

# ARMYHISTORY

Winter 2019

PB 20-19-1 (No. 110) Washington, D.C.

## IN THIS ISSUE

The Center of Military History  
and Army Staff Rides  
Innovative Doctrine, Topics,  
and Techniques for the  
Twenty-First Century

By Charles R. Bowery Jr. **6**

The Other Siege  
Developing and Conducting a  
Staff Ride for Yorktown, 1862

By J. Britt McCarley **10**

Staff Riding in the Twenty-First Century  
A Need for Pedagogical Change?

By Christopher S. Stowe,  
Bradford A. Wineman, and Paul D. Gelpi **20**

Nontraditional Staff Rides  
at West Point

By Jason Musteen **28**

Virtual Staff Rides  
Their Benefits and Methodology

By Curtis S. King **36**

NMUSA Feature **44**

U.S. Army Artifact Spotlight **48**



# ARMYHISTORY

The Professional Bulletin of Army History

By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

MARK A. MILEY  
General, United States Army  
Chief of Staff

Official:

KATHLEEN S. MILLER  
Administrative Assistant to the  
Secretary of the Army

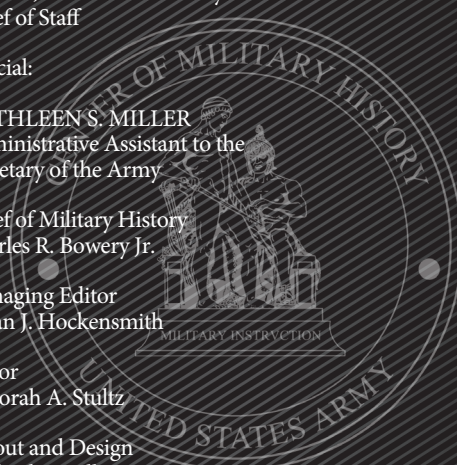
Chief of Military History  
Charles R. Bowery Jr.

Managing Editor  
Bryan J. Hockensmith

Editor  
Deborah A. Stultz

Layout and Design  
Michael R. Gill

Cartographer  
Matthew T. Boan



The U.S. Army Center of Military History publishes *Army History* (ISSN 1546-5330) quarterly for the professional development of Army historians and as Army educational and training literature. The bulletin is available at no cost to interested Army officers, non-commissioned officers, soldiers, and civilian employees, as well as to individuals and offices that directly support Army historical work or Army educational and training programs.

Correspondence, including requests to be added to the distribution of free copies or to submit articles, should be addressed to Managing Editor, Army History, U.S. Army Center of Military History, 102 Fourth Ave., Fort Lesley J. McNair, DC 20319-5060, or sent by e-mail to [usarmy.mcnair.cmh.mbx.army-history@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.mcnair.cmh.mbx.army-history@mail.mil).

Those individuals and institutions that do not qualify for free copies may opt for paid subscriptions from the U.S. Government Publishing Office. The cost of a subscription is \$20 per year. Order by title and enter List ID as ARHIS. To order online, go to <http://bookstore.gpo.gov>. To order by phone, call toll free 866-512-1800, or in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, 202-512-1800; by fax, 202-512-2104; or by e-mail, [contactcenter@gpo.gov](mailto:contactcenter@gpo.gov). Send mail orders to U.S. Government Publishing Office, P.O. Box 979050, St. Louis, MO 63197-9000.

The opinions expressed in *Army History* are those of the authors, not the Department of Defense or its constituent elements. The bulletin's contents do not necessarily reflect official Army positions and do not supersede information in other official Army publications or Army regulations. The bulletin is approved for official dissemination of material to keep the Army knowledgeable of developments in Army history and to enhance professional development. The Department of the Army approved the use of funds for printing this publication on 7 September 1983.

The reproduction of images not obtained from federal sources is prohibited.

Issue Cover: A class from Fort Rucker studies the battlefield terrain at Horseshoe Bend National Military Park in Alabama during the Battle of Horseshoe Bend staff ride in September 2017 /National Park Service

## EDITOR'S JOURNAL

This Winter 2019 edition of *Army History* is a little different from our usual fare. Thirty years ago, this publication, then known as *The Army Historian*, published an issue (Fall 1988, no. 12) comprised almost completely of articles concerning staff rides. The cover article was authored by then-Army Chief of Staff General Carl E. Vuono—signifying the staff ride's importance as a component in the Army's military education programs. Much more than a simple battlefield tour, these in-depth examinations of historical military engagements have been one of the Army's primary leadership and professional development tools for over a hundred years. Three decades later, we have decided it was time for another focused issue to examine what has changed in how staff rides are conducted and presented. We are pleased to offer contributions from a wide range of sources such as the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH), the Army Command and General Staff College, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the Army Training and Doctrine Command, and the Command and Staff College of the Marine Corps University. We hope that these articles will not only help solidify the historical staff ride's place in twenty-first century military education, but will also introduce readers to some of what's changed in the last thirty years and how new technologies can improve this tried-and-tested means of professional development.

This issue also presents a construction update on an interesting component of the National Museum of the U.S. Army, a sneak preview of a upcoming publication about the Army's collection of World War I artifacts, and, as always, an interesting crop of book reviews covering topics like Civil War battlefield guides, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the war in Iraq. Finally, our chief historian provides an update on the initiation of contracts for historians who will author some of the volumes in CMH's forthcoming series on Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM.

On a personal note, this is my thirtieth issue as managing editor of *Army History*. I wanted to take this opportunity to say what an honor and privilege it has been to shepherd this publication through the last eight years. I look forward to many more years of presenting quality issues with thought-provoking content.

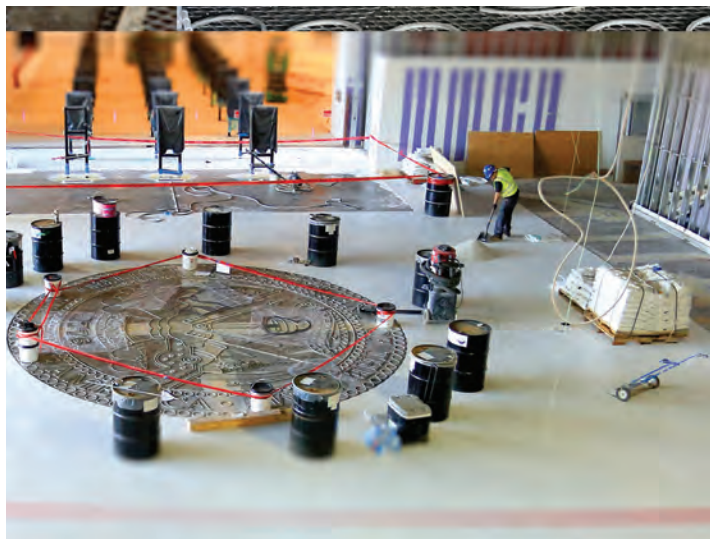
As always, I invite your constructive comments and submissions at [usarmy.mcnair.cmh.mbx.army-history@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.mcnair.cmh.mbx.army-history@mail.mil).

Bryan J. Hockensmith  
Managing Editor





WINTER 2019



6

## THE CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY AND ARMY STAFF RIDES

INNOVATIVE DOCTRINE, TOPICS, AND TECHNIQUES FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

By CHARLES R. BOWERY JR.



10

## THE OTHER SIEGE

DEVELOPING AND CONDUCTING A STAFF RIDE FOR YORKTOWN, 1862

By J. BRITT MCCARLEY



20

## STAFF RIDING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

A NEED FOR PEDAGOGICAL CHANGE?

By CHRISTOPHER S. STOWE, BRADFORD A. WINEMAN, AND PAUL D. GELPI



28

## NONTRADITIONAL STAFF RIDES AT WEST POINT

By JASON MUSTEEN



## Features

4 News Notes

44 NMUSA Feature

48 U.S. Army Artifact Spotlight

52 Book Reviews

63 Chief Historian's Footnote

36

## VIRTUAL STAFF RIDES

THEIR BENEFITS AND METHODOLOGY

By CURTIS S. KING



# NEWSNOTES

## NEW BOOK FROM THE JOINT HISTORY OFFICE

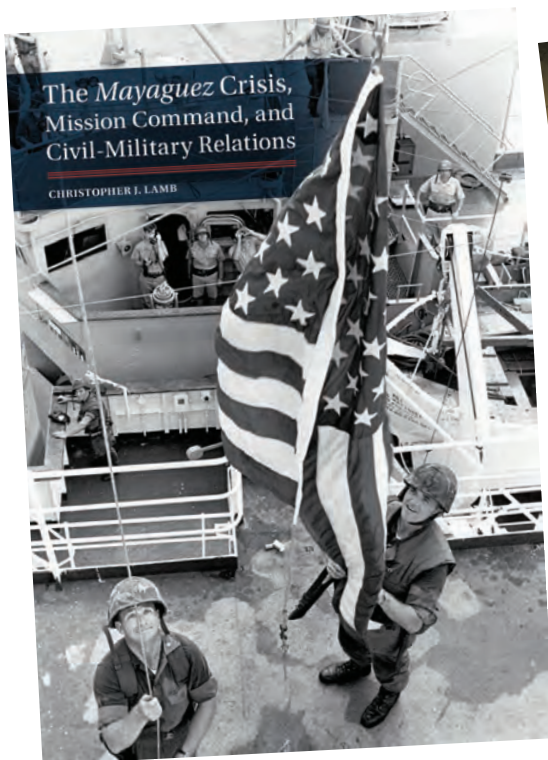
The Joint History Office recently published a new title, *The Mayaguez Crisis, Mission Command, and Civil-Military Relations* by Christopher J. Lamb. President Gerald R. Ford's 1975 decision to use force after the Cambodians seized the SS *Mayaguez* merchant ship is one of the best documented but least understood crises in U.S. history. America's behavior is still explained as a rescue mission, a defense of freedom of the seas, an exercise in realpolitik, a gambit to enhance Ford's domestic political fortunes, and a national spasm of violence over frustrations from losing the war in Vietnam. Widespread

confusion about what happened and why contributes to perplexing explanations for U.S. behavior.

With previously unused sources and penetrating analysis, Lamb's *The Mayaguez Crisis, Mission Command, and Civil-Military Relations* demonstrates how three decades of scholarship mischaracterized U.S. motives and why the common allegation of civilian micro-management during the crisis is wrong. This work extracts lessons for current issues such as mission-command philosophy, civil-military relations, and national security reform. Hardcover copies are available for purchase from the Government Publishing Office, and a free digital version can be found at <http://www.jcs.mil/About/Joint-Staff-History>.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS FROM CMH

The Center of Military History (CMH) is pleased to announce the publication of two new titles in its U.S. Army Campaigns of World War I series. The first of these, *Supporting Allied Offensives: 8 August–11 November 1918* by Paul B. Cora and Alexander A. Falbo-Wild, covers the American Expeditionary Forces' (AEF) participation in Allied actions in various sectors of the Western Front in the final months of the war. As increasing numbers of U.S. troops landed in France in late 1917 and early 1918, AEF commander General John J. Pershing initially resisted French and British efforts to amalgamate fresh American forces directly into







From left to right: Maj. Gen. Russell L. Furan (Ret.), Adrian Traas, Lt. Gen. Todd T. Semanite, Cmd. Sgt. Maj. Bradley J. Houston

the depleted Entente armies. However, the crisis of the German Spring Offensives that began in March 1918 forced Pershing to moderate his hard-line stance on amalgamation, and he allowed American units to participate in combat operations as part of Allied forces for the remainder of the war.

The second pamphlet, *Meuse-Argonne: 26 September–11 November 1918* by Richard S. Faulkner, examines AEF participation in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive—the most vital American military contribution to the Allied effort during the war. On 26 September 1918, the American First Army launched a massive attack between the Argonne Forest and the Meuse River northwest of the French town of Verdun. The narrative of this volume spans the forty-seven days of the AEF's key role in the Grand Allied Offensive on the Western Front, designed to stretch the German Army past its breaking point. From the outset, the inexperienced Americans faced a determined enemy on daunting terrain,

with both natural and manmade fortifications that would challenge the First Army's ambitious operational plan. Although heavy casualties, troop exhaustion, and tangled logistics slowed the AEF's initial momentum, the doughboys capitalized on the strength of their manpower and firepower, as well as their newfound combat experience, to press forward and turn the Germans out of their defenses.

These booklets have been issued as CMH Pub 77–6 and CMH Pub 77–8, respectively. Both pamphlets will be available for requisition by Army units through their normal channels, for download on the CMH Web site, and for purchase by the general public from the U.S. Government Publishing Office.

### CMH HISTORIAN AWARDED THE DE FLEURY MEDAL

At a recent meeting in Crystal City, Virginia, the Army Engineer Association awarded the de Fleury medal to

former CMH historian and retired Army lieutenant colonel Adrian G. Traas for his outstanding contributions to the Engineer Regiment as an engineer officer. The de Fleury Medal is awarded to individuals who display outstanding leadership, dedication, and a commitment to excellence that epitomizes the spirit of Army Engineers. Traas' professionalism, technical and tactical competence, and unmatched work ethic are in keeping with the finest traditions of military service and reflect great credit up on him and the Engineer Regiment. He is the author of *Engineers at War*, which CMH published in 2010. It covers Army Engineers during the Vietnam War. For more information please see CMH's online publication catalog, <https://history.army.mil/catalog/pubs/91/91-14.html>.





# THE CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY AND ARMY STAFF RIDES



INNOVATIVE DOCTRINE, TOPICS, AND TECHNIQUES FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



*By Charles R. Bowery Jr.*





CMH Historian David E. Hilkert conducts a staff ride of the Battle of First Bull Run for members of the Headquarters Command Battalion from Joint Base Myer–Henderson Hall.

In October 1988, General Carl E. Vuono, then chief of staff of the U.S. Army, authored the lead article in *The Army Historian*, the predecessor of this magazine. The Center of Military History (CMH) devoted the entire issue to staff rides, and General Vuono wrote eloquently about the value and power of staff riding as an educational experience for soldiers. Vuono noted in his article that “history puts today’s decisions in perspective against those of past commanders,” and that the study of military history “infuses with living immediacy the matrix of tactics, logistics, command, terrain, and technology.” When properly prepared and facilitated, the staff ride is a unique venue to accelerate that immediacy by, again in the words of General Vuono, “narrowing the gap between peacetime training and war.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1988, the U.S. Army was reaching the height of its post-Vietnam recovery. The recovery process had technological components in the “Big Five” weapons systems, but, equally as important, were the doctrinal, educational, and cultural changes. My predecessor in 1988, Brig. Gen. William A. Stofft, had coedited *America’s First Battles* (Lawrence, Kans., 1986) two years earlier. That same year, the Army War College published the first of its landmark series of staff-ride guides

for Civil War battles. This intellectual ferment pushed staff riding back into the Army’s training and education mindset, and there it has remained.

Thirty years on from the Army’s intellectual renaissance, innovative approaches to staff-ride doctrine, techniques, and topics expand the reach of this timeless educational and training opportunity. As our Army’s institutional efforts focus on building readiness and developing the future force, staff rides offer a low-cost, high-yield way to develop resilient, thoughtful, and tactically and technically sound soldiers and civilians. Properly organized and facilitated, a staff ride creates a matchless environment for the development of historical mindedness in the participants. Since publishing William Glenn Robertson’s *The Staff Ride* in 1987, CMH has embraced the development of staff-ride doctrine as part of its proponent responsibilities for the Army Historical Program.

Today, it is time to reconsider the staff ride in light of the need for new doctrine, expanded topic areas, and twenty-first century techniques. Smart application of these innovations will ensure that the U.S. Army continues to leverage, as the Foreword to Robertson’s pamphlet put it, this “unique and persuasive method of conveying the lessons of the past to the present-

day Army leadership for current application.”<sup>2</sup>

As it is presently constructed in CMH Pub 70–21, the Robertson pamphlet, a doctrinal staff ride is a phased event consisting of preliminary classroom analysis of the subject (a battle or campaign), extensive field study on the ground, and systematic integration of lessons learned after the field visit. The field-research phase traditionally focuses on a campaign, battle, or engagement within a battle, as a case study in the ride’s objectives. The participants frequently assume the roles of historical actors, and brief other students on their character’s actions at various points. The staff-ride leader is the facilitator of this interaction. Robertson clearly distinguishes a staff ride from other types of educational excursions involving historical events or military doctrine, such as a Tactical Exercise Without Troops or a simple guided tour.

The staff-ride doctrine, combined with the foundational goal of staff riding: “to place students on an actual piece of terrain, confront them with an operational situation, and stimulate them to reach conclusions or derive lessons from the experience,” is the Army’s current staff-ride framework.<sup>3</sup> It is time to expand this framework.





Hilkert discusses the fighting at McPherson's Ridge during a Battle of Gettysburg staff ride conducted for Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets from the University of Michigan.

The first step in this process will be a new Army staff-ride doctrine. Over the next year, CMH will revise and reissue *The Staff Ride*. The new pamphlet will be published in hard copy, but an ePub version will also be available, in order to expand the tools available for staff-ride planners and facilitators. The ePub version will be particularly valuable, as it will incorporate moving

maps, video of staff-ride techniques, and presentations of artifacts, primary sources, art, and World Wide Web links to resources both within and outside the Army.

The levels of war offer numerous opportunities to leverage staff riding outside the traditional focus of campaigns and battles. The Department of History at the U.S. Military Academy

has been an innovator in this area. They conduct nontraditional staff rides such as Cold War and Holocaust rides in Eastern Europe, a World War I staff ride in France that sees war through the lens of literature, and a modern Asia staff ride that examines the geopolitics in that area.

Over the past year, CMH has expanded its repertoire as well. Our staff rides traditionally have focused on northern Virginia Civil War battles and the Lincoln assassination. These rides are easily tailored to different audiences, offering discussion topics such as conflict termination, military justice, civil-military relations, and unconventional warfare. For example, the Lincoln assassination staff ride begins in northwest Washington, D.C., at the Surratt Boarding House, where the conspirators planned the attack. It then proceeds to Ford's Theater and then crosses the street to Petersen House. After an optional trip to the Surratt Tavern in Charles County, Maryland, the ride concludes at Fort McNair, in the restored courtroom where a military commission tried and convicted the conspirators. Historians from CMH have conducted this ride for diverse groups such as the Office of the Judge Advocate General of the Army and several non-Department of Defense federal agencies.



Hilkert discusses the escape of several of the conspirators during a Lincoln Assassination staff ride. This stop during the staff ride takes place near the tennis courts (background) on Fort Lesley J. McNair, the former site of the gallows, where four of the conspirators met their end.





Officers and civilian employees from the Army Judge Advocate General's office assemble outside the entrance to Ford's Theatre as part of the Lincoln Assassination staff ride.

The new CMH Pub 70-21 will expand the traditional boundaries of staff riding to incorporate a variety of techniques beyond the battlefield case study, while still reinforcing the value of the time-tested original. A guided Socratic discussion, where participants comment on specific topics without character briefings, might outwardly resemble a portion of a guided tour, but it is an educational experience in its own right when properly prepared and facilitated. This discussion may be the best option for a group that has limited time or little interest in detailed, character-based preparation or comprehensive preliminary study. The U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College is an advocate of the Operational Decision Game (ODG), in which participants use the historical conditions of the campaign, battle, or event to arrive at strategic, operational, or tactical decisions that are independent of those historical events. The ODG is particularly effective for staff rides involving operational or tactical-level staff. The Virtual Staff Ride (VSR), pioneered by the Army Command and General

Staff College, leverages technology to take participants to historical venues that may be inaccessible—such as to eastern Afghanistan and the 2008 Battle of Wanat, or to World War II-era Stalingrad. The VSR could be valuable in a Professional Military Education setting, where VSR content can be nested with specific learning objectives.

The primary value of staff riding is that it deepens participants' intellectual foundations in their duty position or occupational specialty. Subject-matter expertise in the historical events being studied is often beside the point, and may even detract from true learning. There are a variety of paths leading to this intellectual growth; a military history staff ride is one of these paths. Through effective engagement with historical events both on and off the battlefield, using techniques tailored to participants, and supported by updated doctrine, the staff ride will continue to be an effective, low-cost tool for military training and education.

**Charles R. Bowery Jr.**, a retired Army colonel, is the executive director of the

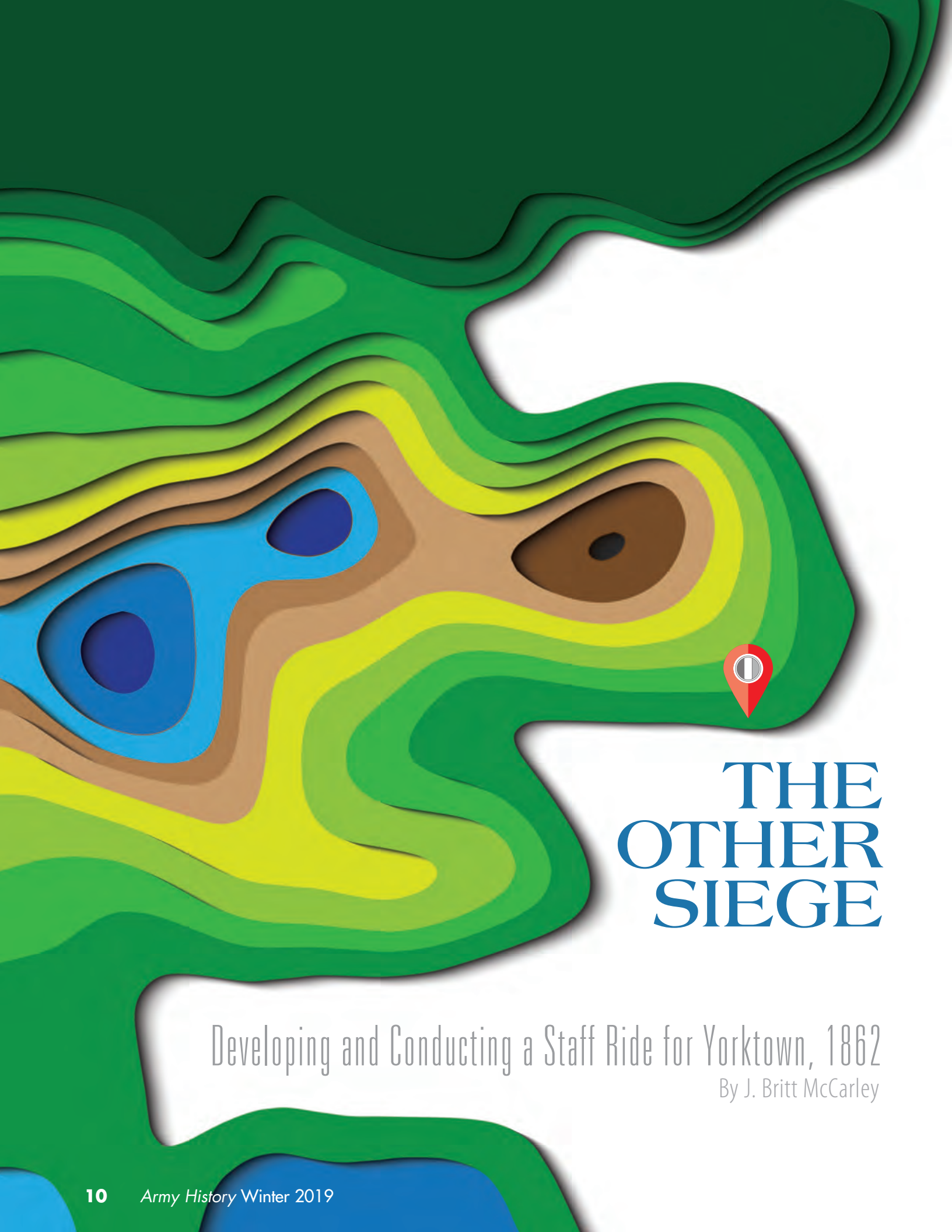
U.S. Army Center of Military History. He is a former military history instructor at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, and a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth. He served as an Apache helicopter pilot in Iraq, and commanded an attack helicopter battalion in Afghanistan. He is the coauthor of *Lee and Grant: Profiles in Leadership from the Battlefields of Virginia* (New York, 2004).



## NOTES

1. Carl E. Vuono, "The Staff Ride: Training for Warfighting," *Army Historian* 12 (October 1988): 1-2.
2. William G. Robertson, *The Staff Ride* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1987), p. v.
3. Ibid., p. 4.





# THE OTHER SIEGE

Developing and Conducting a Staff Ride for Yorktown, 1862

By J. Britt McCarley



The U.S. Army began to use historical staff rides in the formal leader development of soldiers about 1906–1907. After decades of episodic success in developing and conducting additional curricular rides, the Army finally institutionalized the staff ride as pedagogy in its service schools by the mid-1980s. Since then, the Army has used a straightforward, three-part, doctrinal staff-ride methodology—preliminary study phase, field study phase, and integration phase. This method inculcates deep understanding of the profession of arms and of the military art and science in both the practitioners and participants of the staff ride. As a result, the staff ride has become a fixture of post-school professional development for units and staffs. Today, practically all Army organizations use the staff ride also as a team-building event and to strengthen esprit de corps.

