



THE OLD LINER



2025 Summer Hours and Programs at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park

**Summer Schedule for June 9, 2025 –
August 3, 2025**

NPS May 20, 2025, Mary O'Neill

FREDERICKSBURG, VA.— Explore Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park this summer and connect with the people and places that shaped some of the most contested landscapes in American history.

The park's summer interpretive programming starts on Monday, June 9, 2025 and runs through Sunday, August 3, 2025. Park grounds are open daily from sunrise to sunset. Summer hours for visitor centers, historic sites, and guided programs are as follows:

Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Center

**1013 Lafayette Boulevard,
Fredericksburg, VA.**

Open daily, 9 am-5 pm

**Innis House Open House; Daily, 9 am-11
am, drop-in**

Step inside one of the few structures standing on the battlefield and talk to park staff about how the battle impacted the lives of people caught in the crossfire.

**Sunken Road Walking Tours; Daily, 10:30
am & 2 pm, 45 minutes**

*Meet at the battle painting outside the
Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Center.*
Why did the Battle of Fredericksburg

happen in December 1862? Join a guided tour of the one of the most iconic and recognized battlefield landmarks of the war. This walking tour will cover no more than 0.5 mile over mostly flat terrain.

Chatham

120 Chatham Lane, Fredericksburg, VA.

Open daily, 9 am-5 pm

Gate open daily, 9 am-5 pm

Grounds open daily, sunrise to sunset

The interior of Chatham will be partially open over the summer. Due to ongoing restoration projects, the space will not be populated with exhibits, but will be staffed with rangers and volunteers.

**Sparking Freedom at Chatham Walking
Tour; Daily, 2 pm, 45 minutes**

Meet at the Chatham garden-side entrance.

Resistance to enslavement took many forms at Chatham. Discover stories of this resistance and learn about the people whose actions challenged oppression. This walking tour of the Chatham grounds will cover around 0.25 mile over mostly flat terrain and may include some steps.

Chancellorsville Battlefield Visitor Center

9001 Plank Road, Spotsylvania, VA.

Open Daily, 9 am-5 pm

**Investigating Chancellorsville; Daily,
10:30 am & 2 pm, 45 minutes**

*Meet at the battle painting outside the
Chancellorsville Battlefield Visitor Center.*

Why did the US and the Confederate armies clash in May of 1863 and why does it matter? Join park staff to learn about the Chancellorsville Campaign and dive into



THE OLD LINER

some of the big questions surrounding this contested battle.

Reading with a Ranger; *Every other Tuesday (6/10, 6/24, 7/8, 7/22), 10 am, 30 minutes, recommended ages 4-8*
Meet outside the Chancellorsville Battlefield Visitor Center.

Join park staff for a themed storytime and craft activity.

Ellwood

36380 Constitution Highway, Orange, VA.
Building Open Friday-Sunday, 9 am-5 pm
Grounds open daily, sunrise to sunset

No scheduled programs. Staff and volunteers are available on demand to conduct “Battle in the Box” programs that discuss the Overland Campaign and the Battle of the Wilderness.

“Stonewall” Jackson Death Site

12019 Stonewall Jackson Road, Woodford, VA.
Building Open Friday-Sunday, 9 am-5 pm
Grounds open daily, sunrise to sunset

No scheduled programs. Staff and volunteers are available to discuss the events surrounding Jackson’s death and how we remember Jackson today.

Spotsylvania Court House Battlefield
9550 West Grant Drive, Spotsylvania, VA.

Spotsylvania History Hikes; *Every other Saturday (6/14, 6/28, 7/12, 7/26), 10 am, 90 minutes, up to 3 miles hiking*
Meet at the Bloody Angle parking area (Tour Stop #3 on the Spotsylvania Battlefield).
Join park staff at the Bloody Angle on these



Saturday morning hikes to explore the landscape of the Spotsylvania Court House Battlefield.

