



## **Fort Donelson NB Offering Programs for the 162nd Anniversary Battles of Forts Henry and Donelson**

### **Volunteers and Park Employees Will Present Wonderful Programs**

Bill Fields, NPS, January 11, 2024

Fort Donelson National Battlefield is offering programs and events between February 3 and February 18 in observance of the 162nd anniversary of the February 1862 battles for Forts Henry and Donelson.

Events begin on February 3rd at 2:00 PM at the national park's Fort Heiman Unit, 654 Fort Heiman Road, located near New Concord, Kentucky. Presenter Dr. William Mulligan will lead a hike to the Confederate works overlooking Fort Henry and discuss the February 6 battle and the Union taking of both Forts Henry and Heiman.

The following Saturday, February 10, The Fort Henry & Donelson Campaign Group and the national park are co-hosting the second annual symposium featuring noted speakers on a variety of related topics. The symposium, located at the Stewart County Visitor Center, 116 Visitors Center Lane, Dover, Tennessee, will begin at 9:00 AM.

Park programs specific to the Battle of Fort Donelson will be offered from Wednesday, February 14 thru Sunday, February 18, with weekend programming including living history programs, including live-fire infantry and artillery demonstrations. While each day offers interesting programs, February 14 will prove a wonderful time to spend Valentine's Day, learning about the "iron Valentines" – referring to the hundreds of artillery shells exchanged between the Confederate fort and

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the "state of the art" Union flotilla of ironclad gunboats on that date, 162 years before.

A complete schedule of programs, and more details of each, are accessible online via the national park Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/fortdonelsonnps> or web page at: <https://www.nps.gov/fodo/planyourvisit/events.htm> or by calling 931-232-5706 x 0.

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## **American Battlefield Trust Joins Lawsuit to Protect Manassas Battlefield from Massive Data Center Project**

**Trust joins local citizens to fight controversial rezoning that places world's largest data center campus next to a nationally significant historic treasure**

Jim Campi, Mary Koik, ABT, January 12, 2024

(Manassas Battlefield, Va.) — The American Battlefield Trust on Friday joined nine local citizens in taking legal action to stop construction of the world's largest data center campus on more than 1,750 acres immediately adjacent to Manassas National Battlefield Park. The land was rezoned without regard for the irreparable impact to the region's unique historic, natural and cultural resources. The lawsuit asks the Circuit Court for Prince William County to overturn the trio of rezonings granted in violation of Virginia Code by the lame duck County Board of Supervisors in December 2023.

"The Manassas Battlefield is a national treasure and the very definition of hallowed



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ground,” remarked David Duncan, president of the American Battlefield Trust.

“Hundreds of thousands of people visit this National Park every year, generating tourism dollars for the community and providing local residents with recreational trails and open space. It is reckless in the extreme to jeopardize this historic sanctuary over a development that could easily be built elsewhere in the state.”

As the lawsuit recounts, the American Battlefield Trust was formed nearly four decades ago in response to threats to Virginia’s historic battlefields, including one of the first major controversies over inappropriate development at Manassas. It has since collaborated with federal, state and local authorities and countless private citizens to preserve more than 58,000 acres at more than 150 sites in 25 states – and continues to fight, when necessary, to safeguard the soil on which Americans bled and died to forge the nation we are today.

The proposed data center development, dubbed the Prince William Digital Gateway, is slated to become, at full build-out, the world’s largest data center campus — and would overshadow famed Brawner Farm where, at the Second Battle of Manassas in August 1862, Union and Confederate forces faced off against one another in horrific combat. The fallow fields that were the launching point for one of the most devastating and decisive assaults of the Civil War could soon be blanketed with as many as thirty-seven data centers — eight-story, drab concrete-and-steel behemoths that would loom over the battlefield park.

In December, the Prince William County Board of Supervisors approved, in a 4-3 vote, the three rezonings after a nearly

unprecedented, 27-hour public hearing, despite overwhelming local opposition, over objections from the National Park Service and against the recommendation of both County staff and the County’s Planning Commission. The known harms to the Manassas Battlefield and other cultural resources, the unanswered questions about the development’s future impact and the parade of amendments right up until the vote itself persuaded all but the Board of Supervisors of the inappropriate nature of the development.

“Even a month after the vote, it remains dumbfounding that Prince William County ignored its own professional staff, its planning commission, hundreds of concerned citizens, and pleas from the National Park Service and the historic preservation community to protect one of the County’s most famous and treasured landmarks,” noted Duncan. The lawsuit cites an array of legal violations committed by Prince William County as grounds to overturn the rezonings. These range from the lack of required information about the development, inadequate public notice and hearings, unlawful waivers of key analyses, submissions and approvals, failure to consider key environmental and historical facts and unlawful delegation of rezoning power through failure to identify which of the more than 1,750 acres could be put to what uses.

