Edwin Cole Bearss

JUNE 26, 1923 – SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

Edwin (Ed) Cole Bearss passed away on September 15, 2020, in Mississippi, where he had recently moved after living over 50 years in Arlington, Virginia. His wife Margie Riddle Bearss and his daughter Sara Beth Bearss predeceased him. He is survived by his brother Robert (Pat) Bearss, his son Edwin Cole Bearss, Jr. (Annika), and his daughter Mary Virginia (Ginny) Bearss, three grandsons, four great grandsons, and two nieces. Ed was born in Billings, Montana, on June 26, 1923, and grew up on his family's ranch on Sarpy Creek. At age 18, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps. On January 2, 1944, he was badly wounded in Cape Gloucester, New Britain. He spent two years convalescing in Navy hospitals. Using the GI Bill, Ed graduated from the foreign service program at Georgetown University in 1949 and obtained a master's in history from the University of Indiana in 1955. Ed soon found his calling in the National Park Service. He was park historian at Vicksburg from 1955 to 1958 and then historian for the Southeast Region until 1966. In 1958, he married Margie Riddle, a schoolteacher whom Ed courted in an odd manner: on his second visit to Ms. Riddle, Ed brought her a cannonball! While at Vicksburg, Ed was central to the discovery and raising of the USS Cairo, a Civil War ironclad sunk in the Yazoo River in December 1862. To help finance the recovery effort, Ed was a victorious contestant on "The $64,000 Challenge." The vessel now resides in the Vicksburg National Military Park. In 1966, Ed joined other research historians at the headquarters of the National Park Service, responsible for historical sites of the 19th and 20th centuries, including the homes of Presidents Carter and Johnson. By 1981, Ed was named Chief Historian of the NPS, a position he held until 1994. While with NPS, he testified many times before Congress. He also served on the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, established by Congress to guide it on priorities for

battlefield preservation. In 1990, Ed achieved national and lasting fame as one of the commentators in Ken Burns' movie The Civil War. By this time, too, Ed had established a new career as teacher, lecturer and tour guide, educating and leading literally thousands of people across battlefields of almost every American war. He continued leading tours until late 2019. Ed leaves two extraordinary legacies. As a public historian, he is the author, editor or contributor of more than 25 books, 100 scholarly papers, countless NPS monographs and oral histories. As a preservationist, he is responsible for the creation, expansion, and restoration of historic battlefields, houses, and other sites integral to American history. For his contributions to the field, Ed was recognized numerous times, including receiving honorary degrees from Lincoln College and Gettysburg College, the Distinguished Service Award from the Department of the Interior, the Wailes Award (the highest historical award from the State of Mississippi), and awards from various Civil War Round Tables. In 2005, the Smithsonian Institution named Ed as one of 35 people "who made a difference: to our world. The National Park Service Edwin C. Bearss Fellowship Award and the American Battlefield trust Edwin C. Bearss Lifetime Achievement Award were established in his honor. He is a Fellow of the Company of Military Historians and a lifetime Trustee of the American Battlefield Trust. At the time of his death, a bipartisan coalition of members of the U.S. Congress had been sponsoring a resolution to award Ed the Congressional Gold Medal. Private inurnment services will be held in the Bethel Baptist Church Cemetery, Brandon, Mississippi. Memorial services will be announced at a later date. In lieu of flowers, his family requests that gifts be made to the American Battlefield Trust for preservation projects in Mississippi. www.battlefields.org/remembering-ed-bearss.

(The BCWRT Board/Officers have authorized making a $100.00 contribution to the ABT)

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In Last Message before retiring, Trust President James Lighthizer Declares preservation Victory at Antietam

Faced with a short window of opportunity, Trust members rallied to protect a three-acre West Woods parcel

Mary Koik, American Battlefield Trust

September 30, 2020

(Sharpsburg, Md.) – After a remarkable tenure of nearly 21 years, American Battlefield Trust President James Lighthizer used his final communication with members to offer profound thanks for their unwavering support — and to declare victory on an important three-acre portion of the Antietam Battlefield. Lighthizer will be succeeded as president by David N. Duncan. the Trust's longtime chief development officer, on October 1, 2020.

In his message, Lighthizer noted that the occasion was doubly meaningful for him. “I think most of you know that Antietam has a special place in my heart because I started helping to save land there when I was Maryland Secretary of Transportation – years before I came to the Trust. Well, that makes it a particular a joy to offer you this as my very last announcement as President: We did it! Together, we saved the three key acres in Antietam’s West Woods I wrote to you about a few weeks ago. Thank you for rising to the occasion and helping us quickly complete this final transaction of my tenure.”

The property is located in Antietam’s West Woods, one of the most fiercely contested areas of that battlefield. The fighting there on September 17, 1862, is generally considered among the great turning points of the Civil War, a Union victory that allowed President Abraham Lincoln to issue the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. The Trust publicly launched a national fundraising effort to purchase the $310,000 property on August 17, 2020, noting that it was necessary for the transaction to close by the end of September to meet a seller deadline.

