

THE ANTIETAM JOURNAL

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A Publication of the Antietam Institute



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Kevin R. Pawlak
Editor

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The Antietam Journal is a biannual publication of the latest research, interpretation, and stories of the Maryland Campaign of September 1862 that highlights the participants involved—soldier and civilian—and the lasting impact of the campaign on American history.

The Antietam Institute was established in 2021 as a member-based, educational, and philanthropic 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Institute educates the public on the central role of the Maryland Campaign of 1862 and Battle of Antietam as a major turning point of the Civil War that directly resulted in the issuance of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Antietam Institute sponsored conferences, symposiums, publications, and leadership forums facilitate collaborative learning and knowledge exchange, create unique opportunities for discovery and inspire further historical research.

Manuscript Submissions

Send manuscript submissions to the editor at editor2@antietaminstitute.org. Feature articles should not exceed 10,000 words in length (including footnotes).

Cover image: Courtesy of Sharon Murray.

Table of Contents

The Editor’s Column

Kevin R. Pawlak 6

Antietam Institute Announcements 9

Feature Articles

Davis’s “Valiant Coup”: Breaking the Union Cavalry Out of Harpers Ferry,
September 14, 1862

Sharon A. Murray 10

Ezra Carman’s Missing Fight

Bradley M. Gottfried 32

“The Bravest of the Brave...Under So Much Dirt”: Floridians in the Maryland
Campaign

Phillip S. Greenwalt 44

In Their Own Words

John Delaney to John Gould, March 27, 1891

Darin Wipperman 54

Antietam Artifacts

Mansfield’s Hat for a Sword: The Collection of Capt. George Nye, 10th
Maine Infantry

Nicholas P. Picerno 58

In Antietam’s Footsteps

Goodbye Letters from the Battlefield

J.O. Smith 63

Institute Interview

Sitting Down with Dr. Gordon Dammann

Laura Marfut 68

Book Review 75

16th Connecticut: A Valediction	
Judi McHugh 78
Contributor Biographies 79
Antietam Institute Membership Honor Roll .	. 80

The Editor's Column

In the aftermath of the Battle of Antietam, a newspaper correspondent traveling with the Army of the Potomac took in the “ghastly spectacle” of the battlefield, particularly at the Bloody Lane. This correspondent saw war’s destruction in all its might before the dead were buried and the detritus of war removed or scavenged. Overlooking the Bloody Lane, he noted how “the Confederates had gone down as the grass falls before the scythe. They were lying in rows like the ties of a railroad, in heaps, like cord-wood mingled with the splintered and shattered fence rails. Words are inadequate to portray the scene.”¹ Words are a correspondent’s greatest instrument, yet even he was at a loss for them when he tried to describe the aftermath of the bloodiest single day in American history.

“Words are inadequate to portray the scene.” This sentence has always stuck with me. There have been millions of tours, talks, books, articles, and more created about the Battle of Antietam. Yet none of us will be able to ever fully grasp what happened outside Sharpsburg, Maryland, on September 17, 1862, and the important events that occurred as a result of the Maryland Campaign. This correspondent could not comprehend the destruction just days after the battle, so how can we do so 160 years later?

The best we can do is bring the countless stories, details, and analysis of the Maryland Campaign to light and expose them to as many people as possible. That, in essence, is the purpose of *The Antietam Journal*, putting words and stories into print for us to learn and share with others so that they do not fade away, but instead live on.

This second volume contains a variety of stories and analysis about the events of September 1862 in Maryland, many of them lesser-known ones that are nonetheless important.

Sharon A. Murray, whose excellent photographs have graced the covers of both editions of *The Antietam Journal* thus far, shares her research into the life of Benjamin Franklin “Grimes” Davis, the man best associated with the Federal cavalry’s escape from Harpers Ferry on the night of September 14, 1862. Murray ties the ride of the Union horsemen into the larger context of the campaign and provides new accounts of this famed exploit from the Confederate perspective.

Ezra Carman wrote the landmark history of the Maryland Campaign and the Battle of Antietam. Unfortunately, seven pages of his manuscript detailing the charge of Van Manning’s brigade out of the West Woods on the morning of September 17 are mysteriously missing. Bradley M. Gottfried steps into Carman’s big shoes to fill in this hole about an action at the Battle of Antietam that is rarely explored.

¹ Quoted in “Fourth North Carolina,” *Daily Charlotte Observer*, March 3, 1895.

Going from lesser-known actions to lesser-known units, Phillip S. Greenwalt writes about the role that three Florida regiments played in the Maryland Campaign, specifically in the fight for the Bloody Lane. Perhaps that newspaper correspondent looked over some of the casualties that the Sunshine State suffered that bloody day.

Next, Darin Wiperman transcribes a long letter found in the files of Antietam veteran John Mead Gould. John Delaney of the 107th Pennsylvania Infantry described to Gould in great detail his memories of Antietam as Gould tried to piece together the actions around the East Woods.

Mostly, Gould sought to determine who shot the commanding general of his Twelfth Corps, Brig. Gen. Joseph Mansfield, on the morning of September 17. Like Carman, Gould solicited countless letters and interviews from his fellow Antietam veterans to determine the facts. Gould was also a historian of the regiment he fought with at Antietam—the 10th Maine Infantry. Nicholas P. Picerno is the modern equivalent of Gould for that regiment. He shares with us an item from his collection in the “Antietam Artifacts” section of the journal related to Mansfield’s mortal wounding in the East Woods.

Not lost in any of these articles are the personal stories of soldiers that link thousands of visitors to Antietam’s landscape each year. J.O. Smith shares the sad tales of three men who were mortally wounded at Antietam but had a chance to write one last note to their loved ones before succumbing to their wounds. A brief tour will take you to the places where these “goodbye letters” were composed.

The doctors and surgeons of both armies became increasingly busy as the casualties mounted on September 17. Gordon Dammann has spent a significant part of his life collecting and interpreting Antietam’s medical story. Editor Laura Marfut sat down with Dammann to talk about his collection, his involvement with the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, and his future projects.

The Maryland Campaign’s story is naturally intertwined with the state in which it was fought. Michael Hill took time to read and review a new book published by Louisiana State University Press that examines the many facets of wartime Maryland.

Lastly, like that war correspondent, poet Judi McHugh puts into words the feeling of the green soldiers of the 16th Connecticut Infantry as they went into battle for the first time, facing some of the best troops of the Army of Northern Virginia.

I would be remiss if I did not introduce the new cartographer of *The Antietam Journal*, Aaron Holley. He has been a pleasure to work with and is the producer of the excellent maps contained herein. Aaron’s map work will make Antietam much easier to understand and will no doubt lead to a better understanding of Antietam’s bloody landscape.

Our second volume features many new authors, and I know there are more out there with Vol. II of *The Antietam Journal* in their hands. If you have a

story to share, consider publishing it with us in a future issue of the journal. Submissions can be sent to editor2@antietaminstitute.org. Or, just let us know your thoughts about *The Antietam Journal* and its contents. After all, it is our words that are the best tool for keeping the story of Antietam alive 160 years later.

Kevin R. Pawlak

Antietam Institute Announcements

2022 Spring Symposium: Antietam 160th: Evolution of the Scholarship, Changing Perceptions, and Park History

The Antietam Institute is pleased to announce our first annual Spring Symposium, slated for April 23, 2022. Marking the 160th anniversary of the 1862 Maryland Campaign, the symposium will focus on the evolving scholarship, interpretation and understanding of the campaign over the last 160 years.

We are excited to welcome these five dynamic speakers: Steven Stotelmyer, Dr. Emilie Amt, Keith Snyder, Scott Hartwig, and Dr. Tom Clemens. Steve will discuss the changing historiography of George McClellan; Emilie will cover the evolving interfaces of slavery, emancipation, and the battle; Keith will explain the evolution of the battlefield itself; Scott will reflect on his perspectives on Antietam after a decades-long deep dive into the campaign; Tom will wrap up the speakers' portion of the symposium by looking back on the contributions of Ezra Carman and John Gould. Our symposium concludes with a panel comprised of our speakers who look forward to further free-wheeling conversations on these issues and discussions with our audience.

There will be ample opportunities for interactions with the speakers, scholars/experts, and other participants during the presentations, lunch, and during the panel discussion. A continental breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Space is limited, so register early. Registration began on October 15, 2021 and continues until March 23, 2022.

Antietam Institute Historical Research Center

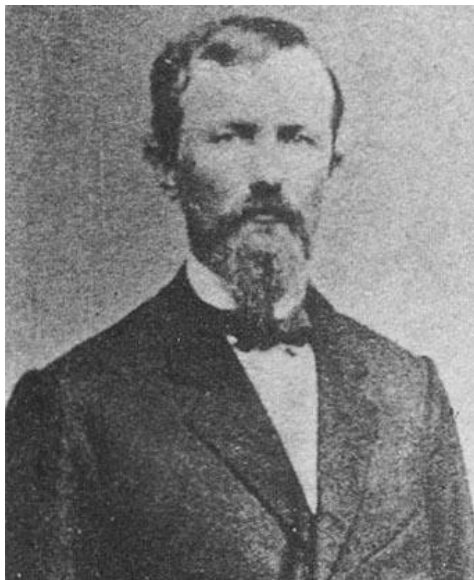
We live in a digital age with thousands of sources at our fingertips. Unfortunately, there is rarely one place to go to find everything we are looking for. The Antietam Institute's website is now home to the Historic Research Center, a repository to collect and share digital copies of historical and contemporary material about the Battle of Antietam and the related Maryland Campaign.

The Historical Research Center has sources grouped into three categories: unit histories, images, and documents. This is a living resource that will continue to have sources added to it, so continue to visit the page to find more resources. Visit <https://antietaminstitute.org/hrc/s/HRC/page/welcome> to find these valuable resources or to submit some of your own items for inclusion in the Historical Research Center.

For more information about both announcements, visit us online at [www. antietaminstitute.org](http://www.antietaminstitute.org)

Davis's "Valiant Coup": Breaking the Union Cavalry Out of Harpers Ferry

by Sharon A. Murray



*Colonel Benjamin Franklin "Grimes" Davis
(Library of Congress)*

Benjamin Franklin Davis was born on October 24, 1831 in Perry County, Alabama. He was the eldest of six sons.² Benjamin's military career began in his teens when he enlisted as a private in Capt. George E. Stewart's Company E, of Lt. Col. James Patton Anderson's First Battalion of Mississippi Rifles on October 20, 1847, for the duration of the Mexican War. As of the date of his enlistment, young Davis was four days short of his sixteenth birthday. He was mustered in on December 23, 1847, probably at Camp McClung, in Vicksburg. The battalion spent time garrisoning the Mexican port of Tampico before hostilities ceased in September 1847 and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo brought the war to an end

in February 1848. Anderson's Battalion mustered out at Vicksburg on June 28, 1848. Davis returned to Aberdeen with an interest in joining the military.³

Davis received a conditional appointment to the United States Military Academy on April 3, 1850, entering with the class due to graduate in 1854. Of the 111 who received appointments, 46 ultimately graduated, including Benjamin, who ranked 32nd. While his academic record was not spectacular, and his conduct record reduced his overall class standing as he accumulated 671

² Letters Received by the Adjutant General, 1822-1860, Benjamin F. Davis, <https://www.fold3.com/image/294318429>; Louisiana Wills and Probate Records, 1756-1984: Union, Succession Record, Volume A and C, 1839-1847, Benjamin E. Davis, https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/tree/157816700/person/322071946456/media/aea02f7e-c472-47d8-83c8-6e9ff9ed28ce?_phsrc=tqP1&_phstart=successSource.

³ Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served in the Mexican War in Organizations from the State of Mississippi, <https://www.fold3.com/image/272439173>; James W. Raab, *J. Patton Anderson, Confederate General, A Biography* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2004) 7.

demerits in his four years at the academy, he was still appointed one of four Captains of Cadets his first year along with John B. Villepigue, James E. B. (J.E.B.) Stuart and Charles N. Turnbull. As the fourth captain, Davis commanded Company D.⁴

Upon graduation on June 16, 1854, Benjamin Davis, who had been nicknamed “Grimes” by his fellow cadets, was commissioned a brevet second lieutenant in the 5th U. S. Infantry. He served with the 5th until March 1855 when he transferred to the 1st U. S. Dragoons. Davis was on active duty with the dragoons in New Mexico, Arizona, and California between January 1856 and November 1, 1861, rising from brevet second lieutenant to captain by July 30, 1861. On August 19, 1861 Captain Davis was commissioned lieutenant colonel of the 1st California Volunteer Cavalry Battalion. He mustered in and trained the volunteers until resigning on November 1, 1861 to return east with his regular army regiment, the 1st U. S. Cavalry.⁵

The 1st U. S. Cavalry, including Captain Davis, who commanded Company K, trained at Camp Sprague near Washington D.C., under Brig. Gen. Philip St. George Cooke, from late 1861 until March 1862, when they left the capital to join the Army of the Potomac in the field. In late March, they boarded a schooner at Alexandria, and headed to Hampton, Virginia, disembarking on April 2. By early May the Army of the Potomac had advanced up the peninsula to within six miles of the Confederate defensive works at Yorktown. The Rebels evacuated their fortifications on the evening of May 3. On May 4, Brig. Gen. George Stoneman’s cavalry had the advance and skirmished with their Confederate counterparts for most of the day. Late in the day, Grimes Davis led a squadron of 60 men from Companies K and I, tasked with protecting Capt. Horatio G. Gibson’s artillery battery and acting as the rear guard for the retiring United States forces. While Davis’s command was delayed in the woods, “assisting our wounded to the rear,” he was “charged by a large body of the enemy’s cavalry”. He “wheeled [his two companies] about by fours...and charged the enemy, repulsing them handsomely” and with great gallantry drove “them back in confusion, protecting the battery and the wounded.” “In this

4 *Official Register of the Officers and Cadets of the United States Military Academy West Point, New York*, June 1854, digital-library.usma.edu; Register of Cadet Delinquencies, Benjamin F. Davis, Mississippi; Orders, Sept. 1842-Aug. 1899, (Record Group 404, USMA Special Collections), 68.

5 U.S., Returns from Military Posts, 1806-1916, Texas, Fort Ringgold, December 1854-June 1855, <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1571/>; Letters Received by the Adjutant General, 1822-1860, <https://www.fold3.com/browse/h99iFMrKE>; Francis B. Heitman, *Historic Register and Dictionary of the United States Army, from its Organization, September 29, 1789 to March 2, 1903*, vol. 1, pt. 2, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 357; Compiled Service Records, California, First Cavalry, Benjamin F. Davis, <https://www.fold3.com/image/313499873>. In August 1861 the army designated all the mounted units as cavalry. The 1st U.S. Dragoons became the 1st U.S. Cavalry. The original 1st U.S. Cavalry became the 4th U.S. Cavalry.

charge a regimental standard, (belonging to the 4th Virginia Cavalry) was captured and a captain [William G. Conner] taken prisoner.” Davis, who lost 13 men in the fray, was commended by Gibson, Cooke and Stoneman in their official reports.⁶

Captain Davis and the rest of the 1st U.S. Cavalry spent the remainder of May and part of June moving up the peninsula toward Richmond. It is unclear if he was involved in the June 13-15 pursuit of Brig. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart’s forces in his first ride around Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan’s army. By the middle of June, if not earlier, efforts were underway to obtain a colonel’s commission for the young officer with the 8th New York Volunteer Cavalry Regiment. While this activity was occurring, Davis was placed on sick leave on June 25. He wound up at the Willard Hotel “confined to his bed with a febrile attack.” In the interim he was commissioned colonel of the 8th New York. Grimes Davis was mustered in on July 11, 1862, in Baltimore with his rank to date from June 25, 1862. The freshly minted colonel joined his new command on July 13, at Relay House, Maryland.⁷

Upon meeting the 8th New York at Relay House, Davis set about training his new command, which prior to his arrival had been dismounted, serving as infantry since their mustering in on November 30, 1861. Five companies of the regiment received horses on July 6. A second allotment was delivered on July 12. Henry Norton noted, “[we] drilled our horses every day until ordered to Harpers Ferry. We had our horses in good shape and ready for business. In a short time after we were mounted and clothed...you would not have known that it was the same regiment that had been straggling in bands across the country. The regiment was so well drilled with the saber that...we were as good a regiment as any of the regulars.”⁸

On August 28, 1862, Colonel Davis was ordered by Maj. Gen. John E. Wool, commander of the Eighth Army Corps to have his regiment ready to start for Harpers Ferry, Virginia by August 30. He was directed to take the field and put a stop to the depredation of the Twelfth Virginia Cavalry against the Winchester and Potomac Railroad. The regiment left Relay House, by train, on August 29

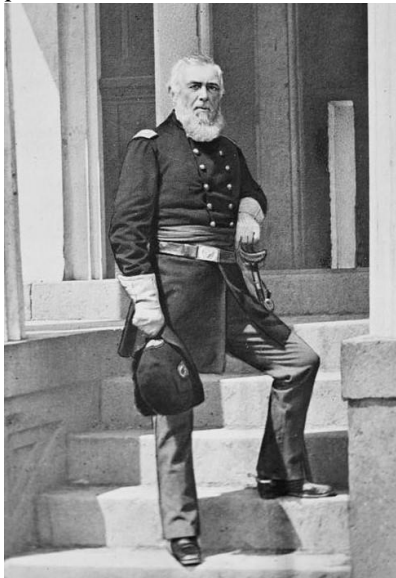
6 *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, vol. 11, pt. 1, (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1889) 428-432 (hereafter cited as *OR*).

7 U.S. Returns from Non-Infantry Regiments, 1821-1916, Field Returns of the 1st Regiment Regular Cavalry, June & July 1862,

https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1225/images/MIUSA1821_102946-00004?ssrc=&backlabel=Return; Letters Received by the Adjutant General, 1861-1870, Benjamin F. Davis, <https://www.fold3.com/image/299838229>; Benjamin F. Davis. New York Civil War Muster Roll Abstracts, Benjamin F Davis, 8th New York Cavalry, [https://www.fold3.com/browse/hCQ742IE5wH10UJP1gnfgkQ11lukL80XD?military.conflict=Civil+War+\(Union\)](https://www.fold3.com/browse/hCQ742IE5wH10UJP1gnfgkQ11lukL80XD?military.conflict=Civil+War+(Union)).

8 Myron Owens Diary, 1864, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, IA, Special Collections; Henry Norton, *Deeds of Daring or History of the Eighth N. Y. Volunteer Cavalry* (Norwich: Chenango Telegraph Printing House, 1889), 24-25.

and arrived at Harpers Ferry the next day. On August 31, Colonel Davis received specific instructions from Col. Dixon S. Miles, who commanded the Railroad Brigade at Harpers Ferry, to “take post at Summit Point, on the Winchester Railroad, with your regiment, it being a point...nearest to the scene of operations where your services are most required, viz Berryville, Winchester, Snicker’s Ferry and the ferries on the Shenandoah generally...It will be your first duty to closely watch the operations of this active partisan corps. Besides breaking up the Twelfth Virginia the primary object assigned to you is the protection of the Winchester Railroad.”⁹



*Colonel Dixon S. Miles
(Library of Congress)*

While Colonel Davis and his command were occupied in the Shenandoah Valley, Gen. Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia were advancing into Maryland. By September 7, Lee and his army were in Frederick. When Lee moved into Maryland, he severed his supply line with eastern Virginia, anticipating he could establish a new supply and communication line through the Shenandoah Valley. Lee knew there were Federal garrisons at Harpers Ferry and Martinsburg but he expected they would be withdrawn once he was in Maryland. Events did not go as planned for Lee however, as Federal authorities in Washington and Baltimore instructed the garrisons to hold their positions, especially Harpers Ferry, “to the last extremity.” On September 9, Lee had his adjutant draft Special Orders No. 191, which outlined how the Confederate army

was to be split up to enable his forces to deal with the two Federal garrisons. On September 10, Lee sent two-thirds of his army under Maj. Gen. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson to Harpers Ferry. By September 12, the Confederates were occupying the high ground surrounding the town. Jackson’s 14,000 men occupied School House Ridge west of Bolivar Heights. Brigadier General John G. Walker’s men were scaling Loudoun Heights. Major General Lafayette McLaws and his command were advancing down Elk Ridge toward Maryland Heights. By 3:30 in the afternoon on Saturday, September 13, after forcing the Federal defenders off Maryland Heights, the Confederates held the high ground around the town. Harpers Ferry was encircled and the Federal garrison was under siege. Everyone in Harpers Ferry knew “the way for the rebels was now

9 *OR*, vol. 51, pt. 1, 768, 772-73.

open, the door locked, it is true, but the key hung outside.”¹⁰

Among the Federal forces at Harpers Ferry were approximately 1,600 horse soldiers made up of all or portions of six cavalry regiments. Included in this total was a squadron of 124 men of the 1st Maryland Potomac Home Brigade Cavalry known as Cole’s Cavalry in honor of their commanding officer Maj. Henry A. Cole; a squadron of 123 troopers from companies H and I of the 1st Maryland Cavalry commanded by Capt. Charles H. Russell, and about a dozen men belonging to the Loudoun Rangers under Capt. Samuel Means.¹¹

Rounding out the cavalry regiments were 146 men of the 7th Squadron Rhode Island Cavalry, commanded by Maj. Augustus W. Corliss; the 12th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry, containing 575 rank and file under Col. Arno Voss and his executive officer Lt. Col. Hasbrouck Davis, and Colonel Davis’s own 8th New York with 614 men. Most of the regiments had at least smelled powder. However, they had limited combat experience. The only regimental commanders who had been in combat were Major Cole and Colonel Davis. Davis, who was the only regular army officer at Harpers Ferry aside from Dixon Miles, was by far the most experienced and he stood head and shoulders above the rest.¹²

Miles and most of his troops knew once Maryland Heights was lost Harpers Ferry was defenseless. This was evident to Colonel Davis and the commanders of the other cavalry regiments, especially those who were familiar with the area. Potentially being captured and spending time as a prisoner of war (POW) did not set well with any of them. As the sun set on September 13, 1862, they were evaluating their options.

