



## THE "OLD LINER" NEWSLETTER

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### Editor's Note

The Friends of President Street Station need daily volunteer help at the Civil War Museum. Please phone Ralph Vincent at 410-461-9377 or Chuck Frascati at 410- 663 5542.

### **Columbia woman's study of fabric weaves a history of the Civil War**

By Bob Allen, Baltimore Sun, September 24, 2013

The Civil War experience has been preserved over the past 150 years through a variety of media: books, newspaper accounts, films, drawings, paintings, diaries ... and fabrics.

Columbia resident Mavis Slawson has made the latter her specialty as a textile historian and docent at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick.

She often gives presentations about the role of textiles in the Civil War, examining their role not only as practical materials but also in conveying and preserving culture across the battlefield.

She says soldiers' quilts, for instance, provided more than physical comfort — they were a source of emotional and spiritual solace for men who were a long way from home and in harm's way.

"Many of these quilts had special meaning to the soldiers in the field or in the hospitals," says Slawson, who is not only well-versed in the history of Civil War quilts but is an accomplished quilter herself.

"It was important for them to have something personal like this from their wives or mothers or children," she says.

Slawson travels around the region speaking about the Civil War — especially during this year marking the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. On Sept. 28-29, she was part of a program, "Coats & Quilts, Soldiers & Civilians: The Fabrics of Life at Antietam," held at the Pry House Field Hospital Museum at Antietam National Battlefield.

Slawson talked about the history of the soldier's blanket — an important possession for both Union and Confederate personnel — and also about the Union army sack coat, a jacket worn by thousands of soldiers during the Civil War and at the Battle of Antietam.

The weekend, hosted by the National Park Service, also looked at the history and cultural significance of quilts and quilting.

Slawson has studied the history and the historic techniques of quilt-making at the Virginia Quilt Museum in Harrisonburg, Va. "That's where I became a convert," she says with a laugh.

"Quilts brought back memories and gave the men the will to stick it out, and to either win a battle or, if they were sick or injured, to get better." The quilts held such inspirational power that soldiers in hospitals would often hang them up as wall art, she says.

"Some of the quilts had puns on them, or riddles or jokes," Slawson says. "Some had biblical verses, and sometimes they had songs, like the 'Star-Spangled Banner.'"

Slawson says during the Civil War, different regions of the Union — including Baltimore and New England states — developed their own styles

and techniques of quilting. While some were made by family members, usually a mother, daughter or sister who had a loved one away at war, others were a community effort.

"Often, one quilter would make one or two blocks and sign them, then others would do the same, and they would sew them all together," Slawson says. "Sometimes if a soldier was in the hospital, family members might come down and visit him in Washington or Baltimore or Pittsburgh and bring him a quilt.

"Most of all, the Civil War quilts contained messages of comfort and love and support for the troops," she says. "The soldiers brought many of them home with them after the war, and they have been handed down from generation to generation, which is very important."

### **Digitized USCT Records Are Now Online**

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The National Archives marked its 150th anniversary by announcing completion of the United States Colored Troops (USCT) Service Records Digitization Project, in partnership with Fold3.

For the first time, this collection of nearly 4 million images of historic documents with detailed information on former slaves is available online.

For more on African American records at the National Archives, see <http://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans>.

For information on records of the Freedmen's Bureau, see [www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/freedmens-bureau/](http://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/freedmens-bureau/)

See Prologue Magazine's special issue on the use of federal records for African American historical and genealogical research at



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[www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/summer/index.html](http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/summer/index.html)

The National Archives Archival Research Catalog's section on African American history is at [www.archives.gov/research/arc/topics/african-americans/highlights.html](http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/topics/african-americans/highlights.html)

### Replica Gun Marks Pelham's Corner

By Scott C. Boyd

(September 2013 Civil War News)

FREDERICKSBURG, Va. – A replica cannon has been placed at the site where Confederate artillerist Maj. John Pelham delayed an attack by thousands of Union troops for an hour on Dec. 13, 1862, during the Battle of Fredericksburg.

