



A Place To Gather: The congregants of Shiloh Church were mostly Methodist, but their meetinghouse was more than a place of worship. It was their school and their muster grounds, the place where they went to picnic and play, gossip and talk politics. In April 1862, it also became a war zone.

Church in the Maelstrom: A historian's reflection on the violence of the war's first major battle

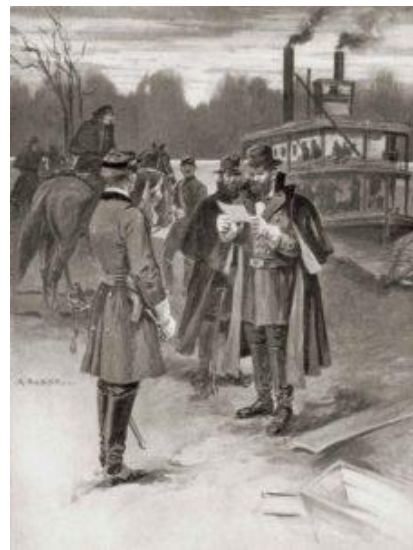
By Stephen Berry
JUNE 2019 • Civil War Times

But go ye now unto my place which [was] in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people. —Jeremiah 7:12

Before it lent its name to the April 6-7, 1862, battle, Shiloh Church was the center of a community. Erected in 1851, the humble church sat at a small crossroads in heavily wooded tableland three miles west of the bend in the Tennessee River where waters that have run all the way from the Appalachians cease their westward track across the top of Alabama and plunge due north, back into Tennessee and all the way to the Ohio River.

Growing up around Shiloh Church, Elsie Duncan remembered her community as an

idyll in the woods. The forest was beautiful, she said, “with every kind of oak, maple and birch, [with] fruit trees and berry bushes and a spring-fed pond with water lilies blooming white.” As the 9-year-old daughter of Shiloh’s circuit-riding minister, Elsie knew the woods well. On the morning of the battle, she remembered that “the sun was shining, birds were singing, and the air was soft and sweet. I sat down under a holly-hock bush which was full of pink blossoms and watched the bees gathering honey.”



Grant Takes Command: Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant reviews reports about the fighting after he arrives at Pittsburg Landing on April 5, 1862. In reality, however, he was likely still on crutches due to a fall off his horse. (Classic Image/Alamy Stock Photo)

Disembarking at Pittsburg Landing, many of Ulysses S. Grant’s soldiers saw not an idyll but a muddy, squalid waste, which, in fairness, Shiloh also was. “Pittsburg Landing...excited nothing but disgust and ridicule,” said one Federal. “A small, dilapidated storehouse was the only building there.” The surrounding area was “an uninteresting tract of country, cut up by rough ravines and ridges, [where] here and

there an irregular field and rude cabin indicated a puny effort at agriculture.”

The Federals were equally unimpressed with Shiloh Church—a “rude structure in which...the voices of the ‘poor white trash’ of Tennessee mingle in praise to God.” “It is not such a church as you see in your own village,” one New Englander explained: “It has no tall steeple or tapering spire, no deep-toned bell, no organ, no singing-seats or gallery, no pews or carpeted aisles. It is built of logs...chinked with clay years ago, but the rains have washed it out. You can thrust your hand between the cracks [making it] the ‘best-ventilated’ church you ever saw.” Such estimations drip with class bias. They also drip with judgment.

The Federals knew that Shiloh Church was proslavery, pro-Confederate. It was formed after the great schism in the Methodist Church in 1844, when, ironically, the local proslavery congregants fled a church called “Union” to form their own church west of the river. To many of the invading Federals, Shiloh Church was a perversion—“a little log building in the woods,” said one, “where the people of the vicinage were wont to meet on the Sabbath and listen to sermons about the beauties of African Slavery.” Reading their Bibles, such Yankees had decided that God demanded a rough equality—no man should be a master; no man should be a slave. Reading the same Bible, the Duncans and their neighbors had concluded that God had fitted an entire race for slavery—whites had been chosen, blacks had not.



The Soul of Shiloh: In Will Gallagher’s photograph, morning light falls on empty pews in Shiloh church. The scene is ambivalent. Is this a place of peace or a place of desolation? Are the congregants dead, their church abandoned? Or maybe this church is about to flood with life? Perhaps the preacher will enter and pronounce a new sermon full of decency, humility, and truth. (Photo Copyright ©Will Gallagher)

I have often wondered whether, in naming their church Shiloh, the parishioners knew what they were letting themselves in for biblically. Certainly they knew their Bible better than I. Then again, they didn’t have Google. “Shiloh” is typically translated as “Place of Peace”—which is, let’s face it, the kind of irony Civil War historians and the public find irresistible. But before Shiloh was a “town” in Elsie Duncan’s west Tennessee, it was a city in ancient Samaria. As the Book of Jeremiah tells us, the ark of the covenant resided there for untold years before the locals, somewhat typically, ran afoul of the Almighty. And so did God smite Shiloh in a biblical bloodletting intended to serve as an example to the Israelites of how lucky they were to be merely enduring the Babylonian captivity: “Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be

quenched.” “Shiloh” is probably correctly translated as “Place of Peace,” but it could also be translated as “Place of Desolation.”

