



THE OLD LINER NEWSLETTER



Why the Union Army Had So Many Boy Soldiers A new book unearths the startling numbers behind underage enlistment during the Civil War



Drummer boy John Clem (left) and Robert Henry Hendershot, who claimed to be the celebrated "drummer boy of Rappahannock" (right) Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division / Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

By Frances M. Clarke and Rebecca Jo Plant
Smithsonian, 1/17/ 2023

Monroe Township, Missouri, was a hotbed of secessionism, but Union sentiment ran strong in John Gudgell's household. Just days after federal troops arrived in the area in mid-June 1861, the family's youngest child enlisted in a home guard unit. By fall, 14-year-old Julian Gudgell was determined to join a proper regiment. Although his father foiled his first attempt, he ran away again a few weeks later and managed to enlist in the 18th Missouri Infantry. On paper, he claimed to be 17.

Julian was one of more than 200,000 youths below the age of 18 who served in the Union Army during the Civil War. Constituting roughly 10 percent of Union troops and most likely a similar proportion of

Confederate forces—though surviving records allow for less certainty on the rebelling side—these young enlistees significantly enhanced the size and capabilities of both armies. They also created a great deal of drama and chaos, upending household economies by absconding with vital labor power, causing loved ones untold anxiety, and sometimes sparking dramatic showdowns between military and civilian authorities.

Family members desperate for their sons' release from service confronted officers in military camps; petitioned elected representatives and government officials; and appealed to judges for writs of habeas corpus, which compelled military officers to appear in court alongside underage soldiers and defend their enlistment. When such efforts failed, many embarked on costly—and often futile—quests, chasing after regiments on the move, combing city streets near enlistment offices or even traveling to Washington to plead their case in person. These conflicts had far-reaching consequences for the individuals and families involved, as well as for the battered nation that emerged from the war. Not only were thousands of minors legally emancipated from parental control through enlistment, but the federal government also centralized power by rewriting militia laws and preventing state and local courts from using the habeas process to check potential enlistment abuses.

An innovative study of underage soldiers and their previously unrecognized impact on Civil War era America

Consider John Gudgell's attempts to recover his son. He first sought the help of a general



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stationed in the area, who assured him that Julian would soon be sent home. Six months later, though, the boy was still in the service.

John then wrote to Missouri

Representative Francis P. Blair Jr., calling himself a stalwart “union man” and saying he would not be trying to intervene if Julian were “older and more experienced.” No matter what arguments John made or whom he petitioned, he could not get his underage son discharged.

Given that the law was on John’s side, this process shouldn’t have been so hard. When Julian enlisted, minors below the age of 21 legally needed the consent of a parent or guardian to enlist in the Union Army. In February 1862, Congress lowered the bar to 18, but at 14, Julian fell well below that threshold. John even managed the rare feat of obtaining the support of Julian’s captain, who wrote to the United States Adjutant General’s Office that a discharge would be in keeping with regulations. Besides, the captain added, “such boys are of little or no use to the army in the field.” Still, Julian was not released.

His service history suggests why. He fought in the Battle of Shiloh in southwestern Tennessee in April 1862 and earned a promotion to corporal in early 1863, soon after his 16th birthday. Not so much as an absence due to illness marred his record. While Julian may have been unusually capable for one so young, many underage soldiers distinguished themselves in similar ways. A large majority of them served as regular soldiers, not musicians, and around 80 percent were 16 or 17 years old. But even the youngest and smallest boys, who were treated as pets of their regiments—allowed to ride while others marched, kept behind the lines while others fought—performed

important roles. They helped carry the wounded from the field, ran messages, filled canteens, tended horses, built campfires, cooked, mended clothes and lifted men’s spirits with their childish antics. They may not have been of age, but they were of crucial use, which is precisely why the military was loath to release them.

This was especially true among the Union forces—a finding that at first might seem counterintuitive, even confounding. After all, the U.S. boasted roughly 3.5 times as many white men of military age as the Confederacy. To address its population disadvantage, the Confederate Congress resorted to far-reaching measures, achieving a substantially higher rate of service among eligible men than the U.S. could ever claim. The Confederacy adopted a policy of universal conscription in April 1862; in February 1864, it lowered the age of conscription from 18 to 17. At the same time, some Confederate states enrolled boys as young as 16 for service in state-controlled units. Meanwhile, the U.S. maintained a minimum age of 18 for voluntary enlistment and only drafted those aged 20 or above. Given all this, it makes sense that many Unionists accused Confederates of “robbing the cradle and grave” to fill their ranks.



*Reproducing William Morris Hunt’s painting *The Drummer Boy*, this photographic*



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print on carte de visite mount resembles the work of the French artists who first popularized the drummer boy figure as a symbol of republican purity and heroism. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Newspapers sometimes recounted tales of drummer boys committing violence, but even in cases like that of John Clem—alleged to have shot a Confederate officer—the act itself is not depicted. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Yet closer scrutiny reveals a more complex history. Most leaders balked at the idea of conscripting youths below 18 directly into the Confederate Army, insisting that such a measure would amount to “grinding the seed corn”—destroying the South’s future. Instead, they enrolled 17-year-olds in state reserve units, which generally entailed less dangerous work that was closer to home. Even near the war’s bitter end, when the Confederates enacted legislation allowing for the enlistment of enslaved people, they declined to conscript boys below age 18 into the regular army. Of course, many tens of thousands of underage youths—possibly over 100,000—served in the Confederate Army nonetheless. But all things considered, it is the Confederacy’s efforts to shield the young from hard service, more than its attempts to mobilize them, that demand explanation.

If inherited notions of the Confederate Army dragooning boys into service are erroneous, so too is the belief that underage enlistment in the U.S. was mainly limited to drummer boys. Drawing on official military records, historians have long held that children younger than 18 made up only a minuscule portion of all Union enlistees—less than 2 percent. Yet when soldiers’ reported ages are checked against census records and other

sources, it becomes clear that the true history of underage enlistment has been obscured by an epidemic of official lies. While most young enlistees shaved somewhere between a few months to a few years off their actual ages, the more extreme cases—like that of 11-year-old George S. Howard, who enlisted in the 36th Massachusetts Infantry by claiming to be a 19-year-old—are positively jaw-dropping. Codified as facts by enlisting officers who often knew better, the lies told by underage boys were subsequently incorporated into historical accounts, skewing our view of the Union Army up to the present day.

Not only did boys and youths enlist in greater numbers than generally thought on both sides, but their service also preoccupied contemporaries to a greater extent than historians have recognized. As soon as the fighting began, petitions and affidavits seeking the release of underage soldiers started pouring into Washington—so many that in September 1861, the War Department simply decreed that it would no longer discharge soldiers on the grounds of minority. But until late 1863, judges in state and local courts continued to hear habeas cases involving minor enlistees, discharging them more often than not. In August 1861, a headline in the *New York Times* pronounced the “plea of infancy” in courtrooms “an epidemic.” Endlessly litigated in courts, debates over underage soldiers also played out in the press, the halls of Congress, government offices, and military and medical circles. All the while, writers, artists and musicians plied the nation with idealized depictions of heroic drummer boys and young soldiers, which appeared in every imaginable corner of the culture—



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from paintings and lithographs to sentimental poems, songs and plays.



THE LITTLE CONFEDERATE.

