Our Camp Journal

Vol. 30, Issue 2 | "We are but few in number but formidable." -Pvt. James Shelton, 7th Md. Co. B | November 2026

Sgt. Joshua F. Lightner, Co. E, 7th MD

Sergeant Joshua F. Lightner and Corporal Benjamin E. Lightner were brothers born in 1840 and 1843, respectively, in Frederick County, Maryland. According to Benjamin's marker in Alexandria National Cemetery he was born on February 7, 1843. Unfortunately, Joshua's birth date is unknown. Their mother was Rachel Shaffer (or Shafer). She had married David Shaffer in 1853, likely following their father's death. Joshua and Benjamin were working as laborers when they enlisted in Company E of the 7th Maryland Volunteer Infantry in Frederick on August 18, 1862. Both were relatively tall for the time, Joshua standing 5' 10" and Benjamin 6', with both having grey eyes and dark hair. And both received promotions in April 1863, Joshua to Sergeant and Benjamin to Corporal.

They served faithfully with Company E, enduring the 7th Maryland?s first winter encampment at Harpers Ferry and pursuing the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia as it retreated from Gettysburg in July 1863. Sadly, both would die within five months of each other from disease, the greatest killer of Civil War soldiers.

Joshua was admitted to the 2nd Division General Hospital in Alexandria on July 26, 1863. The hospital was in a converted private resident on Prince Street with a capacity of about 95 patients. Joshua died of typhoid fever on August 26, 1863, and was buried in Alexandria National Cemetery. The cemetery had been established in July 1862, among the first 14 national cemeteries created by the War Department. On Joshua's death the members of Company E prepared "Resolutions of Grief and Condolence" following a meeting at Rappahannock Station on September 1 to be published in newspapers back home and passed to his family. The resolutions noted Joshua's "noble qualities of heart and mind, his soldierly bearing, his readiness to perform duty in every trying emergency, his generous and disinterested conduct, and his amiable disposition". A pension card for Joshua lists Rachel Shaffer as his mother .

Benjamin died of tuberculosis (also known as consumption) on January 29, 1864, in Culpeper County while the 7th Maryland was in winter camp with the rest of the Army of the Potomac. He had been reported sick starting in November or December 1863 and was being treated in the division hospital. Though he would normally have been buried in a

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Upcoming Campaigns

NOVEMBER

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

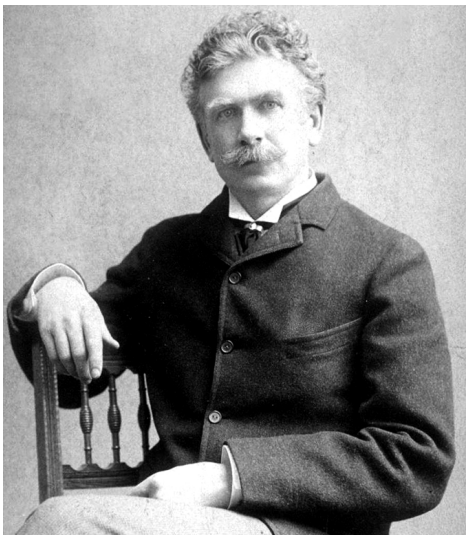
DECEMBER

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

The Mysterious Ambrose Bierce

He survived Shiloh. Its horrors followed him onto the page.

In April 1862, Ambrose Bierce was a 19-year-old sergeant in the 9th Indiana Infantry. Long before he became a celebrated writer, he experienced the Civil War from inside its battle lines.



On April 6, Confederate forces attacked Ulysses S. Grant's army near Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee. They hoped to defeat Grant before Don Carlos Buell's approaching army could reinforce him. By nightfall, battered Union troops still held a defensive position near the river.

Bierce's regiment arrived that evening with Buell's reinforcements. The next morning, it joined the fighting that drove the Confederates back.

Years later, Bierce recalled the experience in "What I Saw of Shiloh."

He described advancing toward woods where he expected to encounter enemy skirmishers. Instead, a Confederate battle line suddenly opened fire. Men dropped around him, and the survivors withdrew across exposed ground. Later, supporting artillery, he endured another kind of terror: lying under fire with little opportunity to strike back. The guns beside him attracted enemy projectiles, while their own blasts nearly deafened him.

But one of his most haunting memories lay in a ravine.

