

Hold on, hold on...we may not be done here yet!

OUR CAMP JOURNAL

Volume 30, Issue 2 **"We are but few in number but formidable." -Pvt. James Shelton, 7th Md. Co. B** October 2026

Angel's Glow: The glowing bacteria that saved soldiers lives at Shiloh

Wounded soldiers glowing with a greenish blue.

Those soldiers inexplicably recovering more quickly than others.

A Halloween tale for this time of year?

No, it was a true episode from the Civil War - the Battle of Shiloh - and one that was only explained many years later, in 2001, in part by two high school students in a Maryland suburb outside Washington.

The story begins on April 6, 1862. Dawn was beginning to break near a small Methodist meeting house in Hardin County, in southwestern Tennessee, and the Union army was not expecting much trouble.

The Union Army of the Tennessee had routed Confederate forces at Forts Donelson and Henry a few weeks before and had hunkered down in Hardin County. The Union forces, so confident in their security, had constructed no defensive works around their camp. Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, the commander, was 20 miles away, meeting with Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell, head of the



On what was once a peaceful Sunday morning soon turned into one of the bloodiest clashes of the whole of the Civil War. (Library of Congress)
Battle of Shiloh painting by Thure de Thulstrup (1888)

Army of the Ohio. Grant had not even bothered to leave an officer in temporary command during his absence, according to historian Christopher Allen. Soon, however, the Union men were roused from their slumber by nearly 45,000 Confederate troops, organized into four corps of the Army of the Mississippi, under the command of Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston. On what had been a peaceful Sunday morning soon turned into one of the bloodiest clashes of the

Civil War.

There were an estimated 23,746 casualties over the two-day battle. On the Union side, 1,754 men were killed and 8,408 wounded. The Confederates suffered similar losses, with 1,728 killed and 8,012 wounded.

With field medicine still primitive during the early days of the war and germ theory still a relatively new concept, hundreds of wounded men were left to wait for aid in the rain on a muddy

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Upcoming Campaigns

OCTOBER

October 3: Fort Ward Civil War Camp Day,

October 16-18: 161st Battle of Cedar Creek, Middletown, VA - Register www.ccbf.us *(FVB Event) (7th MD COMPANY Event)

NOVEMBER

November 13-14: FVB Annual Meeting & Remembrance Day Parade *(FVB Event) (7th MD COMPANY Event)

DECEMBER

December 6: Fort Ward Christmas – Alexandria Va. Details to come.



Shafer Farm Living History

What is today known as the Shafer Farm was part of a 298-parcel of land known as “The Forest of Needwood” in the late 18th century. The house was built by John Garrott III in the early 1830s. In addition to several generations of the Garrott family, the property was occupied by over a dozen enslaved African Americans who worked in the home and fields. By the 1850s, the Garrotts rented the property to Martin Shafer who lived in the house and ran the farmstead.

During the Civil War, the Shafer Farm served as Union General William B. Franklin’s headquarters. Soon after they set camp, General Franklin ordered his troops west to defend South Mountain.

After the Civil War, the Shafers continued to live on the property where they operated a wagon shop and blacksmith shop along Gapland Road leading into Burkittsville. They finally purchased the parcel in 1889, four decades after moving onto the land. The Schafer family owned the property until 2016, when it was given to



Built in the early 1830s, the 5-acre property served as the headquarters for Union General William B. Franklin’s 6th Corps during the Battle of Cramp-ton’s Gap (Battle of South Mountain) on September 14, 1862.

the Burkittsville Preservation Association, Inc. Today, the Shafer Farm includes the original home, a detached.

The 7th Maryland along with the 142 PA, participated in a living history on the grounds.

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Angel's Glow

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battlefield.