Self-guided audio driving tours for all four battlefields and audio walking tours of park sites are available for free on the self-guided tours page or via the official NPS App found. To learn more about these and other park offerings, including the Junior Ranger program and special events stop by the park visitor centers and historic sites, call (540) 693-3200, or visit the Operating Hours page.

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Memorial Day Weekend Programs at Petersburg National Battlefield 2025

2025 Schedule



Flags at Poplar Grove National Cemetery in 2024, Pat Schmidt

NPS May 14, 2025, Eric Schreiner,

PETERSBURG, VA – Petersburg National Battlefield is hosting several special programs over Memorial Day weekend to honor the sacrifices of the soldiers who fought and died at this historic location.



THE OLD LINER

Events will take place at Poplar Grove National Cemetery, 8005 Vaughan Rd, Petersburg, VA 23805, and beside the Eastern Front Visitor Center, 5001 Siege Road, Petersburg, VA 23803.

Friday, May 23rd: Join park staff from 5 to 6:30 PM to help place flags at each grave in Poplar Grove National Cemetery, a meaningful way to pay tribute to those who served. Send an email to pete_volunteer@nps.gov to sign up.

Saturday, May 24th: At 2:30 PM, a Park Ranger will lead a walking tour of Poplar Grove National Cemetery, providing insights into the history of this significant site.

Sunday, May 25th: Experience a cannon firing demonstration with the Artillery Crew from 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM, taking place behind the Eastern Front Visitor Center.

Monday, May 26th: At 10 AM, the Knights of Columbus will host a Catholic Mass open to the public at Poplar Grove National Cemetery. A representative from the Civil Air Patrol, U. S. Air Force Auxiliary, will also provide a ecumenical prayer to honor those who have served. Walking tours of the cemetery will be offered at 11 AM and 2:30 PM. Tours will be led by NPS Park Rangers and highlight poignant stories of the soldiers buried at the site.

Tuesday, May 27th: Join park staff from 5 to 6:30 PM to assist in collecting the flags placed at each grave in Poplar Grove



National Cemetery. Send an email to pete_volunteer@nps.gov to sign up

Learn more about Petersburg National Battlefield at nps.gov/pete or follow @PetersburgNPS on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube

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Honor our Nation's Fallen with these Ten Memorial Day Programs Across the Country

The American Battlefield Trust recommends these events and programs to commemorate the holiday across the country

news@battlefields.org,

May 19, 2025

(Washington, D.C.) — In the years following the Civil War, Americans began dedicating a day each spring to remember friends and family members who lost their lives during the tragic conflict. What was initially known as Decoration Day has evolved into a tradition that encompasses all American wars; Memorial Day became a national holiday in 1971.

To honor the sacrifices made by our nation's military, the American Battlefield Trust — a national nonprofit organization that preserves battlefields of the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War — recommends the following events, volunteer opportunities and activities for Memorial Day Weekend 2025. For more activities and destinations, visit the Trust's online events



THE OLD LINER



page or check out calendars maintained by the National Park Service and state parks or museums near you.



Stones River National Military Cemetery, Murfreesboro, Tenn. *Malcolm MacGregor, photomalcolm.com*

May 23-24: Vicksburg National Military Park, Vicksburg, Miss.

Join for a flag placement at the National Cemetery to begin the weekend and enjoy a free pops concert performed by the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra on the park grounds at sunset on Saturday. There will also be activity stations for the kids. Learn more.

May 24-25: Fort Necessity National Battlefield, Farmington, Pa,

Celebrate Memorial Day with an encampment on the battlefield. There will be British, French and Native camps where you can talk with people about life in the 18th century. Flintlock musket firings and artillery demonstrations will take place throughout the weekend. Learn more.

May 24-26: Manassas National Battlefield Park, Manassas, Va.

Honor the over 3,500 soldiers who died across both battles at Manassas with a weekend full of programs and activities. From the unveiling of the new “Faces of the Fallen” exhibit to special guided ranger tours of the battlefield, there are numerous opportunities to learn and reflect. Learn more.

May 24-26: Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, Kennesaw, Ga.

