

OUR CAMP JOURNAL

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"We are but few in number but formidable." -Pvt. James Shelton, 7th Md. Co. B

November 2025

The 7th Maryland and Bristoe Station

And the Fate of Private Samuel Dowling, 7th MD, Co. "C"

By Pvt. Jeff Joyce

The Bristoe Campaign in October 1863 was an effort by Confederate General Robert E. Lee to outmaneuver Federal Major General George G. Meade and the Army of the Potomac, interposing his Army of Northern Virginia between Meade and Washington City. Meade began retreating from the Rappahannock River on October 11, with the 7th Maryland rapidly marching northeast with the rest of the 1st Corps. By the morning of October 14 the 7th Maryland was within a day's march of the Federal defenses surrounding Centreville.

Captain Edward Mobley of Company A wrote in his diary that on October 14 the 7th Maryland "*Marched at daylight as rear guard to wagon trains. Saw nine parallel columns moving. Arrived at Manassas at noon and Centreville at 4 p.m. Laid on the heights all night.*"

The 7th Maryland regimental history noted that as the Marylanders were "Marching over the old Bull Run battle ground, the solid earth quaked and shuddered, and the air throbbed with the sound of cannonading from Bristoe in rear, and from Thoroughfare Gap on left front."

That cannonading was from the Battle of Bristoe Station. Elements of Confederate Lieutenant General A.P. Hill's Corps stumbled onto Major General Gouverneur Warren's 2nd Corps along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad near Broad Run. The Confederate attack was repulsed and the 2nd Corps joined the rest of the Army of the Potomac that night at Centreville.

Following Hill's defeat at Bristoe Station the Confederates began withdrawing south. On October 19 the 7th Maryland was involved in the Battle of Buckland Mills near Haymarket. Brigadier General George Armstrong Custer's Federal cavalry brigade was routed by Major General Fitzhugh Lee's Confederate cavalry division. Known as the "Buckland Races", Custer's troopers retreated through the Union infantry, including the 7th Maryland. During the fighting the 7th Maryland lost 1 killed, 5 wounded and 15 captured.

In an October 22 letter to his sister Emma, Private James Dorrance of Company A describes the 7th Maryland's experience. "*We boys used to say that the rebs allways run when they heard the 7th was coming, but that is played out now.*"

After the Battle of Buckland Mills the 7th Maryland and the 1st Corps were assigned to guard the Orange

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BATTLE OF BRISTOW, OCT. 14th, 1863.

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

Seizing the Railroad Cut.

How Civil War Deaths Advanced America's Funeral Industry

Embalming methods emerged as a way to preserve and disinfect remains of the fallen



By Crystal Ponti

Before the mid-19th century, most Americans died at home, surrounded by family. Burials were intimate affairs, with the dead laid to rest within days in churchyards or family plots. But during the Civil War, hundreds of thousands of soldiers perished on distant battlefields. Families longed to bring their loved ones home but heat, sanitation issues and rough travel made that nearly impossible.

A November 9, 1864, report from Judiciary Square Hospital in Washington, D.C., described letters from anguished relatives who wondered: *"Is my dear child's grave marked so that I can find it if I am ever able to come after him? Was my husband buried in a coffin?"*

In response, an obscure medical procedure began to find a wider purpose. "Embalming emerged during the war as both a means to preserve the bodies of fallen soldiers and to disinfect them," says Genevieve Keeney-Vazquez, president

and CEO of the National Museum of Funeral History. "The goal was to keep the remains intact long enough to return them to their families, allowing for a funeral and the dignity of a proper burial."

Born out of wartime urgency, embalming laid the groundwork for the professional funeral industry that still shapes American mourning today.

A Practical Need Born of War

Before the Civil War, medical schools occasionally used preservation techniques for anatomical study, but embalming had little role in everyday funerary practice. The unprecedented scale of wartime loss changed that overnight.

"Embalming really took off when Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, a close friend of Abraham Lincoln, became the first Union officer to be killed," says Dana B. Shoaf, director of interpretation at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine. "On May 24, 1861, Ellsworth was shot while removing a large Confederate flag

from the roof of a Virginia hotel."

Thomas Holmes, a coroner's physician before the war and later known as the "father of American embalming," offered his services to Ellsworth's family. The colonel's preserved body was taken to the White House, where it lay in state for several days and then moved to New York, where thousands lined up to view the funeral cortege. Ellsworth's embalming set a powerful example. Families saw that even soldiers who died far from home could be returned for a dignified burial. Demand for the procedure grew quickly.

