movement," wrote Grant to his confidant. "I don't calculate on very great results." Quoting Lincoln, Grant continued, "If Sigel can't skin himself, he can hold a leg while someone else does."

In stark contrast to Sigel's career, former U.S. Vice President John C. Breckinridge had performed admirably on the battlefield. The Kentucky native had seen his first major action at the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862, where he commanded a brigade of Kentucky troops, the soon to be famous "Orphan Brigade." His actions at Shiloh earned Breckinridge a promotion to major general and the respect of his men and fellow officers. As a hard and desperate fighter, he had few, if any, superiors in either army. In early March, he was given command of all Confederate forces in the Shenandoah Valley and asked to cover a vast geographical department that stretched from West Virginia to southwestern Virginia and parts of Tennessee and Kentucky. "I trust you will drive the enemy back," Lee wrote to Breckinridge. To do so, the former vice president had less than 5,000 troops at his disposal.

Ord, by contrast, was to have more than 9,500 men in his command, including 8,000 infantry provided by Sigel. But Sigel bridled at his support role and in the end sent Ord only 6,500 men. When Ord asked him to bring up supplies, Sigel responded, in effect, "I don't think I shall do it." Ord soon tired of Sigel's foot dragging and resigned his command on April 17, which was probably what Sigel was angling for in the first place. The German happily took over the column, moving south from Martinsburg on April 29. His

All: Library of Congress



Principal commanders at New Market included, left to right, Maj. Gen. John C. Breckinridge, Union Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel, and Maj. Gen. John D. Imboden, a native of nearby Staunton, Virginia.

down the valley, and moving south was considered going up the valley.

Grant's plan called for a Union column under Brig. Gen. George Crook to attack the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, one of Lee's vital lifelines, and seize the key transportation center at Staunton. A second column, 9,000 men strong, would tear up the rail line and descend on the major Confederate supply depot at Lynchburg. In command of the second column was Maj. Gen. Edward O.C. Ord, supported—somewhat reluctantly—by Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel.

the Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, in March 1862, deftly handling Union artillery. He was given another star and transferred to the eastern theater of war. He led a division and then a corps in the Shenandoah Valley, where he was part of a collective thumping at the hands of Confederate Maj. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson at the Battle of Second Manassas. He then took command of the largely German XI Corps of the Army of the Potomac but was abruptly relieved of command in February 1863. Since then, Sigel had been exiled to a minor post in Pennsylvania.



infantry, divided into two brigades, was led by Brig. Gen. Jeremiah Sullivan, while Sigel's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Julius Stahel, had charge of the cavalry.

As word of Sigel's advance reached Richmond, Breckinridge took steps to checkmate the Union move into the valley. The man charged with the defense was Brig. Gen. John D. Imboden. A native of Staunton, Imboden had intimate knowledge of his domain. He had served as a captain of artillery under Stonewall Jackson in 1861 and later recruited and raised a cavalry battalion. His most notable achievement came at Gettysburg, where he successfully covered the Confederate retreat and secured, against daunting odds, the army's vital crossing point over a rain-swollen Potomac River at Williamsport. Shortly afterward, Imboden was named district commander in the valley, with 1,500 troopers under his control, including the 18th, 23rd, and 62nd Virginia Mounted Infantry, as well as a battery of artillery. They were tasked with observing, harassing, and slowing down Sigel's advance, buying time for Breckinridge to assemble his forces.

Imboden sent two companies of the 23rd Virginia Cavalry, under Major Fielding Calmese, to operate on the road between

Romney and Winchester. Union scouts detected the activity, and portions of the 6th and 7th West Virginia Cavalry, as well as 14th Pennsylvania Cavalry, rode out in pursuit. The blue-clad horsemen tirelessly gave chase but failed to come to grips with the Confederates. No sooner had the Federals called off the pursuit than fresh Confederate cavalry appeared on the scene. "In a little while," wrote a resident of Winchester, "the Yankees came back and went down the Martinsburg road." In a few moments, they were followed by Calmese, leading his men triumphantly through the streets.

When the news of the running victory reached Breckinridge and Lee, it was viewed as a favorable portent of things to come. A soldier in the 51st Virginia wrote home, "My opinion is that right here in this country will be the next fighting in the spring." He was right. Before the month was out, Imboden was calling for local companies of reserves and militia to bolster his ranks. Rockingham and Augusta Counties, in the central part of the valley, contributed six companies of reservists made up of boys too young and men too old to join the army.

Imboden also reached out to Francis Smith, superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute at Lexington, raising the pos-

The 34th Massachusetts Infantry, photographed in camp near Washington, D.C., found itself in the thick of the fighting at New Market before driving from the battlefield.

sibility that the youthful cadets might be pressed into service. When the war began, the cadets had gone to Richmond to act as drillmasters for the thousands of raw recruits joining the army. In May 1862, they had marched with Jackson to the Battle of McDowell but did not see action there. Now, two years later, they were itching to get into the fight. The feeling was best summed up by a 19-year-old cadet who wrote his mother: "I think you had just as well give your consent at once to my resigning and entering the Army. I want to have some of the glory of the year '64 attached to my name." Smith offered the cadets to Robert E. Lee, but Lee expressed the droll hope that the boys would remain in school, thus avoiding the necessity of what President Jefferson Davis had termed "grinding the seed corn of the nation."

Sigel, satisfied that he had completed his preliminary assignment, moved his headquarters from Cumberland to Martinsburg and made final preparations for the trip southward up the valley. Two days later, Sigel's force entered Winchester and immediately abandoned any further idea of

advance. Despite continued evidence of the enemy's weakness, Sigel lost any sense of urgency, preferring to maintain a rigid routine of drill, inspection, and review—even staging mock battles to gauge how his troops would behave under fire. According to an officer in the 116th Ohio, such pointless posturing “bred in everyone the most supreme contempt for General Sigel. Not an officer or man retained a spark of respect for, or confidence in, him.”

Sigel's sloth-like advance was exacerbated by the need to detach large numbers of troops to deal with the threat posed by Confederate partisan raiders John Mosby and John “Hanse” McNeill, who were terrorizing Sigel's lines of supply and communication. Despite the incessant raiding and mounted clashes, Sigel's main body advanced to Woodstock on May 11. A sharp skirmish there drove the Confederate defenders from the town in such haste that they left behind several unsent telegrams written by Breckinridge and intended for Imboden. These communications revealed that several thousand Confederates were at that very moment coming to his assistance but that Breckinridge was still uncertain about Sigel's destination or purpose.

Having stumbled upon this invaluable intelligence, Sigel could not be spurred to action. Instead, he dispatched Colonel William Boyd and 300 troopers of the 1st New York Cavalry on a scouting mission to secure Sigel's left flank. Boyd soon ran into another Confederate trap at New Market Gap. The Southern troopers had inflicted two severe reverses on Federal forces in one week, and Sigel's cavalry would go into the coming battle seriously weakened.

Meanwhile, on the morning of May 13, some 40 miles away in Staunton, Breckinridge announced that he was “determined not to await Sigel's coming, but to march to meet him and give him battle wherever found.” The Kentuckian had arrived in town eight days earlier, mustering all the militia in the area, and on May 10 he had summoned the 264-man Corps of Cadets from the Virginia Military Institute, fresh

All: Virginia Military Institute



Left to right, VMI Commandant Lt. Col. Scott Shipp, 17-year-old cadet Thomas G. Jefferson, and Cadet Jack Stanard. The two cadets were mortally wounded in the battle.

from raising a commemorative flag at the gravesite of Stonewall Jackson, who had died exactly one year earlier. Breckinridge asked the cadets to stand by to help repel the Union invasion. Meanwhile, he was joined by the veteran brigades of Brig. Gens. John Echols and Gabriel Wharton, totaling another 2,500 men. Including Imboden's men, Breckinridge now mustered 4,816 men at arms.

As the Confederate column snaked through Harrisonburg on May 14, the low rumble of artillery and distant gunfire announced the arrival of Sigel's advance guard at New Market. Colonel Augustus Moor, commander of the 1st Brigade, was ordered to conduct a reconnaissance in force to probe Imboden's position and seize the small crossroads village if possible. Moor did so, driving the thin gray line of defenders four miles southwest of town onto a commanding eminence called Shirley's Hill.

The day's running skirmish settled into a brief but furious artillery duel. Fitful fighting continued throughout the night. “It had been raining all day and continued all night, a cold rain that soaked us to the skin,” remembered a soldier in the 123rd Ohio. “We remained in line all night, sleeping but little on the cold, muddy ground. It was one of the most uncomfortable nights I ever spent.” As darkness fell, Moor's brigade of roughly 2,300 men, fully one-third of the army, dug in northwest of town on a slightly lower rise called Manor's Hill.

The battlefield at New Market was a

box-like peninsula defined by Shirley's Hill on the south, Bushong's Hill on the north, the Shenandoah River on the west, and Smith's Creek to the east. The terrain would force the Federals to fight on a narrow front, and the rains flooded the local streams, rendering them impassable. It was on the far western point of the constricted land corridor at Bushong's Hill that Sigel's army would deploy for battle, but as Sunday, May 15, dawned, he was still 20 miles away at Woodstock.

Sunrise gave a clear view of the field, and Breckinridge studied it carefully with his binoculars. Satisfied that the enemy had no immediate offensive intentions, the Kentuckian declared: “We can attack and whip him here. I'll do it.” Artillery began barking back and forth as Breckinridge made his final dispositions on the northern slope of Shirley's Hill, out of Federal view. It would be an assault in depth, with Wharton's brigade on the left, Echols's brigade on the right, and the 62nd Virginia Mounted Infantry holding the center. The VMI cadets, whose spruce uniforms had drawn catcalls of “Katydids!” and “Rock-a-bye Baby!” from the amused veterans, formed in reserve, constituting Breckinridge's last line.

Just before the Confederate infantry stepped off, Breckinridge spurred his horse up to the young cadets. “Young gentlemen,” he said, “I hope there will be no occasion to use you, but if there is, I trust you will do your duty.” Commandant Lt. Col. Scott Shipp ordered the Corps' white battle flag unfurled while the band struck

up a jaunty tune as the cadets moved into place down Shirley's Hill. Shipp, at 24, was scarcely older than the cadets he commanded, whose average age was 17. The cadets were armed with Austrian rifles and 40 rounds of ammunition in their cartridge boxes. Two 3-inch rifled cannons from the school's artillery section rattled along behind them.

Shipp had not been briefed by the veteran generals to rush his cadets down the hill, and they moved at a leisurely rate, as though they were still on the parade ground. Suddenly, a Federal shell exploded in the midst of Companies C and D. The war had suddenly become all too real. Captain Govan Hill, an adult tactical officer in Company C, dropped with a fractured skull. Private Charles E. Read was struck over the right eye by a shell fragment, and James L. Merritt was hit in the abdomen by a piece of shrapnel that knocked him down but did not penetrate the skin. Pierre Woodlief of Company B also fell. Beside them, 17-year-old cadet John S. Wise was also hit. He remembered the shell vividly: "It burst directly in my face: lightning leaped, fire flashed, the earth rocked, the sky whirled around and I feel upon my knees. Cadet Sergeant [William] Cabell looked at me pityingly and called out, 'Close up, men!' as he passed. I knew no more." Finally, the rest of the corps reached the safety of the valley below.