The stakes involved, and the impacts of such an enormous and incompatible development on the Manassas Battlefield compelled the Trust to join the fight to protect this area. However, the Trust does not oppose data centers or properly planned development: “We are not against data centers when they are properly sited,” Duncan stated.



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“However, we cannot stand aside when hallowed ground vital to our understanding of the Civil War is placed at risk. To do so here would dishonor our mission and our history.”

In the 1980s, northern Virginia experienced tremendous development pressure. A contentious plan to develop 600 acres near Manassas National Battlefield Park, including land that was Robert E. Lee’s headquarters during the Second Battle of Manassas, made national headlines. Ultimately, the land was acquired by the National Park Service at great cost. In 1990, Congress responded by creating the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission to identify the nation’s historically significant sites, assess their condition and “recommend alternatives for preserving and interpreting them.” Concurrently, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior created a nonprofit partner to assist the Park Service in protection of battlefield land: the American Battlefield Protection Foundation, a predecessor organization of the modern American Battlefield Trust.

The passage of time and increase in development pressures has made protection of the Manassas Battlefield all the more critical. Since 2009, the Trust has taken action to acquire multiple parcels of historic significance in the area that will be impacted by the Prince William Digital Gateway, including properties contiguous to rezoned land. This includes 170 acres once part of Rock Hill Farm, an area that served as a field hospital during Second Manassas and likely the final resting place of many who did not survive the battle.

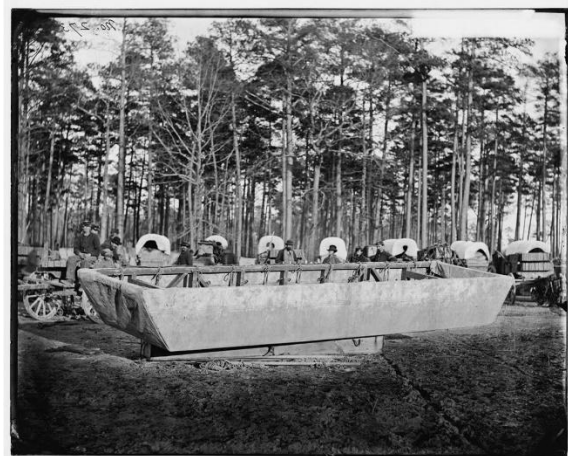
About the American Battlefield Trust: From a grassroots organization started by

historians 30 years ago, the American Battlefield Trust has grown into one of the most successful private heritage land preservation organizations in the nation. The Trust is dedicated to preserving America’s hallowed battlegrounds and educating the public about what happened there and why it matters today. The nonprofit, nonpartisan organization has protected more than 58,000 acres associated with the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War, representing more than 150 sites in 25 states. Its 350,000 members and supporters believe in the power of place and the continued relevance of history as a means to fully understand our rights and responsibilities as Americans. Learn more at [www.battlefields.org](http://www.battlefields.org).

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## Sherman's Pontoniers: A Force Multiplier during the 1865 Carolinas Campaign

Wade Sokolosky, Col., U.S. Army (Ret.),  
January 12, 2024, Blue & Gray Dispatch



*Canvas pontoon boat, 50th New York Engineers, Virginia, 1864 | Library of Congress*



## The Old Liner



Gen. William T. Sherman's 1865 Carolinas Campaign was one of the U.S. Army's most successful military operations during the Civil War. The ability to move a formation of over 60,000 men and thousands of horses and mules through the heart of the enemy's country, despite difficult terrain and weather, was nothing short of a logistics triumph. Sherman's movement through the Carolinas required crossing nine major rivers and numerous swollen streams, tributaries, and swamps during the rainiest winter the region had experienced in decades. Confederate general Joseph E. Johnston, Sherman's former antagonist, paid the highest compliment by declaring, "There had been no such army since the days of Julius Caesar."<sup>1</sup>

Johnston's acknowledgement underscores the engineering skill present within Sherman's army, a recognized "force multiplier" according to United States military doctrine. This capability when employed "significantly increases the combat potential of that force and thus enhances the probability of successful mission accomplishment."<sup>2</sup> Sherman's army comprised three distinct engineer formations: the First Michigan Engineers and Mechanics; the Pioneer Corps, consisting of detailed men and former enslaved Black males; and the traditional pontoon regiments, the First Missouri Engineers and the 58th Indiana Volunteer Infantry, with the latter two handling the majority of bridge construction.

