

Losing the Lost Cause: An Interview with Retired Army Brig. Gen. Ty Seidule



Author Ty Seidule particularly dislikes this tableau on the Confederate Monument in Arlington National Cemetery in which an officer hands off his child to a compliant, tearful Black “mammy”

Sarah Richardson HistoryNet
August 2021

Retired Army Brig. Gen. Ty Seidule spent two decades teaching history at West Point. His new book, *Robert E. Lee and Me: A Southerner’s Reckoning With the Myth of the Lost Cause*, which combines history and memoir, reflects on Confederate memorials and Seidule’s education in segregated academies and at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va., where R.E. Lee was venerated. His book got its start when he wondered why there were so many Lee memorials at West Point, where until around 1898, Confederates were reviled.

CWT: You revered Confederates.

TS: I grew up in Alexandria in Northern Virginia, the last outpost of segregation. I was bused from the white elementary school to an all-Black school named RE Lee, named in 1961 to protest integration.

Alexandria named Confederates as romantic heroes and hid slavery and inequality to ensure racial hierarchy.

CWT: Why did you decide to research the history of Confederate memorials related to the U.S. Army?

TS: I was at West Point and I was chair of the Memorial Committee. I had been in the Army for 25 years and we were creating a new memorial room. It was going to commemorate all the West Point graduates killed from the War of 1812 to the Wars on Terror. I briefed senior leaders to say we can’t put Confederates in because they fought against their country, they killed U.S. Army soldiers, they renounced their oath—for the worst possible reasons, to create a slave republic, and by the way, the building bylaws say it can contain no unworthy subjects. That’s because the person who gave the money for the building was the anti-Confederate postwar superintendent George Washington Cullum. I got nowhere. They said they wanted to bring people together.



Ty Seidule (Courtesy of Ty Seidule)

CWT: Are you the first to research this topic?

TS: No one had written about the Army and West Point and the aspect of memory before. At West Point, there are more than a dozen things named after Confederates, most of them after [Robert E. Lee](#). I wondered why. I understood Washington & Lee University, where I went to school. But why here? I asked and nobody knew. So I went to the archives. In the 19th century, West Point banished Confederates, it was an anti-Confederate museum in a way. No Confederates in the cemetery, our big monument has no Confederates. Our great motto: “Duty, Honor, Country” was anti-Confederate. So when did Lee Barracks, Lee Road, and the Lee Housing area by Lee Gate all come? They came in the 1930s as a reaction to the first Black cadets coming to West Point in over 50 years, and then came in the 1950s when the Army was fighting forced integration. It came again in the early 1970s when minority admissions began. So Confederate memorialization both in the Army and at West Point is a 20th century phenomenon, and it’s a reaction to integration.

CWT: Explain why so many U.S. Army bases, such as Fort Bragg and Fort Hood, are named after Confederates.

TS: They were named in WWI and WWII to bring America—White America— together against a common enemy, Germany, but at the expense of Black Americans. It’s a segregated Army, and it wants to stay segregated. Congressmen from the South control the committees, and you have to listen to them, as well.

CWT: You single out two memorials as especially awful. One is at Arlington National Cemetery.

TS: [Arlington National Cemetery](#) was created in 1864 by Montgomery Meigs in response to the Overland Campaign. It is the old estate owned by Lee’s father-in-law. So they started burying U.S. soldiers there. But in the early 20th century, as White people in the South came into power and disenfranchised Black people, it changes and there are Confederates reburied in the southern part of the cemetery around Stonewall Jackson Circle. And then they put up a monument: an overweight black “mammy” who has a tear in her eye as she takes a baby from a Confederate officer. It’s meant to show that slavery was the best form of labor and the South was right and the United States was wrong. And the White South will always be right and the United States will always be wrong.

CWT: The other is little known.

TS: The second is Fort Belvoir, Va. It was named in WWI after Andrew Humphreys, a Federal Civil War general. It was renamed in 1935 to appease Southern segregationist Howard Smith who had first voted against the Social Security Act. He later voted for it because Franklin Delano Roosevelt renamed Fort Humphreys as Fort Belvoir after the name of the slave plantation, or, as I like to call it, the enslaved labor farm, created in the 18th century and burned to the ground in 1783. It was owned by a loyalist, Lord Fairfax, who wrote in his account book that he paid 10 shillings to bed a Black woman—rape an enslaved woman—at the age of 83. Finding the terrible awful racist nature of how we named these forts and who we named them after—I just could not believe it, and it was not the U.S. Army that I wanted to be a part of.

CWT: Did you have trepidation about publishing this book?

TS: Yes. But I did a video that the war was about slavery and it went viral, got about 30 million views. I got such hate mail for that. I got death threats at my West Point e-mail address. The Army investigated me for political speech, for saying the war was about slavery. I knew what I was getting into. The form of this book was really my wife's idea. She said the only way you're going to do this is to tell your own story. One reason I chose to retire was because I could not write about it in uniform openly. It was too hot a topic for the Army to deal with. And now it's not. I was a pariah about this subject, but now the Army can't wait to change. It's amazing the amount of change that has happened since then.

CWT: Talk about Lee Chapel at Washington & Lee University.

