



Lost Locomotion: The Confederacy forfeited control of the Nashville, Tenn., depot in early 1862, along with supplies and rolling stock.

Insight: Off The Tracks

By Gary W. Gallagher
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The Confederacy failed to take advantage of railroad technology

On April 12, 1864, Robert E. Lee implored Secretary of War James A. Seddon to address the management of railroads in the Confederacy. Problems of supply plagued the Army of Northern Virginia, and Lee wanted all obstacles to deliveries removed. “I earnestly recommend that no private interests be allowed to interfere with the use of all the facilities for transportation that we possess,” he wrote, “until the wants of the army are provided for. The railroads should be at once devoted exclusively to this purpose, even should it be found necessary to suspend all private travel for business or pleasure upon them for the present.”

More than half-a-century later, historian Charles W. Ramsdell emphasized that the Confederacy never overcame the railroad-related troubles Lee had mentioned to

Seddon. “It would be claiming too much to say that the failure to solve its railroad problem was the cause of the Confederacy’s downfall,” stated Ramsdell’s pioneering July 1917 article in *The American Historical Review*, “yet it is impossible not to conclude that the solution of that problem was one of the important conditions of success.” Ramsdell’s piece inspired no other scholar to produce a full-scale treatment of the subject, and in 1939 Douglas Southall Freeman’s *The South to Posterity: An Introduction to the Writing of Confederate History* listed “a study of the Southern railroads” as one of the topics deserving attention.

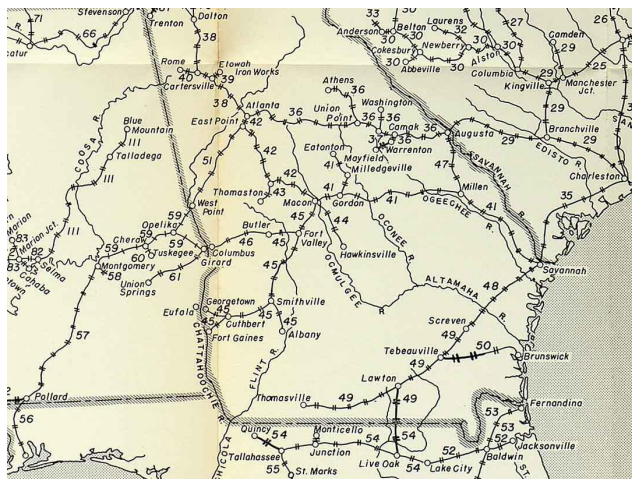
Robert C. Black III’s *The Railroads of the Confederacy* filled the glaring gap in the literature. Published by the University of North Carolina Press in 1952, and reprinted in paperback in 1998, it remains, after more than 65 years, a superior overview that has been augmented but never superseded. Modern readers will find a few anachronistic elements of the book. For example, Black subscribed in significant measure to Frank L. Owsley’s thesis in *State Rights in the Confederacy* (1925); namely, that John C. Calhoun’s “glorification of the individual state” carried over into the war and proved inimical to waging a successful defense against a powerful opponent.

Black also consistently used the term “War Between the States,” which Lost Cause writers embraced in the years after Appomattox, to describe conflict. Yet he largely succeeded in his determination “not to bring any preconceived notions to bear and to allow the politicians and soldiers and railroaders of the Confederacy to speak for themselves.”

Failure to build badly needed new lines hurt the Confederacy

Black's well-researched, comprehensive book expanded on many of the themes in Ramsdell's article and cited substantial evidence to reach similar conclusions. Did Southern railroads figure prominently in the Confederacy's failure to secure independence? "To this question the author can only answer—yes," insisted Black: "Railroad transportation in the Confederacy suffered from a number of defects, all of which played a recognizable part in the southern defeat."

Black explored how insufficient mileage, gaps between key lines, inability to repair and maintain tracks and rolling stock, differences of gauge, and the failure to build badly needed new lines all hurt the Confederacy. Beyond such physical difficulties, he argued, "the Confederates by no means made the best use of what they had. It is men who are most at fault when a war is lost—not locomotives, or cars, or even economic geography." Numerous maps, including one in foldout format locating all the railroads and their gauges in June 1861, greatly enhanced the value of the text.



Rebel Tracks: A section of the map contained in Railroad's of the Confederacy reveals the author's copious research. (The Railroads of The Confederacy)

Black isolated two principal shortcomings that yielded pernicious results for the Confederacy. First, national needs went unmet because the railroads' "owners, managers, and even employees were unwilling to make serious sacrifice of their personal interests." In terms of the railroading sector Black found an absence of overriding national sentiment.

Second, Jefferson Davis' administration and the Congress in Richmond proved "loath to enforce the kind of transportation policy the war effort demanded"—the kind Lee, a committed Confederate nationalist, urged to Seddon in April 1864. Overall, concluded Black, the South lacked the "wholehearted public cooperation" and the "government coercion" necessary "to wage a modern war."

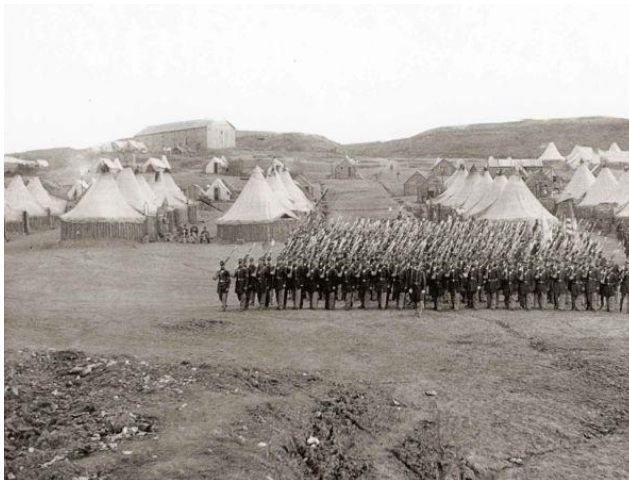
During the decades following its publication, *The Railroads of the Confederacy* enjoyed an elevated reputation. Noted bibliographer Richard B. Harwell placed it among his 200 essential titles on the Confederacy, one that demonstrated how the "collapse of the Confederate railroad service was of immense importance in hastening the breakdown of the Confederacy."

In 1981, the editors of *Civil War Times Illustrated* included it on a roster of essential books compiled from "over thirty consultants." More recently, a major analytical bibliography termed it "a soundly documented study" that details how "Confederate military authorities failed to use effectively the valuable interior railroad lines scattered throughout the South that were available to support numerous campaigns."

Anyone who consults Black's book will better appreciate accounts that discuss the Confederate rail system. Typical is artilleryist

Edward Porter Alexander's handling of the frustrations James Longstreet's First Corps experienced in traveling from Virginia to reinforce Braxton Bragg's army in northern Georgia in September 1863. "In those days the Southern railroads were but lightly built & equipped," explained Alexander, "&, now, for two years they had been cut off from all sorts of supplies of railroad material but what their own small shops could produce. Naturally, therefore, the movement of our corps...was very slow." Alexander reckoned the "entire journey by rail had been about 852 miles in about 182 hours"—an average of just more than four and one-half miles an hour. Such a poor performance mattered in a conflict that, according to Black, "to its last weeks, remained a railroad war." ☆

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Building Block: A Union regiment arrayed in column of companies falls in for dress parade at an Eastern Theater winter camp. On paper, 10 companies of 100 men, or 1,000 soldiers, made up a regiment, but it was very rare to find one at full strength due to illness, casualties, and men detailed for specific tasks.

Facing the Enemy: The crucible of combat forged unique unit cultures within Civil War regiments

By Eric Michael Burke JUNE 2019 • CIVIL WAR TIMES MAGAZINE

Tactical success in combat rests upon a foundation of deeply human factors, and the battles of the Civil War were no exception. While scholars continue to tirelessly probe the letters and diaries of "common soldiers" hunting for evidence of their convictions on a wide range of topics, few have examined how the beliefs members of particular regiments collectively held about themselves, their unit, and the tasks they were assigned could influence their performance on the battlefield.