Located within the boundary of Antietam National Battlefield, the site was ineligible for matching grants traditionally used for battlefield preservation by the Trust. In lieu of that funding source, the Trust drew, for the first time, on money previously contributed to the Lighthizer Legacy Fund, created last autumn when the president announced his plans to retire. Gifts to that fund are earmarked specifically for acquisitions at sites hand-chosen by Lighthizer for their personal significance to him: the Antietam Campaign; Gaines’ Mill and Cold Harbor, Va.; and The Liberty Trail, a special project to shed light on untold stories of the Revolutionary War in South Carolina.

Wayne Hsieh

“Twenty years passed almost in the blink of an eye on this incredible journey we took together, building a legacy that both honors our ancestors and will inspire future generations,” Lighthizer wrote in his farewell message. “I hope you know that I was conscious each and every day that not a single one of the 53,000 acres we saved would have been possible without you, the members of this organization.”

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 53,000 acres associated with the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War.

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David N. Duncan Named New President of the American Battlefield Trust

For 20 Years, Duncan has helped Shape the Trust's Growth

Duncan has spent more than two decades with the Trust, ideally positioning him to lead the organization on a path of continued growth. Overseeing all membership and development efforts, Duncan and his team have raised funds that directly led to the protection of just under 45,000 acres of hallowed ground.

Duncan's appointment comes after an eight-month executive search conducted by a leading national firm, which concluded with a unanimous vote by the organization's Board of Trustees.

Introducing My Successor: Letter from Jim Lighthizer, September 1, 2020

Jim Lighthizer writes a letter to members announcing that the Board of Trustees has unanimously voted to elect David Duncan, currently the Trust's...

Meet David Duncan

A lifelong advocate for preservation and history education
A native Virginian, Duncan's lifelong interest in American history was cultivated from childhood by his father, a public school social studies teacher. He joined the battlefield preservation movement as a dues-paying member of the Civil War Trust in the mid-1990s, volunteering his fundraising expertise for the cause before becoming an employee of the organization in March 2000. Since then, he has been intimately involved in virtually every aspect of the Trust's management and operations, helping it grow into the national leader in historic land preservation and place-based education. Read biography of David ›

According to retiring president Jim Lighthizer, "There is no one at the Trust who has worked more closely with me than David. He has a deep knowledge of the functions of all departments, as well as the support of his colleagues. I have no doubt he will hit the ground running, and not miss a beat."

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Antietam's Cornfield Maelstrom

Photo courtesy of William Wilsbach

David A. Welker Historynet
October 2020

September 1, 1862, dawned bright and clear on David and Margaret Miller's farm north of quiet Sharpsburg, Md. Stepping from their two-story whitewashed home, David—known as D.R.—could see his barn and haystacks west across the Hagerstown Pike, running north from town and bisecting his property, while just east was the family's garden and orchard. Bounded by three woodlots—known now as the North, East, and West Woods—Miller's three well-tended fields east of the road reflected the farm's prosperity. The northernmost, abutting the North Woods, had been recently plowed while another field to the south contained fallow grass. Farther south stood a 24-acre field awaiting harvest, thick with ripe corn. Miller had no way of knowing that within two weeks, his cornfield would become one of the most dangerous places on earth.

Of the many actions aligning to make that so was the decision by Confederate General Robert E. Lee to move his Army of Northern Virginia into Maryland after his late-August victory at the Second Battle of Manassas. Lee sold his move north to President Jefferson Davis as a way to enable Maryland to join the Confederacy. Also, winning a battle on Northern soil might persuade Britain and France to openly support Southern independence, break the Union naval blockade, and perhaps more. Lee's men began crossing the Potomac River on September 4 and reached Frederick the following day. The general quickly scattered his forces across western Maryland preparing his next move.

Union Maj. Gen. George McClellan, meanwhile, reorganized his army to better chase Lee, creating three "wing commands" and unifying his cavalry into a single division while also streamlining army logistics from top to bottom. The unexpected acquisition of Lee's campaign plan—the famous "Lost Orders"—handed McClellan another critical advantage.

David R. Miller's handsome home, seen in this wartime image, stood north of his cornfield. After the battle, Miller submitted a damage claim to the federal government for ,237, and was awarded 5 in 1872. His brother, Daniel, died of disease contracted from exposure to sick soldiers. (Library of Congress)

His campaign compromised, Lee moved west from Frederick to buy time and gain

maneuvering room. Fighting at South Mountain on September 14 failed to stop McClellan's relentless advance, and Lee concluded that returning to Virginia was his only option and ordered his army to gather at Sharpsburg. Word that Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson had secured the vital communication line at Harpers Ferry breathed fresh life into Lee's campaign, however, and he gambled all on fighting at Sharpsburg.

Lee deployed his army along Sharpsburg's north-south ridge, nearly astride the town, facing east toward Antietam Creek. The Confederates wanted to use long fields of fire to oppose McClellan, and then attack after he was winnowed by casualties.

September 16 found both armies only a mile apart, held in check by thick fog.