Bierce recalled descending into ground swept by fire. Ashes covered the earth. Bodies lay among the burned vegetation. He described men who had survived their wounds only to be overtaken by flames.

"Death had put his sickle into this thicket and fire had gleaned the field."

The battle ended with a Union victory, but its two days cost the opposing armies more than 23,000 men killed, wounded, or missing. The struggle for the nearby railroad junction at Corinth would continue.

Bierce also continued fighting. His service carried him through other major campaigns before a serious head wound at Kennesaw Mountain in June 1864. He eventually returned to duty, but lingering effects contributed to his departure from the army in early 1865.

His Shiloh account was a veteran's later recollection, shaped by memory and literary skill. Its closing pages reveal a difficult contradiction: alongside the suffering, he remembered the beauty, companionship, and intensity of being young.

That tension gives his account its lasting power. The same experience could hold terrible loss and memories he still longed to revisit.

Sources:
Ambrose Bierce, "What I Saw of Shiloh."
National Park Service, "Battle of Shiloh."
National Park Service, "Ambrose Bierce Narratives."
Library of America, introduction to "An Affair of Outposts."

James Longstreet, Minister to Turkey

Fifteen years after he tried to break the Union apart, the Union sent James Longstreet to Constantinople as its minister.

It was not as strange a choice as it sounds. Longstreet had been a Republican since 1868, when his old friend Grant made him surveyor of customs in New Orleans. By 1880 he was postmaster of Gainesville, Georgia. On June 14, 1880, President Rutherford B. Hayes appointed him Minister Resident to the Ottoman Empire — not ambassador; that was his actual title, and it mattered in the diplomatic pecking order.

On December 14, 1880, Longstreet presented his credentials to Sultan Abdul Hamid II at Yildiz Palace. The former commander of Lee's First Corps, the man who had ordered Pickett's Charge, was now the United States' representative to an empire that stretched from the Balkans to Arabia.

It was diplomacy on a shoestring. He spoke no Turkish, had no diplomatic experience, and Washington gave him little money and few instructions. The cost of living in Constantinople was so high he could not afford to bring his family. What filled his days was protecting Americans abroad: missionaries, merchants, and Bible agents scattered across the empire.

In March 1881, the Americans in Constantinople came to him for help. The Ottoman government was planning what it called a tax on foreign-owned real estate. Isaac Bliss of the Bible House wrote to him forwarding the proposal, and Bliss, Albert Long, and J. P. Pettibone asked him in a memorandum to "withhold your consent to its enforcement," arguing the scheme was "illegal and in violation of the capitulations made with the United States Government." His chargé later explained the truth of it: "It is a misnomer to designate this measure a 'tax,' for it is in reality a forced loan which, in some cases, will be equal in amount to the market value of the property 'taxed.'"

That spring he also pressed the Ottoman foreign minister over seized Bibles at Gallipoli, and sent aid after the earthquake that devastated the island of Chios in April 1881. He got nowhere with the foreign minister on the Bibles. He was a soldier-diplomat with no leverage and no budget. His mission lasted barely four and a half months. Back in Washington, the papers were already reporting it: on March 31, 1881, the Atlanta Constitution

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Remembrance Day Parade

The traditional annual Remembrance Day Parade will be held Nov. 14. This annual parade honors the soldiers and civilians of the Civil War while recognizing Gettysburg's lasting place in American history.

Sponsored by the Sons of Veterans Reserve, the military department of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, the parade starts on Middle Street, continues to Baltimore Street, and proceeds onto Steinwehr Avenue.

Remembrance Day takes place each November on the weekend closest to the anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln delivering the Gettysburg Address. This year there is a week of special events planned that includes major road closures.