Throughout the Civil War, U.S. Army pontoniers (individuals engaged in constructing a pontoon bridge or assigned to a military unit organized for that purpose) primarily used two boat designs: the French bateau (a shallow-draft, flat-bottomed wooden boat with upswept double ends),

commonly referred to by units in the Western Theater as the "Cincinnati Pontoon"; and a canvas boat (a wooden frame wrapped with canvas) copied from the Imperial Russian Army. A major drawback common to both designs was their length, ranging from 22 to 24 feet, requiring a special "long-gear wagon to transport them."<sup>3</sup> The First Missouri and the 58th Indiana opted for canvas boats due to their significantly lighter haul weight, reducing the number of wagons required to transport the bridging equipment.



Orlando Poe | Library of Congress

The 58th Indiana introduced a modified version of the Russian design called the "Cumberland Pontoon." In 1863, engineers from the Fourteenth Army Corps altered the original design by applying hinges in the middle of the wooden frame. This innovation facilitated the folding of the frame, eliminating the need for a special wagon and enabling the use of a standard army wagon to transport the system. This adaptation streamlined the timely repair or replacement while of the system during campaigns.<sup>4</sup>





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Sherman’s chief engineer, Orlando M. Poe, reported that during the campaign the engineers built a total of 7,720 feet of pontoon bridge, augmented by another 4,000 feet of wooden trestle, totaling 2.2 miles of bridge construction. Due to the difficult terrain and weather conditions encountered while on the march, Poe praised the canvas design over the wooden boats, especially when put through the test of the campaign. “No wooden boats would have stood a moiety of the rough usage bestowed upon these [canvas],” Poe lauded. The success of Sherman’s winter campaign in the Carolinas, in no small part, was due to his engineers, in particular, his pontoniers.

### NOTES

1-Cox, Jacob D., *The March to the Sea; Franklin and Nashville – Campaigns of the Civil War*. reprint, 1913 ed. (New York, 1882), p. 168.

2-Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-05.1, April 2007, p. GL-11.

3-Charles A. Partridge, ed., *History of the Ninety-sixth Regiment Illinois Volunteer Infantry* (Chicago, 1887), p. 630.

4-Historian Earl J. Hess incorrectly states that Sherman’s engineers utilized in addition to those of the canvas design, both wooden and rubber boats during the Carolinas campaign. See Earl J. Hess, *Civil War Logistics: A Study of Military Transportation* (Baton Rouge, LSU Press, 2017), p. 186. Orlando M. Poe reported that both pontoon regiments only used canvas boats during the Savannah and Carolinas campaigns. See, *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, vol. 44, p. 58 and vol. 47, pt. 1, pp. 175-76; Partridge, ed., *History of*



the Ninety-sixth Regiment Illinois Volunteer Infantry, p. 630.

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## The Underground Railroad in Ripley, Ohio

Len Riedel, January 1, 2024,  
[blueandgrayeducation.org](http://blueandgrayeducation.org)



Ripley, Ohio | public domain

Traveling along the Ohio River, you’ll discover many old and nondescript towns. One is Ripley, Ohio. In the mid-19th century, it was the portal of freedom for hundreds of fugitive slaves seeking freedom.

Today, Ripley is a treasure trove of history that is detailed in a splendid Auto Tour book by Dewey Scott, titled *Ripley, Ohio, Underground Railroad Sites*. The 50-page, locally published book is comb-bound and filled with the essence of more than 25 sites tied to the antebellum period when enslaved individuals crossed the Ohio River. In the book, the author highlights Parker House which, today, houses a wonderful museum.

Page 3, site 1: John P. Parker House



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*John P. Parker House in Ripley, Ohio | public domain*

John P. Parker was born in Norfolk, Virginia, in the year 1827. His mother was black, and she was a slave. His father was white. John was sold at age eight, separated from his mother; he never saw her again. Parker was moved to Mobile, Alabama, to be purchased by a doctor. The doctor had two sons who taught John to read by borrowing books from their father's library. John also learned a trade, as a teenager, that of a foundry worker.

Using the skills he acquired in the foundry, he worked and was permitted to keep some of his earnings. With these saved earnings, he was able to purchase his freedom in the year 1845.

John left Mobile, Alabama, and ended up in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1848. He was told of two girls that lived in Maysville, Kentucky, who were slaves and wanted to be free. John went to Maysville, rescued those girls, and took them to Ripley, Ohio, where he witnessed the workings of the Underground Railroad in Ripley first hand. He knew at this point this was his calling. He later married Miranda Bolden, bought property,

and settled in this house in Ripley, Ohio. He became an active member of the abolitionist's movement and Underground Railroad. He not only was a conductor, he was also an extractor. He would cross over into Kentucky and bring slaves back to Ohio. If caught while performing this work in Kentucky, he would have been hanged or resold into slavery. John Parker was never caught nor did he ever lose a fugitive....