TS: The Lee Chapel has no Christian iconography. The only sculpture in the apse is Lee lying on the altar. When the Lost Cause is a civic religion, you need saints for that religion. Lee was revered in his lifetime, but he was a cruel enslaver. Why did he choose the Confederacy? Because of his undying belief in human enslavement. There were eight U.S. colonels from Virginia in 1861, and Lee is the one and only one who did not remain with the United States. I use the Lee Chapel as a way of getting at the Lee reverence. In the 1870s, Jubal Early and his people created the Lost Cause. By the early 20th century, President Taft and Theodore Roosevelt join in. The Lost Cause myth becomes a White American phenomenon. I grew up with the belief that the greatest gentleman of all was Robert E. Lee. That is just not the value

that we should be teaching to U.S. Army soldiers. The only way to prevent a racist future is to first understand and acknowledge our racist past. We have got to be honest about who we are and who we've been if we want to make sure we aren't this way going forward. Who we commemorate should represent today's values.

★ Interview conducted by Senior Editor Sarah Richardson.

0-0

What if Robert E. Lee had sent Troops to Vicksburg?



Confederates repeatedly turn back Federals attacks on their Vicksburg trenches in May 1863 causing Grant to lay siege on the city. Library of Congress

Chris Mackowski HistoryNet
September 2021

Why exactly was the general so opposed to sending help to Mississippi in 1863?

That question was certainly on the mind of Confederate Secretary of War James Seddon that season. By default, then, it was also on Lee's.

Anchored on bluffs lining the Mississippi River, Vicksburg was the key to success in the West for either side as the war entered its third year. The “fortress” city’s topographical dominance gave Confederates the ability to control traffic up and down the river and also served as a vital connection to Southern interests in the Trans-Mississippi Theater.

The Union high command in Washington and the region’s army commander, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, were well aware of Vicksburg’s strategic importance. Grant had made stabs at the city for months, to no avail, but his tenaciousness worried the once-confident Mississippians, who demanded a strong response and reliable leadership.

Department commander General Joseph E. Johnston was the highest-ranking Confederate commander in the Western Theater. He was, however, ensconced at the headquarters of General Braxton Bragg in Tullahoma, Tenn., where Bragg’s Army of Tennessee seemed to dominate Johnston’s attention. Meanwhile, the commander of the Vicksburg garrison, Lt. Gen. John Pemberton, was a Pennsylvanian who had thrown his loyalty in with the Confederacy only because of his marriage to Virginia native Martha Thompson—and thus, to some Southerners, could not be trusted. Worse, he had never held such an important field command in his career.

As the situation along the Mississippi looked more and more questionable, Seddon sought solutions. One option would be to send reinforcements directly to Pemberton, another to send them to Johnston, who left Bragg’s headquarters and arrived in the Mississippi capital of

Jackson on May 13, with orders from Seddon to take command of troops in the Magnolia State and coordinate the struggle for Vicksburg.



Did General Robert E. Lee’s myopic view of the fighting in the Eastern Theater cloud his judgment about the importance of sparing troops to defend Vicksburg in 1863? (Library of Congress)

But from where would those reinforcements come?

Vicksburg stood hundreds of miles from Lee’s own position along the banks of Virginia’s Rappahannock River, and Lee had reason to be concerned about the question. Confederate President Jefferson Davis was a Mississippi native who saw Vicksburg as “the nail head that holds the South’s two halves together.” On a more personal note, Davis and his brother both owned plantations right outside Vicksburg. The urge to protect the riverside bastion and deny Federals free, full access to river navigation was strong.

Lee had another reason to be concerned. From a logistical point of view, he already had two divisions on detached duty from his army as winter thawed toward spring in 1863: Maj. Gen. John Bell Hood's and Maj. Gen. George Pickett's men, both under the overall command of Lt. Gen. James Longstreet. In mid-February, Lee had sent them to southeastern Virginia on a foraging mission to shuffle much-needed supplies back to the rest of the Army of Northern Virginia. Their absence from the Confederate line along the Rappahannock presented a double benefit, too, by lessening the need for those very same supplies on the front. "At this time but few supplies can be procured from the country we now occupy," Lee told Seddon on March 27 as part of a series of urgent correspondence about the dire state of the army.

Longstreet acknowledged Lee was "averse to having a part of his army so far beyond his reach." Detached as they were from Lee's immediate control, the two divisions looked like tempting chess pieces that Seddon could move across the Confederate board to Vicksburg. Complicating matters further, Union Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside's 9th Corps shifted to the Western Theater and advanced on Knoxville, Tenn., increasing the need for Confederate counterforces out West.

Could reinforcements "safely be sent from the forces in this department," Seddon inquired of Lee on April 6, going so far as to muse aloud whether "two or three brigades, say of Pickett's division" could be spared. "[T]hey would be an encouraging re-enforcement to the Army of the West," he stressed.

No one seemed eager to get on Lee's bad side, though; his fiery temper, usually kept hidden under a courtly exterior, was an open secret. Besides, Lee had strung together impressive victories since assuming command in June 1862, so he had earned a certain amount of deference. "I know...that your army is largely outnumbered by the enemy in your front, and that it is not unlikely that a movement against you may be made at any day," Seddon admitted. "I am, therefore, unwilling to send beyond your command any portion even of the forces here without your counsel and approval."