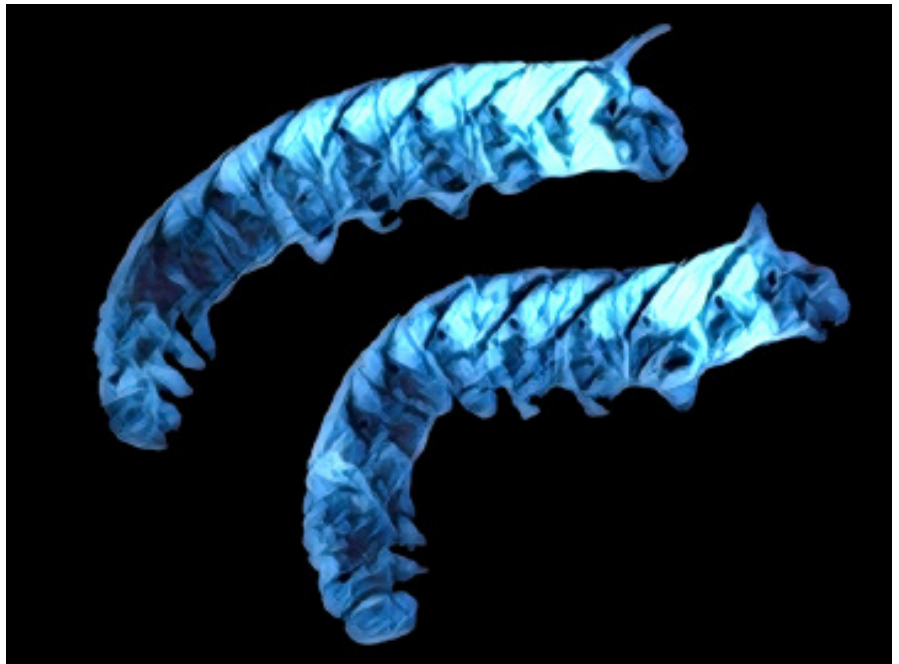
However, as day turned into night, shockingly, some of the surviving wounded began to glow a greenish-blue hue. Moreover, doctors and medical personnel later reported that those with glowing wounds had lower infection rates and healed much more quickly than those without them. The other-worldly phenomenon was quickly dubbed the "Angel's Glow" by soldiers for its seemingly healing properties.

It would take 139 years, however, to apparently unravel the mystery surrounding the glow.

In 2001, high school students Bill Martin and Jonathan Curtis, at Bowie High School in Bowie, Maryland, worked with Martin's mother, Agricultural Research Service microbiologist Phyllis Martin, to root out its source. According to the Agriculture Department, she had "previously studied the bacterium, *Photobacterium luminescens*, as a potential biocontrol agent and knew that this insect pathogen created a glowing effect."

The students found that the *Photobacterium* strains produced antibiotics that inhibited the growth of other bacteria that would have caused infections in open wounds, thus aiding in the soldiers' healing.

It was known that the glowing bacteria live in the guts of nematodes, small parasitic worms, Curtis said in a 2001 interview with HealthDay, "and we found that these nematodes are attracted to small insects that would have



The bacterium *Photobacterium luminescens*.

been in the guts or clothing of the soldiers, and [the worms] would have excreted glowing bacteria." The excreted glowing bacteria

from the parasitic nematode released chemicals that ate away at serious bacterial infections such as gangrene. The cold and wet

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Shafer Farm Living History

Scenes from the Shafer Farm living history event. Firing demonstrations, camp life, drill and inspection were all on display throughout the day. And being with friends.



Angel's Glow

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conditions after the battle likely made it the perfect hosting conditions for the worm and bacteria — and likely helped the soldiers live through the night.

Melissa A. Winn, director of marketing and communications at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick, Maryland, told Military Times,

“Angel's Glow was a true phenomenon and one of those stories about Civil War medicine and soldiers that they hear questions about often, especially around Halloween.”

“What's exciting about the story for us,” Winn said, “is the modern interest in determining ‘why.’ It's genuinely part of our mission to use artifacts, storytelling and the

historic lessons derived from that era to educate the public and define the impact on today's society. We continue to learn from and benefit from Civil War medicine and this story highlights how curiosity about this unique phenomenon has impacted medical study in the 21st Century.”



BATTLE MEMORIES: In April 1862 in Tennessee, some Civil War soldiers who exhibited glowing wounds, or “Angel's Glow,” had a better survival percentage than their non-glowing counterparts.



The Ladies' Knapsack.

I've been debating how to start this article; how to approach it; what perspective to take. It's been a while since I've both remembered and had the time to sit down and write up an article. I've had several ideas for articles over the past several months: an event from a very young reenactors point of view, quilt math, old favorites, recycling fabric, the list could go on and on. But I think the Schaefer Farm event in September at least allows me to take a few of my past ideas and bring them together into one.