Living historians will be giving visitors a glimpse into the hard life of Civil War soldiers all weekend. Join them as they set up camp on the mountain, give historical background and demonstrate musket firing. Learn more.

May 24: Stones River National Battlefield, Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Scouting and other youth organizations from middle Tennessee will place American flags on more than 7,000 graves in Stones River National Cemetery. Volunteers must register here by Wednesday, May 21. A flag clean-up event will also take place after Memorial Day weekend. Learn more.

May 24: Civil War Defenses of Washington, Washington, D.C.

Join NPS staff for a Memorial Day presentation and ceremony at Battleground National Cemetery. Located just west of Rock Creek Park in the nation’s capital, this cemetery was established shortly after the Battle of Fort Stevens, in the summer of 1864. Learn more.

May 24: Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg, Pa.



THE OLD LINER

This Memorial Day weekend, explore some of the lesser-known stories of those buried in Gettysburg National Cemetery. Park rangers will discuss the creation and history of cemetery at Gettysburg and highlight the stories of several servicemembers from each of America's armed conflicts from the Civil War through the war in Vietnam who were laid to rest from the 1860s through the 1960s. [Learn more.](#)

May 25-26: Shiloh National Military Park, *Shiloh, Tenn.*

Join National Park Service staff for a weekend of U.S. military history and firing demonstrations. See and learn about the soldiers' uniforms, equipment and weapons used by the United States military from the Revolution through World War II. [Learn more.](#)

May 26: Antietam National Battlefield, *Sharpsburg, Md.*

Antietam National Battlefield will present a Memorial Day Program on Monday, May 26, 2025, starting at 11:00 a.m., at Antietam National Cemetery, giving visitors a chance to pay their respects to those who gave their lives on the bloodiest day in American history. [Learn more.](#)

May 26: Appomattox Court House National Historical Park, *Appomattox, Va.*

Appomattox Court House National Historical Park will offer special programming to examine the history and traditions of Memorial Day throughout the day. [Learn about the origins of the holiday during a ranger talk and bring the kids to](#)



[build a paper wreath to honor the fallen soldiers. Learn more.](#)

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 nearly 60,000 acres associated with the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War across 160 sites in 25 states. [Learn more at \[www.battlefields.org\]\(http://www.battlefields.org\).](#)

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American Battlefield Trust Praises "Endangered" Listing for Virginia Historic Sites Threatened by Data Centers

Annual list by Preservation Virginia calls out the reckless disregard of Virginia's battlefield parks and historic treasures by insatiable data center developers

news@battlefields.org

May 15, 2025

(Richmond, Va.) — The proliferation of data center development across Virginia has become so widespread, threatening irreplaceable cultural resources and historic landscapes, that Preservation Virginia's annual roster of the Commonwealth's Most Endangered Historic Sites has combined them into a joint entry rather than overwhelming the list. The American Battlefield Trust, which is lead plaintiff in two lawsuits related to data center projects adjacent to national parks —



THE OLD LINER

and is engaged in advocacy and monitoring of several other such projects directly in conflict with its focused mission — praised this latest move to draw attention with the following statement:



The Wilderness Battlefield, Spotsylvania County, Va. Matthew Hartwig

“Data centers are a profoundly hungry type of development,” said Trust President David Duncan. “They consume vast quantities of electricity, water and open space, replacing once-pristine landscapes with bleak and windowless buildings, towering transmission lines and power substations. While our modern lives require this technological infrastructure, there is no reason data centers can’t be constructed in a manner sensitive to our nation’s historic treasures.

“We are grateful to our longtime partners at Preservation Virginia for issuing this call for citizens and decision makers to take a broader view of this issue. This isn’t just about the projects being built directly on historic landscapes or the national or state parks that would have a complex at their fringes; it’s also about the historic districts that stand to be cross-cut by power lines to fuel it, the ancestral lands and



cemeteries that will be disturbed to provide access to vast quantities of water to cool it.

