Washington, D.C.'s Kalen Dent takes a photo of the new mural outside the Harriet Tubman Museum and Educational Center in Cambridge, Maryland. To mark the bicentennial of her birth, events are scheduled across the country, including her birthplace on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Photograph by Starlight Williams, National Geographic

Secrets of Harriet Tubman's life are being revealed 100 years later

Courageous work on the Underground Railroad—and activism afterward—made Tubman one of America's best-known historic figures. Here's how to mark her 200th birthday.

By Starlight Williams, National Geographic, March 10, 2022

We all think we know the Harriet Tubman story. The "Moses of her people," Tubman née Araminta "Minty" Ross was born enslaved on Maryland's Eastern Shore around 1822. From a young age her enslavers rented her out to neighbors as a domestic servant. She later escaped to Philadelphia and then returned to her birthplace at least 13 times to lead 70 of her family and friends along the Underground Railroad to freedom.

That's usually where the story of one of America's most inspirational heroes ends, and all I knew—until I took a road trip to honor the 200th anniversary of her birth, celebrated this month. But in her nine decades (she died in 1913), Tubman did so much more.

This 1868 or 1869 portrait of Harriet Tubman—then in her mid-40s—is considered the earliest-known photograph of her. Photograph Courtesy of the Library of Congress

She was the first U.S. woman to lead an armed military raid and was a spy and nurse for the Union during the U.S. Civil War. She joined Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony in their quest for women's voting rights. She was an outdoorswoman, cared for battered women and children, raised money to build schools for newly freed people, and established

the Tubman Home for Aged and Indigent Negroes, a first-of-its-kind nursing home for African Americans who had nowhere else to go.

“She doesn’t get enough credit for being a humanitarian,” says Ellen Mousin, a volunteer at the Harriet Tubman Museum and Educational Center in Cambridge, Maryland. “People, especially in the North, often don’t realize that African Americans were not usually able to go to nursing homes or healthcare facilities. She made it possible.”

More than a century after her death, historians are still unraveling the secrets of her life. This month the nation celebrates Harriet Tubman’s bicentennial and the fifth anniversary of the two national parks named after her: one in Auburn, New York, and another in Dorchester County, Maryland. Tubman is the only African American and woman to have two named national parks. From film screenings and historical lectures to art exhibits and monument installations, here’s how travelers can uncover the mystery that shrouds Tubman’s life and honor the legacy of a woman who inspired generations.

Nevertheless, she persisted

Stepping onto the vast, open fields of Dorchester County, it’s hard to imagine what gave young Tubman the courage to escape—alone. It is harder to comprehend the ingenuity and resolve it took for her to achieve what others thought impossible, all the while helping heal a world that would rather have seen her broken.

In 1849, her enslaver, Edward Brodess, attempted to sell her, but there were no buyers due to a brain injury she suffered after helping an enslaved man run away. The overseer aimed a two-pound metal weight at the man in an attempt to make him return to work, but it fell short, striking Tubman, only 13 at the time. She would later endure frequent migraines, narcolepsy, and vivid dreams she would interpret as divine visions.

After her enslaver died later that year, Tubman knew her family would be separated, so she and her brothers took a leap of faith and fled. The attempt failed, but she tried again soon after, using the Underground Railroad—a network of safe houses and routes established by Black and white abolitionists that guided enslaved people in the South to freedom in the North—to Philadelphia, and then later Ontario, Canada, after the Fugitive Slave Act became U.S. law in 1850. The act threatened imprisonment for anyone caught assisting a fugitive and allowed headhunters to drag escaped slaves back into bondage. Her husband John Tubman, a free Black man, refused to flee with her and remarried the following year.

Tubman, of course, would go on to be a lauded leader. Yet, more than a century after her death, historians are still searching for answers about who she was.

Many consider the Bucktown General Store, which now operates as a museum in Bucktown, Maryland, to be where Tubman first defied slavery. She received a blow to the head after refusing an enslaver’s order to help him detain

an escaping enslaved man. Photograph by Patrick Semansky, AP Photo

"There's just so much we don't know about Tubman's life. In a way she became an American folk hero," says Meghan Martinez, a professor of history at Florida State University. She believes Tubman's legendary status may be one of the reasons why we don't know more about her. "Americans don't like when a story doesn't have a happy ending. It's easier to end her story at the Underground Railroad because it ruins our image of her being the hero when we find out she died sick and nearly destitute," she says.

Marisa J. Fuentes, a professor of African American history at Rutgers University, adds that until almost two decades ago, there wasn't much scholarly work on Harriet Tubman. "Much of what was written about Harriet until about early 2000s was for school children, leaning more into her extraordinary feats as conductor and less on the accuracy of her history," she says. "It wasn't until Black women opened the field of Black women's history in the 1980s, that historians started asking the right questions."

Last year historians uncovered the location of Harriet Tubman's childhood home, adding another piece to the puzzle. Buried artifacts, including broken pottery, glass, and an 1808 Lady Liberty coin, helped pinpoint the site owned by her father Ben Ross. Here Tubman learned to navigate and survive in the wetlands and woods she would later use to escape to freedom. Archeologists plan to do another dig this spring, says Cierra Maszkiewicz, a park ranger at the 17-acre Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park in Maryland.

"Most of everything that Tubman grew up with is still here today. What was farmland back then is still farmland today," Maszkiewicz says. "I've done a couple of kayak tours right on the Black Water River. That's where Tubman was out trapping muskrats. We've led guided hikes as well. You can walk through the forest just as Tubman would have done."

The 480-acre Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park—carved out of the larger Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge and shares a border with the state park—follows Tubman's early life. It features an expansive visitor center with informative exhibits that don't shy away from the struggles Tubman had to endure, says Maszkiewicz. It is also the site of the Brodess Farm, where Tubman was enslaved as a girl, and the Bucktown General Store where she suffered her traumatic head injury.

In Harriet's steps

For travelers, there is no better way to experience Tubman's history than along the 125-mile Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway. Spanning three states and more than 30 sites, the self-guided driving route immerses people in the places where Tubman worked, lived, and later found freedom.

Left: The outdoor skills Tubman learned navigating the farm fields, creeks, and marshes as a teenager in Dorchester County, Maryland would later be used to help her and others escape to freedom. Photograph by Herb Quick, Alamy Stock Photo. Right: Using interactive exhibits, an audio-visual program, and a research library, the Harriet Tubman

Underground Railroad National Park in Maryland explores her early life and legacy. Photograph by Patrick Semansky, AP Photo

Tubman purchased property in Auburn, New York with hopes of turning it into a home for the poor and elderly. With help from the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Tubman Home for Aged and Indigent Negroes opened in 1908. Photograph by Phillip Scalia, Alamy Stock Photo

"I think it really puts you into her shoes a little bit to see how far she traveled," says Maszkiewicz. "It took me three days to drive it, so you can only imagine how long it took her to walk it."

Linda Harris, the director of events and planning at the Harriet Tubman Museum and Educational Center, did more than just imagine Tubman's journey. She retraced it herself on foot, walking for eight days from Dorchester County to Kennett Square, Pennsylvania.