Our trip to Schaefer Farm, in Burkittsville, Maryland, was the second trip in two years. The historical society of Burkittsville has been trying to revive an annual event that used to be held years ago. Last year, the organizer called on friends for support, and we unfortunately only had about five spectators for the weekend. This year, the organizer

came from Monocacy Battlefield, scheduled speakers, and worked more with the reenactors to try to plan more in advance for the event. While we still had few spectators, the potential for an annual event was more apparent this year. The organizer stopped to have several conversations about how to improve the event for the future, including better water and fire wood sources, and better publicity of the event. The organizers provided water by buying large cases of bottled water; we didn't need the wheel barrow to carry water, but we did fill an entire trash bag for recycling by the end of the weekend. The original plan for fire wood was scrap wood and a giant box of branches and sticks; but the scrap wood was so overgrown with weeds that we were grateful for the firewood we brought from home. While the event was small, I still enjoyed my time at Schaefer Farm, and am truly appreciative of all those



Miss Sarah Harris
Civilian
Coordinator

who came out: Kevin and Joshua Harris, Dawn Giovannini, Rizzi Oskoui, the Gosmyer family, Don Dolbin, and even Jay Henson (I do have picture evidence).

Schaefer Farm is also the first event where we brought out more canvas than just the 'company fly. We set up the kitchen tent so I could cook out in the field for the first time in almost four years. We also set up my own a-frame for perhaps the first time since Della was born. During the first day, we barely made use of the company fly, as the weather was overcast and rather comfortable temperature-wise. The fly did come in handy for a quilt fort and games of hide and seek (though hiding skills came into question several times). It was more useful on Sunday during a brief rain, which we watched come towards us from Crampton's Gap. However, the sun came out and dried things out well enough to be packed up later Sunday afternoon.

The kitchen tent served its purpose well, housing cooler boxes and sheltering food. I planned

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The barn at the Shafer Farm site.

Shafer Farm



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for cold breakfasts and lunches, and only worried about cooking dinner for Saturday night. I think the fire knew it had been about four years since I've cooked for a large group; of course it took way too long for my liking for the water to boil and for the chicken to cook. But we still had chicken noodle soup, with dinner rolls and apple pie, to enjoy with those who stayed for dinner. The last time I cooked for a large

gathering of the 7th was our last event at Harpers Ferry, just a few months before Liam was born.

And the third piece of canvas for the weekend was my own a-frame, which hadn't seen the light of day in almost 8 years. Since having kids, I've been taking advantage of nearby events, where we could sleep at home during the night and then travel a short bit to the event in the morning. However, this event posed itself as a good

opportunity to offer to Della to sleep over in the tent for her first time, to which she very excitedly agreed. The first night took some adjusting, as Della commented on the volume of the other camp and the bugs around us. But each night was wonderful sleeping weather, with one or two quilts being the perfect amount for a good night's sleep. Della enjoyed the experience of sleeping in the tent and staying for the entire weekend. I enjoyed 'sleeping in' each morning, as we didn't have to worry about morning roll calls or packed schedules. In the future, I'll have to try to think about more of the space logistics, as I forgot how cramped that tent can get with two people sleeping in it. And if/when Liam starts sleeping in the tent, all logistics will have to go out the metaphorical window.

Speaking of Liam, he definitely enjoyed having free rein of the camp and grounds at Schaefer Farm. He ran, he crashed, he threw things, and he peed on several things too. He marked his territory around the camp, preferring holes and dirt patches to toilets and tall grass. I'll have to sew a disclaimer onto the back of his clothes, so people aren't surprised as much when he drops trousers in camp.

The second day at Schaefer Farm had fewer reenactors, as several people day tripped on Saturday, or left early on Sunday. I took advantage of the nice weather and the offer to use the Schaefer house front porch to set up my quilting frame. We sat on the



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Shafer Farm

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porch, relaxing, waving to people as they drove by. I was surprised when one truck came back several minutes later with a friend to come talk quilts. We chatted about quilting techniques, hand sewing, the time it takes to make a quilt by hand, and the overall enjoyment of textile art. The quilt that I had on the quilting frame has been 'in progress' for over 10 years at this point, it only gets worked on when I have time at events to set it all up. But I enjoy talking about the experience of hand sewing the pieces together, timing each square at about an hour and a half to complete. Multiply that by 24 squares in the quilt, and it's 24-36 hours just to make all the squares, and then a few hours more to put them all together. Hand quilting the layers together is impossible to time at this point, as I rarely have time to sit and work uninterrupted. Working on the porch of Schaefer Farm is probably one of my top quilting locations so far.