In his memoir, Grant said that Shiloh “has been perhaps less understood, or, to state the case more accurately, more persistently misunderstood, than any other engagement between National and Confederate troops during the entire rebellion.” Grant had a vested interest in saying so: most observers at the time believed that he had made grave mistakes there. To his everlasting credit and occasional shame, Grant was doggedly offense-minded, and by his own admission, prior to Shiloh, he had never quite considered the possibility that he might be attacked. “Contrary to all my experience...we were on the defensive,” he said of the opening action on April 6, “without intrenchments [sic] or defensive advantages of any sort.” This might seem to implicate him as a commander, but he said he had decided that his men were so green they needed drill more than trenches. Probably they needed both. Certainly I agree with a Confederate officer’s assessment that Grant’s position “simply invited attack.”

Leading the Confederates, Grant’s antagonist, Albert Sidney Johnston, had a bad first day too—not least because he was mortally wounded. Most historians regard Johnston as more or less complicit in his own undoing, for having sent off his surgeon and for generally leading from the front. The truth, however, is that Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman had close calls at Shiloh also. It was that kind of fight. As one soldier remembered, the bullets seemed to come “from too many points of the compass.” “A man who was hit on the shin by a glancing ball...[was] hurt...awfully,” the soldier continued, “and he screamed out. His captain said, ‘Go to the rear.’ As the line broke and began to drift through the brush,

this soldier came limping back and said, ‘Cap, give me a gun. This blamed fight ain’t got any rear.’”

The sense of chaos at Shiloh was undoubtedly amplified by the terrain. “I had always supposed, from pictures I had seen, that armies were drawn upon each side of a big field,” noted one Federal. “I didn’t understand how we could fight in those woods.”

Many of them did not fight very well. Grant admitted that most of his men were “entirely raw...hardly able to load their muskets according to the manual.” “In two cases, as I now remember,” he later said, “colonels led their regiments from the field on first hearing the whistle of the enemy’s bullets.”

At Shiloh, many officers were so green, they didn’t even know what their generals looked like. Colonel H.T. Reid was approached by a stranger who said gruffly, “After the men have had their coffee and received their ammunition...move [them] to the top of the bluff and stop all stragglers and await further orders.” Reid stared at the man blankly for a moment before the stranger satisfied his curiosity: “I am General Grant.” Another officer requested ammunition from a stranger “with stars on his shoulders” who sat on his horse as a king might a throne. “I [do not] believe you want ammunition, sir,” the latter said furiously. “I looked at him in astonishment, doubting his sanity,” the officer noted, “but made no further reply than to ask his name.” “It makes no difference, sir,” came the reply, “but I am General Buell.”



Dealt A Bad Hand: Captain Adolph Metzner of the 32nd Indiana fought at Shiloh, and painted this graphic watercolor of two Confederates decapitated by a shell while they were playing cards. Such gory scenes forever remained with Shiloh veterans. (Library of Congress)

Such mix-ups are amusing. They could also be deadly. After his heroic holdout at the Hornets' Nest, Union Brig. Gen. Benjamin Prentiss tried repeatedly to surrender, but every time he successfully did so new Rebels would emerge from the woods and fire on his men even after being ordered to stand down. As one survivor remembered, "The firing did not cease until General Prentice [sic] told the rebel officers that if they did not stop, he would order his men to take their guns and sell their lives as dearly as possible."

Where their greenness most showed was immediately after the battle, when they got their first look at the carnage. "They were mangled in every conceivable form," said one soldier. They were "torn all to pieces," said another, "leaving nothing but their heads or their boots." "They were mingled together in inextricable confusion," said a third, "headless, trunkless, and disemboweled."

There is a problem in Civil War history that I will dub the "problem of gore." Those of us who have written a lot of Civil War history inevitably face a conundrum: When it comes to the material realities of the battlefield, how much is "enough"? Do I really tell my audience that, at the end of day one, Shiloh's spring dogwoods, in full bloom, are festooned with arms, legs, and entrails? Is that gratuitous? Or is it necessary?

They were mingled together in inextricable confusion...headless, trunkless, and disemboweled.

There are few bills I would not pay for my country to have ended slavery even a year sooner. There were generations of black children who never went to school, a vast industry of commodified human beings, endemic rape, and leveraged sex, all of which is humiliating and painful to look upon as an American. Surely ending all of this—surely emancipation—"redeemed" this conflict.