The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust (CVBT) preserves the 1-acre Pelham's Corner site. It is at the intersection of Tidewater Trail (Routes 2 and 17) and Benchmark Road (Route 608) in Spotsylvania County.

The replica U.S. M1857 12-pdr. Napoleon was delivered on July 7 by Marshall Steen, president of Steen Cannons and Ordnance in Ashland, Ky. Steen said he gave the gun barrel Tredegar Foundry markings for added realism.



The reporter's daughter Charlene examines the replica Napoleon 12-pdr. field gun placed at site where Confederate Maj. John Pelham delayed a Union attack at the Battle of Fredericksburg for an hour with a similar gun. (Scott C. Boyd)

CVBT board member Mike Greenfield, who took the lead on procuring the gun, and executive director Jerry Brent received the gun and secured it to the concrete footings prepared by Greenfield.

A dedication ceremony will be held on Dec. 13 featuring National Park Service historian Frank O'Reilly as speaker, Brent said.

The aluminum barrel and carriage cost \$18,500 plus shipping. Greenfield said the aluminum means low maintenance, something important to a small volunteer organization like the CVBT.

Although the CVBT typically purchases only battlefield land, Brent said the group was able to buy the gun – the group's first such purchase – thanks to three special donations.

The Blue & Gray Education Society provided \$9,900, the Duff McDuff Green Jr. Fund of the Community Foundation of the Rappahannock River Region gave a grant of \$6,000, and CVBT member James W. "Jim" Davis gave \$3,300.

Of the CVBT's 23 sites in the Greater Fredericksburg area, Pelham's Corner "is one of the few we have that we do interpret and encourage public visitation," Brent said. The other is Harris Farm, near Spotsylvania Courthouse.

The CVBT already had two interpretive signs at Pelham's Corner erected in 2007, in addition to a granite marker placed in 1903 by James Power Smith, who was on Lt. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's staff. Two state highway historical signs are also at the corner. The CVBT received the Pelham's Corner land in 2007 from a local developer, Silver Companies, in exchange for two small nearby parcels it purchased in 1999.

Pelham was 24 when he earned the sobriquet "The Gallant Pelham" for his conduct at Fredericksburg from Gen. Robert E. Lee. He would die in action just three months later some 30 miles away at Kelly's Ford.

### Ten Things You May Not Know About Abraham Lincoln

By Christopher Klein, History.com

Last fall, Hollywood threw its support behind Honest Abe. With the release of the new biopic "Lincoln," America's 16th president became a box office draw. As Steven Spielberg's film hits the small screen, explore 10 things you may not know about Abraham Lincoln.

#### 1. Lincoln is enshrined in the Wrestling Hall of Fame.

The Great Emancipator wasn't quite WWE material, but thanks to his long limbs he was an accomplished wrestler as a young man. Defeated only once in approximately 300 matches, Lincoln reportedly talked a little smack in the ring. According to Carl Sandburg's biography of Lincoln, Honest Abe once challenged an entire crowd of onlookers after dispatching an opponent: "I'm the big buck of this lick. If any of you want to try it, come on and whet your horns." There were no takers. Lincoln's grappling exploits earned him an "Outstanding American" honor in the National Wrestling Hall of Fame.

#### 2. Lincoln created the Secret Service hours before his assassination.

On April 14, 1865, Lincoln signed legislation creating the U.S. Secret Service. That evening, he was shot at Ford's Theatre. Even if the Secret Service had been established earlier, it wouldn't have saved Lincoln: The original mission of the law enforcement agency was to combat



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widespread currency counterfeiting. It was not until 1901, after the killing of two other presidents, that the Secret Service was formally assigned to protect the commander-in-chief.

### **3. Grave robbers attempted to steal Lincoln's corpse.**

Secret Service did come to Lincoln's protection, but only in death. In 1876 a gang of Chicago counterfeiters attempted to snatch Lincoln's body from his tomb, which was protected by just a single padlock, in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois. Their scheme was to hold the corpse for a ransom of \$200,000 and obtain the release of the gang's best counterfeiter from prison. Secret Service agents, however, infiltrated the gang and were lying in wait to disrupt the operation. Lincoln's body was quickly moved to an unmarked grave and eventually encased in a steel cage and entombed under 10 feet of concrete.