"We had COVID, the deaths of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd, and I felt like my freedom had been taken away. I realized the only way to earn my freedom was to walk in Harriet Tubman's footsteps," says Harris, who leads several Harriet Tubman walking tours each year. "I walked on the ground where the blood of my ancestors lay. I could feel as if I were being lifted by the ancestors."

Soon after her journey, Harris started working at the community-led museum. Throughout the year the center offers guided tours of sites associated with Tubman, educational programming for children, and jazz concerts. In 2019, a powerful mural of Harriet reaching out her hand was added to the exterior of the museum.

Just a few blocks from the Tubman Museum sits the Dorchester County Courthouse, a former slave auction site and the place where Tubman engineered her first escape. In September 2022, it will become the permanent home of a new 12,000-pound, bronze sculpture of Tubman.

Harriet Tubman's story may have started in Maryland, but it didn't end there. She dedicated her life to helping Black Americans not only survive but thrive.

"She couldn't read or write, but she had an emotional intelligence that made people trust her," says Millicent Sparks, a historical interpreter who portrays Tubman around the country.

Harriet's achievements are astonishing. During the Civil War, she led an armed expedition into Confederate territory—freeing more than 700 enslaved people—and served in the Union Army as a nurse, scout, and spy. It would take her another 34 years to be recognized for her service and be paid a pension from the U.S. government. After the war, she remained an active abolitionist, befriending intellectuals such as Frederick Douglass and politicians like Secretary of State William Henry Seward. She also campaigned for women's rights with Lucretia Coffin Mott, Martha Coffin Wright, and Susan B. Anthony.

In this undated photo, Tubman (standing, far left) is shown with her family and former slaves she aided during the Civil War at her home in Auburn, New York. Photograph by William Cheney, Alamy Photos

In 2017, her New York estate, including the nursing home and the Thompson Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church where she worshipped—and raised money to build—became the 32-acre Harriet Tubman National Historical Park. It tells the story of her life as a free woman and preserves her humanitarian legacy.

"When you step onto the property you know instantly that you are in a hallowed space," says Karen Hill, president and CEO of the Harriet Tubman Home in Auburn, New York. The home is an independent nonprofit established by the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church to co-manage Harriet's homestead with the National Park Service (NPS).

The visitor center, which features dozens of artifacts found on various archeological digs, is closed due to COVID-19 until summer. However, travelers can explore the landscape on guided and self-guided tours to see where Tubman farmed, created bricks in her kiln, and spent the last 54 years of her life, says Hill. She adds that the NPS is spearheading the restoration of Tubman's church, with work set to begin in April. Visitors can see her grave at the nearby Fort Hill Cemetery, which is unaffiliated with the historical park. "People learning about Tubman should feel encouraged about their own lives," says Hill. "She took freedom and [weaved] into every aspect of life in America, and America is better for it."

CELEBRATE TUBMAN'S BICENTENNIAL

Cities across the U.S. will be hosting celebrations in honor of Tubman's 200th birthday. Here are a few to explore.

The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center in Maryland will host a series of free, family-friendly programs from March 12 to 13. Events include interactive walking tours, artifact displays, choir concerts, and living history demonstrations.

At the Harriet Tubman Museum and Educational Center, Tina Wyatt, one of Harriet Tubman's great-great-great-grand nieces, will be the keynote speaker for the organization's 50th anniversary on March 12.

The New York State Equal Rights Heritage Center and the City of Auburn plan to celebrate the American icon for seven months. Events begin with a memorial service at the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, a livestreamed walk in her honor, and a cake-cutting ceremony at the Harriet Tubman Home on March 10.
Starlight Williams is an associate editor at National Geographic Travel. Follow her on Twitter.

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LEMAT REVOLVER: THE INNOVATIVE, SINGLE-HANDED, CLOSE-QUARTERS WEAPON

Despite the limited combat impact of the LeMat being limited, Maj. Gen. J. E. B.

Stuart and Lt. Gen. Thomas J. Stonewall" Jackson were known to sport one
By Chris McNabb HistoryNet, 3/8/2022

The weapon's impressive firepower potential attracted an 8,000-unit order from Confederate forces.

The LeMat revolver was one man's innovative effort to give European and American soldiers the ultimate in single-handed, close-quarters firepower. Patented in 1856 by Jean Alexandre LeMat, a Frenchman living in New Orleans at that time, the revolver was a cap and ball muzzle-loader featuring a central smoothbore shotgun barrel, which also served as the axis for an enlarged revolver cylinder, typically .42-cal, that fired down a longer 6.75-inch parallel barrel. The shooter could switch between the shotgun and the revolver by adjusting a pivoting striker on the hammer.

The weapon's impressive firepower potential attracted an 8,000-unit order from Confederate forces during the American Civil War, although only about 2,500 of them were delivered, with most going to the Confederate army's cavalry and smaller numbers to the Confederate navy. The latter also ordered 2,000 smaller "Baby LeMats," with a shorter 4.5-inch revolver barrel in .32-caliber, though only about 100 of these were made.

For all its ingenuity, the LeMat was an awkward and expensive weapon. Its low distribution and single-action design meant that it was soon superseded by new generations of more practical double-action revolvers. LeMat subsequently produced both pinfire and center fire cartridge versions—and even a revolving carbine—in a vain effort to find commercial success.

The combat impact of the LeMat during the Civil War may have been limited, but the gun did have some famous adopters, including General P. G. T. Beauregard (who was also LeMat's cousin and business partner), Major General J. E. B. Stuart, and Lieutenant General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson. Today LeMats are therefore highly collectible, their value heightened by their rarity.

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Somers, Connecticut: The Birth Town of Stonewall Jackson's Little Sorrell

By Norman Dasinger, Jr., March 4, 2022
blueandgrayeducation.org

Stonewall Jackson and Little Sorrel, by David Bendann | LOC

In her book Stonewall Jackson's Little Sorrell, Sharon B. Smith wrote, "During the Civil War more than 3,000,000 horses and mules were pressed into service."

At the Collins Farm on modern Springfield Road, around 1850 in Somers, Connecticut, was born the horse that would become Little Sorrell. Not long ago, the city named one of its roads Little Sorrell Lane as a tribute to the animal that grew up in Somers. In addition, the city has erected a sign explaining the history of the town that includes reference to its most famous war horse.

Connecticuthistory.org on November 19, 2019, wrote, “In 1861, he [Little Sorrell] and a number of other Union horses landed in Confederate hands when Southern forces at Harper’s Ferry overtook their transportation train. After reviewing the newly captured prizes, General Jackson selected a pair of chestnut horses for his own use. He intended to keep the larger of the two … however, Jackson recognized that Big Sorrell frightened easily and did not have a disposition suitable for battle. . . [So] “Little Sorrel” became his mount for the remainder of the war. … It was Little Sorrell who carried Jackson on the fateful day in 1863 when friendly fire mortally wounded the General. … [Afterward,] Little Sorrell briefly lived with Jackson’s widow before moving to the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) and then the Confederate Soldiers’ Home at Richmond’s Robert E Lee Camp.”

Little Sorrell passed away in March 1886. Sharon Smith wrote, “Little Sorrell was a survivor. He had carried Jackson in all but one of the great battles and apparently suffered only one minor injury. He had then lived longer than almost any other horse who had participated in the Civil War, longer even than thousands of human veterans.” He was mounted and put on display first at the Confederate Soldiers Home in Richmond, Virginia, and later at VMI, where he still stands today in the school’s museum.