McClellan used the day to plan his attack for September 17, an assault built around Antietam Creek's three crossings, the Upper, Middle, and Lower bridges and nearby fords. McClellan's opening strike would use the Upper Bridge to hit the Confederate left, followed by a carefully coordinated assault on Lee's right flank from the Lower Bridge, sometimes called the Rohrbach Bridge for a local family and soon to be forever known as Burnside Bridge. Blunting simultaneous flank attacks would thin Confederate forces in the center, where Union attackers crossing the Middle Bridge would strike the final blow. With the flank attacks cutting two of Lee's escape routes—leaving only west to Shepherdstown open—he would be trapped, facing surrender or destruction.

McClellan ordered Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker's 1st Corps, which would lead the opening attack, to get underway by late afternoon. Shortly after 7 p.m., Maj. Gen. Joseph King Feno Mansfield's 12th Corps moved to reinforce Hooker.

Hooker's crossing was detected almost immediately. Confederate cavalry noticed the advance and quickly warned Lee, who had Maj. Gen. James Longstreet send Brig. Gen. John Bell Hood's Division—the only Southern infantry nearby—in response. Facing north along the Hagerstown Pike, Hood's presence bought time for Jackson's entire command to deploy on Hood's left.

At dusk, Hooker's advance troops—Brig. Gen. Truman Seymour's brigade of Pennsylvanians—encountered Confederate cavalry and infantry skirmishers from Colonel Alfred H. Colquitt's Brigade defending the East Woods. Seymour pushed Colquitt back, revealing Hood's infantry and artillery in Miller's corn and grass fields. Thus ended September 16th's brief fighting.

As his troops slumbered, Hooker surveyed the ground of the impending attack. Though it was dark and drizzly, the small white Dunker Church stood out above Miller's rolling ground, framed by the three woodlots. Beyond that the enemy controlled the West Woods, but Hooker knew little more of their location. His plan called for Brig. Gens. Abner Doubleday and James Ricketts' divisions to drive over the open ground toward the church, supported by Brig. Gen. George Meade's Pennsylvania Reserves. The ultimate objective, however, remained reaching the ridge to break Lee's left flank. Like many of his men, Hooker's plan would not survive long after dawn.

Lieutenant Lewis Parmelee (left), 2nd U.S. Sharpshooters, shot five times, killed. At right, 2nd Lt. John Whitman, 2nd U.S. Sharpshooters, killed. (Courtesy of Brian White)

The rain ended at first light September 17, but a deadlier storm was brewing. Hooker's plan took its first hit when both Doubleday and Ricketts sent forward individual 400- to 900-man brigades rather than their entire 3,000-man divisions. Doubleday ordered Brig. Gen. John Gibbon's "Iron Brigade" south along the Hagerstown Pike, with Colonel Walter E. Phelps' and Brig. Gen. Marsena Patrick's brigades in support. Ricketts meanwhile directed both Brig. Gens. George L. Hartsuff's and Abram Duryée's brigades south through Miller's fields toward the church. Ricketts' reserve, Colonel William Christian's brigade, was unexpectedly sent skirting the East Woods to flank an unexpected Confederate threat revealed by the growing daylight.

That new threat was 1,935 men of two brigades in Brig. Gen. Alexander Lawton's Division, deployed perpendicularly to Jackson's main line facing north, roughly 200 yards south of Miller's cornfield. Georgia Colonel Marcellus Douglass was in command of Lawton's men, and Colonel James Walker, leading Isaac Trimble's Brigade, was posted in the same location by Jackson the previous night to resist exactly the advance Hooker intended. Brigadier General Harry Hays' Brigade of Louisianans soon arrived as reinforcements for Lee's left.

The Iron Brigade pushed south through Miller's farmyard until reaching the still-standing corn. There, unseen Rebel fire from the corn ahead and the West Woods on the right halted the leading 6th Wisconsin, soon joined by the "Ragged Ass" 2nd Wisconsin—so-called for the sad condition of their trousers. Recalled Major Rufus Dawes of the 6th Wisconsin, "The bullets began to clip through the corn and spin through the soft furrows—thick, almost, as hail." Confederate shellfire from Nicodemus Heights to their right rear began to "burst around us, the fragments tearing up the ground, and canister whistled through the corn above us." The vicious gunfire stalled Doubleday's half of Hooker's attack.

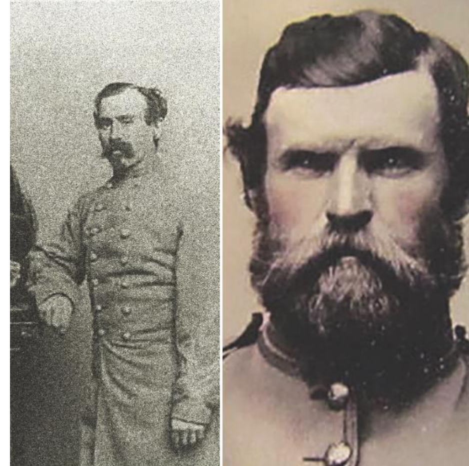
Ricketts' assault 300 yards to the east fared even worse. General Hartsuff, Ricketts' best commander, was wounded while reconnoitering the field prior to the attack. The command vacuum left his brigade confused and immobile. Duryée's brigade, meanwhile, marched determinedly south into battle by itself.