### **4. John Wilkes Booth's brother saved the life of Lincoln's son.**

A few months before John Wilkes Booth assassinated Lincoln, the president's oldest son, Robert Todd Lincoln, stood on a train platform in Jersey City, New Jersey. A throng of passengers began to press the young man backwards, and he fell into the open space between the platform and a moving train. Suddenly, a hand reached out and pulled the president's son to safety by the coat collar. Robert Todd Lincoln immediately recognized his rescuer: famous actor Edwin Booth, brother of John Wilkes. (In another eerie coincidence, on the day of Edwin Booth's funeral—June 9, 1893—Ford's Theatre collapsed, killing 22 people.)

### **5. Lincoln is the only president to have obtained a patent.**

Benjamin Franklin isn't the only American political leader who demonstrated an inventive mind. After being aboard a steamboat that ran aground on low shoals and had to unload its cargo, Lincoln, who loved tinkering with machines, designed a method for keeping vessels afloat when traversing shallow waters through the use of empty metal air chambers attached to their sides. For his design, Lincoln obtained Patent No. 6,469 in 1849.

### **6. Lincoln personally test-fired rifles outside the White House.**

Lincoln was a hands-on commander-in-chief who, given his passion for gadgetry, was keenly interested in the artillery used by his Union troops during the Civil War. Lincoln attended artillery and cannon tests and met at the White House with inventors demonstrating military prototypes. Although there was a standing order against firing weapons in the District of Columbia, Lincoln even test-fired muskets and repeating rifles on the grassy expanses around the White House, now known as the Ellipse and the National Mall.

### **7. Lincoln came under enemy fire on a Civil War battlefield.**

When Confederate troops attacked Washington, D.C., in July 1864, Lincoln visited the front lines at Fort Stevens on two days of the battle, which the Union ultimately won. At one point the gunfire came dangerously close to the president. Legend has it that Colonel Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., a future Supreme Court justice, barked, "Get down, you fool!" Lincoln ducked down from the fort's parapet and left the battlefield unharmed.

### **8. Lincoln didn't move to Illinois until he was 21.**

Illinois may be known as the Land of Lincoln, but it was in Indiana that the

16th president spent his formative years. Lincoln was born in a Kentucky log cabin in 1809, and in 1816 his father, Thomas, moved the family across the Ohio River to a 160-acre plot in southern Indiana. Lincoln did not migrate to Illinois until 1830.

### **9. Poisoned milk killed Lincoln's mother.**

When Abraham was 9 years old in 1818, his mother, Nancy, died of a mysterious "milk sickness" that swept across southern Indiana. It was later learned that the strange disease was due to drinking tainted milk from a cow that had ingested poisonous white snakeroot.

### **10. Lincoln never slept in the Lincoln Bedroom.**

When he occupied the White House, the 16th president used the current Lincoln Bedroom as his personal office. It was there that he met with Cabinet members and signed documents, including the Emancipation Proclamation.

## **Last Farewell to Robert E. Lee**

By Calvin E. Johnson Jr.,  
Canadafreepress.com, October 11, 2013

The United States flag flew at half-mast when Robert E. Lee died!

The New York Times reported:

(Intelligence was received last evening of the death at Lexington, Va., of Gen. Robert E. Lee, the most famous of the officers whose celebrity was gained in the service of the Southern Confederacy during the late terrible rebellion.)—New York Times, October 13, 1870.

October 12th is the 143rd anniversary of the passing of Robert E. Lee.

General Lee died at his home at Lexington, Virginia at 9:30 AM on October 12, 1870. His last great deed came after the War Between the States when he accepted the



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presidency of Washington College, now Washington and Lee University. He saved the financially troubled college and helped many young people further their education.

