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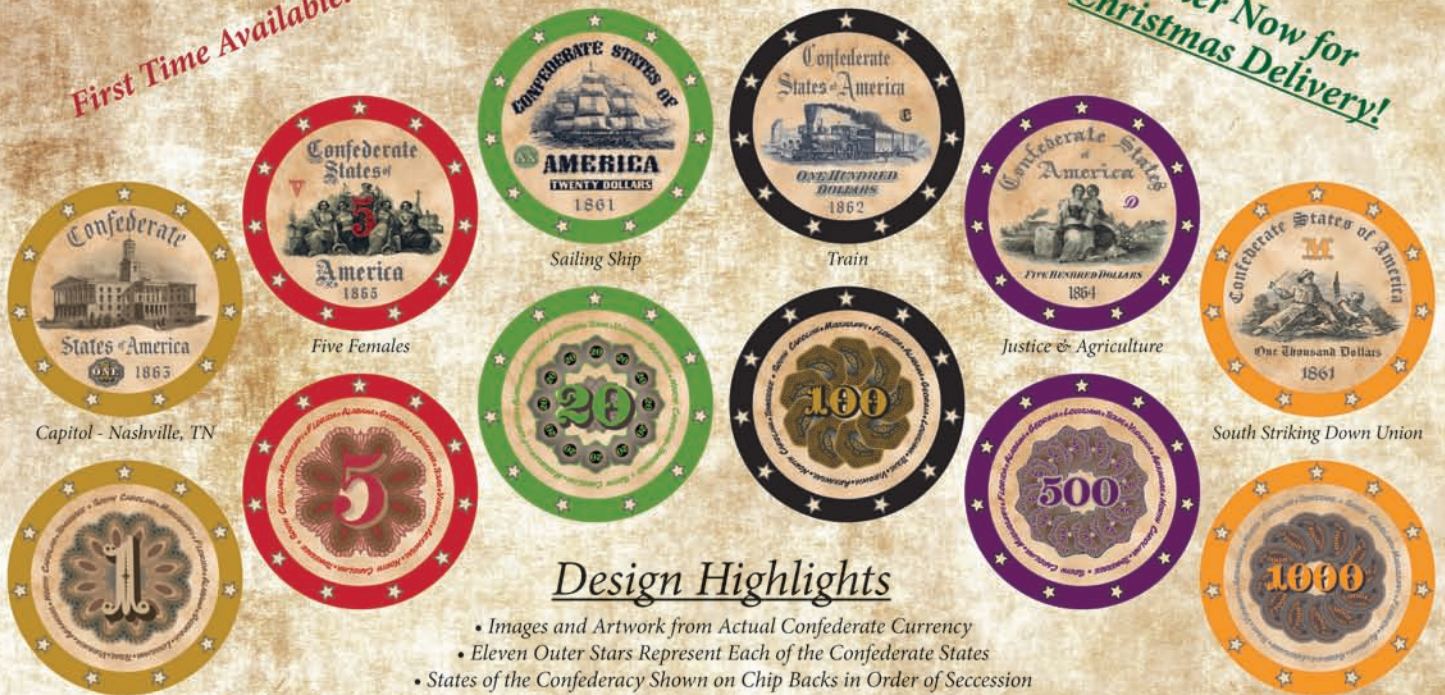
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Contents



12 Grant Takes Washington

In early March 1864, a physically unprepossessing Union general arrived in Washington for a meeting with President Abraham Lincoln. For both the general—Ulysses S. Grant—and the president, the meeting would prove epochal. **Arnold Blumberg**

18 To the Heights of Richmond

In late September 1864, Ulysses S. Grant mounted his fifth offensive against Confederate forces at Petersburg, Virginia. Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler led a two-pronged assault on either end of the Confederate line. The main targets were Fort Harrison and Chaffin's Bluff.

David Norris

30 Diplomatic Duel at Sea

When the Union warship *San Jacinto* stopped the British mail steamer *Trent* en route from Havana to the West Indies, it touched off an international incident that threatened to involve the United States in a third war with Great Britain. **Mark Simmons**

38 Murderous Order at Culp's Hill

Experienced regimental commanders in the woods near Culp's Hill took one look at their new orders and shook their heads. It was a virtual death sentence for the men in their command.

Joshua Shepherd

48 Final Attack at Stones River

Bragg stopped him. "Sir, my information is different. I have given the order to attack the enemy in your front and expect it to be obeyed." **Jim Heenehan**

56 Through a Gate of Fire

Admiral Farragut took on the Confederate minefields, forts, and ironclads at Mobile Bay on the Gulf of Mexico. **Pedro Garcia**

72 "I Am Dying, Egypt, Dying": Poet-General William H. Lytle

A rising star in the Union Army, Brig. Gen. William Haines Lytle was popular with both his superiors and enlisted men. Many felt he was destined for the White House. One morning at Chickamauga would change all that. **Roy Morris Jr.**

80 Wrecking on the Railroad

On April 17, 1863, Union Colonel Benjamin Grierson led 1,700 cavalrymen southward from La Grange, Tennessee, into northern Mississippi on a daring raid designed to divert enemy attention from strategically vital Vicksburg. **Mike Phifer**

90 Stonewall's Victorious Defeat

In March 1862, Confederate General Stonewall Jackson moved north through the Shenandoah Valley to prevent Union reinforcements from heading to the Virginia Peninsula. At Kernstown, he attacked what he thought was the enemy rear guard. He was wrong.

Lawrence Weber

Departments

06 Editorial

Always a cool head in a tight spot, Colonel Benjamin Grierson found a way to help General William T. Sherman hold onto his.

Roy Morris Jr.

08 Intelligence

The Confederate provost guard functioned as a combination rear guard and prison keeper during the Civil War.

Joan Wenner



COVER: An unidentified young Union cavalryman photographed with his Colt Model 1855 pistols, and cavalry saber. See story page 80. Library of Congress

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Always a cool head in a tight spot, Colonel Benjamin Grierson found a way to help General William T. Sherman hold onto his.

Union General William Tecumseh Sherman, not the easiest man to please, always held Colonel Benjamin Grierson in high regard. The former Indiana music teacher, said Sherman, was “one of the most willing, ardent and dashing cavalry officers I ever had. He handled his men with great skill, doing some of the prettiest work of the war.”

A dicey incident on the Western plains five years after the Civil War did nothing to lessen Sherman’s soldierly regard for Grierson. At Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in May 1871, Grierson found the perfect opportunity to repay the general for his kind words and good opinion. Always a cool head in a crisis, Grierson’s quick actions that day would help Sherman hold onto his.

By then Sherman had succeeded his good friend Ulysses S. Grant, now President Grant, as commanding general of the U.S. Army. Through Sherman’s personal intercession, Grierson obtained command of Fort Sill, leading the all-black 10th Cavalry Regiment in the ongoing campaign against restive Native Americans on the plains.

Sherman had gone west to investigate recent depredations by Kiowa and Comanche Indians, who were leaving the sanctuary of their agency near Fort Sill to raid white settlements and wagon trains across the border in Texas. It was all part of a long-standing game—albeit deadly serious at times—for the Indians, but Sherman did not find it amusing. Upon his arrival at Fort

Sill, he demanded to see the principal Kiowa chiefs and hear their version of events.

Chiefs Satanta, Big Tree, Satank, and Lone Wolf rode into Fort Sill on May 27 to confer with the distinctly unamused Sherman and, not coincidentally, to draw more free government rations of sugar, coffee, and beef for themselves and their tribe. Satanta, the leader of the delegation, considered himself a diplomat as well as a warrior. He once had praised George Armstrong Custer, in all sincerity, as a “heap big nice sonabitch.” Now he turned his diplomatic skills on the scowling Sherman, who met the Indians on the front porch of Grierson’s headquarters.

Complaining bitterly (and not without some justice) of Army mistreatment of his tribe, Satanta freely admitted that he had personally led the most recent Texas raid on Lone Star teamsters near Jacksboro, which had resulted in the deaths of seven drivers and the theft of 41 mules. He was notably unrepentant. “If any other Indian claims the honor of leading that party,” said Satanta, “he will be lying to you. I led it myself.” Even worse, from Sherman’s point of view, the chief boldly asserted that Army control of the Kiowas was “played out now. There is never to be any more Kiowa Indians arrested.”

Sherman unsurprisingly disagreed, under-



lining his frank difference of opinion by ordering the immediate arrest of Satanta, Big Tree, and Satank. Satanta, throwing off the blanket he was wearing, grabbed for a pistol. The others followed his lead. Sherman, having anticipated the move, shouted an order and the shutters on the porch windows flew open, revealing several soldiers from the 10th Cavalry, their carbines aimed steadily at the Indians. “Don’t shoot, don’t shoot!” Satanta cried.

At that moment another Kiowa chief, Lone Wolf, came riding up, a bow and arrow in one hand, a Winchester rifle in the other. He took a seat on the porch, handing the bow to a tribesman named Stumbling Bear but keeping the cocked Winchester on his lap. Stumbling Bear, perhaps misinterpreting Lone Wolf’s intentions, suddenly drew back the bow and aimed an arrow at Sherman. Another Indian hit his elbow, deflecting the shot. Lone Wolf leveled his rifle at the startled general, but before he could fire, Grierson alertly jumped onto the chief, knocking him to the floor.

The Indians were led away in chains and Sherman was left with yet another reason to value the quick-thinking, quick-acting Hoosier cavalryman, who had saved him that day from certain death.

Roy Morris Jr.

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The Confederate provost guard functioned as a combination rear guard and prison keeper during the Civil War.

With the bombardment of Fort Sumter in April 1861, the Civil War began in earnest. The first recruits, on both sides, were completely uninitiated in the ways of military life. They had to learn in camp how to be soldiers—living in the open, sharing tents, constructing fortifications, drilling, marching in step and following commands. Included in their training was instruction in proper military conduct, enforced by a system of punishments for infractions that would prove as vexing to the soldiers of the Civil War as it had to every army since the time of Alexander the Great.

The Confederate provost system was one approach to maintaining proper military

discipline in the southern armies. The provost system was based largely on British precedents that had existed since the Revolution and was mainly restricted to purely military police functions. Many provost duties initially were performed by civilians, although the Confederate articles of war provided for military provost marshals and military courts to try personnel charged with violating military law.

In 1862, a subsequent act of the Confederate Congress authorized a military court for each army corps and a provost marshal to execute its orders. The jurisdiction of these courts included offenses against the Articles of War and against Confederate and state laws. An 1863 report of the Army of Tennessee mandated: “A provost marshal general will be assigned to duty at army headquarters with one assistant. Corps

commanders will detail a field officer, with one assistant, for duty at corps headquarters, a captain for division headquarters, and a lieutenant for brigade headquarters. These officers will report regularly to the provost marshal of the army.”

As the war dragged on, Southern governors tried and mostly failed to gain direct control over the provost guard as it increasingly affected the public. They wanted at least to rein in its authority, especially its existence outside the operational sphere of the armies, to prevent abuses against the civilian population. But legislative efforts were generally unsuccessful in limiting the authority of provost marshals over the citizenry. The governors’ fears of such an extension of power would later prove justified as the provost guard’s original purpose—to preserve order in the armies—was greatly expanded by the pressures of war.

One example of the provost guard’s increased authority was the monitoring of transportation services such as trains. The intention was to decrease the growing rate of desertion within the Confederate Army and to restrict the movement of Union spies. A system of passes was devised to regulate travel, annoying citizens and soldiers alike. Vigorous debate continued among members of the Confederate Congress who believed that provost marshal powers should not extend beyond the army. But as the Confederacy’s military fortunes declined, the army often ignored relevant provisions. Military necessities had more weight than the political niceties of catering to strict constitutionalist governors and other state officials.

The widespread unpopularity of civilian passports grew as battlefronts expanded, and Confederate citizens increasingly were subject to the provost guard’s control of every individual’s right of movement. Even



LEFT: Brig. Gen. John H. Winder. BELOW: A provost marshal's office at Aquia Creek, Virginia, in February 1863 draws a desultory crowd. Some soldiers used provost duty to avoid combat.



All photos: National Archives

General Robert E. Lee's wife, Mary Anne Custis, was delayed and questioned by provost guards during a trip before her identity was confirmed. Over time, oppressive measures continued to be hotly debated, and provost authority was to a degree curtailed in areas outside the actual fields of military operations. Additionally, provost marshal appointments were carefully controlled in rear areas.

Early on, Confederate commanders requested authority to raise companies of exempt men to be used by the provost marshals to enforce orders. In addition, local defense units were organized from the reserve corps and those unfit for active service. In at least one major department, a provost organization was formalized on a district and subdistrict basis, and necessary police officers were appointed, with militia being used as provost guards to keep order and guard public property, prisons, and bridges. In many regions, the absence of any other manpower made the use of the provost guards inevitable. And while there were some complaints from regular troops about their being detached for provost duty, there were also numerous instances of men using provost duty to avoid the rigors of active service, a practice that reached serious proportions in the last two years of the war.

Confederate congressional representatives called for steps to prevent officers from abusing their power to grant exemptions from conscription in certain areas. It was feared that enrolling officers who stayed too long in one locality (and who themselves were frequently averse to hard, frontline service) would become overly familiar with local citizens and thus more prone to keep eligible men out of the army.

In military departments, the provost chain of command was from subdistrict to district and finally to department-level provost marshals. In the field armies, as well, a chain extended through the levels of command from brigade through division and corps. Staff responsibilities were fairly well defined, with provost guards receiving their orders either directly from formation



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commanders or through the appropriate staff officers. Even in the most remote commands, the provost machinery was firmly in place, and sometimes entire brigades were placed on provost duty.

It was not until February 1865 that a bill was introduced in the Confederate Senate providing for the formal appointment of a provost marshal general. The purpose was to replace the long-serving Brig. Gen. John H. Winder, who had just died, and name Brig. Gen. Daniel Ruggles as his replacement. When Winder placed Richmond under martial law “to ferret out spies and



other undesirables,” his undiplomatic methods caused further repercussions, and his battles with the city’s hospitals and board of surgeons did nothing but increase his unpopularity. Leaving in June 1864 to become the commandant of the infamous Andersonville prison in Georgia, Winder eventually would command additional southern prison camps and function as provost marshal general until his death on February 7, 1865.

Robert E. Lee never doubted the need for strict discipline. In Lee’s opinion, too much reliance was placed on the soldier’s innate “merit” and not enough was done to instill instinctive obedience. He believed the primary duty of the Confederate provost guard was the maintenance of discipline. Beyond that, Lee looked to the provosts to perform the time-consuming responsibili-



ABOVE: Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia, was part of the provost marshal’s chain of responsibility. It is shown following its liberation by Union troops in April 1865. **LEFT:** Although the powers of the provost marshal were not intended to extend beyond the army, ordinary citizens were also subjected to its regulations, including the unpopular civilian passport.

ties of crime prevention and investigation of crimes committed by military personnel, as well as escorting offenders, apprehending deserters, and rounding up absentees.

In the constant battle against vice, Confederate military policemen encountered looting, pillaging, lax military security, and the soldiers’ time-honored pastimes of gambling and prostitution, all complicated by the ever-present liquor-related offenses. In May 1862, the Confederate Congress attempted to control liquor consumption by passing legislation to punish drunkenness in the army. Such enactments, noted one historian, “had about the same deterrent effect as King Canute did in his famous encounter with the North Sea.”

A highly visible provost was essential for a measure of acceptable discipline, and provost marshals were charged with functioning as policemen, magistrates, and jailers. The Confederate Articles of War in 1861 provided for provost tribunals to try military personnel accused of offenses against military law. Originally, the procedures for courts-martial were inefficient, but an attempt to correct deficiencies was effected a year and a half later, in October 1862, authorizing a military court for each army corps in the field to exercise unrestricted jurisdiction over military personnel and civil jurisdiction in occupied areas. Each court was permitted to appoint a provost

marshal with the rank and pay of a captain of cavalry to execute its orders, and provost jurisdiction was extended to include offenses against the Articles of War, Confederate law, and state law. General courts-martial were also established and they had their own appointed regimental officers serving as provost marshals with duties similar to those of a sheriff in a civilian court.

Although the Articles of War were intended to provide for the trial of military offenders against military law, imprecise wording could be construed as making civilians answerable to military courts. The standards of discipline of the marshals and their subordinate officers, and the degree to which “inhumanity would be tolerated in the imposition of discipline,” varied. Problems frequently arose between the provost marshals and various state supreme courts (acting on writs of habeas corpus) concerning the jurisdiction of the military over civilians accused of crimes against the Confederacy. In one instance, Louisianans loudly bemoaned limited efforts to suspend the writ, and citizens protested the suspension of such rights in New Orleans immediately prior to the Union occupation. When Winder put Richmond under martial law, his undiplomatic methods caused further repercussions. Alarmed, the Confederate Congress quashed Jefferson Davis’s authority to sus-

pend habeas corpus, and virtually anything that smacked of a threat to states' rights was strenuously resisted.

Provost responsibility extended to the operation of detention facilities and service prisons, with Winder tasked with their administration. Initially appointed inspector general of all camps, including the prisons in the Richmond area, Winder met with constant disapproval from the majority of Richmond civilians, who considered the general "active but outrageous." Said one disgusted citizen, "Evildoers were the only ones the police did not trouble. [They were] oppressive only to the peaceful."

Unceasing efforts to control desertion occupied more and more provost troops as the Confederacy's fortunes deteriorated. Large areas in western North Carolina's rugged Sauratown Mountains and parts of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi became sanctuaries for huge numbers of deserters. Constant appeals to deserters to rejoin the colors fell on deaf ears, in many cases not due to cowardice but to increasing concerns for and acute anxiety over the welfare of their families in the war-ravaged South. In numerous dispatches from November 1864 to March 1865, Lee's message on desertion was virtually the same: "Hundreds of men are deserting nightly. I do not know what can be done to put a stop to it."

The decline in confidence and morale significantly decreased the chances of Confederate victory. It is perhaps telling that one of the last operational tasks performed by the provost guard occurred during the evacuation of Richmond in April 1865, exactly seven days before Lee's surrender to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox. A local defense brigade officer was charged with defending the last bridge over the James River east of the city as the remaining provost troops withdrew. As the last of the cavalry crossed the bridge and an engineer officer set it afire, one of the retreating cavalymen exclaimed, "All over, goodbye; blow her to hell." It seemed fitting that a provost guard should have been among the last to leave the burning capital, serving as the rear guard of a nation also blown to hell. □



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M. Todd Cathey and Gary W. Waddey

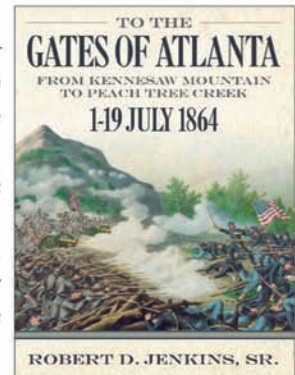
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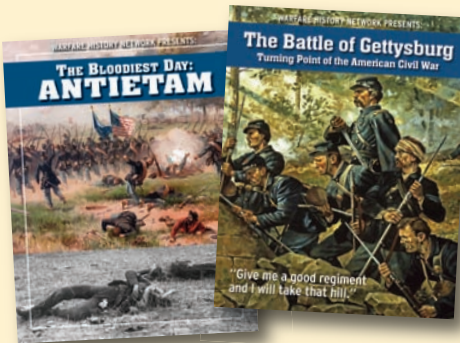
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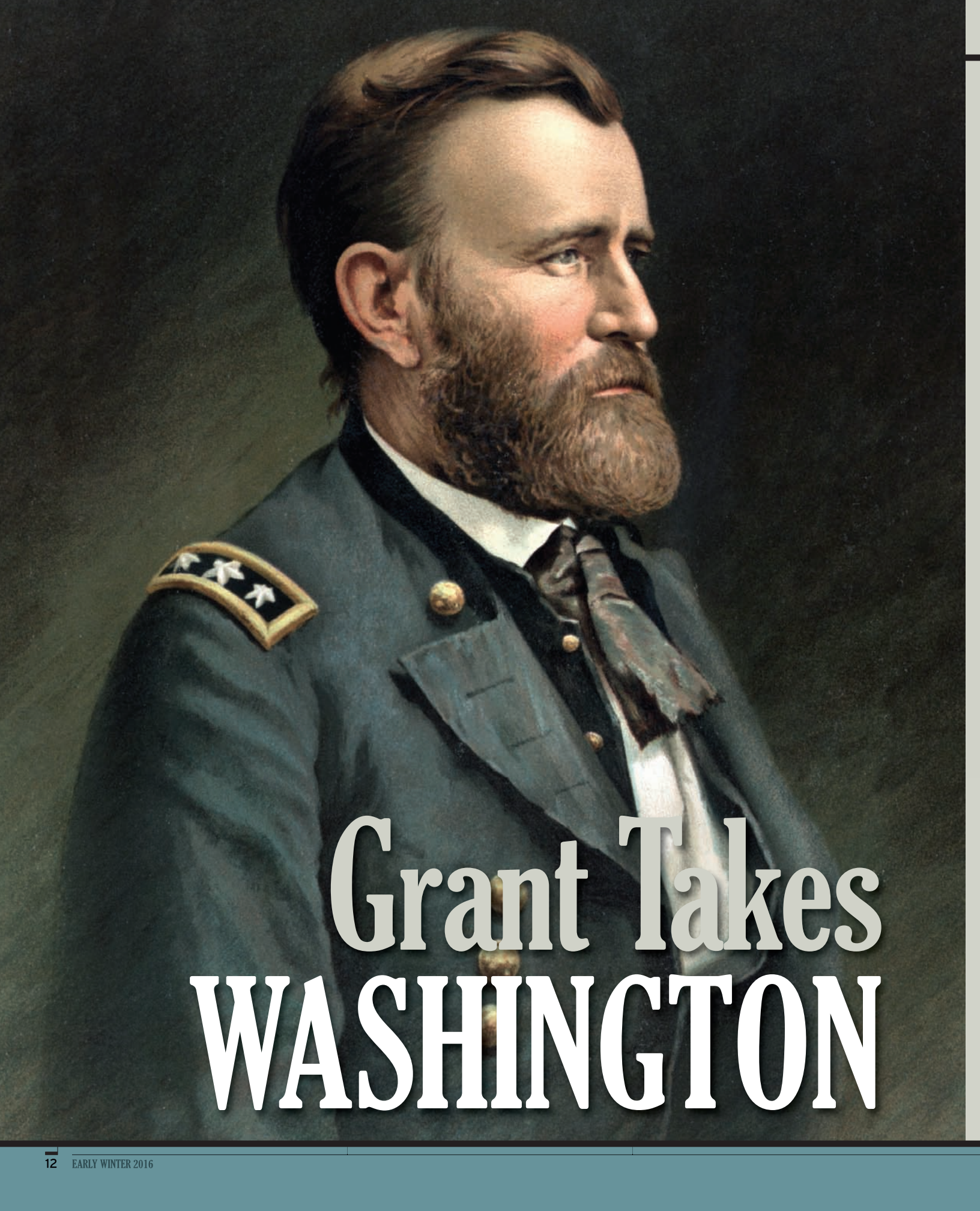


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Grant Takes WASHINGTON

ON March 8, 1864, a rainy Tuesday, President and Mrs. Lincoln held a reception at the White House in Washington. This in itself was not unusual; such events were weekly occurrences. What made this reception different was that, as announced earlier in the *National Republican Newspaper*, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant was to be the guest of honor.

The general had arrived in the nation's capital that afternoon after being summoned by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. Grant had spent the last several days on a train transporting him to Washington from his military headquarters in Nashville. He was accompanied by two staff officers, Brig. Gen. John A. Rawlins and Lt. Col.

tle too much to drink." The registration clerk must have had the same impression. When the general, who was wearing a plain linen duster that hid his uniform, inquired about the availability of accommodations, the clerk replied with patronizing indifference. He offered Grant a cramped room on the top floor. Grant said that would be fine and signed the register.

The clerk's demeanor changed in an instant when he glanced at the signature written on the hotel register: "U.S. Grant and Son, Galena, Illinois." The clerk suddenly realized that the dusty general who appeared so seedy to one onlooker was the most successful Union battlefield commander in the war. Hotel management

ing hall and returned to their room.

By this point in the war, every endeavor Grant had undertaken—from Belmont, Missouri, to Forts Henry and Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga—had ended in victory. The recent improbable triumph at Chattanooga had prompted the *New York Herald* to proclaim, "Grant is one of the greatest soldiers of the age, without an equal in the list of generals now alive." The cover of the February 6 issue of *Harper's Weekly* featured an elaborate Thomas Nast illustration showing the figure of Columbia pinning a gold medal on the general's chest, accompanied by the simple inscription, "Thanks to Grant."

National politicians were not far behind in

In early March 1864, a physically unprepossessing Union general arrived in Washington for a meeting with President Abraham Lincoln. For both the general—Ulysses S. Grant—and the president, the meeting would prove epochal.

BY ARNOLD BLUMBERG

Cyrus B. Comstock, and his 14-year-old son, Fred. An official delegation was supposed to meet Grant upon his arrival but somehow failed to do so. While the two staff officers went directly to the War Department to report that Grant was in town, the general and his son walked to Willard's Hotel, two blocks from the White House, to inquire about lodgings.

Willard's was the best known hotel in the city. It was normal to see civilian and military celebrities conducting government business in the hotel lobby and bar. So many high-ranking Army officers had frequented the place during the past three years that the nondescript, soft-spoken Grant appeared to be just another dime-a-dozen general traveling through Washington on his way home or back to the front. One regular at the hotel described Grant as having the look "of a man who did, or once did, take a lit-

hastily offered the new arrival the bridal suite on the second floor, and the clerk personally carried the Grants' bags up to their lodgings for them.

Coming back down to the dining room, Grant caused a stir as people began to look his way and whisper excitedly to one another, "There's Grant!" Some stood up and hammered on tables, shouting, "Grant, Grant, Grant!" The call went up: "Three cheers for Grant!" Grant rose, fumbled with his napkin, and humbly bowed to all points of the compass. Unable to eat because so many people were swarming around him vying for his attention, Grant and his son left the din-

This sensitively done painting by Swedish illustrator Thure de Thulstrup captures the essential Everyman quality of Ulysses S. Grant, even when he was wearing the three stars of a lieutenant general in the United States Army.

recognizing Grant's value. When Congress convened in December 1863, the House of Representatives issued a unanimous proclamation thanking Grant and his Army of the Tennessee for their recent victories and calling for a gold medal to be struck in the general's honor; the Senate added its endorsement. On December 7, Grant's longtime political patron, Illinois Congressman Elihu B. Washburne, announced that he would introduce a bill authorizing the president to revive the rank of lieutenant general. Everyone understood that Grant was the only candidate for the post. When some in the House counseled waiting until the war was over before bestowing the honor, Washburne thundered, "I want it conferred now!" Washburne's words silenced any further opposition.

When Washburne informed Grant of his scheme, Grant responded to his political

mentor in writing that he did not “ask or feel that I deserve anything more in the shape in honors or promotion.” However, he did not reject the promotion out of hand. He hoped that he could remain in the West while Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, a trusted subordinate and adviser of Grant’s since early 1862, might take charge of the Army of the Potomac in the Eastern Theater.

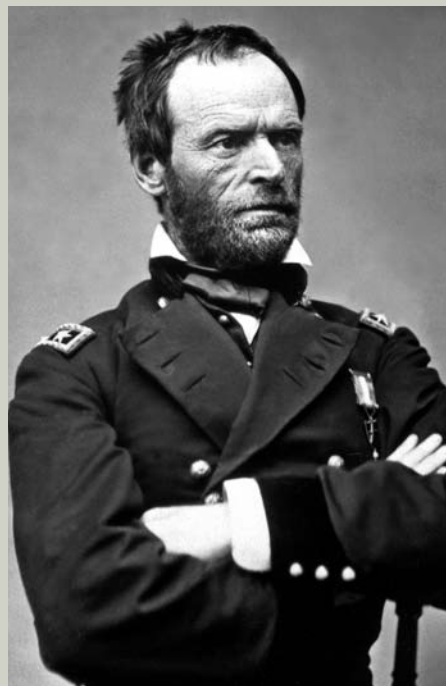
Rumors of Grant’s elevation prompted some opponents of the Lincoln administration to suggest that Grant should become a candidate for president in the upcoming national election. The pro-Democrat *New York Herald* proclaimed, “The next president must be a military man.” The *Herald’s* editor, James G. Bennett, who hated Lincoln, pushed the idea of Grant running on the Democratic ticket in November. Bennett pronounced the general “the people’s candidate” and praised Grant as “the man who knows how to tan leather, politicians, and the hides of rebels.”

Although Grant was in agreement with most Republican policies, he kept his political inclinations to himself, thus prompting both parties to court him. When the idea of his running for the highest office in the land first arose after the fall of Vicksburg, Grant told Ohio Democratic Congressman Barnabas Burns that the idea “astonished him. Nothing likely to happen would pain me so much as to see my name used in connection with a political office.” In a follow-up letter to former Illinois congressman Isaac N. Morris, Grant added, “In your letter you say I have it in my power to be the next president! This is last thing in the world I desire. I would regard such a consummation as being highly unfortunate for myself if not for the country.” To his father, Jessie R. Grant, the general vented his frustrations at the political types who were pressuring him to run for office. “All I want is to be left alone to fight this war out,” he declared, “fight all rebel opposition, and restore a happy Union in the shortest possible time.”

Talk of Grant’s presidential candidacy inevitably harmed his chances of obtaining a third star on his shoulder straps. Former



ABOVE: Grant, right, with his trusted staff officer, Brig. Gen. John A. Rawlins. BELOW: Grant’s close friend and confidant, Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, urged him to “be yourself—simple, honest and unpretending.”



Grant military aides in Washington, along with friendly political operatives, worked to quash the stories of a possible Grant run for the presidency. Washburne warned Grant of the perils: “As things stand now,

you could get the nomination of the Democracy [Democratic Party],” he said, “but could not be elected against Lincoln.”

As the bill for Grant’s promotion to lieutenant general progressed through Congress, Lincoln slowly but surely came around to supporting the idea. As a last measure of reassurance, Secretary of War Stanton dispatched Maj. Gen. David Hunter to Chattanooga to check out Grant’s political soundness. Hunter’s favorable report to the administration led Lincoln to back the lieutenant general bill. His decision was made easier by Hunter’s assurance that Lincoln had the unfailing support of the man he intended to name commander of all Union land forces.

On March 3, Grant telegraphed Sherman, “The bill reviving the grade of Lieutenant General in the Army became a law and my name has been sent to the Senate for the place.” Congress had passed the bill on February 29. Lincoln then submitted Grant’s name to the U.S. Senate for confirmation as his choice to fill the position. Grant went on to inform his friend that Grant had been ordered to report to Washington, and that he would be travelling to the nation’s capital the next morning. He added, “I shall say very distinctly on my arrival there that I will accept no appointment which will require me to make that city my headquarters.”

Sherman extended congratulations on Grant’s promotion and offered some advice to his commander. He said that even though Grant now had “become George Washington’s legitimate successor, and occupy a position of almost dangerous elevation,” Grant must still “be yourself—simple, honest and unpretending.” Sherman urged his chief to stick to his aim of steering clear of politics and let others deal with the War Department and Congress. He implored Grant, “For God’s sake and for your country’s sake, come out of Washington! Come out West,” reasoning that the war would be won in that theater, not in the East.

Grant’s train ride to Washington from Nashville proved to be anything but the low-key event the general had hoped. At



Grant, center right, is depicted in an imaginary scene, attending Abraham Lincoln's last reception at the White House. At his own reception a year earlier, Grant was seemingly uncomfortable with all the attention he received.

every stop along the way large crowds gathered to see and cheer the man who seemed destined to save the Union. This not only surprised Grant but made him uncomfortable. The excitement and interest continued unabated once he checked into Willard's Hotel. Soon after retreating to his room with his son after the chaos in the hotel dining room, Grant was visited by former Secretary of War Simon Cameron and Pennsylvania Congressman James K. Moorhead, who hustled Grant off to the reception at the White House. Either at the Grants' hotel or near the White House, Grant was joined by Rawlins and Comstock, who had spent their time after arriving in the capital unsuccessfully hunting for Secretary of War Stanton to let him know that Grant was in town.

Although the night was wet and raw, a huge crowd had come to the White House in anticipation of Grant being there. As Grant entered the presidential mansion at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, the swarms of onlookers parted like the Red Sea, allowing the general to have a clear corridor through the building. A few score feet from where Grant entered stood President Lincoln. Upon Grant's entrance, Lincoln stepped

forward, a smile on his face, his hand outstretched while Grant walked toward him. One of Lincoln's secretaries recalled that it appeared to be a "long walk for a bashful man [Grant], the eyes of the world upon him." As the men shook hands, Lincoln exulted, "Why, here is General Grant! Well, this is a great pleasure, I assure you."

When the handshake was finished, the two stood side by side, Lincoln at six feet, four inches looking down at the five foot, eight inch Grant as he he grasped the lapel of the general's uniform coat. The president beckoned to Secretary of State William H. Seward, who took Grant off to present him to Mrs. Lincoln, then led Grant to the East Room, where the president and a large crowd were waiting.

As Grant came into the East Room, it signaled another outbreak of cheers; many pressed in on Grant to shake his hand. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles described the scene as "rowdy and unseemly," while another onlooker, Barnabas Burns, said the cheering group "was the only real mob I ever saw in the White House." Grant had to stand on a sofa for the better part of an hour to avoid being trampled underfoot by adoring fans. Brooks wrote of the event:

"For once at least the President of the United States was not the chief figure in the picture. The little, scared-looking man [Grant] who stood on a crimson-covered sofa was the idol of the hour."

With some effort Seward, aided by White House staffers, managed to extricate the distinguished visitor from the press of people who had besieged him and take him to the Blue Room, where Lincoln and Stanton were waiting. Once there, Lincoln showed Grant into a drawing room where Lincoln would present him with his new commission the next day. Lincoln explained that he would make a short speech at the ceremony—no more than four sentences—and that he wanted Grant to make a short reply. So that Grant would know what was coming, the president gave him a copy of his remarks. Lincoln went on to say that he wanted the general to include in his statement two salient points: something that would smooth over any feelings of jealousy among other general officers in the Army, and something that would put Grant "on as good terms as possible with the Army of the Potomac."

At 1 PM the next day, Grant returned to the White House to receive his commission

as lieutenant general in the Regular Army. To make the occasion more newsworthy, Lincoln had assembled his entire cabinet. After the president and Grant positioned themselves standing face to face, Lincoln read his brief statement: "General Grant: The nation's appreciation of what you have done, and its reliance upon you for what remains to do, in the existing great struggle, are now presented with this great commission, constituting you Lieutenant General in the Army of the United States. With this high honor devolves upon you also a corresponding responsibility. As the country herein trusts you, under God, it will sustain you. I scarcely need to add that what I here speak for the nation goes my own hearty personal concurrence."

Grant, holding his written notes in one hand, commenced the acceptance speech he had composed the night before in his hotel room. He appeared ill at ease as he began to read the original draft, and the first few words were almost inaudible. One listener thought Grant simply had not taken enough air into his lungs and tried to read the entire piece in one quick rush. After his poor start the general paused, tightly gripped his paper with both hands, took a deep breath, and went on in a clear voice that seemed to gain strength as he continued to speak. His comments were brief: "Mr. President: I accept this commission with gratitude for the high honor conferred. With the aid of the noble armies that have fought on so many fields for our common country, it will be my earnest endeavor not to disappoint your expectations. I feel the full weight of the responsibilities now devolving on me and know if they are met it will be due to those armies, and above all to the favor of that Providence which leads both Nations and men."

Lincoln's personal secretary, John Nicolay, later observed of Grant's performance: "The general had hurried and almost illegibly written his speech on a half sheet of note paper in lead pencil. His embarrassment was evident and extreme; he found his own writing difficult to read." He went on to say that the speech was "brief and to the point," but noted that Grant had failed

to include the two items Lincoln had requested he make in his presentation. Still, all in attendance agreed that the general's remarks had suited the moment.

After the formalities at the White House, Grant inspected the defenses surrounding Washington, posed for a picture at Mathew Brady's famous portrait gallery, and spent some time with Lincoln and Stanton discussing his new duties. All the while Grant was itching to escape the capital. He concluded his eventful day by attending a dinner at Secretary Seward's home.

The next day Lincoln sent orders to the War Department formally making Grant commander in chief of the armies of the United States. This created a new military hierarchy in the Federal Army: Grant became head of all the Union armies, Sherman took Grant's place as commander of the Department of the Military Division of the Mississippi, and Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, the former Army chief, was relieved of that duty and named chief of staff under Grant. Another major change followed the shakeup of the high command: the headquarters of the new com-



Another Thulstrup sketch shows Lincoln presenting Grant with his lieutenant general's commission as Secretary of War Edwin Stanton looks on approvingly. Stanton originally had doubts about Grant's suitability.

manding general would no longer be in an office at the War Department in Washington, as it had been under Halleck, but would be wherever Grant was at the time.

That same day Grant and Rawlins departed Washington and headed for Brandy Station, Virginia, campsite of the Army of the Potomac and its commander, Maj. Gen. George G. Meade. Soon after his arrival at Meade's headquarters, Grant realized that two significant assumptions that had guided his actions had changed. In the mere 36 hours Grant had been in Washington, he came to realize that despite his sincere desire to return to the West, he needed to be closer to the seat of government. He understood that regular face-to-face meetings with the president and the secretary of war would do more to facilitate the war effort than impersonal telegrams. Also, his presence in the East would ease the vexing problem and practices of army administration departments such as quartermaster and ordnance that consistently acted contrary to the needs of the field armies. Lincoln seemed like a reasonable politician who would not intrude into matters beyond his understanding. Had not the president just told him during their last conversation that he did not expect the general to share his military plans with him? All Lincoln wanted, he made clear to Grant, was that Grant take personal responsibility and act decisively.

Grant had a second change of heart after his first meeting with Meade. A number of his former military subordinates, including Brig. Gen. James H. Wilson and Assistant Secretary of War Charles A. Dana, had recommended that Meade be removed from command of the Army of the Potomac if that organization was to perform at its full potential. Upon meeting Meade, Grant was impressed by the former's offer to step down as army commander and serve in a subordinate capacity if Grant wanted a Western general, such as Sherman, to take charge of the Army of the Potomac. Grant recorded in his memoirs that Meade's unselfish offer "gave me even a more favorable opinion of Meade than did his great victory at Gettysburg the July before." In

addition, contrary to what Grant had been led to believe, Lincoln and Stanton were not eager to remove Meade from command and did not blame Meade for the army's lackluster performance up to that time. They placed that blame on Halleck, who had laid down the rules and objectives under which Meade's army had been operating. Grant decided to retain Meade in command.

After his visit with Meade, Grant returned to Washington on the 11th and met again with Lincoln and his cabinet. Secretary Welles observed that Grant now appeared more calm and businesslike than before, but that he was still lacking in military bearing and dignity. Meanwhile, Sherman sent more reminders to his commanding officer and friend to beware of political intrigues festering in Washington and again begged Grant to return to the West as fast as he could.

After informing the administration of his intention to control the nation's armies from the Eastern Theater and make his field headquarters with the Army of the Potomac, Grant announced that he would be leaving that night for Nashville to meet with Sherman and other principal Western generals to discuss the upcoming military campaign. At the same time he would put his personal affairs in order and move his family east.

Before Grant could depart Washington he had to fend off Mrs. Lincoln's insistence he remain in town for a banquet in his honor on the 12th. Grant held firm to his plan to leave for Tennessee, describing the last three days as "the warmest campaign I have ever witnessed during the war." Although appreciating the "honor Mrs. Lincoln would do me," he told the president, "Time is very important now. And really, Mr. Lincoln, I have had enough of this show business." It was a mark of Grant's growing confidence that he felt safe in refusing the formidable and capricious First Lady's invitation. Lincoln's reaction was unrecorded.

Grant returned to Washington on March 23 from his conclave with the Western generals. Three days later he established his headquarters at Culpeper, Virginia, near



In this famous photograph by Timothy H. O'Sullivan, Grant is seen leaning over a church pew at Massaponax Baptist Church, Virginia, on May 21, 1864. He is studying a war map with Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade after the Battle of Spotsylvania.

but not with the Army of the Potomac. There he fine-tuned his strategy for a coordinated and sustained attack on Confederate forces by the Federal armies on May 3. During these preparations, Grant made four more trips to Washington to give the administration the barebones outline of his forthcoming military operations. While at the capital he stayed again at Willard's, declining to work in the two-room office space set up for him at the War Department. And everywhere he went he drew enthusiastic and admiring crowds. On his last morning in Washington, as the spring campaign was about to commence, a reporter caught up with Grant as the latter was rushing from Willard's to the train station. The newspaperman jokingly inquired if Grant intended to breakfast again until the war was over. Grant responded tartly, "Not here, I don't."

A few days after handing Grant his new rank and responsibilities, Lincoln was asked by William Stoddard, assistant to John Nicolay, what type of general he

thought Grant would turn out to be. After remarking that wherever he was Grant seemed to "make things git," Lincoln added admiringly, "Grant is the first general I've had. He's a general." Lincoln observed that every other military man he had previously put in charge wanted the president to approve his plans and take responsibility for the outcome of those plans. But with Grant, Lincoln declared, "He hasn't told me what his plans are. I don't know and I don't want to know. I'm glad to find a man who can go ahead without me."

When Grant came to Washington in early March 1864, he not only captured the hearts and imagination of the politicians and common people, but also the confidence, respect and fulsome support of the president of the United States. It was a singular personal and political victory for Grant, and it would lead to more victories in the future, for both him and the war-weary nation he served. Lincoln, as usual, had been right. □



To the Heights of Richmond

BY DAVID NORRIS

In late September 1864, Ulysses S. Grant mounted his fifth offensive against Confederate forces at Petersburg, Virginia. Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler led a two-pronged assault on either end of the Confederate line. The main targets were Fort Harrison and Chaffin's Bluff.

Soldiers of the 6th U.S. Colored Troops rescue the unit's colors during an assault on New Market Heights near Richmond. Medal of Honor winners included, left to right, Lieutenant Nathan Edgerton, Sergeant Major Thomas R. Hawkins, and Sergeant Alexander Kelly. Painting by Don Troiani.



Reports of a massive enemy force crossing the James River to assail the paper-thin Confederate lines defending Richmond reached Lt. Gen. Richard S. Ewell before dawn on September 29, 1864. Ewell rode immediately to Fort Harrison, the point where the Federals were hammering his lines. Galloping

ahead of reinforcements, Ewell met only the fleeing remnants of the fort's defenders. Years later, R.S. Rock of the Goochland Artillery would recall that the scattered gunners and foot soldiers "were running so fast that it seemed the balls thrown at us from our own guns that had been captured and turned toward us couldn't come

fast enough to catch us. He tried to rally us, and I heard him say: 'What in the hell are you running for?' A soldier as he ran by him like the wind yelled back: 'Because we can't fly.'" The general found a huge and growing gap in the Confederate shield around the capital city. Substantial reinforcements were hours away. Ewell was

too late to save Fort Harrison. The next few hours would show whether or not he was too late to save Richmond itself.

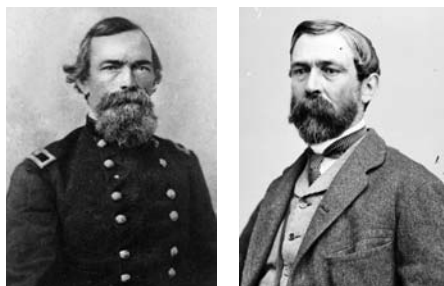
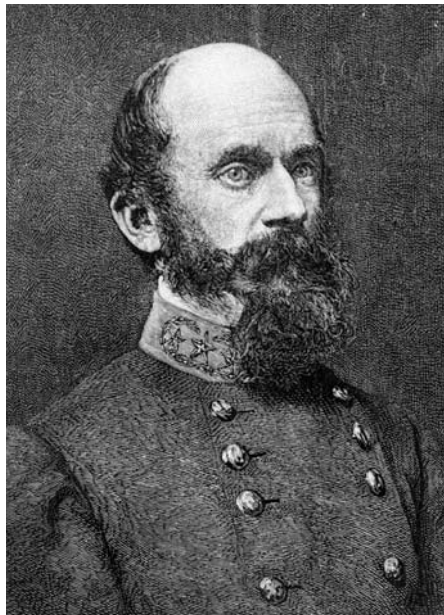
The Union's tightening siege of Richmond and Petersburg was the focal point of the war in Virginia in late 1864. With Ulysses S. Grant in command of the Army of the Potomac, a series of Union offensives kept unrelenting pressure on the Confederate lines. Four separate offensives launched by Grant had failed to break through to the enemy capital, but each had forced General Robert E. Lee to lengthen his defenses and dilute troop strength to man the new sections. If the protective bubble burst anywhere around Richmond or Petersburg, the Army of Northern Virginia could not hold the capital of the Confederacy.

Grant planned a fifth major push for late September 1864. The new plan envisioned two simultaneous attacks: Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler's Army of the James would move directly against Richmond, while Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade's Army of the Potomac would attack the Petersburg defenses. With Petersburg under direct threat, Confederate troops could not be spared to counter Butler's operations. This left Butler with a chance of piercing the enemy defenses and sending several thousand troops into Richmond before the rest of the Union Army could pour in. If Butler failed, there was still a chance that he would create enough of a distraction that the Army of the Potomac could break through the protective shield around Petersburg and seize the vital Southside Railroad. Closing that line would make supplying Petersburg by rail almost impossible. Without Petersburg, the defense of Richmond would crumble anyway, and Lee would be forced to abandon the capital.

The Union commander tasked with seizing Richmond was one of the Civil War's most controversial and contradictory generals. Butler, a politician and lawyer by training, burst on the military scene at the start of the war, ramming through secessionist obstruction in Baltimore to bring the 8th Massachusetts to Washington to protect the nearly defenseless capital. Like



All: Library of Congress



TOP: Union Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler outside his tent near Richmond. **MIDDLE:** Confederate Lt. Gen. Richard S. Ewell. **ABOVE:** Union Brig. Gen. William Birney, left, and Confederate Maj. Richard C. Taylor.

many political generals, he had led his share of disasters, starting with the embarrassing Union loss at the Battle of Big Bethel, Virginia, on June 10, 1861. As military governor of New Orleans, he had outraged Confederates with his harsh treatment of secessionist dissenters, particularly women, and he was also accused of corruption and theft.

