

Hell Settlement

THE BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS, MAY 5-7, 1864

by Chris Mackowski

EMERGING CIVIL WAR SERIES

Footnotes

The original version of this book, *The Dark, Close Wood*, was commissioned by Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. I made extensive use of their archives and research materials, cited in these notes as “FRSP archives.”

Chapter One: Ellwood

William and Betty Jones had come there to the edge of Spotsylvania County. . . .¹

Lacy was “broken down aristocracy. . . .”²

Along the way, the path crosses Wilderness Run, which “served as Ellwood plantation’s lifeblood. . . .”³

Wesley Brainerd’s account of Stonewall Jackson’s arm⁴

¹ Background information in this chapter comes from G. Frank Williss, *Historical Structure Report: Ellwood—Lacy House*, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (FRSP), FRSP archives.

² Fred Wilder Cross, *Historic People and Places in Chancellorsville, Wilderness, Spotsylvania C.H. Region*, FRSP Bound Volumes, Vol. 4.

³ <http://www.fowb.org/index.php/battlefield/wilderness-crossing-trail-guide/>

⁴ Wesley Brainerd, *Bridge Building in Wartime: Col. Wesley Brainerd’s Memoir*, Ed Malles, ed., (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 213.

Chapter Two: The Wilderness

... "a vast sea"⁵

Another described the region less kindly. . . .⁶

"You had a tangle through which a dog could hardly force its way. . . ."⁷

"The scrawny, moss-tagged pines. . . ."⁸

"only a labyrinth of wagon tracks and bridle paths. . . ."⁹

"The dead horses had dwindled away to bones. . . ."¹⁰

"This, viewed as a battleground, was simply infernal. . . ."¹¹

"It is impossible to conceive. . . ."¹²

"All the conditions were favorable for defensive operations," Grant noted.¹³

"[I]t was my intention to fight Lee. . . ."¹⁴

"We were all up by star-light; a warm, clear night. . . ."¹⁵

". . . a wilderness in the most forbidding sense of the word."¹⁶

"There were two pontoons. . . ."¹⁷

The crossing "took a good deal of time. . . ."¹⁸

"Though here was green grass in place of an half inch of ice . . ."¹⁹

The surrounding memorial garden. . . .²⁰

"We firmly believe that preservation and progress. . . ."²¹

"This is a wonderful legacy gift from Wal-Mart. . . ."²²

*The word wilderness conveys generally the impression of a deserted waste*²³

⁵ Morris Schaff, *The Battle of the Wilderness* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1910), 57.

⁶ Noah Andrea Trudeau, *Bloody Roads South: The Wilderness to Cold Harbor* (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1989), 64-5, quotes G. Norton Galloway of the 95th Pennsylvania; Theodore Irving, *More than Conqueror, or Memorials of Col. J. Howard Kitching* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1873), 124; James L. Bowen, "In the Wilderness." *Philadelphia Weekly Times*. 27 June 1885.

⁷ Mason, Edwin C. "Through the Wilderness to the Bloody Angle at Spottsylvania Court House." *Glimpses of the Nation's Struggle*. 4th Series. St. Paul: H.L. Collins Co., 1893. Pg. 294.

⁸ Schaff, 56.

⁹ Mason, 294.

¹⁰ George A. Marden, quartermaster of the 1st United States Sharpshooters, May 8, 1864, FSNMP bound volumes.

¹¹ Francis A. Walker, *General Hancock*, (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1895), 160.

¹² Irving, 124. Mason, 294.

¹³ Ulysses S. Grant, *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, (New York: Library of America, 1990). 521.

¹⁴ O.R. XXXIII, pt. 1, 13.

¹⁵ Theodore Lyman, *Meade's Army: The Private Notebooks of Lt. Col. Theodore Lyman*. David W. Lowe, ed. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2007), 131.

¹⁶ Porter, 50.

¹⁷ Lyman, 131.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ <http://germanna.org/about/visitor-center/memorial-garden/>

²¹ <http://www.civilwar.org/aboutus/news/news-releases/2011-news/walmart-abandons-wilderness-plans.html>

²² <http://www.civilwar.org/aboutus/news/news-releases/2013-news/governor-mcdonnell-announces-1.html>

Chapter Three: Grant Takes Control

The whittling, said an aide, played “sad havoc” on the gloves. . . .²⁵
“It was amusing,” said an observer. . . .²⁶
“[B]ut as I strolled thro’ the group of officers reclining under the trees. . . .”²⁷
Some noted “a good deal of rough-looking dignity”. . . .²⁸
“[H]e rode along the line in a slouchy unobservant way. . . .”²⁹
“[Grant] is by no means a handsome man. . . .”³⁰
. . . “stumpy, unmilitary, slouchy, and Western-looking; very ordinary in fact.”³¹
“There is no enthusiasm in the army for Gen. Grant. . . .”³²
“Well, Grant has never met Bobby Lee yet. . . .”³³
“I can’t spare this man,” Lincoln reportedly said. “He fights.”³⁴
“You are vigilant and self-reliant,” Lincoln told him. . . .³⁵
“He habitually wears an expression. . . .”³⁶
. . . “until the military power of the rebellion was entirely broken.”³⁷
. . . “the resources of the enemy and his numerical strength were far inferior to ours.”³⁸
. . . “to hammer continuously against the armed force of the enemy. . . .”³⁹

²³ reprinted in *The Lives of Gen. U.S. Grant and Henry Wilson* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson & Bros., 1872), 177.

²⁴ Noel Harrison, *Chancellorsville Battlefield Sites* (Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, 1990), 57-60.

²⁵ Porter, 65.

²⁶ William F. G. Shanks, *New York Herald*.

²⁷ Nicholas Smith, *Grant, The Man of Mystery* (Milwaukee: The Young Churchman Co., 1909), 221.

