

American Battlefield Trust Launches 'Prize for History' New, \$50,000 annual book award honors exceptional works in early American military history

Mary Koik, Melissa Winn, ABT
November 15, 2023

(Washington, DC) — The American Battlefield Trust on Wednesday is launching a new program to call attention to the integral connection between the grounds on which the nation's formative conflicts were decided and the fundamental role these landscapes play today as primary resources by which scholars and historians come to more deeply understand the past: the \$50,000 American Battlefield Trust Prize for History.

The Prize will be made annually to a work of military history or biography that underscores the essential role of the nation's military conflicts on the founding, formation and perpetuation of our exceptional country. In creating this award, sponsored entirely by a generous donor, the Trust is encouraging authors to create works that showcase the rich research potential of historic battlefields.

“This award is a natural extension of our work to protect our nation's hallowed grounds,” said David Duncan, president of the American Battlefield Trust. “As we near the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding — and of the battles in which citizen soldiers secured independence and liberty — our hope is to galvanize readers to action on behalf of these threatened sites, introducing the pressing need for preservation to audiences already interested in American history.

An acceleration of commercial and residential development and the proliferation of data centers across states that played pivotal roles in these conflicts adds urgency to the Trust's work to educate and protect these lands from being erased from our history.

This book award will be presented to a work published in the previous calendar year focused on history or biography related to the three conflicts that are central to the Trust's mission: the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and the Civil War, the conflicts for which the Trust has now protected 57,000 acres at more than 155 sites in 25 states since its founding in 1987. Demonstrating its commitment to providing high-quality, impactful and inspiring resources to tell the American story, the Trust now provides free educational content to millions of teachers and students annually.

An initial selection committee for the inaugural Prize is led by noted Civil War historian Gary Gallagher who helped found the Trust nearly 40 years ago. The titles meriting highest evaluation will be forwarded to the distinguished judging panel: James Kirby Martin (Cullen Professor Emeritus, University of Houston), James McPherson (Pulitzer Prize winner, George Henry Davis '86 Professor Emeritus of United States History at Princeton University) and Joan Waugh (Professor Emeritus, UCLA).

The winner and two runner-up finalists will be announced this spring, with the award presented during a special evening event as part of the Trust's Grand Review Weekend, September 21, 2024, in Raleigh, N.C.

Nominations must be made by December 31, 2023. Two finalists will receive \$2,500 each, while the winning author will receive \$50,000 and an invitation to join the subsequent year’s judging panel. Publishers inquiring about submission guidelines and official rules may email bookprize@battlefields.org.

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The Trust Restores Hallowed Ground at Gettysburg, Lookout Mountain and Eutaw Springs

Successful demolition projects preserve historic landscape for future generations.

Mary Koik, ABT October 31, 2023 (Washington, D.C.) —As part of its mission to preserve, educate and inspire, the American Battlefield Trust has successfully completed several projects to restore the historic landscape of Trust-saved land, including the removal of a shuttered mini-golf course in Gettysburg, Pa., a dilapidated motel at Lookout Mountain, Tenn., and a home and assorted modern structures at Eutaw Springs, S.C.

“It’s not enough to just save battlefield land, we want to use it to teach and inspire future generations. To do that, we sometimes have to restore the landscape as we have with these three properties,” said Trust President David Duncan. “Sites that have been compromised and corrupted by decades of neglect and development can’t adequately inspire reflection and connection to the past, and that’s why we have to restore hallowed ground.”



Mulligan McDuffers Adventure Golf & Ice Cream Parlor in Gettysburg before restoration. Tom Nank

One of the Trust’s most high-profile recent restoration projects includes the demolition of Mulligan McDuffers Adventure Golf & Ice Cream Parlor in Gettysburg. Entering Gettysburg National Military Park from the east, visitors have for years driven past glimpses of the shuttered mini-golf course. In September and October of this year, the Trust removed the dilapidated adventure park structures, hauled away old concrete, graded the land and laid down soil and grass seed to restore the earth here, the site of an important position on the Union right flank during the Battle of Gettysburg.



The restored field where Mulligan McDuffers

Adventure Golf & Ice Cream Parlor once occupied important battlefield . Tom Nank
Likewise, in Tennessee, for decades, an increasingly run-down 1940s travel motel blemished approximately an acre of land next to the Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park, ground that played an important role in the Battle of Lookout Mountain. In June 2023, with the support of its members and donors, the Trust was able to demolish the motel and lay down sod to restore the field.

Overlooking the Tennessee River, Lookout Mountain boasted a seemingly strong position for Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg and his Army of Tennessee as they kept the Union Army pinned at Chattanooga. On November 24, 1863, after the successful Union capture of Orchard Knob the day prior, Gen. Joseph Hooker ordered his three divisions to attack the Confederate left at Lookout Mountain. The Wauhatchie Pike, the main road over the mountain during the time of the battle, runs by and through this field, the route of Confederate retreat. Some Union soldiers also crossed over the tract as they began their ascension of the mountain, helping lead to Union success at Missionary Ridge the following day on November 25. The preservation — and now restoration — of this tract will ensure it continues to tell the history of the Battle of Lookout Mountain for generations to come.

In South Carolina, the Trust has cleared the surroundings of a spectacular, centuries-old oak tree, a witness to the Battle of Eutaw Springs on September 8, 1781, the last major engagement of the Revolutionary War in the Carolinas. Until this summer, it stood alongside modern features like a house, car port and chain link fence. With the generous

help of the Trust's members, donors and partners, especially the South Carolina Battleground Preservation Trust, its surrounding landscape has been restored to a grassy field reminiscent of September 1781.



