

VERMONT IN THE CIVIL WAR

1861 to 1865

DOING ITS FULL DUTY
AND THEN SOME.



1860 Presidential Election

2 November 1860

Abraham Lincoln's election as President triggered the Civil War.

Lincoln was not even allowed on of the ballot in most Southern states.

In a four-way race, Lincoln received 40% of the popular vote nationwide and 180 out of 303 Electoral Votes.

Most slave owning states seceded from the Union as a result.

In Vermont, a very abolitionist state, Lincoln took 75.86% of the vote. Highest percentage of any state.

COUNTY ELECTION RESULTS

Addison-----86.55%	Lamoille -----78.43%
Bennington-70.36%	Orange-----68.94%
Caledonia--73.03%	Orleans-----80.67%
Chittenden-77.81%	Rutland-----73.75%
Essex-----66.67%	Washington-70.67%
Franklin-----71.60%	Windham---79.69%
Grand Isle--71.00%	Windsor-----80.94%



Vermont's Contribution to the War Effort

- When asked by Lincoln what could be expected out of Vermont, Vermont's Governor Erastus Fairbanks responded "VERMONT WILL DO ITS FULL DUTY"
- Around 32,000 men out of a total 1860 population of 315,000 served

17 Infantry regiments (not all existed at the same time)

Three companies of sharpshooters

One cavalry regiment

Three light artillery battalions

One heavy artillery battalion



Casualties

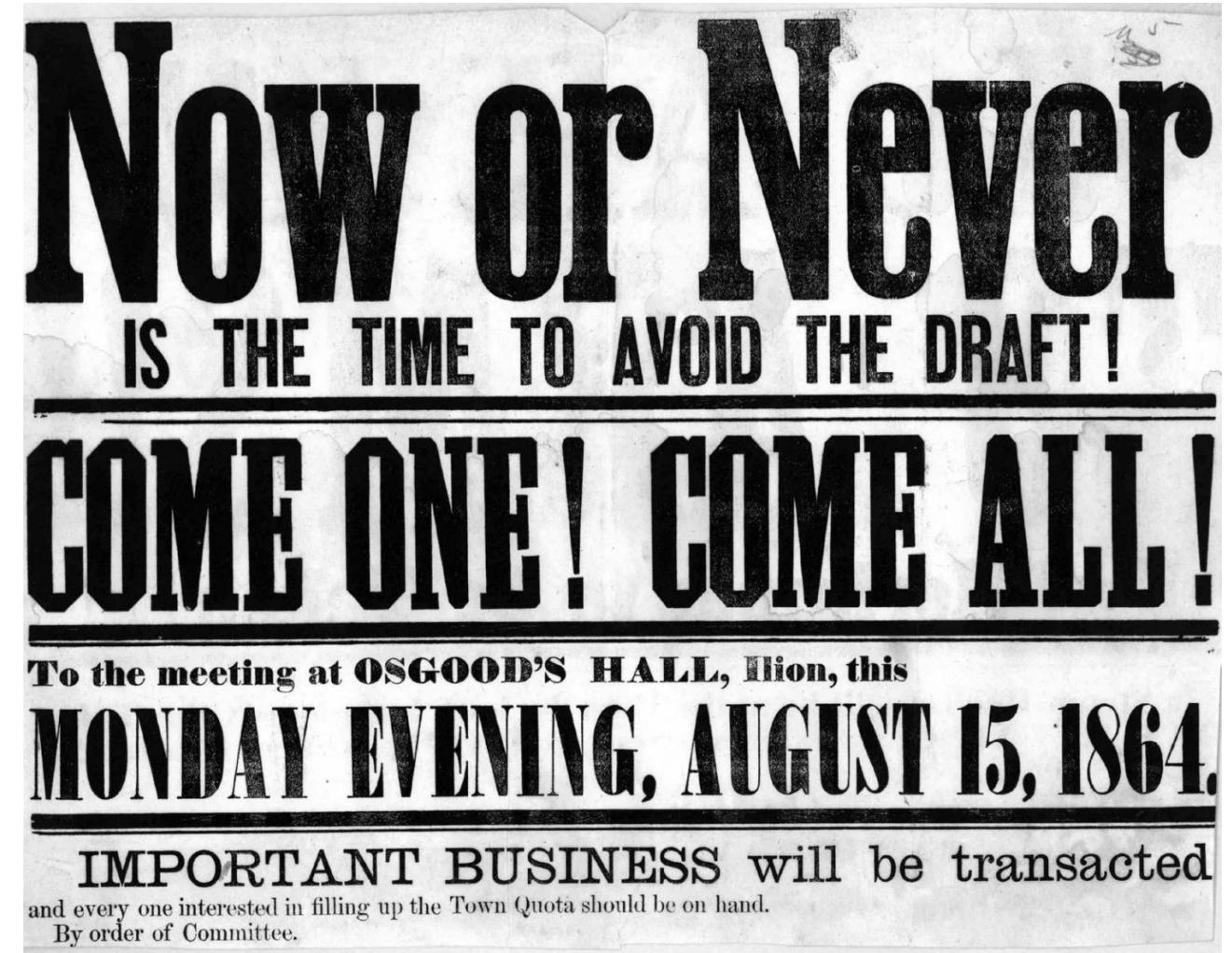
- 5194 Deaths from all causes
- 1832 killed in action
- 3362 died of disease
- 2200 taken prisoner
- 615 died while P.O.W. or soon afterwards.



Replacing Casualties

- To replace casualties and meet quota of soldiers Vermont sent new recruits to existing units.
- Kept veteran units up to strength
- New soldiers learned from the veterans increasing chance of survival
- Some other states did not do this.
- Units were allowed to deplete.
- To meet quota of soldiers formed new units.

My great grandfather Levi Beach was a recruit sent to an existing unit, the 9th Vermont Infantry in December of 1863.