Field Embalmers, Bureaucracy and the Undertaker Profession

Embalmers became a familiar sight near encampments and battlefields. Many were not physicians but tradesmen who saw opportunity in tragedy. "They pitched tents close to battle sites and offered soldiers the chance to prepay for their own embalming should they be killed," says Shoaf. Families also paid steep

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7th MD at Bristow Station

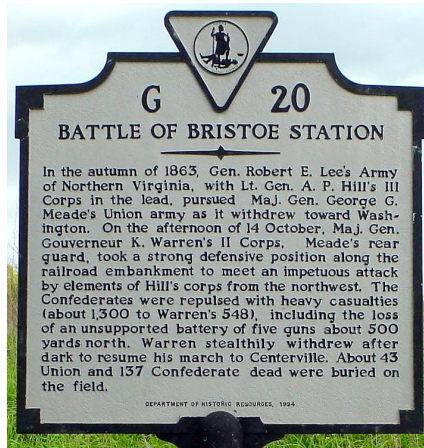
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and Alexandria Railroad while the rest of the Army of the Potomac followed the Confederates back to the Rappahannock River. On November 2 while in camp near Bristoe Station, Captain Mobley and Major Benjamin Schley of the 1st Maryland decided to go fishing. According to Captain Mobley's diary the fish didn't cooperate. "Major Schley & myself went fishing, didn't catch any, threw away the rods and returned disgusted with the sport. The fish in Broad Run have seceded." The 7th Maryland would guard the railroad until late November 1863, when it moved to Culpeper County and settled into winter quarters with the rest of the Army of the Potomac.

One of the members of the 7th Maryland guarding the Orange and Alexandria railroad was Private Samuel Dowling. Samuel was an unmarried 24 year old farmer from Harford County, Maryland, when he enlisted in Company C of the 7th Maryland on August 18, 1862.

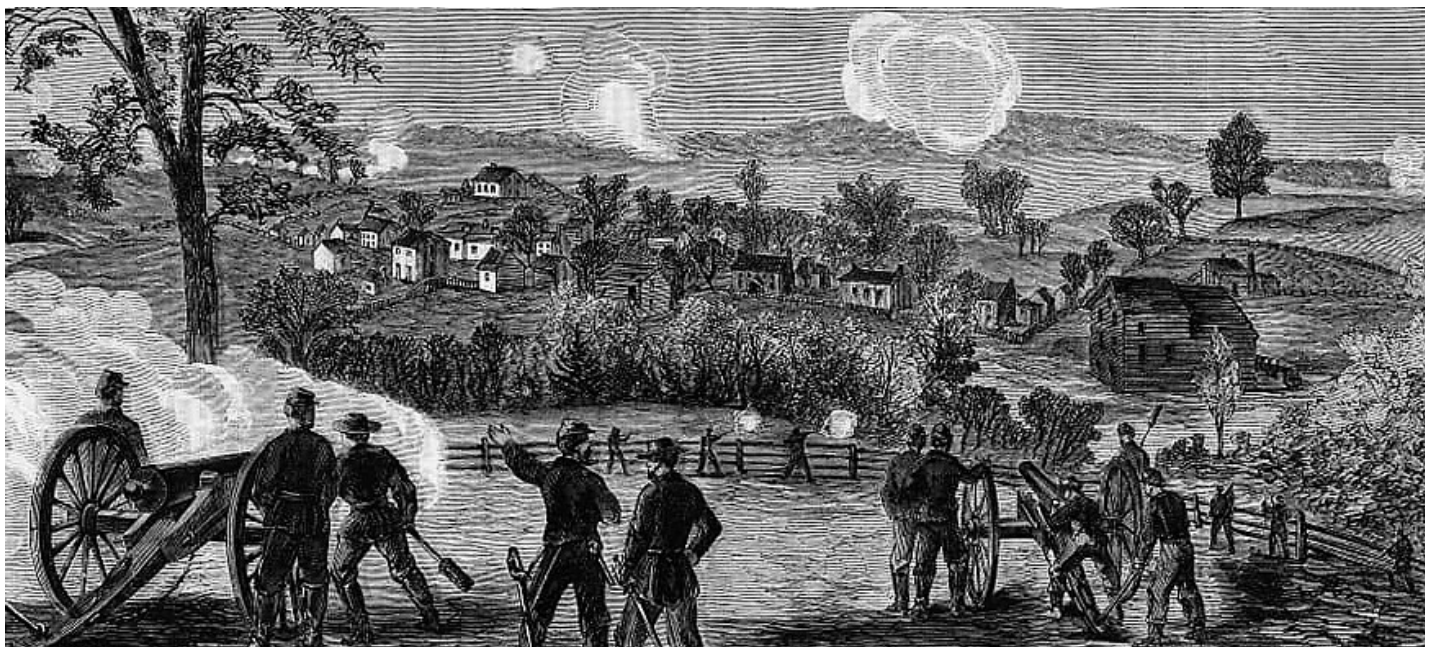
Unfortunately, Samuel contracted typhoid fever and died on October 30 in the 3rd Division hospital. Typhoid fever was one of the largest killers of Civil War soldiers in camp, with an estimated 27,000 Union soldiers succumbing to this intestinal infection caused by contaminated water or food.