And yet there are images of Shiloh I can't get out of my head: the wounded Federal who lay strewn across a log, legs on one side, body on the other, conscious but immobile as fire crept across the leaf litter to ignite the log, burning his legs from his body but leaving his smoking feet on one side and his still-breathing torso on the other.

Or the Confederate, bayoneted through the temple, eye distended, lying in a state of madness, pulling on his eye stalk: "He seems unconscious, and yet he has not lost sensation. He evidently received a bayonet thrust in his temple which caused the eye on that side to bulge out of its socket, and he has pulled at it till the optic nerve is out at full length. How it pops when the eyeball slips out of his hand. He has pulled at it till the optic nerve is real dirty; and from the

delicate structure of the eye and its connection with the brain, we know he must suffer fearfully.”

Am I really supposed to elide this? Am I supposed to edit this out because I am told that it is gratuitous, sophomoric, gauche, or unpleasant? Perhaps I am. But who exactly decided that reading about war should be pleasant? When Oliver Wendell Holmes said of the Civil War generation, “In our youth our hearts were touched with fire,” I think what he really meant was that “In our youth our retinas were burned with images that would never let us go.”

On his second day at Shiloh, Mississippian Augustus Mecklin was awakened at midnight by orders to fall in. The rain was coming in torrents and the darkness was so intense he could barely see the officer leading him into position. Every so often, however, “vivid peals of...lightning” would ignite the landscape, searing Mecklin’s mind with one appalling image after another: first a “dead man, his clothes ghastly, bloody face turned up to the pattering raindrops,” then his friend slipping upon a corpse that lay dismembered in the road, then a Golgotha of “dead, heaped & piled upon each other.” How, Mecklin wondered, had men so quickly taken a beautiful “Sabbath morn” and rendered it an infernal hell-scape where “monster death” held “high carnival”?

Civil War Americans were very articulate when writing about horror. Walt Whitman embodies that conclusion. Traveling to Fredericksburg to nurse his wounded brother, he discovered that his brother was fine. But Whitman was never the same: “These thousands, and tens and twenties of thousands of American young men, badly wounded, all sorts of wounds, operated on, pallid with diarrhea, languishing, dying with fever, pneumonia, &c. open a new world

somehow to me, giving closer insights, new things, exploring deeper mines than any yet, showing our humanity...tried by terrible, fearfulest tests, probed deepest, the living soul’s, the body’s tragedies, bursting the petty bounds of art.”

With all due reverence for Whitman’s style, I think what he is saying is that the real war will never get into the books until we figure out how to grapple deeply with the violence. I entirely grant that the men and women of the Civil War era had an extraordinary tolerance for other people’s pain. Some of them could make fun of a dying man, wave at people with a dismembered arm, or boil a dead man’s bones to make jewelry. But it is cavalier to think that the national bloodletting didn’t affect them deeply or that behind their occasionally feeble metaphors—“corpses stacked like cordwood” and “hails of gunfire”—there wasn’t an ocean of feeling being poured out in a puddle of blood. “As if the soul’s fullness didn’t sometimes overflow into the emptiest metaphors,” Flaubert once explained, “for no one, ever, can give the exact measure of his needs, his apprehensions, or his sorrows; and human speech is like a cracked cauldron on which we bang out tunes to make bears dance, when we want to move the stars to pity.”

Of all the battles fought in the Civil War, I have always thought that tragicomic Shiloh had the best chance of moving the stars to pity. Rightly and wrongly, the Civil War stands as an American Iliad; each of its battles has been translated into a mythic character and asked to play a specific part in a national morality play. Gettysburg stands as the great test of democracy, the darkest hour in a national struggle to determine whether “any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure.”

Shiloh may be equally fabled and fabulous, but the moral is different. Shiloh represents the death of national innocence. On an idyllic spring Sunday in America, war took an Edenic field of dogwoods and peach blossoms and painted it with gore.

Wars may be fought outside, but they are made inside—in the halls of Congress and the White House, in parlors, kitchens, and churches. Elsie Duncan’s father may have been a preacher, but he was also the community’s drillmaster. “He would prepare our young men to go into the army to fight other men that they did not even know, nor have anything against,” Elsie Duncan later marveled. “I used to sit and watch them go marching by and I wondered how many of them would be killed.” Duncan’s final time inside Shiloh Church was when she performed in a concert. She enacted a skit in which the South was the goose that laid the golden egg, but Lincoln squeezed it too hard and it ran away. The girls waved Confederate flags and sang “Dixie.” The men threw “their hats up yelling, ‘hurrah for Jefferson Davis and the Southern Confederacy.’ How that old Shiloh Church did ring.”