Samuel W. Doble of Company D, 12th Maine Infantry Regiment Public domain via Wikimedia Commons



Sixteen-year-old James Dinkins of Mississippi in his cadet uniform Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

As a political and cultural symbol, the boy soldier or drummer boy resonated in the U.S. in ways it simply could not in the Confederacy. Rooted in an artistic tradition that dated back to the French Revolution, the figure embodied the democratic republic that the nation imagined itself to be—youthful, incorruptible and

forward-looking. These were not the values most prized by the Confederate States of America, a nation founded by self-styled patriarchs seeking to uphold a hierarchical social order based on slavery. Like Unionists, Confederates celebrated particularly heroic youths as evidence of their people's unconquerable spirit, but only in the U.S. did the generic boy soldier or drummer boy become a symbol that personified the nation.

Likewise, only in the Union states did youth enlistment become a bureaucratic nightmare and a pressing legal question. That's because the debate over underage enlistees in the U.S. was simultaneously a debate over the limits of military power. It all boiled down to whether the government could legally breach the relationship between a father and a minor son, holding an underage enlistee to service regardless of parental wishes. In other words, contests over the status of enlisted boys and youths inevitably raised fundamental questions over how much authority household heads, communities and states could expect to retain while fighting a prolonged and bloody war.

The Confederacy was also wracked by disputes over how much authority should be ceded to the central government and the military. But in the Confederate states, legal conflicts over the concentration of power rarely centered on underage enlistees. Owing to the comprehensive nature of Confederate conscription, civilians more typically sought the release of absent husbands and fathers—adult male providers—rather than underage sons. In any event, families had an easier time recovering youths who enlisted without parental consent. The suspension of habeas



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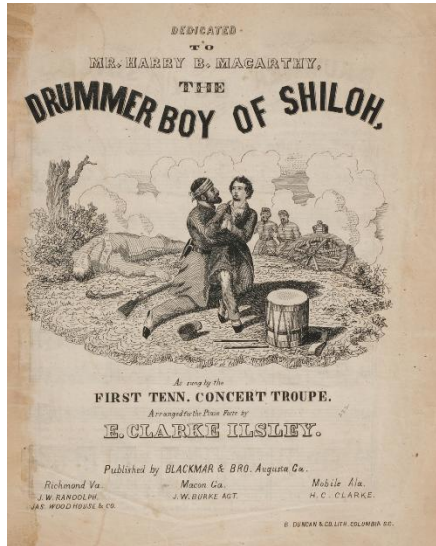


corpus was more episodic and less effective at blocking such cases than in the U.S., and the Confederate government neither enacted laws nor issued general military orders designed to prevent minors' release.

lyrics published in 1864. Wikimedia Commons under public domain

What happened to John and Julian Guggell is thus very much a Union story. Still on the rolls in late 1863, Julian re-enlisted as a veteran volunteer and was rewarded with a 30-day furlough. But once he returned home, his father decided to claim and hold what he saw as rightfully his. The young soldier with a previously unblemished service record failed to return to his unit.

Julian found himself caught between two masters, both relentless in their demands for his presence and service: his father and the U.S. federal government. His decision to privilege filial obedience cost him dearly: Deemed a deserter in April 1864, he was arrested in December, just a week after his father died and less than a month after he turned 18. A court martial panel heard his case in March 1865 and sentenced him to a dishonorable discharge and a year in prison. Two months later, some leading citizens from Julian's hometown managed to get the sentence commuted, assisted by a brigadier general who attested that Julian had been a good soldier and "would not have stayed at home but at the insistence of his father."



The original version of this song sheet pictured a small Union drummer, whose suffering inspires nearby comrades. In this version, produced for a Confederate audience, the drummer is pictured with facial hair and a full-sized drum. Civil War Sheet Music Collection, Library Company of Philadelphia



Popular illustrator Felix O.C. Darley portrayed the same scene in an etching, The Little Drummer, that accompanied a selection of war



Off-duty drummer boys playing cards in camp in the winter of 1862 Public domain via Wikimedia Commons



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While Julian regained his freedom, he would never reap the financial rewards and public accolades afforded to other veterans. His dishonorable discharge barred him from receiving a military pension, and a regimental history published in 1891 fails to list him as a surviving member, even though he was still living at the time. The takeaway seems clear: No matter a soldier's underage status, no matter his parents' wishes, he would be held to account if he violated his military contract. Over the course of the war, thousands of Union soldiers and their families would learn this same hard lesson about the growing primacy of federal and military power.

Adapted from Of Age: Boy Soldiers and Military Power in the Civil War Era by Frances M. Clarke and Rebecca Jo Plant. Published by Oxford University Press. Copyright © 2023 by Frances M. Clarke and Rebecca Jo Plant. All rights reserved.

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American Battlefield Trust Ends Triumphant Year with Nearly 56,000 Acres Saved To Date

Charging into the new year, the leading battlefield preservation nonprofit is empowered by a slew of landmark victories and programs that emphasize America's fighting spirit

Mary Koik, Colleen Cheslak-Poulton,
American Battlefield Trust
January 12, 2023

(Washington, D.C.) – As the calendar turned to 2023, the American Battlefield Trust paused to reflect on a year of much-anticipated preservation victories, record-setting digital engagement, industry-leading

advocacy efforts and a collaborative commitment to producing innovative educational products and pathways that bring the past to life. In 2022, the organization recorded its 24th consecutive year saving more than 1,000 acres of hallowed ground, even as it fought to combat a rising tide of modern threats to historic landscapes.

“The American story lives in the sites the American Battlefield Trust strives to save each and every day, and the public has responded with great vigor to our many projects,” said Trust President David Duncan. “It’s this vast support that enabled the organization to thrive in its 38th year, with remarkable accomplishments sprouting across the map.”

Working closely with landowners and preservation partners during 2022, the Trust completed 30 transactions at 23 battlefields in 11 states, amounting to more than 1,281 acres. This included projects at: Antietam, Md.; Bentonville, N.C.; Buffington Island, Ohio; Cedar Creek, Va.; Cedar Mountain, Va.; Champion Hill, Miss.; Chancellorsville, Va.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Corinth, Miss.; Cumberland Church, Va.; Eutaw Springs, S.C.; Fort Ticonderoga, N.Y.; Franklin, Tenn.; Gettysburg, Pa.; Globe Tavern, Va.; Hobkirk Hill, S.C.; Manassas, Va.; Mill Springs, Ky.; Petersburg, Va.; Second Deep Bottom, Va.; Shepherdstown, W.Va.; Upperville, Va.; Wilderness, Va.



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After a 16-year fundraising effort, the Trust concluded its campaign this May, perpetually saving 208 acres at Fredericksburg Battlefield's Slaughter Pen Farm. Buddy Secor

Representing the largest and most complex private battlefield preservation effort in the nation's history, the 16-year, \$12-million fundraising campaign to save the Fredericksburg Battlefield's Slaughter Pen Farm concluded in May. With the 208-acre Slaughter Pen Farm now owned free-and-clear by preservationists, the Trust now turns toward further landscape restoration and interpretation opportunities there. As it completed this landmark land deal, the organization launched its first effort to save land in Ohio — at the Buffington Island Battlefield — setting the stage for the Trust to soon claim that its preservation footprint extends to half the states in the Union.