On a field lashed by heavy rains, a double line of skirmishers from the 30th Virginia Battalion surged forward at 11 AM. A Federal soldier conceded later that he and his comrades had been taken by surprise. "We were not looking for trouble," he said, being "in ignorance of the fact of the proximity of Breckinridge's forces." As it was, Imboden struck first, sending the 18th and 23rd Virginia charging through the woods on the right and flushing out the blue-clad pickets. The gray line moved resolutely over the crest, down Shirley's Hill and through town, cheered on by citizens. One resident remembered, "The little town, which a moment before had seemed to sleep so peacefully that Sabbath morn, was now wreathed in battle smoke

and swarming with troops hurrying to their positions."

When fully fleshed out, Breckinridge's extended line of battle stretched well beyond the flanks of Moor's defensive position at Manor's Hill, making his line instantly untenable. A soldier in the 18th Connecticut wrote, "As soon as the Confederate support came in sight we were ordered to fall back." Another bluejacket from the 123rd Ohio recalled that the Confederates came "sweeping like an avalanche." From atop Manor's Hill, Major Theodore Lang fired off five messages to Sigel, urging him to come up quickly. Reinforcements dribbled in throughout the morning from the strung-out Federal column, and as they arrived

"As we went up there was evidence of a heavy fight going on in front," grumbled one disgusted artilleryman. "The road was lined with stragglers who kept shouting to us to give it to them, and then getting to the rear as fast as they could."

they were met by wounded and stragglers moving in the opposite direction. "As we went up there was evidence of a heavy fight going on in front," grumbled one disgusted artilleryman. "The road was lined with stragglers who kept shouting to us to give it to them, and then getting to the rear as fast as they could."

Sigel arrived on the field about noon and almost immediately demonstrated his lack of appreciation for the true conditions at the front, rebuking Lang for being unnecessarily excited about the fate of the army. With the Confederate juggernaut in full view, driving everything before them, Lang asked Sigel about the whereabouts of the rest of the army. When Sigel nonchalantly replied that they were coming, Lang countered with a searing "Yes, General, but too late." Sigel ordered Moor to evacuate his position slowly and fall back to a new one. Moor disengaged skillfully and withdrew

several hundred yards, reforming on a ridgeline known as Rice's Hill. In the process, he was compelled to give up the town of New Market.

At this point in the battle, Breckinridge stopped the advance, pausing to redress ranks, shift positions, and adapt his plans to the fluid circumstances. The halt consumed less than an hour, and the Confederates advanced again at 2 PM. Moor recalled that he was "hardly in line when the rebels heralded their advance by their peculiar yell." The onrushing Confederate wave swept forward with considerable momentum, and the second Federal position of the day dissolved into a chaotic withdrawal. However, Moor's short struggle had bought Sigel time to form a new

line atop Bushong's Hill. It ran for nearly a mile and included the 54th Pennsylvania, 34th Massachusetts, and 1st and 12th West Virginia Regiments. As the Confederates approached Sigel's main line, one of Breckinridge's staff officers noted, "It was evident that the enemy had determined to make his final stand."

Supporting the new Union line were four batteries that began working with trip-hammer rapidity and fearful precision. The Confederates continued to advance swiftly and steadily in the face of galling fire. A Federal artilleryman observed: "On they came without wavering, and closing up the gaps that four batteries were cutting through them, and yelling like demons. The order is passed for two-second fuses. The next moment there is a demand along the line for canister, the men work with a will, and we pour the canister among them and for about ten minutes we pour canister from twelve guns right

into them.” An officer in the 34th Massachusetts had a similar recollection: “We waited until they were close enough, and then rose up and gave it to them. They halted and kept up a hot fire. Three times their colors fell and were raised.”

The Confederate left-center faltered and collapsed. Within the space of a few minutes, the 62nd Virginia lost nearly half its strength, the right-half of the 51st Virginia was caved in, and the 1st Missouri and 30th Virginia were also badly broken up. The VMI cadets, following in reserve, again took casualties. Privates Henry Jones and Charles Crockett of Company D were killed instantly by an exploding shell.

With the Confederates reeling, there was an opportunity for a well-placed and well-led counterattack. “Just here a cavalry charge would have won the day for the Yankees,” conceded a wounded officer of the 30th Virginia. However, rather than striking a blow where the enemy had just been driven back in confusion, Sigel launched his weakened cavalry against the enemy right, where Echols’s brigade had yet to be engaged and where Breckinridge had placed 10 cannons and ordered the guns to be double-shotted with canister. An aide to the general reported, “It had scarcely been done before they were seen advancing in squadron front, when, com-

ing in range, the artillery opened.”

Among the massed artillery were two guns from VMI. “We got quickly into action with canister against cavalry charging down the road and adjacent fields. When the smoke cleared away the cavalry seemed to have been completely broken up,” recalled Lieutenant Collier Minge. A Federal sergeant noted succinctly, “They mowed us down like grass.” About this time, Sigel’s infantry was preparing its own counterattack aimed at the weakened Confederate center. The result was a series of disjointed, badly coordinated lunges at the enemy. “We were receiving fire not only from our front, but from our left, and almost our rear. In fact, we were nearly surrounded,” lamented an officer in the 34th Massachusetts.

To make matters worse, there was no cavalry support on the Union left, having been decimated in the earlier attempt to break the Confederate right. “The enemy pressed forward his right, which extended some distance beyond our left, and was rapidly flanking me in that direction,” reported Colonel Jason Campbell of the 54th Pennsylvania. Anxiously watching the attack unfold, a Federal gunner observed, “Our infantry forms for the charge; they move forward, with the glorious old flag to the front. I felt that the

day was ours, for their line was already giving ground. But alas, they do not go more than a hundred yards till they waver and fall back, and we now felt it would be a desperate struggle for the battery, for every man knew we were whipped.”

An ugly gap opened in the Confederate center, directly in front of Breckinridge’s only available reserves—the 26th Virginia Battalion and the VMI cadets. An aide, Major Charles Semple, suggested putting the cadets into line. Breckinridge resisted briefly, then conceded the inevitable. “Put the boys in,” he said, “and may God forgive me for the order.” The cadets swept forward with a wild yell, heading into the orchard below Bushong’s Hill. “The fire was withering,” recalled Commandant Shipp. “It seemed impossible than any living creature could escape.” Private Beverly “Jack” Stanard fell mortally wounded with a shattered leg; his comrade, Private Thomas G. Jefferson, was fatally shot in the stomach. Shipp was struck in the left shoulder by a spent shell fragment and turned over command to senior tactical officer Henry A. Wise. One cadet remembered a regular officer’s attempt to rally his shattered command: “I shall never forget his language—‘Rally men and go to the front. Here you are running to the rear like a lot of frightened sheep. Look at those

The Granger Collection, New York



Into the Cauldron

On the last day of December 1862, Confederate forces under General Braxton Bragg launched a surprise attack on Maj. Gen. William Rosecrans's Army of the Cumberland at Stones River, Tennessee. BY JOSHUA SHEPHERD





Union commander William Rosecrans gestures toward the onrushing Confederates during the height of the Battle of Stones River. It would take two days of fighting to decide the victor.

For the weary troops of the Army of the Cumberland, there was precious little sleep to be had in the farm fields and cedar thickets northwest of Murfreesboro, Tennessee. For four days, the men had battled driving rain and ankle-deep mud as they groped their way southeast from Nashville in search of their Rebel opponents. By the evening of December 30, 1862, the Federals were miserably camped, many without tents, on sodden ground that offered little comfort from the cold night air.

Senior officers fared little better. Maj. Gen. Alexander McCook, commander of the army's right wing, was curled up in the corner of a rail fence when he was abruptly wakened a little after 2 AM by two of his subordinates, Brig. Gens. Phil Sheridan and Joshua Sill. The officers, former roommates at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, were agitated; for several hours, Sill had listened as Confederate troops moved in the darkness across his front, heading, he was certain, to strike the army's exposed flank.

A bleary-eyed McCook listened for some time then enjoined Sheridan and Sill not to worry. The right flank would hold just fine, he announced, and he further doubted "that there was a necessity for any further dispositions." While McCook fell back asleep, Sheridan and Sill, disappointed that they had gotten nowhere with the wing commander, returned to their troops. It was not the first time, literally or figuratively, that McCook had been caught napping.

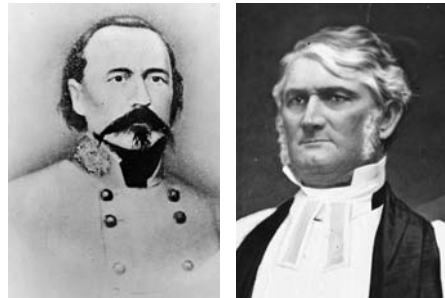
That October, commanding the left flank of the Army of the Ohio at Perryville, Kentucky, his wing had been the target of a Confederate surprise attack. McCook, whose command had been badly chewed up in the subsequent fighting, did little to improve his reputation. Ohio Colonel John Beatty regarded him as little more than an overrated "chucklehead" who was "deficient in the upper story." The army's overall commander, Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell, fared even worse. Repeatedly prodded by the Lincoln administration to mount a vigorous pur-

suit of Confederate forces into eastern Tennessee, Buell obstinately refused, opting for a move toward Nashville in defiance of orders. Not surprisingly, Buell was unceremoniously dumped a few weeks later.

His replacement, Maj. Gen. William Starke Rosecrans, seemed a more promising choice. A West Pointer with impeccable academic credentials, Rosecrans had graduated fifth in the Class of 1842. Elite assignments to the Corps of Engineers and the West Point faculty followed. An Ohio militia colonel at the outset of the war, the Cincinnati-born Rosecrans went on to serve with distinction at Rich Mountain, Virginia, in 1861, and was eventually assigned command of the Federal Army of the Mississippi. While Buell floundered in Kentucky, Rosecrans performed well in the Deep South, scoring timely victories at Iuka and Corinth, Mississippi. When Buell was sacked, Rosecrans was the logical choice to succeed him.

Rosecrans received his appointment on October 24 and went right to work. Fearing a Confederate thrust toward the Tennessee capital, Rosecrans directed his troops, redesignated the Army of the Cumberland, into Nashville on November 7. He quickly whipped his command into shape, restoring discipline in the ranks and cashiering substandard officers. His personal command style was unique. A fervently devout Roman Catholic, Rosecrans was cool under fire but also subject to fits of frenetic overactivity. Despite his eccentricities, he was resoundingly popular with the troops. A skilled organizer, Rosecrans worked tirelessly to see that his men were always properly supplied and well fed. They responded accordingly. Rosecrans's appointment, claimed Robert Stewart of the 15th Ohio, occasioned "silent rejoicing everywhere."

The same could not be said for Rosecrans's opposite number. The commander of the newly christened Army of Tennessee, General Braxton Bragg, was arguably the most reviled general officer in the Confederacy—and not without reason. Although his personal bravery and dedication to the cause were not in question, Bragg's notoriously contentious personality followed him



Some of the principal generals at Stones River included, clockwise from top left: Alexander McCook, William Rosecrans, Leonidas Polk, and John P. McCown.

wherever he went. The acerbic Bragg had turned personal vendettas into something of a cottage industry, engaging in a series of bitter feuds with nearly every senior officer under his command. The imbroglios had ramped up during the 1862 Kentucky campaign, when a number of his chief lieutenants called for his ouster. Bragg kept his job thanks to the good offices of President Jefferson Davis, a longtime friend, but his continued leadership ensured that the Army of Tennessee would remain crippled by dissension.