Lee responded on April 9 with a letter that demonstrated he, too, had his eye on the chessboard. "I do not know that I can add anything to what I have already said on the subject of reinforcing the Army of the West," he opened before offering a string of suggestions. Just as Seddon had suggested a Pickett-for-Burnside shift west, Lee countered with a corresponding shift of troops from southwest Tennessee. "If a division has been taken from Memphis to re-enforce [Union Maj. Gen. William] Rosecrans, it diminishes the force opposed to our troops in that quarter," Lee pointed out, urging offensive action that might tie down Rosecrans' reinforcements and indicating that rumors of a Federal troop shift along the Tallahatchee River would free up Confederate troops there. He also suggested "judicious operations" in the West that could occupy Burnside, which would do more to relieve pressure on Johnston than sending more troops to Tullahoma would.

Seddon, as secretary of war, certainly had his pulse on these developments more so than Lee, who got them second- and third-hand in his camp in Fredericksburg.

But Lee's attention to them demonstrates the larger strategic view he had beyond his own army, which served as a protection *for* his army. His big-picture view served his operational interests.

And Lee's army did have immediate concerns to think about. Rumors circulated everywhere that Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker, on the far side of the Rappahannock, was preparing to shake the Army of the Potomac from its winter slumber. Lee set a May 1 deadline, determining to take the offensive himself if Hooker didn't do something by then. That, too, could help address Seddon's concerns out west. "Should Genl Hooker's army assume the defensive," Lee suggested, "the readiest method of relieving the pressure upon Genl. Johnston...would be for this army to cross into Maryland. This cannot be done, however, in the present condition of the roads....But this is what I would recommend if practicable." Already Lee was looking north of the Mason-Dixon Line, foreshadowing events that would lead to the Battle of Gettysburg.

Lee admitted that Pickett's men seemed to offer an easy fix for Seddon, but he warned the secretary not to be deceived. "The most natural way to reinforce Genl Johnston would seem to be to transfer a portion of the troops from this department to oppose those sent west," he admitted, "but it is not as easy for us to change troops from one department to another as it is for the enemy, and if we rely on that method we may be always too late."

As events would tell, this proved a self-fulfilling prophecy. By not shifting troops, Lee's "Better never than late" logic assured there would be no

reinforcements at all. For a man once described as "audacity itself," this abundance of overcautiousness seems curious.

Lee's pessimism is easily explained by the fact he had a vested interest in keeping Pickett's troops attached to his army. Longstreet already felt he didn't have enough troops to robustly carry out his foraging mission, Lee informed Seddon. "If any of his troops are taken from him," he explained, "I fear it will arrest his operations and deprive us of the benefit anticipated from increasing the supplies of this army."

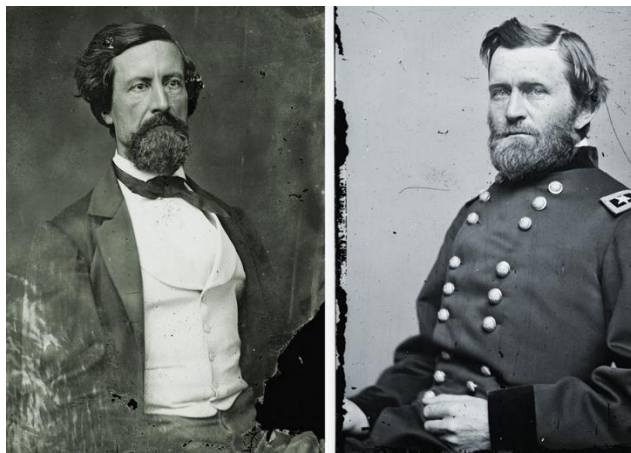
The flurry of correspondence between the two over the previous weeks had clearly laid out the case for Lee's supply concerns, so this comment was no lame excuse suddenly pulled out of thin air. Furthermore, Seddon had attributed the supply urgency to "impediments to their ready transportation and distribution," admitting in particular, "[O]ur railroads are daily growing less efficient and serviceable." To depend on those railroads to quickly shift troops to the West might be asking for trouble.

Lee knew this well enough, too, but instead of closing his letter by saying "check mate," he deployed his usual rhetorical deference. If Seddon thought it "advantageous" to send troops to the West, "General Longstreet will designate such as ought to go." Couched in such terms, Lee knew Seddon would *not* find it advantageous and, better, would think it his own idea.

Like his parries with the Army of the Potomac, though, Lee's victory on the Vicksburg question would be temporary.

As rumor foretold, Hooker's army did rumble to life, and the two forces clashed at Chancellorsville, Fredericksburg, and Salem Church from April 30 to May 4. Hooker slipped away on the night of May 5, giving Lee little time to assess his army's condition before he received another message from Richmond about events in Mississippi.

Even as Lee had beaten back Hooker at Chancellorsville, Grant had begun his spring campaign against Vicksburg in earnest. On April 29, Grant landed two of these three corps on the east bank of the Mississippi at Bruinsburg, south of Vicksburg, then fought his first action of the campaign two days later just a few miles inland at Port Gibson.



