

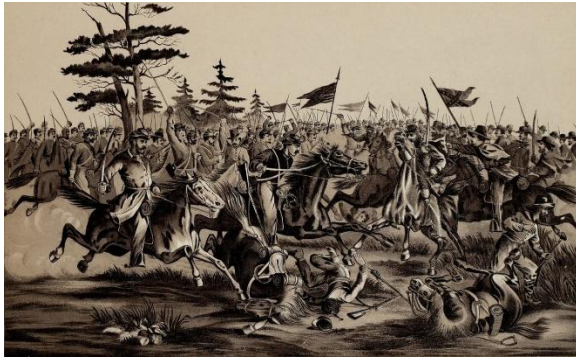


THE OLD LINER



How the Union Cavalry Supported Grant's Overland Campaign in Virginia

Scott Patchan, Blue and Gray Dispatch, July 19, 2024



Cavalry fight at Yellow Tavern etween the forces of Philip Sheridan and JEB Stuart on May 11, 1864 | public domain

The spring of 1864 saw a noticeable transformation of the usage of the Union Cavalry during Grant's Overland Campaign in Virginia.

Against Army of the Potomac commander Gen. George G. Meade's judgement, new commanding general Ulysses S. Grant allowed the Cavalry Corps commander to take his entire corps on a raid. Subsequently, Union general Philip Sheridan achieved victory at the battle of Yellow Tavern, on May 11, 1864, where his Confederate counterpart, Gen. Jeb Stuart, lost his life in battle. Grant's decision, however, had robbed his army of its ability to quickly scout, as the Army of the Potomac went into battle with Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia around Spotsylvania Courthouse. Unlike Lee, who had retained a mounted division when he unleashed Stuart to pursue Sheridan, Grant was left with only

a handful of mounted units, and it clearly had a negative impact on his operations.

Grant next dispatched Sheridan's Cavalry from Cold Harbor to head west to Gordonsville, a vital rail junction where the Virginia Central and Orange Alexandria railroads met. Also, Grant had given Gen. David Hunter, commanding all Union forces in the Shenandoah Valley, general orders to capture Staunton in the valley and then move across the Blue Ridge to Charlottesville and Gordonsville and perhaps even Lynchburg to disrupt the Confederate communications and supply chain. Based on the hazy instructions given to Hunter, Grant planned for Sheridan to join forces with Hunter at Gordonsville and pose a significant threat to Lee from the west, but the plan blundered.

Hunter determined to move farther south in the valley and cross the Blue Ridge at Peaks of Otter, en route to Lynchburg. Hence, the planned rendezvous was not to be. Sheridan moved out toward Gordonsville, but South Carolinian general Wade Hampton, the acting Confederate Cavalry chief, stopped him cold at Trevillian Station.

After two days of seesaw fighting on June 11 and 12, 1864, Sheridan was forced to return to Grant, having failed to achieve his objective. Hunter, too, failed in his effort to capture Lynchburg and retreated through the mountains of West Virginia, leaving the valley open for Confederate general Jubal Early to launch a summer raid all the way to the gates of Washington, D.C., before turning back.



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Sheridan's final charge at Winchester | public domain

The mixed results of these operations weighed heavily on Sheridan's decision-making when he assumed command of all Union forces in the Shenandoah Valley in August 1864. Sheridan, therefore, kept his horsemen close by and used his cavalry as his primary combat arm on a daily basis. His horse soldiers quickly gained supremacy over the Confederate Cavalry and even went toe-to-toe with Early's Confederate infantry with confidence. The emboldened cavalry played a decisive role in Sheridan's victory at Third Winchester on September 19, 1864, which Sheridan followed up with another victory at Fisher's Hill on September 22 and pursued Early to Brown's Gap and basically out of the war.

As a logical follow-up, Grant urged Sheridan to cross the Blue Ridge and move against Charlottesville and Gordonsville, where he would pose a threat to Lee's left flank west of Richmond.

Sheridan, however, fretted about the logistics of such an operation. His experience at Trevillian Station and Hunter's failure at Lynchburg increased his pessimism about crossing the Blue Ridge. In the end, Sheridan returned to his base in the

Northern Shenandoah, and did not risk crossing the Blue Ridge in the fall of 1864. He waited until February 1865 to finally take the risk.

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The Civil War in Florida: The Service and Death of Maj. Benjamin C. Lincoln

Angela Zombek, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, July 15, 2024
blueandgrayeducation.org



Maj. Benjamin Lincoln served in the 2nd USCT, shown here in 1863 at their first camp in Arlington, Virginia. | Library of Congress

Soldiers who fought in Florida during the Civil War garner comparatively little attention compared to those who fought in major theaters of battle. The service and death of Maj. Benjamin Lincoln of the 2nd United States Colored Troops (USCT) provides a window into how Union soldiers experienced war in its tropical climate.