On the front lines in middle Tennessee, such a lack of cohesion courted disaster. Rosecrans, incessantly hectored by the War Department to mount an offensive, got his men in motion on December 26. The troops, advancing in a wide arc as they marched southeast from Nashville, were on a collision course with the Army of Tennessee. Rosecrans's army, roughly 41,000 strong, was divided into three wings. The left wing was led by Maj. Gen. Thomas Crittenden, a Mexican War veteran, Kentucky grandee, and solidly mediocre political general. The right wing was under the command of the affable McCook, who recently had proved so unlucky, or inept,

at Perryville. Rosecrans's center was led by stolid Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas. Although lacking the charismatic élan of many of his contemporaries, Thomas was a reliable career officer. Bearing the not entirely affectionate sobriquets "Old Slow Trot" and "Pap," he was by no means a flamboyant leader, but his laconic composure had a steady influence on troops under fire.

They would soon be in desperate need of such leadership. As Rosecrans advanced over the road network southeast of Nashville, the importance of one thoroughfare, the Nashville Pike, became increasingly apparent. The macadamized road was the most direct route toward the enemy and largely paralleled the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad, a vital supply artery for any potential Union thrust toward Chattanooga. All major roads, as well as the rail line, converged at the town of Murfreesboro, a middling-sized commercial center situated near a shallow, meandering waterway, Stones River.

As the advance units of the two armies



Major General John C. Breckinridge's Confederates, right, attack the well-ordered infantry and artillery of Maj. Gen. Lovell Rousseau's Union division.

sparred and skirmished, a major confrontation in the vicinity of Murfreesboro became all but inevitable. By the evening of December 27, Bragg had concentrated the bulk his army at the town, divided into two corps. On the right was the corps led by Lt. Gen. William Hardee. A career officer and author of a widely used tactics manual, Hardee initially had enjoyed good relations with Bragg, but their relationship was souring rapidly. On Bragg's left was the corps commanded by Lt. Gen. Leonidas Polk, a seemingly competent West Pointer who had opted for the Episcopal ministry and was serving at the outbreak of the war as the Bishop of Louisiana. Despite the pacific nature of his profession, Polk's disagreements with Bragg had degenerated into a bitter personal feud.

Such squabbling didn't bode well with a major fight in the offing. By December 30, both armies had moved into position northwest of Murfreesboro; a good portion of Confederate forces were deployed west of Stones River. Hardee, who considered himself an expert on such matters, was

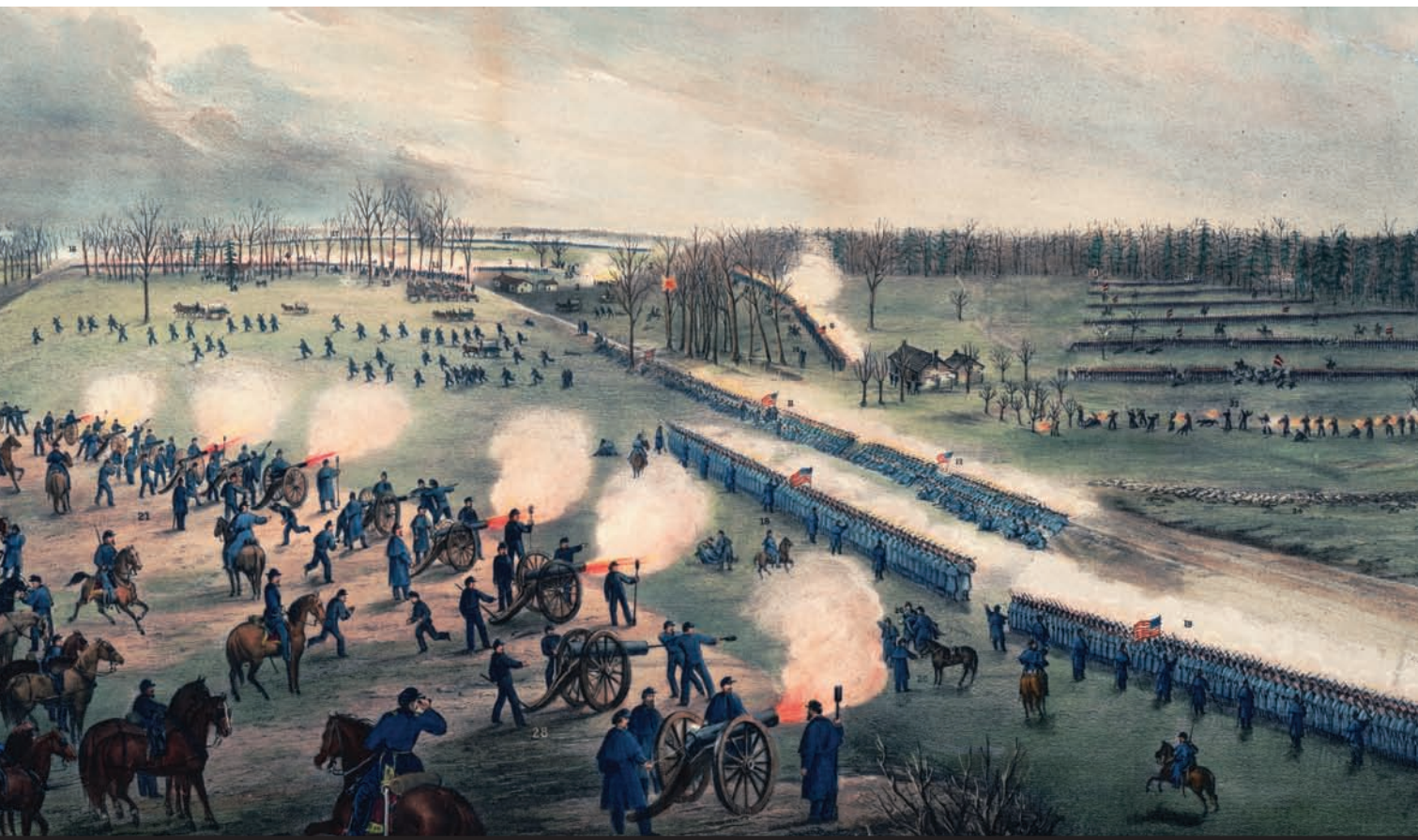
exasperated by the dispositions. Stones River, he warned, could be easily forded by an enemy flanking party, and the rugged ground west of the river was decidedly unsuitable for maneuvering large bodies of infantry. "The open fields beyond town are fringed with dense cedar brakes," wrote Hardee, "offering excellent shelter for approaching infantry, and are almost impervious to artillery."

The forbidding nature of the ground failed to dissuade either army commander. For his part, Rosecrans drafted an ambitious battle plan. He expected to receive an attack on McCook's right wing and directed the Ohioan to simply tie up Confederate forces in the coming action. "Take a strong position," ordered Rosecrans, "if the enemy attacks you, fall back slowly, refusing your right, contesting the ground inch by inch." While McCook maintained his ground, Crittenden was to make the primary effort. Supported by Thomas, Crittenden was to cross Stones River, assail the Confederate right, and drive hard for Murfreesboro in the enemy's rear. If all

went well, asserted a confident Rosecrans, the Rebel line of retreat would be seized, "probably destroying their army."

The Confederates were unlikely to simply await such a development. Coincidentally, Bragg had outlined a remarkably similar plan, intending to implement a grand turning movement against Rosecrans's right. The prickly commander planned to execute a devastating right wheel into Rosecrans's flank and roll up the Federal line *en echelon* from left to right, driving the enemy into Stones River and seizing the Nashville Pike, Rosecrans's only viable avenue of retreat and resupply.

Bragg's selection of the attack's spearhead was a curious one. The lead division was that of Maj. Gen. John McCown, an officer whom Bragg held in little esteem; the Tennessean, in Bragg's opinion, lacked the requisite capacity and nerve for weighty assignments. McCown's supporting division, led by Maj. Gen. Patrick R. Cleburne, was in better hands. Cleburne, an Irish immigrant and British Army veteran, had started the war as a private soldier but





Colonel John Beatty's Union brigade, composed of Midwestern troops from Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky, reinforce the right flank against Maj. Gen. Patrick Cleburne's Confederates. Beatty was soon forced back with heavy losses.

earned his general's stars in short order. Wielding a keen intellect, Cleburne had likewise proved himself a fierce fighter who kept a cool head in action.

By dawn on New Year's Eve, Federal troops went about their morning routine with misplaced nonchalance. Rations were cooked, coffee was boiled, and arms remained stacked. The enlisted men were largely in the dark regarding the tactical situation, and most of their officers were equally detached. On the far right, Brig. Gen. August Willich was sanguine that the Confederates posed no serious threat in his sector. "They are so quiet out there," he remarked to a fellow officer, "that I guess they are all no more here."

At 6:30 AM such illusions were shattered. Federal pickets could hardly believe their eyes. Out of the morning mist stepped a fearsome line of Rebel infantry, advancing

in ominous silence. The attack was spearheaded by McCown, arrayed in a three-brigade front that easily overlapped the Federal right; Cleburne followed 500 yards behind. The center of McCown's line was held by Brig. Gen. Mathew Ector's brigade, a tough outfit largely composed of dismounted Texas cavalry. Northern batteries frantically opened up on the Confederates but failed to halt their progress. Federal Brig. Gen. Edward Kirk, in a desperate bid to buy time, ordered his 34th Illinois to attack the Rebels. The Illinoisans went forward gamely but were quickly brushed aside, leaving the exposed Federal position wide open.

There was little time for startled Union troops to react. Coming on at the double quick and howling like Indians, the Texans tore into the Federal line. Kirk's brigade, which bore the brunt of the initial onslaught, fought briefly and then disintegrated. Kirk was carried from the field with a shattered hip. Although the Confederates had run a gauntlet of artillery fire, the contest with Kirk's infantry was over almost

as soon as it began. The assault was "like a storm taking them completely by surprise," recalled a delighted Captain John Lavender of the 4th Arkansas. "Their coffee pots was on the fire frying their meal, guns in stacks."

With Kirk scattered, the full weight of the Confederate juggernaut fell on Willich's brigade. Cut off from the rest of the division, Willich's hapless troops took the weight of Ector's brigade full in the flank. Isolated groups of Federal troops put up a hopeless fight, but most fled in complete disorder. They had, sometimes literally, been caught with their pants down. A lieutenant in the 14th Texas recalled that "many of the Yanks were either killed or retreated in their night clothes." Hundreds were taken prisoner during the chaotic rout, including Willich, who was snatched up by exuberant Texans.

In little more than 30 minutes of whirlwind fighting, the two brigades occupying Rosecrans's right flank had been nearly obliterated. McCown's troops, exhilarated that the enemy had crumbled so quickly,



veered off to the west, hot on the heels of fleeing Yankees. The three brigades maintained good order but were badly out of position. Cleburne, bringing up his supporting division, ran into fresh Federal troops and was perplexed that McCown had seemingly disappeared from his front. Unfazed by the mix-up, Cleburne filled the gap with his own troops and pressed on.

Cleburne had run into the Federal division of Jefferson C. Davis, a scrappy Hoosier brigadier who, much to the amusement of his own men, shared his name with the Rebel president. Davis had time to adjust his troops, realigning Colonel P. Sidney Post's brigade to face the Confederate onslaught. In Post's right rear was a reserve brigade under the command of Colonel Philemon Baldwin, who had his troops take what cover they could behind a cornfield and rail fence. Both brigades counted on support from the ever-efficient Federal batteries.