In 1997, his bones were cremated and interred on the VMI parade ground where the statue to Stonewall Jackson stood. Since then, the statue has been removed, but the bones of Little Sorrell remain.

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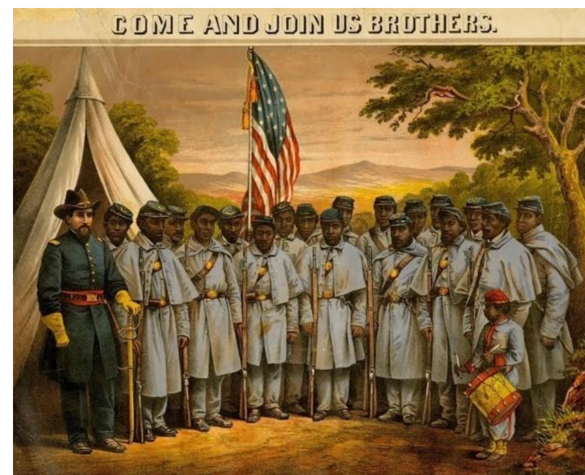
106th United States Colored Troops: The Only All-Alabama Black Union Regiment

By Norman Dasinger, Jr., February 28, 2022
blueandgrayeducation.org

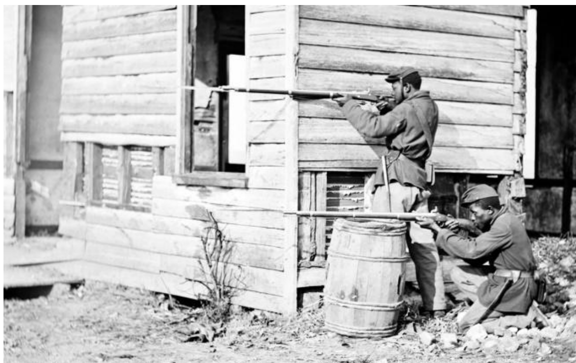


US Colored Troops recruting poster | LOC

Bud McLaughlin wrote in a February 16, 2022, article for The Redstone Rocket: “In late September 1864, a few miles north of Athens [Alabama], a bloody battle took place when Confederate troops led by Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest attacked a Union fortification guarding the train trestle crossing at Sulphur Creek. The bridge was on a vital Union supply line connecting Nashville and Chattanooga. Among the nearly 1,000 Union troops was the 106th United States Colored Infantry.”
The 106th was organized at Decatur, Alabama, in March 1864 as the 4th Alabama Regiment and designated the 106th on May 16. It was reported to be the only all-

Alabama United States Color Troops (USCT) regiment organized during the Civil War. The unit was placed on garrison duty at Pulaski, Tennessee, soon after it was formed, and it continued to serve in the District of North Alabama, guarding the railway between Nashville and Decatur, Alabama—a supply route used by Union General Sherman during his Atlanta Campaign.

The USCT were regiments in the Federal Army that served during the Civil War from 1863 to 1865. President Lincoln initially did not approve of using Black soldiers but changed his mind in 1863. In all, 6 cavalry, 14 artillery, and 135 infantry regiments designated USCT were formed. By 1865, more than 185,000 men had served in the USCT, including 7,000 White officers. African American troops in Alabama were issued the same uniforms, weapons, and rations as Whites. They were, however, paid less than their White compatriots.



USCT at an abandoned farmhouse in Dutch Gap, Virginia, 1864 | LOC

In the summer of 1864, Federal authorities constructed a fortification at Sulphur Creek trestle, in northern Limestone County, Alabama, to guard a segment of the Nashville and Decatur Railroad. The defenses included two blockhouses and a fort atop a hill. On September 25, 1864, Forrest attacked the works and, after a two-hour bombardment, sent a demand through the lines for the garrison to surrender. The Union commander, Lt. Col. John Minnis, met with Forrest and decided to capitulate. In the assault, 200 Union troops were killed and the remainder were taken prisoner. Forrest lost maybe 40 killed or wounded.

This conflict is considered the bloodiest battle in North Alabama. Capt. Andrew Poe of Company C, 106th USCT, wrote, "I fought until only seven of my men stood living beside me. The graves of my poor men and of our enemies are witnesses that I tried to do a soldier's duty."

Poe's cousin was Sherman's Chief Engineer, Orlando Poe, who at that same time was assisting his commander after the capture of the city of Atlanta earlier that same month.

In Mr. McLaughlin's article he interviewed Mark Hubbs, the commander of the Pvt. Richard Taylor Camp No. 53, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. In the article, Hubbs told the author, "The members of the 106th who survived the battle . . . were forced back into slavery. They were sent to Mobile, either by train or marched, to help build earthworks there."

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Did Civil War Soldiers Have PTSD?

One hundred and fifty years later, historians are discovering some of the earliest known cases of post-traumatic stress disorder

Tony Horwitz, Smithsonian Magazine
January 2015

The wounded soldiers above were photographed at a hospital in Fredericksburg, Virginia, between 1861 and 1865. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs division

In the summer of 1862, John Hildt lost a limb. Then he lost his mind.

The 25-year-old corporal from Michigan saw combat for the first time at the Seven Days Battle in Virginia, where he was shot in the right arm. Doctors amputated his shattered limb close to the shoulder, causing a severe hemorrhage. Hildt survived his physical wound but was transferred to the Government Hospital for the Insane in Washington D.C., suffering from "acute mania."

Hildt, a laborer who'd risen quickly in the ranks, had no prior history of mental illness, and his siblings wrote to the asylum expressing surprise that "his mind could not be restored to its original state." But months and then years passed, without improvement. Hildt remained withdrawn, apathetic, and at times so "excited and disturbed" that he hit other patients at the asylum. He finally died there in 1911—casualty of a war he'd volunteered to fight a half-century before.

The Civil War killed and injured over a million Americans, roughly a third of all those who served. This grim tally, however, doesn't include the conflict's psychic wounds. Military and medical officials in the 1860s had little grasp of how war can scar minds as well as bodies. Mental ills were also a source of shame, especially for soldiers bred on Victorian notions of manliness and courage. For the most part, the stories of veterans like Hildt have languished in archives and asylum files for over a century, neglected by both historians and descendants.

This veil is now lifting, in dramatic fashion, amid growing awareness of conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder. A year ago, the National Museum of Civil War Medicine mounted its first exhibit on mental health, including displays on PTSD and suicide in the 1860s. Historians and clinicians are sifting through diaries, letters, hospital and pension files and putting Billy Yank and Johnny Reb on the couch as never before. Genealogists have joined in, rediscovering forgotten ancestors and visiting their graves in asylum cemeteries.

Jogues R. Prandoni (above, in the cemetery at St. Elizabeths) helps families locate the graves of their ancestors. Tom Wolff

"We've tended to see soldiers in the 1860s as stoic and heroic—monuments to duty, honor and sacrifice," says Lesley Gordon, editor of *Civil War History*, a leading academic journal that recently devoted a special issue to wartime trauma. "It's taken a long time to recognize all the soldiers who came home broken by war, just as men and women do today."