### **From Page 7: Eliza Harris and Ripley**

(For those of you who know of Uncle Tom's Cabin this name will be familiar.)



*Eliza crossing the icy river in an 1881 theatre poster | Library of Congress*

A mulatto woman hearing her child was to be sold and separated from the rest of the family. Desperately she took her two year old and made an escape from her Dover, Kentucky, home. Thinking the Ohio River was still frozen, she made her way to the shore opposite Ripley, Ohio. The ice was breaking up and moving. Eliza was being pursued; she took a piece of wood (fence rail), and with a length of rope tied it to her waist and started across the ice. Legend has it, she fell in three times. On the north bank, a man named Chauncey Shaw watched the ordeal develop and helped pull Eliza and her child out of the freezing river. He stated, "Anyone that wants their freedom that bad,



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deserves it.” Chauncey Shaw was reported to be a slave catcher, ruffian, and town drunk. ... The story was told to Harriett Beecher Stowe on her visit to her husband in Ripley. She included it in her book Uncle Tom’s Cabin. . . The event took place in 1838, and the book Uncle Tom’s Cabin was published in 1852.

Your trip to Ripley can easily be teamed with a trip to Maysville, where BGES has designed a walking tour that includes Underground Railroad sites on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River. That walking tour can be found in *The Civil War: A Traveler's Guide* (National Geographic 2016).

Fergus Bordewich (a BGES member) has written the best book on the Underground Railroad—titled *Bound for Canaan*. It is a well-written, page-turning read.

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### **THIS UNION OFFICER ESCAPED A CONFEDERATE PRISON AND BECAME GRANT’S MOST TRUSTED GUNNER**

**Samuel DeGolyer’s Michigan battery fought masterfully during the Vicksburg Campaign.**

By TRACE BRUSCO, 1/4/2024, HistoryNet



*Captain Samuel DeGolyerDeGolyer is one of the war’s might-have-beens. A volunteer officer who showed a natural affinity for leading a battery, the Michigan native escaped a Confederate prison after First Bull Run and then went on to raise his exceptional artillery unit. A random shell burst took his life, cutting short his trajectory. (Library of Congress)*

Tour Stop One at Vicksburg National Military Park is the location of “Battery DeGolyer.” Named after its commanding officer, Captain Samuel DeGolyer, the position had the heaviest concentration of guns on the Union lines during the 47-day Siege of Vicksburg—22 in all.

Though four times the size of a standard Union battery, the position consisted of the 8th Battery Michigan Light Artillery; Yost’s Independent Ohio Battery; Company L, 2nd Illinois Light Artillery; and the 3rd Battery Ohio Light Artillery. Throughout the Siege of Vicksburg, each gun fired two shots an hour daily and, on average, during the siege. The arrangement fired a total of 2,409 projectiles at the Confederate Great Redoubt. But a quick look around Tour Stop One does not indicate who Captain Samuel DeGolyer was, nor does it mention his remarkable performance during the campaign for Vicksburg.



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Who was Sam DeGolyer? Born in upstate New York in 1827, young Sam and his family (pronounced De-Goy-er), moved to Michigan in the 1830s and settled around the Hudson area in the southeastern part of the state. DeGolyer married Catherine Jeffers of Lenawee County and in 1854 their daughter Kate was born. As a young man in Hudson, he was very active in the small farming community and his stout stature and piercing gaze reflected a determined man of action. DeGolyer also held various public posts and positions, owned a spoke-and-wheel production operation, and when war broke out in April 1861, used his popularity with the community to put together a company of volunteers to put down the rebellion.

Company F, "Hudson Volunteers," with Captain Samuel DeGolyer in command, was mustered in as the 4th Michigan Volunteer Infantry on June 20, 1861. A month later, DeGolyer and his men eagerly waited on the plains of Manassas, Va., for their turn to get at the "secesh."

The First Battle of Bull Run on July 21 was a strange sight. The movement of units on the battlefield was sophomoric at best. Regiments on both sides attempted to flank one another using parade-ground maneuvers, but with the air clogged with lead and metal and, moreover, inconsistencies between weapons, flags, uniforms (the 4th Michigan was dressed in gray) and orders, the efforts to break each line often resulted in a bloody repulse.

