

# The Battle of Bristoe Station



RESEARCHING A BATTLE

BILL BACKUS

# Battle of Bristoe Station Anniversary Weekend



Join County Historians for Special In-Time Walking Tours and Evening Luminary for the last Civil War battle in Prince William County.

*Saturday and Sunday  
Oct. 15-16*

**Bristoe Station  
Anniversary Weekend**  
11am-4pm

*Saturday, October 15*  
**Bristoe Luminary**  
5pm



*Friday, October 14*  
**In-Time Walking  
Tours**

3pm-6pm  
Special tours will follow:  
1st Minnesota  
27th North Carolina  
14th Connecticut

All tours are **FREE**  
For more information  
Please call:  
703-366-3049

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Prince William County Department of Public Works  
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# Bristoe Station

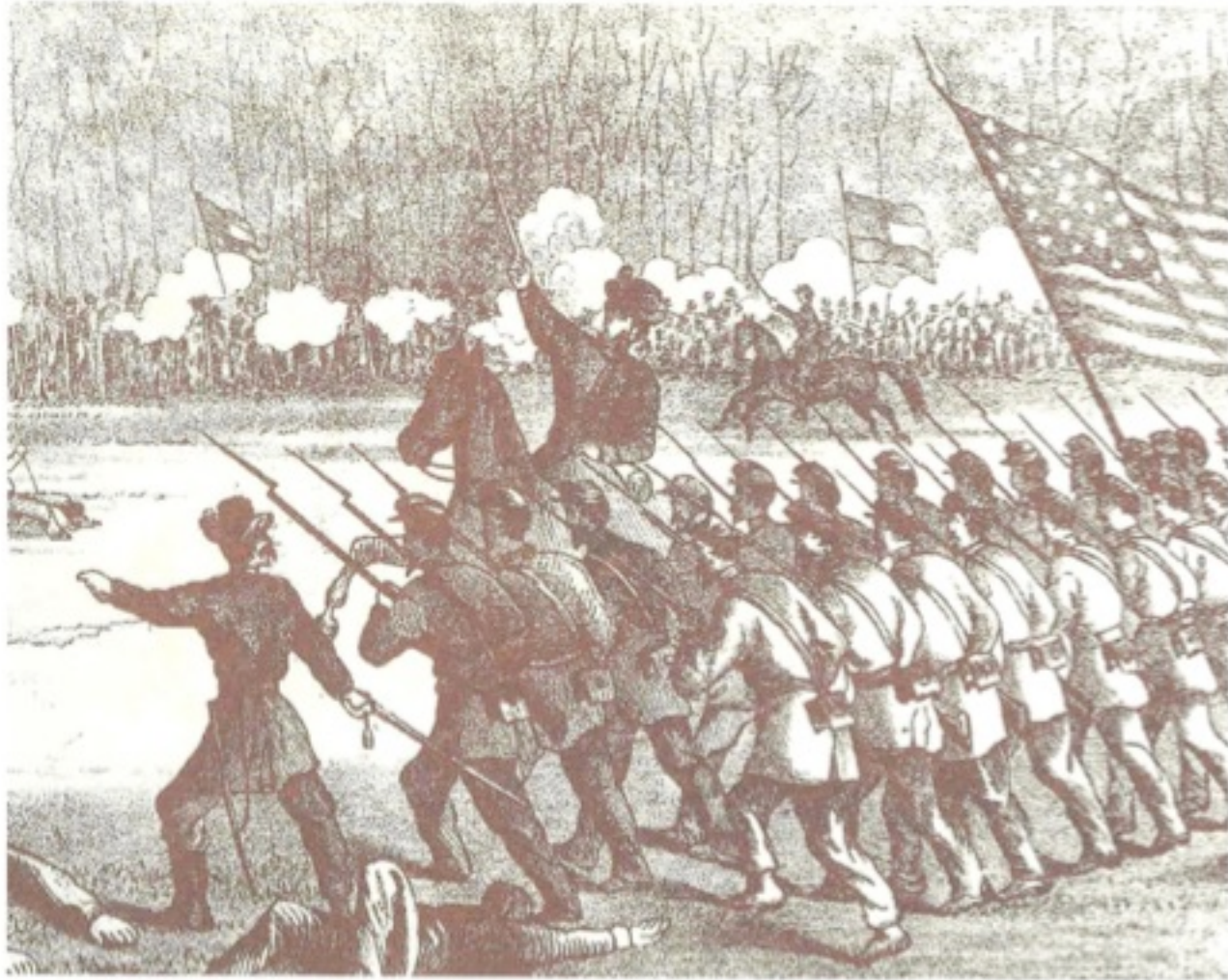


# Bristoe in the Civil War



- Camp Jones: Summer/ Fall 1861
- Battle of Kettle Run: August 27, 1862
- Battle of Bristoe Station: October 14, 1863
- Pennsylvania Reserves Camp: Winter 1863-64