Duryée's New Yorkers and Pennsylvanians endured terrific artillery fire from Nicodemus Heights and Colonel Stephen D. Lee's cannons posted near the Dunker Church. Reaching the northern end of Miller's cornfield, Duryée shifted to a battle front before ordering all 1,100

men to lie down. After Captains James Thompson's and Ezra Matthew's Pennsylvania batteries lobbed rounds into the cornfield to clear Rebel skirmishers, the men rose and picked a lane between corn rows and started forward again. The concealing corn briefly spared them from the shellfire, and on they pressed to the southern end of the field where the enemy waited.

The men of Lawton's and Trimble's brigades anxiously watched for signs of the Yankees they knew were somewhere among the corn. As the 31st Georgia's skirmishers fled Union shells, Lawton's men cried, "What's the matter? What are you running for?" "You'll soon see!" the scrambling Georgians replied. Colonel Douglass, pacing in the rear, directed Lawton's men to pick a row and fire low, which would make every shot count when the enemy appeared. Nearer and nearer they came, until suddenly…

Nearing the fence bordering the southern edge of the Cornfield, Confederate rifle fire tore into Duryée's line, blasting the Union regiments as they emerged from the corn to align with Seymour's Pennsylvania Reserves, still in the East Woods from the previous night. Before the Federal lines met, however, Colonel Walker pushed three of Trimble's Georgia and North Carolina regiments forward to a low rock ledge, placing them squarely on Duryée's exposed left flank.



Lt. Col. Emory Best (left), 23rd Georgia, wounded and captured. At right, Private Jobe Gilley, 27th Indiana, wounded in the chest. (Courtesy of Richard Thompson)

Duryée was losing men fast. Recalled Lieutenant Rush Cady of the 97th New York, "[Private] Sherman was squatting down in the act of priming, when hit by a solid shot, which nearly severed both legs at the knees, & took [off] his right hand at the wrist, the same shot killing Dick Handley instantly, going completely through his body. Sherman's blood, flesh & pieces of bones flew all over & in the faces of the boys who were next to him. He asked for a drink of water, & then begged Alek to cut his throat, he was in such agony." After 20 minutes of such gore, Duryée ordered a retreat.

As Yankee troops yielded, Lawton's and Hays' brigades pursued them into the Cornfield. But just beyond the Cornfield's center, they were halted by threats to their flanks. Lawton's left stalled on Gibbon's 2nd and 6th Wisconsin, while Hays' men drove right at Hartsuff's brigade.

Hartsuff had finally moved once Colonel Richard Coulter of the 11th Pennsylvania assumed command. While too late to save Duryée's men, its advance nonetheless

stopped the latest Confederate drive. Barely 300 yards apart, both Hays' and Hartsuff's brigades were being torn apart by musketry, and Coulter's men suffered additional slaughter as targets of S.D. Lee's artillery adjacent to the Dunker Church. Coulter needed reinforcements, fast. A fresh Federal brigade suddenly appeared in the East Woods, and Coulter raced there to plead for its help. He had no idea what this simple act would cause.

Coulter was racing toward Colonel William Christian's Brigade, which had been sent to support Duryée and Hartsuff by striking the Confederate flank. Christian was a Mexican War veteran, but this was his first brigade command under direct fire, and his approach to the battlefield was erratic to say the least. He ordered his brigade through a series of direction-changing maneuvers and periodically halted to have them drill in the manual of arms. When Coulter approached and asked for assistance, Christian snapped and rode away muttering that "he'd always had a great fear of shelling." By abandoning his brigade, Christian left Coulter's command stuck in its lonely, costly fight.

Colonel Peter Lyle, commanding the 90th Pennsylvania of Christian's brigade, heard Coulter's plea, however. Determined to act, with or without orders, Lyle marched his regiment into the northern end of the Cornfield, allowing Christian's spent command to retreat toward the North Woods. Although the 90th Pennsylvania was only 264 strong, its fire began tearing apart what remained of Hays' Brigade.

On the Cornfield's western end, Lawton's Brigade battled with Gibbon's men. Gibbon had daringly split his brigade. He held the 2nd and 6th Wisconsin regiments in the corn while sending the 19th Indiana and 7th Wisconsin west across the pike to clear threats within the West Woods. Into the center of his position, Gibbon sent Lieutenant James Stewart's two-gun section of the 4th U.S. Artillery, Battery B, which raced south to deploy on the pike's western edge. As support, Hooker ordered Phelps' brigade forward behind Gibbon in the corn while Doubleday sent Patrick's brigade to aid Gibbon's two regiments in the woods. If this pincers movement worked, Gibbon's brigade would soon reunite and resume driving to the Dunker Church.

Seeing Lawton's Georgians struggling in the Cornfield, Brig. Gen. William E. Starke—commanding Jackson's Division—decided to act, advancing both the Stonewall and Taliaferro's brigades out of the West Woods toward the pike. They arrived just as Jones' and Grigsby's brigades were retreating and the effort proved to be for naught. Starke, in fact, was mortally wounded as Gibbon's two regiments emerged from the West Woods, pouring flanking fire into their left. Meanwhile, Gibbon's two Wisconsin regiments and Phelps' brigade sprang at them from the Cornfield's southern end.