James Longstreet, Minister to Turkey

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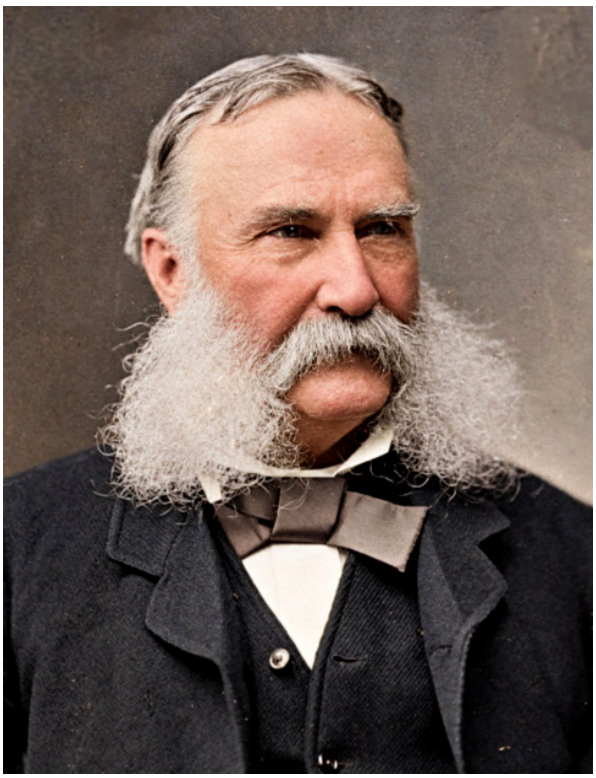
wrote that "it is stated on good authority that general Longstreet is to be recalled from Turkey to become marshal of Georgia." On April 19, President Garfield sent that nomination to the Senate. Longstreet left Constantinople on April 29, was confirmed as marshal on May 11, and on May 18 Garfield signed the formal recall: "I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of State to cause the Seal of the United States to be affixed to an envelope containing the letter of recall of Mr. James Longstreet, as Minister Resident of the U.S. at Constantinople, Turkey." He never went back. By May he was in Vienna, heading home to Georgia. His successor at Constantinople was Lew Wallace — the author of Ben-Hur, taking over the post from the man who had faced his army's guns at Shiloh and Gettysburg. Longstreet served as U.S. Marshal of Georgia, and in 1897 became U.S. Commissioner of Railroads, a post he held until his death on January 2, 1904.



From corps commander against the Union, to the Union's minister to a sultan, to a federal marshal in Georgia — all in one lifetime.

Sources:

U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, record for James Longstreet

Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1881, No. 711 (Heap to Blaine, May 4, 1881, with inclosures)

Atlanta Constitution, March 31, 1881

President Garfield's recall warrant, May 18, 1881

Elizabeth R. Varon, "The 'Bull-Dog' in Istanbul" Journal of the Civil War Era (2023).

Photo:

"Minister to Turkey" portrait of Longstreet, (Library of Congress, Colorized)

Henry Wager Halleck

He outranked Grant. Then he helped Grant win.

Henry Wager Halleck's Civil War career reveals how differently a man could perform as a commander and an administrator. Born in New York in 1815, Halleck graduated third in West Point's class of 1839. An Army engineer and military scholar, he wrote Elements of Military Art and Science and earned the nickname "Old Brains." Before the Civil War, he also became a successful California lawyer. Returning to federal service in 1861, Halleck took command of the Department of the Missouri that November. He inherited serious organizational problems and worked to improve discipline, administration, and supply.

The opening months of 1862 brought major Union victories at Forts Henry and Donelson, Pea Ridge, Island No. 10, and Shiloh. Subordinates such as Ulysses S. Grant, Samuel Curtis, and John Pope directed the fighting, but Halleck's organizational work helped make their operations possible. Those successes elevated his reputation.

His own leadership in the field produced a more mixed result. After Shiloh, Halleck personally directed the advance on Corinth, Mississippi, with more than 100,000 men. His troops moved cautiously, repeatedly digging entrenchments as they approached the vital railroad junction. Union forces occupied Corinth on May 30, 1862. Taking the town damaged Confederate transportation, but P. G. T. Beauregard escaped with his army. Halleck secured an important strategic objective while the Confederate force defending it survived to fight again.

The campaign also strained his relationship with Grant. Named second in command, Grant found himself largely bypassed as Halleck issued orders directly to other commanders. In his memoirs, Grant recalled being "little more than an observer."

In July 1862, Lincoln appointed Halleck general-in-chief of the Union armies. The assignment required him to coordinate campaigns across a vast war and manage generals with powerful personalities.

He struggled to provide that direction. The failure to secure effective cooperation between George McClellan and John Pope during the Second Manassas campaign exposed the weaknesses of Union command. Lincoln eventually described Halleck as "little more than a first rate clerk."

In March 1864, the command structure changed. Grant became general-in-chief, and Halleck became chief of staff in Washington.

Here, his strengths proved valuable. While Grant directed operations, Halleck helped arrange reinforcements, equipment, supplies, and the administrative work supporting armies in the field. The officer who had once frustrated Grant now helped sustain his campaigns.