During the preliminary study phase, staff riders use a broad range of historical sources to thoroughly examine the battle or campaign and the critical locations they will later visit; then they go to those places in the field study phase to evaluate soldiers' decisions and actions on the very ground where they occurred. Finally, in the integration phase, they draw logical parallels and make cogent connections between the historical events and related elements of today's Army profession.<sup>1</sup>

## BACKGROUND

As chief historian of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and director of its Military History and Heritage Program, I have the great privilege of overseeing, in most of the Army's service schools, the program that teaches the staff ride to students as a form of leader development. Historians from TRADOC, assisted by its museum professionals, work with commanders, commandants, and their teams to conduct staff rides as one type of professional development. Since TRADOC's establishment in 1973, our headquarters (HQ) has been located at Fort Monroe, Virginia (1973–2011), and now at nearby Fort Eustis. In that time, the HQ's Military History and Heri-

tage Office (MHHO) historians have conducted hundreds of professional-development staff rides for units and even occasional leader-development staff rides for Army schools, such as the U.S. Army Logistics University at Fort Lee, Virginia, aimed at field grade officers and senior level civilians. For many years, our go-to staff ride has been the internationally significant 1781 Siege of Yorktown, Virginia. The location is managed today as the Yorktown Battlefield unit of the National Park Service's (NPS) Colonial National Historical Park. Yorktown is where, in October 1781, the Americans and their French allies defeated the British and their German auxiliaries in one of the Revolutionary War's last engagements. The victory soon led to peace negotiations and eventually to the 1783 Treaty of Paris recognizing the United States as an independent nation.

When the MHHO moved to Fort Eustis in summer 2011 as part of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure process, we found ourselves on an Army installation containing remnants of numerous Confederate earthworks from the American Civil War's 1862 Richmond Campaign. This move opened a door of opportunity to develop a staff ride covering the 1862 Siege of Yorktown, the Virginia Peninsula's "other siege," which is relatively unknown by comparison.

We began building this new staff ride in November 2011, when the Fort Eustis archaeologist showed us practically all the rebel fieldworks on post. Because the federal government bought the land that is now Fort Eustis in 1918 as part of the World War I mobilization effort, the Civil War forts, trenches, redoubts, and batteries within the installation went largely untouched over the years. However, some have suffered foundation damage from tree growth and some have been harmed by foot traffic, such as one located too near a recreational riverside beach.<sup>2</sup> As we read the primary and secondary sources on the 1862 siege, we extended our fieldwork to portions of parks in Newport News, Virginia, and the Yorktown Battlefield, both of which have miles of earthworks associated with the later siege. Many have survived along interpretive trails and even seemingly

being abandoned deep in the woods. After extensive study, we conducted our first staff ride of the 1862 Siege of Yorktown in 2012 and continue to do so. With each ride we further refine our use of historical sources and the historic ground itself. The rest of this article will first summarize the siege for context, and then it will take the reader, location by location, through this newest staff ride, ending with some of the insights we use to connect the historic event to today's Army.

## THE SIEGE

In July 1861, the Battle of First Bull Run, the Civil War's initial large-scale engagement occurred near Manassas, Virginia, about twenty-five miles outside Washington, D.C. Several months after the battle, President Abraham Lincoln appointed Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan to command the Union's nascent Army of the Potomac, which was being formed to protect the U.S. capital. Remaining in the Manassas area were the victorious Confederate forces that

General McClellan





would soon form the nucleus of the Army of Northern Virginia. It would be under the command of General Joseph E. Johnston, formerly the Quartermaster General of the U.S. Army. During the winter of 1861–1862, the Lincoln administration pressured McClellan to take the Army of the Potomac to the field, defeat the Confederates under Johnston, capture the rebel capital at Richmond, Virginia, about 100 miles to the south, and hopefully end the war. Claiming unpreparedness of the forces under his command, McClellan delayed starting the campaign until late March 1862. During the winter, Lincoln and McClellan debated the best route to Richmond—overland past Fredericksburg or overwater and overland via the Chesapeake Bay. The general eventually chose the latter route by way of the Virginia Peninsula.

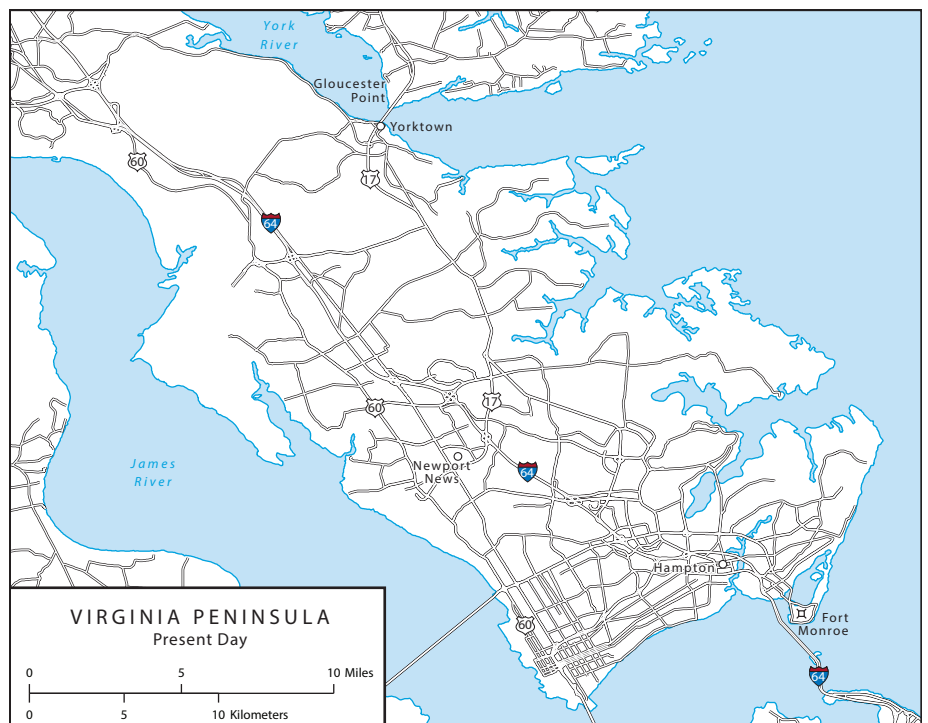
After arriving by ship in the Fort Monroe area on 2 April, McClellan marched straightaway on 4 April. The bulk of his Army of the Potomac trooped northwest along two parallel roads toward Yorktown and Williamsburg, the latter about halfway along the seventy-five miles to Richmond. Because McClellan's maneuver scheme had been developed from a map incorrectly depicting local geography, his infantry columns collided unexpectedly on 5 April with Confederate Maj. Gen. John B. Magruder's Army of the Peninsula behind its main line of resistance along the course of the Warwick River. For the next month, the Army of the Potomac reconnoitered the rebel lines looking for positional advantage, fought a reconnaissance-in-force on 16 April at a point of presumed weakness, and constructed numerous, massive earthworks near Yorktown. McClellan intended to use them to employ about 100 siege-caliber artillery pieces—first to blow a gaping hole in the enemy line near the Warwick River's headwaters, and then to conduct a general assault through the breach to potentially fight the campaign's decisive battle. Throughout that same month, the Confederates reinforced Magruder's troops with Johnston's army to the point where, despite arriving Northern reinforcements, the force ratio had



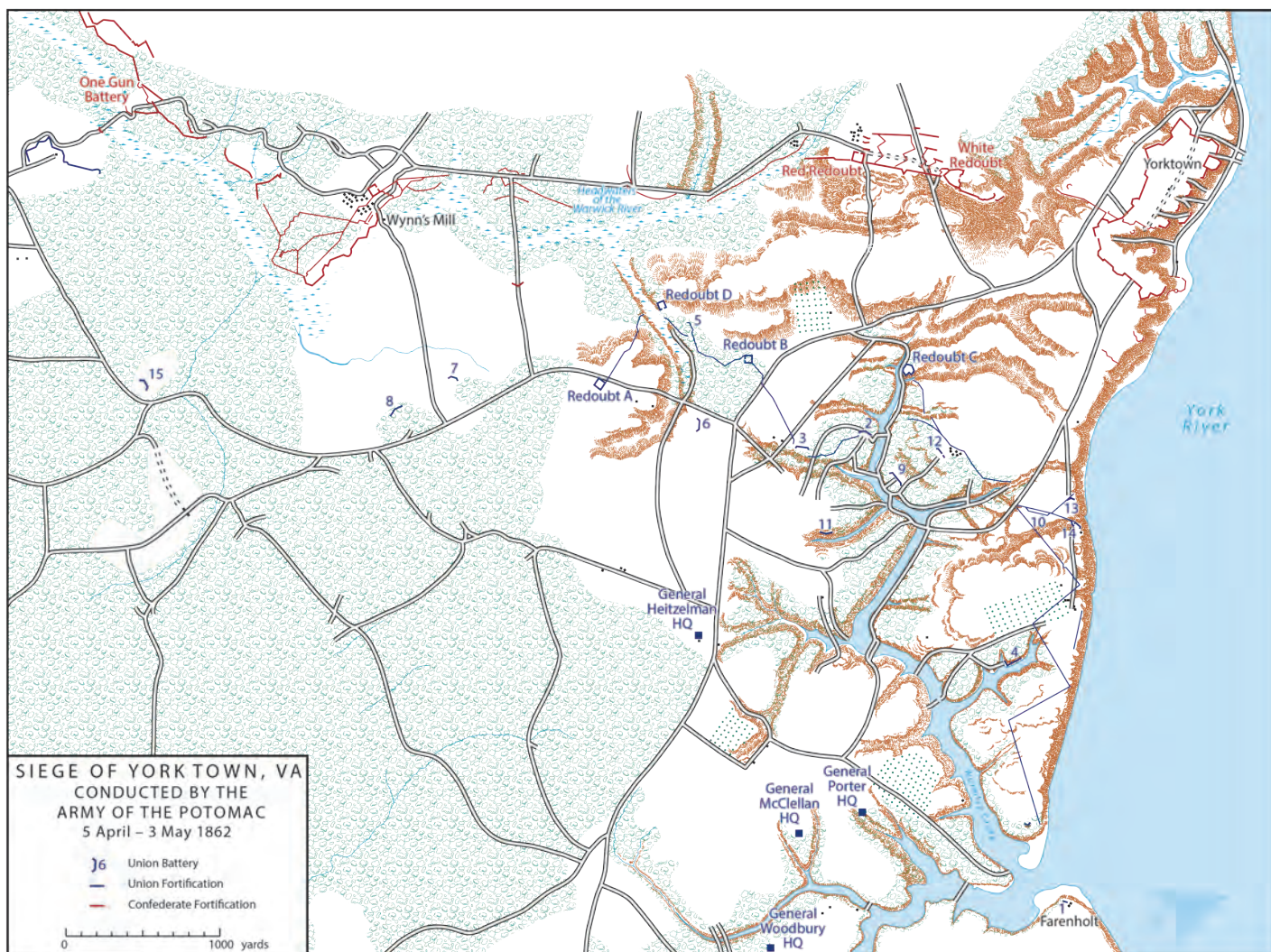
General Johnston



General Magruder







been reduced from the initial robust Union four-to-one to a scant two-to-one. Not wanting to receive a massive bombardment and then fight an open-field engagement, Johnston withdrew toward Williamsburg and ultimately to Richmond on the night of 3–4 May 1862, thus ending the Civil War’s Siege of Yorktown.<sup>3</sup>

## THE STAFF RIDE

After the preliminary study phase, each location visited for discussion and analysis during the field-study phase is called a stand, a proper staff ride term derived from the early twentieth-century U.S. Army practice of conducting staff rides on horseback. Along the way, participants would dismount and “stand” on the ground to consider the significance of any given place. The MHHO’s 1862 Siege of Yorktown staff ride routinely includes nine stands.

At all staff-ride locations, we adhere to the standard analytical framework developed by the U.S. Army Combat Studies Institute—of orientation (to the place), description (of leaders’ decisions and soldiers’ actions), and analysis (in comparison to elements of the military art and science and aspects of the profession of arms). Known by the abbreviation ODA, this framework allows staff ride participants to engage in logical and purposeful exchanges with each other.

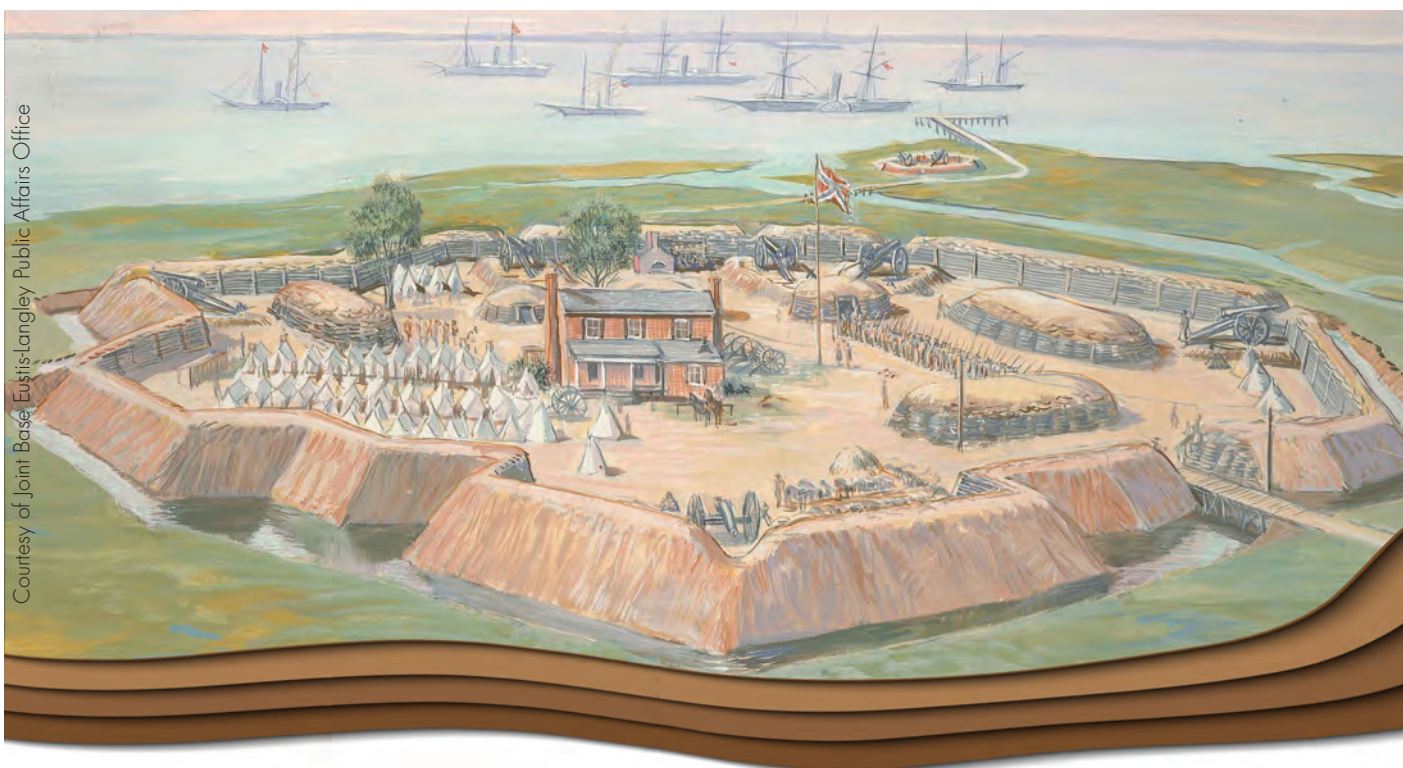
Located along the western shoreline of Mulberry Island overlooking the James River is Stand 1. Mulberry Island, which is actually a peninsula, forms most of the Army’s Fort Eustis portion of today’s Joint Base Langley-Eustis. Stand 1 serves to connect the ride’s preliminary study phase to the field study phase. It sets the siege in proper strategic and operational context, and ensures that the participants

fully understand that Virginia’s James River was a major avenue of approach to Richmond. Thus, it was an area that Confederate naval vessels and fortifications had to deny to the U.S. Navy.

Stand 2 is the massive eight-acre Fort Crafford, which the rebels built as a covering work early in 1862. It was to prevent the Union Army from laying siege to the nearby Mulberry Island Point Battery that the Confederate Navy manned and armed. It worked in conjunction with other neighboring riverside forts to create a corridor of fire along a narrow section of the James River to keep the Union Navy from sailing inland toward Richmond.

The final Fort Eustis location is Stand 3, which is the Minor Farm Line. As the name indicates, the Minor family owned the farm on which Magruder’s troops built a line of still largely pristine redoubts and connecting curtain trenches. These were to prevent any





Courtesy of Joint Base Eustis-Langley Public Affairs Office

A painting of Fort Crawford by Sidney E. King

Union amphibious force that might land on Mulberry Island from advancing along the road dividing the island in half—thus gaining access to the rear area of the main Confederate Warwick River Line.

At this point, the staff ride leaves Fort Eustis, preferably by the Shellabarger Gate, which connects to a bridge over the Warwick River at a point where

the waterway downstream gives way to tidal flats upstream near its head of navigation. Because the river is the peninsula's primary terrain obstacle behind which the Southerners contested McClellan's advance to Richmond, seeing the waterway early in the staff ride forms a useful image in participants' minds and facilitates the rest of the ride. The next two stands are in

parks managed by the City of Newport News with numerous, well-interpreted historical placards produced by the city's historian.

Adjacent to Fort Eustis and overlooking the Warwick River is Stand 4, the Lee's Mill Redoubt, named after the tide mill there in 1862. Nearby, elements of the Army of the Potomac first encountered the enemy on 5

One of the best preserved redoubts from the Minor Farm Line, showing an angle, the dry ditch, and the sally port (middle-left of the photo), which provided access to the gun platforms within the work.







The Dam No. 1 battlefield straddles the city of Newport News's Lee Hall Reservoir (in the middle distance) and contains such interpretive resources as historical waysides, trails, and monuments; remaining Confederate earthworks are in the woods beyond the footbridge that crosses the reservoir.

April. Torrential downpours inhibited McClellan's use of the region's two primary roads: the Great Warwick Road and the York-Hampton Highway. The Union Army employed both as its principal avenues of advance westward. After observing the sheer size of the redoubt, the staff riders review and analyze numerous written communications between politicians

and generals of both sides. These communications led McClellan to adopt siege warfare as his method and led to Magruder's decision to stand and fight from behind strong, but still incomplete, earthworks instead of withdrawing west toward Richmond.

Stand 5 is the site of the so-called Battle of Dam No. 1 on 16 April 1862. It occupies several acres of land within

Newport News Park and lies astride the city's principal freshwater reservoir, which is the dammed Warwick River. By the campaign's start, Magruder had overseen construction of three military dams to supplement two civilian ones connected to mills, thus turning the Warwick into a highly effective, wide, shallow obstacle to maneuver. Union reconnaissance on 6 April identified

Along one of the walkways (foreground) to the Revolutionary War's Surrender Field (visible through the trees on the right) is Union Battery No. 6 (tree-covered mound on the left), which was to hold siege-caliber mortars for McClellan's intended bombardment of the Confederate earthworks protecting Yorktown.







Author's Photo

Today's George P. Coleman Memorial Bridge spans the York River where it narrows. Confederate guns on both banks denied the river as an avenue of approach to Richmond.

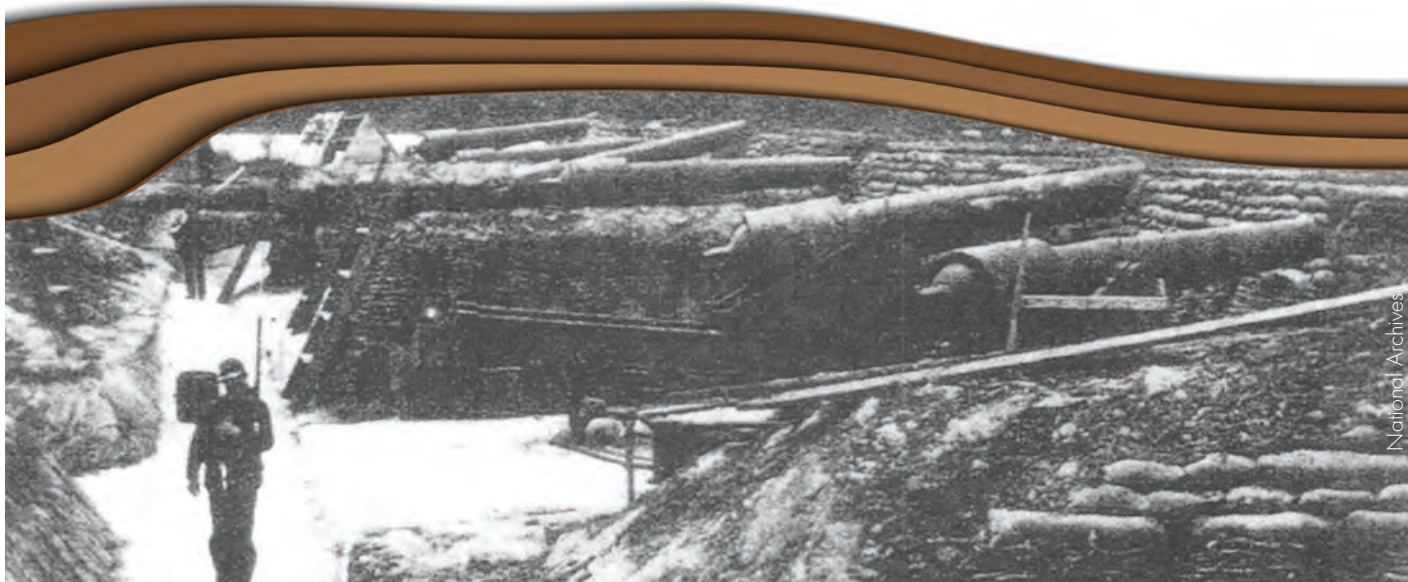
the area around Confederate Dam No. 1 as a weak point and possibly vulnerable to a Union frontal attack. Ten days later, McClellan reluctantly agreed to a limited reconnaissance-in-force, which he directed not to develop into a general engagement. Throughout 16 April, Union infantry and artillery scouted, probed, and attacked. On one occasion, a handful of companies of a Vermont infantry regiment crossed the flooded Warwick and seized a short section of curtain trench near several dug-in Confederate field artillery pieces. Magruder's overall defensive

arrangement devoted minimal force to digging and improving earthworks, while holding the bulk of his infantry to the rear to repel any Union attempts to penetrate the line. His plan worked to perfection on that day, as Confederate regiments and whole brigades massed on the relatively few Union soldiers clinging to their shallow penetration of a forward infantry line. The engagement ended in Union retreat, after they sustained about twice as many casualties as the Confederates. McClellan was now unshakably committed to a siege culminating in massive bombardment

and general assault through a breach in the enemy lines much closer to Yorktown. Stand 5's site contains numerous monuments, placards, trails, and fortifications on both sides of the reservoir, perfect for lengthy and productive discussion and analysis.

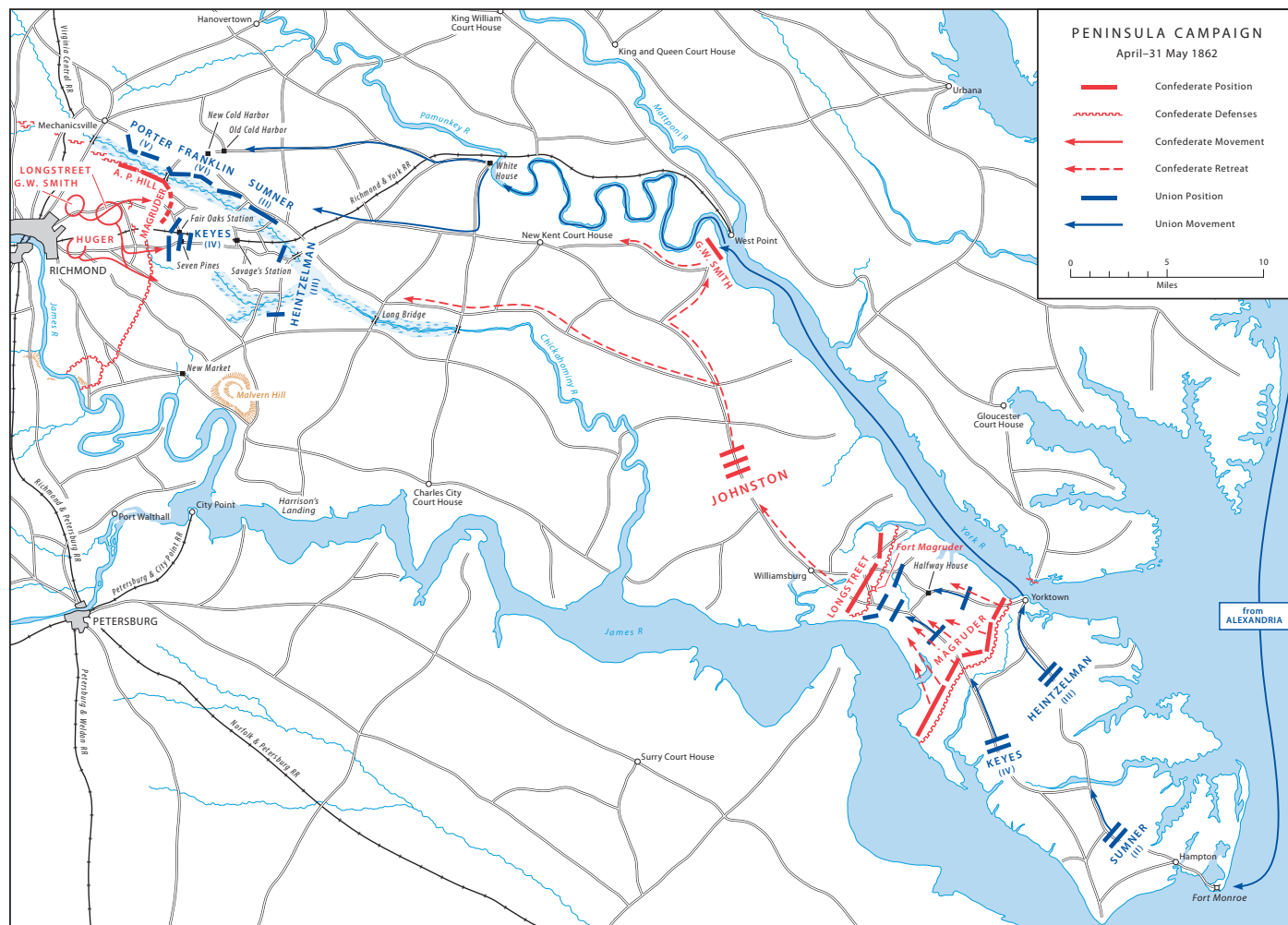
The next three stands are in the NPS's Yorktown Battlefield and are barely distinguishable from the 1781 siege locations, which themselves are, by federal enabling legislation, the Colonial National Historical Park's primary interpretive focus. Right along the York-Hampton Highway, which was

These siege-caliber Parrott rifles in Union Battery No. 1 on the south bank of the York River, at the mouth of Wormley Creek, fired 141 rounds into the Yorktown waterfront and convinced Confederate General Johnston to retreat toward Richmond.