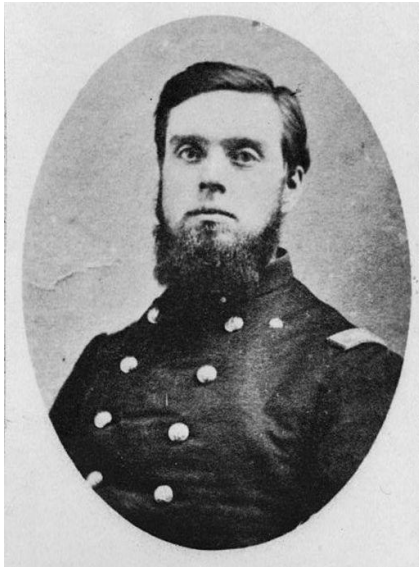
On February 22, 1864, Lincoln arrived with the 2nd USCT to garrison Key West, a significant military and commercial outpost that remained in U.S. possession throughout the entire war. Major Lincoln, married not even a year to his beloved wife, Dora, wanted nothing more than for her to join him on the island, as was relatively common for officers' wives. He spent much time, and



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countless letters, devising plans for her and his brother Alford to journey to Key West despite being short on money to pay for travel. Day after day, Lincoln climbed a parapet at Fort Taylor, looking for the steamer *Nightingale*, which he thought might be carrying his love. Lincoln frequently pined for the war's end and the ability to resume civilian life with his new bride. But he also had ambitions to rise through the ranks and head an independent command.



Col. John T. Wilder | LOC

Lincoln assumed temporary command of Fort Taylor when Col. John Wilder traveled to Havana, Cuba. While in command, Lincoln served on courts martial, witnessed the execution of some disobedient soldiers, and served on an examining board to assess officers of the 2nd Florida Cavalry (Union). He also devoted countless hours to providing spiritual and educational instruction to soldiers of the 2nd USCT, as well as local Blacks, despite many local civilians' opposition to Black troops. His brother Alford finally arrived at Key West, but Dora did not, and Lincoln vowed to continue writing to her every day.

In February 1865, Lincoln left Key West with Companies E, G, and H of the 2nd USCT with the object of quashing blockade running around the port of St. Marks on the Florida mainland. At dawn on March 6, 1865, Lincoln led Companies B and G into the fray at the Battle of Natural Bridge, near present-day Woodville, Florida. Here, Lincoln met his fate. Soon after the battle, instead of opening a letter from her husband as usual, Dora received a letter from Col. John Wilder of the 2nd USCT, dated March 12, 1865, which described her husband's last hours among the living.

Wilder addressed Dora at Alford's request—Lincoln's brother was too distraught to take up the pen. The letter stated that, amid the battle, at 1 p.m. on March 6, 1865, a piece of shell from Confederate artillery struck Lincoln in the bowels. He feared the wound was mortal, but hoped to recover on the steamer *Alliance* and remained cheerful as his comrades carried him from the field. Soon, after requesting to eat, Lincoln drifted into permanent sleep as his spirit "calmly and Peacefully departed."

Dora would never again see her new husband since Wilder could not send Lincoln's body home; the undertaker declared he had "been dead too long in the hot climate." Wilder's heart bled as he praised Lincoln for being self-sacrificing, true, and ambitious. He mourned Lincoln's loss, and the irony that "it was his desire to have an independent command, and he received it, alas, only to lay it down again in death."

All information about Lincoln from "Benjamin C. Lincoln Papers, James. S. Schoff Civil War



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Collection," William L. Clements Library,
University of Michigan.

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American Battlefield Trust Applauds Efforts to Rename Saratoga National Park as Saratoga National Battlefield Park

**Bipartisan legislation seeks to recognize
pivotal military engagements that
occurred on the park's hallowed ground**

Claire Barrett, Jim Campi, ABT, July 10,
2024

(Washington, D.C.) — The American Battlefield Trust supports bipartisan legislation introduced July 3rd by Congresswoman Elise Stefanik (R-NY) and Congressman Paul Tonko (D-NY) to rename Saratoga National Historical Park to Saratoga National Battlefield Park. The effort seeks to distinguish the park as a historic battlefield and signal its historic importance to heritage tourists.

“As stewards and protectors of these hallowed grounds, we celebrate the effort to recognize the sacrifices made here and the history the land holds and shares with future generations,” said Trust President David Duncan.