The people of Vicksburg had little faith in their city's Northern-born Confederate commander, Lt. Gen. John Pemberton (left), and grudging respect for his Union opponent, Ulysses S. Grant. (Left to right: Virginia Museum of History and Culture; The Stapleton Collection/Bridgeman Images)

On May 6, with Grant moving about the Mississippi interior, Pemberton pleaded with Richmond for reinforcements. "The stake is a great one," he told Seddon. "I can see nothing so important." Davis responded the next day: "You may expect whatever is in my power to do." By that time, he and Seddon had directed General P.G.T. Beauregard, in command of the military district that included Charleston and Savannah, to send reinforcements. Those 5,000 men boarded trains on May 6, and lead elements began arriving in Jackson by May 13, where they would rendezvous under Joe Johnston's leadership for Vicksburg's relief.

Davis had explicitly ordered Johnston to Mississippi as an answer to a call from several prominent citizens, including editors of the Jackson *Mississippian* newspaper. The people did not have "confidence in the capacity and loyalty of Genl. Pemberton, which is so important at this junction, whether justly or not..." the editors wrote in a private letter to Davis on May 8. "Send us a man we can trust," they pleaded, "Beauregard, [Maj. Gen. D.H.] Hill or Longstreet & confidence will be restored & all will fight to the death for Miss."

Lee himself was not an option. On the angst-filled evening of April 20, 1861, when he decided to decline Lincoln's offer to command U.S. forces in the war, Lee resolved, "Save in the defense of my native State, I never desire again to draw my sword." Sincere as that vow was, he ended up stretching "defense of Virginia" enough to include an invasion of the North in the fall of '62, and even now he contemplated stretching it again for another. Most important, Lee's vow reflected his Virginia-centric view of the

conflict and his role in it. As a professional soldier, he no doubt would have obeyed any direct order to go west, but as a wily negotiator who knew better than anyone how to manage his own president, he surely would have found a way to make Davis see things *his* way.

But if Lee wasn't going anywhere, Seddon at least wanted to shift Pickett's Division westward—and said so in a May 9 dispatch. Lee was simultaneously deferential and oppositional in his reply the next day: “The distance and the uncertainty of the employment of the troops are unfavorable. But, if necessary, order Pickett at once.”

Within that reply, Lee included a stark assessment: “[I]t becomes a question between Virginia and the Mississippi.” Seeing the note, Davis informed Seddon, “The answer of General Lee was such as I should have anticipated, and in which I concur.” That fairly blunt comment is often taken to suggest Davis agreed with Lee's priorities, but what the president was in fact acknowledging was that the shortage of resources in the face of twin crises created an unfortunate binary choice.

Lee followed his short dispatch to Seddon with a longer one later in the day. He blamed the delay on the garbled transmission of Seddon's telegram, which couldn't be “rendered intelligibly” until nearly noon. It could be, though, Lee needed a little time to think through his response. He did, after all, have much vying for his attention, including the aftermath of battle and the deteriorating condition of trusted subordinate Lt. Gen. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson, who would die that very day.

Lee's reply laid out careful arguments against any move to Mississippi. Sincerely meant at the time, the note now teems with unfortunate irony when read with hindsight.

“If you determine to send Pickett's division to Genl Pemberton,” Lee wrote, “I presume it would not reach him until the last of this month. If anything is done in that quarter, it will be over by that time, as the climate in June will force the enemy to retire. The uncertainty of its arrival and the uncertainty of its application cause me to doubt the policy of sending it. Its removal from this army will be sensibly felt....I think troops ordered from Virginia to the Mississippi at this season would be greatly endangered by the climate.”

Lee predicted that any action in Mississippi would be over by month's end, which, of course, would not be the case. Instead, by month's end Grant was just settling into a siege. Even factoring in the questionable condition of the railroads and the distance to travel, it's reasonable to think Pickett's men could have arrived in the Magnolia State in time to be of use. The timely movement of Beauregard's men from South Carolina and Georgia demonstrated as much. Certainly, the vulnerabilities of the railroad, called into stark relief by the supply issue, offered cause for realistic caution, but a little more audacity would not have hurt.

Pickett's arrival would have added 7,500 troops to Johnston's assembled force of 15,000 men in Jackson—a significant threat to Grant's isolated army. In fact, one reason Grant rushed into assaults on May 19 and 22 was that he had one eye on Johnston operating in his rear and

feared an attack from behind. Johnston never made a move, but perhaps an additional 7,500 men would have inspired action.

Lee's May 10 letter also became ironic because he predicted "the climate in June will force the enemy to retire." Of course, Grant ended up doing no such thing, opting to "outcamp" the besieged force in Vicksburg for 47 days. One of Lee's underlying assumptions proved wildly off the mark, which Seddon had suspected from the beginning: "Grant was such an obstinate fellow that he could only be induced to quit Vicksburg by terribly hard knocks."