The operational history of the war has long been written mostly in narrative, chronicling the movements of regiments and brigades as if they were chess pieces pushed around by generals. Decisions of commanders are critically analyzed and their relative competence weighed against that of their opponents. But warfare is conducted by groups, not merely individuals, and is best analyzed through that lens. Civil War soldiers experienced battle as members of specific regiments and batteries, and the ways in which they and their comrades perceived events in battle and behaved under fire as a unit were powerfully informed by their past experiences as members of their particular unit. The assorted lessons and beliefs imparted by those experiences formed an important part of each unit's culture. Every tattered regimental banner on a Civil War battlefield represented a distinctive story, a cohort with an individual personality, character, and culture borne of all the trials and tribulations, and successes and failures that had led it to that specific place in time and space.



Brig. Gen. Charles Hovey was new to brigade command in December 1862. (Picture History/Newscom)

The regiments of Union Brig. Gen. Charles Hovey's brigade offer a case study of how regimental cultures formed and impacted combat performance. His new brigade of Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele's 1st Division of Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's 15th Army Corps, Army of the Tennessee, was formed just weeks prior to the Battle of Chickasaw Bayou in late December 1862. The brigade of six infantry regiments and one battery was cobbled together from units garrisoning Helena, Ark., in preparation for Sherman's first attempt to capture Vicksburg. They included two regiments of newly raised Iowa troops, the 25th and 31st, along with four "old" regiments, the German-majority 3rd, 12th, and 17th Missouri, and the 76th Ohio. While the latter four had all been in uniform since the first spring of the war, only the latter three had yet seen action in any meaningful sense. Hovey himself had earned his brigadier's star for gallantry while leading an Illinois regiment through a Rebel ambush in Arkansas as a colonel, but

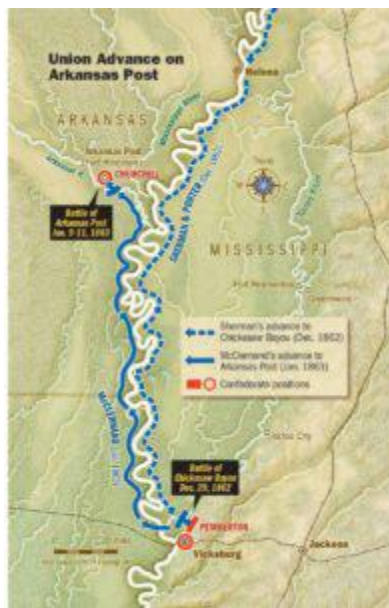
was by no means a combat-hardened commander.

The prewar college president, however, was a quick study. Ordered by Steele on December 26 to probe cautiously down a heavily wooded and narrow levee with his brigade at the Battle of Chickasaw Bayou northwest of Vicksburg, Hovey adeptly rotated out his green Iowans and placed the more experienced Missourians in the front of his column. Sherman ordered Steele to attempt to turn the Confederate forces ensconced atop Walnut Hills guarding the only road south into Vicksburg, and Hovey's brigade was charged with spearheading this effort. Very quickly, his attention to the different levels of combat experience within each of his regiments paid off.

When the head of the brigade was suddenly ambushed, the Missouri veterans took it in stride, dispersing to find cover and returning fire. Having survived similar brushes with enemy fire before at the Battle of Pea Ridge, the Germans were steeled by their past experiences of survival and success. Even so, this time the Rebels proved unwilling to budge, and most of Hovey's brigade eventually withdrew without ever firing a shot.

Although the rookie Iowans had been mercifully spared from danger, while they huddled around small fires in the Yazoo River bottoms that evening under a torrential downpour, survivors of other less fortunate Hawkeye regiments that had been heavily engaged in Sherman's main assault on Walnut Hills mingled with the still-green recruits. The shell-shocked survivors "came around and told us how near they had come to being almost annihilated during the day and had barely escaped," one green Hawkeye wrote. The horrific stories they

told of terrible losses in the attack, along with the apparent incompetence of “our Generals,” made a deep impact on the impressionable recruits, negatively shaping their outlook on bayonet assaults and threatening their trust in both Sherman and Steele. “We wondered why...our Generals were only competent to lead single regiments into ambushes and between cross fires of artillery thereby destroying the army and accomplishing nothing,” a frightened Iowan pondered.



Union Advance on Arkansas Post (Map Graphics © DFL Group 2019)

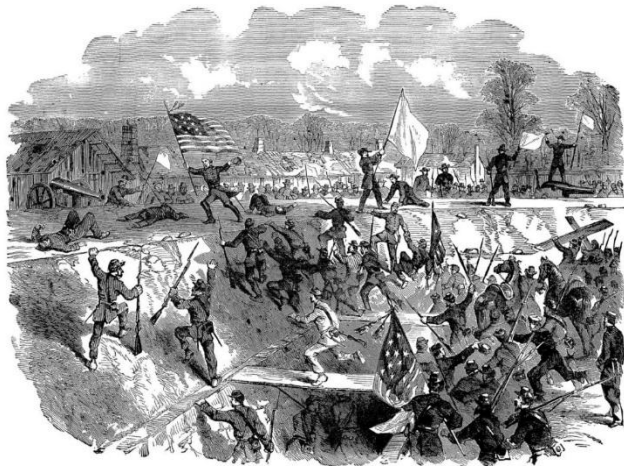
The influence of these horror stories first became evident when the brigade received orders from Steele to prepare for a nighttime attack on the heavily fortified Rebel works north of Vicksburg at Drumgould’s Bluffs on New Year’s Eve. After being ferried northward by steamers under the cover of darkness, the division was to land and storm the enemy works at bayonet point. Those in the ranks were warned that any who failed to maintain their forward momentum would be shot on sight. Privates were “instructed that the danger was as great in the rear as from

the front, and that the heights must be taken if every man should fall,” one shocked Hawkeye revealed. The receipt of such foreboding orders within the context of the horror stories they had just recently overheard was too much for many to take. “Many officers quailed before such a prospect,” one Iowan recalled. “Every man whose bowels did not overcome his bravery,” another wrote, “supposed that he had said his last prayer.” Even the veteran German officers of the 12th Missouri “brooded about what was going to become of us” while they “braced themselves up with whisky and steadied ‘file closers’ by the same means.” Fortunately, the attack plans were aborted when fog precluded all visibility of the objective.

Two weeks later, on the morning of January 11 at the Battle of Arkansas Post, Steele ordered Hovey to form his brigade in preparation for an army-wide frontal assault against fewer than 5,000 Confederates who held hastily dug entrenchments protecting the vulnerable flank of Fort Hindman on the Arkansas River. The secessionists were vastly outnumbered by the 30,000-man Federal host with which Maj. Gen. John McClelland hoped to overwhelm the meager garrison. When McClelland’s initial plans to envelop the fort and force its bloodless capitulation were stymied by a combination of swampy terrain and Rebel opposition, only a direct assault seemed likely to decide the question. As Steele’s aide informed Hovey of the forthcoming assault, it fell to him to organize and arrange the regiments of his brigade in a manner that would best facilitate their success.

Hovey’s deployment decisions once again needed to be informed by the distinctive history, capabilities, and culture of each unit, not merely the relative experience of their commanding officers. Awaiting orders from

the cover of a forest on Hovey's right, Colonel Francis Hassendeubel's veteran 17th Missouri, comprised principally of German amateur gymnasts from Turnverein athletic clubs across the Northern states, would constitute the tip of Hovey's spear. Hassendeubel had earned an impressive record of valor both in Mexico and earlier in the Civil War, and had secured a reputation as a sound tactician and courageous leader. His "Turner" veterans prided themselves on athleticism and marksmanship, and the regiment quickly became Steele's dedicated light infantry force, earning it the informal cognomen of "Hassendeubel's sharpshooters."