²⁸ Theodore Lyman, *Meade’s Headquarters, 1863-1865. Letters of Theodore Lyman from The Wilderness to Appomattox*. Agassiz, George R., ed. (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922), 81; Charles S. Wainwright, *A Diary of Battle: The Personal journals of Colonel Charles S. Wainwright, 1861-1865*. Allan Nevins, ed. (New York: De Capo, 1998), 336.

²⁹ Wainwright, Charles S. *A Diary of Battle: The Personal journals of Colonel Charles S. Wainwright, 1861-1865*. Allan Nevins, editor. New York: De Capo, 1998. Pg. 339.

³⁰ Elisha Bracken, 100th PA, letter April 17, 1864. FSNMP bound volumes.

³¹ Wainwright, Charles S. *A Diary of Battle: The Personal journals of Colonel Charles S. Wainwright, 1861-1865*. Allan Nevins, editor. New York: De Capo, 1998. Pg. 338.

³² Col. Selden Connor, 19th ME, letter May 16, 1864. FSNMP bound volumes.

³³ Grant, *Memoirs*, 598.

³⁴ The source of this comment, which is widely quoted, is actually suspect. Historian Brooks Simpson contends that “Lincoln probably never uttered the phrase. . . .” Brooks Simpson, “Lincoln and Grant,” *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, Roy Basler and Carl Sandburg, eds., (New York: Da Capo Press, 2008), 149.

³⁵ Abraham Lincoln to Ulysses S. Grant, 30 April 1864.

<http://hdl.huntington.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16003coll6/id/5433>

³⁶ Theodore Lyman, *Meade’s Headquarters, 1863-1865. Letters of Theodore Lyman from The Wilderness to Appomattox*, George R. Agassiz, ed., (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922), 81.

³⁷ O.R. XXXIV, pt. 1, pg. 9.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 8.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 9.

... “preventing him from using the same force at different seasons. . . .”⁴⁰
 “Lee’s army will be your objective. . . .”⁴¹
 “[Grant] is so much more active than his predecessor. . . .”⁴²
 “I am heartily tired of hearing what Lee is going to do. . . .”⁴³
 “If any opportunity presents itself of pitching into a part of Lee’s army. . . .”⁴⁴
 “No movement of the enemy seemed to puzzle or disconcert him. . . .”⁴⁵
 . . . “order up some artillery and defend the present location.”⁴⁶
 “Well, Grant,” Sherman said. . . .”⁴⁷
 His chief of staff, Brig. Gen. John Rawlins, later said. . . .”⁴⁸
 . . . Grant “gave vent to his feelings in a way which left no room to doubt that he was deeply moved.”⁴⁹
 “Years ago a turnpike was built from Fredericksburg to. . . .”⁵⁰
 [I]n the northwest angle formed by the two intersecting roads. . . .”⁵¹
 George F. Williams of the 146th New York infantry recalled seeing the Union army’s commanders. . . .”⁵²

Chapter Four: Lee Moves into the Wilderness

“That man will fight us every day and every hour till the end of the war. . . .”⁵³
 “It behooves us to be on the alert, or we will be deceived. . . .”⁵⁴
 Lee even worried that press reports about Grant’s plans. . . .”⁵⁵
 “[A] large number of recruits are being sent to the Army of the Potomac. . . .”⁵⁶
 “Their clothes are too new & overcoats of too deep a blue for old troops. . . .”⁵⁷

⁴⁰ Ibid, 9.

⁴¹ O.R. XXXIII, pt. 1, pg. 828.

⁴² George Gordon Meade to wife, 13 May 1864, in *Letters*, 2:189.

⁴³ Porter, 70.

⁴⁴ O.R. XXXIII, Pt. 2, 403.

⁴⁵ Quoted from a widely circulated newspaper account, in Hamlin Garland, *Ulysses S. Grant: His Life and Character* (New York: Doubleday & McClure Co., 1898), 270.

⁴⁶ Porter, 59

⁴⁷ Interview with Sherman in the *Washington Post*, quoted in the *Army and Navy Journal* for 30 December 1893, subsequently quoted in Bruce Catton, *Grant Moves South* (New York: Little Brown, 1960), 242.

⁴⁸ James Harrison Wilson, *The Life of John A. Rawlins: Lawyer, Assistant Adjutant-General, Chief of Staff, Major General of Volunteers, and Secretary of War* (New York: Neal Publishing, 1916), 217. Wilson recounts the story as told to him by Rawlins.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Charles Carleton Coffin, *The Boys of '61: or, Four Years of Fighting* (Boston: The Page Company Publishers, 1896), 340.

⁵¹ Porter, 50.

⁵² George F. Williams, *Bullet and Shell* (New York: Forbes, Howard & Hulbert, 1884), 328.

⁵³ Porter, 47.

⁵⁴ O.R., Vol. LII, Pt. 2, 649.

⁵⁵ Lee to Davis, 25 March 1864. *The Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee*. Clifford Dowdey and Louis Manarin, eds., (New York: De Capo, 1961), 682.

⁵⁶ Lee to Davis, 8 April 1864, *Papers*, 694.

⁵⁷ Lee to Bragg, 7 April 1864, *Papers*, 692.