New York was one of the most fought over states during the American Revolution. In 1777, the British strategy, led by General John Burgoyne, called for a three-pronged attack on New York, with three separate armies converging near Albany. The battle at Saratoga, fought in two stages on September 19 and October 7, marked one of the largest clashes in the state's history.

The American victory was a turning point in the Revolutionary War, proving that the beleaguered Patriots could hold their own against the superiorly armed and trained British Army. The outcome sealed the alliance between the Americans and King Louis XVI's France.

“As Co-Chair of the Congressional Battlefield Caucus, I will continue to lead the charge to ensure that our many battlefields in Upstate New York and the North Country are preserved,” said Congresswoman Elise Stefanik. “Renaming Saratoga National Historical Park to Saratoga National Battlefield Park will more accurately reflect the historical significance of the site and emphasize the crucial military engagements that took place there. I'm honored to lead this legislation that acknowledges the significance of the turning point in the Revolutionary War and one of the most decisive American battles of the American Revolution.”

“With the 250th anniversary of the battle approaching, there is no better time for the redesignation of the park from Saratoga National Historical Park to Saratoga National Battlefield,” Duncan added.

The bipartisan legislation — Strengthening America's Turning Point Act (H.R.8931) — follows a unanimous June 18 vote by the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors to adopt a resolution requesting Congress and the National Park Service rename the Saratoga National Historical Park to the Saratoga National Battlefield Park.

Battlefields are unique historic resources, and the name change helps to better reflect



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the hallowed grounds where American — and British — soldiers fought and died.

“The historic site marks the first time in world history that a British Army laid down their arms,” said Saratoga County Board of Supervisors Chairman and Saratoga 250th Commissioner Phil Barrett. “This name change would distinguish the park as a historical battlefield and provide a unique identifier to clearly inform tourists of the significance of the park to American independence.”

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Historian Elizabeth Varon's Longstreet Biography Wins Inaugural American Battlefield Trust Prize for History

“Longstreet: The Confederate General Who Defied the South” earns \$50,000 as exceptional work that amplifies the vital nature of historic battlefields as irreplaceable literary sources

Karen Testa, Mary Koik, ABT,
June 27, 2024

(Washington, D.C.) — The inaugural \$50,000 American Battlefield Trust Prize for History has been awarded to historian Elizabeth Varon for *Longstreet: The Confederate General Who Defied the South*, a richly reported biography of the complicated Civil War leader who after the war encouraged an examination of the roots of the conflict and advocated for racial reconciliation.

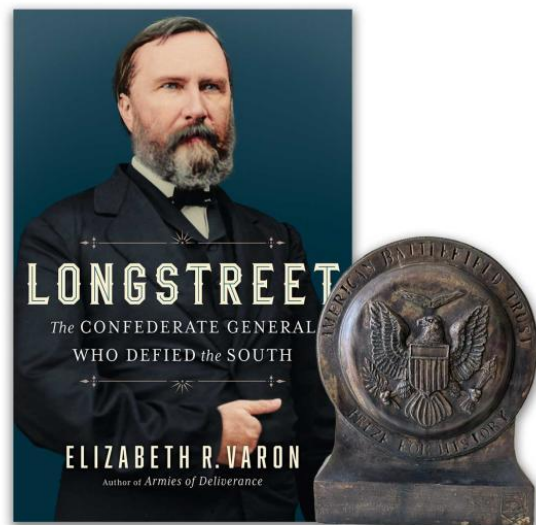
Varon’s work was selected from among nearly 100 entries for the new prize, which seeks to underscore the irreplaceable perspective and primary research value of



preserving the battlefields on which our nation was forged – during conflicts which we still seek to better understand today.

2024 Prize for History Winner
Dr. James McPherson, Pulitzer Prize winning author of *Battle Cry of Freedom* and one of the prize’s three judges, called Varon’s work “a literary and research achievement.” “The special virtue of this book is it tells us the whole story of Longstreet, for the decades after the war as well as the war itself,” said McPherson, professor emeritus at Princeton University. “It’s beautifully crafted and original in its good many insights.”

In accepting the recognition, Varon said, “It is a humbling honor to win this inaugural award from an organization, American Battlefield Trust, that does so much to promote and revitalize the study of America's formative military conflicts. I am especially grateful to be recognized with such an impressive group of fellow finalists, representing the dynamism of the field and the centrality of landscapes to the historical imagination.”