The Eutaw Springs witness tree today sits in a field reminiscent of its 1781 surroundings.
Sarah Nell Blackwell

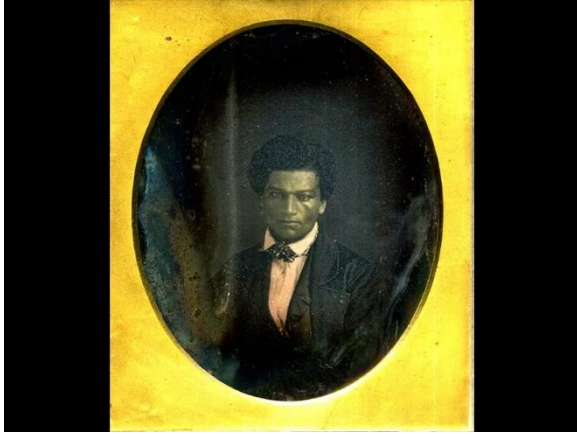
While fighting initially erupted a little over three miles west of the site, the morning of September 8 — when General Nathanael Greene's column surprised a British patrol and foraging party — significant maneuvers and combat unfurled upon this land later in the day. All the while, the young oak tree stood as witness to a well-fought battle, after which the Continental Congress recognized General Greene's exceptional service with one of only seven gold medals given during the war.

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Why We Need to Understand Frederick Douglass Now More Than Ever

The great orator was a branding genius, and a new exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery showcases his motivations

Janelle Harris Dixon. Museums
Correspondent, Smithsonian Magazine
October 20, 2023



Frederick Douglass, Unidentified Artist, Sixth-plate daguerreotype c. 1841 Collection of Greg French

Frederick Douglass' trajectory from an enslaved laborer to a globally recognized statesman is a study in tenacity and self-determination.

Inside a hall at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., a new exhibition compiles an impressive variety of images and objects that evoke the renowned abolitionist's life, work and legacy.

Douglass believed that humans continually shift and change, never staying static, and the show, "One Life: Frederick Douglass"—guest curated by John Stauffer, an expert on slavery and abolitionism at Harvard University—explores the curiosity and ideals that drove the activist's constant evolution as a thinker, writer and orator.



"One Life: Frederick Douglass" exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. Photos by Mark Gulezian, Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery

The timing of the exhibition feels right for a fresh look at Douglass, because, as Stauffer explains, social movements over the past few years have made Douglass' ideals especially relevant.

“Particularly with the rise of Black Lives Matter and the George Floyd murder, more and more Americans who had never really thought about race or slavery recognize for the first time that they’re foundational to the United States and the American experience,” he says. “Douglass was the pre-eminent African American in the 19th century. He was, in my opinion, the greatest nonfiction writer, and he’s also the most photographed American of his time. ... Had it been even 15 years ago, there would not be nearly the interest.”



Frederick Douglass, Southworth & Hawes, Whole-plate daguerreotype c. 1845 Onondaga Historical Association Museum & Research Center, Syracuse, NY

Douglass' story is one of constant reinvention. He was famously careful in constructing his public image, and photography was one of his favorite platforms. He always took care to dress up for the camera, because he wanted to represent himself as a dignified citizen, as distinguished as any white man. The exhibition includes the first photograph of Douglass, a 1841 daguerreotype on loan from a private collector, along with several other images that offer a timeline of Douglass' experimentation with pose and expression.

In that first portrait, a bold Douglass stares directly into the camera lens; the effect, Stauffer explains, is to confront the viewer and declare Douglass' equal status of citizenship. After the Civil War, when he became the first African American to receive a federal appointment—as U.S. marshal for the District of Columbia—he opted to present himself in a side profile, his eyes

fierce, with a visionary gaze. Douglass the statesman needed to present himself differently from Douglass the activist, and the exhibition showcases his vigilant appreciation for the power of the photographed image.

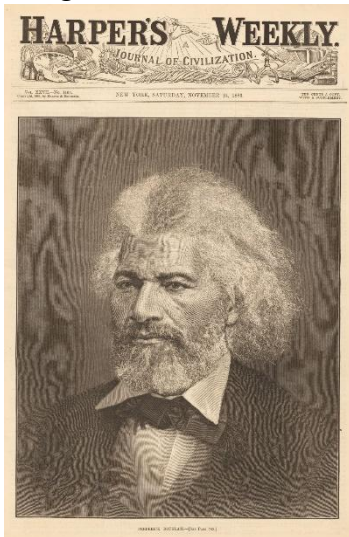


Frederick Douglass, Unidentified Artist, Oil on canvas c. 1845 National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Though photography is a particular specialty of Stauffer's, who wrote the 2015 book *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the 19th Century's Most Photographed American*, explains that he also took care to find a vivid mix of ephemera that represent Douglass' life beyond photography. The resulting collection offers a narrative arc that Stauffer believes Douglass himself would have loved.

“He was always an abolitionist and a radical, but he was the first person to really talk about aesthetics and the power of art in relation to photography,” Stauffer says. “I wanted that to be conveyed in the exhibition. How he wrote in 1841 is much different than how he wrote in 1851 and how he wrote in 1860 and 1870 and up to his death, and the same with how he photographed himself.