"I hope that few of the soldiers of this army will find it necessary. . . ."58
 "The great obstacle everywhere is scarcity of supplies. . . ."59
 "Our army is in excellent condition in every way. . . ."60
 "The country here looks very green & pretty notwithstanding. . . ."61
 "The Army of Northern Virginia alone, as the last hope of the South. . . ."62
 "If I had thought there was any reasonable degree of probability of success. . . ."63
 "I am greatly disappointed at his getting off with so little damage. . . ."64
 "If I am forced to retire from this line. . . ."65
 "Everything indicates preparation for active service about the 1st of May. . . ."66
 Taylor noted "it really seemed to do him good. . . ."67
 "[W]hether with the intention of attacking, or moving. . . ."68
 "The troops are all in excellent spirits, and eager for the fray. . . ."69

Chapter Five: Quandary at Saunders Field

There was "something oppressive in the dim light and the strange quiet. . . ."70
 "With the aide of my glass," wrote a Federal colonel. . . .71
 "I do not believe that Warren ever had a greater surprise in his life. . . ."72
 "If any opportunity presents itself. . . ."73
 "Just imagine the difficulty a single unencumbered man would have. . . ."74
 "The officers and men all along the line. . . ."75
 "The last crop of the old field had been corn. . . ."76
 "Men disappeared as if the earth had swallowed them. . . ."77

58 Lee circular to Army of Northern Virginia, 7 April 1864, *Papers*, 693.

59 Lee to Longstreet, 28 March 1864, *Papers*, 685.

60 Walter Taylor, *Lee's Adjutant: The Wartime Letters of Colonel Walter Herron Taylor, 1862-1865*, R. Lockwood Tower and John S. Belmont, eds., (Columbia, S.C.: Univ of South Carolina Press, 1995), 128.

61 Lee to his wife, 9 June 1863, *Papers*, 507.

62 Ezekial Graham, 6th Georgia, quoted as a chapter header in Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

63 George Gordon Meade, *The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade*, Vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 158.

64 Lee to his wife, 4 December 1864, *Papers*, 631.

65 Lee to Davis, 15 April 1864, *Papers*, 699.

66 Harvey Black, *The Civil War Letters of Dr. Harvey Black*, Glenn McMullin, ed., (Butternut & Blue, 1995), 92.

67 Taylor, *Letters*, 148.

68 Lee to Davis, 4 May 1864, *Papers*, 719.

69 Samuel Clyde, 2nd South Carolina, letter, 28 April 1864, FRSP archives.

70 Sartell Prentice, "The Opening Hours in the Wilderness in 1864," *Military Essays and Recollections*, Vol. 2. (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1894), 114-6.

71 Joseph Hayes, journal, 5 May 1864, Library of Congress.

72 Schaff, 126.

73 Grant to Meade, OR, Vol. XXXVI, Pt. 2, 403.

74 Harold George, 139th Pennsylvania, memoir, FRSP archives.

75 Prentice, 114.

76 Schaff, 149.

“We were exposed to a terrific cross fire. . . .”⁷⁸

“[T]here were two terrific explosions in the hollow behind us. . . .”⁷⁹

. . . “as the wearers ran to and fro over the field, firing and shouting.”⁸⁰

Soon, recalled a Pennsylvania officer. . . .⁸¹

“[T]he advance through the woods was not accomplished. . . .”⁸²

“His horse was killed, part of his clothing was shot away. . . .”⁸³

“All nature seems to expect some awful shock. . . .”⁸⁴

(See *Strike Them a Blow: Battle Along the North Anna* for more information on King and his work.)

The 140th entered the fray with 529 men and lost 23 killed, 118 wounded, and 114 missing—a casualty rate of 48 percent.⁸⁵

. . . estimates vary from anywhere between 108 and 350, all buried in mass graves.⁸⁶

“The trail passes through a maze of earthworks. . . .”⁸⁷

Chapter Six: The Sprawl of Battle

. . . the “champion mud hole of mud holes.”⁸⁸

“Looking down that line from Grant’s right toward his left. . . .”⁸⁹

. . . “the astounded Federals, shattering them. . . .”⁹⁰

“[T]here was a great outburst of musketry. . . .”⁹¹

. . . “pouring out of the woods in great confusion and almost panic stricken.”⁹²

. . . they took up position “on high ground, so that we could plainly see the store

⁷⁷ Porter Farley, *Under the Maltese Cross, Antietam to Appomattox: Campaigns 155th Pennsylvania Regiment, Narrated by the Rank and File*, (Pittsburgh: 155th Regimental Association, 1910), 245.

⁷⁸ Charles T. Bowen, 12 U.S. infantry, 7 May 1864 diary entry, FRSP archives.

⁷⁹ Farley, 245-6.

⁸⁰ *Campaigns of the One Hundred Forty-Sixth Regiment, New York State Volunteers*, Mary Genevieve Green Brainard, ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1915), 193.

⁸¹ A. M. Judson, *History of the Eighty-Third Regiment Pennsylvanians* (Erie, PA: B. F. H. Lynn, Publisher, 1881), 94.

⁸² Survivors’ Association. *History of the Corn Exchange Regiment, 118th Pennsylvania Volunteers*. Philadelphia: J. L. Smith, 1888. Pg. 400.

⁸³ Ibid 401.

⁸⁴ James L. McCown, diary, 5 May 1864, FRSP archives.

⁸⁵ Casualty figures taken from the text of the regiment’s monument in Saunders Field.

⁸⁶ Pfanz, Donald. “The Bone Collectors: Creation of Wilderness Cemetery #1.” *Mysteries and Conundrums*. <https://npsfrsp.wordpress.com/2010/09/07/the-bone-collectors-creation-of-wilderness-cemetery-1/>. The post is based of Pfanz’s research, collected in his book *Where Valor Proudly Sleeps*, part of FSNMP’s archives.

⁸⁷ <http://www.nps.gov/frsp/planyourvisit/upload/GordonFA.pdf>

⁸⁸ Survivors Association, *History of the 121st Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers*, (Philadelphia: Catholic Standard and Times, 1906). 77.

⁸⁹ John Brown Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1903), 240.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 241.

⁹¹ Rufus R. Dawes, *A Full Blown Yankee of the Iron Brigade: Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers*, Alan T. Nolan, ed., (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 260-1.

