

The Veteran's Way: Addressing Post-Traumatic Stress and Veterans Re-integration Through Landscape

By David E. Sheehan

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Department of Landscape Architecture

College of Architecture and Urban Studies

Nathan Heavers, Chair

Cermetrius Bohannon

Jonathan Fitch

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ABSTRACT

Post-traumatic stress, while not unique to war, results from normal human reactions to combat. Historically, civilizations provided communal rituals to support and treat returning warriors. We do not. When combat stress reactions adversely affect normal functioning, we label them Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, implying something wrong with the sufferer, when in reality what is wrong is war itself. Not all veterans develop diagnosable PTSD or seek treatment, but all deal with post-traumatic stress. Complex, with moral, societal, and spiritual dimensions, combat stress manifests physically and emotionally. Veteran support should address both.

Battlefields are places to contemplate the nature of war and martial sacrifice, and to experience emotional empathy with those who fought there. The ground itself is the link to this empathy. Battlefield landscapes can be designed to help veterans process their responses to combat, recognize them as normal human reactions inherent to the warrior experience, and participate in meaningful communalization experiences to aid in social re-integration.

These concepts were applied at Fredericksburg, Virginia, resulting in a 26-mile battlefield trail linking experientially important sites and ending at an outdoor amphitheater. The trail offers the stress-relieving benefits of exercise. It also allows veterans to examine their own experiences in the context of others' and prepares them for communal experiences at the culminating public space.

Pilgrimage on hallowed battlefield ground helps veterans tell themselves their own story. Telling that story to others allows the community to share the burden of peace and helps veterans complete their warrior's journey home.

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PREFACE

My interest in this project is intensely personal. Stemming from a lifelong interest in martial affairs and solidified through personal experience, its development has been a labor of love and in some ways, catharsis. I come from a proud military family. A great-grandfather served in World War I, two grandparents served in World War II, my father fought in Vietnam, my brother in Iraq, and myself in Iraq and Afghanistan. I am not a psychologist, nor am I a kinesiologist, a philosopher, or an historian. But I have experienced combat. I have felt the emotions and physiological reactions that it generates, and I have struggled and continue to struggle with its after-effects. I have watched multiple generations of my own family as well as my brothers and sisters-in-arms struggle with the burdens of their experiences, just as I struggle with mine. This project represents my attempt to help us understand and share the burden of peace.

INTRODUCTION

War has always been part of the human experience. Technology has changed, why and how we go to war has changed, but the fundamental nature of combat has not. It has always, and will always require warriors to give and take life. Veterans have always been changed by their combat experiences, and they have always faced re-assimilation into peaceful society when their fighting was done. The infinitely complex set of physiological and psychological reactions that we currently refer to as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder has existed for at least as long as warfare itself.

Veterans experience a crisis of identity. Simply put, they are not who they were before; whether they choose to acknowledge those changes or not. Post-traumatic growth theorists have used the metaphor of the shattered vase to describe the trauma survivor's situation. When a beloved vase is shattered, its owner has three options: to consider the vase a total loss, sweep up the pieces, and throw them away; to painstakingly glue the pieces back together in a futile attempt to re-create the vase; or to use the pieces to create something different and perhaps even more beautiful, such as a mosaic of broken glass (Joseph, p 93). But it is not enough for veterans to come to a personal realization and acceptance of their changed identities; perhaps the most critical part of the warrior's journey is the re-integration of the new self into the community. Societies throughout history have dealt with the communal and personal experience of war differently, but many have developed a spiritual and psychological understanding of warfare that is lacking in contemporary American society.

This lack of societal understanding, combined with the increased-effectiveness of modern military training, has contributed to the emergence of a veteran population superbly trained to fight and win in combat, but under-prepared for the psychological costs of doing so.

CHAPTER ONE: POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

In the Napoleonic wars it was known as homesickness; in the Civil War,

nostalgia or soldier's heart, and in World War I, shell shock (Bentley, p 13-16). The Second World War brought us combat fatigue. Regardless of the current names and professional language used to try to understand them, warriors have always had psychological and physical reactions to the trauma of combat, of both acute and delayed varieties.

Levels of reaction to particular stressful events are as varied as different people, but combat throughout history has consistently generated a similar set of physical and psychological reactions in its participants. They range from the clinically diagnosable to the barely distinguishable and everywhere in between, but every combat veteran is affected.

Today we know this set of reactions by the term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), but that is only the current name for a phenomenon as old as warfare itself. Veterans experiencing combat stress reactions are not alone. They are not unique, nor are they damaged, weak, or victimized; they are normal, and they are the vast majority. To be unaffected by taking life and seeing one's friends killed and maimed would be abnormal. As psychiatrist and holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl wrote, "the abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behavior" (Frankl, p 30).