Butler's most positive contributions to the Union were his respect for and considerate treatment of freed slaves. Early in the war, slaves who escaped from Confederate owners into the Union lines were handed back. Butler declared that such escapees from disloyal masters were "contraband of war" and would not be returned to captivity. His policy was soon adopted by all Union authorities. Butler also promoted the enlistment of black troops during his time in Louisiana. In 1863, he was transferred to Virginia and given command of the two corps comprising the Army of the James. His troops by 1864 included an African American division commanded by Brig. Gen. Charles J. Paine in XVIII Corps and a black brigade of X Corps under Brig. Gen. William Birney.

Union attacks against Richmond had come from the east since the Peninsular Campaign of 1862. Confederates augmented the natural defenses of swamps and creeks in Henrico County east of the city by building an increasingly complex network of earthworks studded with batteries and forts. Eventually the works extended south to envelop the city of Petersburg and the rail connections that linked that point with Richmond and the rest of the Confederacy. Many miles of defenses protected Richmond, but there were not enough troops to man them effectively. In September 1864, with anticipation of an attack at Petersburg, the Richmond sector was drained of manpower.

In preparing his portion of Grant's fifth offensive, Butler carried out his work in unusually effective secrecy. No one outside of the highest levels suspected anything was planned until his troops were surprised with orders to move out on the night of September 28. For his part, Maj.

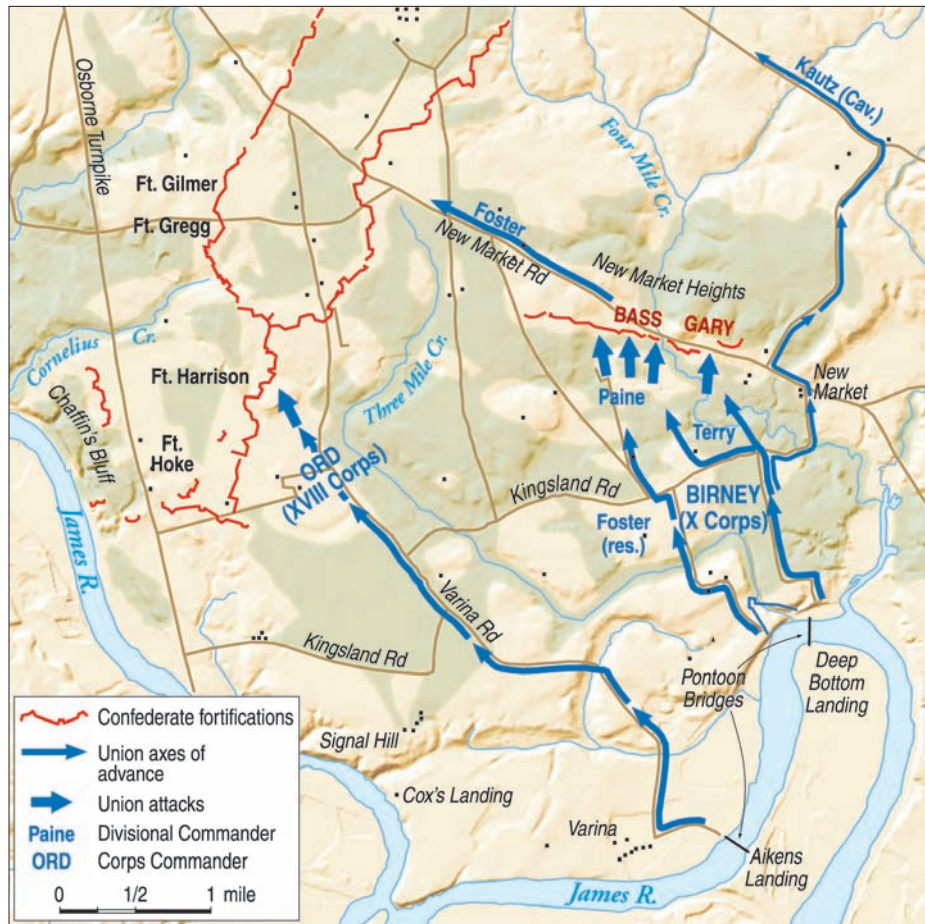
Gen. E.O.C. Ord, commander of XVIII Corps, issued no written orders, and his verbal orders went out only after nightfall. Such tight security was deemed necessary to prevent the spies from deserting and warning the Confederates.

In the camp of one of Ord's regiments, the 118th New York, Major John L. Cunningham heard tattoo sounded to end a routine day. The regiment's brief rest ended when staff officers appeared with unexpected new orders to move out. As the camp was within sight of Rebel sentinels across the James, the tents were left standing while the soldiers were herded to the corps headquarters. There, they handed over their Enfield muskets in exchange for seven-shot Spencer repeating rifles.

With the rest of their corps, the 118th New York marched to the James River. At Aiken's Landing, they found engineers laying a pontoon bridge of some 60 boats so quietly that the men could scarcely hear them at work. About 3 AM, the bridge was ready and the troops filed across. Muffled with dirt, the bridge planks made little noise as the soldiers plodded across, and for the time being the Confederates seemed unaware of the movement.

Half a mile downstream, Birney's X Corps crossed the James by pontoon bridge at Deep Bottom. Born in Alabama in 1825, Birney was a son of James Gillespie Birney, an abolitionist politician and journalist from Kentucky. Birney's corps included the all-African American division of Brig. Gen. Charles Jackson Paine. A lawyer by profession, Paine came from an aristocratic Boston family. His great-grandfather Robert Treat Paine signed the Declaration of Independence. Charles Paine became the colonel of the 2nd Louisiana Native Guard (later the 74th United States Colored Troops, or USCT), one of the first African American units of the Union Army, on October 23, 1862. Early in 1864 he transferred to the eastern theater and joined Butler's staff.

Although the Confederates spotted them once they were across, Ord and Birney were ready to stab at Richmond at dawn on September 29. Birney's 8,000 troops



After fording the horseshoe-shaped James River, Birney's X Corps moved against Confederate entrenchments along New Market Road, less than a dozen miles from Richmond. Breastworks, abatis, and felled trees made the attackers' task even more difficult.

would move north of the crossing and hit a line of Confederate works at New Market Heights. Brig. Gen. August Kautz's cavalry would ride around his right and push up the Darbytown Road toward the Confederate capital. To their left, Ord would take the Varina Road to attack Fort Harrison, a key strongpoint in the main ring of works around Richmond.

Deep Bottom, the landing point of X Corps, was at the top of an oxbow bend of the James River. About three-quarters of a mile to the north was a line of Confederate earthworks at New Market Heights. Perpendicular to the main Richmond defenses, they had been constructed to fend off potential Union attacks from the James. The community of New Market was 1½ miles from central Richmond by road. Protected on the left by the lowlands of Bailey's Creek, the Confederate

works ran east to west, parallel with the New Market Road for half a mile. The line continued at the same angle while the road veered diagonally away to the north. Taking advantage of high ground known as New Market Heights, the works looked down on the valley of Four Mile Creek. Several Union attacks had been repulsed around New Market Heights in previous months, and the area was all too familiar to the bluecoats.

Along New Market Road, 1,800 Confederates manned one mile of works. Below the entrenchments was an abatis, a tight barrier of interlocking trees, branches, and brush. On the left, the 1st Rockbridge Artillery provided cover with their guns. Brig. Gen. Martin Gary's brigade came next, followed by the Texas brigade of Brig. Gen. John Gregg to Gary's right, and then a detachment of the Rich-



ABOVE: Visible at left are the pontoon bridges used by X Corps to cross the James River at Deep Bottom. By this time in the war, Union engineers were quite adept at bridging rivers. **OPPOSITE:** Combat artist Alfred Waud sketched the Union attack on Fort Harrison from the field for *Harper's Weekly*. The peripatetic Waud covered every Army of the Potomac battle from Bull Run to Petersburg.

mond Howitzers. Gregg was at Fort Harrison, leaving command on the ground to Colonel Frederick S. Bass. Brig. Gen. Alfred Terry's division held the Union right, facing Gary and the Rockbridge Artillery. Brig. Gen. Robert Sanford Foster's division waited in reserve.

Paine's division held the Union left, facing Bass's Texans and the Richmond Howitzers. Early that morning they were arrayed on high ground south of Four Mile Creek, where they were instructed to lie down and wait for further orders. Colonel Samuel Duncan's brigade was sent ahead first, but they were blocked by the abatis. Colonel Alonzo Draper moved his brigade forward and to the right to support Duncan. Draper took skirmisher fire from the woods until he reached the creek's ravine.

After half an hour, Draper moved his men ahead in double columns. Emerging from a stand of young pines, they burst into the open 800 yards from the enemy's works. Charging across the field, they lost many men to heavy enemy fire and found themselves mired in the wetlands of Four Mile Creek, 30 yards from the Confederate lines. Slogging through the water, they formed ranks again on the north side of the creek. There, wrote Draper, "The men

generally commenced firing, which made so much confusion that it was impossible to make orders understood." Amid the chaos, Draper was unable to communicate the order to charge, and the brigade remained stranded and tangled in front of the abatis. All the while, men were falling by scores.

For half an hour, under heavy enemy fire, Draper's men hacked at the abatis with axes. Draper's aide-de-camp fled from the field. But to Draper's relief, Confederate fire began dying away. The colonel ordered each regimental commander to rally his men around the colors and charge. Draper's regiments were short of officers. That morning, the 550 men of the 5th USCT went into action with only one officer per company, and managed that only because the adjutant took command of one of the companies.

By the time they reached the New Market Road works, several companies were missing their officers. Stepping into their places to take command under fire, four sergeants in the 5th USCT and four in the 36th USCT became de facto company captains—the first African American soldiers to command troops in combat. Pouring through the abatis, the Union soldiers

rushed up the slope to the Confederate breastworks. Unknown to the Federals, the Confederate fire had slackened because Bass and Gary had received orders to abandon their position and reinforce the lines closer to the city, which were coming under attack from Ord's XVIII Corps. As Paine's troops reached the ramparts, enough Rebels were still in place to keep up a lively fire.

For their actions in the final dash to the entrenchments several men were commended in after-battle reports. Among them, Private James Gardiner charged ahead of his company and into the Confederate works. He shot and bayoneted an officer who was trying to rally his men. A musket ball struck Corporal Miles James and shattered his upper left arm bone. James stayed on his feet, urged his men forward, and somehow loaded and fired his musket with his one good arm.

Paine's strategy of throwing in his regiments piecemeal resulted in needlessly high casualties for a position that was being abandoned anyway. Confederate soldiers remaining in line delayed the Union advance and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy before commencing an orderly evacuation. The sacrifices of Paine's men had meaning far beyond the value of the ground taken. Until that day, the worth of black soldiers was doubted by much of the Union Army in Virginia. Paine's brigade suffered more than 1,000 casualties, most of them in front of the New Market Heights works. "Better men were never better led," wrote Butler. "The colored soldiers by coolness, steadiness, and determined courage and dash have silenced every cavil of the doubters of their soldierly capacity."

While Birney's X Corps crossed at Deep Bottom, Ord's men in XVIII Corps stepped off the Aiken's Landing pontoon bridge. Brig. Gen. George J. Stannard's 1st Division marched inland on the Varina Road. Cunningham and the 118th New York, with their Spencers, were in the lead on the right of the Union skirmish line. About 6 AM, as the sun rose, they stepped onto a ridge one mile from the river. Turning

around, they could see a dark line of blue-coated troops still filing across the bridge. Closer at hand, they came under a sputtering fire from Confederate pickets. Cunningham heard the “lumberman voice” of his brigade commander, Brig. Gen. Hiram Burnham, booming, “Heave after them—double quick!”

Cunningham’s men rushed forward and drove the enemy pickets from a shallow line of trenches. “The crack of our seven-shooters, the cheering of our men as they pursued the surprised ‘Johnnies’ through the woods; the beauty of the morning and its bracing air; the forest clad in autumnal colors—all added spirit and enthusiasm,” wrote the major. Dashing through an abandoned camp, where breakfast was left cooking, Cunningham’s men came within sight of Fort Harrison. In the glare of the early morning, the Rebel fort loomed up in the sunlight with heavy guns dotting its parapet.

Butler’s moves took the Confederates unaware, but before sunup pickets alerted Ewell that the Federals were across the

river. Ewell in turn notified Lee at Petersburg about the impending attack. Lee immediately sent Maj. Gen. Charles Field’s division from Petersburg. Field’s men traveled by rail as far as possible and then marched across a pontoon bridge spanning the James. After Field set out, Lee dispatched Maj. Gen. Robert F. Hoke with more troops to follow him. Artillery commander Brig. Gen. Edward P. Alexander was ordered to bring as many guns as he could safely remove from other points and join Ewell. Lee also telegraphed Secretary of War James Seddon, asking him to call up the militia and local troops available in Richmond. Even with these reinforcements on the way, Ewell faced several more hours of stalling a greatly superior enemy force.

Affairs were serious enough as it was, but Ewell made a miscalculation that put the capital in even greater danger. If Ord decided to move up the bank of the James, he might take Signal Hill and come upon Chaffin’s Bluff from the south. At the bluff, a vital pontoon bridge linked the Confederates north of the river with those sta-

tioned around Petersburg. Unaware that the Federals were aiming for Fort Harrison, Ewell shuffled a large portion of his available force down to Signal Hill, two miles from the fort. Stannard’s division loomed before Fort Harrison. There was a real danger that the Federals could punch through the lightly held fort then roll up long stretches of the neighboring works by flank attacks or by circling from the rear. Richmond was in great peril.

Fort Harrison was an earthwork one mile east of Chaffin’s Bluff and two miles west of the works stormed by Paine’s division. The Confederates had named the fort after Lieutenant William Elzey Harrison, the engineer officer who started the original works on the site in 1862. Harrison laid out a line including 15 batteries. His original Batteries 7, 8 and 9 were enlarged and combined into what became Fort Harrison. To strengthen these works, which defended Richmond from the southeast and shielded the batteries overlooking the James River at Chaffin’s Bluff, a new system of strongholds went up behind Fort Harrison. To the north

Both: Library of Congress



were the neighboring smaller works of Forts Johnson, Gregg, and Gilmer. One mile to the southeast was another, larger work called Fort Hoke. Work had just started on more entrenchments that would stretch down to Signal Hill.

Stannard, receiving a message from Burnham that he was in front of the Rebel works, ordered an immediate attack. Fort Harrison presented a formidable appearance, but with hundreds of its men out of the way at Signal Hill, the fort and the surrounding works were defended by only 800 troops. Major Richard C. Taylor of Maury's artillery battalion found himself in command of the beleaguered stronghold. He had nine guns inside the fort; the others were in adjoining works. A mere four guns in the fort were operable, as the others had been spiked or were out of repair. Only three dozen gunners in Lieutenant John Guerrand's Goochland Artillery were on hand to service them.

Burnham's men left the Varina Road and stepped onto a plowed field. They covered 1,400 yards across the field while exposed to a plunging artillery fire that was, one soldier reported, "galling in the extreme." Burnham's men halted at the base of the slope in front of the Rebel works. Spotting Confederate reinforcements moving in from his right (possibly some of the men driven out of the New Market Heights line), Stannard ordered an immediate charge. His troops poured over the parapet and placed their flag on Fort Harrison. Captain Cecil Clay of the 58th Pennsylvania was one of the Federals charging into Fort Harrison. A Confederate knocked down Clay's first sergeant with a fuse hammer, a wooden mallet used by gunners to drive fuses into shells. The sergeant angrily jumped to his feet and exclaimed, "Damn a man who would use anything like that for a weapon!"

Inside the fort the Confederate defense disintegrated. Among the 50 men taken prisoner were Major Taylor and Lt. Col. John Minor Maury, who had arrived at the scene too late to affect the outcome of the surprise attack. Many others fled, although some held on until the last sec-



A well turned out Company E, 4th U.S. Colored Troops, musters in for a group photograph following its combat at Chaffin's Farm.

ond. Private Rock of the Goochland Artillery remembered Taylor ordering them to cram a double load into one of the fort's Columbiads for a final devastating shot at the enemy. Colonel John M. Hughs of the 25th Tennessee had commanded some of the pickets who were driven in by Stannard's Spencer repeaters. As the Federals swept toward the walls, he rode his horse out over the drawbridge that crossed the exterior ditch at the north end of the fort. Hughs emptied his revolver at the approaching Yankees, rode back into the fort, and escaped.

By 7 AM, Fort Harrison was in Union hands. Brief and inefficient though the Confederate resistance was, Stannard's division still suffered 500 casualties before the fort fell. The few guns captured in working order were dragged around to fire on the retreating Rebels. Burnham pitched in to help aim one of the captured pieces. While at the gun he was struck down by a musket ball and died within moments.

About this time Ewell rode onto the scene ahead of the first reinforcements. Corporal Charles Johnston of the Salem Artillery remembered the general's desperate efforts to halt the Confederate rout. Ewell, said Johnston, "was with the skirmish line, constantly encouraging them by

his presence and coolness. I remember very distinctly how he looked, mounted on an old gray horse, as mad as he could be, shouting to the men, and seeming to be everywhere at once." The ground just west of Fort Harrison was covered with woods, and Ewell scraped together a handful of men. Soldiers, stragglers, and teamsters made a noisy show of firing at the Union soldiers in the fort.

Union attention shifted south to the trenches running down to the James. Ord could only assemble a small attacking party of skirmishers and officers. Leading the assault himself, Ord drove the scattered Confederate defenders out of the breastworks to Fort Hoke. The main force there was Captain Cornelius Allen's Lunenburg Heavy Artillery. Joined by stray infantrymen and reservists, they repelled the Union advance. Ord fell, badly wounded in the leg. With a tourniquet applied to stop the bleeding, he stayed in command until a surgeon demanded that he leave the front. Ord turned over command to Brig. Gen. Charles A. Heckman.

Ewell's first substantial help came from the Confederate Navy's James River Squadron. By 8 AM, a naval battery commander notified Commander Thomas R. Rootes about the Union attacks. Rootes

immediately ordered the gunboats *Nansemond* and *Drewry* to Chaffin's Bluff and sent an officer ashore for further details. The officer returned with the news that Fort Harrison had fallen and a request for help from General Ewell. Rootes took the ironclads *Fredericksburg* and *Richmond* downriver to a landing somewhat ominously called the Graveyard, two miles south of the captured fort.

It was 10:10 AM before the vessels were in position to open fire on the fort and the masses of Union troops around it. Rootes sent Lieutenant E.T. Eggleston of the Confederate Marine Corps ashore with a signal officer and an elevated observation stand to spot the fall of their shots against the enemy. Eggleston sent word that the shells were falling short, so Rootes had his guns aboard *Fredericksburg* and *Richmond* loaded with high charges. With the heavier charges, Eggleston saw the projectiles landing among the enemy troops around Fort Hoke. Ewell sent word to fire fast, and the ironclads kept up their fire all

day, hurling more than 300 rounds from their big guns. Grateful army officers later thanked their naval comrades for their long-range assistance, which they believed helped slow the Union forces until Confederate reinforcements could arrive.

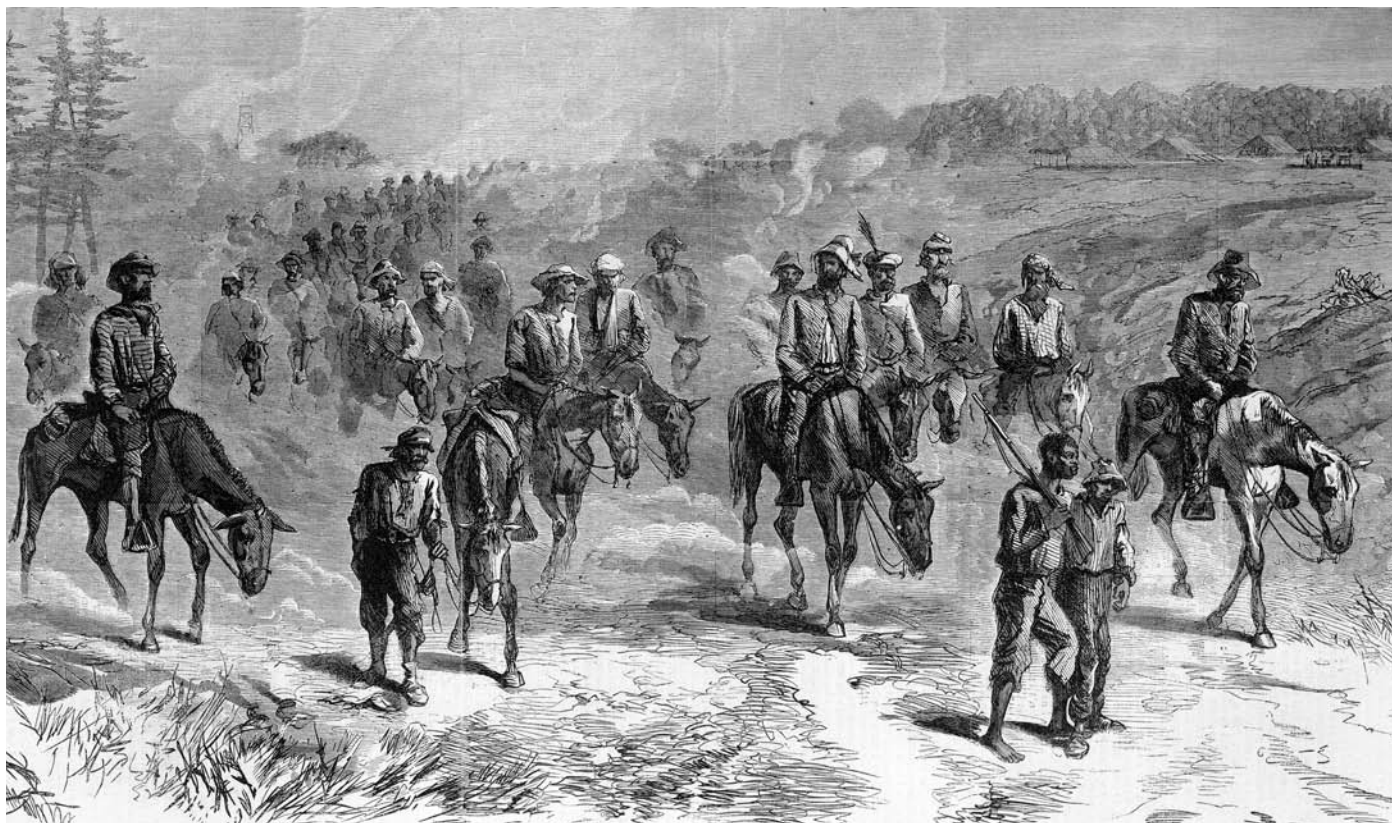
After taking over from Ord, Heckman launched a series of disjointed attacks on the Confederate positions north of Fort Harrison. The 2nd Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery was ordered to take a small work called Fort Johnston. Private Joseph M. Alexander remembered that the Pennsylvania regiment passed the ambulance carrying General Ord, who cheered on the men, telling them, "Hurry up, boys! We'll be in Richmond tonight."

Alexander's regiment hurried forward, followed by the 89th New York. Out in the open, they attracted cannon fire from the Confederate works while big shells soaring down from the James River gunboats crashed among them. In the lead, a battalion of the Pennsylvanians under Major James L. Anderson drew ahead

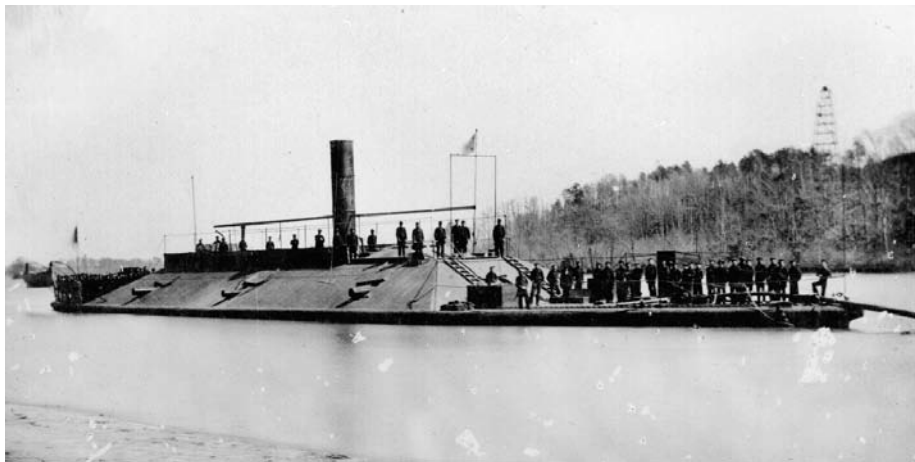
while heavy Confederate fire drove the rest of his regiment and the New Yorkers back to take cover.

Anderson's head was shot off when he was 100 yards away from the fort. In his pocket was a newly signed commission as colonel of the regiment. So heavy was the fall of incoming shells that Alexander saw comrades injured by splinters flying off their shattered musket stocks. From a wounded Pennsylvanian who made it back to their lines, a surgeon removed a musket mainspring that had been driven into the soldier's chest. Anderson's battalion was trapped and cut off under the enemy lines while the supporting troops were driven back. Most of his battalion was killed or taken prisoner.

The sounds of battle carried clearly to Richmond. John Beauchamp Jones, a clerk at the War Department, heard a "heavy and brisk cannonading" as he walked to his office. As he worked at his desk that morning, "the vibrations were very perceptible." After lunch, news



Brigadier General August Kautz' cavalry returns to Union lines after a raid behind Confederate defenses at Richmond. Kautz' horsemen pushed to within two miles of the Rebel capital before turning back.



TOP: Fort Gilmer's 27-foot-deep trench was designed to prevent industrious Union engineers from tunneling beneath the works. **ABOVE:** CSS *Virginia II* was one of several ships of the James River Squadron to support Confederate efforts to retake Fort Harrison. **OPPOSITE:** Firing from behind waist-high rifle pits, Union forces defend newly captured Fort Harrison from Confederate attempts to retake the vital fort. Robert E. Lee personally directed the failed counterattacks.

reached the city that Fort Harrison had fallen and the Yankees were moving toward town. Businesses and government offices closed. Scores of exempted workers joined their militia companies and marched toward the battle. Jones noted that squads of guards were sent into the streets everywhere with orders to arrest every able-bodied man they met, regardless of papers, to throw against the enemy. Citizens watched anxiously from hills and tall buildings, peering at the smoke rising from the battlefield.

The initial fear in Richmond was due to Kautz, who had slipped very close to the

city. After the New Market Road line fell to X Corps, he took his cavalry through and reached the Darbytown Road. They pushed along the lightly defended road and by 10 AM were poised only two miles from the edge of Richmond. A hastily gathered force, Major James Hensley's 10th Virginia Heavy Artillery Battalion, blocked the road with six guns and 100 men. Surprised by Hensley's resistance and uncertain about what else lay ahead, Kautz withdrew. Three hours later he made another rush at Richmond farther north on the Charles City Road. Again, a scratch force faced them from behind a thin line of

entrenchments and a few cannon. Again, Kautz's caution won out, and he pulled away. After a bungled night attack on another Confederate position, he rode back to rejoin the main Union force the next morning.

By late morning, Heckman's advance had stalled. He had suffered heavy losses for very little gain. General Grant personally rode to the battlefield to check on the progress of the operations, although he interfered little with the planning of the day's fighting. Confederate reinforcements trickled in from Richmond and elsewhere. The Southerners anchored their new defense at Fort Gilmer. Named for Maj. Gen. Jeremy Francis Gilmer, the chief engineer of the Confederate Army, it was a smaller work than Fort Harrison, but it was fronted by a formidable, 27-foot-deep ditch. This daunting obstacle to an infantry attack was designed to prevent Union engineers from digging under the works. Set on high ground, the fort looked down on an open expanse where for some distance trees had been cut down and left with their branches attached to create more obstacles.

Elements of X Corps marched from New Market Heights to join the attack on the main Confederate lines. After marching to the pontoon bridge the night before and taking part in the day's action, they were already worn out. Two divisions of the corps made for Fort Gilmer. Maj. Gen. Robert Foster's division moved south from the New Market Road toward the north face of the fort, hindered by having to cross the low, brush-tangled tributaries of Cornelius Creek. Pulling themselves out of the nearest ravine to the entrenchments, the Federals stepped into a cornfield. Now within easy range of Confederate guns, Foster's ranks were cut down by intense artillery fire aided by a growing number of Rebel infantrymen filing into the works. Those who survived got no closer to Fort Gilmer and took cover in the ravine.

Birney's older brother, Brig Gen. William Birney, led his brigade of African American troops toward the fort. Sent in one at a time, each successive regiment was cut to

pieces. By a tragic misunderstanding of orders, only four companies of the 7th USCT were hurled at the fort. One-third of the 189 men were shot down before they approached the works, but the remainder made it to the deep ditch before the ramparts. Some tried to boost other men up onto their shoulders to climb over the parapet, but musket fire hit anyone who looked over the edge. Adding to the musketry, the defenders improvised 12-pounder grenades. Cutting artillery fuses to a two-second length, they lit them and rolled the shells over the parapet into the ditch onto the attackers. Only one man of the four companies made it back to the Union lines; the rest were either killed or captured. "Death fairly reeled in that ravine," one New York soldier remembered.

That afternoon and on into the night the Union forces held their gains and prepared to defend them against the counterattacks that they expected would come the next day. Fort Harrison had been built with some barracks on its western side but no defensive wall. Now the new occupants tore down the barracks and threw up a

new defensive face to block Confederate attacks. Cecil Clay remembered, "Everybody worked with such tools or apologies for tools as could be had and a sort of rifle-pit was constructed across the rear or open space of Fort Harrison."

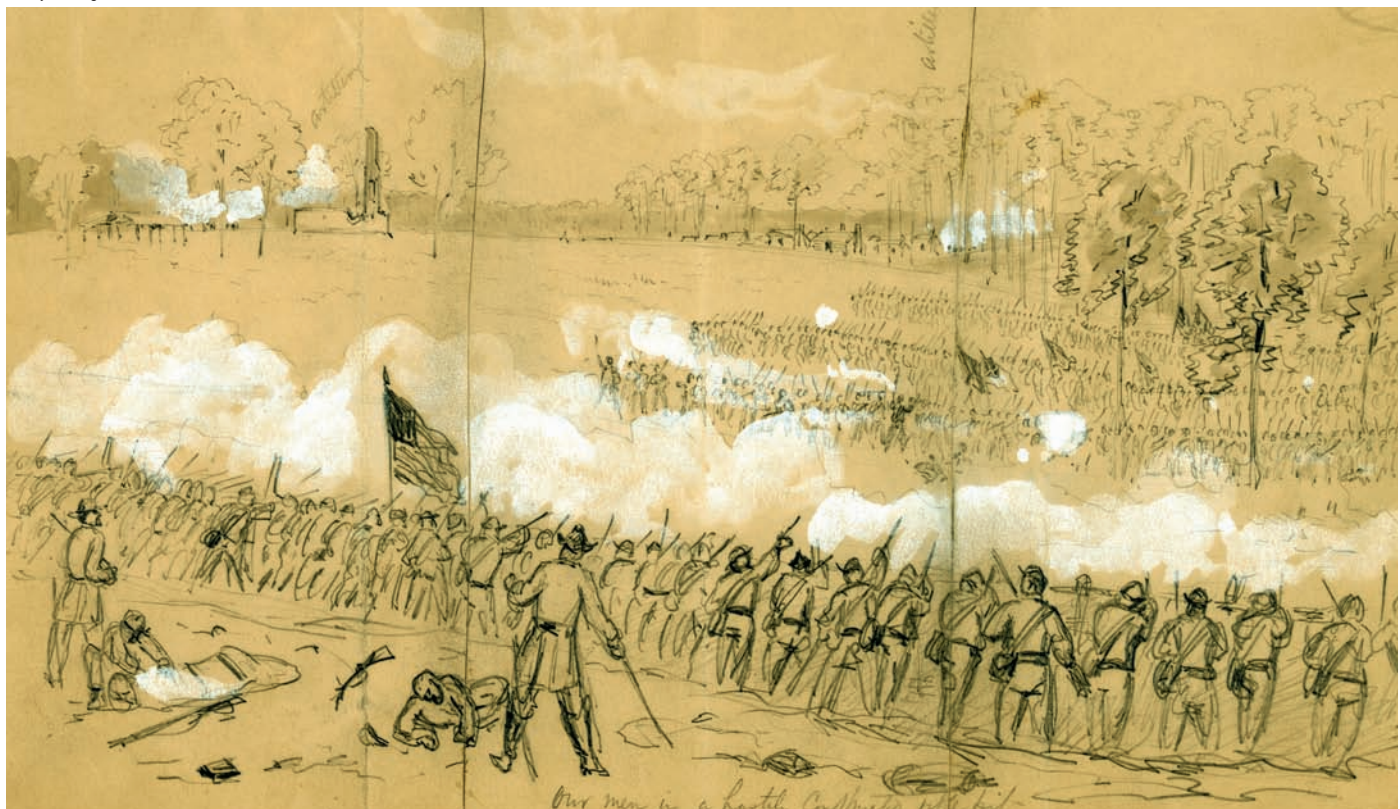
Lee judged the fighting at Fort Harrison even more serious than the threat to Petersburg. Coming to Chaffin's Bluff in person, he planned to take back the captured fort. He considered a night attack, using the first brigades of reinforcements, but decided that waiting for daylight and the arrival of more troops promised better success. On the morning of September 30, as Lee massed his troops to attempt the recapture of Fort Harrison, Richmond's citizens waited for news of the peril looming to the east of them. Of the city's newspapers, only the *Richmond Whig* managed to get out an edition, as nearly all of the city's printers were now carrying muskets at the front. Exemption papers were no more valid that they had been on the day before. Numerous male civilians were detained and sent to the fighting. Overzealously following their orders, guards temporarily arrested one-

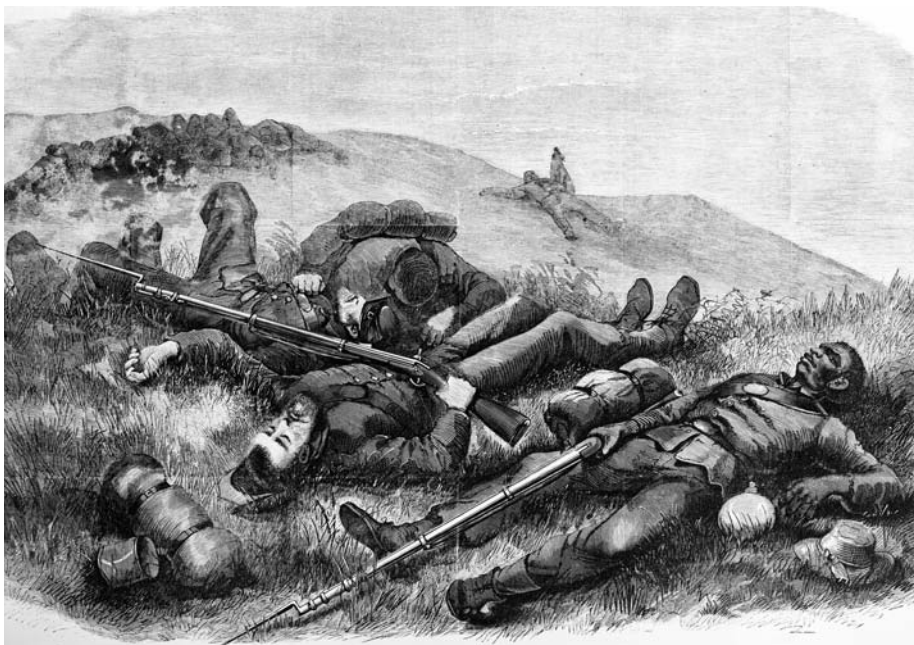
third of President Davis' cabinet: Postmaster General John H. Reagan and Attorney General George Davis.

Confederate ironclads in the James reopened their fire in the morning. Elevation of the naval guns was limited to only six to seven degrees, which restricted their range. To reach the enemy, the guns required charges exceeding those spelled out in naval regulations. With the extra-large doses of powder, a 7-inch rifle gun aboard *Fredericksburg* exploded on its third shot of the day. Lee could not accept a Union force lodged within the Richmond defenses. He was confident that his troops could clear the enemy out. Alexander's artillery would soften up the fort. Then Field and Hoke would send in their infantry, hitting simultaneously from two directions. Hoke foresaw only a costly disaster, and he vainly tried to persuade Lee to wait behind a strong new line of fortifications and draw the Federals out in the open to attack them.

Alexander asked Hoke where he would like the artillery placed before the attack. Hoke replied he would rather Alexander not fire a shot at all. The bombardment

Library of Congress





TOP: African American troops photographed in camp at Fort Harrison, renamed Fort Burnham after slain Brig. Gen. Hiram Burnham. **ABOVE:** Artist James Walker broke new ground in 1865 by showing dead black and white soldiers lying together on an unnamed battlefield.

was likelier, thought Hoke, “to demoralize my men by your shells falling short and bursting among my men” than to hurt the enemy. Artillery would only help “if you will bring your guns up to my line and charge with my men.” Alexander replied that such a move would get his horses killed. “Yes,” answered Hoke,

“and my men are going to be killed. Are your horses of more value than the lives of my soldiers?”

Hoke’s objections were for naught, and the bombardment began. Lee’s plan called for Hoke, with five brigades, to attack the new western façade of Fort Harrison. Field would bring his three brigades from the

east and attack the original front of the fort. His troops would wait in a ravine until Hoke was in position, then both forces would attack at the same time. The Confederate plans fell apart quickly. Brig. Gen. George “Tige” Anderson’s Georgian brigade of Field’s division impetuously poured out of the ravine and charged Fort Harrison. Rushing ahead of any support, the brigade was wrecked in the futile charge. Brig. Gen. John Bratton of South Carolina, whose brigade was to follow 100 yards in the rear of Anderson, felt obligated to support the Georgians and sent his own men against the fort. As Anderson’s men reeled back, one of Bratton’s regiments captured a small redan. While it had no major effect on the battle, the capture of the redan distracted the Federals and enabled some of the Confederates to escape.

Field’s third and last brigade, that of Colonel Pinckney D. Bowles of Alabama, also charged and was driven back with heavy losses. Hoke’s attacks began too late, after Field’s forces were broken up by the heavy Union fire. Hoke’s first attack was broken up and repelled, largely from the concentrated fire of the Federals’ seven-shot Spencers. Private Alexander of the 2nd Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery talked to a wounded North Carolina prisoner after the battle. Thinking of the firepower of the repeating rifles, the Rebel said, “You’uns did not seem to load your guns.”

With Lee’s personal urging, two more attacks by Hoke followed, but they were unable to dislodge the Union troops from Fort Harrison. Most of the Confederate casualties of the battle occurred on the second day during these charges. A survivor of Clingman’s brigade, then commanded by Colonel Hector McKethan, wrote that the brigade charged Fort Harrison with 857 men and lost 587 of them in 10 to 15 minutes. The 8th North Carolina went into the battle with 175 officers and men. Only about 25 were able to report for duty the next morning. The regiment’s battle flag was gone. Trapped under hopelessly heavy Union fire, the color bearer tore the

banner to tiny shreds so it would not be captured with him. One of Hoke's men, echoing his commander's earlier complaint, bitterly wrote, "The dead were buried under the flag of truce, but the artillery horses were saved." Fighting around Fort Harrison ended about 4 PM on September 29. Butler's army had suffered about 3,300 casualties among its 20,000 men. The Confederates, who eventually threw about 16,000 into the battles, lost 2,000 men.

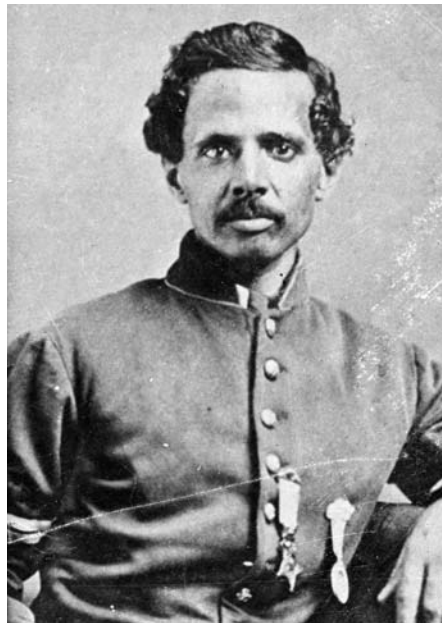
While Field and Hoke made their attacks on September 30, Meade charged the Confederate entrenchments southwest of Petersburg. They captured a section of works around a redoubt called Fort Archer. Under Lt. Gen. A.P. Hill, Confederates dug new fortifications and repelled the Union forces from further progress. Fighting continued until October 2, when each side settled into their newly established lines of entrenchment. Another 2,800 Union and 1,300 Confederate casualties were added to the cost of Grant's fifth offensive.

Fourteen men from Draper's brigade and other USCT regiments in the Army of the James received Medals of Honor for their actions on September 29. Butler was so impressed with the conduct of his USCT regiments at New Market Heights that he supplemented the Medal of Honor awards with a citation of his own, known as the Army of the James Medal or the Butler Medal. Butler himself ordered and paid for the specially designed medals and ribbons. They were manufactured by Tiffany & Company and modeled on the Crimean War Medals issued by Great Britain. "I record with pride," wrote Butler, "that in that single action there were so many deserving that it called for a presentation of nearly two hundred." The Army of the James Medal was the only military honor created for a specific battle during the Civil War.

The fifth major offensive by Grant against the Richmond-Petersburg defenses was part failure and part success. The Confederate capital and its satellite stronghold, Petersburg, were still in Con-

federate hands. But Union gains forced the Confederates to further stretch and distort their defensive lines and spread their troops ever thinner. The Federals, in turn, strengthened the captured Fort Harrison, renaming it Fort Burnham after the Maine general who was killed there. South and north of the fort, Union engineers dug new entrenchments with abatis facing the Confederates on the west. Additional

TOP TO BOTTOM: Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler's privately commissioned Butler Medal; Medal of Honor recipients 1st Sgt. Powhatan Beaty, 5th USCT; 1st Sgt. Alexander Kelly, left, 6th USCT; and Sgt. Maj. Christian Fleetwood, 4th USCT.



Union works were built and anchored on the James River at newly constructed Fort Brady, where heavy guns kept the Confederates' James River Squadron bottled up higher in the river.

The Confederates abandoned the segments of the old line that were now covered by Fort Burnham and consolidated a new line of works that served as a sort of scar tissue to contain the sore spot of Fort Harrison. To make up for the lack of soldiers to man the new lines, they planted hundreds of "subterranean shells" supplied by the navy's Torpedo Bureau in front of their works. Red warning flags, planted three feet behind the mines to warn off their own men, would be removed in the event of a Union assault.

As the dust settled from the loss of Fort Harrison and the failure of the desperate effort to recapture it, the seriousness of the South's deteriorating military situation became all too clear. Lee wrote Secretary of War James Seddon on October 4 from his headquarters at Chaffin's Farm. Unless substantial numbers of new soldiers could be found by a heavy call-up of exempted men, he warned, "It will be very difficult for us to maintain ourselves." Without reinforcing the Army of Northern Virginia, Lee said, the government faced the dreaded prospect of "the discouragement of our people that would follow the fall of Richmond." Lee's grim premonition would come to pass seven months later. Butler's attacks north of the James on September 29 and 30 were an important link in the parlous chain of events that ultimately led to the final collapse of the Petersburg lines, the evacuation of Richmond, and the end of the Confederacy. □

In November 1861, word swept through London that an American warship, *James Adger*, in port at Southampton, was planning to put to sea and intercept a British ship bringing Confederate emissaries to Europe. As a result, the American minister to Great Britain found himself summoned to see the British prime minister at his residence at 94 Piccadilly. Charles Francis Adams made his way through the yellow gloom of a London fog and found Lord Palmerston waiting for him in the library. Palmerston immediately complained to Adams that *Adger's* captain and crew, while “enjoying the hospitality of this country, filling his ship with coals and other supplies, and filling his own stomach with brandy should, within sight of the shore, commit an act which would be felt as offensive to the national flag.”

Earlier in the year, President Abraham Lincoln had proclaimed a blockade of Southern ports, after which Great Britain and France commenced a policy of neutrality that carried with it the rights of belligerent action by the Confederacy. It was the only important concession made to the Confederate states by European powers during the war. The Confederate commissioners in Britain at that time were a poor lot, while the United States foreign minister, Adams, the son of former President John Quincy Adams, was a skilled diplomat who had been urged by Secretary of State William H. Seward to be bold in asserting American rights.

Confederate diplomacy in Europe was more complacent, based on a belief in the economic power of “King Cotton” upon which British and French mills were dependent. Confederate President Jefferson Davis subscribed to this view. Prior to the war, England and Europe had imported nearly 85 percent of their cotton from the South. Nearly one-fifth of the British population earned its livelihood from the cotton industry, while one-tenth of Britain’s capital was invested in cotton as well. However, there was no official Confederate policy to produce a phony cotton famine in Europe or rush cotton

abroad to fill the coffers of the South. It would be a short war, in Davis’s view. If it lasted longer, a concomitant cotton famine would inevitably bring Great Britain into the war to safeguard her economic interests and rescue the South.

William L. Yancey had resigned as Confederate envoy to Britain. In his place, Davis assigned a pair of trusted political cronies to represent Southern interests in

London and Paris. James M. Mason, Yancey’s replacement, was a strange choice in the view of well-connected political wife Mary Boykin Chesnut, who wrote in her diary: “My wildest imagination will not picture Mr. Mason as a diplomat. He will say ‘chaw’ for ‘chew’ and he will call himself ‘Jeems’ and he will wear a dress coat to breakfast. Over here whatever a Mason does is right. He is above the law.” His

Diplomatic

BY MARK SIMMONS



Paris-based associate John Slidell was a better choice. Slidell was a skilled politician and sophisticated New Yorker who had married a French-speaking Creole and moved to New Orleans.

