

The Dispatch

The newsletter of the
Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation

Volume 8, Issue 4
Winter 2025



IN THIS ISSUE

"I Met A Horrible Sight"
by David Hall

**Looking Back on a Year of
Connection and Commitment**
by Lynn Bristol

**Foundation Business
Report**

DONATE...

To provide you with a quality educational experience, your donation payable by check or online through our website, contributes to our meeting that mission.



We have met 57% of our goal to raise \$4,000 in our fundraiser for the Jug Bridge Wayside Project. Consider making a donation.





Entrance to Stop 4 - Gambrill Mill Loop Trail

“I Met A Horrible Sight”

by David Hall

Turning off the Urbana Pike onto the entrance driveway to the Gambrill Trail Loop Area, one passes into a charming vale between Monocacy River bluff on the left and rising land on the right to see the Gambrill House Conference Center . An old mill served as the Monocacy Battlefield Visitor Center for many years, and now is an annex for the National Park Service.

The stone building ahead was part of the Gambrill’s Mill complex, which was located immediately behind the front lines of the Battle of Monocacy on July 9, 1864. It served as both the headquarters of the two brigades of MG James Rickett’s Third Division of the U.S. Sixth Corps and as a refuge for the wounded. Chaplain Edwin Haynes of the 10th Vermont Volunteers remembered the stream that curled around the foot of the river bluff on its course to the Monocacy River:

“This was Gambrill’s Mill stream...the place where many of our own dead and wounded and the dead and wounded of the Confederates who fell into our hands were taken as they were borne out of the battle.” 1

Field hospitals, such as this one on the Gambrill property on July 9, were a common sight on the periphery of battlefields of the American Civil War. Many veterans of the fight passed through the area at different times during the day. Private Charles Osman, a bandsman in the Tenth Vermont Regiment, was expected to assist the wounded and the surgeons. He described his experience to his wife Ellen in a letter- written on July 11, 1864, from Relay House, Maryland, where the U.S. forces finally rallied after their retreat.



Charles and Ellen Osman

“Darling - since I last wrote we have done some of the hardest fighting and marching on record. I can hardly believe that men can endure so much even when I see it with my own eyes...While we were drawing rations Saturday morning the rebs were throwing shells among us. One man was wounded. After they [the 10th Vermont] took their final position we [bandsmen] sought ours, but never found it till we got here. We scattered in 2 or 3 directions. I...saw a grist mill and got behind it - had just got there when some wounded came in - one from my company. I helped dress their wounds, while doing this the shells came howling close to us - we took shelter near the canal [mill race-adjacent to the Gambrill Loop trail], when a shell struck within 6 feet of us. We went for the Division Hospital, but never found it for the reason there wasn’t any!...We followed the railroad and under the protection of a little hill we found ambulances and the wounded which served for a hospital for the time being.” 2

Writing in 1912, Private Frederick W. Wild of Alexander's Baltimore Battery, remembered lugging his sponge bucket through the area early that afternoon when his gun crew, cannon and limber shifted position from the east end of the railroad bridge to the Thomas Hill Field to counter rebel attacks coming from the Worthington farm:



Typical Field Hospital during
1864 Overland Campaign

"Now came an order to go to the relief of the guns at the center of the field. Here I met a horrible sight in passing by the improvised field hospital, it is well enough to go into a hospital of wounded soldiers. When they are all washed and on clean beds and neatly bandaged, but when one sees them all begrimed with blood, and black with dust and powder smoke is quite a different sight, and when you see an assistant surgeon raise a piece of canvas to add one more to the bloody pile of amputated hands, feet, legs and arms, it gives one the horrors. A small stream which we crossed was red with human blood. A Southern officer [famously, MG J. B. Gordon] making his report about the battle, mentions this fact; this stream being in a ravine was protected from shot and shell, and the wounded were placed along it to bathe their wounds until the surgeons could attend to them." 3

As Wild was dipping his bucket in the mill stream and taking in the horrific scene around him, he encountered MG Lew Wallace (see "Small Mercies" [The Dispatch](#), Vol. 6, Issue 4, Winter, 2023, for details). Wallace shared his stark memories of the field hospital in his 1905 autobiography:



MG Lew Wallace

"I rode...to the mill, near which the surgeons of the division had established a field hospital, intending, as I was told, to use the building for shelter of the wounded. The place appeared well selected for the purpose, its one inconvenience being that it was under fire...Some doors had been unhinged and laid lengthwise on trestles, forming a table about which the operators stood in a little group. Most of the men were in their shirt-sleeves, and they were all perfectly composed. A few were smoking. While I sat surveying the scene, a man was brought in bloody and screaming. In a moment he lay stripped. A jagged fragment of shell had torn a furrow across his breast. I could see his lungs clipped and exposed. No need of probing. The chief gave the wound one look, and followed it with a silent wave of the hand; whereupon the under-assistants lifted the doomed subject and bore him away to die slowly and in agony. As I turned to escape the spectacle - from the piercing cries there was no escape - it came to me what some may think a horrible thought: why should not a surgeon, seeing death inevitable, be required to speed the end?" 4

Later that day, Sergeant John Worsham, of the 21st Virginia Infantry Regiment, which had stormed the Thomas Hill field to clinch the victory for the Confederates, shared his recollections of the Gambrill Mill complex, recounting the fruits of victory for a humble infantryman:

"It was about sunset now, and my brigade went into camp in an orchard near the road, on the same ground over which we chased the enemy a few minutes before. In this orchard were several of the enemy, wounded. One of them asked me for water, and stated he had had a canteen but one of our men had taken it from him. Poor fellow! I went to a spring, filled a canteen and carried it to him, and as I had two canteens, gave him this one, and told him that in case some of our men wanted it, he must tell them what I had done for him, and I was sure none of our men would take it. I had a full haversack that I had taken from the body of a dead Yankee on the hill, and offered him something to eat, but he said he had his own haversack, and it was full. He seemed to be very grateful for my little attention...A mill pond was near us, and many took a bath which refreshed us very much. I ate a good supper out of my Yankee haversack, and soon went to bed for the night." 5

Private Alfred Roe of the 9th New York Heavy Artillery passed through the Gambrill property several times that day, in the initial US deployment on the morning of the battle and again in retreat that afternoon, and finally as a prisoner. In 1894 described seeing wounded friends during the retreat:

"By the roadside I passed my friends Foster and Searls; the latter badly wounded, and Foster trying to help him. I never expected to see Searls again in this world, and so bade him "good- by"...Searls, however, did recover and live for about ten years, dying at last from his wounds." 6

After being captured late in the day, Roe and other prisoners were marched over the railroad bridge to the Junction, where

"In the freight house at the station, lying on a pile of loose, ground feet, I found Ed. Ryder, of my company, bleeding from a wound which proved to be fatal. I did my best to staunch the flow of blood but no moral power could help more than to relieve passing distress. I brought him a cup of water, and I can never forget the look that followed as I went out of the building; I to my long march and imprisonment, and he, soon, to the presence of the King of Kings."

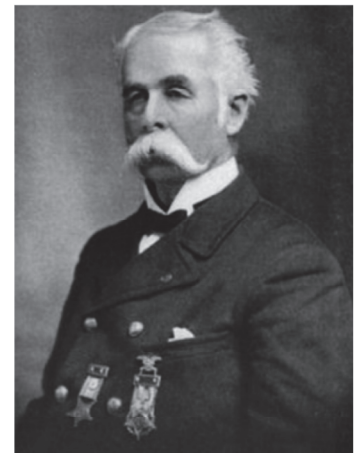
And the next day, as he marched into captivity:

"The day was Sunday; but there was little of home observance of its anctity as we filed out began our first march under rebel direction. As we started southward, I took a farewell glance at the scene of the previous day's fighting. On every hand were lying the bodies of those who had fallen. From these, in most cases, the clothing had been stripped, and the stubble having taken fire, the flame was scorching the unconscious remains. This sad, upturned faces! How imploringly they seemed to look! Boys they were who thus suddenly 'saw life's morn decline'. The bullet had sought alike the young and the old, and here they were lying, soon to be 'In one red burial blent.'

And then this final requiem:

One last look I took at these sights, and an intervening hill shut them out forever.

Vale [farewell] Monocacy."



PVT Alfred S. Roe

1 Haynes, E. M., *A History of the Tenth Regiment, Vt. Vols., etc.* The Tuttle Company, Printers, Rutland, Vt., 1894, 209.

2 George, Charles, Herbert, Jere and Osman, *Bully for the Band! The Civil War Letters and Diary of Four Brothers in the 10th Vermont Infantry Band*, Edited by James A Davis, MacFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, Jefferson North Carolina, and London, 2012. Digital Location 2621.