Memories of War: In this circa 1890 image, Union General Benjamin Prentiss stands third from right with fellow veterans near where he was captured at Shiloh’s Hornets’ Nest on April 6, 1862. (Library of Congress)

Shiloh Church was everywhere in the battle. At different times, it served variously as headquarters for both armies, a hospital, a prison, and a morgue. Albert Sidney Johnston’s body was carried to the church for a time. At the church, P.G.T. Beauregard, Johnston’s successor, decided not to follow up on the gains of April 6, giving Grant a chance to rally and recapture the church the next day. And while the church was not killed on the field, it was certainly a casualty. In the days and weeks after it gave its name to the battle it was torn down for firewood, bridges, and especially souvenirs. “No one who visits Pittsburg Landing has a thought of returning without first making a pilgrimage to Shiloh Church,” noted one newspaper, “and few have returned without bearing home with them ‘a piece of the church as a trophy.’ Shiloh Church is now in ruins.”

Shiloh represents the death of national innocence



Veterans of the Tennessee slugfest formed the National Association of Battle of Shiloh Survivors and issued the medal above to members. The log hanger evokes the rustic setting of the fight. (Heritage Auctions, Dallas)

Shiloh Church got what it deserved, I suppose. But I am glad it has been reconstructed as part of the effort to restore

and preserve the battlefield. I like to think that people will sit there, contemplating hubris and confronting the fact that we are a sometimes hardheaded, hard-hearted, misguided people. We are tenderhearted, too, and capable of redemption. “When I came to,” wrote one wounded soldier at Shiloh,

I found my gun gone and the fellows around me saying it was no use taking [me] off the field. [I had] gone up at the spout....I had not the courage to open my eyes. My first movement was to feel if I still lived....Every action of my life seemed written before me. When I opened my eyes the battle was still going on, and many had bit the dust like myself. I put my hand to my head where I remember having been struck, for I felt no pain, and my hand, when I looked at it, told a fearful story, and [I] felt the warm blood running down my back in a perfect stream....While drooping in this way, my head leaning against the tree, I noticed a little violet looking up to me from under the trampled grass, and a thought of past scenes of a different nature passed through my mind as I plucked it and put it in my sketchbook next to my bosom....The little flower I carefully kept and pressed in my journal was the only trophy I took from the fire of battle.”

Stephen Berry is Gregory Professor of the Civil War Era at the University of Georgia. His books include All That Makes a Man: Love and Ambition in the Civil War South (2003) and House of Abraham: Lincoln and the Todds, a Family Divided by War (2007). This article is adapted from Civil War Places: Seeing the Conflict Through the Eyes of its Leading Historians, edited by Gary W. Gallagher and J. Matthew Gallman, © 2019 by Gary W. Gallagher and J. Matthew Gallman. Used by permission of the University of North Carolina Press. www.uncpress.org

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Two National Veterans Groups Join American Battlefield Trust To Preserve Monocacy Battlefield

Wounded Warrior Project and The Mission Continues join forces with American Battlefield Trust to clean and restore famed Maryland battlefield

Jim Campi & Nicole Ryan American Battlefield Trust April 3, 2019

(Washington, D.C.) — Two outstanding national veterans organizations, Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) and The Mission Continues, are teaming up with the American Battlefield Trust to bring veterans to a storied Civil War battlefield for a day of volunteerism and fun. Participants from the two groups will tackle a special project at Monocacy National Battlefield on Saturday, April 6, as part of the Trust’s nationwide Park Day event. This annual event, held each spring, is a hands-on preservation experience centered on restoring our nation’s battlefields and related historic sites. Nearly 160 sites in 32 states and the District of Columbia are scheduled to participate in Park Day 2019.



Monocacy’s Park Day event will bring nearly two dozen veterans together to work side-by-side on a demolition project that will restore the historic landscape while honoring

the legacy of military service across generations.

“Park Day volunteers of all backgrounds are critically important to historic sites that must balance basic maintenance needs with limited budgets and small staffs,” Trust President James Lighthizer said. “We are excited to partner with Wounded Warrior Project and The Mission Continues to bring veterans onto hallowed ground for an event both deeply meaningful and truly impactful. We are excited to work with these heroes to keep the remarkable landscape at Monocacy clean, open and accessible for the enjoyment of all people.”

“We’ve been at war for almost 18 years now, and the battlefields where our brave men and women fought are in far off places around the globe,” said René Bardorf, WWP senior vice president of government and community relations. “However, right here in America are hallowed grounds where we can stop to reflect on the battles we have fought and the lives that were sacrificed, in the building of this great nation. We’re proud to work alongside the team and volunteers at The American Battlefield Trust to help preserve this critical part of our American history.”