9th VERMONT INFANTRY REGIMENT: First Commander: Colonel George Stannard

- Mustered 9 July 1862 at Brattleboro, VT
- Company C recruited primarily in Addison county
- Look for familiar family names: Example; Beach, Larrow
- Levi S. Beach is my Great Grandfather
- Francis Larrow, likely relative. Deserted
- 1878 total men served
- Casualties
- 23 killed in action.
- 36 died in Confederate P.O.W camps;
- Five died by accident
- Two suicides
- 229 died from disease
- 298 total deaths

EXPLOITS OF VERMONT'S SOLDIERS : ABOVE AND BEYOND FULL DUTY



9th Regiment at Harpers Ferry

12-15 September 1862

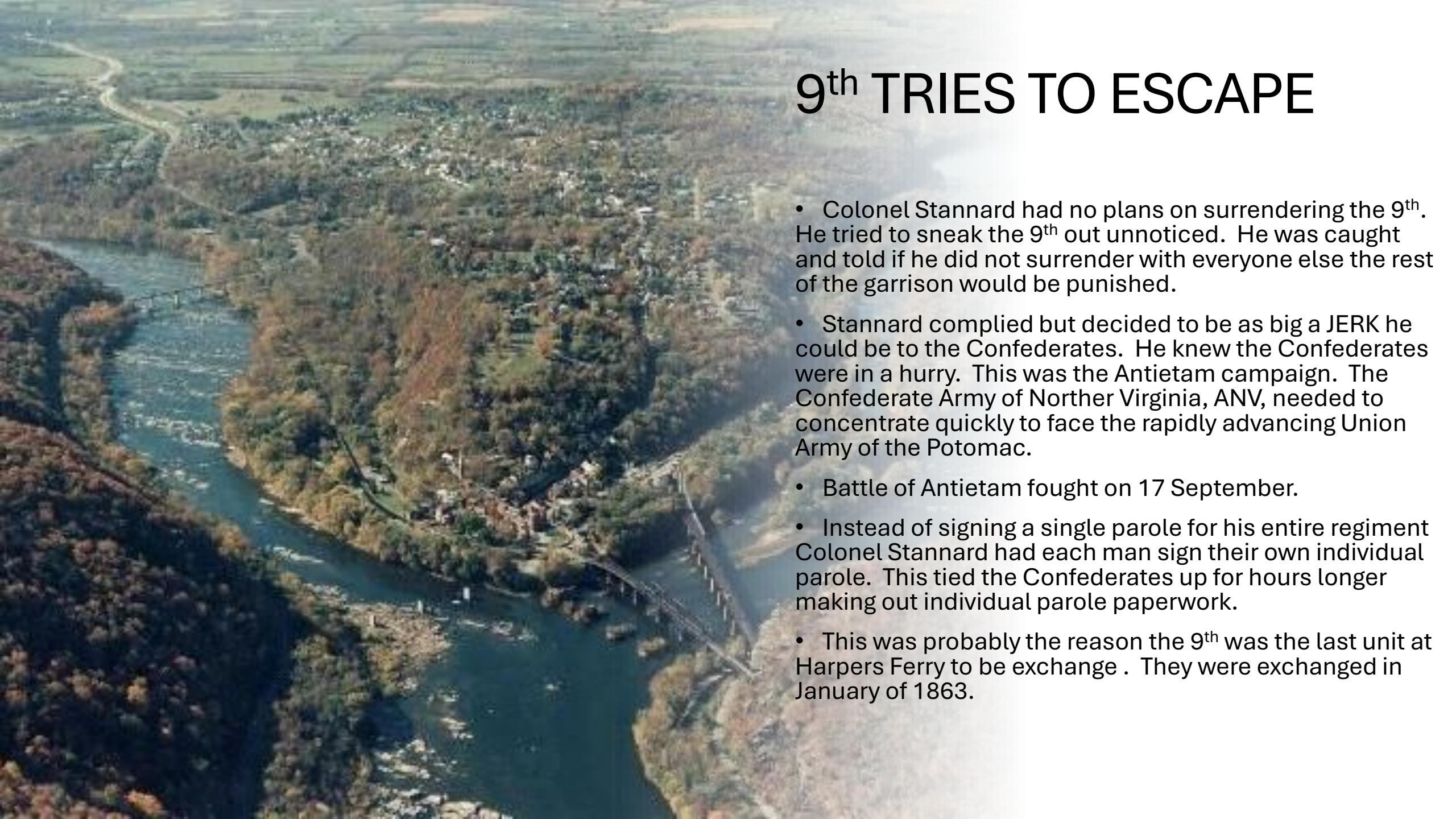
9th part of the Union garrison
protecting Federal Armory of Harpers
Ferry.

Union commander at Harpers Ferry
flubbed the defense and was forced
to surrender the entire garrison.

The Confederate commander paroled
the entire Union garrison. This saved
time and resources.

Paroled prisoners stayed in their
home country. However, they could
not do anything to help the war effort
anymore than if they were in a real
P.O.W. camp. When the other side
had an equal number of parolees a
paperwork exchange was made and
the soldiers could re-enter the war.

