Staff Ride Guide

Battle of Ball's Bluff



Ted Ballard

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BATTLE OF BALL'S BLUFF

by

Ted Ballard

CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY
UNITED STATES ARMY
WASHINGTON, D.C., 2001

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ballard, Ted.
Battle of Ball's Bluff / by Ted Ballard.
p. cm. — (Staff ride guide)
Includes bibliographical references.
1. Ball's Bluff, Battle of, 1861. I. Center of Military History.
II. Title. III. Series.
E472.63 .B16 2001
973.7'31—dc21

2001037180

First Printing—CMH Pub 35–1–1

FOREWORD

The U.S. Army has long used the staff ride as a tool for professional development, conveying the lessons of the past to contemporary soldiers. In 1906 Maj. Eben Swift took twelve officer-students from Fort Leavenworth's General Service and Staff School to the Chickamauga battlefield on the Army's first official staff ride. Since that time Army educators have employed the staff ride to provide Army officers a better understanding of a past military operation, of the vagaries of war, and of military planning. It can also serve to enliven a unit's esprit de corps—a constant objective in peacetime or war.

To support the Army's initiatives, the Center is publishing staff ride guides such as this one on the Battle of Ball's Bluff, Virginia. This account is drawn principally from contemporary after action reports and from the sworn testimony of participants before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, a congressional entity created to investigate the Union defeats at First Bull Run and Ball's Bluff.

Although not in a class with Antietam and Gettysburg or other great Civil War clashes with respect to size or consequences, the Battle of Ball's Bluff nevertheless provides important lessons in small unit actions, leadership, tactical planning, and the role of courage and military professionalism under fire. This small volume should be a welcome training aid for those undertaking a Ball's Bluff staff ride.

Washington, D.C.
22 June 2001

JOHN S. BROWN
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The Author

Ted Ballard has been a historian with the U.S. Army Center of Military History since 1980 and a part of the Center's staff ride program since 1986. *Battle of Ball's Bluff* joins his other battlefield guides to First and Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Wilderness/Spotsylvania. In addition to being the author of numerous articles on military history, he was a contributor to the Center's publication, *The Story of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps;* the author of *Rhineland*, a brochure in the Center's series commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of World War II; and a contributor to the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command publication, *American Military Heritage*, and to the Virginia Army National Guard publication, *The Tradition Continues: A History of the Virginia National Guard, 1607–1985.*

PREFACE

On the night of 20 October 1861, Union Brig. Gen. Charles P. Stone put into action a plan to attack what had been reported as a small, unguarded Confederate camp between the Potomac River at Ball's Bluff and Leesburg, Virginia. Later, after Stone learned there was no camp, he allowed the operation to continue, now modified to capture Leesburg itself. But a lack of adequate communication between commanders, problems with logistics, and violations of the principles of war hampered the operation. What originally was to be a small raid instead turned into a military disaster. The action resulted in the death of a popular U.S. senator and long-time friend of President Abraham Lincoln, the arrest and imprisonment of General Stone, and the creation of a congressional oversight committee that would keep senior Union commanders looking over their shoulders for the remainder of the war. For such a small and relatively insignificant military action, Ball's Bluff would cast a long shadow.

The purpose of a Ball's Bluff staff ride is to learn from the past by analyzing the battle through the eyes of the men who were there, both leaders and rank-and-file soldiers. The battle contains many lessons in command and control, communications, intelligence, weapons technology versus tactics, and the ever-present confusion, or "fog," of battle. Hopefully, these lessons will allow us to gain insights into decision making and the human condition during combat.

Today, the battlefield is enclosed in the 225-acre Ball's Bluff Regional Park, managed by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. A short trail includes interpretive markers and a small national cemetery containing the remains of fifty-four soldiers. Through the years the park has become overgrown but plans are currently under way to return the battlefield terrain to its 1862 appearance.

Several persons assisted in the creation of this staff ride guide. At the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Diane Sedore Arms of the Editorial Branch edited the manuscript and, in the Graphics Branch, Teresa K. Jameson designed the final product and S. L. Dowdy turned sketch maps into finished products. Edwin C. Bearss, Historian Emeritus, National Park Service, took time out from his busy schedule to review the manuscript for historical accuracy. Also, Daniel D. Lorello, New York State Archives, provided a plethora of primary source material on the New York regiments involved in the battle. My thanks to all.

In the narrative the names of Confederate personnel and units appear in italic type, Union personnel and units in regular type.

Any errors that remain in the text are the sole responsibility of the author.

Washington, D.C.
22 June 2001

TED BALLARD

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Cover: *Cannonading on the Potomac, October 1861,* by Wordsworth Thompson, from The White House Collection, courtesy of the White House Historical Association.

BATTLE
OF
BALL'S BLUFF

Ball's Bluff: An Overview

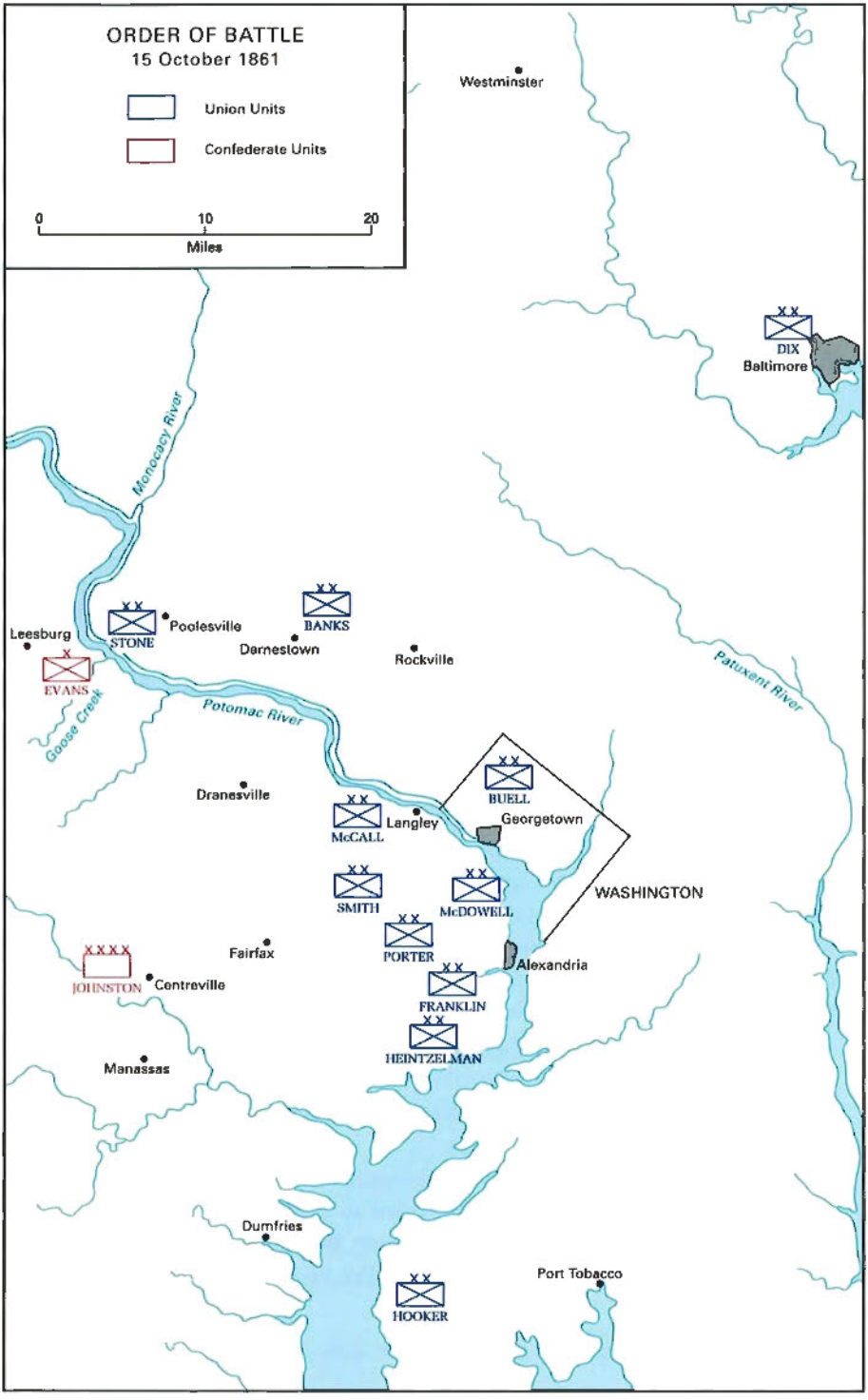
Prelude to Battle

On 22 July 1861, the day after the Union defeat at the Battle of First Bull Run (also known as First Manassas), President Abraham Lincoln summoned 35-year-old Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan to Washington and assigned him command of all troops in the Washington area. McClellan's recent military victories in western Virginia had thrust him into the limelight and brought public acclaim. Lincoln believed McClellan could restore the morale of the beaten Union Army and rebuild it for future operations. McClellan began immediately the complex task of organizing and training a large force capable of defeating the Southern army in Virginia. A month after being assigned command, he designated his force the Army of the Potomac and had molded it into a formidable fighting machine, more than 100,000 men strong.

On the other side of the Potomac River the Confederate Army, commanded by *General Joseph E. Johnston*, numbered about 40,000. After the Confederate victory at Manassas, *Johnston* contemplated going on the offensive, crossing into Maryland, and threatening either Washington or Baltimore. However, *Johnston* felt his offensive would require no less than 60,000 men and requested reinforcements from Richmond. In late September the Confederate government advised *Johnston* that it would be unable to provide additional troops. The Confederate commander was forced to go on the defensive and reluctantly began to withdraw his army from the vicinity of Washington.[1] By mid-October the main part of the Confederate Army was at Centreville, where *Johnston* took up a defensive line and prepared winter quarters. Near Leesburg, *Johnston* left a single brigade to guard the narrow river crossings north of Washington and to provide a line of communications between Confederate forces at Winchester and those at Manassas.

In Washington, McClellan had organized his Army of the Potomac into eleven divisions and began posting them to protect the capital. *(Map 1)* Aware that *Johnston* had troops at Leesburg, he became concerned that the Confederates might attempt to cross the Potomac above Washington. To

[1] Joseph E. Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations* . . . (New York: D. Appleton, 1874), pp. 76–77.


ORDER OF BATTLE
15 October 1861
Union Units
Confederate Units
0
10
20
Miles
Westminster
DIX
Baltimore
Monocacy River
BANKS
STONE
Poolesville
Leesburg
Darnestown
Rockville
EVANS
Goose Creek
Potomac River
Patuxent River
Dranesville
BUELL
McCALL
Langley
Georgetown
SMITH
McDOWELL
WASHINGTON
PORTER
Fairfax
Alexandria
JOHNSTON
Centreville
FRANKLIN
HEINTZELMAN
Manassas
Dumfries
Port Tobacco
HOOKER

Map 1

guard against such a move, the 6,500-man division of Brig. Gen. Charles P. Stone, known as the Corps of Observation, was encamped near Poolesville, Maryland, to watch the several fords and ferries to the east of Leesburg.

Stone's division consisted of three infantry brigades. Brig. Gen. Willis A. Gorman's brigade included the 2d New York State Militia (later redesignated the 82d New York Infantry), 1st Minnesota Infantry, 15th Massachusetts Infantry, and 34th and 42d New York Infantries. The brigade of Brig. Gen. Frederick W. Lander contained the 19th and 20th Massachusetts Infantries, 7th Michigan Infantry, and one company of Massachusetts sharpshooters. Col. (and U.S. senator) Edward D. Baker commanded what was known as the California brigade: the 1st, 2d, 3d, and 4th California Infantries. These regiments had been recruited mostly in Pennsylvania, and, after the Battle of Ball's Bluff and the protest of the Pennsylvania governor, the regiments were redesignated the 71st, 69th, 72d, and 106th Pennsylvania Infantries, respectively. Stone's division also included six companies of the 3d New York Cavalry, a detachment of Maryland cavalry known as the Putnam Rangers (later redesignated Company L, 1st Maryland Cavalry), and three batteries of artillery: Battery I, 1st U.S. Artillery; Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery; and Battery K, 9th New York State Militia (later redesignated 6th New York Independent Battery).[2]

To guard crossing sites farther north, the division of Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks, headquartered at Darnestown, Maryland, established pickets at the mouth of the Monocacy River and some miles northward. About twenty-three miles southeast of Leesburg the division of Brig. Gen. George A. McCall was encamped just below the Potomac at Langley, Virginia.

Opposite Stone's Corps of Observation, on the Virginia side of the river, was the *7th Brigade* of *Col. Nathan G. Evans. Evans'* command consisted of the *13th, 17th,* and *18th Mississippi Infantries; 8th Virginia Infantry; Companies B, C,* and *E, 4th Virginia Cavalry,* and *Company K, 6th Virginia Cavalry;* and the *1st Company, Richmond Howitzers*, a total force of about 1,700 men.[3] About two miles east of the town *Evans* had an earthen fort constructed, designated it Fort Evans, and established his headquarters there.

During October *Evans'* brigade was covering a seven-mile distance of the Potomac River east of Leesburg. Along this stretch *Evans'* pickets

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[2] U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1893) (hereafter cited as *OR),* ser. 1, vol. 5, pp. 16, 293.

[3] Ibid., p. 350.

guarded crossing sites including Conrad's Ferry (known today as White's Ferry), Smart's Mill, and Edwards' Ferry. About halfway between Conrad's and Edwards' Ferries is Ball's Bluff, named for the local Ball family. Rising 100 feet above the river, covered by trees and rock outcroppings, the bluffs overlook Harrison's Island. Harrison's Island itself is flat and at the time of the battle was about 350 yards wide and 3 miles in length. On the Maryland side of the island the Potomac River was about 250 yards wide, but on the Virginia side it was only 60 to 80 yards wide. Along the Maryland shore the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal transported barges between Cumberland, Maryland, and Georgetown, D.C. General Stone maintained pickets on Harrison's Island and had small entrenchments thrown up to protect the men from any Confederate fire from the Virginia bluffs.

Through the end of summer and early fall of 1861, the opposing pickets along the river fell into a daily practice of watching the crossing sites. Although fraternization between Confederate and Union pickets was forbidden, the soldiers sometimes traded newspapers, tobacco, or other items by making small rafts and allowing them to drift across to the other side. Or when the river was low, they might wade out into the center of the water and engage in conversation with one another. Occasionally, there would be shots exchanged but generally the duty was routine and dull.

In mid-October, after receiving reports that the Confederate Army had fallen back to Centreville and Manassas, McClellan saw an opportunity to secure the river-crossing sites north of Washington and perhaps occupy Leesburg. He hoped that a show of force would cause *Evans'* Confederates to abandon the town without a fight, giving McClellan an easy victory and satisfying a Congress anxious for the Union Army to take the initiative. On 19 October McClellan ordered General McCall to march his division from Langley to Dranesville, about fourteen miles south of Leesburg. This movement was not only meant to intimidate *Evans* into withdrawing from Leesburg but was an opportunity to learn the position of the Confederates and allow Army topographical engineers to prepare maps of the area. Once his mission was completed, McCall was to return to Langley the following day. By midnight on the nineteenth, *Evans* was alerted to McCall's advance when a Union courier carrying instructions to McCall's command was captured. Instead of evacuating the area, *Evans* moved his brigade to a defensive position on the Leesburg Turnpike and along the north side of Goose Creek. The following morning, 20 October, a Union signal station at Sugar Loaf Mountain, now unable to see *Evans'* force, reported to McClellan that the enemy had apparently moved away from Leesburg.[4]

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[4] Ibid., pp. 32, 349.

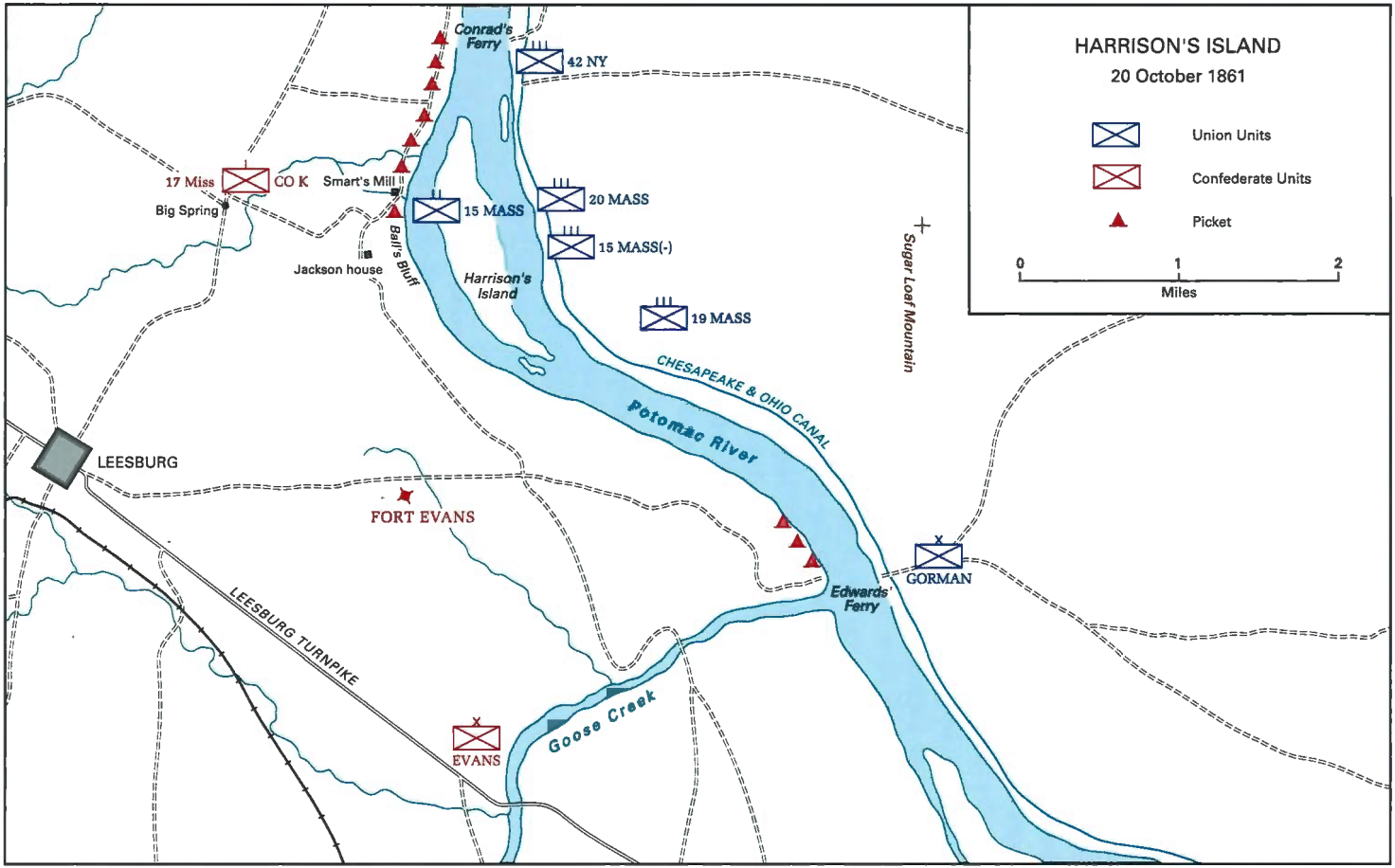
McClellan, unsure whether the Confederates had actually evacuated the town, decided to apply additional pressure with General Stone's division. He sent a message to Stone saying McCall's division had advanced to Dranesville and told Stone to keep a lookout toward Leesburg to see if McCall's movement would drive the Confederates away. McClellan ended the communique with "Perhaps a slight demonstration on your part would have the effect to move them." McClellan failed to tell Stone that the movement of McCall's division to Dranesville was only temporary and that McCall would return to Langley the following day. He also neglected to explain to Stone that the "slight demonstration" was expected to be no more than a show of force on the Maryland shore and that no troops were expected to cross the river for the purpose of fighting.[5]

On the afternoon of 20 October Stone moved a portion of General Gorman's brigade, consisting of the 2d New York State Militia and 1st Minnesota Infantry, to Edwards' Ferry for the demonstration. (*Map 2*) Gorman's 34th New York Infantry was at Seneca, Maryland, eight miles downstream. Gorman's 42d New York Infantry was ordered to the vicinity of Conrad's Ferry, while the 15th Massachusetts Infantry remained on picket duty in the vicinity of Harrison's Island along with General Lander's 19th and 20th Massachusetts Infantries. The movement of Gorman's units to the ferry was joined by the 7th Michigan Infantry of Lander's brigade, along with the Putnam Rangers and two companies of the 3d New York Cavalry.[6]

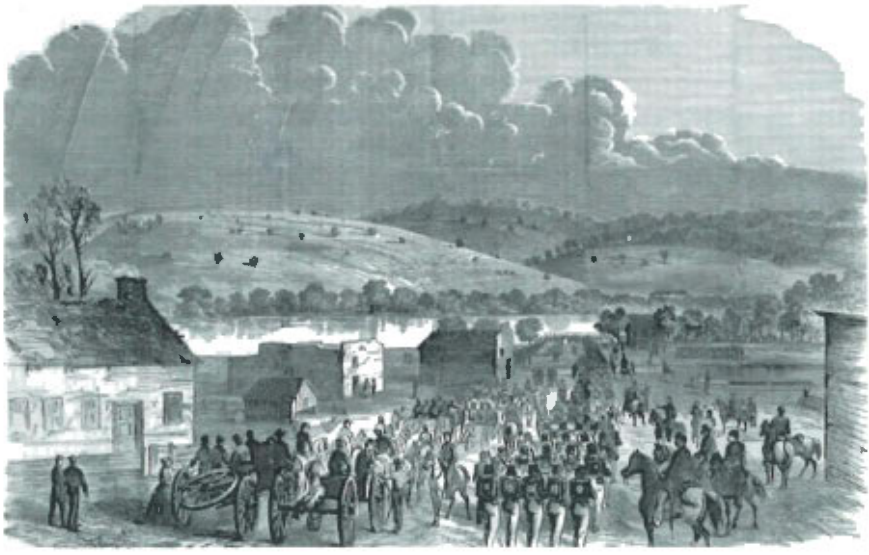
At the ferry, General Gorman had three flatboats removed from the canal and placed in the river preparatory to a crossing. As Union artillery fire drove the Confederates from view and while the remainder of his command waited on the Maryland shore, Gorman began crossing only two companies of the 1st Minnesota Infantry.