Each year, Park Day participants make it possible for sites to implement projects often overlooked or delayed due to budget and staff constraints. Volunteers from WWP and The Mission Continues will make a distinct and lasting impact at Monocacy through their efforts — as well as have the opportunity to hear a local historian explain the unique role the Maryland battlefield played in our national story.



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 50,000 acres associated with the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War. Learn more at www.battlefields.org.

About Wounded Warrior Project

Since 2003, Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) has been meeting the growing needs of warriors, their families, and caregivers – helping them achieve their highest ambition. Learn more: <http://newsroom.woundedwarriorproject.org/about-us>.

About The Mission Continues

The Mission Continues is a national, nonpartisan nonprofit that empowers veterans to continue their service, and empowers communities with veteran talent, skills and preparedness to generate visible impact.

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CITY INTELLIGENCE.

A ROLLING MILL IN RICHMOND . –

One of the greatest present needs of the

Confederacy is a Rolling Mill for making sheet iron and copper, boiler plates, &c. &c. Bars and rods we can make, but not a joint of stove pipe even can be rolled South of the Potomac. The latter article has gone up from 10 cents to 75 cents a pound.

The best Rolling Mill on the continent, is at the Washington Navy Yard, and most providentially, a gentleman has just turned up, who has accurate drawings of this machinery, down to the minutest details. He is a graduate of one of the first Polytechnic Schools of Europe, and being struck with the perfection of this machinery over any he had seen in Europe or America, he (being Assistant Engineer at the Navy Yard at the time,) employed his leisure hours in making these drawings. They are beautiful indeed; it would take months to get similar ones up here, even with the machinery to copy from. How fortunate does it seem then that we have them here already made, so that 50 men or more might be at once put to work to build the house and make the machinery.

We hear that the subject is attracting the attention of prominent members of Congress and the War Department, and we hope soon to hear that the building of the mill and the making of the machinery has actually begun.

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Judge: Confederate Monuments Are Memorials, Will Remain in Charlottesville

A Virginia judge ruled that the Confederate monuments cannot be removed without the state's permission.

By Alexa Lardieri, Staff Writer, U.S. News & World Report. May 1, 2019.

Judge: Confederate Statues Will Remain in Charlottesville



A visitor eats lunch in front of a statue of Robert E. Lee that is surrounded by fencing and a No Trespassing sign in Charlottesville, Virginia. (Steve Helber/AP)

A JUDGE IN VIRGINIA ruled that Confederate statues in Charlottesville are war monuments and are protected by state law.

The ruling by Judge Richard Moore comes as part of a 2017 lawsuit filed against members of the Charlottesville City Council who voted to remove a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee. The decision comes nearly two years after a deadly white nationalist rally in the city left one counterprotester dead. Participants in the

rally said it was organized to protest the planned removal of one of the statues.

The Monument Fund, a nonprofit that works to conserve and preserve historic monuments and memorials, filed a lawsuit in Charlottesville Circuit Court, charging the city with violating the state's monument protection law and acting outside the authority delegated to it by the state, among other charges. The lawsuit was then amended to include the statue of Confederate Gen. Thomas Stonewall Jackson.

In a letter dated April 25, Moore said that the statues of Lee and Jackson depict the men in military uniforms and on horses associated with the Civil War and are therefore considered memorials. According to Virginia law, it is illegal for local municipalities to remove war monuments without permission from the state.

"Upon a full consideration of the matter, I find that there is no other reasonable conclusion but that these statues are monuments and memorials to Lee and Jackson, as generals of the Confederate States of America, and that as such they are monuments or memorials to veterans of one of the wars listed in Va. code," Moore wrote in the letter, featured in the New York Times. "I find this conclusion inescapable. It is the very reason the statues have been complained about from the beginning. It does no good pretending."

The judge acknowledged the controversy surrounding Confederate monuments and clarified that his decision is concentrated on whether the statues of Lee and Jackson qualify as war memorials under state law. He said it does not guarantee that the Fund will win the lawsuit if it goes to trial.

"But this is the only motion I am ruling on at this time, in this letter," Moore wrote.

"There are still several other issues remaining in the case. So this does not mean that plaintiffs will prevail simply because I find that these statues are monuments and memorials as referred to by the statute. ... They are what they obviously are, and I am just calling them what they in fact are."

Alexa Lardieri is a reporter and digital producer at U.S. News & World Report.

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Opinion from the New York Times

Undistorting the Civil War

A new museum in the former capital of the Confederacy situates the conflict in the history of slavery and freedom.

By Jamelle Bouie

Opinion Columnist May 16, 2019



Frederick Douglass. Credit Penelope M. Carrington/The American Civil War Museum

The new American Civil War Museum in Richmond, Va., sits next to the James River in the historic Tredegar district, where slaves and immigrants once produced

munitions for the Confederate Army. The product of a merger of the American Civil War Center and the Museum of the Confederacy, the new museum seeks to tell an inclusive story of the war in hopes of dispelling some of the myths and misconceptions that still dominate popular understanding.