Robert E. Lee suffered a cerebral hemorrhage on September 28, 1870, but was thought to greatly improve until October 12th, when he took a turn for the worse. His condition seemed more hopeless when his doctor told him, "General you must make haste and get well—Traveller—has been standing too long in his stable and needs exercise."

It's written that the rains and flooding were the worse of Virginia's history on the day General Lee died. On Wednesday, October 12, 1870, in the presence of his family, Lee quietly passed away.

The church bells rang as the sad news passed throughout Washington College, Virginia Military Institute, the town of Lexington and the nation. Cadets from VMI College carried the remains of the old soldier to Lee Chapel where he laid in state. Many buildings and homes were covered in black crepe for mourning.

Memorial meetings were held throughout the South and as far North as New York. At Washington College in Lexington eulogies were delivered by: Reverend Pemberton, Reverend W.S. White—Stonewall Jackson's Pastor and Reverend J. William Jones. Former Confederate President Jefferson Davis brought the eulogy in Richmond, Virginia. Lee was also eulogized in Great Britain.

Virginia Military Institute (VMI) Cadet William Nalle said in a letter home to his mother, dated October 16, 1870; "I suppose of course that you have all read full accounts of Gen Lee's death in the papers. He died on the morning of the 12th at about half past nine. All business was suspended at once all

over the country and town, and all duties, military and academic suspended at the Institute, and all the black crape and all similar black material in Lexington, was used up at once, and they had to send on to Lynchburg for more. Every cadet had black crape issued to him, and an order was published at once requiring us to wear it as a badge of mourning for six months."

Robert E. Lee's last words were, "Strike the Tent."

### The Death of Willie Sherman

By THOM BASSETT, New York Times, October 12, 2013

It was no secret that 9-year-old Willie was the favorite child of William Tecumseh Sherman. In fact, his wife, Ellen, reproved him repeatedly for making his preference for Willie uncomfortably obvious to their other children. But on the evening of Oct. 3, 1863, the boy lay dead in a Memphis hotel room. Sherman would write the next day to Ulysses S. Grant that Willie was "the one I most prized [sic] on earth." But Willie's death was the tragic consequence of a series of decisions for which Sherman would blame himself the rest of his own life.

Those decisions began in the aftermath of the long and grueling Vicksburg campaign, which ended in early July 1863. Soon after, Sherman encamped his XV Corps for a period of rest and refitting in an oak grove between the Big Black and Yazoo rivers, about 20 miles east of the former Confederate stronghold. The land, which Sherman had immediately found ideal, was owned by "old preacher Mr. Fox," as Sherman put it in a letter to Ellen. Sherman was pleased to note that two months earlier, Fox had had over 50 slaves, but now they had run away and his house had been ransacked

by Union soldiers. Fox and his family were thus forced to "appeal to us for the Soldier's Ration." Sherman also remarked, with the bitter jocularly he reserved especially for beaten rebels, that Fox had "17 children born to him lawfully & 11 still alive."

All through the late summer and early autumn, Sherman filled his letters home with expressions of deep satisfaction and even delight regarding his camp location. He declared in an Aug. 3 letter to his brother John that "we have lovely camps, plenty of grass, water and shade trees." He bragged to a fellow general that he and his men "have beautiful camps. ... I never saw better camps." To his father-in-law, Thomas Ewing, he wrote that his camp "is in reality one of the best possible. It combines comfort, retirement, safety, and beauty." He went so far as to tell his brother-in-law Philemon that in a fit of whimsy he had named the place "'Polliwoggle Retreat,' in honor of a horse pond, very convenient to our Camp and full of songster frogs."

Sherman also had more serious reasons to be pleased with the camp. Both armies had suffered terribly from disease during the Vicksburg campaign, and he was well aware that the risk of rampant infection was heightened during the summer months. Still, he was confident that he had picked a site free of these dangers. "I have no apprehension on the Score of health," he wrote home on Aug. 13, "and the present condition of my command satisfies me on this score." In another letter to his brother, he noted flatly that "here I fear not yellow fever or any other epidemic."