While the Confederates were being distracted by the demonstration at Edwards' Ferry, Stone ordered Col. Charles P. Devens, 15th Massachusetts Infantry, to send 38-year-old Capt. Chase Philbrick of Company H and twenty men on a scouting expedition toward Leesburg via Ball's Bluff. To support the reconnaissance and protect the group's return, Colonel Devens was also ordered to cross to Harrison's Island four companies of his regiment, Companies A, C, G, and I, where they would join the remainder of Company H already there on picket duty. Stone anticipated that Philbrick would depart in time to accomplish his mission at the same time as the Edwards' Ferry demonstration concluded. However, due to a delay in delivering the order to Philbrick, the scouting party did not

[5] Ibid., pp. 32, 33.
[6] Ibid., p. 293.


HARRISON'S ISLAND
20 October 1861
Union Units
Confederate Units
Picket
0
1
2
Miles
Conrad's Ferry
42 NY
17 Miss
CO K
Big Spring
Smart's Mill
Ball's Bluff
Jackson house
15 MASS
20 MASS
15 MASS(-)
19 MASS
Harrison's Island
Sugar Loaf Mountain
CHESAPEAKE & OHIO CANAL
Potomac River
LEESBURG
FORT EVANS
LEESBURG TURNPIKE
EVANS
Goose Creek
Edwards' Ferry
GORMAN

Map 2



General Gorman's brigade arriving at Edwards' Ferry for General Stone's "slight demonstration," 20 October 1861 (Library of Congress)

cross the river until just before dark, after which it climbed to the bluff and cautiously followed a path through the woods.[7]

With the approach of darkness Stone ended his demonstration at Edwards' Ferry and withdrew the Minnesota troops to the Maryland shore. At this point Stone had successfully carried out McClellan's suggestion for a slight demonstration, and he informed McClellan of the temporary crossing and of the scouting party still near Leesburg.[8]

The Battle

Meanwhile, Philbrick's scouting party had walked in the dark less than a mile from the bluffs when it spotted what appeared to be a row of about thirty tents silhouetted along a ridgeline near the home of the Jackson family. Although no Confederates could be seen, Philbrick and his group fell back to the bluff, crossed back into Maryland, and about 2200 informed Stone of the discovery of the unguarded camp. Seeing an opportunity for a quick raid, Stone decided to send a force across the river to destroy the camp. Although General McClellan had not ordered

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[7] Ibid.; *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War* (hereafter cited as *RJCCW*), 3 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1863), testimony of General Stone, p. 277.

[8] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 33.

such a river crossing in the Leesburg area, Stone was acting with proper authority. Two months earlier, McClellan had instructed Stone that "should you see the opportunity of capturing or dispersing any small party by crossing the river, you are at liberty to do so, though great discretion is recommended in making such a movement."[9] In Stone's words this was "precisely one of those pieces of carelessness on the part of the enemy that ought to be taken advantage of." He quickly wrote orders for Colonel Devens to take five companies of the 15th Massachusetts Infantry across the river with silence and rapidity to destroy the camp.[10]

To cover the return of Devens' force, Col. William R. Lee, commanding the 20th Massachusetts Infantry, was ordered to cross his regiment to Harrison's Island and to send two companies across the river to the bluff. Stone also ordered the 2d New York State Militia at Edwards' Ferry to send eight men along with two 12-pounder mountain howitzers up the canal towpath to a point opposite Harrison's Island. Second Lt. Frank S. French, Battery I, 1st U.S. Artillery, was assigned to command the guns, and four men of Battery I were assigned to the crews. These guns would be under the overall control of Colonel Lee and could fire onto Ball's Bluff to protect a hasty withdrawal. Artillery from Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery, would also be placed in support, with four 12-pounder rifled guns being ordered to the canal towpath near the island. The other two guns of the battery would remain north of Conrad's Ferry, near the mouth of the Monocacy River.[11] And finally, Stone ordered the 1st California Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. Isaac J. Wistar, and the 42d New York Infantry, commanded by Col. Milton Cogswell, to wait at Conrad's Ferry, ready to provide additional support if needed.

In addition to attacking the Confederate camp, Devens' orders stated that after accomplishing his mission he was to return to the Maryland shore, unless a strong position was found on the Virginia side of the river that could be held until reinforcements arrived. He was then to hold on and report. About midnight on 20 October Devens and Companies A, C, G, H, and I (about 300 men) quietly moved to the crossing site on the

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[9] *RJCCW*, testimony of General Stone, p. 267. Quote from *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, pt. 1, pp. 557–58.

[10] Quote from *RJCCW*, testimony of General Stone, p. 277. *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 299.

[11] *RJCCW*, testimony of Colonel Lee, p. 474, and of Capt Dennis De Courcy, p. 304; William L. Haskin, *The History of the First Regiment of Artillery . . .* (Portland, Oreg.: B. Thurston, 1879), p. 150; John H. Rhodes, *The History of Battery B, First Regiment Rhode Island Light Artillery in the War To Preserve the Union, 1861–1865* (Providence, R.I.: Snow & Farnham, 1894), p. 33.

western side of Harrison's Island. Despite the cold, Devens ordered his men to march without overcoats or knapsacks, explaining that they might be cold for two or three hours in the early morning but during the day they would be warm enough. There were only two boats available for the crossing: a lifeboat that could hold twenty-five men and a skiff capable of carrying less than ten men. To increase the number of men crossing, another skiff was brought across the island from the Maryland side and placed in the river. After much difficulty, the crossing was completed about 0400 on 21 October. Once on the Virginia shore, the companies followed the riverbank southward about seventy yards and climbed a narrow, steep path to the top. When the last group had climbed the bluff, Colonel Devens crossed over, briefly getting lost in the dark along the riverbank before finding the path to the top. After checking on his men, Devens returned to the riverbank to make sure the two companies of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry could find their way to the top of the bluff.[12] Colonel Lee had chosen Companies D and I of the 20th to make the crossing and accompanied them himself, leaving the remaining five companies on the island under the command of Maj. Paul Revere, grandson of the Revolutionary War hero.

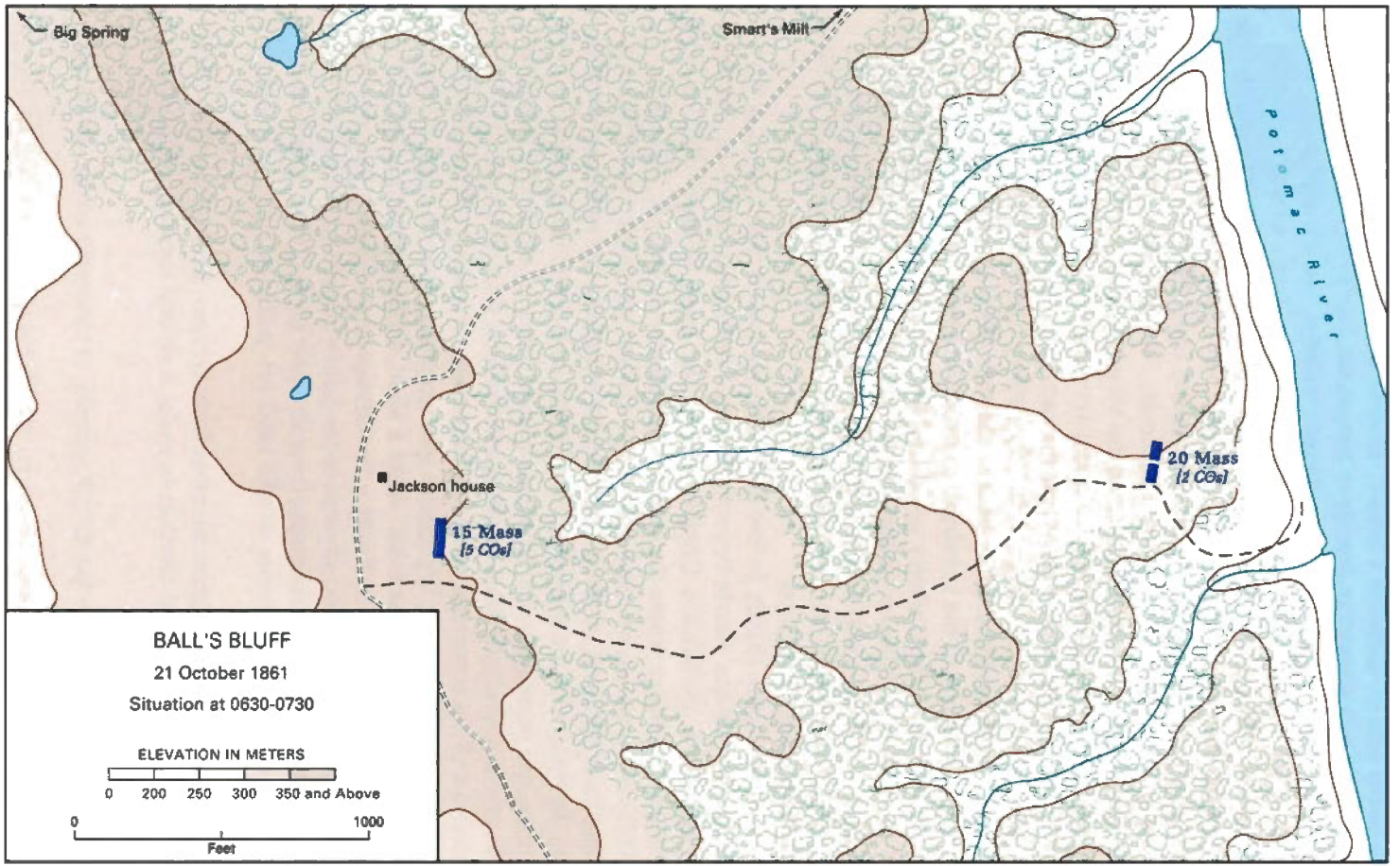
At first light, shortly before 0600, Devens led his men down a narrow path and into the woods beyond, leaving Lee and his companies on the bluff. With Philbrick's Company H in the lead, Devens' force soon reached the ridge where the enemy camp had been seen the night before. (*Map 3*) However, on reaching the site, Devens discovered that Philbrick had been deceived. A row of trees on the ridgeline running perpendicular to the path, with the night sky showing through the openings between the trees, had presented only the appearance of a row of tents. With no camp to attack, Devens decided to salvage something from the mission. While the rest of his command waited in the woods, Devens, Philbrick, and 1st Lt. Church Howe, the regimental quartermaster, crossed over the ridge and scouted toward the town. After a short while they returned, having seen no enemy troops and only a few distant tents. Devens then decided to exercise the discretion allowed in his orders and not return to the bluff. About 0700 he sent Lieutenant Howe to Stone to report that there was no enemy camp, and Devens would hold his position and await further orders.[13]

To distract Confederate attention from Devens' movement, Stone had earlier ordered General Gorman to make a second crossing at Edwards'

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[12] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, pp. 299–300; *RJCCW*, testimony of Colonel Devens, pp. 404–05, and of Colonel Lee, p. 475.

[13] *RJCCW*, testimony of Colonel Devens, pp. 405–06, and of Lieutenant Howe, p. 375.


Big Spring
Smart's Mill
Potomac River
Jackson house
15 Mass
[5 COs]
20 Mass
[2 COs]
BALL'S BLUFF
21 October 1861
Situation at 0630-0730
ELEVATION IN METERS
0 200 250 300 350 and Above
0
1000
Feet

Map 3

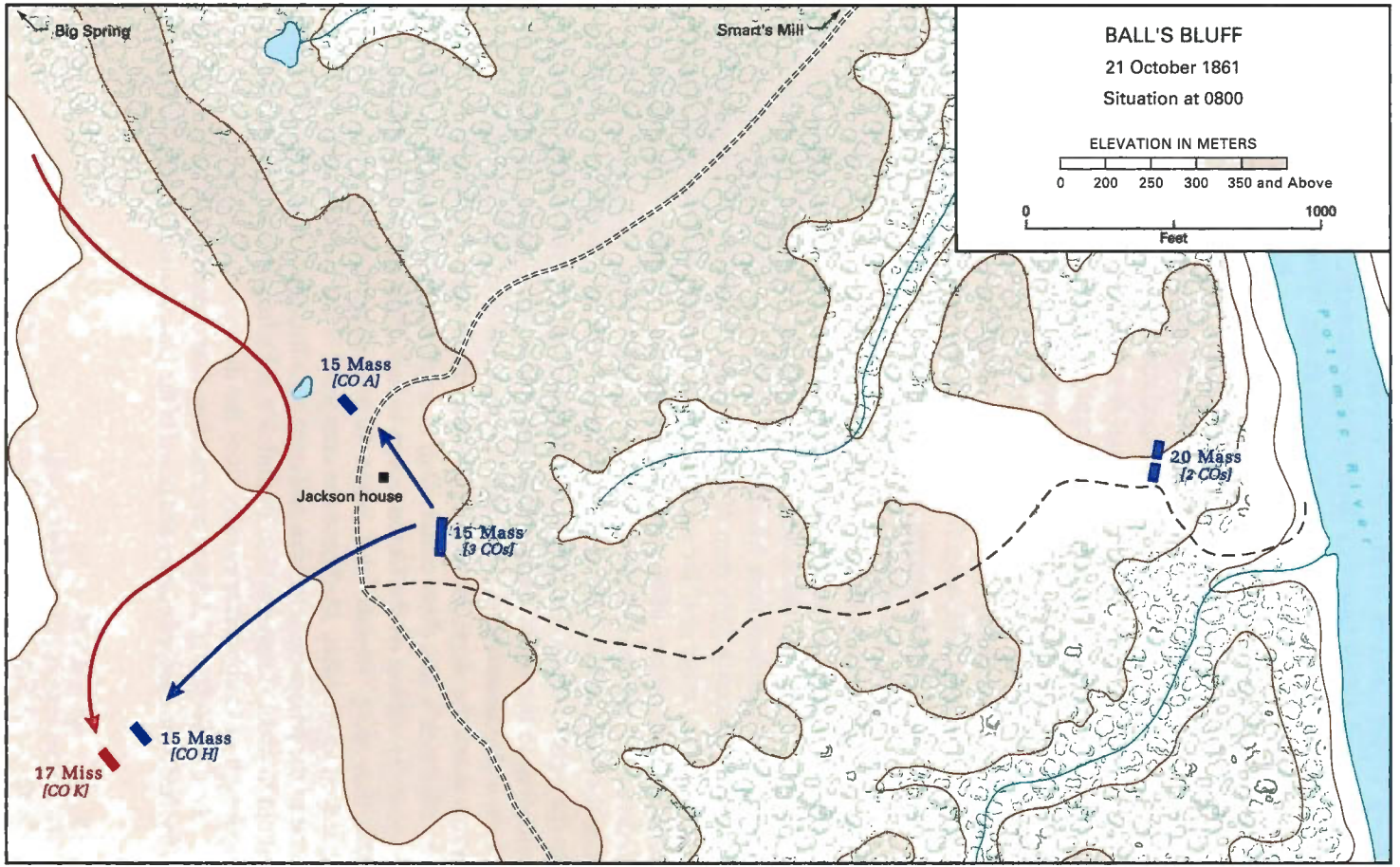
Ferry. Under cover of artillery fire, two companies of the 1st Minnesota Infantry and a detachment of about thirty horsemen of the 3d New York Cavalry would cross over to the Virginia shore. While infantry covered the crossing site, the cavalry would advance as far as the Leesburg Turnpike and report on the number and disposition of any enemy seen.[14]

Back at the bluff, as the sky grew lighter, Colonel Lee took a quick look at his surroundings. His troops were on the edge of an open field, trapezoidal in shape. Woods surrounded the field on all sides, and the path leading toward Leesburg crossed the field and entered the woods almost four hundred yards away. Lee sent out pickets to check the woods to the north and south of the field and continued to await the results of Devens' operation. About 0730 several enlisted men of Company I, 20th Massachusetts Infantry, in the woods to picket the slope above a ravine north of the open field, were fired upon. On the opposite slope, pickets of *Company K, 17th Mississippi Infantry*, south of Smart's Mill, had seen the group coming and opened fire, wounding a sergeant and sending the Massachusetts men scurrying back up the slope.[15]

The Confederate pickets quickly informed their commander, *Capt. William L. Duff,* of the Union crossing. *Duff* forwarded the news to *Evans*, then marched from his camp at Big Spring less than a mile away with the remaining forty men of his company, following a long ravine to the top of the ridge near the Jackson house. Devens' pickets spotted *Duff* and his men about 0800 and alerted Devens. Captain Philbrick was ordered to advance Company H over the ridge and confront the Confederates, while Capt. John Rockwood, with his Company A, moved to the right to block the road to Smart's Mill and prevent the enemy from escaping to the north. Surprised by the sudden appearance of Union soldiers and outnumbered, *Duff* and his men quickly fell back about 300 yards down the slope, closely followed by Philbrick's company. (*Map 4*) As Philbrick's unit drew closer, *Duff* ordered his men to take aim, while repeatedly calling on the Union troops to halt. Philbrick's men called out that they were "friends," but, when the two companies were less than a hundred yards apart, *Duff* gave the command "fire," knocking down several of the Massachusetts men and opening a lively skirmish. Devens was about to order Company G to Philbrick's aid when he was warned of the approach of Confederate cavalry from the direction of Leesburg.[16]

Lt. Col. Walter H. Jenifer, commanding four companies of Virginia cavalry, had been camped nearby and heard of the Union crossing at Ball's Bluff.

[14] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 294.
[15] *RJCCW*, testimony of Colonel Lee, p. 476.
[16] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 363; *RJCCW*, testimony of Colonel Devens, p. 406.