“This is a period of history that’s been so distorted for a variety of reasons,” the museum’s chief executive, Christy Coleman, told me, “where memory has taken over the actual history, and that collective memory is not historical in many cases.”

Modern scholarship on the American Civil War takes a broad view of the conflict, more interested in social, economic and political circumstances than battlefield tactics; more concerned with the perspectives of ordinary people — soldiers, civilians, Native Americans and enslaved people — than individual military leaders.

Public memory of the war is a little different. It is still heavily influenced by work like “The Civil War” by the documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, which, the historian Keri Leigh Merritt writes, concentrates on “hard-fought battles, valiant, virile soldiers, and heart-wrenching tales of romantic love and loss.” More worrisome, as President Trump’s praise of Robert E. Lee as “one of the great generals” demonstrates, are those Americans whose ideas about the conflict owe more to after-the-fact Confederate propaganda than any actual history.

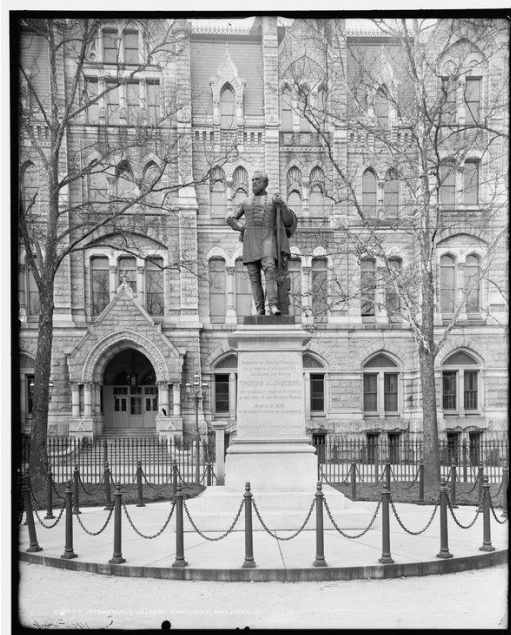
That truth makes the new museum’s location especially significant.

The first significant monument to a Confederate military figure, a standing statue of Stonewall Jackson, was unveiled on Oct. 26, 1875, in Richmond, the former

capital of the Confederacy, just 10 years after Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox Court House. Thousands of Confederate veterans joined tens of thousands of onlookers in a parade down the streets of a city decorated with flags, flowers and portraits of Jackson. They passed arches and towers bearing inscriptions like “Warrior, Christian, Patriot,” ending in Capitol Square, where the statue was unveiled. Gov. James Kemper, himself a Confederate veteran, welcomed them.

The former Confederate capital was now a center of Confederate memorialization and “Lost Cause” ideology. Over the next decades, it would help develop both. In 1890, the city unveiled an imposing equestrian statue of Lee, in a ceremony attended by at least 100,000 people. And in 1896 the all-female Confederate Memorial Literary Society opened the Confederate Museum, an institutional home for Lost Cause revisionism.

A memorial to Gen. Stonewall Jackson of the Confederacy, unveiled in Richmond, Va., in 1875. Credit Library of Congress



This began to change in the 1960s, as the civil rights movement swept the South and historians grappled with the centennial of the Civil War itself. Self-examination under new leadership led to a revamping of the museum and its mission. In 1970, the Confederate Museum changed its name to the Museum of the Confederacy to emphasize an interest in scholarship rather than veneration. In the 1970s and '80s, as historical sites in the state began to look deeper at slavery and the lives of enslaved people, the museum worked with the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop historically grounded exhibitions on the Confederacy. In 1991, it debuted "Before Freedom Came," a major show devoted to slavery in the South.

Coleman, who was then the director of African-American Programs at Colonial Williamsburg, contributed to that exhibition, which used objects and artifacts to illuminate the experience of slavery in the South. In 2008, after nearly 10 years as president and C.E.O. of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African-American History in Detroit, she joined the American Civil War Center as president, which brought her back to Richmond.

Christy Coleman Credit Bob Brown/Richmond Times-Dispatch



The merger came five years later. After six more years of work — including the transfer of 100,000 Civil War artifacts and photographs from the Museum of the Confederacy — the American Civil War Museum was ready.

The first things you see when you walk into the museum are huge, colorized photos of key figures — Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman and Jefferson Davis. Similar historic photos, all colorized, decorate the walls and displays. This might seem like a minor touch, but there's something about seeing actual skin tones and eye colors — the small details of uniforms or civilian dress — that helps you see these historical actors as actual individuals who experienced the world not unlike yourself.