Because of the confidence he had in his location, and because he was unable to take a furlough home, Sherman violated his own policy



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against officers' bringing their families into camp. He thought the practice contributed to laxity, but he decided in this case to send for Ellen and four of their six children, including his beloved Willie. The family joined him in late August. On Sept. 9 a contented Sherman wrote his brother about the arrangements he had made for them all. He and Ellen were together in adjoined hospital tents, with the children nearby in two other tents. "You would be surprised to see how well they get along," he happily reported. "All are well and really have improved in health down here."

Unsurprisingly, in his memoirs Sherman records nothing about his other children's experiences in camp, while he says a great deal about Willie's. He remembered that his son "was well advanced for his years, and took the most intense interest in the affairs of the army." A favorite of the 13th Regulars, the battalion assigned to guard Sherman's headquarters, Willie was made an honorary sergeant in the unit, wore a specially made uniform and regularly attended its parades. Sherman would remember years after the war how much pleasure Willie and he took in horseback rides and in observing the drills and reviews of his troops.

For a few weeks Sherman enjoyed life with Willie and the others, but that time ended in late September due to events in far-off southeastern Tennessee. After the Union defeat at Chickamauga, Sherman was ordered to take command of forces gathered in nearby Chattanooga. On Sept. 28, Sherman moved his headquarters and family to a riverboat at Vicksburg. When Willie that night complained of diarrhea, a regimental surgeon was sent for. He concluded that the boy was suffering from dysentery and malaria.

Willie's condition had worsened by the time the boat arrived in Memphis on Oct. 2. Sherman's family took rooms at the Gayoso Hotel and another doctor was brought in. Typhoid fever was finally diagnosed, but nothing could be done to help Willie. "We were with him at the time," Sherman wrote later, "and we all, helpless and overwhelmed, saw him die."

Ellen and the surviving children returned home to Ohio while Sherman tried to throw himself into his duties as a way to escape his grief, but his letters from this time are filled with terrible self-recrimination. Three days after Willie's death, he wrote to Ellen that "I will always deplore my want of judgment in taking my family to so fatal a climate at so critical a period of the year." On Oct. 14 he wrote again to say that he occasionally gave in to "the wish that some of those bullets that searched for my life at Vicksburg had been successful, that it might have removed the necessity for that fatal visit."

Time did nothing to lessen Sherman's self-blame. "The blow was a terrible one to us all," he would write years later in his memoirs, "so sudden and so unexpected, that I could not help reproaching myself for having consented to his visit in that sickly region in the summer-time." It's striking that here Sherman seems to shift responsibility for Willie's presence in Mississippi to an unnamed other, with Sherman merely "consenting" to his family's joining him there.

Willie haunted Sherman through the rest of the war. In 1864, during his assault on Atlanta and then the long march across Georgia to the sea, Sherman's letters to his wife are filled with obsessive, endlessly searching

discussions of their dead son. In particular, Sherman's sorrow takes the form of wishing that Willie were able to rejoice in his father's accomplishments. In late October 1864, for example, as plans for the devastating march across Georgia were being finalized, Sherman's thoughts turned toward imagined praise from Willie: to be able to see Willie's "full eyes dilate and brighten when he learned that his Papa was a great general would be to me now more grateful than the clamor of millions." At the war's end, on April 5, 1865, assured of his place in history from helping to vanquish the Confederacy, Sherman wished only that Willie "could hear & see — his proud little heart would swell to overflowing."

Sherman and Ellen had eight children, including three sons in addition to Willie, but none came close to replacing him in their father's affections. One, Charles, was conceived during the ill-fated visit to Mississippi; he died of pneumonia at the age of 5 months, without Sherman's ever seeing him. In his memoirs Sherman puts the child's name in quotation marks, as if his son weren't really a person to him. His youngest son Philemon's achievements in law and business gave Sherman a small measure of satisfaction late in his life. Thomas Sherman was a source of conflict and rage for the general, rejecting his father's dictate that he study law and opting for the priesthood instead. After long periods of mental instability, Thomas died in 1933 in a New Orleans nursing home.