Big Spring
Smart's Mill
BALL'S BLUFF
21 October 1861
Situation at 0800
ELEVATION IN METERS
0 200 250 300 350 and Above
0 1000
Feet
15 Mass
[CO A]
Jackson house
15 Mass
[3 COs]
20 Mass
[2 COs]
15 Mass
[CO H]
17 Miss
[CO K]
Potomac River

Map 4

With *Companies B, C,* and *E, 4th Virginia Cavalry,* and *Company K, 6th Virginia Cavalry, Jenifer* hurried to support *Duff*'s command.[17] Devens ordered Philbrick and Rockwood to fall back. After waiting a few minutes on the east side of the ridge, and unsure of the size of the Confederate force on the other side, Devens marched his command back to the bluff. *Duff* also fell back another 300 yards, where he was joined by *Jenifer*'s cavalry. In the short skirmish Philbrick had lost one killed, nine wounded, and two missing. *Duff*'s casualties were three wounded, one seriously.[18] Both *Duff*'s and *Jenifer*'s commands searched the site of the skirmish, gathering dropped weapons and making prisoners of several of the Union wounded. Later, an order arrived for *Jenifer* to report to Fort Evans, so he and his cavalry departed.

Back at the bluff Colonel Lee had heard the firing to the front. Expecting Devens' command to be returning shortly, Lee placed Company D on the left side of the path and Company I on the right side. About 0830 Devens and his men appeared and halted on the path in front of Lee's command. Devens, according to Lee, seemed angry at the result of the operation. When Lee suggested to Devens that he form his men into a line of battle, instead of them standing in column on the path, Devens did not respond. After remaining about half an hour Devens, without saying a word to Lee, marched back up the path and out of sight.[19] Arriving at his earlier position in the woods near the Jackson house, Devens waited for orders from Stone.

Meanwhile, at Edwards' Ferry, two companies of Minnesota troops began crossing the river, along with about thirty horsemen of the 3d New York Cavalry. While the infantry guarded the crossing site, the cavalry scouted toward the Leesburg Turnpike, where it had a brief encounter with the *13th Mississippi Infantry* before returning to the ferry. Watching the Edwards' Ferry operation from the Maryland shore, General Stone received Devens' report about 0830 on the error regarding the Confederate camp. Unaware of Devens' morning skirmish, Stone informed McClellan that Devens had crossed the river and had proceeded to within a mile and a half of Leesburg without seeing any enemy and that Stone's cavalry had briefly skirmished with Confederates at Edwards' Ferry. McClellan responded with, "I congratulate your command. Keep me constantly informed."[20]

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[17] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 368; Kenneth L. Stiles, *4th Virginia Cavalry* (Lynchburg, Va.: H. E. Howard, 1985), pp. 7–8; Michael P. Musick, *6th Virginia Cavalry* (Lynchburg, Va.: H. E. Howard, 1990), p. 5.

[18] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, pp. 308, 353.

[19] *RJCCW*, testimony of Colonel Lee, pp. 476–77.

[20] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 51, pt. 1, p. 498.

Shortly after Devens had returned to the vicinity of the Jackson house, Lieutenant Howe arrived with orders from Stone. Devens was to remain where he was and a detachment of cavalry would arrive for the purpose of scouting toward the town. Howe also said that the remaining five companies of the 15th Massachusetts Infantry commanded by Lt. Col. George H. Ward would be crossing over to the Virginia shore and marching to Smart's Mill, on Devens' right flank. After expressing concern that Ward should join him at the front rather than going to Smart's Mill, Devens sent the quartermaster back to Edwards' Ferry with word of the morning skirmish. On the way back Howe met Ward preparing to cross and told him of the morning skirmish and Devens' desire that Ward support him as soon as possible. Ward sent word to Stone that instead of marching to Smart's Mill, Ward would join Devens' command. Ward then crossed the river and marched directly up the same path Devens had followed. By 1100 all ten companies had united, giving Devens a force of about 650 men.[21]

In the meantime, about ten cavalrymen, led by a noncommissioned officer and sent by Stone to scout for Devens, crossed the river from Maryland and arrived on the Virginia riverbank. Accompanying them was Capt. Charles Candy of General Lander's staff, temporarily acting as an aide to General Stone. While the cavalrymen waited below, Candy rode to the top of the bluff where he met with Colonel Lee. After writing down Lee's evaluation of the general situation, Candy returned to the riverbank and crossed back to the Maryland shore. For unexplained reasons, the cavalrymen, instead of reporting to Devens, followed Candy back across the river.[22] Thus Devens, and later Baker, was deprived of a means of obtaining advance information about the approach of any Confederate force.

Soon after Devens had returned to the Jackson house, Colonel Lee sent a note to Major Revere on the island, telling him that Devens had encountered the enemy and that "we are determined to fight." This prompted Revere to begin crossing his five companies of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry to the Virginia shore, a move that by noon would increase Lee's force to 317 men. Lee had also stopped Lieutenant Howe as he passed by on one of his trips to and from Edwards' Ferry. In response to a question from Howe regarding Lee's assessment of the situation, Lee said to tell Stone that "if he wished to open a campaign in Virginia, now was the time."[23]

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[21] Ibid., p. 309, and vol. 5, pp. 309–10.

[22] *RJCCW*, testimony of Colonel Lee, p. 477, and of Lieutenant Howe, p. 376.

[23] First quote from Ibid., testimony of Colonel Lee, p. 477. Second quote from Ibid., testimony of Lieutenant Howe, p. 376.

Lee posted his seven companies, A, C, D, E, G, H, and I, along the bluff. The men were placed in line parallel with the eastern edge of the open field, with their backs to the river, behind a slight rise of ground and just in front of the wood line. Company D was thrown out as skirmishers in the woods on the left, while Company H was placed in the woods on the right. Revere's troops, with difficulty, had also brought the two mountain howitzers. The guns were hauled up the bluff and placed along the wood line on the northern side of the field.

Earlier that morning Colonel Baker, commanding the California brigade, had ridden down the canal towpath to the 1st California Infantry, stationed at Conrad's Ferry. A little after 0900 Baker met with Colonel Wistar, commanding the 1st, and asked if Wistar thought Baker should go down to Stone's headquarters at Edwards' Ferry. Wistar responded that he didn't know but his own orders were to remain at Conrad's Ferry, unless he heard heavy firing on the bluff, at which time he was to cross over in support. Baker then decided to ride to Edwards' Ferry to see Stone.[24]

Around 1000 Baker arrived at Edwards' Ferry and met with Stone. Baker was informed that McCall's division had advanced to Dranesville. (In fact, by that time McCall was well on his way back to Langley.) Baker was also told that portions of Devens' and Lee's commands were in Virginia at Ball's Bluff and that Gorman was crossing troops at Edwards' Ferry and would push them to the Leesburg Turnpike. General Lander was away in Washington, so Stone assigned Baker command of the division's "right wing" in the area of Harrison's Island. Stone would remain at Edwards' Ferry to coordinate the movements of Baker and Gorman. Baker was ordered to hold any ground previously occupied on the Virginia shore and not yield any ground without resistance. He was not, however, to fight a superior force. In case of heavy firing on the bluff, Baker was to advance forces to support Devens and Lee or to pull all forces back across the river "at your discretion." Baker asked that these orders be put in writing, and Stone wrote them out.[25]

Shortly before 1100 Baker rode back up the canal towpath toward Harrison's Island to take command of Stone's right wing. On the way, he met Howe headed for Stone's headquarters. From Howe, Baker learned of Devens' morning fight and Ward's five companies going to his support. Baker immediately ordered an aide to ride ahead and have Colonel Wistar and the 1st California Infantry cross the river and support Devens and Lee. Baker then rode on toward the island. Howe continued to

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[24] Ibid., testimony of Colonel Wistar, p. 307.

[25] Ibid., testimony of General Stone, p. 275.

Stone's headquarters and informed him of the morning skirmish and of Colonel Ward's companies marching to join Devens. Stone replied that Baker was now in command of that wing and that he would arrange things there to suit himself.[26]

Soon after 1100 Stone wrote McClellan, "The enemy have been engaged opposite Harrison's Island; our men behaving admirably." According to McClellan, this was the first intimation that Stone's movements across the river might be more than a mere scout. McClellan immediately telegraphed McCall to remain at Dranesville but, after learning McCall had already returned to Langley, McClellan ordered McCall and Banks to hold their divisions in readiness for a possible move to support Stone. McClellan also sent a note to Stone asking, "Is the force of the enemy now engaged with your troops opposite Harrison's Island large? If so, and you require more support than your division affords, call upon General Banks, who has been directed to respond. What force, in your opinion, would it require to carry Leesburg? Answer at once, as I may require you to take it to-day; and, if so, I will support you on the other side of the river from Darnestown." Stone responded by saying he thought the enemy was about 4,000 strong, but he believed his command could still occupy Leesburg that day. He ended his message with, "We are a little short of boats."[27]

Meanwhile, Devens deployed three companies as skirmishers around the Jackson house. While Devens' remaining seven companies waited in the wood line, *Colonel Jenifer* returned from Fort Evans with *Companies B* and *C, 4th Virginia Cavalry,* and *Company K, 6th Virginia Cavalry.* Shortly after 1100 skirmishing broke out between *Jenifer*'s and Devens' commands as *Duff*'s *Company K, 17th Mississippi Infantry*, moved about a quarter of a mile to *Jenifer*'s left. *Jenifer* had earlier requested reinforcements from *Colonel Evans* and soon two companies of the *18th Mississippi Infantry* and one company of the *13th Mississippi Infantry* arrived on the right of the Virginia cavalry. As the skirmishing increased in intensity, *Jenifer* sent for additional troops from *Evans*.[28] By noon the Confederates had pushed Devens' pickets east of the Jackson house. (*Map 5*)

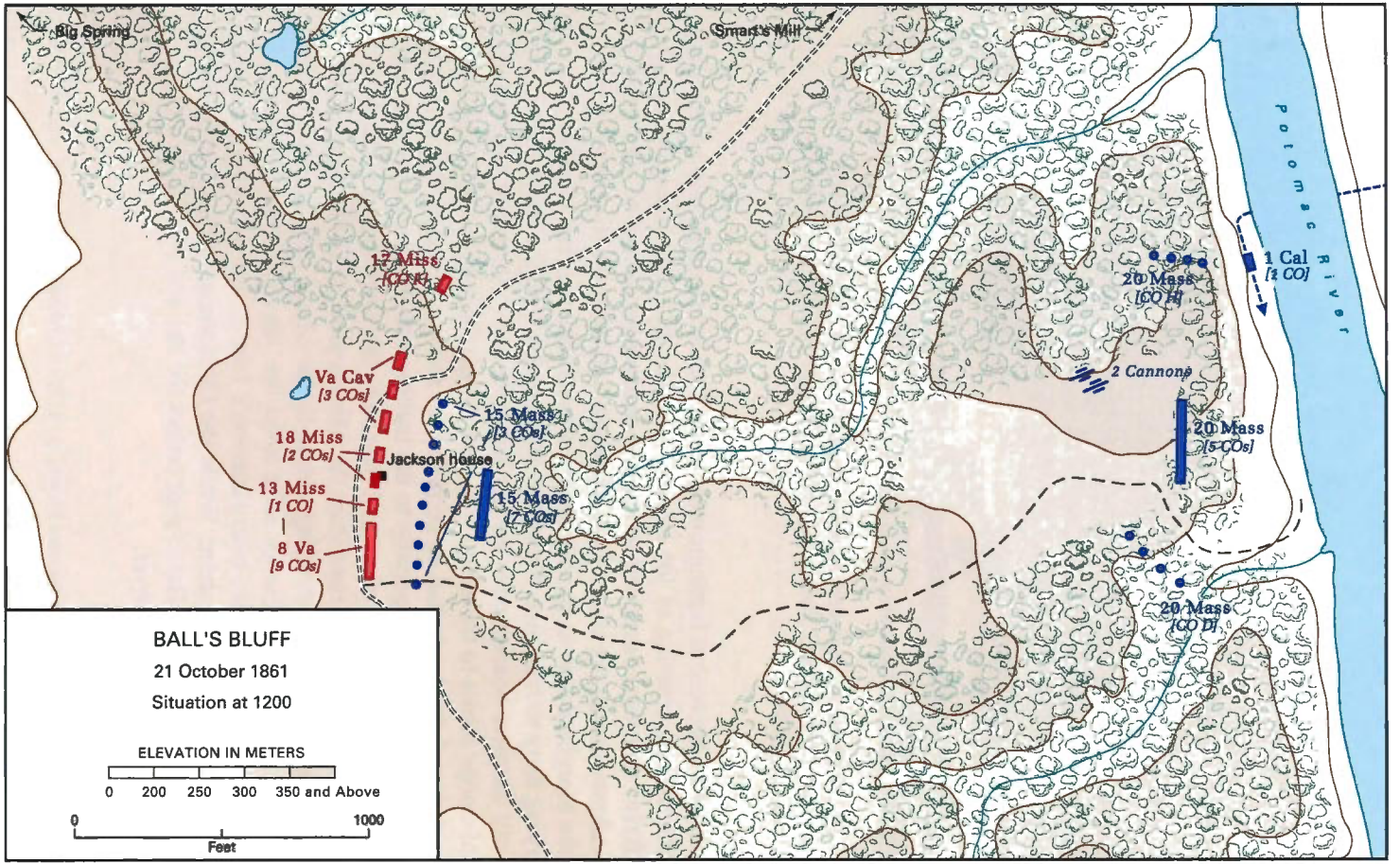
As Devens' men continued to skirmish, Lieutenant Howe arrived with news that Colonel Baker would soon arrive with his brigade and take command. But Baker, rather than cross over from Harrison's Island immediately and make a commander's reconnaissance of what was

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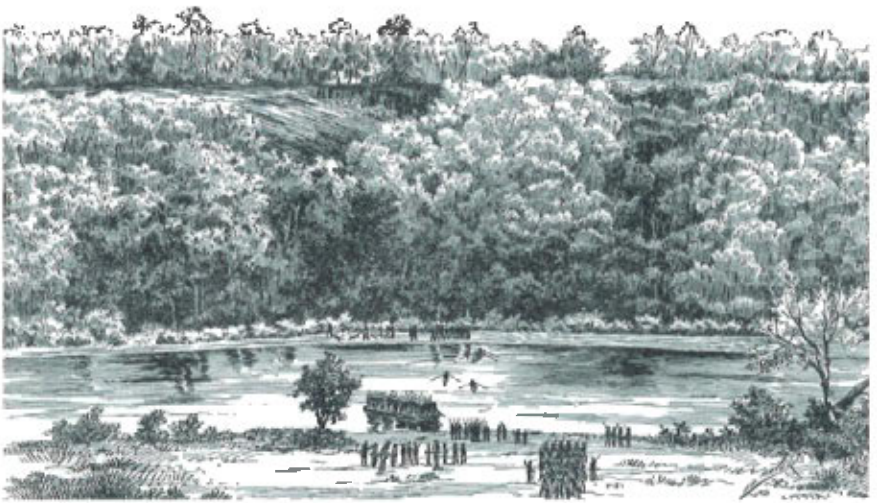
[26] Ibid., testimony of Lieutenant Howe, p. 376.

[27] First quote from *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 33. Second and third quotes from Ibid., vol. 51, pt. 1, p. 499.

[28] Ibid., vol. 5, pp. 368–69.


Big Spring
Smart's Mill
Potomac River
17 Miss
[CO K]
Va Cav
[3 COs]
18 Miss
[2 COs]
13 Miss
[1 CO]
8 Va
[9 COs]
Jackson House
15 Mass
[3 COs]
15 Mass
[7 COs]
2 Cannons
20 Mass
[CO H]
20 Mass
[5 COs]
20 Mass
[CO D]
1 Cal
[2 CO]
BALL'S BLUFF
21 October 1861
Situation at 1200
ELEVATION IN METERS
0 200 250 300 350 and Above
0 1000
Feet

Map 5



Colonel Baker's command crossing from Harrison's Island to Ball's Bluff, 21 October 1861 (John D. Baltz, Colonel E. D. Baker's Defense in the Battle of Ball's Bluff . . ., *1888)*

about to become a battleground, instead chose to supervise personally the tedious crossing of the troops. When he first arrived on the island, Baker had been surprised to see the inadequate means of transporting infantry across the river. The only boats available for the crossing from the Maryland side to the island were three flatboats, each capable of carrying forty to fifty men. From the island to the Virginia shore there were still the three boats used in the morning crossings. Therefore, the passage of troops across to the island was slow. Small trees had to be cut to make poles, and the boats had to be poled up shore a distance, before being loaded, then poled diagonally to the landing site. Baker spent some time overseeing the raising of a small boat from the canal and also the unsuccessful stretching of a rope from the Maryland shore to the island. Later, others succeeded in extending a rope to the island, making it easier for the boats to cross.[29] Shortly after noon the 1st California Infantry had crossed eight companies onto Harrison's Island, one of which had continued to the Virginia shore. While the Californians continued crossing to the Virginia shore, Baker sent orders for the 42d New York Infantry also to begin crossing over.

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[29] *RJCCW*, testimony of Lieutenant Howe, p. 377; of Colonel Lee, p. 476; and of Col Edward W. Hinks, p. 435.

At the same time, Devens' position near the Jackson house was becoming precarious. In response to *Jenifer*'s call for more troops, *Colonel Evans* had sent the *8th Virginia Infantry*, commanded by *Col. Eppa Hunton*, to *Jenifer*'s aid. *Hunton* had left one of his ten companies at Goose Creek and arrived about noon with almost 400 men on the right of *Jenifer*'s three Mississippi companies. This brought the total Confederate force facing the 15th Massachusetts Infantry to over 700 men. On the Confederate left *Duff*'s Mississippi company shifted toward the river. With the attack spreading around his flanks, Devens was forced to pull his men back a short distance. Three times he sent Lieutenant Howe back to locate Baker and hurry up the reinforcements.[30] But Baker had yet to cross over from Harrison's Island, and without reinforcements Devens would have to withdraw his men back to the bluff.

At Edwards' Ferry Stone had ordered the remainder of Gorman's brigade to cross the river into Virginia along with artillery. As soon as Baker began his advance Stone would have Gorman's forces strike the retreating Confederates. While his troops were crossing, Gorman remarked to an aide, "My boy, we will sleep at Leesburg tonight."[31]

By 1300 Colonel Cogswell and his 42d New York Infantry were crossing onto Harrison's Island, along with two rifled guns of Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery. In the temporary absence of the battery commander the two-gun section was placed under command of 1st Lt. Walter Bramhall, 9th New York State Militia. When he arrived on the island, Cogswell presented Baker with a message from Stone. In the message Stone estimated Confederate strength at about 4,000, and he instructed Baker to push the enemy if he could. If Baker drove the Confederates beyond Leesburg, he was not to follow far, but establish a strong position near the town. Baker was also told to report frequently so that when Stone was aware that the enemy was falling back Stone would have Gorman's command come in on the Confederates' right flank. Baker responded that he would cross his forces as rapidly as possible and would advance when his command was strong enough. Baker, referring to Gorman's attack at Edwards' Ferry, ended his message with, "I hope that your movement below will give advantage."[32]

About an hour later Baker crossed the river, reached the top of the bluff, mounted his horse, and assumed command. Upon meeting Colonel Lee, Baker bowed and said politely, "I congratulate you upon the

[30] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 364; *RJCCW*, testimony of Lieutenant Howe, p. 377.
[31] *RJCCW*, testimony of Major Bannister, p. 283.
[32] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 51, pt. 1, p. 502.

prospect of a battle." While Baker and Lee inspected the positions of the troops, Devens and his men came marching down the path, and Baker congratulated Devens "for the splendid manner in which your regiment behaved this morning."[33]

Baker, feeling he did not have sufficient forces to advance, decided to establish a defensive line across the bluff until more troops had crossed the river. He ordered Devens to place the 15th Massachusetts Infantry just inside the wood line along the northern side of the field, facing south, and perpendicular to the 20th Massachusetts Infantry. By now four companies of the 1st California Infantry had climbed the bluff, and Baker placed two of the companies on the left flank of the 15th Massachusetts Infantry and two companies on the left of the 20th. (*Map 6*) Due to a lack of reconnaissance by Baker, the spot assigned to the 15th was a poor one. The ground sloped away from the open field and made it difficult for most of Devens' men to see any Confederate troops unless the enemy approached to within yards of the Massachusetts' position. Somewhat out of the fray, many of Devens' men sat down in the woods.[34] The two California companies on Devens' left also lay on the ground, their field of fire partially blocked by the right flank of the 20th.