How he chose to sit for the camera in the 1840s is different than it was in the 1850s and 1860s. I think the great artists do that. They don't want to have one format. They're continually evolving, and that's Douglass."



Frederick Douglass, Unidentified Artist, Wood engraving on paper, 1883 National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Since its inaugural "One Life" exhibition in 2006, the National Portrait Gallery's series has compiled paintings, sculptures, photographs, drawings, media art and performance to showcase the life and influence of a single historical or pop culture icon at a time, including Thomas Paine, Amelia Earhart, Martin Luther King Jr. and Dolores Huerta. The pause in museum operations due to the Covid-19 pandemic allowed senior photography curator Ann Shumard and her team to create an expanded space for the series. Douglass is the first public figure to be profiled in the enlarged gallery. Among the items featured is the handwritten ledger of Douglass' first enslaver, Aaron Anthony, documenting the births of most of Douglass' maternal relatives: his grandmother Betsey in 1774; his mother, Harriet, in 1792; his uncle

Augustus in 1812; his brother, Perry, in 1813; his sisters Sarah and Eliza in 1814 and 1816; and Frederick Augustus himself in February 1818.



"One Life: Frederick Douglass" exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. Photos by Mark Gulezian, Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery

The show also features portraits of other prominent intellectuals of the era. "What's really remarkable is the relationships that Douglass had with individuals who were of the same mind-set," Shumard says. "There's just this wonderful collection of figures—Gerrit Smith, William Lloyd Garrison, Anna Dickinson—and you get a sense of Douglass in association with this wider movement of progressive individuals, whether they were men or women."

"One Life: Frederick Douglass" is on view at the National Portrait Gallery through April 21, 2024.

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Santos Benavides & "Take No Prisoners!"

Richard Garcia, November 20, 2023,
blueandgrayeducation.org



Col. José de los Santos Benavides, CSA, in the 1860s | public domain

Hispanic Confederates, by John O'Donnell Rosales, notes that about 12,000 Hispanics served in the Confederacy during the Civil War. Of these, there were about 2,500 to 3,000 Texan Mexicans called Tejanos who fought for the South.

One of the most famous Tejanos was Col. José de los Santos Benavides, the commanding officer of the 33rd Texas Cavalry. A native of Laredo, Texas, during his service to the Confederate Army, Benavides tirelessly maneuvered his soldiers across the deserts of the southwest, fighting in approximately 100 battles. Highly respected, he earned the nickname "The Tejano Tiger" and became the highest ranking Tejano to serve in the Confederacy. His troops' battle cry was "¡Viva La Confederacion!" or "Long Live the Confederacy!"



*Juan Cortina | public domain
In May 1861,*

Union sympathizer Juan Cortina and his followers staged a revolt against the Confederate government in south Texas and attacked the village of Carrizo. At a ranch outside the village, Benavides' Tejano cavalry confronted Cortina's men, pushing them into the Rio Grande. In a note, Benavides showed his ruthless side, and said "I particularly ordered my men not to arrest any of the bandits, but to kill all that fell into their hands. Consequently, I have no prisoners."

Benavides crossed paths with the brutal highwayman Octaviano Zapata, from northern Mexico, who along with his bandits terrorized the Rio Grande Valley. The Zapatistas were referred to as Unionistas and were supported by U.S. Consul Leonard Pierce, Jr., in Mexico. Union officers in consult with Judge Edmund Davis met with President Lincoln, who approved the idea to use Mexican and Tejano recruiters called Enganchados to hook men into the Union army. They were provided with uniforms and weapons and paid in gold and land. Flying the U.S. flag during their raids, they were considered the First Regiment of Union troops in Texas. Their battle cry was

“¡Que Viva La Union!” or “Long Live the Union!”

In December 1862, the Zapatistas raided Confederate wagons near Camp Ringgold, Texas. Five Confederates were killed and one escaped. They also captured and hung County Judge Isidro Vela, a Confederate supporter. These activities initiated an extradition agreement between Mexican governor Albino Lopez of Tamaulipas and Confederate general Hamilton P. Bee of Fort Brown allowing Confederate soldiers to cross the border to pursue bandits.

The Zapatistas attacked Mexican soldiers in August 1863, between Guerrero and Mier, Mexico. The mayor of Guerrero asked Benavides to intervene. With 79 men of the 33rd Texas Cavalry, Benavides men surprised the Zapatista camp. Ten bandits lay dead from the fighting including Zapata who had his skull bashed in with a rifle butt. Perhaps his most significant engagement was the Battle of Laredo. During three heavy attacks on March 18, 1864, Benavides and his men defeated the U.S. 1st Texas Cavalry and saved 5,000 bales of cotton. Benavides also fought at the last land battle of the war: the Battle of Palmito Ranch, on May 12–13, 1865.

In the Command of the Line of the Rio Grande, Benavides will be remembered as one of the most respected military leaders in Texas.

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The Keystone Battery, Battery A, 1st Pennsylvania Light Artillery. Six 10-pounder Parrott rifles, divided into three sections of two guns, are present. When fully arrayed, a battery would occupy the better part of a football field. (Library of Congress)

WAS THE CIVIL WAR REALLY THE “FIRST MODERN WAR”?
The war's artillery advancements have been overrated, argues author Earl Hess in his latest study.

