



1860-70

Crisis of the Union

AMERICA'S GREAT EXPERIMENT WITH FREEDOM AND LIBERTY SEEMED AN UTTER failure by 1860, as Northern and Southern states battled over the ethics and politics of human slavery. The nation's founding documents promised that all men were created equal; the practice of slavery mocked that vision. The reckoning between ideals and realities had been building for more than 80 years: now it was at hand. Yet no one dreamed just how bloody and uncivil this war between the states would become. The Civil War is a defining event in America's history, the cleansing moment that consigned slavery to the past—yet even so, it did not end the nation's sectional divisions or win full rights for African Americans. Above is a battle flag of the 84th Regiment, U.S. Colored Infantry, a black Union cadre; above right, the battle flag of the 4th Virginia Infantry.



“Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.”

—Abraham Lincoln, second Inaugural Address, 1865

LIFE ON CAMPAIGN

For soldiers on both sides, life on campaign involved walking miles, sleeping in tents, and periods of intense boredom. Soldiers wore ill-fitting uniforms and carried their possessions with them. Union soldiers usually had better food than the Confederates, and were also able to buy additional food from sutlers, who were merchants who followed the armies.

▼ *These cartoons of life in the Union Army were drawn by Winslow Homer, who became a leading American painter.*



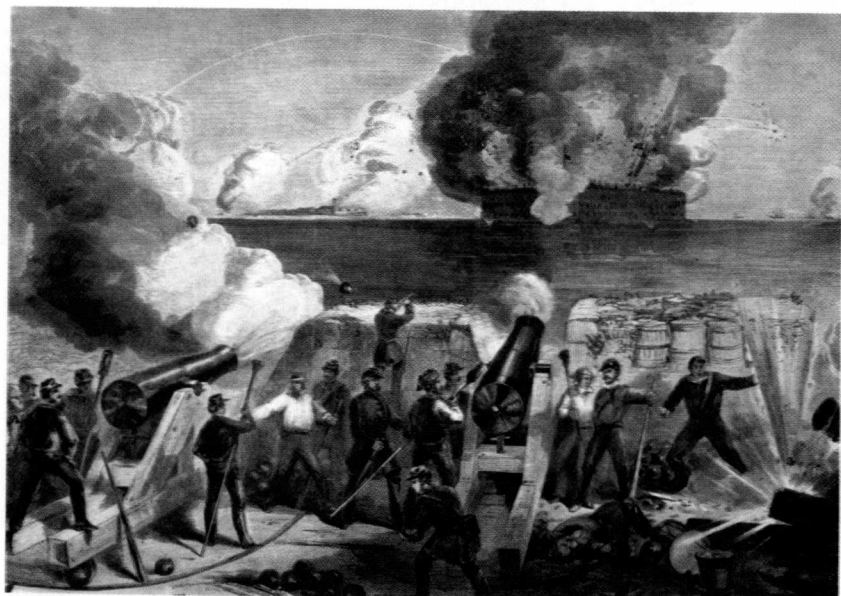
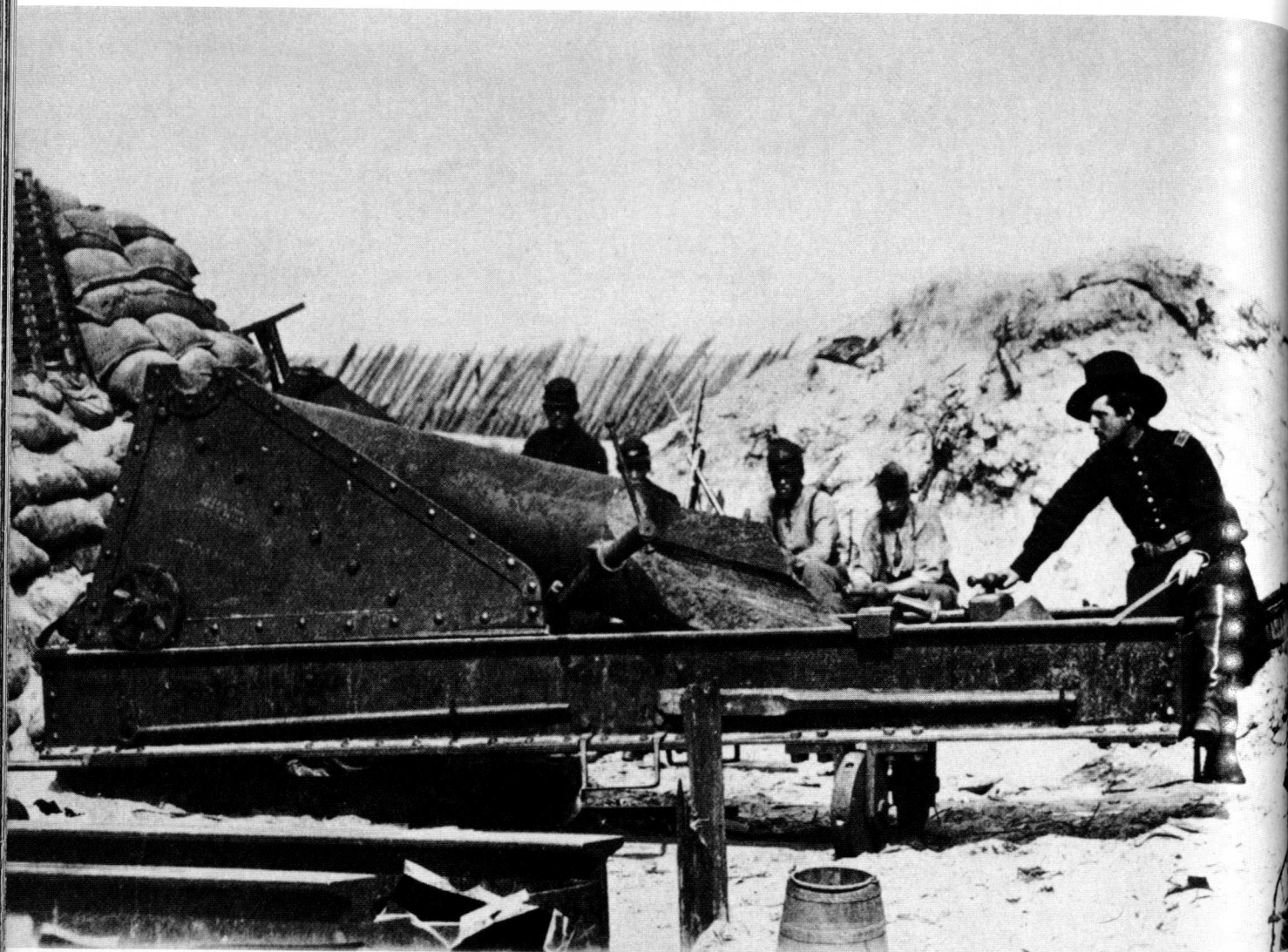
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Civil War by George Enzo