In October, Mason and Slidell were in Charleston waiting to run the blockade aboard CSS *Nashville*, a fast steamer heading directly for England. However, *Nashville* had a deep draft and could only

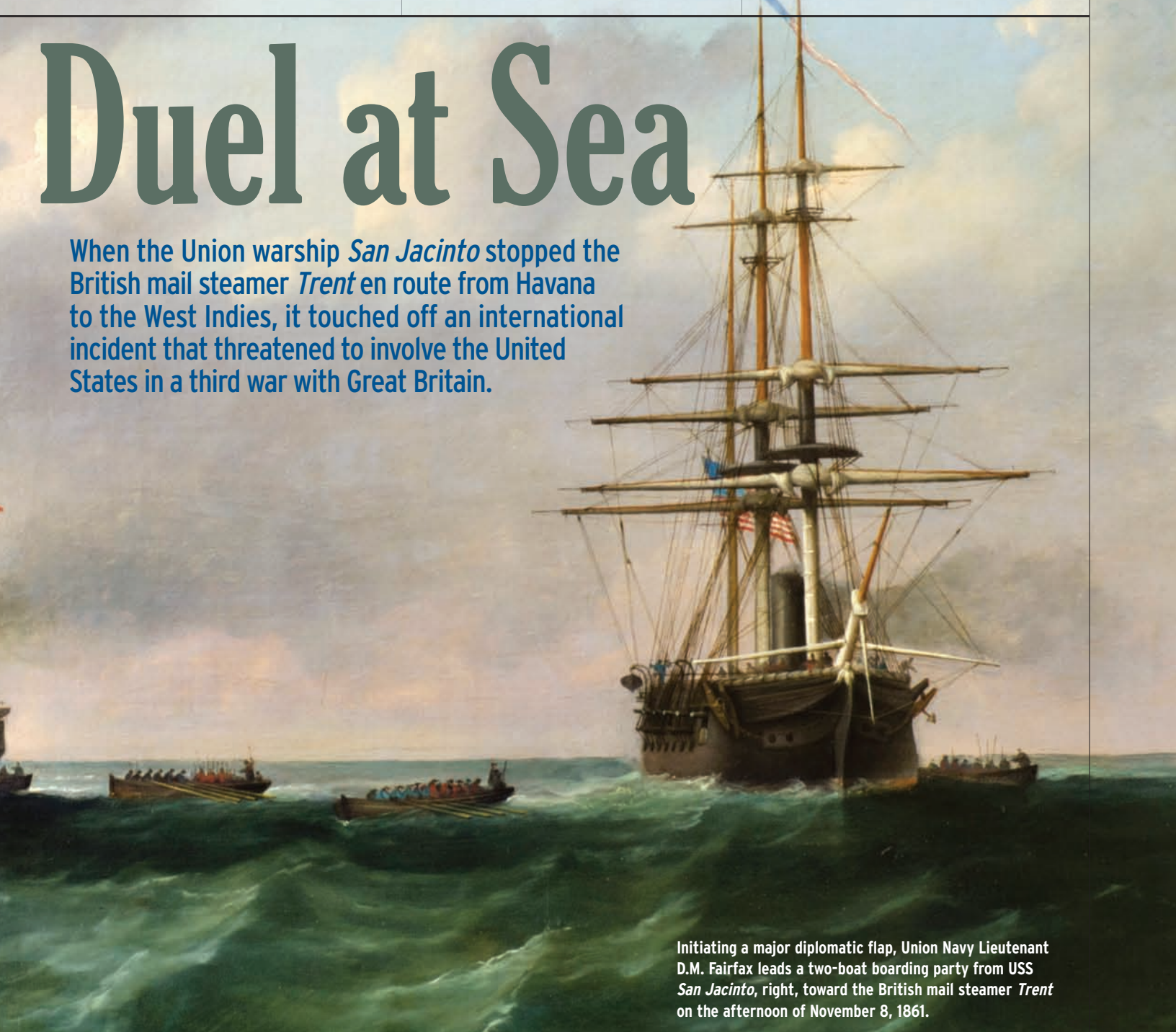
use one of Charleston's channels, which were heavily guarded by Union warships. The diplomats booked passage on *Gordon*, a ship chartered for \$10,000 by George Trenholm, who ran a cotton brokerage, finance, and shipping firm, with offices in Liverpool. The Fraser, Trenholm Company did much of the banking for the Confederacy in Great Britain. The shallow-draft *Gordon*, renamed *Theodora* to confuse

Union blockaders, could use any channel; she left Charleston at 1 AM on October 12 and easily evaded the blockade. "Here we are," Mason wrote gleefully, "on the deep blue sea, clear of all the Yankees. We ran the blockade in splendid style."

Two days later the diplomats arrived in Nassau but missed their connection with a British steamer. They turned for Cuba, hoping to find a British mail ship bound

Duel at Sea

When the Union warship *San Jacinto* stopped the British mail steamer *Trent* en route from Havana to the West Indies, it touched off an international incident that threatened to involve the United States in a third war with Great Britain.



Initiating a major diplomatic flap, Union Navy Lieutenant D.M. Fairfax leads a two-boat boarding party from USS *San Jacinto*, right, toward the British mail steamer *Trent* on the afternoon of November 8, 1861.

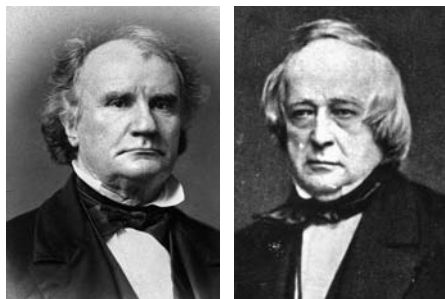
for England. Arriving in Cuba on October 15, they found that British mail ships did dock at Havana but that they would have to wait three weeks for the next ship, RMS *Trent*.

Union intelligence sources thought Mason and Slidell had escaped aboard *Nashville*. Thus the U.S. Navy dispatched *James Adger*, commanded by John B. Marchand, with orders to intercept *Nashville*. On October 3 the Union steam frigate *San Jacinto*, commanded by 62-year-old Captain Charles D. Wilkes, arrived at St. Thomas in the Danish West Indies. He was hunting the Confederate raider CSS *Sumter*.

Wilkes, a gifted astronomer, had experienced many ups and downs in his naval career. Early on, he had won accolades for his voyages of discovery to Antarctica and the Fiji Islands. But repeated displays of bad temper and insubordination had landed him in hot water with his superiors, and Wilkes had been shunted aside to a minor bureaucratic desk in Washington before receiving orders to take command of the steam warship *San Jacinto* on patrol off the coast of West Africa. He was directed to sail the ship home for refitting. Characteristically disobeying orders, Wilkes determined instead to prowl the West Indies for Rebel shipping.

In Cienfuegos, on the southern coast of Cuba, Wilkes learned from a newspaper that Mason and Slidell were in Havana waiting to take passage on *Trent*, sailing first for St. Thomas and then on to England. Wilkes knew that *Trent* would have to use the Bahama Channel between Cuba and the Great Bahama Bank. He thought over the legal implications of trying to remove the Confederate envoys from the British vessel, asking the opinion of his executive officer, Lieutenant D.M. Fairfax. He decided that Mason and Slidell could be considered “contraband” and legally seized.

Trent left Havana on November 7 with Mason and Slidell on board; Slidell was accompanied by his wife and children. Diplomatic secretaries James E. Macfarland and George Eustis were also part of



All: Library of Congress



Leading actors in the *Trent* controversy included, clockwise, from top left, James M. Mason, John Slidell, and Captain (later Admiral) Charles D. Wilkes. None would emerge unscathed by criticism.

the official company. Passing through the Bahama Channel they found *San Jacinto* waiting. The Federal ship spotted *Trent* about noon on November 8; the mail ship was flying the Union Jack. Wilkes ordered a shot fired across *Trent*'s bow. It was ignored. A second shot landed close to the bow. *Trent* hove to. Wilkes gave detailed instructions to Fairfax. “Should Mister Mason, Mister Slidell, Mister Eustis and Mister Macfarland be on board,” he said, “make them prisoners and send them on board this ship immediately and take possession [of the *Trent*] as a prize.” Fairfax was also instructed to seize any dispatches and official correspondence he might find.

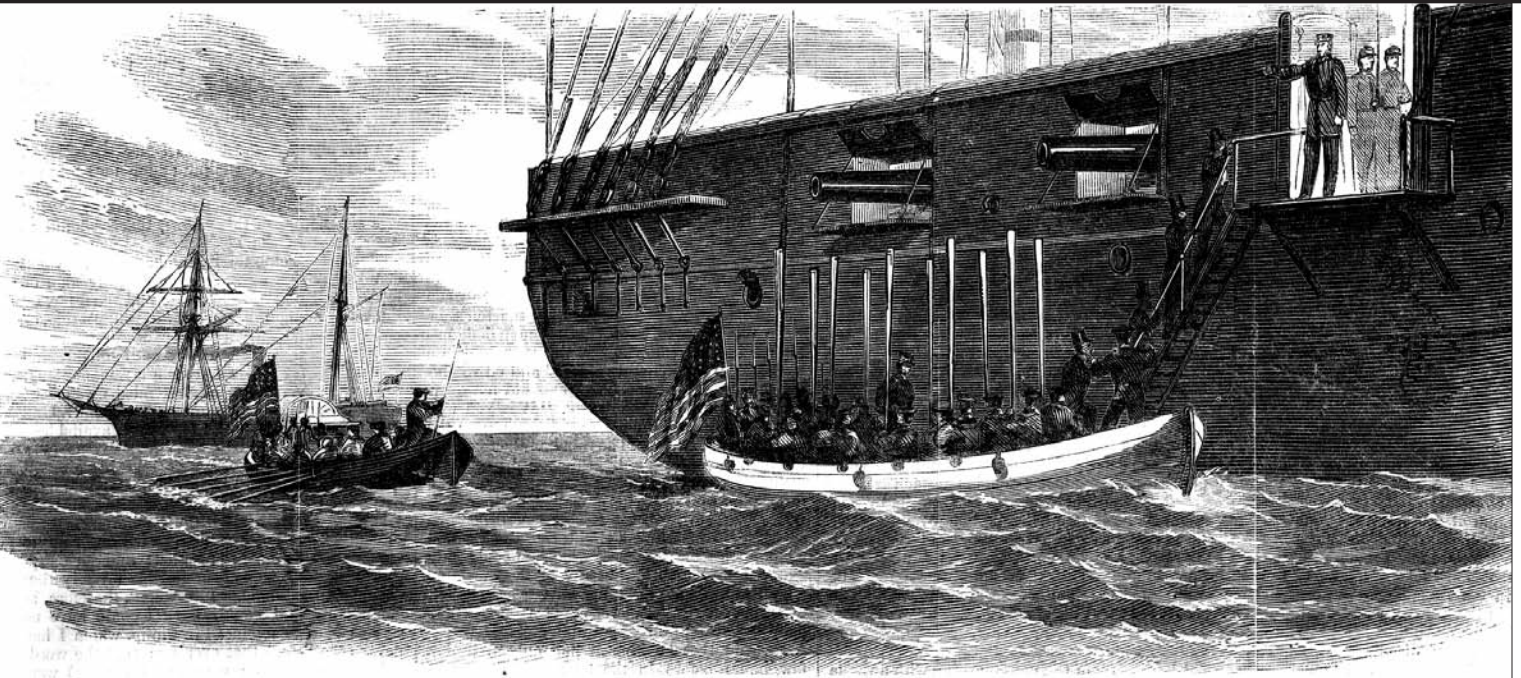
Armed with cutlasses and pistols, Fairfax and a boarding party of 20 men approached *Trent* in two cutters. Fairfax boarded alone, not wishing to enflame the

situation, but found Captain James Moir furious that his ship had been stopped at sea. Fairfax told him his orders, Moir refused to cooperate, and Fairfax soon found himself surrounded and threatened by passengers and crew. He had little choice but to order the armed party in the waiting boats to join him. Once again Moir refused permission for the boarding party to search the ship. Mason and Slidell came forward willingly, and Fairfax backed down, belatedly realizing that such a search would constitute a de facto seizing of the ship—a clear act of war.

Mason and Slidell formally refused to go with Fairfax but did not resist when led to the boats. Wilkes had hoped to find important documents in the captured men's luggage but found nothing. All their dispatches had been taken in hand by *Trent*'s mail agent, Richard Williams, who promised to deliver them to Confederate authorities in London. In the meantime, Slidell's furious wife and daughters heaped verbal abuse on the Union sailors, even after Fairfax grabbed one of the daughters and saved her from falling overboard after a sudden wave.

Wilkes was still keen to seize *Trent*, but Fairfax talked him out of it. A prize crew would be needed, he warned, and the inconvenience to *Trent*'s other passengers and mail recipients was unacceptable. Wilkes reluctantly agreed, and *Trent* was allowed to proceed on her way. Meanwhile, *San Jacinto* reached Hampton Roads on November 15 for coaling, and Wilkes was able to contact Washington. He was ordered on to Boston, where his captives were imprisoned in Fort Warren. A congratulatory telegram was waiting for Wilkes from Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles. “Your conduct in seizing these public enemies was marked by intelligence, ability, decision, and firmness, and has the emphatic approval of this Department,” Welles informed him.

Others in the North likewise praised Wilkes and his crew. Congress thanked him for his “brave, adroit and patriotic conduct in the arrest of the traitors” and had a gold medal struck for him. He was



the toast of Boston and celebrated throughout the country as a hero of the republic. The *New York Times* stoked the patriotic fervor. “We do not believe the American heart ever thrilled with more genuine delight than it did yesterday, at the intelligence of the capture of Messrs. Slidell and Mason,” the newspaper reported. To a Northern public conditioned to believe that Great Britain was decidedly pro-Confederate, the *Trent* affair seemed like a perfect way to put the haughty Britons in their place.

However, others in the North worried that Wilkes’ actions were identical to those that had led the United States to go to war with Britain in 1812. Now the roles were reversed. At midday on November 27, news of the seizures reached London, where it was greeted with personal and official fury. Pro-Northern politician John Bright described the public mood as “every sword leaping from its scabbard, and every man looking about for his pistols and blunderbusses.” Benjamin Moran, assistant to Adams at the American legation, wrote in his diary, “The people are beginning to see that their flag has been insulted, and if that devil *The Times* feeds their ire tomorrow, as it assuredly will, nothing but a miracle can prevent their sympathies running to the South and Palmerston getting

***Trent’s* British captain, James Moir, defiantly refused to cooperate with Fairfax and his boarders, but Confederate emissaries James M. Mason and John Slidell came forward voluntarily to avoid bloodshed.**

up a war. The *Times* is filled with such slatternly abuse of us and ours that it is fair to conclude that all the fishwives of Billingsgate have been transferred to Printing House Square.”

Adams was not at the legation when the news arrived. He was in Yorkshire in the north of England enjoying the hospitality at Fryston Hall as the guest of socialite-politician Richard Monckton Milnes. Moran sent a panicky message to Adams, but the veteran diplomat did not feel the need to hurry back. Finally returning to London, Adams found a note from Foreign Secretary Lord Russell on his desk, but it was late in the day and Adams responded that he would see him the next day. He found his British counterpart with “a shade more of gravity visible in his manner, but no ill will.” The meeting lasted a mere 10 minutes, Adams recalled, but “I scarcely remember a day of greater strain in my life.” What had been feared might happen with *James Adger* had come to pass with *San Jacinto*. Adams doubted that two Confederate envoys were all that important.

In Richmond, Jefferson Davis sent a message to Congress condemning the Federal actions as a violation of international rights “for the most part held sacred even amongst barbarians.” But the Davis administration failed to exploit the incident as a good propaganda opportunity. Mary Chesnut wrote about the seizure of Slidell and Mason, perhaps reflecting the general view in the South. “Something good is obliged to come from such a stupid blunder. The Yankees must bow the knee to the British, or fight them. As I read the Northern newspapers, the blood rushes to my head. Anyhow, down they must go to Old England, knuckle on their marrow bones, to keep her on their side—or barely neutral.”

The British cabinet met in emergency session. Palmerston angrily threw his hat onto the Cabinet Room table and told his colleagues, “I don’t know whether you are going to stand this, but I’ll be damned if I do.” He wrote to Queen Victoria a few days later, saying he wanted to teach the United States a lesson. He left the door open for diplomacy: “If, however, the Americans were to climb down and apologise the result would be honourable for England and humiliating for the United States.”

Recent dispatches from Lord Lyons,

British ambassador to the United States, were read at the meeting. Lyons warned that American Secretary of State Seward might provoke an incident and that the United States then would have difficulty in climbing down. He recommended a show of force, including reinforcing the garrison in Canada. Lord Somerset, the First Lord of the Admiralty, was against Palmerston's wish to reinforce Rear Admiral Sir Alexander Milne's North American and West Indies fleet, arguing that Milne already had enough ships superior to those of the United States and that there was no point incurring unnecessary expense.

However, on land it was a different matter. Within a week of the *Trent* crisis, Secretary of War Sir George Lewis proposed sending 30,000 men to Canada. Palmerston told the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Duke of Newcastle, to advise the Governor General of Canada to prepare for war. "Such an insult to our flag can only be atoned by the restoration of the men who were seized," said Palmer-

ston, "and with Mister Seward at the helm of the United States, and the mob and the press manning the vessel, it is too probable that this atonement may be refused."

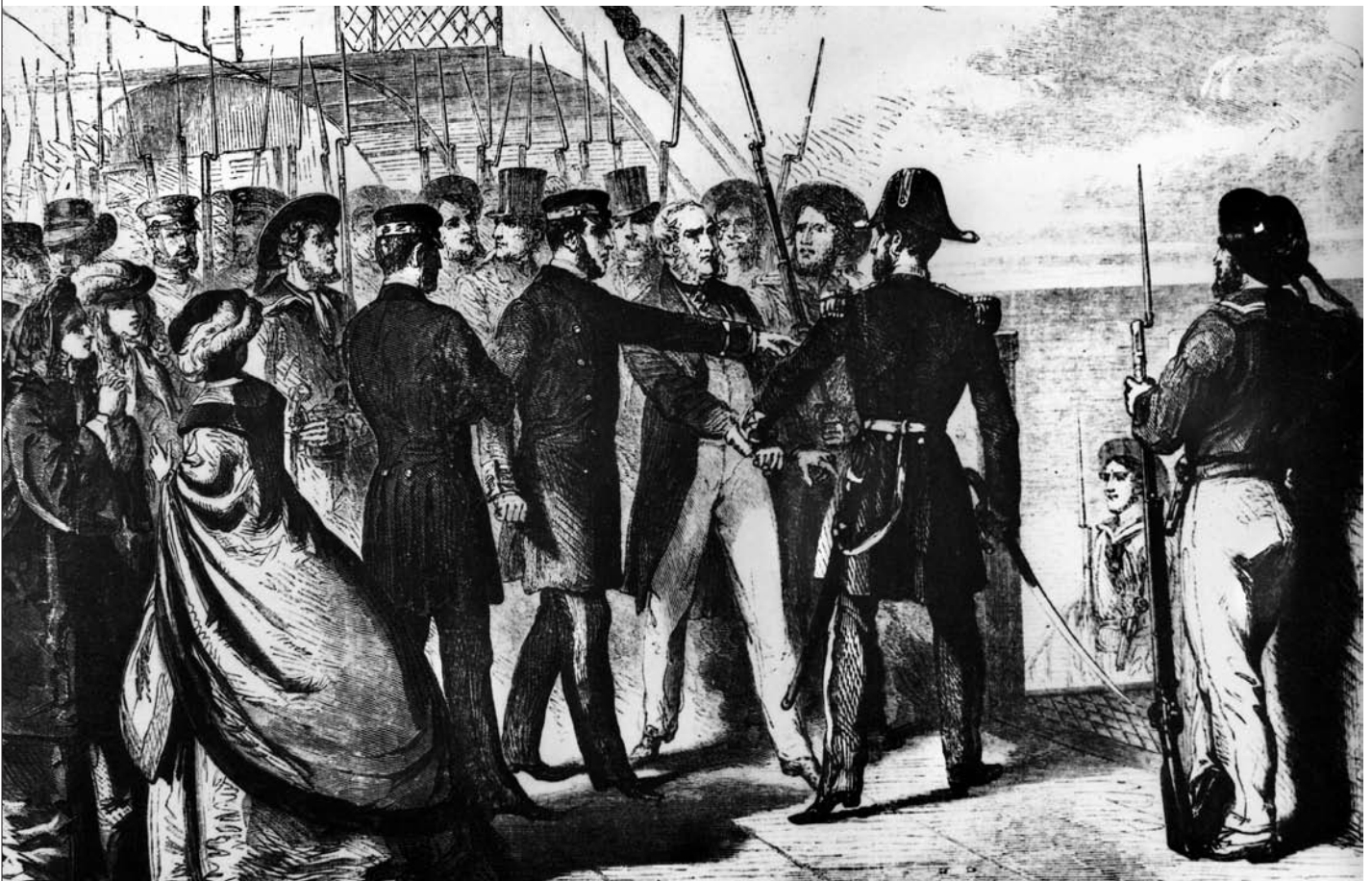
This view had support in both the Houses of Commons and Lords. The country was clamoring for war. All concurred that the American seizure was unlawful. However, at the November 19 cabinet meeting the ministers could not agree on the response they should make to the Americans. William Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer, argued that too strong a response would leave the Americans no room to maneuver. Palmerston countered that too weak a response would give the United States the wrong impression of Great Britain's resolve. It was decided to leave the drafting of the letter to Foreign Secretary Lord Russell. Russell's

Greatly upset, John Slidell's wife and daughters, left, watch angrily as Lieutenant Fairfax and his boarding party of Union sailors and marines surround the Southern diplomat on *Trent's* top deck.

letter stated the facts of the case and demanded the restoration of the Confederate commissioners and a formal apology within seven days of receiving the letter. Failure to comply would mean the immediate departure of Lord Lyons to Canada and a de facto state of war between the two nations.

The cabinet reconvened the next day to examine Russell's draft letter. Some felt the meaning was unclear, and Russell became defensive. Finally, it was agreed that Lord Lyons would be sent two letters—the first a basic outline of the case, the second containing the threat of war within seven days. Gladstone began backtracking, saying he was not even sure the law was on their side, even though there was no doubt that Wilkes had violated international law. After long hours of debate, the cabinet officers agreed to send the letters to the queen for her approval.

The letters arrived at Windsor Castle on November 30. Prince Albert, the German-born consort and husband of Queen Vic-



toria, had been kept up to date with the cabinet's deliberations, and he was convinced that their reaction would be overly aggressive. Prince Albert was ill at the time; officially, he was said to be suffering from a chill, but in fact he had a serious case of typhoid fever. Yet he dragged himself from his bed, barely able to hold a pen, and amended the proposed text. He felt that there should be "the expression of hope that the American captain did not act under instructions, or if he did, that he misapprehended them—that the United States Government must be fully aware that the British Government could not allow the flag to be insulted, and the security of her mail communications be placed in jeopardy, and Her Majesty's Government are unwilling to believe that the United States Government intended wantonly to put an insult upon this country ... and that we are therefore glad to believe that they would spontaneously offer such redress as alone could satisfy this country, viz: the restoration of the unfortunate passengers and a suitable apology."

It was a loophole, an exit route that would allow the American government to withdraw with honor. This redrafting by Prince Albert was the last service he performed for his adopted country. When he presented the document to the queen for her signature, he complained, "I feel so weak I have hardly been able to hold my pen." He collapsed the next day and died 12 days later at the age of 42. Victoria mourned him for the rest of her lengthy life, always wearing widow's black.

Lord Russell agreed with the prince's additions and changes but still doubted that Seward would climb down. He composed a third letter to Lyons outlining the presentation of Her Majesty's demands. Above all, the Confederate commissioners must be released from prison. No apology would appease Britain if they were kept in custody. There was to be no bargaining on that point.

The next day Captain Conway Seymour boarded the Boston-bound *Europa* with the British government's letters. Even with reasonable weather it would still take the

Both: Library of Congress



An anti-Confederate cartoon shows James M. Mason and John Slidell carrying bales of cotton as they approach money lenders Napoleon III of France and English representative "John Bull." Two crudely sketched slaves are visible in the rear.

letters 12 days to reach Lyons and another 12 to return. Meanwhile, Russell worried that the Americans would prevaricate. He wrote, "I cannot imagine their giving a plain yes or no to our demands, I think they will try to hook in France and if that is, as I hope, impossible, to set Russia to support them." Palmerston, for his part, doubted that the United States would even bother to negotiate. "The masses make it impossible for Lincoln and Seward to grant our demands," he said, "and we must therefore look forward to war as the probable result."

While British diplomats fretted and fulminated, Southerners watched the looming crisis with glee. As one observer noted, most Confederates "rejoiced in the prospect of retaliation by England" against the Federal government. The *Richmond Enquirer* editorialized against Wilkes, charging that he had "violated the rights of embassy, long held sacred, even among barbarians." The Confederacy seemed on the verge of gaining a valuable ally in the war against the North and official recognition by European powers that it so des-

perately sought. "The opinion now prevails," wrote a Confederate envoy in London, "that there will be war. England will have a vast steam fleet upon the American coast and will sweep away the blockading squadrons from before our ports."

On December 3, another cabinet meeting was held after it was revealed that United States agents had been buying up Britain's entire saltpeter reserves, most of it due to be shipped. An immediate export ban was put into effect. The Americans, lacking their own supplies of saltpeter, would be severely restricted in the production of gunpowder by this action. An arms and ammunition ban was also instituted, and the Admiralty issued a worldwide alert to the fleet to prepare for action. The first wave of 11,000 troops for Canada left Southampton.

Charles Francis Adams complained to the State Department that all he knew of the *Trent* affair was what he found in the pages of the *London Times*. In three weeks, he said, he had heard nothing from his government, most importantly whether or not Wilkes had acted on official gov-

ernment orders. Adams was kept in the dark. Meanwhile, the mood inside the American legation in London was so tense, said one observer, that it “would have gorged a glutton of gloom.” Adams’ own son Henry stormed, “Good God, what’s got into you all? What in hell do you mean by deserting now the great principles of our fathers; by returning to the vomit of that dog Great Britain? What do you mean by asserting now principles against which every Adams yet has protested and resisted? You’re mad, all of you.”

Back in Washington during the first week of December, many were hopeful that Britain would take no action in the wake of the *Trent* seizures. The arrival of British newspapers on December 13 changed all that, leaving no doubt that Her Majesty’s government would demand reparations and that Wilkes was thought to have acted unlawfully. Secretary of State Seward had openly favored war with Britain as a means of uniting the divided country. He thought the South would drop their brothers’ quarrel and support the nation against the foreign power. Clearly he was mistaken, since one of the South’s main aims was to draw Britain into the conflict on their side, with the hope that France would follow. Lincoln, for his part, had doubted the wisdom of Wilkes’ actions from the start, fearing that “the traitors will prove to be white elephants.” Still new to international affairs, the president was willing to leave the matter in Seward’s hands—for the time being, anyway.

Seward soon found that what he thought he had wanted—war with Great Britain—was not an open-and-shut matter. Seward now saw, as did Lincoln, that what Wilkes had done in stopping *Trent* and removing the two Confederate diplomats was no different from what the British had done to American ships before the War of 1812. They had to stick to the principle of the rights of neutrality at sea. “One war at a time,” said Lincoln, and Seward agreed. Still, they had no wish to antagonize public opinion and said nothing publicly. In his December 1 message to Congress, Lincoln did not even mention

the *Trent* affair, much to the surprise of the body’s members.

On December 18, just before midnight, an exhausted Captain Conway finally reached Lord Lyons’ house in Washington. At 3 PM the next day Lyons presented himself at Seward’s office and delivered the queen’s letter. Seward asked Lyons what would happen if they refused the stated demands or asked for more discussions. Lyons replied, “My instructions were positive and left me no discretion.” Seward asked for more time; it could not be done in seven days. Lyons agreed to come back in two days, when the clock to war would start ticking. Going home, Lyons doubted that an extension of time would make much difference. He sent a coded telegram to Admiral Milne to make ready to evac-



Other key players in the *Trent* controversy, clockwise, from top left, included Charles Francis Adams, American ambassador to Great Britain; Lord Lyons, British ambassador to the United States; and Prince Albert, husband and consort of Queen Victoria.



All: Library of Congress

uate the legation staff to Canada.

Returning to Seward on Saturday, December 21, Lyons was confronted with another request for two more days. Lyons was not the type to ignore his instructions, but he realized that Seward was in a tight corner. He also knew that a letter from France formally supporting Britain’s position would arrive later that day. A new appointment was set for Monday, but Lyons made it clear that this must be the final meeting on the matter. On December 23, Lyons officially delivered Russell’s letter to Seward at the State Department. There was no immediate reply. Lyons had done all he could to help the Americans by delaying, but now the clock was ticking.

Seward got Lincoln to call a cabinet meeting for Christmas Day, at which copies of Russell’s letter were given to the members. It soon became apparent that most were against releasing the Confederate envoys. Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner spoke up, saying that the release of the prisoners would be political suicide; arbitration was the only possible course. However, even as Sumner was speaking news arrived of the official French support for Britain. The room was stunned. Attorney General Edward Bates pointed out that Sumner’s suggestion would not work. Britain’s navy would crush their own and ruin overseas trade, and the nation would be bankrupt. There was already a run on the banks. The cabinet adjourned in the afternoon, agreeing to reconvene the next day. Lincoln, still clinging to the notion of international arbitration of the crisis, asked Seward to present his arguments on compliance in writing the next day, and he would do the same for the arbitration case.

By the next day, most of the cabinet members had come around to Seward’s view that the United States had little choice but to comply with British demands. Seward had been up all night drafting a 26-page response to Lord Russell in which he clearly laid the blame on Captain Wilkes and his failure to take *Trent* to a prize court. Seward showed the draft to Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, who seconded the idea of releasing the

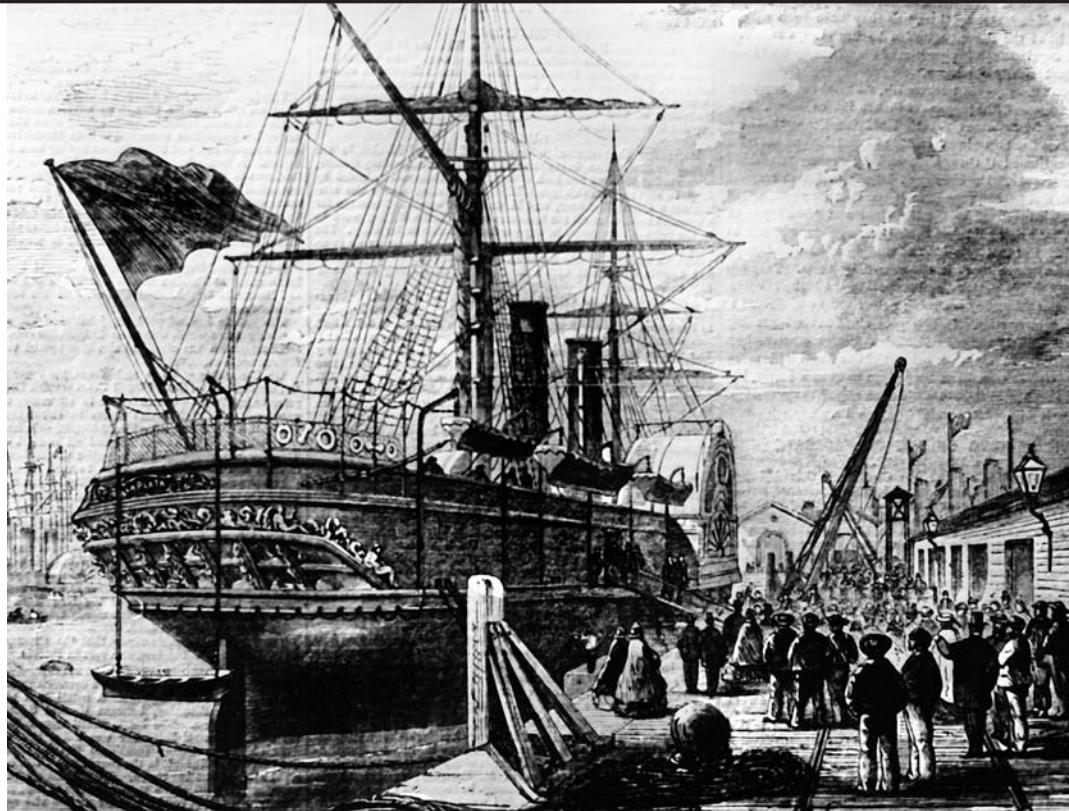
Confederate commissioners.

Sumner was not at the cabinet meeting later that day; he was in the Senate where a late resolution was being debated not to release the Rebel envoys. Meanwhile, Seward outlined his case, then waited for Lincoln to make his for arbitration. But the president said nothing, and the cabinet approved Seward's proposal. When the others had left, Seward asked Lincoln why he had not made a counterargument. Lincoln replied, "I could not make an argument that would satisfy my own mind."

Seward's official reply complied with the basic demands of the Russell letter, stating that Wilkes acted without orders and that the captives would be released. But there would be no formal apology. The envoys were contraband and could rightfully be seized. Wilkes' error was in not seizing *Trent* as well and taking it to a neutral port for judgment. In a final gibe at the British, Seward suggested that Wilkes, by impressing passengers from a merchant ship, had merely followed British practice, not American, an echo to the War of 1812. However, said Seward, the United States wanted no advantage gained by an unlawful action and that as far as the nation was concerned the captives were relatively unimportant. He concluded, "The four persons in question are now held in military custody at Fort Warren, in the State of Massachusetts. They will be cheerfully liberated. Your lordship will please indicate a time and place for receiving them."

In England, the American response was awaited eagerly and with some trepidation. On January 8 news reached London and spread rapidly across the city. In West End theaters, Benjamin Moran wrote, "Audiences arose like one and cheered tremendously." The press conveyed the general sense of relief. On January 8, the *Times* commented: "We draw a long breath, and are thankful we have come out of this trial with our honour saved and no blood spilt." As for Mason and Slidell, the *Times* judged them "about the most worthless booty it would be possible to extract from the jaws of the American lion."

Palmerston wrote to the queen, gleefully



When Confederate ambassadors Mason and Slidell finally arrived at Southampton, England, in February 1862, Queen Victoria refused even to receive them. Cheap Indian cotton obviated the need for continued ties to the South.

reporting the "humiliation" of the United States. The queen took a more measured view. Her speech at the opening of Parliament on February 6, 1862, officially closed the *Trent* affair. "The Question has been satisfactorily resolved," she announced. "The friendly relations between Her Majesty and the President of the United States have therefore remained unimpaired."

Mason and Slidell were duly removed from Fort Warren and put aboard the HMS *Rinaldo* at Provincetown, Massachusetts, and transported to St. Thomas in the Caribbean. On January 14, the diplomats boarded the British mail steamer *La Plata* for the final leg of their long and torturous journey. When the Confederate envoys arrived in Southampton early in February, it was barely reported in the British press. The nation, like the queen, was still wrapped in mourning for the late Prince Albert. Victoria refused even to receive the visitors. Lord Russell told Lord Lyons, "What a fuss we have had about these two men." The soldiers Britain had

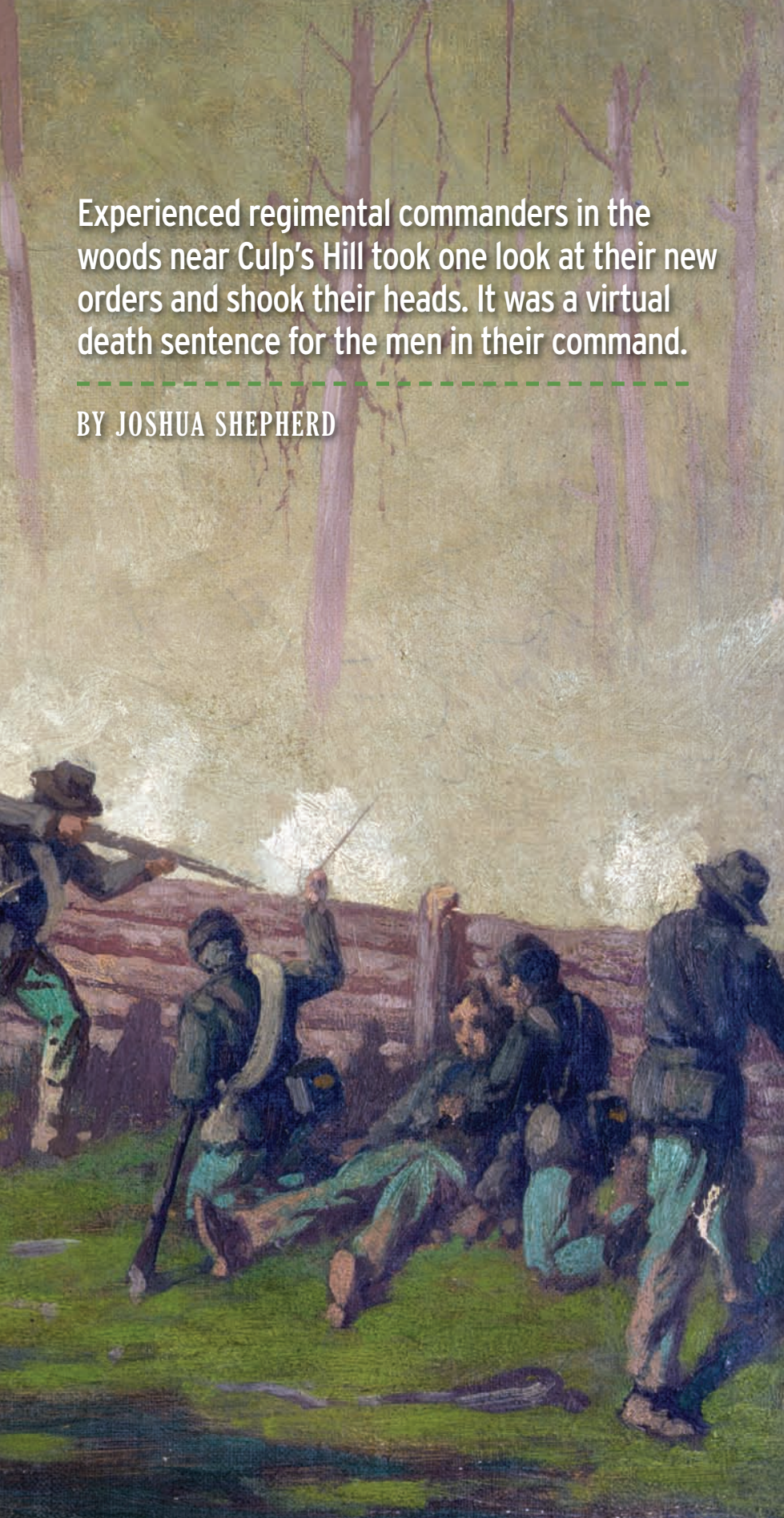
sent to Canada at great expense remained there for some time. They got bored with little to do; some even deserted to America and joined the Union Army.

The South gained little from the *Trent* affair. Late in February the British government issued a report that acknowledged the effectiveness of the Union blockade. After it was debated in the House of Lords on March 10, Mason sent one of his first dispatches to Richmond. It was gloomy. The blockade was effective, and "no step will be taken by this government to interfere with it." With her honor defended (and a cheap alternative to Southern cotton located in India), Great Britain could afford to remain on the sidelines while the Americans killed each other with increasing avidity. In the end, the inherent good sense of three men—Prince Albert, Lord Lyons, and William H. Seward—had avoided the looming threat of war between the United States and Great Britain and allowed Abraham Lincoln, as he fervently hoped, to fight "one war at a time." □

Murderous Order AT CULP'S HILL



Hard-pressed Union troops in the Army of the Potomac's XII Corps fire at oncoming Confederates from behind improvised breastworks atop Culp's Hill. The men were subsequently withdrawn from the strong defensive works by Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade.



Experienced regimental commanders in the woods near Culp's Hill took one look at their new orders and shook their heads. It was a virtual death sentence for the men in their command.

BY JOSHUA SHEPHERD

Although Union Colonel Silas Colgrove had previously led his men through some of the most horrific fighting in the eastern theater of the Civil War, the order he received on the morning of July 3, 1863, in the woods near Culp's Hill at Gettysburg, was the most unnerving he had ever received. Dropping his head and looking noticeably disturbed, Colgrove pulled his nose, which he frequently did when pondering a difficult problem, and muttered, "It cannot be done; it cannot be done." Then the colonel lifted his head and announced, "If it can be done, the 2nd Massachusetts and the 27th Indiana can do it." His counterpart in the 2nd Massachusetts, Lt. Col. Charles Mudge, had a similar but even more ominous reaction. "Well, it's murder," said Mudge, "but it's the order." In the end, only one of them would be right.

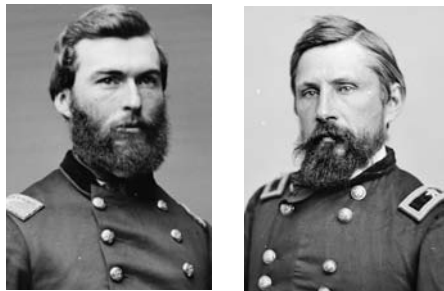
A more curious pairing of outfits could not be found in the Army of the Potomac. The 27th Indiana had been Colgrove's own regiment before his advancement to temporary brigade command. Recruited from the farm country of south-central and southern Indiana, the regiment was largely composed of homespun provincials who would have been considered commonplace had it not been for the efforts of Captain Peter Kop of Company F. "Big Pete," as he was called, stood six feet, five inches tall and latched onto the novel plan of assembling an entire company of "stout and able bodied" men no shorter than 5 feet, 10 inches tall. Not only did he attain his goal, but a good third of his company stood over six feet tall. Topping them all was David Van Buskirk, a veritable Hoosier Goliath whose 6-foot, 11-inch, 300-pound stature earned him the title of tallest man in the Union Army. In fact, the giants of Company F drove up the regimental height average to such an extent that the 27th claimed the distinction of being the tallest regiment in Federal service.

Despite their imposing stature, the robust farm boys of the 27th were in desperate need of real training and they received it from Colgrove. Born in Steuben County, New York, on May 24, 1816, Colgrove immigrated to the backwater of Winchester, Indiana, in 1837 and opened a law practice two years later. Foul-mouthed and ill-mannered, Colgrove

quickly exhibited a distinct talent for annoying his neighbors. The same year he was admitted to the bar, he busied himself fighting Southern slave hunters in the Randolph County courts, as well as litigating on behalf of the free black settlement of Cabin Creek. The resulting ire of the Democratic community little affected the prickly Colgrove, who seemed to relish the fuss, even after he was violently accosted by a gray-haired matron. "I never got such a tongue-lashing in my life," an amused Colgrove recalled.

A state legislator at the outbreak of the war, Colgrove was commissioned lieu-

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Colonels Thomas H. Ruger of the 3rd Wisconsin, left, and George H. Gordon, 2nd Massachusetts. BELOW: Officers of the 2nd Massachusetts were photographed standing together in more peaceful surroundings in 1861. Regimental commander Colonel William Cogswell stands fourth from the left.



Library of Congress

tenant colonel of the 8th Indiana and served a three-month stint in western Virginia, including action at the Battle of Rich Mountain. Governor Oliver P. Morton, always on the lookout for officers with ties to the state's Republican machinery, rewarded Colgrove with the colonelcy of the newly formed 27th in September 1861.

Meanwhile in Boston, another volunteer regiment, the 2nd Massachusetts, was composed of far different makings than its Indiana counterpart. The officer corps of the 2nd Massachusetts was largely composed of young men from some of the wealthiest and most privileged families in the Bay State. Indicative of the lot was Charles Redington Mudge, a recent graduate of Harvard University. Mudge received news of the outbreak of war while still in bed on a Sunday morning. He recalled in a letter to a

friend, "I jumped out of bed at the news of the capture of Fort Sumter, and fully made up my mind to fight; and when I say fight I mean win or die."

Born in New York City on October 22, 1839, Mudge enjoyed a comfortable upbringing; his father, Enoch Mudge, was one of the wealthiest cotton and wool traders in the nation. The younger Mudge was a cheerful, popular individual. He enrolled in Harvard in 1856 and quickly revealed a marked indifference to his studies. The president of Harvard was obliged to forward a cautionary letter to Mudge's father, warning him that Charles' work was "imperfectly performed, and he has persisted in disregarding the rules of order in the college. I trust he will now let the responsibilities and duties of life sober him down, and cure that levity of conduct

which has been so particularly displayed by his residence in College."

Mudge was far more interested in sports and a thriving social life. Lithe, muscular, and athletic, he distinguished himself in many sports and exercises, including rowing, boxing, and gymnastics. An excellent vocalist as well, he served as vice president of the prestigious Hasty Pudding Club. Mudge's personable demeanor garnered him the near universal affection of the student body. "This popularity was founded upon a remarkable unvarying kindness of nature," thought one acquaintance. "An instinct assured each classmate that there could be no chance of a word of harshness or sarcasm from him."

Mudge's personality, however, won few academic points from the faculty. In July 1860, his father was informed that Charles' degree "will be probably granted in a year if nothing occurs in the meantime to make it impossible." The coming of the Civil War sent Mudge scrambling to secure his son's degree. After Charles was commissioned a lieutenant in the 2nd Massachusetts, the elder Mudge pleaded his son's case to the president of Harvard. "As my son may never return and might leave immediately," he wrote, "I have to ask if he can now receive his degree, the reasons will doubtless be sufficiently apparent to the Faculty." The endeavors of Mudge's influential father were successful. By the time the 2nd Massachusetts headed for the front in July 1861, Charles Mudge had been granted his degree.

The regiment was arguably the best-drilled volunteer regiment in Federal service. Its commander, George H. Gordon, was a fussy West Pointer who instilled a professional bearing in his regiment. The Massachusetts men soon earned the nickname of "Gordon's Regulars." The men of Company F were particularly pleased with Mudge. "It was his nature," recalled one acquaintance, "to appreciate the good traits of everyone."