Battle Along The Big Muddy: Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's Expeditionary Force traveled down the Mississippi River supported by Rear Adm. David D. Porter's gunboats and failed to break through to Vicksburg at Chickasaw Bayou. Major General John McClernand then took a force north to Arkansas Post and captured the garrison and fort there, as depicted below. Major General Ulysses S. Grant thought McClernand's effort was self-serving, but the Northern public appreciated the victory. (Frank Leslie's Illustrated)

As the veteran 12th Missouri was detached to guard the brigade's supplies at the

transports, the 17th was one of only two units in Hovey's brigade on the field that had ever conducted a charge, having successfully assaulted a wavering Secessionist line at the Battle of Pea Ridge, on March 8, 1862. More recently, several of the German companies had engaged in a brief skirmish with Texas Rangers in Arkansas that left several of their beloved comrades dead. The night after that fight, word spread that most of the casualties had been slaughtered in cold blood after surrendering and begging for mercy. The rumors deepened the anti-Rebel convictions of the free soil "Dutch," and they thirsted for revenge.



Fragments: The 76th Ohio's national flag lists only a portion of the unit's battle honors. The Licking County regiment served until 1865 and fought in 44 Western Theater engagements. (Ohio History Connection)

Behind the 17th, Hovey deployed Colonel Isaac Shepard's 3rd Missouri. Bay State native Shepard had never personally seen combat, but had led men in a prewar Boston militia before moving west to Missouri. That experience had netted him a position as Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Lyon's aide-de-camp at the

Battle of Wilson's Creek, but a kick from the general's horse incapacitated him just prior to the fight. Like their commander, most of Shepard's men filling the 3rd Missouri's ranks had never experienced combat. Previously assigned to counter-guerrilla duties in Missouri, they had conducted long marches and chased bushwhackers from countless hideouts in the brush, but the ultimate crucible of battle had thus far evaded them.

Fortunately, the veteran 17th would shield Shepard's unblooded command from the impending storm of Rebel fire when the brigade approached the enemy works. The 3rd, in turn, would shield the even greener "fresh levies" of Colonel William Smyth's 31st Iowa following in support. Smyth, a portly Irish lawyer, and his cohort represented the fruits of Lincoln's most recent call for volunteers. Under arms for less than six months, the regiment was barely more than a crowd of civilians with elementary instruction in drill, having yet had no opportunity to test their collective mettle. Even Smyth still had trouble remembering the proper commands on the parade field, occasionally having to embarrassingly rely on a low-toned inquiry to his adjutant: "Lieutenant, what shall I say?"



For His New Land: German immigrant Colonel Francis Hassendeubel of the 17th Missouri died of wound complications on July 17, 1863. (Missouri Historical Society)

Smyth's Hawkeyes looked upon the band of "old" Germans arrayed to their front as hardened veterans by comparison. Focusing on following their lead would ease the terror of forthcoming events while presenting opportunities to learn from observation. Still, in the interest of everyone's safety, Hovey ordered Smyth's greenhorns not to fix bayonets or affix caps to their loaded rifles, but rather to follow closely behind Shepard's line until further orders. This both signaled to the nervous Iowans that they would not be expected to engage in any hand-to-hand fighting and prevented their spontaneous firing against orders.

Formed to the left of these regiments, in the open beyond the timber, were the 76th Ohio and 25th Iowa. As with his arrangements on the right, Hovey placed the only other combat-experienced regiment in his brigade, the veteran Ohioans, ahead of the "new" Iowans following closely in support. At the signal of the field batteries, Hovey's brigade launched into action.

As the Ohioans and Hawkeyes on the left rushed ahead at the double-quick through the open field to their front with wild cheers, the trees and underbrush of the timber made it difficult for the right wing to keep pace. Rebel batteries began to blindly plunge shellfire into the trees. Fragments from one bursting shell tore into Hovey's hand, distracting him briefly from command. As the rounds cracked through the canopy, the Westerners instinctively laid down in the brush for cover, further slowing their advance. One Iowan took note of how "trees and stumps were much sought for and those who had been in service before and honored

for their bravery were among the first to seek them.”

As the two left wing regiments of the brigade continued to surge ahead, the 76th and 25th quickly found themselves alone, mostly out of sight or reach of either Hovey or the rest of the brigade. They would fight a separate engagement as a result. Though originally planning for the weight of his entire brigade to strike the Confederate works at once, the vexing terrain had robbed Hovey of his plans. Things only got worse. As the right wing crawled through the timber, sporadic enfilading fire through the trees from the right suddenly spelled danger to Hassendeubel’s Germans.

First Taste of Hard War



Faces Of Battle: Every soldier who fought in the December 1862 Battle of Chickasaw Bayou came away with his own unique perspective of the fight. (Knox, Thomas Wallace, Camp-Fire And Cotton Field)

William T. Sherman’s and John McClelland’s expeditionary flotilla on the Mississippi River during the winter of 1862-63, the opening movements in the effort to capture Vicksburg, have received little attention from military historians of the Civil War. That is unfortunate given that the battles of Chickasaw Bayou (December 26-29, 1862) and Arkansas Post (January 9-11,

1863) featured many aspects of fighting now commonly considered to be typical of operations during the final year of the war: sustained periods of close contact and intense fighting, increased employment of skirmishing tactics, and regular recourse to earthworks.

All of those factors were integral components of the fighting in the Mississippi and Arkansas bottomlands in the winter of 1862-63. The labyrinthine prewar levee system planters had erected to control the fickle rivers proved ideal impromptu earthworks, introducing many regiments to the challenges of overcoming a fortified enemy position for the first time while simultaneously impressing upon them the value of digging in to provide similar protection.

“It does very well for men at home to turn up [their] nose at ditches and picks and spades,” one Iowa officer reflected, “but to a man brought up before cannon and sharpshooters they become a good institution.” After spending a week skirmishing and sharpshooting while in close contact with Rebel defenders along Chickasaw Bayou, many in the Federal ranks complained of “nervous strain and sleepless exposure.” Frequent rains and the lack of cover on steamer transports meant that many went for weeks with hardly any opportunity to dry their soaked uniforms and equipment.

Many subsequently froze while maneuvering at night on land where blankets and other creature comforts were frequently prohibited. Though small compared to months-long operations like the Atlanta Campaign, several soldiers who served in both perceived relatively little difference.

Reflecting on his experiences at Chickasaw Bayou after the war, Private Charles

Willison of the 76th Ohio, a veteran of the most trying portions of the Atlanta Campaign, maintained that “no engagement in which I was afterward involved impressed me with the nightmarish sensation of this one.”

On the Civil War home front, many recoiled from newspaper accounts of grotesquely high casualty figures, equating the severity of particular fights with their respective “butcher’s bills,” just as historians often do today. Soldiers enduring the clashes, however, were restricted to what path-breaking historian John Keegan called their limited “personal angle of vision” when evaluating their own experiences. Comparatively small engagements could be as traumatic and impactful to participants as major, titanic engagements.

When soldiers read those same newspaper accounts published by embedded correspondents, even if they included portions of the official reports of generals, they often found that their personal experiences of an event, and those of their unit, were difficult to situate within the emerging big picture. As Keegan pointed out in his classic 1976 book *The Face of Battle*, the big picture did not reflect the myriad individual experiences that unfolded at the ground level.

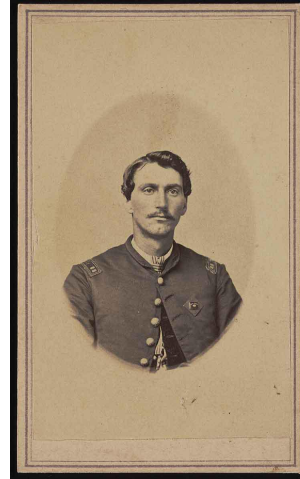
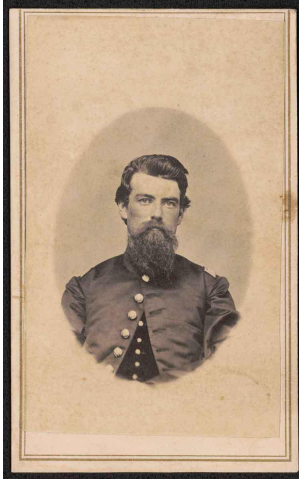
But it was those experiences of a particular event at the ground level that soldiers and their regiments reflected upon and learned from. Historians still tend to think in terms of narratives wherein all the movements of even the smallest of actions are understood.