Counting these casualties and diagnosing their afflictions, however, present considerable challenges. The Civil War occurred in an era when modern psychiatric terms and understanding didn't yet exist. Men who exhibited what today would be

termed war-related anxieties were thought to have character flaws or underlying physical problems. For instance, constricted breath and palpitations—a condition called "soldier's heart" or "irritable heart"—was blamed on exertion or knapsack straps drawn too tightly across soldiers' chests. In asylum records, one frequently listed "cause" of mental breakdown is "masturbation."

Also, while all wars are scarring, the circumstances of each can wound psyches in different ways. The relentless trench warfare and artillery bombardments of World War I gave rise to "shell shock" as well as "gas hysteria," a panic prompted by fear of poison gas attacks. Long campaigns in later conflicts brought recognition that all soldiers have a breaking point, causing "combat fatigue" and "old sergeant's syndrome." In Vietnam, the line between civilians and combatants blurred, drug abuse was rampant and veterans returned home to an often-hostile public. In Iraq and Afghanistan, improvised explosive devices put soldiers and support personnel at constant risk of death, dismemberment and traumatic brain injury away from the front.

Civil War combat, by comparison, was concentrated and personal, featuring large-scale battles in which bullets rather than bombs or missiles caused over 90 percent of the carnage. Most troops fought on foot, marching in tight formation and firing at relatively close range, as they had in Napoleonic times. But by the 1860s, they wielded newly accurate and deadly rifles, as well as improved cannons. As a result, units were often cut down en masse, showering survivors with the blood, brains and body parts of their comrades.

Many soldiers regarded the aftermath of battle as even more horrific, describing landscapes so body-strewn that one could cross them without touching the ground. When over 5,000 Confederates fell in a failed assault at Malvern Hill in Virginia, a Union colonel wrote: "A third of them were dead or dying, but enough were alive to give the field a singularly crawling effect."

Wounded men who survived combat were subject to pre-modern medicine, including tens of thousands of amputations with unsterilized instruments. Contrary to stereotype, soldiers didn't often bite on bullets as doctors sawed off arms and legs. Opiates were widely available and generously dispensed for pain and other ills, causing another problem: drug addiction.

Nor were bullets and shells the only or greatest threat to Civil War soldiers. Disease killed twice as many men as combat. During long stretches in crowded and unsanitary camps, men were haunted by the prospect of agonizing and inglorious death away from the battlefield; diarrhea was among the most common killers.

Though geographically less distant from home than soldiers in foreign wars, most Civil War servicemen were farm boys, in their teens or early 20s, who had rarely if ever traveled far from family and familiar surrounds. Enlistments typically lasted three years and in contrast to today, soldiers couldn't phone or Skype with loved ones.

These conditions contributed to what Civil War doctors called "nostalgia," a centuries-old term for despair and homesickness so severe that soldiers became listless and emaciated and sometimes died. Military and medical officials recognized nostalgia as a serious "camp disease," but generally blamed it on "feeble will," "moral turpitude" and inactivity in camp. Few sufferers were discharged or granted furloughs, and the

recommended treatment was drilling and shaming of "nostalgic" soldiers—or, better yet, "the excitement of an active campaign," meaning combat.

At war's end, the emotional toll on returning soldiers was often compounded by physical wounds and lingering ailments such as rheumatism, malaria and chronic diarrhea. While it's impossible to put a number on this suffering, historian Lesley Gordon followed the men of a single unit, the 16th Connecticut regiment, from home to war and back again and found "the war had a very long and devastating reach."

The men of the 16th had only just been mustered in 1862, and barely trained, when they were ordered into battle at Antietam, the bloodiest day of combat in U.S. history. The raw recruits rushed straight into a Confederate crossfire and then broke and ran, suffering 25 percent casualties within minutes. "We were murdered," one soldier wrote.

In a later battle, almost all the men of the 16th were captured and sent to the notorious Confederate prison at Andersonville, where a third of them died from disease, exposure and starvation. Upon returning home, many of the survivors became invalids, emotionally numb, or abusive of family. Alfred Avery, traumatized at Antietam, was described as "more or less irrational as long as he lived." William Hancock, who had gone off to war "a strong young man," his sister wrote, returned so "broken in body and mind" that he didn't know his own name. Wallace Woodford flailed in his sleep, dreaming that he was still searching for food at Andersonville. He perished at age 22, and was buried beneath a headstone that reads: "8 months a sufferer in Rebel prison; He came home to die."

Others carried on for years before killing themselves or being committed to insane asylums. Gordon was also struck by how often the veterans of the 16th returned in their diaries and letters to the twin horrors of Antietam and Andersonville. "They're haunted by what happened until the end of their lives," she says.

Gordon's new book on the 16th, *A Broken Regiment,* is but one of many recent studies that underscore the war's toll on soldiers. In another, *Living Hell: The Dark Side of the Civil War,* historian Michael Adams states on the first page that his book describes "the vicious nature of combat, the terrible infliction of physical and mental wounds, the misery of soldiers living amid corpses, filth, and flies."

Not all scholars applaud this trend, which includes new scholarship on subjects such as rape, torture and guerrilla atrocities. "All these dark elements describe the margins not the mainstream of Civil War experience," says Gary Gallagher, a historian at the University of Virginia who has authored and edited over 30 books on the war. While he welcomes the fresh research, he worries that readers may come away with a distorted perception of the overall conflict. The vast majority of soldiers, he adds, weren't traumatized and went on to have productive postwar lives.

Gallagher and others also warn against viewing 1860s Americans through too contemporary a lens. As a rule, Civil War soldiers were more religious than Americans today, more imbued with notions of honor and glory, and less inclined to share their pain or seek help for it. They returned to a society without a Veterans Administration or G.I. Bill or modern pharmacology. These and many other factors "make it very hard to apply 21st-century diagnostics to 19th-

century data," says Stephen Goldman, a neuropsychiatrist who has treated veterans and is writing a book about the impact of war on soldiers in the Civil War and other conflicts.

Even so, there are striking instances of Civil War soldiers afflicted in ways that appear similar to the experience of veterans today. PTSD didn't enter the medical lexicon until 1980, but its symptoms—including flashbacks, panic attacks, insomnia and suicidal thoughts—turn up frequently among Civil War soldiers, particularly those who entered asylums. In *Shook Over Hell*, historian Eric Dean examined the records of 291 Civil War veterans admitted to the Indiana Hospital for the Insane and found cases like Elijah Boswell, who "Sobbed & cried & imagined that some one was going to kill him," screaming "the rebels was after him."

Others were brought to the asylum because they barricaded themselves in rooms, awake all night with weapons at the ready. A veteran who narrowly survived an artillery barrage would shout at his wife, "Don't you hear them bombarding?" Another, shot in the side during the war, was described upon admission as sleepless, suicidal and convinced "he is bleeding to death from imaginary wounds."

Asylum records also give painful glimpses of families struggling to understand and help shattered loved ones. Patient files from the Government Hospital for the Insane in Washington, now known as St. Elizabeths, are filled with letters to the superintendent, like this one from a shopkeeper in Pennsylvania. "If brother is in any way conscious of passing events, I should like him to know that I have his oldest son Jimmy with me in the store, that he is a good boy and smart." A Massachusetts woman wrote of her father, "If he does know anything at times please tell him his daughter has written to you about him and also give him my love."