⁹² Washington Roebling, quoted in Schaff, 157.

and the Orange Plank Road which runs by it”⁹³
A soldier described the property as. . . .⁹⁴

Chapter Seven: Homeplaces in the Swirl of War

Homeplaces⁹⁵

A detachment of New Yorkers, trying to find the rest of their regiment, sought out the “lord of the manor” at an unidentified farmhouse. . . .⁹⁶

“ . . . the habitual gloom of his dusky sallow face” . . .⁹⁷

“It will never do, to make a showing of such heavy losses. . . .”⁹⁸

“Mount, walk your horses, and don’t look back.”⁹⁹

Chapter Eight: Crisis on the Plank Road

“Surrounded by his staff and orderlies, with his headquarters flag flying. . . .”¹⁰⁰

A cluster of Federal horsemen burst past “like a flock of wild geese. . . .”¹⁰¹

“We must hold this point at any risk. . . .”¹⁰²

“[A] bullet went whistling overhead. . . .”¹⁰³

Getty’s infantry arrived “running like greyhounds,” filing into the intersection around him.¹⁰⁴

“The distance was nearly two miles. . . .”¹⁰⁵

“ . . . and I reckon you’ll find it out before you leave here.”¹⁰⁶

. . . “occupy the Brock Road if you could do so without bringing on a general engagement.”¹⁰⁷

“The lines struggled and pushed their way through the dense thickets. . . .”¹⁰⁸

⁹³ Wainwright, 348-9.

⁹⁴ Noel Harrison, “Higgerson House,” *Wilderness and Spotsylvania Gazetteer*, 255, FRSP archives.

⁹⁵ The author is indebted to FRSP volunteer Josef Rockus for his instrumental research help on this chapter. Also key was Noel Harrison, *Wilderness and Spotsylvania Gazetteer*, FRSP archives.

⁹⁶ Abram P. Smith, *History of the Seventy-sixth regiment New York volunteers; what it endured and accomplished; containing descriptions of its twenty-five battles; its marches; its camp and bivouac scenes; with biographical sketches of fifty-three officers and a complete record of the enlisted men* (Cortland, NY: Truair, Smith and Miles, 1867), 287.

⁹⁷ Schaff, 209.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁹⁹ Noel Harrison, “Chewing House,” *Wilderness and Spotsylvania Gazetteer*, 251, FRSP archives.

¹⁰⁰ Hazard Stevens, “The Sixth Corps in the Wilderness,” *The Wilderness Campaign. Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts*, Vol. IV (Boston: 1905), 190.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Vermont soldier, *National Tribune*, 28 January 1897, FRSP archives.

¹⁰⁶ Stevens, 190-1.

¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁸ Stevens, 192.

... "a butchery pure and simple."¹⁰⁹
 "The woods would light up with the flashes of musketry as if with lightning. . .
 ."110
 The Vermont monument¹¹¹
 "This morning was beautiful,"¹¹²
 At the dedication ceremony. . .¹¹³
 "I am not surprised that he met his death at the head of his troops. . ."¹¹⁴

Chapter Nine: A Heavy Pounding Match

"Brave men were falling like autumn leaves. . ."¹¹⁵
 "When we reached the junction of the roads. . ."¹¹⁶
 "The wounded stream out, and fresh troops pour in. . ."¹¹⁷
 "For a long time the two lines at close quarters poured deadly volleys. . ."¹¹⁸
 . . . "a line of dead Federals so thick as to form a partial breastwork."¹¹⁹
 "It was novel experience. . ."¹²⁰
 ". . . seeming anxious to recover what had been lost earlier in the afternoon."¹²¹
 . . . "and whatever was before them was driven back."¹²²
 The fighting along the Orange Plank Road. . .¹²³
 "We lay upon the ground surrounded by dead and dying rebel soldiers. . ."¹²⁴
 Another soldier thought "the terrible groans of the wounded. . ."¹²⁵
 . . . "a woeful night . . ."¹²⁶

¹⁰⁹ *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-65*, Walter Clark, ed. (Goldsboro, NC: Nash Brothers, 1901), 75.

¹¹⁰ Robert Robertson, "From the Wilderness to Spottsylvania: A Paper Read Before the Ohio Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, December 3, 1884, (Cincinnati: Henry C. Sherick, 1884), 12.

¹¹¹ Donald Pfanz, *History Through Eyes of Stone: A Survey of Civil War Monuments Near Fredericksburg, Virginia* (2006), 200-3, FRSP archives.

¹¹² S. Duncan Oliphant, "Brigadier-General Alexander Hayes," *The United States Service Magazine*, Vol. 2, (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1864), 272.

¹¹³ Pfanz, *History*, 181,

¹¹⁴ Porter, 52.

¹¹⁵ Robertson, "From the Wilderness to Spottsylvania," 12.

¹¹⁶ John Haley, *The Rebel Yell & the Yankee Hurrah: The Civil War Journal of a Maine Volunteer*, Ruth L. Silliker, ed., (Camden, ME: Down East Books, 1985), 143.

¹¹⁷ Charles Page, *Letters of a War Correspondent*, (Boston: L. C. Page & Co., 1899), 50.

¹¹⁸ James L. Bowen, "In the Wilderness," 27 June 1885, *Philadelphia Weekly Times*.

¹¹⁹ W. J. Martin quoted in *Confederate Military History: A Library of Confederate States History*, Vol. 4, Clement Evans, ed., (Atlanta; Confederate Publishing Co., 1899), 234.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Elihu Washburne to Charles Wadsworth, letter, 2 June 1865, FRSP archives.

¹²² Palmer, quoted in William L. Royall, *Some Reminiscences* (New York: Neale Pub. Co., 1909), 30.

¹²³ *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-65*, Walter Clark, ed. (Goldsboro, NC: Nash Brothers, 1901), 75.

¹²⁴ Rufus R. Dawes, *Service With the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers* (Marietta, OH: E. R. Alderman & Sons, 1890), 261.

¹²⁵ Trudeau, 76.