# Battle of Kettle Run



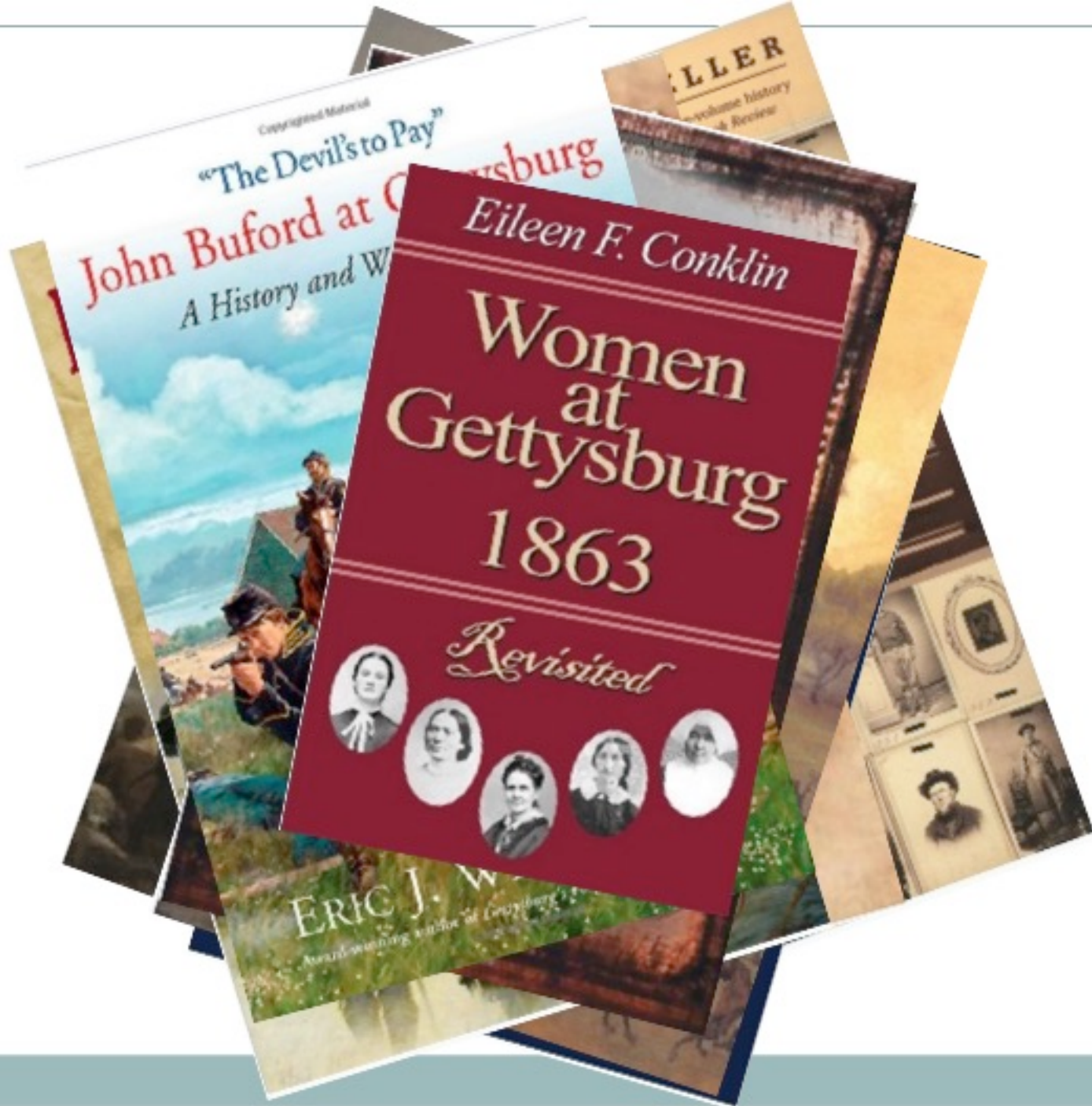
# Battle of Bristoe Station



BATTLE OF BRISTOW, OCT. 14th, 1863.

THIRD BRIGADE, 3D DIV., 2D CORPS.

Seizing the Railroad Cut.



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Bill Backus and Robert Orrison

Foreword by J. Michael Miller

# *A Want of Vigilance*

The Bristoe Station Campaign,  
October 9-19, 1863



EMERGING CIVIL WAR SERIES

Copyrighted Material

# Official Records of the War of the Rebellion



- After Action Report from commanding officer
- Written a few weeks to a few months later
- No standard format
- Officer casualties meant different view points

*Report of Lieut. Col. Charles G. Freudenberg, Fifty-second New York Infantry.*

NEAR CENTREVILLE, VA.,  
October 17, 1863.

CAPTAIN: In obedience to circular from headquarters First Division, I have the honor to report that this regiment broke camp near the Rapidan at 4.30 a. m., Saturday, October 10, 1863, and marched to the Culpeper road, where it joined the brigade, with which it has participated in all the recent movements.

Early on the morning of the 14th of October, at Auburn, the regiment resting in two lines, the men engaged in cooking their breakfast, the enemy's artillery suddenly and unexpectedly opened fire, occasioning a loss of 2 enlisted men killed and 5 enlisted men wounded. Line of battle was immediately formed and the regiment withdrawn behind the crest of the hill. The enemy's fire ceasing, the regiment changed front, when shortly after another battery opened a severe and well-directed fire, wounding 2 enlisted men. About 10 a. m. the regiment moved off by the flank under the enemy's artillery fire, halting on the road on several occasions to form line of battle.

About 2 p. m. it arrived at Bristoe Station, where a spirited engagement was at the time progressing, and it was placed in line of battle on the rear crest of the railroad track, ready for action. Here it was Capt. William Scherrer was wounded by a piece of shell and 1 enlisted man killed. After dark the regiment fell in and moved off by the flank, arriving near its present camping ground toward morning.

The conduct of the officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men deserves creditable mention, of the latter over 600 being conscripts, with only about 80 veterans. They bore the fatigue of the severe marches admirably, and acted under fire better than could have been expected of recruits.

I remain, captain, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
C. G. FREUDENBERG,

*Lieutenant-Colonel, Comdg. Fifty-second New York Vols.*

Capt. GEORGE W. JONES,  
*Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.*

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*Reports of Col. Clinton D. MacDougall, One hundred and eleventh  
New York Infantry.*

HDQRS. 111TH REGIMENT NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS,  
*Camp at Mitchell's Ford, Va., October 17, 1863.*

CAPTAIN: I have the honor to report that on the night of the 13th instant the One hundred and eleventh Regiment New York Volunteers encamped with the brigade in the woods near Little Auburn, and early on the morning of the 14th instant, with the brigade, under command of Brigadier-General Owen, took up the line of march by the right flank, but had proceeded but a short distance beyond the village when the enemy were discovered on the left of the column on the hills commanding the road. Companies A and H were sent forward as skirmishers, and the regiment deployed in line of battle, on the left of the brigade, on the hill, in front of a battery of the enemy which had opened fire upon us. The enemy were driven back, when the regiment was marched with the brigade to a field on

the left of the road and again formed in line of battle on the left of the brigade, and in this manner advanced about a mile, when, no enemy appearing, the column resumed its march by the flank to Catlett's Station. In this engagement the regiment met with no casualty.

At Catlett's Station the regiment was detailed to guard a road leading to the right, and from that point, when the column resumed its march, was deployed as flankers on the right and left of the brigade. On arriving near Bristoe Station, our artillery were found engaging a force of the enemy which advanced to attack the column from the hills on the left of the railroad. The men were suffering much from the fatigue of a rapid march through the underbrush and thick wood which extended along the route, but at the command assembled on the right group and formed in line of battle on the left center of the brigade. At this point one of our batteries, advancing to take position, broke through the line and caused some confusion on the left, but the regiment speedily reformed and advanced on the run, under a severe fire of musketry, to secure the embankment of the railroad, which the regiment reached simultaneously with the Thirty-ninth and One hundred and twenty-fifth New York Volunteers, which were on the right of the brigade. The regiment maintained this position behind the railroad, and assisted in the repulse and defeat of the enemy, who charged down the hill with the intention of carrying the position.

The loss of the regiment in this engagement was 2 enlisted men killed, 2 commissioned officers and 21 enlisted men wounded, and 2 enlisted men missing. Details from the regiment brought into our lines about 100 prisoners, and assisted in securing 4 guns captured by the brigade.

Both officers and men conducted themselves most gallantly through the entire action.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

C. DUGALD MacDOUGALL,

*Colonel, Commanding 111th New York Volunteers.*

Capt. R. S. SEABURY,

*Assistant Adjutant-General.*

#### HEADQUARTERS 111TH REGIMENT NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS,

*Camp at Mitchell's Ford, Va., October 17, 1863.*

CAPTAIN: I have the honor to report that early in the afternoon of the 15th instant, a detachment of this regiment, under command of Capt. Frank Rich, was sent out as skirmishers, in front of the brigade and on the left bank of Bull Run and on the left of Mitchell's Ford. The enemy occupied the rifle-pits on the opposite bank of the stream, and opened fire upon us, which we returned.

The skirmishing was kept up until about 5 p. m., when, the ammunition of the detachment being exhausted, it was relieved by a detachment from the Thirty-ninth New York Volunteers.

Our loss was only 1 man slightly wounded.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

C. DUGALD MacDOUGALL,

*Colonel, Commanding 111th New York Volunteers.*

Capt. R. S. SEABURY,

*Asst. Adj. Gen., 3d Brig., 3d Div., 3d Army Corps.*

gling, shortened our line so much that with the addition of one of General Kirkland's regiments (Forty-fourth North Carolina), which joined our left, the left of the brigade was some distance to the right of the guns. On learning the guns were there and in danger, I dispatched a portion of one regiment to the relief, but the guns had been taken off before the relief arrived.