PTSD is simply the currently fashionable name for the burden that combat veterans have always carried. It is a byproduct of combat and a fundamental part of the warrior's journey; and it always has been. And it is likely why the Mohawk Indian word for warrior translates to "carrying the burden of peace" (Lackenbauer, p 1).

The History of PTSD

Over three thousand years ago, the Egyptian scribe Hori described going into battle: "You determine to go forward. . . . Shuddering seizes you, the hair on your head stands on end, your soul lies in your hand" (Bentley, p 13).

An Athenian soldier at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BCE went permanently blind when the soldier next to him was killed, although

“wounded in no part of his body” (Bentley, p 13). Acute stress reactions such as these are well documented. Delayed stress reactions have by comparison proven much more difficult to identify and understand.

In 1648, the Peace of Westphalia ended a long period of European instability and ushered in the modern state as the dominant form of political organization in Europe, bringing about an age of state-versus-state warfare and professional armies that we are arguably still in today (Van Creveld, p 49). This age of “trinitarian war”, characterized by the triumvirate of the government, the army, and the people (Van Creveld, p 50) is relevant to the history of PTSD in that it necessitated formation of the standing, state-run professional armies that still predominate. The rise of professional militaries led to concurrent increases in standardization and record-keeping, which in turn led to increased documentation of combat’s psychological effects.

In 1678, physician Johannes Hofer identified an illness afflicting Swiss soldiers in France resulting from the “pain which the sick person feels because he is not in his native land, or fears never to see it again. This illness, which Hofer termed “Nostalgia”, was characterized by melancholy, incessant thinking of home, disturbed sleep or insomnia, weakness, loss of appetite, anxiety, cardiac palpitation, stupor, and fever (Rosen, p 342).

Although Hofer claimed to be the first to describe the condition, there is earlier evidence of its existence. Towards the end of the Thirty Years War, soldiers of the Spanish Army of Flanders were diagnosed with an illness labelled *el mal de corazon* (bad heart), and characterized by deep despair. Another term, ‘*estar roto*’, meaning ‘to be broken’ likely described the same ailment. Between 1643 and 1644, at least six soldiers were discharged from the army due to *mal de corazon* (Rosen, p 344). Nostalgia continued to be of interest to military physicians throughout the 18th century as evidenced by the writings of Leopold Auenbrugger, who believed that emotional disorders could cause various diseases of the body. He wrote of such emotional disorders in 1761:

“I have observed none more powerful in obscuring the natural sound of the chest than those due to the destruction of cherished hopes. And since Nostalgia (commonly called Heimweh [German for homesickness]) occupies first place among these disorders I shall give a short account of it here. When young men who are still growing are forced to enter military service and thus lose all hope of returning safe and sound to their beloved homeland, they become sad, taciturn, listless, solitary, musing, full of sighs and moans. Finally, they cease to pay attention and become indifferent to everything which the maintenance of life requires of them” (Rosen, p 344).

According to the official medical history of the Civil War, there were 5,213 cases of nostalgia diagnosed among northern soldiers in 1861, or a rate of 2.34 cases per thousand soldiers. In 1862 this rate rose to 3.3 per thousand (Rosen, p 351). Also emerging from the American Civil War experience was a malady known commonly as ‘Soldier’s Heart’ and in medical circles as neuro-circulatory asthenia. First described in 1863, Soldier’s Heart was characterized by

“cardiac muscular exhaustion, palpitation of the heart, the feebleness of the pulse while the patient is at rest and the great acceleration of the heart movement on the slightest exertion” (Bishop, p 377).

Instances of Soldier’s Heart were also noted during World War I, and as late as 1942 the phenomenon was still little understood;

“Its’ true nature is not yet known, but the full picture which bulks in war is only sporadically encountered in peacetime. Tentatively, I would define [Soldier’s Heart] as a functional circulatory disease, most evident on exertion, unmasked or produced by war service. It is hoped that the experience of [World War II] will provide a better name, a more satisfying definition, and a clearer understanding of this condition” (Bishop, p 377).

During the same time period, English practitioners called Soldier's Heart "effort syndrome", "disordered heart action", and (with typical and highly insightful British wit) D.A.H., "Desperate Affection for Home" (Bishop, p 377). Today, these symptoms fall under the wide umbrella of symptoms commonly experienced by PTSD sufferers.

During World War I, soldiers suffered a spate of unusual psychological symptoms. Struggling to explain the phenomena, military psychiatrists attributed them to the horrifying array of modern weaponry which debuted during that war. Specifically, they blamed soldier's symptoms on exposure to the concussions of new high-explosive shells, coining the term "shell shock" (Boone, p 20). Although this theory was discredited within a single generation, the term is still widely recognized.