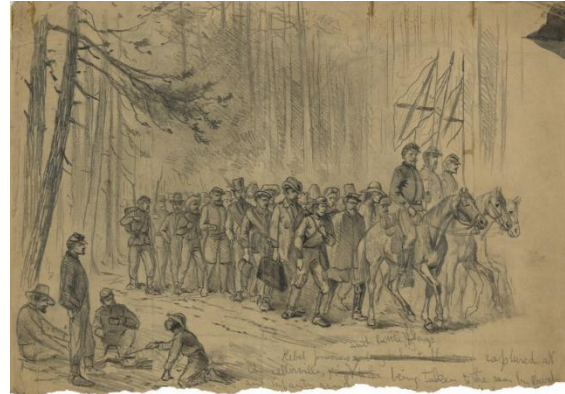
Of course, Lee had a vested interest in keeping his army intact. "Unless we can obtain some reinforcements," he told Seddon, "we may be obliged to withdraw into the defenses around Richmond. We are greatly outnumbered now....The strength of this army has been reduced by the casualties of the late battles."

Indeed, even in victory, Chancellorsville had cost Lee 13,460 men. Compounding those losses, intelligence suggested Hooker's army was already replenishing its own casualties. "Virginia is to be the theater of action, and this army, if possible, ought to be strengthened..." Lee wrote to Davis on May 11, underscoring the point he had made to Seddon the day before. "I think you will agree with me that every effort should be made to re-enforce this army in order to oppose the large force which the enemy seems to be concentrating against it."

In that same letter, noting that troops from the Departments of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida had been sent to Vicksburg—the 5,000 men Beauregard

had shipped out—Lee let slip an idea that had weighed increasingly on his mind since Chancellorsville. "A vigorous movement here would certainly draw the enemy from there," he said.

Lee didn't just want reinforcements for defense. He was thinking about taking the fight to the Federals.



Drained Prisoners from the Army of Northern Virginia, captured at Chancellorsville, head to the rear under guard. Despite victory, heavy losses at the battle left Lee's army further shorthanded. (Library of Congress)

With Stonewall Jackson struggling to recover from his wounding and with James Longstreet not yet back from Suffolk, Lee felt the loneliness of command even as he tried to puzzle out what to do next. How should he follow up Chancellorsville? What should he do about the army in light of Jackson's absence? What could he do to replace the tremendous battle losses his army had sustained? Yes, even perhaps, how might Vicksburg tie into his own plans?

"There are many things about which I would like to consult Your Excellency," Lee wrote Davis on May 7, "and I should be delighted, if your health and convenience suited, you could visit the army." Promising Davis a comfortable

room near his headquarters, Lee wrote, “I know you would be content with our camp fare.”

Davis was too sick to travel, however, and with the wounded Army of the Potomac lurking on the far side of the Rappahannock, and with his own army and officer corps still reeling from its recent bloodletting, Lee did not yet feel comfortable slipping away to Richmond. He’d have to brood over his plans in solitude.

As it happened, Longstreet would have been happy to discuss things. Chancellorsville had triggered a hurried recall of the First Corps commander and his two divisions, but the fighting ended before they could make it back. Lee subsequently ordered his Old Warhorse not to stress his men with a forced march.

On the trip north, Longstreet had plenty of time to chew over the Confederacy’s overall strategic situation. Since at least late January, he had contemplated moves where one corps of the Army of Northern Virginia would hold the line at the Rappahannock while the other corps would operate elsewhere—and his operations around Suffolk had confirmed the idea’s viability. He longed to “break up [the enemy] in the East and then re-enforce in the West in time to crush him there.” By May, Longstreet had a particular eye on Vicksburg. “I thought that honor, interest, duty, and humanity called us to that service,” he would later say.

Traveling ahead of his divisions, Longstreet arrived in Richmond by train the evening of May 5 and spent the 6th conferring with Seddon. What if, the secretary of war floated, we sent Pickett’s

and Hood’s divisions toward Mississippi and not north to the Rappahannock?

Longstreet did Seddon one better. Rather than send troops to Vicksburg where they would move against Grant directly, he suggested reinforcements concentrate instead in Middle Tennessee under Johnston—reinforcements that would include Hood and Pickett, with Longstreet himself along for good measure. Johnston could then combine with Braxton Bragg’s Army of Tennessee in a move against Rosecrans’ Army of the Cumberland encamped in Murfreesboro. “The combination once made should strike immediately in overwhelming force upon Rosecrans, and march for the Ohio River and Cincinnati,” Longstreet argued. That sudden dire threat would force a Federal response. “Grant’s was the only army that could be drawn to meet this move, and that the move must, therefore, relieve Vicksburg,” he concluded.

Longstreet’s plan reflected the same principle Lee had articulated in April while contemplating a move on Maryland, ultimately shelved because of the muddy spring roads. A serious movement north would panic state governments and the Lincoln administration into a response that would sap Union operations of any initiative and momentum while they dealt with a Confederate invasion.

Lee’s Old Warhorse was not being disingenuous toward his commander in proposing this plan. As soon as he reported to Lee on May 9, he presented his idea for Vicksburg’s tangential relief to Lee and asked for “reinforcements from his army for the West, to that end.”