Such a reality was alien to the soldiers fighting through the smoke. Fully understanding the influence such experiences had on the maturation of the Civil War soldiers and units that fought and

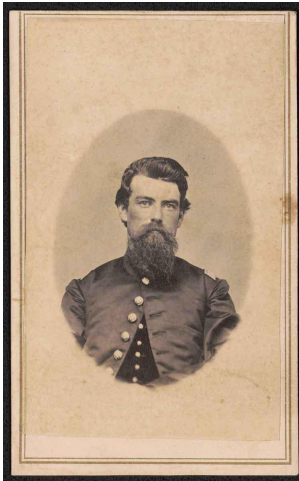
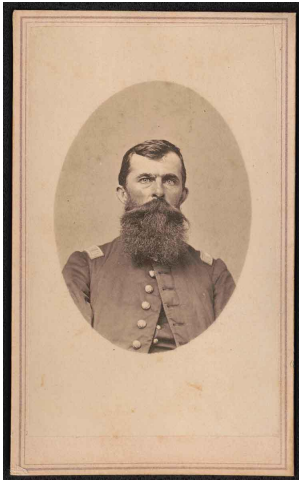
endured them requires a quest to reconstruct the many “faces of battle.” —**E.M.B.**

Spying a handful of Texas cavalrymen—their archenemies—the Turner skirmishers quickly changed front to address the new threat and removed the protective coverage of their veteran experience from the brigade’s assault. Piling into a ravine for cover, the 17th’s veterans began to ply their trade, even as the rest of Hovey’s formation, now with Shepard’s untested 3rd Missouri in the lead, debouched from the trees into the open and approached the still silent Rebel pits.

Civil war frontal assaults were almost entirely contingent upon psychology. Success relied on an attacking regiment’s task coordination and psychological resiliency. Commanders provided inspiration and guided their formation, junior officers repeated commands to the men above the din, sergeants maintained discipline from behind the ranks, and privates relied on confidence in their leaders, each other, and their perceived probabilities of survival. Above all else, a regiment needed to collectively believe it could successfully make (and survive) an attack in order to maximize its likelihood of doing so. This became especially important once the terrifying effects of enemy fire began to dramatically challenge the supposition. The capacity of a point-blank defensive volley to rob an assaulting unit of its belief in success and survival lay at the heart of defensive tactics.



Hawkeye Leaders: The officers above all served in the 31st Iowa Infantry, and on their shoulders fell the responsibility to lead the regiment through its harrowing initial battles at Chickasaw Bayou and Arkansas Post.



All members of an attacking regiment had to sustain their confidence in success while maintaining forward momentum through the traumatic crucible of a defender's initial volley. It was during the reception of this "shock" volley that a unit's particular past experience and culture could make all the difference, either steeling the souls of the men or inspiring existential dread and premonitions of imminent disaster. If a regiment could psychologically withstand the terror of the initial blast of gunfire, the odds of a defender abandoning his position were relatively high. Rarely were attacking regiments physically destroyed by a single volley, and in most cases no hand-to-hand fighting would ensue. Bayonet charges functioned more as psychological weapons than as tools of physical coercion in Civil War battles, but contrary to popular belief frequently proved effective.

Frontal assaults were almost entirely contingent upon psychology

Hovey's right wing was less than 100 paces from the Rebel earthworks when the "blue beans flew into our ranks, bringing death and destruction," the 3rd Missouri color-bearer recalled. Unlike the errant veteran Ohioans to their left, who successfully endured two successive Rebel volleys before hitting the ground for cover upon realizing they were unsupported, nothing in the 3rd Missouri's heritage had prepared it for such an experience. The Germans were cut down mercilessly by fire from the front and flanks as they struggled to climb over felled trees meant to slow their advance.

"It was impossible to get over the barricade," the ensign recalled. "We were all crowded into trap, and our boys fell like flies. It was terrible." In a matter of minutes, 75 Missourians were struck by Rebel fire, and 14 of them killed. Still, the regiment had not been physically obliterated. Even given the casualties it had sustained, along with the Hawkeyes following up close in support, Hovey's right wing still vastly outnumbered the Rebels in the pits. Far more effectual than the human carnage the volley had produced was the confusion and terror it sowed among the Missourians.

The terrified Iowans following closely to the rear looked on in horror. Though spared the physical effects of the Confederate fire, the sight of the long-service veterans to the front as they "staggered and fell to the ground" immediately inspired shock. "Someone in their line cried that the order was retreat," an Iowan recalled. Accordingly, the survivors "sprang to their feet and with the rapidity of lightning, dashed back upon us." The result was chaos, and although only 14 Iowans had yet been wounded, the Hawkeyes spontaneously joined the rout. Seizing the national colors, Smyth cried for his shaken regiment to re-form, but with only moderate success. Those steadied began to fire from

the cover of the trees, but none dared take another step forward. Hovey's brigade had learned its lesson.

Despite Hovey's repulse, after the survivors engaged in a close-range firefight from the safety of the trees for several hours the Confederate garrison of Fort Hindman spontaneously surrendered and the Battle of Arkansas Post ended in Union victory. Initially aghast at how their obvious failure to overwhelm the Southern defenders had somehow ended in victory, the men of Hovey's brigade eventually congratulated each other on their survival and success. Even so, when once again aboard the damp decks of frigid steamers and later crowded around countless campfires in the Louisiana mud of Young's Point, the more complicated cultural legacy of Arkansas Post was etched into the fabric of the culture of each regiment in Hovey's command.

Despite the larger battle ending victoriously, the trauma of the brigade's own repulse deeply influenced the confidence of the men in each unit in their collective ability to succeed in any future assault. Gazing across the Mississippi at the Vicksburg defenses from their miserable camps along the Louisiana bank, the survivors of "the Post" dreaded the future.

Most hoped their leaders had learned the same lessons they had from the terrifying experience. "Our Officers have found that Storming rebel Breast works with Infantry does not pay," one Iowan wrote. "It is discouraging...to always have to attack an enemy behind his entrenchments," another Hawkeye considered. "I hope that it will not have to be done here." Such a lack of confidence could prove the Achilles heel of any future attack.

This became starkly evident when the brigade was next called upon to charge Rebel earthworks during the Siege of Vicksburg on May 22, 1863, when Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant ordered a major assault to try to break the Southern lines. Other brigades along the 15th Corps line, many having enjoyed prior success in assaults, struggled through the fire all the way to the enemy parapet—at least until their formations were dismantled by Confederate fire—the regiments of Hovey’s brigade, now led by Colonel Charles R. Woods, showed little of the resolve they had before Arkansas Post, halting their advance well short of the Rebel parapet at the first available cover.

It was not only the intensity of Rebel fire holding the brigade back, but also the traumatic heritage of each regiment in the brigade. The experience only reinforced the assumptions maintained throughout the brigade about their inability to succeed in frontal assaults. “I do not think there will be any more charges made,” one Iowan officer concluded afterward. “The men cannot be made to do it.”

Battle Rattle

Battle of Chickasaw Bayou

December 26-29, 1862

In this opening effort to capture Vicksburg, Miss., Union forces attacked the city from the northwest, but were thwarted by a combination of miserable weather, thick woods, bottomless swamps, and stout Confederate resistance.

U.S. Forces

*Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman
15th Corps, Army of the Tennessee
Mississippi River Squadron
31,000 men, 1,800 casualties*

C.S. Forces

*Lt. Gen. John Pemberton
Dept. of Mississippi and East Louisiana
14,000 men, 200 casualties*

Battle of Arkansas Post

January 9-11, 1863

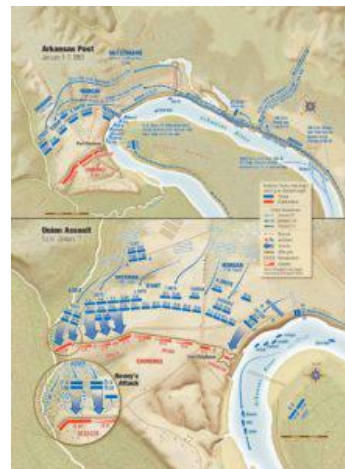
Union forces were successful in capturing Fort Hindman at Arkansas Post on the Arkansas River, which prevented Southern forces from using the waterway as a means to disrupt activity on the Mississippi. Overall commander Ulysses S. Grant, however, was not informed of the movement, and considered it a distraction from the primary goal of capturing Vicksburg.