“Ours consisted of logs and dirt dug up with bayonets. . . .”¹²⁷

Heth suggested to Hill they make a concerted effort to straighten and strengthen their part of the line. . . .¹²⁸

The Federals found quite a surprise when they finally reached this clearing. . . .¹²⁹

Chapter Ten: The Most Critical Moment

“Another great trouble with me is the want of active and energetic subordinate officers. . . .”¹³⁰

“He won’t be up. . . .”¹³¹

“Ewell’s watch must be fifteen minutes ahead of mine. . . .”¹³²

“[O]n come the exultant enemy. . . .”¹³³

“[W]e had the enemy entirely in our power. . . .”¹³⁴

“The battle raged furiously all the forenoon. . . .”¹³⁵

“The roar of musketry, the dying groans of the wounded. . . .”¹³⁶

“We have to be very careful or we step on their dead and wounded. . . .”¹³⁷

“[W]e are driving them most beautifully,” he reported.¹³⁸

“The pressure,” said a South Carolinian, “was irresistible.”¹³⁹

“[I]t looked for awhile that morning as if the last hour. . . .”¹⁴⁰

“[I]f the country has been such that Hancock and his command. . . .”¹⁴¹

“That was, I think the most critical moment. . . .”¹⁴²

Lee, Gowan, and the “flock of *geese*” story¹⁴³

“We hear them forming their broken lines. . . .”¹⁴⁴

. . . “the march being difficult and slow in the dense forest. . . .”¹⁴⁵

¹²⁶ Survivors’ Association. *History of the Corn Exchange Regiment, 118th Pennsylvania Volunteers*. Philadelphia: J. L. Smith, 1888. Pg. 403.

¹²⁷ Isaac Gordon Bradwell, *Under the Southern Cross: Soldier Life with Gordon Bradwell and the Army of Northern Virginia*, Pharris Deloach Johnson, ed., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999), 155.

¹²⁸ Henry Heth, *Memoirs of Henry Heth*, James L. Morrison, ed., (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1974), 184.

¹²⁹ Alexander Boteler, diary, 5 May 1864, Library of Congress.

¹³⁰ Meade, vol. 2, 136.

¹³¹ Lyman, 135.

¹³² Page, 52.

¹³³ Z. T. Griffen. “In the Wilderness.” *National Tribune*. 3/11/1886.

¹³⁴ Bradwell, 157.

¹³⁵ Griffen, “In the Wilderness.”

¹³⁶ Robert G. Scott, *Into the Wilderness*, 117.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Lyman, 136.

¹³⁹ Caldwell, *A History of a Brigade of South Carolinians*, 132-3.

¹⁴⁰ Porter, 356.

¹⁴¹ Grant, *Memoirs*, 530.

¹⁴² Porter, 357.

¹⁴³ Porter, 357.

¹⁴⁴ Scott, 117.

¹⁴⁵ Sorrel, *Recollections*, 240.

“The instant the head of his column was seen. . . .”¹⁴⁶

The story of “Lee to the Rear”¹⁴⁷

“Just as we got to the place to file to the right to form a line of battle. . . .”¹⁴⁸

“Longstreet, always grand in battle, never shone as he did here. . . .”¹⁴⁹

. . . “companion corn-crib and log stable . . . partly masked by meagre plum and cherry trees. . . .”¹⁵⁰

Details on the various “Lee to the Rear” monuments¹⁵¹

“From this spot the Texas Brigade pleaded with General Lee. . . .”¹⁵²

Chapter Eleven: Horror in the Forest

“Danger is far less formidable in the bright, open, ventilated field, than in the dark, close wood. . . .”¹⁵³

The thickets grew so dense. . . .¹⁵⁴

“The great, dark woods are filled with dead and wounded. . . .”¹⁵⁵

“The density of the woods rendered it impossible. . . .”¹⁵⁶

Another soldier likened it to “Indian warfare.”¹⁵⁷

“I hid behind a tree and looked out. . . .”¹⁵⁸

One soldier in the 11th New Hampshire saw a group of Confederates build a line of fortifications out of dead bodies. . . .¹⁵⁹

“[S]moke clouded the vision, and a heavy sky obscured the sun. . . .”¹⁶⁰

“The rattle of musketry would swell into a continuous roar. . . .”¹⁶¹

“I could almost hear the confusion of contending armies. . . .”¹⁶²

¹⁴⁶ William Meade Dame, *From the Rapidan to Richmond and The Spotsylvania Campaign* (Baltimore: Green-Lucas Company, 1920), 85.

¹⁴⁷ The story of Lee and the Texas Brigade has become so legendary that it has grown to mythic proportions nearly the size of Texas itself. For details, see Charles Venable, “The Campaign from the Wilderness to Petersburg,” address before the Virginia Division of the Army of Northern Virginia (Richmond: Geo. G. Gary, 1879), 4-5. As historian Gordon Rhea points out (Rhea, 300), Venable was the only one of Lee’s subordinates on the scene at the time. For a more romanticized version, written by Lee partisan Douglas Southall Freeman, see the inscription on the Texas monument in the Wilderness, quoted on page 85 of *Hell Itself*.

¹⁴⁸ James E. Phillips memoir, 12th VA, FRSP archives.

¹⁴⁹ John Cheeves Haskell, *The Haskell Memoirs: The Personal Narrative of a Confederate Officer*, Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingwood, eds. (New York: Putnam, 1960), 63.

¹⁵⁰ Schaff, 171.

¹⁵¹ Pfanz, 12, 175-8.

¹⁵² Text transcribed from the monument.

¹⁵³ Coldwell, 186.

¹⁵⁴ Bowen, *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, 27 June 1885.

¹⁵⁵ Haley, 152.

¹⁵⁶ Trudeau, 88.

¹⁵⁷ Trudeau, 72.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Ransom F. Sargent, 11 NH, letter, 9 May 1864, FRSP archives

¹⁶⁰ Porter, 72.

¹⁶¹ Scott, 98.

¹⁶² William H. Randall, 1 MI SS, diary, 5 May 1864, FRSP archives, BV 35.