3 Wild, Frederick W.: *Memoirs and History of Capt. F. W. Alexander's Baltimore Battery of Light Artillery - U.S.V.*, Press of The Maryland School for Boys, Loch Raven, MD., 1912. 127

4 *Lew Wallace: An Autobiography*, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1905. II: 762-763.

5 Worsham, John H., *One of Jackson's Foot Cavalry*, The Neale Publishing Company, New York, 1912, Reprinted 1982 by Time-Life Books, Inc., 240.

6 Roe, Alfred S., "Recollections of Monocacy," *Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society, Third Series*, No. 10, Providence Rhode Island Press Company, 1885, 22-32.

Looking Back on a Year of Connection and Commitment

As we close the year, the Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation reflects with gratitude on a period marked by creativity, collaboration, and a renewed commitment to telling the human stories behind the Civil War history preserved at Monocacy National Battlefield.

Throughout the year, we continued to experiment with new ways of engaging audiences. Our YouTube channel, created by board member Brad Stone, grew steadily as it explored figures such as Lew Wallace and traced their connections beyond the battlefield. On Facebook, followers joined us on a travelogue-style photo journey—sometimes planned, sometimes serendipitous—that revealed the many “Faces of Monocacy.” Our newsletter, [The Dispatch](#), was enriched by frequent contributor David Hall, whose thoughtful narratives brought readers closer to the personal experiences of individual soldiers at the Battle of Monocacy.

One of the year’s most significant accomplishments was progress on the Jug Bridge Project, a collaborative effort involving Civil War Trails, the Maryland Department of Transportation–State Highway Administration, and the Foundation. Since its launch in August 2024, this partnership has worked toward interpreting the Battle of Jug Bridge. In December, an agreement was reached to design a new wayside to be installed in East Frederick near the bridge’s historic remains. We extend special thanks to board member Joseph Collins for his important material contributions to this project. We look forward with optimism to breaking ground in mid-spring 2026.

Our partnership with Monocacy National Battlefield deepened this year with the Foundation’s first sponsorship of a park intern scholarship. Charlie Miller, a 2025 graduate of the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College, conducted research on the blockhouses at Monocacy Junction to support a new wayside at Tour Stop 5. Looking ahead, the Foundation and Park are exploring opportunities to incorporate augmented reality into the interpretation of this important aspect of the Monocacy Junction.

The Foundation also remained committed to accessibility, education, and preservation. We subsidized American Sign Language interpreters for public programs, supported National Park Day conservation efforts, and funded the new Junior Ranger booklets now available at the visitor center—helping ensure that Monocacy’s stories are accessible to visitors of all ages and abilities.

We end the year in our celebration with the Park with the opening of a new museum at the Monocacy National Battlefield visitor center. While already welcoming visitors, a formal grand opening is planned in the coming months. We hope you will join us to celebrate this exciting new chapter and to meet both Foundation board members and the dedicated park staff.

As the year draws to a close, I extend my sincere thanks to my colleagues for their dedication and service to the Foundation (in alphabetical order): Jason Coleman, Joseph Collins, Melinda Elliott, Clinton Epplemen, Rosemary Martin, Charley Mitchell, Paula Reed, and Brad Stone. Their commitment—and your continued support—make our work possible.

All our best to you in the coming new year.

Lynn Bristol

President, Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation

Foundation Business Report

Calendar of Events for 2026

April 25, 2026, annual park clean-up sponsored by Amercian Battlefield Trust.

May 2, 2026, First Saturday Hike with MNBF: Role of the Monocacy Junction in the Maryland Campaigns of '62 and '64.

July 9-11, 2026, 162nd anniversary weekend at MONO.

September 12, 2026, "In the Streets" celebration of Frederick's non-profit organizations.

November 11, 2026, Veteran's Day at MONO with MNBF American Legion poppy give-away (*new MNBF event*).

December 11, 2026, Kris Kringle Procession, sponsored by Celebrate Frederick.

Thank You to Our Donors

We extend our thanks to our donors, whose generosity makes our work possible. Your support allows the Foundation to preserve the landscape, expand interpretation, foster accessibility, and share the stories of Monocacy in meaningful and innovative ways. Every project –large and small–reflects your commitment to honoring the past and ensuring that its lessons endure for future generations. We are deeply grateful for your continued partnership and belief in our mission.

MAKE A DONATION

You can pay by credit on our website or by sending a check by mail to the address:

Monocacy National Battlefield Foundation, Inc.

P.O. Box 3404

Frederick, MD 21705

Thank you for your generosity!