The problem of treating psychiatric casualties was forcibly brought home, when in 1943, in the midst of the unprecedentedly massive (and at the time of indeterminate length) World War II effort, the Veterans Administration (VA) calculated that it had spent over a billion dollars on the long term care of World War I psychiatric casualties (Boone, p 20). During the first years of the U.S. involvement in World War II, psychiatric casualties were considered to have "war neurosis", a blanket diagnosis assumed to be pre-existing in the individual due to some inherent weakness or poor parenting, and aggravated by combat (Boone, p 20). Military personnel displaying psychiatric distress of any kind were discharged, and, as in previous wars, emphasis was placed on screening out defective individuals at induction. Midway through the war, however, rising casualties and a shrinking draft pool caused a manpower crisis; the U.S. Armed Forces could no longer afford to systematically discharge men who were displaying psychological symptoms but were otherwise physically fit (Boone, p 20). In response, Army psychologists developed a theory alternately known as combat fatigue, combat stress, or combat exhaustion. Whereas war neurosis implied a deep-seated pathology, the theory of combat fatigue held that psychiatric symptoms among soldiers were caused by natural and highly treatable emotional and physical fatigue (Boone, p 20).

Accordingly, rest, emotional support, and reassurance that they were not sick or abnormal was theoretically enough to re-fortify most men and allow them to return to combat duty. To the military's relief, application of this theory proved successful, and many men suffering from combat fatigue were able to quickly return to full duty (Boone, p 20).

Combat fatigue remained the dominant military psychiatric paradigm until the advent of PTSD, and its imprint can still be seen in current conflicts, where the use of in-theater rest and relaxation facilities in places like Bahrain and Qatar provide brief periods of respite as prophylactic measures.

After the Vietnam War, it quickly became apparent that combat fatigue was inadequate to explain or treat the multitude of psychological and physiological symptoms that Vietnam Veterans were experiencing, and in 1980, a new diagnostic category of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder was added to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, third edition (DSM III). The diagnostic definition of PTSD has changed in every subsequent version of the DSM, and is still the subject of spirited debate. Despite a rapidly growing body of research spurred on in large part by the era of conflict that began in 2001, PTSD is still widely misunderstood among medical professionals, among society, and perhaps most tragically, among veterans themselves.

Contemporary American Understanding

PTSD symptoms include recurrent and intrusive recollections and re-experiencing of trauma, emotional blunting, social withdrawal, difficulty or reluctance in initiating or maintaining intimate relationships, and sleep disturbances. These symptoms can lead to serious difficulties in readjusting to civilian life (Grossman, On Killing, p 282). PTSD's creation as a diagnostic category was a product of both politics and medicine; activists, many of them Vietnam Veterans, had lobbied for a formal diagnosis to validate their experiences with delayed onset, prolonged psychic pain (Boone, p 19).

Highlighting the difficulties in understanding the complexity, range,

and varied manifestations of responses to combat stress is the ongoing debate, evidenced by the evolving official diagnoses in each subsequent DSM, of just what constitutes PTSD. Examination of the diagnostic criteria for PTSD is not the focus of this dissertation. However, in highly condensed form, the DSM-V states that a diagnosis of PTSD is warranted if a person has been exposed to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence; has experienced one or more intrusion symptoms associated with the traumatic event, beginning after the event occurred; persistently avoids stimuli associated with the traumatic event; suffers negative alterations in cognitions and mood associated with the traumatic event, beginning or worsening after the event occurred; displays marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the traumatic event, beginning or worsening after the traumatic event occurred; so long as the disturbance occurs for longer than one month; causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning; and is not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance (DSM-V, p 171-172).

The Veteran's Administration (VA) simplifies the symptoms to four basic types, and advises veterans to seek help if they last longer than three months, cause great distress, or disrupt normal life functions:

- 1) Reliving the event.
- 2) Avoiding situations that remind you of the event.
- 3) Negative changes in beliefs and feelings.
- 4) Feeling keyed up, also known as hyper-arousal (va.gov, retrieved 4/17/15).

According to the DSM, PTSD presents in a wide variety of ways. In some people, re-experiencing, emotional, and behavioral symptoms predominate, while in others, various forms of depression and negative cognitions may be most distressing. In some cases, arousal and reactive-externalizing symptoms are prominent, while in other

cases, predominate symptoms are dissociative. Some people exhibit combinations of these symptom patterns (DSM-V, p 274). In other words, according to the most current medical knowledge, PTSD is some combination of a wide variety of possible psychological and physiological reactions to a traumatic stressor (the definition of which is evolving and regardless will always be subjective to the afflicted), all of which fall into the normal range of human reactions to trauma, and which constitute a disorder primarily due to their prolongation for over one month. The American Psychiatric Association's attempts to define PTSD underscore the difficulties that researchers, medical professionals, veterans, and their loved ones experience in understanding and treating this affliction that has wide-ranging psychological, physiological, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions.