“This is the raggedest hole I about ever saw. . . .”¹⁶³
 One Pennsylvanian had a snake drop on him from a cedar tree.¹⁶⁴
 “I had dismounted to fix my horse’s bit. . . .”¹⁶⁵
 “Hundreds of wounded on both sides, unable to crawl away. . . .”¹⁶⁶
 Cartridge boxes still strapped to the dead and wounded exploded. . . .¹⁶⁷
 “. . . knew it as surely as though I could read his thoughts.”¹⁶⁸
 “To add to the miseries of the battle. . . .”¹⁶⁹
 “The smoke from the clouds of powder and the denser clouds. . . .”¹⁷⁰
 “[A] continued stream of faint and bleeding humanity. . . .”¹⁷¹
 They made “a ghastly sight indeed!”¹⁷²
 “Amputating tables groaned with fainting sufferers. . . .”¹⁷³
 It was like fighting “in the shadow of death,” said one officer.¹⁷⁴
 “The campaign is the severest one ever endured by any army in the world. . . .”¹⁷⁵
 Grant himself later described it as. . . .¹⁷⁶
 “A soldier I once met asked me where I was wounded. . . .”¹⁷⁷
 A scene of “unutterable horror”¹⁷⁸

Chapter Twelve: Confederates Unleashed

“Never did his great qualities as a tenacious, fighting soldier. . . .”¹⁷⁹
 “It was like an army of ghosts rising out of the earth. . . .”¹⁸⁰
 “. . . “[l]ike an avalanche from a mountain side. . . .”¹⁸¹
 “. . . “vast, weird, horrible slaughter pen.”¹⁸²

¹⁶³ Holt, *A Surgeon’s Civil War: The Letters & Diary of Daniel M. Holt, M.D.*, James M. Griener, et. al., eds. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994), 182-3.

¹⁶⁴ James M. Treichler, 96th PA, memoir, 57; FRSP archives, BV 41.

¹⁶⁵ Scott, 97.

¹⁶⁶ Brainerd, 208.

¹⁶⁷ Trudeau, 61.

¹⁶⁸ Frank Wilkeson, *Recollections of a Private Soldier in the Army of the Potomac*, (New York: Putnam, 1887), 67.

¹⁶⁹ Brainerd, 208.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Phil K. Faulk, 11 PA, “Annals of the War,” 25 October 1864, *Philadelphia Weekly Times*.

¹⁷² Lyman, 140.

¹⁷³ Faulk, *Philadelphia Weekly Times*.

¹⁷⁴ “More than Conqueror,” or *Memorials of Col. J. Howard Kitching*, (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1873), 124.

¹⁷⁵ Lt. Col. Moody, 139 PA, 17 May 1864, *Pittsburgh Evening Chronicle*; FRSP archives.

¹⁷⁶ Grant, Ulysses. *The Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*. New York: Library of America, 1990. 512.

¹⁷⁷ Selden Connor, “In the Wilderness,” *War Papers*, vol. 4 (Portland, ME: Lefavor-Tower Company, 1915), 200.

¹⁷⁸ Porter, 73.

¹⁷⁹ Sorrel, *Recollections*, 240.

¹⁸⁰ Mason Whiting Taylor, *Recollections of the Civil War; with many original diary entries and letters written from the seat of war, and with annotated references*, William S. Tyler, ed., (New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1912), 154.

¹⁸¹ D. August Dickert, *History of Kershaw’s Brigade* (Newberry, SC: Albert H. Aull Co., 1899), 348.

“All organization and control seemed to have been lost. . . .”¹⁸³

“Longstreet intended to play his hand for all it was worth. . . .”¹⁸⁴

“[H]e was waving his sword over his head. . . .”¹⁸⁵

“General James S. Wadsworth, the pure patriot, the bravest of the brave, died the soldier’s death. . . .”¹⁸⁶

“That is our business,” Longstreet replied.¹⁸⁷

. . . “that the enemy were in utter rout, and if pressed, would all be his before night.”¹⁸⁸

“I shall not soon forget the sadness in his face. . . .”¹⁸⁹

“Could we have pushed forward at once. . . .”¹⁹⁰

. . . “one of the strongest lines of temporary works it had ever been my fortune to stand behind. . . .”¹⁹¹

. . . “it seemed more like an apology for the attack Longstreet was conducting. . . .”¹⁹²

. . . “added renewed terrors and excitement to the situation. . . .”¹⁹³

“The enemy came rushing up to our breastworks. . . .”¹⁹⁴

“It was impossible to identify any of the bodies found unburied. . . .”¹⁹⁵

Chapter Thirteen: Gordon’s Flank Attack

Gordon, reconnoitering the enemy’s position that morning. . . .¹⁹⁶

Gordon’s “views were opposed by General Early. . . .”¹⁹⁷

“The scene was instantly a very pandemonium of sights and sounds. . . .”¹⁹⁸

Gordon “attacked vehemently. . . .”¹⁹⁹

¹⁸² Charles H. Weygant, *History of the One Hundred and Twenty-Fourth N.Y.S.V.* (Newburgh, NY: Journal Printing House, 1877), 293.

¹⁸³ Lewis Grant report, OR XXXVI, Pt. 1, 699.

¹⁸⁴ Alexander, 360.

¹⁸⁵ George W. Verrill, 17 ME, “The Seventeenth Maine at Gettysburg and in the Wilderness,” *War Papers*, Vol. I, (Portland, ME: The Thurston Print, 1898), 279.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Andrew Dunn to George Bernard, letter, 1 July 1892, *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 20, 95.

¹⁸⁸ Haskell, 65.

¹⁸⁹ Francis W. Dawson, *Reminiscences of Confederate Service, 1861-1865*, Bell I. Wiley, ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State, 1980), 116.

¹⁹⁰ Charles Field, *Southern Historical Society Papers*, Vol. 14, 545.

¹⁹¹ Weygant, 295.

¹⁹² Alexander, 362.

¹⁹³ Josiah Marshall Favill, *The Diary of a Young Officer Serving with the Armies of the United States During the War of the Rebellion* (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley & Sons, Co., 1909), 290-1.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ Donald Pfanz, *Where Valor Proudly Sleeps*, part of FSNMP’s archives.