The same is true of the objects and artifacts, from firearms and military equipment to dolls and handmade utensils, which help ground the period in a material world. Knowledge of Confederate prison camps, for example, is greatly enhanced when you can take a close look at something like the objects imprisoned soldiers made to trade for food and clothing. Similarly, galleries devoted to individual battles and campaigns emphasize the chaos and confusion of the war, and the extent to which, in the moment, no one knew how it would unfold.

The museum pays great attention to detail and even minutiae, but it isn't myopic. From beginning to end, the war is framed as a defining conflict for American democracy, a struggle for freedom whose outcome had world-historical implications. And to emphasize this point, the galleries do not end with surrender and reconciliation; they end with Reconstruction and its aftermath. Visitors are confronted with two images and

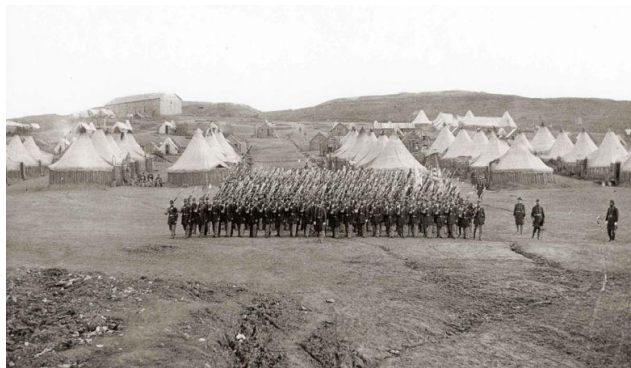
artifacts: a painting of the first elected black members of Congress; a painting of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, signifying Lost Cause nostalgia; and a set of well-preserved robes that belonged to a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

Toward the end of our conversation, Coleman returned to the contrast between memory, which can flatter our recollections of ourselves, and history, which is “always challenging.”

For many Americans, the kinds of stories told in this museum will challenge their preconceptions. There are just too many myths about the Civil War — too much unreflective memory — for that not to be the case. With that fact in mind, Coleman hopes the museum can dispel those myths, bring clarity to the memories and allow the people who experienced the war to speak for themselves. “If we had let them do that from the beginning,” she said, “we might not be dealing with some of the messes we’re dealing with now.”

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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

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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

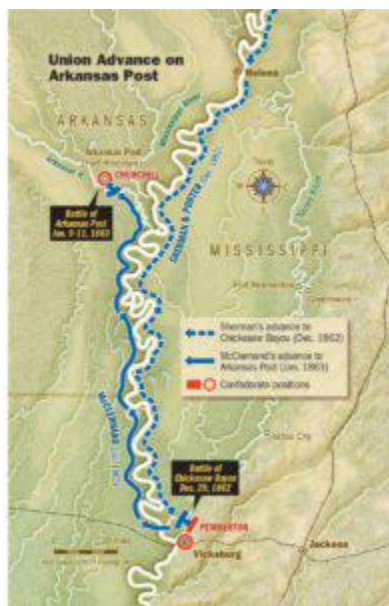
Iowa troops, the 25th and 31st, along with four "old" regiments, the German-majority 3rd, 12th, and 17th Missouri, and the 76th Ohio. While the latter four had all been in uniform since the first spring of the war, only the latter three had yet seen action in any meaningful sense. Hovey himself had earned 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)

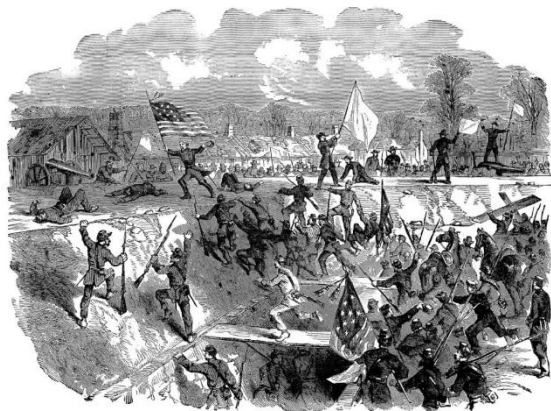
The influence of these horror stories first became evident when the brigade received orders from Steele to prepare for a nighttime

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.

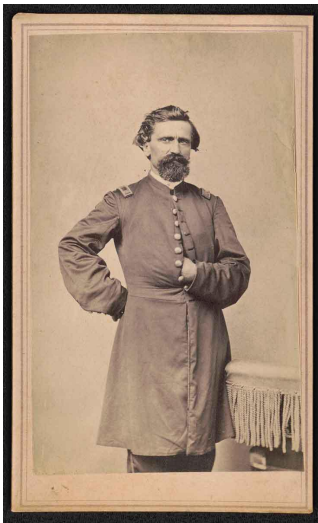
But it was those experiences of a particular event at the ground level that soldiers and their regiments reflected upon and learned from. Historians still tend to think in terms of narratives wherein all the movements of even the smallest of actions are understood.