U.S. Forces

*Maj. Gen. John McClernand
Army of the Mississippi
28,949 men, 1,061 casualties*

C.S. Forces

*Brig. Gen. Thomas Churchill
Fort Hindman Garrison
4,900 men, all killed, wounded, or captured*



Costly Union Victory: The cold and harsh terrain weakened and sickened many soldiers on the Arkansas Post expedition. "Of course no fires were allowed to be built...and the suffering in consequence during the night was extreme," recalled an Ohio officer in one of Hovey's fellow brigades. Grant believed the movement unnecessarily sapped Federal resources, and it was one of the reasons he eventually relieved McClernand on June 18, 1863, during the Vicksburg siege. (Map Graphics © DFL Group 2019)

Indeed, the only regiment of the brigade that proved willing to press home its attack that day, with disastrous consequences, was the 12th Missouri, which had been detached guarding transports during the Arkansas Post fighting. Left unsupported by the reluctant remainder of the brigade, the Missourians suffered more than 30 percent casualties during the assault. Now, they too shared in the convictions of the rest. "Sherman thinks that everything can be forced by the stormers," one disgusted officer observed. After successive traumatic repulses, the men of the brigade emphatically disagreed.

While unique in their particulars, Hovey's regiments were not at all singular in their learned aversion to frontal assaults. The same pattern of erosion of effectiveness when called upon to charge is a phenomenon historians have long identified as a trend in both armies during the war, most especially during its later years. Crucially, however, due to the lack of any formal "lessons learned" program in either army, every Civil War regiment developed such an aversion along its own unique trajectory or "learning curve."

Historians have long recognized that it mattered who commanded an army or unit at

a particular time and place in military history. They have proved far less attuned to the often finely nuanced differences between tightly bonded groups of combatants on the battlefield, and the impress of all past experiences they collectively carried with them and brought to bear in their struggles against the enemy. Exploring such dynamics offers plentiful opportunities to advance the operational history of the Civil War in new and widely interdisciplinary directions, aiding in the ongoing quest of crafting far more holistic explanations for the performance of military units and the outcomes of both minor engagements and major campaigns.

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Washington's Civil War Defenses and the Battle of Fort

Stevens



Fort Lincoln (Library of Congress)

American Battlefield Trust

Dr. B. Franklin Cooling

By the close of the Civil War, Washington, D.C. was the most heavily fortified city in North America, perhaps even in the world. According to the report of the army's official engineer, her defenses boasted 68 enclosed forts with 807 mounted cannon and 93 mortars, 93 unarmed batteries with 401 emplacements for field guns and 20 miles of rifle trenches plus three blockhouses. Moreover miles of military roads, a telegraphic communication system and supporting infrastructure — including headquarters buildings, storehouses and construction camps — ringed the city. Thus, “the finest existing example of the system of defenses based upon a series of detached forts connected by a continuous trench line” contributed to a sense of “seeming impenetrability.” Yet, that system came close to failing at a critical juncture in the war that might well have cost President Abraham Lincoln his life, the Union its war and the country her national unification. This unsung story finds scant attention today in history books or at the various parks preserving the remains of some 22 fortifications, including Fort Stevens, site of

a critical battle during Confederate Lt. Gen. Jubal Early's 1864 attempt to capture the American capital.

Even today, the nation's capital is guarded by an air defense and homeland security system perpetuating man's age-old tradition of protecting seats of power and governance. And the story of defending Washington actually begins in the sorry tale of two inadequate river forts, Great Britain's successful capture and burning of the nascent capital in August 1814 and a tradition of peacetime pecuniary neglect of national security. At the time of Lincoln's election and the Secession Winter, and even through his inauguration, the bombardment of Fort Sumter and his subsequent call for volunteers to suppress rebellion, Washington possessed only a namesake river fort, with virtually no armament and manned by a drunken ordnance sergeant. The city itself had a militia of questionably loyalty supplementing a minuscule group of regular Army ordnance technicians and Marines for protection. True, there was the Navy Yard, but it was given to manufacture and repair and was no harbor bristling with ships and guns. A quick infusion of Army regulars from frontier and other posts and the intrepid leadership of the army's commanding general, the aged Winfield Scott, ensured Lincoln's safety. The eventual arrival of northern militia volunteers allowed the first rudimentary fortifications to be built on the “sacred soil of Virginia.” From little more than bridgehead protection would emerge engineer Brig. Gen. John Gross Barnard's formal Defenses of Washington system. As chief engineer, Barnard was directed to design and build forts to defend Mr. Lincoln's City.



The make-weight crisis came with the Union military disaster at First Manassas in July 1861. A combination of Lincoln's fast-developing paranoia about the city's safety, the arrival of a new general-in-chief, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan and a plethora of military and civilian labor available in the fall and winter meant that the U.S. government became serious about protecting the city as a political symbol of Union. Washington (and now-occupied Alexandria, Va.) became the logistical hub and staging area for operations against Confederate forces in Virginia. In fact, Washington forts countervailed similar fortified rebel camps at Centreville, Leesburg and Dumfries on the Potomac. The navy's fledgling Potomac Flotilla kept the river route to the capital open against Confederate batteries downriver, while two armed camps stared at one another at a distance of thirty miles. The Confederate withdrawal to the south and McClellan's ambitious Peninsula Campaign altered the impasse that had emerged in the spring. By the summer of 1862, 48 forts and batteries protected the city, although by no means in any systematic way. At least, Mr. Lincoln's Washington had rudimentary protection and a mind-set of defense. It also had a new and controversial zeitgeist that would henceforth determine how the war in the east would be

fought and how the capital would be defended and, almost, lost.

This spirit of the moment represented an abiding contest between Lincoln and his generals that would govern affairs for the remainder of the war. It keynoted a theme generally often overlooked in Civil War historiography, that Lincoln and his administration wanted secure protection for Washington — forts, guns, garrison etc. — before any field army undertook a campaign against the Confederates in Richmond. Army commanders, in particular, identified the field army — the maneuver force personified by the Army of the Potomac — on the offensive against Richmond her defenders as the optimal protection for the Nation's Capital. Barnard and his engineers, however, saw the situation differently: a symbiotic relationship where the forts and garrisons were a shield, working hand in glove with the maneuverable army or sword. Victory-hungry generals saw little need to lavish scarce resources of men and material in static defenses; but then, neither did Lincoln, who simply demanded suitable protection for Washington.

Such controversy continued for two campaigning years. The engineers built and constantly improved Washington's fortifications using both white and black, soldier and civilian labor. Ordnance men constantly shifted cannon while technically proficient "heavy artillery" units specifically recruited for Washington's defenses learned their trade of trajectory and distance computation, surveyed the countryside presided over by the frowning heavy cannon, and fraternized with local civilians. It was a pleasant existence for the "spit and polish" white-gloved garrisons, broken only by periodic scares from Col. John S. Mosby's

partisans or Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's northward expeditions.

In fact, Lee came close to challenging, if not capturing, Washington's defenses — both the field army and the field fortifications — after the Battle of Second Manassas. The long-forgotten battle of Chantilly, the remnants of the defeated forces of John Pope and Lee's almost mystical inhibition about the impregnability of Washington's defenses gave him pause and, like after the Battle of First Manassas, the moment of decision slipped away. However, the appearance of Confederates so close to the city panicked Lincoln and his generals once more, particularly as Lee's host slipped into Maryland. Many saw the specter of 1814 all over again, when the enemy swooped in from the north through Bladensburg to plunder the city. Fortifications suddenly grew stronger thanks to soldier and contract labor. A free black landowner watched her house crumble beneath soldier axes and sledgehammers as Fort Massachusetts was expanded and became Fort Stevens. She always claimed that she had been promised a "great reward" for her sacrifice for military necessity by a tall, black-clad stranger, but that Lincoln's promise never materialized. But, a rejuvenated Army of the Potomac, once more under McClellan's steady hand, regrouped, Lee was thrown back at Antietam and the capital was saved. The war receded once more to Central Virginia and the road to Richmond. The same thing happened again the next year. Washington and the government panicked, as Lee circumvented the capital on his march into Pennsylvania, leaving behind much of his army on the bloody fields of Gettysburg.