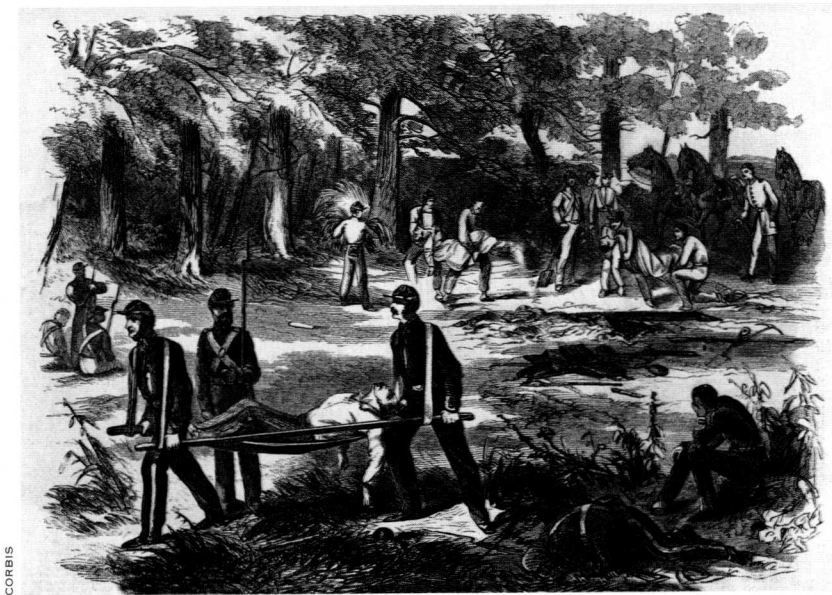
THE GRANGER COLLECTION

First Shots: Fort Sumter 1861

The war that would kill more Americans than any other began with a battle that took not a single life. The flashpoint was the federal armory at Fort Sumter, in the Charleston, S.C., harbor. Confederate General Pierre Beauregard began shelling the fort at 4:30 a.m. on April 12, 1861; 34 hours later, Union Major Robert Anderson (Beauregard's teacher at West Point) surrendered. In a deceptively benign start to what would be a long and grisly war, Beauregard allowed the Yankees safe conduct back to Union territory. Left, a contemporary illustration; above, Union troops at the fort after it was retaken in 1863.

The "Great Skedaddle" 1861

The bloodless Battle of Fort Sumter fed hopes that the secession crisis was more dramatic than deadly, so fashionable Washingtonians picnicked on hillsides near Bull Run Creek in Manassas, Va., on July 21, 1861, after newspapers published the time and place where numerically superior Union forces would meet Southern troops and put an end to the rebellion. But Confederate generals Pierre Beauregard and Thomas (Stonewall) Jackson sent Union troops and their admirers reeling back to the capital in a hasty retreat dubbed "the great skedaddle." Above, children eye cavalry; at right, a contemporary sketch of the battle.



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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHIC DIVISION

SOURCE EXPLORED

This cartoon was printed in the North soon after the defeat at Bull Run. It shows Union soldiers fleeing from the battlefield toward Washington, D.C., after their unexpected defeat. To make clear its subject, it features a prominent running bull. Sightseers who had come out from Washington, D.C., to watch the battle also had to flee the victorious Confederates. The cartoon has numbered features that relate to locations and individuals involved in the battle. It has an antiwar message for the Union. It was drawn from the point of view of a Copperhead, the name given to a Northern Democrat who supported the Confederacy and opposed the war. The Republicans named such people Copperheads after the venomous snake.

AS THEY SAW IT

“ Off they started like a flock of sheep every man for himself and the devil take the hindermost... As we gained the cover of the woods the stampede became even more frightful, for the baggage wagons and ambulances became entangled with the artillery and rendered the scene even more dreadful than the battle, while the plunging of the horses broke the lines of our infantry.

—In a letter home, Samuel J. English describes the moment Union troops fled.



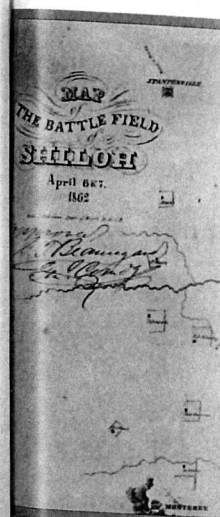
◀ This cartoon reflects the chaos after the battle. Fleeing Union soldiers were caught up with spectators who had come to watch the fighting.