Carl Zebrowski, History.net, 11/16/2023

No larger collection of artillery had ever been brought to a war's battlefields in the Western Hemisphere before the Civil War. More than 200,000 men, trained and educated like no other subset of soldiers in this war of amateurs, handled and operated these big guns.

The story continues that the Civil War changed the standards, rules, and results of artillery use, advancing technological, tactical, and other norms forward from the Napoleonic wars, with their smoothbore guns and inaccurate round shot, toward a present and future determined by rifled guns that could be expected to hit their targets with regularity. Artillery would dominate from here on, and the side that figured out how to use it best would surely be victorious.



(Courtesy of Earl Hess)

Not so fast, says Earl J. Hess. The professor emeritus of history at Lincoln Memorial University and author of 30 books on the Civil War argues in his 2022 study *Civil War Field Artillery: Promise and Performance on the Battlefield* that these advances were overrated in determining the war's outcome as well as the proper place of its artillery on the timeline of military history.

LET'S GET RIGHT TO THE HEART OF IT: THE CIVIL WAR IS OFTEN CONSIDERED THE "FIRST MODERN WAR." YOU ARGUE THAT IT WAS MOSTLY A TRADITIONAL ONE. PLEASE EXPLAIN.

Anyone who views the Civil War as the first modern war has a very hard case to prove. In

my view it overwhelmingly was closer to warfare during the Napoleonic era 50 years before than to World War I 50 years later. A Napoleonic soldier would have been quite comfortable on a Civil War battlefield, while a Civil War soldier would have been stunned by the battlefield created by the Great War of 1914–18.

IN LIGHT OF THAT, WHAT WERE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ARTILLERY FORCES OF PREVIOUS WARS AND THOSE OF THE CIVIL WAR?

Civil War artillery saw only relatively slight improvement over that used in the Napoleonic era. The biggest difference was rifling, which applied to only about half the pieces used during the Civil War. Yet, because mostly of problems with igniting long-range ordnance and problems with seeing targets at great distances, there is no proof that rifled artillery produced any noticeable results on Civil War battlefields other than the odd long-range shot that hit its target because the gun crew happened to be particularly good.

WHAT WERE THE MAIN IMPROVEMENTS OVER THE PAST?

Another difference between Civil War artillery and that of previous decades was adding heavier ordnance to the mix. Six-pounders were phased out during the first half of the Civil War in favor of 10-pounders and 12-pounders. Also, the trend was toward eliminating all decorations and handles on the artillery tube because they caused weak points that could not resist the stress of firing as well. Sleek-looking designs, heavier ordnance, and lighter pieces for easier moving around were the trends evident by the 1850s and 1860s. All this amounts to an improvement on the age-old

system of artillery, but not a revolutionary break from it.

WHAT WERE THE GREATEST DISAPPOINTMENTS OF CIVIL WAR ARTILLERY?

Probably the greatest disappointment was the failure of rifled pieces to prove their worth on the battlefield. Their limitations became apparent to many. That is why about half the pieces used by both sides during the war still were smoothbore. Many gunners were convinced they were at least as good as the new rifles, or better.

HOW MUCH DID THE IMPROVEMENTS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS HAVE TO DO WITH WINNING AND LOSING THE WAR?

Civil War artillery failed to achieve more than a supporting role to infantry. It did not come to dominate the battlefield as would happen along the Western Front during World War I. Even in static campaigns like that at Petersburg, and despite the heavy concentration of artillery pieces along the 35-mile-long trench system at Petersburg and Richmond, the guns failed to provide a campaign-winning edge for either side. That does not mean they were unimportant, by any means. They could and did on occasion elevate their role on the battlefield to something like a decisive edge under the right circumstances. One could argue that Union guns did so on January 2, 1863, at Stones River, and Confederate guns did so at the Hornet's Nest at Shiloh, for example. But far more common was their accomplishment in helping infantry hold a position, a much less prominent, though important, role.

ONE OF THE ISSUES YOU COVER IN YOUR BOOK IS THE CONFLICT OVER CONTROL OF THE ARTILLERY BETWEEN THE ARTILLERY ITSELF AND THE INFANTRY. HOW IMPORTANT WAS THAT, AND HOW DID IT RESOLVE?

Artillery was a supporting arm of the infantry, and to a lesser extent of the cavalry. It did not have the ability to operate independently, always needing support from foot or mounted troops. That is one of the reasons army culture considered it best to vest infantry commanders with the authority to command artillery. Batteries were assigned to infantry brigades and were under the infantry brigade commander's orders and relied on his infantry brigade staff for their supplies as well.

Some artillery officers complained of this arrangement for several reasons. The most prominent one was that it inhibited the concentration of artillery on the battlefield and thus robbed it of its potential to play a decisive role in combat. But more importantly, they complained that infantry brigade staff simply did not know how to supply batteries very well. Another important reason for their complaint was that dispersing the batteries to infantry units greatly limited advancement for artillery officers, most of whom could look forward to holding nothing higher than a captaincy of a battery.

While historians have widely accepted the opinion of artillery officers without question, I argue that their complaint has only limited validity. The complaint about the inability to concentrate the guns to play a prominent role on the battlefield does not hold water. The most visible concentrations of guns, at

Shiloh and Stones River, took place in armies that practiced dispersion of batteries to infantry brigades. The system was flexible. If infantry officers wanted to, they had no difficulty concentrating batteries for a specific job on the battlefield.