“The American Battlefield Trust takes this opportunity to reiterate our call — central to our legal challenges over the Prince William Digital Gateway proposal at the Manassas Battlefield and the Wilderness Crossing project in Orange County — for these projects to be carefully and sympathetically sited, evaluated in a holistic manner that accounts for cumulative impacts and considered by officials in a transparent process that respects public input.”

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Gettysburg Foundation Donates \$472,376 to Gettysburg National Military Park

Civil War News, Apr 8, 2025 Updated Apr 8, 2025

Gettysburg, Pa. (April 8, 2025)—

The Gettysburg Foundation has donated \$472,376 to Gettysburg National Military Park to support preservation, education and visitor engagement projects. The donation, generated from funds raised through Museum & Visitor Center operations for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2024, underscores the Foundation’s ongoing commitment to enhancing the visitor experience and supporting the National Park Service’s mission at Gettysburg.

“The Gettysburg Foundation believes in the essential role that the National Park Service (NPS) plays in preserving and sharing the history of Gettysburg. We deeply value the dedication of NPS staff and remain



THE OLD LINER

committed to supporting their work,” said Jackie Spainhour, president and CEO of the Gettysburg Foundation. “Since 2008, the Foundation has proudly partnered with the NPS, providing support in a number of ways, including this annual financial donation. Our programs, tours and educational experiences continue at the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum & Visitor Center, the George Spangler Farm & Field Hospital and the Children of Gettysburg 1863®museum—all of which remain fully open. We invite visitors to explore these historic places, connect with their powerful stories, and be part of Gettysburg’s enduring legacy.”

Gettysburg Foundation’s Impact in 2024

Through its partnership with the National Park Service, the Gettysburg Foundation continues to make a significant impact on preservation, education and the local economy:

- Welcomed 440,000 visitors to the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum & Visitor Center, reinforcing Gettysburg's importance as a historical and educational destination.
- Conducted more than 40 Higher Ground Leadership programs, inspiring approximately 800 participants with the leadership lessons of Gettysburg.
- Led over 8,300 battlefield tours by Licensed Battlefield Guides, connecting visitors to the rich history of Gettysburg.



- Inspired the service of 110 volunteers who contributed more than 11,100 hours to enhance visitor experiences and support key programs.
- Children of Gettysburg 1863®, the Foundation's interactive history museum for kids, was named one of the country's top ten children's museums by USA Today's 10 Best Readers' Choice travel awards.

The Gettysburg Foundation operates the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum & Visitor Center in partnership with the National Park Service. Since opening its doors in 2008, the Museum & Visitor Center has welcomed more than 15 million visitors from around the globe.

Proceeds from tickets and other Museum & Visitor Center purchases benefit Gettysburg National Military Park and Eisenhower National Historic Site.

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The Distiller Who Faced Down Vigilantes—and the U.S. Government

Robert S. Davis, May 5, 2025,
blueandgrayeducation.org



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The person in the photograph may be Montraville Gaston Holbert, dressed in the garb he wore on raids with the HMF&P. He turned state's evidence against his comrades. | photo courtesy of author

A debate is raging in Washington over whether the federal government can refuse to pay its bills. In the landmark case *United States v. Allred* (1895), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment requires the government to honor those debts. This pivotal decision was rooted in a

peculiar episode involving vigilante moonshiners in Pickens County, Georgia, in 1890.

John Marion Allred (1831–1915), son of Elias and Mary Harrison Allred, was a Democrat before the Civil War who remained loyal to the Union throughout the conflict. He later served as a Republican member of the Georgia legislature from 1871 to 1872.

Allred played a significant role in bringing the railroad to Pickens County and central North Georgia. In 1890, he helped establish the *Piedmont Republican*, Georgia's only white Republican newspaper at the time, in the county seat of Jasper. A young friend recalled Allred's penchant for mild cursing and killing annoying cats with rocks. He married sisters Martha and Sarah M. Davis in succession, and many of his descendants still live in Pickens County.