Confederate officers could clearly discern that the Union position would not be a pushover. The Arkansas brigades of Brig.

Gens. Evander McNair and St. John Liddell became snarled during the advance, and the two brigadiers halted the attack while they bickered about how best to hit Baldwin. McCown had to personally sort the matter out, eventually ordering both brigades forward in unison. Liddell, a West Point dropout, was a good choice for a tough job. A sensible combat commander, Liddell was respected by his men and brave to a fault.

Hat in hand, he personally led them forward. Liddell's Arkansans advanced in the open and paid a grim price. Enemy artillery and small arms swept his ranks, and Liddell, apprehensive that his troops would be slaughtered if they pressed forward unsupported, halted the brigade. The deadlock was broken when a tardy McNair finally brought his brigade into the fight. Sweeping forward at a run, the Arkansans wrecked an impromptu force that Federal officers had patched together on Baldwin's right. McNair then swung his brigade toward Baldwin's main force, which cracked under the pressure. The Federals fell back reluctantly, the commander of the 1st Ohio resorting to blistering profanity to get his Buckeyes to retreat. Liddell's troops, who had been roughly handled during the exchange of gunfire, plunged forward and succeeded in dislodging the Union troops.

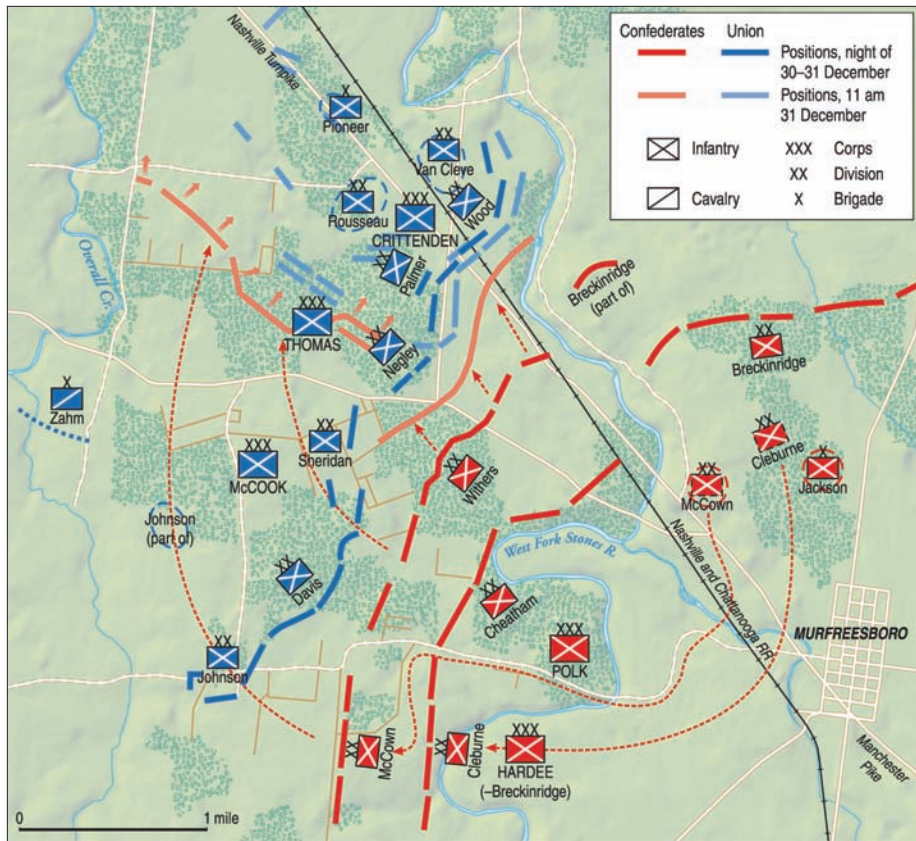
Post's brigade, which sat astride the Gresham Lane, fared little better. Soon after Post had his men in position, Confederate troops surged toward his front. It was Brig. Gen. Bushrod Johnson's Tennessee brigade that advanced across open ground and suffered badly for it. Post's infantry unleashed a hail of musketry, and they were further supported by Captain Oscar Pinney's four guns of the 5th Wisconsin Artillery. Pinney, who had been anxiously awaiting the opportunity to get into action, did grim work. Tearing great gaps in their ranks, Pinney's accurate fire left the Tennesseans stalled in the open. Rebel artillery soon struck back. Unlimbering behind the beleaguered infantry, Captain Putnam Darden's Jefferson Flying Artillery subjected Pinney's guns to intense counterbattery fire. Pinney

was forced to draw off his guns. With the Union artillery in full retreat, Johnson's brigade charged forward and broke Post's right, unhinging the entire brigade line.

The next Federal brigade in line, commanded by Colonel William P. Carlin, was strongly positioned to receive an attack. Carlin, a stern professional soldier with a reputation as a tough fighter, had his men situated among boulders in a thick stand of cedars east of the Gresham Lane. The cedar thicket offered poor visibility, and the onrushing Confederates had no idea that he was waiting for them. They were, at least, coming on in strength—two brigades under the command of Brig. Gens. S.A.M. Wood and Lucius Polk, nephew of the fighting bishop. Like Cleburne, neither brigade commander was aware that McCown had careened off course. Polk's troops unexpectedly came under fire, while Wood's oblivious Butternuts stumbled into a deadly trap. From near point-blank range, the Confederates took a devastating volley from the concealed ranks of the 101st Ohio. Staggered by the ambush, Wood pulled back.

Carlin drew in his right flank in anticipation of a renewed Confederate thrust, but the numbers were against him. Wood and Polk threw their combined weight at his line and Carlin ordered a withdrawal in the face of the deadly pincers. The Federals were subjected to withering crossfire; Carlin himself was wounded as his men scrambled for the rear. "Everything was perfect confusion," recalled Jay Butler of the 101st Ohio, "men and horses running in every direction and Rebels after us, firing upon us and yelling like Indians."

Despite their initial success in shattering the Federal right, Confederate troops soon ran into mounting difficulty as the fighting expanded. As the attack shifted north, the battle came increasingly under Polk's direction. Although the bishop was a West Point graduate, he was better equipped for the pulpit than the battlefield. He had thrown his wing into disarray the previous day after instituting a muddled reorganization and now committed his formidable command in piecemeal fashion. Polk's lead division



ABOVE: Fighting at Stones River centered on the macadamized Nashville Turnpike and the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad, which ran parallel to the pike. Confederate efforts concentrated on getting behind the Union army and the two thoroughfares. **OPPOSITE:** *Harper's Weekly* artist William Travis, an eyewitness to the battle, sketched this picture of Union troops fleeing from a Confederate attack. Firmer troops stand fast at top left.

commander, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Franklin Cheatham, didn't help matters. A barrel-chested bull of a man, Cheatham was a tough fighter whose undeniable bravery was sadly compromised by excessive fondness for the bottle. Subsequent to the battle at Stones River, the general would be dogged by persistent rumors that he had been pitifully inebriated during the fighting.

The most nagging problem for Confederate troops proved to be Union General Sheridan. The scrappy little Irishman had remained edgy since the previous evening, and he had ordered his division under arms well before dawn. Far from being caught unawares, his troops, largely Midwestern volunteers, were ready and waiting for the enemy, and Sheridan had also bolstered his line with artillery. The right flank brigade, led by Joshua Sill, was formed on a ridge-line crowned with heavy timber. Sheridan and Sill were among the few Federal gen-

erals who had actively prepared for the Confederate attack. Paired together in the face of impending crisis, they would prove a formidable duo.

The grim task of assaulting Sheridan's position fell to the brigade led by Colonel J.Q. Loomis, who brought his troops forward roughly an hour behind schedule. Loomis's men, largely Alabamians, were forced to brave a 300-yard expanse of open ground and were badly cut up in the process. When they neared the wood line, panicked Federal troops from Colonel William Woodruff's brigade fled into the timber on Loomis's left. The 26th Alabama impetuously surged into the gap but left their own flank dangerously exposed in the process. The troops of the 35th Illinois unleashed a deadly enfilade fire into the Alabamians, abruptly scattering them to the rear.

Loomis's center regiment, the 1st

Louisiana, was fortunate to face the 24th Wisconsin, a fresh regiment of greenhorns that broke in short order. But on the Confederate right the two opposing lines viciously mauled each other in a stand-up fight that lasted half an hour. Both sides took a heavy beating and the Rebels, in the open and subject to artillery fire, were the first to crack. When they fled to the rear, the Federals counterattacked and cleared the Rebels from the field to their front.

It had been a short but ghastly fight, and two brigade commanders were already out of action. Loomis was injured when artillery fire sent a tree limb crashing on top of him; Sill, who had ridden up and down the line encouraging his troops, was felled when a Minie bullet fatally struck him in the mouth and exited the back of his head. His aide, Lieutenant John Mitchell, found the stricken brigadier "unconscious and alone, bubbling out his last breaths through blood that thickly flowed over his fair face."

The Federals had little time to rest. Within minutes, a fresh line of Confederates appeared in the distance, the reserve brigade of Colonel Alfred Vaughan. Vaughan's troops had jeered the Alabamians for retreating, and one winded soldier had angrily pointed to the Yankees and barked, "Yes, and you'll find it the hottest place that you ever struck."

Vaughan's men were indeed in for a rude awakening. His troops muscled aside Woodruff's Federals but were quickly driven off by a counterattack. Only the hard-driving 9th Texas, oblivious that the rest of the brigade had fallen back, pressed forward. The regiment's leader, Colonel William Young, repeatedly ordered his men forward to engage the 35th Illinois but quickly found that he had led his men into a deadly crossfire. Trapped between the 35th and 38th Illinois, Young scorned the notion of falling back. Dramatically lifting the regimental colors, Young ordered a fresh charge directly into the 35th Illinois. His desperate gamble paid off, the Illinoisans broke, and Woodruff's line came unhinged.

Sill's former outfit was likewise the target of a fresh Confederate brigade, that of

Colonel Arthur Manigault. The South Carolinian led his troops into the same firestorm that had chewed up Loomis. Advancing without support, the Confederates were sent reeling back across the field. Despite his division's admirable performance in the face of repeated attacks, Sheridan nonetheless deemed it high time to pull the troops back to better ground. His men were running low on ammunition; worse yet, it was obvious that the Rebels were regrouping for a concerted push for the Wilkinson Pike.

Sheridan narrowly extricated his division before the blow struck. Desperate to get his troops back to better defensible ground, Sheridan ordered Colonel George Roberts's brigade to mount a counterattack into the advancing Confederates. Roberts, who defiantly exposed himself in front of his own line, histrionically appealed for his men to rely on cold steel. "Don't fire a shot!" he shouted. "Drive them with the bayonet!" His brigade tore into Manigault's brigade and gave Sheridan a brief but much-needed breathing spell.

Along the Nashville Pike, Rosecrans was painfully slow to comprehend the magnitude of the looming disaster. Prior to launching his own attack earlier that morning, the general had, as was customary, heard Mass along with his friend and

chief of staff, Lt. Col. Julius P. Garesché. He then optimistically sent two of Crittenden's divisions across Stones River in execution of his planned attack on Bragg's right. Due to a lack of clear information, Rosecrans remained blissfully unaware that his right had caved in. After receiving the first vague reports from the right wing, Rosecrans remained confident that everything was proceeding as planned. "It is working right," he announced to his staff. If McCook could maintain his ground, "we will swing into Murfreesboro and cut them off."