Sherman had close, loving relationships with his daughters, but even so, to the end of his life his heart remained really only Willie's. The boy's body had originally been



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buried in Sherman's hometown of Lancaster, Ohio. In 1867 Sherman had it moved to St. Louis, where he and his family had taken residence after the war. On the occasion of his 70th birthday, less than a year before he died, Sherman instructed the St. Louis post of the Grand Army of the Republic as to where he wished to be buried. "Deposit my poor body in Calvary" Cemetery, the warrior father requested of his old army comrades, "alongside my faithful wife and idolized 'SOLDIER BOY'."

### A Slave's Service in the Confederate Army

By RONALD S. CODDINGTON, New York Times, September 24, 2013

Sgt. Andrew M. Chandler began his memoir of fighting at Chickamauga with utilitarian prose that belied the horrible, bloody waste that the battle wrought on northwest Georgia in September 1863. "I was engaged in the battle of Chickamauga, belonged to the Forty-fourth Mississippi Regiment, Patton Anderson's Brigade, Hindman's Division," he wrote for an 1894 article in Confederate Veteran magazine.

The highlight of Chandler's story occurred on the second day of the battle, after he participated in a charge that resulted in the capture of a Union artillery battery. "In this charge we, our brigade" — which fought under the command of Maj. Gen. Thomas C. Hindman — "broke the Federal line and drove them nearly one mile, when we were recalled and reformed, and marched back to the old field, which was literally covered with dead and wounded Yankees," he wrote.

The federals had sent more troops to fight the Mississippians. As the bluecoats converged on their

position, Chandler recalled an exchange that he had with Hindman, a dapper dresser bursting with aggression from his 5-foot-1-inch frame. "General Hindman stopped his horse in rear of our company, when I said to him, 'General, we are the boys to move them!' he replied, 'You are, sir.' We were then ordered to the foot of a long ridge, heavily wooded. After remaining there lying down for some twenty minutes, the Yankees charged our brigade."

Chandler abruptly ended his narrative here. He did not describe the rest of the attack — which was strange but telling, because during the fighting a bullet tore into his right leg and ankle and took him out of action. But Chandler's military records and an anecdote passed down through the family over the following century and a half filled in the rest of his story.

A surgeon examined the 19-year-old Chandler as he lay on the battlefield, determined the wound serious and sent him to a makeshift hospital. Soon afterward Chandler was joined by Silas, a family slave seven years his senior.



Collection of Andrew Chandler Battaile Andrew Martin Chandler of the Forty-fourth Mississippi Infantry and Silas Chandler, circa 1861.

In the hospital, according to family history, surgeons decided that the injured leg could not be saved and decided to amputate. Then Silas

stepped in. As one of Chandler's descendants explained, "Silas distrusted Army surgeons. Somehow he managed to hoist his master into a convenient boxcar." They rode the rails to Atlanta, where Silas sent a request for help to Chandler's relatives. An uncle came to their assistance, and brought both men home to Palo Alto, Miss., where they had started out two years earlier.

When the war broke out in 1861, Chandler enlisted in the "Palo Alto Confederates," a local military company that eventually joined the 44th Mississippi. His concerned mother, Louisa, sent Silas, one of her 36 slaves, off to war with him.

Thousands of slaves served their masters and masters' sons in the Confederate Army before and after the "Black Republican" in the White House, as some referred to President Abraham Lincoln, issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Many remained with their owners throughout the war.

Silas had known nothing but slavery his entire life. Born into bondage on the Chandler plantation in Virginia, he moved with the family to Mississippi when he was about 2. He was trained as a carpenter, and the Chandlers brought in extra income by hiring Silas out to locals in need of his skills — a common practice in the antebellum South. The money Silas earned by his labor was paid to the Chandlers, who gave him a small portion. According to a story passed down through Silas's descendants, he saved the pennies that he received in a jar that he hid in a barn for safekeeping.