"We jumped over the fence, and pushed on, loading, firing, and shouting….There was, on the part of the men, great hysterical excitement, eagerness to go forward, and a reckless disregard of life, of everything but victory," recalled Major Dawes. Pivoting on Phelps' 2nd U.S. Sharpshooters, Gibbon's regiments hit Starke's two brigades in front and flank at nearly the same moment Lawton's and Hays' brigades—short on ammunition, thinned by casualties, and seeing

reinforcements moving behind them—yielded ground.

The Cornfield had changed hands four times in barely an hour, and it seemed Hooker might have won the fight. He was, however, about to be brought back to earth by John Bell Hood's men. Hood's infantry column, sent to aid Lawton, quickly deployed across the Cornfield's south edge until reaching the East Woods. The men had marched into battle eating their half-cooked breakfast, johnnycakes or pork, from their bayonets. With Colonel William T. Wofford's "Texas Brigade" on the left and Colonel Evander M. Law's Brigade of Alabamians, Mississippians, and North Carolinians on the right, Hood's Division swept north into the Cornfield.

Corp. John Morton Booker (left), 23rd Virginia, killed. Lt. Col. Thomas Allen, 2nd Wisconsin, wounded in the right arm. (The Marc and Beth Storch Collection)

"A long and steady line of rebel grey, unbroken by the fugitives who fly before us, comes sweeping down through the woods and around the church," recalled Dawes. "They raise the yell and fire. It is like a scythe running through our line."

Wofford's Texans swept away Gibbon's short-lived victory, while across the Cornfield, Law's Brigade drove away the stout 90th Pennsylvania. In mere minutes, Hood had regained control of the Cornfield and all looked promising for the Rebels. Until suddenly it wasn't.

The two guns in Stewart's 4th U.S. Artillery blasted Wofford's left flank, stalling Wade Hampton's Legion and the 18th Georgia, while across the Cornfield, Evander Law's right was stalled by Christian's Brigade, restored to order and firing from cover in the southern end of the East Woods. In response, Law divided his brigade. Half his men pushed north through the open corn and the remainder drove eastward, clearing Christian's men from the East Woods. Wofford also shifted regiments and faced his entire brigade west along the Hagerstown Pike, reinforcing each flank by posting the 4th Texas on the left and moving the 1st Texas toward the right. But, as General Hood later observed, the 1st Texas had "slipped the bridle and got away from the command." The Lone Star boys were driving the Yankees back as they moved north, but they were alone. Their uncoordinated advance also exposed Wofford's unprotected right flank.

Patrick's brigade and Gibbon's 19th Indiana and 7th Wisconsin advanced from the West Woods to threaten Wofford's open right, while a single volley from George Meade's 3,131-man division—the last of Hooker's fresh 1st Corps troops to arrive on the field—nearly swept away the 1st Texas. Hood ordered his men to retreat, and the Cornfield exchanged hands for a sixth time.

Even so, hope was already marching northward from Samuel Mumma's fields. About 7 a.m., Maj. Gen. D.H. Hill advanced Ripley's Brigade to Jackson's aid. Once deployed across the Cornfield's width, Ripley's Georgians and North Carolinians swept northward.

Meade's force advanced swiftly, too. Gibbon pushed forward his left-most regiment, the 9th Pennsylvania Reserves, to support Patrick's brigade. At the Cornfield's southern fence, however, they found Patrick's men gone and their brigade's other two regiments stalled in the center of the Cornfield by enemy fire from the East Woods. Alone and exposed, short on ammunition and with mounting casualties, the 9th Pennsylvania Reserves retreated, yielding the Cornfield once more.

Ripley's Brigade, with Colonel George Doles of the 4th Georgia commanding, controlled the position by fire, rather than presence, remaining south of the Cornfield to align with Law's 4th Alabama, 21st Georgia, and 5th Texas holding the southern East Woods. Left behind by miscommunication, they halted Meade's advance and now anchored Confederate hopes to retain control of the Cornfield.

Hooker's next deadly countermove was already in play, as Mansfield's 7,500-man 12th Corps—a mix of mostly untested and a few veteran regiments—arrived between the North and East Woods. Unlike as he had done with his 1st Corps, Hooker would utilize the full mass of Mansfield's corps, maneuvering two 2,500-man divisions rather than individual brigades. The division of Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams drove directly south toward the Cornfield as Brig. Gen. George S. Greene's division swung on Williams' left through the East Woods. The two divisions were to seize McClellan's objective—the Dunker Church ridge.

Hooker knew that for his grand advance to succeed, Law's Rebels, who had stopped Meade's advance, had to be dispatched. Hooker also knew that assigning Mansfield to lead the task was a risk. Mansfield had assumed command of the corps only five days earlier, had not led troops in battle since 1847 during the Mexican War, and lacked confidence in his new command. Diverting Brig. Gen. Samuel Crawford's brigade—three veteran regiments and the massive but green 124th, 125th, and 128th Pennsylvania—to this task, Mansfield personally led regiments into position astride the East Woods' northern end. Exposed to the nearby maelstrom of battle by this role, Mansfield fell mortally wounded. The first Union, and third overall, general officer to fall before 9 a.m.