Some units even ran into each other or fired into the backs of their comrades. Many soldiers, stripped to the waist, passed out from paralyzing fear or heat exhaustion. Fortunately, as the green 4th Michigan

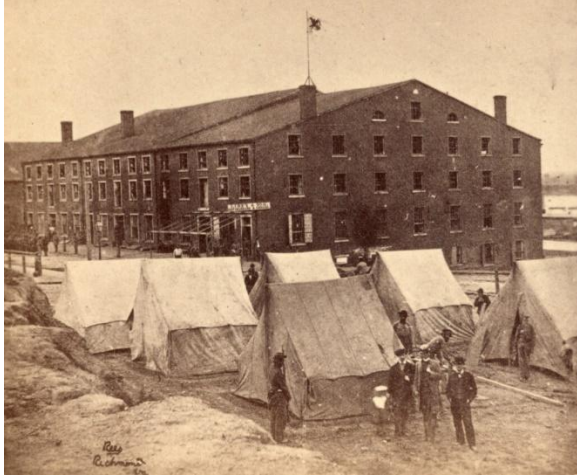
waited its turn to deploy into the fray, the men probably could not see much. Smoke blocked their view, but what was going on beyond it favored the Union Army. News from aides dashing all over the field projected victory, yet the tide changed as Confederate forces received reinforcements just at the right time. Thomas J. Jackson's Virginia soldiers and J.E.B Stuart's cavalry plowed into the exhausted Union lines and scattered the raw citizen-soldiers in every direction.

Through the thick smoke, the 4th Michigan could hear the shrieks of horrified Union soldiers blended with the yells of oncoming Confederates. Suddenly, groups of panicked federals burst out of the smoke clouds and slammed into the Michiganders' ranks. A melee erupted and, while searching for a better glimpse of the fight, Southern soldiers captured DeGolyer and sent him off to Richmond. Following the Union disaster at Bull Run, and after hearing of his capture, DeGolyer's hometown newspaper, *The Hudson Gazette*, asserted that "the fact is, Sam was spoiling for a fight and he wasn't born to be shot." But for a personality such as DeGolyer's, such a prophecy was bound to be tested.





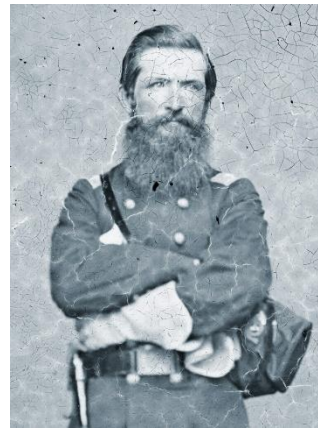
## The Old Limer



*Libby Prison, Richmond A former tobacco warehouse, Richmond's Libby Prison was converted to incarcerate Union officers captured in battle. Like many prisons on both sides, it soon became overcrowded and a breeding ground for disease. The windows were barred but open, so freezing winds would whip through the structure during the winter. DeGolyer escaped it in August 1861. (Library of Congress)*

On August 13, 1861, Sam DeGolyer escaped Richmond's Libby Prison, and for a week, DeGolyer and a companion navigated through the swampy Virginia labyrinths, dodging patrols and dueling armies along the way. Eventually, they made it to the safety of a tobacco vessel headed to Baltimore. Weeks later, DeGolyer met with President Abraham Lincoln and General Winfield Scott. Both made sure to acknowledge publicly the heroic escape from deep within the enemy territory (a much-needed story of redemption for a nation reeling following its embarrassing showing at First Bull Run). With public adulation and inflation of ego, DeGolyer headed back to Michigan. He immediately went to work recruiting 100 men for the 4th Michigan and was promoted to major of the regiment upon his return.

Colonel Dwight A. Woodbury, however, was annoyed with DeGolyer's promotion. Woodbury, a phlegmatic leader who looked and acted every-part of a regimental commander, thought DeGolyer habitually hasty in his actions, especially following his delinquent escapades at Bull Run and thus judged him a scoundrel and a rogue—indifferent to orders. So, in the winter of 1861 and on a short leash, Major Sam DeGolyer set out on his daily duties as third in command of the 4th Michigan Infantry. It did not last long.



*Colonel Dwight Woodbury of the 4th Michigan thought DeGolyer impetuous, and cashiered him from the regiment. On July 1, 1862, Woodbury was killed at Malvern Hill, Va. (Library of Congress)*

In December 1861, while bivouacked outside Washington D.C., Colonel Woodbury learned that DeGolyer ordered the home of some defiant Confederate sympathizers to be stripped of all windows and doors. Woodbury wasted no time in cashiering DeGolyer and sent him back to Michigan to await further orders. Fortunately for DeGolyer, he escaped the "Old Fourth"—the regiment evidently had an officer curse. Four colonels were eventually killed in action, including Woodbury, and Dexter, Mich., native



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Harrison Jeffords, the highest commissioned officer killed by a bayonet during the Civil War.