In reading the regimental histories of the cavalry units at Harpers Ferry there is evidence most of them were desirous of at least attempting to escape the trap. In at least one instance, “when it was rumored that Harpers Ferry would be



Lieutenant Colonel Hasbrouck Davis
(Library of Congress)

10 “The Capture of Harpers Ferry,” *New York Tribune*, September 18, 1862.

11 Laurence H. Freiheit, *Boots and Saddles Cavalry During the Maryland Campaign of September 1862* (Iowa City: Camp Pope Publishing, 2012), 267; L. Allison Wilmer, J. H. Jarrett, George W. F. Vernon, *History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers, War of 1861-1865*, Volume I (Baltimore: Press of Guggenheimer, Weil & Co., 1898), 655-58, 701-02.

12 Freiheit, *Boots and Saddles*, 267, 272.

surrendered, Cole's Cavalry...officers, respectfully but firmly advised Colonel Miles, that under no circumstances would Cole's Cavalry surrender and offered to head and pilot the entire cavalry force in [an] effort to cut their way through the enemy's lines." It is unclear if all of the regimental commanders talked over breaking out with their commands or if they discussed the possibility amongst themselves on the 13th. Samuel B. Pettengill, of the 7th Rhode Island, wrote "after it became evident that Harpers Ferry must fall into the hands of the enemy, a conference of all the cavalry officers was called to consider escaping."¹³

It is also unclear how many meetings were held with Colonel Miles, whether those meetings were on the 13th or the 14th or both and who was in attendance. Several sources mention conferences between B.F. Davis and Hasbrouck Davis regarding an attempted escape but again it is not clear if these discussions were on the 13th or the 14th or both. In an article he wrote for *Battles & Leaders of the Civil War*, Brig. Gen. Julius White unequivocally stated, "during the evening of the 13th a consultation took place between [myself], Colonel B.F. Davis and Lieutenant Colonel Hasbrouck Davis, at which it was agreed that the mounted forces could be of little use in the defense—that the horses and equipment would be of great value to the enemy if captured, and that an attempt to reach McClellan ought therefore to be made." White specified the idea for the escape originated with Benjamin Davis when he mentioned, "this proposition made by Colonel B.F. Davis was warmly seconded by [Lt.] Colonel [Hasbrouck] Davis of the 12th Illinois."¹⁴

In his testimony before the Harpers Ferry Commission, Hasbrouck Davis referred to a meeting with Miles wherein the subject of routes by which the cavalry might leave Harpers Ferry was discussed. Davis testified this meeting occurred on September 13.¹⁵

One thing is clear however, and that is, regardless of what others were thinking, Col. B.F. Davis had no intentions of surrendering his command. Thomas Bell, who served in the 8th New York, commented after the Civil War "to be compelled to surrender without a fight was not Colonel Davis's purpose." Henry

13 Wilmer, *History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers*, 657; S.B. Pettengill, *The College Cavaliers a Sketch of Service of a Company of College Students in the Union Army in 1862* (Chicago: H McAllister & Co. Printers, 1883), 76; Thomas Bell, "At Harpers Ferry," *National Tribune*, June 2, 1887.

14 Julius White, "The Capitulation of Harpers Ferry," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, vol. 2 (New York: The Century Company, 1884), 613. Norton, *Deeds of Daring*, 27. There is considerable confusion in the extant records and documents addressing the cavalry exodus from Harpers Ferry as to when meetings occurred, what was discussed and whom might or might not have been present. There is evidence meetings were held on the 13th. Henry M. Binney might be in error in his testimony that all the meetings were held on the 14th. As others have stated it would have been very difficult to have held a meeting late on the 14th, agreed on a route, communicated with the scattered commands and got them all down in line on Potomac and Shenandoah Streets by about 8:00 p.m. This gives credibility to the assertion born out in testimony that at least preliminary discussions were held on Saturday, September 13.
15 OR, vol. 19, pt. 1, 629-30.

Norton wrote in *Deeds of Daring*, “Davis was busy, for he was going to take his regiment out, and not stay there and be gobbled up by the rebels without making an effort to get away.” Bell also reportedly overheard Davis tell Miles he “would never surrender his force to a living person without a fight.” The colonel’s education, training, experience, natural aggressiveness and unsurpassed bravery made the thought of surrender totally repugnant to him. He was “tough, daring and resourceful” and was not about to wind up in some Confederate prison if he could help it.¹⁶

An article in the September 18, 1862, *New York Daily Herald*, titled “The Siege of Harpers Ferry,” contained information from M.J. Coble, bugler of the 1st Maryland Cavalry and Peter J. Caughlin, Company A, Cole’s Cavalry. Both men had been captured and paroled at Harpers Ferry on September 15. The parolees recalled:

It was not before Colonel Davis had had several interviews with Colonel Miles, in which he entreated and implored permission to sally out and cut his way through the enemy, that the commanding officer gave the desired orders to that effect. The hour for departure was fixed for ten o’clock Saturday night [September 13], but before the hour arrived the order was countermanded, and it required no little persuasion on the part of Colonel Davis to gain a new order to the same effect. Colonel Miles said it was impossible for the cavalry to get through and that they would all be taken; but Colonel Davis said he would attempt it if he lost every man in the effort.

In proposing and unceasingly advocating the escape before Colonel Miles, B.F. Davis echoed the sentiment of every trooper in the beleaguered garrison.¹⁷

Contrary to the statement of the two parolees, there is evidence Colonel Miles was considering trying to get the cavalry out of Harpers Ferry on the evening of September 13 in hopes they might be able to communicate with someone in the United States Army and “report the conditions at Harpers Ferry.” In Maj. Charles Russell’s testimony before the Harpers Ferry Commission, he stated, “On Saturday evening after Maryland Heights had been evacuated Colonel Miles sent for me.” He attended a meeting with Miles in which Colonel Ford and Colonel Davis were also present. “He first asked me if I thought I could lead out what cavalry forces there were there, from Harpers Ferry. I told him I

16 Wilmer, *History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers*, 657; S. B. Pettengill, *The College Cavaliers*, 76; Thomas Bell, “At Harpers Ferry,” *National Tribune*, June 2, 1887; John W. Mies, “Breakout at Harpers Ferry,” *Civil War History*, vol. 2, no. 2 (June 1956): 16.

17 “The Siege of Harpers Ferry,” *New York Daily Herald*, September 18, 1862; Thomas Bell, “At Harpers Ferry,” *National Tribune*, June 2, 1887; Allan L. Tischler, *History of the Harpers Ferry Cavalry Expedition, September 14 & 15, 1862* (Winchester: Five Cedars Press, 1993), 130.

was willing to try.” Later Miles asked Russell if he could take “two or three men and pass through enemy lines” and contact anyone associated with the Army to ask for assistance and notify them Miles thought he could “hold out for forty-eight hours.” Russell again told Col. Miles he was willing to “make the trial.” Major Russell ultimately took nine men from his command, traveled through enemy lines, and arrived at McClellan’s headquarters near Frederick, Maryland about 9:00 a.m. on September 14.¹⁸

If things did not appear desperate enough by nightfall on September 13, while the cavalry was evaluating their options, either independently or in a group, they certainly did by the middle of the afternoon on the 14th. By then the Confederates had all their men and guns in positions. Around 2:00 o’clock Brigadier General Walker “unleashed his Loudoun Heights batteries” on the town. The guns on Maryland Heights and to the west of town joined in the barrage. “Soon shot and shell was falling in every direction.” The United States Army batteries responded but most of their fire was ineffectual. The Confederates had a better field of fire from the elevated ground they occupied and they could concentrate that fire on the exposed Federal cannoneers. Some of the shells fell into the ranks of the cavalry forces, causing “much consternation and commotion” but few if any casualties. Late in the afternoon the Confederates, fearful the Federal forces might try to escape by going either down the Virginia side of the Potomac or across the river into Maryland, took measures to try and prevent that from happening. Walker repositioned some of his infantry on Loudoun Heights. Jackson tried to alert McLaws to watch the Harpers Ferry-Sharpsburg Road. McLaws failed to heed the message, if he received it, in part, because of the threat to his rear from Maj. Gen. William B. Franklin’s Sixth Corps, which had moved into Pleasant Valley after driving the Confederate defenders from Crampton’s Gap. As the cannonading subsided and sun began to set a little after 6:00 p.m. a feeling of gloom settled over the Federal garrison. Grimes Davis and his comrades were now more determined than ever to vacate Harpers Ferry.¹⁹

Dixon Miles’s aide, 2nd Lt. Henry M. Binney testified before the Harpers Ferry Commission regarding the cavalry. He stated, “On Sunday night [September 14] Colonel Davis, came down and represented that the cavalry was of no use [at Harpers Ferry] and if we were obliged to surrender the place they would be as great a prize as the enemy could get. Furthermore, that we had no forage for the horses, and he desired the privilege of cutting his way out. Colonel Miles, then issued an order, or sent his orderlies around to the different commands to meet at his office that evening. They met there around 7:00 or 7:30 o’clock. He then told them if they would consult together, and propose means of getting out, and a road to go by he would issue the order giving them

18 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 720-23.

19 Dennis E. Frye, “The Siege of Harpers Ferry,” *Blue & Gray Magazine*, vol. 5, no. 1, September 1987, 26-27. Tischler, *History of the Harpers Ferry Cavalry Expedition*, 37.

the privilege.” Three routes were proposed. Col. Benjamin Davis proposed going up stream along the Virginia side of the Potomac to Packhorse (Boetler’s) Ford and crossing into Maryland about a mile south of Shepherdstown. Capt. Samuel Means proposed crossing the Shenandoah River upstream of Harpers Ferry near Keys Ferry, then moving eastward through Virginia toward Washington. The third option entailed crossing the Potomac into Maryland on the pontoon bridge that spanned the river at Harpers Ferry then moving up the Harpers Ferry-Sharpsburg and Lime Kiln Roads to Antietam Furnace (Antietam Iron Works) and thence to Sharpsburg. After some periodically heated exchanges between Col. Miles and the cavalry commanders it was finally agreed the route across the pontoon bridge into Maryland thence up to Sharpsburg was the most practical and offered the best chance of skirting the rebel defenses and contacting McClellan’s Army.²⁰

Once a decision had been made Colonel Miles had his Assistant Adjutant General, Lt. Hosea C. Reynolds, draft the orders for the cavalry to leave Harpers Ferry.

Headquarters, Harpers Ferry, Va., 14 Sept., 1862

SPECIAL ORDER No.120.

1st. - The cavalry forces at this post, except detached orderlies, will make immediate preparations to leave here at eight o’clock tonight, without baggage, wagons, ambulances or lead horses; crossing the Potomac over the pontoon bridge, and taking the Sharpsburg Road.

2nd. - The senior officer, Colonel Voss, will assume command of the whole; which will form to the right at the Quartermaster’s Office; the left, up Shenandoah Street, without noise or loud command, in the following order: Cole’s Cavalry, Twelfth Illinois Cavalry, Eighth New York Cavalry, Seventh Squadron Rhode Island Cavalry and First Maryland Cavalry. No other instructions can be given to the Commander for his guidance than to force his way through the enemy’s lines and join our own army.

²⁰ Ibid., 583-584. Freiheit, *Boots and Saddles*, 286. There is considerable confusion in the extant records and documents addressing the cavalry exodus from Harpers Ferry as to when meetings occurred, what was discussed and whom might or might not have been present. There is evidence meetings were held on the 13th. Henry M. Binney might be in error in his testimony that all the meetings were held on the 14th. As others have stated it would have been very difficult to have held a meeting late on the 14th, agreed on a route, communicated with the scattered commands and got them all down in line on Potomac and Shenandoah Streets by about 8:00 p.m. This gives credibility to the assertion born out in testimony that at least preliminary discussions were held on Saturday, September 13.

By order of Colonel Miles, H. C. Reynolds, Lieutenant and A.A.G.”²¹

Once the order had been issued cavalry commanders went to their respective regiments to inform the rank and file of the decision. When the 7th Rhode Island heard the news about 4:00 o'clock Major Corliss also reportedly told his men by the “next morning they would either be in Pennsylvania, or in hell, or on the way to Richmond.” In some cases, men were given the option of staying at Harpers Ferry when the rest of the regiment left. There is no evidence that well, able bodied men with a fit horse chose to stay however. The soldiers quickly prepared to leave Harpers Ferry. Horses were groomed and fed what forage was available and led to water. Saddle girths were checked. The men discarded all non-essential items including, tents, overcoats, blankets, extra paraphernalia and accouterments. They were issued extra ammunition. They might have eaten what food they had available and filled their canteens with water.²²

The individual regiments began to gather at the rendezvous point on Shenandoah Street around 8:00 p.m. Some of the troops probably also lined up on Potomac Street. By then it was dark but it was “a beautiful starlight night.” Commanders whispered last minute instructions to their men. Henry Norton wrote “we were drawn up in line, and our sutler, knowing that he could not get out with his goods, went down the line and gave the boys what tobacco he had. Before we crossed the pontoon bridge each captain gave orders to his company that each man must follow his file leader and that no other orders would be given.”²³

Each regiment formed in a column by two's, in the order specified by Miles's Special Order No. 120. They began walking across the bridge, between 8:00 and 8:30 p.m. behind at least two guides who knew the country well. One of the guides was 2nd Lt. Hanson T. C. Green of Company A, Cole's Cavalry. Another guide was Thomas Noakes of Martinsburg, Virginia. Some participants noted B.F. Davis and Hasbrouck Davis were in the advance directly behind the guides. They were followed by Cole's Cavalry.²⁴

The rushing water of the Potomac and sod placed on the bridge's wooden

21 Wilmer, *History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers*, 658. Colonel Arno Voss was the senior ranking cavalry officer at Harpers Ferry. His commission as colonel dates from February. Benjamin F. Davis, although a captain in the regular army, was commissioned colonel to date from either June 6, 1862 or June 25, 1862, therefore he was junior in rank to Voss. While Voss commanded the expedition on paper it was Grimes Davis, who commanded it in the field and took charge when they encountered Confederates at Sharpsburg and also when Longstreet's train was captured.

22 Pettengill, *The College Cavaliers*, 78.

23 Norton, *Deeds of Daring*, 28; Thomas Bell, “Longstreet's Train,” *National Tribune*, July 3, 1884.

24 D. Scott Hartwig, *To Antietam Creek: The Maryland Campaign of September 1862* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2012), 543; OR, vol. 19, pt. 1, 558.

planking helped muffle the sound of the horses' hooves as they crossed the span. When the head of the column reached the Maryland shore, they turned left onto the Harpers Ferry-Sharpsburg Road, that ran between the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Towpath and the bluff at the base of Maryland Heights, and spurred their horses to a gallop. The column was well spread out as it moved northward in the inky darkness. It took almost two hours for all the horsemen to cross the Potomac. Captain William H. Grafflin, in command of the 1st Maryland Cavalry, who brought up the rear, testified that he did not start crossing the river until about 10:30 p.m.²⁵

One mishap occurred as the column crossed into Maryland. Some men from Company D of the 12th Illinois turned to the right toward Sandy Hook after getting across the Potomac. They quickly discovered their error and turned around after being fired upon by Confederate pickets. It is unclear if they all rejoined the rest of the column or if some re-crossed the pontoon bridge back into Harpers Ferry, which they probably could not have done until the rest of the column was across.

Not long after crossing the river the lead elements of the main column also encountered a few Confederate pickets from the 13th Mississippi Infantry of Brig. Gen. William Barksdale's brigade, which had been left on Maryland Heights with two Parrott rifles when McLaws pulled the rest of his command off the hilltop and took them to Pleasant Valley to confront the Federal Sixth Corps. Thomas Bell wrote "after a spirited response from Lieutenant Green, in which the enemy retreated up the road to Maryland Heights, the column was under full headway." Another member of the 8th New York wrote in a letter to his father, "we came to the rebel pickets and they were so start [scared] they could not fire so we bound and gagged them and on we went."²⁶

The cavalrymen followed the Harpers Ferry-Sharpsburg Road along the river for about a mile. While doing so they tried forming up as rapidly as possible by four, which was probably easier said than done. The road then took a sharp turn to the right and meandered up to the top of the hill. One soldier noted the climb was so steep "that he had to grasp the mane of his horse to stay safe." The column quickly became strung out. Henry Norton wrote, "the only way we could tell how far we were from our file leaders was by the horses shoes striking against the stones in the road. Sometimes we would be twenty yards from our file leaders, and then we would come up full drive; then we would hear some swearing. That was the way we went for several miles," sometimes on the road and other times across fields and open country. Thomas Bell also noted "the increasing pace of the head of the column making it difficult for those in the rear to retain their proper intervals. Until we reached Sharpsburg it was everyman for himself. The only clew was the clatter of hooves" and the rattle of

25 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 771.

26 Thomas Bell, "At Harpers Ferry," *National Tribune*, June 2, 1887; Daniel W. Pulis to his father, September 21, 1862, Rochester, New York Historical Society, Rochester Public Library.

sabers. “To those in the rear of the column the direction of these sounds was not easy to determine.”²⁷

At the intersection of the Harpers Ferry-Sharpsburg Road and the Lime Kiln Road the horsemen veered to the left and at times followed the route of the Lime Kiln Road toward Antietam Iron Works. When not on the roads the men went cross country “across, flats, over fences and through creeks and fields”. The advance pickets of Col. William T. Martin’s Jeff Davis Legion “who were posted at a bridge over a small stream were fired upon about 11 o’clock or they fired on” the advancing Federals near the iron works. At Antietam Iron Works the blue clad horsemen crossed the Antietam, near its confluence with the Potomac, and took the Harpers Ferry-Sharpsburg Road, northward toward Sharpsburg. The head of the column arrived at the outskirts of the town around midnight. Campfires and the light of the moon helped the men avoid the bivouacs of the Confederates. Norton reported “at Sharpsburg, the advance made a halt for about half an hour, so we could close up and let our horses get their wind.”²⁸

On nearing Sharpsburg, and thinking they might be in the vicinity of the Army of the Potomac orders were given to reply to any challenge that might be made. William Luffs of the 12th Illinois wrote, “the night had now become starlight, and as we approached the town, several cavalry vedettes were discovered in the road. To the challenge, ‘Who comes there?’ the answer was ‘Friends of the Union.’ This reply was unsatisfactory for the pickets immediately fired upon [the column], but without effect. A charge was ordered and promptly executed, driving the pickets in and through the principal street of Sharpsburg on the road toward Hagerstown.”²⁹

While Grimes Davis and the Federal cavalry rode northward from Harpers Ferry the Jeff Davis Legion and six guns of Capt. James F. Hart’s Washington South Carolina battery appear to have been moving in the same direction on a parallel route east of the column. Col. Martin, who had been in Solomon’s Gap throughout most of the day on September 14, had been informed of the movement of the Federals by his pickets. Concerned that the troops might be part of McClellan’s left wing “intervening between Jackson’s forces and the Confederate army at Boonsboro and Turner’s Gap,” Martin decided to try and join the rest of Lee’s army at Hagerstown. As he traveled northward, “passing several small towns,” Hart placed several of his guns in “advance to cover the crossroads to the left and kept one or more to the rear” of Martin’s command.

27 Norton, *Deeds of Daring*, 28; Thomas Bell, “At Harpers Ferry,” *National Tribune*, June 2, 1887.

28 Norton, *Deeds of Daring*, 30; James F. Hart to Gen. E. A. Carman, April 7, 1900, Box 3, Folder 1, Ezra A. Carman Papers, New York Public Library (hereafter cited as NYPL).

29 William H. Luff, *March of the Cavalry from Harper’s Ferry, September 14, 1862* (Chicago: Illinois MOLLUS, A. C. McClurg & Co., 1894), 41. The cavalry vedettes might have been from Beverly Robertson’s Brigade which was commanded by Col. Thomas T. Munford.

Martin's Confederates did not come into contact with any of their comrades nor did they encounter the Federal cavalrymen.³⁰

As the United States cavalry headed north out of Sharpsburg on the Hagerstown Pike the glow of campfires could be seen in the distance. Sounds carried through the night air including the voices of officers giving orders and the dull rumbling of wheels against the roadway, which indicated enemy camps could be nearby. "A civilian informed an officer of the Eighth New York that the column was going right into Lee's Army." In actuality, most of Brig. Gen.