As an attorney by profession, Allred served as a U.S. Justice Department commissioner, a role akin to a Justice of the Peace in Jasper, from 1883 to 1886 and again starting in 1889. By 1890, he owned a mill and was among the few federally licensed distillers in Pickens County. This dual role placed him in the unusual position of prosecuting his illegal competitors in the whiskey trade.

In response, a clandestine group of local moonshiners, known as the "Honest Man's Friend & Protector" (HMF&P), retaliated by burning down the homes of individuals who were being paid by the government (i.e., Allred) to testify against their moonshining cohorts. The cost of the head of a family



THE OLD LINER



being tried and going to prison could devastate a family, and the HMF&P, wearing bizarre disguises in their arson attacks, sought to prevent such outcomes. They were the first of many such “whitecap” organizations but remain the only such vigilantes brought to justice.

As a federal commissioner, Allred orchestrated the arrests that brought these men to justice, even testifying to their otherwise good character. In his official capacity, he was responsible for funding depositions and assembling posses—including his brother, Rev. Elias Walter Allred—to apprehend the alleged lawbreakers.

When the federal court in North Georgia ran out of money to pay its bills, Allred was not reimbursed the \$329.70 he had spent. He sued the United States in the Court of Claims for monies due him. He won the case, and the federal government appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which upheld the lower court’s decision. As a result, the United States has been compelled to honor its financial obligations ever since.

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Dan Sickles Returns to Gettysburg for the Last Time

by **Emerging Civil War Guest Post**

Posted on April 25, 2025

ECW welcomes guest author John L. Hopkins.

In the summer of 1913, 45,000 Union veterans and 8,000 former Confederates

converged on Gettysburg for the largest Blue-Gray reunion ever held. Among those in attendance was the last surviving corps commander who had participated in the battle: 92-year-old Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Sickles, a man whose continued presence among the living was a rebuke to anyone who believed longevity was the gods’ reward for a man of probity, honor, and sobriety.

As a congressman in pre-war Washington, Sickles had gunned down his wife’s lover, Philip Barton Key, in broad daylight in Lafayette Square. To call the ensuing murder trial sensational would be an understatement. Sickles’s legal team, which included future Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, presented a defense based upon the then-novel claim of temporary insanity and secured an acquittal. Three months later, Sickles reconciled with his wife, an action that may have outraged public opinion even more than his murder of Key.



General Sickles (center) at Gettysburg in 1886, a few years before the 44th NY Monument incidents. (Library of Congress)

At Gettysburg, Sickles’s III Corps had narrowly escaped annihilation on the battle’s second day after he moved it without



THE OLD LINER



authorization some 1,500 yards forward of the rest of the Union line, a decision that Maj. Gen. Henry Halleck called “an error which nearly proved fatal in the battle.”^[1] In the desperate fighting that ensued, a shell fragment shattered Sickles’s right leg, which had to be amputated. He never received another command.

After the war, Sickles returned to New York, built a successful and lucrative law practice, and was appointed minister to Spain, where he was rumored to have had an affair with Queen Isabella II. Back in Congress in 1892, he helped pass the legislation that created the Gettysburg National Military Park.

By 1913 he had spent a half-century working to reshape the historical record and recast his own role at Gettysburg from that of blundering political general who “came so near being the cause of irreparable disaster”^[2] to that of an indispensable man who, through bold, aggressive action, had saved the day. And as the fiftieth anniversary of the battle approached, he helped plan the grand reunion of Union and Confederate veterans that he hoped would be “a national love feast.”^[3] It was Sickles who first proposed that “a permanent Peace Monument of some kind should, if possible, be dedicated on the field at the time of the Jubilee celebration,” an idea that did not come to fruition until the 75th anniversary in 1938.^[4]

A few months before the reunion was set to take place, an audit of the New York Monuments Commission, which Sickles had chaired for 26 years, found more than \$28,000 unaccounted for. Suspicions turned

to its chairman, who was known to be experiencing financial difficulties and had no explanation for the discrepancy, and around whom rumors of financial improprieties had swirled before. A warrant was issued for his arrest in January 1913, but he remained free on bond while his friends worked frantically to keep him out of jail. Harry K. Thaw, the obsessive, mentally unstable millionaire who had murdered architect Stanford White in 1906, even sent a check for \$1,000 from his cell in New York’s Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane to help pay off the old general’s debts.^[5] Finally, in early May, weary of the negative press the case was generating, the state attorney general dropped the prosecution.