Beyond land acquisition, public education is a critical part of the Trust's mission, whether in the form of classroom resources, on-site interpretation or, increasingly, digital content. The Trust has demonstrated its ability to tell stories gleaned from these historic landscapes through vast video production, which has attracted an impressive audience. In 2022 alone, our Youtube channel amassed more than 50 million views and attracted 172,000 new subscribers, making for a total of 350,000

followers on that social platform alone and generating impactful revenue to contribute to our mission. Bringing viewers to the battlefield, the Trust team set out to provide anniversary coverage at Gettysburg, Antietam and Fredericksburg, creating 40 videos that have since gathered more than 1.37 million views. Plus, its fruitful video swing to Georgia and Tennessee gave audiences a unique insight on the Civil War struggles that unfolded at Chattanooga, Chickamauga, Atlanta and many others along the way. While such videos delivered access to expert historians, our *How We Became America: The Untold History* series — which expanded by more than 50 videos in 2022 — utilized eye-catching animation and quippy dialogue to capture the attention of students and teachers while uncovering Revolutionary and Civil War topics.

Exhibiting prolonged commitment to the power of place, the Trust unveiled a new initiative and on-site interpretation while also returning to its wide array of in-person events. In March, we launched the Medal of Honor Valor Trail™ alongside the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, to put a spotlight on the places most closely connected with Medal of Honor recipients, in person and online. Of these digital efforts, an innovative map debuted, allowing users to virtually follow in the footsteps of recipients by plotting more than 3,500 citation locations on a global map. Meanwhile, as visitors stepped foot on hallowed ground maintained by the Trust, they found new informative signage at more than seven locations. But some of the most immersive experiences brought to life by the Trust in 2022 were the ones that encouraged fellowship among its preservationist



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members, through our Donor Thank You Weekend in South Carolina to our Annual Conference in Northern Virginia and the Grand Review in Valley Forge, plus some 40 intimate Twilight Tours offered at 21 locations throughout the summer.

Instilling an understanding of the nation's first 100 conflict-filled years within the future leaders of tomorrow, the Trust worked with classrooms in mind, providing resources to some 16 million students and teachers. While the organization's Virtual and In-person Teacher Institutes professionally developed some 900 educators from nearly every state plus five countries, the Traveling Trunk program journeyed to 78 schools in 35 states, engaging approximately 13,800 students. Enabling experiences in historic outdoor classrooms, both the Field Trip Fund and "Great Task" Youth Leadership program came roaring back to life. A partnership with Gettysburg National Military Park, with support from the Bowe Stewart Foundation, the "Great Task" offers leadership and character-building experiences by utilizing the military park for a variety of lessons. Student interest in the battlefield preservation movement continues to be elevated through the Youth Leadership Team, which is now on its fourth cohort of history-enthused teens, all driven to bring the topic of battlefield preservation and education to classmates, neighbors and local decisionmakers.



The American Revolution Experience explores the journey of 13 individuals during America's struggle for independence.

The past year saw the Trust dedicate itself to the American Revolution through a variety of preservation and education initiatives. In April, we made a public pledge to save 2,500 acres of Revolutionary War battlefields to mark the upcoming 250th anniversary of that conflict, and proceeded to make progress through fundraising campaigns, acquisitions and land transfers. Accelerating learning on the subject, we launched the American Revolution Experience — a new website that examines the lives of 13 men and women who witnessed the dawn of a new nation, created alongside our friends at the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). Additionally, our Liberty Trail mobile tour guide debuted in February, including interpretation for 30 Revolutionary period stops across South Carolina, ranging from national and state parks to once-secret spots. A PBS episode of *Travels with Darley*, hosted by six-time Emmy Award-nominated host and producer Darley Newman, highlighted many of The Liberty Trail's sites, resulting in a reach of seven million people on that network and more on streaming services.

Federal, state and local government officials who understand the value of history are also critical to the Trust's work. In June, members of the Board of Trustees and staff

BALTIMORE CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE



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headed to Capitol Hill to advocate for continued funding for battlefield preservation and education, meeting with more than 90 Senators and Members of Congress to discuss the importance of our nation's hallowed grounds. Meanwhile, the Commonwealth of Virginia approved a new unit of the state park system, Culpeper Battlefields State Park, which will be formed through a 1,700-acre donation by the Trust, who has faithfully protected land on the Culpeper County battlefields of Brandy Station, Cedar Mountain, Kelly's Ford and Rappahannock Station. Despite these successes, the Trust also faced off against an overwhelming resurgence of threats to historic landscapes in the form of data centers, highway interchanges, solar facilities and more, with thousands answering our calls for support at Manassas, Culpeper, Wyse Fork, Wilson's Creek, Vicksburg and Gettysburg. The year's end came with the passage of the Omnibus Appropriations Bill, which provides full funding for key preservation programs and expands the authorized boundary of Missouri's Wilson's Creek National Battlefield to include the Newtonia Battlefield.

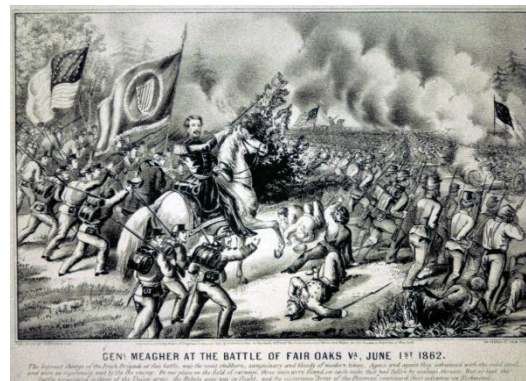
The Trust's 2022 land preservation accomplishments were made possible by the assistance of numerous government and private partners, including: American Battlefield Protection Program; Battle of Franklin Trust; Buffington Island Preservation Foundation; Central Virginia Battlefields Trust; Commonwealth of Kentucky; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Community Conservation Partnerships Program; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission; Commonwealth of Virginia;

Fort Ticonderoga Association; Franklin's Charge; Friends of Cedar Mountain; Friends of Franklin Parks; Friends of Vicksburg National Military Park; Gettysburg Foundation; HTR Foundation; Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission; Kershaw County, S.C.; Manassas Battlefield Trust; Mill Springs Battlefield Association; Mississippi Department of Archives & History; National Park Service; North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources; Old Dominion Land Conservancy; Petersburg Battlefields Foundation; Save the Franklin Battlefield; Save Historic Antietam Foundation; Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association; South Carolina American Revolution Sesquicentennial Commission; South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust; South Carolina Conservation Bank; State of North Carolina; Tennessee Historical Commission; Virginia Land Conservation Foundation; Washington County, Md.; and West Virginia Outdoor Heritage Conservation Fund.

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General Meagher and the Irish Brigade

Clay Hoffman, January 2, 2023,
blueandgrayeducation.org





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Currier & Ives lithograph of General Meagher at the Battle of Fair Oaks in 1862 | LOC

Brigadier Gen. Thomas Francis Meagher—founder and commander of the Union Army’s Irish Brigade—lived a life of struggle and triumph on three continents, before being appointed by President Andrew Johnson in 1865 as Montana’s territorial secretary of state and the territory’s acting governor.

Born in Ireland in 1823, he was an Irish nationalist and leader of the Young Irelanders in the Rebellion of 1848, resulting in his conviction for sedition. Sent to a prison in Australia, he eventually escaped and made his way to the United States, where he worked as an attorney and journalist, and became a noted lecturer on the Irish cause.

Having supported the South prior to the Civil War, his decision to serve in the Union Army was not an easy one. However, his increasing opposition to slavery eventually prevailed. Commissioned as a captain in the New York Militia, he stated, “It is not only my duty to America, but also to Ireland. We could not hope to succeed in our effort to make Ireland a Republic without the moral and material support of the liberty-loving citizens of the United States.”