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The American Battlefield Trust Prize for History recognizes an outstanding published work focused on military history or a biography central to the nation's formative conflicts — the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War. Although the Trust has protected more than 58,000 acres at nearly 160 sites related to those conflicts, many more remain threatened. The prize seeks to encourage further preservation by highlighting the way historic landscapes aid and inform researchers. Because it is endowed by a generous donor, the prize program diverts no funds from the Trust's critical mission.

“An excellent book can ignite the imagination,” said Trust President David Duncan. “Reading about the dynamic figures and events of the past inspires millions of Americans to travel to historic sites where they can stand in the footsteps of the past, often thanks to the work of historic preservation organizations who ensure that such places are safeguarded for future generations.”

A selection committee winnowed the list of nominees from nearly 100 from 24 different publishers to 11 finalists, which were then considered by this year's expert panel of judges: McPherson, Dr. James Kirby Martin, professor emeritus at University of Houston and Dr. Joan Waugh, professor emeritus at UCLA.

The works of two other authors also were recognized with \$2,500 honorable mentions: D. Scott Hartwig's *I Dread the Thought of the Place: The Battle of Antietam and the End of the Maryland Campaign* and Friederike Baer's *Hessians: German Soldiers*

in the American Revolutionary War. Each of the three titles focuses on a key discipline within the field of military history — a biography of a notable leader, an analysis of an iconic campaign and a thematic examination of a pivotal group. And each relied upon the power of place for the research that underpinned it.

The inaugural awards will be presented in September, during the Trust's annual Grand Review weekend in Raleigh, N.C. Publishing houses may submit nominations of 2024 titles for next year's award after October 1. Further details on the prize may be found on the American Battlefield Trust website.

Professor Elizabeth R. Varon is the Langbourne M. Williams Professor of History at the University of Virginia; her winning title is published by Simon & Schuster. Friederike Baer is an associate professor of history and the Division Head for Arts and Humanities at Penn State Abington College; her work is published by Oxford University Press. D. Scott Hartwig spent 34 years interpreting history for the National Park Service, including two decades as supervisory historian at Gettysburg National Military Park; his Antietam titles are published by Oxford University Press.

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Illegal Hunting Activity in Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park

July 17, 2024
Justin Young, NPS

Fort Oglethorpe, GA: Hunting and trapping date back to the indigenous peoples who



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first inhabited the local area, and even to this day, people venture to private and public lands to harvest small and big game. The US Forest Service allows hunting on 650,000 acres in 10 TN counties, TVA provides 175,000 acres, and TWRA makes over 7,000 acres available to the public for hunting. However, not all public land is open to hunting. Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park is closed to all hunting and trapping.

On April 16, 2024, William Edward Lough of Trenton, Georgia, and Jonathan Daniel Plaster of Rossville, Georgia, plead guilty in federal court to the illegal taking of wildlife. Both men were issued fines by U.S. Magistrate Judge Steger. The investigation spanned several years and involved multiple interviews, hours of surveillance, and a search warrant to solve the case.

Both men were involved in the illegal hunting and taking of 2 white-tailed deer that were transported from Tennessee into Georgia. The original prohibited acts in the incident included charges from both state and federal officers which consisted of hunting in a closed area, hunting without a license, falsifying records, violating the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Restriction, firearm possession by a prohibited person, providing a false statement, and destruction of a natural area.

In recent years, the Lookout Valley, Tennessee, portion of the national military park has seen an increase in illegal hunting activity. The area surrounding Lookout Creek has seen the most illegal activity.



If you are in any portion of the national military park and see or hear illegal hunting activity, please call 911 and inform them of your location. On-duty law enforcement rangers will be dispatched to that area.

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Ceremonial Ribbon Cutting Held to Celebrate the Reopening of Little Round Top

Civil War News June 24, 2024

Gettysburg PA—Gettysburg National Military Park today (June 24, 2024) celebrated the reopening of Little Round Top with a ceremonial ribbon cutting. The Little Round Top area of the Gettysburg battlefield, which saw extensive fighting on the afternoon of July 2, 1863, had been closed to the public for almost two years for extensive rehabilitation efforts to improve parking areas, accessibility and safety, and address erosion and vegetation issues.



Ceremonial Ribbon Cutting Held to Celebrate the Reopening of Little Round Top

Little Round Top is expected to reopen to the public later this afternoon.

The project enhances access to a more extensive, safe, and accessible trail system that allows visitors to experience the area's



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monuments, cannons, and other areas of interest. Gathering areas across the summit will better accommodate the many large groups arriving by bus. Eroded soils have been stabilized and re-vegetated. New interpretive waysides throughout the area tell the story of those who suffered, died, and memorialized the battlefield. In addition, satellite parking has been expanded and formalized in the area with access to the trail system.