I would respectfully state that I have been with the brigade during some of the heaviest engagements of the war, and have never seen the men more cool and determined, and that their falling back resulted from no fault of theirs, but from the great superiority in number and position of the enemy, and entire want of support, both in rear and prolongation of our lines.

I have the honor to be, respectfully,

E. D. HALL,  
Colonel, Commanding.

Maj. R. H. FINNEY,  
Assistant Adjutant-General.

No. 107.

*Report of Maj. David G. McIntosh, C. S. Army, commanding  
Artillery Battalion.*

CAMP NEAR BEVERLY FORD,  
October 23, 1863.

CAPTAIN: In accordance with your request I have the honor to submit the following report, being duplicate of one already furnished Colonel Walker, of the part taken by this battalion in the engagement at Bristoe Station on the afternoon of the 14th instant:

When within about a mile of the station I received an order from Major-General Anderson, through Major Duncan, his staff officer, to move my battalion to the front. Passing the division, I halted a moment upon the open ground where the descent to the railroad begins, and Major Duncan saying as he joined me again that he had directions from Lieutenant-General Hill where to place me, I moved immediately on, attracting some fire from the enemy's batteries. Observing that I was approaching near the enemy, I ordered Captain Hurt to take his two Whitworth guns out of the column and place them in the best position he could find on the hills in rear. Captain Johnson's battery had previously been detached by order of General Anderson, and left at Broad Run. With the remaining nine guns I proceeded to follow Major Duncan, who pointed out an open space between two pine thickets as the position which I was to occupy.

Our line of infantry was then in the act of advancing over the hill at this point and drew a heavy musketry fire upon them in rear. I therefore halted my column at the base of the rising ground in front, sending word by Lieutenant Houston, my ordnance officer, who accompanied me on the field, to Lieutenant-General Hill why I had done so, and ordering the pieces to draw up under cover, I proceeded to look at the ground with Major Duncan. On casting my eye over the field I saw and represented to Major Duncan the exposure of the situation because of its proximity to the railroad bank, being only 400 or 500 yards distant, where the enemy's line of bat-

tle was posted and in full view of a number of opposing batteries stretching from the left to the extreme right. He (Major Duncan) left, saying he would represent the situation to General Hill.

In the meantime our line had advanced a short distance over the crest of the hill, and exhibiting symptoms of wavering, I ordered up five light rifled pieces, consisting of the Second Rockbridge Battery, three guns, Lieutenant Wallace commanding, and a section of Hurt's battery, under Lieutenant Crenshaw, and directed them to open with shell, firing over the heads of our men.

Lieutenant Houston returned just at this time with a message from General Hill that he wished me to take position as quickly as possible, and I thereupon ordered up a section of Rice's Napoleon battery, placing it to the left of the rifled guns. Before this order was executed, however, our line of infantry in front had broken, and, falling back through the guns, passed on to the rear. My officers joined me in endeavoring to rally and stop them upon the slope in rear of the guns, but without avail. Lieutenant Wilson, while thus engaged, was struck down and seriously injured by a shell.

The ground being clear of our infantry in front, I directed a round or two of canister to be thrown at the enemy along the railroad, but pointed the fire chiefly against the opposing battery, which concentrated upon me a converging fire from this direction. I dispatched a messenger hastily to General Hill to say that I was badly enfiladed from the right and regarded the position untenable, which message the general has since informed me he did not receive.

Believing I could obtain a position to the right where I might divert the enemy's fire, I proceeded in that direction with two guns undischarged of (a section of Napoleons under Lieutenant Price), and met Major Duncan on the way, who told me guns were needed in that quarter, and who showed me a position from which the enemy's battery, then annoying me so much, could be taken almost in rear. He informed me at the same time that General Long would have up a number of guns in a few minutes, and as one of Lieutenant Price's was detained by an accident on the way, I deemed it imprudent to open with one gun, and ordered the lieutenant to report to General Long as soon as he came up and desire him to open immediately.

Returning to the first position, where I had left seven guns engaged, I observed that the fire had ceased. On inquiring the reason of Lieutenant Wallace, then in command, he replied that he had not men enough left to work the guns; that the enemy were advancing, and he had just been to look for infantry support. I at once ordered the guns to be dragged down the hill by hand, and the remaining men, who were lying in the bush, started forward; but at that instant a body of the enemy, apparently skirmishers, appeared stealing over the crest of the hill and in a moment more were among the guns. I saw it was too late to remove them, and directed the limbers and caissons to be drawn off in the edge of the woods, and the men to retire without noise.

Believing the number of the enemy at the guns to be small, and that they could still be recovered with prompt action, I rode rapidly in search of a body of infantry; but the plain in my rear was bare of all troops. After some minutes I found a brigade (General Walker's, I think), and reported to him the condition of affairs and desired him to throw forward a body quickly as possible. A few minutes after I observed General Heth approaching, when I informed him also

of my situation. Lieutenant Wallace informs me that he saw the enemy roll off the guns by hand in a few minutes after they were taken possession of.

The two Napoleon guns of Captain Rice were both disabled, having their axles broken and the cheek of one shivered. One was dragged off before the approach of the enemy; the other was recovered the next morning. All the ammunition in the limbers of the pieces was expended by Captain Rice, his caissons being kept in rear. He estimates the time during which he was engaged at one hour. His casualties were 8 men wounded and 10 horses disabled.

The five rifled pieces which preceded Captain Rice in the action were engaged probably an hour and a quarter.

Lieutenant Wallace's three guns fired 204 rounds. His casualties were 2 lieutenants wounded, and 2 men killed and 13 wounded.

Lieutenant Crenshaw's section fired only 25 rounds. His casualties were 1 man killed and 16 wounded.

The total casualties was 3 men killed and 39 wounded. Forty-four horses were disabled.

The section of Napoleon guns under Lieutenant Price reported to Lieutenant-Colonel Jones, of General Long's command, and was engaged late in the afternoon without suffering any loss in men or horses.

The section of Whitworths fired 8 shots at the enemy, also without loss.

I am, captain, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

D. G. McINTOSH,

*Major of Artillery.*

Capt. W. N. STARKE,

*Assistant Adjutant-General, Third Army Corps.*

No. 108.

*Reports of Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart, C. S. Army, commanding Cavalry Corps.*

BUCKLAND, VA.,

October 20, 1863.

GENERAL: After offering some considerable resistance to the advance of the enemy at this point yesterday, in accordance with the suggestion of Major-General Lee, I retired with Hampton's division slowly before the enemy until within 2½ miles of Warrenton, in order that Major-General Lee, coming from Auburn, might have an opportunity to attack the enemy in flank and rear. The plan proved successful. The enemy followed slowly and cautiously after Hampton's division, when, on hearing Major-General Lee's guns on their flank, I pressed upon them vigorously in front. They at first resisted my attack stubbornly, but once broken the rout was complete. I pursued them from within 3 miles of Warrenton to Buckland, the horses at full speed the whole distance, the enemy retreating in great confusion. Major-General Lee had attacked them in flank just below Buckland.

We captured about 200 prisoners, 8 wagons and ambulances, and arms, horses, and equipments.