BATTLE OF SHILOH

► This hand-colored print showing Grant leading a charge at Shiloh was published as a souvenir in the North in 1862.



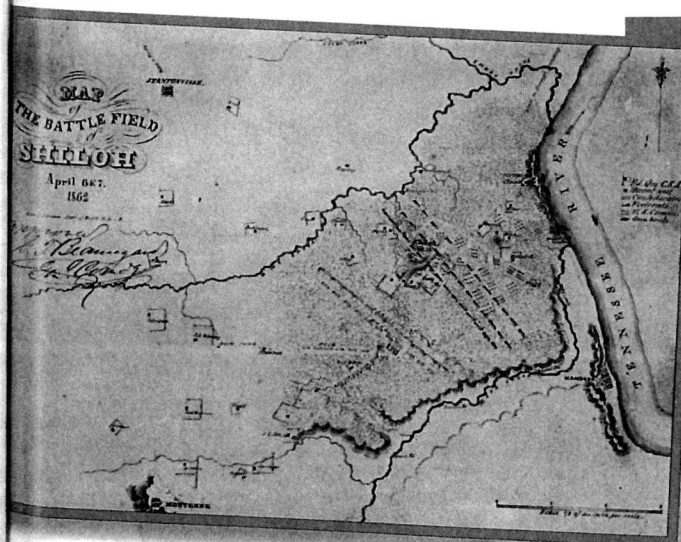
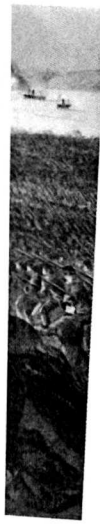
On April 6, 1862, Confederates led by Generals Albert Johnston and Pierre G. T. Beauregard launched a surprise attack in southwestern Tennessee to split the Union in two. Some 40,000 Confederates attacked General Ulysses S. Grant's troops at Pittsburg Landing, Shiloh. A Confederate victory looked likely until Union soldiers held their ground at a sunken road that became known as the Hornet's Nest. When Union reinforcements arrived, the Confederates were overwhelmed.



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The writer Ambrose Pierce joined the 9th Indiana Volunteers. He describes the close-quarter fighting that made Shiloh the war's bloodiest battle so far:

“ Then—I can’t describe it—the forest seemed all at once to flame up and disappear with a crash like that of a great wave upon the beach—a crash that expired in hot hissings, and the sickening “spat” of lead against flesh. A dozen of my brave fellows tumbled over like ten-pins. Some struggled to their feet only to go down again, and yet again. Those who stood fired into the smoking brush and doggedly retired. We had expected to find, at most, a line of skirmishers similar to our own... What we had found was a line of battle, coolly holding its fire till it could count our teeth. There was no more to be done but get back across the open ground... ”



SOURCE EXPLORED

This map of the battlefield at Shiloh was drawn by the Confederate Army engineer León Joseph Frémaux. It was endorsed as being accurate by General Pierre G. T. Beauregard, the senior Confederate commander. It shows how the Confederates trapped the Union Army against the Tennessee River. General Ulysses S. Grant used that to his advantage, however, when he brought in reinforcements overnight on steamships.

▲ The map is signed beneath the title by General Beauregard, the most senior Confederate general to survive the battle.

The Bloodiest Day on American Soil: Slaughter at Antietam 1862

Buoyed by victory in the Second Battle of Bull Run, General Robert E. Lee led his Army of Northern Virginia into Maryland in September 1862, driving toward Washington. In response, General George B. McClellan, the vain, overly cautious leader of the Army of the Potomac, finally heeded Abraham Lincoln's pleas and sent his troops into battle. Yet even though McClellan learned of Lee's battle plan in advance through a stroke of luck, his attack was timid and poorly coordinated. The result was a confused, day-long encounter that became a bloodbath; the "butcher's bill" numbered more than 10,000 Southern casualties, including some 1,500 dead, and an estimated 12,000 Northern casualties, including 2,000 dead. Below, soldiers lie in death along the Hagerstown Turnpike that divided the battlefield. The battle was a strategic victory for the North, as Lee was forced to withdraw. Despite his overwhelming superiority of numbers and Lincoln's urging, McClellan did not pursue Lee's battered army, and Lincoln relieved him of his command in November. Even so, the successful defense of Washington gave Lincoln the opening he needed to direct a political thrust at the South. Five days after the battle, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that all slaves in seceded Southern states would be free as of Jan. 1, 1863—making the abolition of slavery a goal of the war and helping undermine the Confederacy's slave-supported society.



BATTLE OF ANTIETAM



▲ *The Union 51st New York and 51st Pennsylvania regiments charge across a Confederate-held bridge on Antietam Creek in this drawing by Edwin Forbes.*

In late summer 1862, General Robert E. Lee planned to attack the Union Army on Union soil. Union spies discovered his plan, however, so General George McClellan's Army of the Potomac was lying in wait at Antietam Creek, Maryland. The forces clashed on September 17, 1862, the bloodiest day of the war. Approximately 24,000 men were killed, wounded, or captured as Lee's gamble ended in a bloody stalemate.



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◀ *Cameras were too slow to record movement well, so photographers often took pictures of static subjects.*

SOURCE EXPLORED

This photograph of dead Confederate soldiers waiting to

be buried was taken by the Scottish-born photographer Alexander Gardner. Gardner was one of a number of men who photographed the aftermath of battles. He used a traveling darkroom built on the back of a wagon to develop his photographs. There was an eager audience for such images back in the East. They were gory, but they were the closest most people had ever come to the battlefield.