Funding for the project represents a mix of federal funds and generous donations. The total cost of the project was \$12.9 million, of which \$5.2 million came from donations from the Gettysburg Foundation, National Park Foundation, and the American Battlefield Trust.

“We extend our deepest thanks and gratitude to our philanthropic partners at the Gettysburg Foundation, National Park Foundation, and the American Battlefield Trust. Their dedication, vision, and support of this project made it possible” said Kristina Heister, superintendent of Gettysburg National Military Park and Eisenhower National Historic Site. “After a twenty-two-month closure, we are thrilled to welcome the American public back to the most iconic location on the battlefield. It is an area where visitors can truly experience a meaningful connection to the past and understand the sacrifices made to protect our freedoms. We are confident that, with the help of the visiting public, the improvements to Little Round Top will provide an amazing experience for generations of visitors to come.”

“The Gettysburg Foundation is excited about the reopening of Little Round Top and the work that the National Park Service has completed to rehabilitate the landscape, monuments, and trails there,” said Gettysburg Foundation interim president & CEO David Malgee. “We are proud to have supported this extensive project as the official non-profit partner of the National Parks at Gettysburg and are truly thankful for the many enhancements to “the hill” that will inspire visitors for generations to come,” added Malgee.

“Gettysburg veteran and Medal of Honor recipient Joshua Chamberlain noted that ‘In great deeds something abides. On great fields something stays’ and there are few landscapes for which that power of place is more tangible than Little Round Top.” said American Battlefield Trust President David Duncan. “Now revitalized and enhanced, it stands ready to welcome this and future generations, a place where they can feel a meaningful connection to the past.”

“Modernizing and improving visitor access to Little Round Top protects this hallowed ground and ensures that future generations can explore this place where history was made, and better understand how the battle of Gettysburg shaped our nation,” said National Park Foundation President and CEO Will Shafroth. “I am grateful for the generosity of John L. Nau, III and the partnership of the American Battlefield Trust for making it possible.”

Park staff would like to thank the many members of the local Gettysburg community who helped keep park visitors up to date with pertinent information about the project



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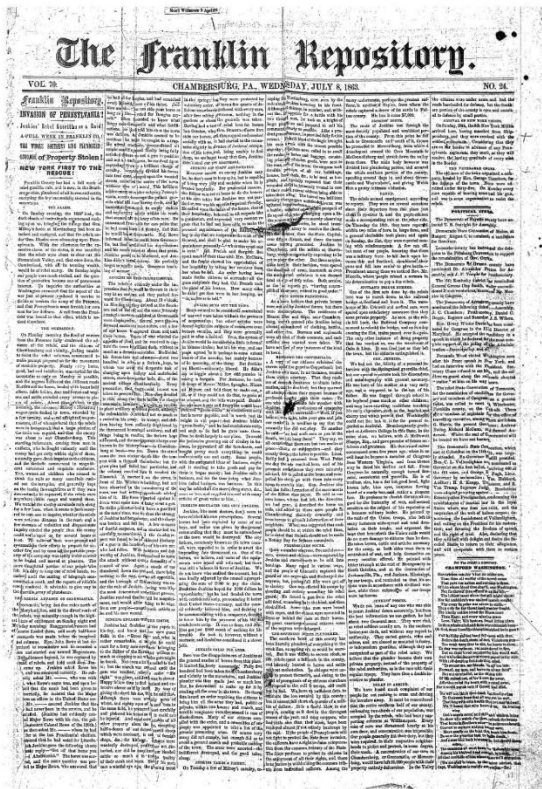


and their continued patience throughout the process. We look forward to welcoming visitors back to this iconic battlefield site and join us as stewards to help us protect and interpret the site for generations to come.

Full details of the project, including photo albums, videos, time lapse videos, and frequently asked questions are on the park's website at www.nps.gov/gett.

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The Franklin repository., July 08, 1863, Image 1



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Did Civil War Soldiers Have PTSD? One hundred and fifty years later, historians are discovering some of the earliest known cases of post-traumatic stress disorder

Tony Horwitz, Smithsonian Magazine,
January 2015



The wounded soldiers above were photographed at a hospital in Fredericksburg, Virginia, between 1861 and 1865. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs division

In the summer of 1862, John Hildt lost a limb. Then he lost his mind.

The 25-year-old corporal from Michigan saw combat for the first time at the Seven Days Battle in Virginia, where he was shot in the right arm. Doctors amputated his shattered limb close to the shoulder, causing a severe hemorrhage. Hildt survived his physical wound but was transferred to the Government Hospital for the Insane in Washington D.C., suffering from “acute mania.”