Such an assessment was utterly disconnected from reality, a fact that became increasingly apparent. When Rosecrans received word that Willich's brigade had been obliterated, he sprang to action with characteristic energy, immediately ordering one of Thomas's divisions under the command of Maj. Gen. Lovell Rousseau to shore up the line on Sheridan's right. At the same, he called back the two divisions he had sent across Stones River. Far from assuming the offensive, Rosecrans was locked in a desperate defensive battle that threatened the destruction of his entire army.

As the battle raged unabated on the right, Federal officers enjoyed mixed success as they frantically attempted to rally their bro-

ken and disordered commands. The tangled cedar thickets and farm fields south of the Wilkinson Pike were the scene of a bloody running fight that took a horrific toll of life. "I cannot remember ever seeing more dead men and horses and captured cannon, all jumbled together," recalled Private Sam Watkins of the 1st Tennessee. "The ground was literally covered with blue coats dead." While Manigault regrouped his disordered brigade, he found help in the form of Brig. Gen. George Maney's Tennesseans. Manigault's men had been taking a beating from two Federal batteries, those of Captains Charles Houghtalling and Asahel Bush, that had the South Carolina troops trapped in a deadly crossfire.

The two brigadiers agreed to launch their troops at the batteries in unison, Maney at Bush and Manigault at Houghtalling. Bush's battery fled before Maney could close on the position, and the Tennessean assumed that Manigault had already seized Houghtalling's guns as well. The South Carolinian, however, was nowhere to be found. When Maney's luckless troops approached Houghtalling's battery, which they unaccountably assumed to be friendly, they were greeted by a murderous salvo that disabused them of the notion. While Houghtalling's Illinoisans banged away at



every Rebel in sight, bewildered Confederate officers dickered over the identity of the gunners and what to do about them.

As the Confederate attack proceeded in costly fits and starts, Sheridan was granted precious time in organizing a hasty defense of the most forbidding terrain on the field. While maintaining contact with Brig. Gen. James Negley's division on his left, Sheridan bent back his right until his position assumed the shape of a large "V." It was a precarious salient that pointed far to the south, but it was situated in a boulder-strewn cedar forest so dense that it constituted ready-made breastworks.

When Manigault's brigade at last lurched forward, the general directed his troops at the formidable concentration of Federal guns at the apex of Sheridan's hairpin defensive line. For the men who grappled there, it was a terrifying experience. The crouching soldiers of the 42nd Illinois that awaited the Rebels could see next to nothing. The cedars were so dense, recalled one survivor, that they were not aware of the approach of the enemy until they saw their glistening bayonets a few feet from them. In a few paralyzing moments, the forest floor erupted with flashes of musketry. Men dropped by the dozen as the two sides savagely mauled each other. The Alabamians, dazed by the punishment, fell back.

What ensued was one of the most savage and sustained actions of the war. As advancing Confederate troops curled around the Union salient, they unleashed repeated assaults at the Federal position. Fortunately for the defenders, the disjointed attacks were considerably blunted due to lack of coordination. Exhausted and mystified Confederate officers led their troops into a bewildering maze of tangled cedar thickets and limestone outcroppings. The forest was rapidly blanketed in choking clouds of smoke, and opposing lines routinely stumbled into each other at close quarters. The carnage was immense. Lt. Col. Junius Scales, who led his 30th Mississippi into the brutal maelstrom, later recalled that "every foot of soil over which we passed seemed dyed with the life blood of someone."

Both sides fought with bitter tenacity. Wave after wave of Confederate troops clashed against the forest with little effect. Rosecrans, who was desperately organizing a last-ditch defense of the Nashville Turnpike, ordered Sheridan to buy time for the rest of the army by holding his position at all extremities. His troops did just that. Caught in the closing jaws of a Confederate assault that swept in from the west, south, and east, the Federals were subjected to a horrendous crossfire made worse by Rebel artillery. Confederate commanders had rolled up every available gun to hammer away at the Yankees, sending a storm of shells crashing through the forest. Trees splintered and cowering soldiers were torn to pieces by sharp wooden projectiles ricocheting among the boulders.

For more than an hour the battered Union troops held their position, but eventually they began to run low on ammunition. Sensing the inevitable, Sheridan reluctantly ordered a retreat. The Federals came to rue the impressive rock formations that had served as such inviting defensive positions. As they scrambled over the boulders, they fell prey to Confederate formations that closed in for the kill. Few of the Federal artillery pieces could be extricated from the deadly trap; the boulder-laced cedar thickets, explained Sheridan, were "almost impenetrable for wheeled carriages." The veterans who struggled in the confounding labyrinth of cedar trees were witness to horrors that they would never forget. "The history of the combat in those dark cedar thickets," recalled a soldier of the 36th Illinois, "will never be known."

For the exhausted Illinoisans who fled for the rear, the scene conjured up gruesome images of the Chicago stockyards; they christened the ground the Slaughter Pen. Sheridan's beleaguered division had been decimated, but their resolute defense of the army's dangerously exposed flank had afforded Rosecrans priceless time to patch together a new defensive line along the Nashville Pike.

The unexpected ferocity of the Confederate attack had wrecked McCook's wing, and thousands of troops fled for the rear

in complete chaos. "Fugitives and stragglers emerged from the cedars in full view," recalled Lieutenant John Yaryan, "followed by confused masses of panic-stricken troops." Rosecrans himself was anything but composed, becoming nearly hysterical as he worked frantically to save the army and his own reputation. The general grasped at every available reserve to stabilize his collapsed right flank.

Off to Sheridan's right, Rousseau directed his division into the dense cedar thickets south of the Nashville Pike. They plugged the gap none too soon. Subsequent to the morning's confusion, McCown had reorganized his battered division and pushed hard for the Union rear. Rousseau's troops tangled with the Confederates briefly and then fell back to the safety of supporting artillery along the pike. In the confusion, Colonel John Beatty's brigade never got the word to retire. A solid combat leader, Beatty had received orders to hold his position "until hell freezes over," and he endeavored to do just that.

Beatty's Midwesterners hastily threw together ad hoc breastworks of tree limbs and settled in for a fight. Lucius Polk led his brigade against the stronghold and was roughly handled in the process. After receiving withering fire during a failed frontal attack, Polk attempted to edge past Beatty's right, but abruptly ran into the concealed ranks of the 15th Kentucky. The Bluegrass Unionists fired an unexpected volley into the Rebels that sent them reeling. Beatty had belatedly wised up. After repeated attempts to make contact with adjacent units, he came to the conclusion that his brigade had been abandoned. The annoyed colonel pulled his men out and sardonically explained that "the contingency to which General Rousseau referred—that is to say, that hell had frozen over"—had indeed taken place.

Beatty's attempts to rally his brigade failed until he reached the turnpike. McCown's brigades then mopped up the last Federal resistance in the cedars, pressed toward the pike, and halted at the edge of the forest. Lines were dressed before renewing the assault. Once again the rugged ter-



In another Travis sketch, a momentarily unflappable Rosecrans, right, peers through binoculars at the fighting while Confederate artillery shells explode amid Union artillery in the foreground.

rain, paired with the inevitable fog of war, ensured that the Confederate thrust for the Nashville Pike would result in uncoordinated butchery.

Ector, whose hard-fighting Texans had enjoyed such success earlier in the morning, went forward unsupported across open ground. Waiting for the veteran Texans were green Union troops. In his desperation to fill gaps along the Nashville Pike, Rosecrans had ordered up Brig. Gen. John Morton's Pioneer Brigade, an engineering outfit expected to see little action. The Pioneers were supported by Battery B, Pennsylvania Light Artillery, and Captain James Stokes's Chicago Board of Trade Battery. Raised and equipped by patriotic Chicago commodities traders, the men of the battery had yet to see a serious fight.

The Texans streamed across the open ground but soon found themselves in a tight spot. Slugging it out with the Pioneer Brigade, Ector's right, lashed by artillery fire, took the worst of it. The Texans' left fared even worse. Their flank was unprotected by supporting units, and Colonel Samuel Beatty's Union brigade pitched into

their left. The bitter struggle ultimately left the Federals master of the field after Ector, reluctantly, pulled his men out.

Beatty, along with Colonel James Fyffe's brigade, followed close on the heels of the routed Texans but ran into unexpected resistance of their own when they neared the cedars. It was Cleburne's division, stretching far beyond the Federal flank. The doughty Arkansan wasted little time in throwing his men at the overextended Yankees. Faced with overwhelming pressure, Colonel Charles Harker pulled his Federal brigade back to protected ground far off Fyffe's right. For Fyffe and Beatty, the move was a disaster. Swiftly edging past Fyffe, Cleburne's veterans tore into the exposed Federal flank and unhinged the two brigades. Panic-stricken Yankees fled in confusion, and Cleburne's entire division headed for the final prize—possession of the Nashville Pike.

In the face of looming catastrophe, Rosecrans scooped up every available regiment and threw them into line. In what the pious general could only have regarded as a miracle, the threat inexplicably evaporated. As astonished Confederate brigadiers watched in amazement, their vaunted regiments broke and fled for the rear in considerable confusion. Liddell, for his part, was out-

raged by the sudden collapse of the Confederate attack. "The movement was totally unexpected," reported the Louisianan, "and I have yet to learn that there exists a cause commensurate with the demoralization that ensued." Cleburne was more sympathetic to the plight of his weary foot soldiers. Running low on ammunition and unsupported by artillery, Cleburne noted that his men "had little or no rest the night before; they had been fighting since dawn, without relief, food, or water." Quite simply, they had reached the limits of human endurance.

Bragg was nonetheless determined to break the enemy once and for all. Rather than redouble his efforts against the shattered Federal left, Bragg focused his energies on the right, where, he thought, Rosecrans's remaining flank was invitingly situated for a crushing blow. The prickly army chief was hopeful that a final drive against the weakened Federal left would achieve a decisive breakthrough, seize the Nashville Pike, and occasion the complete disintegration of the Army of the Cumberland. Bragg, however, would face fierce resistance in the form of a particularly stubborn Federal brigade under the command of Colonel William B. Hazen.

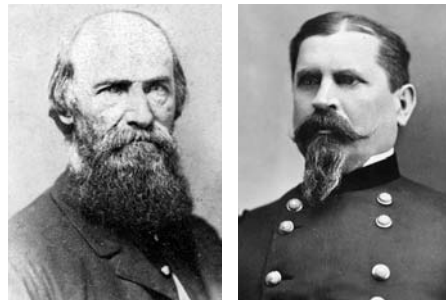
A hard-bitten Old Army man, Hazen had

graduated in the West Point Class of 1855 and cut his teeth fighting Comanche on the southern plains. Badly wounded during a fight in 1859, Hazen was back in the field as an Ohio colonel at the outbreak of the war. He was also one of the toughest brigade commanders in Crittenden's left wing. Hazen's four regiments, the 41st Ohio, 9th Indiana, 6th Kentucky, and 110th Illinois, were positioned across the Nashville Pike and would defy the Army of Tennessee for the better part of a day. They were drawn up in a conspicuous stand of timber that would forever be remembered as the scene of unspeakable carnage—the Round Forest.