Originally buried near Bristoe Station in a temporary grave, Samuel was moved to Arlington National Cemetery after the Civil War ended. He now rests in Section 13. Due to poor record keeping his first name was mistakenly recorded as James, which is now engraved on his marker.



8	7	Md.
<i>Samuel Dowling</i>		
Pvt.	Co. C	7 Reg't Maryland Inf.
Age <i>24</i> years.		
Appears on Co. Muster-out Roll, dated <i>Arlington Heights Va. May 3, 1865</i>		
Muster-out to date _____, 1865		
Last paid to _____, 1865		
Clothing account:		
Last settled _____, 1865; drawn since \$ _____ 100		
Due soldier \$ _____ 100; due U. S. \$ _____ 100		
Am't for cloth'g in kind or money adv'd \$ _____ 100		
Due U. S. for arms, equipments, &c., \$ _____ 100		
Bounty paid \$ _____ 100; due \$ _____ 100		
Remarks: <i> Died Oct 30/63.</i>		
<i> Bristow Station Va.</i>		
<i> Typhoid Fever</i>		
Book mark: _____		
<i>Blair</i>		
(461)	Cap	

Above, Bristoe Station marker and Pvt. Dowling's last muster, dated Oct. 30, 1863



THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC AT BUCKLAND - SCENE OF A CAVALRY SKIRMISH WITH STUART - by A.R. Waud

A Nostalgic Look Back: Remembrance Day 2005

Present for Duty

- Military -

Capt. Jay Henson
Lt. Rick Boyle
1st Sgt. Guy Beaven
1st Sgt. Vince Jarzinka, 155 Pa.
2nd Sgt. Steve Bush

Corporals

Jeff Bush
Pat Ellis
Brandon Wolf

Privates

Steve Giovannini
Phil Giovannini
Bryant Boyle
Hans Matyikos
Dwight Coleman
Rick Cole
Dave Jahnke
Dan Hart
Bill Hart
Pat Morton
Harold Baird
Todd Beckley
Ethan Criswell
Brandon Boyle

Medical Steward Charlie Gossard

- Civilians -

Miss Cheryl Bush
Miss Emma Bush
Miss Dawn Giovannini
Miss Jen Coleman
Miss Chrisa Jahnke
Miss Dee Beckley
Miss Eunice Criswell
Miss Vicky Jarzynka

On a brisk, sun-drenched day in mid-November the soldiers and civilians of the 7th Maryland along with the entire regional reenactment community descended on Gettysburg, Pa. for the annual Remembrance Day parade and ceremonies.

For the 7th Maryland, the morning



Pvt. Dwight Coleman looked around at the solemn graves as Capt. Henson gave the eulogy for the Maryland soldiers who died.

began with a march through the cemetery where Abraham Lincoln spoke his famous words, and where all the Union graves are forever giving a testimony to the deeds performed not only on the very grounds they sleep beneath, but throughout the four years of blood and strife.



The solemnest sound, the playing of the hardest 26 notes in music, "Taps."

It was altogether fitting we did this. Each state was honored by their respective reenactment community, including Maryland by Capt. Henson and Sgt. Bush.

The parade, itself, followed the usual route from the school down the main street. The whole day was drenched in sunshine from start to finish.

The trek along the route began to get a bit dreary with the usual cadences of "1...1...1.2...1," especially since the music from the bands ahead were drowned out by crowd noise. Buttt...as always, the 7th Maryland chimed in with their own marching tunes, thanks in large part to Pvt. Pat Morton. "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and "The Battle Cry of Freedom" were the most popular and kept all occupied until, before we knew it, the trek was over.