Hildt, a laborer who’d risen quickly in the ranks, had no prior history of mental illness, and his siblings wrote to the asylum expressing surprise that “his mind could not be restored to its original state.” But months and then years passed, without improvement. Hildt remained withdrawn, apathetic, and at times so “excited and disturbed” that he hit other patients at the asylum. He finally died



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there in 1911—casualty of a war he'd volunteered to fight a half-century before.

The Civil War killed and injured over a million Americans, roughly a third of all those who served. This grim tally, however, doesn't include the conflict's psychic wounds. Military and medical officials in the 1860s had little grasp of how war can scar minds as well as bodies. Mental ills were also a source of shame, especially for soldiers bred on Victorian notions of manliness and courage. For the most part, the stories of veterans like Hildt have languished in archives and asylum files for over a century, neglected by both historians and descendants.

This veil is now lifting, in dramatic fashion, amid growing awareness of conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder. A year ago, the National Museum of Civil War Medicine mounted its first exhibit on mental health, including displays on PTSD and suicide in the 1860s. Historians and clinicians are sifting through diaries, letters, hospital and pension files and putting Billy Yank and Johnny Reb on the couch as never before. Genealogists have joined in, rediscovering forgotten ancestors and visiting their graves in asylum cemeteries.

“We've tended to see soldiers in the 1860s as stoic and heroic—monuments to duty, honor and sacrifice,” says Lesley Gordon, editor of *Civil War History*, a leading academic journal that recently devoted a special issue to wartime trauma. “It's taken a long time to recognize all the soldiers who came home broken by war, just as men and women do today.”

Counting these casualties and diagnosing their afflictions, however, present considerable challenges. The Civil War occurred in an era when modern psychiatric terms and understanding didn't yet exist. Men who exhibited what today would be termed war-related anxieties were thought to have character flaws or underlying physical problems. For instance, constricted breath and palpitations—a condition called “soldier's heart” or “irritable heart”—was blamed on exertion or knapsack straps drawn too tightly across soldiers' chests. In asylum records, one frequently listed “cause” of mental breakdown is “masturbation.”

Also, while all wars are scarring, the circumstances of each can wound psyches in different ways. The relentless trench warfare and artillery bombardments of World War I gave rise to “shell shock” as well as “gas hysteria,” a panic prompted by fear of poison gas attacks. Long campaigns in later conflicts brought recognition that all soldiers have a breaking point, causing “combat fatigue” and “old sergeant's syndrome.” In Vietnam, the line between civilians and combatants blurred, drug abuse was rampant and veterans returned home to an often-hostile public. In Iraq and Afghanistan, improvised explosive devices put soldiers and support personnel at constant risk of death, dismemberment and traumatic brain injury away from the front.

Civil War combat, by comparison, was concentrated and personal, featuring large-scale battles in which bullets rather than bombs or missiles caused over 90 percent of the carnage. Most troops fought on foot, marching in tight formation and firing at



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relatively close range, as they had in Napoleonic times. But by the 1860s, they wielded newly accurate and deadly rifles, as well as improved cannons. As a result, units were often cut down en masse, showering survivors with the blood, brains and body parts of their comrades.

Many soldiers regarded the aftermath of battle as even more horrific, describing landscapes so body-strewn that one could cross them without touching the ground. When over 5,000 Confederates fell in a failed assault at Malvern Hill in Virginia, a Union colonel wrote: “A third of them were dead or dying, but enough were alive to give the field a singularly crawling effect.”

Wounded men who survived combat were subject to pre-modern medicine, including tens of thousands of amputations with unsterilized instruments. Contrary to stereotype, soldiers didn’t often bite on bullets as doctors sawed off arms and legs. Opiates were widely available and generously dispensed for pain and other ills, causing another problem: drug addiction.

Nor were bullets and shells the only or greatest threat to Civil War soldiers. Disease killed twice as many men as combat. During long stretches in crowded and unsanitary camps, men were haunted by the prospect of agonizing and inglorious death away from the battlefield; diarrhea was among the most common killers.

Though geographically less distant from home than soldiers in foreign wars, most Civil War servicemen were farm boys, in their teens or early 20s, who had rarely if ever traveled far from family and familiar

surrounds. Enlistments typically lasted three years and in contrast to today, soldiers couldn’t phone or Skype with loved ones.