National Archives





one of McClellan's avenues of advance along the peninsula in early April, is Surrender Field, where the British and Germans laid down their arms to conclude the Revolutionary War siege. Along a walkway to a pavilion overlooking Surrender Field is Stand 6, Union Battery No. 6 from 1862. One of fifteen numbered batteries and four lettered redoubts that the Army of the Potomac built to hold and protect Union artillery, No. 6 was to contain siege-caliber mortars to contribute to the massive Union bombardment planned for 5 May. The shelling was to be aimed at the nearby dry-ground interval between the Warwick River's headwaters and the neighboring draws that converge to form tidal Yorktown Creek. This battery location is an opportune place to discuss how McClellan intended to use firepower to give his army an advantage in fighting possibly the war's decisive battle to preserve the Union and its location very near York-

town—ironically also the scene of the decisive last large engagement of the American Revolutionary War.

Branching off the York-Hampton Highway, opposite the Yorktown National Cemetery that contains dead from the 1862 Richmond Campaign, is Goosley Road, which currently runs on a centuries-old roadbed and largely bisects the pivotal dry-ground interval. At this point is Stand 7, where, well into the siege, the Confederates completed the White and Red Redoubts to cover surrounding key terrain. Stopping here, at the NPS's road entrance to a 1781 site, to consider the importance of the ground in 1862, is optional. However, driving through the area gives staff-ride groups a feel for its proximity to the greatest concentration of nearby Union siege batteries completed by the time Johnston opted for retreat to the west.

Stand 8 can be reached from the NPS Visitor Center parking lot. Even today,

Yorktown is mostly covered on three sides by immense rebel earthworks which were constructed essentially on the trace of the 1781 British works. The NPS interprets the fortifications chiefly from a Revolutionary War perspective, but Civil War photographs reveal that what remains now is mainly from 1861–1862. Through a large gap in the earthworks near the Visitor Center is the undulating plain upon which most of the 1781 siege occurred. Much of the eastern face of Yorktown's immediate 1862 defenses is visible from here as well. It was these numerous large-caliber rebel guns that McClellan intended to avoid directly attacking by using methodical siege tactics. Also, constant sharpshooter (i.e., sniper) activity, long a characterization of sieges, was especially evident in this area.

Stand 9 is on the York River waterfront in a park jointly administered by York County and the NPS. Arriving there after driving through the vil-



Author's Photo

The author (left) and an HQ TRADOC staff section after concluding the integration phase of an 1862 Siege of Yorktown Staff Ride. The phase took place on the York River's south bank between its narrows and the location of Union Battery No. 1 (along the far shoreline visible on the left).

lage of Yorktown gives the staff-ride group a chance to see how war, occupation, and historic preservation have essentially prevented the town from evolving much further than a leftover (but still beautiful) colonial Virginia tobacco seaport. Standing on the south bank of the river, the end of the siege can be discussed and analyzed. Visible is the George P. Coleman Memorial Bridge, which spans a half-mile over a narrowing of the York River. Yorktown itself is in plain view. In the opposite direction, the location downriver where Union Battery No. 1 was built near the base of a modern red-and-white-striped condensation tower can also be seen. On 1 May, 100 and 200-pound Parrott rifles from that battery opened fire on Yorktown's wharves and quickly stopped all boat traffic in and out of the town from upriver. Johnston concluded that when McClellan finished preparing all his siege batteries, the Army of Northern Virginia, which had arrived in force and absorbed Magruder's Army of the Peninsula, would soon receive a massive artillery bombardment and a general infantry assault that could decisively conclude the siege. Predictably, on the night of 3–4 May, one day before McClel-

lan was to begin his mighty shelling, Johnston withdrew his army—eventually all the way to Richmond—where the campaign ended in a week of battles in summer 1862. While leaving Yorktown, the Confederate Army emplaced “torpedoes,” which today we would know as Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and they caused some casualties as Union troops began to occupy the town. McClellan responded emotionally and controversially when he forced Confederate prisoners of war to find and remove the remaining booby traps.

On the riverbank, the staff ride ends with the integration phase. It most often includes consideration of the tactical and law-of-land-warfare implications of IEDs and their earlier “torpedo” counterparts; the operational results of the delay caused by the month-long siege on the rest of the Richmond Campaign; and the strategic effects of the siege on the Lincoln administration's eventual issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation in part to undermine the South's economy and morale.

The integration phase can conclude with more specific ties to today's Army. For example, senior leaders, especially general officers and civilian

executives, can benefit from a closer examination of Generals McClellan, Magruder, and Johnston and how they—as army-level commanders—handled the challenges facing them on the Virginia Peninsula in 1862. This element of study addresses one of the staff ride's enduring strengths, that is, examination of the human dimension of war. Though Magruder is the least well known of the trio and his Civil War reputation is generally poor, he emerged from this Yorktown episode as an unexpected and notable, albeit brief, success.

Moreover, the U.S. Army's recent focus on Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) includes such considerations as a return to Large-Scale Combat Operations (LSCO) and the continuing importance of Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) activities. Yorktown in 1862 incorporated land, sea, and air (observation balloons) operations; it was the largest campaign of the Civil War in terms of total troop commitment; and the Confederate navy and army's efforts to deny Union forces access to the James and York Rivers as avenues of advance and lines of communication fit the A2/AD profile. At that time, no element of the Confederate military performed better A2/



AD-like duties than the CSS *Virginia* ironclad, a kind of wonder weapon which kept the U.S. Navy and its ironclad, the USS *Monitor*, from using the James River during the siege. It denied the Union Army access to Mulberry Island and Richmond and thus focused McClellan's campaign on the Virginia Peninsula and the adjoining York River for lack of better alternatives.

The reliable principles of war, lately increased from a traditional nine to twelve and long a staple of Army officers' precommissioning education,<sup>4</sup> can always serve as a basic analytical framework for practically any staff-ride effort. Also, the daily violence, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA, in current doctrinal parlance) of the 1862 Siege of Yorktown shed light on VUCA as a constant factor in war. Finally, although Yorktown in 1862 did not include a large, set-piece battle, like Gettysburg or Antietam did, its nontraditional character as a doctrinally incomplete semisiege and the dispersed nature of its hallowed ground nonetheless offer relevant insights into the timeless universals of the military art and science.<sup>5</sup>

**Dr. J. Britt McCarley** holds a Ph.D. in history from Temple University. After working for the National Park Service, he came to the Army Historical Program in 1988 and is now the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) chief historian and the TRADOC Military History and Heritage Program director.



## NOTES

1. The U.S. Army codified its staff-ride doctrine in the late 1980s with William G. Robertson, *The Staff Ride* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1987, revised 2014). Robertson chronicled his efforts to reestablish the staff ride in the curriculum of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in William G. Robertson, "The Staff Ride

Returns to Leavenworth," *The Army Historian* 2 (Winter 1984): 5–6. The U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) published its own staff-ride guide in the mid-1990s: Marine Corps University, *Staff Ride Handbook* (Quantico, Va.: Marine Corps University, 1996). The USMC handbook also includes a section on battle analysis methodology, which is a critical-thinking methodology that has long been a feature of officer education at Army service schools. In standard Army practice, mastering battle analysis methodology enables learning and implementing staff-ride methodology in a process of progressive and sequential instruction for company-grade Army officers. The Army's early efforts to devise and use what we call the staff ride today, which also included simultaneous activity at the U.S. Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pa., are well related and analyzed in: Carol Reardon, *Soldiers and Scholars: The U.S. Army and the Uses of Military History, 1865–1920* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), pp. 34, 47–48, 50–66. In 1988, CMH devoted an entire issue of its professional bulletin for Army historians to the staff ride: *The Army Historian* 12 (October 1988). Two articles that address the pedagogy of using Civil War battlefields as, in effect, outdoor classrooms for soldiers are: Ethan S. Rafuse, "How to Teach a Civil War Battle," *Organization of American Historians Magazine of History* 27, no. 2 (2013): 17–22; and Christian B. Keller and Ethan S. Rafuse, "The Civil War Battlefield Staff Ride in the Twenty-first Century," *Civil War History* 62, no. 2 (2016): 201–13. The venerated American Battlefield Trust devoted most of the summer 2018 edition of its quarterly publication to how and why the American military visits and studies historic battlefields: *Hallowed Ground* 19, no. 2 (June 2018). Finally, one can explore the variety of staff-ride endeavors both inside and outside the military by simply googling "staff ride." Applications of the essential methodology are numerous and often creative.

2. Pete Regan, *Bound in a Brilliant Tide: The History of Mulberry Island, Virginia* (Fort Eustis, Va.: Cultural Resources Management Office, n.d.), pp. 32–34.

3. By far the most inclusive and overall best history of the 1862 Richmond Campaign is Stephen W. Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond: The Peninsula Campaign* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1992), especially pp. 1–62. The only recent book-length study of the 1862 Siege of Yorktown is John V. Quarstein and J. Michael Moore, *Yorktown's Civil War Siege: Drums Along the Warwick*, Civil War Sesquicentennial Series (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2012). During the Civil War sesquicentennial, CMH published eighteen pamphlets on the war's U.S. Army campaigns, including the following which incorporates the 1862 Richmond Campaign: Christopher L. Kolakowski, *The Virginia Campaigns, March–August 1862*, The U.S. Army Campaigns of the Civil War (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2016), pp. 26–49. A little known, but well-executed monograph on Mulberry

Island's Civil War fortifications is Emma-Jo L. Davis, *Mulberry Island and the Civil War, April 1861–May 1862* (Fort Eustis, Va.: Fort Eustis Historical and Archaeological Association, 1968). A staff ride—like guide to the 1862 Richmond Campaign's battlefields is Brian K. Burton, *The Peninsula and Seven Days: A Battlefield Guide* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), especially pp. 1–25, 38–46. A recent conference paper on the "Cram Map controversy," which involved basing McClellan's scheme of maneuver for the opening march of the campaign on a faulty map of the Peninsula's geography, is J. Britt McCarley, "For Want of an Accurate Map Was an 'American Waterloo' Lost? Geography as an Underappreciated Element in the 1862 Siege of Yorktown," Society for Military History Annual Meeting, Louisville, Kentucky, April 2018.

4. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3–0, 17 Jan 2017, pp. I-2, A-1–A-4, accessed 9 October 2018, [http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3\\_0\\_20170117.pdf](http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_0_20170117.pdf).

5. One aspect of the staff ride that is routinely poorly executed, or in too many cases simply omitted, is the concluding integration phase, which provides the enduring relevance of the ride by connecting it to such professional interests as doctrine, training, and operations. Often, through poor time management during the field study phase, the staff ride will reach its natural culmination before integration of the Army's current concerns occurs. Therefore, this article makes it a point to address several recent doctrinal and operational developments that connect directly to today's Army profession. In keeping with the U.S. Army's current three-layered approach to writing doctrine, the trio of Army Doctrine Publication 3–0 *Operations*, Army Doctrine Reference Publication 3–0 *Operations*, and Field Manual 3–0 *Operations* are all replete with specialized terms and doctrinal frameworks that are ideal for analysis during staff rides. They should be used with care and discretion so as not to commit presentism and thus distort the past to fit today's needs. Like all Army Historical Program offices, the TRADOC MHHO conducts oral history interviews with the command's senior uniformed and civilian leaders, including biannual sessions with each Command General (CG) of TRADOC. Two recent CGs, General (Ret.) Robert W. Cone and General (Ret.) David G. Perkins, provided information during their oral history sessions on the Army's recent doctrinal shift toward MDO, LSCO, and A2/AD as concerns with near-peer and peer competitor conflict have increased lately. And last, the venerable principles of war have a history, which is explored in two studies: Maj. John I. Alger, *The Origins and Adaptations of the Principles of War* (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1975); and John I. Alger, *The Quest for Victory: The History of the Principles of War* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982).



# STAFF RIDING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

A NEED FOR PEDAGOGICAL CHANGE?

BY CHRISTOPHER S. STOWE, BRADFORD A. WINEMAN, AND PAUL D. GELPI





Courtesy of Col. Christopher Zavatz

American and international military officers and senior enlisted personnel employ the Socratic-dialogue approach during a staff ride at Cedar Mountain Battlefield, Virginia.

For over a century, the historical staff ride has been lauded as an effective teaching tool for military professionals to refine decision-making and critical-thinking skills. Many, if not all, staff rides conducted currently by Professional Military Education (PME) institutions adhere to one of two methodological approaches: the character-driven (or role-player) ride or those adopting a traditional Socratic-dialogue method. Each has its devotees within the PME establishment and each offers distinct returns in its approach.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, since the dawn of the twenty-first century, criticism of staff riding has emerged to challenge the exercise's utility. This article briefly examines the historical context for staff rides, analyzes prevalent approaches to modern rides, identifies common deficiencies in their methodologies and, most importantly, emphasizes an alternate way to execute future rides. It encourages military schools to return to the intellectual spirit of staff riding as informed by the Clausewitzian concept of "reenactment," as a means to better execute the PME mission to

develop critical thinkers and creative problem solvers.<sup>2</sup> It maintains that decision game-driven staff rides are the most effective way to develop and refine skills invaluable to the twenty-first century military and civilian national-security professional. Decision game-driven staff rides offer a unique learning experience that encourages students to gain constructive leadership experience within a framework that inspires critical thinking and the creative spirit.

To varying degrees over the last eighteen years, members of the Ameri-





Courtesy of Cdr. Christopher Zayat

Members of the Battle of Cedar Mountain staff ride discuss the engagement.

can military have extolled the staff ride as a superior exercise for current and future commanders to develop decision-making, leadership, and warfighting skills against the background of historical events. Indeed, the October 1988 issue of *The Army Historian* contained essays from such luminaries as then-Army Chief of Staff General Carl E. Vuono, Brig. Gen. Robert A. Doughty, former head of the Department of Military History at the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, and Brig. Gen. Harold Nelson, onetime Army chief of Military History. They promoted the staff ride as perhaps the finest peacetime learning method “to bring together,” as Vuono wrote, “the realities of war.”<sup>3</sup> In the thirty years since, however, a small number of voices have emerged to question not only staff ride pedagogy, but also the exercise’s worth for the military professional. Maj. Matt Cavanaugh, in an unpublished essay for the USMA Master Teaching Program, asserted that “the . . . Army simply assumes that the . . . staff ride is a valuable edu-

cational tool.”<sup>4</sup> He cites contemporary criticism that modern rides lack a coherent instructional framework based on educational theory, and adhere to an oft cited (but outmoded) Army guide for practitioners—*The Staff Ride* by William G. Robertson.<sup>5</sup> Eugenia C. Kiesling, a West Point Department of History professor, is perhaps more incisive in her reproof. Modern staff rides, she contends, “have . . . shed some of their essential features . . . to become, instead, tours.”<sup>6</sup> In this atmosphere, the staff-ride experience often becomes a vehicle for subject-matter experts (often military historians but not always) to showcase their knowledge to a passive student audience. While still useful as an informational tool, these tours fail to engage students either in exercising their critical thought or refining their decision-making skills. Perhaps worst of all, Kiesling maintains, are subsequent efforts to package the “takeaways” from said experts into scripted publications—to be used by any military member tasked with leading a staff

ride, regardless of audience, intent, or level of student preparation.

The use of decision games as a means to educate American military professionals dates to the beginning of the twentieth century, when the U.S. Army first adopted Prussian and German-inspired instruction methods, including the staff ride, for its officer training. Initial American staff rides emphasized history-driven approaches to instruction, with officers from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, engaging in lively debate while on Civil War battlefields. During the discussion process, students reflected on such abiding military issues as command and control, logistics, morale, and medical care, mainly through the examination of the decisions of prominent Union and Confederate leaders. The use of decision game-type exercises, however, was not unusual during the earliest iterations of staff riding. Additionally, they played a fundamental role within the Army War College’s map exercises and war games that preceded some, if not all, of



its staff-ride efforts. In these classroom sessions, faculty presented students with detailed planning scenarios drawn from past events that often deviated significantly from the historical narrative in important ways. These scenarios, whether adhering to history or not, forced officers to consider carefully the organizational factors, time-space concerns, and intelligence variables that are so vital to effective military planning.

The War College's games were akin to those in the Prussian Grand General Staff's *Moltke's Tactical Problems from 1858 to 1882*.<sup>7</sup> Students, using the games assigned them, would present their courses of action (COA) to faculty, who graded the submitted product in both form and content. The absence of a single solution, however, marked a difference between *Moltke's Tactical Problems* (fifty-five of its sixty-six games have a selected solution) and these nascent map exercises and war games. This distinction was an important one. A key component built in to prevent an overreliance on history as a guide and, moreover, as a means to avoid ex post facto decision making, was the omission of the names of historical commanders when the students engaged in problem framing, developing COA, and writing orders. In doing so, these exercises—and decision games played on the battlefield—fostered critical thinking and refined decision-making skills. The intent of these exercises was not to mimic the decisions of past leaders or produce the “correct” solution. The controlling principle was to encourage the students to consider complex military problems independently of historical influences.<sup>8</sup>

Staff riding in the modern era reflects both similarities to, and clear differences from, its late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century antecedents. Most current military rides conducted by PME institutions across the services adhere to one of two distinct methodological approaches: the character-driven (or role-player) ride and the Socratic dialogue method. Each has its devotees within the military-education establishment.

The character-driven ride immerses its participants in a historical campaign by allowing staff riders to as-

sume the persona of a major military or civilian actor. This approach enables an individual staff rider to become a limited subject-matter expert for their character. With fellow role players of equal preparation, this style facilitates a rich and triangulated discussion among riders, their peers, and ride facilitators. This method, when performed well, often generates meaningful takeaways for its participants. After preliminary reading, field study (the execution of the ride itself), and integration (or “reflection”) sessions, students better appreciate the inherent complexities of leadership, command and control, and operations, regardless of time and place.<sup>9</sup>

Of course there are drawbacks to the character-driven method. Most apparent is its focus on historical personalities that, in turn, can de-emphasize discussion of such military variables such as the principles of war, the component parts of military planning and decision-making processes (e.g., the Military Decision-Making Process; the Marine Corps Planning Process), and the use of military ways and means to achieve political ends. Indeed, such a methodology may encourage individual students to prepare their persona without addressing adequately the strategic, operational, and tactical contexts that shape a battle or campaign, preventing the holistic understanding that a staff ride should impart on its participants. Likewise, if a student's character is one whose contributions were of passing consequence during a campaign, or one who became a casualty during the operation, then the student may become disengaged from the staff-ride process after their character becomes less relevant. Yet the principal disadvantage of the role-playing approach is a tendency among its participants to engage in group recitations of the campaign's narrative—through the eyes of its major players. It fails to encourage them to embrace, without the shackles of hindsight, their own creative- and critical-thinking skills in the solution of real-world, if historical, scenarios.<sup>10</sup>

The Socratic-discussion method mitigates some weaknesses of the character-driven method, but per-

petuates others. An obvious strength of Socratic dialogue is that it solicits engagement among the entire group rather than targeting single participants to summarize the actions of selected characters. This flexible methodology can, if conducted skillfully by students and facilitators, enable the group to conduct the ride in true seminar-learning fashion. It often opens up discussion threads—warfighting functions, maneuver warfare, elements of national power, and civil-military relations in wartime are four examples—that may not be explored fully in a character-driven staff ride.<sup>11</sup> A Socratic-dialogue staff ride, nevertheless, may devolve, like its character-driven counterpart, into a discussion of the decisions made during an action at the expense of fostering genuine creative thinking among its participants. Most importantly, the Socratic process can, as any discussion facilitator has discovered, become less productive if students intellectually detach or lack adequate preliminary study. Well-prepared and highly motivated leaders and participants are essential prerequisites to execute a wide-ranging, Socratic dialogue within the staff-ride construct.

The Marine Corps University's Command and Staff College (CSC), in revisiting and refining both Prussian and American pedagogical methods, has made decision games an important component of its staff rides. At CSC, staff rides fall under the Leadership Department, which conducts two rides—Chancellorsville and Gettysburg—as part of its curriculum each academic year. While these are historic battles and could fall under the College's War Studies (military history) curriculum, the CSC has placed them instead in the Leadership Department because their purpose is to serve as an exercise for students to develop their decision-making and critical-thinking skills in an historical warfighting context. The entire CSC curriculum focuses on critical thinking and the operational level of war; its students will graduate and eventually move on to battalion-level command or to positions on higher-level staffs as planners. The CSC endeavors



The staff-ride group during an operational decision game—scenario atop Henry House Hill, Manassas National Battlefield Park, Virginia

for its students to focus on why key decisions were made during these campaigns and how these decisions are tied to the strategic aims and intent of their higher commands.

A critical feature is the execution of the staff ride itself. The CSC has recently shaped its staff rides better to reflect the model perfected primarily by Carl von Clausewitz. This model is captured by historian Jon Sumida in *Decoding Clausewitz: A New Approach to On War*. Clausewitz, according to Sumida, encouraged his readers to put themselves in the mind of the decision maker at a critical point in a campaign and walk through why a decision was made, without the prejudice of what occurred historically. Clausewitz termed this intellectual process “reenactment” and asserted that it was the key to developing an understanding not only of command, but also of war itself; it is not for students to judge historical leadership in an operation, but to develop their own solutions to problems given the same knowledge as the historical leader.<sup>12</sup>

The CSC adheres to the Clausewitzian concept of reenactment and implores its students to forswear the historical decision and the events that followed. Instead, it attempts to find key decision points where a commander had to make a strategic or operational-level choice. The student will take the exercise from there. Here is an example of a Strategic Decision Game (SDG) from the 1781 Yorktown, Virginia, campaign:

#### New York City

YOU ARE THE COMMANDING GENERAL, BRITISH FORCES IN AMERICA. It is late October 1781. You have just now learned that your principal offensive force in the southern colonies, numbering over 7,000 men, has surrendered at Yorktown, Virginia, to a coalition force under the leadership of the insurgency’s military commander. On the day of the surrender, you

dispatched reinforcements numbering 5,000 men and a relief fleet to extricate your embattled southern command. Its mission has, with the news of surrender becoming known, been overcome by events. You maintain robust military and naval forces in New York which, when combined with scattered combat power in Nova Scotia, South Carolina, and Georgia, number between 26,000–30,000 men. Assets in the West Indies, too, would increase forces available in North America. The loss at Yorktown has, however, damaged not only your cherished “southern strategy,” but has delivered a blow to British national policy and prestige. The sitting ministry may become imperiled as a result of this turn of military events, and cries are likely to escalate within Parliament to end operations in North America—which have never been popular





The 2018 U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College elective staff-ride class at the Groveton Monument, Manassas National Battlefield Park

at home and have by now become but a single element in an escalating global conflict against your “traditional” Old World enemies. You are keenly aware of your strategic advantages/disadvantages at this stage of hostilities, and your immediate civilian superior, the Secretary of State for America, has advocated always for a firm stand against the insurgents. Your next move may have momentous consequences for not only your American strategy, but your national military and security strategies as well.

General, what are your orders?

During the staff ride, a selected student receives the scenario, has a few minutes to devise a COA, and briefs the COA to peers. The peer group then critiques the COA for its positives and negatives, a process that stimulates a professional conversation about the factors influencing the decision to

be made. Often, additional students will present alternate COAs and the discussion evolves. Throughout the exercise, the learning objective is not to examine and pass judgment on a decision made over 200 years ago or to produce a single correct answer to a problem. Instead, the learning objective is to understand the variables and considerations that inform decision-making. Decision game-based learning, therefore, demonstrates that each choice has its own immediate consequences and subsequent near- and long-term effects. Above all, as Clausewitz strove to demonstrate, these decisions should generate an appreciation for the difficulty of the decision-making process, particularly when made under the duress of a high-operational tempo and combat.