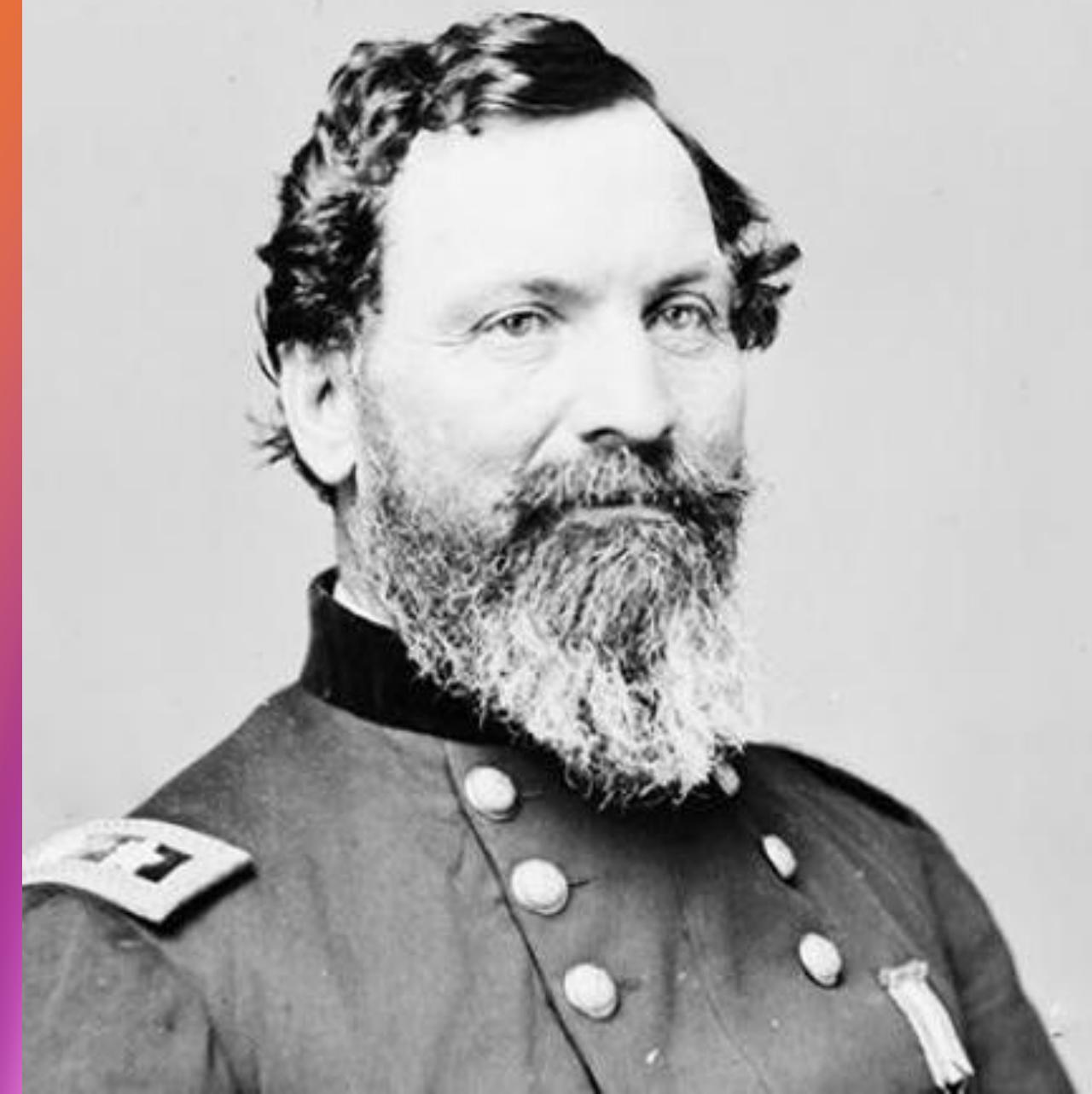


An aerial photograph of a river valley. The river flows from the bottom left towards the center, with its banks lined with lush green trees and bushes. In the background, a small town with numerous buildings is visible, nestled among the trees. The surrounding land is a mix of green fields and more forested areas, creating a patchwork pattern. The sky is clear and blue.

9th TRIES TO ESCAPE

- Colonel Stannard had no plans on surrendering the 9th. He tried to sneak the 9th out unnoticed. He was caught and told if he did not surrender with everyone else the rest of the garrison would be punished.
- Stannard complied but decided to be as big a JERK he could be to the Confederates. He knew the Confederates were in a hurry. This was the Antietam campaign. The Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, ANV, needed to concentrate quickly to face the rapidly advancing Union Army of the Potomac.
- Battle of Antietam fought on 17 September.
- Instead of signing a single parole for his entire regiment Colonel Stannard had each man sign their own individual parole. This tied the Confederates up for hours longer making out individual parole paperwork.
- This was probably the reason the 9th was the last unit at Harpers Ferry to be exchanged . They were exchanged in January of 1863.

On the Road to Gettysburg



- Most of the Vermont troops in the Army of the Potomac were concentrated in the VI Corp commanded by General John Sedgwick.
- It was against Army policy to concentrate soldiers of one state in a single Corp. If that Corp got in a tough fight then that state could lose a significant portion of its young men.
- An exception was made for Vermont. Its men wanted to serve together and seeing they were dedicated and tough soldiers an exception was granted.