General Meagher in uniform in the 1860s | National Portrait Gallery

Following the first Confederate shots being fired at Charleston’s Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, Meagher began recruiting able-bodied Irish-Americans. Many enlisted in Company K of the 69th Infantry Regiment of the New York State Militia—the “Fighting 69th”—who fought in the First Battle of Bull Run. Soon after that, Meagher returned to New York to form the Irish Brigade, and was promoted to Brigadier General to lead them in the Peninsula Campaign of 1862, the first large-scale offensive of the Eastern Theater.

At the Battle of Fair Oaks, the Brigade distinguished themselves as fierce fighters, with the Gaelic phrase “Faugh a Ballaugh,” meaning “clear the way,” serving as their war cry. Their reputation was further enhanced when printmaker Currier & Ives published a lithograph depicting General Meagher on horseback, leading his men in a bayonet charge. After marching through the Chickahominy River to reinforce the weakening V Corps, the Brigade fought successfully at the Battle of Gaines’ Mill,



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which is regarded by many historians as the highlight of Meagher’s military career.

In the fall of 1862, the Irish Brigade suffered significant losses at the Battle of Antietam, followed by even greater casualties at the Battle of Fredericksburg. The Brigade’s chaplain, Father William Corby of the Congregation of Holy Cross, recalled that “it was a body of about 4,000 Catholic men, marching—most of them—to their deaths.” Following additional casualties at Chancellorsville, Father Corby, who would later become the president of the University of Notre Dame, famously granted general absolution to what remained of the Irish Brigade on the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg. According to Fox’s Regimental Losses, among Union Army Brigades, only the 1st Vermont Brigade and the Iron Brigade lost more men than the Irish Brigade during the entire war.

Having been reassigned to duty in the Western Theater, General Meagher went on to serve in multiple roles, including as commander of a provisional unit in the Army of the Ohio, before resigning his commission on May 15, 1865. He tragically drowned in the Missouri River two years later.

As for the Irish Brigade, after receiving reinforcements, it continued serving for the remainder of the war, including at the Battles of the Wilderness, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, and Appomattox Court House, among many others.

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The Siege of Spanish Fort, Alabama

Paul T. Brueske, December 30, 2022,
blueandgrayeducation.org



Map of Spanish Fort Battlefield core and study areas by the American Battlefield Protection Program. | NPS

Despite the Union victory at Mobile Bay in the summer of 1864, the city of Mobile, Alabama, remained an important place for the Confederates to defend and the Union to attack in 1865. Both sides saw it as a critically valuable logistical center with access to two navigable rivers—the Alabama and Tombigbee—and two principal railroads—the Mobile & Ohio and the Mobile & Great Northern Railroads—linking the Alabama-Mississippi theater to the Georgia-Carolinas theater. Indeed, the lines of communication were essential to moving Confederate forces and supplies throughout Mississippi, Alabama, and much of Georgia. Federal authorities wanted to occupy southern and central Alabama, with Montgomery as the ultimate objective point of the 1865 invasion of Alabama. Capturing Mobile, with its year-round river and railroad communication into the heart of Alabama, would greatly facilitate that objective.

On January 18, 1865, General in Chief Ulysses S. Grant—who had wanted to take



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Mobile earlier in the war—ordered Maj. Gen. Edward R. S. Canby “to move against Mobile, Montgomery, and Selma and destroy roads, machine shops, and anything useful to the Confederate war effort.”

Through intelligence reports from deserters, Canby knew that the city’s western land approach defenses featured three strong lines of earthworks with massive ditches in front of them. The water approaches were crammed with every kind of obstruction that human ingenuity could invent: shore batteries, underwater channel obstructions, and gunboats. In addition, deadly submerged torpedoes (mines) littered the water approaches to the city and thus kept Farragut’s fleet a safe distance away.

Mobile’s western fortifications were so strong that Canby decided not to move directly against the city. Instead, he flanked them. He planned to march up the eastern shore, with naval support on his left in Mobile Bay. He would move first against the two Baldwin County forts, Spanish Fort and Blakeley, to gain access to the Tensaw and Alabama Rivers and thus flank Mobile. Spanish Fort and Fort Blakeley were two wings of a defensive system, about 4 miles apart, designed to keep the U.S. Navy out of the Blakeley River. The Confederates built Spanish Fort to protect the Blakeley River artillery batteries, Huger and Tracy, by preventing the Federals from establishing a battery there that might bombard the latter. Fort Blakeley protected the line of communication with Spanish Fort, Huger, and Tracy. Fortifying Blakeley also secured a base of operations against Union raids from Pensacola.



Major General E. R. S. Canby, officer of the Federal army | LOC

On March 17, 1865, Canby finally launched the campaign for Mobile in Baldwin County, Alabama. His column encamped near Fort Gaines and Fort Morgan amounted to over 32,000 men, including A. J. Smith’s 16th Corps and portions of Gordon Granger’s 13th Corps. As Canby’s men endured the arduous trek from their staging camps north through Baldwin County, Adm. Henry K. Thatcher’s naval fleet—over 30 armed vessels—covered their left just off the eastern shore of Mobile Bay. A small Confederate cavalry command—about 500 men—under Lt. Col. Phillip B. Spence, 12th Mississippi Cavalry, did all they could to resist and delay the Federal juggernaut. But, on March 26, Canby’s force appeared before Spanish Fort and the battle erupted. The Federals pushed back the vastly outnumbered Confederates and invested Spanish Fort, opting for a methodical siege rather than a costly frontal assault.

Brig. Gen. Randall L. Gibson, a 33-year-old Louisianan, assumed command of Spanish



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Fort. For the first week of the siege, his force comprised his Louisiana Brigade and Bryan M. Thomas's Alabama Brigade, and a variety of veteran artillery units under Col. Isaac W. Patton. Gibson sent out several sorties to buy time and keep the Federals off balance. On March 31, Brig. Gen. James T. Holtzclaw's veteran Alabama Brigade arrived to relieve Thomas's Brigade.

Despite the obstinate resistance they faced, Canby's veterans dug their trenches closer each day to the works of Spanish Fort. Finally, on April 8, the 8th Iowa under Col. James Geddes, of Eugene Carr's Division, 16th Corps assaulted the fort's northern flank through a supposedly impassable swamp. The 8th Iowa lodgment gained about 300 yards of the fort. They did not press on farther because of darkness and the dangers of being fired upon by their comrades in the 13th Army Corps, who did not immediately realize the 16th Corps occupied the northern portion of the fort. Gen. A. J. Smith planned to take the entire fort the following morning.

General Gibson, who operated under orders to hold out as long as possible without risking the loss of his garrison, had other plans. Unknown to most of his men, a secret footbridge had been constructed through the swamp to evacuate. Much to the chagrin of the Federals, the Spanish Fort garrison executed a remarkable escape under the cover of darkness. About 2,000 soldiers escaped while less than 600 were captured.

After the two-week siege of Spanish Fort, Canby concentrated his forces on April 9 in a massive assault on Fort Blakeley, the last major battle of the war. The fall of Spanish Fort and Fort Blakeley resulted in the capture of Mobile three days later. On May

4, the war east of the Mississippi River ended with Lt. Gen. Richard Taylor's surrender of the remnants of the Spanish Fort garrison, included with his Confederate Department of Alabama, Mississippi, and East Louisiana.