When the 1864 Overland Campaign began, there were 24,492 horses with the Army of the Potomac, and 5,158, or 21 percent, served with the artillery. The image above shows a horse artillery battery, in which every member was mounted. (Library of Congress)

THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING TO THEIR COMPLAINTS...

Their complaints were quite valid when it came to administrative control, rather than battlefield control. They needed their own staff to supply the batteries and to constantly train the men.

By the midpoint of the Civil War, the major field armies of both sides began to group field artillery into units of their own, called artillery brigades in some armies and artillery battalions in others. Between battles, these units were under the control of an artillery officer appointed to his position, and he was responsible for supply and training. But during a battle, control of those units reverted to infantry commanders at the division or corps levels. This was not

everything the artillery officers wanted, but it was more than they ever had before in American military history. Moreover, it essentially was the system used during the 20th century wars as well.

In the Civil War this arrangement improved the administration and upkeep of the artillery force, but it did not noticeably improve its battlefield performance, which was as good early in the war as it was later in the conflict. Even though some infantry officers foolishly ordered the guns about even though they knew nothing about how to use them, an equal number were keen students of artillery practice and could use the guns well on the battlefield.

There was a third group of infantry officers who knew little if anything about how to use artillery but were wise enough to allow their battery commanders a completely free hand in operating under fire. In other words, there is not such a clear-cut difference between the dispersion policy of 1861–62 and the concentration policy of 1863–65.

HOW SHOULD WE THINK OF THE CIVIL WAR AS IT OCCUPIES THE SPACE BETWEEN NAPOLEONIC WARFARE AND WORLD WAR I?

I do not see the Civil War as a transitional conflict between the Napoleonic wars and World War I so much as a minor variation on the Napoleonic model. The things that made the Great War the first truly modern conflict were largely or wholly absent in the Civil War. If that is transition, then one could say there was a huge leap across a big chasm between 1865 and 1914, but an easy step back from 1861 to 1815.

LAWMAN LEGEND BASS REEVES: THE INVINCIBLE MAN HUNTER

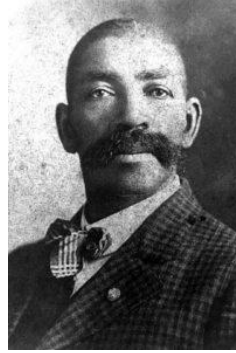
Casualty rates among deputy U.S. marshals were extremely high in Indian and Oklahoma territories, but Reeves completed his long reign there unscathed while making life miserable for outlaws...white, black or Indian.

ART T. BURTON, History.net, 11/12/2023



Bass Reeves (front row, left with cane) served as a lawman in the American Indian territory of Muskogee (today's Oklahoma). (University of Oklahoma Library)

He was a frontier lawman above reproach and probably made a greater impact on his assigned jurisdiction than any other badge wearer west of the Mississippi. Deputy U.S. Marshal Bass Reeves was part Superman, part Sherlock Holmes and part Lone Ranger. But he was real, and he was black.



Born a slave, Bass Reeves fled his master and soon carved a name for himself as one of the most famous marshals in the West. (Oklahoma University Library) (University of Oklahoma Library)

The larger-than-life African American marshal worked in the most dangerous area for federal peace officers, Oklahoma and Indian territories, for 32 years. Recent research shows that before the two territories merged into the state of Oklahoma in 1907, at least 114 deputy U.S. marshals died on duty there. It was no picnic for members of the Indian police or local law enforcement, either, but the challenges and hardships were usually greatest for the deputy marshals. The majority of federal lawmen were killed in the Cherokee and Creek nations of Indian Territory, within a 50-mile radius of Muskogee, in the Creek Nation. When recognizing the wild towns of the Wild West, Muskogee must be mentioned along with Tombstone, Arizona Territory; Las Vegas, New Mexico Territory; Dodge City, Kan.; and El Paso, Texas.

Born a slave near Van Buren, Ark., in July 1838, young Bass moved with his owner to north Texas in the 1840s. His owner, George R. Reeves, was a farmer, tax collector and sheriff before the Civil War. During the war, Colonel Reeves organized the 11th Cavalry Regiment for Grayson County, Texas. Bass Reeves said in a 1901 interview that he had

been George's body servant but that they had parted company (not on good terms, according to family history) during the war. Supposedly, Bass and George argued during a card game, and Bass knocked his master out cold. In Texas, a slave could be killed for such an act, so Bass headed for Indian Territory and found refuge with the Creek and Seminole Indians, learning their customs and language. (After the war, George Reeves would rise to become speaker of the House of Representatives in Texas before dying from a rabid dog's bite on September 5, 1882.)

Exactly what Bass Reeves did during the Civil War after he left his master remains uncertain. One uncorroborated claim says that Reeves served in the U.S. Army as a sergeant during the conflict. It's possible he could have been with one of the guerrilla Union Indian bands in the territory, such as the Cherokee Pins. He might also have served with the Union's First Indian Home Guard Regiment, composed mostly of Seminoles and Creeks, under an Indian name. The Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw and Seminole), who earlier had been relocated from the Southeast to Indian Territory, fought on both sides during the conflict. Afterward, the western portion of the territory was taken away from them and set aside as reservations for Plains Indian tribes (Comanche, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Apache and Kiowa) who were subdued by the U.S. military.