The brother of John Hildt, the Michigan soldier who lost his arm and sanity after the Seven Days Battle, wrote a letter in their native German, in hopes "he will recognize any thing I say to him. He is John Hildt Corporal Co K 1st Michigan Vol." Hildt's family also sought a pension for both his physical and mental disability. The latter claim was denied, the pension office wrote, due to "lack of proof" that Hildt became insane due to his wartime service and wounding.

Doctors were more sympathetic but unable to do much for the veterans in their care. Treatment consisted mainly of "moral therapy," a regime of rest and light labor in the hospital gardens, which perched atop what was once a peaceful and bucolic hilltop in Anacostia. Doctors also administered opiates, stimulants and "tonics," such as a punch made of milk, eggs, sugar and whiskey. All this may have provided temporary relief to patients. But most Civil War veterans who entered the asylum never left it.

One file includes a photograph of the patient, in old age, still wearing his uniform four decades after being admitted at the end of the Civil War with "Acute Suicidal Melancholia." Often, the last item in a patient's file is a telegram like the one sent to a Massachusetts woman in 1900. "Your husband died this afternoon. Shall we bury here? Answer?"

Hundreds of Civil War soldiers are among those buried at St. Elizabeths, in two cemeteries that were little visited and became overgrown in the course of the 20th

century. Now, this too has changed as families rediscover long-forgotten forebears and come to visit their graves.

“A lot of the old stigma is gone,” says Jogues Prandoni, a volunteer at St. Elizabeths who helps families research their forebears and locate graves. “People hear about troubled veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and want to know about and honor ancestors who may have suffered in the same way.”

Among the many genealogists he’s guided is Marti Bourjaily, a Coloradan whose family tree includes an lumberman from Maine and young volunteer in an infantry regiment that fought at Antietam, Gettysburg and other major battles. Edward Leard was wounded in the eye, deserted several times and suffered a mental collapse after returning to Maine at war’s end. Sent first to a state hospital, he was transferred to St. Elizabeths and died there at the age of 54 with $18 to his name.

The surviving records don’t reveal much about Leard’s affliction. But Bourjaily wonders if he was like her own father, who stepped on a land mine at the Battle of the Bulge, watched a friend die while trying to save him and was “pumped up on morphine” before returning home, where he drank heavily and “ranted” about his wartime experience throughout her childhood.

“They didn’t have phrases like ‘post-traumatic stress disorder’ in the Civil War, they just thought these shattered guys were sissies, the sort that George Patton would have slapped across the face,” she says. “Soldiers come back different people, that was true with my dad and I’m sure it was with Edward Leard. I want to reach out to this man and tell him how sorry I am that he had to go through hell.”

Gail Palmer, a retired newspaper reporter in Florida, has also come to view the Civil War and her own family through fresh eyes. She took up genealogy while caring for her Alzheimer’s-afflicted mother—“I decided to join her back where she was, in the past”—and anticipated researching the many prominent people she’d been told about, dating back to the Revolution. “No one ever mentioned Oliver Perry Chappell,” she says.

An infantry captain from New York, Chappell fought in several battles before being wounded and captured at Chancellorsville and sent to a Confederate prison. Upon his release, he wandered and struggled, changing jobs and spouses and becoming indigent before entering the Government Hospital for the Insane, where he died in 1885. Palmer learned of his fate only after finding an application for a soldier’s tombstone in his name, which led her to the asylum.

“I was stunned,” she says. “All I’d heard about were my wealthy and successful ancestors who belonged to yacht clubs and the DAR and appeared in the society pages.”

This lineage includes three other great-grandfathers who served in the Union Army. Palmer says all of them appear to have settled down and prospered, and her research has led her to suspect that Oliver Chappell’s instability predated the Civil War. “I’m not real confident how together he was in the first place, but how together are any of us?” she wonders. “We might skate through life if nothing terrible happens, but we fall apart if it does.”

Whatever Chappell’s mental state, Palmer is proud to welcome him back to the family.

She's taken what she calls a "pilgrimage" to St. Elizabeths and the National Archives to learn more about her great-grandfather and has posted her research on Ancestry.com.

"Oliver's the most interesting ancestor I've got," she says. "Maybe, finally, we're far enough away from the Civil War to tell the painful stories that families like mine covered up."

Tony Horwitz was a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who worked as a foreign correspondent for the Wall Street Journal and wrote for the New Yorker. He is the author of Baghdad without a map, Midnight Rising and the digital best seller BOOM. His most recent work, Spying on the South, was released in May 2019. Tony Horwitz died in May 2019 at the age of 60.

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THIS ANTIETAM PHOTO HAS BEEN A MYSTERY FOR 40+ YEARS. WE'VE SOLVED IT (WE THINK).

Sources old and new tell a fresh story of Antietam and men who died there

By Dana B. Shoaf. HistoryNet 2/23/2022

Crossing bloody ground Artist Thur de Thulstrup's stirring 1887 print of Union troops charging near the Dunker Church is a classic illustration of the September 17, 1862, fight. Colonel William Irwin's 6th Corps brigade suffered high casualties attacking Confederates near the church.

The Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862 is often thought of as four separate groups of fighting: The Cornfield, Maj. Gen. John Sedgwick's West Woods disaster, the fight for the Sunken Road, and then the Union capture of Burnside Bridge and the stunning Confederate counterattack that ended the fight. Often lost within the violent shuffle was hard fighting that took place around noon, just east of the Dunker Church, when an Army of the Potomac 6th Corps brigade led by Colonel William H. Irwin counterattacked Confederate troops who had driven back regiments from the 12th Corps.

The 6th Corps had broken camp near Rohrersville about 5:30 a.m. on the 17th, and headed toward the battlefield with Maj. Gen. William Smith's 2nd Division in the lead. Smith's troops arrived on the field about midday, and it wasn't long before Irwin's brigade comprising the 20th, 33rd, 49th, and 77th New York, and the 7th Maine was clearing the East Woods and guiding down the Smoketown Road into a haze of smoke and gunfire.

The Union brigade took it on the chin in this action, enduring more than 300 casualties. According to Colonel Irwin, the 20th New York of his command lost an astounding number of killed and wounded. As he wrote in his battle report on September 22: "The Twentieth New York Volunteers by its position was exposed to the heaviest fire in

line, which it bore with unyielding courage and returned at every opportunity. The firmness of this regiment deserves very great praise. Colonel [Ernst] Von Vegesack was under fire with his men constantly, and his calm courage gave an admirable example to them. Each of their stand of colors is rent by the balls and shells of the enemy, and their killed and wounded is 145. This regiment was under my own eye in going into action and frequently during the battle, and I take pleasure in strongly testifying to its bravery and good conduct."

That fighting, though, has been treated as a footnote or outright ignored in the major histories of the battle. James Murfin's 1965 The Gleam of Bayonets does not mention it, and it only warrants a paragraph in Stephen Sears' 1983 Landscape Turned Red. Map studies of Antietam also pay little heed to the sacrifice of Irwin's brigade. Bradley Gottfried's The Maps of Antietam does not show details of Irwin's advance toward the Hagerstown Pike, nor do the maps in the above-mentioned books. Murfin does, though, include the final position of Irwin's brigade on one map. The maps of the highly regarded Antietam on the Web website do not indicate Irwin's role in the fight.