Crossing behind the four California companies, Colonel Wistar reached the top of the bluff and consulted with Colonel Baker. Baker eagerly sought Wistar's opinion of the disposition of the troops, and the two inspected the line. Wistar, however, offered no opinion. Instead, he expressed concern about a deep ravine and thick woods on the south side of the field. If the Confederates occupied those positions, he told Baker, the Union left would be outflanked. Wistar asked Baker's permission to extend his line a few paces in that direction, and Baker responded, "I throw the entire responsibility of the left wing to you."[35] Wistar shifted the two California companies toward the ravine, where they discovered and relieved Company D, 20th Massachusetts Infantry.

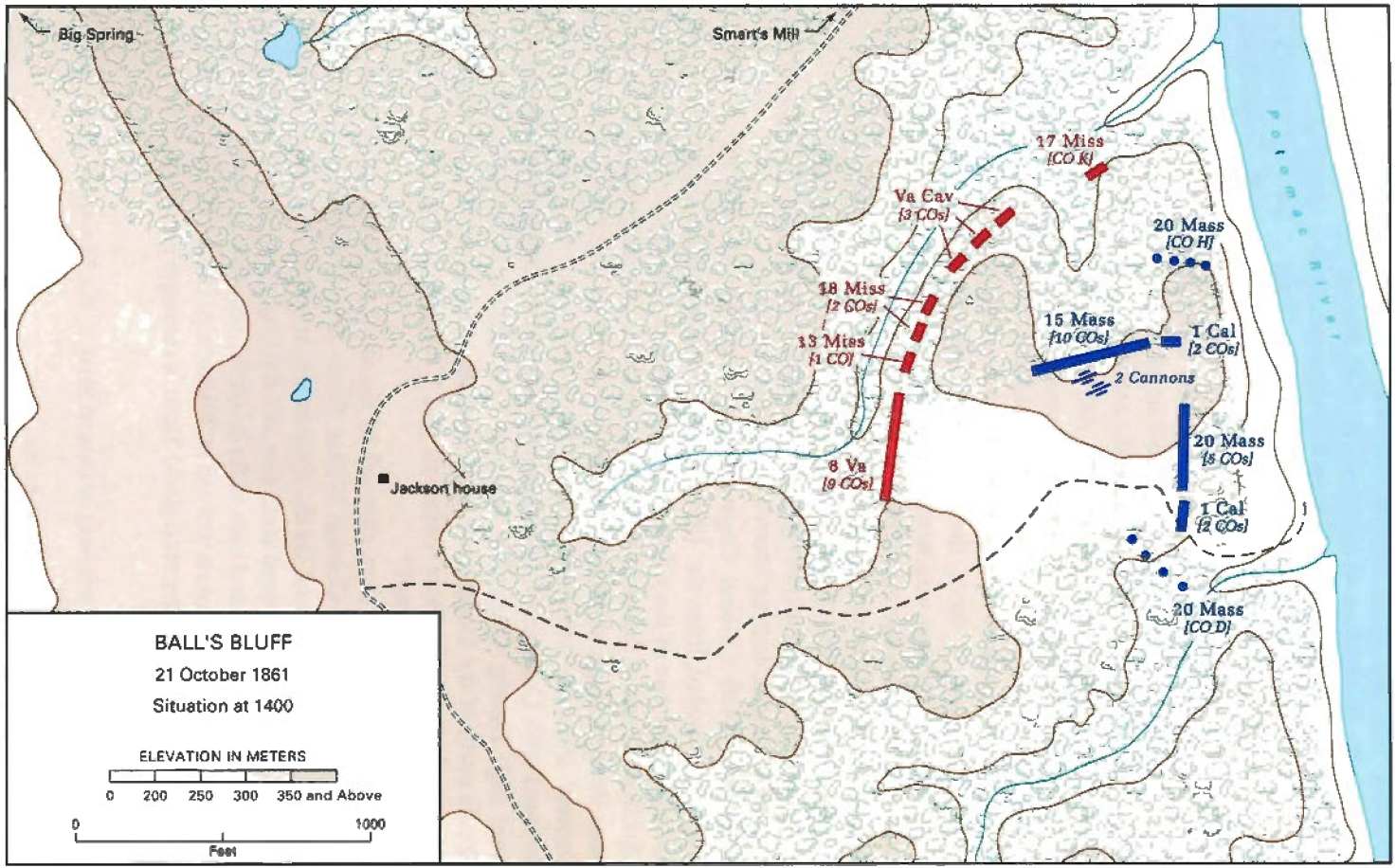
Jenifer's command and the *8th Virginia Infantry* had followed Devens and soon arrived on the western edge of the field and in the woods to the north. Although Devens' right flank was somewhat protected from small arms fire by woods, the dismounted Confederate cavalry and *Duff*'s company moved around the Massachusetts' flank and into the rear of Devens' position. To counter this threat, Devens detached Companies A and I, in skirmish order, and they moved to the rear of

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[33] First quote from *RJCCW*, testimony of Colonel Lee, p. 478. Second quote from Ibid., testimony of Colonel Devens, p. 408.

[34] Ibid., testimony of Colonel Devens, p. 408.

[35] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 51, pt. 1, p. 500.


Big Spring
Smart's Mill
17 Miss
(CO K)
Va Cav
(3 COs)
20 Mass
(CO H)
18 Miss
(2 COs)
15 Mass
(10 COs)
1 Cal
(2 COs)
13 Miss
(1 CO)
2 Cannons
20 Mass
(5 COs)
8 Va
(9 COs)
Jackson house
1 Cal
(2 COs)
20 Mass
(CO D)
Potomac River
BALL'S BLUFF
21 October 1861
Situation at 1400
ELEVATION IN METERS
0 200 250 300 350 and Above
0 1000
Feet

Map 6

Devens' line and faced slightly northward. They were joined on their right by the skirmishers of Company H, 20th Massachusetts Infantry.

As *Jenifer*'s and *Hunton*'s men kept up a steady fire against Baker's right, Stone began to receive reports of heavy firing in the Ball's Bluff area. Assuming that Baker had begun his advance, Stone informed McClellan that "There has been sharp fighting on the right of our line, and our troops appear to be advancing there under Baker. The left, under Gorman, has advanced its skirmishers nearly 1 mile, and, if the movement continues successful, will turn the enemy's right." Obviously, Stone was mistaken about any advance by Baker, but his optimistic message prompted McClellan to respond with a coded message, "Take Leesburg." When the message arrived at his headquarters, Stone discovered he did not have the code to decipher it. He sent a cryptic message back to McClellan that "I have the key, but I don't have the box," but McClellan's message was never decoded and Stone was unaware of its contents.[36] Meanwhile, at Edwards' Ferry Stone had sent three infantry regiments from Gorman's command across the river. Although Stone had implied to Baker that these troops were to come in on the right flank of the Confederates confronting his command, only a few of Gorman's troops advanced, halting about a mile from the ferry.

About 1430 Colonel Cogswell and Company C, 42d New York Infantry, crossed from the island to the Virginia shore. Cogswell also brought over one of the rifled guns of Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery. None of the boats then being used to transport troops had a bottom strong enough to hold the weight of the gun, so a flatboat was hauled around from the Maryland side of the island, and the gun and crew crossed with Company C. The horses and limber crossed over on a second trip. During Cogwell's crossing Confederate skirmishers on the bluffs north of the landing site took potshots at the group, but after landing on the Virginia shore Cogswell had Company C drive them away from the edge of the bluff.[37]

Colonel Cogswell then climbed to the bluff and met with Colonel Baker. As he had with Colonel Wistar, Baker invited Cogswell to examine the line and comment on the disposition of troops. No enemy could be seen, but sporadic small arms fire still fell on the Union position, and Baker ordered officers and men to lie down to avoid the incoming rounds. When Baker and Cogswell arrived at Wistar's position on the southeast corner of the field, Baker read aloud Stone's message giving the estimate

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[36] First quote from *RJCCW*, testimony of General Stone, p. 488. Second and third quotes from *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 321.

[37] *RJCCW*, testimony of General Stone, p. 488.

of 4,000 enemy troops, then ordered Wistar to send out two companies of skirmishers. Wistar, now with six companies of the 1st California Infantry on Baker's left, responded by saying that, considering the time it had taken Stone's message to reach Baker, the 4,000 men must then be in front of them. To send out two companies of skirmishers would be to sacrifice them. Baker replied that he needed to know what was out there and reiterated the order. Wistar then advanced two companies across the open field. As the first company entered the wood line at the far side, the *8th Virginia Infantry*, which was lying in the woods, rose up and with a yell charged into the right flank of the lead Californians. Caught off guard, Wistar's men opened fire and after a short but violent melee fell back into the wood line on the south side of the field.

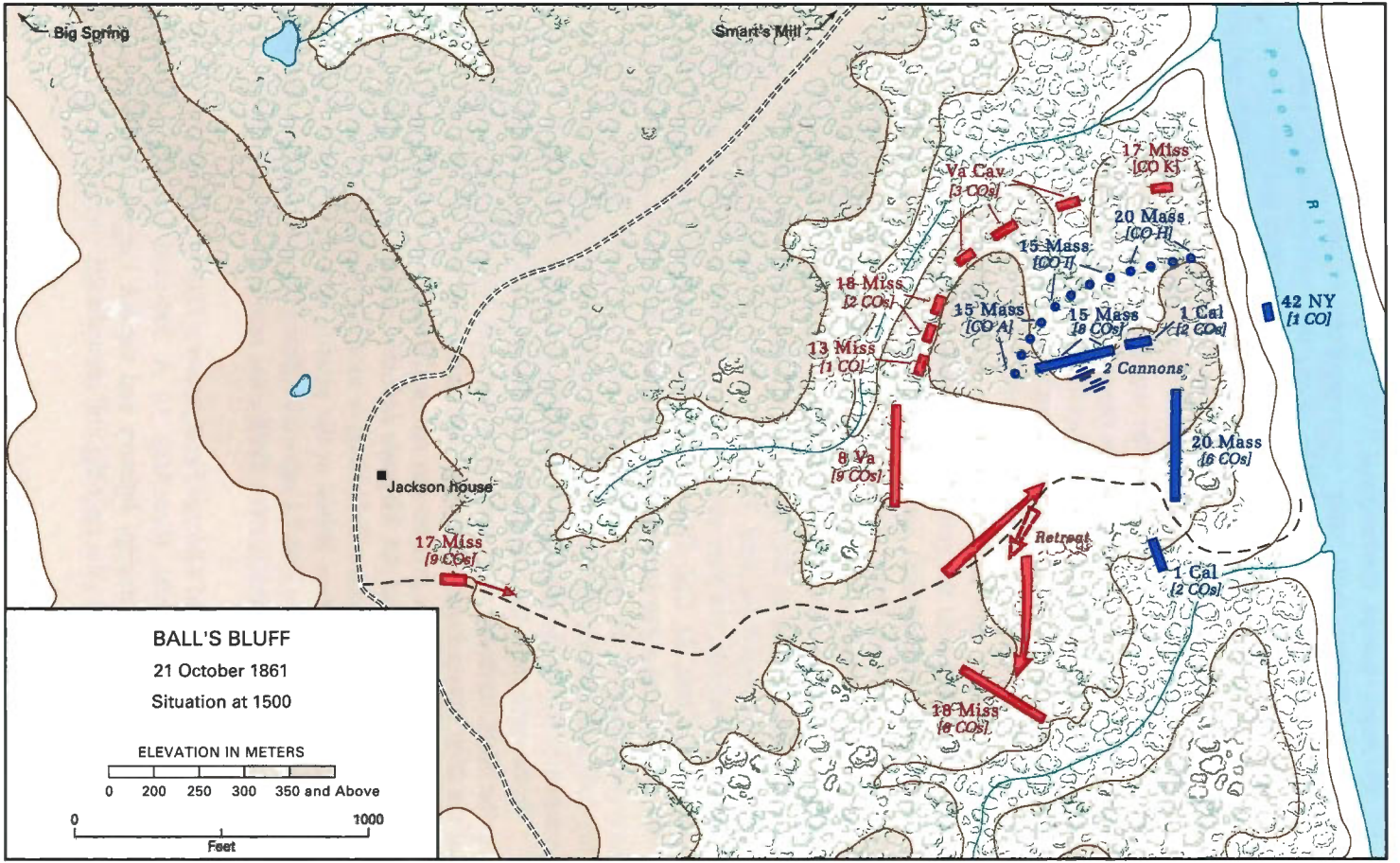
Earlier, *Evans*, now believing that the main Union thrust would be at Ball's Bluff, had sent the rest of *Col. Erasmus Burt*'s *18th Mississippi Infantry* (eight companies) and *Col. Winfield Scott Featherston*'s *17th Mississippi Infantry* (nine companies) to support *Jenifer*. About 1500 *Burt*'s men arrived on the right of the *8th Virginia Infantry*. (*Map 7*) *Hunton*'s troops had been keeping up a steady fire, particularly against the two howitzers posted in the open. *Burt*'s regiment halted, fired a couple volleys, and charged the guns. The attack drove the gun crews back to the safety of the woods, but *Burt* was mortally wounded, and his men fell back to the wood line. *Lt. Col. Thomas M. Griffin* assumed command of the *18th*, discovered a gap between his command and the *8th*, and detached two companies of the *18th* to extend his left. *Griffin* also sent another of his companies to the right to drive back remnants of the two California companies still in the edge of woods on the south side of the field.

In the meantime, the rifled gun of the Rhode Island battery was hauled up the bluff, limbered to its team of horses, and drawn through the ranks of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry. Just as the gun was unlimbered on a slight rise (the site of a present-day national military cemetery), the *18th Mississippi Infantry* and *8th Virginia Infantry* opened fire, immediately wounding several crewmen and killing or mortally wounding all the horses. The frightened horses bolted at the gunfire and dragged the limber back through the 20th's line.[38] Cogswell ordered the remaining crewmen to return fire, but the shells were ineffectual against the Confederates in the thick woods.

About 1530 more of *Colonel Featherston*'s *17th Mississippi Infantry* arrived at the battlefield. (*See Map 8.*) A 200-yard gap still existed between the *18th Mississippi Infantry* and the *8th Virginia Infantry*, so *Featherston* moved into the opening and immediately opened fire on the

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[38] Ibid., testimony of Colonel Lee, p. 479.


Big Spring
Smart's Mill
Potomac River
17 Miss [CO K]
Va Cav [3 COs]
20 Mass [CO H]
15 Mass [CO I]
18 Miss [2 COs]
15 Mass [CO A]
15 Mass [8 COs]
1 Cal [2 COs]
42 NY [1 CO]
13 Miss [1 CO]
2 Cannons
20 Mass [6 COs]
8 Va [9 COs]
Jackson House
Retreat
17 Miss [9 COs]
1 Cal [2 COs]
18 Miss [6 COs]
BALL'S BLUFF
21 October 1861
Situation at 1500
ELEVATION IN METERS
0 200 250 300 350 and Above
0 1000
Feet

Map 7

rifled gun, knocking down the remainder of the crew. Although wounded, Lieutenant Bramhall remained with the gun and, along with Colonels Wistar and Cogswell and volunteers from the 1st California Infantry, manned the gun to keep it firing. Even Baker assisted in pushing the gun back into position several times after its recoil.[39] However, Confederate fire was too severe, and the gun fell silent, having fired less then ten rounds. To the right, the two mountain howitzers also sat silent, their crews suffering the same fate as those assigned to the rifled gun.

Small arms fire was growing in intensity on the Union left, and the companies of California troops were beginning to run out of ammunition. Since most of the troops on both sides were armed with similar-caliber smoothbore muskets, the California troops were able to replenish their ammunition by taking rounds from the cartridge boxes of the Confederate dead. In the center of the Confederate line the *8th Virginia Infantry* was also low on ammunition, with some soldiers having fired their last round. *Jenifer* sent an urgent request to *Evans* for more ammunition and provisions and asked, if provisions could not be had, that a barrel of whiskey be sent to refresh the men. On *Jenifer*'s left flank the three companies of dismounted Virginia cavalry shifted farther left, toward *Captain Duff*'s position, and *Duff*'s company was ordered to fall back and join the rest of the *17th Mississippi Infantry* on the opposite flank. However, before *Duff* reached his regiment, the order was countermanded, and *Duff*'s company halted some distance in the rear of the Confederate line where it remained for the rest of the battle.[40]

Hearing the heavy firing from Edwards' Ferry, Stone believed Baker was still advancing toward Leesburg. Stone informed McClellan that nearly all of his division was across the river, Baker on the right, Gorman on the left, with Baker heavily engaged.[41]

But Baker was not advancing. Instead, he was barely holding his own on the bluff. Shortly before 1700, as the intensity of the Confederate fire continued to shift to Baker's left, he met with Wistar in the southeast corner of the open field to assess the situation. While standing next to Baker, Wistar received his third wound of the day and was carried down the bluff and back to the island. Also carried back across the river was 1st Lt. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., of Company A, 20th Massachusetts Infantry, who had been wounded twice.[42] Holmes would survive the battle and the war to become a Supreme Court justice.

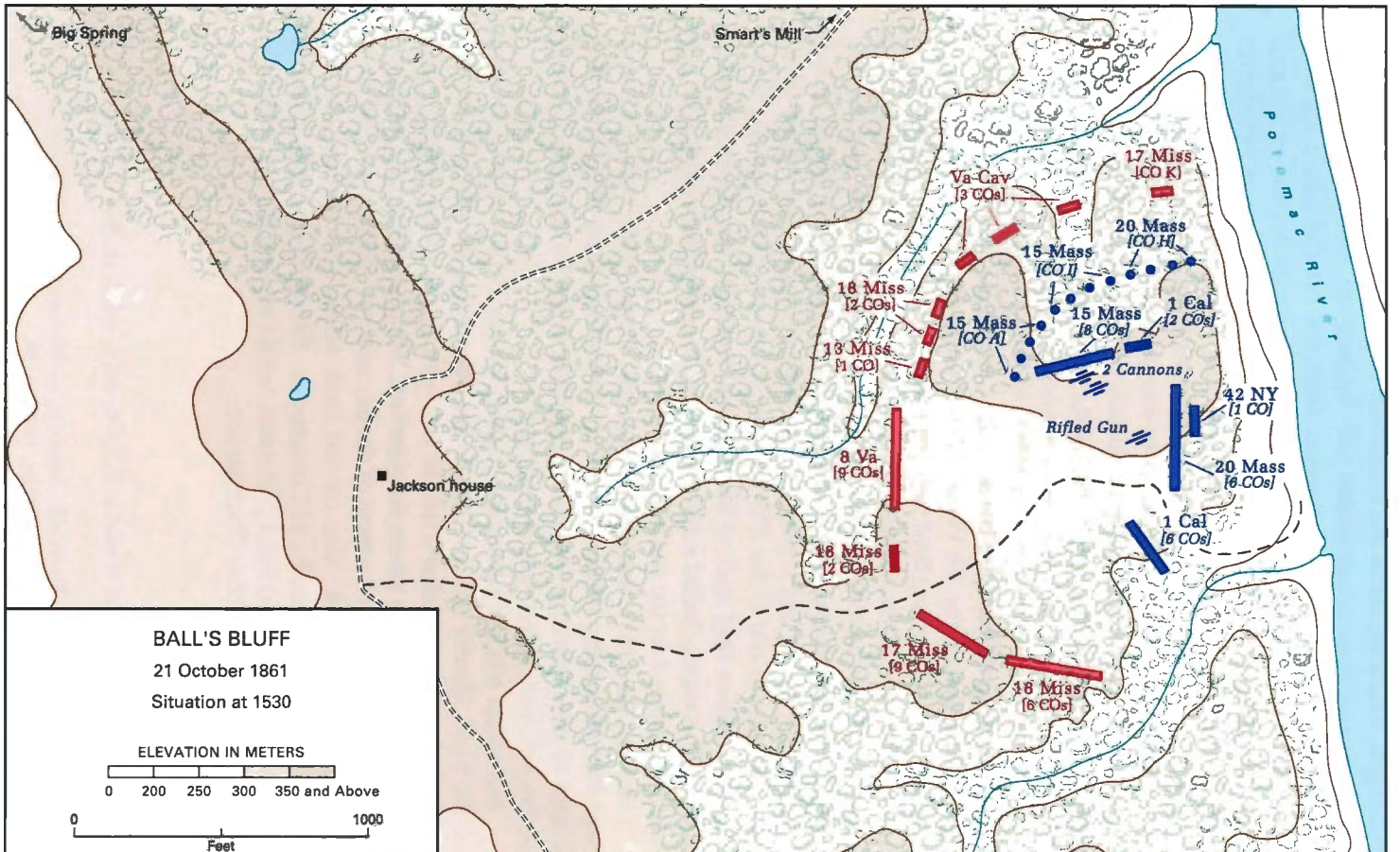
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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., testimony of Colonel Wistar, p. 312; *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, pp. 364, 367, 370.