Halleck remained in the Army after the war and died in 1872. His record deserves a balanced assessment. His caution and difficulty managing commanders limited his effectiveness at the top. His organizational abilities nevertheless contributed to Union victory. Keeping armies operating was essential work, even when it brought less recognition than winning battles.

SSources:

National Park Service, "Henry W. Halleck."

American Battlefield Trust, "Henry W. Halleck."

National Park Service, "The Siege and Battle of Corinth: A New Kind of War" and "Union Command Trouble."

Ulysses S. Grant, Personal Memoirs, Chapter XXVI.

Our Camp Journal

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

Above, the Prince Street Hospital. Below right, upon Joshua's death the members of Company E prepared "Resolutions of Grief and Condolence" following a meeting at Rappahannock Station on September 1 to be published in newspapers back home and passed to his family. Below left, Benjamin Lightner's marker.

Joshua Lightner

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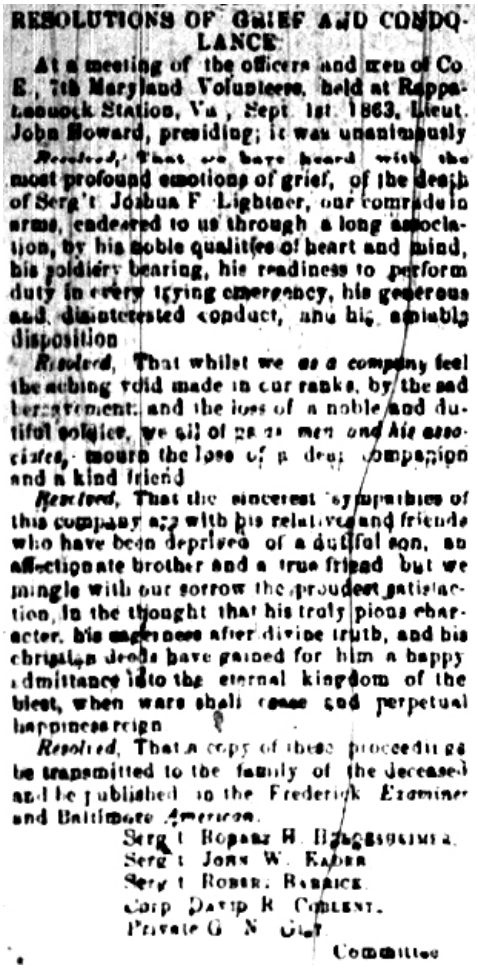
temporary cemetery in Culpeper County, Benjamin's remains were moved to Alexandria and buried at Alexandria National Cemetery not far from Joshua. His family likely made arrangements for his burial there and at some point purchased a special stone marker in lieu of the standard wooden marker.

Several 7th Marylanders were treated at Alexandria hospitals during the Civil War and four are buried in Alexandria National Cemetery, including Joshua and Benjamin Lightner."



RESOLUTIONS OF GRIEF AND CONDOLENCE

At a meeting of the officers and men of Co. E., 7th Maryland Volunteers, held at Rappahannock Station, Va., Sept. 1st, 1863, Lieut. John Howard, presiding; it was unanimously

Resolved, That we have heard with the most profound emotions of grief, of the death of Serg't Joshua F. Lightner, our comrade in arms, endeared to us through a long association, by his noble qualities of heart and mind, his soldiery bearing, his readiness to perform duty in every trying emergency, his generous and disinterested conduct, and his amiable disposition

Resolved, That whilst we as a company feel the sad void made in our ranks, by the sad bereavement, and the loss of a noble and dutiful soldier, we all of us as men and his associates, mourn the loss of a dear companion and a kind friend

Resolved, That the sincerest sympathies of this company are with his relatives and friends who have been deprived of a dutiful son, an affectionate brother and a true friend but we mingle with our sorrow the proudest satisfaction, in the thought that his truly pious character, his eagerness after divine truth, and his christian deeds have gained for him a happy admittance into the eternal kingdom of the blest, when wars shall cease and perpetual happiness reign

Resolved, That a copy of these proceedings be transmitted to the family of the deceased and be published in the Frederick Examiner and Baltimore American.

Serg't Robert H. Higginbotham
Serg't John W. Kaber
Serg't Robert Barrick
Corp Daniel R. Corlett
Private G. N. [illegible]

Committee