DeGolyer returned to Michigan and soon was at work with a new plan: raise an artillery battery. But not just any battery, a 'flying battery.' Napoleon used such instruments of war successfully on the battlefield, and so would DeGolyer. Battery H, 1st Michigan Light Artillery (aka the 8th Michigan Light Artillery) was mustered into service on March 6, 1862, in Monroe. The battery consisted of six guns: two 12-pounder howitzers and four 12-pounder James Rifles. These guns were not particularly powerful but were able to quickly discharge rapid salvos while maneuvering around the battlefield with speed. And with that, the 1st Michigan Light Artillery headed to the war's Western Theater.

On May 1, 1863, after months of failed probes at the defenses of Vicksburg, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant and his approximately 70,000 men landed below the bastion on open terrain. His goal: cut off Vicksburg from the supply lines at Jackson, Miss., and coax the Confederates under Lt. Gen. John Pemberton out from their defenses and destroy them in detail. DeGolyer and the 1st Michigan Artillery were part of this massive movement. It was during the Vicksburg Campaign that historian Ed Bearss noted DeGolyer began his evolution into "the greatest artillery officer in Grant's army."

Immediately, DeGolyer and the 1st Michigan found themselves in the middle of a fight. At Port Gibson, Grant sought to secure a lodgment for his army to pressure Vicksburg from the south and east, and in their first test in combat with Grant,

DeGolyer's artillery raked the Confederates unmercifully. Using canister, the battery tore up the surrounding area with precision and speed, opening the road to Jackson. Two weeks later, at the Battle of Raymond, DeGolyer was enthroned as Grant's point man.

On May 12, brutal heat slowed the Union's advance on Jackson. Grant's columns only made 1½ miles the day before, and then Confederate forces appeared. Hearing battle, and without orders, DeGolyer spurred his guns up the Utica Road. While deploying into position, he unlimbered amid the lounging 20th Ohio Infantry. The gunners crashed through the Buckeyes boiling coffee pots and immediately poured relentless shot and shell into the advancing 7th Texas Infantry. DeGolyer's blood was up, and the Confederate attack unraveled in the face of DeGolyer's guns. The road to Jackson opened and Grant wasted no time in moving on.



*DeGolyer's name became synonymous with his battery, formally designated Battery H, 8th Michigan Light Artillery. The battery proudly used this silk guidon, and it was probably specially commissioned for the unit. After DeGolyer's death, Captain Marcus Elliot and then Captain William Justin commanded the battery, which served until its July 1865 muster out. (Save the Flags, Michigan State Capitol)*

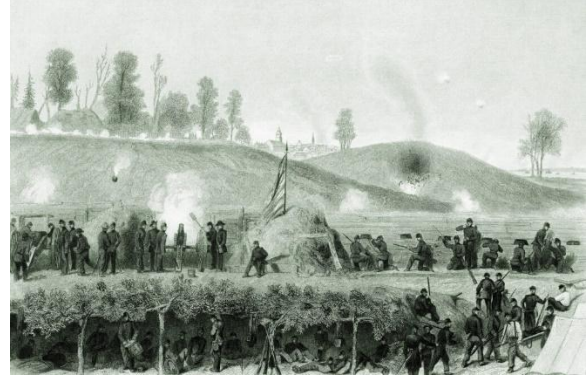


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Four days later, Grant's columns inched closer to the defenses at Vicksburg. On a bald rise, Confederate forces set out to strike at Grant before he could hit them. The collision at Champion Hill was some of the most savage combat of the Vicksburg Campaign. Stubborn Confederate resistance and constant counterattacks during the early morning of May 16 stifled cohesion between attacking Union forces. At 9 a.m., the situation looked bleak for Grant, but fortune smiled on him as his wild card surged onto the battlefield.

DeGolyer unlimbered behind a rail fence just as another Confederate push threatened to beat back the Union advance for good. Using his keen gunner's eye, DeGolyer noticed a better position and, according to an unnamed New York World correspondent observing the fight, "made a wide detour to the right...and opened a terrible enfilading fire upon the enemy." The Confederate pressure subsided, but they came on again in typical fashion. The veteran Alabamians charged pell-mell into the mouths of DeGolyer's guns. The horrified correspondent looked on as the Alabamians "advanced in solid columns and in magnificent style." True to his command philosophy, DeGolyer waited "till they had reached a point two hundred yards from the mouth of the cannon...and discharged them, a terrible volley, full in the faces of the advancing columns." Noticing a more proper undulation for his guns, DeGolyer fell back a short distance to the higher ground and behind a rail fence.