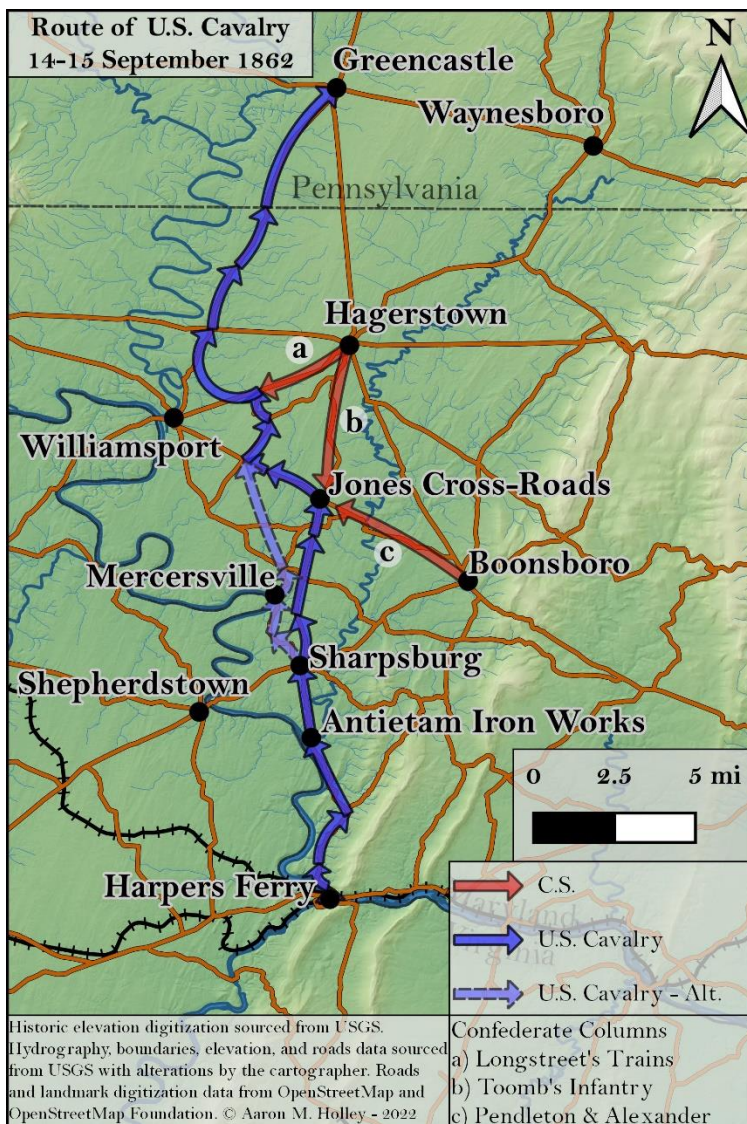
Colonel Arno Voss
(Chicago Tribune)

Robert A. Toombs' brigade of Georgians from Brig. Gen. David R. Jones's Confederate infantry division was moving southward on the Hagerstown Pike toward Sharpsburg during the early morning hours of September 15 as the Federal forces traveled north. The regimental officers of the Federal cavalry stopped to discuss the situation with their guides. The guides selected an alternate route, "a circuitous path through the lanes and by-roads, woods and fields" to the north and west of the pike. "The column marched steadily and silently threading their way between the camps of the sleeping foe until it emerged at a point on the Hagerstown and Williamsport Turnpike about two miles east of Williamsport." They were less than an hour ahead of and just missed an encounter with the Army of

Northern Virginia's reserve artillery under Brig. Gen. William N. Pendleton and its reserve ordnance train commanded by Lt. Col. Edward Porter Alexander, which were headed westward toward Williamsport from Boonsboro on the Boonsboro-Williamsport Road. While Colonel Voss remained the titular commander of the Federal cavalry it is pretty evident by this time that Grimes Davis had assumed tactical command of the same and "took charge when trouble loomed."³¹

30 Hart to Carman, April 7, 1900, NYPL.

31 Freiheit, *Boots and Saddles*, 296; *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 830, 888; Hartwig, *To Antietam Creek*, 552. In "Diary of a Soldier" published in the *Gettysburg Times* on July 24, 1923, William A. McIlhenny wrote, "At Sharpsburg we left the public roads; we had a good guide and it was a dark night so we kept to the fields and woods, not striking a road until we struck the Pike running from Hagerstown to Williamsport, then daylight was just beginning to break." There have been numerous versions written by both participants and non-participants over the years following the cavalry's exodus from Harpers Ferry on September 14-15, 1862. Some writers authored multiple versions of their side of the story. Because of this it is almost impossible to ascertain exactly what happened and the exact route that was traveled.



(Aaron Holley)

William Luffs of the 12th Illinois noted, “it was now just in the gray of morning, Fires of a large camp of the enemy could be seen, near Williamsport.” Henry Norton wrote, “just before we got to the pike we halted in a piece of woods. As the advance of the column approached the pike the rumbling of wheels in the distance toward Hagerstown was heard” and a “dense yellow cloud of dust was visible.” “Colonel [Davis] went ahead to reconnoiter, and when he got to the road, he soon found out it was a rebel wagon train principally loaded

with ammunition and escorted by infantry with a detachment of cavalry in the rear.” Wagons containing Maj. Gen. James Longstreet’s reserve ordnance were in the lead. They had left the Hagerstown area around midnight, September 14. The train was guarded by several companies of the 11th Georgia Infantry under Maj. Francis H. Little and a detachment of the 1st Virginia Cavalry. “Little had placed half of his command in the middle of the wagons and the other half in the rear and arranged for the First Virginia Cavalry to follow behind.” Longstreet’s wagons were followed by “a train of supplies collected in Maryland, and other commissariat and quartermaster stores.” Bringing up the rear were wagons belonging to Maj. Gen. Daniel Harvey Hill’s division.³²

The reserve ordnance train containing at least 45 wagons was commanded by “London-born” 1st Lt. Francis W. Dawson, an assistant ordnance officer with Longstreet’s command. “It was an anxious moment, but Colonel [B.F.] Davis of the Eighth New York and Lt. Colonel [Hasbrouck] Davis of the Twelfth Illinois, who were at the head of the column, were equal to the occasion.” The 8th New York was immediately formed in line facing the road on the north side, the 12th Illinois in the same order south of the road, the Maryland and Rhode Island cavalry were held in reserve; while Colonel Davis with a squadron of his regiment, advanced and took possession of the road so as to intercept the enemy. “All was done in silence, and it was still too dark for our troops, concealed in the timber which skirted the road to be seen.” The concealed Federal horsemen watched Dawson and a small body of cavalry appear over a hill that rose to their right, followed by the ordnance wagons. As Dawson and the other unsuspecting Confederates rode toward the concealed United States Army troopers, Colonel Davis reportedly quietly told his command “Don’t shoot boys.”³³

“When the head of the train came up, Colonel Davis ordered it to halt, which it did without a shot being fired.” Colonel Davis reportedly asked a rebel staff officer, “Where are you going with that train?” “Across the Potomac at Williamsport,” was the reply. “What troops are these?” inquired the Confederate. “Union troops from Harper’s Ferry,” answered Colonel Davis. “Who are you?” asked the Johnny. “Colonel B.F. Davis, 8th New York Cavalry,” came the reply, “and you are my prisoner!” Dawson later wrote “I was forty or fifty yards ahead of the column when a voice from the roadside called out “Halt!” The gloss was not yet off my uniform, and I could not suppose that such

32 Luff, *March of the Cavalry*, 43; Norton, *Deeds of Daring*, 31-32; Hartwig, *To Antietam Creek*, 548; Thomas G. Clemens, ed., *The Maryland Campaign of September 1862, Vol. I: South Mountain* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2010), 384; Joseph L. Harsh, *Taken at the Flood Robert E. Lee & Confederate Strategy in the Maryland Campaign of 1862* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1999), 296.

33 Hartwig, *To Antietam Creek*, 547-548; I.W. Heysinger, “The Cavalry Column from Harper’s Ferry in the Antietam Campaign,” *Journal of the U.S. Cavalry Association*, vol. 24, no. 100 (January 1914): 621.

a command, shouted with a big oath, was intended for me.” When the command was repeated Dawson rode “to the side of the road in the direction of the voice” and found himself “at the entrance of a narrow lane,” which was filled with men on horseback. He could not tell if they were friend or foe in the predawn darkness. He confronted the Federal cavalryman who he thought had ordered him to stop. “How dare you halt an officer in this manner. The trooper responded surrender and dismount. You are my prisoner.” When Dawson asked who he was speaking to the cavalryman reportedly answered, “Colonel B.F. Davis, 8th New York Cavalry.” Dawson was placed under guard on the side of the road. Colonel Davis then “detailed his forces by squadrons” and ordered Capt. William Frisbie, Company D, 8th New York to take the train, “turn it right on the turnpike that ran to Greencastle, and run it through to that place at the rate of eight miles per hour.” Frisbie purportedly “innocently” asked Davis where the road was, “and [he] was peremptorily ordered to ‘find it, and be off, without delay!’” When the wagon train “moved off in the direction of the Pennsylvania line,” Lt. Francis Dawson was with it, astride his own horse and a prisoner of war as were at least six members of the 3rd Virginia Cavalry.³⁴

Private Charles D. Grace, Company B, 4th Georgia Infantry Regiment, who also wound up as a prisoner of Davis’s command and spent about three weeks at Fort Delaware before being paroled and exchanged on November 10, 1862, described the capture of Longstreet’s train from the Confederate perspective in an October 16, 1897, letter to Ezra Carman historian of the Antietam Battlefield Board. He wrote:

If I remember correctly there were no guard for Longstreet’s train. The only guard, if guard at all, were the details sent back to cook rations and a few on the sick list. We passed through Hagerstown and were nearing Williamsport about half past four o’clock a.m. on the 15th. The moon would occasionally show itself brilliantly through the drifting clouds. At a point about a mile east of Williamsport at a knoll of timber on the south side of the pike a road supposed to be the river road intersected the pike at right angles. The knoll on which the timber stood had been graded down to the west side to a level with the pike. To the west as far as the river or Williamsport was cleared land. As I came up to the

34 Luff, *March of the Cavalry*, 44-45; Thomas Bell, “Longstreet’s Train,” *National Tribune*, July 3, 1884; Tischler, *History of the Harpers Ferry Cavalry Expedition*, 100-01. An interesting controversy related to the cavalry breakout from Harpers Ferry centers around the number of wagons and prisoners that were captured and taken to Greencastle, Pennsylvania. It is impossible to ascertain the figures with any certainty. The total number of captured wagons varies between forty and 175. The number of prisoners captured is around 100. In his *Military Memoirs of a Confederate* published in 1907, Edward Porter Alexander wrote the Federal cavalry “captured and destroyed the reserve ordnance train, of 45 wagons, of Longstreet’s corps.” Edward Porter Alexander, *Military Memoirs of a Confederate: A Critical Narrative* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 232.

junction of the road, I found the men stopping and noticing some cavalry back behind the knoll, perfectly concealed from view, approaching from the east. I demanded to know by what authority the men were halted—the train still moving on—when two or three cavalymen threw their guns down on me, saying ‘by this authority’ their barrels glistening brightly. I saw they were Spencer’s carbines behind which sat men in blue uniforms. I replied ‘that authority was sufficient.’ Just at that moment Colonel B.F. Davis came up, his horse on the gallop, his pistol in his right hand, and in a perpendicular position above his shoulder, remarking to the men, ‘stand fast men and we will cabbage a hell of a lot of them.’ I said being a little petulant. ‘Yes sir, I hope you will have them do so for General J.E.B. Stuart will have you in our condition in a few minutes as he is on his way this side of Hagerstown.’

The remark was either fortunate or unfortunate because he immediately ordered the men to throw down the rail fence on the west side of the road, at the same time ordering the prisoners, who numbered sixty-one, to move out and get in the wagons, which they did of course, and as soon as the prisoners were in the wagons Colonel Davis ordered four men to ride up by each team, a part of the column of troops moving diagonally across the field to the northwest, intersecting the pike right at the junction of the Greencastle Pike and the Hagerstown & Williamsport Pike, which proved to be only 150 to 200 yards west of the point where we were halted. As soon as everything was ready, the order was given to move off as fast as the teams could be made to travel. As the wagon I was in wheeled into the Greencastle Pike, I realized for the first time I was really a prisoner on my way to Pennsylvania. Colonel Davis told me his regiment had escaped from Harpers Ferry during the night, crossed the river, and had traveled very hard, only making such halts as was necessary to take observations. He thought he was “bagged” when he intercepted our train but finding no guard for the train, after reconnoitering a little, he then threw out a picket across the Greencastle Pike and cut the train in two, turning the wagons northward. He had sent some scouts from the rear of his column to reconnoiter along the pike towards Hagerstown and had just returned when I walked into the trap.³⁵

Elements of the 1st Virginia Cavalry harassed the rear of Davis’s column and their captured wagon train as it sped toward Greencastle. The Federal rear guard was able to fend them off. The Virginians were not able to recapture any of the

35 Charles D. Grace to Ezra Carman, October 16, 1897, Antietam Collection, Dartmouth College; Civil War Service Records (CMSR), Confederate, Georgia, Charles D. Grace, fold3.com.

wagons or prisoners or inflict any casualties on the jaded United States cavalrymen. A number of wagons broke down. They were moved off the road and blown up or burned after the teams were unhitched. The command with their prisoners and captured wagons reached Greencastle about 9:00 a.m. on the 15th after riding 50 miles in 12 hours. The exhausted, hungry cavalrymen were warmly welcomed by the town residents, who plied them with every type of food imaginable. A trooper from the 15th Pennsylvania Cavalry, who was in town when the column arrived wrote, "I saw the dusty procession marching into Greencastle, and had the honor of being placed, loaded revolver in hand, on the hind seat of an omnibus, to stand guard over the rebel prisoners, whom I conducted to the county jail."³⁶

In an April 7, 1900, letter to Ezra Carman, James Hart noted:

Just before sunrise our route crossed that taken by the enemy, and we were informed that the column had passed that point a short time ahead of us. This was probably at the crossing of the road leading from Downsville to Hagerstown. From there we followed rapidly after the retreating forces, and soon after sunrise saw the explosion from the burning of a part of Longstreet's ordnance train, which the retreating column had intercepted. We were too late to afford any relief, even if our force had been sufficient. After a short pursuit past the burnt wagons Col. Martin retired toward Williamsport. My impression is that some few captures of stragglers [from the Federal column] were made that morning.³⁷

Not long after the United States cavalry column arrived in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, the news was telegraphed to Harrisburg and Baltimore. The first telegram announcing the column's arrival in Pennsylvania was dated 8:00 a.m. from Greencastle. It noted "Sixteen hundred of our cavalry are coming into town - they cut their way out from the neighborhood of Harpers Ferry." At 10:00 a.m. Pennsylvania's Governor Andrew Curtin, who was in Harrisburg, telegraphed a second message he had received from Greencastle to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton: "the following just received from Greencastle, dated 9 a.m., September 15, 1862: United States Cavalry, from Harpers Ferry, has arrived at Greencastle, under command of Colonel Davis, Eighth New York...The force is 1,300 strong. They left Harpers Ferry at 9 o'clock last evening and cut their way through. One mile out from Williamsport, they captured Longstreet's ordnance train, comprising 40 wagons; also brought in 40 prisoners. Fighting has been going on for two days at Harpers Ferry...Colonel Davis says he thinks Colonel Miles will surrender this morning. Colonel Miles

36 Freiheit, *Boots and Saddles*, 320.

37 Hart to Carman, April 7, 1900.

desires his condition made known to the War Department.”³⁸

The fatigued cavalymen from Harpers Ferry turned over the wagons and prisoners to authorities in Greencastle according to Henry Norton. “We went into a piece of woods to feed our horses and rest up. We were about played out. We were hungry and sleepy. Several laid down on the ground, while others sat down with their backs leaned against trees. Many were asleep in a jiffy. The people of the area were scared when they saw us coming, they thought we were rebels. After finding out who we were, they were not long in getting there with wagons loaded with provisions for us to eat—almost everything anyone could think of—and told us to help ourselves. We had a good square meal and some left over for another time. From that time on Colonel Davis put a great deal of confidence in the Eighth New York Cavalry. He knew that where he went, they would follow him. As soon as we got out of camp the boys began to like him. We soon found out Colonel Davis was a great fighting man.”³⁹

It is unclear what the losses were in the ranks of the cavalry regiments that evacuated Harpers Ferry on September 14, 1862, although the 8th New York regimental history reported an enlisted man missing at Williamsport on the 15th. Some men were “lost” in route but many reportedly eventually rejoined their commands. A number of soldiers stayed in Harpers Ferry, either because they were sick or because they “could not find horses able to endure a sharp and perhaps prolonged ride.” The official records indicate the 12th Illinois reported two enlisted men wounded and four officers and 153 enlisted men missing. The 8th New York’s casualties included five officers and 87 men missing. The 1st Maryland Cavalry lost 23 men when Miles surrendered. The men captured at Harpers Ferry were paroled. Many, including 80 members of the 8th New York, wound up at Camp Douglas in Chicago, Illinois, where they remained until they were exchanged in late November 1862.⁴⁰

“Stonewall” Jackson was deeply disappointed when he arrived in Harpers



Sign at Intersection of Virginia Ave. and Bower Ave., Washington County, Maryland (Sharon A. Murray)

³⁸ Tischler, *History of the Harpers Ferry Cavalry Expedition*, 43; *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 2, 305.

³⁹ Norton, *Deeds of Daring*, 34.

⁴⁰ *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 549; “The Siege of Harpers Ferry,” *The New York Daily Herald*, September 18, 1862.

Ferry on September 15 to find the Federal cavalry gone. The *New York Daily Herald* reported on September 18, 1862, “his first question, after glancing over the eight-thousand infantry drawn up unarmed in line before him, was, “Where is all the cavalry you had?” And on being informed that they had escaped the previous night, en masse, he was silent, but his face, and the countenance of the rebels about him, wore a look of disappointment and chagrin.” He purportedly cried, “impossible! I would rather have had them than anything else in this place.” J.E.B. Stuart was no happier than Jackson, in part, because he had admonished Lafayette McLaws to watch the Harpers Ferry-Sharpsburg Road. Captain William W. Blackford, a member of Stuart’s staff, wrote, “to think of all the fine horses they carried off, the saddles, revolvers, and carbines of the best kind, and the spurs, all of which would have fallen to our share, and the very thing we so much needed, was enough to vex a saint.”⁴¹

In his September 21, 1862, report to President Jefferson Davis, General Lee played down the escape of the United States cavalry from Harpers Ferry and the loss of Longstreet’s wagons when he wrote “unfortunately on September 14, the enemy cavalry at Harper’s Ferry evaded our forces, crossed the Potomac into Maryland, passed up through Sharpsburg, where they encountered our pickets, and intercepted on their line of retreat General Longstreet’s train.” Some historians contend the loss of Longstreet’s ammunition had an adverse impact on Lee’s forces during the Battle of Antietam. “The enemy captured and destroyed forty-five wagons.” Lieutenant Colonel Edward Porter Alexander, Chief of Ordnance for the Army of Northern Virginia, later wrote, “the loss of forty-five wagons” loaded with ammunition and subsistence “had been a severe blow at such a distance from our base at Culpeper, Virginia. On the 16th I was ordered to collect all empty wagons and go to Harpers Ferry and take charge of the surrendered ammunition; bringing back to Sharpsburg all suiting our calibres.”⁴²

The breakout of the United States cavalry from Harpers Ferry on September 14, 1862, succeeded beyond anyone’s wildest dreams. Cavalry historian Gregory J.W. Urwin said of the cavalry’s expedition, “Davis’s valiant coup compared favorably with anything Stuart had ever done, and it stood as an unrecognized omen of what was to come.” It compares favorably with Nathan Bedford Forrest’s exodus from Fort Donelson with his Confederate cavalry, prior to the fort’s surrender, in February 1862. While there is no question according to Special Order No. 120, that Colonel Davis was not in “official” command of the cavalry expedition, at least on paper, there is ample evidence that he had a great deal to do with initiating the idea and persuading Colonel Miles to allow the column to depart. In route he was instrumental in helping ensure the success of the venture and in the capture of Longstreet’s train. Isaac

41 Ibid.; William W. Blackford, *War Years with Jeb Stuart* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1945), 146.