As Longstreet recalled, Lee “reflected over the matter for one or two days.” This was either a generous or a forgetful retelling. The same day Longstreet pitched the idea, Seddon’s garbled telegram arrived asking to transfer Pickett’s Division west—a telegram no doubt inspired by Seddon’s conversation with Longstreet. Lee didn’t respond until May 10, and during that time, he sent for Longstreet for further discussion.

“I thought we could spare the troops unless there was a chance of a forward movement,” Longstreet explained to a confidant. “If we could move of course we should want everything that we had and all that we could get.”

Indeed, Lee had begun thinking of moving, not defending, and his reply to Seddon suggests a mind firmly made up. “To that end he bent his energies,” Longstreet recalled. “His plan or wishes announced, it became useless and improper to offer suggestions leading to a different course.”

But even as Lee settled on his plans—and set his mind about reclaiming Longstreet’s two divisions—John Pemberton was penning frantic letters to Richmond about Grant’s movements through the Mississippi interior. Davis, still ailing, was largely silent in reply, but he confided “intense anxiety over Pemberton’s situation” despite public confidence.

In fact, the timing of Grant’s river crossing could not have worked out better for him in relation to events in the East, which presented more urgency to Richmond because of their proximity. Chancellorsville, on Richmond’s doorstep compared to the Magnolia State,

sucked up all the oxygen. Davis’ illness kept him uncharacteristically passive, and even before he recovered, Stonewall Jackson’s May 10 death provided additional, mournful distraction. Davis and Seddon did agree to send reinforcements west from Beauregard, but at a time when additional troops might have also come from the Army of Northern Virginia, Robert E. Lee was feeling his oats after his Chancellorsville victory.

Lee finally had his conference with Davis in Richmond on May 15, arriving on a day of “calamity,” according to Confederate clerk John B. Jones. A fire had torn through the Tredegar Iron Works and Crenshou’s woolen mill, mostly destroying them, and news had just arrived of Grant’s capture of Jackson. “[Vicksburg] may be doomed to fall at last,” Jones wrote. If so, it would be “the worst blow we have yet received.”

Lee, Jones wrote, looked thin and a little pale, while Davis, just back to work, was “not fully himself yet.” Lee was so alarmed at the president’s frailty, in fact, he wrote upon his return to Fredericksburg, “I cannot express the concern I felt at leaving you in such feeble health, with so many anxious thoughts for the welfare of the whole Confederacy weighing upon your mind.”

Although no record exists of the discussion that day, the result of the Lee-Davis confab was the Gettysburg Campaign—or at least the general outlines of it. “It appears, after the consultation of the generals and the President yesterday, it was resolved not to send Pickett’s division to Mississippi,” Jones observed on May 16.

In the weeks that followed, Davis perhaps felt buyer's remorse for his troop allocations. After two failed assaults on Vicksburg, Grant besieged the city instead. "The position, naturally strong, may soon be entrenched," said Davis, conceding that Grant had the additional advantage of connecting his army with gunboats and transportation on the Yazoo River to the north of Vicksburg, allowing Federals to bring in more troops, supplies, and big guns—none of which were now available to the cut-off city.

"It is useless to look back," Davis told Lee, "and it would be unkind to annoy you in the midst of your many cares with the reflections which I have not been able to avoid." Davis had put the needs of the Confederacy ahead of his home state but now could not stop wondering whether he had prioritized the crisis properly. What if Lee had sent troops to Vicksburg? Would it have made a difference? Was the gambit worth it?

Lee's foray north of the Mason-Dixon Line was about to begin. The answers to Davis' questions awaited.

Adapted from The Summer of '63: Vicksburg and Tullahoma, edited by Chris Mackowski and Dan Welch (Savas Beatie, 2021).

0-0

On 157th Anniversary, New Interpretation and National Attention for Battle of New Market Heights

Freshly installed explanatory signage for engagement for which 14 members of the United States Colored Troops receive the

Medal of Honor appear in FOX News Sunday "Power Player" segment

Mary Koik, American Battlefield Trust.
September 2021

(Richmond, Va.) — At dawn on September 29, 1864, three brigades of the United States Colored Troops assaulted Confederate positions [on New Market Heights](#), one element of a multi-pronged offensive to threaten the Southern capital of Richmond. After fierce, the Union carried the day in this sector as the Confederates sacrificed that high ground to hold elsewhere along the line and defend the city. [Fourteen USCT soldiers earned the Medal of Honor](#) — a remarkable figure considering only 25 Black men received the nation's highest award for valor during the entire Civil War.

The American Battlefield Trust has protected a total of 88 acres on the [New Market Heights Battlefield](#), including a [February 2021 acquisition announcement](#). In preparation for the anniversary, the Trust worked with partners at Civil War Trails, Inc., to install a series of four educational signs on its property, the first step in creating a battlefield park ready to welcome visitors. The signs include information on the battle and overall campaign, as well as the Medal of Honor recipients, recognized permanently by name on the battlefield for the first time, and the battlefield preservation process.