Afterwards, the 7th convoyed over to the town of Thurmont, Md. where the vittles were aplenty, and don't spare the forks, by golly. Fish, ribs, beef, crawdads, it was all there.

After the stomachs were sated, Sgt. Bush called a formal meeting to order and business was attended. On one of the sadder items, we all had to wish Lt. Rick Boyle Godspeed on his REAL deployment to Iraq. Please keep him in your prayers.

Come back safe, young man!



Above, the Pennsylvania contingent laid a wreath on top of the sod where so many are eternally sleeping. Below, the ladies looked on as the Maryland regiments paid homage at the Maryland Monument.





A stereoscopic image showing army surgeon Richard Burr hand-pumping chemicals into the body of an soldier during the American Civil War, United States, 1863. Getty Images

(Continued from page 2)

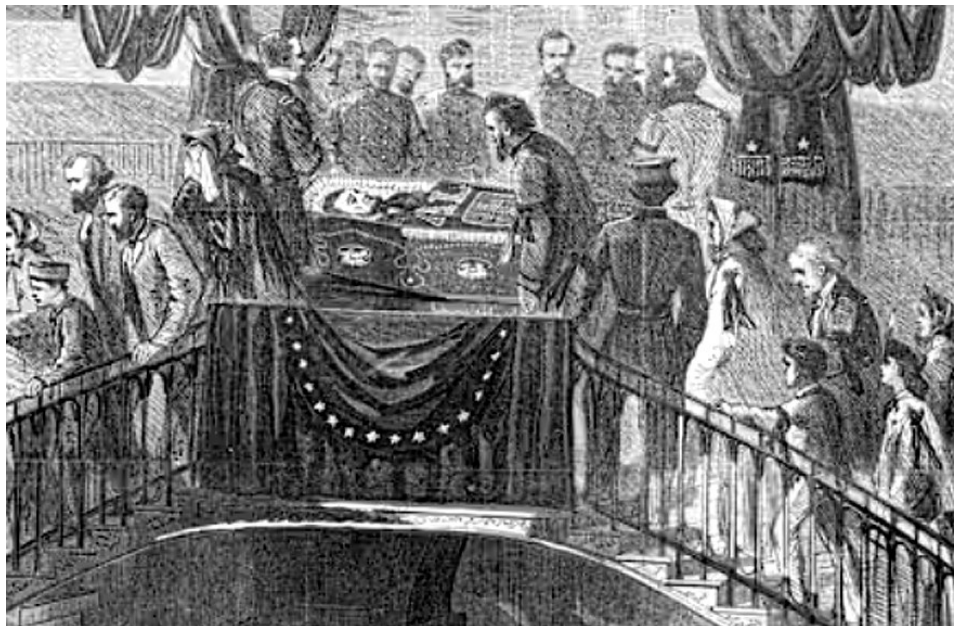
prices for their services. Over the course of the war, Holmes claimed he had embalmed 4,000 men at \$100 per corpse. He even marketed his own embalming fluid, selling it to fellow practitioners for \$3 per gallon.

As war casualties mounted, the rush to profit—coupled with inconsistent techniques and little oversight—bred controversy. “In 1864, for example, Timothy Dwight of New York complained that Dr. Richard Burr, a Washington embalmer, tried to extort money from him by holding his son’s body for ransom,” says Shoaf. “Without the family’s permission, Burr embalmed the body and then contacted Mr. Dwight, demanding \$100 for its release.”

The chemicals used in embalming posed their own hazards. The mixtures—often containing arsenic, zinc and mercuric chlorides blended with creosote, turpentine and alcohol—were effective at slowing decay but dangerously toxic.

(Formaldehyde, the preservative most associated with modern em-

balming, would not come into use until decades later.) Runoff from makeshift embalming tents frequently leached into the surrounding soil, leaving behind residues of heavy metals and poisons. In some areas, traces of these 19th-century chemicals can still be found in the ground today.



In April 1865, Abraham Lincoln’s body was embalmed and transported by train on a tour from Washington, D.C. to Springfield, Illinois. Here, a viewing is depicted at City Hall in New York. Bettman Archive

The War Department issued General Order 39 in March 1865, requiring embalmers working near battlefields to be licensed and supervised. Many of these battlefield embalmers went on to set up funeral businesses in peacetime, expanding the role of the undertaker to include transport, preservation, cosmetics, coffin making, viewings and ceremony. The shift was from death managed at home to death managed by professionals.