42 Freiheit, *Boots and Saddles*, 317-318.

Heysinger of the 7th Rhode Island noted in an August 23, 1905 letter to Ezra Carman, while “Col. Voss, [was] the real commander, we all at the time recognized Col. Davis’s ability, and looked to him, as we might say, for the technical work of the expedition.” William H. Nichols, who also served with the 7th, penned words that were reiterated by many other authors and army officers after the successful breakout. Nichols noted, “much of the success of the expedition was due to Colonel B.F. Davis of the Eighth New York Cavalry” who was afterwards recommended by McClellan for the brevet rank of major in the regular army for “conspicuous conduct in the management of the withdrawal of the cavalry from Harpers Ferry.” In a September 23, 1862, telegram to Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck, General-in-Chief of the United States Army, McClellan wrote, “Captain B.F. Davis merits the notice of the government. I recommend him for the brevet of major.” The honorary rank was confirmed to date from September 15, 1862.⁴³

On September 22, 1862, Col. Benjamin Davis was tapped to command the Fifth Brigade of the Army of the Potomac’s Cavalry Corps. The brigade was broken up on the 23rd when the 8th New York was ordered to Hagerstown “to obtain camp equipage and recruit men and horses.” Davis and his New Yorkers participated in the battles and skirmishes of McClellan’s fall campaign through Loudoun and Fauquier counties between October 26 and November 15, 1862. A member of the 8th New York wrote “Our Colonel” has been “prominent in all the movements and is greatly relied upon.” On November 14, Alfred Pleasonton recommended John H. Farnsworth, David McMurtrie Gregg and Benjamin Davis be promoted to brigadier general of volunteers, noting “promotion of these officers in the proper organization of the cavalry will greatly add to its efficiency.” Farnsworth’s and Gregg’s promotions were made official on November 29, 1862. Colonel Davis’s promotion was never approved, probably, because he was from the south “and when the nomination came up for confirmation there was no one present with any information in regards to [Davis] and [his] name was passed over in accordance with a rule of the Senate.” He would go on to lead a brigade as an “acting brigadier general”—except for a short stint when he commanded a division—for much of the time between December 18, 1862 and June 9, 1863, when he was killed leading the advance across Beverley’s Ford during the opening hour of the Battle of Brandy Station. John Buford lamented his passing, writing, “he died in the front, giving examples of heroism and courage to all who were to follow. He was a thorough soldier, free from politics and intrigue, a patriot in the true sense, an ornament to his country and a bright star in his profession.” Davis’s remains were taken to the

43 Gregory J. W. Urwin, *The United States Cavalry, An Illustrated History, 1776-1944* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 118; Isaac W. Heysinger to Ezra Carman, September 4, 1905, Box 3, Folder 6, Carman Papers, NYPL; William H. Nichols, *The Siege and Capture of Harpers Ferry by the Confederates, September 1862* (Providence: Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society, 1889), 37-38; *OR*, vol. 51, pt. 1, 861.

cemetery at West Point where he was interred with full military honors on June 13, 1863, three days short of the ninth anniversary of his graduation from the academy.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Rawles, *History of the Third Pennsylvania Cavalry*, 131; Myron Owen Diary. *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 2, 128; Letters Received by the Adjutant General, 1861-1870, Pleasonton, A, <https://www.fold3.com/image/300212009>; John Gibbon, *Personal Recollections of the Civil War* (Dayton: Press of Morningside Bookshop, 1988), 26; Janet B. Hewett, et al, editors, *Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, vol. 5, pt. 1 (Wilmington: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1994), 228.

Ezra Carman's Missing Fight

by Bradley M. Gottfried

A number of soldiers, both Union and Confederate, recalled a furious fight during the Battle of Antietam that took place on and west of the knoll where the Maryland monument now sits at about 10:00 a.m. Brig. Gen. George Greene's division (Twelfth Corps) had swept through the East Woods/Cornfield and settled on the high ground, where they were called upon to repel a furious charge out of the West Woods. Who were these Confederates and what was the outcome of the charge? A review of Ezra Carman's seminal work is silent on this fight. This paper seeks to set the record straight and give light to an important action that has largely been overlooked.

The fight involved two brigades that had recently arrived on the battle line: Lt. Col. Hector Tyndale's brigade and Brig. Gen. John Walker's brigade, now commanded by Col. Van Manning.

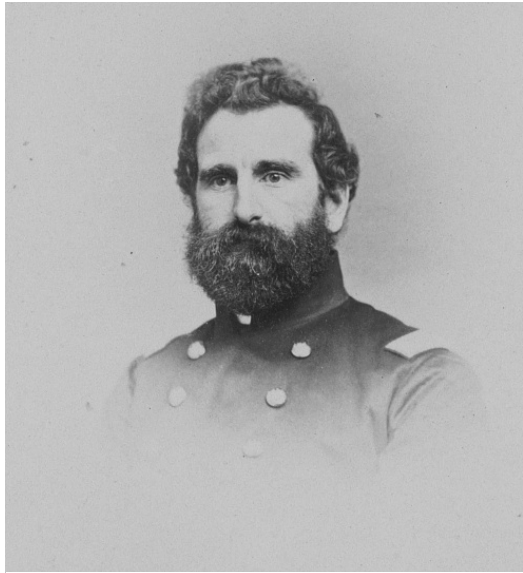
Tyndale's brigade was composed of four Ohio regiments (5th, 7th, 29th, and 66th Ohio) and the 28th Pennsylvania. The brigade was shy the 29th Ohio as it was detached for wagon guard duty on September 9. Although 41-year-old Tyndale never served in the military prior to the war, he was no stranger to its actions and traditions. He was offered an appointment to West Point, but chose to enter the family business at the urging of his mother. He still found time to serve in a Philadelphia artillery militia unit and rose through its ranks. He also accompanied Maj. Edwin Sumner and the 1st Dragoons on an expedition to the Northwest in 1845. Tyndale was traveling in France with his wife when the Civil War erupted and he immediately returned home to assist in raising the 28th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry. He rose through the regiment's ranks, from major in June 1861 to lieutenant colonel in April 1862 and commanded the brigade during the Maryland Campaign.⁴⁵

The brigade's Ohio regiments were brigaded together under Brig. Gen. O. S. Ferry (Brig. Gen. James Shields' division) on May 10, 1862 and were part of the Department of the Rappahannock. The 28th Pennsylvania was added when the brigade transferred to the Second Army Corps of the Army of Virginia. Several of the regiments had already seen action, including during the West Virginia Campaign of 1861-62, the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1862, and the Battle of Cedar Mountain, where it first fought as a united brigade in Brig. Gen. George Greene's division.⁴⁶

45 McLaughlin, John M., *A Memoir of Hector Tyndale*. (Philadelphia, PA, 1882), 6, 7; Carman, *The Maryland Campaign* vol. 2, 539-40; vol. 3, 299.

46 Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, three volumes (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1959), vol. I, 347, 350.

The brigade left the Second Bull Run battlefield on September 1 and headed for Washington. After crossing the Potomac River on September 4, the brigade, with the rest of the corps, made its way through Washington, and camped at Rockville the following day. After a few days' rest, the march north continued on September 9. A veteran recalled, "during the tedious march of about 125 miles, in the hottest season of the year, they passed through . . . Alexandria, Long Bridge . . . Ijamsville, Frederick, and Boonsboro. They also crossed Cotoctin [sp] and South mountains, and waded the



*Lieutenant Colonel Hector Tyndale
(Library of Congress)*

Monocacy and other streams." The brigade arrived in Frederick on September 13 and marched through the town the following day amid church bells ringing behind them and cannons firing in the distance in front of them. The march toward South Mountain should have been an easy one, but traffic choked the roads. "The roads were occupied by cavalry, artillery and ammunition trains. The infantry moved across fields and through tall standing corn, where the still, close air intensified the suffocating heat," according to a veteran.¹⁷

During the march through Turner's Gap on September 15, the men experienced the aftermath of the hard fighting there. J. Hume, of the 7th Ohio wrote home, "We beat them bad...they lost two to our one. I came through there on Tuesday after and there was thirty or forty dead Rebels laying in the Woods and behind a Stone wall not buried...the citizens was trying to have them buried." The victory cheered the men. John Foering of the 28th Pennsylvania recorded in his diary, "Army in excellent spirits. Genl. McClellan passes us...and was heartily cheered."¹⁸

47 Fox, William F., "Slocum and His Men: A History of the Twelfth and Twentieth Army Corps," in *In Memoriam Henry Warner Slocum, 1826-1894* (Albany, New York, J.B. Lyon Company, Printers, 1904), 139.

48 Bates, *Pennsylvania Volunteers*, vol. I, 428.; *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 480-481; George L. Wood, *The Seventh Regiment: A Record* (New York: James Miller, 1865), 134-36; J. Hume letter, Antietam National Battlefield Library; J. Hume letter, Antietam National Battlefield Library, 7th Ohio Unit File; Diary of John Foering, September 15, 1862 entry, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Hume says he passed through Turner's Gap on Tuesday. All other accounts put members of the Twelfth Corps noted it was on Monday.

Tyndale's men crossed the Upper Bridge during the night of September 16-17 and headed west to the Hoffman and Line farms. The brigade's 1,220 men could hear the sounds of battle to the south as they huddled around their fires making coffee on the morning of September 17.⁴⁹

The men were soon ordered south and deployed for action upon approaching the East Woods. The brigade was deployed, from right to left: 7th Ohio- 66th Ohio- 5th Ohio- 28th Pennsylvania. The morning mist limited visibility, but the men could easily hear the battle's intensity as they continued their approach. Moving through the East Woods, the brigade encountered the right flank of Col. Alfred Colquitt's brigade in the Cornfield. Hit in front, flank, and rear, Colquitt's men relinquished their positions and headed for the rear. Maj. Orrin Crane of the 7th Ohio, who assumed command of the brigade after Tyndale was wounded in the hip and then the head during the battle, later reported, "the enemy gave way in confusion and disorder before the furious onset of our troops. We pursued them rapidly, capturing many prisoners, and strewing the ground with their dead and wounded." Sgt. William Fithian of the 28th Pennsylvania recalled Colquitt's men "would load, then haul and give us a volley, then retreat, we pushing them as closely as possible." Dwindling ammunition caused the officers to order the men to slacken their fire. The brigade halted in the clover field just north of the Smoketown Road to await ammunition. After being resupplied, the brigade, in the words of Lt. Col. Eugene Powell of the 66th Ohio, "moved rapidly forward and formed... under shelter of a small knoll, directly in front of the church on the Sharpsburg road," on which the present-day Maryland monument sits. The historian of the 7th Ohio recalled how the regiment "formed in two lines in rear of the battery, and lay behind a low ridge, sufficiently high to protect from a direct shot, but which offered no shelter from the fragments of shells bursting near to and over us; these were continually striking amongst us, often grazing a cap or an arm, but doing no particular harm."

All of the regimental reports explain how the men prepared to repulse an enemy attack. Capt. Fred Seymour of the 7th Ohio reported, "[a]fter replenishing the men with ammunition, we changed our line to the right to an elevated piece of ground, and awaited the advance of the enemy, who were charging on us from the woods en masse." These men were from Brig. Gen.

49 See Carman, *The Maryland Campaign of 1862*, vol. II, 135, n. 39 for further discussion on regimental strength. Tyndale wrote years after the battle he took 1,050 into the fight, McLaughlin, *A Memoir of Hector Tyndale*, 55; D. Cunningham and W. W. Miller, *Antietam: Report of the Ohio Antietam Battlefield Commission* (Springfield, OH: Springfield Publishing Company, State Printers, 1904), 44. Cunningham and Miller state the 66th had 200 men and the other two Ohio regiments had about the same. Cunningham and Miller, *Report of The Ohio Antietam Battlefield Commission*, 45. Eugene Powell, commander of the 66th Ohio, claimed his regiment numbered only 150 during the battle and the other regiments were about the same. Eugene Powell, "Lee's First Invasion: Recollections of the Eastern Campaigns of the Fall of 1862," *National Tribune*, June 27, 1901.

John Walker's brigade under the command of Col. Van Manning.⁵⁰



Tyndale's position from the position of the 48th North Carolina. The Hagerstown Pike is in the foreground and the Smoketown Road on the left. Tyndale's brigade's right was anchored on the knoll on which the Maryland Monument now sites and extended to the right of the photograph. (Bradley M. Gottfried)

When Walker was assigned a division, he relinquished command to Manning at the start of the Maryland Campaign. Manning was a 23-year-old Arkansas attorney at the start of the war. He was also a state legislator and owner of a 640-acre plantation that used eight slaves to run the operation. Manning was described as being “that peculiar breed of Southerner, typical of that era, to whom his service in the field was a duty both patriotic and spiritual.” He rose to command the 3rd Arkansas prior to commanding the brigade, which was composed of his own regiment and the 27th North Carolina, 46th North Carolina, 48th North Carolina, and 30th Virginia.⁵¹

50 Cunningham and Miller, *Ohio at Antietam*, 45; Ezra Carman, *The Maryland Campaign of 1862*, vol. II, 139; Lawrence Wilson, *Itinerary of the Seventh Ohio Volunteer Infantry 1861 – 1864* (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1907), 208; Wood, *The Seventh Regiment*, 139; *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 506, 508, 509; William Fithian Account, copy at the Antietam NMP Library. 51 Robert K Krick, *Lee's Colonels: A Biographical Register of the Field Officers of the Army of Northern Virginia* (Dayton, OH: Press of Morningside Bookshop, 1984), 224; Collier, Calvin L. *They'll Do To Tie To!: The Story of the Third Regiment, Arkansas Infantry, CSA*. (Little Rock, AR: Democrat Printing and Litho Company, 1959), 5-6.

Manning's brigade's early experiences during the Maryland Campaign were much more eventful than Tyndale's. The division, composed of Manning's and Brig. Gen. Robert Ransom's brigade, was among the last of Lee's army to cross the Potomac River on September 7 and was tasked with destroying the works at the Monocacy Aqueduct. The men quickly realized the "stone and cement bulwark was of the staunchest." They toiled for five hours on September 9, attempting to complete their mission, but the "structure defied all efforts to break its seams." The men headed back to the Potomac River and crossed it on



*Colonel Vannoy Manning after the Civil War
(Library of Congress)*

September 10, as Special Orders 191 assigned them to occupy the Loudoun Heights sector during "Stonewall" Jackson's siege of Harpers Ferry. The division reached the base of the mountain on September 13. Two of Manning's regiments, the 30th Virginia and 27th North Carolina, scaled the mountain that day; the remainder remained at its base. A Virginian exclaimed in his diary, it is "the most prettiest countrys I think I ever beheld." The two regiments were relieved by the 46th and 48th North Carolina that evening. Some of the infantry later helped manhandle the cannon up the steep side of the mountain, which opened fire on September 14.⁵²

The fall of the Harpers Ferry garrison on September 15 put the brigade on the road later that day with the rest of the division, but when Gen. Walker could not find a suitable site to cross the Shenandoah River, the command marched upriver to find a ford. The crossing was the third time the command conducted a river crossing in eight days. The fourth crossing occurred on September 16 when the brigade reached Shepherdstown and again crossed the Potomac River. "A heavy sense of urgency pervaded the air as the gray columns swung along," according to the historian of the 3rd Arkansas. The men flopped down just west of Sharpsburg and fell into a deep sleep.⁵³

They were up at 3:00 a.m. on September 17 and marched several miles south

52 Collier, *They Do to Tie to!*, 82-83; *OR* vol. 19 pt. 1, 912-13; Robert Krick, *30th Virginia Infantry* (Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1983), 22; Clark, *North Carolina Regiments*, vol. II, 433.

53 Krick, *30th Virginia Infantry*, 23-24; John G. Walker, "Jackson's Capture of Harpers Ferry," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, vol. II (New York: The Century Company, 1887-89), 611; Collier, *They Do to Tie to!*, 83-87; Clark, *North Carolina Regiments*, vol. II, 433.

to an open field overlooking Snavelly's Ford across the Antietam Creek. They never forgot what they saw on the opposite side of the creek, occupied by the Union Ninth Corps: "As far as the eye could see, stretching away to the distant hills was a solid sea of heaving blue...They were in columns, lines and masses." The division was ordered three miles north at about 9:00 a.m. to reinforce Jackson's line anchored by the Dunker Church. As the brigade reached the area near the Sunken Road, the 3rd Arkansas and 27th North Carolina were dropped off to seal a hole in the Confederate line. The remainder of the brigade continued north to the West Woods.

Manning and his men traversed a cornfield adjacent to the West Woods, as bullets slapped against the stalks, making a "terrible noise." Col. Edward Hall of the 46th North Carolina claimed the men entered the "contest in the best of spirits." The division arrived in the West Woods just after 10:00 a.m. By this time, McLaws' division, with help from Early's brigade (Alexander Lawton's division), had already mauled Sedgwick's division and the woods were fairly quiet as Manning's men entered from the west, driving due east. Hall testified, "the enemy commenced falling back in disorder, and we passed through the woods without seeing them." Up ahead, George Greene's division (Twelfth Corps) occupied the elevated open area south of the Smoketown Road, largely invisible behind the hill. Some of these troops had recently helped repulse a determined charge by some of Kershaw's brigade and were vigilant for further attacks.⁵⁴

Manning led his three remaining regiments through the West Woods and halted on the right of Ransom's brigade. He quickly deployed the regiments: the 46th North Carolina on the left, the 30th Virginia in the middle, and the 48th North Carolina on the right. The partial brigade then continued moving east through the woods amid heavy artillery and small arms fire. The Dunker Church loomed in front of the 48th North Carolina on the right, forcing it to break in half, each wing passing around it and then recombining on the other side.⁵⁵

Hall on the far left of the line, took in the stout fences "running obliquely" along the Smoketown Road and explained in his report, "In face of such difficulties I thought it inexpedient to charge farther. I therefore placed my regiment behind a breastwork of rails, which I found just beyond the woods, in short range of the enemy, and commenced firing, my men being well protected."⁵⁶

54 *OR* vol. 19, pt. 1, 914-15, 918; Walter Clark, *Histories of Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-1865*, 5 volumes, (Goldsboro, NC: Nash Brothers, Book and Job Printers, 1901), vol. III, 116-17; Krick, *30th Virginia Infantry*, 24-25; Isaac Hirsh Diary, September 17, 1862 entry, Library of Virginia; Collier, *They Do to Tie to!*, 89; Robert Knox to Ezra Carman, n.d., NA-AS; Cope Map #8 (9:00 - 9:30 a.m.).

55 Krick, *30th Virginia Infantry*, 25; Clark, *NC Regiments*, vol. III, 116-117.

56 *OR* vol. 19, pt. 1, 918.

The Virginians and North Carolinians never forgave Manning for what he did next. Thinking the enemy was retreating, Manning with little to no combat experience leading a regiment, much less a brigade, “without any reconnaissance and without any support on either flank,” ordered his men forward without hesitation. Since Hall’s 46th North Carolina remained glued in the woods, only two regiments, the 30th Virginia on the left and 48th North Carolina on the right, charged out of the woods. This would be the first real taste of battle for the two regiments.

Robert Knox of the 30th Virginia explained how Manning “came tearing up on horseback & waving his sword around his head & clearing the fence [along the Hagerstown Pike] at a bound called to us to follow him . . . we charged over the fence & across the field with a yell fixing bayonets at a full run,” A veteran claimed his men “got over [the first fence lining the Hagerstown Pike] in gallant style...under a galling fire.” Manning was shot from his horse and brigade command passed to Hall.⁵⁷

Colonel Hall on the far left of the line described how Manning approached and explained how “he was seriously wounded and would be compelled to retire from the field.” Hall being the next senior colonel, command of the brigade “would fall upon me.” It is unclear what Hall did next, but his report suggests he did little to oversee the subsequent charge of the 48th North Carolina and 30th Virginia. As a result, the subsequent charge of the two regiments was uncoordinated and almost guaranteed to fail.⁵⁸

The attack got off to a ragged start, as not all of the men in the two regiments charged out of the West Woods. Lt. Col. Samuel Walkup of the 48th North Carolina recorded in his diary how the men marched “through a piece of woods facing a terrific fire of artillery and musketry, several of our men were killed and wounded in the woods & many hesitated and took shelter behind trees & could not be forced forward.”⁵⁹

Those Virginians and Tar Heels who left the West Woods to attack Tyndale’s men on the knoll faced immense barriers in reaching the enemy lines, including a series of sturdy post and rail fences and less formidable worm fences. Those who traversed these fences faced a determined enemy on high ground that one soldier in gray called, an “immense stone hill” on the opposite side of the road.

The two regiments’ attack route is unclear. If the brigade numbered 2,164 at Antietam, and the regiments were of approximate size, they would average 541 men. The 48th North Carolina’s left flank probably extended north along the

57 *OR* vol. 19, pt. 1, 918; Krick, *30th Virginia Infantry*, 25-27; Robert Knox to Ezra Carman, November 10, 1897, NA-AS. Knox claimed “the enemy were in massive columns in our front & two twelve guns batteries enfilading our advance.”

58 *OR* vol. 19, pt. 1, 918.

59 Diary of Samuel H. Walkup, April 1, 1862 - March 29, 1865, 23, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

Hagerstown Pike to almost opposite the intersection with the Smoketown Road. The bulk of the regiment faced the knoll and to the lower ground south of it. The 30th Virginia extended the line northward. The right of the regiment was probably at or near the intersection of the Smoketown Road and the Hagerstown Pike; the remainder faced the clover field north of the former road. After crossing into the field, the Virginians would be forced to swing right to get into position facing the knoll on the opposite side of the Smoketown Road. This would explain Col. Hall's remark: "Owing to the nature of the ground, their maneuvers were accompanied by some disorder."