And speaking of the house itself, we actually got to go inside for a tour of the house late Sunday morning. The Burkittsville preservation society has been working for a long time to clean and fix up the house, which has been uninhabited for decades. Walking through the house, you can really see the history in the house, and how beautiful it was and can be again. The first floor is made up of three main rooms, with an unusual billiards room addition added on later in the 20th century (which you can't even get to from inside the house, it has a separate exterior entrance). The second floor also has three original rooms, with a fourth accessible room above the billiards toom. The more modern addition of a bathroom was placed somewhat in the middle of the staircase landing up to the second floor, but only included a toilet. We even got to go up to the third floor attic, which still had all original flooring and was quite spacious. I enjoyed being able to peak into a historical house that I've driven by so many times. I hope the

preservation society is able to continue with their goal of getting it cleaned up and opened again to the public.

Overall, I enjoyed the Schaefer Farm event, and hope were invited back for future events there. With Don Dolbin attending, he's hopeful to get more FVB involvement, as he sees the potential for it being a different type of event that the FVB can enjoy. While I probably will not be able to go to the FVB meeting in November, I'll plan on going to the meeting in January to stir up what trouble I can. I do hope to see maximum effort for the Remembrance Day parade, I'll even offer up my driveway to RV parking for the weekend if needed. So start polishing all the shiny things and cleaning all the leather things, get the scarves and gloves dusted off, and make sure your shoes are glued together (maybe that's just me). I'll bring snacks for the kids and kids at heart if needed, but I will only pull tiny children in my wagon. I'm looking forward to seeing many friendly and fond faces in November.



Above, Capt. Don Dolbin, Capt. Jay Henson, Lt. Kevin Harris and Pvt. Josh Harris spend some time around the campfire. At right, Col. Don Swope was treated to a tour of the on-going restoration inside the Shafer House.



OUR CAMP JOURNAL



Civil War Re-enactors;
America's Living Historians.

Battlefield

A nick of tone in silence
that broods like perfume
Of honeysuckle, then rip-
pling and arpeggios at
random

In the loft of trees: summer
is a tropic

Of suffusions and melody,
endless song and singing
Rendering presences of his-
tory that are fallen.

At Gettysburg and Verdun,
what songs are sympathy
Or solace for the once dis-
quieted? All flickering
Or edging of sound fulfills
the day and says,

"Hush now. Ease is here,
over hillock where you strew
Insignia, having held your

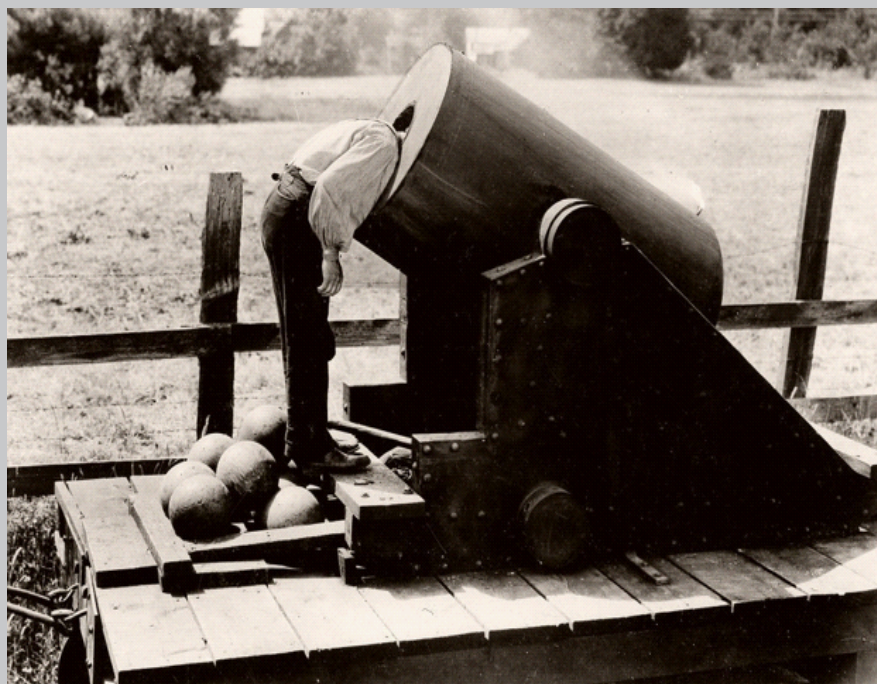
uniform where they were
pinned,
Mercilessly enjoined by can-
ister. Birdcall

In an orchard, plaint rising
through sun,
And the grass glitters dew.

Lines of infantry
Moved through the radiance
of noon where puffing loam
Was fertile year upon year,
where farmer kept his sons
As agents for a fantasy. De-
sire kept them low
As laden boughs, but the
fusillade arrived

From hill and rock, slight
at first, then singing,
"Quietly, quietly now."

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