Williams quickly stepped into the command void, however, completing Mansfield's task by sending the 128th Pennsylvania south into the woods. The inexperienced Keystoners struck Ripley's right flank and Law's 4th Alabama and retired, but the attack persuaded Doles that Ripley's Brigade couldn't withstand another fight. As if on cue, D.H. Hills' next brigade, Colonel Alfred Colquitt's, appeared, crossing Ripley's front like a human curtain to enable Doles' retreat. Colquitt's timing was impeccable, but it was the last bit of luck the South enjoyed in the Cornfield.

At nearly the same moment, the 12th Corps attack wound into high gear.

Crawford's brigade, holding the northern East Woods, served as an anchor in the center; on their right, Gordon's brigade moved directly south toward the Cornfield as Greene's leading brigade on the left, Lt. Col. Hector Tyndale's 1st Brigade—Pennsylvania and Ohio boys—pivoted southwestward into the East Woods, driving the Rebels before them.

Captain John Hanna (left), 6th Georgia, killed. Sergeant Charles Johnson (center), 12th Massachusetts, killed. Private Benjamin Sharpless (right), 6th Pennsylvania Reserves, wounded. (Courtesy of Neal Thompson; Courtesy of Ross Kelbaugh; HNA Archives)

The Confederacy's final hope for holding this position, Garland's Brigade of D.H. Hill's Division, soon proved not up to the task. It had lost 359 casualties only four days before during the South Mountain fighting, including General Garland, leaving its five North Carolina regiments under Colonel Duncan McRae unnerved by prospects for another fight. Once into the chaotic East Woods, the 5th North Carolina's commander recalled, "Captain T.P. Thompson…came up to me in a very excited manner and tone cried, 'They are flanking us! See, yonder's a whole brigade!' [W]hen this act of indiscretion occurred, they began to break and run."

McRae's reinforcements fled just as Tyndale's brigade appeared. Emerging largely unopposed into the Cornfield, Tyndale hit Colquitt's thinned brigade while Greene's second brigade, Colonel Henry Stainrook's, arrived on their left. Swinging like a barn door, Greene's united division swept away the East Woods' remaining defenders, Law's three regiments.

Brigadier General George Gordon's brigade advanced, too. Recalled Robert Gould Shaw, a captain in the 2nd Massachusetts who would go on to fame with the 54th Massachusetts the following July, "[T]he Brigade advanced through the cornfield in front, which…was full of their dead and wounded….Beyond the cornfield was a large open field, and such a mass of dead and wounded men, mostly Rebels, as were lying there, I never saw before; it was a terrible sight…."

Greene's division pressed inexorably westward across the Cornfield, sweeping remaining Confederate resistance before it. Benjamin Witcher of the 6th Georgia proposed to make a stand with some prone comrades, until his friend shook several, proving they were dead. When the 12th Corps reached the Hagerstown Pike, it signaled the 10th time that the Cornfield had changed hands in barely two hours.

The Cornfield was securely in Union hands, but it remained to be seen if Maj. Gen. Edwin V. Sumner, who replaced the wounded Hooker in command, could meet McClellan's first objective. Stonewall Jackson also faced a daunting

task, sustaining the Confederate left. Resolving such issues would require many hours of fighting.

The fight for the Cornfield had consumed all of Hooker's forces on the Federal right, the 1st and 12th Corps, while two-thirds of Jackson's available force—Lawton's, Jackson's, and Hood's divisions—and three of the five brigades in D.H. Hill's Division were similarly spent.

The Cornfield's human cost stunned witnesses. One Confederate wrote, "Around me are dead and wounded in horrid crowds," while another recalled, "frequently places where for 50 or 60 yards you could step from one dead Yank to another & walk all over the ground without touching it with your foot." A New Yorker observed, "We saw some without any head. Some without any arms. Some without any legs. Some shot through their guts…It took hard to see them lay there bleeding to death." Wofford's 1st Texas lost 45 killed and 141 wounded of the 226 Texans who entered the Cornfield, an 82.3 percent casualty rate—the greatest single regimental loss in any battle for either side of the entire war. Hartsuff's 12th Massachusetts lost 49 killed and 165 wounded of the 334 men who advanced into the Cornfield, generating a 64 percent casualty rate.

Nightfall on September 17 brought an end to Antietam's fighting and marked many historic transformations on the fields surrounding Sharpsburg. America's bloodiest single day forever applied a capital letter to Farmer Miller's Cornfield, and made it a national symbol of death and sacrifice.