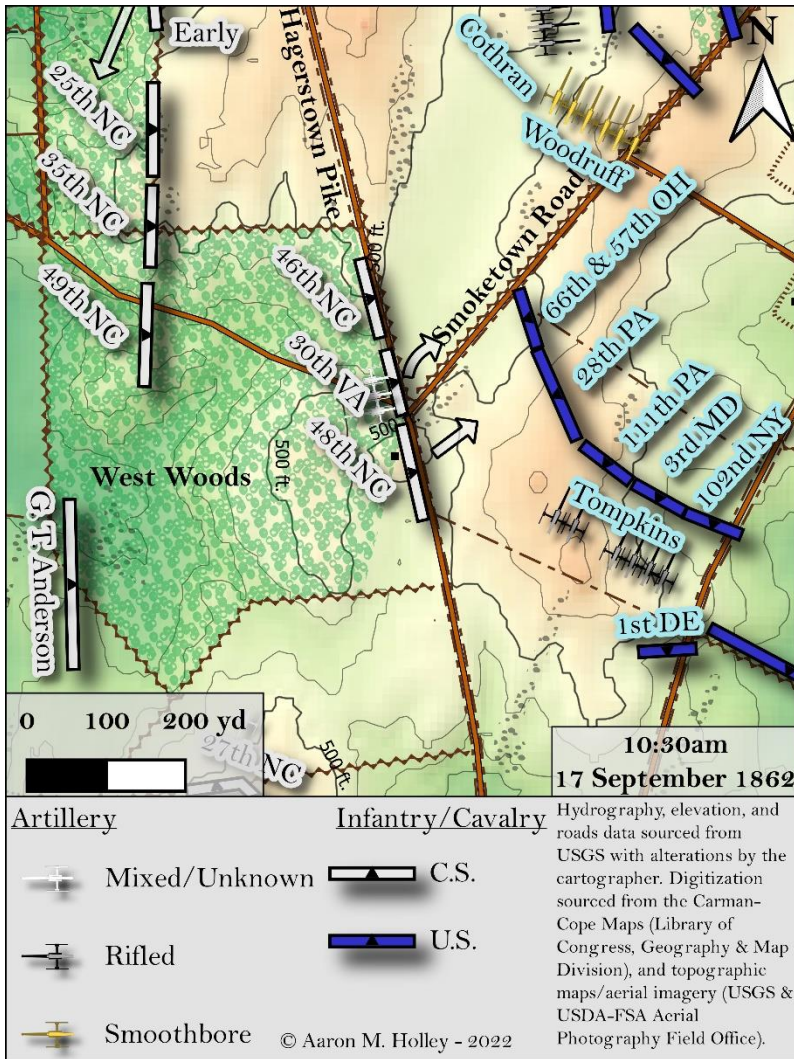
Tyndale's brigade was deployed in a slightly curved line, with 7th Ohio on the right, with its right close to the Smoketown Road, followed by the 5th Ohio and then the 66th Ohio. These regiments faced the 30th Virginia and would prove its undoing. The left of the 66th Ohio was tethered to the right of the 28th Pennsylvania, whose left flank connected with the 111th Pennsylvania (Col. Henry Stainrook's brigade). These regiments occupied the lower ground south of the knoll, facing west and the 48th North Carolina.⁶⁰

A number of North Carolinians refused to budge from behind the fences lining the Hagerstown Pike at the start of the charge. Walkup noted in his diary how he drew his pistol and "threatened to shoot & scolded but with very futile effect." Woodruff's battery was off to the left, spitting canister, and in front, a determined Union skirmish line contested the Confederate approach. The two regiments were in a considerable state of disorder as they prepared to attack the Union position on the knoll and south of it. As they did, the main Union line rose up and fired a deadly volley in the approaching attackers.

"We then received orders to fall back under cover of the hill, and awaited the advance of the enemy; when within a short range our troops were quickly thrown forward to the top of the hill, where we poured into their advancing columns volley after volley," according to Maj. Crane. Maj. John Collins of the 5th Ohio recalled, "Our regiment laid down until they [Manning's men] approached quite near, when they suddenly raised and discharged a volley into their lines..." Capt. Fred Seymour of the 7th Ohio explained how his men "with coolness, waited until within 50 yards and then poured in a scathing fire upon them, volley upon volley..."⁶¹

60 D. Scott Hartwig, *To Antietam Creek: The Maryland Campaign of September 1862* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 680; *OR*, VOL. 19, pt. 1, 918; Cope-Carman Map #9 (10:30 a.m.).

61 *OR* vol. 19, pt. 1, 506, 507, 508, 918.



(Aaron Holley)

The fences proved the undoing of the North Carolinians. According to Hall, “in attempting to charge over the fences and up the ascent [the men] found themselves so massed up that they were compelled to lie down in the face of the enemy and under a withering fire.” Walkup observed how his men were “exposed to a terrible fire which swept everything before it...” No troops could sustain such a pounding for long. Hall noted how the North Carolinians “suffered severely, and in a short time were compelled to retire.” Walkup watched as his regiment “breaking & the whole gave way in confusion & retreat[ed] in disorder.” Sgt. Fithian of the 28th Pennsylvania admitted that

Manning's men "fought well, in fact they seemed to know no fear, Brave, daring men."⁶²

The Virginians on the left were having their own problems as they maneuvered into position to face Tyndale's men. A soldier exclaimed how the enemy "poured a perfect hail of bullets into us." Those Virginians reaching the fence fell to the ground and attempted to return the fire. Many felt betrayed by their comrades from other commands who had not come up to support them. The situation was now dire. "We were in a very bad situation and the enemy in a splendid one on a hill, and we at the bottom," continued the Virginian. It was now every man for himself, as another Virginian noted, it was "so terrible that every man broke and got out as fast as possible." The attack lasted all of perhaps 15 minutes and had traversed no more than 150 yards. Maj. Crane claimed, "So terrific was the fire of our men that the enemy fell like grass before the mower; so deadly was the fire that the enemy retired in great disorder, they not being able to rally their retreating forces." Making matters worse, Greene's men were "firing volley after volley after us" as the survivors retreated back to the West Woods.⁶³

The two regiments continued their retreat through the West Woods, to the disgust of the men of Kershaw's brigade who, according to Walkup, were "begging us to stand by them." He admitted his men were more exposed than the South Carolinians and a number fell when in this area. Hall reported how the retreat of the two regiments created a gap on his right, and rather than see if it would be exploited by the enemy, he pulled his 46th North Carolina further back into the woods to connect with his other two regiments.⁶⁴

Greene's men now advanced off the knoll and drove the last of Manning's and Kershaw's men out of the West Woods, just north of the church. Fithian explained, "we got a going and couldent' stop" and noted how the enemy's return fire unhorsed most of the officers. Crane, filing the report for the brigade, noted: "We charged them in a heavy piece of woods, driving them out of it, capturing a large number of prisoners (among them was a lieutenant-colonel and a lieutenant), and made terrible havoc in their ranks, covering the ground with the slain, many of them officers. We gained the woods, and held our position for two hours."⁶⁵

This was a trying time for the Confederates as the path to Sharpsburg lay open. Hall was approached by Maj. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson who told him

62 *OR* vol. 19, pt. 1, 918; Diary of Samuel H. Walkup; Cope-Carman Map #9 (10:30 a.m.); Fithian Account.

63 Krick, *30th Virginia Infantry*, 26-27; Knox to Carman; Cope Map #9 (10:30 a.m.); E.D. Hall to Ezra Carman, March 5, 1892, National Archives; *OR* vol. 19, pt. 1, 506.

64 Walkup Diary; *OR* vol. 19, pt. 1, 918; Hirsh Diary.

65 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 508; Fithian Account. Eugene Powell claimed he was the only officer on horseback that day. Powell, "Lee's First Invasion: Recollections of the Eastern Campaigns of the Fall of 1862."

to seek out division commander Maj. Gen. Lafayette McLaws for orders. McLaws ordered him to “hold the woods at all hazards,” so he advanced his 46th North Carolina, the only unit still retaining its cohesion, back into the woods, where he placed the regiment “behind a ledge of rocks, throwing out Company A and a company from the Thirtieth Virginia, as skirmishers.” The latter company had been left behind at Snavelly’s Ford and was only now returning to the brigade. William Barksdale’s brigade came up on the North Carolinians’ left and Ransom’s brigade connected with its right. Greene’s men had been thrown out of the woods by this point, so the units held their positions in the West Woods.⁶⁶

The 30th Virginia did not participate in these actions. The regiment’s historian suggested the regiment attempted to reform behind the Dunker Church before moving southwest to form in a cornfield south of the West Woods earlier occupied by the remainder of the brigade. Walker noted in his report, the regiment “owing to some unaccountable misunderstanding of orders...went entirely off the field, and, as a regiment, was not again engaged during the day.” Walker and his staff found the regiment and “succeeded in gathering up portions of it...”⁶⁷

This ended the actions of Manning’s three regiments at Antietam (his other two regiments, the 3rd Arkansas and 27th North Carolina, fought in other actions on the northern end of the battlefield). They lost a total of 442 men while in the West Woods. The 48th North Carolina lost the most, 217, probably because it was hit in its front by part of the 66th Ohio and 28th Pennsylvania and its right flank by the 111th Pennsylvania. The 30th Virginia lost 160 and the 46th North Carolina, which did not leave the West Woods to charge the enemy opposite the Smoketown Road, lost 65 men. How many of Tyndale’s 376 total battle losses can be attributed to this action is unclear, as the brigade also fought earlier in the East Woods/Cornfield.⁶⁸

Gen. Walker blamed the fences for the attack’s failure, believing, “the post-and-rail fences stretching across the fields lying between us and the enemy’s position, I regard as the fatal obstacle to our complete success on the left, and the success there would, doubtless, have changed the fate of the day.” Certainly, the fences contributed to Manning’s defeat, but the odds were against him from the start as two regiments attacking a full Union brigade on high ground can only be considered folly.

An observer noted how “he hoped for their own sakes that the . . . [regiment]

66 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 506, 918-19; John Hudgin to Ezra Carman, n.d., NS-AS. According to Hudgin, his company was deployed as sharpshooters above Snavelly Ford and remained behind when the remainder of the division headed north toward the West Woods. The identity of the company from the 30th Virginia is unknown.

67 Krick, *30th Virginia Infantry*, 27; *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 915; Cope Map, #10 (12:00 - 12:15 p.m.).

68 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 199, 811, 917.

would soon learn the difference between the deliberation of a dress parade and a charge over an open field in the face of largely superior numbers.” Like Kershaw’s earlier charge, all Manning’s accomplished was to add to the Confederates’ casualty lists.⁶⁹

Carman’s interpretation of this action is unknown, as his seminal work is missing five pages that covered the approximate time of this attack. The action is shown in the Carman-Cope Map #9 (10:30 a.m.), however, there are issues with the placement of some of the units. It was also briefly covered in John Priest’s work on the Battle of Antietam. Until now, however, this action has not been described in detail.⁷⁰

69 Clark, *North Carolina Regiments*, vol. III, 68.

70 Thomas G. Clemens, ed., *The Maryland Campaign of September 1862, Vol. II: Antietam* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2012), 236, n. 124; John M. Priest, *Antietam: The Soldiers’ Battle* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing, 1989), 151-52.

“The Bravest of the Brave...Under So Much Dirt”: Floridians in the Maryland Campaign by Phillip S. Greenwalt

The streets of Frederick, Maryland reverberated with the steady cadence of marching feet, from barefoot to shoed, as thousands of Confederate soldiers carried out their orders on September 10, 1862. Matching the route step of the southern infantry was the airy tune struck up by the accompanying musicians. Countless men belted out the lyrics of the popular song, “The Girl I Left Behind Me.” General Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia headed south and west from the central Maryland town, carrying out the directives of Special Orders No. 191.

Among the rank-and-file of the invading rebel army were three regiments from the smallest populated state in the Confederate States of America: Florida. In the 1860 census the entire population of the state was 140,424 souls, split between 78,679 free and 61,745 enslaved persons. Out of 33 states in the Union in 1860 only Delaware and Oregon had smaller populations. Florida though rallied to the Confederate cause, being the third state to secede from the United States on January 10, 1861, and the sixth state to formally join the Confederate States of America.⁷¹

The first regiment to arrive in Virginia from Florida was the 2nd Florida Infantry. Eight companies were mustered into one-year service in La Villa, Florida, near Jacksonville, in early July 1861. By the middle of the month, the full ten companies were allocated. On July 15, 1861, the regiment embarked on trains for the trek northward and to war. Their baptism of fire was at the Battle of Williamsburg on May 5, 1862, where their regimental commander, Col. George T. Ward was killed. By the end of the Peninsula Campaign, the 2nd Florida was joined by two other Florida units.⁷²

Raised around Tallahassee, the state capital, in the spring of 1862, the 5th Florida’s ten companies mostly hailed from the western panhandle of the state. Mustered into Confederate service the unit arrived in Virginia in time for the Second Manassas Campaign. Also joining the 2nd and 5th Florida regiments was the 8th Florida Infantry. Raised in the summer of 1862 and mustering approximately 950 men, the unit also took the railways north in time to join the campaigning in northern Virginia in late summer.

With the theater of operations changing from the gates of Richmond and the Tidewater peninsula to northern Virginia, organizational changes occurred in

71 Margaret E. Wagner and others, ed., *The Library of Congress Civil War Desk Reference* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 70.

72 Joseph H. Crute, Jr., *Units of the Confederate States Army* (Midlothian, VA: Derwent Books, 1987), 74-75.

the Army of Northern Virginia. An informal two wing structure commanded by major generals Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson and James Longstreet replaced the looser division structure Lee had overseen since taking command in early June 1862. Along with the reorganization, the 2nd Florida was joined by the 5th and 8th Florida, replacing two Louisiana regiments in Brig. Gen. Roger Pryor’s brigade. Remaining with the 2nd Florida was the 3rd Virginia and the 14th Alabama. The brigade marched north in a division commanded by Brig. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox.⁷³

At Second Manassas the division was primarily held in reserve and saw limited action. With the move into Maryland the brigade was reassigned. Wilcox’s and Maj. Gen. Richard H. Anderson’s divisions were merged (Wilcox became a brigade commander while Anderson led the division). Pryor’s brigade joined five other brigades to make up Anderson’s command. Beginning on September 4, 1862, the lead elements of Lee’s army rolled up their breeches, slung their cartridge boxes and pouches onto their rifles and held the collection above their heads. With this task done, the main rebel army splashed across the Potomac River and emerged in Maryland. Lee’s first foray into the North had begun.

After crossing the Potomac River at White’s Ford, the route of march carried the Floridians past Sugarloaf Mountain, which towered 800 feet over the surrounding countryside, two and a half times higher than the largest peak in Florida. The infantry passed through Buckeystown and camped outside of Frederick, the largest town in Frederick County. The 1860 population of Frederick numbered 8,143. In comparison, the largest cities in the state of Florida in 1860 were Pensacola (2,876), Key West (2,832), and Jacksonville (2,118). Add all three together and Frederick, Maryland still had a higher population! These sights continued the odyssey of visiting foreign lands for the Floridians.

The Floridians rested for a few days in their camps outside Frederick. On September 9, Maj. Gen. Lafayette McLaws and Lee’s other subordinates received Special Orders No. 191 from General Lee. McLaws’ and Anderson’s divisions were to be the tail of the Army of Northern Virginia as the Southerners left Frederick. When the army reached the vicinity of Middletown, Maryland, McLaws veered to the left and headed toward Harpers Ferry. Moving through the South Mountain range, the Georgian’s objective was to occupy Maryland Heights. This movement, in conjunction with other Confederate columns would invest the Union garrison at Harpers Ferry and lead to their capitulation. McLaws was ignorant of the topography around Harpers Ferry, but nonetheless, he pushed onward according to his orders.

For the Floridians, the morning of September 10 started with roll call and the breaking of their brief sojourn in Frederick. After the other Confederate columns cleared the route of march, Pryor’s brigade swung onto the road and

73 Ibid., 74-77.

began the route step. Approximately ten miles separated Middletown from Frederick. Pryor's command moved toward the Potomac River and marched for Weverton and the pass that bore its name. Their presence here closed off any route between the mountain and the Potomac River. A brigade of Georgians and Alabamians under Ambrose Wright also assisted in securing the pass.

Pryor's brigade stayed in the vicinity of Weverton until September 15 when the Federal garrison at Harpers Ferry surrendered. As fighting occurred all around their position, the only action that Pryor's command performed while in the vicinity of Weverton was to "cut the canal just above a culvert near the place" with commandeered tools. The canal was "materially damaged" and his troops also "broke the canal lock." This allowed for the higher water level above Weverton to flood down the canal.⁷⁴

Sergeant Isaac M. Auld of the 5th Florida penned a letter to his mother recapping their stay at Weverton. "We were placed to guard a gap in the mountains expecting the enemy every minute, but well for them they did not come."⁷⁵

On September 15, Pryor's brigade broke camp and joined the rest of McLaws' division in Pleasant Valley. There, the Confederates waited impatiently in battle line expecting an advance from the north by enemy soldiers from Maj. Gen. William Franklin Sixth Corps. This ultimately did not occur. Later that day, the Floridians finally crossed to the southside of the river, bringing over their baggage, ammunition, and wounded.

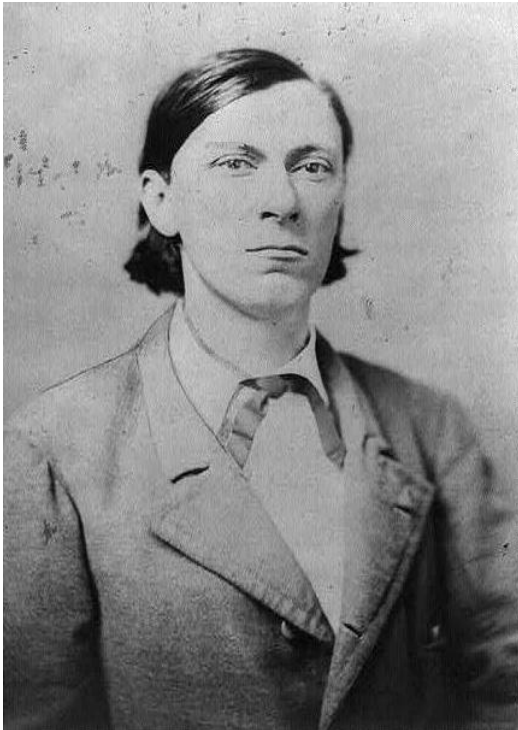
The Floridians' route the next day brought them approximately four miles up the Shepherdstown Road near the hamlet of Halltown in Virginia (modern-day West Virginia). Having reached an area of bivouac, "a large number had no provisions, and a great portion had not had time or opportunity to cook what they had." After a brief sojourn, the Floridians were on the road again at 3 p.m. as the Confederate infantry marched well into the dark. After another brief respite, the men were roused again around midnight to head closer to Sharpsburg.⁷⁶

As McLaws, riding ahead of the two divisions, approached the Maryland town that morning, he was determined to find the army commander. Failing to locate Lee, McLaws found General Longstreet who gave the Georgian his orders. Longstreet directed McLaws to send Anderson's division "direct down the road to the hill beyond Sharpsburg, where he [Anderson] would receive orders." Longstreet also pointed McLaws in the direction of Lee's current headquarters west of Sharpsburg. After a quick consultation with the army commander, McLaws received orders where to place his command and "rode back to hasten

74 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 852-57.

75 Waters, Zack C., and James C. Edmonds, *A Small But Spartan Band, The Florida Brigade in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 32.

76 Waters and Edmonds, *Spartan Band*, 32; Clemens, ed., *South Mountain*, 432-33.



Brigadier General Roger Pryor (Library of Congress)

up General Anderson.⁷⁷

Anderson's division was in rough shape, having gone almost two complete nights without a long rest and bereft of victuals in between. The pace of the route also wore down the ranks. Sergeant Auld continued his letter to his mother with a note about this portion of the campaign. "The night before [the Battle of Antietam] they traveled very fast" and as a result "about half of the regiment broke down that night."⁷⁸

The tired survivors of the recent forced marches arrived near Lee's headquarters before the sun rose on September 17. The veteran soldiers of Pryor's brigade awaited their turn to enter the maelstrom as the cacophony of shot, shell, and men's voices echoed towards

their reserve position. Soon the action filtered south from Lee's left flank toward his center.

A shortcut used by locals to avoid paying tolls for the two turnpikes that intersected in Sharpsburg created a sunken lane that cut through the farm fields outside town. Daniel Harvey "D.H." Hill's division protected this sector of the line. Due to the nature of the fighting that ensued, this part of the battlefield proved just as deadly for the defenders as it was for the attackers. From September 17 onwards this sunken lane was known as the "Bloody Lane."

With pressure mounting from the Union Second Corps, Hill sent back a staff officer requesting reinforcements. The only Confederate infantry in reserve in the center of Lee's battle line was Anderson's division. Thus, without food or rest and unloading knapsacks, Anderson's division entered the fray, advancing around 10 a.m. that morning. In short order, Anderson was struck in the thigh by a rifle round and knocked out of the action. As the most senior brigadier, Roger Pryor assumed command. Unfortunately for the Floridians, along with the rest of the brigades in this division, Pryor had no inkling of what the overall

77 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 852-57.

78 Waters and Edmonds, *Spartan Band*, 32.

strategy was or even the orders given to Anderson. Pryor's lack of information severely impacted the division's ability to effectively deploy and prevail in the fighting. One veteran described Pryor as "the incomparably incompetent Roger Pryor," far from a ringing endorsement of his leadership skills and a fitting epitaph to his role in the ensuing fighting along the Bloody Lane.⁷⁹

One historian of the campaign surmised that Anderson "likely planned a flank attack" on the advancing Second Corps division of Brig. Gen. William French's bluecoats. Instead, the bewildered Pryor fed his brigades in piecemeal, sapping their attacking potential. In a postwar letter, David Lang, then a captain in the 8th Florida, further detailed the loss of leadership suffered by the command at the beginning of the advance.