[41] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 34.

[42] George A. Bruce, *The Twentieth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 1861–1865* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1906), p. 59.


Big Spring
Smart's Mill
Jackson house
Potomac River
Va Cav
[3 COs]
17 Miss
[CO K]
20 Mass
[CO H]
15 Mass
[CO I]
18 Miss
[2 COs]
15 Mass
[CO A]
15 Mass
[8 COs]
1 Cal
[2 COs]
13 Miss
[1 CO]
2 Cannons
42 NY
[1 CO]
Rifled Gun
8 Va
[9 COs]
20 Mass
[6 COs]
1 Cal
[6 COs]
16 Miss
[2 COs]
17 Miss
[9 COs]
16 Miss
[6 COs]
BALL'S BLUFF
21 October 1861
Situation at 1530
ELEVATION IN METERS
0 200 250 300 350 and Above
0 1000
Feet

Map 8



Contemporary depiction of the death of Colonel Baker (Library of Congress)

While Baker remained in the open watching the action, Companies A and H, 42d New York Infantry, arrived on the bluff and were sent into the woods on the south side of the field. There, they drove back the Confederate skirmishers about fifty yards but were in turn forced to fall back. Although the Confederates remained relatively unseen in the woods, their small arms fire was taking its toll on anyone standing in the open field.

About 1700 Baker was struck simultaneously by several bullets and killed instantly. A group of men from the California companies rushed forward to recover his body, and it was taken down the bluff and carried back across the river. Few of the Union troops were aware of Baker's death, but the question arose briefly as to who would succeed him in command. Colonel Lee, believing he was the senior officer present, claimed command and ordered a retreat back across the river. Colonel Cogswell, however, claimed seniority to Lee, to which Lee assented. Cogswell refused to order a retreat, saying it would be suicide to try and recross the river in the presence of an aggressive enemy. Instead, he preferred they try and cut their way through to Gorman's command at Edwards' Ferry.[43]

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[43] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 322.

In preparation for the breakout, Cogswell ordered the four infantry regiments to form a column of attack in the woods along the southeast corner of the field and the 15th and 20th Massachusetts Infantries began shifting to the left, behind the 1st California Infantry and the three companies of the 42d New York Infantry. As the column was being formed, a few Union troops dragged the rifled gun back and attempted to roll it over the bluff, but fallen trees blocked the way and it was left in the woods.

Colonel Hunton, seeing the Massachusetts troops withdrawing from his front and the two howitzers left unattended, had his men redistribute the few remaining cartridges so that most of the men would have one round. After having his men fix bayonets, *Hunton* ordered his command forward and the Virginians charged across the open field. (*Map 9*) Two companies of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry rushed out to try and save the two mountain howitzers but were driven back "by a perfect shower of bullets," and the guns were captured.[44]

While Cogswell moved to the head of the column in the woods, an individual appeared on horseback in the field on the right of the three companies of the 42d New York Infantry. Colonel Devens later testified that the individual, whom he did not know, rode a gray horse and waved his hat at the New Yorkers, "as an officer would who was calling the troops to come on."[45] Breaking column, some of the New Yorkers charged onto the field and the 15th Massachusetts Infantry, thinking an order had been given to charge, also started forward. However, Devens and another officer rushed in front of the regiment and brought it to a halt. While Devens was attempting to put his men back in column, the New Yorkers tumbled back in disorder through the 15th's ranks, and both regiments fell back to the edge of the bluff. Cogswell tried to reorganize his scattered column for another attempt but with no success.

After the charge of the *8th Virginia Infantry*, *Colonel Hunton* informed *Colonel Featherston* that his ammunition was exhausted. *Featherston* then ordered the *17th* and *18th Mississippi Infantries* to advance, without firing, until they were close to the Union line, then fire and charge. Shouting, "Charge, Mississippians, charge! Drive them into the Potomac or into eternity," *Featherston* led the two regiments forward.[46]

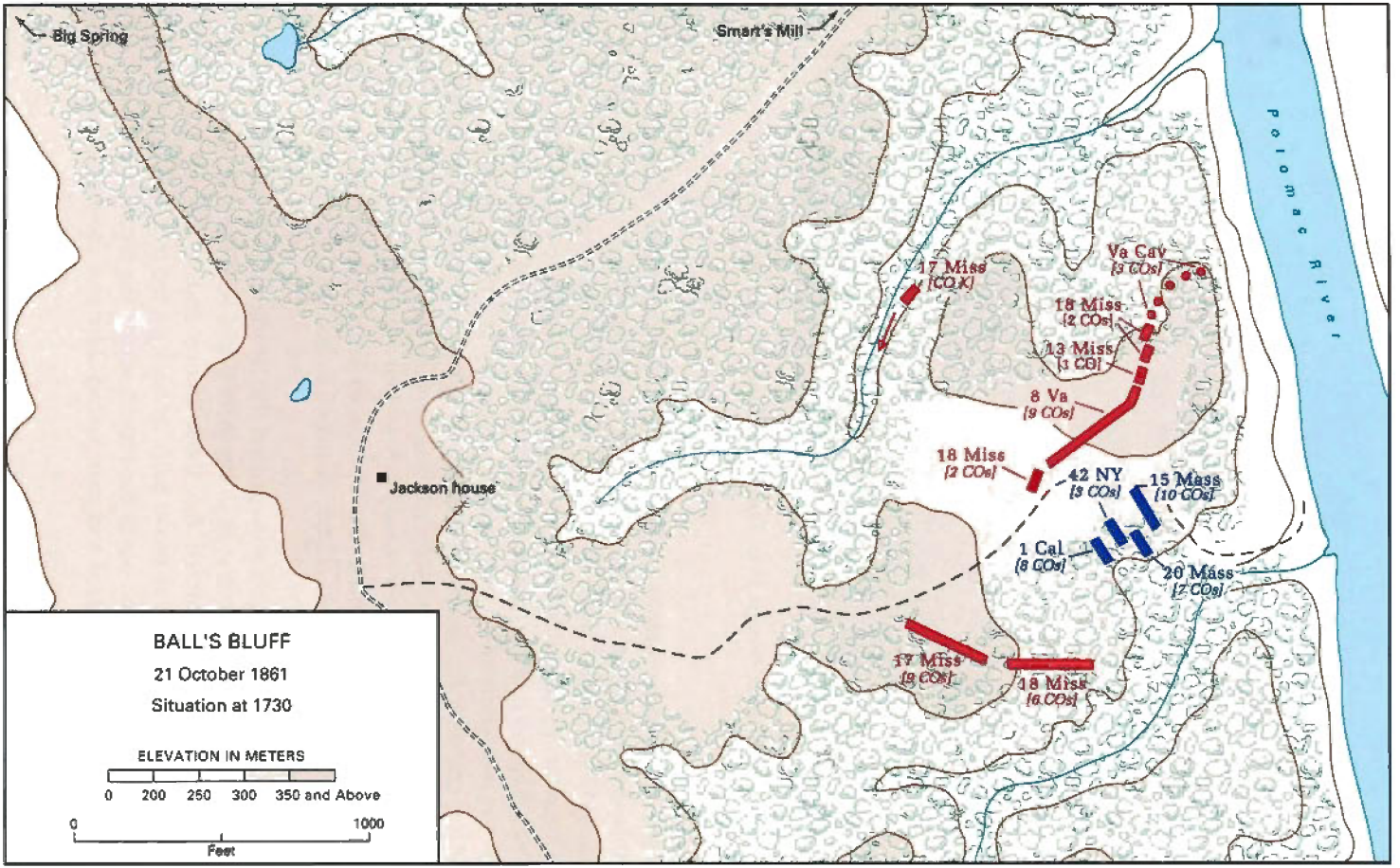
Cogswell now realized all was lost and ordered Devens to retreat down the bluff. But Devens refused to accept the verbal order to retreat unless Cogswell repeated it in front of a witness. The order was then

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[44] Ibid., p. 367. Quote from Bruce, *The Twentieth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry*, pp. 51–52.

[45] *RJCCW*, testimony of Colonel Devens, p. 410.

[46] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 361.


Big Spring
Smart's Mill
Potomac River
17 Miss (CO K)
Va Cav (3 COs)
18 Miss (2 COs)
13 Miss (1 CO)
8 Va (9 COs)
18 Miss (2 COs)
42 NY (3 COs)
15 Mass (10 COs)
1 Cal (8 COs)
20 Mass (7 COs)
Jackson house
17 Miss (9 COs)
18 Miss (6 COs)
BALL'S BLUFF
21 October 1861
Situation at 1730
ELEVATION IN METERS
0 200 250 300 350 and Above
0 1000
Feet

Map 9

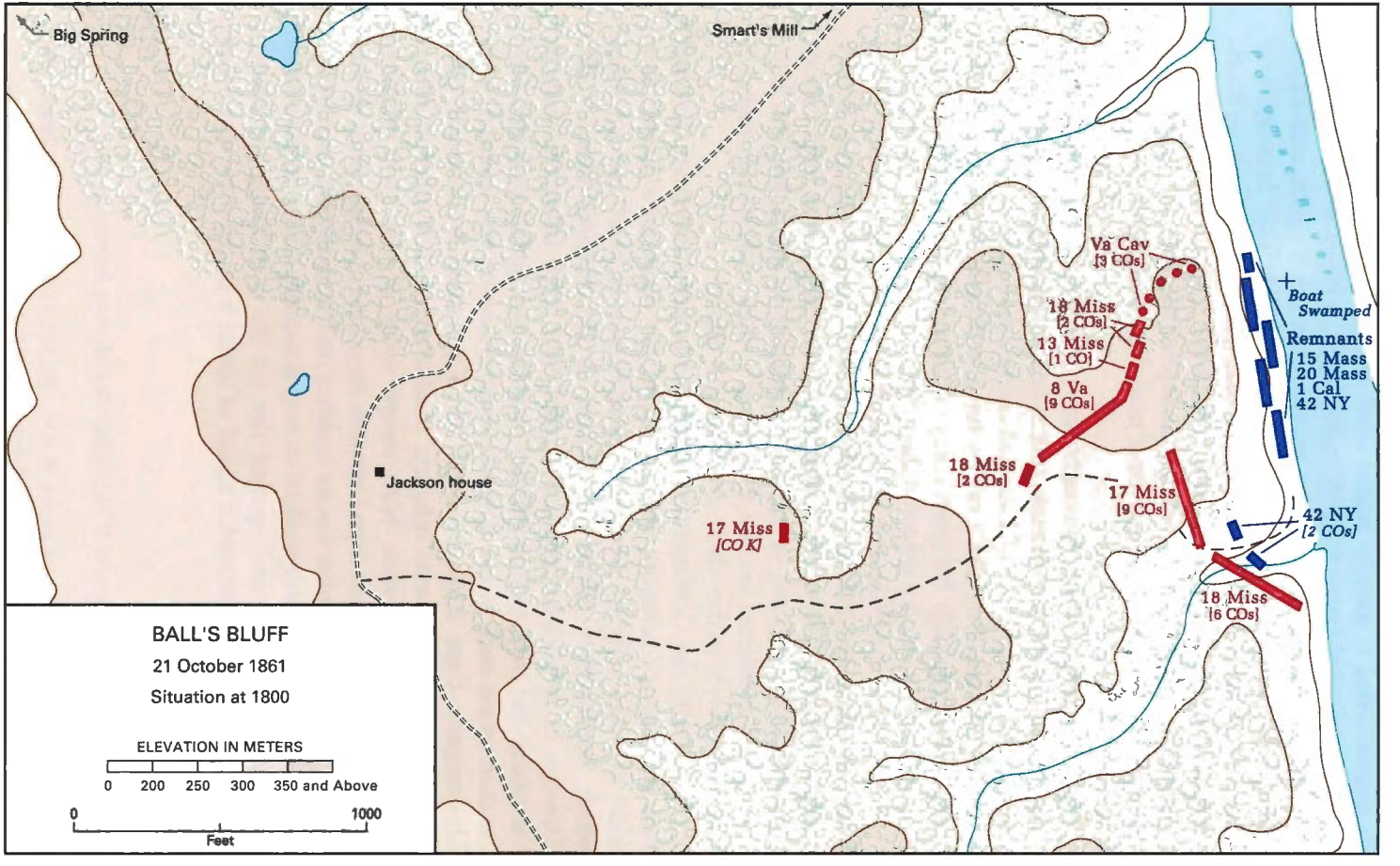


Retreat of Federal troops from Ball's Bluff into the Potomac River (Library of Congress)

repeated in the presence of Maj. John W. Kimball, 15th Massachusetts Infantry, and Devens ordered his men to retreat. News of retreat spread quickly and caused chaos throughout most of the Union ranks as all of the Union troops scrambled over the bluffs and onto the riverbank. (*Map 10*) Men began climbing, jumping, or tumbling down to the plateau below. Some were injured or even killed when they fell down the steep slope. After reaching the riverbank Devens tried to establish a skirmish line to fire back up the bluff but soon advised his men that it would be every man for himself and that they should throw their weapons into the river and escape the best they could. Devens tossed his sword into the water and with the help of a couple others, managed to float to the island on a large tree branch.[47]

As the Union soldiers crowded on the riverbank in the darkness the large flatboat arrived, carrying Companies E and K of the 42d New York Infantry. Cogswell ordered the fresh troops and a few of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry to move halfway back up the trail to try and hold off the Confederates and cover the retreat across the river. The boat was then loaded with wounded and unwounded alike and shoved off but was

[47] *RJCCW*, testimony of Colonel Devens, pp. 410–11.


Big Spring
Smart's Mill
Jackson house
Va Cav
[3 COs]
18 Miss
[2 COs]
13 Miss
[1 CO]
8 Va
[9 COs]
Boat
Swamped
Remnants
15 Mass
20 Mass
1 Cal
42 NY
18 Miss
[2 COs]
17 Miss
[9 COs]
17 Miss
[CO K]
42 NY
[2 COs]
18 Miss
[6 COs]
BALL'S BLUFF
21 October 1861
Situation at 1800
ELEVATION IN METERS
0 200 250 300 350 and Above
0
1000
Feet

Map 10

so overcrowded it quickly tipped over and sank. Those who did not drown managed to return to the Virginia shore or swam to the island. As this was the only large boat then available on the Virginia side of the island, Companies B, D, F, G, and I of the 42d New York Infantry, who were still on the island and unable to cross, watched helplessly as disaster unfolded on the opposite shore.[48] While the Confederates fired from the top of the bluff, the three smaller boats plied the river, laboriously carrying small groups back to the island, until they were riddled with bullets and sank.

Officers of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry assisted 54-year-old Colonel Lee down the riverbank, where Lee, a seriously wounded Major Revere, and several other officers and enlisted men tried to escape upriver. When they tried to make a raft by tying fence rails together with their sword belts, it quickly fell apart. They continued upstream, where a portion of *Jenifer*'s cavalry captured them.[49]

Back at the riverbank below the bluff, Capt. William Bartlett of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry shouted to those around him that if they couldn't swim to follow him upstream. About twenty men from various regiments followed and in the dark managed to reach Smart's Mill. Avoiding Confederate cavalry, they found a small sunken skiff, raised it, and crossed over to the island, five men at a time.[50]

In the dark the Confederates continued to fire down from the bluff into the mass of refugees trapped below. On Harrison's Island, men tried to make rafts of whatever material was at hand and set them adrift, hoping they might float across to the Virginia shore. Capt. Timothy H. O'Meara, Company E, 42d New York Infantry, swam to the island and tried to find another boat but was unable to locate one. He then swam back to the Virginia shore where he was captured with his company. Capt. Alois Babo and 2d Lt. Reinhold Wesselhoeft, both of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry, tried to assist each other in swimming the river but were both swept away in the swift current. Wesselhoeft's body was found thirteen days later, twenty miles downstream.[51] While the Union troops huddled on the riverbank, part of the *18th Mississippi Infantry* worked its way down the ravine on the southern side of the field and opened fire on the men along the shore. Cogswell quickly organized a squad of about a dozen men who were

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[48] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 324.

[49] Bruce, *The Twentieth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry*, p. 54.

[50] Ibid., pp. 56–57.

[51] *RJCCW*, testimony of Colonel Hinks, p. 436; *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 325; Bruce, *The Twentieth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry*, p. 55.

still armed and moved to the mouth of the ravine to stop this fire, but he and the group were surrounded and captured.

About 1830 a courier brought Stone the news of Baker's death. Stone quickly forwarded the news to McClellan and then rode toward the island. All along the towpath lay water-soaked fugitives who had managed to swim over, each with a story of the defeat. Stone also passed the body of Colonel Baker being brought to Edwards' Ferry and stopped briefly to pay his respects. Opposite the island sporadic firing was still going on, and Stone was told that everyone in Baker's wing had been killed or captured. Stone sent an order to Col. Edward W. Hinks of the 19th Massachusetts Infantry, whose regiment was then crossing onto the island, to secure all wounded and fugitives as soon as possible and to hold the island at all hazards until the wounded had been removed.[52] Then Stone, fearing that the victorious Confederates would now turn on Gorman's troops at Edwards' Ferry, rode down the towpath to order Gorman to withdraw to the Maryland shore.

By 2000 most of the Union forces still on the riverbank below Ball's Bluff had surrendered, although the firing continued intermittently into the night. Some soldiers, however, hid in the dark and throughout the night and the next morning were either captured or made attempts to swim to the island. At 2130 Stone alerted McClellan that he was trying to prevent further disaster and warned that any advance from Dranesville must be made cautiously. Stone also informed McClellan that Gorman's forces on the Virginia shore were being cautiously withdrawn. McClellan, concerned lest Gorman's forces would be withdrawing in the face of an aggressive enemy, ordered Stone to hold the Virginia shore at Edwards' Ferry at all hazards. In Washington President Lincoln had been anxiously listening to reports of the battle. At 2200, after learning of the death of his friend Baker and the Union defeat, Lincoln sent a message to Stone asking for particulars of the battle. Stone responded that "It is impossible to give full particulars of what is yet inexplicable to me."[53] Later, McClellan ordered General Banks to rush his division to Stone's support.

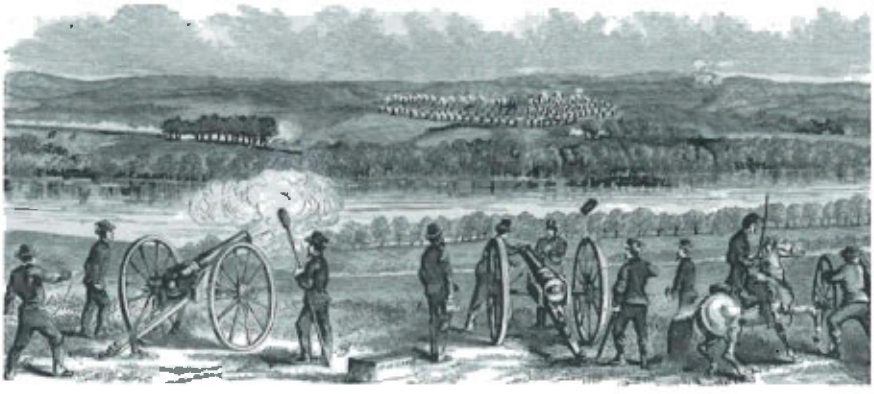
Still believing McCall was at Dranesville, Stone sent a message to McClellan suggesting that reinforcements be sent up to Goose Creek. It is only then that he learned that McCall had not been at Dranesville all day.[54]

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[52] *RJCCW*, testimony of General Stone, p. 487.

[53] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 34. Quote from Ibid., vol. 51, pt. 1, p. 498.

[54] *RJCCW*, testimony of General Stone, pp. 488–89.