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The Battle Of Olustee, or Ocean Pond, Florida

By Samuel Jones Major-General C.S.A. with "Comments on General Jones's Paper, by Joseph R. Rawley, Brevet Major-General, U.S.V. " Jan 14, 2023 Updated Jan 14, 2023. *Civil War News*

Reprinted from an article written by Gen. Samuel Jones and Gen. Joseph R. Hawley in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Vol. 4, 1888, pp. 76-80.

THE fourth year of the war was also the year for the election of a President of the United States, and it would have been strange if an event of so much importance had not in some measure shaped the conduct of the campaigns of that year. If any one of the Southern States could he brought so effectually under the control of the Union army as to give plausible pretext to any considerable portion of the inhabitants, white and black, to form a quasi-State government recognizing the authority of the United States, it would not only be received as an earnest of the success of the Union arms, but the State could be represented in the approaching convention for the nomination of a candidate for President, and take part in the election to follow.

Florida appeared to offer better prospect of success in such an undertaking than any other Southern State. Its great extent of coast



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and its intersection by a broad and deep river, navigable by vessels of war, exposed a great part of the State to the control of the Union forces whenever it should be thought desirable to occupy it. The exigencies of the Confederate service had in a great measure stripped Florida of troops. If a column of Union troops could penetrate the country west-ward from Jacksonville, occupy a point in the interior, and break up communication between east, middle, and west Florida by the destruction of the railroad and bridges about the Suwanee [Suwannee] River, the Southern Confederacy would not only be deprived of a large quantity of the food drawn from east and south Florida, but a point d'appui would be established for any of the inhabitants who might be disposed to attempt the organization of a State acknowledging allegiance to the United States.

President Lincoln's views on the subject are expressed in the following letter:

"Executive Mansion, Washington,
January 13th, 1864.

"MAJOR-GENERAL GILLMORE:

"I understand an effort is being made by some worthy gentlemen to reconstruct a loyal State government in Florida. Florida is in your department, and it is not unlikely that you may be there in person. I have given Mr. Hay a commission of major, and sent him to you with some blank-books and other blanks to aid in the reconstruction. He will explain as to the manner of using the blanks, and also my general views on the subject. It is desirable for all to cooperate; but if irreconcilable differences of opinion shall arise, you are master. I wish the thing done in the most speedy way possible, so

that when done it will be within the range of the late proclamation on the subject. The detail labor of course will have to be done by others; but I shall be greatly obliged if you will give it such general supervision as you can find convenient with your more strictly military duties. Yours very truly,

"A. Lincoln."



General Quincy A. Gillmore, U.S.A.

Under these instructions General Gillmore, on the 5th of February, ordered General Truman Seymour to proceed with a division of troops from Hilton Head to Jacksonville, Florida. Admiral Dahlgren, who seems to have been always ready to cooperate with the land forces, sailed with the expedition with a squadron of five gun-boats, and was in readiness, if needed, to cover the landing. No opposition was met with, however, and on the 7th General Seymour's force of about seven thousand men landed at Jacksonville.



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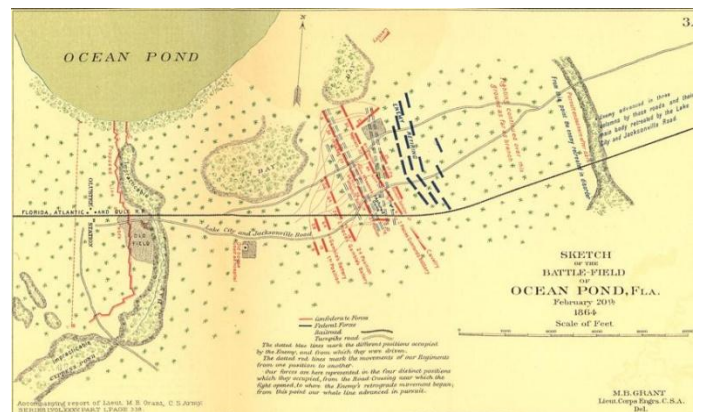


Brig. Gen. Truman Seymour, USA.

The objects of the expedition as reported by General Gillmore to the general-in-chief (who did not approve it) were: First. To procure an outlet for cotton, lumber, timber, etc. Second. To cut off one source of the enemy's commissary stores. Third. To obtain recruits for the negro regiments. Fourth. "To inaugurate measures for the speedy restoration of Florida to her allegiance," etc.

It was known that the few Confederate troops in east Florida were widely scattered, and no opposition was anticipated until reinforcements could arrive. Celerity of movement was therefore important. General Seymour promptly marched in-land,— Colonel McCormick, commanding a picket at McGirt's Creek, retiring,— captured five field-pieces which the Confederates could not move for want of horses, and reached Baldwin, twenty miles from Jacksonville, February 9th, where he was joined by General Gillmore. Colonel Guy V. Henry, commanding a small brigade of cavalry and mounted infantry, marched westward, encountered a picket of about 150 men at the crossing of the south fork of the St. Mary's River, which, with the loss of twenty-five of

his men, killed and wounded, and without loss to the Confederates, he dislodged, and proceeded to within three miles of Lake City, when he was recalled, and on the 11th joined the main body, which had reached Barber's plantation on the south fork of the St. Mary's. Here the command was delayed for the lack of transportation. The railroad had been relied on for transportation, but there was only one engine on the road, and that in such wretched condition that it could not be used within several days, if at all.



Ocean Pond map of the Feb. 20, 1864 battle. Official Records Atlas, plate 53, no. 3. Library of Congress

From Baldwin General Gillmore returned to Jacksonville, and on the 13th to Hilton Head, whence he issued a proclamation announcing his occupancy of Florida, calling on the people to take the oath of allegiance to the Union, assuring them that the State had been recovered from rebel rule, and would not again be abandoned, the United States being able to protect all loyal citizens.

There seems to have been some vacillation in the execution of the expedition. General Seymour, on whom the execution of General Gillmore's plans devolved, wholly disapproved it. The movement on Lake City he regarded as in opposition to sound



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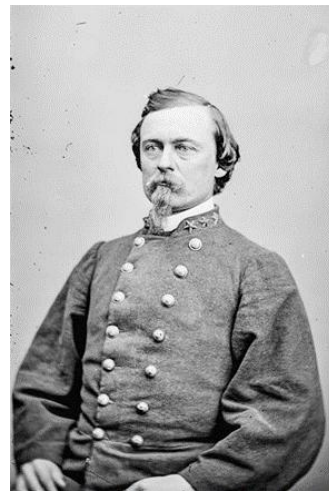
strategy, and inadvisable, and he had discovered that what had been said of the desire of Florida to come back into the Union was a delusion. "Do not," he writes to Gillmore, "fritter away your infantry in the interior," but at once withdraw the whole force back to Jacksonville and Palatka, points which could be easily held and would serve as rendezvous for such Floridians (if any) as should desire to form a new State government under the Union flag. To this Gillmore replied telling him not to risk a repulse by an advance on Lake City; if he met serious opposition, he should concentrate at Sanderson's on the St. Mary's. But how was he to advance at all without risking seeing a repulse, seeing that there was an enemy in his path? Nor could he remain at Sanderson's with entire safety, for Seymour reported that Sanderson's could not be fortified to advantage, or the troops supplied there. Gillmore then directed him to concentrate without delay at Baldwin, but that point offered scarcely more advantages of strength than Sanderson's, and was, besides, twenty miles from his supplies at Jacksonville, and he had but little transportation.