By mid-point in the struggle, a War Department Commission, led by Barnard, had dissected the strengths and weaknesses

of what had become a vast system of defenses for Washington, as well as the needs and costs for maintaining and improving those fortifications. Civilian labor now provided the means for erecting more earthworks, barracks, sheds and storehouses. Civilians also constructed elaborate river works at Fort Foote (which supplanted the aged Fort Washington) to deter naval attacks — a threat not so much from the Confederates as from European powers seeking to intervene. The commission calculated the need for infantry garrisons numbering 25,000 men, plus 9,000 trained artillerymen, a cavalry force and an additional 25,000-man maneuver force — all separate from the campaigning Army of the Potomac. In typical military fashion, the numbers were completely unrealistic given manpower deficiencies and draconian efforts to fill the armies of the Union proper. In terms of the mission of defending the city, however, the figures were reasonably realistic. Yet, as the months of 1863 waned without a serious direct threat to the capital, predictable complacency prevailed. After all, the city had 60 forts, 93 batteries and 837 guns together with 23,000 garrisoned men in position to defend her. Wasn't that sufficient?



Fort Totten - Washington DC (Library of Congress)

Matters looked good on paper. A now-connected system of fortifications existed by which every important point (at eight hundred to 1,000 yard intervals) was occupied by an enclosed fort of some type. Every important approach or depression not necessarily commanded by such a fort was swept by a battery for field guns (to be emplaced in an emergency by arrival of batteries of the maneuver army). Rifle-pits for two ranks of men connected the forts around the perimeter of the city, except to the east of the city beyond the Anacostia River. This was the zone of least threat, even though an enemy could knife between forts and take commanding artillery positions along the ridge overlooking the Navy Yard and within firing distance of the capitol. Yet, this point in time became the moment of maximum danger, as newly arrived General-in-Chief, Ulysses S. Grant led the Army of the Potomac in spring and summer campaigns against Lee and Richmond. Dismissing Lincoln's concern for the defense of Washington, Grant nearly sacrificed the whole game, as it turned out.

Grant, like McClellan and the other army commanders adhered to the notion that the best defense was a good offense. The Army of the Potomac needed trained manpower and to his mind, the defenses of Washington, in part, could provide it. So all the "Heavies" and the infantry and cavalry departed the forts for the field, replaced by semi-invalid Veteran Reserves, trainees, 100-day levies and a small cadre of experienced troops who escaped the dragnet. Ever-mounting casualty lists from the Overland Campaign only served to drain even more from Washington's protection despite admonitions from the engineers, and the ever dangerous Robert E. Lee sensed opportunity. In the early summer he dispatched Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early on the war's most daring and ambitious attempt to

capture Washington. This story too has seemingly escaped the pages of history as possibly the decisive moment in the Civil War. Of course, it remains a central point in the story of the defenses and defending the city.

Confederate authorities felt that another offensive north of the Potomac could shock the war-weary North in a presidential election year. Lee was more focused, thinking Early's expedition could relieve pressure upon his own forces in the Richmond-Petersburg lines. He directed Early to capture Washington if he could, cut rail and telegraph communications around Baltimore and free the thousands of prisoners purportedly held at Point Lookout in southern Maryland. It was a tall order that depended upon speed, deception and, ironically, the weather. Grant and the Army of the Potomac had no inkling of the daring raid until it was almost too late. Leaving Richmond in late June, Early saved Lynchburg and Lee's logistical lifeline, and then swiftly transited the Shenandoah Valley, crossing into Maryland by July 7. Two days later, he ransomed the town of Frederick for \$200,000 and fought a pitched battle with a motley array of Federals assembled by VIII Corps and Middle Department commander Maj. Gen. Lew Wallace (who went on to write Ben Hur) on the banks of the Monocacy River, just south of town. The battle — now one of the National Park Service's flagship sites — resulted in decisive Confederate victory, but at heavy cost to Early's legions and a delay in his timetable. Monocacy, aptly termed "the battle that saved Washington," cost Early a whole day's march time and was one of two episodes that determined the fate of the capital and the nation that summer.



Jubal Early (Library of Congress)

Early won the battle but lost the ensuing race to get to the capital before, freshly alerted to the dire threat, reinforcements could arrive in the city, rushed by water from City Point, Va. A panicked government, a confused command setup and ill-matched troop units, coupled with refugees and an overcrowded city populace made for an unstable situation in anticipation of Early's arrival. But, the main story was the combination of the delay and losses caused by the Battle of Monocacy, temperatures reaching the mid-nineties and troop columns enveloped in dust. Lincoln wired hysterical Baltimoreans to be "vigilant but keep cool" as he hoped neither city would be taken. Still, he really had no control over the situation. Nor, it seems, did Early, as it took his men a day and a half to reach the Washington suburbs. Hasty reconnaissance suggested the need to shift eastward in order to break through the defense system and more time was wasted marching across the Federals in plain view from Rockville, Md., to the Seventh Street road. Sharp-eyed Federal signalers caught sight of the dusk clouds and what they portended by the time Early's advance

elements appeared before Fort Stevens about mid-day on July 11. The general was up to the task at hand; his army was not. Strung out beside the road for miles in the heat and dust, they were simply too tired and thirsty to mount the decisive attack Early needed. The Confederate force might at this point have been successful at breaching the Yankee lines, but instead merely settled into cooling bivouacs at Silver Spring and in the vicinity of today's Walter Reed Army Medical Center while their leaders studied Washington's fortifications before them.

Union lines appeared strong but feebly manned. All that Confederate officers could discern through binoculars were citizens and militia manning the ramparts. Still, a headlong rush seemed inopportune in the heat, so the raiders resorted to skirmishing while the defenders remained content to await reinforcements. It was a curious standoff in retrospect. Perhaps by this stage in the war nobody wanted to take chances. Certainly the soldiers were in no particular mood to sacrifice themselves. One who was, however, appears to be President Lincoln, who arrived by carriage with an official party and a host of curious. From the Potomac east to the rail tracks to Baltimore, the line of Washington's forts became the battle sector. Sharpshooters peppered ramparts, Lincoln and his wife Mary ostensibly visited the wounded in the fort's hospital but nobody made a move toward pitched battle on July 11.

The next day would be critical; the decisive moment for both sides. Dawn brought the illusion that veteran reinforcements in faded blue had arrived on the Union lines. In reality, these merely dismounted cavalry and invalids. Confederate leaders again hesitated. Ironically, hastily improvised cavalymen thrust into the rifle pits deceived Early long enough for the real reinforcement from the

VI and XIX Corps to arrive at Washington's wharves and march out to bolster the defenses. Early now realized his precarious position. Isolated north of the Potomac with pursuers coming in on his rear from the west, it looked like would be unable to complete his missions of freeing prisoners, disrupting communications and — above all — capturing Washington. "We didn't take Washington," Early told his staff officers, "but we scared Abe Lincoln like Hell." But now he must escape; Lee needed his men. Skirmishers would have to buy him time until night would permit withdrawal.

Meanwhile, the persistence of the Union Commander-in-Chief's desire to view the skirmishing from atop Fort Stevens's parapet nearly achieved unexpected consequences for Early and the Confederacy. When a surgeon nearby went down with a sharpshooter's bullet, Union commanders realized this nonsense of a president being shot at had to stop. He could be killed, the battle lost and the war altered all with the crack of an Enfield rifle in the hands of a butternut sharpshooter. So the army generals ordered an advance by several veteran brigades from the Army of the Potomac. It was all very military — flags flying, lines straight — and Lincoln loved it. However, 10 percent of the attackers went down in the melee as rebels rushed down from their camp sites and the late afternoon produced a new stalemate, out beyond the fortifications, in the no-man's land that today features urban neighborhoods and the outskirts of Walter Reed, before Early slipped away under cover of darkness.