Artillery firing in support of Union troops on the Virginia side of the Potomac River at Edwards' Ferry, 22 October 1861 (Library of Congress)

About 0330, 22 October, two of General Banks' brigades arrived at Edwards' Ferry and began to cross the river to reinforce Stone's command. As the day dawned cold and rainy, a Union burial party under a flag of truce crossed at Harrison's Island to bury the Union dead. By evening the group had buried forty-seven bodies, two-thirds of those found on the battlefield. By noon of that same day Banks' two brigades had crossed the river and had a brief skirmish before the Confederates withdrew. In the afternoon General McClellan arrived at Poolesville. He decided the Union position on Harrison's Island was not a favorable one but waited until dark to order any withdrawal. McClellan then ordered all Union troops withdrawn from the island to the Maryland shore. When the last troops reached the Maryland shore, the remaining guns of the 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery fired a salvo at the bluff, a "compliment to the rebel commander."[55]

The weather cleared on 23 October and at Edwards' Ferry the Confederates, realizing that Stone had been reinforced, withdrew to Fort Evans. During the day McClellan arrived at Edwards' Ferry to take personal command, and that evening (1915) he ordered all of Stone's and Banks' forces on the Virginia side of the river at Edwards' Ferry to withdraw. By 0400 the next day all Union troops had returned to the Maryland shore, which, as McClellan wrote to his wife a few days later, "they should never have left."[56]

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[55] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 313.

[56] Stephen W. Sears, ed., *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan, Selected Correspondence, 1860–1865* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1989), p. 111.



Retreat of Union forces to the Maryland shore at Edwards' Ferry, night of 23–24 October 1861 (Library of Congress)

Summary

What had started out as a surprise attack on a small, unguarded Confederate camp had turned into a military disaster. The opposing forces at Ball's Bluff were evenly matched, about 1,700 men on each side, but Union casualties were over 900 killed, wounded, and missing. Confederate casualties were comparatively light, about 150 killed, wounded, and missing.[57] The North was still smarting from the previous defeat at the Battle of First Bull Run, and the perceived military incompetence at Ball's Bluff and the death of a popular U.S. senator created an additional public outcry.

Within two months of the Battle of Ball's Bluff, the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War was established to investigate both battles. Concerning Ball's Bluff, General Stone soon became the focus of Northerners who wanted to see someone punished, and he was called before the committee. Stone testified that the purpose of his operation on 21 October was solely to destroy the supposed Confederate camp. He had not planned to fight a battle that day but allowed most of his troops to cross into Virginia because he thought the Confederates were withdrawing. If the advance of McCall's division to Dranesville had the effect of forcing the Confederates out of Leesburg "we had nothing to do but to occupy it."[58] Stone told the congressmen that had

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[57] *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, pp. 308, 353.

[58] Quote from *RJCCW*, testimony of General Stone, p. 269, and see also p. 491.

he known that McCall's division was not at Dranesville on 21 October, he would have immediately withdrawn all of his forces from Virginia. Stone was so sure that McCall was operating on his left flank that he had warned his artillery at Edwards' Ferry to be careful they did not fire on friends "whom I expected to see coming up the other side of Goose Creek." And when McClellan sent Stone a message asking for information about a good road from Darnesville to Edwards' Ferry (McClellan's message actually meant Darnestown, Maryland), Stone assumed that the message was in error and that McClellan had actually meant Dranesville, Virginia.[59]

Stone placed the blame for the defeat squarely with Colonel Baker. Stone said he had placed Baker in command of the troops at Harrison's Island with discretionary orders as to whether to send more troops across the river or to withdraw those already there. Baker was not to fight if the Confederates were in superior force. Stone said, "The whole story after that is, that Colonel Baker chose to bring on a battle."[60]

General McClellan, after hearing Stone's version of events, publicly exonerated Stone of any wrongdoing, issuing a circular to the Army saying that "the disaster was caused by errors committed by the immediate Commander—not Genl Stone." McClellan also wrote to his wife that "the man directly to blame for the affair was Col. Baker who was killed—he was in command, disregarded entirely the instructions he had received from Stone, and violated all military rules and precautions."[61]

But the Northern press and the radical Republicans on the joint committee needed a living scapegoat. During lengthy hearings on Ball's Bluff, accusations were made that General Stone had returned runaway slaves to their masters, that he might be disloyal, and that he lacked military competence. In February 1862 he was arrested and held for six months in Fort Lafayette, New York, without formal charges ever being placed against him. After his release Stone was returned to duty but served in various commands as only a staff officer and military clerk. He resigned from the Army in September 1864.

After the Battle of Ball's Bluff, the Union and Confederate Armies went into winter quarters, and it would not be until the spring of 1862 that either would resume military operations. The Confederate Army would withdraw from Northern Virginia south to take positions behind the Rappahannock River, followed by the Union Army sailing down the Potomac River to Fort Monroe, Virginia, to threaten Richmond from the

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[59] Quote from Ibid., p. 490, and see also pp. 489, 491.

[60] Ibid., p. 268.

[61] Sears, *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan*, p. 111.

east. Concern for the upper Potomac fords would diminish until September 1862, when the Confederate Army would cross the Potomac near Leesburg to begin the Maryland campaign.

Further Readings

Irwin, Lieutenant Colonel Richard B. "Ball's Bluff and the Arrest of General Stone." In *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, edited by Clarence C. Buel and Robert U. Johnson. Vol. 2, pp. 123–34. New York: Century Co., 1884, 1887, 1888.

Patch, Major General Joseph D. *The Battle of Ball's Bluff*. Leesburg, Va.: Potomac Press, 1958. It includes Northern and Southern newspaper accounts of the battle.

U.S. Congress. Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. *The Battle of Ball's Bluff*. Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint Co., 1977. This contains the sworn testimonies of principal participants, pp. 253–510, from the *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*.

U.S. War Department. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1893. Vols. 5 and 51 in ser. 1 contain documents and reports concerning Ball's Bluff.

CHRONOLOGY

(All times are approximate and are based on those given in the after action reports by unit commanders or in testimony before the Joint Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War.)

19 October 1861

General Joseph E. Johnston withdraws the Confederate *Army of the Potomac* from the vicinity of Washington and establishes a defensive position near Centreville, Virginia. *Johnston's 7th Brigade*, commanded by *Col. Nathan G. Evans*, remains near Leesburg to guard crossing sites on the Potomac River.

Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan orders Brig. Gen. George A. McCall's division of the Union Army of the Potomac to march from its camp at Langley, Virginia, to Dranesville on a reconnaissance. General McClellan hopes that McCall's movement will cause *Colonel Evans'* brigade to withdraw from the Leesburg area.

1800: General McCall's division arrives at Dranesville.

2400: *Evans* is alerted to McCall's advance. Instead of abandoning Leesburg, *Evans* moves his brigade to a defensive position south of the town along Goose Creek.

20 October 1861

McClellan is informed by a Union signal station on Sugar Loaf Mountain that the Confederates appear to have moved away from Leesburg.

1100: McClellan informs Brig. Gen. Charles P. Stone at Poolesville, Maryland, of McCall's movement to Dranesville and suggests a "slight demonstration" by General Stone's division might cause the Confederates to abandon Leesburg, if they have not already done so.

1200: Stone orders the 42d New York Infantry to march to Conrad's Ferry and await orders.

1300: Stone moves a portion of Brig. Gen. Willis A. Gorman's brigade to Edwards' Ferry, along with the 7th Michigan Infantry, two companies of the 3d New York Cavalry, and one company of the Putnam Rangers. To give the Confederates the impression the Union Army is crossing into Virginia, two companies of the 1st Minnesota Infantry are sent across the river, supported by artillery fire.

During the demonstration at Edwards' Ferry, Stone orders a small scouting party to cross the river at Ball's Bluff to scout toward Leesburg.

By evening, Stone's demonstration at Edwards' Ferry ends, and the Minnesota troops withdraw to the Maryland shore.

2200: The scouting party returns from Ball's Bluff and reports the discovery of an unguarded Confederate camp of about thirty tents about a mile from the river.

2300: Stone orders Col. Charles P. Devens, 15th Massachusetts Infantry, to take five of his companies and attack the Confederate camp at daylight. Two companies of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry will also cross the river to protect Devens' return.

2400: Colonel Devens and five companies, along with Col. William R. Lee with two companies of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry, begin crossing the Potomac River from Harrison's Island to Ball's Bluff. Lt. Col. George H. Ward, with five companies of the 15th Massachusetts Infantry, and Maj. Paul Revere, with five companies of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry, remain on the Maryland shore as support.

Lt. Col. Isaac J. Wistar, commanding the 1st California Infantry, is ordered to move his regiment to Conrad's Ferry as possible support for Devens' attack.

21 October 1861

0400: Devens and Lee complete crossing their troops to the Virginia shore.

0600: While Lee and his two companies remain at the bluff, Devens and his five companies march toward the site of the supposed Confederate camp. Devens soon discovers the report of the camp was in error.

Responding to orders from Stone, Gorman moves the 2d New York State Militia, 1st Minnesota Infantry, and 3d New York Cavalry to Edwards' Ferry.

0700: After a short reconnaissance toward Leesburg, Devens sends 1st Lt. Church Howe to Stone to report that there is no Confederate camp and to say that Devens will remain on the Virginia shore and await further orders.

The 1st California Infantry arrives at Conrad's Ferry.

To divert attention from Devens' movement, Stone sends a detachment of the 3d New York Cavalry and two companies of the 1st Minnesota Infantry across the river at Edwards' Ferry.

0730: Confederate pickets from *Company K, 17th Mississippi Infantry*, fire on Lee's pickets of Company I, 20th Massachusetts Infantry.

0800: *Company K, 17th Mississippi Infantry*, skirmishes with Company H, 15th Massachusetts Infantry, near the Jackson house. *Lt. Col. Walter H. Jenifer*, with four companies of Virginia cavalry, arrives, and Devens withdraws his men east of the Jackson house.

At Edwards' Ferry the detachment of the 3d New York Cavalry rides inland about a mile and briefly skirmishes with the *13th Mississippi Infantry* before returning to the ferry.

0830: Devens withdraws his five companies to Ball's Bluff.

McCall's division completes its reconnaissance at Dranesville and begins the return march to its camp at Langley.

Lieutenant Howe informs Stone that Devens had found no Confederate camp and was remaining on the Virginia shore to await orders.

Stone orders Colonel Ward, with the remaining five companies of the 15th Massachusetts Infantry, to cross from Harrison's Island and march to Smart's Mill. This is to support Devens' command if it is forced to fall back in that direction.

Stone also orders a detachment of about ten cavalrymen to report to Devens for the purpose of scouting.

0900: Devens and his five companies return to the vicinity of the Jackson house.

Jenifer and his cavalry are ordered to Fort Evans.

Lee sends a note to Major Revere that Devens has been engaged in a skirmish and that "we are determined to fight." Revere begins crossing his five companies of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry and two mountain howitzers from the island to the bluff.

At Conrad's Ferry, Wistar receives orders from Stone that, if heavy firing is heard from across the river, he is to cross with his regiment and support Devens and Lee. Having heard the firing from Devens' earlier morning skirmish, Wistar moves his regiment closer to Harrison's Island.

0915: Howe returns from Stone's headquarters and reports to Devens that he is to remain where he is, that Ward's five companies of the 15th Massachusetts Infantry are marching to Smart's Mill, and that a detachment of cavalry will soon join Devens. Devens says he would rather have Ward's companies join him near the Jackson house, then sends Howe back to Stone with news of the morning skirmish.

0930: *Jenifer* returns to the scene of the morning skirmish, along with three companies of Virginia cavalry, and joins *Company K, 17th Mississippi Infantry.* They are joined by one company of the *13th Mississippi Infantry* and two companies of the *18th Mississippi Infantry.*

0945: Unaware of the morning skirmish near the Jackson house, Stone informs McClellan that Devens has discovered no Confederates near Leesburg and that the detachment of the 3d New York Cavalry has skirmished with Confederates near Edwards' Ferry.

On the way back to Stone's headquarters at Edwards' Ferry, Howe encounters Ward and tells him of the morning skirmish and of Devens' desire that Ward join him instead of marching to Smart's Mill. Ward tells Howe to inform Stone that Ward will join Devens' command.

Stone orders Gorman to continue crossing his troops at Edwards' Ferry.

1000: *Evans* orders the *8th Virginia Infantry* to Ball's Bluff.

Col. Edward D. Baker, commanding the California brigade, arrives at Stone's headquarters and is given command of all troops in the vicinity of Harrison's Island.

1030: Colonel Baker leaves Stone's headquarters for Harrison's Island.

Howe meets Baker on the canal towpath and informs him of the morning skirmish and of Ward's marching to Devens' assistance.

Baker sends orders for the 1st California Infantry to cross the river and support Devens and Lee.

1045: Howe informs Stone of the morning skirmish and of the fact that Ward is marching to join Devens instead of going to Smart's Mill.

1100: Ward's five companies of the 15th Massachusetts Infantry join Devens' five companies near the Jackson house.

1110: Stone informs McClellan that "The enemy have been engaged opposite Harrison's Island; our men behaving admirably." According to McClellan, this is his first intimation that Stone's activities are more than a reconnaissance. McClellan orders McCall to remain at Dranesville if he is still there and, if not, to hold his division in readiness to march to Stone's support. McClellan also orders Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks, commanding a division at Darnestown, Maryland, to be prepared to march to Harrison's Island.

The cavalry detachment crosses the river into Virginia and, without reporting to Devens as ordered, returns to the Maryland shore.

Jenifer's cavalry and infantry begin skirmishing with Devens' command.

1130: The 1st California Infantry begins crossing onto Harrison's Island.

Revere's five companies of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry, along with two mountain howitzers, cross from Harrison's Island to Ball's Bluff.

1150: Stone sends a message to Baker estimating Confederate strength at 4,000. Baker is to push them as far as Leesburg if possible. When the Confederates fall back, Gorman's brigade at Edwards' Ferry will strike their right flank.

1200: Howe reports to Devens that Baker will cross the river and take command. Three times during the next two hours Devens sends Howe back to the bluff to locate Baker and to hurry up the reinforcements.

Baker crosses onto Harrison's Island and assists in the crossing of the 1st California Infantry.

Baker orders the 42d New York Infantry at Conrad's Ferry to march to Harrison's Island and cross over. Two guns of Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery, then with the New York regiment, are ordered to accompany the infantry.

The *8th Virginia Infantry* arrives near the Jackson house and falls in on the right of *Jenifer*'s Mississippi companies.

McClellan sends a message to Stone asking the estimated strength of the Confederate force currently engaged opposite Harrison's Island and also what size force would be necessary to capture Leesburg. McClellan states that he may require Stone to occupy Leesburg today and will support Stone from the other side of the river at Darnestown. Stone responds by saying he believes the enemy strength is about 4,000 but thinks his command can occupy Leesburg today.

1300: McCall's division arrives back at its camp at Langley.

Col. Milton Cogswell and the 42d New York Infantry begin to cross onto Harrison's Island. Cogswell delivers Stone's 1150 order to Baker, who responds that the advance will begin when Baker feels his command is strong enough.

Two rifled guns of Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery, cross to Harrison's Island.

1400: Baker crosses to Ball's Bluff to take command.

After four companies of the 1st California Infantry have crossed to the Virginia side of the river, Wistar crosses over.

With no reinforcements arriving, and to prevent his command's being cut off, Devens withdraws the 15th Massachusetts Infantry toward the bluff. *Jenifer*'s command and the *8th Virginia Infantry* follow in pursuit.

1420: Stone informs McClellan that there is heavy firing opposite Harrison's Island, but Baker is advancing.

1430: Baker places the 15th Massachusetts Infantry on the Union right flank.

Cogswell and one company of the 42d New York Infantry cross the river to the Virginia shore, along with one rifled gun of the Rhode Island battery.

Baker orders two companies of the 1st California Infantry to advance as skirmishers. However, the two companies are attacked by the *8th Virginia Infantry* and driven back.

1500: The *18th Mississippi Infantry* arrives on the right of *Jenifer*'s command and charges the two mountain howitzers. *Col. Erasmus Burt*, the regimental commander, is mortally wounded, and the regiment withdraws.

The rifled gun is hauled up the bluff and placed in the open field, near the location of the present-day national cemetery.

1530: The *17th Mississippi Infantry* arrives and takes position between the *8th Virginia Infantry* and the *18th Mississippi Infantry*.

1600: Stone informs McClellan that all of Baker's and Gorman's forces are across the river, with Baker's command heavily engaged.

McClellan orders Banks to send one brigade to Poolesville, Maryland, to support troops at Harrison's Island and the other two brigades to Seneca, Maryland, to support Stone if necessary.

Wistar is seriously wounded and carried from the battlefield.

1700: Companies A and H, 42d New York Infantry, arrive on the bluff and make a brief attack against the Confederate right.

Baker is killed.

Cogswell assumes command and orders all Union forces on the bluff to form a column of attack, faced to the left. An attempt is to be made to break out toward Edwards' Ferry.

1730: A charge by the *8th Virginia Infantry* captures the two mountain howitzers. Out of ammunition, the Virginians halt in the open field.

Union troops make an unsuccessful attempt to push the rifled gun over the bluff.

An unidentified mounted officer appears in the field, on the right of Cogswell's column. Apparently thinking the officer is ordering them to charge, a portion of the 42d New York Infantry break column and charge

into the open field. The Confederates drive them back through the 15th Massachusetts Infantry, and both units fall back toward the bluff.

Unable to get his attacking column in motion, Cogswell orders a general retreat to the riverbank.

The *17th* and *18th Mississippi Infantries* attack Cogswell's retreating troops and drive them down the bluff.

1800: As the Union troops crowd on the riverbank below the bluff, Companies E and K, 42d New York Infantry, arrive on the Virginia shore. Cogswell orders them halfway up the bluff to attempt to hold off the Confederate attack while Union troops on the riverbank try to cross the river to the island. However, the last remaining boat is swamped, and many of the Union troops still on the riverbank attempt to swim to the island.

Devens swims to Harrison's Island.

Cogswell is captured on the riverbank.

Lee and several others attempt to escape upriver toward Smart's Mill but are captured by Virginia cavalry.

1830: Stone is informed of Baker's death. He sends the news to McClellan, then rides upriver to a point opposite Harrison's Island, where he gives orders to the 19th Massachusetts Infantry to secure the island and care for the wounded.

Stone returns to Edwards' Ferry where he informs McClellan of the defeat and of his intention to withdraw the Union forces at Edwards' Ferry to the Maryland shore.

2200: McClellan orders Stone to hold his forces on the Virginia shore at Edwards' Ferry while reinforcements are sent. McClellan sends Brig. Gen. Frederick W. Lander, in Washington, D.C., to Edwards' Ferry to rejoin his command.

2245: McClellan orders Banks' two brigades at Seneca to march to Edwards' Ferry and cross as many men as possible to the Virginia shore before daylight.

2330: Stone suggests that McClellan send up reinforcements to Goose Creek. It is only then that Stone learns that McCall has not been at Dranesville all day.

22 October 1861

0330: Banks and his two brigades arrive at Edwards' Ferry and begin to cross the river to reinforce Stone's command. Later, Banks reports to McClellan that Stone himself is still on the Maryland shore.

Sometime later that morning, under a flag of truce, a Union burial party crosses from Harrison's Island to Ball's Bluff to bury the Union dead.

General Lander arrives from Washington and crosses to the Virginia shore at Edwards' Ferry.

1200: Banks' two brigades at Edwards' Ferry complete their crossing to the Virginia shore.

1600: Confederates skirmish briefly with Union troops near Edwards' Ferry. General Lander is seriously wounded.

McClellan arrives at Poolesville. After dark McClellan orders all Union troops on Harrison's Island withdrawn to the Maryland shore.

23 October 1861

In response to an order from General McClellan, Stone crosses to the Virginia shore at Edwards' Ferry.

McClellan makes a personal reconnaissance of the Edwards' Ferry area and decides the Union position on the Virginia shore is not a favorable one. However, he waits until dark to order a withdrawal.

1915: McClellan orders Stone's and Banks' forces to begin withdrawing to the Maryland shore.

24 October 1861

0400: The withdrawal of all Union forces from the Virginia side of Edwards' Ferry is completed.