D.H. Strother, one of General McClellan's staff, watched with McClellan as soldiers fought at a sunken road on the battlefield that later became known as Bloody Lane:

“ As the smoke and dust disappeared, I was astonished to observe our troops moving along the front and passing over what appeared to be a long, heavy column of the enemy without paying it any attention whatever. I borrowed a glass from an officer, and discovered this to be actually a column of the enemy's dead and wounded lying along a hollow road—afterward known as Bloody Lane. Among the prostrate mass I could easily distinguish the movements of those endeavoring to crawl away from the ground; hands waving as if calling for assistance, and others struggling as if in the agonies of death. ”



*ew York and 51st
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ridge on Antietam
by Edwin Forbes.*

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The 54th Massachusetts, the first all-black regiment, enrolled more than 1,000 volunteers. They included George E. Stephens, who wrote this letter to an African American magazine:

“ May 1, 1863, Camp Meigs, Readville, Mass;
 There is quite a stir in the camp to-day... Hundreds are flocking here from Boston and its environs to witness the military evolutions of the 54th Reg.... and never did they acquit themselves so admirably... I do not exaggerate when I say that there is no regiment superior, if equal to this in physique and aptitude of its men... I never saw a body of men who seem to be so perfectly at home in camp and have so many ways to divert and amuse themselves. Singing, dancing, foot-ball, cricket, wrestling, and many innocent games with the parades and drills... keep our camp in a perfect whirl of animating scenes. ”



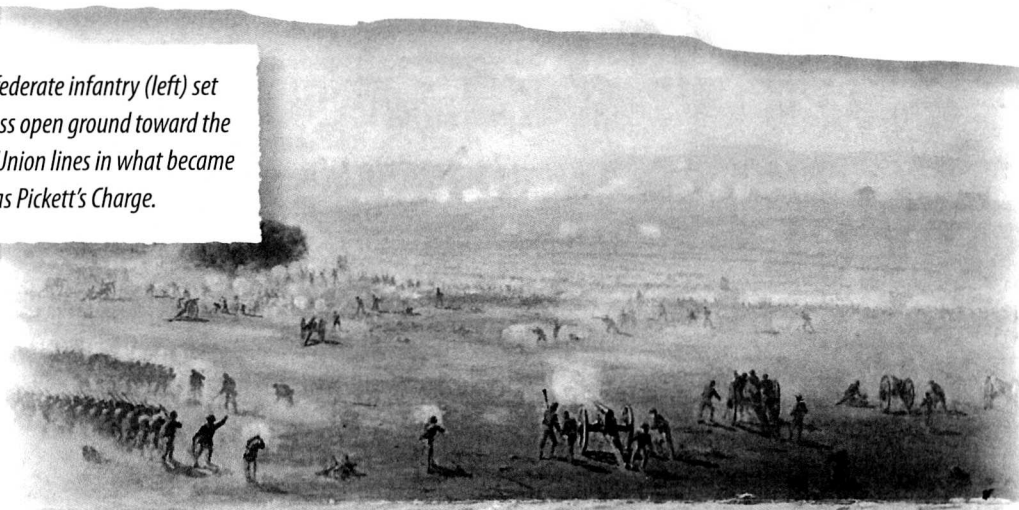
▲ Homer published his souvenir cards in 1864. They include an African American reinforcing a trench (bottom right)

SOURCE EXPLORED

These scenes of life in the Union Army, and those on the opposite page, were published as small cards in Boston in 1864. They were painted by the artist Winslow Homer, who later became very famous for his pictures of marine subjects. Homer was sent to the front lines by *Harper's Weekly*. He recorded all aspects of life for the men in battle, in camp, and on leave. He also painted images of women's roles in the war effort and life on the home front.

BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

► *Confederate infantry (left) set out across open ground toward the distant Union lines in what became known as Pickett's Charge.*



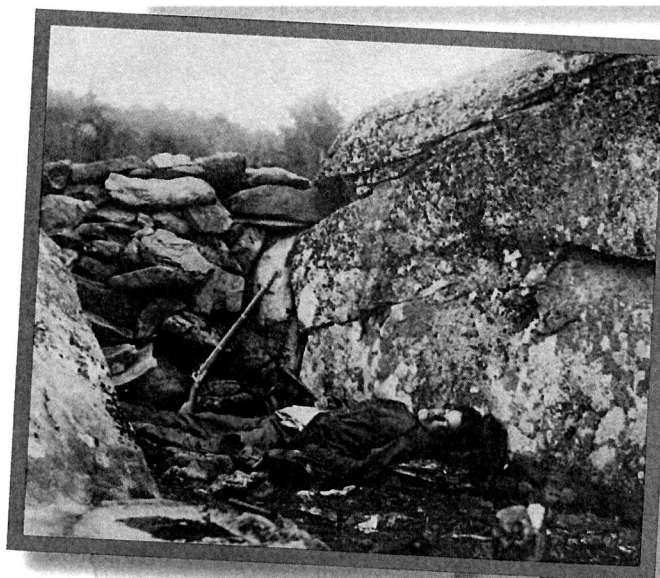
The battle fought at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, from July 1–3, 1863, changed the course of the war. Robert E. Lee had invaded the North, but stumbled into a whole Union army commanded by General George Meade. The first day ended with the Confederates close to victory, but the arrival of Union reinforcements turned the tide the next day. On July 3, Lee sent 15,000 troops forward in Pickett's Charge. As they marched across open ground, Union cannon and rifles gunned them down. Confederate troops never again came as close to Washington, D.C.