By the early 1870s, Bass and his family (wife, Jennie, and four children; eventually there would be 11 children) were living in Arkansas. Although other blacks lived in the countryside near Van Buren, Reeves built a

substantial home for his family right in the town proper on the riverfront. Several oral stories say that Reeves served as a scout and guide for federal lawmen going into Indian Territory in search of outlaws. A better employment opportunity came in 1875. That March, Judge Isaac C. Parker took over the Fort Smith federal court in Arkansas, which had jurisdiction over all Indian Territory and western Arkansas, and he promptly ordered his marshal to hire 200 deputies. At that time, the territory consisted of all the land that would become the state of Oklahoma except for the panhandle. This was the largest federal court, in terms of area, in U.S. history, and most likely there were never more than 70 deputies covering the vast area at any one time. Bass Reeves was one of the deputies hired that year. He was skilled with weapons, could speak several Indian languages and apparently knew the lay of the land. The federal police had jurisdiction over whites or blacks that were not citizens of the respective tribes in Indian Territory. The Indians had their own police and courts for their citizens. Noncitizens who committed crimes against the Indians would have to be arrested by deputy U.S. marshals and their cases heard in federal court.

Bass Reeves has been called the first commissioned African American deputy U.S. marshal west of the Mississippi River, but this may not be true. A story in the "Indian Pioneer Papers" at the Oklahoma State History Museum in Oklahoma City tells of a posse led by one "Negro" Smith from Fort Smith in 1867. Smith was sent to catch a gang of outlaws who had robbed a stagecoach and killed the driver near Atoka, in the Choctaw Nation. *The Cherokee Advocate* reported on October 14, 1871, that a Cherokee Indian named Ross had killed a

black deputy U.S. marshal on the banks of the Arkansas River opposite Fort Smith. Reeves, though, was undoubtedly one of the first, and he certainly became the most famous black deputy to work the Indian nations before statehood.

In the late 1870s, despite being a commissioned deputy U.S. marshal, Reeves served as a posseman and went into Indian Territory with more experienced lawmen, including Deputy U.S. Marshals Robert J. Topping and Jacob T. Ayers. Later, Reeves and his good friend Deputy U.S. Marshal John H. Mershon teamed up on occasion. Federal law mandated that deputies take at least one posseman whenever they went into the field. On extended trips into the territory, deputy marshals often brought two or more possemen, along with a guard and a cook. One or two supply wagons (sometimes referred to as “tumbleweed wagons”) would serve as headquarters on the prairie while the lawmen rounded up desperadoes. The Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad tracks in the territory were known as the “deadline.” Deputies couldn’t arrest anyone east of the tracks until they were on their way back to Fort Smith. The lawmen typically traveled west to Fort Reno and Anadarko, south to Fort Sill and then back to Fort Smith. This trip took in about 400 miles and would take one to two months depending on high water. Reeves made catching criminals while in disguise part of his modus operandi. He did this throughout his years while working for the federal courts at Fort Smith, Ark., and Paris, Texas. Sometimes he would appear as a drifter, other times as a cowboy, preacher or farmer. For example, he once got a tip that some dangerous outlaws were holed up in a log cabin, so he dressed in farmer overalls and intentionally got his ramshackle

wagon stuck on a nearby tree stump. When the four outlaws came out to help him get unstuck, he got the drop on them and brought them to justice.

In disguise or not, it was a dangerous business. The closest he came to losing his life, he said in a 1906 newspaper interview, came sometime in 1884 while riding the Seminole whiskey trail in search of four men, two white and two black, for whom he had warrants. His pursuit was interrupted by three brothers named Brunter—who had been accused of horse stealing, robbery and several unsolved murders in Indian Territory.

The Brunters got the drop on Reeves. With their guns pointed at the lawman, they ordered him to dismount and keep his hands away from his Colt revolver. Reeves played it cool, showing the brothers warrants for their arrest and asking them what day of the month it was, so that he could make a record for the government. The outlaws thought the lawman must be out of his mind. They told Reeves, “You are just ready to turn in now,” but they were laughing too hard and relaxed their guard. Reeves whipped out his Colt and killed two of the brothers as quick as lightning. While he was in the act of shooting those two, he grabbed the gun barrel of the third outlaw, who could only manage three harmless shots. Reeves hit the third Brunter in the head with his revolver, killing him. There would be no fees to collect on the three dead men, but there were now three fewer desperadoes infesting Indian Territory. Also in 1884, a benchmark year in Reeves’ long career, Bass and the noted Choctaw lawman Charles LeFlore arrested Texas horse thief Robert Landers right in Fort Smith. Reeves’ most celebrated gunfight occurred that same year. Jim Webb,

the foreman of the huge Washington-McLish Ranch in the Chickasaw Nation, was his foe. A black preacher who owned a small farm adjacent to the ranch had let a fire get out of control, and it spread onto ranch land. Webb had scolded the preacher, but that didn't satisfy his anger. He had then shot him to death. Webb was one tough hombre who had reportedly killed 11 men while living in the Brazos River region in Texas. Reeves was able to arrest Webb without incident but was forced to go after him again when the foreman jumped his bond.