Sickles cheering at the 1913 reunion. Library of Congress.

So, it must have been with no small sense of relief that Sickles set out for Gettysburg and the reunion. “The old warrior certainly has sympathy in his misfortunes,” the *Boston Globe* editorialized, “and the knowledge that he has the regard of the Boys in Blue may serve to remove some of the bitterness from his cup.”^[6] He arrived on Sunday, June 29, along with several thousand other New York



THE OLD LINER



veterans to find a cheering crowd surrounding the Western Maryland railroad station. He was helped into a waiting automobile and, accompanied by an escort of 24 troopers from the 15th U.S. Cavalry, driven out to the Rogers house on the Emmitsburg Road, where he was to be the honored guest of the veterans of Carr's brigade.

Sickles had agreed to write a series of articles from the reunion, which were syndicated in newspapers around the country. He began his July 2 dispatch with characteristic modesty: "The thronging hordes who have motored and walked and trolleyed to my camp today have swept there [sic] hats off and hailed it as 'Sickles Day.' And so I have always regarded July 2nd. It was on this day a half-century ago that God gave me strength to serve my country and my Maker, better than I had ever been able to serve them before. It was upon this day in '63 that I lost my leg and did my little part by the mercy of God to preserve the Union. ... Let me call attention right here to the fact that if I had not taken the initiative our left would have been lost. Longstreet said I won the battle by my advance move."^[7]



Sickles signs an autograph at the 1913 reunion. Library of Congress.

Longstreet himself was nine years in his grave, but his widowed second wife, Helen Dortch Longstreet, a former newspaper reporter and fierce defender of her late husband's legacy, was very much alive; she, too, filed newspaper stories from the reunion that backed up Sickles's view. "The tragic figure of this great reunion," she wrote of Sickles, "is the grim warrior whose life blood on these wind-swept fields, on the fateful July day 50 years ago, cemented forever the indissoluble union of the states. It was his victory. It is his field."^[8]

Mrs. Longstreet went to the Rogers house to pay her respects to her husband's old adversary, and at her approach Sickles "arose and bowed deeply. He took the greatest pleasure in the dramatic situation



THE OLD LINER



and the utmost satisfaction in being permitted on this anniversary and at that spot of spots to tell Longstreet's widow what a splendid and noble enemy her husband was."^[9]

Dan Sickles's life had never lacked for drama or plot twists that would make a scriptwriter blush, and the 1913 reunion was no exception. Among those in attendance was an 82-year-old resident of the Confederate Soldiers' Home in Pikesville, Maryland. A veteran of Breathed's Battery of horse artillery in J.E.B. Stuart's command, he had been wounded twice, captured at Madison Court House, and spent more than a year as a prisoner of war. His name was John Francis Key—grandson of Francis Scott Key and nephew of Philip Barton Key, the man Sickles had murdered five and a half decades earlier.^[10]

John L. Hopkins is a retired communication and public relations professional with more than three decades of experience in higher education, nonprofit, and agency settings. He was born and raised in New York City and earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Williams College. He is the author of The World Will Never See the Like: The Gettysburg Reunion of 1913, which the Wall Street Journal called "a compelling, poignant and sometimes heartbreaking account of the biggest gathering of the Blue and Gray since the Civil War."

Endnotes:

^[1] *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series 1, Vol. 27, Part 1, 16.

^[2] Frank A. Haskell, *The Battle of Gettysburg* (Sandwich, MA, 1993), 117.