Unfortunately for the men of the 27th Indiana, the same could not be said for Silas Colgrove. From the outset, the colonel proved decidedly unpopular with most of



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Battlefield artist Alfred Waud's panoramic landscape of Charlestown, West Virginia, shows the camp of the 2nd Massachusetts at far left. The drawing was made in March 1862, when the 2nd Massachusetts brigaded together with the 27th Indiana and 3rd Wisconsin in Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks' V Corps. The following month they were soundly defeated by Stonewall Jackson at Winchester.

his men and virtually all of his officers. A sullen and foreboding man, "Old Coley" demanded both rigorous drill and rigid discipline. Not surprisingly, his unbending personality and explosive behavior alienated his troops, all fresh volunteers unaccustomed to taking orders. The soldiers generally felt his overbearing style bordered on the tyrannical, and it was not uncommon for a wayward soldier to be rebuked with a blistering haze of profanity.

Barely a month and a half after mustering in, a cabal of disaffected officers forwarded a letter to Governor Morton requesting a new colonel for the 27th. The insubordinate letter was shelved out of hand, but the malcontents then confronted Colgrove directly and pressed for his resignation. Normally combative, Colgrove was stunned by the lack of confidence. "It was a heavy stroke and took the colonel completely by surprise," remembered one observer. "Instead of getting in a rage as all expected he would it humbled him right down." A flustered Colgrove told his officers that he preferred losing his life to resigning and going home in disgrace.

Undeterred, the group sent another letter to the governor requesting Colgrove's immediate recall. "We have patiently submitted to insults," the letter read, "until forbearance is beyond endurance. The reg-

iment is now on the point of demoralization for such causes as having officers called fools, liars & threatened with a knockdown."

Far from effecting Colgrove's recall, the letter backfired for its signatories. Commissary Sergeant Simpson Hamrick, a casual observer of the tempest among the officers, noted that "Colgrove will be too fast for them, for he is shrewd and smarter than all the officers combined. They will drop one by one, and the regiment will still be controlled by the one man power." True to Hamrick's prediction, Colgrove retained not only the governor's confidence but his commission as well and succeeded in outlasting his opponents. Over the course of the following year, all the insubordinate officers either resigned or were transferred out of the 27th, replaced with men who were either loyal to Colgrove or smart enough to keep their own counsel. Hamrick summed up the imbroglio in a letter home. "The great trouble is our officers," he wrote. "Colgrove is decidedly the best, but has an abuseful disposition. But with all his vices he is the officer worth a notice." There was no doubt, he said, about Colgrove's "fighting pluck."

Such infighting was only aggravated when, in March 1862, the 27th Indiana, 2nd Massachusetts, and 3rd Wisconsin

Regiments were brigaded together in Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks' V Corps. The rough mannerisms of the Hoosiers clashed with the prim carriage of Gordon's Regulars, and a mutual animosity developed. Promoted to brigade command, Gordon was regarded as a pretentious martinet who held his "seven-foot Indiana volunteers" in little esteem. The Hoosiers responded with equal contempt for the "Lilliputian" Bay Staters. Derided for their pronounced Hoosier drawl, Colgrove's men were likewise displeased with their connection to "one of the most detestable Yankee brigades." One Hoosier summed up his comrades' feelings in a letter home, bemoaning that "one glance is sufficient to distinguish the 'semi-barbarous' 27th & their Badger friend the 3rd Wisconsin, who are pretty much in the same category, from their polished bandbox neighbors."

Such harmless banter could be expected from soldiers, but the antipathy that developed between Gordon and the 27th subsequent to their first engagement was less amusing. Banks' V Corps, including Gordon's brigade, was soundly trounced by Maj. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's Valley Army at Winchester, Virginia, on May 25, 1862. During the chaotic retreat from town, a good number of men from both regiments were taken prisoner. Com-



ABOVE: The 3rd Wisconsin holds its lines at the Battle of Antietam, September 17, 1862. The future unit commander, Colonel Thomas H. Ruger, was wounded in the leg during the battle. During Reconstruction, Ruger was military governor of Georgia. **OPPOSITE:** This photo of Culp's Hill taken not long after the battle shows the ravages of the fighting. Union Colonel Silas Colgrove's brigade was positioned at the left base of the hill.

pany F of the 2nd served as a rear guard, and Mudge, hobbled by a painful wound to the leg, was narrowly saved from capture by the efforts of friend and former classmate Lieutenant Robert Gould Shaw.

Humiliated by the debacle, Gordon cast about for a scapegoat and roundly criticized the performance of Colgrove's rustics. Labeling them "that incorrigible 27th Indiana," Gordon wrote that the Hoosiers were "naturally insubordinate and cowardly." Although Colgrove was well disposed to dressing down his own men, he bristled at such language from Gordon and averred that there was "more good fighting material in the 27th than any regiment in the service."

The opportunity for both the 27th Indiana and the 2nd Massachusetts to prove their mettle came during the Maryland Campaign of 1862. Banks' command was redesignated the Army of the Potomac's XII Corps, of which both regiments helped form the 1st Division's 3rd Brigade. On the morning of September 13, the 27th, at the head of XII Corps, was probing for the Army of Northern Virginia when the men were ordered to halt in a hay field south of Frederick. First Sergeant John M. Bloss and Corporal Barton W. Mitchell were

resting in the clover when they discovered a discarded letter lying close by. It turned out to be one of the most fortuitous finds in military history.

Upon further inspection, Bloss discovered that the letter was not only wrapped around three fine cigars, but was headlined "Confidential Special Orders No. 191 Hdqrs., Army of Northern Virginia." The two Hoosier volunteers had unwittingly discovered both the plans and detailed troop dispositions of the Rebel army. Bloss immediately recognized its importance and reported the find to Captain Kop, who directed it to Colgrove. Colgrove personally delivered the order to XII Corps headquarters, and by noon it was in the hands of Maj. Gen. George McClellan.

The discovery made by two of Colgrove's farm boys helped bring about General Robert E. Lee's desperate delaying action at South Mountain on September 14 and the Battle of Antietam three days later. Although Gordon's brigade had seen action in the Shenandoah and at Cedar Mountain, it was the unparalleled carnage of Antietam that truly blooded the men. The brigade took part in XII Corps' grand assault on Lee's left and entered the horrific fight for David Miller's cornfield.

Mudge suffered bruised ribs and Colgrove had his horse shot from under him, but the rank and file paid a truly grim price. In the 27th Indiana alone, of the 443 men taken into action 36 were killed and a staggering 235 were wounded.

Subsequent to the bloodbath at Antietam the rancor between the two regiments subsided, and their petty squabbles dissipated. Eventually even Gordon praised the conduct of the "incorrigible" 27th, one of whose members proudly wrote home, "Even our old Yankee general said we was the best fighting material he ever saw."

In the autumn of 1862, command of the brigade passed from Gordon to Thomas H. Ruger, formerly the colonel of the 3rd Wisconsin. An attorney in civilian life, Ruger was nevertheless a professionally trained soldier. He had attended West Point and graduated third in the class of 1854, then served in the exclusive Corps of Engineers. Inter-regimental relations proved smoother under Ruger's firm but even-tempered leadership. "We regarded him as a strict disciplinarian," said one of his men, "but he was a just man, humane."

Unit cohesion would be sorely needed during the following spring's campaign. By

that time the Army of the Potomac had a new commander in the person of Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker. Determined to finally bring Lee to bay, "Fighting Joe" launched a surprise offensive in April 1863, and the affair initially went well. The 27th Indiana was tasked with securing Germanna Ford, a vital crossing of Virginia's Rapidan River, and by the first of May the two armies were arrayed for battle in dense forest near the Chancellorsville crossroads. Stonewall Jackson's unexpected flank attack of May 2 caught Hooker entirely by surprise, and the Confederate juggernaut wrecked one Federal brigade after another. As darkness fell, Jackson ran into stiffening Federal resistance, and following his accidental wounding the attack was halted for the night.

Among XII Corps troops in line that night was the 1st Division's 3rd Brigade, including Colgrove's 27th Indiana and the 2nd Massachusetts under Colonel William Cogswell. Realizing that the Confederates would press their advantage in the morning, Colgrove braced his men for the coming battle, nabbed two fieldpieces from a passing battery, and admonished his troops to form into line and stand firm.

When the battle renewed at dawn the next day, Ruger's brigade was assailed by regiment after regiment of fresh troops, and the fighting intensified, in the words of one participant, to a struggle "which for cool, deliberate action and resolute, unflinching endurance, on both sides, has had few parallels." Colgrove, stripped down to his shirt, was busy helping his volunteer gunners. He called out to his 19-year-old son, Theodore, the regimental major, "Here, boy, you run the regiment while I run this here gun."

As the Rebel line faltered and gave way, the 27th Indiana, along with the 2nd Massachusetts and 3rd Wisconsin, mounted a vigorous bayonet charge that swept their front. The 2nd engaged in a brutal hand-to-hand encounter with the 1st North Carolina, and Mudge later recorded that he had prayed for courage, "but I never believed a man could feel so joyous, and such a total absence of fear, as I had there."

Colgrove received a nasty wound to the hip, but the ball missed any bone. Cogswell was not as fortunate, receiving a serious wound that incapacitated him. Command of the 2nd fell to Mudge, a major since the previous November, who wrote to his father after Chancellorsville that the pressures of battle and command weighed heavily on him, "yet I had courage enough, by God's help, to bear it all coolly."

Mudge's repeated allusions to divine assistance highlighted his reawakened interest in spiritual concerns. By upbringing an Episcopalian, Mudge apparently underwent something of a personal revival consequent to his experiences in the war. Whereas the crusty Colgrove, described by one of his men as the "most profane man I ever came in contact with," was entirely



indifferent to the administration of divine services to his men, Mudge took it upon himself to personally perform such duties in the absence of a chaplain. He was known to keep an Episcopal prayer book in his pocket, and his attention to the spiritual welfare of the regiment further endeared him to the men.

Ruger's brigade would face its most desperate fight of the war two months later. Flushed with the success of its Chancellorsville victory, the Army of Northern Virginia again crossed the Potomac River in the middle of June and ushered in the campaign that would culminate at the cross-

roads of Gettysburg. Hooker shadowed the Rebel army, but his days of command were numbered. Exasperated by the disastrous drubbing of the Army of the Potomac, the Lincoln administration was determined not to risk another such defeat on northern soil and pressured Hooker into resigning. His replacement was V Corps commander Maj. Gen. George G. Meade, awakened from a dead sleep and given command of the army in the early morning hours of June 28.

Three days later Meade was drawn into the epic struggle at Gettysburg, and the orders he issued on July 1 would have fatal repercussions for the men of the 27th Indiana and 2nd Massachusetts. Known as the Pipe Creek Circular, the directive detailed Meade's strategic vision for the campaign

and resulted in a gross misunderstanding for one of his corps commanders. In the circular, Meade made provision for a possible withdrawal of his army to Pipe Creek in Maryland. In the event such a move would become necessary, he appointed XII Corps commander Maj. Gen. Henry Slocum as commander of the army's right wing. This nebulous unit was to consist of both Slocum's XII Corps and V Corps. In assuming command of the right wing, Slocum left a vacancy in the command of XII Corps, which was filled by Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams of the 1st Division. Williams was then replaced by Ruger.

Command of Ruger's 3rd Brigade, consisting of the 27th Indiana, 2nd Massachusetts, 3rd Wisconsin, 13th New Jersey, and 107th New York, fell to the brigade's senior colonel, Colgrove, who was still recuperating from his Chancellorsville wound. Lt. Col. John Roush Fesler assumed command of the 27th.

Throughout the three days of fighting at Gettysburg, Slocum labored under the deluded impression that he commanded the so-called right wing, an arrangement that Meade's headquarters remained seem-

Hill. The brigade pressed forward, near the crest, but was quickly called back. News arrived of the collapse of I and XI Corps, and Williams ordered a withdrawal of his own troops to a safer position south of Wolf Hill near the Baltimore Pike.

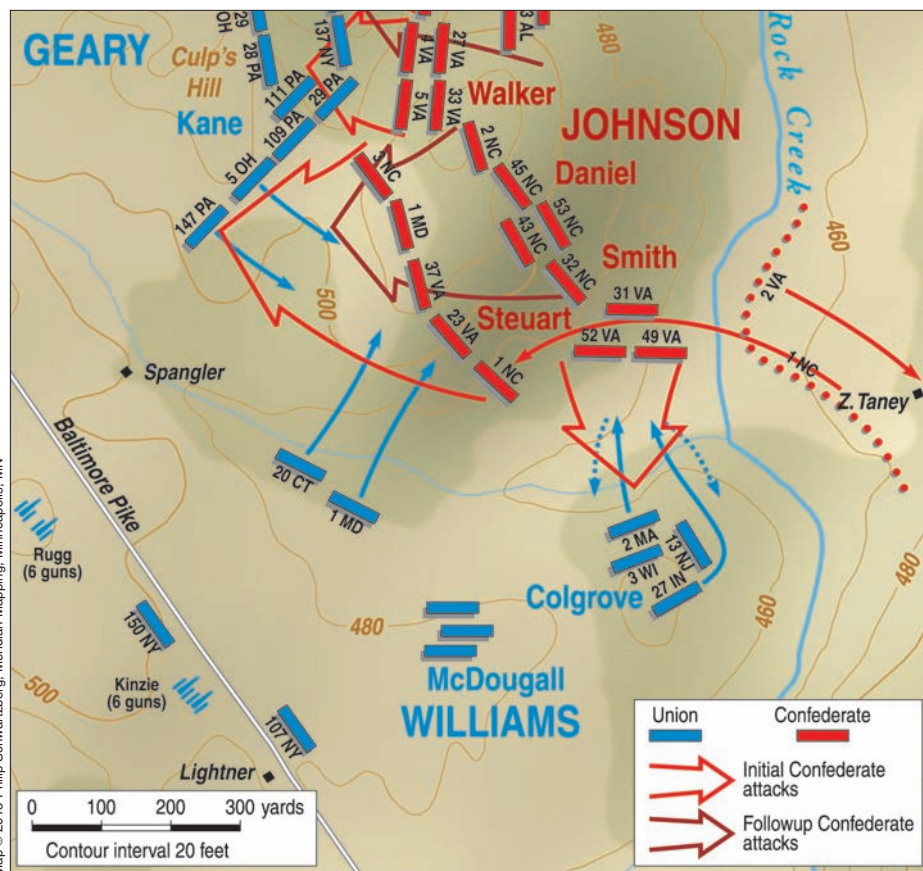
The following morning, Colgrove's most reliable regiments—the 27th Indiana, 2nd Massachusetts, and 3rd Wisconsin—engaged in a hot skirmish with the enemy on Wolf Hill before the entire XII Corps took up positions on Culp's Hill, tying into the right of I Corps. Slocum's men imme-

a popular picnic site for the locals, and the spring fed into a small rivulet that flowed east into Rock Creek.

From their position on Culp's Hill, the troops could hear the roar of battle raised by the grand Confederate assault that was unleashed against Meade's left during the late afternoon. As the Rebel attack rolled north along Cemetery Ridge, Meade ordered the withdrawal of XII Corps from Culp's Hill to bolster his weakened left. Following a mild protest from Slocum, Meade allowed just one brigade of the corps to remain behind and guard the summit of the upper hill. For the men of Colgrove's brigade, the maneuver proved anticlimactic. The men formed and advanced into Weikert's Woods but just as quickly were ordered back to their former position. The Confederate assault on the left had run out of momentum, but a new threat had emerged on the right.

The Confederate division of Maj. Gen. Edward Johnson assaulted the Federal works on Culp's Hill, and although Johnson's men were unsuccessful in seizing the stubbornly defended summit, they quickly occupied the empty trenches of XII Corps on the lower hill. As dusk fell, Colgrove found McAllister's Woods clear of Confederates, and he sent Company F of the 2nd Massachusetts across Spangler's Meadow to probe the lower hill. The Bay Staters captured a Rebel officer and 22 soldiers who appeared to be straggling about looking for water. Mudge reported that the works on the lower hill had been captured and occupied by forces from Brig. Gen. George Stuart's brigade, but Colgrove and Ruger wanted further proof.

Mudge led his entire regiment to the north edge of the meadow and ordered Captain Thomas B. Fox's Company K farther up the hill. Two skirmishers from Company K finally confirmed the presence, in force, of Confederate troops. The two men fell in with a group of soldiers from the 23rd Virginia and, after an uneasy exchange, the Virginians exclaimed, "Why, they are Yanks!" One soldier was immediately captured, the other sprinted back down the hill. While



From the comparative safety of McAllister's Woods, the 2nd Massachusetts and 27th Indiana made a gallant but unnecessary attack on Confederate forces at Culp's Hill. "Well, it's murder," said Massachusetts Lt. Col. Charles Mudge, "but it's the order." Mudge died in the attack.

ingly unaware of, as well as the new chain of command in XII Corps. This unexpected shakeup of senior officers in the middle of an active campaign led to a most ungainly and unfortunate command structure at the worst possible time.

Colgrove's brigade arrived at Gettysburg on the afternoon of July 1 and initially deployed for action in front of Benner's

diately set to work erecting breastworks and soon constructed a stout line of entrenchments from the crest of upper Culp's Hill down across the lower hill and ending near Spangler's Meadow. The meadow, largely surrounded by forest and about 100 yards wide, was a low-lying, boulder-strewn, boggy area. In the center of the meadow bubbled Spangler's Spring,

Mudge withdrew the bulk of the regiment to McAllister's Woods, Fox made a bold showing and called out to the Confederates to surrender. The outnumbered Federals were met with an eruption of musketry that lit up the hillside, and Company K was likewise withdrawn.

Members of the 27th Indiana stood a respectable distance away and listened to an impromptu meeting of senior officers inside McAllister's Woods. Colgrove argued for an immediate attack to recapture the works; Ruger demurred, noting that the gathering darkness would compound the difficulty of carrying the works, which were occupied by an unknown number of Confederates. Williams believed that his men should sit tight until daybreak when "we will shell hell out of them."

When informed that much of XII Corps' breastworks had been occupied by the enemy, Slocum responded, "Well, drive them out at daylight," an order that Williams felt was "more easily made than executed." As acting corps commander, it fell to Williams to develop a tactical plan for the following morning. The general ultimately decided to make the main thrust with his left wing. Ruger's 1st Division, which occupied the right, would hold a "threatening position" but only push the Rebels "should opportunity offer." Williams judged the Confederate left flank opposite Colgrove's brigade "quite impregnable for assault."

At daybreak, Williams unleashed his hellish barrage, and when the firing ceased, Johnson launched an ill-fated assault on Culp's Hill. Meanwhile, Colgrove's men were subject to a nagging fire from Confederate skirmishers. To the north of Spangler's Meadow, six companies of the 1st North Carolina were scattered among an outcropping of boulders near the base of the lower hill. To their left, the 2nd Virginia was positioned behind a stone wall that ran perpendicular to the captured breastworks. Across Rock Creek, the remaining four companies of the 1st North Carolina were concealed on the hillside and in the farm buildings of Zebulon Taney and, in the words of one Federal, "annoyed us terribly



Confederate troops in Brig. Gen. George Stuart's brigade assault Culp's Hill on the morning of July 2, 1863. The Rebels captured and held the lower works, setting up a murderous counterattack by Union forces the next day.

by their skillful marksmanship."

At 7 AM, matters were made worse for the Federals when the Confederate position was reinforced by the Virginia brigade of Brig. Gen. William "Extra Billy" Smith. A professional politician, Smith was a former member of the Confederate Congress and since May 1863 had been the governor-elect of Virginia. He was also a tough fighter, thrice wounded in action, and respected by his men. Smith personally led his soldiers down the hill to the stone wall, where they relieved the troops already on the scene. The six 1st North Carolina companies retired from Spangler's Meadow; Colonel John Nadenbusch led his 2nd Virginia across Rock Creek to a position where they could readily enfilade any Federal thrust across the meadow. Nadenbusch, a miller from Berkeley County, had received his appointment to the colonelcy in March, but both he and his regiment were experienced veterans. A contingent regiment of the famed Stonewall Brigade, the troops had seen action from the war's outset.

Subsequent to Johnson's unsuccessful assault on Culp's Hill, Slocum was convinced that the Rebels were "becoming shaky" and deemed a counterattack in

order. Bypassing Williams, Slocum ordered Ruger to assault the captured works with two of his regiments. The cautious Ruger requested that a reconnaissance be carried out first to ascertain the actual strength of the enemy on the lower hill. Slocum assented, and Ruger passed on verbal orders to a staff officer, Lieutenant William M. Snow. Colgrove was "to try the enemy with two regiments, and if practicable, to force him out." Snow was dispatched around 10 AM.

The subsequent conversation between Snow and Colgrove remains a mystery. Snow maintained that he delivered the verbal orders exactly as they had been given by Ruger, but Colgrove left the discussion with Snow with an entirely different impression. He claimed to have been ordered to "advance your line immediately" and that he was given no discretion. Colgrove was further under the deluded impression that the division's 1st Brigade had mounted a successful counterattack to his left and was in need of support. Because of the narrow front that Spangler's Meadow afforded, Colgrove could only deploy two of his regiments. He likewise realized that throwing forward a skirmish



Privates George Guinn of the 52nd Virginia, left, and Samuel Cowley of the 2nd Virginia took part in the fighting around Culp's Hill. Guinn was just 16 at the time.

line into the open expanse of the meadow would amount to little more than a death sentence for the troops.

Colgrove concluded that to comply with Ruger's orders he was forced to storm the lower hill with two of his regiments, and the selection of the two regiments was an unenviable dilemma that caused Colgrove to nervously tug at his nose and mutter to himself. At his immediate disposal were the 3rd Wisconsin on the left, the 2nd Massachusetts directly facing the meadow, the 13th New Jersey fronting Rock Creek, and the 27th Indiana somewhere to the rear of the Massachusetts men. The colonel considered his core regiments—the Hoosiers, Badgers, and Bay Staters—to be the “three best regiments I have ever seen in action.” Ultimately, he settled on the 2nd and the 27th and dispatched a messenger accordingly.

When the courier reached the 2nd Massachusetts he found Mudge and his adjutant, Lieutenant John A. Fox, and delivered the order to attack. Mudge was nonplussed. He asked the courier if he was certain that was the order and was assured that it was. “Well,” said Mudge, a little dryly, “it’s murder but it’s the order.”

Disaster unfolded in minutes. Already in position to launch the attack, Mudge

ordered his men forward at the double quick. As soon as the regiment emerged into the meadow, it was met with a hail of musketry. Captain Thomas Robeson of Company E collapsed with a mortal wound, as did Color Sergeant Levitt C. Durgin. Corporal Rupert J. Sadler then grabbed the flag and was shot dead in seconds. The next color-bearer, Corporal James Hobbs, went down wounded, to be relieved by Private Stephen A. Cody, who saved the colors from touching the ground.

The regiment steadily advanced, drove in a handful of Confederate skirmishers, but saw its own men shot down by the dozen. The grim spectacle awed onlookers in the 3rd Wisconsin, who remained behind but were prepared to move up in support. To cheers of “See there goes the 2nd,” the Badgers stood helpless as the Massachusetts men were cut down like grass in a prairie fire.

Off to the right, the 27th Indiana arrived late to the fight. From its apparent position facing Rock Creek, the regiment was forced to change front at the double quick and face the meadow. In the frenetic confusion of the moment, Fesler's men unceremoniously ran into the ranks of the 13th New Jersey. Colgrove barked orders to unsnarl the lines and with shrill, piercing

tones called out to his Hoosiers, “Twenty-seventh, charge! Charge those works in your front!”

The regiment cheered, charged out from McAllister's Woods, and was met with, in the words of Colgrove, “One of the most destructive fires I have ever witnessed.” The regiment veered to the right of the Massachusetts men and, when halfway across the meadow, was staggered by “a terrific volley, one of those well-aimed, well-timed volleys which break up and retard a line, in spite of itself.” So many men fell that survivors described the earth simply swallowing up the regiment. Fesler's right flank, entirely exposed and subject to an enfilading fire from the Confederates across Rock Creek, suffered especially heavy casualties. Theodore Colgrove, urging the men from horseback, thought that the three flank companies had been brought down en masse.

The regiment stalled amid the hail of gunfire and exchanged volleys with the Confederates. “The air was alive with singing, hissing, and zipping bullets,” noted one survivor. The color guard was virtually annihilated; one of its survivors, Color Sergeant John L. Files, pressed on through the gauntlet despite the loss of his comrades. The flag was then seized by Lieutenant William W. Dougherty, who attempted to rally the men for a further push. Subject to such a scathing fire, the men could not be budged; Dougherty drove the flagstaff into the ground.

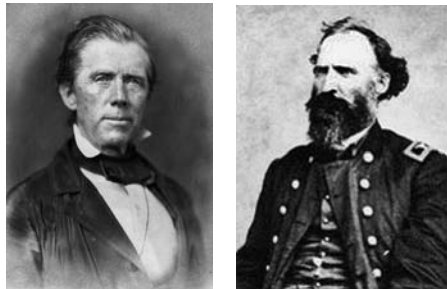
In the ranks of the 49th Virginia of Smith's brigade, Private William Johnson took aim at a conspicuous Federal officer mounted on a black horse—possibly Major Colgrove—who was carrying a flag and urging on his men. Johnson misfired, recapped the nipple, and misfired again, finally noticing that his hammer was blocked by a small chain. Rectifying the problem, Johnson was about to pull the trigger when his own rifle was hit by a ball, which mangled his left hand and struck him in the chest.

At the head of the 2nd Virginia, Nadenbusch was busy waging a welcome one-sided fight. While suffering scant casual-

ties of his own, Nadenbusch's heated oblique fire was tearing great gaps in the ranks of the Hoosiers in the meadow. He later recorded that "with this concentrated fire the enemy was soon forced to retire in confusion." Meanwhile, from his vantage point in McAllister's Woods, Colgrove appraised the futility of leaving his men in the open and sent word to Fesler to pull the men out. Dougherty was removing the flag when Private Alonzo Burger offered to take it, and the regiment proceeded to effect the retreat rapidly but in good order.

For the men of the 2nd Massachusetts, the nightmarish ordeal was not quite over. The regiment had advanced to within yards of the Confederate works and found some cover amidst the outcropping of boulders. Mudge, who had gone into action with the color company, was shot through the neck and killed instantly.

Library of Congress



Command fell to Major Charles F. Morse, who noted that his men grappled with the Confederates "at the shortest range I have ever seen two lines engaged at."

Men were dropping on every side in the toe-to-toe fight, but the Massachusetts men were inflicting few casualties on the well-concealed Confederates. Still carrying the flag, Private Cody mounted a large boulder, waved it at the enemy, and was quickly shot dead. Another fellow who raised the flag went down wounded. While enemy fire poured in from the front, a small detachment of Rebels darted from their works in an attempt to turn the regiment's right.

Little inclined to further expose his men to such pointless slaughter, Morse ordered a withdrawal. Before heading out, one of the men thought to remove the ever-present Episcopal prayer book from Mudge's

Library of Congress



ABOVE: Spangler's Meadow, alongside Culp's Hill, was a popular picnicking location before the war. It was the site of a misguided and futile charge by the 2nd Massachusetts and 27th Indiana on the third day of the battle. **LEFT:** Confederate Brig. Gen. "Extra Billy" Smith, left, and Union Colonel Silas Colgrove.

pocket. Morse then led his men to the left of their former position and formed behind a stone wall. "I never saw a finer sight," thought one observer, "than to see that regiment, coming back over that terrible meadow, face about and form in line as steady as if on parade."

Ever impetuous, "Extra Billy" Smith ordered the 49th Virginia, backed up by the 52nd, into the meadow. The ill-conceived counterthrust was quickly driven off, and Morse finally received an order from Colgrove to return the 2nd to its former position. As the smoke settled, the tragic cost of the bungled charge became all too obvious. A full third of the 27th Indiana had been hit—18 killed, 93 wounded. The 2nd had suffered slightly higher casualties of 22 killed, 112 wounded. To Morse, "it was a sad thing calling the rolls."

Attempting to explain the disaster in his official report, Alpheus Williams wrote that Colgrove either "misapprehended the orders sent him or they were incorrectly communicated." Colgrove maintained that when he received his orders, Snow

said, "The general directs you to advance your line immediately." Snow was equally adamant that a general attack was to be mounted only if the Rebels were "not found in too great force." Snow said he "could never quite understand" why the charge was ordered. Continuing to hash out the matter was pointless. Ruger ultimately came to the conclusion that it was impossible to ascertain which man was responsible for the mistake. His final estimation of the incident was that it was "one of those unfortunate occurrences that will happen in the excitement of battle."

Veterans of the 2nd Massachusetts recalled the disaster that befell their regiment at Culp's Hill with surprising equanimity. "Where the mistake was made I never knew and don't care to know," recorded Lieutenant Fox. "We never had any hard feeling toward Gen. Colgrove. He sent his own Regt. in with us, and they stood as long as brave men could be expected to." That was cold comfort for Charles Mudge, who had foreseen all too clearly that his orders that morning were, indeed, "murder"—his own included. □

Final Attack AT STONES RIVER

Bragg stopped him. "Sir, my information is different. I have given the order to attack the enemy in your front and expect it to be obeyed."

By Jim Heenehan



Late in the morning of January 2, 1863, Confederate Maj. Gen. John Breckinridge gazed through the brush at newly arrived Union infantry occupying a partially wooded hill to his front near Murfreesboro, Tenn. The Yankees had moved in the day before, alarming the local Rebel commanders. Some suspected a trap, prompting the general to crawl beyond his picket line for a look.

Just then a rider galloped up, summoning the Kentuckian to General Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee headquarters. The day

was cold and overcast as Breckinridge mounted his horse to ride back to join his moody commanding officer. He could not have been enthused about the meeting. Bragg's unfair criticism of him after the 1862 Kentucky campaign, coupled with Bragg's seemingly vindictive execution of a young soldier in Breckinridge's command the month before, had left the two men bitter enemies. Things were about to get worse.

Two days earlier, December 31, the Confederates had opened the battle of Stones River (also called Murfreesboro) by surprising Maj. Gen. William Rosecrans's

Army of the Cumberland in a dawn attack that staggered the Yankees. The Union line bent but never quite broke. Bragg's assumption that the battered Yankees would retreat that night was dashed when New Year's Day revealed the enemy still in place. Now Bragg had to come up with a new plan. Thirty hours later he had it—Lt. Gen. Leonidas Polk's Corps would hit the Federal left. But first Bragg had to take care of a preliminary matter, which is where Breckinridge came in.

Just after noon Breckinridge rode up to army headquarters, dismounted, and



Union Private Alfred E. Mathews drew a number of sketches of the fighting at Stones River, in which he participated. This one shows Breckinridge's attack on the first day of the three-day conflict.

joined his commanding officer by a giant sycamore tree near the Nashville Pike. The personal animosity between the two men was perhaps aggravated by their appearances and personalities. Breckinridge, with his long mustache and striking profile, was possibly the handsomest general in the Southern army. Bragg, with his

bushy beard and wrinkled face, was undoubtedly the ugliest. While the dashing Breckinridge was the epitome of a Southern gentleman, Bragg's blunt, critical style made him a hard man to like and an easy man to hate.

Now joined by his subordinate, Bragg explained his proposed assault. The previ-

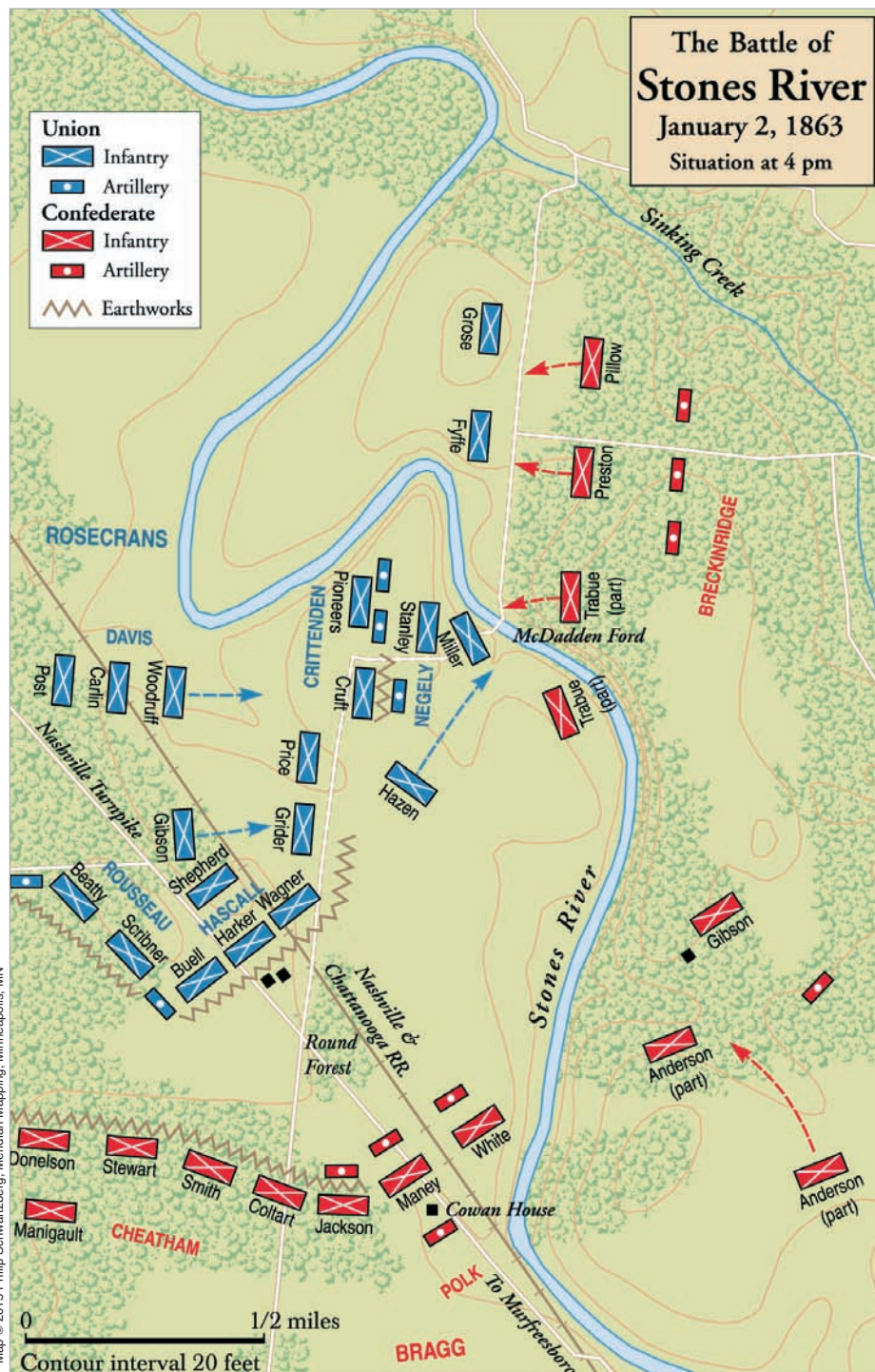
ous day a Yankee detachment had crossed Stones River at a spot called McFadden's Ford, occupying a large hill on the river's east bank, fronting Breckinridge's command. The hill provided Rosecrans with a natural artillery platform that could decimate the right flank of Bragg's proposed attack. Before Bragg could launch Polk's assault, he insisted that Breckinridge take that hill.

Breckinridge was stunned. He had just returned from a reconnaissance of that very hill and was convinced an attack would be suicidal. Strong detachments of Yankees were situated on and near the grassy prominence. The Confederates would have to attack over several hundred yards of open fields subject to Union artillery fire. Union reserves might be massed to the rear of the hill. Even if he took the hill, it was flanked by a taller hill across the river to the northwest. Yankee artillery placed on this far hill could make things hot for his men, even if they managed to capture the near hill. Warming to his argument, Breckinridge began to trace the position in the dirt when Bragg stopped him. "Sir, my information is different. I have given the order to attack the enemy in your front and expect it to be obeyed."

That ended the discussion. The assault would go forward as planned. Bragg ordered Breckinridge to attack with his own four brigades at 4 PM—just 90 minutes away. Bragg assured the Kentuckian that he had arranged for two dismounted cavalry brigades to advance on his right. He also advised Breckinridge that his division's three artillery batteries would be supplemented by two batteries (10 guns) under the command of Captain Felix Robertson. All five batteries were to advance with the infantry. Once the infantry had taken the hill, the batteries would unlimber. The men were to entrench, securing the position. The infantry was not to advance beyond the hill.

By starting the attack 45 minutes before sunset, Bragg calculated that the Federals would not have time to organize a counterattack to retake the hill before nightfall. The next morning, strengthened by breastworks, the Confederate artillery

Breckinridge's Confederates attacked the Federals, who were holding a ridge east of the Stones River.



Map © 2015 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

could enfilade the Union lines across the river as Polk's infantry smashed them from the front.

Bragg's subordinates did not share his confidence. Breckinridge thought the plan was insane. Coming across one of his brigade commanders, Brig. Gen. William Preston, he exploded: "General Preston, this attack is made against my judgment, and by the special order of General Bragg. Of course we must all try and do our duty and fight as best we can. If it should result in disaster, and I be among the slain, I want you to do justice to my memory and tell the people that I believed this attack to be very unwise, and tried to prevent it."

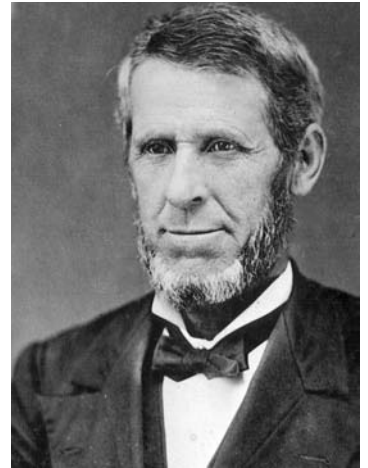
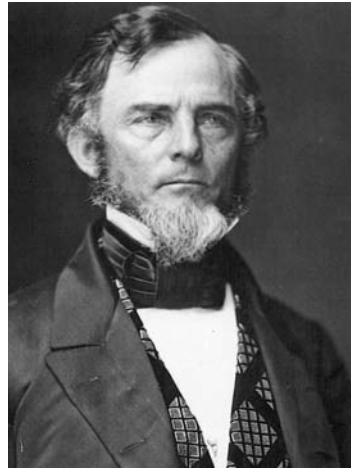
Brig. Gen. Roger Hanson, commander of the Kentucky "Orphan Brigade," favored more direct action. Upon hearing

As 4 PM approached, Breckinridge realized that the promised dismounted cavalry support for his right had not arrived. His men would be taking flank fire from the Union left as a result. Even nature mocked him as a hard, driving sleet kicked up, further complicating his attack.

Suddenly a single cannon fired—the signal to attack! Putting his apprehensions aside, Breckinridge ordered his brigade commanders to commence the assault. Hanson galloped up to one of his regimental officers, shouting, "Colonel, the order is to load, fix bayonets, and march through this brushwood. Then charge at the double-quick to within a hundred yards, deliver fire, and go at him with the bayonet." Soon 5,000 men advanced, bayonets bristling and colors flying.

reserve behind the hill while a fourth, led by Colonel William Grose, had been detached from Brig. Gen. John Palmer's Division to support Beatty's left rear. The six-gun, 3rd Wisconsin Artillery was also posted near Grose's reserve position.

Unbeknownst to Bragg and Breckinridge, the Union dispositions were faulty. The front line brigades of Price and Fyffe were too far apart for mutual support, while Grose's Brigade was too far to the rear. Grider's men assumed that no Confederate attack would be launched so late in the day and had stacked arms. Furthermore, the front line of the Federals was isolated because only the rear elements were in close proximity to the main Union force across the river. One more thing hidden from the Rebels was the extent of Yankee



LEFT TO RIGHT: Colonel Charles Manderson, USA; Colonel James Fyffe, USA; General Gideon Pillow, CSA; Colonel William Grose.

of the proposed attack, Hanson cried that he would kill Bragg to stop him from murdering his own men.

Breckinridge was having a bad day and it got worse. He argued with Captain Robertson, commander of the 10-gun detachment, over whether Robertson's cannon were to move forward with the infantry or wait until the Rebels had first captured the hill. Breckinridge was sure that Bragg wanted the cannon to accompany the infantry, but Robertson refused to move his two batteries until the infantry had taken the hill. In disgust, Breckinridge agreed to let Robertson advance his guns as he thought best.

Breckinridge organized his troops in a dense formation consisting of two double brigade lines separated by no more than 150 yards (the normal distance was 300). Opposing them 1,000 yards away on the east side of Stones River were four Union brigades (4,000 men) and a six-gun battery, all commanded by Colonel Samuel Beatty. The first two Yankee brigades under Colonels Samuel Price and James Fyffe were employed in a double line, a six-regiment front line backed by a four-regiment second line. The two right rear regiments occupied the hill that was the focal point of Bragg's attack.

A third Union brigade under the command of Colonel Benjamin Grider was in

artillery support. But they would find out soon enough.

The Rebel lines moved out as if on parade and immediately began taking artillery fire. One Union shell exploded, killing and maiming 18 Confederates. But the Rebels closed ranks and kept coming. Instinctively, the men bent low to avoid nature's frozen pellets and the more lethal fusillades of their blue-clad opponents.

General Hanson, redirecting his murderous intent from Bragg to the Yankees, led his Kentucky boys toward the Federal troops guarding the hill. Hanson was fortunate that the brushwood bordering Stones River helped screen his left flank. Although

the river bent toward Hanson's men, causing them to bunch as they squeezed right, the brushwood provided a measure of cover unavailable to the Tennessee, Florida, and North Carolina troops marching through a cornfield to Hanson's right.

The Federals facing Hanson were lying low in a ridge line at the base of the hill, invisible to the general and his men. Ironically, Hanson's Kentucky troops were attacking Colonel Price's Brigade, which included two Kentucky regiments of its own. Price's men let the Confederates come to within 100 yards before leaping to their feet and firing a severe volley. Momentarily staggered, the Orphan Brigade closed ranks, advanced a few paces, and delivered a sharp return volley. The bullets hit their mark and dozens of Federals keeled over. Other Yankees flinched instinctively before attempting to reload. Suddenly a thunderous Rebel yell rent the air as Hanson's Kentuckians lowered bayonets, charging the enemy. A handful of Yankees fired a parting shot before the entire Union force broke for the rear. An admiring Breckinridge shouted approvingly, "Look at old Hanson!"

Their blood rising, the Orphan Brigade eagerly pursued their routed foes. Farther up the hill the Union second line vainly tried to draw a bead on the advancing Rebels, whose charge was screened by the retreating Yankee first line. Confusion gave way to panic when some enterprising Confederates crossed the river and began hitting the second Federal line with flank fire. The Union line would not hold long.

But things were not going as smoothly on the Confederate right. In the absence of the promised dismounted cavalry support, the Rebel line was too short. Union Colonel James Fyffe saw his opportunity and began shifting his mixed Indiana/Ohio Brigade to rake the Confederate right flank. The front Rebel brigade had difficulty adjusting to this threat as Brig. Gen. Gideon Pillow, appointed to its command by Bragg moments before the attack, was skulking behind a tree.

Lt. Col. F.M. Lavender of the 20th Tennessee on the far end of Pillow's second

line saw the problem, and wheeled his unit around to cover the first line's exposed flank. He was shortly joined by Captain E.E. Wright's Tennessee battery (unlike Captain Robertson, Breckinridge had advanced his division artillery with the infantry). Wright's added firepower decidedly tipped the balance in the Rebel's favor and the Federals pulled back.

Colonel Fyffe now faced a dilemma. With Price's Brigade breaking up to his right and Confederate infantry and artillery to his front, he realized he was outflanked and outgunned, and reluctantly ordered a retreat. As Fyffe tried to direct his men back to Grose's reserve line, a shell exploded nearby, panicking his horse. The frightened animal bucked Fyffe off his back and bolted for the rear, dragging the unfortunate colonel, whose boot was caught in the stirrup. Fyffe's men, completely demoralized, ran panic-stricken for their lives. Although badly bruised, Fyffe recovered sufficiently to write his wife and mother about the incident shortly after the battle.

With Fyffe's Brigade routed, the two Confederate right-flank brigades of Pillow and Preston continued forward, pushing back Grose and the remaining elements of Fyffe's command. On the left, Hanson's Kentucky troops and Colonel Randall Gibson's Louisiana Brigade appeared ready to sweep the hill. Things looked grim for the Yankees.

Still, Colonel Beatty kept his head and almost stabilized the situation for the Union. After Hanson's Orphan Brigade smashed Colonel Price's troops at the base of the hill, Beatty called up his reserve under Grider. Precious moments were lost as Grider's men grabbed their rifles and fell into position. Up the hill they came, as Price's fugitives scrambled madly past them in the opposite direction. Grider formed his men at the hill crest. When all was ready, his men fired a volley. Then another. And another.

The telling blows staggered the Confederates. Colonel Grider shouted to Beatty, "Colonel, we have them checked. Give us artillery and we will whip them!" Beatty promised to round up some cannon.

As the Orphan Brigade traded volleys with Grider's men, a shell exploded, wounding its commander, Brig. Gen. Hanson. Breckinridge raced to his friend's side in a desperate attempt to stop the bleeding. Then, realizing that Hanson was beyond help, he called for an ambulance to take his comrade away from the carnage. Hanson died of his wounds.

Grider's Brigade had stopped Hanson, but now the Rebel reserve line under Colonel Gibson moved forward. Indeed, the narrow spacing between the two brigades made it impossible for Gibson's men not to advance to the firing line where they became so intermingled with Hanson's troops that all command control of the two brigades was lost. However, the added firepower gave the Confederates an advantage in their stand-up fight with Grider's troops.

Grider still thought he could slug it out with his gray-clad foes until the promised artillery support arrived, when he noticed his right flank regiment, the 19th Ohio, giving way. Grider attempted to halt its retreat, but the 19th Ohio's commander, Colonel Charles Manderson, pointed to flank fire he was receiving from Rebels who had crossed Stones River. Grider and Manderson concluded that the brigade should be pulled back to the rear base of the hill. But the Confederates gave Grider no time to re-form. Under intense pressure, his men bolted across McFadden's Ford to safety.