All of this matters for several reasons. One, it is still a common misconception that Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan kept the entire 6th Corps in reserve and its regiments did not see action or were very lightly engaged. Another assumption is that by late afternoon this fighting on the northern end of the battlefield had died down and had entirely shifted to the Sunken Road.

And lastly, as will be discussed on the following pages, it is very possible that one of the iconic images taken of Antietam dead after the battle, and one of the few to show Union corpses, actually shows men of the 20th New York of Irwin's brigade. That conclusion, as will be seen, is the cumulation of years of research by photo historians and the recent discovery of primary source material, notably the recently discovered Simon G. Elliott map of battlefield burials. The following excellent summary of the fight undertaken by William Irwin's men is from the just released, Brigades of Antietam: The Union and Confederate Brigades at the Battle of Antietam, edited by Bradley M. Gottfried. Ironically, this fine book also does not include any detailed account of Irwin's battle movements in its map section.

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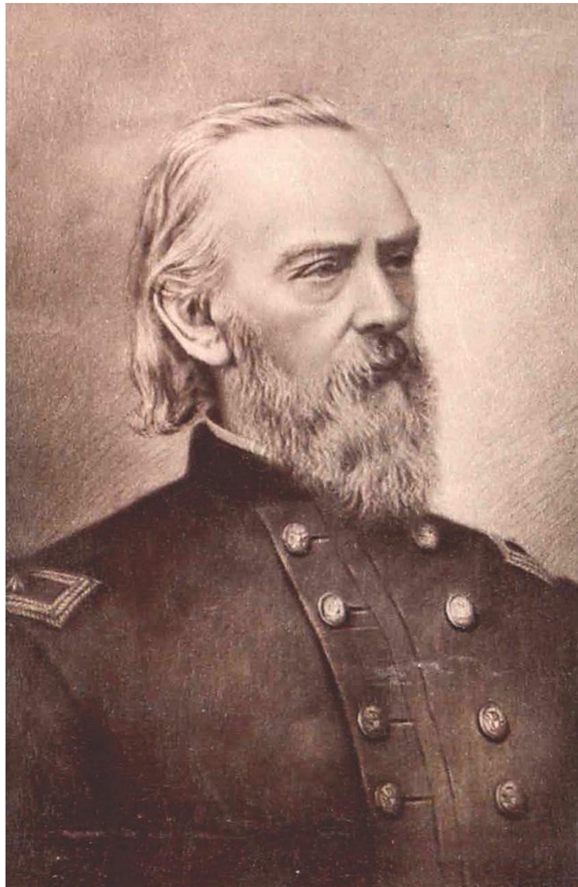
Niday Picture Library/Alamy Stock Photo

THIS ANTIETAM PHOTO HAS BEEN A MYSTERY FOR 40+ YEARS. WE'VE SOLVED IT (WE THINK)–PART II

By MARTIN PRICHETT2/23/2022

Colonel William Irwin's 6th Corps brigade of Maj. Gen. William F. "Baldy" Smith's 2nd Division was an experienced unit, whose regiments were mustered into service between May 9, 1861, and November 23, 1861. They participated to varying degrees

in all combat during the Peninsula Campaign and Seven Days Battles.


Col. William Irwin (USAHEC)

Pennsylvanian William Howard Irwin was born in 1818 and attended Dickinson College for two years before returning home to study for the bar. He entered the Army in February 1847 and received a commission in the 11th U.S. Infantry. Irwin was seriously wounded at the Battle of El Molino del Rey on September 8, 1847, during the war with Mexico, while leading his company. He received a brevet to major for his bravery and returned to Pennsylvania to practice law until the outbreak of the Civil War when he again donned a uniform. He enlisted as a private after the fall of Fort Sumter but quickly rose to the rank of colonel of the 7th Pennsylvania Volunteers, a 90-day unit that participated in the early advance on the Shenandoah Valley in June–July 1861.

After the regiment mustered out, Irwin assisted in raising and organizing several Pennsylvania units. He was appointed colonel of the 49th Pennsylvania in late 1861. Several of his subordinates brought charges against him for drunkenness and "conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline." He was acquitted on the first charge but convicted on the second, drawing an inconsequential suspended punishment. He went on to lead the 49th with distinction during the Peninsula Campaign. He was given a brigade in the 2nd Division in the 6th Corps prior to the advance into Maryland.

Irwin's brigade left Camp California, near Alexandria, Va., and eventually crossed the Potomac River at Long Bridge, camping near Georgetown on September 7. The column subsequently marched through the Maryland towns of Rockville, Barnesville, Darnestown, and Jefferson, toward Catoctin Mountain. On September 14, the brigade trudged through Burkittsville to support William T.H. Brooks' brigade (also of Smith's division) at Crampton's Gap. The brigade was subjected to enemy artillery fire as it hurried through the town but sustained no casualties. The men spent the afternoon and evening supporting Captain Romeyn Ayres' divisional artillery and camped at the gap until Wednesday, September 17, when they began their march toward Antietam Creek. Irwin's brigade reached its destination at 10 a.m. and crossed Antietam Creek at Pry's Ford, where it was called into action by Smith to relieve troops from Maj. Gen. George S. Greene's division of the 12th Corps.

Brigadier General William French's division (2nd Corps) launched charge after charge

against the Sunken Road during this time. To relieve pressure on D.H. Hill's two brigades defending the road, wing commander James Longstreet directed a counterattack meant to land on French's vulnerable right flank. John Cooke of the 27th North Carolina led his regiment and the 3rd Arkansas (Colonel Van Manning's Brigade in Brig. Gen. John Walker's Division) out of the West Woods and against French's flank. The ambitious band assisted in routing the left of Greene's division holding the Dunker Church and then crossed Hagerstown Pike, setting their sights on the Union soldiers clearing out the Sunken Road.

Irwin threw the 33rd and 77th New York out as skirmishers on the right of the brigade along Smoketown Road. The rest of the brigade was oriented south-southwest with its right on the road. The large 20th New York led the advance, the 49th New York followed on its right, and the 7th Maine advanced on its left *en echelon*. The 20th New York cleared the East Woods with Smith riding behind the regiment. As the three regiments dashed past the southern edge of the East Woods, they encountered retreating elements of Greene's division. They then moved through Lieutenant Evan Thomas' 4th U. S. Artillery, Battery A, firing at the enemy in the West Woods.

Colonel Ernst von Vegesack led the 20th New York at Antietam. He was born in Sweden and served as a Swedish army officer before coming to America. He received a Medal of Honor for directing troops under heavy fire at Gaines' Mill as a volunteer on Brig. Gen. Dan Butterfield's staff. After the war, he returned to his native country to serve in its military. (The National Archives of Sweden)

Farther south, Cooke's Confederate assault force climbed over the fences lining Mumma Lane and entered a cornfield. Before Cooke's men could attack French, they were hit by John Brooke's brigade (Israel Richardson's 1st Division, 2nd Corps) that was rushed toward the Roulette Farm buildings from the east to halt the two enemy regiments. The 7th Maine also rushed forward to add its support from the north. While Brooke's men fired into the enemy's front, the 7th Maine fired into the left flank of the 27th North Carolina. The

intense fire in their front and flank was more than Cooke's men could handle and they broke in confusion, followed closely by Irwin's men.