^[3] Letter, Daniel E. Sickles to Louis Wagner, Nov. 23, 1910, Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg Commission: Correspondence, Record Group 25.24, Box 2, Pennsylvania State Archives.

^[4] Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg Commission Minutes, 13, Record Group 25.27, Box 1, Pennsylvania State Archives.

^[5] "Harry Thaw Goes to General Sickles' Aid," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 3, 1913.

^[6] "Editorial Points," *Boston Globe*, June 29, 1913

^[7] "Sickles Tells of His Bitter Fight on July 2nd, 1863," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 3, 1913.

^[8] "As Mrs. Longstreet Sees It," *Baltimore Sun*, July 2, 1913.

^[9] "55,000 Veterans Defy Great Heat," *New-York Tribune*, July 2, 1913

^[10] "Maryland 500 Strong," *Baltimore Sun*, July 1, 1913

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The Last Major Confederate Surrender: Smith, Buckner, Shelby, and Price Debate Their Options

by Sean Michael Chick, ECW



THE OLD LINER



Posted on May 19, 2025

Dating when the American Civil War ended is a point of debate. All that can be agreed upon is that the fall of Richmond and Petersburg, followed quickly by Robert E. Lee's submission at Appomattox, created a chain reaction that assured collapse. Lee and his ability to hold Petersburg and Richmond was the hope the diehards clung to in 1865. Now it was gone.

Aiding this was William Tecumseh Sherman's advance through North Carolina and the fall of the last major coastal bastions at Charleston, Wilmington, and Mobile. James Wilson ripped through Alabama and into Georgia and Florida, destroying the last of the South's industrial base. Joseph Johnston, who was never as committed to the Confederacy as others, surrendered on April 26 after long negotiations. The last major force east of the Mississippi River was surrendered by Richard Taylor at Citronelle, Alabama, on May 4. The next day, Jefferson Davis dissolved the Confederacy and was himself captured on May 10, the same day Florida's forces submitted.



General Richard Taylor

Even as the Confederacy fell apart, some wanted to continue. Many were looking to their political future. Taylor observed with his usual sarcasm that "many Southern warriors, from the hustings and in print, have declared that they were anxious to die in the last ditch, and by implication were restrained from so doing by the readiness of their generals to surrender. One is not permitted to question the sincerity of these declarations, which have received the approval of public opinion by the elevation of the heroes uttering them to such offices as the people of the South have to bestow; and popular opinion in our land is a court from whose decisions there is no appeal on this side of the grave." Taylor believed such dramatic statements were hollow.

Johnston had a spat with Thomas Clingman, who was perhaps looking to his political future. Clingman wanted to "make this a Thermopylae" rather than surrender to Sherman. Johnston retorted that he was "not

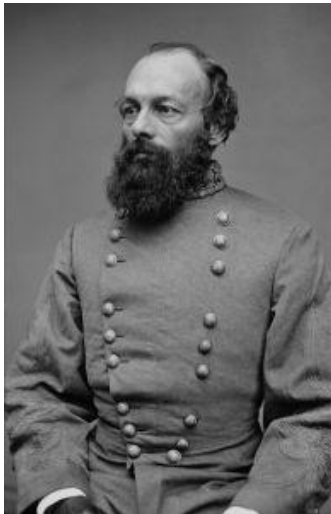


THE OLD LINER



in the Thermopylae business.” Johnston had already told Davis it was over, and Taylor told his men not to turn guerrilla lest they “be hunted down like beasts of prey.” Kirby Smith’s Trans-Mississippi Department was different. It was filled with guerrillas and rough-hewn cavalry. If a true guerrilla war or insurgency were to happen, it would be here, where there were actual diehards as well as men who feared retribution. They might keep fighting.

Smith was tired of his command and asked for reassignment months before. His department was under constant strain and reeling from Sterling Price’s disastrous Missouri invasion. Supplies were dwindling, inflation was high, the men were unpaid, and many were leaving. Smith resorted to freely executing deserters, but it did little good. Some 50 men in the 29th Louisiana left as deserters from east of the Mississippi streamed in, bringing stories of disaster at Nashville and Petersburg.