Such difficulties have led some researchers, practitioners, and veterans to move farther afield in search of valid explanations of and effective treatments. Dr. Edward Tick, for example, views PTSD as an identity disorder stemming from a wound of the soul. Tick argues that moral and spiritual dimensions must be addressed in treatment of PTSD, because "warrior-hood is not a role but a psycho-spiritual identity, an achieved condition of a mature, wise, and experienced soul." Furthermore, Tick believes,

"By modeling warrior traditions worldwide in ways that are relevant and adapted to modern life, we can grow a new identity strong and compassionate enough to carry the wound and heal the soul" (Tick, War and the Soul, p 7).

Dr. Peter Levine, author and developer of a proprietary treatment called Somatic Experiencing, believes that PTSD symptoms stem from un-discharged energy from an incomplete nervous system response to the traumatic event. Levine's approach emphasizes the connection between the body and the mind and focuses on the human organism's innate ability to heal itself. In his words,

"The practice of modern medicine and psychology, while

giving lip service to a connection between mind and body, greatly underestimates the deep relationship that they have in the healing of trauma. The welded unity of body and mind that, throughout time, has formed the philosophical and practical underpinnings of most of the world's traditional healing systems is sadly lacking in our modern understanding and treatment of trauma" (Levine, p 2).

Of the approximately 16.5 million wartime veterans in the United States today, 14 million are nearly evenly distributed between the Vietnam era (1961-1975) and the Gulf War era (1990-Present). Of Gulf War era veterans, approximately 2.6 million have served post 9/11 (va.gov, retrieved 4/17/15). The Veteran's Administration (VA) reports that 11-20% of Iraq/Afghanistan veterans and 12% of Gulf War veterans have PTSD in a given year, and the Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (VVRS) found that 15% of Vietnam veterans had current PTSD at the time of the study, with a lifetime incidence among that population of 30% (va.gov, retrieved 4/17/15). This large range in prevalence highlights the difficulty of accurately tracking the epidemiology of PTSD. Scientific PTSD studies have consistently generated disparate results. Richardson et al, in their review of PTSD prevalence estimates, found that point-prevalence of PTSD across studies ranges from 2% - 17%, with lifetime incidence ranging from 6% - 31%. Among Vietnam veterans, point prevalence ranges from 2.2% to 15.2%, among Gulf War veterans from 1.9% - 13.2%, and among veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan from 4% - 17.1% (Richardson et al, p 2). At any rate, PTSD has become one of the signature wounds of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, with as many as one-fifth of veterans presenting symptoms above the clinical threshold.

One of the many factors complicating PTSD identification, study, and treatment is that PTSD symptoms are all part of the normal human reaction to trauma. The VA stresses that the vast majority of those who experience combat will experience some level of these symptoms, but that for most, the symptoms will subside with time. The existence of PTSD is based upon the duration, intensity, and the effect on the

sufferer's life of those symptoms.

The variety and availability of support available to veterans has proliferated since the Vietnam War, and particularly since 2001. The VA conducts a wide variety of in-patient and outpatient programs, and there are a plethora of public and private organizations which offer a wide variety of treatment and support to veterans and their families. Though constantly evolving, treatment for those veterans who develop PTSD and seek help for it generally consists of individual or group therapy and medication, when warranted, to help control the physical symptoms.

Past Cultural Understanding

Many ancient and primitive societies appear to have had an innate understanding of the psychological, physiological, and spiritual effects of combat trauma that is missing in modern American society. Dr. Edward Tick writes;

“Our ancestors conducted war with far greater preparation, guidance, and restraint than we do today... One of the primary purposes of war was as a rite of passage into adulthood. Unlike our veterans today, warriors were reintegrated into civilian life with elaborate rituals that involved the whole community and imparted transformative spiritual wisdom. Though modern society has made such ancient beliefs and practices anachronistic, we are still ruled by and try to replicate them” (Tick, War and the Soul, p 3-4).

Traditional Native American societies tended to view war as either a normal, though extra-ordinary part of life that needed to be controlled through ritualization, or as a disruption to the natural order (Holm, p 243). Most tribes maintained a rigid distinction between war and peace, and developed elaborate rituals designed to aid the transition of both individual warriors and the entire society between the two. According to Native American scholar and Vietnam veteran Tom Holm, warriors were ritually prepared for war and offered protective medicine to assure

their safe return to the community.

“ In addition to the rituals for war, many tribes devised purification ceremonies to restore individual warriors, as well as the rest of the community, to a harmonious state. Unless the returning warriors were purged of the trauma of battle, it was felt they might bring back memories of conflict to the tribe and seek to perpetuate patterns of behavior unacceptable to the community in its ordinary functioning” (Holm, p 243).