# Other Primary Accounts



- Newspapers
- Journals/Diaries
- Letters
- Regimental Histories

— A correspondent of the Raleigh Progress, writing from Cook's brigade, relates the following incident:

I will now give you an incident in the battle at Bristol, which I can assure you is strictly true, as the officer who saw it and told me about it is a man of undoubted veracity. There was a man of company A, 27th N. O. troops, named Geo. P. Piner, who went into the fight with a small Testament in his breast pocket.— A ball struck the book, and penetrated as far as the 5th chap. Mat., 21st and 22d verses. It merely blackened that passage, glanced off, and left the man uninjured. The verses read: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment, and whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment."— The man said, *that* Yankee ball was like the devil—it had to turn its course when met by scriptural opposition. There was a man also of the same company and regiment, named J. H. Parker, who discovered a Yankee sharpshooter behind an old chimney. He ran up to him, and bayoneted the Yankee through the body, killing him instantly. Parker, I am sorry to say, was killed himself shortly afterwards.

#### FROM THE RAPPAHANNOCK.

We learn that on Friday evening, the enemy, supposed to be twenty five thousand strong, attacked two of our brigades—Hoke's and Hayes'—and after a gallant defence, in which the Yankees suffered heavy loss in killed and wounded, they succeeded in flanking the two brigades; capturing a considerable number of men, and several pieces of artillery. The fight took place north of the Rappahannock. It is said the Yankees crossed at Kelly's Ford and Rappahannock Bridge, Friday evening, and it is supposed Meade's whole force is advancing.

Stirring news may be looked for from that quarter; for if Meade desires a general engagement he will no doubt be accommodated—and with the usual result when the two armies come in contact in Northern Virginia.

The enemy are reported to have disappeared from the lower part of Stafford.

*Richmond Sentinel.*

1863

Oct 14

The boys reported that the enemy are right upon us some claiming that both sides got water from the same source. We started this AM very early and as soon as we were moving the enemy commenced to drop shells in our ranks. We forded the river and charged their battery, capturing it and some prisoners, clearing the road. We at once started again, the enemy following us as close as they dare, came out on the RR at Cattlets Station and followed the RR going north. About 2 AM heard sounds of artillery firing directly in our road and were doublequicked to Broad Run where we crossed and were given the order to move by the Left Flank and on looking up saw the enemy moving toward us on the double quick each side trying to get to the RR first where there was a big cut. We arrived first and get the position which we held advancing through a piece of pine woods capturing 5 pieces of artillery and a large number of prisoners. Learned the name of this place is Bristoe Station. As soon as it was dark we retreated carrying off all our wounded. Having had 2 battles today capturing 8 pieces of artillery beside prisoners from a force who has chasing us.

- 15 Crossed Bull Run early this morning after being on the road all night and formed our lines on the heights to receive attack which was given about 5 PM but amounted to nothing as we were ready to receive them.
- 16 All quiet on our front today but there has been some heavy firing toward the Gap.

Bristle Station <sup>16</sup>  
 1/2 mi. N. of Rappahannock Station  
 Oct 17<sup>th</sup> 1863

My dear Mother

I wrote to Father day before yesterday to let you know that I had only received a slight wound, in the fight of the day before.

We had a very severe fight. Our brigade and Bowles' brigade were the only troops much engaged and we suffered very severely. It was the hottest place I ever saw. Sharpsburg was not near so hot. The engagement commenced about three o'clock and lasted till near night and in that time we lost fully two thirds of our Regt. Our loss 7 killed, 3 officers and 21 men wounded and 16 missing. The killed are Capt. H. P. Strong, Private Campbell, J. C. Carter, G. Morris, W. F. Pearson, Jas. Shields and J. E. Woods. The wounded are Capt. Dickson severely on right side, myself slightly in right knee, Lt. Patterson severely in groin, Private Conrad Brown right arm amputated, T. P. Clark right foot slightly, J. K. Colcord thigh broken, Co. I. Corley hand slightly, Dorothy hand slightly, E. J. Fannett thigh severe, A. J. Farnes hand slightly, M. A. Latta thigh slightly, Kaley hand slightly, Lockhart brain by shell slightly, Private brain by shell slightly, Nelson leg severe, W. H. Newman face & leg severe, Pickette leg amputated, R. Roy Strain face severe, S. G. Strayhorn ankle slightly, D. Thompson brain by shell slightly, W. Thompson arm slightly, Jas. Webb breast severe, J. H. Woods thigh severe, and W. D. Woods leg and knee severe.

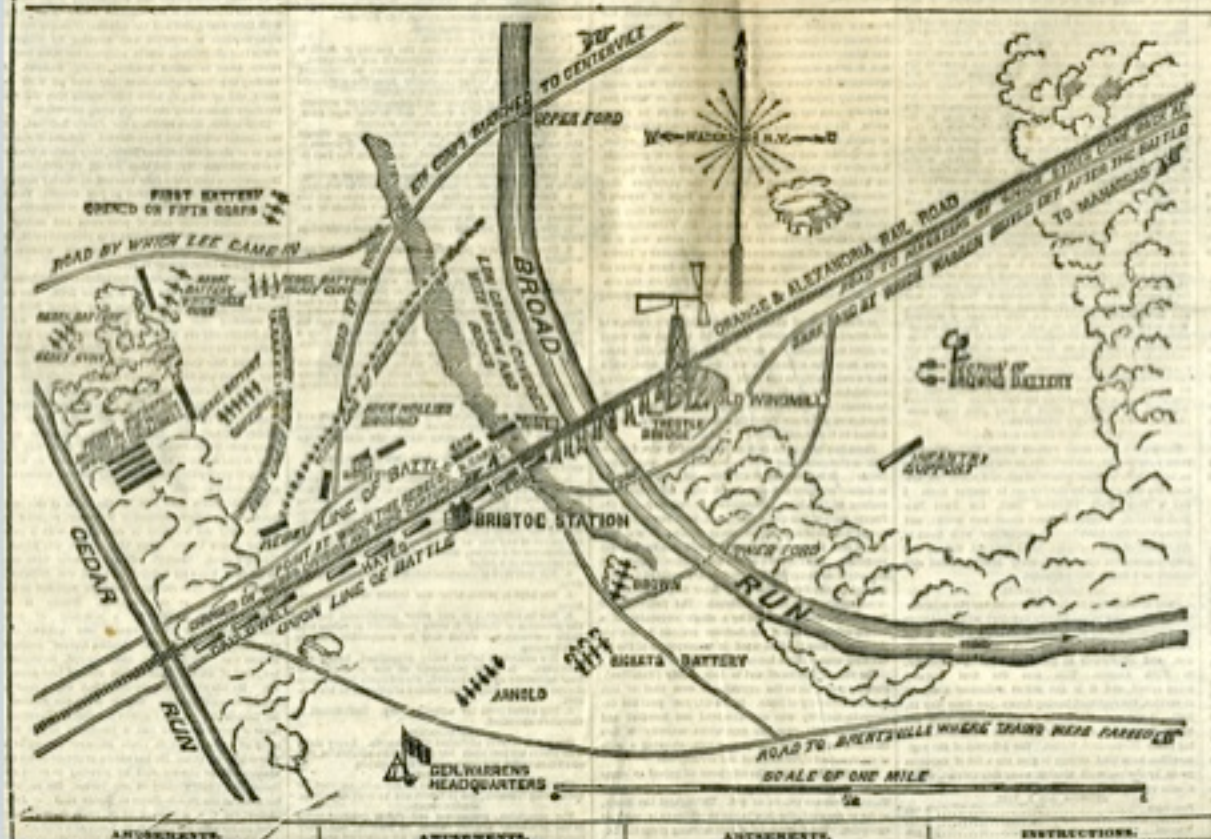
The Missing are: Sergeants, Corp. 2 Halls, Private Polyzlock.