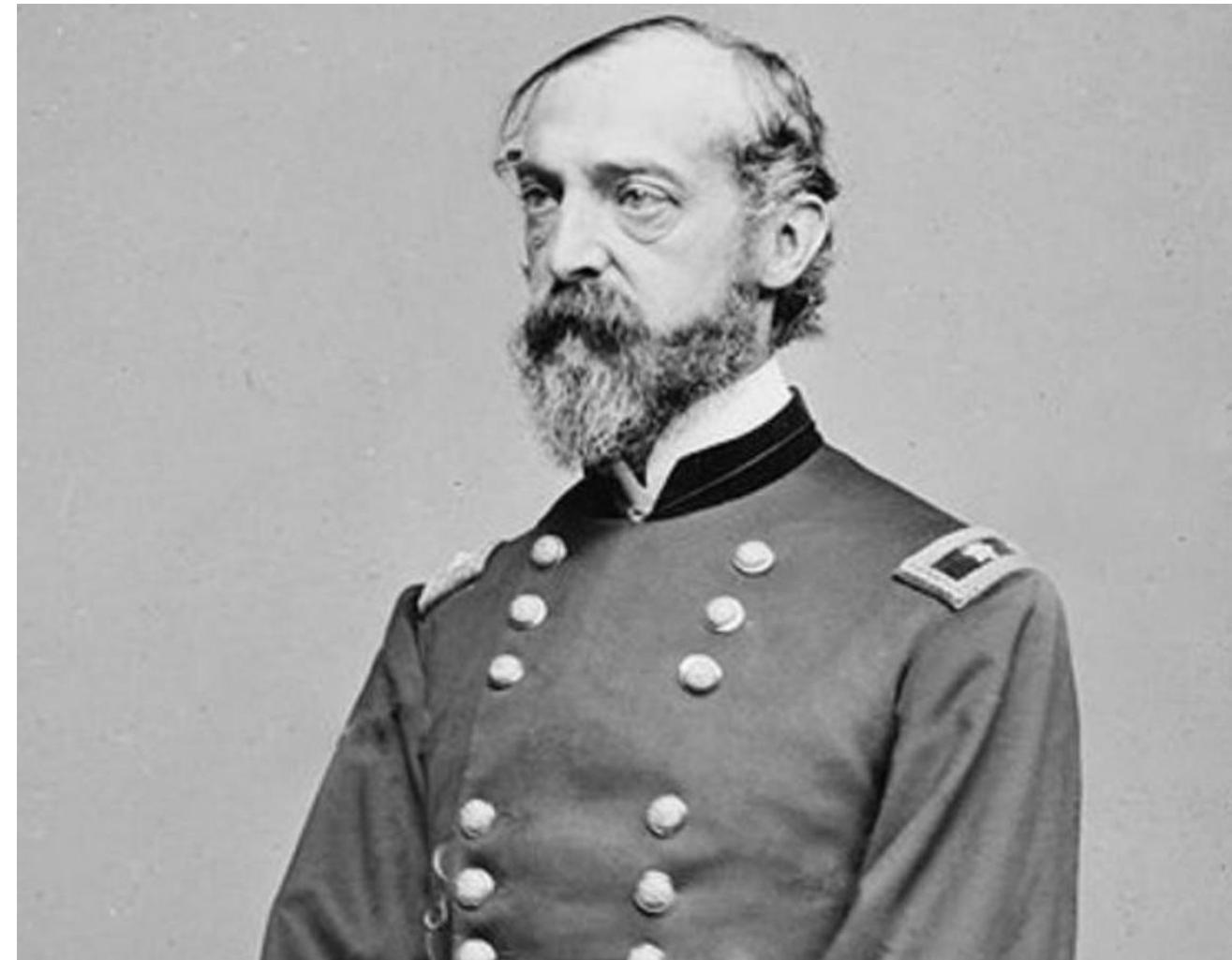
Gettysburg: 1-3 July 1863

The VI Corp was the furthest from Gettysburg when Union and Confederate units started fighting there on the morning of 1 July 1863.

When General Sedgwick received orders from General Meade, commander of the Army of the Potomac, to march to Gettysburg he issued an order that became the motto of the Vermont National Guard. “Put the Vermonters in the lead and keep rest of the column close up.”

The Vermonters were his fastest marching soldiers and he needed them to set the pace.

They arrived at Gettysburg in late afternoon of 2 July. This gave Meade the critical advantage in manpower he needed to ensure victory.



Smashing Pickett's Charge 3 July 1863

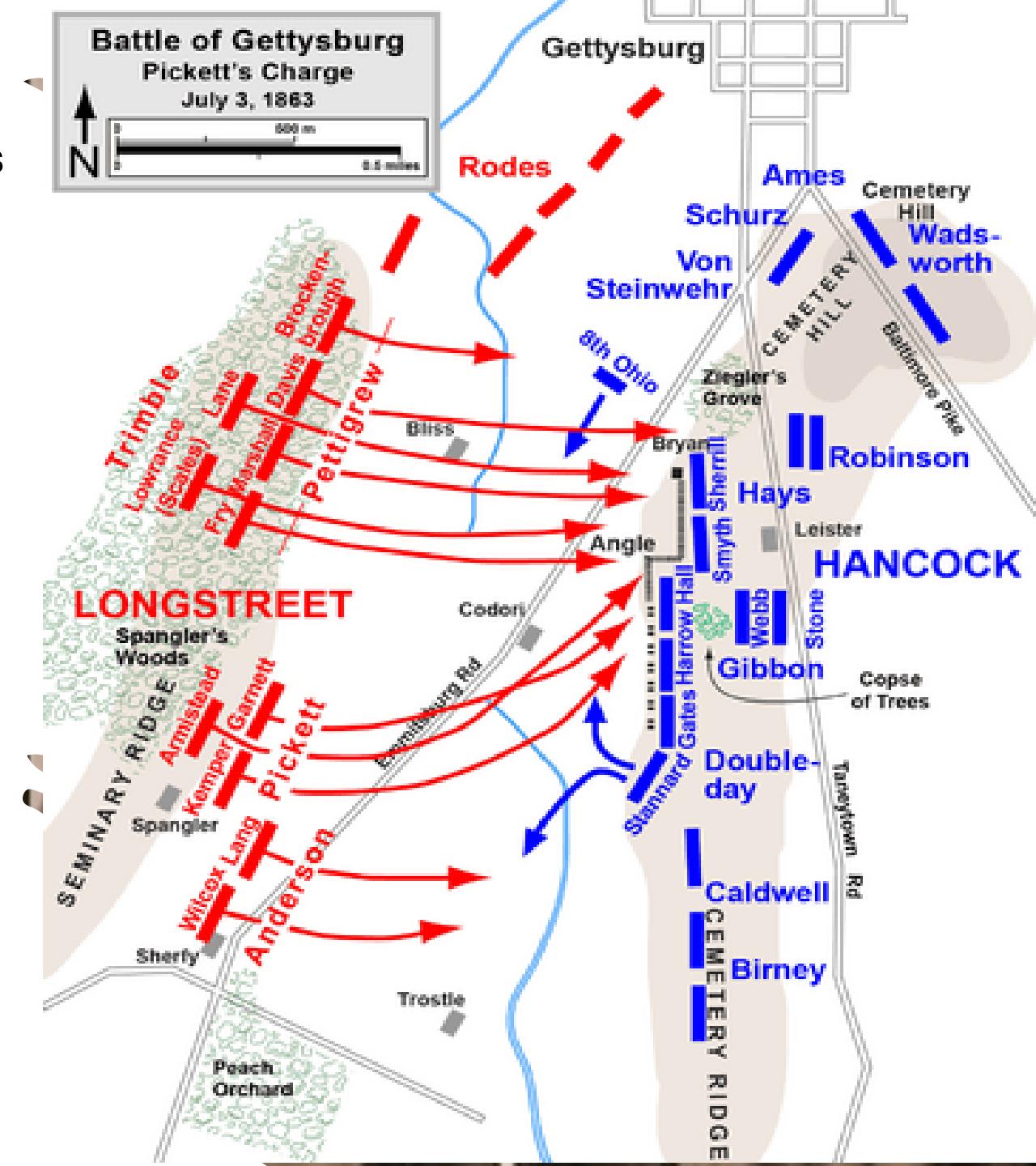
2nd Vermont Battalion

Composed of 13th, 14th, and 16th Vermont Regiments

Commanded by now General George Stannard

The 2nd Vermont had been assigned to protect the transportation infrastructure near Washington D.C.. They were a nine month battalion yet to see any combat and due to be discharged in less than a month.