Whilst General Gillmore was at his headquarters at Hilton Head and the army in the interior of Florida was beyond the reach of telegraphic communication, much of necessity was left to the discretion of General Seymour. Having obtained reliable information that the strength of the enemy in his front did not exceed his own, the excellent character of his own troops, as he reports to his chief, forbade any doubt as to the propriety of a conflict on equal terms. Accordingly he resolved to carry out the general plan on which he supposed the occupation and control of east Florida had

been based, by marching at once to the Suwanee [Suwannee] River and destroying the bridges and railroad, thus breaking up communication between east and west Florida. On the receipt of Seymour's letter communicating his determination, Gillmore promptly returned a sharp and emphatic disapproval; but it was too late.

On the landing of Seymour's expedition at Jacksonville, Brigadier-General Joseph Finegan, the Confederate commander of east Florida, immediately telegraphed to Savannah and Charleston for reinforcements, and by February 10th had collected at Lake City 490 infantry, 110 cavalry, and two field-pieces of his own widely scattered force. That night he placed the men in position two and a half miles east of that town, and reinforcements were sent to him from Charleston and Savannah.

Demonstrations were made by the Union commanders at these points, but they failed to prevent the departure of reinforcements for Florida.



*Brig. Gen. Joseph Finegan, CSA.
Library of Congress*

By the 13th a Confederate force of about 4600 infantry, 600 cavalry, and three field-batteries (12 guns) was concentrated near



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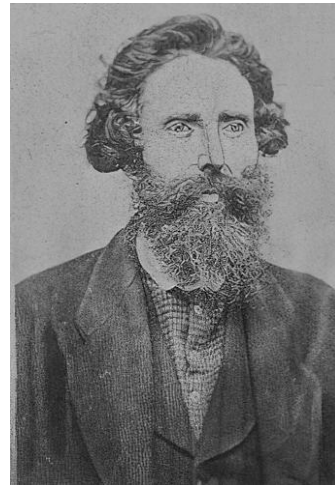
Lake City. This force was organized into two brigades; the first, A. H. Colquitt's, made up of the 6th, 19th, 23d, 27th, and 28th Georgia regiments, the 6th Florida, and the Chatham battery of Georgia artillery. The second brigade was composed of the 32d and 64th Georgia Volunteers, 1st Regiment Georgia Regulars, 1st Florida Battalion, Bonaud's Battalion of Infantry, and Guerard's Light Battery. Colonel George P. Harrison, Jr., of the 32d Georgia, commanded the brigade. The cavalry was commanded by Colonel Caraway Smith, and the Florida light artillery was unattached and in reserve. The whole force numbered about 5400 men at Ocean Pond on the Olustee, 13 miles east of Lake City.



Brig. Gen. Alfred H. Colquitt, CSA.

The country along the railroad from the Suwanee [Suwannee] River eastward is low and flat, without streams to delay the march of an army, and covered with open pine forests unobstructed by undergrowth. The only natural features which could serve any purposes of defense were the lakes and ponds scattered over the country. The position at Ocean Pond offered these advantages. From the 13th to the 20th some

defensive works were begun, but little progress was made toward completing them, on a line extending from Ocean Pond on the left, a sheet of water of about four miles in length by from two to two and a half miles in width, to another pond about two miles long, on the right and to the south of the railroad. A short distance in front of the left was another pond, and in front of the right a bay or jungle, passable only within two hundred yards to the right or south of the railroad. The position possessed strength provided the enemy would attack it directly in front, but could be readily turned.



Col. James Montgomery, USA.



Col. Guy Vernor Henry, USA.



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Early on the morning of February 20th, Seymour marched westward from his camp on the south fork of the St. Mary's River, to engage the enemy near Olustee, about eighteen miles distant. The country over which he marched was open and level, presenting no strategic points, and the ground was firm, offering no difficulty to the march of troops of any amount. Colonel Henry was in advance with his small brigade of cavalry and Elder's Horse Artillery (Battery B, First U.S. Artillery). Though there was no lack of general officers in General Gillmore's command, on this expedition the three infantry brigades were commanded by colonels. Colonel (afterward General and United States Senator) J. R. Hawley led in three parallel columns, marching by flank, the center one on the road, the other two dressing on it. Colonels W. B. Barton's and James Montgomery's brigades followed in the same order of march. Captain John Hamilton's Light Battery "E," 3d United States Artillery, and Captain L. L. Langdon's "M," 1st United States Artillery, and a section of Rhode Island Artillery, under Lieutenant Metcalf, followed. One regiment, the 55th Massachusetts, was left in camp, which, with other regiments detached, reduced the force engaged to about 5500 men, with 16 fieldpieces.



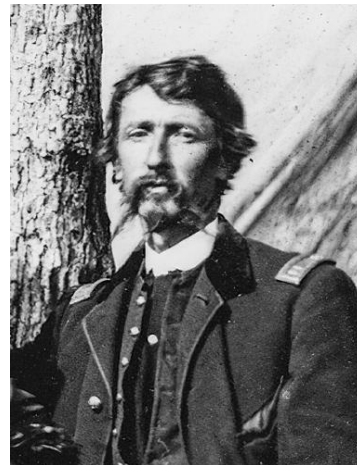
Capt. John Hamilton, USA.



*Colonel Loomis L. Langdon, 1st Artillery, 1890.
State Library and Archives of Florida*

General Finegan had thrown forward Colonel Smith's cavalry, supported by the 64th and two companies of the 32d Georgia regiments, to skirmish with the advancing enemy and endeavor to draw them on to attack in the selected position.

Apprehending, however, that the Union commander would be too cautious to attack a relatively strong position which could be so easily turned, he ordered forward General Colquitt with three of his regiments and a section of Gamble's artillery to assume command of all the troops in front. About two miles east of Olustee Colquitt found the enemy, who had driven in the pickets, advancing rapidly.



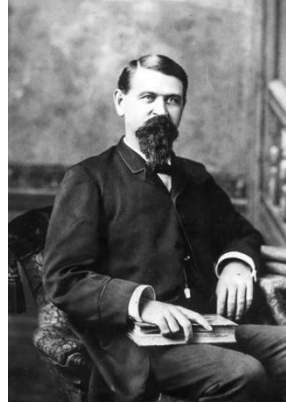


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Capt. Samuel Sherer Elder, USA.

The colonel of the 64th Georgia, a new regiment, never before in action, supposing that only mounted troops were advancing against him, had formed square to resist cavalry. Colquitt arrived just in time to save the square from being ripped open by the enemy's artillery. He threw forward skirmishers and quickly formed line of battle under a brisk fire, the 19th Georgia on the right, the 28th on the left, with the section of Gamble's battery in the center. The 64th and the two companies of the 32d Georgia were formed on the left of the 28th. The 6th Georgia was thrown still farther to the left to check any movement by that flank; the cavalry was divided and thrown to the two flanks. In this order the line advanced, the enemy yielding slightly but stubbornly contesting the ground. Finding the enemy in force in his front, Colquitt called for reinforcements, but General Finegan had anticipated him and Colonel Harrison was at hand with his brigade. The 6th Florida, Battalion was put in line on the right of the 19th Georgia, and the 23d on the left of the 64th Georgia. Colonel Harrison with his own regiments, the 32d Georgia and 1st Georgia Regulars, took position between the 23d and 64th Georgia, and by Colquitt's order assumed direction of affairs on the left of the line. Instead, therefore, of attacking the Confederates in a selected position strengthened by field-works as the Union officers supposed, the battle was joined about 3 o'clock P.M. on level ground covered with open pine forest, offering no advantage of position to either.