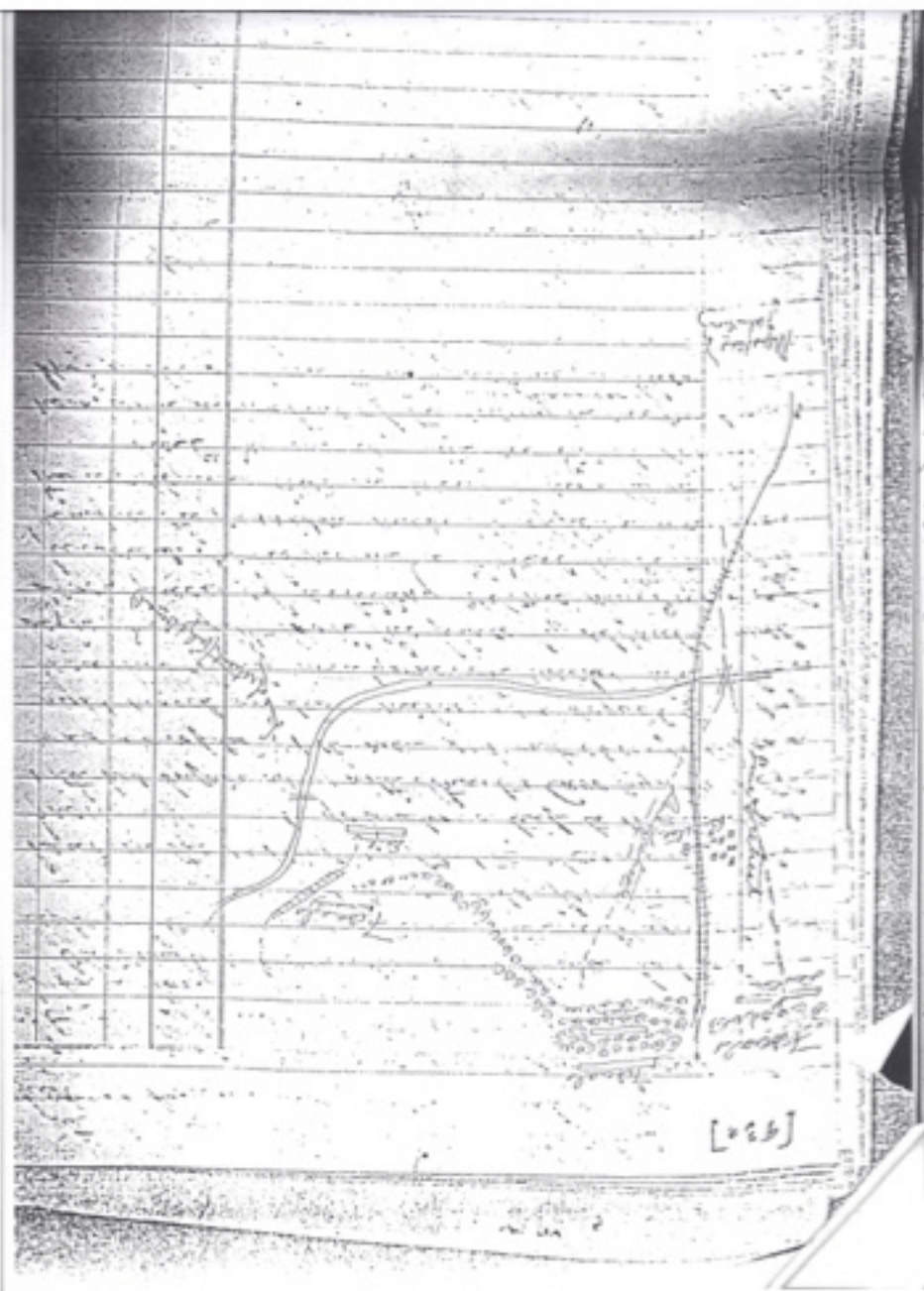
# MAPS

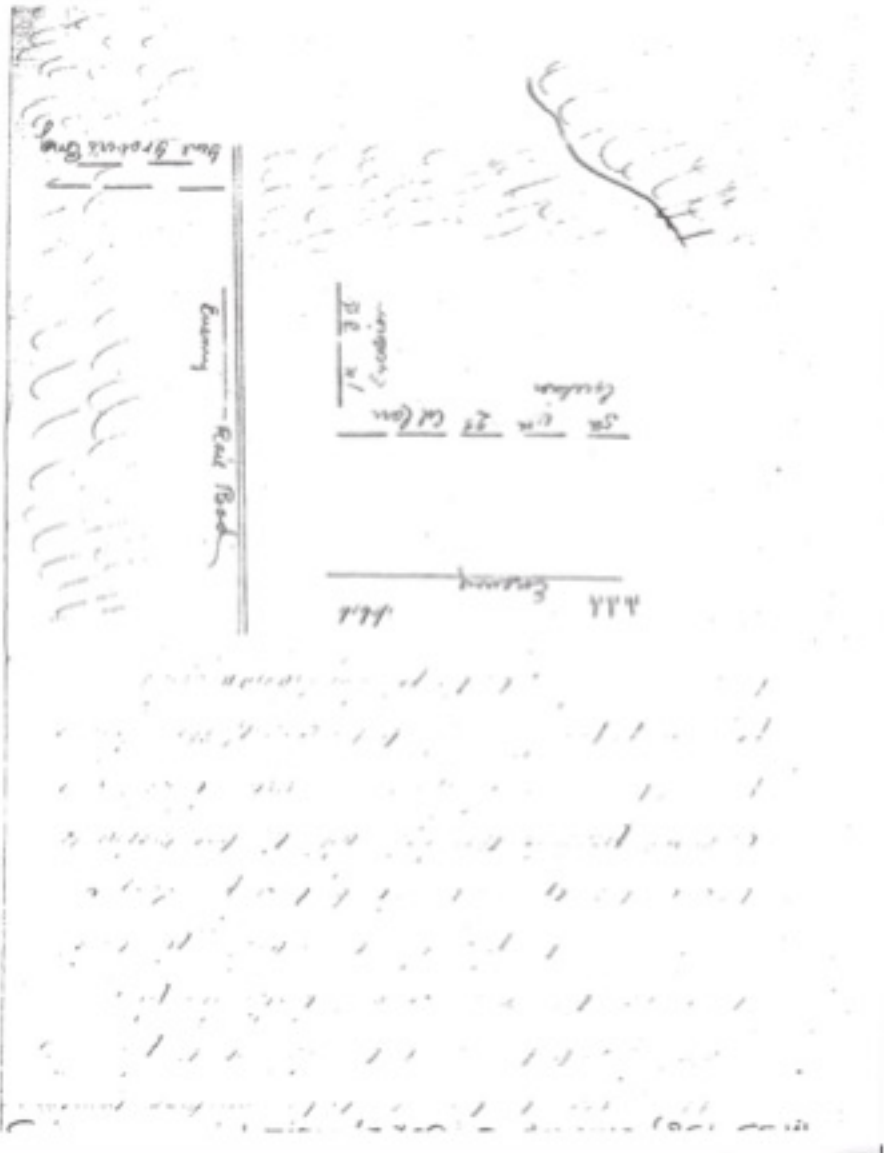
NEW YORK, MONDAY OCTOBER 19, 1863.—TRIPLE SHEET.