▲ *General Lee's army made a last stand at Pickett's Charge. The rifle pits were the last line of defense. It was here that the Confederates were finally defeated.*

Confederate Lieutenant G.W. Finley took part in Pickett's Charge, when General George Pickett led his infantry across open ground into a hail of fire:

“ The fatal field was before us. Where I marched, through a wheatfield that sloped gently toward the Emmitsburg road, the position of the Federals flashed into view. Skirmishers lined the fences along the road, and back of them, along a low stone wall or fence, gleamed the muskets of the first line... As we came in sight, there seemed to be a restlessness and excitement along the enemy's lines, which encouraged some of us to hope they would not make a stubborn resistance. Their skirmishers began to run in... Men were falling all around us, and cannon and muskets were raining death upon us. Still, on and up the slope toward that stone fence our men steadily swept, without a sound or a shot, save as the men would clamor to be allowed to return the fire that was being poured into them. ”



SOURCE EXPLORED

Alexander Gardner named this famous picture "Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter." It shows a dead Confederate at Gettysburg. The image is not what it seems, however. Research in the twentieth century showed that Gardner and his assistants moved the body to this location, called the Devil's Den. Gardner probably thought the stones made the image more dramatic.

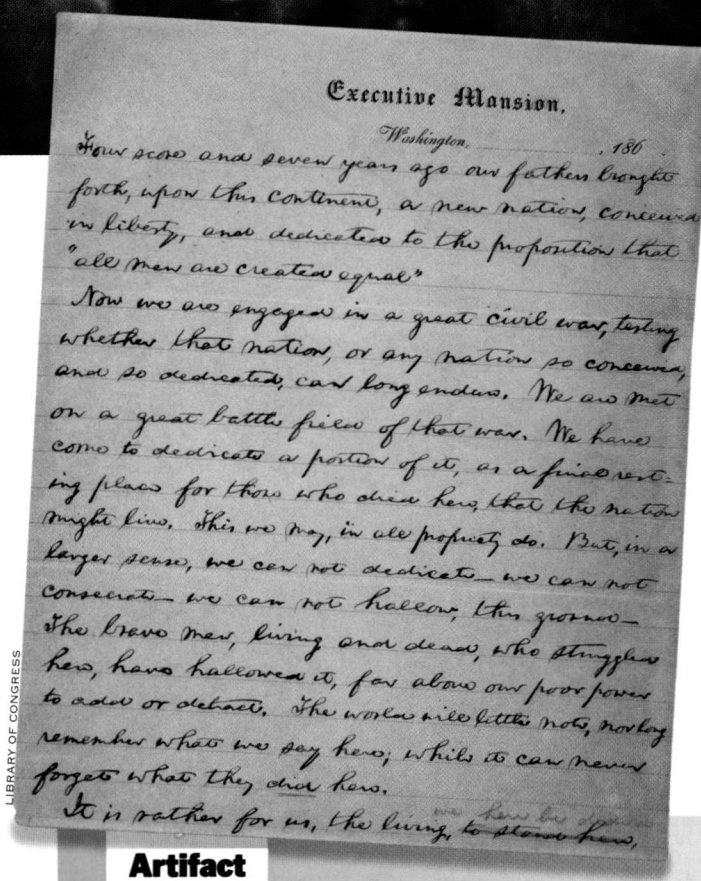
▲ Gardner used various ways to make his photograph more dramatic. The rifle did not belong to the sniper: it was Gardner's own.



A Great Battle—and its Memorable Aftermath 1863

The most significant battle of the Civil War began when an advance column of rebel troops invading Maryland and Pennsylvania stumbled onto a Union position outside the crossroads town of Gettysburg, Pa., on July 1, 1863. By the next day, the brilliant General Robert E. Lee had nearly completed a double envelopment of the Union forces. But on July 3, Lee blundered, sending a division of more than 15,000 men under Major General George Pickett in a direct charge against Union lines on the high ground of Cemetery Ridge. Pickett's Charge, if one of the most valiant actions in U.S. military history, left more than 10,000 rebels killed or wounded. Attempting to salvage something from the disaster, two more Southern divisions followed Pickett's and were similarly cut to pieces. When the battle ended that evening, more than 36,000 Americans were dead, wounded, missing or captured. One day later and some 900 miles away, Union General Ulysses S. Grant captured the Confederate stronghold at Vicksburg, Miss., handing control of the Mississippi River to the Union. The twin victories were the war's decisive moment: the Union was clearly stronger in men and arms than the rebels.

President Abraham Lincoln, seen above in the only picture that shows him at Gettysburg, delivered a memorial address on Nov. 19, 1863, in which he called on Americans to rededicate themselves to the nation's founding ideals and portrayed the war as a great test of whether a nation "conceived in Liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" could long endure.