¹⁹⁶ O.R. XXXVI, Pt. 1, 1077.

¹⁹⁷ O.R. XXXVI, Pt. 1, 1071.

¹⁹⁸ Edwin C. Mason, “Through the Wilderness to the Bloody Angle at Spotsylvania Court House,” delivered 12 March 1895, reprinted in *Glimpses of the Nation’s Struggle: Papers Read Before the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States*, Vol. 4, (St. Paul, MN: H. L. Collins Co., 1898) 296.

... "These commands were rapidly broken and scattered."²⁰⁰
 "They swung around to our rear, and we had more than we could. . . ." ²⁰¹
 "Halt! For God's sake, boys, rally!"²⁰²
 ... "the approach of darkness in the dense woodland created confusion. . . ." ²⁰³
 "Had there been daylight," Grant later wrote. . . .²⁰⁴
 "I must be permitted in this connection. . . ." ²⁰⁵
 ... flank attack remains one of the most intriguing sources of speculation from the battle.²⁰⁶
 ... "the lack of springy formation, and audacious, self-reliant initiative."²⁰⁷

Chapter Fourteen: Grant Moves South

"Joe Johnston would have retreated after two days of such punishment. . . ." ²⁰⁸
 Somewhere nearby, a band began to play.²⁰⁹
 "He is very feeble and nervous and suffers much from his wound. . . ." ²¹⁰
 "chivalrous, deliberate 'Dick' Anderson"²¹¹
 ... Lee "constrained to spare his men as much as possible. . . ." ²¹²
 "I have been so hungry that I have cut the blood off from crackers. . . ." ²¹³
 "I do not hope to gain any decided advantage from the fighting. . . ." ²¹⁴
 "This will, in all probability, compel him to try and throw himself. . . ." ²¹⁵
 Exchange between Warren and Meade about shells falling near Ellwood²¹⁶
 "The arms in our possession. . . ." ²¹⁷
 "[T]he chief who had led them through the mazes of the Wilderness. . . ." ²¹⁸

¹⁹⁹ O.R. XXXVI, Pt. 1, 1071.

²⁰⁰ O.R. XXXVI, Pt. 1, 1077

²⁰¹ Charles Edinborough, "The Sixth Corps at the Wilderness," *National Tribune*, 7 January 1885, FRSP archives.

²⁰² Hyland Clare Kirk, *Heavy Guns and Light: A History of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery*, (New York: C. T. Dillingham, 1890), 164.

²⁰³ OR XXXVI, Pt. 1, 1077.

²⁰⁴ OR XXXVI, Pt. 2, 480.

²⁰⁵ O.R. XXXVI, Pt. 1, 1078.

²⁰⁶ Historian Gordon Rhea offers an excellent analysis of the full controversy in his book *The Battle of the Wilderness*. See pp. 407-416 for a breakdown of events and a deconstruction of the various perspectives.

²⁰⁷ Schaff, 201.

²⁰⁸ Lyman, 141.

²⁰⁹ Marcus Toney, "After Thirty Years," *The Banner*, FRSP archives, BV 62, originally found on Reel 59, Frame 482, Hotchkiss Papers, Library of Congress.

²¹⁰ Mrs. Charles Blackford quoted in Jeffrey Wert, *James Longstreet: The Confederacy's Most Controversial Soldier*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 390.

²¹¹ Sorrel, *Recollections*, 250.

²¹² Taylor, *Four Years*, 129.

²¹³ Casler, 208.

²¹⁴ Porter, 65.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Lyman, 147.

²¹⁷ Charles B. Brockway, "Across the Rapidan," 7 January 1882, *Philadelphia Weekly Times*.

“Soldiers weary and sleepy after their long battle. . . .”²¹⁹
 . . . “the demonstration did not really cease until the general was out of sight.”²²⁰
 “Such were the prominent features of the entire campaign. . . .”²²¹
 “In his renewed effort to get past our flank. . . .”²²²
 “I propose to fight it out along this line if it takes all summer. . . .”²²³
 “The hammering business had been hard on the hammer.”²²⁴

Casualty figures cited are those generally used by FRSP in its battlefield interpretation.

Quoting a newspaper account, he described it as. . . .²²⁵
 “a good soldier, of great force of character, honest and upright. . . .”²²⁶
 “General Meade has more than met my most sanguine expectations. . . .”²²⁷

Epilogue

The salmon-colored house on the crest of the hill....²²⁸
 “She saw the same violets and bluets in that wood of death....”²²⁹

Appendix A: “Their Spencer carbines made the dense woods ring” Federal Cavalry in the Battle of the Wilderness by Daniel T. Davis

“The rising sun shone upon its flags. . . .”²³⁰
 For the inexperienced Wilson, it was a heavy assignment.²³¹
 It was his first field command with the mounted arm.²³²

²¹⁸ Porter, 78.

²¹⁹ Porter, 79.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Stiles, 248.

²²² Alexander, 365.

²²³ Grant to Halleck, 11 May 1864, OR XXXVI, Pt. 2, 627.

²²⁴ Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, *The Passing of the Armies: An Account of the Final Campaign of the Army of the Potomac* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1915), 10.

²²⁵ Meade, *Life and Letters*, Vol. 2, 197-8.

²²⁶ Meade, *Life and Letters*, Vol. 2, 246.

²²⁷ Grant to Stanton, 13 May 1864, OR XXXVI, Pt. 2, 695

²²⁸ Background information in this chapter comes from G. Frank Williss, *Historical Structure Report: Ellwood—Lacy House*, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (FRSP), FRSP archives.

²²⁹ Phenie Tapp obituary, Fredericksburg *Free Lance-Star*, FRSP archives.

²³⁰ Louis Boudrye *Historic Records of the Fifth New York Cavalry*. J. Munsell, Albany NY. 1868, pg.123.

²³¹ War Department. War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the War of the Union and Confederate Armies. 130 Vols. Washington, D.C., 1880-1901. Vol. 36, Part II, pgs. 875, 896. Hereafter cited as O.R.