These conditions contributed to what Civil War doctors called “nostalgia,” a centuries-old term for despair and homesickness so severe that soldiers became listless and emaciated and sometimes died. Military and medical officials recognized nostalgia as a serious “camp disease,” but generally blamed it on “feeble will,” “moral turpitude” and inactivity in camp. Few sufferers were discharged or granted furloughs, and the recommended treatment was drilling and shaming of “nostalgic” soldiers—or, better yet, “the excitement of an active campaign,” meaning combat.

At war’s end, the emotional toll on returning soldiers was often compounded by physical wounds and lingering ailments such as rheumatism, malaria and chronic diarrhea. While it’s impossible to put a number on this suffering, historian Lesley Gordon followed the men of a single unit, the 16th Connecticut regiment, from home to war and back again and found “the war had a very long and devastating reach.”

The men of the 16th had only just been mustered in 1862, and barely trained, when they were ordered into battle at Antietam, the bloodiest day of combat in U.S. history. The raw recruits rushed straight into a Confederate crossfire and then broke and ran, suffering 25 percent casualties within minutes. “We were murdered,” one soldier wrote.

In a later battle, almost all the men of the 16th were captured and sent to the notorious



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Confederate prison at Andersonville, where a third of them died from disease, exposure and starvation. Upon returning home, many of the survivors became invalids, emotionally numb, or abusive of family. Alfred Avery, traumatized at Antietam, was described as “more or less irrational as long as he lived.” William Hancock, who had gone off to war “a strong young man,” his sister wrote, returned so “broken in body and mind” that he didn’t know his own name. Wallace Woodford flailed in his sleep, dreaming that he was still searching for food at Andersonville. He perished at age 22, and was buried beneath a headstone that reads: “8 months a sufferer in Rebel prison; He came home to die.”

Others carried on for years before killing themselves or being committed to insane asylums. Gordon was also struck by how often the veterans of the 16th returned in their diaries and letters to the twin horrors of Antietam and Andersonville. “They’re haunted by what happened until the end of their lives,” she says.

Gordon’s new book on the 16th, *A Broken Regiment*, is but one of many recent studies that underscore the war’s toll on soldiers. In another, *Living Hell: The Dark Side of the Civil War*, historian Michael Adams states on the first page that his book describes “the vicious nature of combat, the terrible infliction of physical and mental wounds, the misery of soldiers living amid corpses, filth, and flies.”

Not all scholars applaud this trend, which includes new scholarship on subjects such as rape, torture and guerrilla atrocities. “All these dark elements describe the margins not

the mainstream of Civil War experience,” says Gary Gallagher, a historian at the University of Virginia who has authored and edited over 30 books on the war. While he welcomes the fresh research, he worries that readers may come away with a distorted perception of the overall conflict. The vast majority of soldiers, he adds, weren’t traumatized and went on to have productive postwar lives.

Gallagher and others also warn against viewing 1860s Americans through too contemporary a lens. As a rule, Civil War soldiers were more religious than Americans today, more imbued with notions of honor and glory, and less inclined to share their pain or seek help for it. They returned to a society without a Veterans Administration or G.I. Bill or modern pharmacology. These and many other factors “make it very hard to apply 21st-century diagnostics to 19th-century data,” says Stephen Goldman, a neuropsychiatrist who has treated veterans and is writing a book about the impact of war on soldiers in the Civil War and other conflicts.

Even so, there are striking instances of Civil War soldiers afflicted in ways that appear similar to the experience of veterans today. PTSD didn’t enter the medical lexicon until 1980, but its symptoms—including flashbacks, panic attacks, insomnia and suicidal thoughts—turn up frequently among Civil War soldiers, particularly those who entered asylums. In *Shook Over Hell*, historian Eric Dean examined the records of 291 Civil War veterans admitted to the Indiana Hospital for the Insane and found cases like Elijah Bos-well, who “Sobbed & cried & imagined that some one was going



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to kill him,” screaming “the rebels was after him.”

Others were brought to the asylum because they barricaded themselves in rooms, awake all night with weapons at the ready. A veteran who narrowly survived an artillery barrage would shout at his wife, “Don’t you hear them bombarding?” Another, shot in the side during the war, was described upon admission as sleepless, suicidal and convinced “he is bleeding to death from imaginary wounds.”

Asylum records also give painful glimpses of families struggling to understand and help shattered loved ones. Patient files from the Government Hospital for the Insane in Washington, now known as St. Elizabeths, are filled with letters to the superintendent, like this one from a shopkeeper in Pennsylvania. “If brother is in any way conscious of passing events, I should like him to know that I have his oldest son Jimmy with me in the store, that he is a good boy and smart.” A Massachusetts woman wrote of her father, “If he does know anything at times please tell him his daughter has written to you about him and also give him my love.”