Artifact

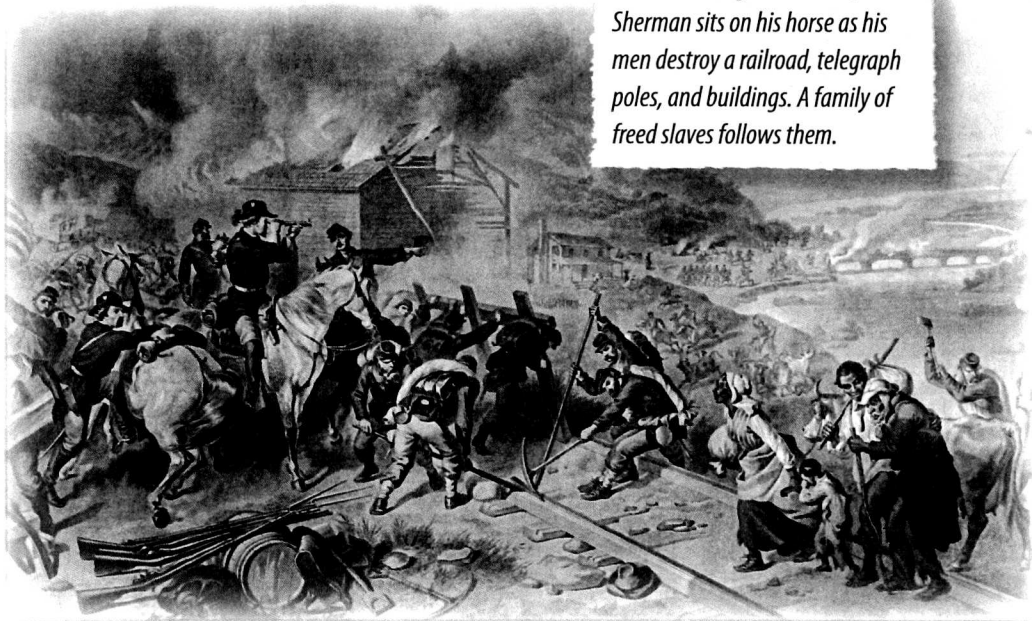
Manuscript, Gettysburg Address

Lincoln spoke for less than two minutes at Gettysburg; this manuscript in his hand, one of five that exist, includes only 10 sentences and 272 words. The legend persists that Lincoln wrote this profound document in haste on the train to the battlefield; in reality, he carefully revised his remarks in advance, as was his custom all his life.

SHERMAN'S MARCH TO THE SEA

On September 2, 1864, Union General William T. Sherman captured Atlanta, Georgia. He then set out through Georgia and the Carolinas to the coast. His 60,000 troops left a trail of devastation. They took food from hungry Southerners. They tore up railroad tracks, burned bridges, and stole livestock. Sherman was trying to break the morale of civilians to hasten the surrender of the South. His march caused lasting resentment among Southerners.

▼ *In this image from 1883, Sherman sits on his horse as his men destroy a railroad, telegraph poles, and buildings. A family of freed slaves follows them.*



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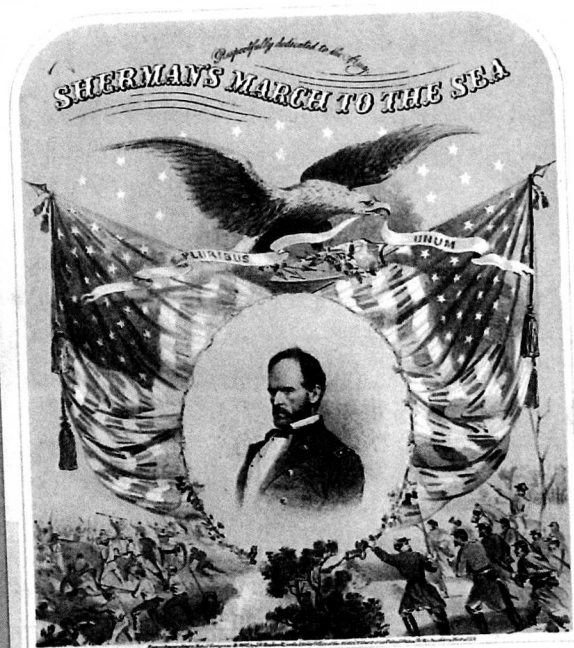
Union Major George Ward Nichols noted in his diary how Southerners tried to hide their possessions from Union troops:

“As rumors of the approach of our army reached the frightened inhabitants, frantic efforts were made to conceal not only their valuable personal effects, plate, jewelry, and other rich goods, but also articles of food, such as hams, sugar, flour, etc. A large part of these supplies were carried to the neighboring swamps; but the favorite method of concealment was the burial of the treasures in the pathways and gardens adjoining the dwelling-houses. Sometimes, also, the graveyards were selected as the best place of security from the ‘vandal hands of the invaders...’ Wherever the army halted, almost every inch of ground in the vicinity of the dwellings was poked by ramrods, pierced with sabres, or upturned with spades...”

SOURCE EXPLORED

Composers wrote songs and marches to celebrate many parts of the Civil War. This song is based on the March to the Sea. Before recorded music was available, sheet music was hugely popular. It allowed people to play the latest popular songs at home.