Native American societies also viewed war as a rite of passage, an initiation into adulthood and the warrior identity. Taking life, seeing their peers die, and chancing their own death caused warriors to focus on mortality and experience emotions that many individuals do not deal with until the end of their lives. Native American societies considered this a form of age acceleration; veterans had gained maturity through their combat experiences, which was equated with wisdom (Holm, p 246). While acknowledging that purification was needed to cleanse veterans of the taint of war, Native American societies viewed their combat experience in a positive light, with warriors gaining insight into the mysteries of death, and wisdom and maturity beyond their years. By valuing the veteran’s experience, the community conferred status on returned warriors. Veterans were thus encouraged to see their experiences in a positive light; but perhaps more importantly, they were obligated to assume higher roles in the community and to use their gained wisdom for communal benefit. As one Winnebago elder remarked, “We honor our veterans for their bravery and because by seeing death on the battlefield they truly know the greatness of life” (Holm, p 246).

In addition to being purged of the taint of war and honored by their community, Native American veterans benefitted from what Tom Holm calls the “social absorption of combat related trauma” by the community (Holm, p 247). A Cherokee Vietnam veteran related:

“After I got home, my uncles sat me down and had me tell them what it was all about. One of them had been in the service in World War II and knew what war was like. We talked about what went on over there, about the killing and the waste, and one of my uncles said that was why God’s laws are against war. They never really talked about those kinds of things with me before” (Holm, p 247).

Several things happened in this instance. First, by listening to the veteran’s story and placing it within the societal construct, the community accepted his experiences, traumas and deeds as their own. Second, older, wiser, admired community members accepted the veteran into their midst, for the first time as an equal. Third, this veteran’s uncle, himself a World War II veteran, provided a positive example of a mature, veteran warrior’s contribution to society after his combat days are over. Tom Holm’s work with Native American Vietnam veterans indicates that some have been helped in their reintegration by revived traditional rituals designed to cleanse the taint of combat, honor the warrior’s experience, and communalize combat trauma.

Dr. Jonathan Shay tells us that most warrior societies and even many non-war-centric societies have historically offered communal purification for returning warriors. In the medieval Christian church, anyone who shed blood in war, regardless of the circumstances, had to do penance, and the Hebrew Bible likewise describes ancient Hebrew rites for returned warriors. The early Romans had a purification ceremony for returning armies which included passing under a beam with the head covered, as well as other ceremonies, purification, and sacrifices (Shay, p 152-153).

Athenian sacred theater was theater of, by, and for combat veterans which offered cultural therapy and purification. According to Shay,

“The ancient Athenians had a distinctive therapy of purification, healing, and reintegration of returning soldiers that was

undertaken as a whole political community. Sacred theater was one of its primary means of reintegrating the returning veteran into the social sphere as citizen” (Shay, p 153).

Athenian sacred theatre seems to have performed a similar communalization function to the ritualistic exercise participated in by the Cherokee Vietnam veteran; to allow veterans to relate their experiences to the community, situate those experiences within the broader societal construct, and for the community to collectively assume the burden of those experiences. Shay describes this circle of communalization:

“When trauma survivors hear that enough of the truth of their experience has been understood, remembered and retold with enough fidelity to grasp some of this truth ___ no one who did not experience their trauma can ever grasp all of the truth___ then the circle of communalization is complete” (Shay, p 244).

Findings

Dr. Robert Lifton postulated that trauma creates a transformation of the self (Lifton, p 11). To a great extent, the post-traumatic process is the psyche’s struggle to understand and reconcile with the changes that the experience of trauma has wrought; to come to terms with the ‘new’ self and its place in the world. The arrestment, inadequate resolution, or failure of this process is encapsulated in the oft repeated observation, ‘he [or she] never came home from the war’. A person’s reaction to a traumatic stressor and the emotions it elicits is likely to fall within some normative range, but is personally unique. Emotional responses to extreme danger and violence can complicate the physiological response, both during and after a traumatic event, as can the compartmentalization techniques taught to modern warriors.

Anyone who has experienced trauma is affected; psychologically wounded, to an extent. The severity of the wound can range anywhere from the worst case of clinically diagnosable complex PTSD to ‘just

fine’; but everyone is affected. Clinicians necessarily deal with the minority of veterans who have the worst, clinically diagnosable cases of PTSD. The majority of veterans do not fall into this category. They more or less re-assimilate into society, yet still carry the burden of peace. They fall in the middle ground between diagnosable and fine, and in the words of veteran Dan Sheehan,

“Hide their wounds out of pride, fear, and shame. Pride because we believe we should be able to handle anything, fear because we think our wounds exhibit weakness, and shame because others have suffered more yet appear to be fine” (Sheehan, p 348).