²³² Ezra J. Warner. *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders*. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge LA. 2006, pgs. 566-567. Hereafter cited as Waner. Ulysses S. Grant. *Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*. Charles L. Webster & Company, NY. 1886. Vol II, pgs. 114-115.

When he reached Parker's Store, Wilson detailed Col. John Hammond's Fifth New York Cavalry to cover the thoroughfare as the rest of the division bedded down for the evening.²³³

Before them lay an open route toward the Union army.²³⁴

"Fighting with a daring rarely equaled," one of his troopers wrote. . . .²³⁵

Wilson's and Rosser's accounts of the battle²³⁶

Wilson passed away in Wilmington, Delaware, on February 23, 1925.²³⁷

Appendix B: "It's Griffin, not Gregg": Cracks in the Army of the Potomac's High Command by Ryan Quint

Dismounting, Griffin's "face was stern and flushed. . . ." ²³⁸

Lyman narrated Griffin's tirade in his personal diary. . . .²³⁹

. . . "mutinous and wished him put in arrest."²⁴⁰

"Who is this Gen. *Gregg*? You ought to arrest him!"²⁴¹

In response, Meade the Old Snapping Turtle. . . .²⁴²

. . . "Such a mixed command was not calculated to produce the best result. . . ." ²⁴³

Appendix C: Where's Burnside?

"genius for slowness."²⁴⁴

After the war, Grant tried to put a positive face on it. . . .²⁴⁵

When ordered to break camp at 2:00 a.m. the following morning. . . .²⁴⁶

²³³ Ibid, O.R. Vol. 36, Part II, pgs. 875-876.

²³⁴ Ibid, O.R. Vol. 36, Part II, pgs. 1069-1070.

²³⁵ Ibid, Boudrye pg. 122. O.R. Vol. 36, Part II, pgs. 189, 876.

²³⁶ James H. Wilson. *Under the Old Flag: Recollections of Military Operations in the War for the Union, the Spanish War, the Boxer Rebellion, Etc.* D. Appleton & Company, New York and London. 1912. 2 Vols. Volume 1, pgs. 380-381. William N. McDonald. *A History of the Laurel Brigade.* Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, Second Edition, 2002. Pgs. 225-226. Ibid, O.R. Vol. 36, Part II, pg. 877

²³⁷ Ibid, Warner pgs. 567-568.

²³⁸ Theodore Lyman, *Meade's Headquarters: 1863-1865*, ed. George R. Agassiz (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922), 90.

²³⁹ Theodore Lyman, *Meade's Army: The Private Notebooks of Lt. Col. Theodore Lyman*, ed. David W. Lowe (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2007), 134.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Theodore Lyman, "Addenda to the Paper by Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel W.W. Swan, U.S.A., On the Battle of the Wilderness," in *Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts: Vol IV* (Boston: The Military Historical Society of Massachusetts), 168.

²⁴³ Andrew A. Humphreys, *The Virginia Campaign of 1864 and 1865* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), 83.

²⁴⁴ Schaff, 226.

²⁴⁵ O.R. XXXIV, Pt. 1, 18.

²⁴⁶ Lyman, 136.

"I knew it!" Hancock exclaimed. "Just what I expected."²⁴⁷

"No one had expected much from Burnside," says historian Gordon Rhea. . . .²⁴⁸

"The difficulty of making a way through the dense forests. . . ."²⁴⁹

"The inferiority of the 9th Corps begins now to show a good deal. . . ."²⁵⁰

. . . according to Burnside biographer William Marvel. . . .²⁵¹

"To them he was invincible," Marvel wrote; "wherever Ambrose Burnside went, victory should soon follow."²⁵²

Appendix F: Building a Battlefield: The CCC in the Wilderness by Rebekah Oakes

For more information about the CCC at FRSP, see Joan M. Zenzen. *At the Crossroads of Preservation and Development: A History of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park*, 2011, FRSP archives.

²⁴⁷ Schaff, 225.

²⁴⁸ Rhea, 432.

²⁴⁹ Grant, *Memoirs*, 530.

²⁵⁰ Lyman, 173.

²⁵¹ William Marvel, *Burnside* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 96.

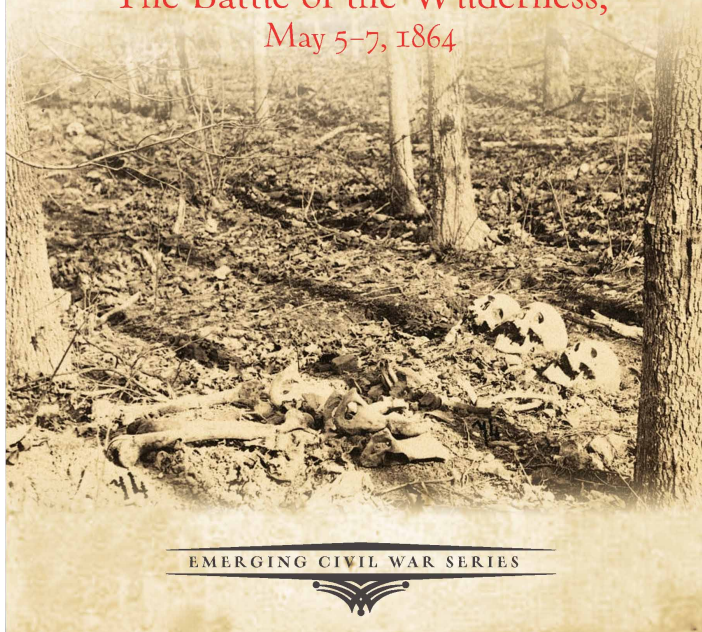
²⁵² *Ibid.*

Chris Mackowski

Foreword by Gregory A. Mertz

Hell Stret

The Battle of the Wilderness,
May 5-7, 1864



EMERGING CIVIL WAR SERIES