Troops positioned in the vicinity of the Round Forest had sparred with the Confederates since daybreak, but their first major challenge came from Brig. Gen. James Chalmers's Mississippi brigade. Not untypical for Confederate attacks that day, Chalmers's troops came forward unsupported. Adding insult to injury, the 44th Mississippi on Chalmers's right went into action woefully underequipped; many of the troops were armed with what one staff officer described as nearly inoperable "refuse guns." A number of unlucky soldiers carried no arms at all. Nevertheless, the indomitable Mississippians improvised and went forward with wooden staffs at shoulder arms. It was a recipe for disaster.

As the brigade angled its way forward, it divided when it reached the Cowan Farm southeast of the Round Forest. Chalmers personally led the bulk of his men to the left of the farm, while two of his regiments veered north. Both detachments stumbled into a maelstrom. Chalmers and his men slugged it out with the Federals from a distance of 50 yards. The unforgiving exchange of musketry resulted in ghastly and pointless carnage. While the defenders of the Round Forest remained unmoved, Chalmers's brigade was torn to pieces. So many of the Rebels littered the ground that the scene was remembered as the "Mississippi Half Acre."

The attacks continued unabated. Brig. Gen. Daniel Donelson led his fresh brigade of Tennesseans in Chalmers's wake and



TOP: A bugler with the 9th Indiana, one of four Union regiments to grimly hold off Confederates in the Round Forest. ABOVE: Union Generals August Willich, left, and William B. Hazen.

executed a bloody reprise of the earlier attack. His command likewise split when it reached the Cowan Farm, and Donelson veered to the west of the Round Forest. The Federals couldn't help but watch the grand attack with admiration. The Rebels came on in crisp ranks, thought Brig. Gen. John Palmer, and "it was not easy to witness that magnificent array of Americans without emotion."

Donelson would have help. Brig. Gen. Alexander Stewart's Tennessee outfit came into action on his left, driving back the Federals under the command of Brig. Gen. Charles Cruft. General Thomas was quick to react. Close at hand was a crack brigade of U.S. Army regulars under the command of Oliver Shepherd, still a lieutenant colonel after two decades of service. Directing Shepherd to the dark cedar forest south of the Nashville Pike, Thomas gave simple orders. "Shepherd," he said, "take your

men in there and stop the Rebels."

The regulars faced a harrowing crucible. In an unforgiving toe-to-toe fight, the two lines repeatedly unleashed shuddering volleys into each other; both sides stubbornly refused to yield an inch. "Men were falling all along the line," recalled an admiring Federal staff officer, "but not one turned his back to the enemy." Ultimately, cool discipline triumphed. The regulars succeeded in shattering Stewart's advance but paid a heavy price for it. After the smoke cleared, 400 regulars lay dead or wounded on the forest floor.

When Stewart's and Donelson's battered brigades fled the field, it was growing increasingly clear that Confederate troops were unlikely to wrest the Round Forest from Rosecrans, who had shifted so many spare regiments to the threatened sector that the area was now the most heavily manned section of the battlefield. Bragg, however, remained as committed as ever to seizing the Round Forest, and the attack stubbornly continued, one brigade at a time, constituting a truly senseless loss of life.

The next Confederate unit haphazardly thrown into the meat grinder was Brig. Gen. Daniel Adams's outfit. Advancing directly astride the Nashville Pike into the teeth of Hazen's fortress, Adams's troops were badly torn by Federal artillery and small arms as they pressed the futile attack. Their advance stymied by the persistently troublesome impediment of the Cowan Farm, Adams's troops approached the Round Forest badly deprived of momentum. Sensing an opportunity, Colonel George Wagner unleashed the 15th and 51st Indiana in an unexpected bayonet charge. Taken aback by the Hoosiers, Adams ordered a retreat.

Polk, however, was far from finished, but unfortunately for the common soldiers destined to do the actual fighting and dying, the high command had clearly run out of fresh tactical ideas. The bishop launched a further series of attacks toward the Round Forest that were clearly doomed to failure and executed with little enthusiasm. Three more brigades, those of John Jackson, John Palmer, and William Preston, accomplished

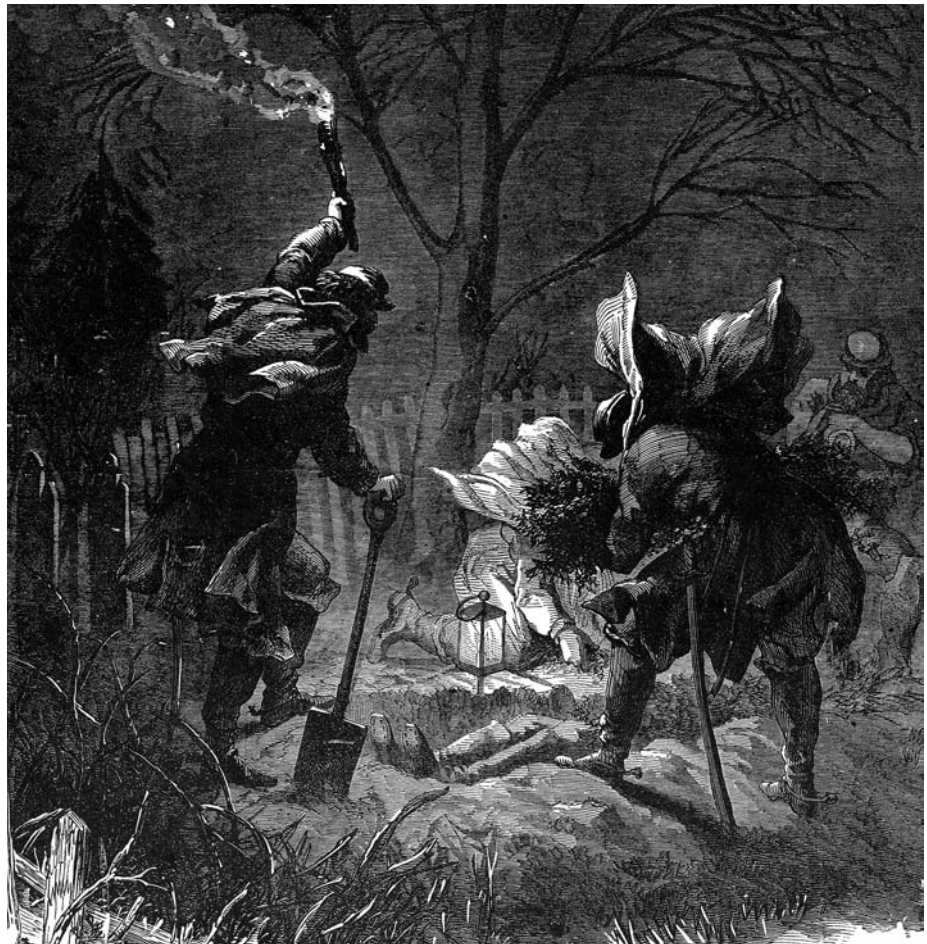
little more in their 11th-hour assaults than to add to the carpet of dead and dying men in front of the Round Forest.

Rosecrans himself narrowly avoided death toward the close of the action. While riding at the head of a group of officers, a Confederate projectile flashed by the general and struck his close friend Julius Garesché. The shell carried away Garesché's head, and his horse plunged another 50 yards before the officer's body fell to the ground. Rosecrans kept his composure through the macabre incident and tersely expressed his view of a soldier's lot. "Brave men," he remarked, "die in battles."

It was a stark assessment that could just as easily apply to the thousands of men who were killed or maimed during the opening day's fighting at Stones River. As darkness fell, the troops in both armies instinctively collapsed after enduring 10 solid hours of grueling combat. During the course of the daylong struggle, the two opposing armies had brutalized each other in some of the worst fighting in American history. The once pastoral fields and forests outside of Murfreesboro had been transformed into a bloody shambles littered with human wreckage. In all, approximately 20,000 men were left killed, wounded, or missing during the deadly struggle west of Stones River.

The nightmarish ordeal left searing memories. Some of the dead, remembered William Newlin of the 73rd Illinois, appeared to be sleeping, "eyes closed, hands at their sides, and countenances unruffled. Others appeared as if their last moments had been spent in extreme pain—eyes open, and apparently ready to jump from their sockets; hands grasping some portion of their garments and their features all distorted and changed. It was a sickening sight to look upon."

The unspeakable bloodletting failed to dissuade Bragg from maintaining the fight. His troops had wrecked a good portion of the Army of the Cumberland, battered in the Federal right for about three miles, and come tantalizingly close to ultimate victory on the Nashville Pike. All in all, it seemed to have been a promising start. "We



Decapitated by a whooshing cannonball, Rosecrans's aide, Colonel Julius P. Garesché, is buried by torchlight on the battlefield. Garesché's body was later reinterred at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

assailed the enemy at seven o'clock this morning," the general reported, and "have driven him from every position except the extreme left. With the exception of this point we occupy the whole field." Bragg decided to sit tight and await developments, convinced that daylight would find the Army of the Cumberland in full retreat.

In that belief he would be sorely disappointed. In the candlelit confines of his headquarters cabin, Rosecrans assembled his army's senior officers for a momentous council of war. No one would readily admit suggesting retreat, but the possibility was discussed at length. Thomas and Crittenden were for giving battle again. Although McCook's wing had clearly taken a severe thrashing, the troops had fought remarkably well and exacted a steep price from the Confederates. More importantly, the lines had stabilized and battle-weary sol-

diers, justifiably anxious for a little cover on the morrow, were working feverishly to throw up breastworks.

Before he made his decision, Rosecrans, accompanied by McCook, rode east along the pike. McCook later explained that Rosecrans was looking for defensive positions to which he could fall back. Nearing Overall Creek, the general spotted torches in the distance. They were carried by his own cavalry, but in the darkness he was convinced that Confederates were preparing for a dawn assault. Returning to headquarters, Rosecrans explained that the enemy had gotten "entirely in our rear and are forming a line of battle by torchlight." The Army of the Cumberland, he announced, had little choice but "to fight or die." By the closing hours of December 31, it was unclear which of those options was the most likely to occur. □

Extreme homesickness, termed “nostalgia” during the Civil War, often killed more soldiers than enemy bullets. Some literally died to get home.

A slight knee wound brought the New Jersey boy to a Washington military hospital, but “his mind had suffered more than his body,” wrote volunteer nurse Louisa May Alcott. “He lay cheering his comrades on, hurrying them back, then counting them as they fell around him, often clutching my arm, to drag me from the vicinity of a bursting shell, or covering up his head to screen himself from a shower of shot; while an incessant stream of defiant shouts, whispered warnings, and broken laments poured from his lips.” Such

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

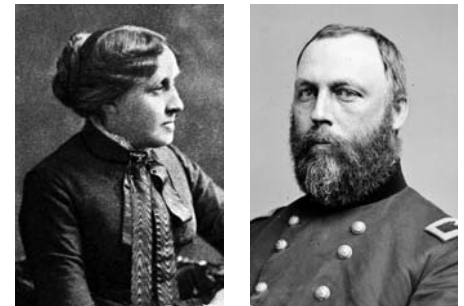
hallucinations and flashbacks are consistent with what is now called posttraumatic stress disorder.