Lincoln's Funeral and the Power of Public Display

Perhaps no figure did more to popularize embalming than Abraham Lincoln. After his assassination in April 1865, Lincoln’s corpse was embalmed and transported by train on a long national tour from Washington, D.C., to Springfield, Illinois. Along the route, the body lay in state in dozens of cities. Millions of Americans came to view their fallen president. Embalmer Charles Brown was quoted in the press asserting, “The body of the president will never know decay.”

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

Upcoming Campaigns

NOVEMBER

November 14-15: **FVB Annual Meeting & Remembrance Day Parade** *(FVB Event)

(Parade: 7th MD COMPANY Event)

DECEMBER

Christmas related events will be listed as received and confirmed.

even long after death. With embalming, families had time to gather mourners, hold viewings and plan processions. Open-casket funerals became viable. Families who might once have only had a quick graveside service could now hold wakes or viewings at home, in churches and eventually in funeral parlors.

From Battlefield Necessity to Modern Standard

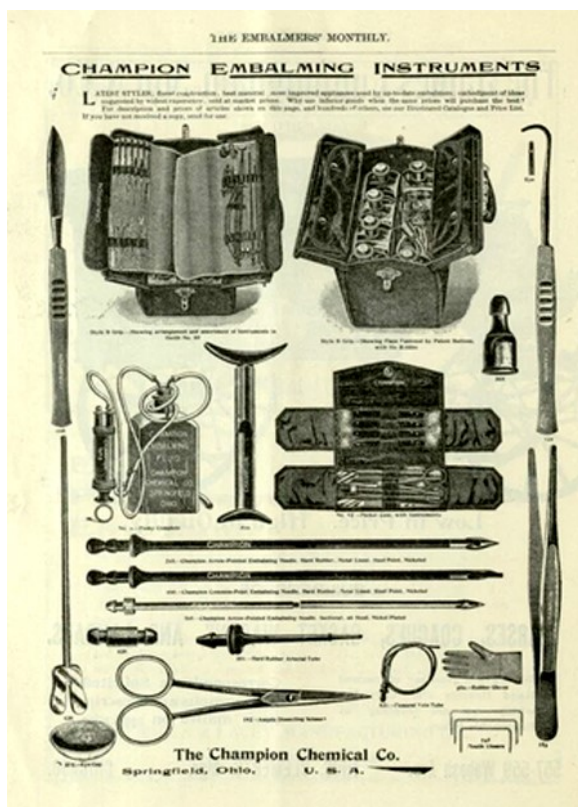
By the late 19th century, embalming was firmly established as a routine practice in the United States. Professional associations, schools and regulations emerged to standardize methods. The funeral industry expanded into a powerful sector of American life, complete with national companies, trade journals and specialized equipment manufacturers.

It all traced back, in part, to the blood-soaked battlefields of the Civil War. The unprecedented scale of death created urgent demand for preservation, while high-profile embalming—from fallen soldiers to President Lincoln—normalized the practice in the public imagination. Keeney-Vazquez says funeral professionals still learn this histo-

ry as part of their required training, beginning with Thomas Holmes and his wartime role in making embalming a standard practice.

About the author:

Crystal Ponti is a freelance writer from New England with a deep passion for exploring the intersection of history and folklore. Her work has also appeared in *The New York Times*, *A&E Crime & Investigation*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and *BBC*, among others. Find her @HistoriumU, where she also co-hosts the monthly #FolkloreThursday event.



An advertisement for Champion Embalming Instruments.

(Continued from page 5)

Lincoln's embalmed remains demonstrated to ordinary Americans that the dead could be presented with dignity,

FISK'S
PATENT AIR-TIGHT METALLIC

BURIAL CASES

ARE FOR SALE BY
M. M. WHITE,
UNDERTAKER,
South side Penn. av., near corner of 3d st.,
WASHINGTON,

Where Cases of all sizes can be obtained, and funerals attended to with economy and dispatch.

These Cases can be sold as low as good Wooden Coffins, and can be furnished ready for use in thirty minutes from the time the order is given.

These Metallic Burial Cases have been used for the remains of the following persons:

Mrs. MADISON,	Hon. J. C. CALHOUN,
Hon. D. KAUFMAN,	" H. CLAY,
" R. RANTOUL,	" DAN. WEBSTER,
" O. FOWLER,	Com. MORGAN.