Col. George Paul Harrison Jr., CSA.

General Seymour's plan was to concentrate his artillery in the center, strongly supported on both flanks by the first brigade, and while the two brigades in rear were hastening into position, to overwhelm his enemy by a rapid fire of his superior artillery, and then charge. Hamilton's and Langdon's batteries were hurried forward to join Elder's, which had been in advance with the cavalry. The 7th Connecticut, which so gallantly had led the first assault on Battery Wagner, July 11th, 1863, had first felt and driven back the advanced Confederates, all in turn had itself yielded ground, was withdrawn to unmask the line; the 7th New Hampshire moved forward into line on the right and the 8th United States Colored Troops on the left of the batteries. The fire of the latter was exceedingly effective. The section of Gamble's battery was soon put hors de combat. It was replaced by the Chatham Artillery of Savannah, which, under Captain John F. Wheaton, was drawn from the right to the center under a galling fire. The whole Confederate force on the field moved forward and the action became general along the whole line. The 7th New Hampshire, a veteran regiment armed with superior rifles, broke and fled in confusion; not, however, until it had suffered severely in killed and wounded. The most strenuous efforts of its



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colonel, Abbott, and of Colonel Hawley, aided by staff-officers, could not stem its flight and reform it. The 8th United States (colored) on the left experienced the same fate. Its colonel, Fribley (white), had fallen mortally wounded; other commissioned officers and many of the rank and file had fallen, when it too fled and did not appear again as a regiment on the field. Barton's brigade replaced the 7th New Hampshire and Montgomery's the 8th United States Colored Troops, but the flight of those regiments had greatly exposed the artillery. Though it continued its fire with admirable effect, the men and horses were falling fast, and some of these, becoming unmanageable, dashed and locked their carriages against the trees, until so many of the men and horses were killed and wounded that five guns were abandoned to the advancing Confederates.

By that time the Confederates had exhausted their ammunition, and there was none near at hand. The regiments were halted, the few men who had ammunition returning a slow fire to the very brisk fire from the other side, while staff-officers, couriers, and orderlies were riding at utmost speed between the line and an ammunition-car on the railroad some distance in the rear, bringing up cartridges in haversacks, pockets, caps, in anything into which they could be crammed, and distributing them along the line. To hold a line under a heavy fire which it cannot return is a severe trial to the steadiness of the best troops. During this trying pause Lieutenant Hugh H. Colquitt of the general's staff was a conspicuous object to the troops in both lines as he galloped in front of the Confederates, waving a battle-flag and exhorting the men to stand fast, not to lie down or shelter themselves behind the pine-trees, lest the enemy should suppose the line

had broken and melted away, and assuring them that their cartridge-boxes would soon be replenished. The men were equal to the emergency and stood fast until they were supplied with ammunition. In the meantime the 27th Georgia Regiment, Bonaud's Battalion, the 1st Florida Battalion, and a section of Guerard's Battery arrived from the intrenched lines in the rear. They were put in position near and a little in advance of the center, to hold the enemy in check until the other commands could be supplied with ammunition. By direction of General Colquitt, Colonel Harrison had formed the 6th and 32d Georgia regiments on the extreme left, thus securing an effective cross-fire on Seymour's right. A general advance along the whole Confederate line followed, and the Union line yielded ground, first reluctantly and sullenly, then with some precipitation which presently became a confused flight. When the Union line gave way, the Confederates sprang forward with a yell and pursued the enemy several miles and until night closed in on the scene and stopped pursuit.



Olustee Battlefield Historic State Park, in Baker County, Florida. Wikimedia

During the engagement Colonel Smith's cavalry had guarded the flanks, Lieutenant-Colonel A. [Abner] H. McCormick, 2d Florida Cavalry, on the right, and Colonel



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Duncan L. Clinch, 4th Georgia Cavalry, on the left. Early in the action Colonel Clinch was so severely wounded as to necessitate his removal from the field, and was succeeded by Captain N. A. Brown. When the Union line finally gave way and the flight commenced, the cavalry was ordered to pursue and seize every opportunity to strike the retreating enemy. But from some excess of caution, or other unexplained cause, the pursuit was not vigorous, and thus the full fruits of a dearly won victory on a well-contested field were not gathered. The retreat was covered by Colonel Henry's cavalry and the 7th Connecticut Volunteers, which halted for a time at the St. Mary's and Baldwin, but the main body of the shattered army continued its flight until it gained the shelter of the gun-boats at Jacksonville. As so often happened during the war, the victors were ignorant of the full extent of the victory, which, on this occasion, was so complete that a vigorous pursuit could scarcely have failed at least to double the already heavy Union loss.

General Seymour, who throughout the day had shown his usual coolness and gallantry, attributed his disaster to the "great numerical superiority of the Confederates," an opinion which doubtless he held with sincerity at the time, but which was soon found to be entirely erroneous, the numbers engaged being nearly equal. General Gillmore and his staff sharply criticised the whole affair, and even charged Seymour with disobedience of orders, but did not give the specifications. In the Union camps in the Department of the South the affair was characterized as a second Dade's massacre, or Braddock's defeat. It was, however, a fair fight in an open field. The tenacity with which the Union troops contested the field is

shown by the losses on both sides. Theirs was about one-third of their number engaged, and 120 horses killed. It was especially heavy in officers: Colonel Fribley was mortally wounded and died on the field, Lieutenant-Colonel Reed was mortally, and the major of his regiment, Bogle, severely wounded, as were Colonels Moore of the 47th, Sammon of the 115th New York, and the chief of artillery, Captain Hamilton. Captain Vandervere [Captain Garrett Van Devere] of the 115th New York was killed. General Seymour commended the good conduct of all the troops engaged except the 7th New Hampshire and 8th United States Colored Troops. The former's misconduct he attributed to the presence in the ranks of a number of inferior conscripts and substitutes. It lost in the engagement 209, and the 8th United States Colored Troops 310, officers and men. In addition to five or six field-pieces, the Confederates captured 1600 rifles and muskets, a flag, and a quantity of ammunition.

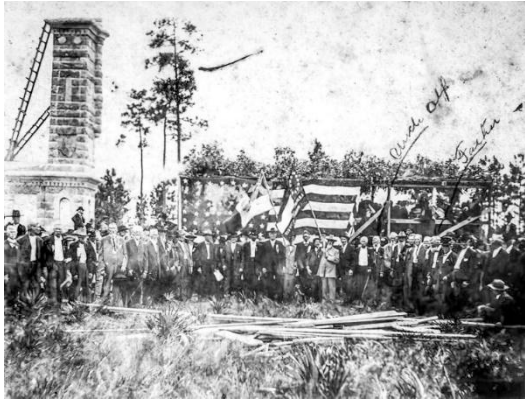
The Confederate loss was 940 killed and wounded. The 32d Georgia had suffered most severely, losing 164 officers and men. Among the killed or mortally wounded were Lieutenant-Colonel James Barrow and Lieutenant P. A. Waller, 64th Georgia; Captain H. A. Cannon, commanding the 1st Georgia Regulars; Adjutant William H. Johnson, 19th Georgia; Lieutenant W. H. Combs, 6th Georgia; Lieutenant Thomas J. Hill, 6th Florida; and Lieutenant W. W. Holland, 28th Georgia. Lieutenant R. T. Dancy, 32d Georgia, on Colonel Harrison's staff, was killed by the side of his chief early in the action.