Symptoms labeled “shell shock” or “combat fatigue” in later wars were poorly understood during the Civil War, and writings of the period imprecisely labeled them “homesickness,” “nostalgia,” “irritable heart,” or sometimes “sunstroke.” Of course, homesick soldiers were not unusual during the war. The very word homesickness had more serious implications than it does today. Kate Cum-

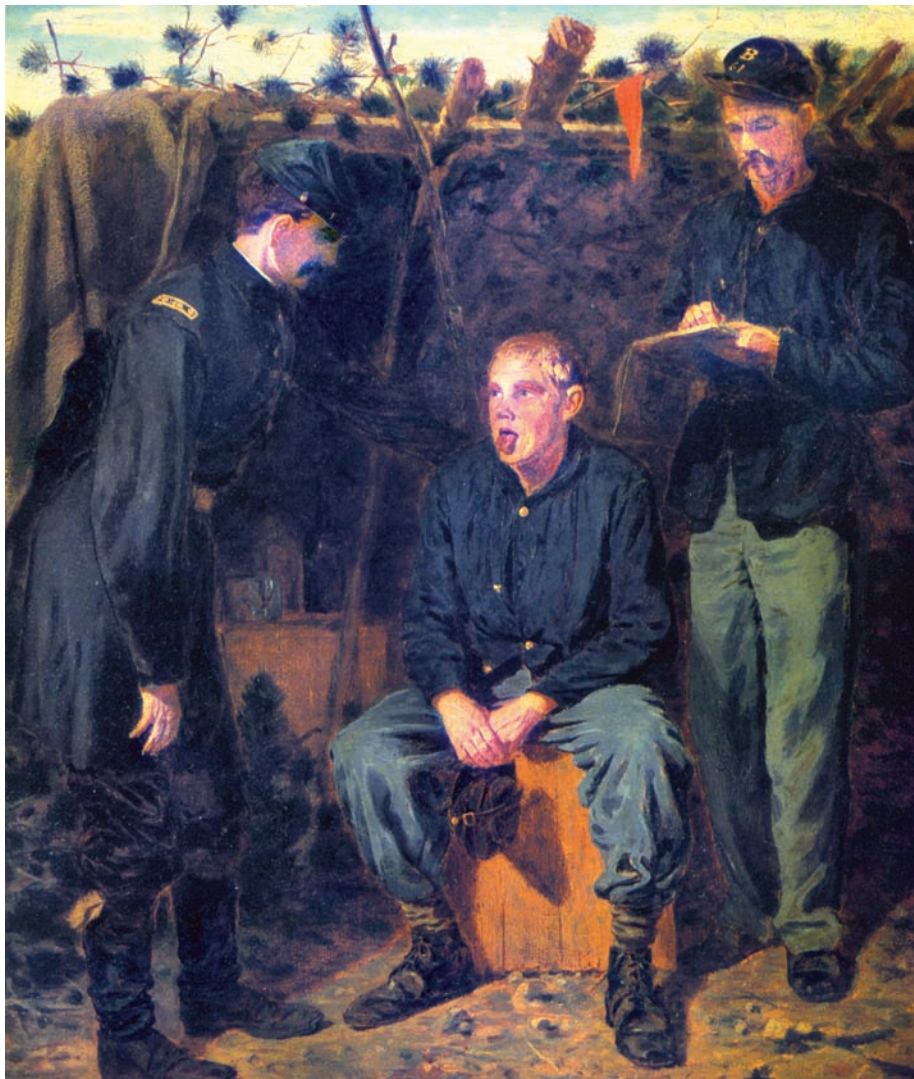
ming, who worked as a nurse in various Confederate hospitals, recounted a concert at which a hospital matron sang “Home, Sweet Home.” It was a mistake, Cumming wrote. “It scarcely does to sing such a song at present, as it touches the heart a little too deeply.” Similarly, Union Surgeon General William A. Hammond wrote that it was often necessary “to prohibit the regimental bands playing airs which could recall or freshen the memories of home.”

Union surgeon John G. Perry said he had

Both: Library of Congress



ABOVE: Nurse Louisa May Alcott and Union Surgeon General William A. Hammond. **LEFT:** A young soldier feigns illness to avoid combat duty in Winslow Homer’s painting, *Playing Old Soldier*. Nostalgia was a real issue during the war.



attempted to suppress his emotions before he left home, but on the boat headed to the front he had behaved “as I did when a child for the first time away from home. I cried as I did then, all night long.” Perry thought the man in the berth above him was asleep, “when suddenly he rolled over and looked down upon me. I felt for the moment thoroughly ashamed of myself, but he said nothing and settled back into his place, and then I heard him crying also.” Perry said he was haunted by the word home. “An awful sinking at the heart still sweeps over me, and I can easily understand how soldiers die of homesickness.”

A lieutenant with the 3rd Iowa Regiment observed that “many good soldiers were pos-

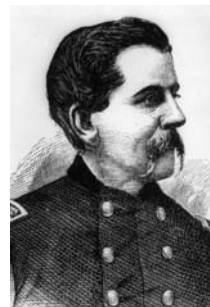


essed of a homesickness—a desire to be sent home on furlough or discharged, that amounted almost to a mania.” One Union surgeon went even further, claiming that homesickness “killed as many in our army as did the bullets of the enemy.”

Concern over homesickness went up the chain of command in both the Union and Confederate armies. In his Confederate surgeon’s manual, Dr. J. Julian Chisolm said that in the Army of Northern Virginia when “homesickness threatened to break out as an epidemic, an order to erect works was always hailed with pleasure.” Even if the fortifications went unused, they were built “simply to keep the men employed, and make them contented and happy.” In 1863, North Carolina Governor Zebulon B. Vance wrote President Jefferson Davis, listing homesickness as one of “the causes which move our troops to quit their colors.”

On the Union side, an official of the United States Sanitary Commission, an organization that supplemented the U.S. Army’s medical and relief efforts, said homesickness was “a great difficulty which our surgeons have to contend with in their patients. Medicines are then useless.” The Government Hospital for the Insane reported that homesickness was “evident by the character of the morbid mental manifestations exhibited by several of our army patients.”

Nostalgia was closely related to homesickness. In fact, some writers equated the two.



Dr. Samuel D. Gross, left, a prominent Northern professor of surgery, and Assistant Surgeon De Witt C. Peters. TOP: A nurse helps a wounded soldier in the Army of the Potomac write a letter home. Homesickness was epidemic during the war.

Assistant Surgeon J. Theodore Calhoun wrote in 1864 that nostalgia was merely the more professional term. The Surgeon General’s official history, *The Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion*, said that homesickness occasionally “developed to a morbid degree and was reported as nostalgia.”

Official figures for nostalgia cases were not large—5,547 cases, 74 deaths, and 36 discharges through June 1866—making the malady less prevalent than epilepsy, for example. However, Assistant Surgeon Roberts Bartholow said, “These numbers scarcely express the full extent to which nostalgia influenced the sickness and mortality of the army.” Bartholow, who wrote the surgeon general’s manual for soldier enlistment and discharge, said nostalgia was frequently fatal and was “a ground for discharge if sufficiently decided and pronounced.” Calhoun

saw nostalgia often as a cause of other disease, or as a “complication to be dreaded as one of the most serious that could befall the patient.”

Symptoms attributed to nostalgia varied from doctor to doctor. Bartholow listed “weeping, sighing, groaning, and a constant yearning for home; hallucinations and sometimes maniacal delirium.” Dr. Samuel D. Gross, a professor of surgery, said nostalgia was “characterized by a love of solitude, a vacant, stultified expression of the countenance, a morose, peevish disposition, absence of mind, pallor of the cheeks; and progressive emaciation.”

Assistant Surgeon De Witt C. Peters noted that early symptoms included great mental dejection, loss of appetite, and indifference to external influences. These gave way to hysterical weeping, throbbing of the temporal arteries, an anxious expression of the face, and “watchfulness,” among other symptoms. Another surgeon referred to “impaired digestion and prostration of nerve-power manifested by languor, tremulousness, palpitations and obscure cardiac pains.”

Peters said that among young prisoners of war, nostalgia was the worst complication to encounter. Anna Holstein, a volunteer nurse, had experienced the condition with former prisoners. A Union soldier under her care became frantic with terror. When asked if the flags on the walls looked like Rebel flags to him, the soldier replied, “Oh, no, that looks like home.”

There was no agreement on how to treat nostalgia patients. Calhoun recalled his boarding school days, where ridicule was wholly relied upon. “The patient can often be laughed out of it by his comrades, or reasoned out of it by appeals to his manhood,” wrote Calhoun, “but of all potent agents, an active campaign, with its attendant marches, and more particularly its battles, is the best curative.” As evidence, he discussed a unit that lost men daily in camp while adjacent regiments remained healthy. Actively engaged at the Battle Chancellorsville, however, they fought nobly, developed a strong esprit de corps, “and from that day to this, there has

been but little or no sickness, and but two or three deaths.”

Similarly, Surgeon John L. Taylor noted that “kind and sympathizing words—amusements—seemed to invite a more deplorable condition.” That approach predominated in his regiment, whose officers told soldiers that their disease was merely moral turpitude, looked upon with contempt, and that “soldiers of courage, patriotism and sense should be superior to the influences that brought about their condition.” Taylor claimed better success with his method. “This course incited resentment, passions were aroused, a new life was instilled and the patients rapidly recovered,” he said.

In sharp contrast, Gross argued for more sympathy and less criticism. “The treatment is moral rather than medical,” he advised, “agreeable amusements, kindness, gentle but incessant occupation, and the promise of an early return to home and friends constituting the most important means of relief.”

Another surgeon’s view was to give the troops something to do to pass the dull hours. “An officer should be detailed as Superintendent of Public Amusements, who should be manager of theatrical performances, races, competitive shooting and prize competitions of all sorts.” Ultimately, such treatments may say more about the surgeon than about the patient or disease.

Some surgeons noted heart-related symptoms in nostalgia patients early in the war. In 1862, Surgeon A.J. McKelway reported heart disease caused by “overexertion preceding the battle and excitement and effort during its continuance.” With the benefit of two decades of hindsight, the surgeon general’s history observed: “Overaction of the heart during an engagement was due perhaps as much to nervous excitement and anticipation of danger as to overexertion. Even soldiers accustomed to the alarms of battle were not at all times exempt from the results of mental impressions.” Many cases arrived in hospitals after the continued exertion, anxieties, and excitement. Some patients experienced acute chest pain even while asleep.

Most Civil War surgeons did not make the now obvious connection between heart disease and stress. In late 1862, Acting Assistant



This hand-colored photograph of wounded Union soldiers during the Peninsula Campaign shows the makeshift nature of medical help. There was little time to deal with soldiers suffering from complex mental or emotional ailments.

Surgeon Jacob M. Da Costa reported an uncommon malady, called “Chickahominy fever,” among soldiers returning from Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan’s just concluded Peninsula Campaign. “Both body and mind remain for a considerable period enfeebled,” noted Da Costa. Symptoms included memory loss and “mental wandering.” Another surgeon listed such symptoms as “indifferentism, wandering and muttering, restlessness, insomnia, and watchfulness.”

Da Costa described typical cases with heart-related symptoms, including “palpitation and a feeling of uneasiness in the cardiac region.” Another patient had palpitations and sharp chest pains. The patient’s other symptoms improved and he regained his strength, “but any excitement or labor agitates him and brings on violent beating of the heart,” Da Costa observed. “The irritable state of the organ remaining long after the general health was in every other respect fully reestablished, all form a clinical combination of very great interest and frequency.”

In early 1863, Dr. Alfred Stille, who worked at a large military hospital in Philadelphia, reported heart palpitations to be a common disease among the soldiers, in

a form he had very rarely observed in civil practice. Stille associated it with “a state of extreme exhaustion, especially when occurring after violent and prolonged muscular efforts.” A few months later, Dr. Henry Hartshorne noted among his patients, similar palpitations, which he evocatively called “trotting heart” or “cardiac muscular exhaustion.” Hartshorne recognized nervousness as a source of palpitations but found the soldiers’ palpitations to differ in character from “ordinary sympathetic or nervous palpitation” in his civilian patients.