The bloodletting created the semblance of Union battle victory in the only Civil War battle inside the District of Columbia. Washington's forts had held and performed their designated task. The boom of heavy cannon, the crack of musketry, the clatter of

arriving and shifting maneuver forces and the only time that a serving American president had come under enemy fire while in office all marked the so-called "Battle of Fort Stevens."

Monocacy, Fort Stevens and Early's raid symbolized the continuing peril of the Union — notwithstanding the result. In London, newspapers proclaimed that the Confederacy seemed more formidable an enemy than ever. Grant had been caught off-guard and nearly lost the capital by neglect and Lincoln's political fortunes sunk to their lowest depths. The threat to Washington provided a wake-up call that changed the direction of the war. Grant continued his tenacious hold on Lee, even though Early remained a hovering threat in the lower Shenandoah until Maj. Gen. Phil Sheridan's Valley campaign ended that annoyance in September and October. That, together with Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's capture of Atlanta, shifted the fortunes of war and secured Lincoln's reelection. As the war wound down, the engineers and garrisons in Washington's forts continued to expend money and labor bolstering the works. And, after Appomattox, they maintained some of the forts as long as possible conflict threatened with France over Mexico.



Cannon at Fort Stevens (CWPT)

Gradually, landowners reclaimed the ground and cut the timber that buttressed walls and structures in the forts. The military collected cannons, tools and equipment inside the forts, sending them back to depots downtown. Engineers wrote reports seeking to prevent the disbanding of all the forts and the recurrence of an unprotected national capital. Yet, the re-united nation wanted to forget war and erase military expenditures for any large standing army or navy. The books closed formally on the vast wartime endeavor on June 14, 1866 and authorities never again considered extensive field fortifications to defend Washington. Later on in the century, however, new river batteries were constructed as protection against foreign naval intrusion. Then, they too receded into history as technology and changing dimensions of national security rendered them obsolete. In the 1860s, engineer Barnard considered his Civil War brainchild the equal of any European fortification system of its time.

Defending Washington had expended \$1.4 million of the war effort and kept back an average of 20,000 men from the Army of the Potomac at any given time. Grant's insensitivity to Lincoln's paranoia about the city's protection in the spring and summer of 1864, coupled with the president's failure to sufficiently dent Grant's focus on the offensive, as he had two years earlier with McClellan, carried the nation to the brink of disaster by July. The "what ifs" that subsequently accompanied Early's appearance — possible death or capture of Lincoln, the capture of the capital, whether temporary or permanent, and the cause for Grant's lifting the Richmond-Petersburg siege during the critical election campaign — all remain wondrous to contemplate today. Standing today where Lincoln stood in 1864 atop the Fort Stevens parapet (a spot well-marked by a stone

marker and bas relief), one must marvel why posterity has never declared this singular event one of the pivotal episodes (or even Confederate "lost opportunities") of the Civil War. If Lincoln had been killed or the capital lost, George B. McClellan might have been elected, possibly leading to a military Caesar taking charge during a horrendous of civil-military crises, determining the postwar course of the nation — or nations. We do well to ponder the effect since it took three critical civil rights amendments to render permanent Lincoln's emancipation effort and victory over slavery. All that might have turned out for differently if the Defenses of Washington had not held on July 11 and 12, 1864 at Fort Stevens!

Years later, a Senate commission seeking parkland for a burgeoning city ensured that at least some of the forts and their undeveloped landscape would form the basis of a fort circle park system to benefit residents with fresh air and green space. More recently, Virginia jurisdictions have saved the last remaining vestiges of these sentinels of another era. Nonetheless, today's Defenses of Washington remain high on preservationists "endangered species" lists. True, a Civilian Conservation Corps reconstructed Fort Stevens's parapet and magazine. These, together with nearby Battleground National Cemetery, give posterity a sense of this forgotten field of strife despite niggardly interpretation and the complete absence of a visitor's center for comprehending the magnitude of the people and events and people that took place there. The McMillan Commission efforts to use remaining forts as core elements for urban parkland provided an important precedent. The legacy of these efforts, however, is troubled. The survivors of the once-mighty Defenses of Washington are attended by overgrown earthworks, abandoned trash,

poorly interpreted historical remains and plagued by questionable public safety.

Today's tourism could profit from the McMillan and other preservation efforts concerning the Defenses of Washington. Key survivors provide something "beyond the National Mall" for visitor experience in the Nation's Capital. Happily, they include Alexandria's city-run Fort Ward Museum and Park, offering reconstructed earthworks and the only true visitor's center devoted to the topic. Arlington County's Fort C. F. Smith and the National Park Service owned Fort Marcy off the George Washington Parkway or Fort DeRussy in Rock Creek Park suggest prime un-restored but preserved examples of the forts. Other fragments remain scattered around the city, but some of the best languish east of the Anacostia River in neighborhoods of dubious access due to crime. The better maintained if under-interpreted Fort Stevens in northwest Washington and the fascinating river fortifications in southern Maryland — old Fort Washington and its state-of-the-art Civil War successor, Fort Foote — make ideal tourist destinations. In fact, visitors to the latter will be treated not just to the formidable earthen parapets and sophisticated design for withstanding heavy naval attack, but solid interpretive markers and two remounted seacoast Columbiad cannon add a uniqueness rarely found elsewhere. Battleground National Cemetery near Walter Reed Army Medical Center on Georgia Avenue, NW, and Fort Stevens have recently been joined by a new heritage walking trail in the adjacent Brightwood neighborhood, dealing heavily with the battle, make the area worth a special pilgrimage.

So today at the remaining defense sites, dog parks vie with picnic areas, overgrown earthworks and trash-littered parkland

supplement wildlife and city life creatures. Biking and hiking trails plus urban streets afford access without much direction, and the only randomly interpreted forts all muster a full spectrum of challenges for stewards of the Civil War forts of Washington. In the end, we would do well to remember an American president was under fire and nearly lost his life at one of these sites, together with many of his boys in blue; a Medal of Honor was earned here; and the combined efforts of white and black, soldiers and civilians kept tenacious Confederate troops at bay. The forts and their modern green space are just as worthy of preservation as any battlefield. Because of them, Washington, D.C. — the symbol, sword and shield of one nation — emerged unscathed from the Civil War and stands today as the centerpiece of our heritage.

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American Battlefield Trust Announces Fundraising Campaign To Save Hallowed Ground At Stones River

O'Reilly Auto Parts, Trust agree to \$4 million deal to preserve 42 historic acres at Stones River battlefield in Tennessee

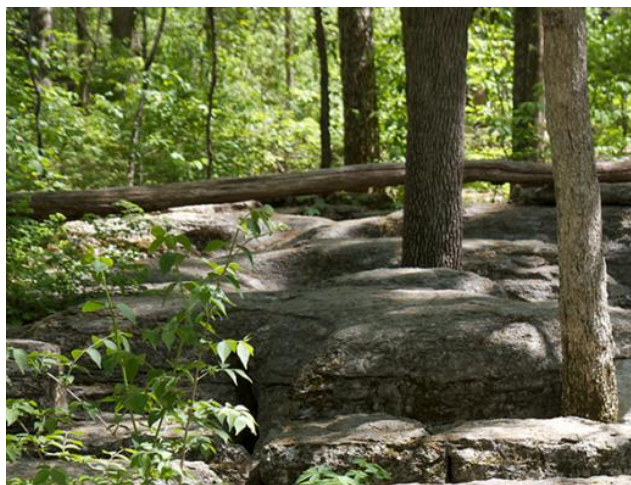
Jim Campi & Nicole Ryan June 26, 2019

(Murfreesboro, Tenn.) — The American Battlefield Trust has reached an agreement with O'Reilly Auto Parts to acquire and preserve 42 acres of prime battlefield land at the Stones River battlefield in Tennessee. The purchase price of \$4.0 million will be mostly funded with federal and state matching grants; the Trust is seeking to raise \$170,000 in private donations for remaining costs. To date, the Trust has saved 3,516 acres throughout the Volunteer State,

including 26 acres at the Stones River battlefield.