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This expedition to Olustee, the only one of any magnitude which General Gillmore had undertaken beyond the range of the gun-boats, terminated his campaign in the Department of the South.



Survivors of the Battle of Olustee at the dedication of the battlefield monument on October 23, 1912.

COMMENTS ON GENERAL JONES'S PAPER, BY JOSEPH R. RAWLEY, BREVET MAJOR-GENERAL, U.S.V.

I HAVE read General Jones's paper upon the battle of Olustee with much interest. It is clearly his sincere endeavor to write an impartial statement of the facts; it is amusing to see how widely he varies from the exaggerated reports of Generals Beauregard and Finegan.

He fairly presents the differences between Generals Gillmore and Seymour. At Baldwin, a night or two before the battle, General Seymour called together six or eight of his officers for consultation. Some were cautious, others were outspoken, but it was decidedly the general opinion that it would be impossible to hold permanently a position out toward the center of the State, having for its line of communication a rickety railroad with one engine running fifty or sixty miles back to the base at Jacksonville. It would

take more than our whole little army simply to hold the line against the force that would certainly soon be collected against us. The Confederates could have ruined us by letting us march one more day without interruption and then sitting down on the railroad between us and home with their rapidly increasing force. Most of us thought it would be sufficient to attempt to make the St. John's River our main western line, but Seymour thought it his duty to go on. He was, and is, a brave and honorable patriot and soldier.

General Jones shows that the Confederates had chosen a strong position. They had their line of battle fully formed to meet us. My old regiment, the 7th Connecticut Infantry, about 330 strong, armed with Spencer carbines, led the advance guard, commanded by Colonel Henry, and composed of the mounted 40th Massachusetts Infantry (a small regiment), Captain Samuel S. Elder's regular battery, and a detachment of the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry. Between 2 and 3 P.M. they met and drove back the enemy's cavalry, and soon found the main line, striking up a vigorous combat. Our troops were stretched along the road in the order General Jones describes. When the artillery opened, General Seymour told me the enemy had but a section of artillery "up there" and that it could be captured. Under his orders I put the 8th United States Colored Troops, Colonel Fribley, in line and sent them up the road and led the 7th New Hampshire to the right, moving around to strike the enemy's left flank. Our artillery began to work fast. My little regiment of three hundred, deployed as skirmishers in rather close order, went straight into the face of General Colquitt's brigade in full line waiting for us. Suddenly the 7th New



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Hampshire, moving in column of companies, saw the solid gray line about 250 yards ahead. A heavy fire was opened on us. Colonel Abbott misunderstood my order of deployment; I undertook to correct the error, and the regiment broke. Here General Jones is in error; they re-formed and did excellent service on our right flank, and later rejoined the 7th Connecticut in the center. They lost in all 209; there were never braver men. In the meantime Colonel Fribley's black men met the enemy at short range. They had reported to me only two or three days before; I was afterward told that they had never had a day's practice in loading and firing. Old troops, finding themselves so greatly overmatched, would have run a little and re-formed—with or without orders. The black men stood to be killed or wounded—losing more than 300 out of 550. General Jones is again in error; they fell back and reorganized. Colonel Fribley's monument shows where he fell.

The 7th Connecticut assembled on their colors in response to their bugle-call, and I placed them in the center of the field opposite to my friend General Colquitt, and they were supplied with ammunition. Several times they checked the enemy with their seven-shooters, and they did not stir from their position until they received a second order from General Seymour to fall back. The 54th Massachusetts (colored) after a time came and stood on their left. The next brigade, under Colonel Barton, of the 48th New York, came up and deployed. But the whole Confederate force of five thousand was there. Barton's brigade suffered frightfully. Montgomery's two regiments, both colored, were heavily punished.

Omitting further details of the battle, which lasted over three hours, shortly after sunset

General Seymour ordered us to fall back to a new line. We did so, and several regiments successively gave three cheers. This was the occasion of the report to the Confederate commander that we had formed a new line. Their cavalry so reported, and, though six hundred strong, never fired a shot at us, nor came within our sight. Behind us was a small body of water—an acre, it may be—beside which were gathered a large number of our wounded, under the care of surgeons. All who could walk or be put into wagons were started off, and several surgeons were ordered to stay with the remainder.

Our whole column was put in motion deliberately. Seymour took my regiment from me again, to serve as infantry skirmishers in the rear-guard with Henry's mounted men. The 54th Massachusetts was sent to report to me, and with three regiments, moving by the flank, in parallel lines my brigade marched eastward, with our comrades.

General Jones says the Union forces “yielded ground first reluctantly and sullenly, then with some precipitation, which presently became a confused flight. When the Union line gave way, the Confederates sprang forward with a yell and pursued the enemy several miles, and until night closed in on the scene and stopped pursuit.”

This must have been borrowed from some of the wild reports made by the enemy immediately after the battle. Our last formation in line of battle (just referred to) was a few hundred yards in rear of the center of the field. It was fast growing dark in the pine woods. Not a yell nor a shot pursued us that long night. When my command reached Baldwin on the 21st, we picked up some of our equipments, left there



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two or three days before, destroyed some stores, loaded up the cars and moved on to McGirt's Creek. Crossing on the narrow road through the swamp, we formed line on the eastern bank, put out pickets, and took a good sleep. Colonel Henry and his mounted men and the 7th Connecticut stopped at Baldwin over the night of the 21st.

General Finegan's report of the 23d (three days after the battle) says: "I occupy Barber's place this morning and my cavalry are in the vicinity of Baldwin." He says, also, "I left Ocean Pond [the battle-field] yesterday"—that is to say, two days after the fight.

The reports of Generals Colquitt, Finegan, Gardner, and others give reasons for the feeble pursuit—"fatigue, absence of rations, disadvantages of pursuit in the dark," etc. It is stated that the order to pursue was withdrawn "in consequence of a report from the advanced cavalry picket that the enemy had halted for the night and taken a position (subsequently ascertained to be incorrect)." General Colquitt says he sent "repeated orders to Colonel Smith of the cavalry to continue the pursuit, but only two companies on the left, and those but for a short distance, followed the enemy." Smith was relieved from his command, and he requested a court of inquiry. Finegan was relieved by Gardner. General Beauregard, reporting to Richmond, March 25th, says "the fruits of the victory were comparatively insignificant" laying the blame on the cavalry commander, through "whose lack of energy and capacity for the service no serious attempt was made to pursue with his command, while the exhaustion of the infantry . . . and our want of subsistence supplies and ammunition made an immediate pursuit by them impracticable."

It was a fair, square, stand-up fight in pine woods, just there not very thick, and having little undergrowth, save about an occasional swampy hole. There was probably a difference of less than five hundred in the numbers engaged. The Confederates knew the ground and were formed for battle. We rushed in, not waiting for the proper full formation, and were fought in detail. The enemy had the great advantage, with modern weapons, of being on the defensive and ready. There was absolutely no pursuit of the defeated party until the next day. The Confederate loss was 940; the Union loss 1861. This left the former with say 4500; the latter with about 3700, or in about that proportion. It was one of the sideshows of the great war, but the loss on the Union side was proportionately about three times as great as at Buena Vista. I suppose it did help to whittle away the great rebellion.

Publisher's Note: The Olustee Battlefield is open to the public. For more information visit <https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/olustee-battlefield-historic-state-park>.