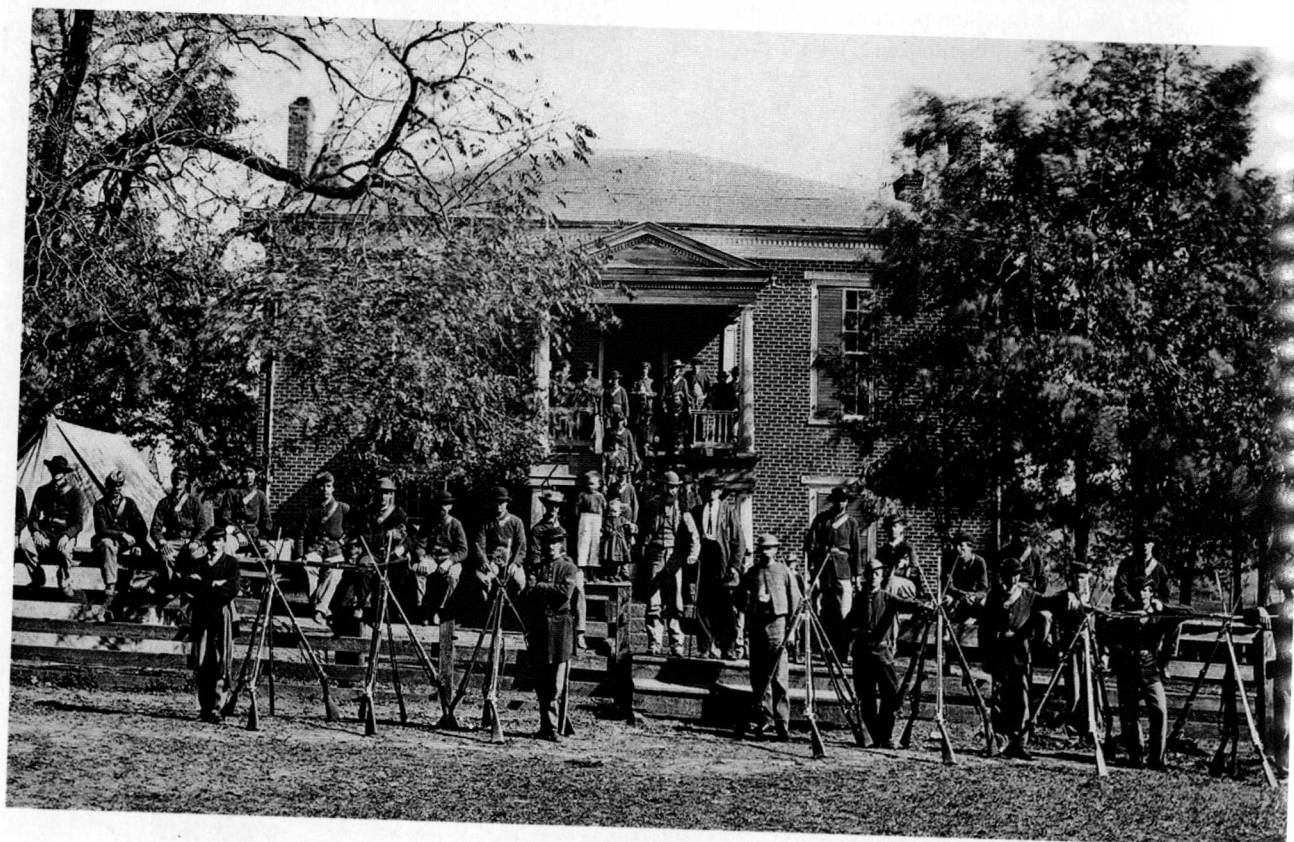
► “*Sherman's March to the Sea*” was written in 1865 to be performed by a pianist and four singers.



WORDS BY S. H. BYERS. 29622. MUSIC BY J. O. ROCKWELL. 172.
 NEW YORK, Published by Wm. Hall & Son, 543 Broadway. May 6, 1865.
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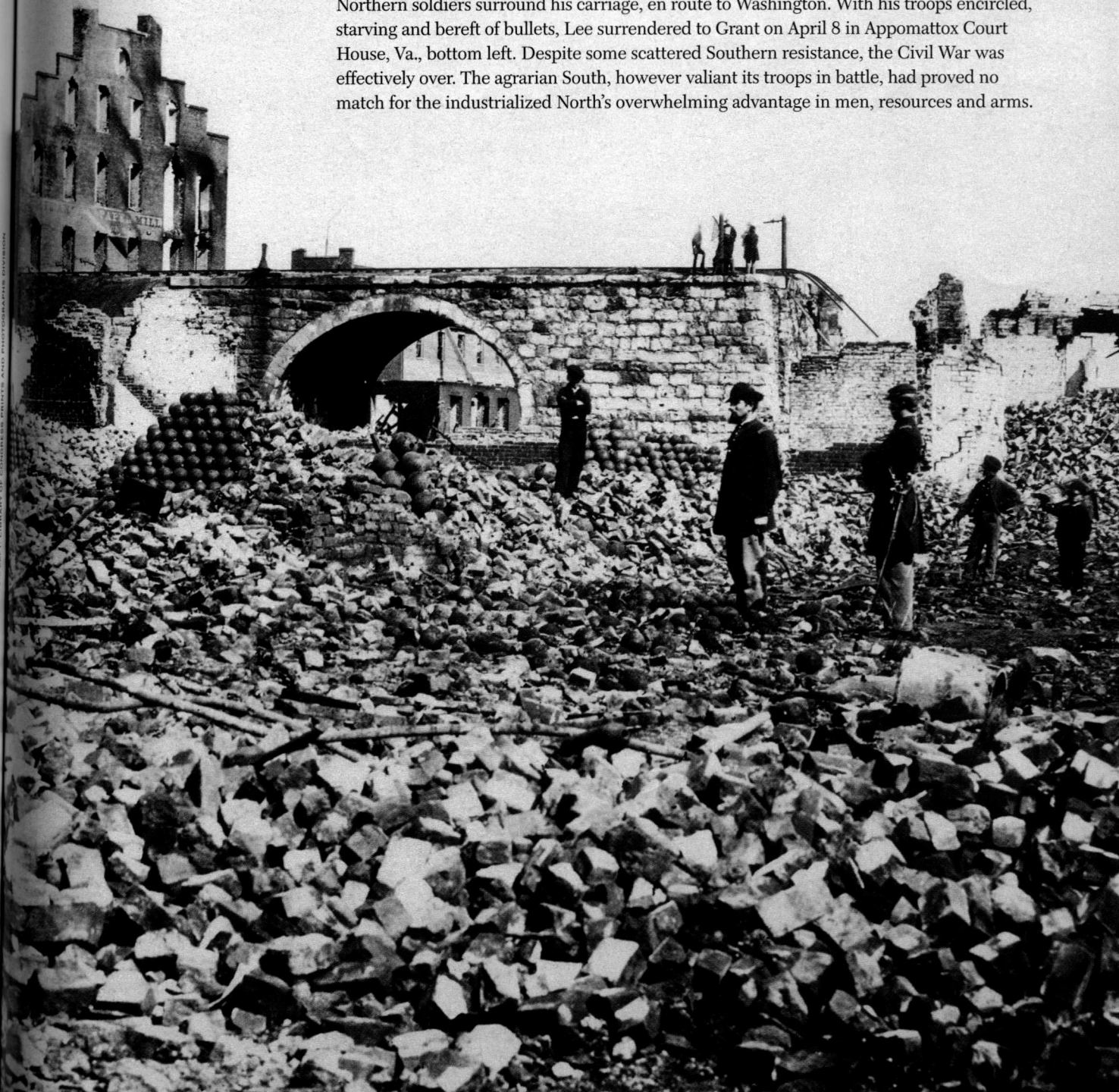
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A Vanquished South Agrees to Surrender 1865