Over the weekend, Damon Radcliffe, the great-great-grandson of one of those recipients appeared on the national broadcast of FOX News Sunday with host Chris Wallace as the “Power Player of the Week,” to discuss the importance of protecting New Market Heights and other sites where nearly 180,000

Black volunteers in Army units designated as U.S. Colored Troops fought for liberty, with some 34,000 giving their lives for the cause.

“It’s a sense of bravery, a sense of courage,” Radcliffe, a lieutenant in the nearby York-Poquoson Sheriff’s Office told Wallace. Through preservation, he noted, “The story will always continue on; that’s what this is about.”

For valor at New Market Heights, the Medal of Honor was presented to: Pvt. William Barnes, Company C, 38th USCT; 1st Sgt. Powhatan Beaty, Company G, 5th USCT; 1st Sgt. James Bronson, Company D, 5th USCT; Sgt. Maj. Christian Fleetwood, 4th USCT; Pvt. James Gardiner, Company I, 36th USCT; Sgt. James H. Harris, Company B, 38th USCT; Sgt. Maj. Thomas R. Hawkins, 6th USCT; Sgt. Alfred Hilton, Co. H, 4th USCT; Sgt. Maj. Milton Holland, 5th USCT; Cpl. Miles James, Company B, 36th USCT; 1st Sgt. Alexander Kelly, Company F, 6th USCT; 1st Sgt. Robert Penn, Company I, 5th USCT; 1st Sgt. Edward

Ratcliff, Company C, 38th USCT; and Pvt. Robert Veal, Company D, 4th USCT. Two white officers leading USCT units, 1st Lt. William Appleton (Company H, 4th USCT) and Lt. Nathan Edgerton (Adjutant, 6th USCT) were also recognized with that honor.



Information on each Civil War recipient of the Medal, tied to the battlefield where he fought is available in the Trust’s Medal of Honor Database .

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. Learn more at www.battlefields.org.

0-0

Top 8 Civil War Landmarks to Check Out in Historic Baltimore



Christian Hinkle/Alamy Stock Photo

Melissa Winn, HistoryNet
September 2021

Southern sympathizers attacked Union troops at Baltimore, Maryland, in April 1861—the war’s first blood drawn in action

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, which began operating in 1830, was the nation’s oldest rail line and had cemented Baltimore’s status as a major transportation hub. Its proximity to the nation’s capital meant it would be essential to Union war efforts. But Maryland was a slave state and many Baltimoreans were opposed to the war. Yet the city also was home to the country’s largest population of free Blacks, many white abolitionists, and Union supporters. The divided loyalties created a palpable tension that boiled over on April 19, 1861, when the 6th Regiment Massachusetts Militia, answering Abraham Lincoln’s call for volunteers, reached Baltimore on its way to Washington.

Because no direct rail connection linked President Street Station and Camden Station, rail cars that transferred between the two had to be pulled by horses along Pratt Street. The regiment’s colonel, Edward F. Jones, had received information that their passage through Baltimore “would be resisted.” And it was. A mob of antiwar supporters and Southern sympathizers attacked the train cars and blocked the route, forcing the troops to make the trek on foot, while they were further assaulted with bricks, stones, and pistols. In response, several soldiers fired their weapons into the crowd, igniting a giant brawl. Five soldiers and 12 civilians were killed

during the riot, the first such casualties of the war.

The 6th Massachusetts Militia successfully reached Camden Station but left behind dozens of wounded and dead. According to Baltimore Mayor George W. Brown, the riot escalated the conflict to full-scale war, because “a step was taken which made compromise or retreat almost impossible...passions on both sides were aroused which could not be controlled.”

Visitors to Baltimore can follow Civil War Trails signs from President Street to Camden Station, which interpret the fateful events of that April 1861 day. The city itself is steeped in the history of this country’s upbringing, and related sites to explore include the birthplace of the “Star-Spangled Banner.” —*Melissa A. Winn*



Washington Monument

Mount Vernon Square

On April 18, 1861, 700 of Baltimore’s Southern sympathizers gathered at historic Washington Monument, pictured

here. Hearing that four companies of Pennsylvania state militia, accompanied by two Regular Army artillery units, were marching in formation along Pratt Street to Camden Station, the crowd headed that way. A police cordon had been thrown up along the route and the troops were unarmed, but some stones and bricks were hurled, and Nicholas Biddle, a free Black traveling with the Pennsylvania soldiers was injured. The Pennsylvanians' safe passage through town frustrated the antiwar crowd and many returned the next day to confront members of the 6th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Militia. Interactive displays inside Washington Monument explore its history and significance, and visitors can climb to the top of the column for a small fee.



B&O Railroad Museum 901 W. Pratt St.

During the Civil War, Baltimore was the rail center of Maryland and the North's gateway to the South. The 40-acre site upon which the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum sits is considered the birthplace of American railroading, where Baltimore businessmen, surveyors, and engineers set about building the B&O Railroad in 1828, laying the first commercial long-distance track, building the first passenger station, and designing the country's railroad system. The museum's collection includes locomotives and rolling stock, historic buildings, and artifacts that document the impact of the B&O on the growth and development of early railroading and that cover the railroad industry in its entirety.



President Street Station 601 S. President St.