ORDER OF BATTLE, OCTOBER 1861

Stone's Division, Army of the Potomac, USA
(Brig. Gen. Charles P. Stone)

1st Brigade (Brig. Gen. Willis A. Gorman)
- 2d New York State Militia (later redesignated 82d New York Infantry)
- 1st Minnesota Infantry
- 15th Massachusetts Infantry
- 34th New York Infantry
- 42d New York Infantry (also known as the Tammany Regiment)

2d Brigade (Brig. Gen. Frederick W. Lander)
- 19th Massachusetts Infantry
- 20th Massachusetts Infantry (also known as the Harvard Regiment)
- 7th Michigan Infantry
- 1st Company, Massachusetts Sharpshooters (also known as the Andrew Sharpshooters)

3d Brigade (Col. Edward D. Baker)
- 1st California Infantry (later redesignated 71st Pennsylvania Infantry)
- 2d California Infantry (later redesignated 69th Pennsylvania Infantry)
- 3d California Infantry (later redesignated 72d Pennsylvania Infantry)
- 4th California Infantry (later redesignated 106th Pennsylvania Infantry)

Cavalry
- 3d New York Cavalry (six companies)
- Putnam Rangers (District of Columbia volunteers, later redesignated Company L, 1st Maryland Cavalry)

Artillery
- Battery I, 1st United States Artillery
- Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery
- Battery K, 9th New York State Militia (later redesignated 6th Independent Battery, New York Light Artillery)

7th Brigade, First Corps, Army of the Potomac, CSA
(Col. Nathan G. Evans)

13th Mississippi Infantry
17th Mississippi Infantry
18th Mississippi Infantry
8th Virginia Infantry

Cavalry (Lt. Col. Walter H. Jenifer)
Companies B, C, and *E, 4th Virginia Cavalry*
Company K, 6th Virginia Cavalry

Artillery
1st Company, Richmond Howitzers

CASUALTIES

Estimates of numbers engaged in Civil War battles vary, and statistics on killed, wounded, captured, and missing are incomplete. Participants attempted to fill gaps as they wrote their official reports, and historians have tried to refine the data. The reports of casualties at Ball's Bluff shown in the *Official Records* are certainly inaccurate. They do not show numbers of dead whose bodies were not immediately located, nor do they show the number of wounded who later died, or the missing who returned to duty or who were later determined to be captured. Although Confederate casualty figures appear to be fairly accurate, the Union figures are not. The day after the battle a Union burial party reported interring forty-seven bodies, leaving about twenty-five unburied. In the days following the battle another twenty bodies were reported washed up on the banks of the Potomac between Ball's Bluff and Washington. Counting those soldiers listed as missing and never accounted for, the number of Union dead might be as high as two hundred.

UNION CASUALTIES AT BALL'S BLUFF

Unit	*Killed*		*Wounded*		*Missing*		*Aggregate*
	Ofcrs	*Men*	*Ofcrs*	*Men*	*Ofcrs*	*Men*	
15th Massachusetts Infantry	2	12	4	57	8	219	302
20th Massachusetts Infantry	2	13	6	38	6	129	194
42d New York Infantry	3	4	0	6	6	114	133
1st California Infantry[a]	3	10	3	37	6	222	281
9th New York State Militia[b]	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Artillery	0	0	0	5	0	4	9
Battery I, 1st U.S. Artillery	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	10	39	15	143	26	688	
Grand Total	49		158		714		921

[a]Later redesignated 71st Pennsylvania Infantry
[b]Later redesignated 6th Independent Battery, New York Light Artillery

Source: U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1893) (hereafter cited as *OR*), ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 308.

Confederate Casualties at Ball's Bluff

Unit	*Killed*		*Wounded*		*Missing*		*Aggregate*
	Ofcrs	*Men*	*Ofcrs*	*Men*	*Ofcrs*	*Men*	
13th Mississippi Infantry	1	3	0	2	0	1	7
17th Mississippi Infantry	2	0	1	8	0	0	11
18th Mississippi Infantry	0	22	7	56	0	0	85
8th Virginia Infantry	0	8	4	39	1	0	52
Total	3	33	12	105	1	1	
Grand Total	36		117		2		155

Source: *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, p. 353.

ORGANIZATION

The infantry regiment was the basic administrative and tactical unit of Civil War armies. Regimental headquarters consisted of a colonel, lieutenant colonel, major, adjutant, quartermaster, surgeon (with rank of major), two assistant surgeons, a chaplain, sergeant major, quartermaster sergeant, commissary sergeant, hospital steward, and two principal musicians. Each company was staffed by a captain, a first lieutenant, a second lieutenant, a first sergeant, four sergeants, eight corporals, two musicians, and one wagoner.

The authorized strength of a Civil War infantry regiment was about 1,000 officers and men, arranged in ten companies plus a headquarters and (for the first half of the war at least) a band. Discharges for physical disability, disease, special assignments (bakers, hospital nurses, or wagoners), courts-martial, and battle injuries all combined to reduce effective combat strength. Before too long a typical regiment might be reduced to less than 500 troops.

Brigades were made up of two or more regiments, with four regiments being most common. Union brigades averaged 1,000 to 1,500 infantrymen, while a Confederate brigade averaged 1,500 to 1,800. Union brigades were designated by a number within their division, and each Confederate brigade was designated by the name of a current or former commander.

Divisions were formed of two or more brigades. Union divisions contained 2,500 to 4,000 infantrymen, while the Confederate infantry division was somewhat larger, containing 5,000 to 6,000 men.

A corps was formed of two or more divisions. Two or more corps constituted an army, the largest operational organization.

In the Eastern Theater in the fall of 1861 the principal adversaries were the Union Army of the Potomac and the Confederate *Army of the Potomac* (renamed the *Army of Northern Virginia* in June 1862). The Union Army was organized into eleven infantry divisions. In March 1862 these divisions would be reorganized into five corps of three to four divisions each. Union artillery was organized into batteries of four to six guns each, and two or more batteries assigned to each division. An artillery reserve contained eight batteries. Union cavalry was generally organized into regiments and assigned to a division. A separate cavalry command included three regiments and two additional companies. The total strength of the Union Army of

the Potomac in October 1861 was approximately 152,000 men, including a division stationed in Baltimore.

In October 1861 the Confederate *Army of the Potomac* consisted of two infantry corps, organized into a total of fifteen brigades. Each brigade contained from two to five regiments. Artillery was organized into a corps of approximately six batteries, while the cavalry was organized into a single brigade, with independent companies operating with some infantry brigades. The total strength of the Confederate *Army of the Potomac* in October 1861 was approximately 40,000 men.

TACTICS

The tactical legacy of the eighteenth century had emphasized close-order formations of soldiers trained to maneuver in concert and fire by volleys. These "linear" tactics stressed the tactical offensive. Assault troops advanced in line, two ranks deep, with cadenced steps, stopping to fire volleys on command and finally rushing the last few yards to pierce the enemy line with a bayonet charge.

These tactics were adequate for troops armed with single-shot, muzzle-loading smoothbore muskets with an effective range of about eighty yards. The close-order formation was therefore necessary to concentrate the firepower of these inaccurate weapons. Bayonet charges might then succeed because infantry could rush the last eighty yards before the defending infantrymen could reload their muskets after firing a volley.

The U.S. Army's transition from smoothbore muskets to rifled muskets in the mid-nineteenth century would have two main effects in the American Civil War: it would strengthen the tactical defensive and increase the number of casualties in the attacking force. With a weapon that could cause fatalities out to 1,000 yards, defenders firing rifles could decimate infantry formations attacking according to linear tactics.

Later in the Civil War the widespread use of the rifled musket caused infantry assault formations to loosen up somewhat, with individual soldiers seeking available cover and concealment. However, because officers needed to maintain visual and verbal control of their commands during the noise, smoke, and chaos of combat, close-order tactics to some degree would continue to the end of the war.

A typical combat formation of a regiment might be six companies in the main line, with two in reserve, and two out in front in extended skirmish order. During battle additional companies might be fed into the skirmish line, or the skirmishers might regroup on the main line.

Rapid movement of units on roads or cross country was generally by formation of a column four men abreast. The speed of such columns was prescribed as two miles per hour. Upon reaching the field each regiment was typically formed into a line two ranks deep, the shoulders of each man in each rank touching the shoulders of the man on either side. The distance between ranks was prescribed as thirteen inches. A regiment of 500 men (250 men in each rank) might have a front of about 200 yards. Both front and rear ranks were capable of firing, either by volley or individual fire.

Small Arms

In 1855 the U.S. Army adopted a .58-caliber rifled musket to replace a .69-caliber smoothbore musket. The new infantry weapon was muzzle loaded, its rifled barrel taking a hollow-based cylindroconical bullet slightly smaller than the bore. The loading procedure required the soldier to withdraw a paper cartridge (containing powder and bullet) from his cartridge box, tear open one end with his teeth, pour the powder into the muzzle, place the bullet in the muzzle, and ram it to the breech using a metal ramrod. A copper percussion cap was then placed on a hollow cone at the breech. To fire the weapon, the hammer was cocked, and when the trigger was pulled the hammer struck the cap and ignited the powder charge. Each soldier was expected to be capable of loading and firing three aimed shots per minute. Although the maximum range of a rifled musket might be over 1,000 yards, actual fields of fire were often very short, the emphasis of musketry fire relying on volume at close range rather than accuracy at long.

The basic ammunition load for each infantry soldier was 40 rounds in the cartridge box. When more action was expected, 20 additional rounds were issued to each soldier, who placed them in his uniform pockets or knapsack. In addition, 100 rounds per man were held in the brigade or division trains and 100 rounds in the corps trains.

At the beginning of the war a shortage of rifled muskets on both sides forced the Northern and Southern governments to issue the older smoothbore weapons or purchase weapons from European nations. At the Battle of Ball's Bluff the regiments on both sides were armed mostly with smoothbore weapons, with a few companies armed with rifles. As the war progressed more soldiers were armed with rifles, although even late in the war some troops on both sides still carried smoothbores.

Both single- and multiple-shot handguns were generally carried by officers. Although the types of handguns used by both sides were innumerable, two of the most common were six-shot revolvers produced by Colt and Remington, both in .36- and .44-caliber.

The Union cavalry was initially armed with sabers and handguns, but soon added breech-loading carbines. In addition to Sharps and Spencer carbines, dozens of other types of breech-loaders, from .52- to .56-caliber, were issued. Confederate cavalrymen might be armed with a wide variety of handguns, shotguns, muzzle-loading carbines, or captured Federal weapons.

Typical Civil War Small Arms

Weapon	*Effective Range (in yards)*	*Theoretical Rate of Fire (in rounds/minute)*
U.S. rifled musket, muzzle-loaded, .58-caliber	400–600	3
English Enfield rifled musket, muzzle-loaded, .577-caliber	400–600	3
Smoothbore musket, muzzle-loaded, .69-caliber	100–200	3

Source: MS, Ernest F. Fisher, Jr., Weapons and Equipment Evolution and Its Influence Upon the Organization and Tactics in the American Army, 1775–1963, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1963, file 2–3.7, AB.Z, U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH), Washington, D.C.

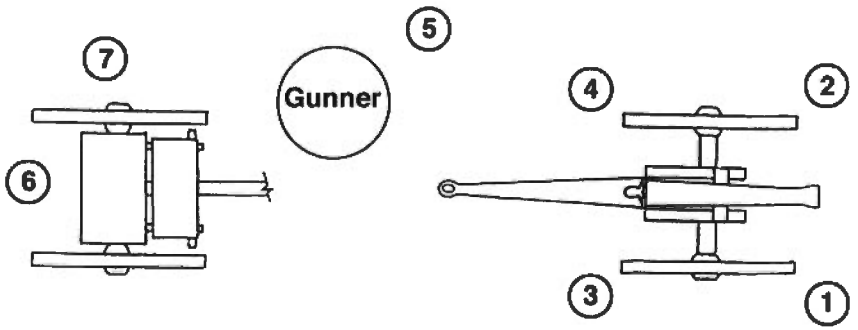
ARTILLERY

Civil War field artillery was generally organized into batteries of four to six guns. Regulations prescribed a captain as battery commander, while lieutenants commanded two-gun "sections." Each gun made up a platoon, under a sergeant ("chief of the piece") with eight crewmen and six drivers.

For transport, each gun was attached to a two-wheeled cart, known as a limber, and drawn by a six-horse team. The limber chest carried thirty to fifty rounds of ammunition, depending on the type of guns in the battery. In addition to the limbers, each gun had at least one caisson, also drawn by a six-horse team. The caisson carried additional ammunition in its two chests, as well as a spare wheel and tools. A horse-drawn forge and a battery wagon with tools accompanied each battery. A battery at regulation strength, including all officers, noncommissioned officers, buglers, horse holders, and other specialized functions, might exceed 100 officers and men. With spare horses included, a typical six-gun battery might have about 100 to 150 horses.

A battery could unlimber and fire an initial volley in about one minute, and each gun could continue firing two aimed shots a minute. A battery could "limber up" in about three minutes. Firing was by "direct fire," that is, fire in which the target is in view of the gun. The prescribed distance between guns was 14 yards from hub to hub. Therefore, a six-gun battery would represent a normal front of about 100 yards. Depth of the battery position, from the gun muzzle, passing the limber, to the rear of the caisson, was prescribed as 47 yards. In practice these measurements might be altered by terrain.

During firing, cannoneers took their positions as in the diagram below. At the command "commence firing," the gunner ordered "load." While the gunner sighted the piece, Number 1 sponged the bore, Number



5 received a round from Number 7 at the limber and carried the round to Number 2, who placed it in the bore. Number 1 rammed the round to the breech while Number 3 placed a thumb over the vent to prevent premature detonation of the charge. When the gun was loaded and sighted, Number 3 inserted a vent pick in the vent and punctured the cartridge bag. Number 4 attached a lanyard to a friction primer and inserted the primer in the vent. At the command "fire," Number 4 yanked the lanyard. Number 6 cut fuzes for exploding shells (if needed). The process was repeated until the command was given to cease firing.

TYPICAL CIVIL WAR FIELD ARTILLERY

Weapon	*Tube Composition*	*Tube Length (in inches)*	*Effective Range at 5° Elevation (in yards)*
6-pdr smoothbore field gun 3.67 in. dia. bore	bronze	60	1,523
12-pdr smoothbore field howitzer 4.62 in. dia. bore	bronze	59	1,680
12-pdr smoothbore mountain howitzer 4.62 in. dia. bore	bronze	33	1,005
10-pdr Parrott rifle 2.9 in. dia. bore	iron	78	1,950
3-inch ordnance rifle 3.0 in. dia. bore	iron	73	1,835
12-pdr James rifle 3.67 in. dia. bore	bronze	69	1,700

Note: Cannon were generally identified by the weight of their solid iron round shot although some, like the 3-inch ordnance rifle, used the diameter of the bore for identification.

Sources: Henry L. Abbott, *Siege Artillery in the Campaigns Against Richmond With Notes on the 15-inch Gun*, Professional Papers 14 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1867); Alfred Mordecai, *Artillery for the United States Land Service as Devised and Arranged by the Ordnance Board. Including Drawings and Tables of Dimensions of the Ordnance for the Land Service of the United States, 1841.* (Washington, D.C.: J. & G. S. Gideon, 1849); *Instruction for Field Artillery, Prepared by a Board of Artillery Officers.* (Philadelphia, Pa.: J. B. Lippincott, 1863).

Artillery Projectiles

Four basic types of projectiles were employed by Civil War field artillery: solid shot, shells, case shot, and canister.



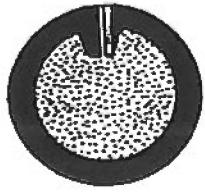
Shot



Bolt

Solid Projectiles

Round (spherical) projectiles of solid iron for smoothbores were commonly called cannonballs or shot. When elongated for rifled weapons, the projectile was known as a bolt. Solid projectiles were used against opposing batteries, wagons, buildings, etc., as well as enemy personnel. While shot could ricochet across open ground against advancing infantry or cavalry, bolts tended to bury themselves upon impact with the ground and therefore were not used a great deal by field artillery.



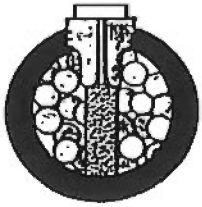
Spherical shell



Rifled shell

Shell

The shell, whether spherical or conical, was a hollow iron projectile filled with a black powder bursting charge. It was designed to break into several ragged fragments. Spherical shells were exploded by fuzes set into an opening in the shell, which ignited the shell near the intended target. The time of detonation was determined by adjusting the length of the fuze. Rifled shells were detonated by similar timed fuzes or by a percussion fuze detonating the shell upon impact.



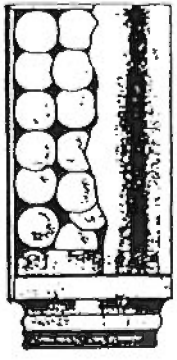
Spherical case shot



Rifled case shot

Case Shot

Case shot, or "shrapnel," was developed in the late eighteenth century by an English artillery officer named Henry Shrapnel. The projectile had a thinner wall than a shell and was filled with a number of small lead or iron balls (27 for a 12-pounder). A timed fuze ignited a small bursting charge inside the shell, which fragmented the casing and scattered the contents in the air. Case shot was intended to burst from 50 to 75 yards short of the target, the fragments being carried forward by the velocity of the shot.



Canister

Canister

Canister consisted of a tin cylinder in which was packed a number of iron or lead balls. Upon discharge the cylinder split open and the smaller projectiles fanned out. Canister was an extremely effective antipersonnel weapon, with an effective range of 400 yards. In emergencies double loads of canister could be used at ranges less than 200 yards, using a single propelling charge.

LOGISTICS

Bureau System

Bureau chiefs and heads of staff departments were responsible for various aspects of the Army's administration and logistics and reported directly to the Secretary of War. The division of responsibility and authority over them of the Secretary of War, the assistant secretaries, and the General in Chief was never spelled out. Therefore the supply departments functioned independently and without effective coordination throughout most of the Civil War, although the situation improved after Ulysses S. Grant took command in the spring of 1864.

Logistical support was entrusted to the heads of four supply departments in Washington. The Quartermaster General was responsible for clothing and equipment, forage, animals, transportation, and housing; the Commissary General for rations; the Chief of Ordnance for weapons, ammunition, and miscellaneous related equipment; and the Surgeon General for medical supplies, evacuation, treatment, and hospitalization of the wounded.

For other support there were the Adjutant General, the Inspector General, the Paymaster General, the Judge Advocate General, the Chief of Engineers, and the Chief of Topographical Engineers.

The military department was the basic organizational unit for administrative and logistical purposes, and the commander of each department controlled the support in that area with no intervening level between his departmental headquarters and the bureau chiefs in Washington. There were six departments when the war started (East, West, Texas, New Mexico, Utah, and Pacific). Later on, boundaries changed and several geographical departments were grouped together as a military "division" headquarters.

Army depots were located in major cities: Boston, Massachusetts; New York; Baltimore, Maryland; Washington, D.C.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Louisville, Kentucky; St. Louis, Missouri; Chicago, Illinois; New Orleans, Louisiana; and San Francisco, California. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was the chief depot and manufacturing center for clothing. Advance and temporary supply bases were established as needed to support active operations. Until 1864 most depot commanders were authorized the rank of captain who, despite the low rank and meager pay, had tremendous resources of men, money, and materiel under their control. There were a few exceptions, notably Col. Daniel H. Rucker at the Washington Quartermaster

Depot and Col. George D. Ramsay at the Washington Arsenal. The primary function of the depots was to procure supplies and prepare them for use in the field by repacking, assembling, or other similar tasks.

Procurement was decentralized. Purchases were made on the market by low-bid contract in the major cities and producing areas by depot officers. Flour and some other commodities were procured closer to the troops when possible. Cattle were contracted for at specific points, and major beef depots were maintained at Washington (on the grounds of the unfinished Washington Monument); Alexandria, Virginia; and Louisville. The Subsistence Department developed a highly effective system of moving cattle on the hoof to the immediate rear of the armies in the field to be slaughtered by brigade butchers and issued to the troops the day before consumption. The Confederate Army used a similar system with depots at Richmond, Virginia; Staunton, Virginia; Raleigh, North Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; Columbus, Georgia; Huntsville, Alabama; Montgomery, Alabama; Jackson, Mississippi; Little Rock, Arkansas; Alexandria, Louisiana; and San Antonio, Texas.