Colonel William Christian had a track record of incompetence. (USAHEC)

Born in 1825 in Utica, N.Y., William Henry Christian served with the 1st New York Volunteers throughout the Mexican War, though he saw no combat. He then served as his local militia's drillmaster. With such military credentials, he was able to form and lead the 26th New York Infantry when the Civil War began. Colonel Christian's first battle experience on October 21, 1861, proved a complete disaster, however. He led a 350-man force to capture Confederate cavalry operating near Pohick Church, Va., but the Rebel troopers slipped away. During the return march, Christian lost control of his force and his men looted local homes, with one soldier killed in the process. Christian and his regiment faced their next test at the Second Battle of Bull Run, when he was ordered to hold a position along Chinn Ridge on the Union left flank. But while his New Yorkers faced the unexpected attack by Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's Right Wing, Christian was well behind the lines, lying under a tree, wrapped in a blanket, and being attended to by a surgeon. He had left his command, Christian later explained, because he

suffered from both heat stroke and a severe case of poison ivy on his hands. Once Chinn Ridge's intense fighting ended that day, Christian experienced a miraculous recovery when he assumed brigade command in place of the wounded Brig. Gen. Zealous Tower. That evening, as the brigade fell back toward safety, the newly minted brigade commander rode among his ranks, waving the brigade flag and encouraging "his men." Understandably suspicious, the 26th New York's officers gathered in secret to consider alerting division commander Brig. Gen. James Ricketts of Christian's actions. Probably considering the implications if they were mistaken, the group decided against raising their concern. As it would turn out, this was the wrong decision, one that would have grave implications two weeks later at Antietam. –D.A.W.

David A. Welker is a professional historian and a military analyst for the federal government who writes from Centreville, Va. He has also published Tempest at Ox Hill*, and this article is adapted from his 2020 release,* The Cornfield: Antietam's Bloody Turning Point*, published by Casemate Press.*

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Below is a link to a recent CNN feature which tells how Calvin Osbourne, President of the 54th Massachusetts, Company B discovered his ancestor was in the 1st Kansas Colored

https://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2020/09/17/black-military-veterans-greatest-gen-orig.cnn/video/playlists/military-wwii-sponsorship/

The Apple Barrage

Emerging Civil War

Posted on October 1, 2020 by Sarah Kay Bierle

Apples in an orchard in the Lower Shenandoah Valley.

Private William McCarter of the 116th Pennsylvania Infantry (Irish Brigade) wrote a colorful memoir and included this autumnal story about soldier and civilian interactions near Charlestown (now West Virginia) in October 1862. Here's the account in his own words, and the language he recorded—which is apparently toned down—is left as it appears in the original.

An hour of our allotted time having now nearly expired, a backward movement was begun towards camp by a different and more circuitous route than the one by which we came. We had not proceeded far on our way when we arrived opposite a brown, rough-cast house with a large orchard. The place was stocked with apple trees still laden with the tempting fruit. On the ground beneath, many fine apples laid all around. The entire place was surrounded by a low iron railing or fence, which in several parts had been knocked down. The broken pieces laid on the ground, leaving openings large enough to admit persons from the outside.
Being very fond of a good apple, which is my favorite fruit at all seasons of the year, I

proposed a raid on the orchard. The plan was willingly agreed to by all, thinking that under the circumstances there could be no hard or impropriety in doing so.
Accordingly, I led the way trough one of the openings, followed by all of the boys except three who remained outside. They soon afterwards followed. Here the most amusing incident of my life in the army took place.
I had entered the enclosure, picked up an apple from the ground, a fine, big, juicy fellow, and commenced eating it. My left arm rested on the muzzle of my musket. A lady suddenly appeared at an open window in the house some 15 yards distant. Her hair was disheveled and she held a comb in her hand. Upon seeing me standing there all alone—for my companions, before joining me in the attack on the apples, had gone to quench their thirsty appetites by a draught of clear, cool water from a pump which stood at the corner of the house, nearly underneath the window at which the lady stood—she addressed me in the following language, leaning out of the window: "I say, you damned, infernal Yank, don't touch one of my apples."
I, however, heeded not the order. Continuing to feast on the delicious fruit, I eyed her ladyship with silent scorn and contempt. Seeing that no respect whatever was paid to her commands, she withdrew from her position. But a moment afterwards she returned, accompanied by a large black dog who thrust his head out of the window, growling and snarling at the invaders of his territory. The beast showed a set of under and upper teeth which would have done honor to any Virginia bloodhound. Even this had no effect on me. I was determined to secure several fine apples. By this time, the angry passions of the female Virginian had reached their highest pitch. After indulging for fully ten minutes in the most abusive, obscene and blasphemous language that I ever heard, she added, "Go home, you damned, thieving Yankees to your whoring mothers in the North."
This was too much for any brave Irishman to stand, especially one clad in Uncle Sam's uniform. It made my blood boil. Dashing my musket down on the grass, I picked up the largest apple near me and shouted "Now, you get!"
I hauled off with all my force, driving the fruit through the window, smashing the glass in a thousand pieces. This caused her ladyship to beat a hast retreat behind the wall inside. It protected her from the shower of apples which soon followed my attack on her fort.
The noise of the breaking glass, falling almost at their feet at the pump under the window, suddenly attracted the attention of my fellow soldiers. One of them remarked on seeing me throw the apple, "Look. What's the matter? Bill's got his Irish up."
But the sound of his voice had scarce died away when a shower of empty stone, porter and other bottles came down upon their heads from an upper window in the house. They cut one poor fellow's head severely and injured another. The bottles were very probably thrown by the same woman who had insulted me. This was the signal for a general uprising. Being much excited myself at the moment, I shouted to the boys, "Go at the windows with apples." They made one grand rush for the place where I stood. Upon reaching it, they gathered up bushels of apples and then commenced a bombardment of the house. My Irish friends broke and smashed to pieces every pane of glass in the residence. They rendered its interior for the time a regular apple receptacle.
We boys then helped ourselves to the refreshing and beautiful fruit. We supplied our haversacks also without the least opposition or interference from anyone, no inmate of the dwelling attempting even to show a nose. Marching slowly out of the

place on to the road, we trudged back to camp. There we divided the spoils, as far as they went, among the other members of the regiment. Our story caused much merriment and laughter throughout the Irish Brigade.
Source:

McCarter, William. Edited by Kevin E. O'Brien. *My Life in the Irish Brigade*. Da Capo Press, 1996. Pages 44-45.