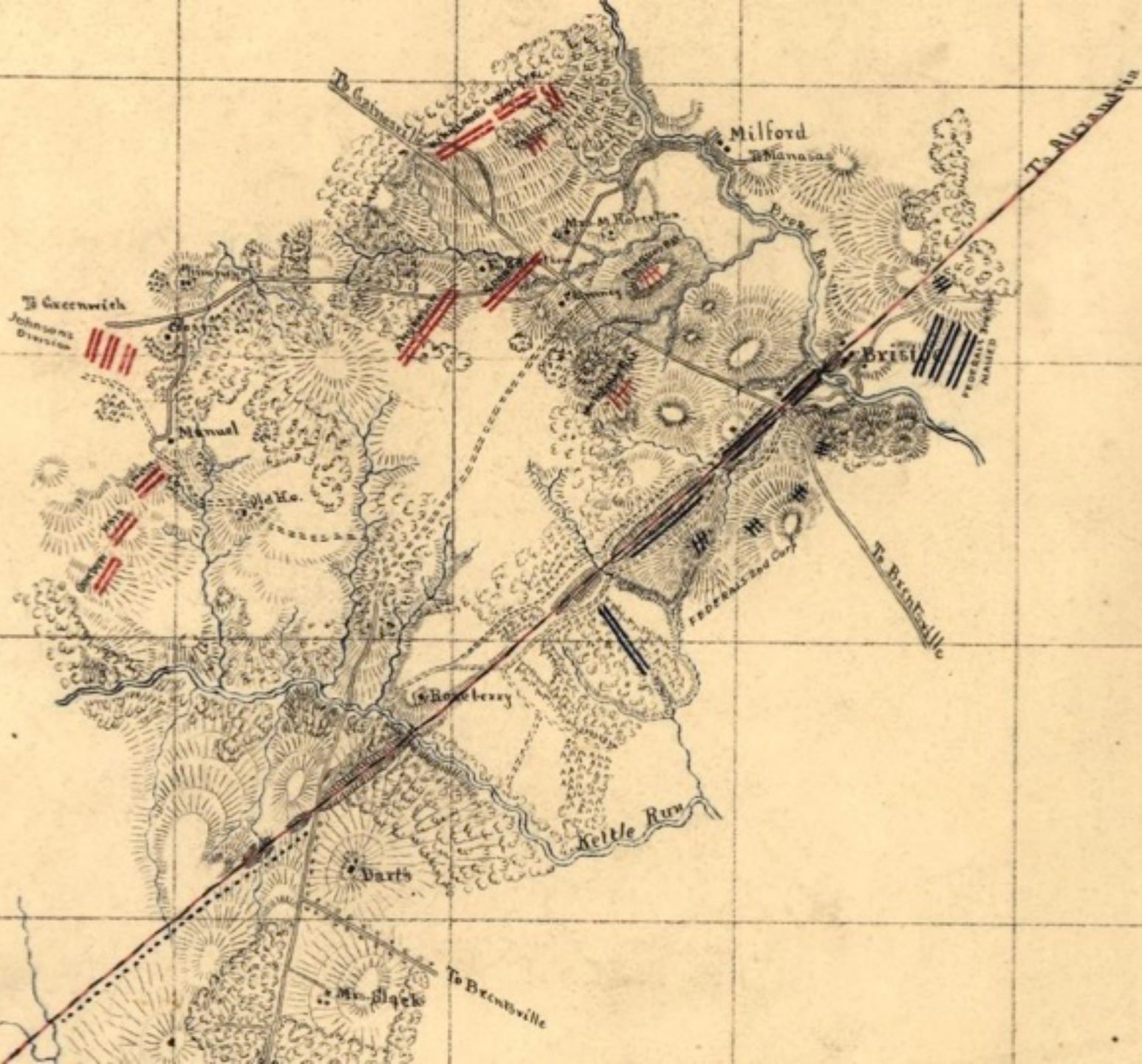
## THE VICTORY AT BRISTOE.

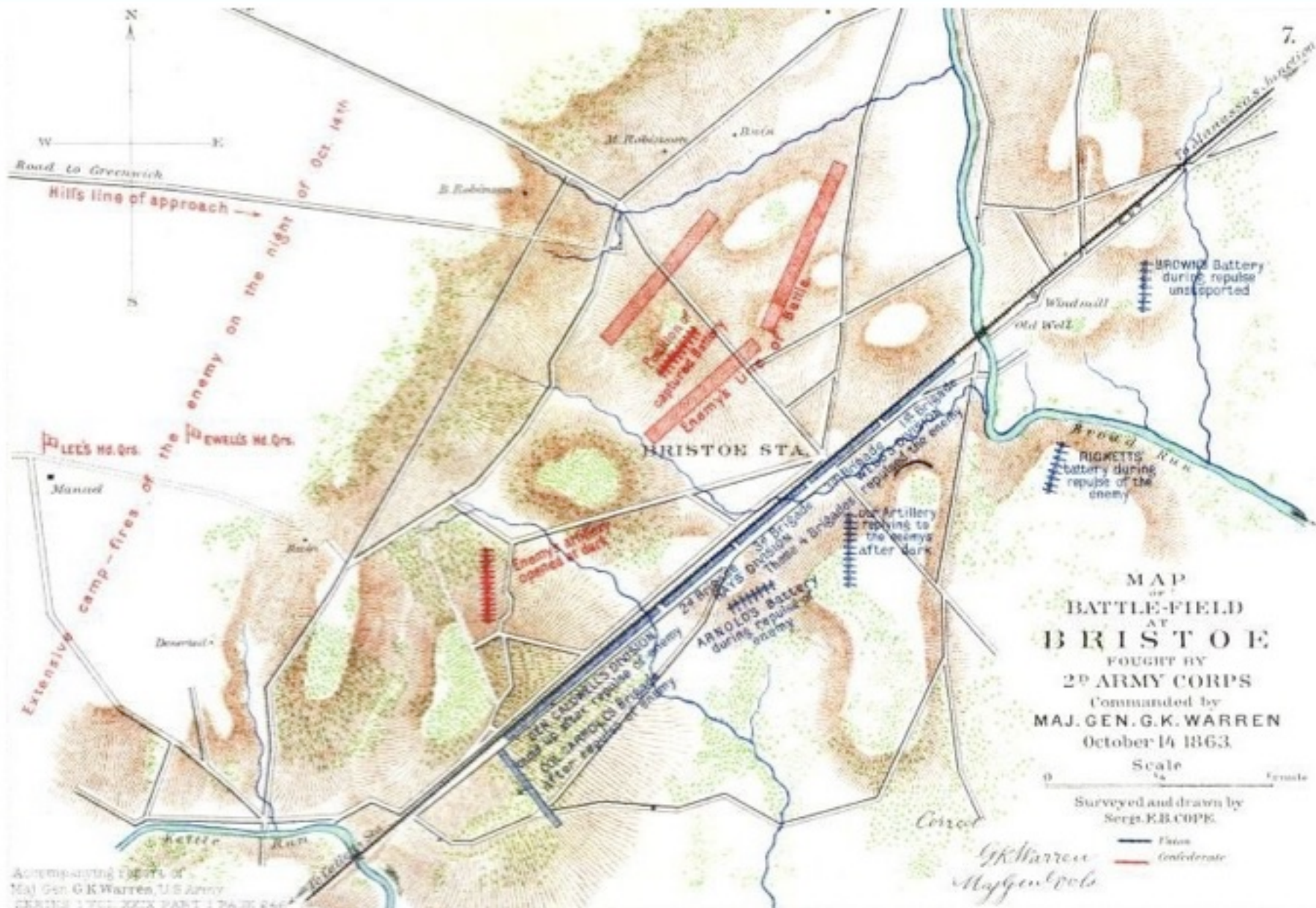
Map of the Battle Field of Broad Run, or Bristoe, October 14, 1863, Drawn on the Spot by Mr. F. G. Chapman.