*Federal artillerymen keep up a barrage on Confederate lines at Vicksburg. The town itself can be seen in the background. In the foreground, soldiers inured to the constant chaos await their turn on the line. (Buyenlarge (Getty Images))*

Sure enough, the Alabamians regrouped "as if by magic" and surged out of the tree line. A rail fence—DeGolyer's first position—hindered the Confederate advance. The Michiganders waited for the exhausted Confederates to climb or pull down the rails and then unleashed a fierce cannonade that shredded the mob. In awe of the carnage, the New York World observer summed up the destruction: "It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the slaughter occasioned on the right and centre of the line. The ground was literally covered with the dead and dying. In the ravines, behind trees, on the summit of the hills, lay the unfortunate men of both armies, some of them stiff and cold in death's icy grasp, others with wounds of every description; here, an arm cut off by cannon balls; there a leg hanging on by the muscles."

Indeed, DeGolyer and his elite unit were indispensable to Grant. A few weeks later, the Union Army approached Vicksburg and unleashed a series of bloody attacks that failed miserably. Grant recoiled and settled in for a siege. At the center of his line, he placed Captain DeGolyer and entrusted him with a command of 22 guns.





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The Siege of Vicksburg lasted 47 days, but DeGolyer did not see the end. On May 28, the indispensable Captain Samuel DeGolyer was mortally wounded in the right leg and abdomen while resting in his tent behind his guns. Soon Sam’s wife, Catherine, rushed to his side and brought him home to Michigan, where he lingered for a few months before succumbing to his wound on August 8—just 33 years old.

Tour Stop One at Vicksburg National Military Park was christened “Battery DeGolyer” following the war, and his guns remain commanding the area to this day.

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## A BATTLE ULYSSES S. GRANT COULDN’T QUITE WIN

**As president, the former Union general did all he could to stop the KKK but ultimately came up short.**

By GORDON BERG, HistoryNet, 1/8/2024



*This illustration of unidentified U.S. soldiers wearing captured Ku Klux Klan regalia accompanied a December 1868 Harper’s Weekly story about the reunited nation’s KKK scourge.*

*At the time, Harper’s did not reveal they were soldiers and not Klansmen. (Library of Congress)*

### Interview

They came for Wyatt Outlaw in the dark of night. Burning torches lit their white robes and hoods, masking their identities but illuminating the evil intentions in their hearts. They snatched Outlaw from his home in front of his family, dragged him down Main Street in Graham, N.C., mutilated his body, and hanged him from a tree in the courthouse square. His “crime” was being a Black man active in the Union League and holding public office in Alamance County. His death was recorded as “misadventure” at the hands of persons unknown.



*Fergus Bordewich (Courtesy Fergus Bordewich)*

Depredations like this and worse occurred by the thousands throughout the violent South against newly freed African Americans in the years after the Civil War, perpetrated by White supremacist groups collectively known as the Ku Klux Klan. In *Klan War: Ulysses S. Grant and the Battle to Save Reconstruction* (Knopf, 2023), Fergus M. Bordewich chronicle this devastating chapter in American history and the determined efforts by President Ulysses





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Grant to break the violent grip of the Klan during Reconstruction. Hard-won legislation, championed by Grant, and the dedicated efforts of resilient federal judges and juries backed by the gleam of Union Army bayonets broke the power of the Klan. But unlike Grant's Civil War campaigns, the victory was not decisive. The seeds of domestic terrorism cultivated after the war have periodically found fertile ground in American society during times of social and political turbulence. Bordewich's book is excellent history and a timely warning.

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO DO A BOOK ABOUT GRANT'S WAR AGAINST THE KLAN?

"Klan War" evolved naturally from several of my previous books in which I wrote about the significance of slavery and race in the Early Republic, the development of the Underground Railroad, the Compromise of 1850, and most recently in the Civil War, in "Congress at War." I wanted to show what homegrown American terrorism looked like, how it was defeated by Grant, and what its consequences were.

### MUCH INK HAS BEEN SPILLED ABOUT THE SUPPOSED FAILURES OF ULYSSES S. GRANT'S PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATIONS. SHOULD THE EFFICACY OF HIS PRESIDENCY BE REEVALUATED IN LIGHT OF HIS WAR AGAINST THE KLAN?