By now the three Union brigades near the hill had been routed from the field, while the fourth brigade—Grose's—had been pushed north. The Union battery east of Stones River, the 3rd Wisconsin Artillery, was retreating by sections to the river's west bank. Even so, the Confederate advance was beginning to lose cohesion. Breckinridge's attack formation was too tight and his men were now hopelessly intermingled, as brigade and regimental integrity disintegrated.

When Grider's Federal Brigade pulled back, the mass of Rebels surged forward, the hill now theirs for the taking. Bragg had directed Breckinridge to halt his division once the hill had been captured. Had



the Kentuckian done so, his men might have secured the hill using the Duke of Wellington's famous "reverse slope" tactic, which had helped him win the battle of Waterloo. Wellington had posted his infantry on the rear slope of a ridge, shielding them from enemy artillery fire. But that was not possible now.

Firing wildly and screaming at the top of their lungs, the Confederate troops crested the hill without formation in blind pursuit of the fleeing enemy. Any orders to halt the advance were ignored by the overconfident Rebel soldiers. As Private Ed Thompson put it, "In the madness of the pursuit all order and discipline were forgotten." Frightened Federals raced down the hill and splashed across McFadden's Ford, straining to reach the safety of the opposite bank while the Rebels charged down feverishly trying to stop them.

The final two-gun section of Lieutenant Cortland Livingston's 3rd Wisconsin Battery entered the stream with the Confederates just 100 yards behind. This section had helped cover the Union retreat, and now Livingston wondered if one or both

pieces might be lost to the enemy. Torrents of bullets pinged the water while dull thuds hit the caissons. Several horses went down in the Rebel fusillade, threatening to strand the guns. Under mounting fire the Union artillerymen jumped into the river, cut away the reins from the dead animals, and got the guns to safety.

Farther downriver some Confederates caught up with Corporal E.C. Hockensmith of the Union's 21st Kentucky (Price's Brigade) color guard. As Hockensmith was about to enter the ford with the regiment's colors, he was accosted by a Rebel who ordered him to surrender. "Myself I will surrender, but my colors never!" he shouted, throwing the flag into the water. His comrade, Sergeant J.T. Gunn, seized the colors and splashed across to the other side. In the confusion Hockensmith also made good his escape.

West of Stones River, Maj. Gen. Rosecrans was in a panic. Galloping up to a reserve brigade, he implored, "I beg you for the sake of the country and for my own sake to go at them with all your might. Go at them with a whoop and a yell!"

Federal troops counterattack by crossing a ford to the east bank of Stones River. This was the decisive charge of the day. Confederate artillery wagons try to make good an escape.

It was now just past sunset. If Breckinridge could hold his position for another 10 minutes of twilight, Bragg had his hill. But Bragg had not reckoned with Maj. Gen. Thomas Crittenden's chief of artillery, Captain John Mendenhall.

Earlier that day, Crittenden, Rosecrans's Left Wing commander, had asked Mendenhall to establish several batteries on the river's west bank in anticipation of just such an attack. Mendenhall pulled together one of the most lethal artillery concentrations of the Civil War, massing 58 guns on a narrow front, many mounted on the dominating hill northwest of the river opposite its contested sister hill. With the battle reaching its climax and Beatty's Division in flight, Crittenden turned to Mendenhall and said, "Now Mendenhall, you must cover my men with your cannon."

Mendenhall waited until the last Union soldiers had safely retreated across the river

before giving the signal to fire. Then he let the Rebels have it. Almost 60 Union cannon blistered the disorganized Rebel mob sweeping down the hill. Men fell in heaps. Panic set in. The 16 Confederate cannon north of the recently taken hill tried to answer but were no match for the better-sited, more numerous Federal batteries.

Breckinridge looked frantically for Captain Robertson's six-gun battery that was supposed to arrive on the hill shortly after its capture, but in vain. Although Robertson sent his smaller battery off to the right, he declined to advance his remaining cannon, claiming (mistakenly) that the Confederate infantry failed to capture this critical elevation. Bragg's plan to hold the captured hill was coming apart.

In the Confederate lines, all was confusion. Shells seemed to burst among them from all directions. Soldiers who stopped

to carry off wounded comrades were themselves cut down. It was as if "the heavens opened and the stars of destruction were sweeping everything from the face of the earth," remarked one Tennessee soldier. Another suggested that they had just "opened the doors of Hell, and the devil himself was there to greet them."

Union reinforcements were now at hand. Colonels John Miller and Timothy Stanley spontaneously advanced their Federal brigades across the river and up the hill, supported by remnants of the original defenders. On they charged after the fleeing Confederates, with more Union troops joining in every minute. They retook the hill and still they came.

Captain Wright's battery attempted to cover the retreat of Breckinridge's right flank, firing salvos into the lines of Grose's oncoming Yankees, who had now joined

the charge. The Tennessee battery did its best, but the Federals never wavered. As they approached to within 75 yards, Wright keeled over with a mortal wound. Other men and horses went down.

Breckinridge's chief of artillery, Major Rice Graves, rode up to the battery and took command. "Limber to the rear!" he shouted. Then, thinking better of it, he ordered a final round of double-canister. The guns belched out death to the nearest Yankees and then the men tried to relimeter. Too late! The Federals were in among them and only two of the four guns managed to escape.

The Confederates were now streaming back through the woods from where Breckinridge had launched his attack.

The 78th Pennsylvania overruns a Confederate battery and its soldiers wrestle for a Confederate battle flag.



Unless they stopped, the Yankees would sweep them from the field. Riding into the crisis, General Preston rallied some troops on the Rebel right by vigorously swatting the routing men with his saber. Another knot of soldiers formed around the 20th Tennessee's Sergeant Battle, who raised the regimental flag after the color-bearer was shot down. Preston praised the sergeant who immediately "seized the colors and bravely rallied the men under my eye."

On the left, Colonel Joseph Lewis of the 6th Kentucky saw his own color-bearer fall. But Adjutant Samuel Buchanan— noted Lewis—"with the chivalry that ever characterizes him in battle," immediately picked up the 6th Kentucky's flag. The colonel called for a volunteer to take the colors and Private Adams bravely stepped forward to receive the flag. As the various regimental flags appeared along the edge of the woods, enough men rallied to the colors to set up a scratch defensive line. They were reinforced by one of the two missing-in-action cavalry brigades and Robertson's uncommitted six-gun battery.

The Union line approached this final position and halted. The scattered fire from the Rebel units and the gathering darkness deterred any further Union advance. The Federals pulled back to their original lines.

The first battle of the new year was over. With the repulse of this attack (Breckinridge lost 1,500 men, the Federals 700), Bragg decided that a further stand at Murfreesboro was untenable. He would shortly retreat to his Tullahoma, Tenn., position, leaving Rosecrans with a messy but sorely needed victory.

Meanwhile, in the south, the Battle of Stones River raged on long after the fighting ceased. Bragg was furious with several subordinates whose actions, he believed, had cost him a brilliant victory. Prominent on the list was Breckinridge. Not coincidentally, the accused officers thought that Bragg had single-handedly lost Stones River. A postbattle explosion occurred almost immediately.

In response to adverse newspaper criticism, Bragg circulated a memo to his divi-

sion and corps commanders asking for their views on the army's retreat, which his subordinates interpreted as requesting a vote of confidence. Breckinridge joined two other generals in writing Bragg that they no longer trusted his judgment, suggesting he resign for the good of the army. An angry Bragg refused. President Jefferson Davis ordered General Joseph Johnston to investigate the matter, which he did, ultimately supporting Bragg in this dispute.

Now it was Bragg's turn. Without waiting for the postbattle submissions from his generals, Bragg sent a secret battle report to the War Department in which he faulted a

much to Bragg's chagrin.

The argument as to who was right goes on to this day. While many historians sympathize with Breckinridge, the fact is that the Rebels captured Bragg's hill despite Breckinridge's pessimism and tactical mistakes concerning cavalry support and troop disposition. Had Breckinridge kept his men from advancing beyond the hill crest, it is possible they could have weathered Mendenhall's artillery bombardment for the 10 minutes needed until darkness would have ended the battle.

Regardless of who was right, this personal war did not bode well for the Army

The guns belched out DEATH to the nearest YANKEES and then the men tried to relimber. TOO LATE! The Federals were in among them and only two of the four guns managed to ESCAPE.

number of officers. In particular, Bragg was upset with Breckinridge's performance on both December 31 and January 2. As to the January 2 attack, Bragg felt that Breckinridge failed to coordinate the assistance of the dismounted cavalry units on his right flank, despite reminders from Bragg to do just that. In addition, he thought Breckinridge's overall execution of the attack had been poorly handled, resulting in the loss of unit cohesion as his troops reached the hill.

Breckinridge soon found out about Bragg's critical report, but his request for a copy was denied. Not until after it was printed in a Richmond newspaper (with Bragg's help) did Breckinridge get a chance to read the controversial document. Enraged, Breckinridge sent a letter to General Samuel Cooper, Adjutant Inspector General of the Confederacy, in which he complained that the failure of his men to hold the position they had carried "was due to no fault of theirs or mine, but to the fact that they were commanded to do an impossible thing." Breckinridge then had this letter printed in the Richmond papers,

of Tennessee. In late May 1863, Bragg got Breckinridge transferred to Mississippi. Bragg had a second division commander court-martialed, and bullied a third into nearly resigning. If Bragg thought he had eliminated or cowed his enemies, he was mistaken. Both corps commanders and many subordinate officers still hated him. Moreover, a need for reinforcements would reunite Breckinridge with Bragg nine months later at the Battle of Chickamauga. While the Army of Tennessee would win its greatest victory at that bloody stream, it could not escape the after-battle bickering that again erupted between Bragg and his generals. The result would be the disaster at Missionary Ridge on November 25, 1863, and, finally, Bragg's own removal from command of the Army of Tennessee. □

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Admiral Farragut holds on to rigging as his flagship, the *Hartford*, duels with the Confederate ram *Tennessee*. Piercing Mobile Bay was a major victory for the North.



ADMIRAL FARRAGUT TOOK ON THE CONFEDERATE
MINEFIELDS, FORTS, AND IRONCLADS AT
MOBILE BAY ON THE GULF OF MEXICO.

THROUGH A Gate of Fire

BY PEDRO GARCIA

On the night of August 4, 1864, in the cabin of his flagship the USS *Hartford*, Admiral Farragut read his Bible, arriving at ultimate assurance that God was on his side. There was a knock on his door.

“Admiral,” asked an officer, “won’t you give the sailors a glass of grog in the morning—not enough to get them drunk—but just enough to make them fight well?”

“No Sir!! I never found that I needed rum to enable me to do my duty. I will order two good cups of coffee to each man at 2 AM, and at 8 AM I will pipe all hands to breakfast in Mobile Bay.”

Much farther north and east, in Richmond, Va., Confederate States President Davis also resorted to prayer and wired the defenders of the environs of Mobile, Ala., “May our Heavenly Father shield and direct you, so as to divert the threatened disaster.”

In the city of Mobile, newspapers confidently predicted that Farragut could fire until the end of the war, but the forts guarding the harbor would still stand. The men inside Fort Morgan bragged that because they could hit a bobbing barrel at a thousand yards, they could knock the *Hartford* out of the water.

Mobile was by far the most important Gulf of Mexico port used by blockade-runners, New Orleans having fallen to Northern forces in April 1862. At first, running the blockade had been easy. Mobile was infused by a giddy and gay atmosphere in those days: Young men in flashy uniforms were leaving for army camps accompanied by colorful celebrations and grandiose oratory and levity; schoolboys toting wooden guns drilled in the streets; and anxious businessmen of Northern loyalty quietly left town. Southerners could afford to joke about the Union blockade in 1861: Equipped with 50 warships, more or less, the U.S. Navy had to cover 3,550 miles of Southern coastline, 189 harbors or inlets, and nine major seaports.

But by the summer of 1864 Southerners found nothing humorous about the blockade—almost 500 warships patrolled the coastline and rivers. Eluding capture was not an easy task for runners; the odds of capture—1 in 10 in 1861—were now 1 in 3. Yet, Mobile was even more difficult to blockade than the Carolina ports. The distance from Pensacola to the Rio Grande is about 600 miles, not counting the Mississippi River delta. Behind this coast is an intricate network of inland waterways in which shallow-draft craft could move safely to find an exit or inlet not covered by blockaders.

The Federal warships patrolling outside Mobile Bay were part of Farragut's West Gulf Blockading Squadron, and duty was routinely mundane and monotonous, punctuated by moments of high drama. Aboard each ship, a deck officer posted aloft in the boson chair scanned the dark horizon, moonless nights being favored by blockade-runners, straining to spot the silhouette of a runner or a distant plume of smoke. If a runner was sighted, a signal rocket would streak through the night, sending seamen to their battle stations, and with steam up, the chase was on. Firing rocket after rocket to mark the runner's path, the blockaders would pursue their quarry. Hurriedly shoveling pitch pine and rosin chunks into the ship's furnace, the ship's firemen stoked a hotter fire to build speed. Aboard the harried blockade-runner, firemen would fuel the ship's furnace with sides of bacon or turpentine-soaked cotton to gain enough speed to outdistance the enemy. Narrow escapes were common, but when capture seemed imminent, a captain would heave to and surrender. More often, he would turn toward shore and try to

beach his vessel in the breakers, hoping his cargo could be salvaged later.

Now and again a lighter moment highlighted the chase. In October 1862, the *Caroline* was captured after a six-hour chase off Mobile. When brought aboard the *Hartford*, her captain protested vehemently to Farragut that he was not headed for Mobile but for Matamoros, Mexico, as his clearance papers revealed. To this fantastic claim the old admiral replied, "I do not take you for running the blockade, but for your damn poor navigation. Any man bound for Matamoros from Havana and coming within 12 miles of Mobile Point has no business to have a steamer."

When Farragut was ordered to capture New Orleans in January 1862, the order from Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles specifically mentioned the capture of Mobile as a follow-up measure. Accordingly, the Union occupation of the Crescent City was barely days old when Farragut began planning his operation at Mobile Bay. But President Lincoln and Welles postponed this event until the opening of the Mississippi had been completed,

and sent Farragut upriver to cooperate with Flag Officer Charles H. Davis. Farragut hated the river—it was no place for his sloops of war—but there he stayed until Port Hudson and Vicksburg surrendered in July 1863. All but broken in health from the arduous service in the malaria-ridden lower Mississippi, he took a leave of absence.

By the summer of 1864, Northerners and Southerners alike believed that action was long overdue at Mobile. As David Dixon Porter, a Union naval officer, once put it, "Mobile is so ripe now, that it would fall to us like a mellow pear." If Rear Adm. Farragut had had his way, it

would have been closed off from the sea in 1862. Writing in 1887, an officer who served on board Farragut's flagship said, "It is easy to see now the wisdom of his plan. Had the operation against Mobile been undertaken promptly, as he desired, the entrance into the bay would have been effected with much less cost of men and materials, Mobile would have been captured a year earlier than it was, and the Union cause would have been spared the disaster of the Red River campaign of 1864. At this late date it is but justice to admit the truth."

In addition, shortly after his capture of Vicksburg, Ulysses S. Grant proposed that he attack Mobile with the help of the Navy. He thought it would be an ideal base for operating in the deep South. The request was refused, not once but three times. After his successful operations at Chattanooga, he renewed his proposal and once again it was denied. General Nathaniel Banks at New Orleans also proposed that he attack Mobile, but he was ordered into Texas on what would turn out to be the ill-fated Red River operation.

Then in January 1864, a recuperated and rejuvenated Farragut resumed command, and his first act was to make a personal reconnaissance of Mobile. Taking charge of a gunboat in his fleet, he ordered the vessel in close, "where I could count the guns and the men who stood by them."

Unlike New Orleans, Mobile had prepared well for the onslaughts of the Union fleet. This, however, was due less to Rebel tenacity than to the Union's attention to other objectives. Indeed, viewed from afar, a heavy mist of ripeness hovers over the opening days of summer 1864.

Yet, during the long months that the Confederates had been left in comparatively peaceful possession of Mobile, an elaborate system of fortifications had been created for guarding the entrances to the broad but shallow sandy shoals of the bay. The city itself was at the head of Mobile Bay, about 20 miles from the ocean. On the tip of Mobile Point was erected the pentagonal Fort Morgan, garrisoned by 700 men and 79 guns, which





ABOVE: The forecastle of the USS *Hartford*. This reliable sailing vessel was Farragut's flagship and served him well in the battle. **OPPOSITE TOP:** Confederate Admiral Franklin "Ol' Buck" Buchanan. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** Union Admiral David G. Farragut.

easily commanded the shipping channel, half a mile wide and 21 feet deep. About three miles to the westward rose Dauphin Island, on the eastern point of which was Fort Gaines with 26 guns, which commanded Pelican Channel, actually a shallows projecting two miles toward the shipping channel.

To strengthen and improve the defenses, the Confederates had thrown up obstructions, extending in the shallows from Fort Gaines eastward toward Fort Morgan. Off the obstructions, in deeper water, a row of black buoys marked three staggered lines of mines, which were then called torpedoes. They reached directly across the main channel to within 500 yards of Mobile Point, so that passing ships, in order to skirt the minefield, had to pass directly under the guns of Fort Morgan. Farragut well understood the full significance of the ominous black buoys, but he was confident that the submersibles, encrusted with barnacles, their

powder damp, were waterlogged and powerless. He also believed a good many had drifted from their moorings. But the danger could not be ignored or taken lightly, and with that in mind Farragut sent boat crews out at night to find the buoys, then fumble around until they located the mines anchored a few feet under the water. When found, they would be either sunk or removed.

Formidable as it all looked, the old admiral was not impressed. "I am satisfied," he wrote to Secretary Welles, "that if I had one ironclad at this time I could destroy their whole force in the bay," and with 5,000 cooperating soldiers from the army, "reduce the forts at my leisure." The Tennessee native, who was perhaps the best naval officer on either side, based his superb tactics on an analysis of his shortcomings as well as those of his opponent. This 54-year veteran of the Navy understood the limitations of land fortifications, and both on the Mississippi River and at

Mobile Bay he used this tactical understanding flawlessly. It is revealing that in all of his communications with Secretary Welles during this period, Farragut's first consideration was the condition of his opponents, and even more revealing that he was willing to act upon his perception of their weaknesses.

This was another indication of Farragut's best-case or optimistic approach to the conduct of war. It was easy to see an opponent's strengths, but Farragut took a step beyond and tried to comprehend his opponent's problems and limitations. He was also very aware that, about 130 miles north of Mobile—at Selma—the Confederates had built one of their largest naval stations. Confederate Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory, intent that Mobile not be lost and responding to cries of alarm from the governor of Alabama, contracted for two floating batteries in May 1862, the *Huntsville* and the *Tuscaloosa*. Originally planned as ironclads, their engines proved inadequate. Barely able to stem the weak current, the ships clearly could not confront the enemy in open bat-

tle, but they might work as floating batteries. Moreover, in the fall of 1862 other contracts had been closed, one of which was a powerful screw ship that would become one of the most powerful and famed Confederate ironclads, the *Tennessee*. All hope was staked on her.

Rear Admiral and historian Alfred Thayer Mahan called the *Tennessee* “the most powerful ironclad built from the keel up by the Confederacy.” She was probably the most potent craft that sailed from a Confederate navy yard during the war. Her displacement was 1,273 tons; she was 209 feet long with a 48-foot beam, and was fitted with a casemate 79 feet long. The internal structure of the casemate was of yellow pine 18.5 inches thick, augmented by 4 inches of oak. This was covered by 5 inches of iron plate, increasing to 6 inches forward.

Her outer decks were armored with 2-inch sheet iron. The lower reaches of the casemate descended under the waterline and formed a solid angle that would make it very difficult to ram the ship. She carried a battery of six Brooke rifles; two of 7.5 inches forward and astern, pivoted so that they could be fired either from a porthole in front or from two ports on the sides. She carried the other four, of 6 inches, in broadsides. Her shallow draft would allow her to find refuge in the broad expanses of 14-foot water that was not accessible to Farragut’s heavy warships.

Nevertheless, the *Tennessee* had some serious flaws that would impair her at critical times. First, she was very slow because her engines, recovered from a river steamer, had been patched together and adapted by a system of connecting gears to give her screw propulsion, resulting in a great dissipation of power. Even though in her engine trials she had logged 8 knots, when fully loaded she could barely make 6. Second, her port shutters, 5 inches



The Confederates had planned well. In order to avoid mines, ships had to steer close to the guns of Fort Morgan.

thick, were hinged high; under enemy fire they might fall and obstruct the portholes. Last and most serious, through some unbelievable oversight, the tiller chains passed over the deck astern and were therefore fully exposed to enemy fire. As her captain said, “We were compelled to take the consequences of the defect, which proved to be disastrous.”

The South had little to work with: Old locomotive boilers were cut and pressed together in new shapes to serve new purposes while once-careful mechanics looked the other way in embarrassment at their tired handiwork; and fatigued machinery of memorable steamers was dismembered and made to serve purposes its designers could not have foreseen. Furthermore, the *Tennessee*’s advantage of shallow draft could be checkmated if Farragut had monitors of similar or even lighter draft.

After the loss of New Orleans, the

South’s hero of Hampton Roads, Admiral Franklin Buchanan, had been ordered to Selma to supervise the building of the *Tennessee* and the creation of a fleet that would break the Federal blockade. Mallory originally had sent his most aggressive senior officer to Mobile, not only to raise the blockade off that city, but also to cooperate in a combined effort to regain New Orleans and the lower Mississippi. Therefore, his building operations were essentially offensive in motive, but were defensive in fact. For “Ol’ Buck” Buchanan, the battle to come meant victory or defeat for the entire Southern navy. The Mississippi was lost, for which Galveston and other Texas ports were useless; Charleston and Savannah were bottled up and would stay that way.

During the night of May 17, Buchanan succeeded in getting the *Tennessee* over Dog River bar below Mobile and into the lower bay. His plan was to run through the blockade and capture nearby Fort Pickens and Pensacola, Fla. But the ironclad ran hard aground in the lower bay after crossing the sandbar, and was discovered by blockaders the next morning. Anxious days passed, but neither belligerent made a move. Buchanan seemed overawed by the Union fleet and, believing an attack was imminent, dropped all pretense of offensive action, preparing for the expected blow. Farragut fully believed that Buchanan, who had been refloated at high tide, was waiting for a dark night and smooth sea to renew his sortie.

“No doubt is felt of his success. Coming on the heels of the rebel successes on the Red River, the public mind is in such a state of excitement,” Farragut wrote to Welles. It was believed that if the ram destroyed the blockade off Mobile in the wake of General Bank’s failure on the Red

River, New Orleans would panic and might be lost to the Union. Thus a naval stalemate developed off Mobile that was to last for the next month and a half. In addition to the *Tennessee*, Buchanan had three wooden gunboats somewhat comparable to Farragut's lighter ships. They were the *Morgan*, *Gaines*, and *Selma*, with a total of 22 guns, including four very effective Brooke rifles, yet they had been converted from river steamers, and their light construction made them poorly suited for the rigors of battle. The greatest faith was in the *Tennessee*. She was a very powerful ironclad—but her most serious deficiency was that she was alone. The South held absurdly high hopes for her. Buchanan wrote to a friend, "Everybody has taken it into their heads that one ship can whip a dozen, and if the trial is not made, we who are in her are damned for life, consequently the trial must be made. So goes the world."

Tennessee was a formidable obstacle, which Farragut would find across his path on the day he determined to attack. To his son, the admiral wrote, "Buchanan has a vessel which he says is superior to the *Merrimac*, with which he intends to attack us.... So we are to have no child's play."

By the spring of 1864, the Yankees bossed the Mississippi River system, West Virginia, Tennessee, Virginia north of the Rapidan River, parts of Louisiana, and most of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. But the bulk of the Confederacy was still intact. Rebel arms controlled the Shenandoah Valley, and two powerful armies—Lee's in Virginia and Joe Johnston's in Georgia—remained defiant. Grant with an army twice the size of Lee's advanced toward Richmond, but was repulsed with bloody losses in May at the Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania, and in June at Cold Harbor. General Sherman and his "bummers," 80,000 strong, pushed off from Chattanooga, plunging into the Deep South toward Atlanta. With Atlanta in sight, Sherman wanted to prevent the Confederate troops in southern Alabama from moving to Johnston's aid.

Although not yet prepared to roll the

dice, Farragut was at least ready to shake them and, eager to help, he decided he could assist Sherman by pretending to force an entrance into Mobile Bay. On February 13, he sent six mortars to the west of Dauphin Island to attack the small, weak, and unfinished Fort Powell. The mortars, supported by four gunboats, put up a fierce display. Confederate General Dabney Maury, military commander of the district, bought the ruse, panicked, and asked Richmond for more troops. Thus, any intention of siphoning off troops from Mobile to defend against Sherman was dropped, and Farragut had accomplished something at the cost of a few mortar shells.

Farragut, who up to this time had been scornful of ironclads and now faced an imminent meeting with one, had a touch of "ram fever." His reports to Secretary Welles of the appearance of the *Tennessee* in the lower bay produced prompt action. Welles ordered the ironclad *Manhattan* to leave the naval yard at Norfolk and report to Farragut; soon a second ironclad, the *Tecumseh*, received the same orders. Furthermore, Admiral David Porter was ordered to send Farragut two light-draft ironclads from the Mississippi Squadron—the *Winnebago* and *Chickasaw*.

All were formidable vessels of the Monitor class, but much more powerful than the famed prototype. The *Manhattan* and *Tecumseh* displaced 2,100 tons, were 225 feet long, and had much stronger armor than had been used earlier. Their most important asset was their ordnance—each had two gigantic 15-inch Dahlgrens—the same caliber used by the 40,000-ton battleships of World War II—capable of firing projectiles weighing more than 430 pounds. The twin-turreted, quadruple-screwed river monitors, although built to operate in shallow inland waters, would prove themselves extremely efficient. They were 229 feet long, displaced 1,300 tons, and held four 11-inch Dahlgrens.

The arrival of the first monitor was the signal for Farragut to prepare his ships in earnest for the attack. The old admiral must have sensed that fortune had brought the well-nigh impossible of three months

ago within the reach of his courageous grasp, and so convinced was he of the ripeness of the moment, he refused to procrastinate. To increase pressure on Joe Johnston's army, early in June Sherman wired General Edward Canby, who had relieved Banks after his dismal Red River campaign, and asked him to raise a ruckus with Farragut at Mobile. On June 17 General Canby conferred with Farragut, and on July 3 sent him General Gordon Granger with 2,400 troops, to land in the rear and invest Fort Gaines. They were all that could be spared at the time, because General Canby had been ordered to send reinforcements to the Army of the Potomac, which would eventually operate in the Shenandoah Valley under General Phil Sheridan.

General Page, who commanded at Fort Morgan, was convinced his firepower was inadequate, although General Maury was certain that the forts, obstructions, and the *Tennessee* would obliterate Farragut's squadron. Farragut was obviously expecting the hottest contest of his career. "I know Buchanan and Page, both officers of known merit in the old navy, will do all in their power to destroy us, and we will reciprocate the compliment. I hope to give them a fair fight, if I once get inside," he wrote to his son.

Fort Morgan, built in 1818 as part of the coastal defense program begun after the disastrous British landing in the War of 1812, was obsolete in 1864 and unable to withstand the fire of powerful rifled guns. However, the weakest aspect of the fort was the Mobile Point peninsula. Low and sandy, it presented no obstacle to the landing of troops seeking to take Fort Morgan from the rear. Moreover, despite the fear the torpedoes inspired, they were the weakest point of the Mobile Bay defenses. According to the Confederate commander of the Corps of Engineers, the Prussian Victor von Sheliha, they were anchored on shifting sands and unstable gravel. Furthermore, the Confederates had also been obliged to leave a 500-yard gap between Fort Morgan and the torpedo field to allow passage of blockade-runners.

Admiral Mahan later correctly observed that if the Confederates had laid electrical torpedoes, they would have been able to close the whole bay and channel. Because they did not they were limited to obstructing the western part of the channel by a triple line of contact torpedoes that they hoped would force enemy ships under Fort Morgan's guns. Had they been used, electrical torpedoes could have been connected to Fort Morgan by cable for turning on and off depending on what sort of ship was approaching. Instead, contact torpedoes, which can become ineffective from prolonged immersion, were laid in three lines along the western part of the channel and were marked with black buoys. To avoid this threat ships entering the bay were forced to pass under the guns of Fort Morgan.

Farragut's fleet prepared for action. They stowed superfluous spars below, rigged splinter nets on the starboard sides, barricaded the helms with sails and hammocks, heaved hempen fenders over the inboard sides, and spread chains and sandbags around the deck machinery. To prevent disabled craft from jamming up the battle line, the smaller gunboats were lashed side by side with chains and were to run up to the forts in pairs, just as Farragut had done at New Orleans and Port Hudson. The spearhead of the attack was to be the four monitors and was to proceed in advance off the starboard bow of the main column of seven pairs of wooden ships carrying a broadside of 75 guns. The lead monitor, *Tecumseh*, had orders to hug Mobile Point and lead them to the right of the most eastern buoy, which marked the minefield. Although the column of wooden ships was not to pass at such close range to Fort Morgan, it also was to clear the eastern end of the ominous markers.

Farragut made his plans and the Confederates made theirs. On July 28, the *Tennessee* cruised the bay, majestically, calmly, engaged in target practice; and from the deck of the *Hartford*, Farragut watched 400 miserably clad, half-drilled cadets from Mobile, boys 14 to 18, arrive at Fort Gaines to reinforce the garrison. On the western

end of Dauphin Island, Granger's troops, on August 3, landing with difficulty in the heavy surf, lugged six 3-inch Rodman rifles seven miles through sand and planted them 1,200 yards from Fort Gaines. Trenches were shoveled. Watching them, Farragut wrote: "I can lose no more days. I must go in day after tomorrow morning, or a little later. It is a bad time, but when you do not take fortune at her offer, you must take her as you can find her."

Farragut fretted all day long on August 4, waiting for sight of the *Tecumseh*, which had not arrived from Pensacola. He slept poorly. Of the grave ponderings that may have troubled his mind, or the dreams that visited his sleep, history cannot say. It rained hard about sundown, cleared, and under a half-moon and a high black sky salted with shimmering stars, a comet flashed across the sky. Even the most hard-bitten salt, filled with the superstitions of the sea, had to admit that the heavens were offering an omen of victory. For whom, Farragut or Buchanan, was an issue that would be decided presently.

About 3 AM, Farragut awoke, dressed, and breakfasted with his chief of staff. As he sipped hot tea, he sent his steward to ascertain the direction of the wind and the condition of the weather. When informed that there was a light wind from the southwest and the sea was all but a dead calm, he put his fork down and quietly declared, "Well, Drayton, we might as well get

under way."

Aboard the *Tennessee*, conditions were horrendous. The officers and crew had lived atrociously since crossing into the lower bay. Rains came nearly every day and with them, said Surgeon Daniel Conrad, "the terrible moist, hot atmosphere, simulating that oppressiveness which precedes a tornado." Sleep was impossible. "From the want of properly cooked food, and the continuous wetting of decks at night, the officers and men were rendered desperate." All hands looked forward to the impending battle, whatever the outcome, "with a positive feeling of relief."

For weeks Conrad had watched the Federal ships multiply outside the bay. Stripped for action, they "appeared like prize fighters ready for the ring." At daybreak on August 5, the doctor and his admiral were roused by the quartermaster and informed that the "enemy's fleet is under way." They climbed to the hurricane deck, Buchanan painfully limping from wounds suffered at Hampton Roads. Upon seeing Farragut making for the main channel, Buchanan nodded and turned to the skipper. "Get under way, Mr. Johnston," he said. "Head for the leading vessel of the enemy and fight each one as they pass us." If there was valor and superlative fighting mettle to be shown, these sons of the Confederacy would show it. If David Farragut wanted the title of hero, he would have to earn it.

With a bright sun rising in a cloudless sky, August 5 promised to be a typical summer's day. In fact, it had, indeed, produced ideal conditions for Farragut. The southwesterly wind would carry the smoke of the battle into the eyes of the gunners at Fort Morgan, and there was an early morning flood tide that would carry damaged ships past the fort into the bay. As the fleet swung into motion, a solitary Yankee gun signaled Granger's troops on Dauphin Island to commence firing on Fort Gaines. Infantrymen, sweating and blackened, threw off their clothing, cursed the boiling sun, and poured shot and shell into the Rebel earthwork. The curtain was now raised on this drama.

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Fort Morgan took a great deal of punishment during the morning of Farragut's invasion of the bay and in the subsequent weeks under siege by the Union Army.

At 6:22 the *Tecumseh*, which had arrived at 2 AM, leading the monitor line, opened the battle, firing a ranging shot from each of her monster 15-inch guns. Farragut signaled for closer order, each pair of vessels a few yards apart, echeloned a bit to starboard and, helped by the flood tide, swept majestically onward. At 7:06, range half a mile, Fort Morgan opened fire, immediately answered by the leading *Brooklyn* with her forward Parrot rifles. "It is a curious sight to catch a single shot from so heavy a piece of ordnance," observed a surgeon on the USS *Lackawanna*, recalling the impression left from the view of the first shell from Fort Morgan. "First you see a puff of white smoke upon the distant ramparts, and then you see the shot coming, looking exactly as if some gigantic hand had thrown in play a ball toward you. By the time it is half way, you get the boom of the report, and then the howl of the missile, which apparently grows so rapidly in size that every green hand on board who can see it is certain that it will hit him between the eyes. Then, as it goes past with a shriek

like a thousand devils, the inclination to do reverence is so strong that it is impossible to resist it."

"Soon after this," Farragut wrote, "the action became lively."

As the monitor division approached Fort Morgan, the *Tennessee* and the gunboats *Selma*, *Gaines*, and *Morgan* steamed from under the shelter side of Mobile Point and took position across the main channel, but behind the minefield. Buchanan had executed the classic naval maneuver of crossing Farragut's "T." In minutes, a galling and murderous raking fire was loosed down the long axis of the Federal line. Meanwhile, the column of wooden ships was coming up on the port quarter of the monitor division, sailing into positions where they belched a stunning barrage upon Fort Morgan—Confederate fire slackened appreciably. Farragut, in order to discern the course of the battle in the resulting pall of smoke, climbed high into the main rigging, and as the smoke grew heavier ascended rung by rung to just under the main top. Captain Drayton,

who remembered that the admiral suffered mildly from vertigo, and fearing that he might have a bad fall if wounded, sent a quartermaster aloft to pass a line around him and secure him to the rigging.

Thus originated the story that Farragut went into the battle "lashed to the mast." This much publicized incident was merely a safety precaution while the admiral was in an exposed position to get a better view of what was going on. The pilot was also in the main rigging for the same reason, and he had a voice tube to the captain on deck. Farragut had hardly gained this position when he saw the impetuous *Tecumseh* among the line of buoys that marked the minefield.

Captain Tunis Craven of the *Tecumseh* looked through the heavy grilled port of his tiny smoke-filled conning tower, and is alleged to have decided that there was not room for him to pass to the right, or eastward, of the designated buoy. He clanged four bells to the engine room and tried to pass the rows at full speed. It seems that, confident of the vessel's invulnerability and the destructive power of her enormous 15-inch Dahlgrens, he was intent on being the first to get at the *Tennessee*. It is definitely known that after he fired the one round from each of his guns at the pestiferous Fort Morgan, he immediately reloaded them with the maximum possible charges of powder, holding them for the *Tennessee*.

As Catesby ap R Jones had recommended, artillerymen at Fort Morgan fired calmly, accurately, and below the waterline at the Union ironclads. He had been a lieutenant on board the CSS *Virginia* and had commanded the ram after Buchanan fell. Now as head of the Selma Cannon Foundry, he had supplied the fort with a few of the revolutionary Brooke rifles, and had written to General Page with his well-considered views.

At 7:30 the *Tecumseh*, abreast of the fort, was hit by at least two steel-cored armor-piercing projectiles. It veered off course, steaming farther into the torpedo field. Suddenly there was a fearful explosion and instantly a towering geyser of water shot from the bow. Her hull smashed, the ironclad lurched and heeled to port, "as from

an earthquake shock.” For one brief, coruscating moment, sinking by the bow, her propeller could be seen racing madly in the air, then she foundered, dragging into the chasm her captain and 92 men.

“Immediately,” said Surgeon Conrad of the *Tennessee*, “immense bubbles of steam, as large as cauldrons, rose to the surface of the water ... only eight human beings could be seen in the turmoil.”

John Collins, the *Tecumseh’s* pilot, was one of them. He and Captain Craven stood at the ladder of the turret roof. “After you, pilot,” said the captain. “There was nothing after me,” Collins said later. “When I reached the utmost rung of the ladder, the vessel seemed to drop from under me.” Some men leaped from the side and swam away from the suction. Everywhere, for a few moments, an eerie silence took hold as men stared. At Fort Morgan, General Page ordered his gunners to hold their fire against the boats that were rescuing survivors.

While the *Tecumseh* was rushing to her doom, she was involving the leading screw sloop *Brooklyn* in a situation that threatened disaster for the whole fleet. One of her lookouts reported shoal water to port, in the direction of the minefield, a stretch of water that was out of bounds. Then “a row of suspicious looking buoys directly under our bow” was spotted—empty shell boxes from Fort Morgan. Unsure of whether to stop or press on, Captain James Alden of the *Brooklyn* backed engines to clear the hazard, threatening collision along the entire battle line. In any case, stalled in the *Tecumseh’s* mess, *Brooklyn* made the whole fleet, brought into a confused huddle in the narrow channel, a stationary point-blank target. The Rebel gunners in Fort Morgan, recently driven to shelter by the fleet’s broadsides, returned to their pieces, unleashing a wilting counterfire that cut down scores of sailors. Furthermore, from such a disordered formation, as compressing the van hindmost onto center, the fleet could not return an effective counterfire, or even withdraw without confusion and loss.

At this critical moment, a naval officer

observed, “The batteries of our ships were almost silent, while the whole of Mobile Point was a living line of flame.” Lieutenant Kinney of the *Hartford* remembered, “The sight was sickening beyond the power of words to portray. Shot after shot came through the side, mowing down the men, deluging the decks with blood, and scattering mangled fragments of humanity.” From ahead came the relentless raking fire of the Confederate squadron, against which Farragut could not reply.

The battle was turning on the edge of a razor. The slightest flinching by Farragut was critical. A great commander by nature, every bit as bold and intelligent as the transcendent Nelson, Farragut’s qualities of leadership carried the day. From his lofty position just below the main top, he asked the pilot if there was sufficient depth of water for *Hartford* to pass to the port of *Brooklyn*. Receiving an affirmative, with propeller churning ahead, the flagship pivoted on her heel and shot past the confused *Brooklyn*. There are several versions of just what Farragut said and did next. It is alleged that as the *Hartford* passed the *Brooklyn*, someone aboard *Brooklyn* cried out a warning of torpedoes to the admiral, in answer to which he shouted the famous words, “Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!” Most Farragut biographers and historians of the battle give full credence to the episode and his words, yet they were attributed to him 14 years after the event. That an oral order from his position high in the rigging could be heard on deck through the din of battle is doubtful. What is certain is that by order, gesture, or in some form, the spirit of that command was transmitted, and the *Hartford* lay a course straight for the minefield.

A less heroic and probably more accurate account was presented by Lieutenant Kinney of the 13th Connecticut Infantry, who at that moment was serving in one of *Hartford’s* tops. He was one of a detachment of army signalmen distributed among the fleet in order to facilitate cooperation with Granger’s land forces. He declared that, “as a matter of fact, there was never

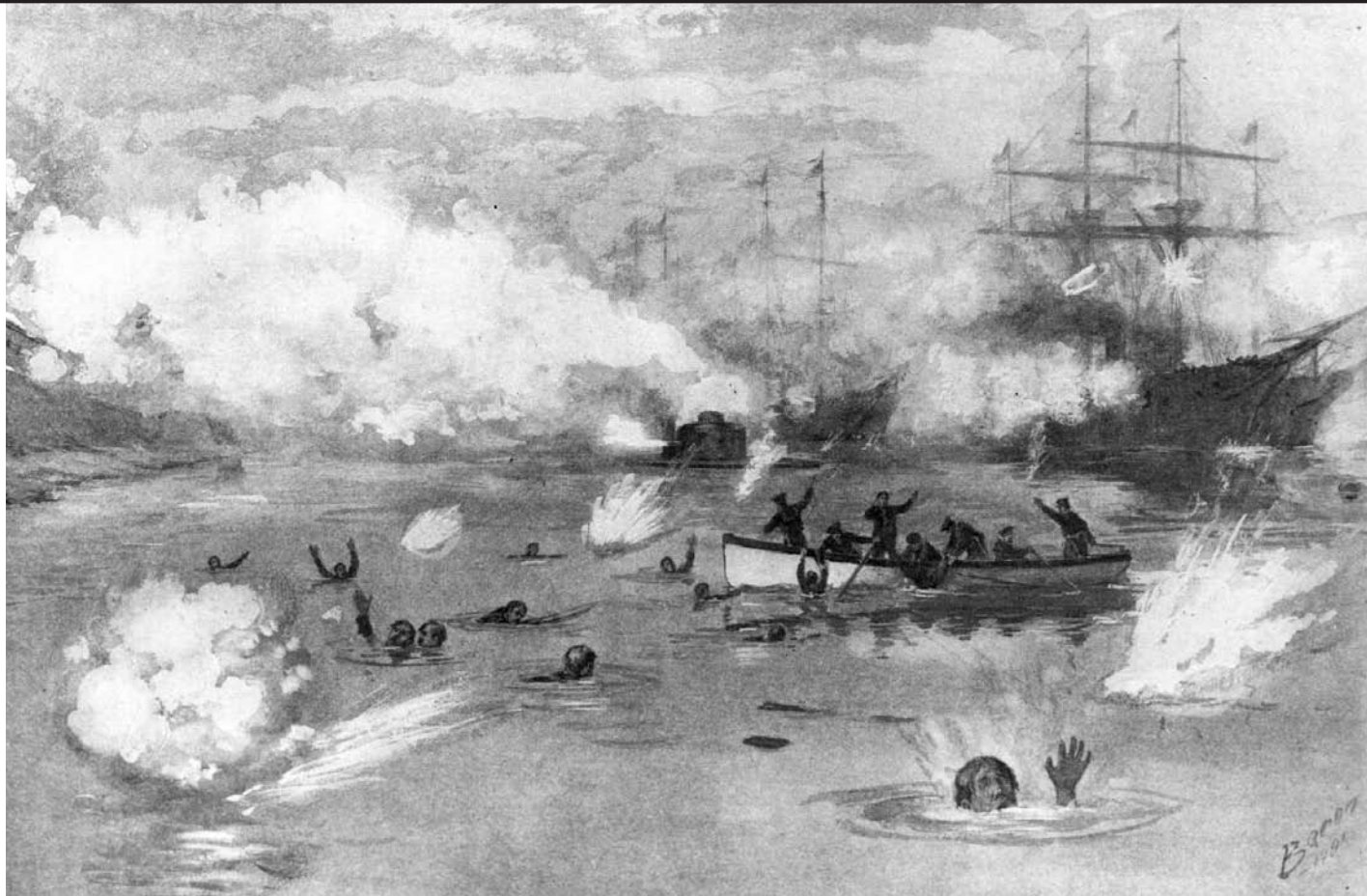
a moment when the din of battle would not have drowned out any attempt at conversation between the two ships, and while it is quite probable that the Admiral made the remark, it is doubtful if he shouted it to the *Brooklyn*.” Be that as it may, the admiral’s action suited the words. The battle now witnessed the remarkable sight of the *Hartford* and her lashed consort, *Metacomet*, leading the column of ships directly across the minefield.

Among the papers found after his death, Farragut had written in a memorandum, “Allowing the *Brooklyn* to go ahead was a great error. It lost not only the *Tecumseh*, but many valuable lives, by keeping us under the guns of the fort for thirty minutes.”

Rushing westward of *Brooklyn* was a bold and courageous decision to make, but it paid off handsomely, because no ship in his formation struck a mine, or at least none exploded. “Some of us,” one sailor said, “expected every moment to feel the shock of an explosion ... and to find ourselves in the water.” Mines could be heard bumping against the ships’ copper bottoms, and several times the snapping of primers could be heard. But as Farragut had surmised, these particular mines had been so long under water that they were not effective.

By his firm and quick decision the momentum of running past the fort was not lost. From the moment of *Hartford’s* turn, her starboard battery, followed by those of *Brooklyn* and the ships behind, spat a torrent of flame, smoke, and flying iron at Fort Morgan, again driving the gunners to their bombproofs. The fleet poured in 491 projectiles but inflicted little damage—the elevation of the Yankee guns had been too high. At this moment, the Union ironclads which, in obedience to orders, had delayed before the fort, occupying its guns until the fleet had passed, drew near the rear wooden ships and opened up on *Tennessee*.

Having entered the lower bay, *Hartford* now appeared before the *Tennessee*, which steered to ram her, meanwhile firing shells at her that killed 10 men and wounded five. Yet, the slowness of the Confederate ironclad and the mobility of the sloop



The *Tecumseh* going down.

caused the attempted ramming to fail.

The Rebel gunboats, however, were hitting their enemies with a terribly accurate, methodical, and sustained barrage. From the *Morgan* the sloop *Oneida* received a shell in her starboard boiler, engulfing the engine room in scalding steam, cutting down the entire watch: eight men dead and 30 wounded. Topside, fragments tore off the captain's arm, decapitated a marine, and critically wounded the men at the 9-inch gun. Another shot tore into the 8-inch gun, killing its captain and sponger; a third cut the wheel ropes and set fire to the deck above the forward magazine. Disabled, she had to be towed from the action. The *Selma* repeatedly pummeled the *Hartford*, whose decks, according to a marine on board, looked like a slaughter pen.

Indeed, it was in this phase of the battle that the *Hartford* and *Metacomet* lost more men and were most seriously damaged. But according to Captain Drayton,

not a man faltered. "There might perhaps have been a little excuse," he said, "when it is considered that a great part of four gun crews were at different times swept away ... in every case the killed and wounded were quietly removed, the injuries at the guns made good, and in a few moments except for traces of blood nothing could lead me to suppose that anything out of the ordinary had happened."