I have to say that the regiment went into the battle in command of Lt. Col. [George A.C.] Coppen...by assignment of Gen. Roger A. Pryor, just preceding the battle, because of the absence and sickness of Col. Richard Floyd and Lt. Col. Jon M. Pons...Col. Coppen was killed almost immediately after getting under fire in the cornfield below the stone barn near bloody lane!⁸⁰

As the division moved into the open fields of the Piper farm, the men were pummeled by enemy artillery—Captain John A. Tompkins' Battery A, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery situated on the Dunker Church Plateau and Federal artillery across Antietam Creek. Despite the heavy fire, Anderson's veterans reached the Hagerstown Pike about 100 yards south of the Piper Lane. Pryor's brigade entered the Piper Lane, passed by the Piper barn, and then filed to the left before ascending a small rise near the Piper orchard.⁸¹

Meanwhile, the toll of the Federal artillery fire continued to mount. Lang's postwar communication continued:

Capt. Richard [Robert] Waller then assumed command as senior Capt. and was also killed with the colors of the regiment draped over his shoulders, almost immediately afterward...The next in line, the writer [Lang himself] had been previously wounded between the time of the killings of Col. Coppen and Capt. Waller.⁸²

Advancing into the apple orchard, now in battle formation, two of the three regiments from Florida, the 2nd and 8th Florida were now commanded by captains. The former, under William Duncan Ballentine, after crossing the

79 Thomas G. Clemens, ed., *The Maryland Campaign of September 1862, Vol. II: Antietam* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2012), 259; Waters and Edmonds, *Spartan Band*, 33.

80 Waters and Edmonds, *Spartan Band*, 34.

81 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 308-09; Clemens, ed., *South Mountain*, 259.

82 Waters and Edmonds, *Spartan Band*, 34.

Hagerstown Pike and taking position in the Piper orchard, ordered the command to lie down. In this position, the brigade was less susceptible to the murderous fire of Federal artillery, which included rounds of shell and case shot.⁸³

Meanwhile, Robert Rodes' men in Hill's division were desperately holding onto the "Bloody Lane" line. Looking around for possible reinforcements for his beleaguered command, Rodes noticed the men of Florida "in a hollow immediately in my rear and near the orchard." Inquiring from horseback what infantry this was, Ballentine informed Rodes the men comprised part of Pryor's brigade but were ignorant of where to advance and deploy. Rodes rectified the situation, locating Pryor, and getting the brigade commander to issue the necessary orders.⁸⁴

With a change of front forward on the left company, Ballentine initiated the forward movement, with the other regiments forming at the double-quick on the right of the 2nd Florida. The regiments were aligned in the following order from left to right: 2nd Florida-8th Florida-5th Florida-3rd Virginia-14th Alabama. The Floridians advanced shortly after 10:30 a.m.⁸⁵

Besides Tompkins' battery, the men of Pryor's Brigade also received enemy rifle fire from the brigades of Brigadier General Francis Meagher and Colonel Nathan Kimball. The advance took the Floridians out of the orchard, through a cornfield, and into the sunken lane. According to the historian of the Florida brigade, the forward rush carried the command through the lane and up the hill on the far side. The charge was repulsed quickly and with severe losses. Capt. Ballentine fell wounded and was escorted from the field. Colonel John Hatley, in command of the 5th Florida, and one of the ranking officers still on the field in the brigade, "was shot through both thighs at the bloody lane."⁸⁶

Although the sunken road seemed like a logical defensive position, the Floridians were just one set of Confederate infantry that brashly charged through the ready-made defense. After the punishment in the Piper farm and orchard and forward movement out of the Bloody Lane, the Floridians settled near the 30th North Carolina. One Floridian remembered the enemy occupying "a semicircle on the side of a hill" formation in which the blue-coated infantry "poured upon us a murderous fire." Furthermore, the Federal line had an arc shape in which the two wings and center seemed to bend toward the Confederates, providing heavy rifle fire that cut down five 5th Florida flag bearers while the unit occupied the position.⁸⁷

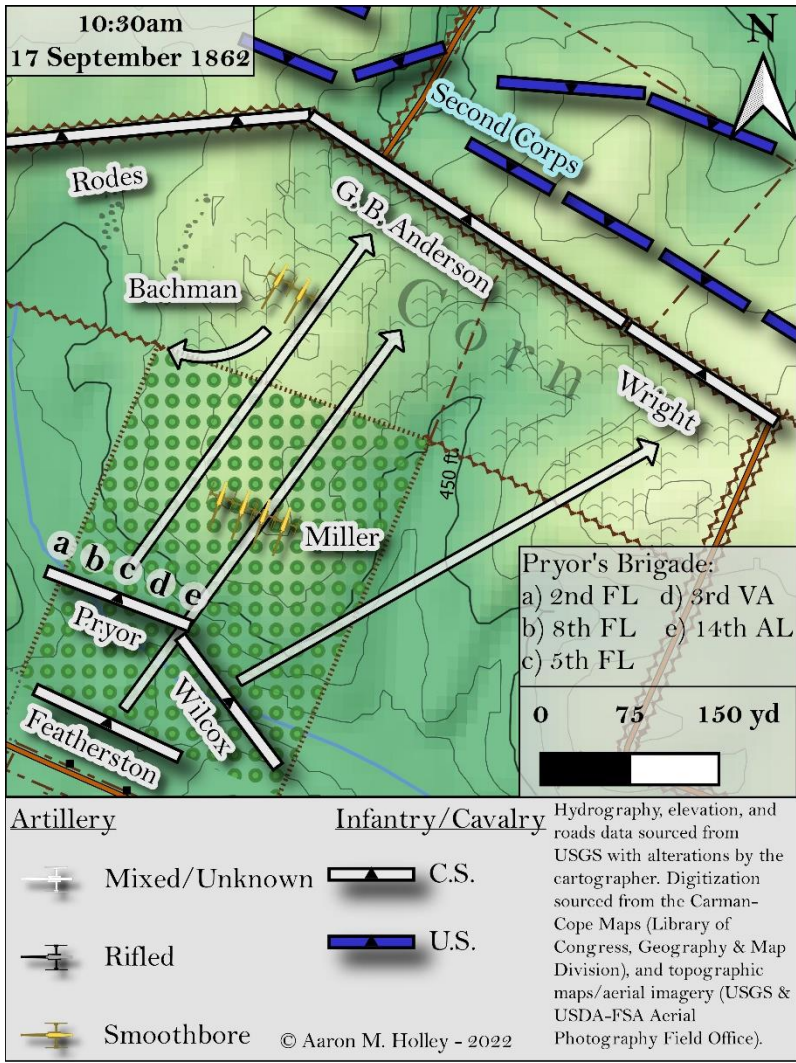
83 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 308-09; Waters and Edmonds, *Spartan Band*, 34.

84 Waters and Edmonds, *Spartan Band*, 34.

85 *Ibid.*, 36; Clemens, ed., *Antietam*, 270; Shane M. Turner, "Rearguard of the Confederacy: The Second Florida Infantry Regiment," M.A. Thesis, (Florida State University, 2005).

86 *Ibid.*, 36.

87 Robert K. Krick, "It Appeared As Though Mutual Extermination Would Put a Stop to the Awful Carnage, Confederates in Sharpsburg's Bloody Lane," in *Antietam: Essays on the 1862*



(Aaron Holley)

With the Florida units “badly cut up” and the disarray prevalent in the Confederate defenses due to a lack of unified command, the situation was tenuous at best for the southerners. The final tipping point became the “skillful application by their enemies [the Federals] of newly arriving reinforcements.” Colonel Francis Barlow leading the 61st and 64th New York Regiments maneuvered onto the Confederate right flank, which allowed them to obliquely

Maryland Campaign, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1989), 244.

fire down the Confederate line. This caused the North Carolinians on the end of the line to recoil, which in turn “unhinged the Alabamians’ line as well.”⁸⁸

With the lack of officers present, the destructive fire from the flank led to “internal misunderstandings” which all played a part in the collapse of the Confederate defensive line. Trying to make sense of why the Confederates were eventually routed occupied the accounts of survivors, many of whom did not look favorably on the Floridians.⁸⁹

“Internal misunderstandings” could best describe the remembrances such as Col. R.T. Bennett’s, commander of the 14th North Carolina, who wrote in his official report “portions of the...2nd Florida, coming to our succor, broke beyond the power of rallying after five minute’s stay” have stained the image of the three Florida units. One historian wrote that accounts like Bennett’s have placed a permanent “blemish on their...record.”⁹⁰

However, a deeper dive into the primary sources, including accounts from soldiers, paints a different picture. Captain Council Bryan, a member of the 5th Florida, who survived the carnage, penned:

The soldiers also suffered appalling casualties...[the Florida troops] double quicked a mile and a half into the fight Wednesday morning about 9 o’clock, fought three Yankee brigades all day and came out at night with 63 men for duty...the whole Regiment was cut to pieces.⁹¹

Bryan was captain of Company C of the 5th Florida and his tallying of casualties shows both the reduced ranks that entered the engagement and who came out unscathed. They “went in with 17 men and came out with 3 unhurt.”⁹² The destruction of the command took perhaps one hour. Despite their condition, the Floridians fought as well as could be expected.

A battlefield reporter remarked “the 5th Florida behaved with distinguished courage and intrepidity.” The 5th and 8th Florida, in the center of the line, held under “a murderous fire about an hour” with the 5th Florida losing five color bearers during the course of the action.⁹³

A survivor of the fighting in Captain Bryan’s Company C, 5th Florida, told how the “retreat was ordered—at that moment the colors fell and were left. The enemy had suffered too much, and notwithstanding his advantages, to pursue, and our gallant Lieutenant Colonel, already wounded in the arm, went back and

88 Krick, “Mutual Extermination,” 244.

89 Ibid., 245.

90 Waters and Edmonds, *Spartan Band*, 36; Andrew Francis Lindstrom, “Perry’s Brigade in the Army of Northern Virginia,” M.A. Thesis, (University of Florida, 1996), 56.

91 Waters and Edmonds, *Spartan Band*, 36.

92 Ibid., 36.

93 Kevin Pawlak, *Shepherdstown in the Civil War: One Vast Confederate Hospital* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2015), 81.

brought them away under a shower of bullets.”⁹⁴

Another soldier “was wounded five different times in as many places; yet he continued to shoot away as fearlessly as ever until he received the fifth wound, which disabled one of his hands, so he could not load his piece.”⁹⁵

Although sick, Col. Richard F. Floyd, commander of the 8th Florida, left a hospital in Virginia and hurriedly tried to make his way back to command for the campaign. Still weak and lacking stamina to take command, Floyd nonetheless witnessed what happened to his fellow Floridians. He wrote to Florida governor John Milton five days after the Battle of Antietam:

Of course I was in no condition to take command for I had to stop, panting from weakness, and sit down every hundred yards. Still I went on to see all the battlefield; I saw enough to make my heart ache for our poor fellows, for every instant of time they were passing me supported, even litters, all covered with wounds—Finally, I met several of our poor fellows coming off wounded, some mortally, and asking them for our Regt they piteously replied “they are all killed, wounded, or dispersed.”⁹⁶

The entire 8th Florida, on the morning of the battle, mustered 120 men total. Floyd continued:

There were no field officer present, nor the adjutant...There were only three Captains on the Field. One Company [Company A] was not represented at all...one other company only mustered three men on the field...

A fitting epitaph of what an approximate hour of combat did to the Florida units in the Army of Northern Virginia can be summed up by these two sentences, also from the pen of Floyd.

By this time both Regts & also the gallant 2d [2nd Florida]...had been cut up and scattered here and there in small squads. The next day it was difficult to find any men at all of these Regts, except the wounded who were brought off.⁹⁷

Out of an aggregate strength of 570 Floridians who marched onto the Antietam battlefield, 282 were killed, wounded, or missing by the time the three regiments retreated from the Bloody Lane—a casualty rate of close to 50%.⁹⁸

94 Waters and Edmonds, *Spartan Band*, 37.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid., 38.

98 There is some ambiguity regarding the casualties of the Florida regiments, the numbers listed

With two newer regiments, the 5th and 8th, along with the veteran 2nd, the Florida regiments fought gallantly, suffered gallantly, but the historical record has not treated them gallantly. Part of the reason is the lack of official reports from the division, since Anderson, the division commander, and Pryor, the brigade commander, both did not pen one. In fact, only one regimental commander in Pryor's entire brigade wrote an official after-action report. Secondly, the series of "internal misunderstandings," lack of field grade officers, and the successful maneuvering of two Union regiments shrouded the ending of the Confederate defense and led to piecemeal attempts to explain and placate who was at fault. The lack of witnesses from the Florida units and the poor showing of their brigade commander made the Floridians an easy scapegoat for the Confederate failure at the Bloody Lane.

However, the advance of the brigade, with the lack of sleep, supplies, the incessant marches from September 15 onwards just to get to the battlefield shows the determination and will of these troops. Then to enter combat, stay under galling artillery and infantry fire without the chance to reply in kind shows great courage under fire. Responding to the order to advance into this maelstrom and actually carrying out the attack shows an immense bravery. When considering the performance of these Florida soldiers and the horrendous casualties they suffered on that fateful September day, the record truly does not do them justice. As Capt. Council Bryan wrote,

We lost in killed and wounded at least two-thirds. The Second Florida has twenty-six men for duty. The Regiment has won for itself a name. It is as brave as the bravest. We heard today we were ordered back to Florida, and such bright faces you never saw—under so much dirt.⁹⁹

The Floridians, under dirt and grime, would fight again on both sides of the Potomac River until Appomattox.

in the text come from the calculations of the Floridians by the historians who wrote the only complete unit history of the brigade. *Ibid.*, 39.

99 Although the officer stated two-thirds, the casualty total was closer to 50% but some exaggeration is always warranted in these communications. Lindstrom, "Perry's Brigade," 59.

In Their Own Words: John Delaney to John Gould, March 27, 1891

by Darin Wipperman

The words below come from a letter dated March 27, 1891, part of the extensive collection focused on the Antietam Campaign at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. A native of Ireland, John Delaney enlisted in the 107th Pennsylvania shortly before his 14th birthday. Wounded at Antietam, Delaney received a Medal of Honor for actions at Hatcher's Run in 1865. Perhaps his recollections of Antietam are not impeccable. Perhaps his opinions are incorrect. Yet the young teenage hero certainly earned the right to his own views and imperfections. Delaney's correspondent was John Gould, an officer in the 10th Maine Infantry at Antietam.

* * * * *

My Dear Capt.

I have your interesting letter of the 17th, and without waiting for books I will give you my personal recollections of the memorable evening of the 16th and all of the 17th of Sept. 1862. It was possibly 8 P.M. of the 16th when our Regt. was brought to a halt in the East Wood, with orders to hold ourselves in readiness to move at a moments notice. Soon after, possibly 9 P.M. we were aroused by a fierce musketry rattle in our front, which owing to the stillness of the night and the fact of the firing in the woods made it appear and sound far more fierce than it really was. The racket proved to be an encounter between the Penna Reserves and a line of Hoods men, while each was manuevering for position, our boys had the best of it, and soon everything became quiet and we again laid down in our bivouac, and slept until dawn; when we were ordered to fall in, and moving by the right flank out into a plowed field, and there formed into "close column by division," in which position we marched in almost a due south direction, until we reached a position about one hundred yds in rear of our artillery, our Regt was directly behind Capt Thompson's first Penna battery¹⁰⁰ and at that time the rain of shot and shell from the vicinity of the Dunkards Church was fearful. I recall most vividly while standing behind our guns, a Rebl shell struck right under the muzzle of one of Thompsons guns, exploded, three of the men going down, and man carrying a shell, and standing immediately to the right and mouth of the gun had the fuse of the shell in his hand fired by the exploding shell, and I saw that brave fellow grab the burning fuse and extinguish it. Another incident was the dropping of a solid shot directly in front of our Regt. and seeing it bound like a foot ball over the ten companies without injuring a man. I speake of these two incidents because they impressed themselves on my

100 Battery C, Pennsylvania Light Artillery.

mind most forcibly. Our stay in that position was possibly 15 minutes, though it seemed much longer. The order was given to move forward, which we did moving past and in front of the Artillery, our advance carried us from plowed field into a clover field in which we formed line of battle, and pushed a cross said field into the famous Corn field, and on over it to its southern edge, where we were forced to halt by the vicious fire from both artillery and infantry. We remained in that position until all our ammunition was gone, when the line fell back. Now comes a *personal* feature and one which I don't like to refer to, but under the circumstances cannot lead up to the point you want without giving it. When that battle was fought, I was a boy - only 14 years old on the 22nd of April previous, because I was low in stature which placed me immediately on the left of my company and that being on the right of the Color Company. When I got on my feet (we had been kneeling during the fight) I discovered our two flags laying under a pile of dead and wounded men of "C" Company, at the same moment the Rebel line of battle was advancing on a dog trot with their guns at trail arms. Quick as thought I took in the situation, turned round to see if any comrade was near enough to help me save our flags, my eye caught sight of only two men, my own Capt J. Sheafer and my tent mate private James Kennedy. Each going to the rear, and each calling to me to "come back," as quick as I could throw my voice to them that our flags were still on the ground, they both came bounding back, and in an instant we pulled them out, and with our hearts in our mouths dashed away, the Rebels calling to us to drop the flags, but strange to say for some reason or other, failed to fire a shot at us. On we ran, until I found myself nearing the middle of the Corn field, when I heard the sweet Irish brogue of my tent mate Kennedy (he was only four years from Ireland) calling out to Capt. Sheafer, "Captain, Captain, hold on you devil till I give them another volley." The purely Irish of the above is so apparent that coercion would be out of order, were it not for his appeal to me, "Johnnie, you little devil, let them have it square in the face." It had just dawned on this brave Irish soldier that he had not fired the last charge he put in his Austrian rifle, for at the time I called to him to come back and help get the flags, he was struggling to drive home his last round, and without waiting to even draw his ramrod he dashed back and helped rescue the flags, and his forgetting that his gun was loaded until he was at least half way across the Corn field and there turned, facing a whole line of battle not more than 75 yds from him, pulled the trigger and sent bullet and ramrod into that line as soon as he fired, (the kick of his gun nearly took him off his feet). He bounded off like a deer, I after him, but I did not go far when my ears caught the sound of a familiar voice making the following appeal, "Joney, come help me," and rushing to where my comrade was laying shot clean through the right breast I tossed the flag to Kennedy (left Sheafer carrying the other) and with my right arm around the poor fellow helped him to his feet and started back. We did not have far to go as our reserve *Mansfield's men*, were kneeling and laying behind the low stone or rock fence, with their guns resting

on the lower rail of the wood fence on the stone wall. Many of the men behind that fence called to me to drop my comrade and get over the fence as the Rebel line was then near enough for our men to count the buttons on their jackets, but I heeded not until I heard off to my left (our right) the familiar Rebel yell, and turning to see the cause, a shower of bullets came from the direction of the Hagerstown pike, one of them striking me above the right knee, when down I went with my poor German friend, almost instantly I found myself lifted up in the strong arms of a powerful Irish sergeant belonging to the Regt (New York) on the other side of the fence and immediately handed me over the fence, where I remained until the next morning. I scarcely found myself on the other side of the fence when a sheet of fire flashed out from along the low fence rail, and when the smoke lifted an instant later there was nothing left standing at the Rebel line. Now the question that presents itself to my mind so far as rendering you my aid is this, who composted that line? That is, if your Regt, was in the line which took our place about 8 A.M. True I may be very much mistaken as to the state whose troops followed us to that fence, but I feel quite confident that it was the 11 or 5th Alabama.¹⁰¹ By this statement you will see that the Brigade had gone back as a Brigade some time before Capt Sheafer, Private Kennedy and myself left the south side of the Corn field, hence I cannot state positively at what point the 105th New York fell back to, but undoubtedly you are right in placing them where you do, as the left of our Brigade extended East of the West point of the East Woods. What I meant by the low stone wall, was not a regularly laid wall, but what we commonly found during the war, loose stones laid in a row a foot or so high and then a regular rail fence over and above that. This will tally with what Col. Walker called a "rock fence."¹⁰² I remember instantly seeing a number of stone heaps in the field between bloody Lane and the Corn field and directly west of the center of East Woods. As to your point of who did those Rebels run against? I mean the Rebels who followed us, and were repulsed at stone fence. Unquestionably they were *Manfields*¹⁰³ men with one Brigade of our Division (Hartsuff's)¹⁰⁴ which acted as a reserve for the rest of the Division, and who went in with your Corps, and drove the Rebels back past the Dunkard Church. By reference to your letter of March 6th you ask particularly as to where the Rebels came from that followed us. As far as my range of vision carried, they came from the West wood, extreme southeast corning, by the right flank, as far down as I could see the lane on our left, they then moved toward us in line of battle passing over the *thin* Rebel line in our front, all the time over artillery pouring grape and canister into them, which made the progress of those in the open field much slower than the part of their line which was advancing in the West Woods. This

101 Neither of these regiments were near Delaney's regiment.

102 Colonel James A. Walker, Trimble's Brigade, Ewell's Division, Jackson's Command. *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 977.