The interplay between physiology and psychology that generates and sustains the traumatic stress reaction is perhaps infinitely complex, but the symptoms generally fall under two broad categories; the physical, and the emotional. These two symptomatic categories are so closely intertwined that neither can be dealt with independent of the other.

Broadly speaking, the physical manifestations of the combat stress reaction; exaggerated startle response, inability to relax, anxiety, irritability, mood swings, insomnia, and the like are indicative of undischarged energy. Without outlet, this energy builds inside like a pressure cooker; and no matter how tightly a veteran clamps down, it will eventually escape. Without healthy ways to discharge this energy, it can escape in unhealthy or inappropriate ways.

The emotional or psychological aspects of combat stress such as anger, guilt, depression, numbness, and mistrust have their genesis in emotional and psychological responses to the original traumatic event(s) that may not have been originally understood or processed. Veterans have been changed by their experiences. They must learn who they have become, come to terms with their new selves, and determine their new place in society. In America, we have traditionally left them to do this on their own. The result is a growing number of veterans who have not fully completed the warrior’s journey; while physically among

us, they have not psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually come home from the war. Treatment for the psychological aspects of combat stress typically focuses on talking (storytelling), in both individual and group formats. Dr. Edward Tick identifies storytelling as one of the six necessary steps of warrior return. Tick argues:

“Stories release emotion, reveal secrets, educate, organize our lives into coherent narratives, point toward meaning ... Who are we collectively without our stories? Not telling stories renders truth a casualty and our identities a mask ... Stories restore truth to individuals and cultures. Without stories, we do not know. Without publicly told stories, war can become locked inside and drive us crazy ... The witness endures the pain in service to the sufferer. Secrets are released and no longer work as inner poison causing distressing emotions and symptoms (Tick, *Warrior’s Return*, p 211-212)

Veterans need to tell their stories; first to themselves, then to their loved ones, and finally to the larger community. Through this communalization of trauma, perhaps they can share the burden of peace.

CHAPTER TWO: SITE SELECTION

Design Criteria/Goals

In order to assist veterans in coping with combat stress, the landscape should address both the physiological and psychological aspects of the post-traumatic stress reaction. It should give veterans an opportunity to dissipate stress-induced energy in a safe, healthy, and challenging fashion while simultaneously catalyzing storytelling at the intra-personal, inter-personal, and public levels.

In order to help veterans dissipate stress-related energy, the design should incorporate the potential for physical exertion of user-selected intensity and duration. Voluntary aerobic exercise has been found to reduce the incidence of stress-related psychiatric disorders in humans.

Exercise lessens the nervous system’s response to stress; minimizing increases in stress hormones, preventing stress-induced immunosuppression, and ultimately reducing the incidence and severity of stress-related disorders such as depression and anxiety (Greenwood & Fleshner, p 140). Also, Schindler (2010) found a positive correlation between intensity, duration, and frequency of exercise with higher levels of life satisfaction and fewer reported PTSD symptoms (Schindler, p 50-51). The VA, leading clinicians, and the Department of Defense unanimously recommend regular exercise as a positive coping mechanism for veterans experiencing combat stress reactions and re-integrating into society post-deployment (Whealin et al, p 57). Additionally, anecdotal evidence suggests that many veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan use exercise as a primary means of coping with stress. As a PTSD-diagnosed combat veteran of both wars, I can certainly say that this is true in my case.

The landscape design should also include features which non-confrontationally encourage rumination on the emotional experiences of combat. Just as in the colloquialism “you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink”, a veteran cannot be forced to confront and examine his or her experiences; the impetus must come from within. The most the landscape can aspire to do is offer the veteran stress-relieving physical activity to help clear the mind, while presenting reminders of the emotional experience of combat in hopes of catalyzing contemplation.

In addition to giving veterans the opportunity to reflect on their combat experiences, the landscape design should include a public gathering space designed to facilitate a variety of modes of storytelling in support of trauma-communalization experiences. The space should be intimate enough to support gatherings of small groups, but versatile enough to support much larger gatherings in the case of special events. Examples of such events could include, but certainly need not be limited to Veteran’s Day, Memorial Day, and other significant martial anniversaries.

Hallowed Ground

Many view battlefield land as sacred, made so by the struggles of those who fought there. Abraham Lincoln immortalized this sentiment in his Gettysburg Address:

“But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate -- we cannot consecrate -- we cannot hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract” (library.cornell.edu, retrieved 4/19/15).