- Only days before the Battle of Gettysburg began the 2nd was re-assigned to I Corp Army of the Potomac.
- They were positioned on Cemetery Ridge just South of the copse of trees, the target of Pickett's attack.
- Pickett's men had to cut across the front of the 2nd to head for the copse of trees.
- General Hancock, commander of the Union center, and Stannard saw a priceless opportunity and had the 2nd Vermont battalion launched a devastating flank attack on Pickett's division.
- This attack crushed the right wing of Pickett's Charge.
- This attack was as decisive as the 20th Maines attack the day before.



Comments about Vermont Troops at Gettysburg

- When General Abner Doubleday, acting I Corp commander, saw the 2nd Vermont's attack he was heard to exclaim, "Glory to God. See the Vermonters go to it." He credit the 2nd attack as the decisive factor in defeating Pickett's Charge.
- Three years later General Meade visited St. Albans Vermont. There he stated publicly "There was no individual body of men who rendered greater service at a critical moment than the comparatively raw troops commanded by General Stannard."



END OF THE PAROLE SYSTEM

Starting in 63 the Union started employing Black soldiers.

- The Confederates took offence to this and refused to exchange any black soldier they captured.
- To Grant a soldier was a soldier no matter what his color and demanded blacks be exchanged like white soldiers were.
- The South refused so Grant terminated the entire parole and exchange system.
- POW populations of both sides now exploded.
- Disastrous for the Confederates. After over two years of war their manpower reserves were exhausted. Getting back captured soldiers had helped to partially offset combat losses. Now that was gone.

*Not only could they not get their captured men back but now had to assign soldiers to guard Union POWs.

- The Union with a better to three to one advantage in manpower could afford not to get its captured soldiers back.
- The death spiral the Confederate armies were already in now accelerated.



Jumping Ahead: Early 1865

Desperate to replenish ranks

Confederates started recruiting and training slaves as combat soldiers with the promise of freedom at wars end.

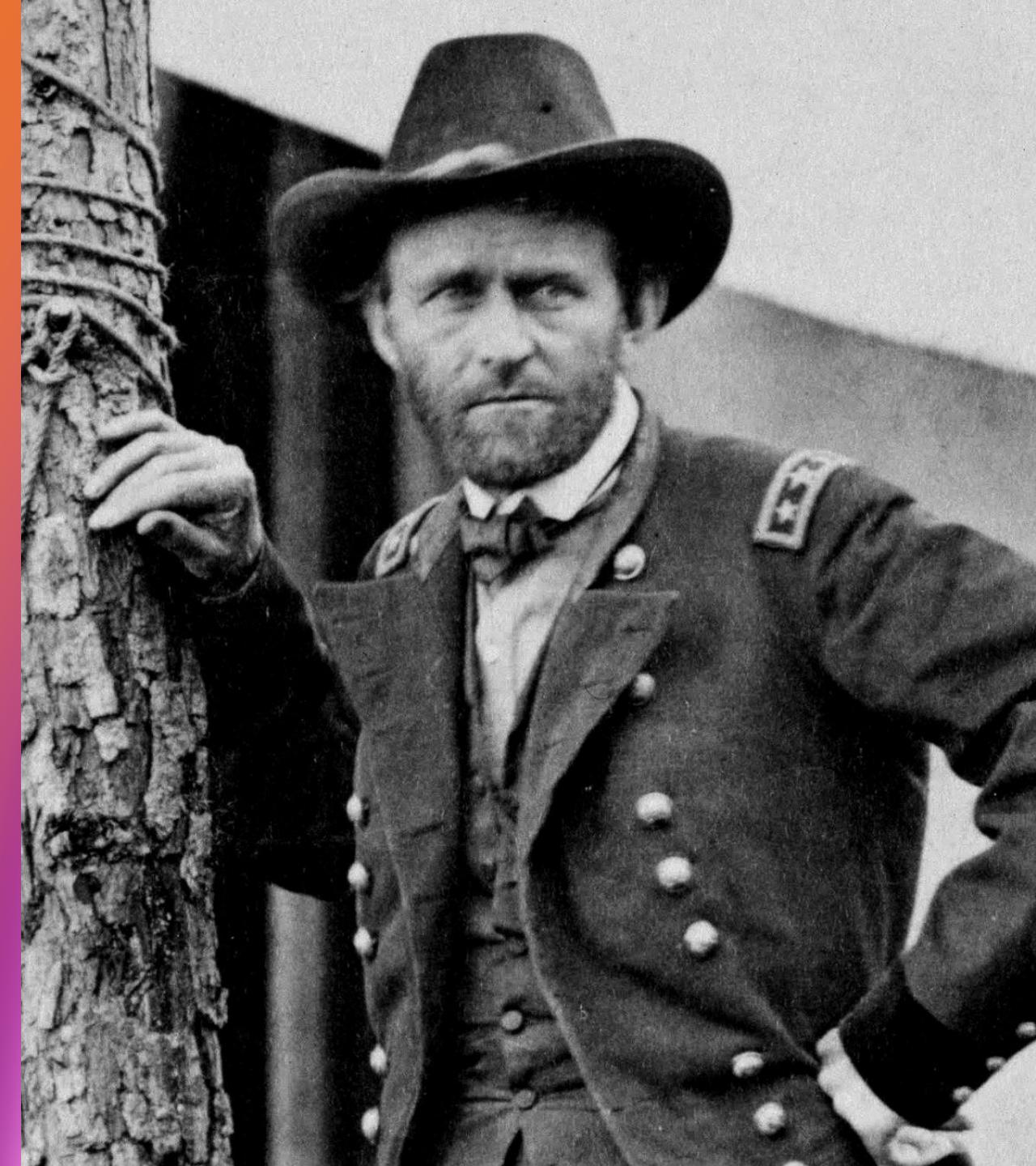
Totally destroys the basis of slavery; the belief in racial supremacy.