Around 1860 Silas wed Lucy Garvin in a slave marriage, not recognized by law. A light-skinned woman, she was the illegitimate daughter of a mulatto house slave named Polly and



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an unnamed plantation owner. She was classified as an octoroon, or one-eighth African, which determined her legal status as a slave.

The next year Silas bid his newlywed wife farewell and went to war with Chandler. He shuttled back and forth from encampments in Georgia and elsewhere to the plantation in Mississippi to procure and deliver much-needed supplies to Chandler. No account exists that Silas ever attempted to flee to Union-held territory.

At the Battle of Chickamauga, the 44th went into action with 272 men and suffered 30 percent casualties, including Chandler. According to the Chandler family, Silas accompanied him to Mississippi. "A home town doctor prescribed less drastic measures and Mr. Chandler's leg was saved."

Chandler "was able to do Silas a service as well," noted the family. During one campaign, Silas "constructed a shelter for himself from a pile of lumber, the story goes. A number of calloused Confederate soldiers attempted to take Silas's shelter away from him, and when he resisted threatened to take his life. At this point Mr. Chandler and his comrade Cal Weaver, came to Silas's defense and threatened the marauders with the same kind of treatment they had offered Silas. This closed the argument."

Chandler's Chickamauga wound ended his combat service. But Silas went back to the front lines with Chandler's younger brother, Benjamin, who enlisted in the Ninth Mississippi Cavalry in January 1864. Silas accompanied the younger Chandler and the rest of the Ninth as they skirmished with advance elements of Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's army through Georgia and

the Carolinas. Then, during the Confederacy's final days, Benjamin Chandler and a detachment of his fellow Mississippians joined the military escort that guarded President Jefferson Davis as he and his entourage fled Richmond.

By the time Davis reached Georgia, fears that his large escort would draw the attention of numerous Union patrols crisscrossing the countryside in search of him prompted commanders to act. On May 7, 1865, most of the escort was disbanded. Davis continued to ride south with a much smaller and less conspicuous guard.

Benjamin Chandler and Silas were part of the group ordered to disband. Three days later, Chandler surrendered to federals near Washington, Ga. Silas was by his side.

President Davis was captured the same day, about 175 miles south in the Georgia village of Irwinsville.

Silas returned home, and reunited with Lucy. They eventually had 12 children, 5 of whom lived into adulthood. Silas became a carpenter in the Mississippi town of West Point, and he taught the trade to at least four of his sons. "They built some of the finest houses in West Point," noted a family member, who added that Silas and his boys constructed "houses, churches, banks and other buildings throughout the state."

Silas lived within a few miles of his former masters, the Chandler brothers. In 1868, Silas and other freedmen constructed a simple Baptist altar near a cluster of bushes on land adjacent to property owned by Andrew and his family. The freedmen soon replaced it with a wood-frame church.

In 1888, Mississippi established a state pension program for

Confederate veterans and their widows. African-Americans who had acted as slave servants to soldiers in gray were also allowed to participate. Over all, 1,739 men of color were on the pension rolls, including Silas.

Benjamin Chandler died in 1909. Silas passed away in September 1919 at age 82. Andrew Chandler survived Silas by only eight months. He died in May 1920.

In 1994, the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy conducted a ceremony at the gravesite of Silas in recognition of his Civil War service. An iron cross and flag were placed next to his monument.

The event prompted mixed reactions from descendants of Silas and Andrew. Silas's great-granddaughter, Myra Chandler Sampson, denounced the ceremony as "an attempt to rewrite and sugar-coat the shameful truth about parts of our American history." She added that Silas "was taken into a war for a cause he didn't believe in. He was dressed up like a Confederate soldier for reasons that may never be known."

But Andrew Chandler Battaile, great-grandson of Andrew, met Myra's brother Bobbie Chandler at the ceremony. He saw the experience a bit differently. "It was truly as if we had been reunited with a missing part of our family."

Bobbie Chandler, for his part, accepts the role his great-grandfather played in the Confederate army. He observed, "History is history. You can't get by it."