Definitely, it should. Grant's deep personal commitment to the extension of full citizenship and human rights to Black Americans made his one of the most ambitious and consequential presidencies in our history. Overall, his presidency was mixed: as is well known, some members of his administration were corrupt, his efforts

to acquire Santo Domingo did not succeed, and his enlightened Indian policy did not ultimately prevail. But after Reconstruction, his reputation was ruthlessly destroyed both by resurgent advocates of the Lost Cause and their Democratic allies, who disdained him precisely because of his commitment to Black civil rights and Reconstruction.

### HOW IMPORTANT WAS NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST IN THE FORMATION, ORGANIZATION, AND SPREAD OF THE KU KLUX KLAN?

Forrest was a wealthy prewar slave-dealer and a war criminal as well as a talented cavalry commander. But he was not the founder of the Klan. He was recruited by its early organizers to serve as its first "Grand Wizard." Traveling around the South, he served as a sort of reactionary Johnny Appleseed: wherever he went, new Klan "dens" sprang up behind him, and violence soon followed. Most probably, he also encouraged the Klan to develop the guerilla cavalry tactics that were its trademark. Of course, those tactics were used not against soldiers but against unarmed, helpless, and isolated freed people and white Republicans.

### HOW DOES GRANT'S WAR AGAINST THE KLAN EQUATE TO A BATTLE TO SAVE RECONSTRUCTION?

Without Grant's decisiveness, both military and legal, the Klan would have continued to overwhelm the embryonic two-party system in the former Confederate states. The Klan's political goal was to destroy biracial democracy in the South; Grant's was to protect it. When the Klan was finally faced by federal soldiers instead of hapless civilians, it caved.



## The Old Limer



MOST PEOPLE ASSOCIATE KLAN DEPREDATIONS BEING INFLICTED AGAINST POOR, RURAL, UNEDUCATED BLACKS. YOU ARGUE THAT THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE. EXPLAIN.

Many rural freed people were certainly victims of the Klan. But the Klan's primary target was the new class of (mostly) once-enslaved men who rose to positions of local and later county and statewide political leadership. Their "ignorance" is a racist trope. Many were at least as well educated as their white neighbors. Some had university educations. White Republicans were also targets of the Klan. The last thing that southern reactionaries wanted to see was viable biracial government in which Blacks exhibited equal or even superior talent to white men.

WHAT WAS IT ABOUT THE KLAN THAT ATTRACTED PROMINENT WHITE COMMUNITY LEADERS TO ITS RANKS?

There's a common idea that the Klan was made up of hoodlums, louts, and thugs. Such men did join the Klan, along with poor white farmers and other workingmen. But it was founded and almost everywhere led by the so-called "better class" of men in their communities, commonly former Confederate officers, landowners, lawyers, doctors, even journalists and ministers. Such men saw themselves as the "natural" leaders in their communities. Their stated goal was to permanently enshrine white supremacy, a term which Klan members proudly embraced.

YOU ARGUE THAT BY 1872 THE ORGANIZED KLAN WAS IN RETREAT. WHY WASN'T ITS DEFEAT DECISIVE?

Once Grant broke the Klan as an organized movement, northern interest in the South's problems rapidly waned. Especially after 1874, funding for both occupation troops and federal prosecutors shriveled, as white supremacist "redeemers" steadily recaptured state governments. With reactionary Democrats in control, terrorism was no longer necessary to subvert the rights of the freed people. That would now be done mainly by political means.

WHO WERE THE FRONT-LINE HEROES IN GRANT'S WAR AGAINST THE KLAN?

While many federal soldiers and law officers struggled heroically against the Klan, two stand out. Major Lewis Merrill of the 7th Cavalry led the crackdown on the most Klan-infested counties of South Carolina. A West Point graduate with legal training and a sterling record hunting down Confederate guerrillas in Missouri during the Civil War, he was the perfect man for the job. Keeping the Klan on the run with his veteran troops and penetrating it with spies, he secured thousands of arrests. On the legal side, Grant's attorney general, Amos Akerman, a passionately committed Georgia Republican, brought immense energy to the prosecution of the Klan.

YOU WARN THAT THE KLAN BEQUEATHED TO AMERICA A MODEL FOR USING TERRORISM AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL CONTROL. ARE WE HEARING ECHOES OF THE 1870S IN OUR CURRENT SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE?

My book is one of history, not present-day politics. But a few conclusions are inescapable. The United States is not so exceptional that it is somehow absolved from the potential for organized terrorist



## The Old Liner



violence of the type we have seen in other countries. The story of Reconstruction and the Klan war further demonstrates that rights that we take for granted—as freedmen did in the 1870s—can be taken away again. There are forces in today’s America that have the potential to undermine our most basic democratic processes and institutions, as we saw on January 6, 2021. We must remain vigilant if we are not to let our democracy slip through our fingers.

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