The last 12 months of the Civil War brought destruction on a scale never seen before in human conflict. Union top commander Ulysses S. Grant, the tough general Lincoln had been seeking for so long, believed that chewing up Southern troops in battle and torching Southern resources behind the lines was the only way to end the conflict. The first strategy cost the Union more than 66,000 casualties in just six weeks in the fall of 1864, but inflicted even heavier losses on the South, now out of manpower. The second was pursued by General William T. Sherman. Calling for "devastation more or less relentless," he laid waste to much of the state of Georgia, entering and burning its capital, Atlanta, on Sept. 1-2, 1864. Marching east to Savannah and the sea, Sherman then hooked north toward Virginia and General Robert E. Lee's army, already besieged from the other direction by Grant's forces.

The Confederacy was doomed: its capital, Richmond, Va., fell on April 3, 1865. Below, Union troops survey the ruins. President Jefferson Davis fled but was captured; at top left, Northern soldiers surround his carriage, en route to Washington. With his troops encircled, starving and bereft of bullets, Lee surrendered to Grant on April 8 in Appomattox Court House, Va., bottom left. Despite some scattered Southern resistance, the Civil War was effectively over. The agrarian South, however valiant its troops in battle, had proved no match for the industrialized North's overwhelming advantage in men, resources and arms.

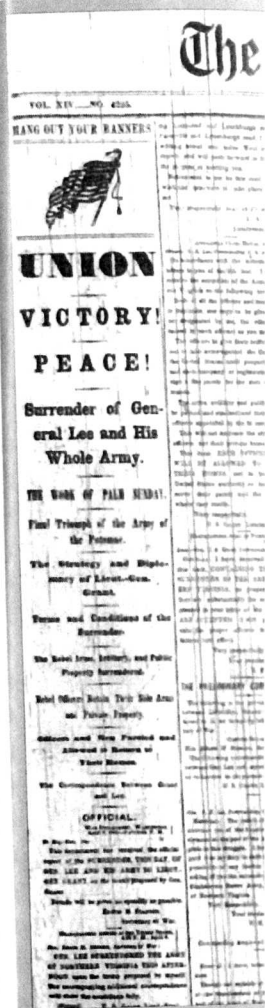


RIGHT: MEDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION—CORBIS; LEFT: TOP: CORBIS; BOTTOM: MEDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION—CORBIS

SURRENDER

By March 1865, time was running out for the Confederates. Lee had left Richmond and was retreating toward North Carolina. Short of men and with supplies running low, Lee was blocked by a larger Union army at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. Early on April 9, the Union Army won a decisive battle. Later, Lee and Grant agreed surrender terms for the Army of Northern Virginia. The last Confederate army did not surrender until June 23, when the Civil War officially came to an end.

▼ Lee (left) and Grant (seated, right) sign the surrender in a farmhouse in Appomattox Court House, Virginia, on April 9, 1865.



SOURCE EXI

The New York T Army of Northe surrender are s across the top a your banners." April 12. Grant's and their horse It was not quite field, but althou they all surrenc

The New-York Times

NEW-YORK, MONDAY, APRIL 10, 1865. THE VICTORY. Thanks to God, the Giver of Victory. Honors to Gen. Grant and His Gallant Army. A NATIONAL GAZETTE HEREAFTER. I've Desired You to be Proud of the Independence of Every Army Department, That had Armed.

AS THEY SAW IT

“ Before us in proud humiliation stood the embodiment of manhood: men whom neither toils and sufferings, nor the fact of death, nor disaster, nor hopelessness could bend from their resolve. ”

—General Joshua L. Chamberlain describes the Confederate troops at the surrender ceremony on April 12.

◀ The front page of the New York Times of April 10, 1865, is dominated by the news from Appomattox Court House.

SOURCE EXPLORED

The New York Times of Monday, April 10, 1865, reports the surrender of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. As was common at the time, the headlines about the surrender are stacked on top of each other in a column, rather than placed in strips across the top as is more usual today. The column is headed "Hang out your banners." The surrender on April 9 was followed by a formal ceremony on April 12. Grant's generous terms allowed the Confederates to keep their sidearms and their horses, which would be necessary to plant crops for the year's harvest. It was not quite the end of the war. There were other Confederate forces in the field, but although some officers argued in favor of continuing in the conflict, they all surrendered over the course of the next two months.