That this sentiment resonates in American culture today is evidenced by the fact that the United States preserves more battlefield land than any other country in the world, and continues to preserve more. Not only are battlefields places where “various forms of veneration reflect the belief that the contemporary power and relevance of the lessons of the battle are crucial for the continued life of the nation”, but they are spaces where Americans come to discuss “the nature of heroism, the meaning of war, the efficacy of martial sacrifice, and the significance of preserving the patriotic landscape of the nation” (Linenthal, p 1). The Civil War Sites Advisory Commission (CWSAC), in their 1993 report on the state of the nation’s Civil War battlefields, wrote that battlefield commemoration is “not a matter of glorifying or romanticizing war. Quite the contrary; it is a matter of comprehending its grim reality. The battlefields are monuments to the gritty courage of the men who fought and died there” (CWSAC, p 14). Furthermore, the CWSAC report asserts;

“Being present on a battlefield, we can experience an emotional empathy with the men who fought there. With a little imagination we can hear the first rebel yell at Manassas, imagine the horror as brush fires overtook the wounded at the Wilderness...share the anguish of the families of 800 or more unknown soldiers buried in a mass grave at Cold Harbor, or hear the hoarse yells of the exhausted survivors of the 20th

Maine as they launched a bayonet charge at Gettysburg’s Little Round Top” (CWSAC, p 14).

Like veterans, fought-over land experiences the trauma of combat. It is gouged, overturned, heaved, and buckled; structures are obliterated, trees shattered, verdant forests transformed to barren wastelands, populations killed and scattered. It is forever changed. Through these experiences, and with the blood of those who fought on it, such land is consecrated. It becomes hallowed ground. Rather than glorifying war or the worst elements of passion that war can ignite, American battlefields serve as places of quiet contemplation on the courage and dedication of the participants and of the dreadful toll of warfare. As such, our nation’s battlefields are uniquely suited to catalyze the multi-leveled storytelling and understanding that can help our veterans re-integrate.

Veterans have powerful connections to the places where they fought. The hallowed grounds where they engaged in combat provide perhaps the most direct access to the emotions they felt at the time. One only has to watch the opening scene from the movie “Saving Private Ryan” to see the truth in this statement. In 1913, at the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, Union and Confederate veterans returned to remember and reconcile with themselves and each other. Pictures from that reunion show veterans of Pickett’s Charge shaking hands over the famous stone wall where in their youth they fought. Throughout the closing of the 19th and opening of the 20th centuries, similar reunions were held at many Civil War battlefields, Fredericksburg included.

Veterans of America’s twentieth and twenty-first century wars, by and large, do not and may never have opportunities to return in peace to the places where they fought. Since the Civil War, the vast majority of American military actions have been fought on foreign soil. World War II veterans have and still can re-visit the European battlefields where they fought. Vietnam veterans have increasingly made cathartic pilgrimages to the battlefields of their youth. Such trips, however, due to the prohibitive cost and effort involved, are likely once in a lifetime events. And they will likely occur many years after combat, when the

unseen wounds of war have either healed or long since solidified into personality traits. Veterans who fought in North Korea, Beirut, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and many other overseas conflicts may never be able to return in peace to their battlefields. But even if they can, it will likely be a case of too little, too late. Veterans coping with combat stress and struggling to reintegrate need surrogate places that can help them access their compartmentalized emotions now, not decades in the future. And they need to be able to visit those places as often as they need to as they work through the process of return.

English poet and decorated WWI veteran Robert Graves described his reaction to the end of his war (which occurred while he was convalescing from battlefield wounds in England) in his autobiography *Goodbye to All That*:

“The news sent me out walking alone along the dyke above the marshes of Rhuddlan (an ancient battlefield, the Flodden of Wales), cursing and sobbing and thinking of the dead” (Graves, p 246).

Graves’ response illustrates the power of hallowed battlefield ground. He related not to the specific events of the Battle of Rhuddlan, but to the common experience that linked the veterans of Rhuddlan, Graves and his comrades, and their respective battlefields: the experience of combat.

Dr. Edward Tick describes the use of “warrior pilgrimages” in his treatment of veterans, believing them to meet some of their spiritual and psychosocial needs. In addition to leading international pilgrimages to places as far-flung as Vietnam and Greece, Dr. Tick has led visits to relevant sites on home soil including Saratoga and Valley Forge to “deepen, strengthen, or heal their connection to the warrior tradition” (Tick, *Warrior’s Return*, p 246-247). These are places that provide connection to the warrior tradition through the shared common experience of warfare. Regardless of technological, political, and social changes, the essence of war has remained lethal struggle, from time

immemorial. It is this shared experience that makes a battlefield the appropriate landscape to assist veterans in their post-combat journey and reintegration.