As part of the CSC elective-course curriculum, the faculty also offers a five-week seminar on staff-ride pedagogy. The principal aim of the elective is to provide CSC students the intellectual and methodological tools to conduct

staff rides for their units after they conclude their studies and return to the operating forces. After conducting seminar-style discussions on the uses and abuses of modern staff rides and a deep secondary-source dive into the 1862 Second Manassas campaign (the historical subject of the staff-ride elective), a cohort of approximately fifteen CSC students conducts an operational-level ride. The campaign, which began with the Battle of Cedar Mountain near Virginia’s Rapidan River on 9 August 1862 and concluded with the engagement at Chantilly, Virginia, on 1 September 1862, has much to offer the modern national-security professional. It was a campaign defined by transformational national policies, consumed by civil-military frictions, and replete with operational challenges involving mass armies. In completing the three phases of the ride, CSC students gain insight into the nuances of leadership under stressful conditions, consider time-space factors in planning and executing deep operations, and ponder the relationships

among ends, ways, and means in war, and other factors. The faculty adviser encourages students to take creative approaches to devise and implement staff ride stops (called stands), allowing them the freedom to employ decision games, in addition to character-driven and Socratic approaches, to facilitate their understanding of the issues and overall learning experience.

By all accounts, the student experience is beneficial. Essential staff-ride-planning variables, such as determining which themes to reinforce throughout the ride, should be resolved prior to the ride's execution. Moreover, each teaching method presents challenges for the seminar students. For the purposes of this essay, we are showcasing operational decision games (ODG) to the exclusion of other methods. Note in the examples provided the multitude of options that can be employed in the decision-game approach. The example below was conceived by a CSC student-officer and executed at the site indicated:

**Rappahannock Station  
(Remington), Virginia**

**YOU ARE THE COMMANDING GENERAL [FEDERAL] ARMY OF VIRGINIA.** You have suffered several defeats to this point at the hands of a rebel force in the region between Washington, D.C., and the secessionists' declared capital of Richmond, Virginia. Using terrain, you achieve interior lines to consolidate and regroup. On 20 August 1862, nearly your entire force is consolidated north of the Rappahannock River.

You determine that several of your recent setbacks are due to your lack of knowledge of enemy intent/actions. You have prioritized logistical efforts to improve your army's cavalry sustainment, and requisite supplies were received and distributed from Rappahannock Station to your cavalry units. Organizationally, you have restructured your dispersed cavalry units to create a division consisting of 3X brigades, led by one commander.

You have arrayed your army at critical Rappahannock River ford sites (Kelly's, Beverly's, and Freeman's) and are defending the south side of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad bridge at Rappahannock Station with an infantry brigade (-) and two artillery batteries. Your principal defensive lines, however, consist of two corps (+) and massed artillery extending along the north bank of the Rappahannock. You have available one infantry corps as a reserve. It is 1400, 21 August 1862, and your cavalry has been resupplied. You summon your newly appointed cavalry commander to your command post.

What are your orders to him?

Importantly, while the bulk of the information contained within the above decision game has a basis in historical fact, a single variable—that of a unified Army of Virginia cavalry division commanded by a single officer—strays from the Second Manassas campaign narrative. This is welcome, even encouraged, to dissuade students from adhering to the historical record in fashioning their response(s) and to encourage their “creative spirit,” as Clausewitz famously wrote, to be “free to roam.”<sup>13</sup>

Another ODG (this one created by CSC civilian faculty) from the 1863 Pennsylvania campaign further illustrates the possibilities available to challenge students when employing history as a learning tool. Notice, again, that a single element—the sending of more robust reinforcements from the Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, Maryland, garrisons to the Federal Army of the Potomac—has strayed from the historical narrative, potentially altering the options available to staff riders as they consider a COA:

**Taneytown, Maryland**

It is 1830, 1 July 1863. **YOU ARE THE COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.** The Commanding Gen-

eral of the U.S. Army has directed you to protect both Washington and Baltimore, as well as operate against the enemy's forces arrayed in Pennsylvania. Your headquarters is in front of defensive positions you have today selected astride Big Pipe Creek, Maryland, with the intent of luring the enemy into battle. This morning your advance corps arrived on your orders at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, some thirteen miles north of your current headquarters, after receiving reports that your cavalry had encountered the enemy there. Although the corps commander informed you of his intent to defend the town—which conformed to the amount of discretion you extended to him in your orders—he was killed almost immediately after he committed his corps. A general with whom you are less familiar commands the force at Gettysburg—now two infantry corps strong—and may not be privy to your latest intent. Consequently, you dispatched one of your most-trusted subordinate officers, a man fully cognizant of your intent, to take temporary command of your forces in Gettysburg and assess the situation. His initial report has just now arrived and you learn from it that two enemy corps pushed your two corps out of Gettysburg. Your forces now hold a prominent height south of the town. Your trusted subordinate claims that the hill is good defensive terrain and that your advance forces have regrouped sufficiently to hold the position if they are reinforced.

Fresh information received at headquarters indicates that the disposition of one enemy corps remains unknown. The enemy's infantry appears to be converging upon Gettysburg but you lack conclusive information to confirm their intent. Additionally, an enemy cavalry division had positioned itself three days earlier between you and the nation's capital, but you now (similarly) lack conclusive intelligence of more recent enemy cavalry dispositions or intent. Your orders from



the commanding general are clear: stay between the enemy and the nation's capital. Only an hour ago, you learned that your request for a "composite corps" of reinforcements from the defenses of Washington and Baltimore has been approved. These forces number some 12,600 men according to the latest army returns. Defending at Big Pipe Creek seems the most feasible, acceptable, and suitable way to ensure you stay between the enemy and the capital while engaging enemy forces. Still, the enemy is miles away from Taneytown. Two of your corps have been hotly engaged at Gettysburg and at least one more corps should arrive in its vicinity before sundown. The "composite corps" cannot be expected to be present in the area of operations for a matter of two to three days. Your subordinate commanders need guidance, as the time has arrived to commit to Gettysburg, Big Pipe Creek, or elsewhere.

General, what are your orders?

Staff rides offer modern military and civilian national-security professionals a useful means to develop their decision-making skills. Staff rides also facilitate the development of the military professional's "5,000-year-old mind"—an event that allows one to learn from the historical experiences of others and to gain a greater professional understanding that can be beneficial in the current operating environment.<sup>14</sup> In doing so, staff rides allow students to gain valuable decision-making and leadership experience within a framework that encourages and promotes critical thinking. They can test their creative spirit in a manner that is not on the job training—with all the attendant consequences of learning while doing in a combat environment. As the historian Jay Luvaas observed, "Obviously history served Napoleon not so much because it provided a model to be slavishly followed, but because it offered ways to capitalize on what others before him had experienced."<sup>15</sup>

Character-driven and Socratic-dialogue staff rides offer valuable learning experiences; however, both kinds—by

their design—tend to emphasize what happened historically. Thus, these staff rides tend to deemphasize the development of decision-making skills and, in their focus on the historical record, discourage students from thinking creatively and critically. In contrast, decision game–driven staff rides develop and refine these invaluable skills.

**Christopher S. Stowe** is professor of military history and war studies at the Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, Quantico, Virginia. He is the author of numerous articles and reviews on nineteenth-century American military history.

**Dr. Bradford A. Wineman** is a professor of military history at the Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University. He is the author of many articles and reviews on American military history.

**Dr. Paul D. Gelpi** is a professor of military history at the Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University. He is the author of numerous reviews and articles in U.S. and military history.



## NOTES

1. Portions of this essay appeared previously in Bradford A. Wineman, Christopher S. Stowe, and Paul D. Gelpi, "The Staff Ride: A Model for the 21st Century," *Marine Corps Gazette* 102, no. 7 (July 2018): 70–75.

2. Jon Tetsuro Sumida, *Decoding Clausewitz: A New Approach to On War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), pp. 177–78.

3. Carl E. Vuono, "The Staff Ride: Training for Warfighting," *The Army Historian* 12 (October 1988): 1–2; Robert A. Doughty, "Studying the Operational Level of War: A Staff Ride to Sedan (1940)," *The Army Historian* 12 (October 1988): 3–6; Harold Nelson, "What the Staff Ride Can Depict: Face of Battle, Clash of Wills and Arms, Generalship, and Cause and Effect," *The Army Historian* no. 12 (1988): 15–17.

4. Matt Cavanaugh, *The Historical Staff Ride, Version 2.0: Educational and Strategic Frameworks*, Center for Teaching Excellence, United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y., 2014, accessed 11 October 2018, [http://www.usma.edu/cfe/literature/cavanaugh\\_14.pdf](http://www.usma.edu/cfe/literature/cavanaugh_14.pdf). Cavanaugh advocates use of the Experiential Learning Model (or ELM) as a means to both conduct staff rides and as a measure of performance/assessment. The ELM is, in

fact, the preferred instructional model at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

5. William G. Robertson, *The Staff Ride* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1987).

6. Eugenia C. Kiesling, "The United States Army's Historical Staff Rides: History and Historiography," *Defence Studies* 5, no. 1 (March 2005): 48–58.

7. *Moltke's Tactical Problems from 1858 to 1882*, ed. The Prussian Grand General Staff, trans. Karl von Donat (London: W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd., 1894).

8. Carol Reardon, *Soldiers and Scholars: The U.S. Army and the Uses of Military History, 1865–1920* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1990), pp. 42–49, 50–56; Carol Reardon, "From Antietam to the Argonne: The Maryland Campaign's Lessons for Future Leaders of the American Expeditionary Force," in *The Antietam Campaign*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 289–315.

9. Christian B. Keller and Ethan S. Rafuse, "The Civil War Battlefield Staff Ride in the Twenty-first Century," *Civil War History* 62, no. 2 (2016): 201–13; Robertson, *The Staff Ride*, pp. 11–18.

10. For a defense of assessing the decisions of historical actors to foster critical-thinking skills, see Keller and Rafuse, "Civil War Battlefield Staff Ride," pp. 207–208.

11. Keller and Rafuse, "Civil War Battlefield Staff Ride," pp. 204–5; Nelson, "What the Staff Ride Can Depict," pp. 15–17; see also Clay Mountcastle, "Gettysburg: The Army's Living Classroom," *Civil War Monitor* 3, no. 2 (2013): 28–29, 92; O. James Lightizer, "Preserved Battlefields as Training Grounds," *Civil War Monitor* 6, no. 3 (2016): 18.

12. Sumida, *Decoding Clausewitz*, pp. 45, 177–78.

13. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 89.

14. In a 20 November 2003 email, General James N. Mattis, United States Marine Corps, observed that "we have been fighting on this planet for 5,000 years and we should take advantage of their experience. 'Winging it' and filling body bags as we sort out what works reminds us of the moral dictates and the cost of competence in our profession." Quotation in Jill S. Russell, "With Rifle and Bibliography: General Mattis on Professional Reading," *Strife* (Blog), 7 May 2013, accessed 15 October 2018, <http://www.strifeblog.org/2013/05/07/with-rifle-and-bibliography-general-mattis-on-professional-reading/>; Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 318.

15. Jay Luvaas, "Military History: Is It Still Practicable?" *Parameters* 25, no. 2 (1995): 91. The 1995 article is a reprint of Luvaas' 1982 *Parameters* article.

# NONTRADITIONAL STAFF RIDES



at  
WEST POINT

By Jason Musteen



**F**or two weeks now we have fought to free ourselves from different things. Some of us have fought for freedom from biases . . . some for freedom from the weight of death that permeates the fields of France, and some for freedom from the fear that we may one day repeat the mistakes of the past.”<sup>1</sup> This is how one West Point cadet struggled with his thoughts at the end of an atypical staff ride, one that spent very little time on tactics and operations, but instead examined culture, strategy, loss, and memory. “I suppose I am fighting all of those battles, but specifically, I am fighting for meaning. I want to understand what all of this means for my own time and my own service. I pray that’s a fight that I never stop fighting.”<sup>2</sup>

The United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point makes extensive use of traditional operational staff rides. Groups of cadets, large and small, conduct several staff rides each year to the battlefields of Gettysburg, Antietam, Saratoga, Normandy, and others, evaluating terrain and operations. The academy tailors each of these studies to the needs of the participants, adjusting the pedagogical approach and specific discussion points, demonstrating the inherent flexibility and versatility of operational staff rides. It is this flexibility that makes staff rides such a valuable tool for commanders and educators. Technology adds to that flexibility and changes our concept of what is possible. Already, three-dimensional simulations and virtual reality (VR) provide a resource-efficient way to see and interact on the terrain, and advancements continue to improve the quality of VR options. Augmented reality is another tool being used to enhance field studies on actual battlefields. Just as emerging technology continues to expand the possibilities and alter our understanding of operational staff rides, we can also adjust this concept through nontraditional staff rides that look beyond operations and tactics and instead look to military culture, strategy, and memory to produce responses like the one shared by the cadet above.

At West Point, the Department of History conducts several nontraditional staff rides each year during



Cadets survey the divided geography of Cold War Germany by following the course of the Berlin Wall by bike

spring break and summer sessions. Supported by generous donors who fund margin-of-excellence educational opportunities through the West Point Association of Graduates, these nontraditional staff rides often focus cadet study at the strategic level of warfare, or they might not even have a primarily military focus, yet they still serve the academic and military education of cadets. They typically require an examination of politics, economics, and society, or sometimes religion, culture, and language. They are interdisciplinary in approach, bringing in aspects of political science, international relations, law, literature, and philosophy. Each one is different according to the selected goals, yet they each serve USMA’s mission “to educate, train and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor,

Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the nation as an officer in the United States Army.”<sup>3</sup>

As an undergraduate university, West Point has several advantages that strengthen these nontraditional staff rides. For example, the academy typically offers summer staff rides as a three-credit history course, which allows the instructors and cadets to conduct a rigorous preliminary study phase that requires participants to read several books and articles. The participants then discuss those reading assignments during classroom sessions, and they augment those readings and discussions with films or perhaps other educational outings. The staff rides usually include eight to fifteen cadets, led by two or three instructors. Many are overseas, but some take place in the United States. All seek to merge academic learning





United States Military Academy

Cadets pose at the Reichstag in Berlin after studying nationalism and historical memory during the Cold War Staff Ride.

and professional military education with leadership and character development. A donor who has supported some of these nontraditional staff rides best summarized their value: “If I can move you physically, I can move you emotionally.”<sup>74</sup> Like with traditional staff rides, it is that stirring of emotions while on-site that becomes the catalyst for learning and development.

These nontraditional staff rides maintain many recognizable elements common to operational staff rides. They all follow the three phase approach of preliminary study, field study, and integration. They include extensive travel and navigation across terrain, which includes an emphasis on the human environment. And they require a broad examination of historical decisions and actions along with a consideration of possible alternatives available at the time. Yet they differ from more traditional staff rides in several ways. They provide broader strategic context within which militaries operate, or they might consider the consequences of warfare. They might even focus on nonmilitary events or

examine various national or regional identities and cultures.

## CONTEXTUALIZING MILITARY OPERATIONS

One purpose of the nontraditional staff ride is understanding the broader strategic context in which soldiers fight. Rather than focusing on the tactical or operational levels of war, these staff rides focus on strategy and tactics. For example, the Department of History annually conducts a Cold War Staff Ride to key arenas in Eastern Europe. After a week of intensive preliminary study, the cadets visit: Berlin, Germany; Vienna, Austria; Prague, Czech Republic; Budapest, Hungary; and Kraków and Warsaw, Poland. They examine the origins, progress, and conclusion of the Cold War. The study helps contextualize strategic thought and decisions across both NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and Warsaw Pact nations. The staff ride offers an expanded notion of the battlefield—one where airlifts, border defense, and espionage defined

the conflict, and the human terrain is as important as the lines on the map indicating where the Iron Curtain fell.

At each location, cadets link historical study to the challenges they will face in their own careers. One particular focus is national identity and an examination of how nations tell their story. In 2018, one cadet recognized that “it is important to understand our allies’ and our enemies’ histories in order to be better equipped to make decisions.”<sup>75</sup> Another theme of the study is the strength of the human spirit and the desire for freedom. After visiting the locations of the Velvet Revolution of 1989 in Prague, another cadet said it had shown him “what people are willing to do for freedom. As an officer, I hope I can encourage my soldiers to do the same.”<sup>76</sup> Such strategic themes also translate down to the personal and individual. “I learned a great deal about traits necessary for good officership,” said one cadet at the end of the staff ride, “including the importance of hope and positive outlooks in the face of adversity.”<sup>77</sup>

## CONSIDERING THE CONSEQUENCES OF WARFARE

Another purpose of nontraditional staff rides is to consider the experiences of combat for soldiers and the consequences of combat for states and nations. As part of the centennial commemoration of World War I, cadets participated in staff rides to the Western Front in 2014, 2016, and 2018. Rather than examining operations, the staff ride served to explore individual and national memory and commemoration of war. Reading poetry, literature, and memoirs written by the soldiers who fought the war, cadets wrestle with loss, grief, and the challenges of company-grade leadership. At one point, the cadets rose before 0400 and occupied a portion of an extant trench line in an unmaintained section of a farmer’s woods near the



Cadets visit Kościusko Mound in Kraków, Poland, to study the historical connections between Poland and the United States, and their influence on the course of the Cold War.

Somme River. Standing just below the century-old parapet, the cadets silently stood at attention for thirty minutes and wordlessly observed the sunrise over no-man's-land. Then they gathered in the quiet and read two poems that each describe a different morning routine on the front—one violent and the other monotonous. After a lengthy discussion of the experiences of lieutenants in the trenches, the cadets walked 200 meters to a small British cemetery where 2d Lt. David Cuthbert Thomas is interred. Thomas had been a friend of the poets Siegfried Sassoon and Robert Graves, and all had served together in the Royal Welch Fusiliers. Standing at Thomas' grave and reading Sassoon's and Graves' recollections of his life and death, the cadets discussed the weight of sacrifice.<sup>8</sup> They also noted the alarming proximity of the living to the dead in World War I. Stand-to-Arms and funerals were both part of a soldier's regular routine, so after burying their friend, the young poets simply turned and walked back to their trench. And so did the cadets.

The officers leading the staff ride offered their own stories of loss—of friends and of their soldiers. This makes the academic personal. As cadets saw their officers struggle with words and memories, they surely began to wonder how they would serve and lead. Most considered, perhaps for the first time, how they might respond to the losses of their soldiers or their friends. They listened intently as an officer described serving as a rear detachment commander and casualty notification officer, visiting families he had come to know and love, and then delivering the news that shattered their world. With discussions moving back and forth from the past to the present, the cadets began to truly understand the gravity of the path they have chosen to pursue, and it humbled them. "I can feel the past, present, and future collide in a way I haven't quite expe-

rienced time before," one cadet said.<sup>9</sup> They ask themselves if they will ever be prepared to lead others, and then they determine that they will strive to be.

In yet another staff ride, cadets blended aspects of a traditional operational study with the greater analysis of an expanded historical context. Trading in their 2018 spring break for the opportunity to conduct a staff ride, cadets visited five states to study American westward expansion and the changes to the ideas of American freedom and opportunity that the frontier helped shape. The staff ride challenged cadets to reflect critically on the causes and consequences of westward expansion and the Army's role in the process. Although the staff ride included a tactical analysis of the Little Bighorn battlefield, the scope and overall goals were much larger. Focusing on the years 1848 to 1909, cadets visited battlefields, museums, cultural sites, and Indian reservations to explore how environment, industries, and culture of the frontier influenced the development of the western United States. The staff ride encouraged cadets to understand how local context influences critical constructs of race, gender, freedom, and opportunity.

Following the Oregon Trail west from Fort Kearney, Nebraska, the staff ride forced cadets to address military and nonmilitary leadership challenges created by continuously living and operating in austere environments. Cadets then considered how those challenges must be confronted within a framework that adheres to Army values, even when service takes them abroad. After studying the traditional American narrative of the West, the cadets then examined some of the same elements of that history from the Lakota perspective with a trip to the Pine Ridge Reservation of the Oglala Sioux in South Dakota. Cadets gained an appreciation of the Lakota historical perspective, the organization and conflicts within Lakota society, the oft-contentious relationship between the tribe and the federal government, and how military service today provides opportunities and challenges for tribe members. Cadets examined the connection between land and religion, seeing for themselves with a visit to Badlands National Park how the environment influences Lakota spirituality. They also considered how narratives of the American West remain ideologically contested by



United States Military Academy



Cadets with Colonel Jason Musteen at the Tyne Cot Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, Belgium

comparing Mount Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Memorial in the Black Hills. All agreed that the intellectual skills they had gained will make them better officers.<sup>10</sup>

## THE IMPORTANCE OF NONMILITARY EVENTS TO MILITARY OPERATIONS

In addition to exploring context and consequences of military operations, some nontraditional staff rides focus on critical nonmilitary events that have shaped the world in which we operate and in which the soldiers serve. Each year, USMA's Department of History teams up with the Department of Law and the Department of English and Philosophy to conduct an American Civil Rights Staff Ride. The staff ride uses immersion to study historical and contemporary issues in American civil rights. In educating cadets to be leaders of character, these nontraditional staff rides use history to help develop an appreciation for the diversity of the American experience, so they will better understand each other and the soldiers they will soon lead. Like with any staff ride, the preliminary study phase is key

to maximizing the understanding of the field study. In advance of the most recent iteration of the staff ride in the summer of 2018, cadets read several books and numerous articles in preparation, and their discussions drew on many contentious current events. They also benefited from guest speakers and seminar discussions, and their staff ride experiences allowed some of them to play leading roles in the dedication of West Point's new cadet barracks, named in honor of USMA graduate and commander of the Tuskegee Airman, General Benjamin O. Davis Jr.

The staff ride moved by rail and van from West Point through the South, with discussions at commemorative sites and critical locations in the fight for civil rights. For example, in Leesburg, Georgia, cadets visited an old stockade where, in 1963, police officers had detained forty-three African American teenage girls for forty-two days for demonstrating in favor of integration. In addition to this sort of environmental analysis, the staff ride incorporated literature, poetry, music, and food to gain a richer appreciation for cultures of the South. Cadets met governors and former governors,

state legislators, attorneys, civil rights leaders, Freedom Riders, author John Grisham, and average Americans living in the shadow of the past and in the reality of strained race relations. The staff ride was far more than a tour of sites; it was a dynamic exchange with participants of the events. While visiting the stockade in Leesburg, the cadets met two sisters who had been held there in 1963 and heard their story. At Tuskegee University in Alabama the cadets struggled with the awful truth of lynching through personal stories and data-based criminal analysis. In Mobile, the cadets met the district attorney who prosecuted the 1981 lynching of Michael Donald. Standing at the tree where it happened helped the cadets appreciate how recently these events occurred, and how their legacy continues to shape America.

Though they dealt with sometimes incomprehensible realities, the cadets quickly grasped the importance and the value of the history they studied. That understanding shaped their thoughts of current topics, as well. For example, in New Orleans, cadets visited Lee Circle, where they saw a tall, yet empty, pedestal. Where a statue of Robert E. Lee recently stood,



they wrestled with another issue from history that defines the present—Confederate memorialization. This issue strikes close to home for cadets, as the Academy has buildings, streets, or awards named for Robert E. Lee and P. G. T. Beauregard, both USMA graduates and former Superintendents of West Point. The staff ride also forced them to consider the role of the U.S. Army, whose obligations have always extended well beyond fighting and winning the nation's wars. On a previous iteration of the staff ride for example, the cadets visited Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas. Among the challenging issues they considered was President Dwight D. Eisenhower's decision to deploy the 101st Airborne Division to enforce integration in opposition to the Arkansas National Guard, which had been called out by Governor Orval Faubus to prevent the entry of nine African American students to the high school.