No matter what a man's status was before, making him a soldier to elevates his status to the equal of anyone else.

Also, at this time the Confederate government offered to end slavery if Britain and France would give them diplomatic recognition.

In other words, in a last desperate attempt to win the war the South was willing to give up what it went to war for to preserve.





The Wilderness

5-7 May 1864

- First battle of General in Chief Grant's overland campaign
- Deadliest Civil War battle for Vermonters.
- Over 1200 Vermonters were killed, wounded or captured.

VERMONTERS TAKE THE POINT IN THE WILDERNESS

5-7 MAY 1864

- To shore up a weak point in the Union battleline General Sedgwick sent the 2nd division of his corp in.
- The division contained the Vermont Brigade. Sedgwick specifically ordered the 2nd division commander to put the Vermonters at the critical road junction for he knew they would hold the line no matter what.
- Despite enormous casualties the Vermont brigade stopped the Confederate assaults.



SUMMER OF 1864

Union Becomes Short of Soldiers

- Three Year Enlistments from 1861 up.
- Many soldiers re-enlisted but many others did not.
- Those who did re-enlist received 30 day leave.
- Caused severe shortage of manpower for Union army in summer of 64.
- Defenses around Washington D.C. stripped of Soldiers to reinforce AOP at Petersburg.

BATTLE ON MONOCAY: 9 July

1864

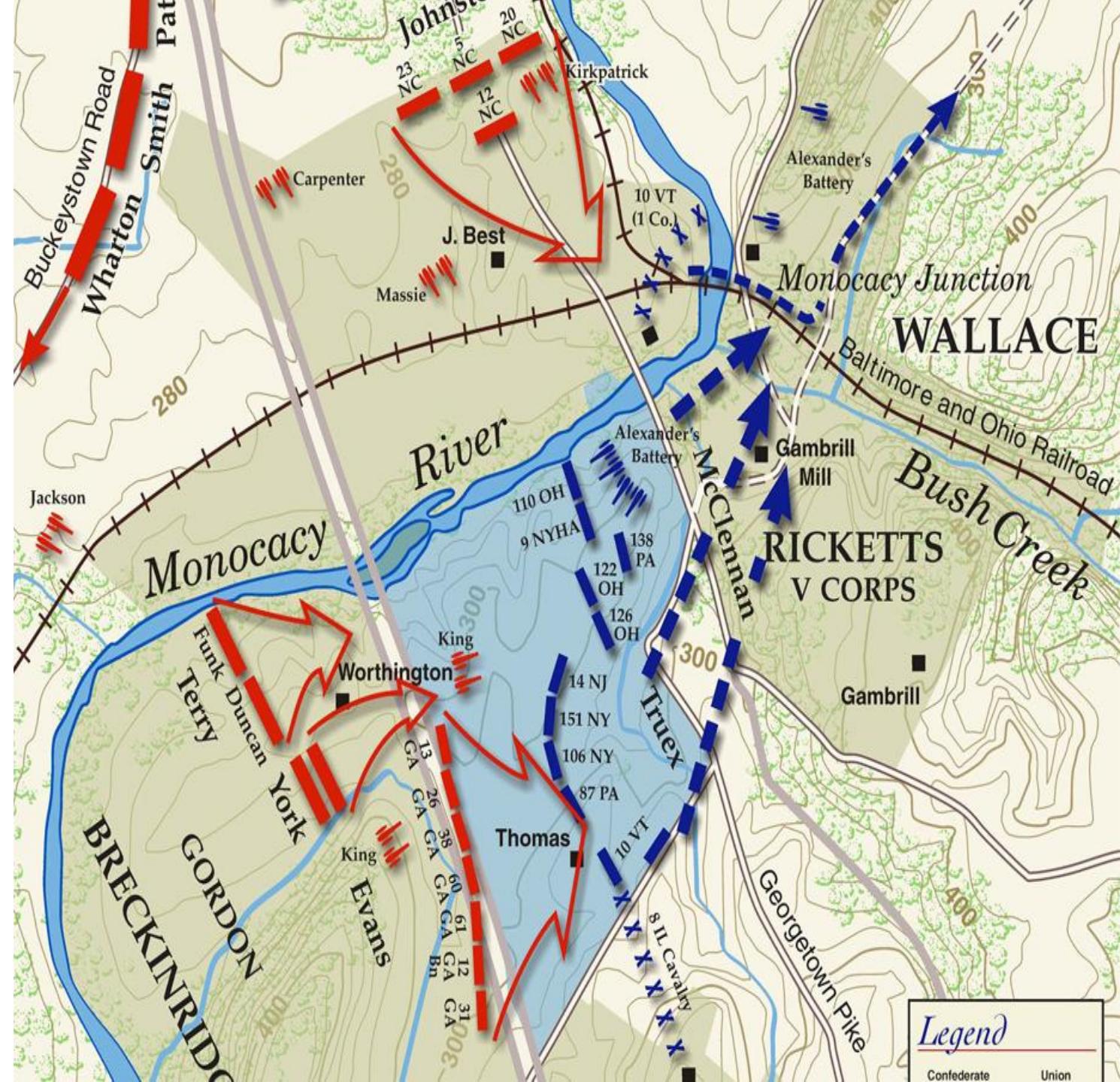
Robert E. Lee sends Jubal Early and around 15,000 up the Shenandoah Valley to threaten Washington D.C..

Outnumber Union troops are defeated by Early's force at the Battle of Monocay in Maryland.

Battle delayed Early by a day allowing Union reinforcements, much of the VI Corp, to arrive to defend Washington.

General Phil Sheridan given command of Union Forces to drive the Confederates away from Washington and out of the Shenandoah Valley.

An unusually large percentage of those troops were Vermont Units.