Confederate Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith in Uniform, 1862

Not until April 19 did Smith know of Lee’s fate when John Pope informed him. It was kept from the men until April 21. The initial reaction from the top brass was to keep fighting, confirmed in a meeting on April 29 in Shreveport. That same day, George Fournoy, backed by Louisiana Governor Henry Allen, said that Smith planned to surrender the department to Pope. Adding to Fournoy’s case, John T. Sprague, Pope’s chief of staff, was at Alexandria waiting for Smith to submit. Smith denied that he wanted to yield, but now there were rumors in a chaotic situation.

Price wanted to arrest Smith. However, Smith’s spies warned him, and Smith ordered Price to Washington, Arkansas, to get him out of Shreveport. How serious Price was is debatable, but it is unnerving that he even contemplated anything. Smith, though, decided to hold on in case Davis made an escape.

Smith had some 50,000 men in arms, but once the news of Lee’s surrender arrived, the department’s shaky discipline and morale collapsed. Desertion accelerated. Officers left and were followed by their men, some destroying their weapons. Lawlessness was so bad that Smith and his staff did not leave their quarters at night.

Texas troops abandoned the cause first. John N. Edwards, a member of Joseph Shelby’s staff, insulted them in 1867 in strong words, that it “never occurred to her galloping, spur-jingling, half-horse, half-alligator Yahoos, that some bastard Federal lieutenant would erect branches of his negro bureau in every available town, and through the magic



THE OLD LINER



of a shoulder-strap whip away the half dozen revolvers girt about them, and the fearful yells with which the long-haired man-eaters were wont to extinguish the ‘Yankees’ and devour the ‘Dutch.’ Where now are the ‘three-foot’ bowie-knives? Where the coiled lassoes for fancy work about the skirmish lines? Where the unterrified, unextinguishable, unadulterated, *unutterable* Tex-i-ans, who swore as an excuse for clandestinely disbanding, that if the ‘Yankees dared to pollute the sacred soil of Texas, every rivulet should run with blood and every bayou should be a battle-field?’ Herding harmless cattle in the sunlight, and promising great things some day — subjugated, oppressed, trampled upon, and despised by the very ‘Yankees’ to whom they marched three hundred miles to surrender, and for whose sakes their guns were consumed in the prairie grass, and their swords beaten into plowshares.”

On May 8, Sprague met Smith at Shreveport and told him Johnston had surrendered. Smith wavered, knowing there was no major army east of the Mississippi outside of Taylor’s forces, which had just taken a beating at Mobile and Selma. Regardless, Smith turned down Pope on May 9, in part because Pope’s message was too harsh. Meanwhile, morale utterly collapsed in the department at the news of Johnston’s surrender, and now most generals and politicians decided it was truly over. In a May 13 meeting at Marshall, Texas, the various governors advised Smith to surrender.



John Pope

Despite all the bad news, Shelby would not give up. He wanted to replace Smith with Simon Buckner. The plan was to keep on fighting until driven across the Rio Grande, where the Rebels would help either side in the ongoing Mexican Civil War and from there found “an Empire or a Republic.”

When Shelby told Smith his plan, Smith cried and promised to hand command to Buckner, who agreed to take command only if Smith gave it up willingly.

Buckner apparently agreed with Shelby at this point, but there is some doubt about how serious he was. However, most soldiers wanted to give up, and Buckner was fast losing hope, if he had any. Smith, meanwhile, at Shelby’s behest, sent William Preston to Mexico to apprise him of the situation. There were vague hopes of Mexico letting the Rebels in or even asserting some authority over Texas. Smith also expected Davis to arrive via Cuba, not knowing yet he was in Wilson’s custody. At



THE OLD LINER

the same time, Smith sent a letter to Pope to reopen talks.

That the war would end was certain, but the situation was in flux and dangerous. The next few weeks would determine if the bloodshed would end sooner or later. And in this situation, Buckner would play a key role

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