Col. Ty Seidule, head of the Department of History at West Point, often reminds historians that what they study will change their character. A cadet participant on the Civil Rights Staff Ride confirmed that thought: "I am not sure I can accurately describe the emotion or enlightenment I gained from this trip. What I do know is our intellectual pilgrimage throughout the South changed us for the rest of our lives."<sup>11</sup>

## GEOPOLITICAL AND CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

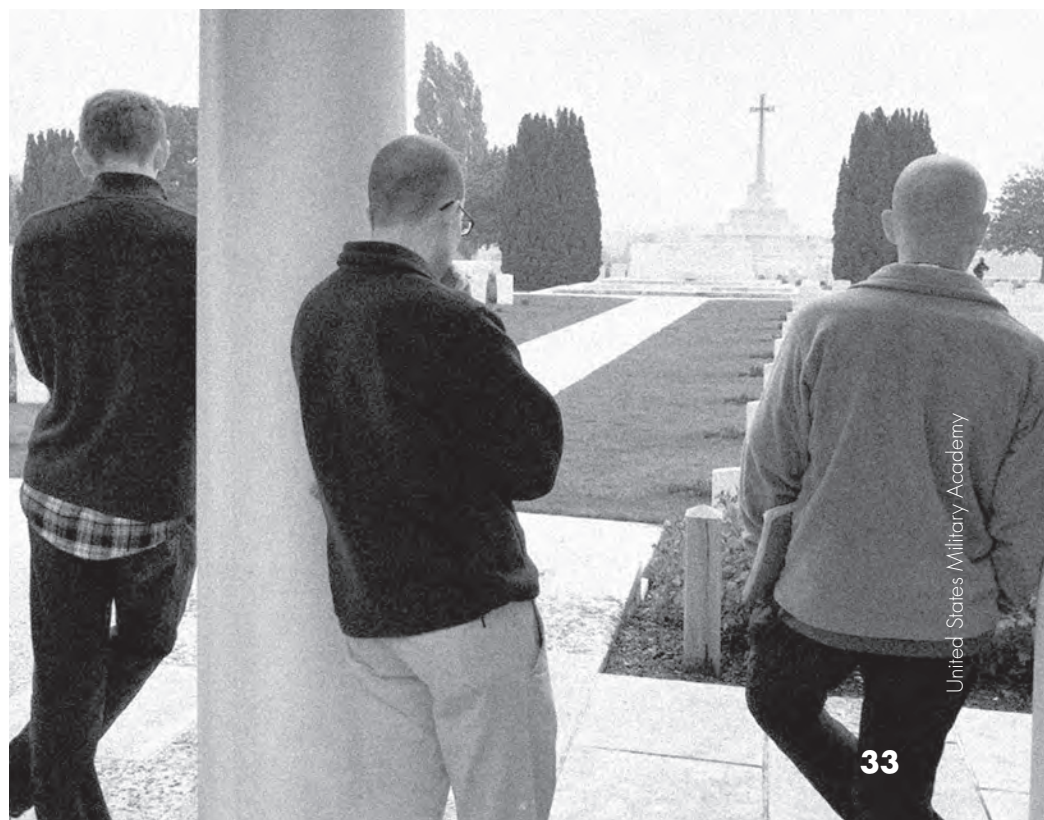
Another purpose of these non-traditional staff rides is to explore geopolitics and understandings of other cultures. The staff rides allow cadets to interact with and think like someone different than themselves, crucial skills for Army officers to develop. Cultural staff rides allow West Point cadets to become more empathetic by immersing them in a foreign culture. The questions and

discussions these staff rides generate are typically broad and far-reaching, requiring the cadets to consider new and different perspectives. This, in turn, often leads them to think more about themselves, their own society, and the intersection of their perspectives with the foreign culture.

A recent staff ride took cadets to Japan to study the evolution of Japanese identity from the Edo period (1603–1867) to the present. Cadets examined the geopolitical position of Japan by exploring Japanese history and contemporary culture. Cadets experienced ancient traditions at Himeji Castle and with a traditional tea ceremony in historic Kyoto. Participants then encountered modern culture, by navigating the Shinkansen bullet trains between metropolitan areas. Studying the key terrain of Tokyo and Osaka, the cadets compared ancient and premodern Japanese identity to current notions of Japanese character. Cadets were surprised to find both continuity—the ancient Japanese warrior culture still present in salarymen—and change—a Japan that defines itself by economic rather than military might. Cadets spoke with average Japanese citizens on a regular basis and often had their own worldviews challenged. One cadet

met two Japanese men who blamed the rise of China on American intervention against Japan during World War II. All the cadets recognized the difference between how the history of the war is told in the United States and how it is told in Japan.

Like with the Civil Rights Staff Ride, cadets were forced to consider how the past shapes contemporary culture and how modern culture shapes competing narratives of the past. Recognizing that paradox, one cadet said that while she "learned so much history, [she] simultaneously experienced Japanese culture in a way that helped [her] understand their perspective of history."<sup>12</sup> Some of the cadets noted how the Japanese cultural and religious practices of honoring one's ancestors have contributed to how we remember World War II. "Does this create a false 'warrior identity?'" one wondered.<sup>13</sup> This question led her to consider the sources of her own identity: "I need to be more open-minded, yet logical, to ensure that as an Army officer, my views and identity are not coming from one side of history."<sup>14</sup> These experiences prompted deep discussions and intellectual growth for these future officers who might one day be forced to operate in culture much different from their own. These experiences are impossible to replicate



Cadets study the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme at Thiepval, France.



United States Military Academy

Cadet Sophia Hein plays “Last Post” in honor of fallen British soldiers at Loos, France

in a textbook and cannot be matched on a traditional staff ride.

In the summer of 2019, the Department of History is planning a similar cultural interdisciplinary staff ride to Washington D.C. and Vietnam. Cadets and officers will study both sides of the normalization of diplomatic relations between the United States and Vietnam in 1995, a highly controversial diplomatic issue with strategic impact in the important region of Southeast Asia. Cadets will interview key actors on both sides of the debate, to include Vietnam veterans, diplomats, and members of the National League of POW/MIA Families and visit the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. In Vietnam, cadets will grapple with how and why relations between the two countries have changed since the 1970s by visiting large corporations, government agencies, and several other locations, and will explore the tradeoffs made during the normalization process. Such an approach will teach cadets critical analysis, how to weigh competing

perspectives, and why the legacy of the Vietnam War remains important even today. The Department of History has repeatedly found that exploring issues like this compels cadets to think deeply about their own decision-making process and how they negotiate complex decisions.

## CONCLUSION

Nontraditional staff rides can pursue many different goals, consistent with William Glenn Robertson’s injunction that a staff ride’s “sole purpose is to further the professional development of U.S. Army leaders.”<sup>15</sup> As an under-

Former Governor of Mississippi William F. Winter at his home in Jackson, discusses memories with cadets.



United States Military Academy



graduate university with generous donor support, West Point has an obvious advantage over other Army units in conducting nontraditional staff rides. However, these types of studies do not have to be the exclusive domain of cadets. At the core of each of these studies are concepts important to all soldiers in all units, such as critical thought, the challenge of leadership, understanding culture and human nature, and character development. With the support of West Point's Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, a recent USMA graduate led his battalion through an innovative nontraditional staff ride he organized in Poland. As the culminating event of a three-month professional leader development program, his staff ride took the battalion's leadership through the Army Regulation 15-6 investigation process using a World War II case study from the German Army in 1941.<sup>16</sup> After studying the historical record of three German company commanders and their different responses to an order to murder Jews, the officers visited the Auschwitz concentration camp. "This was an absolutely life-changing event for me," one of the staff ride

participants said. "I am so thankful for this opportunity and know others in the [battalion] are as well. I will never forget this experience and the lessons I learned throughout."<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, these nontraditional staff rides exercise participants' strategic thought, and would make a great addition to the training and development program of strategic-level staffs. Army culture often privileges tactical experience over strategic thought and assignments. The key to promotion, even into the general officer ranks, and assignment to strategic-level leadership frequently requires a strong tactical pedigree. Although operational staff rides and battlefield studies are of proven value, the Army's senior leaders would benefit from strategic-level nontraditional staff rides, as well. They are particularly well-suited for higher institutions of professional military education and could be incorporated into existing programs.

As the Army continues to prepare soldiers to succeed in a complex world, while acknowledging the uncertainty of the future, leaders across the Army can leverage the proven worth of the nontraditional staff ride to address the types of scenarios and challenges our leaders face.

**Col. Jason Musteen** is chief of the International History Division in the Department of History at the U.S. Military Academy. A combat veteran, he holds master's and doctorate degrees in Modern European History from Florida State University and a degree in Advanced Defense Studies from the French War College. He is the author of *Nelson's Refuge: Gibraltar in the Age of Napoleon* (Annapolis, Md., 2011) and is a contributing author or editor of several other books and series.



## NOTES

1. Staff ride attendee's conversations with author.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Donor conversations with author.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Robert Graves, "Not Dead," in *Fairies and Fusiliers* (London: William Heinemann, 1919), p. 67; Siegfried Sassoon, "A Letter Home" in *War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2004), pp. 44-46.
9. Staff ride attendee's conversations with author.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. William Glenn Robertson, *The Staff Ride* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1987), p. 5.
16. Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Procedures for Administrative Investigations and Boards of Officers*, AR 15-6, 1 April 2016.
17. Evan Kowalski, "16th Special Troops 'Vanguard' Battalion Develops Leaders through Innovative Curriculum, Staff Ride," U.S. Army, posted 21 December 2017, accessed 10 September 2018, [https://www.army.mil/article/198488/16th\\_special\\_troops\\_vanguard\\_battalion\\_develops\\_leaders\\_through\\_innovative\\_curriculum\\_staff Ride](https://www.army.mil/article/198488/16th_special_troops_vanguard_battalion_develops_leaders_through_innovative_curriculum_staff Ride).

Cadets and officers pose after studying the historical roots of contemporary Japanese culture in Tokyo.







U.S. Army Command and General Staff College

# VIRTUAL STAFF RIDES

## THEIR BENEFITS AND METHODOLOGY

BY CURTIS S. KING

Virtual terrain from Operation IRAQI FREEDOM





Virtual terrain showing Battery Wagner

Like traditional staff rides that take place on the actual terrain of a battle, virtual staff rides (VSRs) are powerful instruments for the education of modern military professionals. If done properly, a VSR will allow participants to study a battle or campaign in great depth, thereby gaining insights into warfare that are timeless, yet relevant to current military operations.<sup>1</sup> This article examines the ways in which VSRs bring value to the Army's educational system and the methodology used in conducting a VSR. Through this examination, it will become readily apparent that almost all facets of a VSR are tremendously similar to a staff ride conducted on a battlefield. Before looking at the value and methodology of VSRs, it is important to clarify some terms and provide some background to the development of the virtual ride.

When discussing the VSR, this article is referring to the model used by the Staff Ride Team of the Combat Studies Institute (CSI), Army University Press at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. This is not in any way meant to overlook other techniques of using computer technology to execute or enhance the study of a battle or campaign. That said, the

CSI Staff Ride Team model is based on the principle that a VSR should follow closely the methodology of a traditional staff ride that is conducted on actual battlefield terrain (hereafter referred to as a "ground" staff ride). The U.S. Army's manual for staff rides, *The Staff Ride* by William G. Robertson, was published before the development of VSRs, but its definition of a staff ride applies to both ground and virtual staff rides.

A staff ride consists of systematic preliminary study of a selected campaign, an extensive visit to the actual sites associated with that campaign, and an opportunity to integrate the lessons derived from each. It envisions maximum student involvement before arrival at the site to guarantee thought, analysis, and discussion. A staff ride thus links a historical event, systematic preliminary study, and actual terrain to produce battle analysis in three dimensions. It consists of three distinct phases: preliminary study, field study, and integration.<sup>2</sup>

Like the ground ride, the VSR is based on a three-phase structure, but

unlike its ground counterpart, the VSR uses computer-generated terrain in the field-study phase. Aside from the use of virtual terrain, a VSR follows the methodology of ground staff rides in almost every aspect. However, the difference in terrain does call for some techniques unique to a VSR, which is covered later.

The developmental history of the VSR at Fort Leavenworth provides some interesting context into the purpose and reasons for conducting a VSR. In 2005, the Combined Arms Center (CAC) commander, Lt. Gen. William S. Wallace, directed the CSI Staff Ride Team to develop a VSR based on Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). General Wallace was a strong supporter of ground staff rides, which often dealt with battles from the American Civil War, Revolutionary War, and Indian Wars because of the readily accessible battlefields in the United States. Knowing this, the CAC commander sought to expand the time frames covered by the CSI Staff Ride Team's available rides and urged the creation of new rides that covered more current conflicts such as OIF. Because it would be difficult, expen-

sive, and dangerous to travel to Iraq, an OIF staff ride demanded a way of bringing the terrain to the classroom. After extensive research, the Staff Ride Team contracted for software and a 3-D artist/terrain developer (referred to as a “VSR technician”) that fulfilled the needs of this new type of staff ride. Those needs included the creation of actual terrain and the ability to build in terrain features that might no longer exist (such as destroyed structures) or have changed over time (such as a river that has changed course). Also essential for a VSR was the ability for a participant to move freely within the terrain (unlike many simulations that only allow a limited number of terrain paths). Finally, the software needed to be portable so that the Staff Ride Team could conduct VSRs at sites outside of Fort Leavenworth. With these requirements met, the Staff Ride Team conducted the first VSR in May 2005 as part of a Command and General Staff College (CGSC) elective course on OIF. Soon after, CSI was conducting OIF VSRs for organizations throughout the U.S. Army in addition to its CGSC course.

In 2008, the CSI Staff Ride Team developed its second VSR, this time covering Operation ANACONDA in Afghanistan. As before, this VSR was initially developed to fill the need for a CGSC elective. Not long after, it began to be used throughout the Army as units requested the ride at their home stations. Over time, the team has developed nine additional VSRs. Some of these continue the original intent of covering more recent engagements, such as the Coalition Assault on Fal-lujah, Iraq in 2004 and the Battle of Wanat in Afghanistan in 2008. Others have been developed around older battles to include the German assault on Stalingrad in World War II and the United Nations defense at Chipyong-ni in the Korean War. As of 2018, the demand for VSRs throughout the Army continues to grow, and the Staff Ride Team continues to develop new VSRs while executing numerous rides from its existing catalogue.

When discussing the value of staff rides (ground and virtual), it is useful to start with the goals of studying mili-

tary history in general, as described in the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Regulation, *Military History and Heritage Education Program* (MHHEP). “The goal of MHHEP is to ground soldiers and leaders in military history and heritage so they can use historically-informed critical and creative thinking/reasoning skills as the basis for complex problem-solving and decision-making.”<sup>3</sup> Staff rides support this overarching goal by providing an in-depth examination of a campaign or battle that is enhanced by knowledge of the terrain and is applicable across time. Most military-history instruction looks at broader trends in warfare—vast topics like entire wars; social, political, and economic influences; and organizational/structural histories such as the development of the U.S. Army mechanized forces. The staff ride is different. It focuses on distinct events and allows for participants to hone their critical thinking skills on themes that include the “dynamics of battle, especially those factors which interact to produce victory and defeat,” “the nature of the face of battle, the timeless human dimensions of warfare,” and “case studies in leadership,” both positive and negative.<sup>4</sup>

## BENEFITS

While the value of a VSR has much in common with its ground counterpart, the virtual version has benefits that a ground staff ride lacks. First, there is the ability to create and access terrain that is otherwise difficult or dangerous. Afghanistan and Iraq VSRs are prime examples. Similarly, it allows access to terrain that no longer exists. Two examples that address this challenge are the Battery Wagner VSR and the Battle of Stalingrad VSR. Battery Wagner, part of the Civil War’s Charleston Campaign and made famous in the movie *Glory* (1989), has been destroyed by sea erosion and the island on which it was located has a dramatically changed configuration.

Likewise, the modern city of Volgograd bears little resemblance to the Stalingrad of 1942. The intense firepower brought to bear in the battle de-

stroyed almost all of the city’s original buildings. The VSRs for these battles use virtual terrain that replicates the actual sites at the time of the battle. A second benefit of the VSR is its lower cost; it takes much less funding to have the CSI Team come to a unit’s home station, than to have an entire unit travel to a battlefield site. In particular, many Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) detachments, which often have limited budgets and are often located far from battlefields, choose a VSR to conduct a staff ride.

The VSR’s technology also offers unique benefits. A notable advantage is the capacity to move from stand to stand rapidly. A stand is a location on the terrain where staff riders stop and conduct a discussion that is tied to the site. In a VSR, you can jump from one location to another instantly, or you can “fly” to the next stand either along the roads or directly through the air. This can save hours that would be spent on ground transportation getting from site to site. Another benefit is that participants can get aerial views of the battlefield which cannot be perceived from the ground. These aerial perspectives are excellent for orienting the students. Finally, a VSR can give the view of a battle’s air components. For example, the Operation ANACONDA VSR includes stands that involve U.S. Air Force assets as well U.S. Army aviation elements. In these instances, the VSR technology allows participants to take the perspective of the pilot, the crew, and any ground force being inserted by aircraft.

Considering all these positive aspects, there are, however, some drawbacks to a VSR. Perhaps the greatest weakness of a VSR is that it is usually presented at participants’ home station. This can sometimes lead to students treating it as just another class in the same familiar setting. Ground rides at locations “away from the flagpole” separate students from their daily routine and encourage them to become more immersed in the battle. Participants tend to do more preparation in the preliminary study phase as well as in the field. Instructors must make an extra effort in a VSR to ensure that students prepare, participate, and



try to shed their home station routine for the time that they are on the staff ride. Another potential problem is a well-intentioned desire to put too many students through the field phase at one time. Ground rides and VSRs are best conducted in groups of twenty or fewer people per instructor to allow for group interaction and participation. Occasionally with a VSR, units will treat it as a typical classroom experience and think of the field phase as a traditional lecture with fifty to 100 people in a single session. Not only does this severely limit participation, interaction, and critical thinking, these large audiences often find it difficult to see the nuances in the virtual terrain, no matter how large the projection screen. Even if the numbers are kept low, instructors must work to get the students to interact and make use of the terrain.

## METHODOLOGY

Before delving into the methodology of a VSR, it is useful to explain how the Army University Press generates virtual terrain. The creation process is a collaboration between a VSR technician and a historian. The VSR technician starts by downloading Digital Terrain Elevation Data of the area to be simulated. This data is the “frame” of the topographical information and is the base for the rest of the terrain elements. The technician then adds satellite imagery to the frame, providing a surface for the elevation data. Often the imagery must be manipulated to remove or change surface features, such as roads that did not exist at the time of the battle. The VSR technician then creates models of features that are above the surface—buildings, trees, and bridges, for example—and places them on the terrain, thus creating a 3-D environment.

As mentioned previously, the foundation of the methodology of a VSR is like that of a ground staff ride and based on three phases: preliminary study, field study, and integration. Before examining the way in which a VSR executes in these phases, it is worthwhile to clarify some confusion concerning ground staff rides that ex-

ists in the Army historical community and in the Army at large. The CSI Staff Ride Team follows the Army’s model for staff rides as set forth in the U.S. Army Center of Military History’s publication, *The Staff Ride*. Col. Arthur L. Wagner and Maj. Eben Swift developed the Army’s original concepts for a staff ride at Fort Leavenworth and William Glenn Robertson revived them in *The Staff Ride*. The vast majority of Army organizations that conduct staff rides also follow this guide. This does not mean that the CSI Staff Ride Team follows *The Staff Ride* is to be followed slavishly. In fact, one of the cornerstones of a staff ride is tailoring it to fit the audience. This can range from a ride having weeks of preliminary study, to a high-profile staff ride for the TRADOC commander and his subordinate commanders, to an ROTC class that may have time for only a single short reading for preliminary study and a one- or two-hour-long field phase. Because Robertson’s book was written before the development of the VSR, there is no official Army model for VSRs. Even so, the CSI Staff Ride Team follows as closely as possible the methodology in *The Staff Ride* when planning and conducting a VSR.

## METHODOLOGY — SIMILARITIES

Ground staff rides and VSRs have almost no differences in the preliminary study and integration phases. In a VSR, just as in a ground ride, “the purpose of the preliminary study phase is to prepare the student for the visit to the site of the selected campaign” and “the preliminary study phase may take various forms, depending upon the time available for study and the needs of the participants.”<sup>5</sup> These forms may include, but are not limited to, readings, classroom instruction—which may also include briefings and presentations from the students—maps, terrain boards, movies, and music, as well as an examination of weapons, uniforms, and other equipment from the period. Students may also be assigned roles (normally as various leaders on either side) to focus their preliminary study, and sometimes the role is carried over into the field

study. Alternatively, students may be assigned topics or various doctrinal principles (for example, principles of war or warfighting functions) to study to gain a greater focus. In the initial study phase, limited time may preclude the use of some (or most) of these forms of preliminary research, but at a minimum the students should read a battle or campaign narrative. This is to ensure that they know the key leaders, and the movements and engagements of the leaders’ units, before the field phase. This preparation allows the student to focus on the terrain in the field phase, which enhances the educational value of the ride. Otherwise, students tend to overlook the terrain aspect while trying to grasp the facts of the battle.

The integration phase of a VSR similarly follows the same principles and methods of a ground staff ride. In this phase, students “analyze the previous phases and integrate what they learned in each into a coherent overall view.”<sup>6</sup> There are a myriad of techniques for conducting the integration phase, and asking broad, open-ended questions is one that works well. Ultimately, the goal is for students to integrate lessons from the field phase, specifically the terrain, with the preliminary study to gain insights that are applicable today. The integration session is often relatively short—thirty minutes to 1 hour—and can be conducted at the site of the field phase, or another location (such as a restaurant or a unit’s home station), after the field study is complete. However, a VSR’s integration phase is usually conducted in the classroom soon after the last stand of the field phase. In this case, we recommended a break for the students, perhaps a bit longer break than usual, to allow them to gather their thoughts and assimilate the entire ride. Also, when the integration session of a VSR begins, the terrain should still be displayed so that it can be referenced during discussions. This is another advantage of a VSR. In a ground ride, it is not feasible to return to all of the stands as can be accomplished instantly with virtual terrain.

Although the field phase of a VSR differs greatly from that of a ground



U.S. Army Command and General Staff College

Virtual terrain from the Battle of Chipyong-ni showing the village of Jipyong-ri

staff ride, there is some commonality. Both rides divide the field-study phase into a series of stands. The format for conducting a stand, while equally flexible in both, generally follows the pattern of orientation, description, and analysis (ODA). Orientation is usually the responsibility of the instructor; he or she familiarizes the students to the terrain, pointing out cardinal directions and key aspects of the landscape relevant to the battle or campaign. During the description portion, the instructor and students explain the events that took place at the location, or sometimes describe events that relate to the location in time or theme. If there has been enough time for extensive preliminary study, the students can handle the description of the events (for example, engagements, unit movements, and leaders' decisions), and avoid lengthy accounts from the instructor. Analysis at the stands should be an open discussion among the students (facilitated by questions from the instructors) that allow learning points and insights to be shared. In both types of rides, the analysis phase should be questions that get the students to think and interact. Sometimes these are historically focused questions such as "evaluate the

location of the observation post at Wanat, was it the best location, why was it chosen?" Also, the analysis part of a stand is ideal for insights about the relevance of the historical action to today's warfare. An example from the Chipyong-ni VSR would be the following: "why is Maj. Gen. Almond so far forward at the second battle of Wonju and is this in keeping with the current US doctrine of mission command—why or why not?" All three elements of ODA do not have to appear in every stand or always in the same order, but they are a good general framework for the organizational of the material in a field stand.

There are several other aspects of a field phase common to both VSRs and ground rides. It is worth reiterating that in both types of staff ride, small groups are the best way to keep student interest and involvement at a high level. Stands are usually done while stationary on the ground, but sometimes there is information provided while moving over the terrain (virtual or ground), such as talking about the route or the fighting that occurred while on the move. Usually, the instructor provides this information as it is difficult for student interaction while moving in the terrain. Vignettes

are used often throughout the field phase of a VSR or ground ride. These commonly take the form of quotations (or paraphrasing) that tell stories of courage or fear in the face of battle, give insights into a commander's character or decision-making, provide humor, or bring the human element into the staff ride in some other way. Instructors use "walkbooks" and visual aids, usually maps, to assist them in executing both types of staff rides. Though their visual aids are in different media—oversized, mounted map boards for ground rides; Microsoft PowerPoint slides for VSRs—the purpose and type of information provided is the same.

## METHODOLOGY — UNIQUE ASPECTS

Even though the similarities between ground rides and VSRs are extensive, there are several important aspects of the field phase that are unique to the VSR. First, there is the physical location—the classroom. In this setting, students are normally sitting, often behind desks, rather than standing as they would at a battlefield. With this in mind, in order to give the students the feel of the actual terrain, a VSR requires two computers with



two projectors and screens (or large-screen televisions). One screen shows the virtual terrain and another shows slides (usually maps) at the same time. Showing these features simultaneously emulates the ground ride technique of standing on the terrain while referencing a visual aid. If one screen is larger than the other, the terrain is normally projected onto the larger screen. This serves to emphasize the importance of the terrain—always the focus of the field phase whether a VSR or ground ride.

Despite a different physical setting for the field-study phase, a VSR effectively presents the virtual terrain to give the students an experience extremely close to that of being on a ground staff ride. To do this, the students must be engaged with the terrain. In a ground ride, the students are immersed in the terrain. They have the freedom to look at different parts of the ground and move around to see alternate viewpoints. The same is true in a VSR, but students might assume that the terrain is controlled only by the instructor (though a technician). An instructor could compound this assumption by clinging to the directions in the workbook and not involving the students. One way to avoid this is to have students come up to the screen and point out terrain items. If a student asks a question or makes a comment, they should be encouraged to come to the screen to use the terrain for illustration. Participants may also use laser pointers to reference terrain locations on the screen. The instructor can also ask students if they want to look in another direction, or move slightly within the stand for a different view. One example of student involvement with the terrain is in the Palm Sunday Ambush (Iraq, 2005) VSR. At one stand in the ride, participants are at a location on a side road from the ambush site with three vehicles in a Military Police (MP) squad. There are several options facing the MP squad leader for how to react to the situation. The instructor can ask the students to describe those options and have the VSR technician move in the virtual terrain in the same way that the students are describing, thus allowing the



The setup of a VSR classroom

students to control the terrain moves instead of the instructor.