The Battle of Cedar Creek

- In the early morning hours of 19 October 1864 Confederate forces under Confederate General Jubal Early launch a surprise attack against Union forces encamped near Cedar Creek.
- Attack caught Union forces completely by surprise and started driving Union forces from the field in a rout.
- A suicidal stand by the 8th Vermont and a few other regiments gave the rest of the army time to rally and reform.
- Counterattack by Union forces, including several other Vermont regiments, drove the Confederates in rout from the field.
- The battle ended Confederate threat to D.C forever.



Meanwhile on the Same Day

Confederate Operatives Raided Saint Albans

Vermont

Based out of Canada around 22 Confederate operatives raided St. Albans.

Intent was to cause an international incident by robbing banks and terrorize locals.

Hoped U.S. forces would follow them into Canada angering Great Britain.

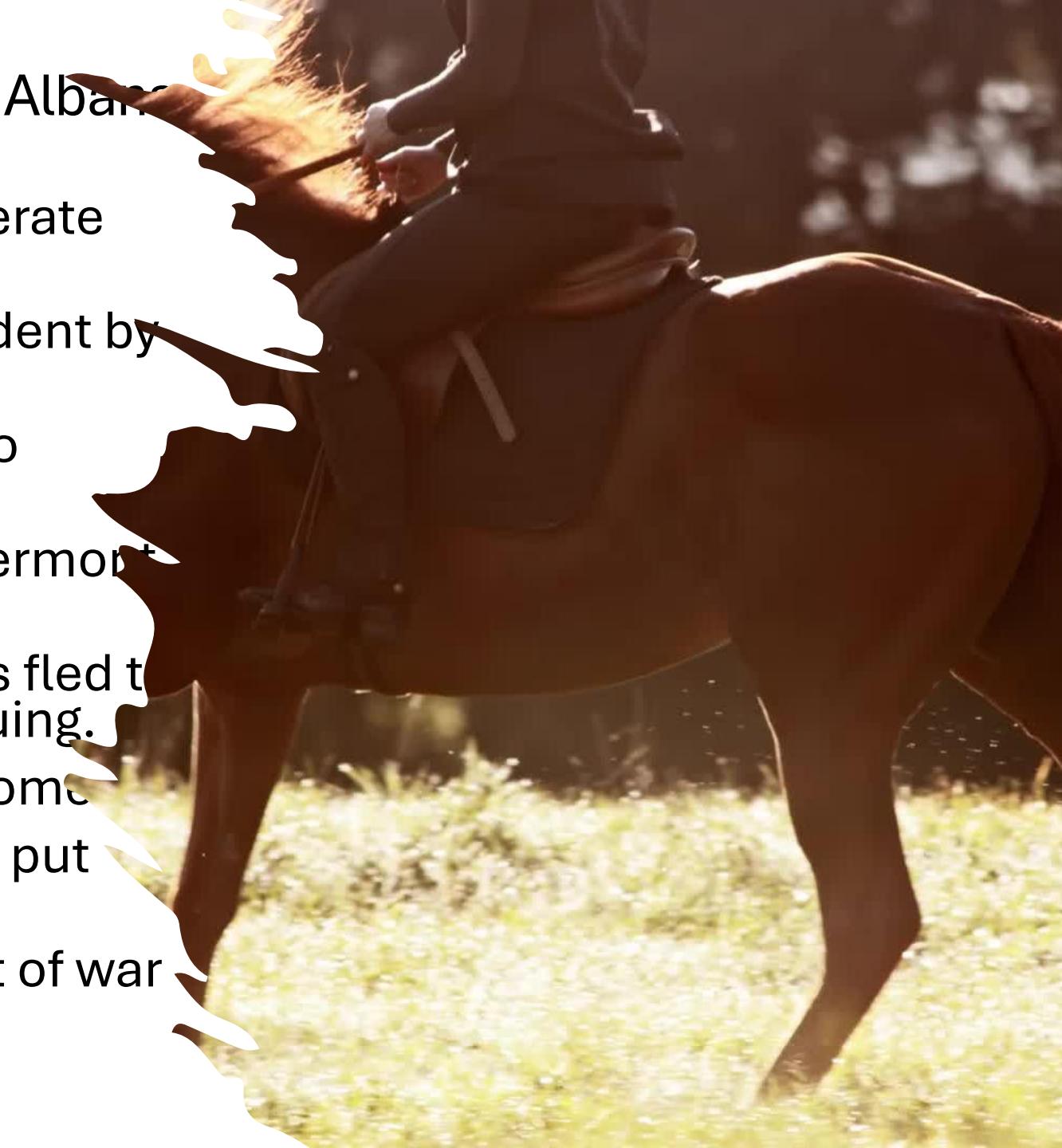
George Conger, formerly Captain in 1st Vermont Cavalry, quickly organized resistance.

Facing unexpected resistance the raiders fled to Canada with Conger and his posse pursuing.

Conger crossed the border and caught some

Turned over to Canadian authorities who put them on trial.