It was Hampton Roads all over again—where the small Confederate ships, protected by the *Virginia*, had inflicted severe blows on the Federal ships—or so it seemed. While the *Tennessee*, protected by her armor, exchanged shot and shell with the wooden ships, causing them heavy damage, she again tried in vain to ram the *Brooklyn*, and also the *Richmond* and the *Lackawanna*. But she was too slow, and the blows were avoided. "The ram received from us three full broadsides of nine-inch solid shot, each broadside being

eleven guns," said Captain Thornton Jenkins of the *Richmond*. "They were well-aimed and all struck." When he examined the ram the next day, all he found were some scratches.

Meanwhile, the ironclad turned about, but her circle brought her under Fort Morgan, and in this fashion the Confederate gunboats were temporarily isolated. As successive pairs of the fleet crossed the minefield, and out of range of Fort Morgan, the light gunboats cast off their lashings and were sent in pursuit of their tormentors. In addition, the *Gaines* and *Morgan*, off Farragut's starboard bow, received a withering fire from *Hartford's* cannon.

With guns barking, *Metacomet*, Lt. Cmdr. James Jouett commanding, cast off from the flagship and dashed for the *Selma*, the *Port Royal* joining the chase to make the contest completely uneven. The Rebel gunboat attempted a prudent retreat up the bay, but was overhauled, punctured with shot and, hopelessly outclassed in

every respect, surrendered. Boarding her, Union sailors found a complete mess. Fifteen men lay mangled and one lieutenant, his bowels ripped out, flapped over the breach of a cannon. When Lieutenant Patrick Murphey of *Selma*, his arm in a sling, came aboard to surrender, he drew up before his old friend and stiffly said, "Captain Jouett ... the fortunes of war compel me to tender you my sword." Jouett would have no part of such formality and replied, "Pat, don't make such a

Sailors rescue USS *Tecumseh* survivors.

Farragut's natural assumption was that Buchanan would either aid the fort to prevent a future exit of his fleet from the bay, or he would steam to sea and play havoc with the transports and light gunboats. In any case, the prevailing opinion of the fleet's officers was that Ol' Buck would seek no general action against the intruding Yankees away from the supporting guns of Fort Morgan.

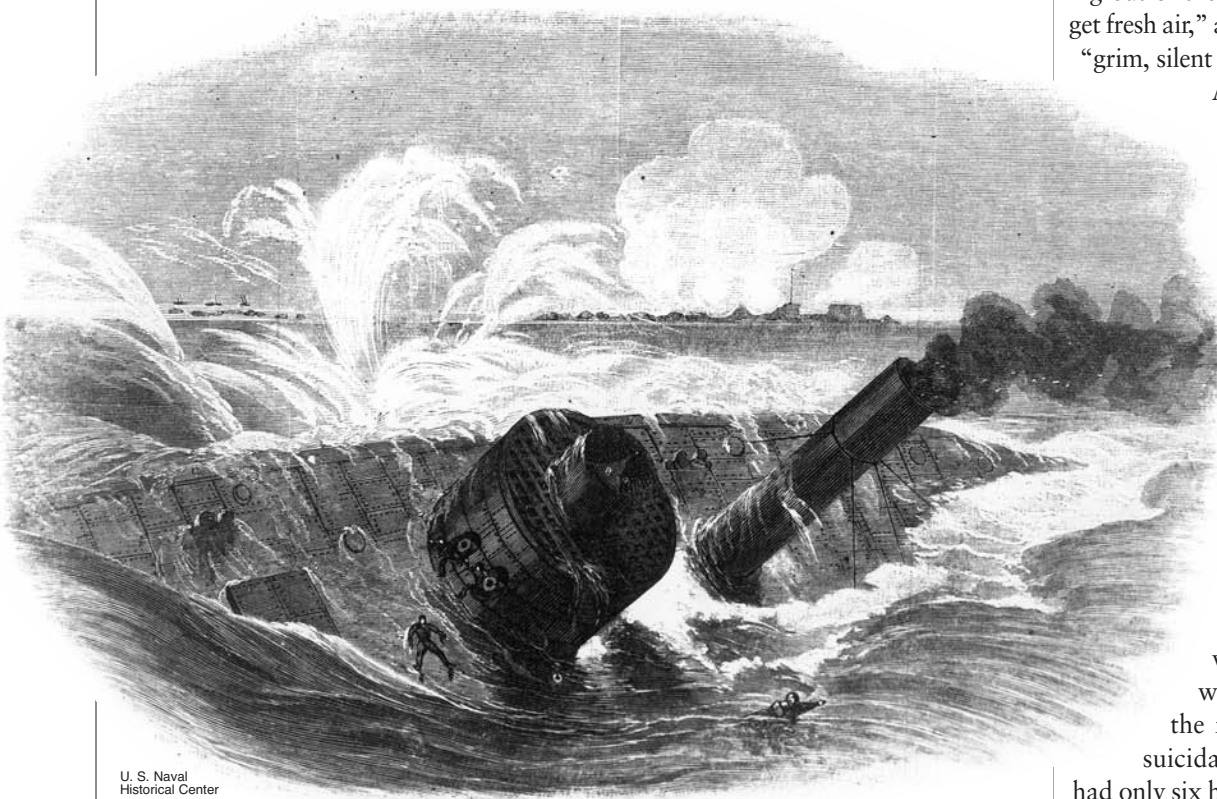
The *Hartford* anchored about four miles northwest of Fort Morgan, due east from Fort Powell, at about 8:35, the rest of the

had a decision to make. His ram had been inspected and found to be generally undamaged, but the *Tennessee* had been hit several times in the smokestacks, and the perforations had reduced her draft so that she could not attain anything like maximum speed. Still, she had not been built for speed anyhow, and as long as she could move at all, Admiral Buchanan was content. In this quiet interlude the men of the *Tennessee* also breakfasted on hardtack and coffee. Surgeon Conrad remembered "the men all eating standing, creeping out of the ports on the after decks to get fresh air," and he described Ol' Buck as "grim, silent and rigid."

After some 15 minutes, Buchanan called out to the captain, "Follow them up, Mr. Johnston, we cannot simply let them go this way." As the fact penetrated, and the surgeon heard muttered comments from every rank, he ventured to ask the question himself, "Are you going into that fleet, admiral?" Instantly came the reply, "I am, Sir!"

Turning toward another officer, Conrad whispered under his breath, "Well, we'll never come out of there whole." Afterward he learned the reason for this apparently suicidal decision. The *Tennessee* had only six hours of coal, and Buchanan meant to burn it fighting to the end. "He did not mean to be trapped like a rat in a hold, and made to surrender without a struggle." As naval historian William M. Still, Jr., correctly supposes, Buchanan was counting on surprise (the enemy was at anchor) to inflict the maximum damage possible, then retreat again under the guns of Fort Morgan and act like a floating battery.

Farragut had been planning his own next move and had come to the conclusion that he would wait for dark, then board the *Manhattan* and personally lead the



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damned fool of yourself. I have had a bottle on ice for you for the last half hour."

The *Gaines*, hit in 17 places, her rudder disabled, and leaking badly, sought refuge near Fort Morgan and *Tennessee*, but foundered 400 yards short. The *Morgan*, momentarily grounded, freed herself and gained a position under the guns of Fort Morgan. Later, under cover of darkness, she escaped to fight another day. Likewise, the *Tennessee* contented herself to lie under the guns of Fort Morgan and fire at the approaching vessels. In this position,

fleet anchoring astern of her. When Farragut disengaged himself from his lashings and came down to the poop deck, Captain Drayton approached him, "What we have done has been well done, sir, but it all counts for nothing so long as the *Tennessee* is there under the guns of Fort Morgan." The admiral agreed, "I know it, and as soon as these people have had their breakfast, I am going for her."

Across the way, the hero of Hampton Roads, limping up and down the deck impatiently, pacing in perplexity, knew he

three Union monitors, exploiting their shallow draft and gigantic Dahlgrens, in attack against the *Tennessee*.

Buchanan saved him the trouble. For a few minutes a heavy rain squall passed over, and when pushed away by the wind, a call, at about 8:45, came down from aloft the flagship, "The ram is coming for us." Farragut refused to believe it, thinking, "I did not think Ol' Buck was such a fool."

Conrad watched as "one after another of the big wooden frigates swept out in a wide circle." With inferior speed and exposed tiller chains, *Tennessee* was not equipped for close-in fighting, and by attacking the whole Union squadron, Buchanan threw away his great defensive strengths.

According to Admiral Mahan, Buchanan should have exploited the light draft of his vessel, as well as the range of his Brooke rifles, by staying in shallow waters far from the Federal ships and battering them from afar. By attacking at close quarters, he was playing into Farragut's hands. Mahan's view makes sense. So how does one explain Buchanan's decision to come to close quarters? First, if the *Tennessee* stayed in shallow waters, she could have stopped the three Union ironclads (whose draft was equal to or less than hers) from coming to close quarters. Second, from the whole battle, as well as from his report afterward, it is clear that Buchanan (thinking, perhaps, of his experience with the *Virginia*) trusted in the ram. This hope would prove his undoing. Experience had proven that a ship could not be rammed while in motion. Indeed, two years later at Lissa the Austrian ironclad *Herzborg Ferdinand Max* would succeed in ramming the Italian *Re d'Italia* only after the latter, struck in the rudder, was lying still in the water.

When Farragut saw the *Tennessee* coming, he ordered all ships to steer for her at once, seizing the initiative and putting the Confederates on the defensive. The *Brooklyn* lunged first, firing steel-cored shot from her bow chasers. At the very last moment the *Tennessee* sheared off, giving her some heavy shots in passing. That ended the day for the *Brooklyn*, 11 dead and 43 wounded. Then the wooden ship

Monongahela, with her consort *Kennebec* still lashed on her port side, separated from the circle of ships, and with a tower of white foam creaming from her iron prow, came running at full speed, "which we on board the *Tennessee*," said Surgeon Conrad, "fully realized as the supreme moment of the test of our strength."

The *Monongahela* struck the ironclad's armored knuckle with tremendous but glancing impact, tearing away her own iron prow, shattering the butt ends of her planking. The shock threw most of the men in both ships to the deck. At the moment of impact, the *Tennessee* fired two shots that completely penetrated the hull and passed out the opposite side. The *Monongahela* responded with an impressive broadside that did no more damage than scrape the paint.

She was hardly away, reported the *Tennessee*'s Lieutenant Wharton, "when a hideous-looking monster came creeping up on our port side," the monitor *Manhattan*, "whose slowly revolving turret revealed the cavernous depth of a mammoth gun. 'Stand clear of the port side!' I shouted. A moment after a thundering report shook us all, while a blast of dense, sulphurous smoke covered our port-holes, and 440 pounds of iron, impelled by 60 pounds of powder, admitted daylight through our side, where before it struck us there had been over two feet of solid wood, covered with five inches of solid iron ... I was glad to find myself alive after that shot."

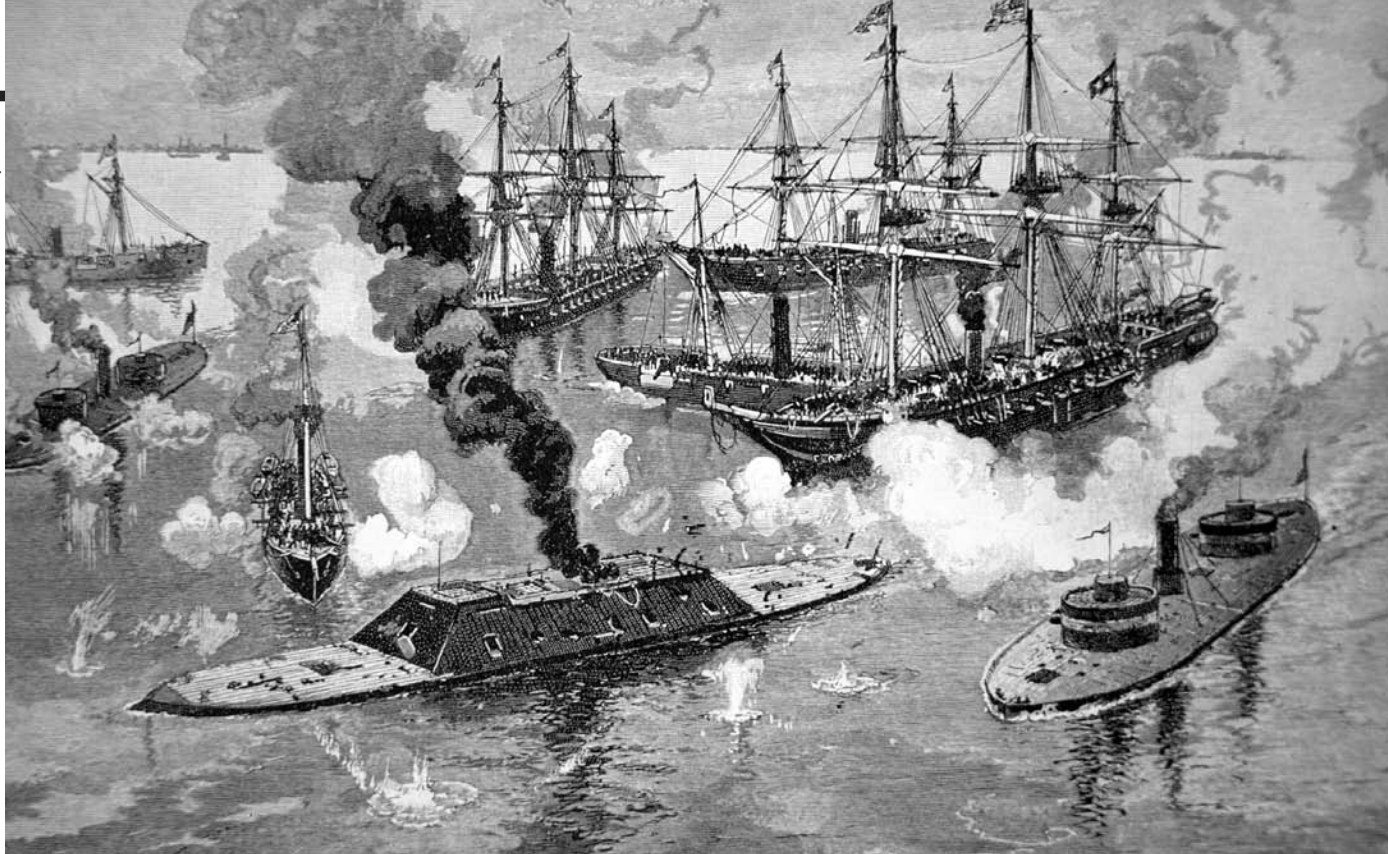
With hardly time to recover, the *Tennessee* now found herself the target of the sloop *Lackawanna*. Under a full head of steam, *Lackawanna* smashed at right angles into the after end of the ram's casemate, crushing the wooden ship's stem and

causing a considerable leak. She struck with such force that the two vessels swung parallel head to stern, the *Tennessee* bringing two guns to bear on the *Lackawanna*, but the Union ship bearing only one. The bluejackets were close enough to hear the Rebels swearing at them, and from the *Lackawanna* were hurled a spittoon and a holystone to add to the shot and shell. The *Tennessee* sent two percussion shots that lit up the berth deck like a pinball machine, knocking down men by the bunch and setting fire to the magazine. This was answered with a shot that damaged *Tennessee*'s thinly protected tiller chains, jamming her steering gear to cause a lazy left turn. Another shot immobilized the afterport shutter. Buchanan sent for a repair party of firemen to clear it with sledgehammers. Two braced their backs against the casemate, holding the shutter bolt steady, while their mates slammed away.

"Suddenly," said Surgeon Conrad, "there was a dull sounding impact, and at the same instant the men whose backs were against the shield were split in pieces. I saw their limbs and chests, severed and mangled, scattered about the deck, their hearts lying near their bodies." Everyone including the admiral was "covered from head to foot with blood, flesh, and viscera." Lost in the horror was Ol' Buck, cut down by an iron splinter, alone in his agony. Conrad saw that one of Buchanan's legs was twisted and crushed under his body. The medic diagnosed the wound as a compound fracture, and from every indication the leg would have to come off. Sending for the captain, in frightful pain Buchanan gasped, "Well, Johnston, they've got me. You'll have to look out after her now. This is your fight, you know."

Now the two flagships, Rebel and Yankee, warily approached each other bow to bow. Then the two ships rushed at one another in a struggle that became an awful, prolonged affair of violent give and take. The *Hartford* struck a glancing blow, which was further mitigated by her port anchor catching in the gunwale of the *Tennessee*. The flagship poured her whole port broadside into the ram, 980 pounds of smashing

**"Follow them up,
Mr. Johnston, we
cannot simply let
them go this way."**



ABOVE: Overwhelmed by Union ships, the stackless and battered CSS *Tennessee* surrenders to her foes. **OPPOSITE:** Smoke and flame spew from dueling ships in the action at the entrance of Mobile Bay. Fort Morgan is seen in the left background in this 1901 rendition of the battle.

iron, but the solid shot merely dented the side and bounded harmlessly into the air. Incensed Yankee sailors fired revolvers into the enemy's gun ports, one shot horribly mutilating the face of the chief engineer. The ram replied by sending a shell battering through *Hartford's* berth deck and sick bay, killing eight. Locked in a death grip, the ships came port to port so close that an engineer on the *Tennessee* bayoneted a Union man on the *Hartford*, and a Union sailor put a pistol ball through the engineer's shoulder at point-blank range.

Farragut put his helm to starboard and circled to ram again, when the *Lackawanna*, misjudging the swiftly changing positions of a dozen vessels all converging on a single point, rammed the *Hartford* starboard aft, cutting a deep wound to within two feet of the waterline. For the moment, pandemonium reigned, some sailors believing the flagship was sliced through, and she might have been had the *Lackawanna* still carried her iron prow. Looking over the side, Farragut saw a few inches of plank above water and ordered Drayton to advance full speed at the

enemy. Within a few moments of the order, the *Lackawanna* again loomed up on starboard.

The agitated admiral yelled to the army signal officer, Lieutenant Kinney, "Can you say 'For God's sake' by signal?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then say to the *Lackawanna*, 'For God's sake, get out of our way and anchor!!'"

The *Hartford* steamed ahead. Surrounded on all sides, *Tennessee* became the target of the whole squadron. She had been rammed at least four times, but as her casemate construction was continued well below the waterline, the principal damage was suffered by the Union ships.

But the dauntless, if foolishly directed, *Tennessee* was in her death throes. The twin-turreted ironclads *Chickasaw* and *Winnebago* doggedly tormented her by placing themselves directly astern, "firing the two eleven-inch guns in their forward turret like pocket pistols." The *Tennessee's* armor began to crack. Then all the weak points of the ironclad began to fail; the port shutters, their chains shattered, blocked the portholes, making it impossible for gunners

to fire. The rudder chains were smashed, making it impossible to steer.

With the *Tennessee* out of control, the *Chickasaw* was able to lie alongside, almost rail to rail, and begin hammering the case-mate with all four of her guns. The funnel, knocked to pieces, caused steam pressure to fall to almost zero, and a suffocating smoke permeated the ironclad while the temperature in the engine room increased to 145 degrees. Incapable of steering, standing still, with water pouring in from leaks opened by repeated collisions with the enemy, the *Tennessee* was wholly disabled.

"Realizing our helpless condition," convinced that the ship was "nothing more than a target," Commander Johnston went below to inform Admiral Buchanan, who said with what must have been the bitterest gall, "If you cannot do further damage you had better surrender." Johnston climbed to the hurricane deck, lowered the Confederate colors and, "decided with an almost bursting heart, to hoist the white flag."

It was about 10 o'clock in the morning.

But the USS *Ossipee* was bearing down under a full head of steam, could not check

herself in mid-career, and caromed into the helpless ram. Her skipper, Commander William LeRoy, a comrade from the old navy, hailed, "Hello, Johnston, how are you?" He sent a boat and Johnston came aboard, "I'm glad to see you, Johnston, here's some ice water for you," he said. They disappeared into his cabin to renew old times over a bottle.

For his part, Farragut acted properly, although not as generously as he might have. He did not go aboard the *Tennessee* to call on the wounded admiral, and demanded that a junior officer board the ram to take the admiral's sword. This was the same sort of insult that years earlier had inspired the rage of his adoptive father, Captain David Porter, when a British junior officer tried the same during the surrender of his flagship at Valparaiso Bay in the War of 1812, on which ship Farragut was then a midshipman. To the junior Confederate officers Farragut was polite, if distant; yet when the fleet surgeon visited

Buchanan, who indicated no particular friendship for Farragut, the surgeon made it clear to Farragut that the admiral's feelings had been hurt. General Page asked that Buchanan be sent under parole to Mobile, but Farragut refused.

After the battle, in writing to Secretary Welles, Farragut, a Southern man by birth and association, was far more gentle with Admiral Buchanan. But, he had a personal grudge against those officers who had been trained by the U.S. government, had supported that government, had been supported in turn by it, but had then turned in rebellion against it. He might have friends in the South, but personally his emotions were too involved to allow him to treat Buchanan as he might have.

Farragut also thanked the officers and men of the fleet, and mentioned that he "led" them into Mobile Bay. Captain Alden of the *Brooklyn*, who had been posted to lead the fleet in and who had nearly lost the battle for the Union, took

offense at the admiral's statement and went aboard the *Hartford* to protest. Farragut took the man below to his cabin, and what transpired there we know not, but ever afterward there was a coolness between the two men.

Farragut had won a brilliant victory, but at what cost? Fifty-two officers and men had been killed and 170 wounded. Adding the losses of the *Tecumseh*, the number of killed increases to 145, and the total losses to 315 killed and wounded. Aside from the loss of an ironclad, the sloop *Oneida* had been disabled, the *Hartford* had been hit 20 times and the *Brooklyn* 59 times. Others had received serious damage except for the ironclads which, though they had been repeatedly hit (the *Winnebago* alone 19 times), had resisted well. A supply ship that tried to follow the fleet against orders was disabled by a shot from Fort Morgan, grounded, and later burned by the Confederates. The Southerners lost 12 killed and 20 wounded. Taken prisoner were



Mary Evans Picture Library



U.S. monitors steam closest to Fort Morgan as the action begins in this dramatic overview of the battle. The USS *Tecumseh* sinks at right as the Rebel gunners blaze away at the invasion force.

280, including Admiral Buchanan, whose leg would be saved. The *Tennessee* and *Selma* were captured, and the *Gaines* was gutted. Fort Morgan had only one killed and three wounded.

The press and the masses hailed Farragut as the greatest naval officer since Nelson. The dauntless manner in which he had damned the torpedoes and hurled the wooden prows of his cruisers against the iron-knuckled sides of the *Tennessee* brought praise from naval experts as well

as from laymen. Admiral Mahan considered Mobile Bay the strongest evidence for Farragut's audacity and naval genius, and wrote pages of praise on the tactical handling of the fleet, thus consciously or unconsciously obscuring the admitted fact that this battle was void of major strategic importance.

And perhaps it was just as well, for Farragut had not then, and has not yet, received full historical credit for his telling blows on the Mississippi River. President Lincoln considered the Southerner the best appointment made in either service. Secretary Welles wrote in his memoirs, "I considered him a great hero of the war."

Atlanta fell to Sherman on September 2, and combined with Farragut's victory dramatically enhanced Lincoln's prospects for reelection. Secretary of State William Seward came to the heart of the matter: "The victory at Atlanta comes in good time, as the victory in Mobile does, to vindicate the wisdom and energy of the war administration."

Within a few hours after the surrender of the *Tennessee* (which was towed to New Orleans and pressed into Union service), the *Chickasaw* steamed westward and joined five gunboats in pummeling Fort Powell. The fort commander readily saw that his position was untenable and at



about midnight the place was evacuated and blown up.

On Dauphin Island, the Federal army had not lagged. After a fierce exchange, Union batteries had silenced Fort Gaines and prevented the employment of its guns on the fleet. The fleet then joined Granger's forces in the investment of the fort and, surrounded on three sides by the navy plus a fourth by the army, unfurled the white flag on August 7. General Page and his officers at Fort Morgan spat in the direction of Fort Gaines and cursed its commander, Charles DeWitt Anderson, for his half-hearted attempt to defend his position. General Page was not so easily dismayed. Workers,

reservists, militia, two Louisiana artillery regiments, six companies of cavalry, and a battalion of convicts, 4,000 in all, girded themselves for the final assault.

The Confederate Army in Atlanta, fighting for its life against Sherman, ignored Mobile's pleas. Only a handful of recruits responded to the call at Montgomery. The governor of Mississippi also was silent. Granger's forces were transported to Mobile Point, and a siege train was brought from New Orleans. Farragut then stationed his ships, which now included the prize *Tennessee*, so that Fort Morgan was surrounded on land and sea. Determined to defend his post to the last extremity, the fiery 57-year-old Page responded to a request for surrender, "I am prepared to sacrifice life, and will only surrender when I have no means of defense."

At daylight on August 22, a hundred Army and monitor guns opened a blistering, well-coordinated bombardment around the clock. The fort shook. The walls were breached in many places, its casemates crumbled, wooden buildings were set on fire, and all but two of its guns were knocked out. When a fire threatened the powder magazine around midnight, General Page had his entire powder supply wetted down. By daylight on August 23 he had taken enough, and he raised the white flag.

"We landed at Fort Morgan and went over the place," reported journalist FitzGerald Ross. "I confess I did not like it at all. It is built in the old style.... When bricks fly about violently by tons' weight at a time, which is the case when they come in contact with 15-inch shells, they

"I am prepared to sacrifice life, and will only surrender when I have no means of defense."

make themselves very unpleasant to those who have trusted them for protection."

Mobile was out of business. But the capture of the lower bay, and the complete closing of the port to blockade-runners, together with the absence of a major military movement in the hinterland that hinged upon the capture of Mobile, convinced Farragut that there was no point of immediately pressing up the bay and conducting a campaign against the city. In fact, he appears to have become a little cynical toward the whole war. "It [the city of Mobile] would be an elephant and take an army to hold it. And besides, all traitors and rascally speculators would flock to that city, and pour into the Confederacy the wealth of New York."

As autumn wore on, Farragut's subordinates began to worry about his health. He fainted while talking to Captain Perkins of the *Chickasaw*. Perkins attributed this to exhaustion, and the fact that "his health is not very good anyway." Likewise, Captain Drayton of the *Hartford* began to become concerned over the admiral's failing strength. In one of his letters home, Farragut himself seems to have concluded his days as a sea fighter were over. "This is the last of my work and I expect a little respite." He sailed home from Pensacola at the end of November.

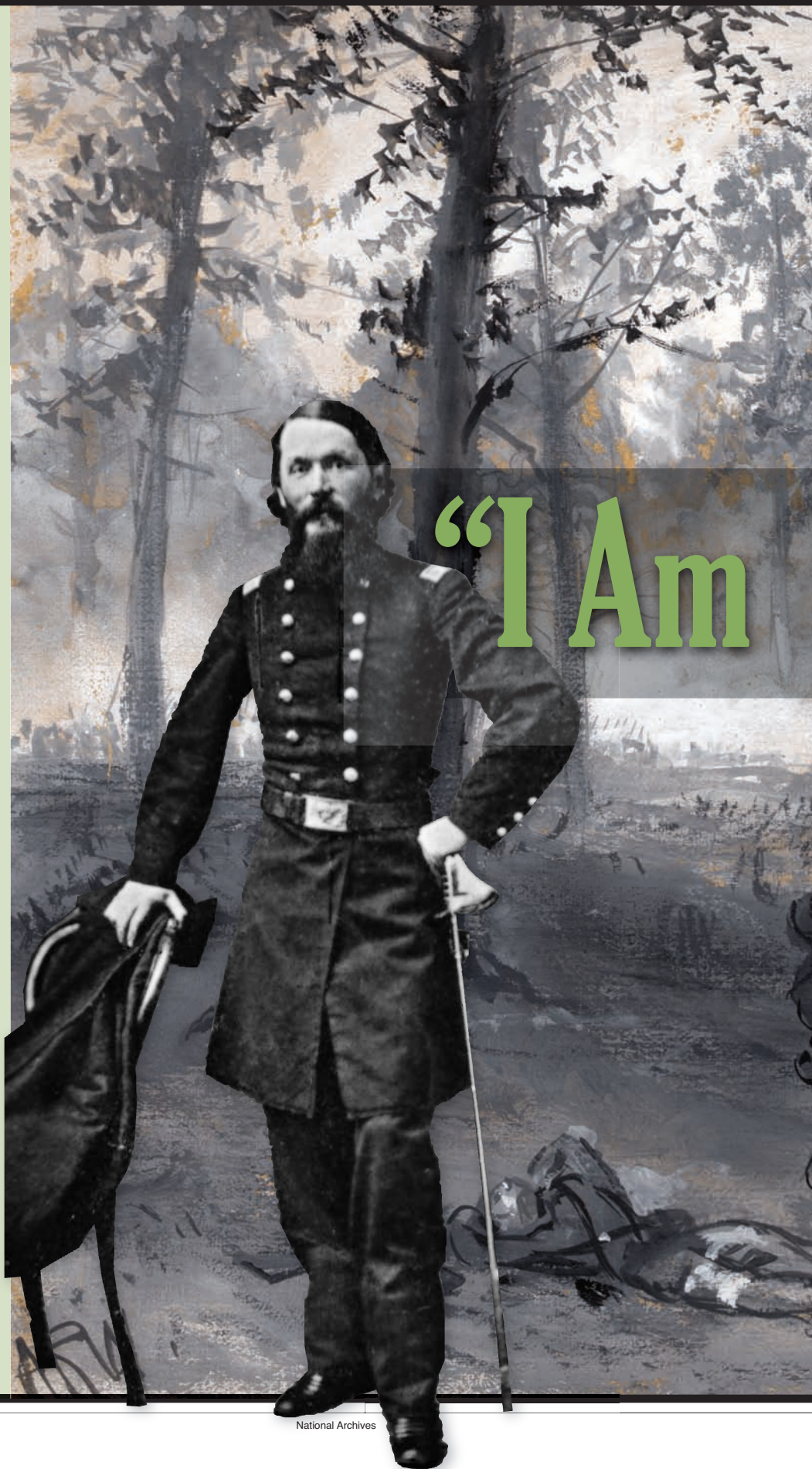
If adequate troops had accompanied Farragut's naval force, the Union could have taken the city of Mobile after the surrender of the forts guarding the bay's entrance, but the army felt it could not commit the necessary troops until early 1865. Eventually, a combined army and navy effort finally attacked and besieged the city in March and April of that year. Mobile surrendered on April 12th, three days after Appomattox, and four years to the day after the firing on Fort Sumter. □

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Seemingly from birth, William Haines Lytle was bound for glory. As the last surviving male offspring of one of Cincinnati's leading pioneer families, Lytle was the prototypical golden boy. Blessed with good looks, a winning personality, and a verbal facility that enabled him to begin reading at the age of four, he was groomed from the start to fulfill a special destiny. By the time he was 16, Lytle was one of the most popular young men in the Queen City. His adoring sister Lily was not alone in believing that he was destined one day to become president of the United States.

Politics, poetry, and the law vied for Lytle's adult attention, but his special interest—like that of his great-grandfather, Captain William Lytle—was the military. At the age of three, he was painted in a full uniform with a dress sword hanging at his side; a year later he received his first gun. Short and slender (he was five feet, six inches tall), Lytle nevertheless had inherited his namesake's love of fighting. The old captain had fought successively against the French, the British, and the Indians on the western frontier before settling down near Lexington, Kentucky. His son, also named William, moved to Cincinnati in 1806 and built a handsome mansion on the outskirts of the city, from which he presided over the upper reaches of Cincinnati business and cultural life. The younger Lytle was a patron of the arts, commissioning John James Audubon to paint his and his wife's portraits and donating a princely \$11,500 to newly founded Cincinnati College. World-famous songwriter Stephen Foster was a distant relative.

William Haines Lytle, called Will, was born on November 2, 1826. His father, Robert Lytle, was more interested in politics than the military. Dubbed "Orator Bob," he was elected to the Ohio House of Representatives in 1828 and the United States House of Representatives four years later. A lifelong Democrat, Robert Lytle was a personal friend of future presidents James K. Polk and Franklin Pierce, and his son Will was dandled on the lap of President Andrew Jackson. (Young Will



"I Am

Harper's Weekly artist Alfred Waud's battlefield sketch shows Confederate infantry advancing ominously through the trees toward Union forces during the Battle of Chickamauga. INSET: General William H. Lytle.

Dying, Egypt, Dying”

POET-GENERAL WILLIAM H. LYTLE

A rising star in the Union Army, Brig. Gen. William Haines Lytle was popular with both his superiors and enlisted men. Many felt he was destined for the White House. One morning at Chickamauga would change all that. | **BY ROY MORRIS JR.**

returned the favor by toddling about the family mansion shouting “Jackson!” at the top of his lungs—an early indication of his own political instincts.) Orator Bob’s political fortunes waned as Jackson lost popularity after his stand against the Bank of the United States, and he lost his reelection bid to Whig challenger Bellamy Storer in 1830. Jackson immediately appointed him U.S. surveyor general, a position previously held by Robert Lytle’s father.

When Will Lytle was 13, his father died of tuberculosis; his mother died two years later of the same disease. As the man of the house, Will became a father figure for his two sisters, Josephine and Lily. Both girls worshiped him, particularly Lily, the youngest of the children. With the help of his maternal grandmother, Margaret Lytle, Will kept the family together, living in the mansion and staying in Cincinnati to attend college rather than matriculating at Princeton, his mother’s choice. After graduating first in his class from Cincinnati College in 1843, Lytle studied law with his uncle, Ezekial Smith Haines, one of the city’s leading attorneys, receiving his law degree four years later.

By that time, the Mexican War was at its height, and Lytle enlisted in the army, where he quickly won election to the rank of lieutenant in Company L, 2nd Ohio Volunteers. By the time he reached Mexico, however, the war was already winding down, and Lytle was denied the opportunity to draw his sword in combat. Instead, he spent most of his time futilely politicking for a staff position with General William O. Butler of Kentucky, an old family friend who perhaps inadvertently alienated the proud young officer by receiving him “with a hauteur which I could not brook even in a Major Genl.” When he was promoted to captain a few months later, Lytle observed with some satisfaction that now he enjoyed a position “which elevates me above [Butler’s] favor or charity ... he and his staff may both go to the devil.”

Returning home to Cincinnati in July 1848, Lytle resumed his legal practice and political aspirations. After surviving a near-fatal case of cholera, he reclaimed the

family legacy by winning election to the Ohio House of Representatives. “William H. Lytle—the worthy son of noble sire,” proclaimed one campaign banner. Another neatly encapsulated Lytle’s appeal: “Small in body but big in soul.” To his uncle Edward Lytle the newly elected representative promised: “My political career shall be free from all impurity and have but one guiding star [,] a sincere and holy ambition to promote the true interest of the people.” When Kentucky senator Henry Clay’s funeral cortege passed through Cincinnati in July 1852 en route to his final resting place in Lexington, Lytle was the youngest man selected to accompany the procession. Riding a white horse on a Mexican saddle covered in silver, Lytle made a striking figure. According to his sister Lily, “Everyone talked about how handsome he looked.”

Adding to his romantic image, the gray-eyed, long-haired Lytle cultivated a city-wide reputation as a patron of and participant in the finer arts. He attended museum openings, high-flown operas, and gala society balls, and once took the role of Hamlet’s ghost in an amateur performance of the play. He also became a connoisseur of fine wines, some of which were locally produced in Cincinnati, and developed, in the careful words of one scholar, “the gentleman’s weakness for drinking.” He spent a number of less exalted nights playing billiards with his friends in the rough-and-tumble Irish Hill section of town. Reports of his disreputable conduct, perhaps planted by political enemies, appeared in local newspapers, and Lytle’s Uncle Edward scolded him in a letter: “I would ten thousand times sooner have heard of your death. My scorn of rowdiness and vulgar debauchery is and always has been inexpressible.” Lytle assured his uncle that the reports of his roistering were greatly exaggerated.

Part of Lytle’s discontent may have been the result of a series of romantic disappointments. He showed a certain aristocratic propensity for falling in love with his cousins, beginning with his first cousin, Lily Macalester, the daughter of his father’s

sister, Eliza. Lily’s father, prominent Philadelphia businessman Charles Macalester, opposed the courtship from the start on the unimpeachable eugenic grounds that the two were close relatives in a family plagued by tuberculosis, but he also found Lytle’s public escapades unacceptable. The couple broke off their two-year engagement in 1853, and Lytle moved on to a more distant cousin, Sarah Elisabeth “Sed” Doremus, the niece of New Jersey governor (and Lytle kinsman) Daniel Haines. In early 1855, Lytle asked Sed to marry him, but she declined. Apparently expecting to be asked again, she was devastated when her punctilious suitor abruptly ended the engagement. Lytle wrote wistfully to his sister Lily, who rather liked Sed, “Love, that star with me has set forever.” Sed, for her part, vowed never to marry before Lytle did—a vow she would keep for the rest of her life.

From his mother Lytle inherited a love of poetry, and he began writing verse in his early teens. His first poem, written in 1840, was “The Soldier’s Death.” His Mexican War service inspired the poems “Popocateptl,” “Jacqueline,” and “The Volunteers.” His best-known poem, which quickly became one of the most popular drawing room pieces of the 19th century, was the lyric “Antony and Cleopatra,” which Lytle dashed off one afternoon at his home while recovering from a serious illness. Its memorable opening line, “I am dying, Egypt, dying,” became a catchphrase in both Northern and Southern homes during the decade before the Civil War. After it was published in the June 19, 1858, issue of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, Lytle, like the rather more talented Lord Byron before him, “awoke one morning to find himself famous.”

Lytle left the state legislature in 1853 to concentrate on his legal career, joining his Uncle Ezekial and his good friend Alex Todd in the law firm of Haines, Todd & Lytle. He turned down offers to run for Congress or to serve as President Pierce’s secretary to Chile. In 1857, he narrowly missed being elected lieutenant governor of Ohio, a loss probably attributable to his



strong support of the recent, controversial Dred Scott decision by the Supreme Court, which rejected the notion of citizenship for African Americans. “The black Republican party,” warned Lytle, would eventually drive patriotic Southerners out of the Union, since “their self respect will not permit them to remain.” The abolitionists, he advised, “should keep cool and not tear their linen.” Three years later, after failing to win the Democratic nomination for Congress, Lytle campaigned vigorously for party presidential nominee Stephen Douglas in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the election of Abraham Lincoln and the very departure from the Union by outraged Southerners that Lytle and others long had foreseen.

Lytle had remained active in military affairs, rising to the position of major general of the 1st Division, Ohio Volunteer Militia. One month after the Confederate firing on Fort Sumter in April 1861, he resigned his militia post to accept a commission as colonel of the 10th Ohio Infantry, a regiment recruited largely from Cincinnati’s sizable Irish community. His previous experience helped him whip the rowdy, hard-drinking regiment into shape at Camp Harrison, a training facility

located seven miles outside the city. In appreciation of his untiring work and diligence, his colleagues in the Cincinnati Bar Association presented Lytle with a handsome ceremonial sword; other friends made him the gift of a spirited black charger with the Gaelic name Faugh-a-Ballaugh, or Clear the Way. In June 1861, the young colonel accepted a stand of regimental colors sewn by the patriotic women of Cincinnati and promised to return the flag “to the Queen City of the West, without spot or blemish.” He rode away to the war shouting, “Faugh-a-Ballaugh!”

From the start Lytle showed a troubling propensity for injury. On the march from Bulltown to Buckhannon, in western Virginia, he “came very near shooting off my toes,” as he told his Uncle Ezekial, when his pistol exploded in its holster and a ball grazed his boot. A few nights later his horse stumbled over a large tree in the dark and went down hard, with Lytle somehow managing to avoid being crushed, although Faugh-a-Ballaugh did fall on one of his legs and “came near rolling down a steep precipice.” During the advance to Bulltown, Confederate skirmishers fired dozens of shots at Lytle and his men, but with little effect. His sister Lily, who

Federal troops assault Confederate breastworks at the Battle of Carnifex Ferry, Virginia, in September 1861. Leading his troops forward, Lytle was wounded in the leg by a Minie bullet that day—the first of several wounds the ill-starred Lytle would suffer.

recently had married prominent local attorney Samuel Broadwell, suffered nervous prostration worrying about her brother and lost 20 pounds in two months. She professed herself “almost heart-broken” at her brother’s departure.

Once at the front, Lytle and the 10th were not long in making a name for themselves. On September 10, 1861, while serving under fellow Cincinnati Brig. Gen. William S. Rosecrans, the regiment was ordered to attack a fortified Confederate position in the woods opposite Carnifex Ferry on the Gauley River. Crying “Follow, Tenth!” the white-gloved Lytle led his men across a ravine and up a steep hillside into the mouth of 12 enemy cannons. The “most unequal contest,” reported Lytle, resulted in both of the regiment’s color-bearers being shot down, and Lytle himself suffered a dangerous wound when a Minie bullet struck him in the calf of his left leg, scraping the bone and barely missing two major arteries. The same bullet, passing through Lytle, killed Faugh-a-Ballaugh, who ran

ahead a few steps before dropping dead. The regiment, fighting alone for the better part of an hour, pressed the Confederates hard and won the nickname the “Bloody Tenth.” Lytle had proven his worth as a combat leader while also continuing his unfortunate habit of getting injured. His commander, Rosecrans, marked him down as a man who would fight.

The wound at Carnifex Ferry knocked Lytle out of action for the next four months, and he returned to Cincinnati to recuperate. In November 1861, the regiment arrived home on leave and immediately marched past Lytle’s mansion at Third and Broadway, cheering loudly and throwing their hats into the air while their colonel, still unable to ride a horse, took a seat in an open barouche alongside regimental pastor Father William O’Higgins and led the men on an impromptu parade through the city. The 10th’s now-tattered battle flag was proudly displayed in the window of Shillito’s department store.

After a brief interlude as company commander of Camp Morton at Bardstown, Kentucky, Lytle rejoined the Army of the Ohio, now led by Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell. His hard fighting at Carnifex Ferry had won Lytle advancement to the brigade level as commander of the 17th Brigade, 3rd Division. The brigade included the 10th Ohio, 3rd Ohio, 15th Kentucky, and 42nd Indiana. Brig. Gen. Ormsby Mitchel, an old professor of Lytle’s at Cincinnati College, commanded the division. Despite his new position, Lytle was passed over for brigadier general, an omission his ever solicitous sister Lily attributed to rumors that he was drinking heavily. “It cannot pain you half as much to read this my brother as it pains me to write it,” she told him. “But when you know that promotions—respect & everything you are ambitious of awaits your abstaining from the vile poison it is incomprehensible to me why you have not the moral courage to abandon it forever.”

Lytle, who had responded to a similar entreaty from Lily two months earlier by promising to abide “happily” by her wishes, apparently did not feel the need to

“My life has been one of constant activity and incessant unremitting toil,” Lytle told his sisters. “Never in my life have I done so much hard work.”

re-avow his dedication to abstinence. Future letters did not mention the matter, although Lytle complained to his brother-in-law Samuel Broadwell that he had been “treated like a dog from the jump” in the matter of promotion. Continuing the metaphor, he attributed his situation to “a lot of dogs at Cincinnati or Columbus or Washington [who] have tracked me like bloodhounds.” He threatened darkly to “settle my private accounts with the cowardly miscreants who have maligned me” once the war was over.

For the time being, Lytle was too busy with garrison and patrol duty in northern Alabama to worry about his political enemies. “My life has been one of constant activity and incessant unremitting toil,” he told his sisters. “Never in my life have I done so much hard work.” Operating out of Huntsville, Lytle’s brigade was responsible for safeguarding the Athens & Decatur Railroad and the bridges across the Elk River. It was arduous and unwelcome duty, particularly in an area of the South that recently had suffered the brutal touch of Cossack-style campaigning, thanks to the hard hand of Lytle’s fellow 3rd Division commander, Russian-born Colonel John Basil Turchin, born Ivan Turchinineff. Turchin’s 8th Brigade had sacked and plundered nearby Athens, Alabama, after Confederate snipers fired on them from upstairs windows in the town. To Lytle’s “great disgust,” he said, the sisters

of a family friend had been “plundered of everything they had” by Turchin’s soldiers. It did not improve Lytle’s mood to learn that Turchin had been recommended, along with him and their divisional comrade, Colonel Joshua Sill, for promotion—or that both Turchin and Sill would be promoted ahead of him later that year.

At the end of August 1862, Lytle and the rest of the Army of the Ohio rushed northward to stave off Confederate General Braxton Bragg’s surprise invasion of Kentucky. For a time, no one knew what Bragg’s intentions were, and cities along the Ohio River from Louisville to Cincinnati fortified themselves against imminent Rebel assault. Lytle’s sisters naturally worried that their hometown would come under attack, as did their brother, but at the last minute Bragg swung away from the river and turned southeastward into rural Kentucky to link up with General Edmund Kirby Smith’s army at Bardstown. On October 8, the Union and Confederate armies blundered into each other on the outskirts of Perryville, a small hamlet nine miles southwest of Harrodsburg on the banks of the drought-stricken Chaplin River.

From the start, the Battle of Perryville was an affair—one could scarcely call it a comedy—of errors. Owing to a natural phenomenon known as “acoustic shadow,” Buell could not hear the roar of cannons three miles away, and his second in command, Maj. Gen. Charles Gilbert, blithely assured him “that his children were all quiet and by sunset he would have them all in bed, nicely tucked up.” Meanwhile, Lytle’s brigade, in Brig. Gen. Lovell Rousseau’s division on the Union left, was being roughly handled by successive waves of Confederate infantry led by Brig. Gen. Patrick Cleburne’s redoubtable division.

Attempting to rally his men on the heights overlooking Doctor’s Creek, a tributary of the Chaplin River, Lytle was struck behind the ear by a piece of Rebel shrapnel that exited his cheek and knocked him to the ground. Left for dead along with 265 of his 500 men, he was found sitting dazedly on a rock, still holding his

sword, by Confederate Captain W.T. Blakemore, an adjutant for Brig. Gen. Bushrod Johnson. Blakemore asked Lytle if he needed help; Lytle responded “that those on the field needed more immediate attention.” He offered Blakemore his sword, but the captain told him suavely that “one who could command such men should never suffer such indignity.” Instead, he escorted Lytle to Johnson’s tent, where the fellow Ohioan took one look at Lytle’s blood-smeared face and vacant expression and sent him back to the brigade surgeon for emergency aid.