In June 1884, Reeves located Webb at Bywaters Store at the foothills of the Arbuckle Mountains. Webb refused to surrender this time, and the two men had a running gunfight. After nearly being shot himself, Reeves got down from his horse, raised his Winchester and shot Webb twice from a distance of about a quarter-mile. Several cowboys and the owner of the store witnessed this gunfight. Heroics like that had caused the Muskogee *Indian Journal* to refer to Reeves as one of the best deputy U.S. marshals in Indian Territory. At that time, after Reconstruction, it was rare to find black federal policemen anywhere in the country except Indian Territory. Reeves and the other black deputies there would blaze a trail of justice and equality for all citizens of that federal protectorate. During the territorial era, at least 50 black deputy U.S. marshals served in Indian Territory. Reeves stood out in most any gathering of marshals, white or black, and not just because he stood 6-foot-2 and weighed 180 pounds. He had a reputation for being able to whip any two men with his bare hands and manipulate six-shooters and rifles equally well with either hand. His most trusted weapon was a Winchester rifle, but

he was also known to carry as many as three revolvers, two butt forward at his belt for easy access. Territorial newspapers reported that during his career he killed 14 desperadoes—but it could have been twice that number. He brought in a great many men alive, too, including outlaws with bounties on their heads. As a man hunter, he had few equals. On one occasion he hauled in 17 horse thieves in “Comanche country” near Fort Sill. Texas rustlers often ventured into Indian Territory to steal ponies from the Indian residents. Not that Bass Reeves was perfect. Nobody could be a lawman that long without chalking up a blemish or two on his record. On one of his 1884 trips into the Chickasaw Nation, Reeves shot and killed his black cook, William Leech. On April 8, while Reeves and his posse were camped near the Canadian River, he uttered a few choice words about Leech's cooking, and Leech responded in kind. The possemen assumed the banter was all in fun, since Reeves and Leech had seemingly gotten along in the past. But this time things apparently got out of hand. Leech, according to one popular account, poured some hot grease down the throat of a puppy that Reeves had in camp, and the deputy marshal proceeded to shoot down the cook. Then again it might not have happened that way at all, and the dog might have belonged to Leech. In any case, nothing came of the shooting for a while.

The next year, 1885, was considerably less eventful. But in September '85, Bass Reeves did swear out a warrant for the arrest of the infamous female outlaw Belle Starr, as well as Fayette Barnett, for horse stealing. Reeves and Belle Starr were apparently on friendly terms. Many times in dealing with people he knew, Reeves would inform them

that they were wanted in Fort Smith and it might be better if they would turn themselves in so he wouldn't have to haul them around the countryside. Although it is not known for sure that he made this suggestion to Mrs. Starr, she did soon turn herself in at Fort Smith—the only time on record that she did so—and reportedly said that she “did not propose to be dragged around by some federal deputy.”

In January 1886, two years after shooting his cook, Reeves was indicted for first-degree murder, arrested by Deputy U.S. Marshal G.J.B. Frair and held in the Fort Smith federal jail. It took six months before Reeves could make bond. On May 21, President Grover Cleveland appointed a new U.S. marshal, John Carroll—the first former Confederate veteran that Reeves would serve under at Fort Smith. Whether Carroll had anything to do with the proceedings against Reeves is not known. The trial was finally held in October 1887. Eleven witnesses were called for the prosecution, while Reeves and his excellent attorneys requested 10 witnesses for the defense. Reeves testified that he had argued with Leech while in camp but that nothing had come of it. That same evening, Reeves said, a cartridge caught in his Winchester rifle and while trying to dislodge the bullet, the gun accidentally went off. The bullet, the defendant continued, struck Leech in the neck, and though Reeves sent for a doctor, the cook expired before medical help could arrive. Reeves was acquitted of malicious murder, but because the murder trial had depleted his substantial savings, he had to sell his home in Van Buren and move his family to a house on the outskirts of Fort Smith.

Reeves resumed his productive ways in the field after this interlude, once again bringing in desperadoes and villains by the dozen. In the spring of 1889, Jacob Yoes, a Union Army veteran, was appointed U.S. marshal at Fort Smith. Late that year, Yoes sent Reeves after a gang of killers, and on December 30, Reeves sent a note to the marshal saying, “Have got the three men who killed Deputy Marshal [Joseph] Lundy [on June 14, 1889].” His three prisoners were Seminole Indians—Nocus Harjo, One Prince and Bill Wolf. In April 1890, Reeves captured the notorious Seminole Tosa-lo-nah (alias Greenleaf), who had murdered and robbed three white men and four Indians. Greenleaf had been on the run from the law for 18 years, and this was the first time he was arrested.

In November 1890, Reeves went after an even more famous Indian Territory outlaw, the Cherokee Ned Christie, who was accused of killing Deputy U.S. Marshal Dan Maples in May 1887. Christie had maintained his innocence but refused to come to the white man's court, for he felt no justice would be served. Reeves and his posse attacked Ned's hideout in the Cherokee hills, known locally as Ned's Fort Mountain. Reeves was able to burn down the fortified cabin. At first, he believed Christie was trapped inside, but he later found out that the renegade had escaped. Christie swore vengeance on Reeves but failed to make good on the threat before a large federal posse killed Christie at Fort Mountain on November 2, 1892. The first white and black settlers had been allowed onto Indian lands in 1889, when Oklahoma Territory, just west of Indian Territory, was opened. In a 1930s interview, Harve Lovelady, an early white settler in

Pottawattomie County, described the scene in the territories:

In Old Oklahoma the West was West when the six-shooters worked out in the gambling halls and in the saloons of Asher, Avoca, Wanette, Earlsboro, Violet Springs, Corner, and Keokuk Falls about the time of 1889 and 1890....These small Western towns were inhabited by Negroes, whites, Indians, half-bloods, gamblers, bootleggers, killers and any kind of an outcast....