Completed in 1851, President Street Station served passengers traveling along the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad. In February 1861, Abraham Lincoln, wary of a possible assassination attempt, secretly passed through the station on the way to his inauguration in Washington, D.C. On April 19, 1861, the 6th Massachusetts Militia arrived here at 10 a.m. Because of the anti-Union demonstrations the day before, they were ordered to load their

weapons, which proved to be a necessary measure as the day's events unfurled. Today the station houses the Baltimore Civil War Museum, with exhibits exploring the city's difficult tenure during the conflict.



Camden Street Station 333 W. Camden St.

As the 6th Massachusetts troops reached Camden Station, the mob renewed its assault, incited by a man waving a secessionist banner. Soldiers aboard the waiting train opened fire to protect their comrades. Colonel Edward F. Jones ordered the cars' window blinds drawn to discourage further attacks. A final shot came from the train as it departed at 1:30 p.m., killing wealthy merchant Robert W. Davis on the Spring Garden side of Camden Station.



Fort McHenry 2400 E. Fort Ave.

After the Baltimore Riot, Fort McHenry became an important part of Union efforts to keep Maryland from seceding. In July 1861, General John A. Dix invited several prominent Baltimore women with known Southern sympathies to be entertained at the fort. During the event, he directed their attention to the large Columbiad cannon pointed in the direction of Monument Square in the city. Dix informed his guests, “[I]f there should be another uprising in Baltimore, I shall be compelled to try to put it down; and that gun is the first that I shall fire.” Future uprisings in the city were successfully deterred. The fort was used to hold dissidents after President Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus and as a prisoner of war camp after the Battle of Antietam.



**Battle Monument Calvert Street
between Fayette and
Lexington Streets**

On the evening of April 19, Maryland Governor Thomas Holliday Hicks and Baltimore Mayor George W. Brown spoke here to the people of the city to try to calm them. The monument commemorates the Battle of Baltimore with the British fleet of the Royal Navy's bombardment of Fort McHenry, the Battle of North Point, and the standoff on the Eastern siege fortifications, in what is now Patterson Park. It honors those who died in September 1814 during the War of 1812.



1840s Carrollton Inn 50 Albemarle St.

History lovers who visit Baltimore can stay at the 1840s Carrollton Inn, a boutique hotel comprised of a series of interconnected row homes, dating back to the early 19th century. Nearby, Little Italy is a dining destination just steps away from President Street Station.



USS Constellation

301 E. Pratt St.

Built in 1854 at the Gosport Shipyard in Portsmouth, Va., *USS Constellation* was the flagship of the anti-slave trade African Squadron when the Civil War began in April 1861. The following month, *Constellation* made one of the first captures for the Union when it took the slaver *Triton* of Charleston, S.C.

After briefly being recalled to American waters, *Constellation* was ordered to the Mediterranean, where it fulfilled a variety of missions, including protecting American commerce from Confederate raiders.

This feature appeared in the September 2021 issue of America's Civil War Magazine.

0-0

Pivotal Piece of Harpers Ferry Battlefield Finds a New Home Within National Historical Park

American Battlefield Trust has now transferred nearly 343 acres to the vastly visited Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

Colleen Cheslak, Mary Koik American Battlefield Trust August 26, 2021

(Harpers Ferry, W.Va.) — One of America's most scenic and historically significant national parks has grown, thanks to the recent donation of land from by the American Battlefield Trust, the nation's premier heritage land protection organization. This 0.61-acre parcel is the final portion of a four-part preservation campaign undertaken between 2013-14 to be transferred to the National Park Service, and means the Trust is now responsible for the protection of 342 acres within Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

“Over the course of 29 years, the Trust has faithfully stood beside the hallowed ground of Harpers Ferry, diligently pursuing preservation opportunities large and small,” said Trust President David Duncan. “This donation is the latest chapter in a long story of augmenting a landscape steeped in some of the most dramatic chapters of American history — from Civil War to civil rights.”

This particular site was once proposed for a new gas station and mini-mart, but the Trust and its devoted partners stymied historically destructive development in its tracks. In 2013, the Trust acquired this and an adjacent 3.28 acres in partnership with the National Parks Conservation Association, the National Park Service and the Bank of Charles Town, all of whom recognized its unforgettable role in the American story. With this land now incorporated into its borders, the park's gateway is more secure and new opportunities for interpretation can be sought.



Bolivar Heights witnessed more battle action than any other location at Harpers Ferry. Harpers Ferry, W.Va. Noel Kline

“This landscape is rich in stories of our Civil War and civil rights history, and it's an honor to have helped preserve it from inappropriate development,” said Joy M. Oakes, NPCA's Senior Mid-Atlantic Regional Director. “The National Park Service is America's greatest storyteller, and it's vital that we help them protect places like Harpers Ferry for future generations.” Sitting along the site of the Harpers Ferry – Charles Town Turnpike on Bolivar Heights, control of this land and the surrounding properties was vital to the U.S. forces defending Harpers Ferry. As the center of the Union position, it also was a prime target for the Confederates. On the morning of September 15, 1862, Stonewall Jackson's

artillery — placed on the heights
surrounding the town — rained fire upon the
turnpike and its bordering fields, setting the
stage for a Confederate

0-0