103 Brigadier General Joseph Mansfield, Twelfth Corps.

104 Brigadier General George Hartsuff, Third Brigade, Second Division, First Corps.

accounts for the turning of our right flank, or the forcing back of the right before the center was struck. Thus you will see the Rebel column advanced from a point opposite our center and sweeping around with their left until they laped our right near the D.R. Miller house. These were the men you met and helped to drive back passed the Dunkard Church, and out on to the high ground beyond the bloody lane. At this late day it is folly for any of us to criticize the blunders of that battlefield, and yet if any one is pardonable for doing so, those of us who shed our blood on the field should have first place. I was fortunate enough not to be so badly wounded, as not to see and realize how vicious was the management that did not hurl 5000 of the brave fellows, Porter's men, with the breach that the men of Richardson and French made between two and three o'clock.¹⁰⁵ I witnessed the magnificent charge of Meaghers Brigade, saw Meagher place his hat with its long white and green plumes on the point of his sword and rush forward a head of his Brigade, saw them cross the bloody lane, that point toward the dunkards Church, and sweeping everything before them, but there was no aid sent forward to help them hold what they had so bravely won.¹⁰⁶ But what occurred at Antietam happened at Fredericksburg and again at Gettysburg. McClellan had fully 20000 men who did not fire a shot at Antietam, Burnside had 25000 men who did not load their guns at Fredericksburg, and Meade had fully 15000 men at Gettysburg what did not get within range of a rifle ball, and in each of these battles Lee had no idle men, they all fought, and yet Capt, every history or sketch that you have ever seen no matter by whom written speak of the preponderance of numbers on our side.¹⁰⁷ But let God's truth be told, and it will appear that in all those great battles down to the fall of 1863, the number of men who actually fought on both sides were about equal. I hope this will not weary you, I have had to write at moments when I could get time, and this has been strung out over two days. I am very busy in this office, and if you find this disappointed charge it to my inability to get time. I enclose your copies of a couple letters which I am sure as a soldier you will appreciate. Yours sincerely,
J.C. Delaney

105 For a discussion of the Army of the Potomac's Fifth Corps in the Battle of Antietam, see Gottfried, ed., *Brigades of Antietam*, 109-11; Steven R. Stotelmyer, *Too Useful to Sacrifice: Reconsidering George B. McClellan's Generalship in the Maryland Campaign from South Mountain to Antietam* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2019), 143-98; Bradley Graham, *The Antietam Effect* (Gettysburg, PA: Media Magic, 2012), 301-56.

106 Brigadier General Thomas Meagher, Second Brigade, First Division, Second Corps. This brigade never crossed the Bloody Lane.

107 See footnote 104 for different interpretations of this claim.

Antietam Artifacts: Mansfield's Hat for a Sword, The Collection of Capt. George Nye, 10th Maine Infantry

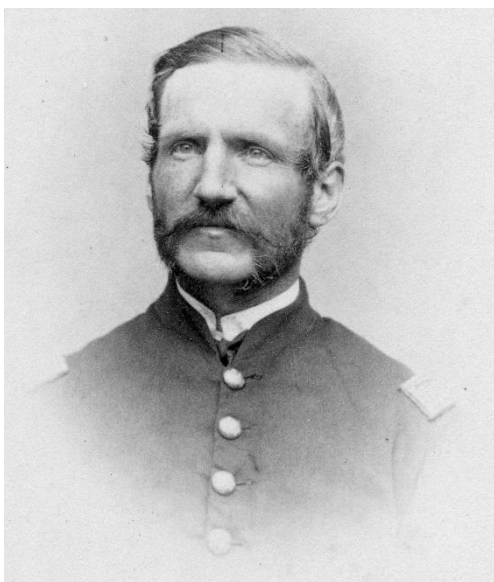
by Nicholas P. Picerno

George Henry Nye was born in Hallowell, Maine on February 24, 1828. He was mustered into the 1st Maine Infantry in May 1861.

On May 9, 1861, Nye wrote his wife, "I am called to help support our National Flag. My grandfather fought 7 long years to help gain it and shall not I help support and sustain that legacy that has been handed down to me."

The regiment was in service for three months, and its term of enlistment expired that August. Though the 1st Maine never engaged in battle, the regimental historian wrote, "So ended the 1st Maine: its birth was honorable and glorious, and it did all the service that was required of it."

Nye next mustered into the 10th Maine Infantry on October 4, 1861, joining many of his former 1st Maine comrades. He was commissioned captain of Company K. Unlike the 1st Maine, the men of the 10th Maine witnessed the savagery of war occurring first at the Battle of Cedar Mountain on August 9, 1862. Afterwards, they were combat veterans, and they became embroiled in combat once more, this time on September 17, 1862, near Sharpsburg, Maryland, in the Battle of Antietam.



Captain George Nye (Nicholas P. Picerno)

Around 7:15 a.m., on September 17, the 10th Maine was deploying along a fence line in an area later to be known as the East Woods. Their newly minted corps commander (an army veteran), Brig. Gen. Joseph King Fenno Mansfield, was astride his mount next to a limestone outcropping near where his current day mortuary cannon sits on Mansfield Avenue.

He had erroneously ordered the men of the 10th Maine to hold their fire as he mistakenly believed they were firing at fellow federal soldiers. Regimental historian Maj. John Mead Gould would later write, "Captain [then 1st Lieutenant] Jordan now ran forward as far as the fence, along the top of the

ledge behind which his division was sheltered and insisted that Gen. Mansfield should 'Look and see.' He and Sergt. Burnham pointed out particular men of the enemy, who were not 50 yards away, that were then aiming their rifles at us and at him. Doubtless the General was wounded while talking with Jordan; at all events he was convinced, and remarked, 'Yes, you are right.'"¹⁰⁸

Several men of the 10th Maine observed some of Mansfield's belongings on the field just after he fell. Lieutenant William P. Jordan, who was speaking with Mansfield when the general was wounded, retrieved the general's hat cord as it fell from the general's hat while Mansfield waved it at the men of the 10th Maine in an effort to have them cease fire.

A soldier in Company F removed Mansfield's blood-stained gauntlets and later gave them to his company commander, Capt. William Knowlton. The general's hat was given to Captain Nye by a sergeant in the 10th Maine, and the story of the sword begins.

Nye kept General Mansfield's hat in his possession. The 10th Maine mustered out of service on May 8, 1863, and Nye returned to his home in Lewiston, Maine. While home, he decided to send the hat to the gallant general's family in Middletown, Connecticut. Nye received acknowledgement of the favor in a letter dated October 9, 1863, from the deceased general's nephew, Henry Stephen Mansfield.

Captain George H. Nye
Lewiston, Maine

Dear sir

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your esteemed favor of the 25th Augt also my Uncle's hat which came in hand in due time-

I shall cherish it as a memento of a brave soldier, a sincere Christian, a skillful Engineer, a true patriot, a friend and in all other words a representative man-

I should have been glad of the band perhaps I may write Capt. Jordan-

I take the liberty of enclosing my Uncle's card, also I send per Express a light cavalry sword of our manufacture which please accept.

You intimate in a former letter that you was about to enter the service again as one of the tried veterans, if so my best wishes attend you.

With respect, I am

Yours Truly

H.S. Mansfield

108 John Mead Gould, *Joseph K.F. Mansfield, Brigadier General of the U.S. Army: A Narrative of Events Connected with his Mortal Wounding at Antietam, Sharpsburg, Maryland, September 17, 1862* (Portland, ME: Stephen Berry, 1895), 15.

Henry S. Mansfield and Estus Lamb owned a scythe factory in Forestdale, Rhode Island. Recognizing there was a profit to be made by producing swords, the firm was awarded its first contract to manufacture light cavalry swords in 1861 and continued to manufacture light cavalry swords until the end of the war.

In the summer of 1863, George Nye learned of the formation of a new regiment, one in which many of the veterans of the 10th Maine, as well as some of the vets of the old 1st Maine Infantry, would enlist.

Nye entered the 29th Maine Infantry in November 1863 and eventually commanded the regiment as colonel while serving in the Shenandoah Valley in 1864. On October 19, 1864, during the Battle of Cedar Creek, Nye suffered a serious wound and fell from his horse. The scabbard of his prized light cavalry sword sustained damage.

In January 1865, the Mansfield and Lamb sword company sent Nye a replacement scabbard at no cost that he cheerfully accepted. Nye served in the 29th Maine until June 1866, having served the entire terms of the 1st, 10th, and 29th Maine infantry regiments. For his meritorious service Nye received two brevets, first as brigadier general and later as major general.

George Nye brought his treasured sword home with him after the war. He wrote about it in an 1892 letter to Maj. John Mead Gould, historian of the 1st-10th-29th Maine.

General Nye wrote:

I sent the Gen's. [Mansfield's] hat to his nephew, H. S. Mansfield of Millville, Mass, he having heard that I had it through Mr. Samuel Parmenter then of Lewiston now in the coal business at Providence R. I. Mr. Mansfield wrote to me at Lewiston soon after the 10th was mustered out and asked if I could certify before a justice of the peace in reference to it being the general's hat! I did and gave the full particulars as it was then fresh in my memory. He acknowledged the receipt of the hat and sent me a fine sword, as he was making swords for the government after the war. I had my military history battle sketches on the sword to leave to those who may follow after.

Brevet Major General George H. Nye died on October 23, 1908. As his body was placed upon the ground in which he would repose at Arlington National Cemetery, his family wished to place upon his casket the one item he cherished of his military service, that being his Mansfield and Lamb light cavalry sword. The sword was removed prior to him being lowered into the grave. And as Nye wished in 1892, it was left to those who may follow after.





(Nicholas P. Picerno)

In Antietam's Footsteps: Goodbye Letters from the Battlefield

by J.O. Smith

This past September marked the 20th anniversary of 9/11. The Flight 93 National Memorial in Pennsylvania preserves messages left for loved ones by passengers and crew from the plane. These recordings, a difficult listen to be sure, and accounts of what happened tell us that those onboard confronted their fate with a clear-eyed resolve. With voices similar to those from Flight 93, three mortally wounded soldiers at Antietam—Allen Zacharias, Wilder Dwight, Henry Sand—wrote to their loved ones from the battlefield. No doubt there were others. Today, visitors can pay their respects to these men at or near where they wrote their goodbyes.



Captain Allen Zacharias likely wrote his goodbye letter within view of this image in Philadelphia Brigade Park (J.O. Smith)

Captain Allen Zacharias was born in Washington County, Maryland near Hagerstown and moved with his father to Monroe, Michigan at a young age. He entered service in Company K of the 7th Michigan in the summer of 1861. Promoted to captain in March 1862, Zacharias carried on his person a short biographical note written during the Seven Days Campaign, instructing its finder to tell his friends in the regiment and his father of his fate should he fall. On

September 17, the 7th Michigan was part of the II Corps mid-morning advance to the West Woods, in the second line of John Sedgwick's division. Crossing to the west of the Hagerstown Pike but not much farther, Zacharias's regiment entered the woods at their intersection with the road (the southeast corner of today's Philadelphia Brigade Park), just north of the ravine the Confederates would use to their advantage. Struck in front and flank by William Barksdale's Mississippians and George T. Anderson's Georgians, the 7th Michigan suffered 221 casualties, including 29-year-old Captain Zacharias. He wrote to his family from the field:

Dear Parent, Brothers, and Sisters: I am wounded—mortally, I think. The fight rages around me. I have done my duty; this is my consolation. I hope to meet you all again. I left not the line until nearly all had fallen, and colors gone. I am getting weak; my arms are free, but below my chest is numb. The enemy trotting over me; the numbness up to my heart. Good-bye all. Your son, Allen.

A Maine artilleryman forwarded the note to the captain's friends. Brought to a field hospital and later to the home of a family friend in Hagerstown, Zacharias was tended to by his father and sister but eventually succumbed on December 31, 1862.¹⁰⁹

Lieutenant Colonel Wilder Dwight of the 2nd Massachusetts Infantry, a Harvard-educated native of Springfield, Massachusetts, helped organize his regiment in 1861. He began a letter to his mother on the morning of the 17th as his regiment was "drawn up in support of Hooker." Sometime after Dwight began the letter, his regiment and the rest of the XII Corps helped collapse the Confederate left around the Cornfield in some of the day's bloodiest fighting. Later that morning and probably not long after Captain Zacharias fell, the 2nd Massachusetts and 13th New Jersey advanced from the East Woods to support U.S. troops retreating out of the West Woods, passing over ground where today stands a white-column monument to the 11th Mississippi, whose captured colors Dwight had earlier held aloft before his cheering men. As they went forward, Dwight and his men traversed a sea of human wreckage. A Federal officer said the Confederate dead "lay in heaps, mowed down, and many of our brave boys with them. So it was everywhere." Near the Hagerstown

109 Charles Lanman, *The Red Book of Michigan: A Civil, Military and Biographical History* (Detroit: E.B. Smith, 1871) 339-40; *OR* 19, pt. 1, 193; Bradley M. Gottfried, ed., *Brigades of Antietam* (Sharpsburg, MD: The Press of the Antietam Institute, 2021), 94; Jno. Robertson, comp., *Michigan in the War* (Lansing: W.S. George & Co., State Printers, 1882) 271-2; Ezra Carman, *The Maryland Campaign of 1862*, Thomas Clemens, ed., 3 volumes (El Dorado Hills: Savas Beatie, 2010, 2012), vol. II, 195; see the position of the 7th Michigan on the 9:00-9:30AM Carman-Cope map at

[https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3842am.gcw0248000/?sp=12&r=0.2,0.439,0.23,0.146,0.](https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3842am.gcw0248000/?sp=12&r=0.2,0.439,0.23,0.146,0)

Pike, just south of where the Massachusetts state monument is today, Confederate reinforcements in the woods ahead opened fire. A bullet hit Dwight in the wrist and hip. The two Federal regiments fell back from the road, leaving behind their dead and wounded, including Dwight. Lying on the ground in the throes of his wounds, with a hand no doubt unsteadied by the pain, Dwight wrote a blood-stained valediction:

Dearest Mother, I am wounded so as to be helpless. Good bye if so it must be. I think I die in victory. God defend our country. I trust in God, and love you all to the last. Dearest love to father and all my dear brothers. Our troops have left the part of the field where I lay. Mother, yours, Wilder. All is well with those that have faith.

Later, a private from the 2nd Massachusetts, Rupert Sadler, found Dwight with his head propped up on a rail. Dwight gave Sadler the letter to his mother. The next morning, Dwight was taken to a farmhouse a few miles east of the battlefield. Dwight telegraphed his family, "Make haste to join me." He died at midday on September 19 at the age of 29.¹¹⁰



*Lieutenant Colonel Wilder Dwight
(Life and Letters of Wilder Dwight)*

As Captain Zacharias and Lieutenant Colonel Dwight were confronting their fates within a few hundred yards of one another, two and a half miles to the south, Capt. Henry Sand of the 103rd New York Infantry and the rest of Brig. Gen. Isaac Rodman's Ninth Corps division were in search of a suitable crossing of Antietam Creek downstream from the Lower (Burnside) Bridge. Sand had joined the 7th New York State Militia in April 1861 and later became a captain in the 103rd New York in March 1862. Crossing the creek at Snavelly's Ford, Sand and his regiment climbed the steep bank and went forward as

110 *Life and Letters of Wilder Dwight, Lieut. Col. Second Mass. Inf. Vols.* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868), 293-5, 303; George E. Otott, "Clash in the Cornfield: The First Texas Volunteer Infantry in the Maryland Campaign," in *Civil War Regiments: A Journal of the American Civil War*, vol. 5, no. 3 (Savas Publishing Company, 1997), 110; Dwight's letter can be viewed on the website of the Massachusetts Historical Society; Gottfried, ed., *Brigades of Antietam*, 197-200; see the position of the 2nd Massachusetts on the 10:30AM Carman-Cope map at <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3842am.gcw0248000/?sp=13&r=0.203,0.447,0.239,0.152,0;> for more on Zacharias and Dwight, see <http://john-banks.blogspot.com/2016/08/notes-from-antietam-battlefield-good.html>.



Captain Henry Sand (New York State Military Museum)

part of the Final Attack during the late afternoon of September 17. The 103rd's brigade would lose close to half its number in the uphill assault on the Confederate right. After the regimental color bearer "had twice been shot down," Sand "rushed forward, extricated our flag from his dying grasp and bore it aloft. He ran along the line, waving the flag, inspiring his men to come up to that." Sand offered his men an "encouraging smile" but then "felt a bang in [his] leg and came down like a stone." Though his men gathered around him, Sand "waved them off," raising his cap over his head and calling out, "on boys, on, never mind me." Carried to the cover of a stone wall, likely just down the slope and a few yards to the east of where the 9th New York Monument is today, Sand wrote these lines:

Dear Ma,

Here I lay on the field, shot through the thigh. My wound is painful but not mortal I believe—however, I send you these lines to bid you all goodbye in case I never see you again.

I hear our men cheering and hope the day is ours—if we only have a great victory, I am contented. Goodbye. My love and kiss to all—

your loving son, Henry.

Once Fairchild's brigade and the rest of the Ninth Corps retreated to Antietam Creek, Confederates moved Sand a few hundred yards north to the Avey farm. After the Confederate withdrawal south of the Potomac, Sand wound up at the nearby Otto farm and wrote at least three letters to his family in the week after the battle. Sand's mother came to him and wrote home on October 26 that her son remained "cheerful and hopeful" though he "grows thinner daily." Henry Sand died at 10:30 p.m. on October 30, 1862. His attending physician recorded that 26-year-old Sand "was rational and able to speak within an hour or so of his death."¹¹¹

111 Gottfried, ed., *Brigades of Antietam*, 169-174; Peter H. Sand and John F. McLaughlin, eds., *Crossing Antietam: The Civil War Letters of Captain Henry Augustus Sand, Company A, 103rd New York Volunteers* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2016), 32, 137-43; <https://sparedshared22.wordpress.com/2020/12/30/surgeon-casebook-from-german-reform-church-hospital-in-sharpsburg/>, accessed December 28, 2021; see the position of the 103rd New

The sixteen decades separating us from Zacharias, Dwight, Sand and the rest of the fallen perhaps make their words less haunting than recordings from 9/11. But our own raw memories from 20 years ago remind us that our detachment from these Antietam farewells belies the searing pain the Civil War generation must have felt in their day. Before the end of this century all of us with a living memory of 9/11 will be gone, leaving those commemorating that terrible Tuesday as distant from it as we are from Antietam, the painful echoes fading down the years. The best we can do is preserve, reflect, and remember the fallen from Antietam and 9/11—may our descendants do the same.

The approximate locations where the goodbye letters were written are as follows: Zacharias: Philadelphia Brigade Park is Stop 5 on the Antietam National Battlefield driving tour. N 39.477930, W 77.748073; Dwight: the Massachusetts State Monument is located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Cornfield Avenue and the Hagerstown Pike (Dunker Church Road). N 39.480637, W 77.748170; Sand: the 9th New York Monument is located along the Harpers Ferry Road, N 39.452800, W 77.743792; alternatively, Stop 10 on the park driving tour provides another perspective of where the 103rd New York was in action on the slope leading up to the 9th New York Monument.

Institute Interview: Sitting Down with Dr. Gordon Dammann

by Laura Marfut

Dr. Gordon Dammann, interested in history at a young age, was a dental student in Illinois when he realized there were books on the topic of Civil War medicine, yet an abundance of misinformation. Since then, he has devoted nearly every spare minute, or what was left after running a private dental practice, coaching football and raising a family, to filling the information void and setting the record straight.

In addition to founding the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, which now includes the Pry House Field Hospital Museum and Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Office Museum, he authored the three-volume *Pictorial Encyclopedia of Civil War Medical Instruments and Equipment*. Dr. Dammann also co-authored *Images of Civil War Medicine—A Photographic History* and *Island of Mercy: Hospitals in the Maryland Campaign, September 1862*, and edited the reprint *Memoirs of John Letterman, MD Surgeon of U.S. Army, 1861-1865*. He has also been giving tours as a National Park Service certified Antietam Battlefield Guide for the last 16 years. Dr. Dammann recently retired from his private practice in Lena, Illinois.

LM: Which came first, your interest in dentistry or your interest in Civil War medicine?

GD: My interest in the Civil War came as a youngster in Peoria, Illinois. My father loved history and took us around to various historic locations. In high school I got busy with sports and the trips slowed down, but my interest in history remained. Then came my interest in medicine. I was supposed to go to West Point but blew my knee out. Instead, I went to dental school, graduating in 1969. I joined the army for two years, then moved to Lena, Illinois.

I always had an interest in Union cavalry and did a lot of reading, but got interested in the medical part because I could only find two books written on the subject and there were so many misconceptions; doctors seen as “sawbones,” and the idea that Civil War medicine was not good medicine. But as a result of what happened during the Civil War the United States became the “beacon of medicine” because of the research that was being done here. We made medicine in the world a lot better because of it. There is nothing this country can’t do when we have the resources and put our minds to it, and we proved it then.

I started collecting artifacts and writing about field medicine over the next few years. By 1988, my collection had grown to over 5,000 items. My wife Karen and I built our house ourselves, and my collection took over a whole room. Karen was ok with all of this. We were in the Army together, and when I started collecting, she bought into the program. We have been a great team. Our sons,

too: one is an orthopedic surgeon and the other is an administrator for a Civil War museum in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

LM: The National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick, Maryland was built around your personal collection. Where did you find such rare artifacts?