Conducting the field phase in a VSR allows for different approaches to orient of the students. Due to the unique capabilities of VSR technology, the instructor can acquaint the students to the battlefield by taking an aerial view of the entire battlefield. For example, before going to the stands in the Fallujah (Iraq) VSR, the CSI Staff Ride Team instructor will show the entire city's virtual terrain from above to familiarize students with the major terrain features involved in the fighting. From that bird's-eye view, the instructor works from west to east, and as he or she calls out each piece of terrain, the VSR technician zooms down to the location to get a closer view and then zooms back out. This kind of overall orientation can be done at several points in the field phase to help students place individual engagements into the context of the overall battle. While this technique is valuable, the instructor has to be careful not to overuse the aerial orientation. Students should view traditional ground-level orientations at most of the stand sites so that they see the terrain as the participants did at the time of the battle.

A quality VSR will mesh terrain and visual aids much the same way a ground ride does, even though the terrain is virtual and the visual aids are computer slides. An essential step to making this work is for the instructor and VSR technician to rehearse extensively before the execution of the field phase. Students (and even instructors) can get "lost" in the virtual terrain be-

cause of the speed at which viewpoints can move. Frequent orientations to the virtual ground, while at the same time referencing the visual-aid maps is the best way of minimizing this problem. Throughout, instructors encourage students to ask questions about the terrain and to feel free to have the technician go back to a piece of ground for clarification.

Visual aids (particularly maps) are essential in the VSR, as long as they do not take the focus away from the terrain and the conduct of the field phase. While pictures of people, equipment, and other items can be placed into the slides of a VSR, they can also be distractions and are best kept as part of the preliminary study phase. The best type of illustration for a VSR (or a ground ride) field phase is a photo or painting that can be replicated by the terrain view at a stand—serving as a powerful connection to the past.

## CONCLUSION

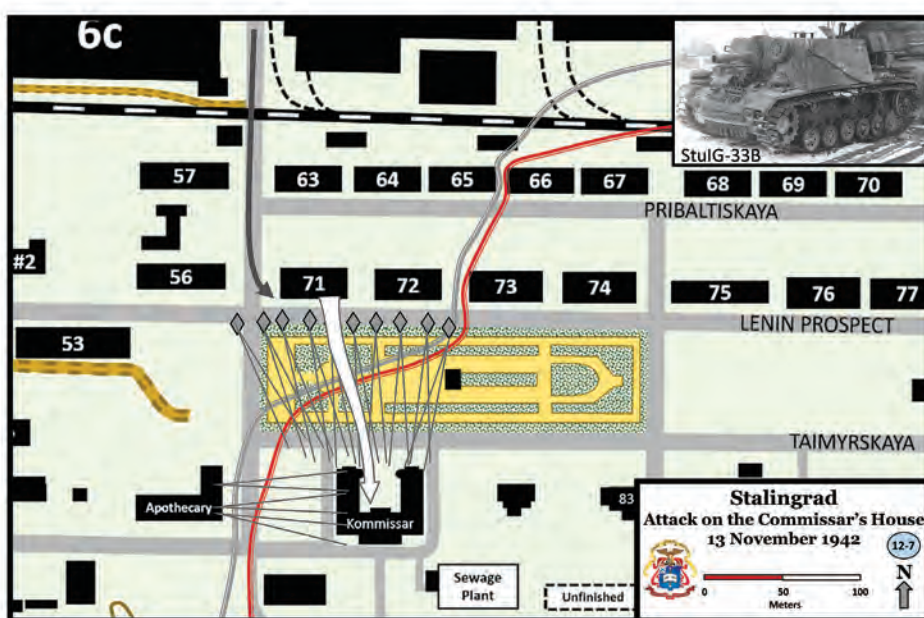
In sum, the VSR has great value for the Army's military history program. While the CSI Staff Ride Team's VSRs are not the only way in which virtual technology can be used in a staff ride, this version, relying heavily on the methodology of a ground staff ride, has great utility. The success of the VSR program can be seen in participant feedback. Written After Action Reports have included such comments as "I have a greater respect for the differing terrain throughout the region" and "definitely provided a better level of realism."<sup>7</sup>



Virtual terrain of Iraq displaying the 2005 Palm Sunday Ambush



A virtual view of Stalingrad showing the Commissar's House



Verbal feedback has also been positive. For example, several soldiers who had participated in a ground staff ride at Chipyeong-ni recently executed a VSR for the same battle with a CSI team. Those soldiers remarked at how real the terrain looked and how the VSR was just as valuable as their ground ride. As a final glimpse into the utility of a VSR, there are the insights of eight soldiers who were in the action at Wanat and later participated in a Wanat VSR. They all remarked on the realism of the virtual terrain, the value of moving freely through the terrain to see multiple vantage points, and the powerful experience of feeling like they were back on the same ground.

Those looking for more information on the CSI Staff Ride Team's VSRs can access them through the Army University Press website: <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Educational-Services/Staff-Ride-Team-Offerings>.

**Dr. Curtis S. King**, is a historian on the Staff Ride Team of the Combat Studies Institute, Army University Press, and is an adjunct professor at Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas.







## NOTES

1. For the sake of brevity, this article primarily concerns battle and campaign staff rides, while recognizing that other events, such as natural disasters, can be sources for staff rides.

2. William Glenn Robertson, *The Staff Ride* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1987), p. 5.

3. U.S. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), *Military History and Heritage Education Program: TRADOC Regulation 350-13*, 22 February 2018, accessed 10 October 2018, <http://adminpubs.tradoc.army.mil/regulations/TR350-13.pdf>.

4. Robertson, *The Staff Ride*. On pages 5–6, Robertson lists thirteen potential objectives or goals for a staff ride. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, nor must every ride attempt to achieve all of these goals.

5. Robertson, *The Staff Ride*, p. 11.

6. Ibid., p. 17.

7. After Action Report, copy in author's files.



The view from a gunner's position at Wanat (right) and the same view displayed virtually (center)

The terrain orientation view for the Fallujah VSR (top)



# ARMY EMBLEM TAKES SHAPE

BY THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

Even before a guest enters an exhibit gallery, the National Museum of the United States Army—currently under construction at Fort Belvoir, Virginia—establishes the connection between the visitor, the American soldier, and the U.S. Army.

As individuals approach the entrance to the museum, several pylons will greet and escort them through the main entrance. These stainless steel columns continue along the left side of the lobby before turning left and assembling into formation, thus creating the *Soldiers' Stories Gallery*, which will feature the biographies of ordinary soldiers. Immediately to the right of this gallery and dramatically inset into the white terrazzo floor at the center of the spacious lobby is the full color Army emblem, twenty-one feet in diameter. The David Allen Company—under contract with Clark Construction Group, LLC, and the Army Historical Foundation—constructed the emblem using a unique flooring process.

Terrazzo is a composite material consisting of chips of marble, quartz, granite, and glass set with a binder. As Mabry Sumner, chief of facilities and security for the museum, explains, “Terrazzo has become one of the most innovative and cost-effective flooring materials. Using terrazzo for the flooring provided the opportunity for this striking design and the use of custom coloring—each terrazzo color formulated for the emblem was coordinated through the United States Army Institute of Heraldry to ensure its accuracy.”

The creation of the emblem was a multiweek process. It began with constructing and laying a metal frame to precise measurements in order to replicate the emblem. After specially trained craftspersons securely anchored the frame to the subfloor, they began filling in the frame with colored terrazzo. Each color was poured individually, and in carefully timed segments, so the terrazzo could be spread properly into their exact shape before drying. “This is a simplified example,” added Sumner, “but imagine the process of framing and filling in colors to create a work of stained glass.” Once all the individual colors set, the workers sanded and polished the entire piece to complete the project. A protective covering currently safeguards the emblem until the building’s potentially damaging interior construction is complete.

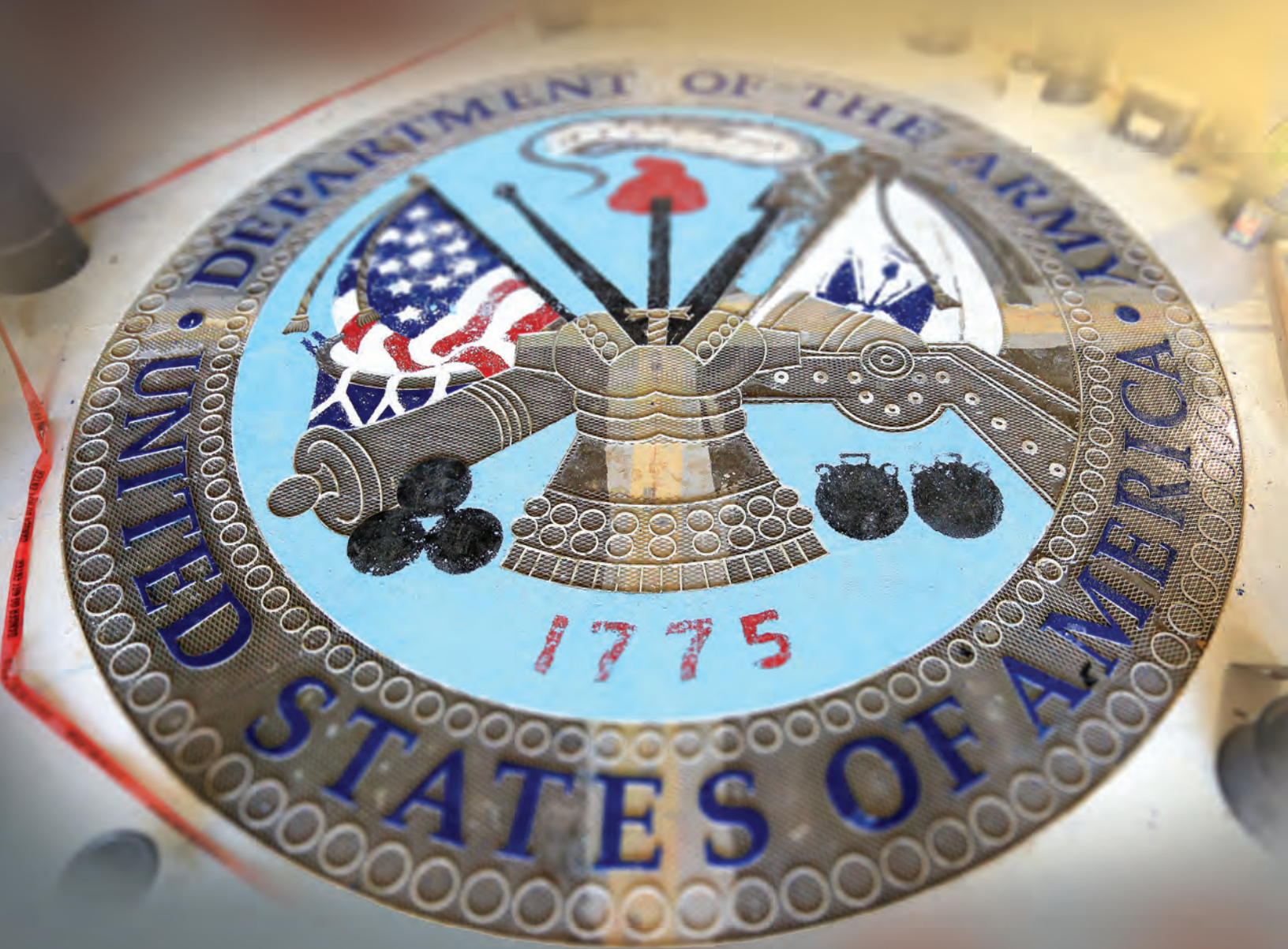
“Seeing the finished product and the enormous letters of ‘This We’ll Defend’ in the emblem is inspiring to all of us involved in this project,” remarked Museum Director Tammy Call. “It will be a fitting tribute to all of our nation’s soldiers that this insignia will welcome and bid farewell to our visitors and staff each day.”



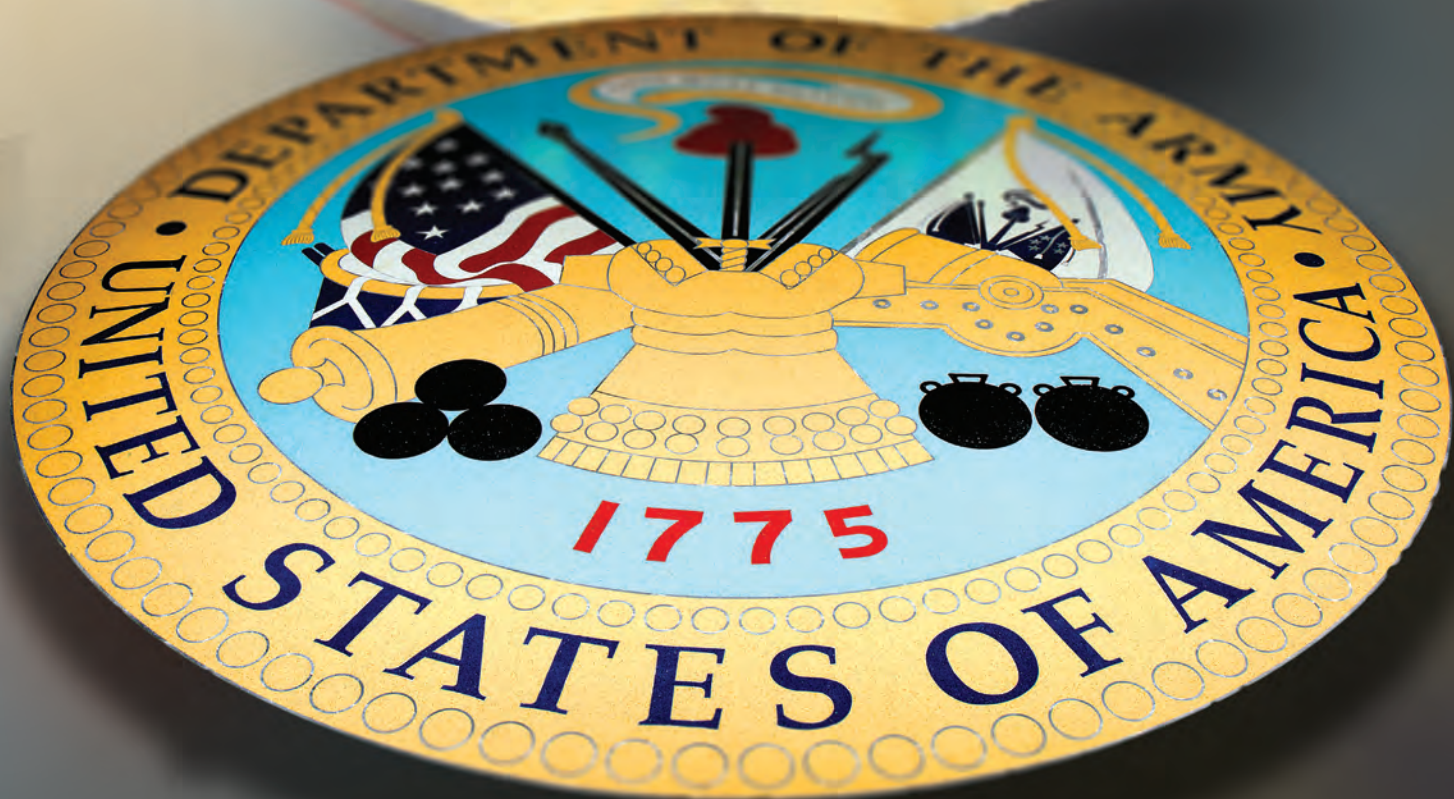














# U.S. ARMY ARTIFACT SPOTLIGHT

NEW IN PRINT

## THE GREAT WAR U.S. ARMY ARTIFACTS

BY DEBORAH A. STULTZ

As part of its efforts to mark the centennial of World War I, the U.S. Army Center of Military History has published *The Great War: U.S. Army Artifacts*. This full-color book uses high-resolution photographs and a wealth of historical research to showcase objects relating to the First World War from the collections of the Army Museum Enterprise (AME).

The AME oversees the historical and material culture of the U.S. Army. It preserves, presents, and interprets the Army community for soldiers and civilians. The AME manages over thirty museums (and their collections) in the United States, Germany, and Korea, and is also directing the construction of the National Museum of the U.S. Army at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. The artifacts presented in the book are a small sample of the more than 34,000 World War I artifacts in the AME's vast collection. Although the soldiers and civilians who served during the Great War are no longer here, we can hear and understand their stories through these objects. The artifacts give us a profound connection to the events of one hundred years ago.

Technological innovation made World War I the first modern, mechanized, and industrial war, and the artifacts show how those who participated in the war made sense of their difficult surroundings on a day-to-day basis. Air combat became common for the first time. A corporal's diary includes drawings and notes on aircraft tail shapes to assist him in identifying whether a plane was friend or foe. In the trenches, the doughboys routinely faced poison gas attacks and had to carry respirators and protective masks. They sometimes personalized these objects with their name or their unit's insignia. World War I also brought about advancements in medicine and medical treatments. Motorized ambulances could transport the sick and wounded away from the infectious conditions of the battlefield, increasing their possibility of survival. Red Cross brassards and red vests identified medical orderlies and ambulance drivers. The United States faced many logistical challenges in fighting a war overseas. Soldiers not only battled the enemy on the front lines, but also established base camps, built roads, constructed rail lines and bridges, kept draft animals and carrier pigeons, and prepared food. Mobile kitchens were developed to serve hot food to the troops at the front. During the Great War, the U.S. Army grew in unprecedented numbers. Soldiers came from every state in the nation and included African, Hispanic, and Native Americans. Some soldiers brought a little bit of their home with them to Europe, such as a Texas flag, and some brought pieces of the war home with them, such as a vase made from a shell casing. Women also joined the war effort by attending service schools, volunteering with civilian service organizations, becoming nurses and signal operators, building equipment and armaments on the home front, and selling war bonds. Their uniforms echoed those of the soldiers they supported. These objects, and many more featured in this book, provide us with indelible insight into these lives from a hundred years ago.

Shown here are some pages from this unique book. Sarah G. Forgey, Chief of Art, AME, served as editor, selecting the featured items to highlight key aspects of the wartime experience. The AME's curatorial team—Alan T. Bogan, Paul M. Miller, and Carrie M. Gabaree—have shared insights about the objects and their owners. Historian Brian F. Neumann provided background and context. Photographer Pablo Jimenez-Reyes ensured high-quality photographs for every artifact shown. Former Army Staff Artist Gene Snyder designed the volume.

The volume will be available in November 2018. It can be purchased by the public from the Government Publishing Office by itself or as part of a handsome boxed set with its companion, *The Great War: U.S. Army Art*.

Deborah A. Stultz is an editor at the U.S. Army Center of Military History.







# THE GREAT WAR

## U.S. ARMY ARTIFACTS



*Livens Projector and Equipment*  
U.S. Army Chemical Corps Museum, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri



The Livens Projector was a British-produced weapon designed to fire or "project" a cylindrical canister containing poison gas, high explosive, or incendiary oil into enemy positions. Soldiers typically buried them up to their muzzles when in firing position and discharged them electrically. The 1st Gas Regiment used this system.<sup>79</sup>

This watercolor painting by an unknown artist, titled *The Carrying Party*, depicts American soldiers carrying Livens Projector canisters to the front.

<sup>79</sup> Crowell, *America's Munitions*, p. 210.



*Renault FT Light Tank "Five of Hearts"*  
Company C, 344th Battalion, Tank Corps  
National Museum of the United States Army,  
Fort Belvoir, Virginia



The AEF organized a Tank Corps in 1917 in France. By 11 November 1918, five heavy battalions and ten light battalions existed, four of which had been in combat. While tank production in the United States was proceeding, very few American-made tanks reached France before the Armistice. The Army acquired all tanks used in combat by the AEF from our allies—heavy tanks from the British and light tanks from the French.<sup>80</sup>

Company C, 344th Battalion, Tank Corps, used this French-made, two-man tank during World War I. The battalion was part of the 1st Provisional Tank Brigade commanded by Col. George S. Patton. The tank was nicknamed "Five of Hearts" because of its identification markings. The French assigned suits and numbers from playing cards to identify tanks.

The Five of Hearts saw heavy combat in the Fléville sector during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. During its support of the 16th Infantry of the 1st Division, the turret and 37-mm. gun mount became so jammed with bullets that they could not be used. Soldiers left the tank on the field of battle after the infantry secured the area, but later recovered it. In 1919, it was sent to Camp Meade—the U.S. Army Tank Corps Headquarters—as a memorial to the corps' service in the First World War.

<sup>80</sup> *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War*, Vol. 3, Part 1, pp. 491-98.



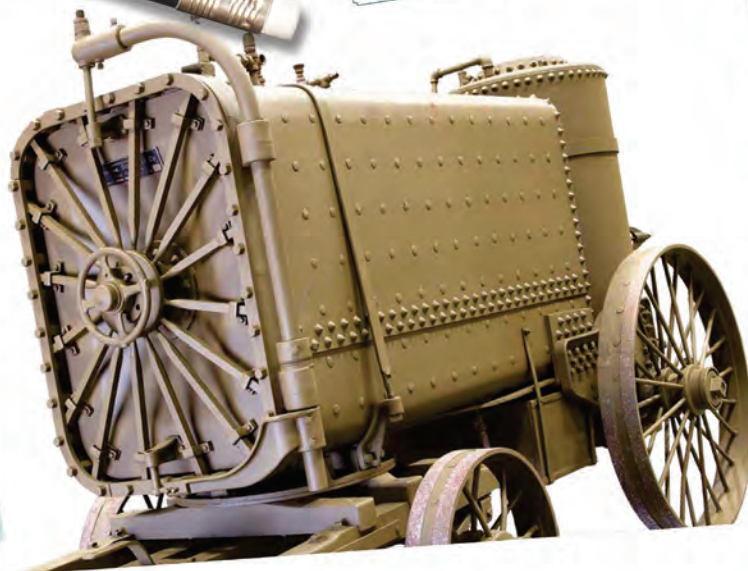
Advancements in medical science, a greatly expanded U.S. Army, poor sanitary conditions in the front lines and rest areas of France, and the anticipation of many casualties required the adoption of new equipment for clothing disinfection and surgical dressing sterilization.

The Army tested portable disinfectors in 1916 during the Mexican Expedition. During World War I, the Army extended their use to evacuation hospitals and base hospitals lacking fixed disinfectors. These portable units used steam and formaldehyde to kill infectious organisms such as lice. Medical personnel also used them to sterilize surgical dressings in large quantities. The portable disinfectors could be towed by horses or trucks to rest areas to fumigate the clothing of soldiers just out of the front lines.

The American Sterilizer Company of Erie, Pennsylvania, made this example. The cylindrical boiler is used to generate steam, and there is a formaldehyde generator located below the large chamber that held uniforms being disinfected.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Wolfe, *The Medical Department of the United States Army in the World War, Volume III*, accessed 3 May 2018, [http://history.army.mil/books/docs/www/finance\\_supplych14rev.html](http://history.army.mil/books/docs/www/finance_supplych14rev.html).

Portable Towed Sterilizer and Disinfector  
U.S. Army Museum Support Center,  
Anniston Army Depot, Alabama



Pattern 1917 Corrected English Small Box Respirator Gas Mask and Carrier  
Sgt. Vernon E. Rings, Company F, 321st Infantry, 81st Division  
U.S. Army Chemical Corps Museum, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri



Sergeant Rings carried this gas mask during his service in the AEF. The accompanying record card notes that the Army issued the mask to Rings in August 1918 and he experienced a mustard gas attack while wearing it in October in either the Ban-de-Sapt or Saint-Dié sectors.

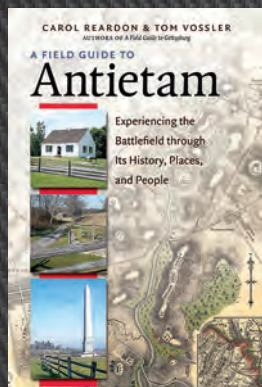
Sergeant Rings personalized the carrier for his mask by drawing the division's "wildcat" insignia on it and by recording locations where he served. American companies produced "corrected" gas masks such as this beginning in May 1917. The masks were meant to resist the effects of gas better than the previously issued British small box respirator.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Crowell, *America's Munitions*, pp. 331-44; *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War, Zone of the Interior: Organization and Activities of the War Department*, Vol. 3, Part 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1988 [reprint]), pp. 416-19.



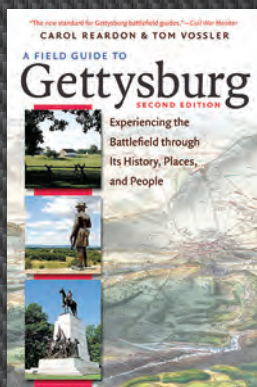
# BOOKREVIEWS

*A Field Guide to Antietam:  
Experiencing the Battlefield  
through Its History, Places, and  
People*



By Carol Reardon and  
Tom Vossler  
University of North Carolina Press,  
2016  
Pp. vi, 347. \$23

*A Field Guide to Gettysburg:  
Experiencing the Battlefield  
through Its History, Places, and  
People, Second Edition*



By Carol Reardon and  
Tom Vossler  
University of North Carolina Press,  
2017  
Pp. vi, 477. \$24

## Dual Review by Nathan A. Marzulli

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of Civil War battlefield guides published. They aim to update and supplement the U.S. Army War College Guides to Civil War Battles series that Jay Luvaas and Harold W. Nelson pioneered nearly three decades ago. Although these guides usually vary in style and technique, the purpose of such books are generally similar: to direct the reader on an all-encompassing battlefield tour. They provide maps and a wealth of information describing the events that happened, analysis of command decisions, and often personal vignettes of the men who fought there. Carol Reardon, the George Winfree Professor of American History at Pennsylvania State University, and Tom Vossler, a retired U.S. Army colonel and former director of the United States Army Military History Institute, are not new to this genre. In 2013, the two authors released the innovative *A Field Guide to*

*Gettysburg: Experiencing the Battlefield through Its History, Places, and People* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2013)—the second edition of which is reviewed below. It not only described the tactical fighting from 1–3 July 1863, but also included the personal accounts of human tragedy that befell both soldiers and civilians. The two authors have teamed up again to write a similar book, this time for America's bloodiest single day in history, titled *A Field Guide to Antietam: Experiencing the Battlefield through Its History, Places, and People*.