The next day, Lytle was taken to Harrodsburg and paroled. He returned to Cincinnati to await formal exchange, and on December 1 testified at a court of inquiry looking into Buell’s less than stellar handling of the army at Perryville. Falling back on his legal training, Lytle declined to testify directly about anything he had seen while in Confederate hands, quoting a provision in his parole that enjoined him “not to reveal anything that I might have discovered within the line of the enemy.”

Lytle’s testimony, or lack thereof, did not help Buell, a fellow Democrat, who was removed from command by Republican President Lincoln and replaced by Lytle’s old commander in western Virginia, William Rosecrans. Luckily for Lytle, he was too late to rejoin the army for the gruesome Battle of Stones River, fought

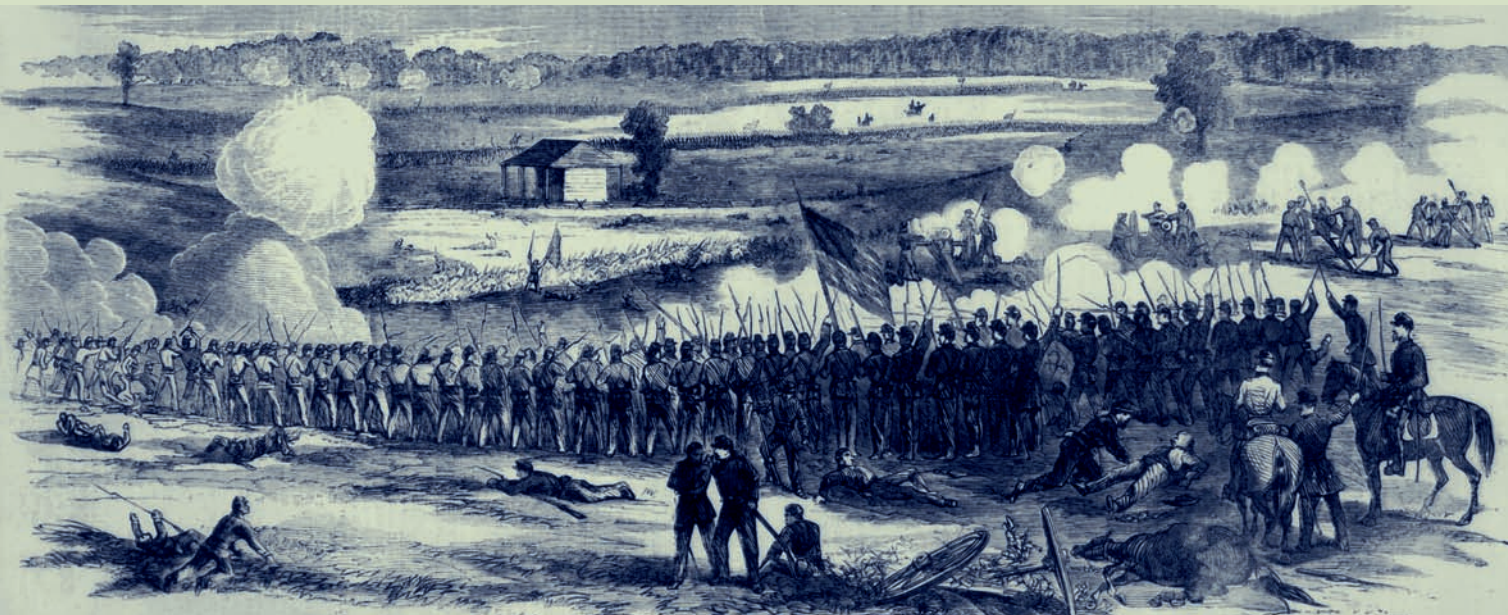
near Murfreesboro, Tennessee, on the last day of December 1862. There, Rosecrans won a narrow but decisive victory, holding Nashville for the Union and sending Bragg’s Confederates stumbling southward into winter camp around Tullahoma. Among the thousands of Union casualties during the two-day battle was recently promoted Brig. Gen. Joshua Sill, who was killed leading the 1st Brigade, 3rd Division, XX Corps of the Army of the Cumberland—the new name for the main Union army in the western theater of the war. In a bit of irony that probably was not lost on Lytle, he inherited Sill’s command under Maj. Gen. Phil Sheridan, yet another Ohioan (from Somerset).

Rejoining the army at Murfreesboro in February 1863, Lytle took advantage of the lull in fighting to pay a courtesy call on the Tennessee branch of his family. He had made the acquaintance of David Lytle the previous year while stationed near Murfreesboro, and he gladly accepted an invitation to stay with the family until his army promotion and living quarters were finalized—the weather, as he told Lily, “has been detestable and the mud is knee deep.” David Lytle died that winter, but Will continued living with the family. He apparently developed a serious affection for the widow, Sophia Dashiell Lytle, whom he described as “brilliantly educated—a fine Latin & Greek scholar & a very charming

lady.” He repeatedly urged his sisters to send Sophia food, clothing, and other hard to come by items in Union-occupied Tennessee. At the same time, he reaffirmed his attachment to his cousin Sed, sending word through his sisters “that I will never forget her, and if I survive the wars hope to meet her again.” Sophia Lytle subsequently transferred her affections to Captain Carter Harrison, grandson of President William Henry Harrison and brother of future president Benjamin Harrison.

There was little time, at any rate, for romance. The hard-charging Sheridan put Lytle to work marching, picketing, and overseeing bridge repairs for the division. Lytle’s brigade consisted entirely of northwestern regiments: the 36th and 88th Illinois, 21st Michigan, and 24th Wisconsin. They were “said to be full of fight,” Lytle reported proudly, and they would soon have the opportunity to prove their reputation. That June, after months of hectoring from an increasingly exasperated War Department, Rosecrans commenced his long-awaited drive toward Chattanooga, on the Tennessee-Georgia border, whose confluence of railroads and rivers gave it a strategic importance far beyond its ramshackle appearance.

Federal riflemen fire on the enemy at the Battle of Perryville, Kentucky, in October 1862. Once again Lytle was wounded, struck in the head and face by Confederate shrapnel and taken captive. He was paroled the next day.



Lytle's brigade, spearheading the advance, was in the lead when the army reached the hamlet of Cowan, Tennessee, in early July. There, wrote Lytle, one of his sharpshooters accidentally shot and killed a young boy dressed in gray who ill-advisedly ran toward them in the rain. The youth was attempting to put back a fence rail, and Lytle's men took him for a sniper. It later transpired that the boy's family was pro-Union, and his teary-eyed sister leaned out an upstairs window as they passed and cried: "Hurrah for the Union, but oh you have killed our dear little Freddy." "Such is war," Lytle sighed sympathetically.

In one of the smoothest strategic feats of the war, Rosecrans feinted Bragg out of Middle Tennessee with a series of brilliant

ing, in turn, to remember them for the rest of his life. "It may not be for all of us there today to listen to the chants that greet the victor, nor to hear the brazen bells ringing out the new nuptials of the states," Lytle said. "But those who do survive can tell how their old comrades died with their harness on, in the great war for Union and liberty." The speech was reprinted in the *Cincinnati Commercial*, where it received "quite a run at home," Lytle bragged. His commanding general was less impressed. Rosecrans needled Lytle, in the presence of a number of other officers, "Lytle, was your father a better orator than you?" Lytle, understandably, was not amused.

The time for speeches quickly passed. In early September, the Army of the Cumberland occupied Chattanooga without a shot, the Confederates falling back into northwest Georgia. Rosecrans would have been well advised to remain in Chattanooga and wait for reinforcements before pursuing Bragg's army into the heavy woods beyond. But stung by the repeated criticism of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and the implied displeasure of President Lincoln, he ignored advice to do just that and instead pushed ahead, convinced that Bragg's army was retreating in disarray. Dividing his own army into three wings, Rosecrans stalked after Bragg, in the process dangerously extending his own lines and isolating his three corps in the mountainous gaps below Chattanooga. In the meantime, Bragg had secretly consolidated his army in the deep woods to the east of the mountain passes. He intended to destroy the Union army at his leisure, one corps at a time. Had it not been for a bungled preliminary attack at McLemore's Cove, Bragg's plan might well have worked. As it was, Rosecrans belatedly realized the deadly peril he was in and hastily ordered his units to concentrate in the vicinity of Crawfish Springs, a puddle-sized hamlet 12 miles south of Chattanooga.

On September 19, the Battle of Chickamauga exploded. As Rosecrans had guessed, Bragg intended to turn the Union

left and block the road back to Chattanooga. With unparalleled savagery, the two armies collided in the vine-covered thickets around Chickamauga Creek. ("Chickamauga" is an old Indian word romantically mistranslated as "the River of Death." It actually means "bad water," commemorating a long-ago smallpox epidemic.) The fighting raged until long after dark, "one solid, unbroken wave of awe-inspiring sound," a participant recalled, "as if all the fires of earth and hell had been turned loose in one mighty effort to destroy each other." The Union line, although forced back in places, somehow managed to hold together. The next day, each side realized, would prove decisive.

Lytle's brigade, left behind to safeguard the army's right at Lee and Gordon's Mill astride the La Fayette Road below Chickamauga, missed the first day of combat altogether. Summoned hastily to reunite with its besieged comrades, the brigade pushed on to the battlefield, arriving about 2 AM and bivouacking on a hillside near Rosecrans' headquarters, the cabin of a backwoods widow named Eliza Glenn. The night was unseasonably cold, and campfires were prohibited. Lytle's men slept on the frosty ground, their muskets beside them—those who could actually sleep with the screams of hundreds of wounded and dying men cascading around them in the dark.

Lytle was untypically gloomy. Besides the dangerous position of the army and the prospect of even more desperate fighting the next day, he was suffering from a heavy cold that made it hard for him to breathe—sleep was out of the question. Calling his aide, Cincinnati-born Lieutenant Alfred Pirtle, to his side, Lytle put his arm around him and said quietly, "My boy, do you know we are going to fight two to one today?" He explained that Bragg's Confederates had been reinforced by Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's redoubtable I Corps from the Army of Northern Virginia. Even then, Longstreet's men were creeping stealthily through the woods less than two miles away from Lytle's camp in preparation for one of the most startling



Russian-born Colonel John Basil Turchin, left, disgusted Lytle by allowing his men to sack and plunder the town of Athens, Alabama. Confederate Brig. Gen. Patton Anderson, right, commanded the troops that mortally wounded Lytle at Chickamauga.

flanking maneuvers. At Bridgeport, Alabama, 25 miles southwest of Chattanooga, the army stopped to replenish supplies before a final push toward Chattanooga. Lytle's brigade was tasked with rebuilding a railroad bridge across the Tennessee River that the Confederates had partially burned. During a break from his bridge-building duties, Lytle was invited to a special encampment of his old 10th Ohio Regiment, at which Colonel William W. Ward presented him with a jewel-encrusted Maltese cross, a belated parting gift from the regiment.

Never at a loss for words, Lytle responded with a graceful speech thanking his old friends for remembering him and promis-

breakthroughs of the entire war. An unread letter from Lily was stuffed into Lytle's coat pocket. His orderly, Joseph Guthrie, the son of Cincinnati lawyer James Guthrie, urged the general to keep out of the fight the next day. "No, Guthrie, I never shrink from my duty," said Lytle, "but if I fall I want you to carry me off the field—and take care of my poor horse." The long night dragged on.

The next morning the battle resumed with a vengeance, the Confederates mounting a series of rolling attacks on the Union line from north to south. Rosecrans, frantic and exhausted, issued a burst of panicky orders to reinforce the Union left and began shifting troops in that direction. Brig. Gen. Thomas Wood's division, to the immediate left of Lytle's brigade, had just pulled out of line to obey Rosecrans' latest directive when, more or less by coincidence, Longstreet launched an attack on the just vacated position. Screaming the Rebel yell at the top of their lungs, the first of 11,000 battle-hardened Confederates surged through the gap, instantly cutting the Union army in two and threatening to annihilate all opposition. Lytle was at Union headquarters talking to his divisional commander, Phil Sheridan, when the breakthrough occurred. Sheridan immediately ordered him to move his men into line from their sheltered position on a dirt road behind the hill below the Widow Glenn's. Lytle obeyed at once, calling to his lead regiment, the 88th Illinois, "Forward into line!" He pulled on a pair of dark kid gloves and murmured, perhaps to himself, "If I must die, I will die as a gentleman."

Already, as Lytle brought his troops up the slope of what would become known as Lytle Hill, the far side of the heavily forested crest was boiling with Confederates. Brig. Gen. Zacharias Deas' Alabama brigade was in the lead, firing devastating point-blank volleys into the backs of retreating Union soldiers and stopping to reload a few hundred feet from Lytle's hastily improvised position. Pirtle, riding back to join Lytle after carrying a message to a nearby artillery battery, saw the general exhorting his men with emphatic ges-



Battle-hardened troops of the 21st Michigan, part of Lytle's brigade at Chickamauga, pose after the battle. All the men in his command were Midwesterners.

tures of his saber. "Boys," said Lytle, "if we whip them today we will all eat our Christmas dinner at home." Distractedly, he twisted his mustache with the fingers of his left hand.

Lytle had no way of knowing it, but the Rebels coming ominously toward him were commanded by an old friend, Tennessee-born Brig. Gen. Patton Anderson. As Democrats, the two had shared a common political bond, and they had also served together in Mexico. A few months before the Civil War, they had last seen each other in Charleston, South Carolina, and Anderson recalled that when they parted, "they promised that nothing should ever interfere with their friendship, and if either should ever be in trouble the other was to assist him in every way practicable." There was nothing Anderson could do for Lytle now; his Mississippi troops were firing as quickly as they could at anything blue, and the mounted Lytle, silhouetted against the green-brown hillside, was too easy a target to miss.

Pirtle, who had rejoined Lytle, leaned over to hear what the general was saying above the din of battle. "I bend to catch what he is saying," Pirtle recalled years later, the battle still a present-tense memory. "He calmly says with a firm voice 'Pirtle, I am hit.' For an instant I cannot speak; my heart almost ceases to beat, but I say

'Are you hit hard, General?' 'In the spine—if I have to leave the field you stay here and see that all goes right.' 'I will, General.'" A moment later, Lytle sent Pirtle dashing off to bring up a lagging regiment. Another aide, Captain Howard Green of the 24th Wisconsin, moved to his side. Lytle turned to say something to Green. At that instant, a bullet struck Lytle squarely in the face, entering at the left corner of his mouth and exiting through his right temple. He reeled in the saddle; Green caught him as he fell. A passing sergeant of the 24th Wisconsin, Thomas J. Ford, heard Lytle gasp his last words: "Brave boys, brave boys."

Green lowered Lytle to the ground. The stricken general tried to say something else, but his mouth was full of blood. Bullets were whizzing everywhere. Colonel Thomas Harrison of the 39th Indiana Mounted Infantry rode up, dismounted, and attempted to help Green and a couple of orderlies carry Lytle away, but an exploding shell wounded one of the orderlies. Green was fumbling his hold when Lytle gave a sudden convulsive tug of Green's knees and relaxed into death. Harrison remounted his horse and rode away; Green ran for the opposite side of the hill. Confederates swarmed onto the crest, yelling with exultation. The ever-loyal Pirtle was headed back up the other side of the hill when a riderless horse careened past him—it was Lytle's. He turned and ran the other way, tears blinding his steps.

Continued on page 98

Union Colonel Benjamin Grierson stuck his left foot into the stirrup and swung up into the saddle. Orders were quickly given, and soon a column of 1,700 blue-jacketed troopers of Grierson's 1st Brigade, along with a battery of artillery, trampled southeast from La Grange, Tennessee, in the early dawn of April 17, 1863. The cavalymen were traveling light, packing only five days' rations to last them 10 days, oats in the nosebag for their mounts, and 40

The key Confederate port of Vicksburg, on the east bank of the Mississippi River, had withstood numerous Union attempts to capture it since late 1862. Finally, in early 1863, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant decided on a bold plan to march a good portion of the Army of the Tennessee down the west bank of the river past Vicksburg while naval support slipped past the port's defiant batteries. Then Grant would move his troops across the mighty river and

On April 17, 1863, Union Colonel Benjamin Grierson led 1,700 cavalymen southward from La Grange, Tennessee, into northern Mississippi on a daring raid designed to divert enemy attention from strategically vital Vicksburg.

Wrecking on the Railroad

By Mike Phifer



rounds of ammunition for their carbines and revolvers.

The blue column snaked into the pine-clad hills of northern Mississippi. Most of the men thought they were headed on a scouting mission to Columbus to smash up the railroads there. They were wrong. Only the 36-year-old Grierson and his aide, Lieutenant Samuel Woodson, knew the true objective of the raid. It was much deeper into enemy territory—and much riskier.

secure a beachhead before investing Vicksburg from the south. To help keep the Rebels distracted from the beachhead, various diversions were needed.

Besides feints north of Vicksburg, a cavalry raid south of Vicksburg was planned to disrupt the railroads, especially the Southern Railroad of Mississippi, the main supply line into the city, and tie up Confederate forces there. Grant wanted Grierson to lead the raid, writing to Maj. Gen. Stephen Hurlbut, commander of XVI Corps, in Memphis in mid-February: "It seems to me that Grierson, with about five hundred picked men, might succeed in making his way south, and cut the railroad east of Jackson, Miss. The undertaking would be a hazardous one, but it would pay well if carried out."

The raid suited Grierson, who in December had taken command of the 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, XVI Corps. The brigade consisted of the 6th Illinois, 7th Illinois, and 2nd Iowa Cavalry. Grierson did

much of the planning of the raid, although he was aided by his superiors, Generals Hurlbut and William Sooy Smith, who commanded the La Grange camp. Although Grant had initially suggested that Grierson should take 500 men, this force was increased to 1,700 troopers—Grierson's whole brigade plus Battery K of the 1st Illinois Artillery, which sported six light-caliber Woodruff guns.

Although Grant wanted the Southern Railroad cut somewhere between Meridian and Jackson before his army crossed the Mississippi, it was decided that more had to be done than just tear up tracks. To distract the Confederates, the town of Newton Station would be the primary target. There the tracks of the Southern Railroad could be wrecked and the railroad depot burned. Newton Station also offered the opportunity of wrecking tracks on the nearby Gulf & Ohio Railroad, which ran north and south.

To give Grierson's raiders a better chance



Well-led and well-equipped, Union cavalrymen in the western theater of the war were able to match their Confederate opponents in both firepower and audacity. Premier Union cavalry leader Phil Sheridan got his start in Mississippi. LEFT: Benjamin Grierson.



An alert crew from the 1st Illinois Artillery poses beside their gun. The unit's Battery K took along six light-caliber Woodruff guns on the Grierson raid.

of success, two other short raids were to be launched at the same time by the Army of the Tennessee into northern Mississippi. Meanwhile, the Army of the Cumberland was planning a raid through northern Alabama and Georgia, which was also timed to coincide with Grierson's raid.

Commanding the Confederate Department of Mississippi and Eastern Louisiana was Lt. Gen. John Pemberton, who had about 50,000 men. The strongest force was kept at or near Vicksburg, while two cavalry units under the command of Colonel William Wirt Adams were stationed at Port Gibson. Another large force was positioned at Port Hudson under Brig. Gen. Franklin Gardner. Other forces under Maj. Gen. William Loring and Brig. Gen. John Chalmers were in northern Mississippi, while Brig. Gen. Daniel Rugles, in Columbus, was responsible for defending northeast Mississippi. Troops were also stationed at such places as Jackson and Grand Gulf, supported by local militias and state troops spread throughout the department.

Grierson, a music teacher before the war, was visiting his family in Jacksonville, Illinois, when a telegram arrived from Hurlbut telling him to return immediately. The raid was on. Grierson arrived back at La Grange in the early hours of April 17, and Smith gave him some last-minute instruc-

tions to cut the Southern Railroad and, if practicable, the Mississippi Central and the Mobile & Ohio Railroads as well. After talking with Smith, Grierson rejoined his brigade. Colonel Edward Hatch, commander of the 2nd Iowa, had the brigade ready to go.

Riding south, Grierson's force was soon split, with the 6th Illinois advancing on a western road and the 7th Illinois and 2nd Iowa on a parallel road to the east. Grierson's horse soldiers covered 30 miles the first day, stopping for the night four miles northwest of the town of Ripley at a plantation owned by a Doctor Ellis. After capturing some Confederates nearby, the troopers settled down for the night, lighting fires and enjoying fare taken from Ellis's smokehouses—something they would do at many local plantations in the coming days.

By 7 AM, the raiders were mounted and moving toward Ripley with the 7th Illinois under Colonel Edward Prince leading the way. Once at Ripley, Grierson ordered Hatch to make a feint with the 2nd Iowa east toward the Mobile & Ohio Railroad, while the rest of the brigade headed south toward New Albany.

Four miles south of Ripley, gunshots suddenly rang out as a detachment of eight Confederate horse soldiers fired at the advance party of the 7th Illinois. The blue-jacketed troopers charged after the fleeing

Rebels but soon reined up their mounts. Nobody was hurt in the exchange, and the advance party, fearing an ambush, decided to wait for Prince and the rest of the regiment to join them. Concerned that a strong Rebel force might be lurking along the Tallahatchie River, 12 miles away, Prince ordered Major John Graham to take to his 1st Battalion and ride hard for the bridge at New Albany.

Hatch and his 2nd Iowa horsemen, meanwhile, turned south toward Molino. Scouts from Colonel J.F. Smith's 1st Mississippi Regiment, a state guard unit based out of Chesterville, soon spotted the column of Federals. Having only one company on hand to face the enemy cavalry, Smith dispatched a messenger to Chesterville while he attempted to slow down the Union advance.

Hatch was not the only Federal raider then skirmishing with the Confederates. Graham and his hard-riding battalion encountered Rebel pickets as they thundered toward the bridge over the Tallahatchie. While some of the pickets fired at the Federals, others attempted to tear up planks and torch the bridge. Graham's cavalry was coming too fast for the pickets to do much damage, and they scrambled for their horses and attempted to escape. Four of them weren't fast enough and were captured along with the bridge. Graham ordered his men to dismount, repair the planks, and prepare to defend the bridge. As it turned out, it was unnecessary; Grierson and the main column forded the river three miles upstream.

By late afternoon the two Illinois regiments had reunited at New Albany and pushed five miles southeast under a darkening sky. Grierson was hoping that Hatch would rejoin him, but the Iowans halted for the night after crossing the upper branches of the Tallahatchie. The Illinois troopers camped for the night at another local plantation, enjoying food from its smokehouses and finding a herd of horses and mules hidden in the woods. The four prisoners taken at the bridge, meanwhile, starting talking. Two of them were state troopers, while the other two belonged to

Lt. Col. Clark Barteau's 2nd Tennessee Cavalry, which was part of Ruggles' command, stationed less than 20 miles away with 400 or 500 regulars and as many state troopers. The prisoners also revealed that a few miles to the northwest a detachment of the 18th Mississippi Cavalry under Major Alexander Chalmers was camped at King's Bridge.

Torrents of rain pounded down during the night but slackened a little by first light. Grierson hoped to further confuse any pursuit by dispersing Rebel cavalry camps in the vicinity. Two companies from the 7th Illinois under Captain George Trafton stopped north on the muddy road to New Albany. There they found a body of state troops. Trafton's wet and muddy men charged forward, guns blazing in the rain. The Confederates scattered, but not before eight were killed or wounded.

Two other companies from the 7th Illinois rode out for King's Bridge to disperse the Rebels, but they found only hastily deserted lean-tos, tents, unrolled bedding, and smoldering cookfires. The final detachment sent out by Grierson, also consisting of two companies, rode east in an attempt to make contact with Hatch and give him orders to make a demonstration toward Chesterville. They were also to look for a hidden herd of horses reported by the prisoners to be concealed in the woods a few miles away. The raiders needed fresh horses, since the fast-moving raid quickly exhausted their mounts.

The troopers managed to find only a few horses, but they did make contact with Hatch's advance guard and passed along Grierson's orders to Hatch before riding back to rejoin the rest of their regiment. After breakfast, the 6th Illinois mounted up and headed toward Pontotoc, followed by the returning six companies of the 7th Illinois.

Around 4 PM, the 6th Illinois neared Pontotoc. Grierson expected a fight and ordered the advance troops to ride toward town in an attempt to determine the defenders' strength. Some citizens and state troopers fired on the advance guard but soon fled upon seeing the whole Federal



TOP: Grierson, seated center with hand on chin, is surrounded by his staff. **MIDDLE:** Confederate Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton, left; Colonel Edward Hatch of the 2nd Iowa Cavalry. **ABOVE:** Captain John Raines served with Company C, 2nd Tennessee Cavalry.

regiment. A lone defiant Rebel, however, remained and continued to fire on the blue-jackets until he was killed. The town was

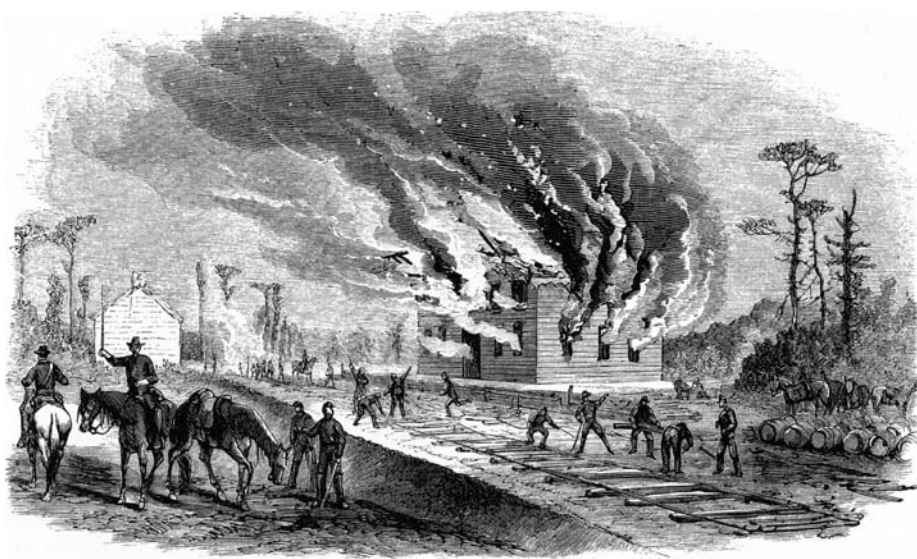
soon in Grierson's hands, and a wagonload of ammunition was promptly destroyed. While the 6th moved out, a search party from the 7th discovered and destroyed 500 bushels of salt hidden in an old mill.

After making a feint toward Chesterville, Hatch's lowans, slowed by state troop skirmishers, finally rejoined Grierson. That evening the raiders encamped five miles south of Pontotoc at two plantations. On the morning of the 20th, bugle calls awoke the troopers. After boiling some coffee and packing their gear, the soldiers assembled with their mounts for inspection. Men and horses thought unfit to continue the raid were shunted aside to form a special detachment. These 175 men, nicknamed "the Quinine Brigade" by the rest of the brigade, were put under the command of Major Hiram Love of the 2nd Iowa. Grierson sent the men back to La Grange, along with several prisoners and a number of spare horses and mules. Accompanying them was one of the Woodruff guns.

At 3 AM, the Quinine Brigade, formed into columns of four, rode out of camp for Pontotoc. Grierson hoped they would obliterate his tracks and deceive the Rebels into believing the whole brigade had turned back. Meanwhile, the rest of the brigade was soon back in the saddle and continuing south toward the town of Houston.

Barteau's combined force of Confederate regular cavalry and state troopers was also in the saddle and attempting to pick up the trail of the Union raiders, who they had expected to attack them the day before at Chesterville. After receiving word the enemy had passed through Pontotoc, Barteau rode through the night for Okolona Station on the Gulf & Ohio Railroad, believing this was the raiders' true objective. But Barteau failed to find any fresh tracks indicating that mounted forces had passed by. He headed for Pontotoc, which his advance scouts reached at noon.

Barteau quickly learned that the Federals had passed through the area hours before and were headed west for Oxford. Barteau sent a detachment to follow the Quinine Brigade, which he figured was a diversionary force. After the scouts



returned with news that the small force of Federal cavalry had turned north, Barteau ordered his men to follow the main force of enemy raiders. At nightfall they camped a mile and a half north of Houston to give their worn-out horses and men a much-needed rest.

By this time Grierson had passed Houston and was camped 12 miles south of the town at another local plantation. That night Grierson met with his regimental commanders and other key officers to discuss decoying Rebel pursuit. He ordered Hatch to take the 2nd Iowa and strike for the Gulf & Ohio Railroad from West Point as far south as Macon if possible. Then, if practicable, they were to hit Columbus, destroying the government works there and striking the railroad south of Okolona before returning to La Grange.

At 7 AM on the 21st, Grierson's brigade broke camp and headed southeast on another rainy day. After the column of bluejackets passed through Clear Springs, Hatch halted his regiment. "This patrol," wrote Sergeant Lyman Pierce, "returned in columns of fours, thus obliterating all the outward bound tracks. The cannon was turned in the road in four different places, thus making their tracks correspond with the four artillery pieces which Grierson had with the expedition. The object of this was to deceive the rebels, who were following us, into the belief that the entire column had taken the Columbus road."

The deception worked. Barteau's scouts found the tracks and assumed the main column of Union cavalry had doubled back and was riding east for the Gulf & Ohio Railroad at Columbus. Barteau sent his men galloping eastward along the muddy road after the enemy, which he soon overtook at Pala Alto. Around noon, as the rain started to lighten, Barteau made contact with Hatch's command, which was just preparing to mount up after halting for lunch. Shots rang out as Hatch's rear guard was overrun by the Confederates. Barteau's men then charged toward the main body of Federals.

Hatch, hearing the gunshots, ordered his men to continue into a hedged lane and dismount. Taking cover along the brush and trees that bordered the lane, the Iowans, armed with sporting Colt revolving rifles, opened up on the Rebels. Barteau, sensing he had the Federals trapped, halted the charge and sent four companies of Tennesseans to take up positions at the far end of the lane while he attacked the enemy with the rest of his command.

Hatch's men had good cover, and for two hours they held off the Rebels. Then Barteau shifted his men, putting his green Mississippi state troops in Hatch's front, where they had the cover of a church and some trees. There they were to hold their fire until the Federals were "close enough to make it destructive and deadly." The 2nd Tennessee, meanwhile, formed to

attack up the lane and hit the enemy rear. Before the Confederates could attack, Hatch struck first.

The lone Woodruff gun opened up on the Mississippi troops while the Iowa cavalrymen hit the Mississippians hard, causing them to retreat in disorder. Hatch's men pushed the Confederates three miles toward the Mobile & Ohio Railroad. Barteau and his Tennesseans, meanwhile, rode hard to place themselves in a position between the Yankees and the railroad tracks. They dug in for the night and waited for reinforcements, intending to continue the battle the next morning.

Hatch had other ideas. He led his men northward through a large swamp, guided by an African American scout. After crossing a river with considerable difficulty during the night, Hatch's raiders struck Okolona near sunset on the 22nd, finding it abandoned and torching 30 barracks full of cotton. Barteau, reinforced by Lt. Col. James Cunningham and his 2nd Alabama Cavalry, rode after Hatch.

Pushing north again on the 23rd through more swamps, Hatch's men found horses and mules hidden by their owners. Barteau continued to dog the raiders, who were burning bridges as they withdrew north. On April 24, nearing Birmingham, Hatch divided his force, sending six companies to the east while the rest of his command, along with 31 prisoners and 200 escaped slaves who were helping to drive the 600 captured horses and mules, proceeded into town.

Making a forced march, Barteau finally caught up with Hatch's rear guard, which put its Colt revolving rifles to good use stopping three charges before being forced back on the rest of Hatch's command, which repulsed the Confederate attack and fell back across a bridge over Camp Creek. The bridge was then torched, ending the skirmish after it had cost the Confederates 30 men and exhausted their ammunition. Hatch returned safely to La Grange a couple of days later, having lost only 10 men himself.

Grierson, meanwhile, was continuing to push south. Ahead of the column of horse-

men now rode a group of scouts led by a Canadian quartermaster sergeant named Richard Surby. According to Surby, he approached his superior, Lt. Col. William Blackburn, executive officer of the 7th Illinois, with the idea of “having some scouts in the advance dressed in citizens clothes.” Blackburn discussed the idea with Grierson, who approved it and gave Surby permission to form his scouts. Eight men from the 7th Illinois were dressed as irregular Confederates. The scouts, nicknamed “the Butternut Guerrillas,” would prove quite useful to Grierson.

Passing through Starkville on April 21, the raiders seized Confederate mail and destroyed supplies. Grierson was disturbed to learn that the townspeople knew the raiders were coming. As a violent storm flashed and crashed overhead, the bluejackets pushed south from Starkville through swamps where horses struggled through belly-deep mud and water. Finding some high ground, the raiders stopped for the night. Graham’s 1st Battalion, however, got little rest. Grierson earlier had received information from a slave

about a nearby tannery, and he sent Graham’s force to destroy it.

Concerned that the Confederates had been telegraphed of his force passing through Starkville, Grierson decided to send out another diversionary force, Company B of the 7th Illinois. Commanded by Captain Henry Forbes, the company was given the dangerous mission of riding fast to Macon and pulling up the Mobile & Ohio Railroad tracks, ripping down telegraph wires, and drawing as much Confederate attention as it could.

Separating from the main column, Forbes and Company B rode east for 30 miles. That evening Forbes halted his company at a plantation three miles from Macon. Around 9 PM, pickets captured a Confederate scout who revealed that a trainload of infantry was expected to arrive

Map © 2015 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



ABOVE: Grierson’s raid began at the Union cavalry depot in La Grange, Tennessee, on April 17. The primary target was the crossroads depot at Newtown Station, where rail lines transected in all four directions. **OPPOSITE:** In this *Harper’s Weekly* engraving, Grierson’s industrious raiders tear up tracks and burn a rail depot in Mississippi as part of the plan to disrupt Southern Railroad service to the besieged city of Vicksburg.

that night. Forbes’ own scouts soon heard the whistle of an engine, leading the captain to believe that enemy reinforcements were arriving in town. Taking Macon was now out of the question. Forbes felt they had done what they came for; he would later report, “We kept all eyes on the Mobile & Ohio Railroad.”

He was right to do so—Pemberton knew now that 2,000 Union cavalrymen were raiding deep into his district, but he believed the Mobile & Ohio was their main objec-

tive. He sent Loring to Meridian to take command of all troops in the area and run down the enemy raiders. Troops went quickly by rail to Macon, where Pemberton had received reports of a large enemy force approaching. This was Forbes’ company.

Grierson, after a rugged journey through deep mud and water, was nearing Louisville. He ordered Major Mathew Starr to ride ahead with a battalion of the 6th Illinois and secure the town. When Starr’s men galloped into Louisville they found the streets empty and the buildings closed—the townspeople had been warned of the Yankees’ approach. After the main column passed through town, Grierson left Graham’s force behind for an hour to make sure no one left with news of the raiders. The column then pushed on through more swamps before camping around midnight at another plantation. It had been a rugged 50-mile journey, but their objective now lay only 40 miles away.

On the morning of April 23, the Butternut Guerrillas galloped ahead of the main column with orders to

capture a key bridge over the flooded Pearl River. A couple of miles from the bridge the scouts chanced upon an elderly man who told them the bridge was held by a guard of five men, including his son, and that they had ripped up some planks in the center of the bridge and placed incendiaries in the openings. The old man reluctantly agreed to help after he was warned that the raiders would destroy his property if the bridge was damaged.

The old man talked his son and the guards into galloping away, leaving the bridge in the scouts’ hands. After replacing the missing planks, Surby left one scout to wait for the main column and led the rest of his men after the fleeing guards, who he worried would spread word of the Union advance. As he neared Philadelphia, Surby spotted armed men drawn up in a line across the road. He immediately requested

that an additional 10 men be sent up to reinforce the Butternut Guerrillas. When Surby saw the help coming, he led his scouts forward, revolvers blazing, and stampeded the Rebels. The town was quickly in Federal hands.

The muddy blue column of cavalry continued to push south. After a brief rest, Grierson had his men riding through the night. He sent Blackburn and 200 men of the 7th Illinois ahead with orders to capture Decatur and scout the ultimate target of the raid, Newton Station. Blackburn easily secured Decatur and halted six miles outside Newton Station. Grierson then ordered Surby and two scouts to ride into town to reconnoiter. Riding to within half a mile of town, Surby halted on an elevated position to have a better look at Newton Station. No enemy camp or pickets were visible, and Surby could only see a few people moving around a large building that he took to be a military hospital. Pushing closer to town, Surby and his two scouts stopped at a house on the edge of town, where he learned that two trains were due to arrive shortly.

Not wasting any time, Surby sent one of his scouts back to inform Blackburn and then hurried into town with his other scout to capture the telegraph station, which he found closed. Convalescents soon began to pour out of the hospital upon seeing the

two scouts. Surby pulled his revolver and told them to remain inside.

Blackburn and his men thundered into town none too soon as a freight train puffing black smoke approached a mile east of town. Most of the blue raiders dismounted, hid their horses, and took cover; pickets moved to secure the different approaches to town. The locomotive, pulling 25 freight cars loaded with ordnance and commissary supplies for Vicksburg, rolled into the station. Blackburn gave a signal, and troopers came out from hiding and seized the train, then quickly hid again as a second train neared town.

The combined freight and passenger train soon slowed down by the depot. Surby climbed aboard the locomotive and pointed his revolver at the engineer, telling him that if he reversed the engine Surby would put a ball through him. The troopers rushed from their hiding place and seized the train's 13 cars. Four of the cars carried ammunition and arms, while six had commissary stores on them and the remaining two contained personal belongings of people leaving Vicksburg.

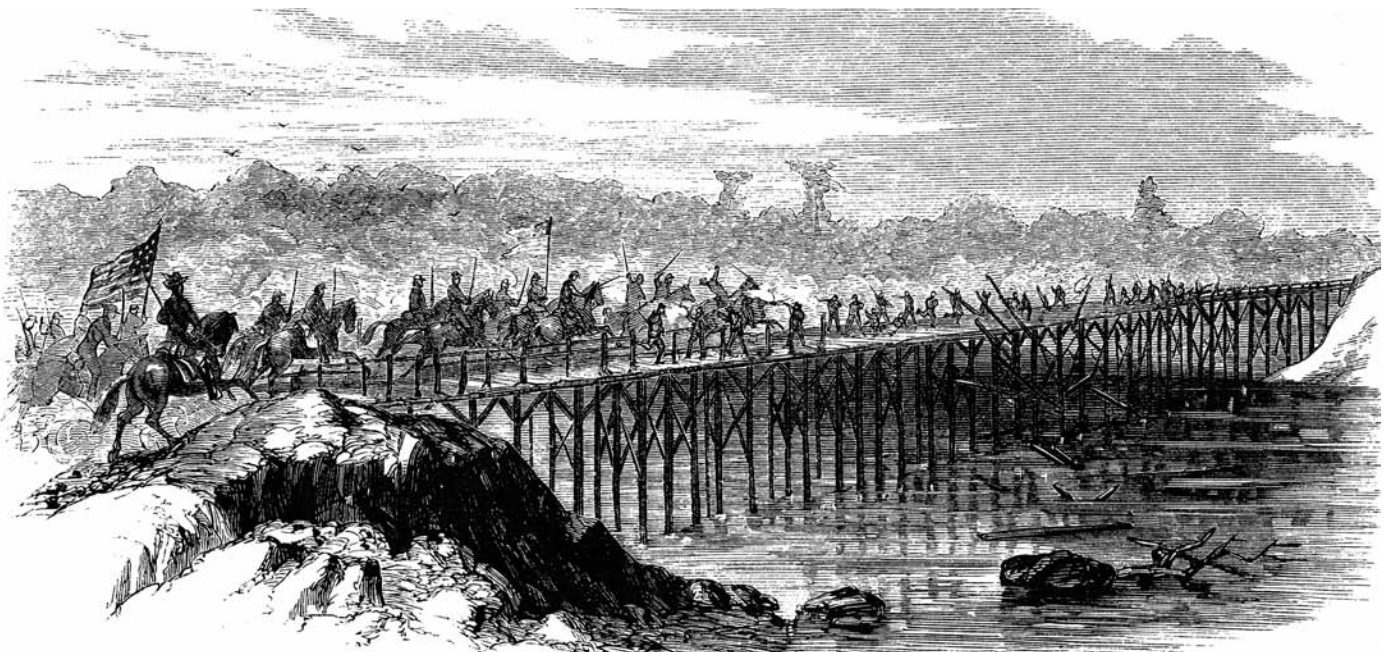
Since both trains carried explosives and

Grierson's Butternut Guerrillas, scouts from the 7th Illinois disguised as Confederate irregulars, charge across the Pearl River bridge east of Vicksburg just before the bridge could be destroyed by locals.

loaded shells aboard them, Blackburn had them moved away from the hospital after the civilians' goods were removed from the two boxcars. They were then set on fire, and the shells and ammunition began to explode. Grierson, who was nearing town, heard the ammunition exploding and charged into Newton with his men, believing Blackburn was under attack. Grierson was relieved to learn the true state of events. Now serious destruction got underway.

The Federal cavalry commander ordered Starr to take two battalions of the 6th Illinois east of town to torch bridges and trestles, cut down telegraph poles, and destroy the lines. Captain Joseph Herring was ordered west of town with a battalion of the 7th Illinois to do the same thing. More destruction took place in town, where a warehouse containing 500 arms and a large number of uniforms was set on fire. Railroad rails were pulled up and thrown on fires of burning crossties and then twisted. The two locomotives exploded.

By 2 PM, the destruction was complete, and Grierson headed south again, knowing the Confederates were looking for him to the north. Before leaving the burning and smoking destruction at Newton Station, Grierson and his officers asked some of the paroled Confederate officers taken at the hospital about various roads to the east, hoping to confuse pursuers.



After a three-hour rest five miles south of Newton Station, the raiders pushed on to Garlandville around dusk. Grierson would later write, "We found the citizens, many of them venerable with age, armed with shotguns and organized to resist our approach." A cavalry charge scattered them, but not before they got off a volley that severely wounded a trooper. The militia was disarmed and released. Grierson reported that the militiamen were apologetic, "acknowledging their mistake, and declared that they had been grossly deceived as to our real character. One volunteered his services as a guide and upon leaving us declared that hereafter his prayers should be for the Union Army."

The Federal column pushed southwest again, the exhausted men slumping in the saddles. Some actually fell asleep as they rode, having not slept more than five hours in the last 72. Finally, they stopped for the night around midnight at a plantation belonging to a Doctor Mackadora, 50 miles from Newton and a couple of miles west of Montrose.

By 8 AM on April 25, the troopers were back in the saddle again, riding west. To get his men safely out of Rebel territory, Grierson intended to head for Grand Gulf along the Mississippi, where he knew Grant was intending to land his army. By this time, hearing of the strike on Newton Station, Pemberton tardily grew concerned over the rail line to Vicksburg and mobilized more units, including Adams' cavalry.

After making only five miles, the Federal column held up at a plantation, resting until 2 PM, while parties were sent out to find fresh horses hidden in the swamps and woods. They continued on, stopping at another plantation for the night. Grierson ordered one of Surby's scouts, Sam Nelson, to create a diversion by riding north to Forest Station on the Southern Railroad and cutting the telegraph line. If possible, Nelson was to torch bridges and trestles as well.

Nelson, however, would not complete his mission; he ran into a Confederate cavalry detachment under Captain R.C. Love. The quick-thinking Nelson told Love that he

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A well-turned-out Mississippi cavalryman, with a tasseled hat and an unsheathed saber, poses for a formal shot in a photographer's studio. Campaigning in the field was far less formal.

was a paroled Confederate and claimed the Yankees numbered 1,800 men and were headed east toward the Mobile & Ohio Railroad. Satisfied with his answers, Love let Nelson go. The raider raced back to warn Grierson, knowing that once the Rebel cavalry reached the main road and saw the Federal cavalry column's tracks, they would determine their true direction.

Forbes' Company B, meanwhile, reached Newton Station, where they learned from prisoners of the Federals intention to head east. It was rumored that that Federals were at the town of Enterprise, where Forbes was now determined to go. Sometime around 1 PM he neared the town only to find it strongly held by the Confederates. In a bold move, Forbes approached the town under a flag of truce and met with Colonel Edwin Goodwin, commander of

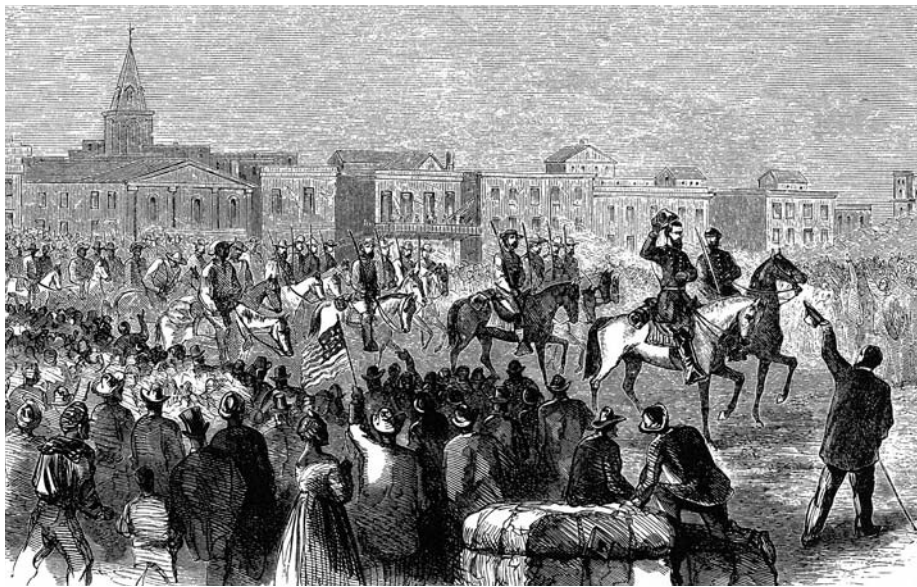
the 35th Alabama Infantry, demanding the surrender of the town on behalf of Grierson. Goodwin asked for an hour to consider the surrender offer, to which Forbes agreed. Forbes did not wait around to hear Goodwin's answer, galloping west as soon as his back was turned.