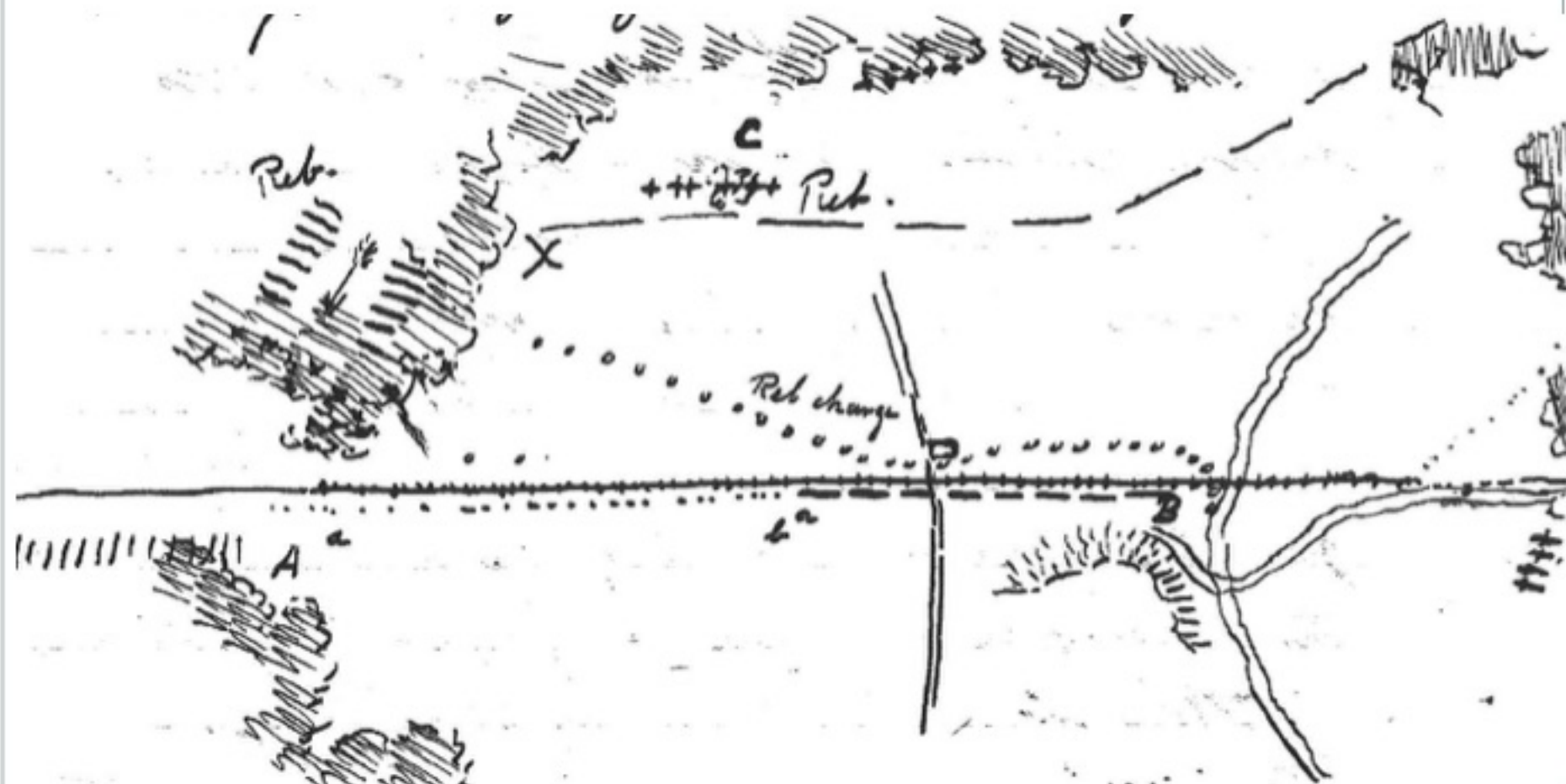












002NR

Boundary fence

Boundary fence

Cross fence

90 ACRES TIMBERED LAND  
(T.K. DAVIS)

Cross fence

Boundary fence

Cross fence

Boundary fence

Hay meadow Road

BRISTOL  
STATION

A Map of two Tracts  
of Land the property  
of J. H. Davis  
showing the Buildings  
and timber including  
fencing thereon from  
to 1st April 1882