According to the authors, these field guides are “designed to help you discover for yourself the heroism and the tragedy that unfolded on this landscape.” Therefore, “you must spend time on the battlefield itself” (p. 9). Each book consists of several individual tour stops, with many of these having a few sub-stops. Each begins with an orientation to the landscape, and identifies—often with an excellent modern-day photo-

graph—a specific location and direction in which to stand in order to get the best view of the action described in the accompanying text. The orientations also identify many of the most prominent visual landmarks to help readers get their bearing and understand how the action that occurred at this stop fits into the battle as a whole.

The Antietam field guide consists of twenty-one individual tour stops. Each stop may answer up to six important questions: What Happened Here?; Who Fought Here?; Who Commanded Here?; Who Fell Here?; Who Lived Here?; and lastly, What Did They Say about It Later? Although each applicable question is answered thoroughly, this wealth of information is concurrently the biggest weakness and strength of *A Field Guide to Antietam*. On the one hand, the guide is simply too verbose for the user to try and complete the tour in one day; most stops consist of at least several pages of text, and the book encompasses over 300 pages. For more concise descriptions of the battle actions, this reviewer would recommend Ethan S. Rafuse's *Antietam, South Mountain, and Harpers Ferry: A Battlefield Guide* (Lincoln, Neb., 2008).

This should not deter the Antietam enthusiast from picking up a copy of Reardon and Vossler's guide, however. Despite the abundance of text, the biggest strength of the book is also the amount of detail that the authors have provided. Many parts of the battle covered in *A Field Guide to Antietam* have not been included in other guides. These include the final Confederate effort to retake Dunker Church from Brig. Gen. George S. Greene's division, the actions of Confederate artillery on Cemetery Hill throughout the battle, and the final stand of Col. Hugh B. Ewing's Kanawha Division brigade after the attack of Brig. Gen. Maxcy Gregg in the forty-acre cornfield.



In addition to the descriptions of battlefield actions and tactics, this guide also provides the reader with an interesting look into the lives of people who were in Sharpsburg, Maryland, during the battle. This not only includes the thousands of men who fought there, but also the many civilians, with familiar names such as Mumma, Miller, Rohrbach, and Poffenberger, whose lives were permanently affected by the conflict that raged over their properties on 17 September 1862. Reardon and Vossler also cover parts of the important postwar struggle to memorialize the battle and eventually establish the Antietam National Battlefield.

The overall breadth and attention to detail within the Antietam guide is incredible, and nearly everything that would allow for a fluid and polished battlefield tour is supplied for the reader. The book's introduction includes two pages titled "Helpful Hints for Touring the Battlefield," which covers everything from park access, to roads, to the restroom locations to allow for the greatest personal comfort during the tour. Furthermore, at tour stops that include multiple substops, the authors indicate how far one will have to walk, the type of terrain (e.g. paved, gravel, dirt, etc.), or if the user will remain in sight of their vehicle. The authors and publishers will have to keep in mind that some information—especially the park hours and fees—will have to be frequently updated in order for *A Field Guide to Antietam* to remain effective.

The quality of the content for each tour stop is generally very good. The maps are colorful and comprehensive; the directions (both driving and walking) between each stop are clear; and the modern-day color photographs help the user in orienting themselves to the battlefield. The tactical descriptions of "what happened," especially in the often-confusing Miller cornfield, are sometimes a bit confusing, however, due to the chosen order of the tour stops. In addition, this reviewer would have liked a discussion of South Mountain, and an order of battle. Nevertheless, Carol Reardon and Tom Vossler's *A Field Guide to Antietam* is an excellent addition to the genre of Civil War battlefield guides. Although it would be cumbersome to

use for completing a full tour of Antietam in a single day, it is an excellent resource full of interesting and pertinent information that will give the reader "a better appreciation of the complexities of mid-nineteenth century combat from the perspectives of both senior leads and privates in the ranks" (p. 18).

The University of North Carolina Press has also now released an updated and expanded second edition of Reardon and Vossler's *Field Guide to Gettysburg*. The content and structure of this updated edition is similar to the first edition and to the *Field Guide to Antietam*. Like those books, each tour stop begins with an orientation to the landscape, and identifies a specific location and direction in which to stand in order to get the best view of the action described in the accompanying text. This section also identifies many of the most prominent visual landmarks to help readers get their bearing and helps them to understand how the action at this stop fits into the larger perspective of the battle. The main addition to this second edition of *A Field Guide to Gettysburg* is the inclusion of two additional tour stops, "The Fight on the Harmon Farm," and "Powers Hill." This increases the number of stops to thirty-six. These additions are a welcome improvement because they help the reader to further comprehend and understand the three days of fighting at Gettysburg. The Emanuel Harmon farm was the location of intense action between Brig. Gen. Solomon Meredith's famed "Iron Brigade" and Brig. Gen. James J. Archer's brigade on 1 July 1863. During the battle, Confederate soldiers burned the farm's buildings to the ground. Over the ensuing 150 years, this part of the battlefield remained in private hands; it was the site of a popular hotel, a mineral water-bottling operation, and most recently the Gettysburg Country Club, which featured a nine-hole golf course frequented by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. In 2011, the Conservation Fund, with the assistance of the American Battlefield Trust, purchased the property and transferred ownership to the National Park Service.

Powers Hill is another welcome addition to this field guide. This prominence, which rises above the Baltimore Pike, was the location of Union artillery which

supported the Union XII Corps in the vicinity of Spangler's Spring and lower Culp's Hill. A short, but steep, trek up its slopes rewards one with a clear view over to Spangler's Spring, thanks to the recent preservation efforts of the American Battlefield Trust and the National Park Service. In addition to these major changes, the Second Edition of *A Field Guide to Gettysburg* includes some minor updates to the maps, photographs, and text.

Most of the positive attributes of Reardon and Vossler's other guides transfer to this updated version. The overall breadth and attention to detail within this guide is robust, and nearly everything that would allow for a fluid and polished battlefield tour is supplied for the reader. The only major downside with this book—something consistent with the authors' previous two works—is that the plethora of information sometimes makes the text difficult to navigate during a battlefield tour. Union and Confederate orders of battle would also be welcomed in any future editions for quick reference to the opposing armies' structure.

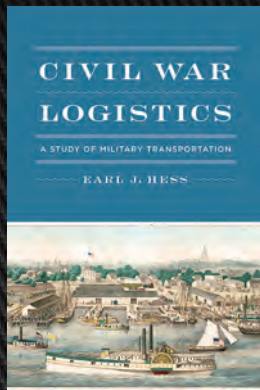
The University of North Carolina Press has hit another homerun with Carol Reardon and Tom Vossler's second edition of *A Field Guide to Gettysburg*. Their work continues to set the standard for studies of Gettysburg and battlefield guides for every major battle of the Civil War.

**Nathan A. Marzoli** is a historian in the Force Structure and Unit History Division at the U.S. Army Center of Military History. A U.S. Air Force veteran, he completed a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in history and museum studies at the University of New Hampshire. His primary research and writing interests focus on the Civil War—specifically the study of Union soldiers and their relationships with their home communities. He is the author of "We Are Seeing Something of Real War Now": The 3d, 4th, and 7th New Hampshire on Morris Island, July–September 1863," which appeared in the Fall 2017 issue of *Army History* and won an Army Historical Foundation Distinguished Writing Award.





*Civil War Logistics: A Study of Military Transportation*



By Earl J. Hess  
Louisiana State University Press, 2017  
Pp. xx, 341. \$45.95

**Review by Mark L. Bradley**

Historian Earl J. Hess has added a much-needed volume on logistics to his impressive list of Civil War books. As the title indicates, the focus is on transportation, which he divides into four major systems: rail-based, river-based, coastal shipping, and wagon trains. Hess classifies the first three systems as national or strategic in scope, and the fourth system as local or tactical. On a lesser scale, he also briefly discusses the use of pack animals, cattle herds, and individual soldiers as means of military transportation. Hess argues that logistics played a crucial role in the outcome of the Civil War: “Northern officials crafted the most sophisticated supply arrangements ever seen up to that time. Their Southern counterparts put together a pale imitation of that Northern system, and this is one of the many reasons the Confederacy lost the war” (p. xix).

In Chapter 1, “The Logistical Heritage,” Hess surveys the history of military transportation from the ancient Greek and Roman armies to the American and European armies of the mid-nineteenth century. “In every age,” he writes, “problems associated with logistics and supply involved rather similar solutions” (p. 1). Hess indicates that these lessons had to be relearned by successive generations of logisticians, who were, by and large, indifferent students

of history. He notes that the Civil War was the first major railroad war, and that quartermasters worked out “problems that would continue to stymie German quartermasters in the Franco-Prussian War five years after Appomattox. The world tended to overlook the lessons of the Civil War just as American quartermasters tended to ignore the world’s lessons in logistics” (p. 16).

“Quartermasters North and South” is the subject of Chapter 2. In describing the impact that one man could have on logistics, Hess quotes a committee report from the Confederate Congress: “A poor quartermaster ‘may effectually check the progress of an army, and the demands of an [infantry] officer may destroy the most perfect administration’ of the transportation system” (p. 17). Quartermasters comprised a select group of officers who—not unlike present-day sports referees—tended to be taken for granted unless they happened to blunder at an inopportune time. Hess extols the diligence of Union quartermasters, who compiled a “mountain of material . . . concerning all phases of their important work,” whereas “Rebel officers were terrible record keepers” (p. 31). Given this apparent lack of conscientiousness, it is hardly surprising that “Confederate transportation history tends to be the story of unsolved problems, irreparable difficulties, and frustrated attempts to make a success out of failure” (p. 32).

Hess believes that blame for the Confederacy’s inadequate military transportation network starts at the top. At the outset, President Jefferson Davis should have appointed a “transportation czar with real power to keep the wheels moving” (p. 32). But the fault was not solely Davis’. “The entire Confederate government was loath to exercise the extraordinary power displayed by the Federal government” (p. 33). As a result, the Southern transport system eventually deteriorated to the point that it barely functioned, “and the rank and file [in gray] suffered far more than their counterparts in blue” (p. 33).

Chapters 3–8 cover “The River-Based System;” “The Rail-Based System;” “The Coastal Shipping System;” “Wagon Trains;” “Pack Trains, Cattle Herds, and Foot Power;” and “Troop Transfers,” demonstrating the Union’s superiority

in each type of transportation. During the war, for example, Northern railroad companies laid 4,500 miles of new track and began to forge a truly national transportation network, while Southern rail lines rapidly fell into disrepair owing to a lack of resources.

As for troop transfers, Hess notes the Union Army’s impressive feat of transporting Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker’s XI Corps and XII Corps—roughly 20,000 soldiers and their baggage—by rail from Virginia to Tennessee in the fall of 1863. But he also concedes that the journey of the 7,000-man remnant of the Confederate Army of Tennessee from Mississippi to North Carolina in the closing months of the war, while on a more modest scale than Hooker’s transfer, “was nothing less than a miracle” (p. 213).

To offset the North’s superiority in transportation assets, Confederates targeted Federal steamboats (Chapter 9) as well as their railroads, coastal vessels, and wagon trains (Chapter 10). Although the Union Army managed to keep its river-based transportation system operational, the rail-based system proved far more vulnerable to attack. As railroad sabotage escalated, Union commanders often retaliated with severity. In 1864, Federal officers in Kentucky punished guerrilla activity by shooting captured saboteurs, deporting Rebel sympathizers, and suspending the writ of habeas corpus.

No commander, North or South, understood the strategic significance of railroads better than Union Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, who devoted considerable time and effort to destroying enemy rail lines and equipment. Among the Confederate generals who proved adept at wrecking railroads was Robert E. Lee. In October 1863, Lee “dedicated his army to tearing up in a thorough manner [a section of] the Orange and Alexandria Railroad” (p. 238). It is ironic that Lee’s action, while intended to restrict Union mobility in the short term, could also be construed as a self-inflicted wound in the long term, for it damaged a lengthy stretch of railroad in northern Virginia.

In his conclusion, Hess argues that the American Civil War had much to teach both contemporaries and later generations about modern logistics. But just

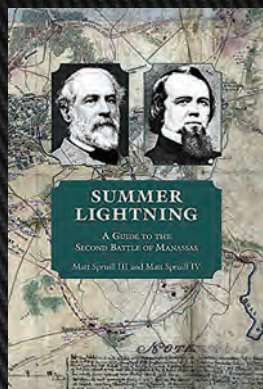


as few Union and Confederate quartermasters profited from the examples of their predecessors, so too did few of their successors learn from them. Thanks to Hess' excellent volume, the subject of Civil War military transportation is no longer a closed book.

**Dr. Mark L. Bradley** is a historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History. He is the author of *Bluecoats and Tar Heels: Soldiers and Civilians in Reconstruction North Carolina* (Lexington, Ky., 2009). His current book project is the official Army history of logistical support in Vietnam.



### *Summer Lightning: A Guide to the Second Battle of Manassas*



By Matt Spruill III and Matt Spruill IV  
University of Tennessee Press, 2013  
Pp. xx, 324. \$32.95

### Review by Adam West

*Summer Lightning: A Guide to the Second Battle of Manassas* is the seventh book in Matt Spruill III's collection of battlefield guides, and it is the second one in which his son, Matt Spruill IV, has collaborated. Both authors are retired Army officers, and Matt Spruill III is a former Gettysburg battlefield guide. Their brief bios on the back cover indicate to readers that they are in for a detailed, in-depth look into one of the lesser-known battles of the American

Civil War. The book does not make an argument for or against the actions and decisions of either side. It is purely a guidebook intended to give readers a thorough understanding of what was taking place at all points on the Manassas battlefield throughout the three days of conflict.

The book begins by setting the stage for the battle and examines the dispositions of both armies during the summer of 1862. As Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac advanced on Richmond from the Virginia Peninsula, smaller forces under Major Generals John C. Frémont (located west of the Shenandoah Valley), Nathaniel P. Banks (in the Shenandoah Valley), and Irvin McDowell (north of Richmond) supported him. But McClellan's plan was disrupted when Maj. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson confronted Banks during his famed Valley Campaign. Threatening Washington, D.C., the Valley Campaign drew the forces under Frémont and McDowell into the Valley in pursuit of Jackson. At this time, General Robert E. Lee took command of the Army of Northern Virginia and immediately focused on pushing McClellan's army away from Richmond. The armies under McDowell, Frémont, and Banks were organized into one army under the command of Maj. Gen. John Pope, named the Army of Virginia. Lee, still facing off against McClellan, but concerned about Pope's army concentrating north and west of Richmond near Warrenton, sent Jackson to Gordonsville to block Pope's advance on Richmond. Because Pope was slowly advancing southward, and McClellan was making no move, Lee decided to join his army with Jackson in confronting the more immediate threat posed by Pope. Lee and Pope engaged in a face-off across the Rapidan River, until Pope pulled back behind the Rappahannock River. Lee then sent Jackson on a wide, encircling march around Pope's right flank in an attempt to turn it. Jackson managed to get behind Pope and cut his lines of communication to Washington, then seized his forward supply depot at Manassas Junction. His position along the Rappahannock now untenable,

Pope sent his army in two separate columns northward to pursue Jackson, trap him at Manassas, and cut him off from Lee's army—a well-conceived and aggressive response to a decisive move by his opponent. However, Pope was unaware that Jackson had already departed Manassas and had taken up a strong defensive position, concealed on high ground overlooking the Warrenton Turnpike where one of Pope's columns would pass. This set the stage for a battle that, although it has not received the same amount of attention as other Civil War conflicts, was decisive and crucial to how the war progressed.

The Spruills guide readers to begin a tour of the battlefield at the Manassas National Battlefield Park's Visitor Center on Henry House Hill. The authors then direct readers to a location along the Warrenton Turnpike (U.S. Route 29), facing the high ground to the north where Jackson's men were lying in wait behind an unfinished railroad line. The reader is given directions to various points on the battlefield corresponding with location of major actions and gives the reader a first-person view of what the ground looked like to the units involved. With the outstanding detail the authors give about the size and number of units engaged and their deployments and maneuvers, the reader can easily visualize the battle unfolding. The maps, instead of being oriented north-south, are oriented to the reader's point of view from where they are standing on the battlefield. These maps show landmarks and the dispositions of the two armies.

Even though the book is meant to be taken along on a battlefield visit, those reading from home will find it easy to follow the Spruills' descriptions of the battlefield that enable them to visualize it almost as if they were there. The guide is an easy read, yet still detailed enough to paint a clear picture for those visiting vicariously.

The Spruills have also included official reports, letters, and diary entries from soldiers and officers who participated in the battle or witnessed it. These are interspersed with the locations on the battlefield guide so that readers can discover what was happening and what



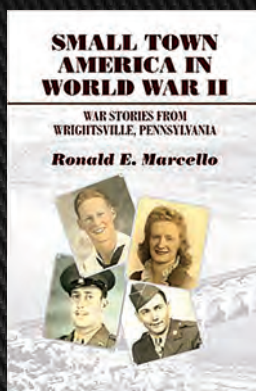
was about to happen from gripping, firsthand accounts.

In addition to being a battlefield guide, the book's plethora of information makes it a must-have reference for any military historian (or military-history enthusiast). Army leaders will find many case studies embedded within the story of the battle that demonstrate good and bad leadership. The guide successfully balances between scholarly and entertaining narrative, making it perfect for readers of all backgrounds.

**Capt. Adam West** was commissioned through officer candidate school into the U.S. Army Adjutant General's Corps, and is currently assigned to the 3d Security Force Assistance Brigade. He earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Brigham Young University-Idaho and is completing a master's degree in ancient and classical history through American Military University.



*Small Town America in World War II: War Stories from Wrightsville, Pennsylvania*



By Ronald E. Marcello  
University of North Texas Press, 2014  
Pp. xvi, 452. \$24.95

**Review by Mark A. Snell**

Ronald E. Marcello, professor emeritus of history at the University of North Texas, was the director of the university's Oral History Pro-

gram and is a native of Wrightsville, Pennsylvania, home to the twenty people whose interviews comprise this book. *Small Town America in World War II* is in the style of Studs Terkel's 1985 Pulitzer Prize-winning *"The Good War: An Oral History of World War II"* (New York, 1984), except it is much more limited. Terkel's work was both national and international in scope, while Marcello's focus is on a small, blue-collar town astride the Susquehanna River in south central Pennsylvania. Because of Marcello's intentional geographical limitation, his potential pool of interview subjects was much smaller than Terkel's broad sample. In addition, Terkel's interviews were conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Marcello's interviews occurred more than a half century after the war, when the conflict's participants were in the twilight of their lives and when their memory would have been far less sharp and precise. Professor Marcello attempted to overcome these problems by doing "extensive background research beforehand and going into the interview armed with an outline of the topics to be discussed" (p. 8).

After a short overview of Wrightsville's history (which includes a Confederate invasion and brief skirmish during the Gettysburg Campaign) as well as a discussion of Marcello's interview method, the rest of the book is divided into six thematic sections: the home front, the North African and Italian theaters, the Northwestern European theater, the Pacific theater, stateside military service, and the occupation of Germany. The collection of interviews is followed by a brief, concluding chapter. By far, the war against Germany receives the most attention, with ten interviews (each a stand-alone chapter) devoted to Italy/North Africa/Northwestern Europe. Marcello does not tell us why there is such a disparity. The section about the home front contains six interviews, including three women (two industrial workers and a government nurse). Of the three male civilians who were interviewed, one was a foundry worker,

one a foundry executive, and one was a teenage school boy (the older brother of Marcello). Disappointingly, only two of interview subjects had served in the Pacific—a sailor and a Marine Corps antiaircraft artilleryman. The two veterans who served stateside included a Naval Reserve WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) member who achieved the rank of chief petty officer and an Army Air Forces sergeant who spent the war in Oklahoma training B-17 crews. Three of the chapters are devoted to the experiences of one man—Staff Sergeant Mervin Haugh—a tanker who fought in three different theaters of operations. Most of the interviews were conducted with U.S. Army veterans; the majority served in infantry or armored divisions.

Marcello's mastery of the oral history technique—knowing the right questions to ask—is apparent in the way that he draws out his subjects' memories of the global conflict. He also weaves together the narrative by inserting the necessary historical background within those accounts, allowing each story to flow in a readable and understandable way. Each chapter also includes both explanatory and bibliographic endnotes.

The strengths of *Small Town America* are the stories themselves, told by participants who not only endured the Great Depression and the war, but who went on to live long lives and thus were able to contextualize their wartime experiences. For example, a Signal Corps master sergeant in the 4th Infantry Division recalled, "During the Battle of the Bulge, I saw what happened to replacement troops. . . . I saw troops come up who still had the chalk marks on their helmets to signify troop movements and troopships or replacement depots. They were sent to the front one day, and the next day the trucks were coming back with mattress covers over the dead guys. So replacements had very little chance of surviving. . . . You'd think of what kind of family they had—whether they were married or single, their mother their father . . . . I don't



know why but that went through my mind and I got to thinking about it. It was pitiful to know that these guys would never get home” (p. 227). Marcello finishes this particular oral history by informing us that the master sergeant was a career soldier, eventually becoming “responsible for White House communications during the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower and had forty men under his supervision . . . [who] accompanied the president on trips to Camp David, the Eisenhower farm at Gettysburg, and several European summit conferences . . . [He] retired to Wrightsville after his twenty-seven years of military service” (pp. 230–31). These and other fascinating yet poignant accounts are the heart of *Small Town America in World War II*.

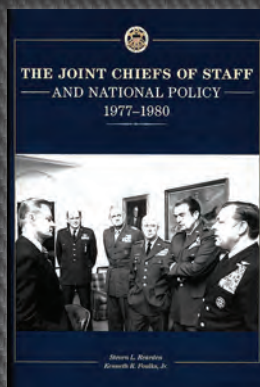
Full disclosure: I am a native of York County who has visited Wrightsville on numerous occasions over the course of my life, and I have intensively studied the history of the area. As such, I probably had greater expectations for *Small Town America* than most historians and laypeople. My biggest disappointment is that Marcello had the opportunity to compare and contrast his hometown with similar small towns in Pennsylvania, or for that matter, other towns across the United States. He failed to do so. For example, were Wrightsville’s wartime and postwar experiences measurably typical or different than similar communities? Were the individuals who served in the armed forces representative of the demographics of the town, county or even state? Why or why not? How many men and women actually served in the armed forces? How many were wounded or killed? Marcello’s concluding essay, “Home,” briefly and sometimes tangentially addresses some of these issues, but only in a very general fashion. These limitations restrict the book’s usefulness primarily to readers keenly interested in York County history or students attempting to learn more about the impact of World War II on the lives of common citizens. Nonetheless, it is a good read and

makes an interesting case study of a relatively obscure Pennsylvania town during the Second World War.

**Dr. Mark A. Snell** served in the Army for more than twenty years in a wide variety of assignments, initially as an enlisted soldier and then as an ordnance officer. From 1987–1990, he was an assistant professor in the Department of History at the U.S. Military Academy. Upon his retirement from the Army, he became the founding director of the George Tyler Moore Center for the Study of the Civil War and professor of history at Shepherd University in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. He retired again in 2013. He is the author or editor of numerous books and essays on the Civil War, World War I, and World War II. His most recent book is titled *Gettysburg’s Other Battle: The Ordeal of an American Shrine during the First World War* (Kent, Ohio, 2017).



### *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy: 1977–1980*



By Steven L. Rearden and  
Kenneth R. Foulks Jr.  
Office of Joint History, Office of  
the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of  
Staff, 2015  
Pp. xi, 351. \$29.95

### Review by John C. Binkley

*The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy: 1977–1980*, by Steven

L. Rearden, in collaboration with Kenneth R. Foulks Jr., is the twelfth volume of the official history of the Joint Chiefs of Staff’s (JCS) role in the development of national security policy. As with the previous volumes, the organization of this book is thematic in nature—some chapters focus on the role of the JCS as it relates to specific geographic areas, such as Western Europe or Latin America, and some chapters focus on policy questions, such as budgets, arms control, or defense organization. Rearden has wide experience in official histories, having contributed to other JCS histories and to the history of the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

The book’s primary theme is the tension that existed between President Jimmy Carter’s administration and the Joint Chiefs. While such tensions maybe considered a normal part of American civil-military relations, the situation during the Carter administration was exacerbated by a series of events that took place in the previous decade: the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Vietnam War, and the erosion of the Chiefs’ role during the Robert McNamara’s tenure as Secretary of Defense. By the early 1970s the prestige of the JCS had substantially diminished. Although the JCS had started to reassert its role, it took a serious step backward during the Carter administration because the administration sought “to rely more on diplomacy and moral suasion to achieve American security objectives,” (p. 1) than the use of traditional military power. Even the selection of the Chiefs during this period was marked by officers steeped in technological competency as opposed to political or military strategy. The result, from the authors’ perspective, was a JCS made up of “competent but compliant” officers who wanted a more robust military presence in the world, but rarely pushed back against the administration’s desire to use softer forms of national power.