Gordon and his wife Karen (Gordon Dammann)

GD: I found just about everything at Civil War shows and different dealers that I trusted. I found the dealers by word of mouth and by working with other collectors. I dealt with four or five good guys in the beginning and just stayed with them. They helped me.

LM: Establishing the museum required significant community and governmental support. What was the experience like from inception to completion?

GD: One night in 1988, I woke up at 3 a.m. and thought, “What are we going to do with all this stuff?” That’s when the idea of a museum was born.

I have always loved Antietam. Being in the Army medical corps, the “Letterman Plan” was a particular interest of mine. The plan involved improvements in medical treatment instituted by George McClellan’s medical director, John Letterman, which formed the basis of how field medicine is done today. Many of those initiatives were used for the first time at Antietam, so I thought Antietam would be the best place for the museum.

The Piper farm house, which sits off the Old Hagerstown Pike just south of the Sunken Road and had been used as a Confederate hospital, wasn’t being used. I thought, wouldn’t it be neat if we could put the museum there? Karen and I flew out and met with the Antietam superintendent at the time, Rich Rambur. He was excited about the idea and we communicated back and forth for the next three years, but he was transferred to another duty station and the idea stalled.

In the meantime, we formed a Board of Directors from about 13 guys and gals I knew throughout the 1980’s who were interested in the Civil War and bought into the museum idea; George Delaplaine, Armin Weng and others. That’s when the city council in Frederick, Maryland contacted me. They had read an article in the newspaper about our museum looking for a home and liked the idea of having it in their city. A 19th century building was available if we could raise two million dollars. The building had been used by a furniture maker and an undertaker during the Civil War.

Frederick mayor Paul Gordon loved the idea. He invited me to bring my slide

carousel and talk to the city council. The idea sat there for several months, then I got a call from one of our board members asking if I could hop on a plane and fly to Annapolis, Maryland, to speak to the Senate Finance Committee. Toward the end of my allotted ten minutes, Charlie Smeltzer, who was head of the Finance Committee and a strong supporter of the museum idea, said “Dr. Dammann flew all the way from Illinois, so we should give him more than ten minutes.” We ended up with a million-dollar grant from the state of Maryland, but it was a matching grant which meant we had to raise the other million. At that point I basically became a “museum prostitute” - I would do anything for museum money. We started out seeking donations from the big pharmaceutical companies, thinking they would be the likely donors, but met with little success. Private donations turned out to be the key; we got more money from living rooms than board rooms.

We raised the second million in two years—1998 to 2000—and started leasing the building in 2000. Built in the 1700’s, it was just a shell when we took it over. It was ready to fall apart. One night I got call from the contractor who said the front of the building was about to fall into the street. We had to buttress it at a cost of \$80,000.

We rebuilt it from the inside out. By 2000 it was good enough to put displays in there. The lease from the city was inexpensive, but we needed lots of money to completely transform the inside to meet the standards of the International Council of Museums as a Class A museum. JaNeen Smith took over in the late 1990’s as the Executive Director of the museum. She was a dynamo (now passed) and got us through the grand opening in 2000 and our initial American Association of Museums accreditation in 2002. In the end, the cost was between three and four million dollars.

Next came the Pry House Field Hospital Museum at Antietam followed by the Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Office Museum in Washington, D.C.

LM: The Pry House Field Hospital Museum at Antietam opened in 2005, five years after the museum opened in Frederick. How did you finally get a museum at Antietam?

GD: In the early 2000’s, Antietam Superintendent John Howard called about possibly turning the Pry house and barn, which were sitting vacant, into a museum. The Pry House was George McClellan’s headquarters during the battle and served as John Letterman’s medical headquarters during and after.¹¹² With the help of John Howard, we worked out a lease with the Federal government. This was one of the first times the National Park Service staff had worked with a private entity. It was unbelievable how this all fell into place.

We already had Frederick, but having something at Antietam was important in telling the story of how the “Letterman Plan” changed everything in field

112 See Thomas G. Clemens, “In Search of McClellan’s Headquarters.” *Civil War Times*, June 2016, 26-33, for an updated interpretation of McClellan’s use of the Pry House.

medicine. Letterman's evacuation system and ambulance corps was set up in August 1862 and used for the first time at Antietam. In preparation for the battle, Letterman identified hospital sites at the farms of Hoffman, Roulette, Cost, Line, Newcomer, Kennedy, Neikirk, Pry, and Locust Spring, as well as buildings in the town of Keedysville, to receive wounded from both armies. This system became the "Letterman Plan."

LM: Among the displays at the Pry House are authentic-looking mannequins of Union generals Joseph Hooker and Israel Richardson in the rooms where they were treated and, in Richardson's case, died. Where did the mannequins come from?

GD: Karen and I went on a tour to Normandy and saw hospital sites which had been turned into museums. We saw great uniforms planted on ugly mannequins and said, "We have to get decent mannequins." We found a company, Dorfman Museum Figures in Ellicott City, just outside of Baltimore, that made mannequins designed according to how we wanted them. My son did research on photographs of Richardson and Hooker so that the mannequins would look authentic. The cost was high to start with and adding faces was another thousand bucks, but we wanted to do it right. So, another fundraising effort. We had to raise every dime that we spent.

LM: In 2015, the National Museum of Civil War Medicine opened the Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Office Museum in Washington, D.C. How did that come to be?

GD: I was chairman of the board when this came to us in 2007. The offices where Clara Barton lived and worked from 1865-1868 had been discovered in the mid-1990's during a routine inspection of the building on 7th Street slated for destruction. The offices were on the building's third floor, which had been blocked off for nearly a century. They contained thousands of artifacts of Barton's work, including personal letters about work she was doing to help families find where their loved ones had been buried. Barton suffered a nervous breakdown in 1868 and left for Europe. She later returned and founded the American Red Cross.

The Red Cross came to our board about turning the offices into a museum and we voted to take it over. We had to renovate the entire third floor to turn it into what it was back then. That took lots of time and money, which meant more fundraising; but the museum tells a great story about Clara Barton and the missing soldiers.

LM: Is there one particular artifact in any of the museums that holds special meaning for you?

GD: That would be the artificial leg in the Frederick museum belonging to a soldier from the 9th Maine Heavy Artillery. His name was Peleg Bradford from Carmel, Maine. I got to know his family. His great-grandson always talked about sitting on grandpa's wooden leg, the result of a wound sustained at Petersburg. He said, "Grandpa talked about his leg running around like a chicken without

its head.” Peleg’s story of survival is remarkable. He had an initial amputation at Petersburg, then an additional one in Washington, D.C. Before the war, Peleg had become engaged to a woman in Carmel named Cynthia. After the amputations he wrote her a letter saying, “Cynthia, I will not come back because I cannot dance at our wedding...I am not a whole man.” But he did go back. He married Cynthia and they had six children together. He did all of those things and survived, so he’s my favorite person. We would like to find a similar story involving a Confederate soldier.

One “must see” exhibit would be the camp display, also in the Frederick museum. The tent is the only one of its kind. It belonged to surgeon John Wiley, 6th New Jersey Infantry Regiment, who used it as his living quarters.

The tent came to me in 1988. I got a call from a dealer that I trusted who said, “Doc, you won’t believe what’s coming up for sale.” It came from Cape May Court House in New Jersey, where it had been in the attic of Wiley’s house all those years. The family wanted to sell the house and had to find a place for the tent. I bought it and put it on display at Civil War shows at Gettysburg, Nashville, and all around, as a way to teach about Civil War medicine. In Nashville, an official from the Smithsonian who was judging the displays came up and said, “You know, that’s the only surviving wall tent from the Civil War!”

LM: Who helped you in the beginning?

GD: Our Board of Directors was fantastic, especially the Delaplaine family of Frederick. In addition to all the fundraising we did, we put a lot of our own money into it because we wanted to make it work and do it right. Executive Director JaNeen Smith knew what had to be done and we got it done. A lot of the original crew have passed by this time. It really was a labor of love.

There were three board members from the Midwest: me, Armin Weng and Dr. Tom Sweeney. Armin was a Lutheran Minister. He had a Civil War round table in Illinois about 50 miles from us. I joined his round table in the 1970’s and we became good buddies. He was my salvation when I needed help. When I’d get too worried, Karen would call Armin and he would come up and tell me, “God wills it.”

Early in the process, we held a conference on Civil War medicine at Shepherd College (now Shepherd University) near Antietam to raise additional funds. We raised about \$20,000. Rev. John Schildt, also an Antietam Battlefield Guide, was part of that. Without Weng and Schildt praying for us, we never would have gotten off the ground!

The city of Frederick was really great to us. They were the first to invite us in, and the building lease was reasonably priced.

I couldn’t have done any of this without the support from my dear wife. Those were great times, but busy and trying times, too. I was still practicing dentistry and coaching high school football. The whole family supported me through it all. My town supported me, too, despite some who were thinking, “Why does he have a replica of a cannon in his front yard?”

LM: As an Antietam Battlefield Guide, how do you weave your extensive knowledge of Civil War medicine into your tours?

GD: I always ramble on about the medical part of it and Letterman's evacuation system that he started at Antietam. That system carried over to what the Army uses today. I saw it in Vietnam: out of the war zone, back to the field station...it all started at Antietam. That's why I have such a love of Antietam. My tours always bring battlefield medicine into them, including locations of field dressing stations, such as the one for John Gibbon's Iron Brigade behind the D.R. Miller farmhouse.

I cover what was going on in Confederate field medicine also. Lafayette Guild was Letterman's counterpart in the Confederate army. Letterman and Guild were learning at the same time on the battlefields. They had both been at the Jefferson Medical School in Philadelphia at the same time and were part of the medical corps in the Federal Army before the war. There was at least one time during the war when they collaborated in person. After the battle of Chancellorsville, they both had wounded on both sides. It was not possible for Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker (commander of the Army of the Potomac) to get together with Gen. Robert E. Lee (commander of the Army of Northern Virginia), so Letterman and Guild got together with the white flag and agreed to exchange the wounded. They were both at Gettysburg as well. Letterman resigned in 1864 as medical director and became a hospital inspector. After the war they both lived in or near San Francisco, California, so it is likely they met at some point during those years.

LM: You've authored and co-authored several books on Civil War medicine. Is there one of which you are especially proud?

GD: That would be the one I did with Jay Bollet called *Images of Civil War Medicine: A Photographic History*. It told the story of field medicine during the Civil War using hundreds of rare photographs.

We were getting photographs from all over the country. Jay was a retired M.D. and provided input on the medical part. I had the material that would go into it and the job of finding the images. It ended up taking about two years to complete.

Every time you do something like that you learn something surprising. We found original photographs of the Smoketown tent hospital at the University of Rochester Edward G. Miner Library in Rochester, New York, including one of nurse Maria Hall tending to the wounded. The Smoketown hospital was one of the largest hospitals in the vicinity of Antietam. It sat somewhere near the intersection of Smoketown Road and the Williamsport Road. I'm still working on exactly where it was.

LM: What's next for you?

GD: There are a lot of things I'd like to do if I have enough days on this earth. Something already in the works is to find the exact location of the Smoketown hospital. I'm working with another Antietam Battlefield Guide, Joe Stahl, on

that.

I'd like to write a book or pamphlet on John Letterman working with his counterpart, Lafayette Guild. I think the two of them did a great service to American medicine. There is not a lot out there on Guild, but it's neat because they were together off and on throughout their careers. As I mentioned earlier, their paths crossed many times. I think there is a good story out there on how these two worked together.

I am drawn to the stories of survivors, which is why Peleg Bradford's artificial leg is my favorite artifact. Many sustained horrendous wounds and survived while some received a nick and died from that. Wisconsin Governor Louis Harvey accidentally drowned in the Tennessee River after the Battle of Shiloh while bringing resources to help the wounded. I have been working on a project on the wounding at Antietam of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. Holmes was wounded three times during the war: shot in the chest at Balls Bluff; shot in the neck at Antietam; and wounded in the foot at Chancellorsville. He survived and became a Supreme Court Justice.

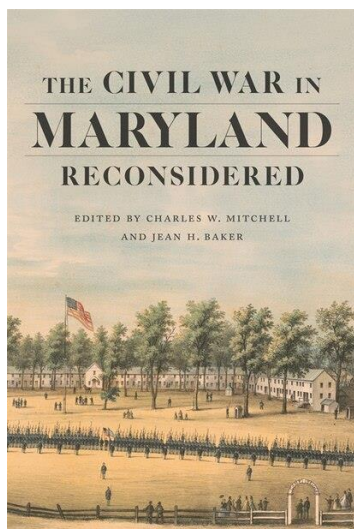
LM: What do you consider as your greatest achievement?

GD: Becoming an Antietam Battlefield Guide 16 years ago. The guides are some of the greatest people I know. I took my field test with Ted Alexander, former Chief Historian at Antietam who passed away in July 2020. Antietam guides are super special people; it's a sharing environment. There's nothing else like it.

Book Review

Mitchell, Charles W. and Jean H. Baker, eds. *The Civil War in Maryland Reconsidered*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2021. Hardcover, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN: 978-0-8071-7289-6. \$45.00.

Review by Michael Hill



Students of the 1862 Maryland Campaign—presumably that’s most who subscribe to this journal—should know that only one of the 13 essays in “The Civil War in Maryland Reconsidered” specifically deals with that campaign. They should also know that this is a tremendous resource for deepening your understanding of it.

Edited by longtime Civil War scholar Charles W. Mitchell and Goucher Professor Emerita Jean W. Baker, who write a great introduction, this collection adds valuable context to the events of September 1862 by illuminating the many currents flowing across the border state that would play host to these two armies.

For starters, know that the one essay that does focus on the Maryland Campaign is an excellent account of burying the bodies at South Mountain and Antietam by Brian Matthew Jordan whose books include one on South Mountain and another on the long-lasting effects of the war on Union veterans. Jordan shows the downside of the Union finally achieving success against the army of Robert E. Lee—among the spoils that went to the victors were the horrors left behind on a 19th-century battlefield.

The campaign also gets a direct account in an incisive essay by the dean of Antietam scholars, Thomas Clemens, who chronicles all the times Confederate troops crossed the Potomac—four by his count since he notes that in the first few weeks of the war a southern officer at Harper’s Ferry named Thomas Jackson sent rebel troops up onto Maryland Heights. Jackson, who would gain the nickname he would carry into history a couple of months later not far away in Manassas, noticed that Harper’s Ferry could not be defended if Maryland Heights was not secured, knowledge he put to use 16 months later during the second incursion into Maryland. The Gettysburg campaign and Jubal Early’s raid were the other two.

But for the most part, *The Civil War in Maryland Reconsidered* examines the myriad issues around secession and slavery and war that affected both politics and daily life in Maryland, not only in the mid-19th century but right down to

the present as the war's aftershocks reverberate in ways unique to this border state.

In doing so, these essays destroy many of the persistent myths that cling to Civil War history and memory in Maryland. One of the main ones is summed up nicely in the foreword by Adam Goodheart of Washington College writing about a monument to a Confederate soldier in Talbot County on the Eastern Shore. The story it tells, he writes, "ignores the fact that approximately two-thirds of the men who marched off to war from Talbot County did so wearing the Union blue, including hundreds of African Americans ... Yet its narrative has long been present throughout Maryland ... that this was a state kept in the Union only by the point of a bayonet..." (page ix)

The essays make clear that slavery was long a contentious issue in Maryland despite its slave state status, reinforced, Johns Hopkins Professor Martha S. Jones makes clear, by the mixed reception to the Dred Scott decision written by Maryland's own Roger Brooks Taney. Many point to the victory in Maryland of the southern Democrat—and future Confederate general—John Breckinridge in the 1860 election as proof that most in the state would have seceded if left to their own devices. But as Mitchell makes clear in his essay, Breckinridge won only a plurality of the votes in Maryland while the majority of ballots were cast for pro-Union candidates—though mainly for also pro-slavery John Bell, only a handful for Abraham Lincoln.

The point driven home in this and other essays is that most in Maryland did not want to leave the union especially if you discount the Eastern Shore. So, the tepid reception given Confederate troops who came into the central part of the state in 1862 was no surprise. Lee and other southern leaders who expected otherwise had fallen victim to their own anti-Lincoln propaganda. Perhaps even more interesting is Frank Towers' examination of secession politics in Baltimore where April 19, 1861 riots and those cannons on Federal Hill Benjamin Butler trained on the city have led many to believe the city was a southern stronghold. Towers, a professor at the University of Calgary, writes convincingly that most citizens of Baltimore were unionists. Many think otherwise because secessionist support was centered in the upper crust whose views tended to get the most attention—as did their subsequent arrests on charges of disloyalty. In fact, as another essay shows, Union troops—black and white—were recruited in Baltimore much as they were in any other northern city, with difficulty.

But before white Baltimoreans get too proud of their forebears being on the right side of history know that the bulk of anti-secessionist sentiment came from the virulently racist anti-immigrant Know-Nothing party. That's indicative of the contradictions that ran through Maryland during the Civil War era, appropriate given its status as a Union state south of the Mason-Dixon Line the delineates its border with Pennsylvania.

It is far from a simple story, but a simple summation is that this was a state whose white citizens were for the most part both pro-Union and pro-slavery, a

sentiment that often now we see as contradictory was certainly shared by many in the loyal union states. As such, it is probably fitting that Maryland was the site of the crucial victory by George McClellan (who probably shared exactly those sentiments) and ironic that that victory led to the Emancipation Proclamation, particularly when you read the essay by Jonathan White of Christopher Newport University on the difficult task of getting emancipation approved in Maryland, which did not happen until 1864.

Of course, the fight for the state's loyalty goes on as University of Sussex emeritus professor Robert Cook's excellent essay on Civil War memory in Maryland shows. He begins by recounting the 2017 middle-of-the-night removal of Baltimore's Confederate monuments as well as the statue of Taney. Monuments play a major role in Maryland's wrestling match with memory, including the two the state built that honor both Union and Confederate soldiers, one at Antietam, the other in Chattanooga.

The struggle over memory continues. Since Goodheart wrote that introduction, the Talbot County Council voted 3-2 to remove the Talbot Boys Confederate monument and relocate it to a private park on the Cross Keys battlefield in Virginia.

The Civil War in Maryland Reconsidered has some flaws that often accompany books of essays, mostly inevitable repetitions as many go over the same background to set up their thesis. For instance, there are several accounts of the riots in Baltimore in April 1861 that gave the Civil War its first casualties. But the quibbles are minor. This is a worthy addition to the bookshelf of anyone interested in any aspect of the Civil War in this state.

16th Connecticut: A Valediction by Judi McHugh

Young

so young and unprepared we laughed
passing time in time to the march
untested yet bold
certain that our fight would end the war

Suddenly silent, suddenly serious
suddenly sick with trepidation
we approached our line of battle
Veteran South Carolina rose as one
and fired into our untrained line

You fell

I held your head in my hands
your broken head in my hands
no time, no time to mourn
only time to fight or run

Forgive me

I crept back to find you
Even now, the field is not quiet
crows still scavenging
whippoorwills cackling as they catch at the souls
In this morass of men and boys
slowly dying lying on this trampled field

calling out into the deaf twilight
for some shred of relief
I cannot find you
How can we mourn if I cannot find you?

Contributor Biographies

Sharon A. Murray is a native Idahoan with degrees in History and Mining Engineering from the University of Idaho. She volunteers at Antietam National Battlefield and has been a Certified Antietam Battlefield Guide since 2014. She is currently working on a biography of Col. Benjamin Franklin “Grimes” Davis.

Bradley M. Gottfried received his Ph.D. in Zoology from Miami University and spent 40 years in higher education before retiring in 2017 as president of the College of Southern Maryland. He has written 14 books on the Civil War, He is a Certified Antietam Battlefield Guide. He also edited and organized the Antietam Institute’s first publication, *Brigades of Antietam*.

Phillip S. Greenwalt received his M.A. in history from George Mason University. He is the author or co-author of five books and is a founding member of the Emerging Revolutionary War blog and a regular contributor to the Emerging Civil War blog. He currently works as the Chief of Interpretation at Catocin Mountain Park.

Darin Wipperman holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Northern Iowa. Most recently, he has worked as a reporter and editor for weekly newspapers in New Hampshire. He is the author of *First for the Union: Life and Death in a Civil War Army Corps from Antietam to Gettysburg*.

Nicholas P. Picerno is Chairman Emeritus of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation. He has been collecting and researching the history of the 1st-10th-29th Maine Infantry for 40 years.

J.O. Smith has a master’s degree in history from the University of Georgia and undergraduate and law degrees from Duke University. He is an attorney and lives with his family near Annapolis, Maryland. He has been a Certified Antietam Battlefield Guide since 2018.

Laura Marfut is a retired U.S. Army colonel with master’s degrees in International Relations and Education, and a Master of Strategic Studies degree from the U.S. Army War College. She has been a Certified Antietam Battlefield Guide since 2019.

Michael Hill spent most of his career as a journalist at the *Baltimore Sun*. Now retired, he is a Certified Battlefield Guide at Antietam National Battlefield.

Judi McHugh lives and works in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. One of her most recent publications has been nominated for the Pushcart Award.

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