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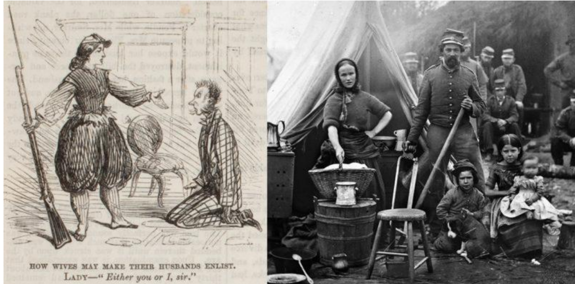
Women in the Civil War



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Nothing challenged Victorian ideology in the United States more than the Civil War. Women living during Antebellum America were the epitome of domesticity. The industrial revolution changed the way men worked. Men increasingly spent their work time away from home, moving into factories, offices, and shops. In what historians call 'the Cult of True Womanhood,' women devoted their lives to creating 'haven in a heartless world' for their husbands and children (Women in the Civil War). The war changed all of that for women on both sides of the conflict.

Well-off Southern women were eager to see their men go and fight for their cause and were one of the most effective recruitment tools the Confederacy had. They used every tool at their disposal to encourage enlistment, including shaming.

HOW WIVES MAY MAKE THEIR HUSBANDS ENLIST.
LADY—"*Either you or I, sir.*"

These wealthy white women were left to attend their husbands' businesses, including the plantations. This responsibility allowed them to have a voice in society. They also had to continue running the household.

Poor white women in the South didn't have the help running a household or the family farm. They were mothers and cooks with generally no agricultural experience. Food shortages were not uncommon and resulted in letters pleading from wives asking for their husbands to be allowed to return to help with crop production. Others went to work in factories, including those that made uniforms for the Confederate army.

Female slaves used the Civil War as an opportunity to escape. Plantations were less supervised. The women took advantage of the situation and escaped into Union territory to start anew. Many followed Union soldiers north during Sherman's

March. Although male slaves who made it to the North were considered free men, women and children were not and remained in limbo for the duration of the war. In March 1865, Congress enacted a law that freed between 50,000 and 100,000 women and children of men serving in the U.S Colored Troops. Many of these women found themselves in Washington, D.C. and could "enter schools staffed by black and white teachers and funded by northern relief societies." (Giesberg)

Women in the North were already employed in the textile, clothing, and shoe-making industries. With the onset of the war, women's roles in the workforce expanded. The proportion of women in the workforce increased from one-quarter to one-third. For the first time, women of the North and Women of the South became schoolteachers.

Women on both sides of the conflict organized for their causes. They volunteered in hospitals rolling bandages and raised money to help supply troops with what they needed and to help injured soldiers.

Women were not allowed to serve as nurses at the beginning of the war. It was felt that no woman should have to witness the horrors of war. Injuries were so numerous that many men died from disease and infection. Finally, women could volunteer as nurses. The federal government created the United States Sanitary Commission in 1861 allowing women to go into army camps and hospitals and help. (Women in the Civil War)

Between 2,000 and 5,000 women volunteered as nurses on both sides of the conflict. Their duties including assisting in the operating room and dispensing medicine, cleaning, and bandaging wounds, and feeding soldiers. These women were called 'Florence Nightingales.' The most famous of them was Clara Barton, a clerk in the U.S. patent office. Her work in nursing earned her the nickname 'Angel of the Battlefield.' (Brooks) In addition to being nurses, women worked as laundresses, cooks, and matrons.

Although they were not allowed to fight, between 400 and 600 women took up the cause alongside their loved ones in the conflict. How did they get past the Union and Confederate armies? The physical exam consisted of a check of the mouth for the condition of the teeth. If you had enough teeth and you could hold a musket, you were in. The minimum age for soldiers was 18 in the North, but it wasn't too difficult to get around that because both armies often looked the other way. The South had no age restriction. Many of the young male soldiers were teens so it was easy to fit in with the right clothing, hair, and attitude. (Righthand)

Women also served as spies on both sides of the conflict. Flirting with soldiers at social events was their main way of garnering information. They were also smugglers. They would move supplies, ammunition, and medicine across enemy lines under their hoop skirts. (Brooks)

By the end of the war, women and how they thought about themselves fitting into society was changing. They worked outside of the home. They contributed to the greater good. Although they went back to being mothers and wives at the end of the war, the experience was not lost on them or the nation. The changing role of women was spurred on by the war and there was no turning back.

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– Donna Klein #civilwar