Bass Reeves, a coal-black Negro, was a U.S. Deputy Marshal during one time and he was the most feared U.S. marshal that was ever heard in that country. To any man or any criminal what was subject to arrest he did his full duty according to law. He brought men before the court to be tried fairly but many times he never brought in all the criminals but would kill some of them. He didn't want to spend so much time in chasing down the man who resisted arrest so would shoot him down in his tracks. The new Oklahoma Territory towns were different from the Indian Territory towns in that saloons were legal in the former. Profiteers—principally white men and women—could make a killing by buying liquor in Oklahoma Territory and bringing it into Indian Territory, as long as the deputy U.S. marshals didn't catch them. The federal court for Oklahoma Territory was in Guthrie. Reeves, like many other deputy U.S. marshals, became cross-deputized so that he could work in both territories. The worst saloon town in Oklahoma Territory was said to be the Corner, just across the boundary with the Seminole and Chickasaw nations. The term "bootlegging" supposedly came from the drovers, cowboys and ranchers who would put a flat bottle of

whiskey in their boots and smuggle the contraband into Indian Territory for profit. The term "last chance" was coined here, because these border saloon towns offered the last chance to get legal whiskey before a traveler crossed into the dry Indian nations. On at least one occasion, Reeves reportedly killed a gunman in a Corner saloon who called him out for a gunfight.

In late June 1891, Reeves and his posse rode into Fort Smith with eight prisoners (five wanted for murder) from the Indian nations. The captured outlaws included William Wright, a black man; Wiley Bear and John Simmer, Indians; and William McDaniel and Ben Card, white men. McDaniel and Card had been arrested for allegedly killing John Irvin, a black man, but Reeves apparently didn't have enough solid evidence to indict the pair. The *Fort Smith Weekly Elevator* attacked Reeves for chaining up the two men and dragging them around Creek country for nearly a month. Most likely, Reeves was reprimanded by Marshal Yoes, but there is no record of such action. Reeves left Fort Smith around 1893 and transferred to the federal court at Paris, Texas. This court had jurisdiction over much of the Chickasaw and Choctaw nations in the 1890s. Reeves was stationed at Calvin, Choctaw Nation, and would take many of his prisoners to Pauls Valley, Chickasaw Nation, where a federal commissioner was stationed and there was a jail. Hearings would be held at Pauls Valley, and if necessary, criminals were transferred to the Texas court for trial. By the late 1890s, three federal courts were located in Indian Territory to hear major and minor cases—the Southern District at Ardmore, Central District at McAlester and Northern District at Muskogee. Federal authorities transferred

Reeves to the Northern District, where he was first stationed at tiny Wetumka in the Creek Nation. By 1898 he was living in Muskogee, where he would stay until statehood in 1907.

Reeves escaped many assassination attempts during his career, one of the last occurring on the evening of November 14, 1906, at Wybark, Creek Nation. While riding in his buggy looking to serve warrants, he was fired upon under a railroad trestle by unknown parties. He returned fire, but nobody was hit. By that time, Reeves was focusing on arresting black and Indian felons, though he would still arrest white outlaws if the occasion called for it.

The last major gunfight that Reeves took part in erupted in Muskogee on March 26, 1907. A large group of black anarchists calling themselves the United Socialist Club had taken over a two-story house and declared that they could claim any property in town. Two city constables, John Colfield and Guy Fisher, were sent with eviction papers, only to be met at the door of the house by gunfire. Fisher was wounded, but escaped; Colfield was severely wounded and couldn't move from where he lay. The U.S. marshal's office was alerted, and Chief Deputy U.S. Marshal Bud Ledbetter, along with a black deputy U.S. marshal named Paul Smith and others, arrived on the scene. An intense gunfight followed. Ledbetter killed two of the offenders, and Smith saved Ledbetter's life by killing one of the radicals who had Ledbetter pinned down. Reeves arrived late. After noting where most of the gunfire was coming from, he plugged an anarchist who was shooting down on the lawmen from an upstairs window. The lawmen killed two more of the group before the remaining seven anarchists surrendered.

Constables Colfield and Fisher recovered from their wounds, and Ledbetter called Reeves "one of the bravest men this country has ever known."

Even before that shootout, on March 8, 1907, the Oklahoma City *Weekly Times-Journal* ran a story headlined "He has Killed Fourteen Men: A Fearless Negro Deputy of the Indian Territory." Two days later, on March 10, *The Washington Post* reprinted that lengthy article. It would be the most national exposure Bass Reeves received during his lifetime. And if accurate, it means that the black anarchist he killed later that month would have been No. 15.

When Oklahoma became a state on November 16, 1907, the federal office was downsized, and many of the lawmen found other jobs. Bass Reeves, now 68, took a job with the Muskogee police department, walking a downtown beat. Old-timers reported that Reeves would walk with a sidekick who carried a satchel full of pistols and that there was never a crime on his beat. Reeves would complete 32 years of service as a law officer without ever being reported wounded. He died at home of Bright's disease on January 12, 1910, at age 71, and was buried somewhere in Muskogee. The exact location is not known today; it was probably either in the Old Agency cemetery or in a small black cemetery west of town on Fern Mountain Road. Reeves' long service and remarkable dedication to duty could match any lawman of his time, and his six-shooter had been, as the two newspapers reported in March 1907, "a potent element in bringing two territories out of the reign of the outlaw, the horsethief and bootlegger, to a great common wealth."