“After facing the potential loss of historic property at Stones River some four years ago, I am elated with the extraordinary opportunity to now preserve and protect this hallowed ground,” said James Lighthizer, Trust president. “I want to thank O’Reilly Auto Parts for its willingness to see this property set aside for preservation, and I am proud that we could work together to further protect a battlefield that witnessed key Civil War action.”

The tract to be acquired by the Trust is located in the battlefield’s core, and its protection will help connect two previously separated wings of the battlefield preserved by the National Park Service. Uniting these adjacent portions of the battlefield will help paint a more complete picture of the conflict. It will also provide a more cohesive experience to visitors of Stones River National Battlefield, which last year saw its fourth highest annual attendance in the park’s 92-year history.



"The Friends of Stones River National Battlefield is elated with the American Battlefield Trust's announcement of its efforts to date to preserve more land

associated with our historic Civil War battle,” said Friends president Ed Arning. “This battlefield is a shining star among its peers as we continue to see more than 250,000 visitors annually. Visitors are constantly reminded as they walk, bike and ride through the battlefield the importance of preserving our American history. We look forward to supporting the American Battlefield Trust in any way we can.”

Much of the Stones River battlefield has been lost forever to development, making the 42 acres to be acquired by the Trust the largest unprotected tract still available for preservation. Previously owned by the General Electric Corporation, this land faced an uncertain fate until its new owner, O’Reilly Auto Parts, agreed to sell it to the Trust, a tremendous victory for battlefield preservation. The historically significant property has long been one of the highest preservation priorities for the Trust and its Tennessee partners.

The three-day Battle of Stones River was fought in bitterly cold rain and sleet, from December 31, 1862 through January 2, 1863. Maj. Gen. William Rosecrans’ Union force met Gen. Braxton Bragg’s Confederate Army just north of Murfreesboro, and the inevitable engagement erupted on New Year’s Eve. The heavy fighting continued on both sides for three days and, while a tactical draw, would prove to be a key strategic Union victory. Bragg abandoned the field on January 3 and, with it, Confederate aspirations for control of Middle Tennessee. Of the more than 80,000 soldiers who struggled at Stones River, nearly a third – 24,645 men – were casualties by the end of the battle.

About the American Battlefield Trust

The American Battlefield 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 51,000 acres associated with the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War. Learn more at www.battlefields.org.

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10 Questions . . . with Robert Lee Hodge

Emerging Civil War is pleased to welcome Robert Lee Hodge to our ranks.. (In the photo: Robert Lee Hodge, Bud Hall, and Chris Mackowski)

Many people know who you are from your exploits in *Confederates in the Attic* , but who is “Robert Lee Hodge” beyond the version of you portrayed in the book?
Ha. Well, the way I see myself and the way others see me is I assume a lot different. I am full of flaws that some of my friends can attest to. That being said, I think I often disappoint folks who have read “the book” and meet me to find I have read “The Myth of Sisyphus,” drool over Rembrandt and Frederick Church, and love old architecture. I tend to think they expected a neo-Confederate caveman, clad in a homespun

loincloth carrying a club, or a Glock, perhaps on a Harley. Horwitz was a sensationalist, but I am thankful to have been written about.

Who am I? I have great concern for historic greenspace and culture—it makes me hurt and gets me angry. The person you read about in the book does not exist, but parts certainly do, or did.

How have you seen the Civil War landscape, as a whole, change since *Confederates* was published?

Just recently—June 17, 2019—the Confederate monument to the dead in Nashville was vandalized with red spray paint that said, “They were racists.” By today’s standards, everyone was—and probably everyone still is, to some degree, racist—whatever that term really means. I thought the red paint splashed on the face of the faded bronze Rebel was somewhat oddly artistic and meaningful—it reminded me of the Confederate blood spilled. I wanted to take a picture of the bloody bronze Reb, not only because I wanted to document it, but because it strangely added to it. Of course I was hurt and upset by the cowardly action, but this is nothing new anymore—these childish efforts have been going on in the anti-history/anti-art war camp since June 17, 2015.

It has been rough to see the massive authoritarian anti-Confederate memory aggression. The self-righteous judgment of the dead is hurtful to witness. However, there is also something healthy about these juvenile moves that add to the kids’ social resume—it also creates definition as to who they are, and makes one wonder where and how the indoctrination took place. It also reminds us of how topical the Civil War is. The bullying is rough, but I have to try to be like Gandhi or King and take the lumps for

the time being. I have been going to Rebel monuments since I was 4. In my mind I never saw an evil person at them in almost 50 years of visiting—and I have been to hundreds of Confederate monuments. The lack of nuance is interesting, and the press fuels this in a partisan way. Simplistically put, I feel the vandalism is an example of technology damaging civility.

How did you get hooked on the Civil War?

My name, of course did it, juxtaposed to being born on Stonewall Jackson's 143rd birthday, juxtaposed to the Marx/Sears "Blue and the Grey" figurines, juxtaposed to *The Golden Book of the Civil War*. The Rebel aesthetic is what I was all about. The popular Romanticism of the Confederate with the visual-history aspect made me an addict. Tony Horwitz once said, "Never grow up." I think he was jealous of my "Confederate Peter-Pan" approach to history, and to life in general. This journey would not have happened without the library—my favorite place in town. When I would not show up for dinner, my mother would call the librarian to get me out of the Civil War books to go home and eat.

You're a deeply passionate advocate for battlefield preservation. Why is preservation so important, and why is it so important to you ?

Preservation boils down to math perhaps: add limited space to a population explosion nobody will address because it would be political suicide to do so, to how much time we have until huge amounts of land are overrun with aesthetically abysmal abominations called "developments," to local government simply often doing bad things to help developers, etc. Thus, you see a real crisis of epic proportions. Water quality is compromised, air quality, ingress and egress, quality of life, habitat, etc. all effected by a few folks—the cronies of local

government that chase avarice. Perhaps this is just human nature and I should give up on idealism.

For me I "woke up" in June 1991 when I saw The Wilderness battlefield being compromised for homes just a few feet from the earthworks. It was B.S., and it really numbed me. I did not get angry for about a week because I was still in shock. Then I started calling the National Park Service, and I became an intern for the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission. I learn how powerful local governments are to destroy the Nation's battlefields. My love for Civil War memory, but more specifically Confederate memory, turned me into a "tree-hugger." I wish Teddy Roosevelt was eternal, and a dictator—a fusion of nationalism and environmentalism.

What do you see as the next Civil War frontier?

Civil War memory is a huge "evergreen" frontier that will continue to expand because the "the information age" really started in the 1850's. It is fascinating that this 150+ year old subject has so much data sitting in archives all over the country (and in grandma's attic) that is waiting to be discovered. For instance, Record Group 94 at the National Archives is over 13,000 feet long. Another example is the fighting at Spotsylvania Court House, in the area of Po River—only Bill Matter and Gordon Rhea have really dug into it. Bringing deeper associations to what happened there is something I hope to do. The resources are available, but bringing the connectivity to all the mass data is of course the challenge.

Lightning Round (short answers):

Most overrated person of the Civil War?

Joshua Chamberlain? Abraham Lincoln? I like both figures, but the masse focus makes me yawn. The unknown I want to get to

know—the privates in the ranks, blue and grey. The civilian aspect helps paint the picture also—but go beyond, for example, two authors I am fond of, Fremantle and Mary Chestnut.

Favorite Trans-Mississippi site? Wilson's Creek, by far. They have a decent chunk of land saved, a great library, a great museum, and a great Friends group.

Favorite regiment? Often the 17TH Virginia Infantry, but it depends what day it is. Tomorrow it may be the 16th Alabama Infantry, or maybe the 9th Alabama Infantry. It always shifts.

What is the one Civil War book you think is essential? The kids book from American Heritage Publishing, *The Golden Book of the Civil War*. It had a huge impact on tens of thousands. On a more cerebral level: anything from Bill Styple at Belle Grove Publishing— *Writing and Fighting in the Army of Northern Virginia*, and *Writing and Fighting the Civil War* come to mind .

What's one question about the Civil War no one has ever asked you that you wish they would? What is the wildest courts-martial you have ever read?