While the 7th Maine was engaged with Cooke, the 20th New York came to a rise in the ground just to the east of the Hagerstown Pike that had sheltered Greene's men earlier in the day. It was ordered to halt there, but the New Yorkers kept going until they were driven back by small arms fire from Manning's Brigade and an enemy battery stationed near the West Woods. The New Yorkers quickly retraced their steps to the high ground and lay down behind the hill. They were soon joined by the 49th New York who also took cover. After repulsing Cooke and clearing the Mumma Farm buildings, the 7th Maine also returned to the brigade, lying down behind the hill on the left of the 20th New York.

The 33rd and 77th New York, on the skirmish line to the right of the rest of the brigade, had their own share of excitement. As they headed toward the West Woods, with the 33rd New York on the right of the Smoketown Road and the 77th New York on its left, they were closely watched by the 49th and 35th North Carolina (Robert Ransom's Brigade in John Walker's Division). The Tar Heels hopped behind a rail barricade they had previously built just north of the Dunker Church. Irwin explained what happened next: "A severe and unexpected volley from the woods on our right struck full on the Seventy-seventh and Thirty-third New York, which staggered them for a moment, but they closed up and faced by the rear rank, and poured in a close and scorching fire."

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Corning of the 33rd New York reported his regiment was "in columns at the time, marching by the right flank. This sudden and unexpected attack caused a momentary unsteadiness in the ranks, which was quickly rectified. The battalion faced by the rear rank and returned the fire." Captain Nathan Babcock of the 77th New York claimed the two lines were so close that "you could see the white of their eyes." The historian of the 49th New York claimed its two fellow New York regiments were "losing frightfully, and would doubtless have been annihilated had not General Smith seen their predicament and sent an aide to their rescue, who faced them by the rear rank and placed them behind the ridge, at right angles with the other regiments of the brigade." The brigade re-formed in the safety of the Mumma swale.

The swale sheltered Irwin's men from the enemy's small arms fire but not from their artillery and sharpshooters. The brigade also found itself in the uncomfortable position between dueling Union and Confederate artillery, causing considerable uneasiness among the men in the ranks.

A Confederate battery fired along the flank and through the line of the 20th New York, which, from the nature of the ground, was compelled to refuse its left, and thus received the fire along its entire front. Sharpshooters from the woods to the right and to the extreme left also opened upon the brigade. Shell, grape, and canister swept from left to right. The enemy fired quickly and accurately, causing Irwin's losses to accelerate. The historian of the 49th New York recalled, "the whirring shells and screaming shrapnel going both ways over their prostrate forms, reduced the most corpulent of the men to very thin proportions."

Major Thomas Hyde and his 7th Maine found themselves better protected by large boulders along their line and were able to

see the Irish Brigade's (Richardson's Division, 2nd Corps) notable colors and the Union line finally breaching the Sunken Road, as well as artillery playing along the right of the line from Confederate batteries near the Dunker Church. The Germans of the 20th New York on the right, having only flat ground to lie on for protection, suffered mightily, and a stream of wounded headed for the rear. The regiments occupying protected terrain, such as the 7th Maine, lost but few men. At one point, Hyde suggested to Colonel Ernst von Vegesack of the 20th New York that the Confederates could possibly be sighting in on the 20th's regimental colors being held high.

Most of the brigade remained in this position, subjected to heavy artillery and sharpshooter fire for 24 hours, until relieved by a brigade from Maj. Gen. Darius Couch's 4th Corps division (attached to the 6th Corps) on September 18. The 7th Maine did not stay inactive, however. The rugged men were dead shots and were deployed as sharpshooters against the Confederate artillery positions. One Maine sharpshooter known by the name of "Knox" drove every man from the guns of one section and knocked an unknown general officer from his horse in the distance.

At about 4:30 p.m., Colonel Irwin became concerned about Confederate troops he could see moving across Reel Ridge to the west, on the other side of the Hagerstown Pike, who appeared to threaten the division's left flank. Heavy fighting could be heard in the direction of Sharpsburg. The hills blocked most views of troop movements to the left, where the 5th and 9th Corps were in action. Irwin watched the Confederate columns and worried they could be supporting Lee's right flank, now under attack. Irwin sent word to Smith requesting artillery support, and the division's chief of artillery, Captain Emery Upton, complied. Captain John Wolcott's Maryland Light Battery arrived as ordered and dropped trail with its three rifled guns. These guns threw a destructive cannonade against the enemy positions for half an hour before being replaced by Lieutenant Edward Williston's 2nd U.S. Artillery's six Napoleons. Enemy sharpshooters from D.H. Hill's Confederate division began firing at the cannoneers from the Piper Orchard, causing Irwin to look to his best unit available to put an end to the sniping. He again turned to the 7th Maine.

Hyde led his men toward the new target, the Piper Farm building complex, about half a mile away, firing while crossing the Sunken Road filled with enemy dead and dying.

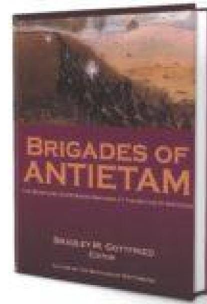
The beginning of the 7th Maine's memorable charge began as badly as it ended, with supporting Union guns accidentally firing into Hyde's men, dropping four. Enemy soldiers in front of, and to the left of, Hyde's men realized they were in danger of being cut off and ran for safety, clearing out the orchard. Hyde quickly obliqued his men to the left to take cover behind a ridge, on the south rim of the cup, running from behind the Piper barn to Hagerstown Pike. As Hyde rode up the high

ground, he quickly took in the danger around him. Lying down in front of his men was a line of enemy troops from George T. Anderson's Brigade and another body led by D.H. Hill himself, rushing along Piper Lane to his left in an effort to cut off his retreat.

With the enemy in front, and closing on his right, Hyde quickly realized it was time to retreat. He ordered the regiment to move by the left flank before Hill's men saw them, and double-quickened his men past the Piper barn, through a forced opening in the picket fence, and into the orchard. Additional troops, remnants of Cadmus Wilcox's and Ambrose Wright's brigades (both of Richard Anderson's Division), still full of fight, headed for Piper Lane and opened fire just as Hyde's men passed through the fence. Hyde's men returned the fire and then Hyde instantly sent his men up the hill in the middle of the orchard, where they again halted to fire into G.T. Anderson's men and others who were hurrying toward them.

Hyde and the remnants of his regiment quickly retraced their steps back across the Sunken Road to the safety of the rest of the brigade hunkered down in the Mumma Farm swale. The 7th Maine won accolades for its actions at the Piper Farm and Hyde received the Medal of Honor, albeit at great cost.