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.**

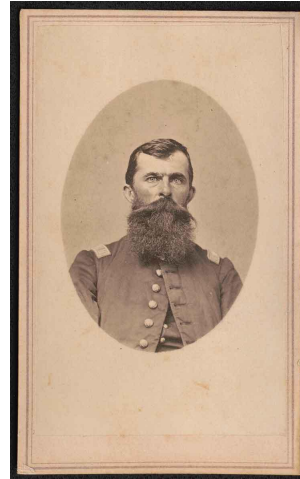
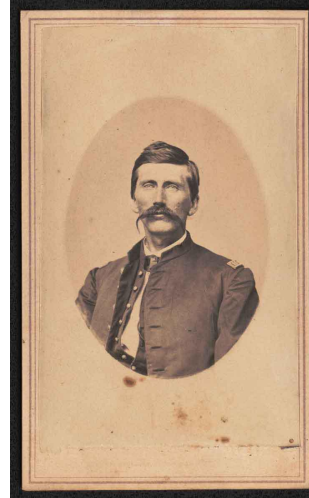
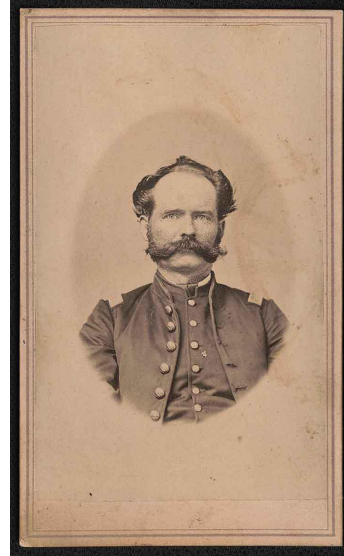
Spying a handful of Texas cavalymen—their archenemies—the Turner skirmishers quickly changed front to address the new threat and removed the protective coverage of their veteran experience from the brigade’s assault. Piling into a ravine for cover, the 17th’s veterans began to ply their trade, even as 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.

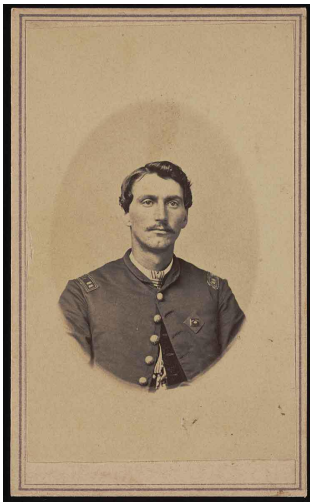
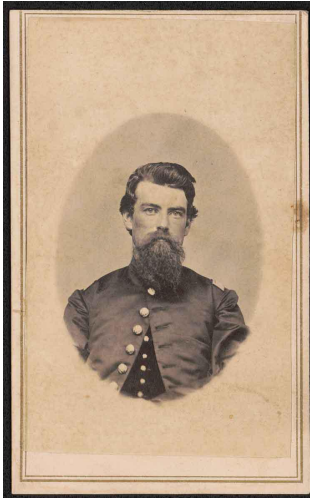
Civil war frontal assaults were almost entirely contingent upon psychology. Success relied on an attacking regiment’s task coordination and psychological resiliency. Commanders provided

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.



• Capt. Joseph H. Evans, Co. G (Library O)





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

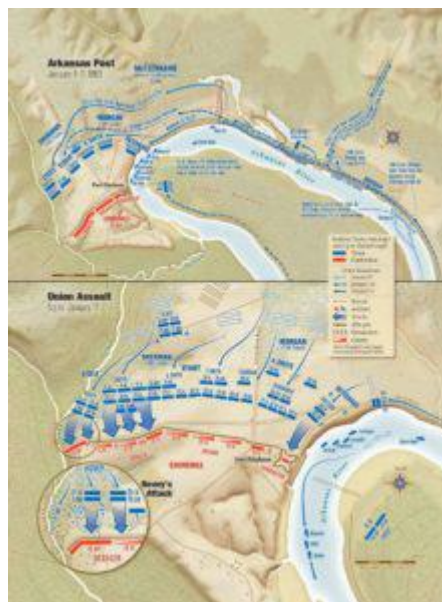
Union forces were successful in capturing Fort Hindman at Arkansas Post on the Arkansas River, which prevented Southern forces from using the waterway as a means to disrupt activity on the Mississippi. Overall commander Ulysses S. Grant, however, was not informed of the movement, and considered it a 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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organizations past and present operate on and off the battlefield. He is a U.S. Army combat infantry veteran; 1/9 Infantry, 2nd ID in Iraq and 1/12 Infantry, 4th ID in Afghanistan.

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