While each of the thematic chapters has the ability to stand alone as an interesting case study in civil-military affairs, one of the more interesting chapters deals with development of



the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) in the Persian Gulf. On the one hand, the Defense Department and the majority of the JCS, especially Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Thomas B. Haywood, were the leading proponents for a forward leaning strategy in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean and advised the creation of a permanent force in that geographic area. On the other hand, the president and the State Department were more cautious about the placement of military forces in Southwest Asia. The chapter also gives insight into an interesting side-story of interservice conflict, as the Marine Corps sought to carve out a specific role for itself with the formation of the RDF, while the majority of the JCS believed that any Persian Gulf initiative should be joint in nature. Ultimately, it was the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Iran, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, and the articulation of the Carter Doctrine that finalized the formation of the RDF.

Another interesting chapter is the one that analyzes the Chiefs' role in the all-important area of arms control and the negotiations surrounding the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II) arms treaty. This chapter begins to pull back the veil surrounding the inner workings of the JCS and exposes the differences that can arise between the civilian and military perspectives. According to the authors, the essential issue was the JCS' concern that arms control was doing little to limit effectively the growth of the Soviet atomic arsenal. This generalized problem was exacerbated by the administration's desire for deep cuts in nuclear weapons. The Chiefs looked at such reductions with great caution, believing that U.S. and Russian views on cruise missiles, as well as the role of the new Russian Backfire bomber, were essentially irreconcilable without substantial modernization of the American nuclear arsenal. Despite the Chiefs' concerns, the administration went forward with the negotiation of SALT II. The authors expose the differences among the members of the JCS, with the majority concluding that the SALT II treaty

was the best that could be accomplished, while others, including the JCS' own negotiator, Lt. Gen. Edward L. Rowny, opposing the treaty as fundamentally dangerous to America's security interests. In the final analysis, SALT II was never ratified due to the deteriorating relationship with Russia following its invasion of Afghanistan.

Although each of the book's chapters supplies an interesting story in its own right, it should be noted that official histories by their nature have pluses and minuses. This history is no exception. One positive factor is the use of declassified documents which can substantially assist future research. Additionally, the various chapters reveal in a clear and concise fashion the issues confronting the JCS, the positions generally held by the JCS, and the opinions held by the civilian leaders within the administration. The footnotes and the text lay a solid foundation for additional research. A final benefit is that we begin to see, albeit in a limited way, the internal workings of the JCS and the differing service views.

Notwithstanding these positive aspects, there are several problems that any researcher using this work should note. It is apparent that this volume originally was written during the 1990s, and was published with little updating of the research. Thus, the work fails to incorporate the last two and a half decades of scholarship on the Carter administration. Second, as in many official histories, this volume lacks an analytical aspect and tends to simply recite the facts without getting into the reasons why people and organizations took the positions they did, and why agreement or disagreement existed. For example, it would have been interesting if the authors tried to explain why the Carter administration selected the different members of the JCS. That might have substantiated the authors' contention that the members of the JCS were "competent but compliant" in their role. It might have also shed some light on why the members of the JCS took the positions they did. Moreover, with some exception, the authors do not go into the different

service positions. Even when they do, as indicated above in the chapter on strategic arms negotiations there is little exploration of why the individual members of the JCS concluded the way they did. While I recognize that this is a history of the role of the JCS, it is impossible to understand the positions taken by an individual chief without consideration of the positions taken within the services. The authors could have taken better advantage of the military services' very sophisticated oral history programs and their own internal studies to give context to the individual Chiefs' positions.

Despite some of the deficiencies associated with this official history, it must be noted that official histories such as this one form an important foundation for a researcher's work. They supply the bedrock on which further research is conducted. Without such histories, researchers would have a much more difficult time understanding the complexities and inner workings of the national security community and its decision-making processes. Consequently, this work should be on the bookshelf on any scholar interested in exploring the role of the JCS.

This volume and other official JCS histories are available online in PDF format at <http://www.jcs.mil/About/Joint-Staff-History>.

**Dr. John C. Binkley** is a professor of history and political science at the University of Maryland University College. He is also a former faculty member of the Department of Joint and Combined Operations, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. He has written for journals such as *Military Review*, *Parameters*, and *Armed Forces & Society*. He is currently working on a monograph about the Joint Chiefs of Staff.





*The Struggle for Iraq: A View from the Ground Up*



By Thomas M. Renahan  
Potomac Books, 2017  
Pp. xii, 520. \$36.95

**Review by Matthew J. Margis**

The war in Iraq played a key role in American foreign policy through three presidential administrations. Most accounts of the war come from military or journalistic sources, and describe the war's operations and influence on policy initiatives. Thomas M. Renahan offers a different perspective. In *The Struggle for Iraq: A View from the Ground Up*, Renahan provides an account of his experiences as an American civilian working with Iraqi citizens and other expatriates to introduce democracy and expand civil rights in the war-torn nation. Renahan worked in Iraq's major regions (southern Iraq, Baghdad, and Iraqi Kurdistan) during three distinct phases of the war. His book serves as a compelling narrative of one man's efforts to advance democratic institutions, promote free elections, and fight corruption.

Known as Dr. Tom by his Iraqi counterparts, Renahan arrived in Amarah, the capital of Maysan Province in Southern Iraq three days before American forces captured Saddam Hussein. Working for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Renahan acted as an adviser to the new Maysan Provincial Council, and helped launch a major democracy campaign. The author recounts his

optimism during the early stages of American occupation as well as Iraqi enthusiasm for their projects. Eventually, increased violence forced USAID to relocate Dr. Tom to Kuwait. Within a few weeks, Renahan was back in the United States, and USAID abandoned many of his projects. Renahan returned to Iraq in late 2005, this time as the national anticorruption manager for the Iraq Civil Society Program in Baghdad. Serving during the height of sectarian violence, Renahan's narrative reflects the unfortunate realities of assassinations, revenge killings, and collateral damage. Renahan's gut-wrenching stories about the deaths of his close friends and colleagues remind the reader of the costs of war on Iraqi citizens.

Renahan's third tour in Iraq began in 2007. Unlike in his earlier positions, Renahan found himself working in the relative safety of Iraqi Kurdistan. Serving as a consultant to the Minister of Municipalities of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Erbil, Iraq, the author traveled throughout the region. He met with local leaders to discuss civil works projects and infrastructure development, and then reported back to the minister.

Taken together, Renahan's three accounts give the reader a glimpse of life in Iraq immediately following the U.S. invasion, during the height of violence, and in the aftermath of the Iraq "surge." Through his voice, one can appreciate the risks Iraqi citizens encountered as they commuted each day and worked with aid organizations. Renahan's narrative shows how extremists used a culture of violence to terrorize an entire nation, and how such violence takes a toll on the local population and the émigrés working within Iraqi society.

The book's strongest moments come from the author's engaging and often heartbreaking stories. Renahan describes the close friendships he formed and his depictions give life to the characters. Readers will feel connected to the men and women who became Dr. Tom's surrogate family. Renahan recounts his guilt when USAID pulled the plug on his project in Southern Iraq, and he describes his frustrations when he was unable to

finish his early initiatives. He expresses his emotions when he heard that assassination squads murdered some of his closest friends. The author discusses his sense of loss and helplessness that arose from these senseless attacks and how he persevered through it all. Yet Renahan's story can be optimistic. He describes moments where his democracy team or anticorruption group made great strides and set the groundwork for further success.

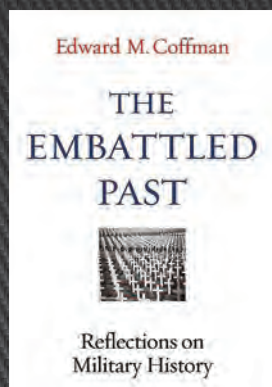
This work is not just Renahan's memories of his experiences, however. While including historical sections for context, the author describes his role in aid programs within the framework of Iraq's political and cultural history. Dr. Tom outlines the problems his agencies faced and the cultural, social, and bureaucratic hurdles his teams needed to overcome. Throughout this work, Renahan offers solutions to improve Iraq's democratic process from the top down. While his solutions address specific issues, they would require a reorientation of American policy, and are thus unrealistic. Nonetheless, his proposals spark curiosity and prompt a recalculation of preconceived notions about the situation in Iraq. Ultimately, the author contends, America's role in Iraq is not over. Renahan argues that the United States owes it to the Iraqi people to continue to support them militarily and politically and ensure their young democracy can take hold in the region. This book would be a valuable addition for anyone interested in studying the nuances of Iraqi society between 2003 and 2017.

**Matthew J. Margis** is a historian in the Field Programs Directorate at the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH). He earned his Ph.D. from Iowa State University in 2016 and worked at the National Archives and Records Administration before joining CMH. He is currently working on the Center's series covering Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM.





*The Embattled Past: Reflections on Military History*



By Edward M. Coffman  
University Press of Kentucky, 2014  
Pp. 201. \$40

### Review by Thomas Bruscino

Let's get the critique out of the way: the title for this book is all wrong. Edward M. Coffman's life work was never about battling over history. Coffman wrapped his arms around the past. *The Embattled Past*—that's a better way to understand this book and its contents. His volume is a collection of articles, essays, and reflections that is at once a primer on Coffman's career and a guide to how to "do" history.

Edward Coffman is an emeritus professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and one of the leading lights in military history. (Full disclosure: he was my dissertation adviser's adviser, and served as a reader on my master's thesis.) His career has been at the center of the rise, partial fall, and complicated resurgence of academic military history. He earned a Ph.D. in the subject before the field really had a foothold in the discipline; his scholarship and students led the military history field during the Cold War years; his retirement coincided with the spate of departments cutting military historians in the 1980s and 1990s; and his ongoing writing and mentorship have helped to allow the field's return to relevance in recent years.

His story is made evident by the chapters in *The Embattled Past*. The essays fall into two broad categories that roughly divide the book: first, examples of Coffman's scholarship, and second, discussions of the historian's craft. Practitioners dominated most military history writing before World War II. They used the past to better understand their craft, and as a result they focused on the strategic and operational side of the field. Coffman could write to that audience—his account of the United States in World War I, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I* (New York, 1968) is definitive—and this collection includes articles intended to provide lessons on the transition to peace, the relationship between the professional and civilian military traditions in America, and America's overall strategy for the First World War.

Strategic and operational issues, vital though they are, tell only part of the story, and no one understood that better than Coffman. Strategic and operational histories can and often do focus on ideas and institutions or decisive points and divisions, at the expense of the people who make those things real. Coffman never lost sight of people. Long before it became vogueish, he made it his life's work to write a social history of the officers, soldiers, and families of the U.S. Army. Together, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784–1898* (New York, 1986) and *The Regulars: The American Army, 1898–1941* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004) represent his magnum opus. They are unlikely to be surpassed in telling of the everyday lives in and around the Army from independence to World War II. Three essays in this volume, on the 15th Infantry Regiment in China, the Philippine Scouts, and Dwight Eisenhower's West Point roommate Paul Hodgson, serve as case studies of Coffman's style of social military history.

Coffman became the progenitor of what was once known as the new military history. We now know it more simply as social military history. It dominates the field, and

has allowed military historians to reengage with a larger field that is focused, perhaps overly so, on issues of race, class, and gender. Social military history has gotten military historians back into history departments. While we can lament the decline of academic operational military history, the Coffman-style of military history has pried open the door to returning operational military history to the academy.

The second half of *The Embattled Past*, the far more personal half, explains how he became a vanguard in military social history. Included are reflections on the craft of history from the last thirty years of Coffman's career. Pride of place belongs to his 1997 review on the course of military history in the United States after World War II, which ought to be required reading for all aspiring military historians as an overview of their field. But the rest of the chapters reveal, perhaps unintentionally, the ways in which Coffman helped influence the account of that history. His essay on oral history and his tributes to historians Thomas D. Clark and Forrest Pogue stand out in that regard. Interviews have always had a role in the writing of history, but Coffman correctly notes that systematic oral history, the large-scale gathering of recollections of all participants in historical events, began in earnest with battlefield interviews during World War II. Pogue participated in those interviews, saw their value, and carried the practice into his work on George C. Marshall. Early in his career, Coffman assisted Pogue in those efforts. Given his delight in sharing personal stories, Coffman immediately grasped the value of oral histories in telling the tales that have too often been left in the margins. We have all become the beneficiaries of the inclusion of perspectives of junior officers, enlistees, women and minorities in the military, and military families.

The only new contribution to *The Embattled Past*, Coffman's account of his interview of Douglas MacArthur, drives home another point. The rise of social history has too



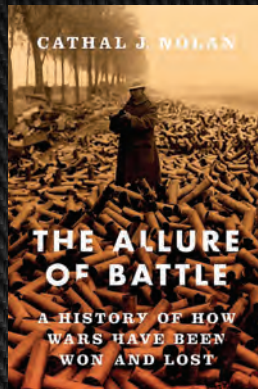
often been accompanied by the idea that the stories of great men have been overdone. Commonly known as “great white man history,” it has become passé for academics. In recent years, it has too often been left to journalists and amateur historians who are dedicated but often untrained in the skills of academic history. Coffman’s MacArthur interview shows how histories of great men are still be important for historians to undertake. For Coffman, the stories of generals need to be told too, and oral history allows for an accounting that makes better sense of memoirs and archival documents. MacArthur was Coffman’s biggest, but by no means only, catch. He interviewed and corresponded with hundreds of famous and infamous historical figures over his career.

In reading *The Embattled Past* and seeing just how much ground Coffman covered over the years, this historian’s feelings of inadequacy were tempered only slightly by knowing that at least that trail has been blazed. In addition to his published work, the Coffman papers are available for researchers at the Marshall Library at the Virginia Military Institute. A pilgrimage to Lexington is in order, as is much more new work along the lines laid out by Edward M. Coffman. I can think of no greater tribute to one of the finest scholars and teachers our field has ever known.

**Thomas Bruscino** is an associate professor at the U.S. Army War College. He is the author of *A Nation Forged in War: How World War II Taught Americans to Get Along* (Knoxville, Tenn., 2010). He is currently at work on a history of the Meuse-Argonne Campaign.



*The Allure of Battle: A History of How Wars Have Been Won and Lost*



By Cathal J. Nolan  
Oxford University Press, 2017  
Pp. xiii, 709 \$34.95

**Review by John R. Maass**

Although it is difficult to summarize a thesis-driven, 700-page interpretive study in a brief review, the author himself provides perhaps the best synopsis of *The Allure of Battle: A History of How Wars Have Been Won and Lost*. “Although grand-scale battles are far less decisive in history than is commonly believed,” Cathal J. Nolan writes, “the idea of them fascinates. We are drawn to celebrate battles because they seem to deliver a decision” (p. 4). For centuries, chroniclers and scholars have “traditionally looked for the key moments that turned wars toward finality, pointing especially to lopsided and grand-scale battles as the key mechanism of decision by force” (p. 3). While Nolan points out that studies of decisive battles abound and remain popular today, he refutes the premise that individual battles win wars.

The author concludes that “battles did not usually decide the major wars of the modern era” (p. 2), and that since the 1600s, only a few battles during wars among great western powers and Japan “have proved to be more than locally or tactically decisive” (p. 7). He points out that numerous generals and admirals “who won hugely lopsided battles went on to lose the wars of which they were a part,” as “truly decisive battles” were rare and “accomplished little” (p. 3). Questioning the common characterization

of “decisive battle,” the author argues instead that “it was attrition rather than battles that decided most modern Great Power wars, though seldom by choice at the outset” (p. 6). “Human and material attrition,” Nolan states, “are far more important in determining outcome” (p. 4). Large wars among the great powers were characterized not by high stakes battles in which one side risked soldiers, materiel, and viability, but by a “protracted stalemate born from a rough strategic balance, broken only after attritional wearing turned wars into contests of endurance” (p. 7). Covering the Battle of Cannae (216 BC) to the Battle of Okinawa and the end of World War II in the Pacific (1945), though not comprehensively, Nolan is guided by the premise that “despite battle’s abiding allure, we must study war and not just battle” (p. 7).

In a sweeping overview of the emphasis among belligerents on fighting risky, throw-of-the-dice battles on land and sea, Nolan finds that these engagements—Lützen (1632), Fontenoy (1745), Borodino (1812), and Sedan (1870), to name but a few—did not decide their wars’ outcomes. Nolan does point to a few such battles that were in his estimation decisive, such as Leuthen (1757) and Königgrätz (1866). For the most part, however, his persistent argument is that wars were won by endurance, resources, and logistics, and not the gamble of a great captain seeking a crushing defeat of the enemy early in a conflict, before the opponent could marshal the forces and guns to protract it. Wars of grinding attrition were much more common, Nolan finds, and were seldom won on a flat, green battlefield between two forces lined up to fight it out on a single day. This was especially true beginning with the wars of Napoleon Bonaparte, who ushered a new era of warfare characterized by advanced weaponry, the mobilization of whole nations for war, and “mass conscript armies” (p. 575).

Nolan’s study is a thought-provoking one, and will likely generate debate among scholars. Despite the book’s title, the author limits the scope of his work almost exclusively to European warfare, and with the exception of World War II, he largely ignores



American conflicts. The absence of examples and analysis of the American Revolutionary War and the American Civil War is particularly glaring in that a useful comparison could have been made with European examples, and readers could have seen how the American context melded with (or contradicted) Nolan's argument. Moreover, in the attrition versus all-or-nothing battle contrast, is there nothing to learn from post-World War II conflicts? And how do the Cold War, various insurgencies, and the West's recent (and ongoing) operations fit in to the author's thesis? Curiously, Nolan does not include the last seven decades in this work.

Readers and historians familiar with the earlier work of Russell F. Weigley (*The Age of Battles: The Quest for Decisive Warfare from Breitenfeld to Waterloo* [Bloomington, Indiana, 1991]) and Walter Millis (*Arms and Men: A Study in American Military History* [New York, 1956]) will recognize that Nolan has plowed some familiar ground in that both of these earlier scholars also concluded that, in Weigley's words, "the age of battles . . . proved to be an age of prolonged,

indecisive wars. . . ."<sup>1</sup> Additionally, Nolan may have overstated the futility of battles. He focuses on the ineffectiveness of battles as quick, one-shot, war-winning fights designed to bring conflicts to end suddenly before soldiers and supplies were used up. What he leaves out, however, is that wars consist of many battles—can there really be a war without them? Few conflicts have ever been won in a single stroke, but the threat of them influences belligerents to negotiate wars' end. A battle may not be decisive while the smoke still obscures the field, but its horrors may steer leaders and civilians to act to end a war—through diplomacy, surrender, or other strategies. That does not undermine Nolan's correct assertion that "wars were driven and largely determined by finance and administrative capacity," and logistics (p. 83).

Although Nolan's prose is excellent and his narrative is well-organized, he often gets entangled in the details of some battles to no apparent benefit. Blow-by-blow accounts of Austerlitz and Sedan, for example, are not necessary for the demonstration of the author's thesis and significantly

lengthened the book. Several of the maps are poorly executed in that they provide no legends, and the lack of a bibliography is also disappointing. Still, *The Allure of Battle* is a valuable new look at western wars and how they were fought.

## NOTE

1. Russell F. Weigley, *The Age of Battles: The Quest for Decisive Warfare from Breitenfeld to Waterloo* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. xii.

**Dr. John R. Maass** is a historian at the National Museum of the U.S. Army. He received a bachelor's degree in history from Washington and Lee University and a Ph.D. in early U.S. history from the Ohio State University. He is the author of *Defending a New Nation, 1783–1811*, the first pamphlet in the Center of Military History's Campaigns of the War of 1812 series (Washington, D.C., 2013), and of the books, *The Road to Yorktown: Jefferson, Lafayette and the British Invasion of Virginia* (Charleston, S.C., 2015) and *George Washington's Virginia* (Charleston, S.C., 2017).



# ARMYHISTORY

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

**A**rmey History welcomes articles, essays, and commentaries of between 2,000 and 12,000 words on any topic relating to the history of the U.S. Army or to wars and conflicts in which the U.S. Army participated or by which it was substantially influenced. The Army's history extends to the present day, and *Army History* seeks accounts of the Army's actions in ongoing conflicts as well as those of earlier years. The bulletin particularly seeks writing that presents new approaches to historical issues. It encourages readers to submit responses to essays or commentaries that have appeared in its pages and to present cogent arguments on any question (controversial or otherwise) relating to the history of the Army. Such contributions need not be lengthy. Essays and commentaries should be annotated with endnotes, which should be embedded, to indicate the sources relied on to support factual assertions. A manuscript, preferably in Microsoft Word format, should be submitted as an attachment to an e-mail sent to the managing editor at [usarmy.mcnair.cmh.mbx.army-history@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.mcnair.cmh.mbx.army-history@mail.mil).

*Army History* encourages authors to recommend or provide illustrations to accompany submissions. If authors wish to supply photographs, they may provide them in a digital format with a minimum resolution of 300 dots per inch or as photo prints sent by mail. Authors should provide captions and credits with all images. When furnishing photographs that they did not take, or any photos of art, authors must identify the owners of the photographs and artworks to enable *Army History* to obtain permission to reproduce the images, if necessary.

Although contributions by e-mail are preferred, authors may submit articles, essays, commentaries, and images on readable electronic media (DVD, CD, USB flash drive) by mail to Bryan Hockensmith, Managing Editor, *Army History*, U.S. Army Center of Military History, 102 Fourth Ave., Collins Hall, Bldg. 35, Fort Lesley J. McNair, D.C. 20319-5060.



# CHIEF HISTORIAN'S FOOTNOTE

JON T. HOFFMAN



## FROM GREEN TO TAN

The Center of Military History (CMH) is making steady progress on launching the Army's official history series covering the conflicts since 11 September 2001. Unofficially dubbed the Tan Books in homage to CMH's World War II series that is widely known as the Green Books, we are unabashedly modeling this effort after that earlier successful program. CMH has been planning the series for some time, beginning with the issuance of a concept paper in 2016. The Conference of Army Historians in July 2017 hosted a four-hour session on the topic, followed by a two-day symposium in December at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, with representatives from throughout the Army and Department of Defense (DoD) history programs. Dr. W. Shane Story, chief of General Histories Division here at CMH, then drafted an execute order (EXORD) defining a plan for the Tan Books. CMH circulated it to command history offices for comment in April 2018, then revised it based on the feedback. The Center briefed Mr. Mark F. Averill, the acting Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army, on the draft EXORD in July. The brief provided background information on prior series covering conflicts from the Civil War through Vietnam, a proposed list of volumes, options for sourcing the work, and anticipated challenges to overcome (especially declassification). At the end of August, Mr. Averill submitted the draft EXORD to the office of the Secretary of the Army for approval.

The current draft of the EXORD grounds the series in the 2018 National Defense Strategy guidance to "emphasize intellectual leadership and military professionalism [by] deepening our knowledge of history."<sup>1</sup> It projects a total of forty-two volumes covering operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the institutional Army since 11 September 2001. CMH proposes editing and publishing all volumes, and researching and writing thirty-two of them. Commands have volunteered to produce manuscripts for the other ten books. The Center will assign some of the volumes to its permanent civil-service authors, but is looking to ramp up the effort with contract historians, with the goal of completing the series within twenty years. The total anticipated cost, over and above the already budgeted labor cost of civil service positions, is less than forty million dollars. By way of comparison, we know that the Army spent forty-five million (in current dollars) from nonappropriated funds to support the Green Books, and that amount covered perhaps one-third of the full cost of that series. CMH hopes that the Secretary of the Army will sign the EXORD, just as Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson issued the War Department Circular in

February 1946 to launch the World War II official histories. In addition, the Center has proposed that the Army request a DoD-funded effort at U.S. Central Command to declassify records, so that all the services and the Joint Staff can complete unclassified histories in a timely manner, support veteran claims, and permit wider use of official records in professional military education.

While we await the Secretary's decision on the EXORD, CMH already has begun execution with the resources we have available. Two permanent civil service authors are researching and writing books. Dr. Nicholas J. Schlosser is writing the *Surge in Iraq* (2007–2008) and Mr. Mark J. Reardon is revising his manuscript on *Building the Iraqi Army*. Dr. J. Travis Moger is working on a campaign pamphlet covering the Army in the Middle East from 1991 through 2001—a precursor to a full volume that will set the stage for the rest of the Tan Books. In the latter part of fiscal year 2018, we signed two contracts related to the series. Mr. Robert L. Bateman, a prolific author and retired Army officer, is authoring a volume on Army doctrine after 11 September 2001. Mr. Benjamin Brands, a former Army officer and West Point history instructor, will be writing a campaign pamphlet covering the preparation and conduct of the invasion of Iraq in 2003. It will serve as the basis for a future book on that topic. Cadet Command and West Point's Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis have started joint work on a volume covering Army recruiting and initial training, while The Judge Advocate General has initiated work on legal operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Twenty years is an ambitious schedule for the Tan Books, but the Center completed seventy-one of the seventy-nine volumes of the Green Books by 1969, twenty-three years after that series officially got underway. We hope that the end result of our new effort will be as highly regarded as the World War II series, no matter how long it takes.



1. Department of Defense, Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge, p. 8, accessed 23 October 2018, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.