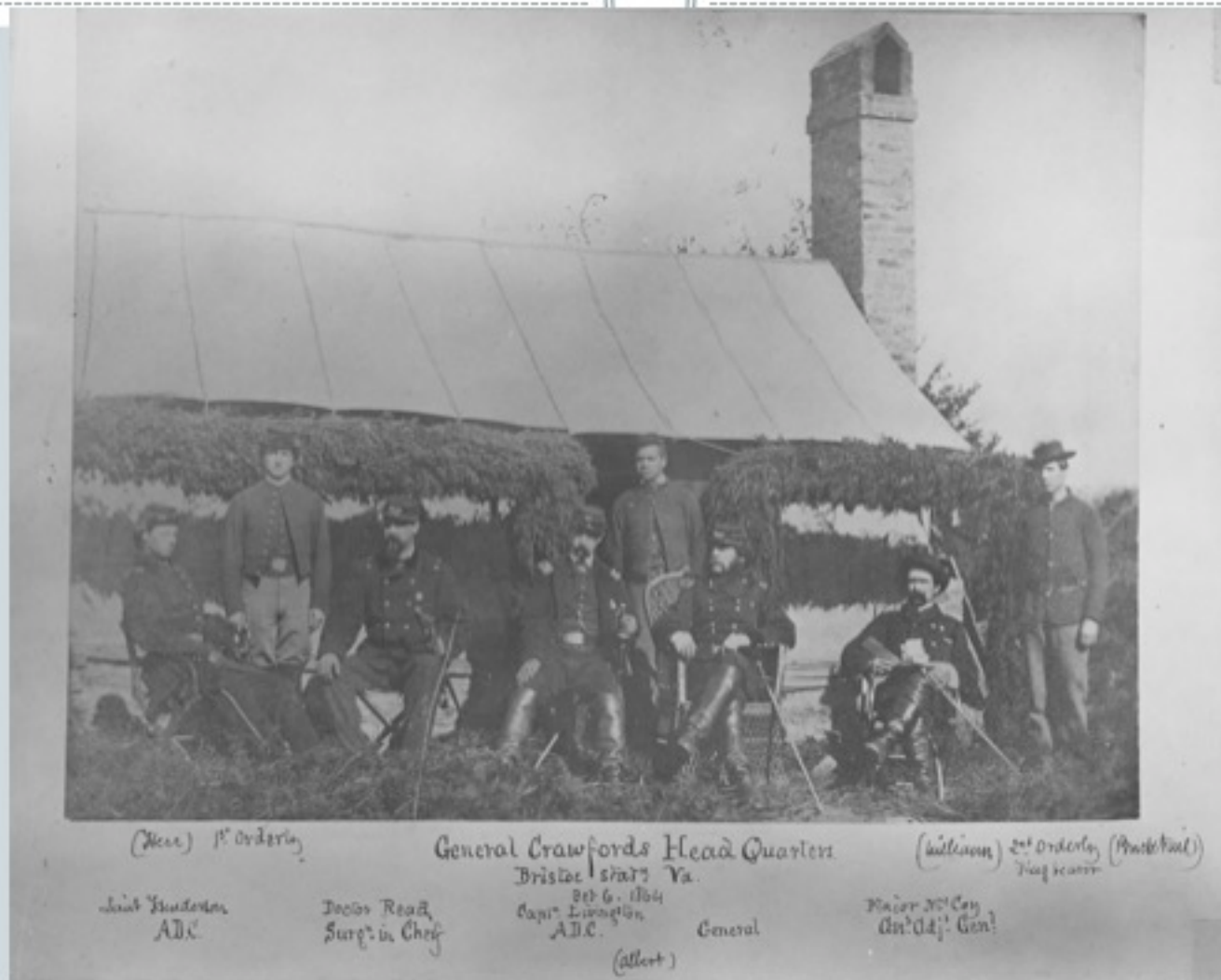
4100 ACRES

timbered land

Church Road



# Images





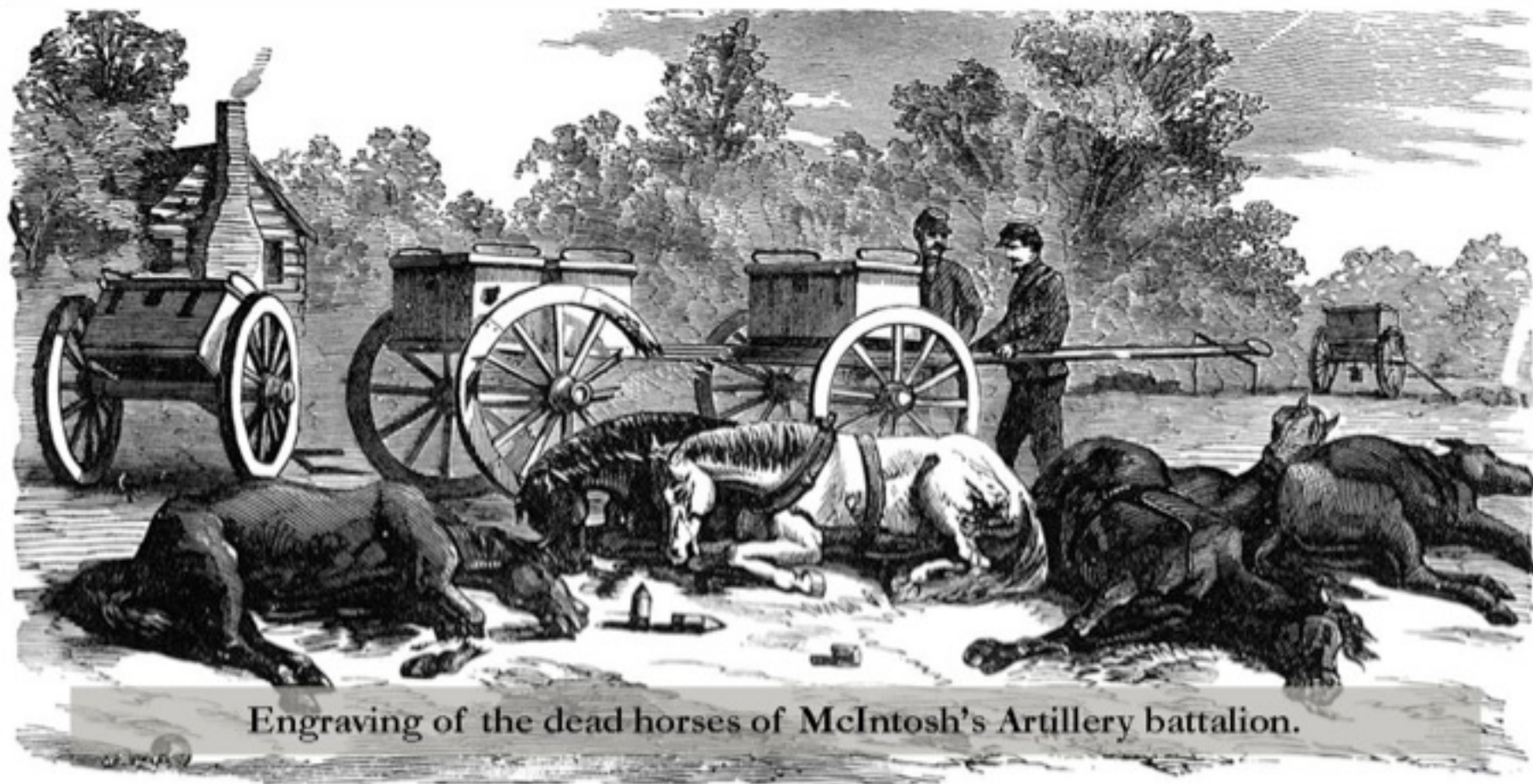
THE BATTLEFIELD. near BRISTOE STATION. Showing destruction of R.R. Road by Ewell when retreating  
sketched Aug 17 1862 by R. H. Sneden U.S.A.



BATTLE OF BRISTOW, OCT. 14th, 1868.

THIRD BRIGADE, 8D DIV., 2D CORPS.

Seizing the Railroad Cut.



Engraving of the dead horses of McIntosh's Artillery battalion.

# Other Sources



- Landscape
- Archaeology
- Oral History
- Memoirs

# Lee-Hill Exchange



- “Well, well General, bury these poor men and let us say no more about it”
- Five different accounts of the exchange:
  - Long
  - Heth
  - Poague
  - Hotchkiss
  - Seymour

# Lee-Hill Exchange



- Armistead Long's *Memoirs of Robert E. Lee*
- Published in 1886
- Promoted and commanded the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps Artillery
- Probably not near Lee

# Lee-Hill Exchange



- Henry Heth's memoirs
- “General, bury your dead”
- Heth included himself in the scene
- Poor performance

# Lee-Hill Exchange



- William Poague
- “One who was near enough to hear what passed told me that General Lee’s reply was ‘General Hill, I think you had better attend to the burying of your dead,’ and that he was evidently not pleased with Hill’s management of the affair.”

# Lee-Hill Exchange



- Jediah Hotchkiss
- “Gen. Lee and staff, accompanied by Gen. Early and staff, rode up to the vicinity of the engagement, where Gen. Lee, ascertaining what had happened, reproached Gen. Hill in most bitter terms for the manner in which he had brought on this engagement, and for the horrible results that had followed, displaying a great deal of bitter feeling in what he said to Gen. Hill.”

# Lee-Hill Exchange



- Capt. William Seymour

October 15, 1863

“The General seemed to be in no good humor and casting a glance over the field thickly strewn with dead Confederates sharply rebuked Gen. Hill to send immediately for his pioneer corps to bury his unfortunate dead. Gen. Hill recognized a rebuke in the tone and manner of his commander and replied, ‘this is my fault, General.’ ‘Yes,’ said Lee, ‘it is your fault; you committed a great blunder yesterday; your line of battle was too short, too thin, and your reserves were too far behind.’ Poor Hill, he appeared deeply humiliated by this speech.”

# Questions?