Irwin's brigade occupied the battlefield for 26 hours until relieved at noon on September 18. Irwin summed up his brigade's actions during the battle: "It was under fire constantly during this time in a most exposed position, lost 311 in killed and wounded, yet neither officers nor men fell back or gave the slightest evidence of any desire to do so. My line was immovable, only anxious to be launched against the enemy. I forbear comment on such conduct. It will commend itself to the heart and mind of every true soldier."



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THIS ANTIETAM PHOTO HAS BEEN A MYSTERY FOR 40+ YEARS. WE'VE SOLVED IT (WE THINK)–PART III

By DANA B. SHOAF 2/23/2022

The location of the Antietam battlefield photo above had eluded

researchers for years. Who took it and when, however, was well known. Photographers Alexander Gardner and his assistant, James Gibson, both employed by Mathew Brady, took the images on September 19, 1862, two days after the battle. This exposure was one of a series showing dead soldiers and burial parties at work that Brady exhibited in his New York gallery in October 1862. The images shocked viewers, many of whom, far removed from battlefields, still entertained a sanitized view of war.

"Mr. Brady has done something to bring home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war. If he has not brought bodies and laid them in our dooryards and along the streets, he has done something very like it," a *New York Times* correspondent would write, noting that a "terrible fascination" brought throngs of people to see them.

William Frassanito studied these same images in his 1978 classic, *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day*. He was able to ascertain the location of most of Gardner's images, but this one, stereoview #550, eluded him, mostly due to the photographer's own caption, "Group of Irish Brigade, as they lay on the Battle-field of Antietam, Sept. 19, 1862."

The Irish Brigade served in the 2nd Corps and consisted of the 29th Massachusetts and the 63rd, 69th, and 88th New York Infantry. The storied unit assaulted the Sunken Road on September 17, suffering heavy casualties in the process. But after extensive hunting near the Sunken Road, Frassanito could not pinpoint the image's location in that vicinity, partially due to the photo's hazy background.

In findings he published in his 2012 book, *Shadows of Antietam,* author Robert J. Kalasky was able to track down where the unfortunate soldiers were lying, and extensively documents his photo sleuthing. As can be seen in the following comparative images, Gardner's camera was located behind the modern visitor center, facing toward Red Hill to the southeast and several yards away from the Mumma Farm Lane that is today paved and used for automobile traffic. The Irish Brigade attacked the Sunken Road about 400 yards to the south.

The location of the image was thus determined, but a mystery remained. Who were these men? Kalasky speculated that they belonged to Maj. Gen. George S. Greene's 2nd Division of the 12th Corps, who passed over this ground during their late-morning attack toward the Dunker Church and the Hagerstown Turnpike.

Keys in Topography

The Gardner image in question shows dead Union troops on the Antietam battlefield. That is uncommon in the Gardner series, which mostly shows the bodies of dead Confederates. Federal troops held the field and naturally buried their comrades first. There are a number of keys in the background of the photograph, indicated by the numbers below, that help locate its position. When the relative location of the Gardner image is juxtaposed with the mass grave of the 20th New York that cartographer Elliott placed in this nearly same location, it is not far-fetched to conclude these corpses were men of that regiment. The jumbled forms have been placed on shelter tents and blankets so that burial parties could drag them to this central location for burial, and as they were going about their morose work when Gardner was taking his images, other dead men could have been dragged here. It's sobering to think that these men who gave their life for

their country are a drop in the bloody bucket of Antietam's 23,000-plus casualties, and that they may now rest in unmarked graves in Antietam's National Cemetery.

Key:

1. Roulette house out of sight to the left

2. Portions of South Mountain visible through the haze

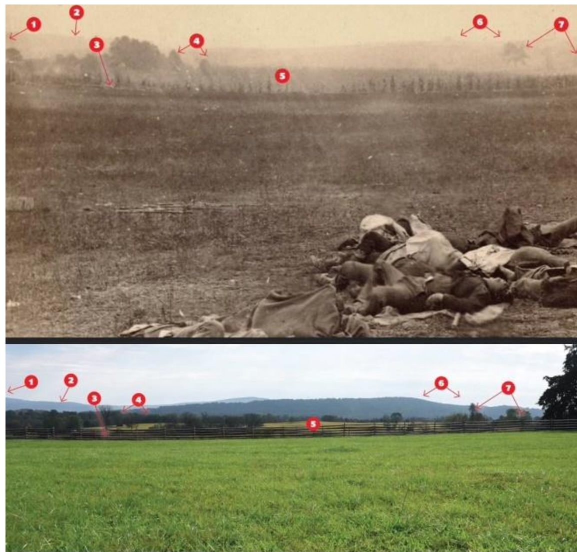
3. Mumma Farm lane, the modern park road

4. Trees separating Roulette Farm fields

5. Site of Mumma's wartime cornfield

6. "Bump" sloping to "notch" in Red Hill

7. Trees along Roulette Farm lane



The discovery of new historical primary documents is always exciting. In the spring of 2020, Andrew Dalton and Timothy Smith of Pennsylvania's Adams County Historical Society came across a long-forgotten map at the New York Public Library that marked battlefield burial trenches and individual grave sites of thousands of Union and Confederate soldiers killed at the Battle of Antietam. Drafted in 1864 by cartographer Simon G. Elliott, the detailed map locates 2,644 Union and 3,210 Confederate graves. Dashes on the map indicate Confederate locations, while Federal graves are identified by crosses. Dead horses were marked by figures resembling commas. The Union bodies were exhumed in 1866 and relocated to the Antietam National Cemetery, and the Confederates were eventually reinterred at Rose Hill Cemetery in Hagerstown.

The map was a revelation for students of Antietam, and has a direct bearing on the photograph in question. Very close to the spot where Gardner's "Irish Brigade" photo was taken, Elliott shows a mass grave of 20 soldiers from the 20th New York. Considering the fact that Colonel Irwin's 6th Corps brigade attacked over this very ground and suffered a staggering 51 killed, it is very plausible to conclude that the dead soldiers pictured belonged to the 20th New York, shot down during their assault.

Alexander Gardner (Library of Congress)

Why would Gardner have labeled these men as "Irish Brigade" dead? There are a couple

of possibilities. He might have been told the dead men were from New York, and not knowing exactly where the Irish Brigade attacked, he made his erroneous conclusion. The Elliott Map labels the Mumma Farm Lane as “Rebel Works.” Today, the “Sunken Road” refers to a specific location, but when the photographers reached the battlefield, the nomenclature would not have been as precise. It’s possible that Gardner did not know exactly where the Sunken Road began and ended.

Or he could have labeled the men as casualties from the well-known Irish Brigade as a marketing ploy. Gardner wanted to make money on his images, and wasn’t beyond manipulating the facts to make a buck, as he would prove in 1863 when he dragged a Confederate “sharpshooter” to his Devil’s Den lair at Gettysburg.

Over the past decades diligent research has pinpointed the location of this image of Antietam’s grim harvest. And now, by correlating the information on the Elliott Map with the location of the image, I believe that the dead men were members of the 20th New York who had been dragged to a central location for mass burial. While that cannot be stated with 100 percent certainty, the case is certainly strong.

The conclusion that the dead men are from the 20th New York rests with Civil War Times*, but we would like to thank Chris Vincent and the Antietam Institute, Thomas G. Clemens, and the Center for Civil War Photography for their assistance with this article.*

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