Supply Operations

Most of the unit's logistical needs were handled at the regimental level. The regimental quartermaster was normally a line lieutenant designated by the regimental commander. His duties included submitting requisitions for all quartermaster supplies and transport; accounting for regimental property including tents, camp equipment, extra clothing, wagons, forage, and animals; and issuing supplies and managing the regimental trains. The regimental commissary officer, also designated from the line, requisitioned, accounted for, and issued rations. The regimental ordnance officer had similar duties regarding arms and ammunition and managed the movement of the unit ammunition train.

In theory, logistical staff positions above the regimental level were filled by a fully qualified officer of the supply department concerned. However, experienced officers were in perpetual short supply, and many authorized positions were filled by officers and noncommissioned officers from line units or were left vacant, the duties thus being performed by someone in addition to his own. This problem existed in both armies, where inexperience and ignorance of logistical principles and procedures generally reduced levels of support.

The Soldier's Load

The Union soldier carried about 45 pounds: musket and bayonet (14 pounds), 60 rounds of ammunition, 3 to 8 days' rations, canteen, blanket or overcoat, shelter half, ground sheet, mess gear (cup, knife, fork, spoon,

and skillet), and personal items (sewing kit, razor, letters, Bible, etc.). Confederates usually had less.

Annual Clothing Issue

The Union infantry allowance consisted of 2 caps, 1 hat, 2 dress coats, 3 pairs of trousers, 3 flannel shirts, 3 flannel drawers, 4 pairs of stockings, and 4 pairs of shoes. Artillerymen and cavalrymen were issued boots instead of shoes. The allowance equaled $42.

Officially, the Confederate soldier was almost equally well clothed, but the Southern quartermaster was seldom able to supply the required items. Soldiers wore whatever came to hand, the home-dyed butternut jackets and trousers being characteristic items. Shortages of shoes were a constant problem.

Rations

The daily individual ration for a Union soldier consisted of 20 ounces of fresh or salt beef or 12 ounces of pork or bacon; and 1 pound of hard bread or 18 ounces of flour or 20 of cornmeal. Also, 1 gill of whiskey per day was issued in cases of excessive fatigue or severe exposure.

In addition to the daily individual ration, the following were issued to every 100 men: 15 pounds of beans or peas; 10 pounds of rice or hominy; 10 pounds of green coffee or 1.5 pounds of tea; 15 pounds of sugar; 4 quarts of vinegar; 3.75 pounds of salt; 4 ounces of pepper; 30 pounds of potatoes; and, when practicable, 1 quart of molasses.

Desiccated potatoes or mixed vegetables, a dehydrated concoction referred to by soldiers as "desecrated vegetables," could be substituted for beans, peas, rice, hominy, or fresh potatoes.

Basically, the Confederates got the same ration composition as Union soldiers but often in less quantity. Much of the meat and coffee that was issued was captured or obtained from sources other than the commissary department.

Wagons

An Army wagon, drawn by four horses over good roads, could carry 2,800 pounds. A good six-mule team, in the best season of the year, could haul 4,000 pounds. In practice, wagons seldom hauled such loads because of poor roads.

The number of wagons authorized for the Union Army in August 1862 was as follows:

corps headquarters	4
brigade or division headquarters	3
infantry regiment	6
battery of light artillery or squadron of cavalry	3

Forage

The forage ration for horses was 14 pounds of hay and 12 pounds of oats, corn, or barley. For mules, the daily ration was 14 pounds of hay and 9 pounds of oats, corn, or barley.

Tents

In the field the Union Army utilized a variety of canvas tents. The wall tent measured approximately 7 feet high, 10 feet wide, and 12 feet deep, and was issued to officers above company level. A typical hospital tent might be 14 feet long, 14 feet wide, and 11 feet high. Shelter tents were issued to company level officers and enlisted men. They consisted of two sections that buttoned together to form what is now often referred to as a "pup" tent. Each enlisted man received a shelter tent half and buttoned it together with that of a sleeping mate.

The number and kind of tents prescribed for the Union infantry in the field were as follows:

corps headquarters (admin)	1 hospital
division and brigade headquarters (admin)	1 wall
corps, division, or brigade commander	1 wall
every two officers of the staff	1 wall
regimental colonel and field and staff officers	1 wall each
other officers of the regimental staff	1 wall per 2 officers
company officer	1 shelter
every enlisted man	1 shelter half
every officer's servant	1 shelter half

Baggage

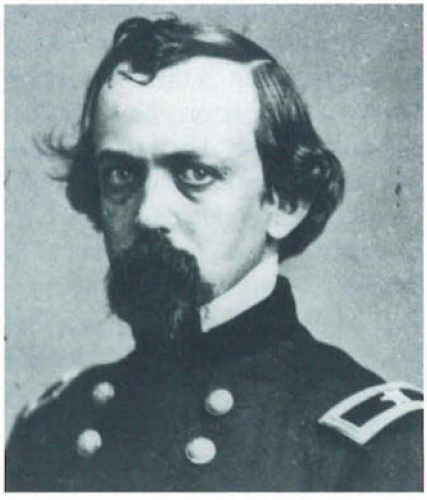
Enlisted men of both armies were required to carry their own baggage. A Union order of September 1862 limited officers to blankets, one small valise or carpet bag, and a mess kit. Enlisted men carried their rations and personal belongings in a waterproofed canvas knapsack or haversack attached to a strap slung over one shoulder.

Sources: Capt. Walworth Jenkins, *Book of Reference for Quartermasters* (Louisville, Ky.: John P. Morton, 1865); U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1893); *Revised United States Army Regulations of 1861* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1863); Erna Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army: A History of the Corps, 1775–1939* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962).

Selected Biographical Sketches

Union Officers

Charles P. Stone
1824–1887, Massachusetts
USMA 1845

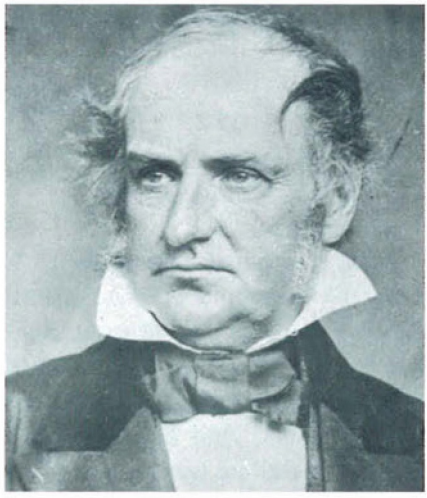


Charles P. Stone (Massachusetts Commandery Military Order of the Loyal Legion and U.S. Army Military History Institute)

After graduating from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Stone served as an ordnance officer with Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott's army in Mexico. There, he was brevetted first lieutenant and captain. After the war he spent five years as chief of ordnance of the Pacific Department. In 1856 Stone resigned from the Army and was employed by the Mexican government as a surveyor. With the outbreak of war in 1861, Stone returned to Washington and as inspector general of the District of Columbia militia secured the capital for the arrival of President-elect Abraham Lincoln. Stone was appointed a colonel of the 14th U.S. Regulars in May and a brigadier general of volunteers in August. He commanded a brigade in the Shenandoah Valley during the First Bull Run campaign and afterward commanded a division, the Corps of Observation, guarding the fords on the upper Potomac. In October 1861 he sent a portion of his command to attack a suspected Confederate camp near Leesburg, Virginia, and it was soundly defeated at the ensuing Battle of Ball's Bluff. Stone bore the brunt of public and congressional criticism. In February 1862 he was arrested in the middle of the night, without charges being preferred, and confined for 189 days. Stone was released without explanation. It was not until 1863 that he was given another assignment, in the Department of the Gulf. But in April 1864 the Secretary of War ordered Stone mustered out of his commission, and Stone was without a command. He finally resigned from the Army in September of the same year. After the war he served thirteen years as chief of staff in the Egyptian Army, and

later he returned to the United States, where he served as an engineer on the foundation for the Statue of Liberty.

Edward D. Baker
1811–1861, England



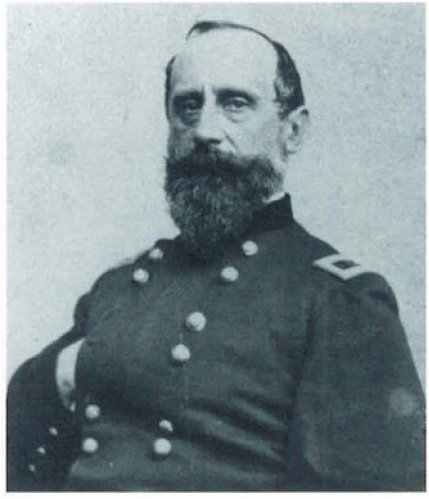
Edward D. Baker (Massachusetts Commandery Military Order of the Loyal Legion and U.S. Army Military History Institute)

At the age of four Baker and his family left England to come to America, arriving at Philadelphia. He later moved to Illinois, where he was admitted to the bar in 1830. Five years later he became acquainted with Abraham Lincoln and soon became involved in local politics, being elected to the U.S. Congress in 1837, and the U.S. Senate in 1840. In 1844, while living in Springfield, he defeated Lincoln for the nomination for the U.S. congressional seat and was elected. The two remained close friends, however, with Lincoln naming one of his sons Edward Baker Lincoln. During the Mexican War, Baker briefly dropped out of politics and served as a colonel of the 4th Illinois Volunteers. He returned to Springfield in 1848, but, rather than run against Lincoln again for nomination to the U.S. Congress, Baker moved to Galena, where he was nominated and elected to Congress. In 1852, after failing to receive a cabinet appointment under President Franklin Pierce, Baker moved to California, where he was admitted to the state bar. In 1860 he moved again, this time to Oregon, where he was elected to the U.S. Senate. In May 1861 he was authorized by the Secretary of War to organize an infantry regiment to be taken as part of the quota from California. Recruiting mostly in Philadelphia, Baker raised the 1st California Infantry and served as its colonel. A few months later he was assigned command of a brigade in General Stone's division, guarding fords along the Potomac River north of Washington. On 21 October 1861, Baker was killed at the Battle of Ball's Bluff.

Charles P. Devens
1820–1891, Massachusetts

Devens graduated from Harvard University in 1838 and Harvard Law School in 1840 and was admitted to the Massachusetts bar. He later

served as a state senator, U.S. marshal, and state militia officer. With the outbreak of war Devens was mustered into Federal service as a major of the 3d Battalion of Massachusetts Rifles, a ninety-day regiment. Just before the Battle of First Bull Run the unit's enlistment expired, and the men mustered out. Devens was then commissioned a colonel of the 15th Massachusetts Infantry. In October 1861 his unit participated in the Battle of Ball's Bluff, where he was forced to swim the Potomac River to escape capture. He was promoted to brigadier general in April 1862 and assigned command of a brigade of the IV Corps, Army of the Potomac, from the Peninsula campaign to the Battle of Fredericksburg. In May 1863 at Chancellorsville Devens commanded a division of the XI Corps, where he was wounded and his division virtually destroyed by Lt. Gen. Thomas J. Jackson's flank attack. Returning to duty, Devens commanded a division in the Army of the James during 1864 and 1865 and after the Confederate surrender at Appomattox commanded the District of Charleston, South Carolina. In 1867 he was appointed a judge of the superior court and in 1873 a justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court. Four years later Devens was appointed U.S. Attorney General under President Rutherford B. Hayes, after he had turned down the position of Secretary of War.



Charles P. Devens (Massachusetts Commandery Military Order of the Loyal Legion and U.S. Army Military History Institute)

William R. Lee
1804–1891, Massachusetts

Lee was a classmate of Robert E. Lee in the West Point class of 1829 but dropped out prior to the completion of his studies. He served for a time as a civil engineer and railroad superintendent and in July 1861 was appointed a colonel of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry. He was captured at the Battle of Ball's Bluff in October and with others was held as a hostage for the good treatment of the captured crew of the Confederate privateer *Savannah*. He was exchanged in April 1862 and rejoined his regiment. At the Battle of Nelson's Farm in June 1862, he was severely injured when his horse fell on him. Nevertheless, he participated in the



William R. Lee (Massachusetts Commandery Military Order of the Loyal Legion and U.S. Army Military History Institute)

Peninsula campaign and the Battle of Antietam. At Antietam, even though he was the senior colonel present in his brigade, he refused to accept temporary command of the brigade when the commanding officer was wounded. His regiment served at the Battle of Fredericksburg on 13 December 1862. Two days later Lee was assigned command of the 3d Brigade in the II Corps, but he immediately offered his resignation from the Army, which was accepted on 17 December 1862.

Isaac J. Wistar
1827–1905, Pennsylvania



Isaac J. Wistar (Catherine Vanderslice Collection, U.S. Army Military History Institute)

After graduating from Haverford College, Wistar studied law and opened a practice in Philadelphia. In 1853 he became a law partner of Edward D. Baker. In 1861 Wistar assisted Baker in raising the 1st California Infantry and was appointed a lieutenant colonel. After Baker, who had been the regiment's colonel, was assigned command of the brigade, Wistar commanded the 1st California Infantry at the Battle of Ball's Bluff in October 1861. There, he was wounded three times, his right arm being completely disabled, and was carried from the field. In November 1861, while convalescing, he was appointed colonel of the regiment. Although his arm was still disabled, Wistar returned to duty with the regiment in time to participate in the Battle of Antietam in September, where he was wounded again, in his left arm. In

March 1863 he was promoted to brigadier general and in May assigned a brigade in Brig. Gen. George W. Getty's division stationed at Suffolk, Virginia. In May 1864 he was briefly in command of a brigade of the XVIII Corps, Army of the James, but was soon relieved. He seems to have held no other command, until he resigned in September 1864. After the war he practiced law, became prominent in the coal business, and at one time was president of the American Philosophical Society and Academy of Natural Sciences. In 1892 he founded the Wistar Institute in Philadelphia, the first independent medical research facility in the United States.

Milton Cogswell
1825–1882, Indiana
USMA 1849



Milton Cogswell (Civil War Library & Museum, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States [MOLLUS], Philadelphia, Pa.)

After graduating from the U.S. Military Academy in 1849 Cogswell was assigned to the 8th U.S. Infantry and served at Sackett's Harbor, New York, until 1850, when he was transferred to frontier duty in Texas. A year later he was assigned to the Military Academy, first as an assistant professor of mathematics and later as assistant professor of infantry tactics. In 1855 Cogswell served on frontier duty in New Mexico. In May 1861 he was promoted to captain and shortly afterward appointed a colonel of volunteers in command of the 42d New York Infantry. At the Battle of Ball's Bluff on 21 October, Cogswell was captured and remained a prisoner of war until exchanged in September 1862. Assigned a colonel of volunteers of the 2d New York Heavy Artillery the following month, he resigned his volunteer commission in April 1863. During the final years of the war Cogswell served generally in various administrative posts in New York. After the war he served in North and South Carolina as an acting judge advocate general; assistant commissary of musters; assistant commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau; provisional mayor of Charleston, South Carolina; in the Bureau of Civil Affairs; military commander of Columbia, South Carolina; and military commander of Charleston, South Carolina. Beginning in 1869 he served with the 21st Infantry in Arizona, until his retirement in 1871.

Nathan G. Evans
1824–1868, South Carolina
USMA 1848



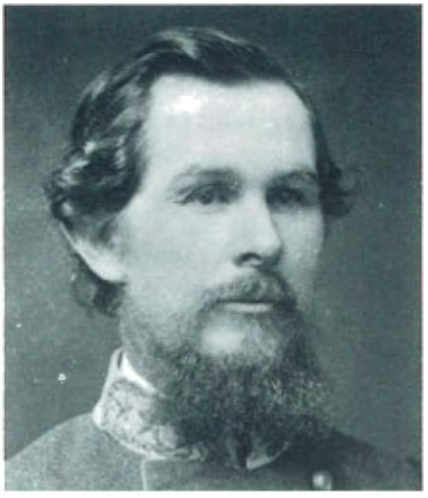
Nathan G. Evans (Massachusetts Commandery Military Order of the Loyal Legion and U.S. Army Military History Institute)

After graduation from the U.S. Military Academy, Evans served on the western frontier with the dragoons and cavalry, before resigning in 1861 to enter Confederate service. He was commissioned a colonel and commanded a small brigade at the Battle of First Bull Run, where it was said his command went far toward saving the day for the South. During the thick of the fight, he was everywhere, closely followed by an aide carrying a jug of Evans' favorite whiskey. His brigade later was assigned to guard the upper fords of the Potomac, above Washington. In October 1861 a Union force crossed the river near Leesburg and at the Battle of Ball's Bluff Evans' command drove the enemy into the Potomac River, inflicting great loss. Evans was promoted to brigadier general to be effective the day of the battle. Evans' brigade participated in the battles of South Mountain and Antietam in September 1862 and was assigned to General Joseph E. Johnston's army during the Vicksburg campaign as well as campaigns in North Carolina. His passion for alcoholic beverages led to constant difficulties with his superiors, and he was subsequently tried for drunkenness and acquitted and later for disobedience of orders and also acquitted. General P. G. T. Beauregard considered Evans incompetent and had him removed from command for a time. After the war Evans became a high school principal in Alabama, where he died in 1868.

Eppa Hunton
1822–1908, Virginia

After graduating from the New Baltimore Academy, Hunton taught school for three years, then studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1843. He became prominent as an officer in the Virginia militia and as a commonwealth's attorney. With the outbreak of war in 1861 Hunton was commissioned a colonel of the 8th Virginia Infantry, which participated

in the Battle of First Bull Run in July. In October his regiment was part of Evans' brigade near Leesburg, where he led his command against a Union force at Ball's Bluff, driving it into the Potomac River. Afterward, Hunton held brigade command in Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's division, Maj. Gen. George Pickett's division, and the Department of Richmond, being promoted to brigadier general in August 1863. After service in the defenses of Richmond, he rejoined Pickett's division and fought at Cold Harbor and in the Richmond and Petersburg siege lines. In March 1865 his command fought a delaying action at Five Forks and again the following month at Sayler's Creek, where he was captured. After the war Hunton resumed his former law practice and became involved in politics. From 1873 to 1881 he served in the U.S. Congress and in the U.S. Senate from 1892 to 1895.



Eppa Hunton (Massachusetts Commandery Military Order of the Loyal Legion and U.S. Army Military History Institute)

Walter H. Jenifer
1823–1878, Maryland

Jenifer, the son of a former member of Congress and minister to Austria, entered the U.S. Military Academy in 1841 (along with Charles P. Stone) but withdrew two years later. In 1847 Jenifer was commissioned a lieutenant of infantry, transferred two months later to the 3d Dragoons, and in 1855 was assigned to the 2d Cavalry, serving with Nathan G. Evans. While serving with the 2d Cavalry, Jenifer patented a cavalry saddle that would be used in substantial numbers by Confederate and some Union cavalry during the Civil War. In February 1861, while he was stationed in Texas, that state seceded from the Union and officers of the 2d Cavalry were offered positions in the Confederate Army. Jenifer declined the offer, although he was sympathetic to the Southern cause. Instead, he planned to offer his services to his home state of Maryland, if it seceded. Maryland did not secede, but in April Jenifer resigned his U.S. commission and unsuccessfully attempted to organize a company of Maryland cavalry for Confederate service. By July 1861 Jenifer had been commissioned a lieutenant colonel in the Confederacy and commanded

several companies of Virginia cavalry in Brig. Gen. Richard S. Ewell's brigade at the Battle of First Bull Run. Afterward, Jenifer was assigned to Col. Nathan G. Evans' brigade near Leesburg, where in October 1861 his cavalry companies participated in the Battle of Ball's Bluff. In early 1862 Jenifer, now a colonel, was assigned to command the 8th Virginia Cavalry but was relieved of command when the regiment was reorganized shortly thereafter. Throughout the remainder of the war, he served mostly in the Department of the Gulf as inspector of cavalry and a cavalry commander. After the war Jenifer was one of fifty former Union and Confederate officers to accept commissions and serve in the Egyptian Army (including Brig. Gen. Charles P. Stone). Jenifer was commissioned a colonel in the Egyptian Army in 1870, agreeing to fight for Egypt in any war except one against the United States. Two years later, his health affected by his foreign service, Jenifer returned to the United States and began operating a horse farm in Maryland. With the assistance of the khedive of Egypt, Jenifer imported and raised Arabian horses in Baltimore, Maryland, winning top awards at local fairs before his death in 1878.