The brother of John Hildt, the Michigan soldier who lost his arm and sanity after the Seven Days Battle, wrote a letter in their native German, in hopes “he will recognize any thing I say to him. He is John Hildt Corporal Co K 1st Michigan Vol.” Hildt’s family also sought a pension for both his physical and mental disability. The latter claim was denied, the pension office wrote, due to “lack of proof” that Hildt became

insane due to his wartime service and wounding.

Doctors were more sympathetic but unable to do much for the veterans in their care. Treatment consisted mainly of “moral therapy,” a regime of rest and light labor in the hospital gardens, which perched atop what was once a peaceful and bucolic hilltop in Anacostia. Doctors also administered opiates, stimulants and “tonics,” such as a punch made of milk, eggs, sugar and whiskey. All this may have provided temporary relief to patients. But most Civil War veterans who entered the asylum never left it.

One file includes a photograph of the patient, in old age, still wearing his uniform four decades after being admitted at the end of the Civil War with “Acute Suicidal Melancholia.” Often, the last item in a patient’s file is a telegram like the one sent to a Massachusetts woman in 1900. “Your husband died this afternoon. Shall we bury here? Answer?”

Hundreds of Civil War soldiers are among those buried at St. Elizabeths, in two cemeteries that were little visited and became overgrown in the course of the 20th century. Now, this too has changed as families rediscover long-forgotten forebears and come to visit their graves.

“A lot of the old stigma is gone,” says Jogues Prandoni, a volunteer at St. Elizabeths who helps families research their forebears and locate graves. “People hear about troubled veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and want to know about and



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honor ancestors who may have suffered in the same way.”

Among the many genealogists he’s guided is Marti Bourjaily, a Coloradan whose family tree includes an lumberman from Maine and young volunteer in an infantry regiment that fought at Antietam, Gettysburg and other major battles. Edward Leard was wounded in the eye, deserted several times and suffered a mental collapse after returning to Maine at war’s end. Sent first to a state hospital, he was transferred to St. Elizabeths and died there at the age of 54 with \$18 to his name.

The surviving records don’t reveal much about Leard’s affliction. But Bourjaily wonders if he was like her own father, who stepped on a land mine at the Battle of the Bulge, watched a friend die while trying to save him and was “pumped up on morphine” before returning home, where he drank heavily and “ranted” about his wartime experience throughout her childhood.

“They didn’t have phrases like ‘post-traumatic stress disorder’ in the Civil War, they just thought these shattered guys were sissies, the sort that George Patton would have slapped across the face,” she says. “Soldiers come back different people, that was true with my dad and I’m sure it was with Edward Leard. I want to reach out to this man and tell him how sorry I am that he had to go through hell.”

Gail Palmer, a retired newspaper reporter in Florida, has also come to view the Civil War and her own family through fresh eyes. She took up genealogy while caring for her

Alzheimer’s-afflicted mother—“I decided to join her back where she was, in the past”—and anticipated researching the many prominent people she’d been told about, dating back to the Revolution. “No one ever mentioned Oliver Perry Chappell,” she says.

An infantry captain from New York, Chappell fought in several battles before being wounded and captured at Chancellorsville and sent to a Confederate prison. Upon his release, he wandered and struggled, changing jobs and spouses and becoming indigent before entering the Government Hospital for the Insane, where he died in 1885. Palmer learned of his fate only after finding an application for a soldier’s tombstone in his name, which led her to the asylum.

“I was stunned,” she says. “All I’d heard about were my wealthy and successful ancestors who belonged to yacht clubs and the DAR and appeared in the society pages.”

This lineage includes three other great-grandfathers who served in the Union Army. Palmer says all of them appear to have settled down and prospered, and her research has led her to suspect that Oliver Chappell’s instability predated the Civil War. “I’m not real confident how together he was in the first place, but how together are any of us?” she wonders. “We might skate through life if nothing terrible happens, but we fall apart if it does.”

Whatever Chappell’s mental state, Palmer is proud to welcome him back to the family. She’s taken what she calls a “pilgrimage” to St. Elizabeths and the National Archives to



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learn more about her great-grandfather and has posted her research on Ancestry.com.

“Oliver’s the most interesting ancestor I’ve got,” she says. “Maybe, finally, we’re far enough away from the Civil War to tell the painful stories that families like mine covered up.”

Tony Horwitz was a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who worked as a foreign correspondent for the Wall Street Journal and wrote for the New Yorker. He is the author of Baghdad without a Map, Midnight Rising and the digital best seller BOOM. His most recent work, Spying on the South, was released in May 2019. Tony Horwitz died in May 2019 at the age of 60.