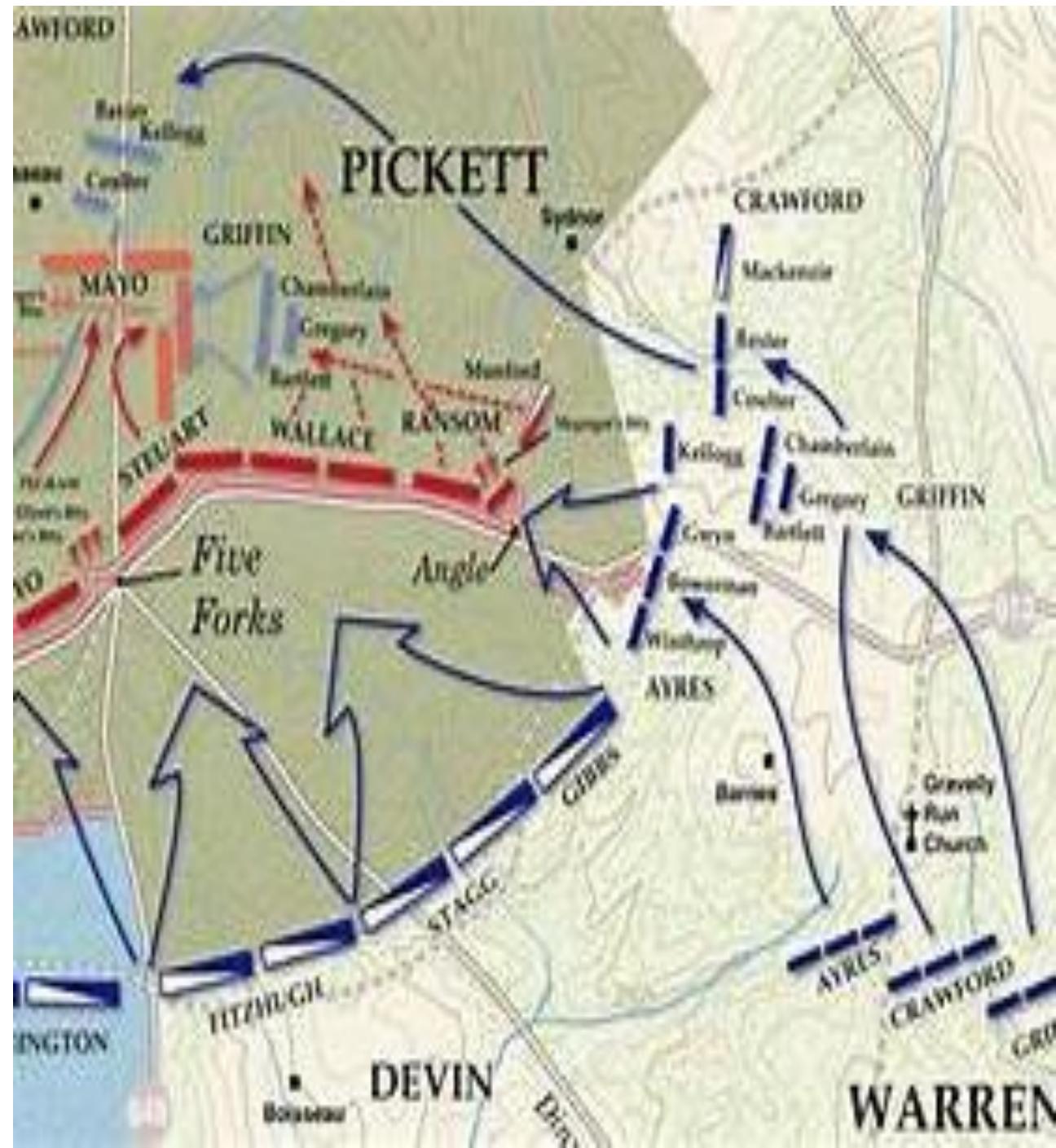
Canadian courts deemed incident an act of war and released the raiders.



BATTLE OF FIVE FORKS, 1 APRIL 1865: Union Cuts Last Railroad to Petersburg/Richmond

With the last supply line to Richmond and Petersburg now cut General Grant decides to end the matter once and for all.

For the next day, 2 April, he orders an all out assault on the trenches of Petersburg.



This is from a History Channel Episode about the 5th Vermont Officers of the 5th Vermont decide to launch a night attack on 2 April.

They darkened their faces, secured personal gear so it would not rattle, loaded but did not cap their muskets.

In the early morning hours of 2 April they snuck up on the Confederate trenches undetected.

Charging a clos-range they were in the trenches before the Confederates could effectively react.

Other Union regiments immediately followed in support, securing the breach.

Lee now had no choice but to abandon Richmond.



Back to the 9th

During the siege of Petersburg the 9th was assigned to the Army of the Potomac.

One thing soldiers of the 9th noticed was as the siege went on more and more Confederate soldiers deserted. They saw the direction the war was going. If the Confederate soldier lived in Union controlled territory, they could go home. No P.O.W. camp.

With the fall of Petersburg on 2 April the 9th entered Richmond the next day. One of the first units to do so. There they fought fires and restored civil order.

On 4 April when President Lincoln visited Richmond he headed to the Confederate White House. There he entered Confederate President Jeff Davis's office and sat at his desk. Union soldiers who saw this all gave out a cheer. This was the symbolic end of the Civil War. One re-united nation with one President.



BACK HOME AGAIN

On 25 November 1865 the leadership of the 9th Vermont received orders to begin the process of mustering out.

They were the next to the last Vermont regiment to be mustered out of Federal service.

The 9th arrived by train to Burlington, Vermont on 6 December 1865. For the next couple days they were wined, dined and praised by numerous VIP's.

They then all dispersed back to their civilian lives forever changed by the war that had forever changed their nation.

Pictured here is my great grandfather Levi Beach, veteran of the 9th. After the war he lived the rest of his life in Ferrisburg, raising a family and working as a blacksmith.

He attended re-unions at Gettysburg for the rest of his life. He died on 23 June 1919 and is buried in Hollow Road Cemetery in North Ferrisburg.



VERMONTERS WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE AWAY FROM THE BATTLEFIELD

GARDNER SPRINGS BLODGETT

1. Major, Union Army, Quarter Master Department. Founder of Blodgett Oven Corporation
 - On the orders of Quarter Master General Montgomery Meigs laid out the first graves at what was to become Arlington National Cemetery.
 - Arlington was Robert E. Lee's pre-war home.
 - Confiscated by U.S. Government for his joining the Confederacy
 - Meigs considered Lee a traitor and personally responsible for the death of every Union soldier.
 - Choose Arlington for that reason and ordered Union dead buried so close to the house Lee could never live there again.
Meigs own son was buried in Mrs. Lee's rose garden.

Ann Eliza Smith wife of VT Governor J. Gregory Smith

- St. Albans Resident
- Her husband was in Montpelier on 19 October 1864
- On hearing a Confederate raid was in progress rallied household staff to defend her home.
- Locked all the windows and doors and she stood on her front porch with the only gun in the house, an unloaded revolver.
- It was in the raiders plan to attack her house.
- Facing organizing resistance from Conger's men they decided to get while the getting was good.
- They passed the Ann's house and seeing her standing in the doorway with a gun decided to keep heading toward Canada.
- Ann supplied horses and firearms to Conger and his men and ordered them to kill any raider they caught.