Da Costa used the phrase “irritable heart” in the title of an 1871 journal article in which he summed up his experience with more than 300 soldiers and continued to define it as a functional cardiac disorder. Besides palpitations, sometimes violent, Da Costa noted that his patients suffered from “smothering or suffocating sensations at night, a mere feeling of uneasiness near the heart, shortness of breath, giddiness, and disturbed sleep, including dreams of unpleasant character.”

Da Costa attributed a plurality, some 38.5 percent, of the cases to hard field service, particularly excessive marching. Within this category he included constant and heavy duty

on the picket line, active movements in the face of an enemy, forced marches, and arduous and exciting fighting and marching. It was entirely opposite from other physicians' positive interpretation of battle-related activities during the war.

In contrast to an overall lack of treatment for mental disease, there were some treatments in place for heart disease. Da Costa first prescribed rest but also employed plant-based remedies, including digitalis, aconite, veratrum viride, gelsemium, hyoscyamus (henbane), belladonna and atropine, conium (hemlock), and Cannabis indica.

Massive numbers of casualties made effective or even humane treatment difficult. Julia Wheelock worked in Washington-area hospitals from 1862 through 1865. She estimated that there were 10,000 wounded in Fredericksburg, Virginia, at one time. All the public

think it would be so painful if I only had a pillow, or cushion, or something to keep it from the hard floor," the soldier said. One "wretched hospital," a former grocery store, had only a single small candle for light. When someone moved the candle to another part of the crowded room, Wheelock, afraid she would stumble over the injured, crept on her hands and knees to deliver cups of broth to the wounded, starving soldiers. Many were so fresh from the battlefield that their wounds were still undressed. Given such conditions, it was small wonder that the often overwhelmed military medical establishment could not care adequately for victims with poorly understood psychological needs.

In 1855, Congress had established in Washington the Government Hospital for the Insane, later St. Elizabeth's Hospital. Its stated goals were to provide "the most humane care

After the Civil War, Congress liberalized the law governing admissions to the hospital. Those accepted included former patients who relapsed within three years of their discharge from the hospital, those discharged from the military for insanity, and "indigent insane persons, who have become insane within three years after discharge from such service from causes which arose and were produced by said service." Giving veterans three years after discharge to seek treatment was a relatively forward-looking admission that mental and emotional wounds, like physical wounds, could take years to heal.

Some wounds never healed. A 2006 study of military and Pension Board medical records of 17,700 Civil War veterans found an association between the men's wartime experiences and the occurrence of cardiac, gastrointestinal, and nervous diseases throughout the remainder of their lives. One measure found a 51 percent increase in those three disease categories.

Those removed from the battlefield were marked by their experiences as well. A civilian relief worker wrote that after the Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania, "The surgeons were at work, probing, extracting balls, amputating in the open air, while upon every hand were cries of agony from the poor fellows, which would have melted any but a heart of stone." Years later, nurse Lois Dunbar recalled, "I have had men die clutching my dress till it was almost impossible to loose their hold." Even experienced doctors and nurses could not easily forget such sights and sounds.

One soldier summed up the literal deadliness of nostalgia: "Would you believe—and yet it is true—that many a poor fellow in the Army of the Cumberland has literally died to go home; died of the terrible, unsatisfied longing, home-sickness?" Against the ravages of nostalgia, he wrote, paraphrasing Shakespeare's Macbeth, "the surgeon combats in vain, for, 'who can minister to a mind diseased?'" Sadly, the answer to Macbeth's rhetorical question remained largely true 2½ centuries later, during the Civil War. "Therein the patient must minister to himself." For many soldiers, as for the guilt-stricken Macbeth, there was no cure at all. □

Both: Library of Congress



A Union doctor from the 14th Indiana Volunteers tends to Confederate wounded after the Battle of Antietam in September 1862. Blankets stretched over fence railings were the only protection from the elements at this crude medical aid shelter.

buildings, including the courthouse, churches, hotels, warehouses, factories, paper mill, theater, school buildings, stores, stables, and private residences were converted into shelters for the wounded, until Fredericksburg was one vast hospital.

Wheelock recounted wounded soldiers begging for pillows. "I'm wounded in the head, and my knapsack is so hard," said one. Another wanted one for his stump. "I don't

and enlightened curative treatment of the insane of the army and navy of the United States, and of the District of Columbia." Diversions of the mind were found to displace morbid feelings. Such diversions included church services, educational lectures, music, books, and musical instruments, including several pianos. Caregivers attempted "to render the institution not only a good hospital, but a kind and sympathizing home."

SOLDIERS

Continued from page 13

even then aiming their rifles at them. Finally convinced that he had erred, Mansfield said, “Yes, yes, you are right,” and almost immediately was struck in the chest by a bullet. His head drooped and his body sagged against the saddle, but he was able to guide the stricken horse along the Hagerstown Pike toward the rear. At first no one knew that the general had been wounded. Then the wind blew open his coat, revealing his blood-soaked shirt. At this point some soldiers helped Mansfield dismount and took him to the rear. The lines of battle rolled forward and the attack of XII Corps proved to be just one more futile effort to force the Confederate line.

Mansfield was taken in an ambulance to the makeshift hospital at Line’s house less than a mile away. There he was attended throughout the next 24 hours by a team of three surgeons, as well as Captain Clarence H. Dyer, his faithful aide-de-camp, who stayed at his side throughout the ordeal. Drifting in and out of consciousness, alternately asking after the well-being of his comrades and uttering words of prayer, Mansfield gradually weakened and died just a few minutes after 8 on the morning of September 18.

Mansfield’s moment of glory had lasted less than a half-hour. All around the spot where he fell were the mortal remains of his shattered corps. At least 275 men lay dead and another 1,470 wounded were crowded into the small area around the East Woods, a casualty rate of nearly 20 percent of those engaged. Posthumously confirmed as a major general of volunteers, Mansfield was the longest serving soldier on the field that day and the highest ranking casualty of the Battle of Antietam. He was also the oldest graduate of West Point, as well as the oldest general, to be killed in battle during the Civil War. He died at his post, with his face turned toward the enemy—a fitting epitaph for any soldier, no matter how long the service or brief the glory. □

DOUGLAS and LINCOLN

Continued from page 31

crashing to the ground. No sooner had they regained their footing than another bench, this one reserved for the ladies in attendance, also gave way, leaving the fairer victims to reel dazedly into the arms of their rescuers, bonnets and petticoats askew.

Once again Lincoln denounced slavery as a spreading evil and repeated his claim that Douglas and the Democrats were conspiring to make the practice both national and permanent. After Douglas retaliated by criticizing Lincoln for ignoring the Supreme Court’s Dred Scott decision, Lincoln, perhaps rattled by the collapsible stage, got into a shouting match with a *Chicago Times* reporter in the crowd. “I don’t care if your hireling does say I did,” Lincoln roared, “I tell you myself that I never said the Democratic owners of Dred Scott got up the case.” On that less than elevated note, the sixth debate came to an end.

The seventh and final debate took place on October 15 in Alton 115 miles downriver from Quincy. Despite beautiful fall weather and a special \$1 round-trip riverboat ticket from nearby St. Louis, only 5,000 people—the second smallest turnout of the series—showed up at Alton’s new city hall for the event. Perhaps, as a Cincinnati newspaper reporter conjectured, “the novelty had worn off” the debates. Douglas’s voice had been reduced by now to a hoarse whisper, and he could scarcely be heard over the crowd. Quoting Lincoln’s earlier statement that he would be “exceedingly sorry ever to be put in the position” of having to vote on the admission of new slave states to the Union, Douglas made one of his rare jokes: “Permit me to remark that I don’t think the people will ever force him into a position where he will have to vote upon it.” Lincoln joined good naturedly in the laughter.

Buoyed by the presence of his wife and eldest son, Robert, at the debate, Lincoln gave one of his strongest performances. He confessed that he was “not less selfish than other men” in seeking high political office,

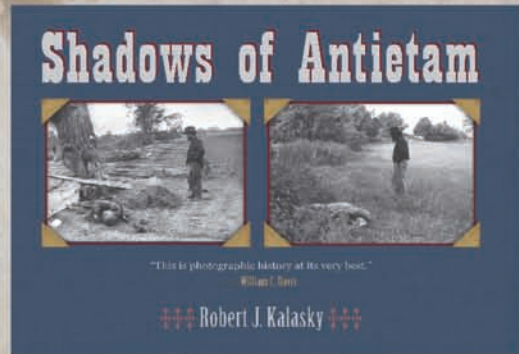
“but I do claim that I am not more selfish than is Judge Douglas.” (“Roars of laughter,” the *Chicago Tribune* reported parenthetically.) The chief difference between the two sides, said Lincoln, was that one considered slavery to be wrong, while the other did not. “That is the real issue,” Lincoln concluded, “an issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Douglas and myself shall be silent.”

Lincoln was both right and wrong in that assessment. The explosive issue of slavery would continue to rage after the debates were over, but both he and Douglas would also continue to have a real say in future events. That November the Democratic-controlled Illinois Legislature returned Douglas to the Senate over Lincoln, although Republicans won the only statewide election, that of state treasurer, by 3,800 votes. But as Douglas had presciently argued during the campaign, the Republicans were setting the stage for a presidential campaign in two years, during which they would “connect the northern states into one great sectional party, and inasmuch as the northern section is the stronger, the stronger section will out-vote and control and govern the weaker section.” In his worst nightmare, he couldn’t have foreseen that Abraham Lincoln would be the one doing the controlling and governing.

As for Lincoln, his first reaction to losing the senatorial election was amused chagrin. “I feel like the boy who stumped his toe,” he told visitors to his law office in Springfield. “I am too big to cry and too badly hurt to laugh.” He tried to take the longer view, recalling that on election night he had nearly lost his footing on a rain-slick path. Lincoln remembered telling himself then, “It’s a slip and not a fall.” He viewed the just concluded campaign in a similar light. “I am glad I made the late race,” he said. “It gave me a hearing on the great and durable question of the age, which I could have had in no other way; and though I now sink out of view, and shall be forgotten, I believe I have made some marks which will tell for the cause of civil liberty long after I am gone.” He was not gone yet. □

SHADOWS OF ANTIETAM

ROBERT J. KALASKY



A REVOLUTIONARY RE-CREATION OF THE HISTORIC ANTIETAM BATTLEFIELD PHOTOGRAPHS

Two photographers sent by Mathew Brady—Alexander Gardner and James Gibson—recorded the horror of war at Antietam with the first-ever images of dead American soldiers. In *Shadows of Antietam*, Robert J. Kalasky has painstakingly re-created Gardner's and Gibson's output, retracing their footsteps by location, date, and time to chronologically and sequentially place their images. With the help of reenactors and black-and-white photography, Kalasky assembled a comprehensive study, based on sunlight and shadow, of the 74 known glass plates recorded by Gardner and Gibson at Antietam.



“Kalasky has produced a seminal study on the photography of Antietam. This important work should be required reading for all serious students of the battle.”

—TED ALEXANDER,
Chief Historian,
Antietam National
Battlefield

“Kalasky brings to the living the dead of Antietam.”

—DENNIS FRYE, author
of *Antietam Revealed*



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