Grierson was asleep when Nelson arrived in the early morning of April 26 with news of encountering the Rebel cavalry. The camp was soon a bustle of activity as the Federals prepared to pull out; by 6 AM they were riding west, burning bridges behind them. By nightfall they passed through Westville and stopped to rest two miles to the west at a plantation. With them they had the Smith County sheriff, who had been captured by Surby's scouts.

The raiders made 40 miles with 60 more to go before reaching Grand Gulf. Two major rivers lay in their way, and Grierson wanted crossings over them seized and held. He directed the 7th Illinois to seize a bridge over the Strong River, leaving a detachment to hold it. Two other battalions, under Prince, rode on to capture a ferry over the Pearl River that was vital to the Yankees' escape. By the early morning of the 27th, Prince had reached the river's edge only to find the ferry on other side of it.

The ferry came back across the river, its handlers mistaking the Federals for Confederate cavalry. Twenty-four mud-splashed troopers and their mounts boarded the ferry and were taken across the river. Prince had ordered them to capture the Confederate guards on the far side only they discovered there were none. Grierson soon arrived, but it would take eight hours to get his whole command across the river. Meanwhile, Prince and the two battalions under his command, with the Butternut Guerrillas in the advance, headed toward Hazlehurst, where the New Orleans, Jackson & Great Northern Railroad passed through town. Prince sent in two of the Butternut Guerrillas to send a telegram to Pemberton telling him that the Yankees had reached the Pearl River but found the ferry destroyed and were heading northeast.

The message was duly sent by the tele-



Benjamin Grierson leads his men into Baton Rouge on May 2, having covered more than 600 miles in 16 days and destroyed more than 50 miles of railroad and seized 1,000 horses and mules

graph operator, but as the two scouts headed out onto the muddy street they were spotted by the Smith County sheriff, who had escaped during the night. The scouts jumped onto their horses and spurred out of town, rejoining the other scouts a mile to the east. Surby sent back word to Prince about what had happened, then charged back into Hazlehurst, finding the streets deserted.

With rain beginning to pound down yet again, the scouts learned that a train was coming. The rest of Prince's command soon arrived and set up an ambush for the southbound train. Spotting the bluejackets as he rolled into town, the engineer put the engine in reverse and steamed back out of Hazlehurst. Despite this setback, the raiders tore up tracks and torched a good number of boxcars full of commissary stores, ammunition, and shells. An explosion accidentally set some of the buildings on fire, which the Federal troopers tried to help extinguish.

The rest of the brigade soon joined Prince, and they were heading west again by 7 PM. At Gallatin after dispersing the town's defenders, Grierson turned southwest to confuse any pursuit. A small wagon train carrying a 64-pounder Parrot gun was captured and spiked, and 1,400 pounds of gunpowder were destroyed. The raiders

stopped for the night at another plantation to grab some much-needed sleep.

By 7 AM on April 28, the Federal raiders were on the move again intending to push toward Grand Gulf. Along the way Grierson dispatched a battalion of the 7th Illinois under Captain George Trafton to make a lightning strike against the New Orleans & Jackson Railroad at Bahala, creating a diversion while the rest of the column headed to Union Church. At 2 PM, about two miles northwest of their destination, Grierson's men were resting when a Rebel cavalry detachment fired on their pickets. The Federals quickly scrambled after them, pushing the Rebels back through Union Church before halting for the night.

At 3 AM on the 29th, they were joined by Trafton, who brought disturbing news. After creating havoc at Bahala and discovering an empty Confederate camp nearby, Surby and another scout learned that Adams' cavalry was in the area and preparing an ambush on the road between Union Church and Fayette. Grierson, learning that his pursuers were increasing, decided to head back east to the New Orleans & Jackson Railroad. To throw off pursuers, he ordered a battalion of the 6th Illinois to make a demonstration toward Fayette, where Adams had set up his ambush. The

rest of the brigade, soon to be joined by the diversionary battalion, set out in the opposite direction for Brookhaven, overtaking along the way a wagon train hauling several hogsheads of sugar.

At Brookhaven the troopers charged and captured more than 200 Confederate soldiers, whom they immediately paroled. They set on fire a section of trestlework, a small bridge, railroad cars, and the train station itself. By this time Adams had discovered the Yankees weren't coming, but help was on the way. Pemberton had dispatched Colonel Robert Richardson to take command of the 20th Mississippi Infantry, which was now acting as mounted infantry, and chase down Grierson.

Despite some delays, Richardson's force rolled into Hazlehurst around noon and set out for Union Church. After reaching there at 9 PM and learning the Yankees had left that morning, Richardson rested his men and horses for a couple of hours before setting off for Brookhaven. Two other Confederate forces, under Colonel W.R. Miles and Major James De Baun, were dispatched by Gardner from Port Hudson to aid in trapping the Federals.

After breaking camp eight miles from Brookhaven early on the morning of April 30, Grierson's raiders pushed south along the railroad, burning bridges, trestles, railroad cars, and depots at Bogue Chitto and Summit (although the depot in the latter village was not torched since it was too close to private houses). Behind the raiders came Richardson, who linked up with Love's command and hoped with Adams' help to overtake and defeat Grierson.

At Summit, Grierson was informed erroneously that the Rebels had a strong force at Osyka—a rumor spread by the Confederate commander there. Grierson would later write, "Hearing nothing more of our forces at Grand Gulf and not being able to ascertain anything definite as to General Grant's movements or whereabouts, I concluded to make for Baton Rouge." At sunset the Federals rode south out of Summit, following the railroad toward Osyka. Once well clear of the citizens' eyes, Grierson turned his brigade west for Baton Rouge.

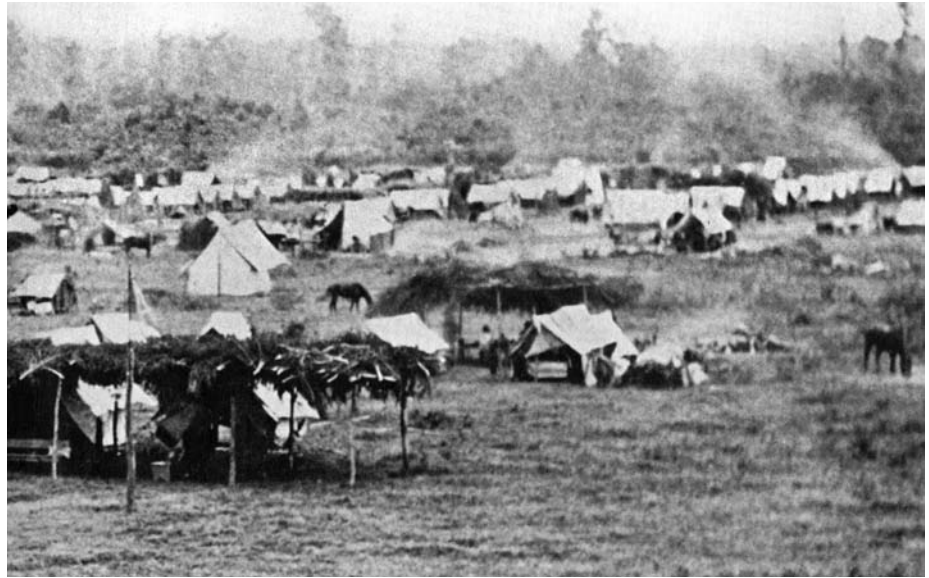
At dawn they stopped for a brief rest at a plantation.

Richardson's and Love's combined force charged into Summit at 3 AM on May 1, only to find that once again the Yankees had cleared out. Although he missed Grierson, Richardson did learn from the townspeople that the Yankees were headed for Osyka. Richardson rode out of Summit intending to get ahead of the raiders and set up an ambush. By 9 AM, his scouts informed him that Grierson was heading west. Richardson had no choice but to rest his worn-out men and horses for three hours before pushing on to Osyka, which he believed Grierson still intended to attack.

Meanwhile, the Federals continued their ride toward Baton Rouge. Ahead lay Wall's Bridge over the Tickfaw River. Surby and his scouts were out front and discovered fresh tracks of enemy cavalry headed from Liberty to Osyka. The tracks belonged to three companies of the 9th Louisiana Partisan Rangers under De Baun, who had stopped around 11:30 AM to rest and eat at Wall's Bridge. A small rear guard half a mile to the rear was soon encountered by Surby's scouts. Although the scouts captured a few of the pickets, a couple of shots rang out as troopers from the 7th Illinois encountered more pickets. A Confederate officer and his orderly, going to investigate, were nabbed by the scouts.

Blackburn arrived on the scene after hearing the shooting and ordered Surby and his scouts to follow him. Believing the Rebels knew of their presence, Blackburn rashly charged across the bridge. "It seemed as though a flame of fire burst forth from every tree," Surby later recorded. Blackburn and his horse went down, while Surby took a bullet in his thigh. A platoon from G Company of the 7th Illinois under Lieutenant William Styles followed across the bridge and was met by a hail of lead that thudded into three men and seven horses. Five raiders were captured, while four others managed to escape.

When Grierson and Prince arrived, they quickly had two companies from the 7th dismount and form into skirmish lines on



The Union camp in Baton Rouge at the close of Grierson's campaign. Note the brush arbors erected around the officers' tents to provide extra cover from the elements.

either side of the bridge. A Woodruff gun was positioned on the road and began hammering the Rebels in the trees across the bridge. A second gun was brought into action. Soon a battalion of the 6th Illinois was ordered to charge across the bridge, while two other battalions forded the river to flank the Confederates and send them fleeing in the direction of Osyka.

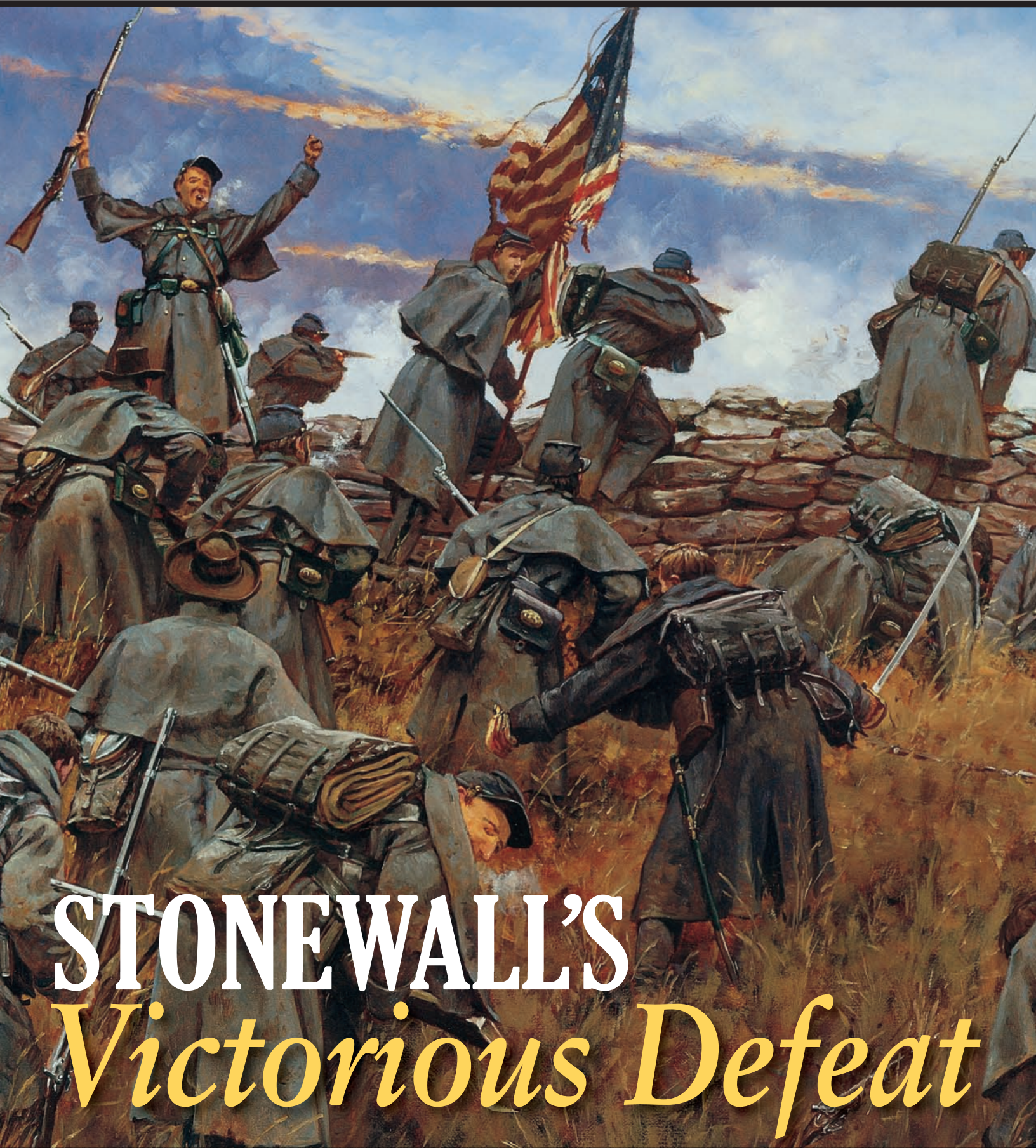
With the short fight over, the wounded were moved to a nearby plantation. Included among them was Surby, who put his own blue uniform back on for safety in case he was captured, and the mortally wounded Blackburn. Volunteering to stay behind with the wounded were surgeon Erastus Yule and two other men. Surby was right to be cautious—he and the others would be taken prisoner by Adams, who along with Richardson would soon give up the chase after being ordered to return to Port Gibson to fight Grant's army, which had finally crossed the Mississippi.

The Federals, meanwhile, pushed on toward Baton Rouge. Samuel Nelson was put in charge of Surby's scouts, who again led the way. Ahead of the raiders lay Williams Bridge over the Amite River. The raiders encountered and drove off more Confederate cavalry, but not before word was sent to Gardner at Port Hudson that the Yankees were heading to Williams

Bridge. A sizable Confederate force was dispatched from Port Hudson to secure the bridge, but they were too late. Pushing through the darkness, Grierson reached the bridge at midnight and continued to ride on through the night for the last river, the Comite, which lay between the Federal cavalry and Baton Rouge.

Grierson easily forded the river and overran a Rebel camp, capturing most of the troops there. The dead-tired Federals, many of them asleep in the saddle, pushed on for another four miles before stopping at a plantation to grab some rest. One of Grierson's orderlies, sound asleep, continued on toward Baton Rouge, where he was awakened by Union pickets. He had quite a story to tell, and soon a patrol was sent out to make contact with Grierson.

A parade was held in Baton Rouge later in the afternoon for the worn-out troopers in honor of their raid. In 16 days they had ridden 600 miles through enemy territory, destroying more than 50 miles of railroad tracks, capturing and paroling 500 prisoners, seizing 1,000 horses and mules, and tying up precious Confederate reserves who were needed at Vicksburg. With the parade over, Grierson and his tired command finally eased out of their saddles and got some well-deserved rest. All in all, it had been quite a trip. □



STONEWALL'S *Victorious Defeat*

▶ In March 1862, Confederate General Stonewall Jackson moved north through the Shenandoah Valley to prevent Union reinforcements from heading to the Virginia Peninsula. At Kernstown, he attacked what he thought was the enemy rear guard. He was wrong.

SUNDAY MORNING, March 23, 1862, was sunny and warm in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. Confederate general Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, a devout Christian, did not like to fight on the Lord's Day. "The enemy could be

destroyed tomorrow," he reasoned. "The peace of the Lord would not be violated." Still, the sun and warmth were a welcome relief for Jackson and his vaunted "foot cavalry," who for several days had been braving high winds, cold temperatures, and hard rain in

endurance-draining marches northward through the Shenandoah Valley. Some days they covered as many as 21 miles.

The destination of their exhausting marches was Winchester, Virginia, where soldiers from the Union Army of the Potomac's V Corps were located, but

BY LAWRENCE WEBER



Exultant Union troops clamber over the much-fought-over stone wall at Kernstown in this painting by Keith Rocco.

Jackson and his men did not make it there. Instead, Jackson halted his men at Kernstown, a few miles south of Winchester. He wanted to rest his men, continue the march the next morning, and engage the enemy on Monday instead of Sunday. Unfortunately for Jackson, things did not work out quite the way he planned.

During the previous few weeks, tensions had been high between Union and Confederate soldiers stationed in the Shenandoah Valley. Jackson's forces, which previously had been camped in Winchester, had been forced to move around a great deal. Union Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks had been following orders from Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, commander of the Army of the Potomac, to disrupt and remove Jackson's forces and secure the Shenandoah Valley for the North. When Banks and the men of V Corps approached Winchester in early March, Jackson had intended to fight to maintain his position there. After all, this was familiar ground for Jackson, and he felt confident that he could be successful there.

Unfortunately for Jackson and his men, badly needed supply wagons with rations and muskets for the soldiers had been taken to the wrong location in Newtown, roughly eight miles south of Winchester, just as Banks's V Corps was closing in on the town. The grim news and poor timing forced Jackson to make a difficult decision. With the arrival of Banks's men, without supplies and rations, and seriously outnumbered, Jackson felt that he had to withdraw from Winchester without a fight. He was distraught at the decision, telling a local clergyman: "This I grieve to do. I must fight," he said, drawing his sword halfway out of its scabbard for emphasis. But he surrendered to the inevitable. "No, it will cost the lives of too many brave men," he said. "I must retreat. Nothing but necessity and the conviction that it will be for the best induces me to leave." Under cover of darkness, Jackson and his men began their retreat from Winchester. A small boy accompanied them part of the way, crying out: "Jackson's gone! Jackson's gone!"

Jackson marched from Winchester to Strasburg, 18 miles away. There, the men set up camp for several days and were able to resupply themselves with a limited amount of essential items. Unfortunately for them, the equipment was poor and the men remained fatigued. At any rate, their stay in Strasburg was short. While Jackson was deciding on his next move, Banks was ordered to detach a division of 9,500 men under the command of Brig. Gen. James Shields to pursue Jackson southward through the valley. As Shields and his men closed in, Jackson recognized the same type of threat he had faced at Winchester and came to the same conclusion. On March 15, Jackson and his men left

► **BREAKING ONE OF HIS OWN RULES, JACKSON DID NOT PERSONALLY RECONNOITER THE FIELD BUT ACCEPTED ASHBY'S REPORT AT FACE VALUE. IT WAS A CRUCIAL MISTAKE.**

Strasburg and continued to search for a more strategically situated piece of ground.

Jackson found a new location at Rude's Hill, three miles south of Mt. Jackson. Rude's Hill was an excellent defensive location, and it was there that he established camp. On March 19, he set up his headquarters near the settlement of Hawkinstown, three miles north of Mt. Jackson. Utilizing the geography allowed Jackson to assess the situation in the valley, which provided him with an opportunity to figure out what to do next. At Rude's Hill, he began to get word of a larger plan that was unfolding regarding the movements of the Army of the

Potomac. McClellan was poised for a major assault on the Confederate capital of Richmond.

McClellan's plan was a sound one. Using the United States Navy in tandem with the Army, McClellan wanted to land on the Virginia Peninsula and march west toward Richmond, with the Navy providing protection of the Army's flanks along the York and James Rivers. If his plan was successful, McClellan would be hailed as the savior of the Union. "The moment for action has arrived, and I know that I can trust in you to save our country," McClellan informed his men.

McClellan felt that Banks and his men had done an excellent job of dislodging the Confederates from the Shenandoah, specifically from the Winchester and the Manassas Gap Railroad areas. Believing that these areas were secure, McClellan instructed Banks to begin moving eastward across the Blue Ridge Mountains to join forces for an all-out assault on Richmond. McClellan ordered Banks to leave several regiments behind to guard the railroad bridge and to provide protection to V Corps. Banks ordered Shields to remain in the valley with several divisions.

According to reports from Jackson's cavalry chief, Colonel Turner Ashby, Banks's entire army was leaving the Valley to join forces with McClellan on the Virginia Peninsula. On Saturday evening, March 22, Ashby and his men began to skirmish with Union forces in the Winchester and Kernstown areas in an attempt to disrupt the movements of V Corps. After receiving the report from Ashby, Jackson felt that together they could attack the reduced Union forces stationed around Winchester and possibly disrupt Banks's march toward McClellan on the peninsula. Unfortunately for Jackson, Ashby's information was incorrect. What Ashby reported as a limited Union force was actually a full division of 9,500 men, intent on securing the Shenandoah and providing cover for Banks's men.

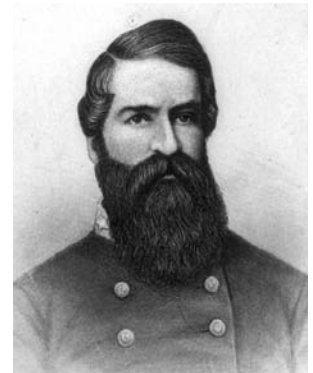
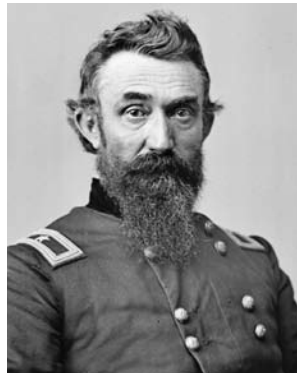
If Banks was successful in linking up with McClellan, they might launch an assault on Richmond that could end the

war. Jackson felt that his only options were to either intercept Banks before he could join forces with McClellan or else cause a major disruption in the Shenandoah Valley that would pull forces away from McClellan, threaten Washington, and stall the campaign on the Virginia Peninsula. For Jackson, it was time to march back to Winchester and fight.

Early in the morning of March 23, Jackson and his men began their march toward the Winchester area. Covering roughly 15 miles through the valley, Jackson halted the advance around 2 PM, one mile outside of Kernstown and three miles south of Winchester. He ordered his men to set up tents. All the regiments except for Colonel John A. Campbell's 48th Virginia, which was the rear guard, arrived within a mile or two of Kernstown that afternoon. Jackson originally had no intention of engaging the enemy on the 23rd, but additional information presented to him during the morning march caused him to reconsider. Ashby passed along word from usually reliable Winchester sources that the Federals had only four regiments left inside the town and that even those forces were planning to withdraw shortly to Harpers Ferry.

Even so, Jackson felt that attacking the enemy immediately was not the most prudent decision; early Monday morning would be better. But when Jackson and his men arrived outside Kernstown, he noticed that their positions were visible to the Union soldiers on the opposite heights and therefore they were already compromised and vulnerable. "I concluded that it would be dangerous to postpone it until the next day, as re-enforcements might be brought up during the night," Jackson reported afterward. "I determined to advance at once."

The Union side of the battle would not, in fact, be commanded by Shields. The day before, Shields had been severely wounded in a skirmish with Ashby's men when an artillery shell exploded nearby and a fragment struck Shields in the upper arm, breaking the bone. The wound was severe enough to cause Shields to leave the field. Senior regimental officer Colonel Nathan Kimball, an Indiana physician, took com-

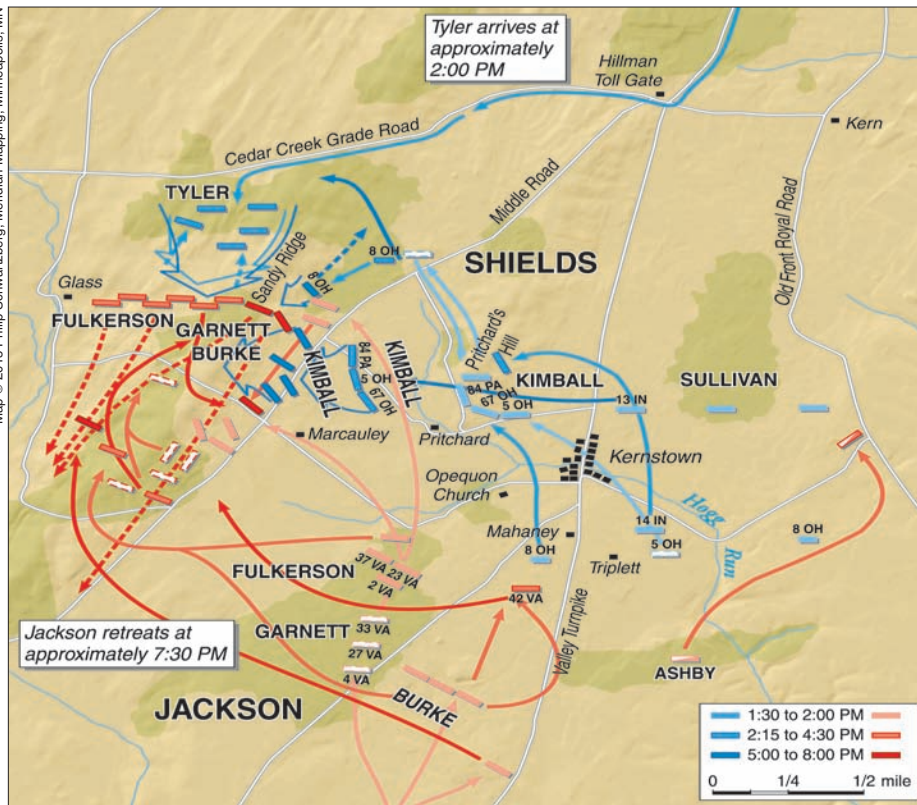


ABOVE: Nathan Kimball, Richard Garnett, Turner Ashby, left to right. **TOP:** A member of the Pennsylvania Light Artillery stands watch over the battery, two weeks before Kernstown. Sketch by Alfred Waud.

mand of the division. Kimball, like Shields, was an experienced Mexican War veteran, a hero of the Battle of Buena Vista, but he would be the third divisional commander in three weeks. (The original commander, Brig. Gen. Frederick Lander, had died of illness on March 2.) It was unclear whether he could handle his men competently.

Early in the morning of the 23rd, Ashby's forces renewed the attack,

advancing from Kernstown and occupying a position with their artillery batteries on the heights to the right of the Valley Turnpike leading into Winchester. Ashby attempted to turn the Union flank, but Kimball proved up to the task of command, directing the 8th and 67th Ohio Regiments to meet the Confederates head-on. His men held strong, driving the Southern forces back through Kernstown



Pritchard's Hill, center, held a commanding view of the battlefield. From there Union forces were able to mount a successful flank attack. OPPOSITE: Union Brigadier General James Shields is wounded by an exploding shell during skirmishing one day before Kernstown. Currier & Ives, 1862.

and uncovering the only high ground in the area, a small knoll called Pritchard's Hill. Immediately realizing the hill's importance, Kimball stationed the 1st Brigade and two batteries of artillery on the crest and moved another brigade to the left of the hill. A third brigade was held in reserve in the rear, out of sight of the approaching Southerners.

Jackson arrived at Kernstown in mid-afternoon and conferred with Ashby, who continued to assure him that only a small Union force held Pritchard's Hill. Breaking one of his own rules, Jackson did not personally reconnoiter the field but accepted Ashby's report at face value. It was a crucial mistake. Around 4 PM, Jackson unleashed an attack on the Union left, whose commanding feature, the six-mile-long Sandy Ridge, was covered by dense forest and fronted by a shallow stream, Hogg Run. Jackson sent some of Ashby's men forward to skirmish along the stream while the rest of the cavalry and Jackson's three infantry

brigades wheeled left and headed for the woods flanking Pritchard's Hill.

The Confederate attack began to unravel from the start. Jackson's lead brigade, commanded by Colonel Samuel V. Fulkerson, ran into heavy Union artillery fire and took shelter—ironically—behind a stone wall. There, Jackson reported, his men “opened a destructive fire which drove back the Northern forces in great disorder after sustaining a heavy loss, and leaving the colors of one of their regiments upon the field.” It should have been enough to drive away a Union brigade. The only problem was that there were three Union brigades in the vicinity, and one of them, commanded by Ohio-born Colonel Erasmus B. Tyler, moved up to support their embattled comrades.

In the meantime, confusion reigned on the Confederate side. Jackson's second in command, Brig. Gen. Richard Garnett, was commanding the famed Stonewall Brigade, which was supposed to be kept in

reserve while Fulkerson cleared out the supposedly small enemy force. Jackson had not bothered to brief Garnett on his overall battle plan, perhaps expecting to make short work of the Federals, and Garnett accordingly was holding to a slower pace in the rear of the assault. Frustrated by what he considered the tardy progress of his namesake brigade, Jackson ordered one of the regiments to hurry to Fulkerson's support. While Garnett went to make the dispositions, Jackson abruptly ordered the entire brigade forward.

Subordinate officers, unsure of whether to obey Jackson or Garnett, dawdled. Men wandered about desultorily while their officers sent back aides to clarify their instructions. During the interval, Jackson thought that his men were actually breaking through the Union lines and carrying the field. Suddenly, a massive explosion occurred to Jackson's left, and Federal artillery came pounding into the center and left of Jackson's lines. Jackson knew that he was in trouble. Attempting to assess the trouble, he sent a member of his staff, Sandie Pendleton, to find out where the extra Union artillery was coming from. Pendleton reported back to Jackson that the enemy did not have four regiments on hand, but at least three times that number. Jackson responded, “Say nothing about it, but we are in for it.”

Kimball described the surprise artillery attack from the Union point of view: “At this juncture I ordered the Third Brigade, Colonel E.B. Tyler, Seventh Ohio, commanding, composed of the Seventh and Twenty-ninth Ohio, First Virginia, Seventh Indiana, and One hundred and tenth Pennsylvania, to move to the right to gain the flank of the enemy, and charge them through the wood to their batteries posted on the hill. They moved forward steadily and gallantly, opening a galling fire on the enemy's infantry. The right wing of the Eighth Ohio, the Fourteenth and Thirteenth Indiana Regiments, Sixty-seventh Ohio, Eighty-fourth Pennsylvania, and Fifth Ohio, were sent forward to support Tyler's brigade, each one in its turn moving gallantly forward, sustaining a heavy

fire from both the enemy's batteries and musketry. Soon all of the regiments above named were pouring forth a well-directed fire, which was promptly answered by the enemy, and after a hotly contested action of two hours, just as night closed in, the enemy gave way and were soon completely routed, leaving their dead and wounded on the field, together with two pieces of artillery and four caissons."

In the center of the storm, the men of the Stonewall Brigade found themselves literally engaged in the fight of their lives. Taking positions to the right of Fulkerson's men at the stone wall, Garnett's brigade helped turn back repeated Union attacks—only to run out of ammunition as the afternoon waned. Confederates began drifting rearward in a growing stream. Jackson, furious, stopped one soldier and demanded to know why he was falling back. When the soldier replied that he had run out of ammunition, the general shouted, "Then go back and give them the bayonet!" Garnett, closer to the action at the front, gave the order to fall back. "Had I not done so," he said later, "we would have run imminent risk of being routed by superiority of numbers, which would have resulted probably in the loss of part of our artillery and also endangered our transportation." At 6:30 PM, he ordered the brigade to withdraw. Fulkerson's men soon followed suit.

Jackson angrily made his way to the front, where he encountered Garnett shouting at his men to make an orderly retreat. "Why have you not rallied your men?" Jackson demanded. "Halt and rally!" Garnett tried to explain the situation, but Jackson turned away and grabbed a frightened drummer boy by the shoulder. "Beat the rally!" he screamed. "Beat the rally!"

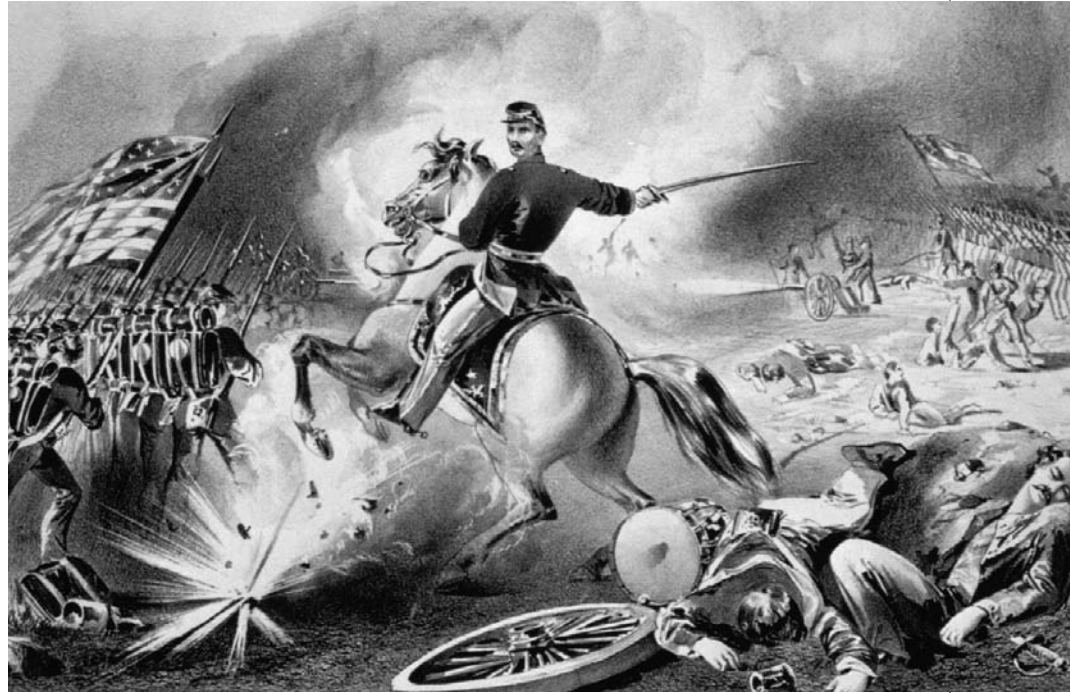
Jackson surveyed the field and felt that it was not time yet to fall back into safer positions. "Though our troops were fighting under great disadvantages," he said later, "I regret that General Garnett should have given the order to fall back, as otherwise the enemy's advance would at least have been retarded, and the remaining part

of my infantry reserve have had a better opportunity for coming up and taking part in the engagement if the enemy continued to press forward."

Garnett finally located Colonel William Harman of the 5th Virginia and directed him to place the regiment in a defensive position on the crest of a small hill while the rest of the Confederates withdrew. Thanks in large part to the disarray of the on-charging Union troops and the

the Confederates suffered 718 losses, including 263 captured. Among the latter was one of Jackson's own kinsmen: Lieutenant George G. Junkin, a cousin of the general's first wife, Ellie. Jackson, dismounting beside a campfire alongside the road, stood looking morosely into the flames. A Southern cavalryman, with ill-advised humor, remarked to the general that "the Yankees don't seem willing to quit Winchester, sir. It was reported that they

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"I AM WELL SATISFIED WITH THE RESULT. TIME HAS SHOWN THAT WHILE THE FIELD IS IN POSSESSION OF THE ENEMY, THE MOST ESSENTIAL FRUITS OF THE BATTLE ARE OURS."

approaching darkness, Harman's men, joined by elements of the 42nd Virginia, managed to stabilize the line. As night fell, the infantry fell back behind the screening cavalry and headed south along the Valley Turnpike toward Bartonsville.

By 8 PM, the Battle of Kernstown was over. Of the 12,300 men engaged in the struggle, 1,308 were casualties. On the Union side there were 590 casualties, while

were retreating, but I guess they're retreating after us." Jackson's eyes flashed. "I think I may say I am satisfied, sir," he snapped.

In the cold light of day, Jackson would find himself a good deal less satisfied.

Clearly, Ashby's faulty report on the enemy strength at Winchester was a major contributing factor in the defeat. Jackson's major mistake in sending in his reserves during the midpoint of the battle was



Both: Library of Congress

based in large part on Ashby's badly underestimated numbers. For his part, Ashby admitted his erroneous intelligence in his official report. "Having followed the enemy in his hasty retreat from Strasburg on Saturday evening," he wrote, "I came upon the forces remaining in Winchester within a mile of that place and became satisfied that he had but four regiments, and learned that they had orders to march in the direction of Harpers Ferry."

Although the bad information may have caused Jackson's defeat, he was initially magnanimous, praising Ashby in his official report of the battle: "During the engagement Colonel Ashby, with a portion of his command, including Chew's battery, which rendered valuable service, remained on our right, and not only protected our rear in the vicinity of the Valley turnpike, but also served to threaten

the enemy's front and left. Colonel Ashby fully sustained his deservedly high reputation by the able manner in which he discharged the important trust confided to him." Jackson also praised the ladies of Winchester, who tended to the injured and sick, and the men of Winchester who buried the dead.

The general was not so accommodating to Garnett. Two weeks after the battle, Jackson relieved Garnett of command and placed him under arrest pending a court-martial for his unauthorized retreat at Kernstown. "I regard Gen. Garnett as so incompetent a brigade commander," Jackson wrote, "that, instead of building up a brigade, a good one, if turned over to him, would actually deteriorate under his command."

Garnett, furious and embarrassed, demanded an immediate trial. The five reg-

imental colonels in the Stonewall Brigade rallied to his defense, saying Garnett's actions had been justified. Jackson's loyal aide, Sandie Pendleton, noted in a letter home to his mother that "the brigade is in a very loud humor at [Garnett's arrest] for he was a pleasant man and exceedingly popular." But Pendleton defended Jackson's decision, adding, "The arrest, however, was necessary, and I now see why Napoleon considered a blunder worse than a fault. Genl. G's fault was a blunder."

In the end, the court-martial was delayed, then adjourned without a verdict. Garnett returned to the army as a brigadier in Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's I Corps and was later killed commanding his brigade during Pickett's Charge at the Battle of Gettysburg. Too sick to walk that day, Garnett had ridden a horse directly up to the Union lines before being fatally wounded. Many



ABOVE: Combat artist Alfred Waud's eyewitness sketch of the Union attack on the stone wall at Kernstown was published three weeks later in *Harper's Weekly*. **OPPOSITE:** Another northern artist, Edwin Forbes, made this vivid drawing of ragtag Confederate prisoners after Kernstown. A total of 263 Confederates were captured at the battle.



felt that his actions at Gettysburg were a pointed attempt to regain the reputation he had lost at Kernstown.

Kernstown remained Stonewall Jackson's only major tactical defeat during the war. But while the Union succeeded in forcing Jackson's men off the field and into retreat the following day, Jackson in the end accomplished most of his original objectives, albeit inadvertently. Abraham Lincoln, upon learning of the surprising battle in the Shenandoah, became overly concerned about the potential threat to Washington. He ordered two full divisions from Banks's corps back into the valley and recalled Brig. Gen. Irvin McDowell's

I Corps to Washington as well, drawing at least 50,000 valuable men away from McClellan's upcoming Peninsula Campaign. The absence of these men may well have been a determining factor in McClellan's eventual defeat. In this way, at least, Kernstown could be considered a strategic victory for Jackson and the Confederates, despite the fact they had been driven from the field.

That was the position Jackson took as well. In an after-action report filed during the second week of April, he maintained: "Though Winchester was not recovered, yet the more important object, for the present, that of calling back troops that

were leaving the valley, and thus preventing a junction of Banks' command with other forces was accomplished, in addition to his heavy loss in killed and wounded." A few days later, Jackson wrote to his wife, Anna: "I am well satisfied with the result. Time has shown that while the field is in possession of the enemy, the most essential fruits of the battle are ours. For this and all our Heavenly Father's blessings, I wish I could be ten thousand times more thankful."

Jackson spent the remaining months of spring engaged in his Valley Campaign constantly disrupting Union forces and preventing them from reinforcing McClellan. The Battles of McDowell, Front

Royal, First Winchester, Cross Keys, and Port Republic were all victories for Jackson. By the time the Battle of Port Republic was over in early June 1862, Jackson was able to join General Robert E. Lee for the Seven Days' Battles, where Lee successfully defeated McClellan and forced him to retreat back to the Virginia Peninsula, thus ending the Peninsula Campaign. As one modern historian has noted: "Had Jackson won the Battle of Kernstown, he could scarcely have achieved a more favorable result. History can provide few examples of a defeat that so favored the defeated. Jackson's lucky star had begun its ascendancy." □

WILLIAM LYTLE

Continued from page 79

While the wave of battle swept northward from later-named Lytle Hill and the remnants of the Union army came to rest a mile away on another ravine-riddled prominence called Snodgrass Hill, a number of Confederate officers who had known Lytle before the war stopped to pay their respects to the fallen general. First to arrive was Anderson, who knelt beside his old friend and carefully removed a ring, several photographs, and a lock of hair, intending to send them through the lines to Lytle's family. Anderson posted an honor guard around the body and ran to catch up to his brigade. Major William Owen, a friend of Lytle's from childhood, arrived next. He was looking down at Lytle when Brig. Gen. William Preston rode up and asked, "What have you here?" "General Lytle of Cincinnati," said Owen. "Ah! General Lytle, the

LEFT: Keith Rocco's drawing of Lytle's death at Chickamauga. His last words were, "Brave boys, brave boys."
BELOW: Lytle's mortuary monument at Chickamauga was restored in 2013 after decades of disrepair. (Vandals had stolen the original cannonballs.)



son of my old friend, Bob Lytle," said Preston, immediately dismounting to pay his respects. "I am sorry it is so."

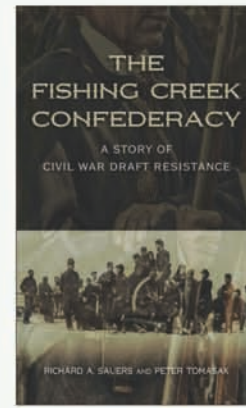
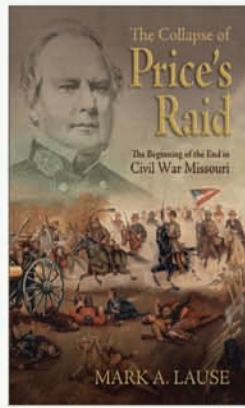
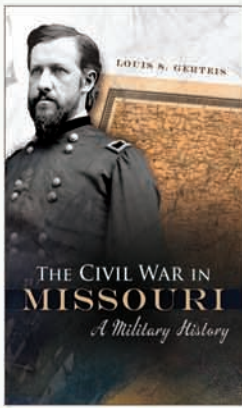
Confederate surgeon E.W. Thomasson, who had served with Lytle in the Mexican War, came onto the scene a few minutes later. Lytle, he said, was "as good a man as ever lived, even if he did have on Yankee clothes." Thomasson commandeered an ambulance to take Lytle's body to the rear. A dying Confederate captain, James Deas Nott of the 22nd Alabama—the



same regiment that had killed Lytle—was asked if he minded sharing his ambulance with the slain Union general. Nott had no objection. By the time the ambulance reached a makeshift field hospital behind the lines, both men were dead. Later that night they were buried side by side in hastily dug graves.

A few days later, Lytle's body was disinterred and returned through the lines under a flag of truce by members of his first regiment, the 10th Ohio. After a brief memorial service in camp, Lytle's flag-draped casket was shipped back to Cincinnati by boat. On October 22, after lying in state for one day in the city courthouse, where his former fiancée Sed Doremus kept an all-

night vigil beside his casket, Lytle was reburied at Spring Grove Cemetery. The largest crowd ever to attend such a local event watched as the funeral procession wound its way to the cemetery from Christ Episcopal Church. Lytle's old orderly, Joseph Guthrie, led the general's riderless horse, with Lytle's boots reversed in the stirrups. Future president James A. Garfield was one of the pallbearers. The procession dispersed at Central and Freeman Avenues, and a carriage containing Lytle's immediate family—sisters Josephine and Lily and their husbands—said a last goodbye in the early twilight. It rained on their brother's newly turned grave—a symbolic touch the poet-general would have approved. □



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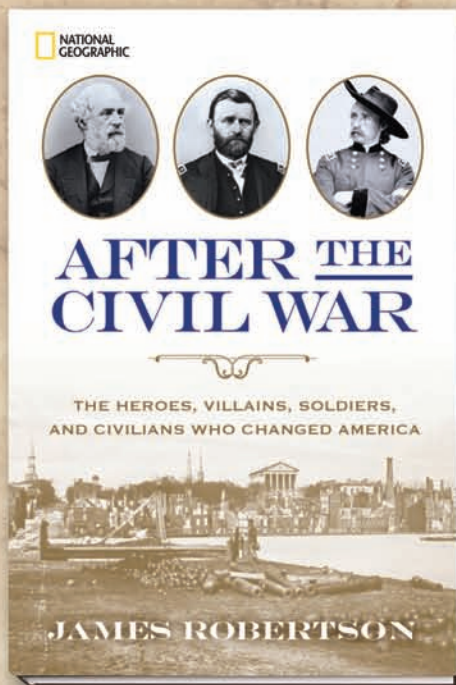
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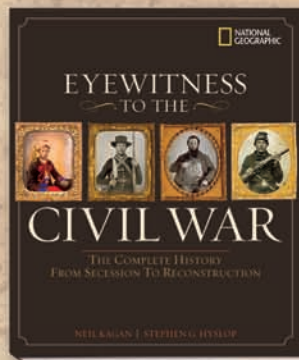


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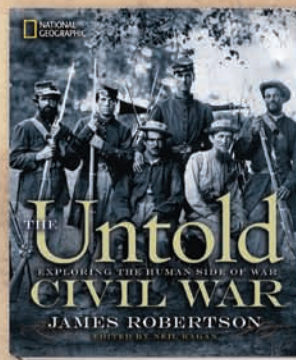
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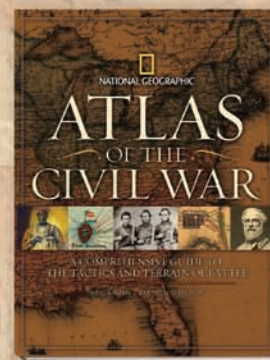
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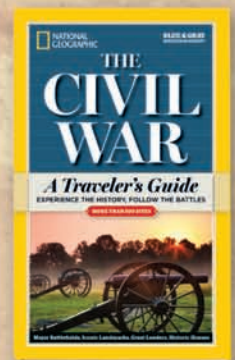
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