The Civil War in American Cultural Memory

Of all American wars, the Civil War looms largest in our collective memory. On over 10,000 sites in the United States, more than 3 million Americans fought each other, consecrating the ground with the blood of 620,000 dead and many more wounded. These are places where American warriors of the past fought, died, killed, and experienced the same range of emotions modern warriors feel and future warriors will feel. The Civil War, more than any other conflict, is directly responsible for the American society we have today. And it is the only war where, both then and now, Americans unanimously identify with the humanity of soldiers and civilians, and where every engagement is bitter; for regardless of the outcome it always came at the expense of those whom we deep down, we considered our own. Civil War battlefields represent the majority of the hallowed ground that is readily accessible to the greatest number of Americans. That accessibility, combined with the importance of the Civil War in American cultural memory, makes a Civil War battlefield an appropriate site for a landscape intervention to help veterans manage stress and facilitate reintegration.

Site Selection Process

In selecting an appropriate battlefield for the proposed project, there were several factors to consider: cultural importance, accessibility to the target population, and variety and intensity of the historic experience. The appropriate site would be readily accessible to the largest possible number of veterans, culturally significant enough to be readily recognized as such by the majority of Americans, and possess sufficient variety and intensity of historic experience to resonate with the largest number of contemporary veterans. As research progressed on the themes of societal estrangement, communalization, and reintegration, it became apparent that the ideal site should also incorporate a civilian

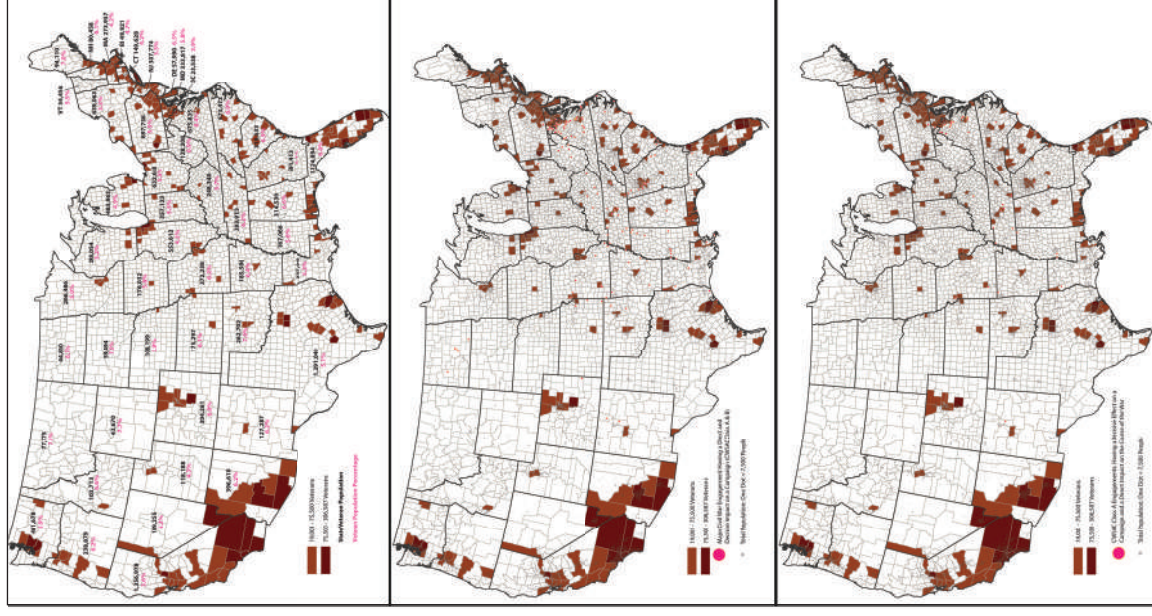
community, in both the historical and modern contexts.

The 1993 CWSAC Report on the Nation's Civil War battlefields identified 384 principal battlefields out of the approximately 10,500 Civil War engagements. These were further classified Class "A", "B", "C", or "D":

- "A", having a decisive influence on a campaign and a direct impact on the course of the war;
- "B", having a direct and decisive influence on their campaign;
- "C", having observable influence on the outcome of a campaign;
- "D", having limited influence on the outcome of their campaign or operation, but achieving or affecting important local objectives (CWSAC, p 16-17)

Due to their strategic character, class A and B battlefield sites were considered to hold national significance, while C and D sites were tactical operations of state or local significance. This study limited site consideration to the 149 nationally significant battlefields. These were cross-referenced with veteran population data and general population data to determine points of nexus. This data proved inconclusive due to the sheer number of battlefields, so the field was narrowed to include to the 45 Class A battlefields. Comparing veteran population data with total population showed which of those battlefields were within the local commuting area (50 miles) of an area of high veteran population density.

Not surprisingly, the areas of highest veteran population coincided with areas of overall highest population, with the area comprising the northeast corridor between Boston, MA and Washington, DC leading the way. The state with the highest veteran population density was Virginia at 8.4%, with the majority of that population clustered in northern Virginia and the coast.



[Figure 2.1] Battlefield Locations Compared to Population Distribution (CWSAC Appendix M)

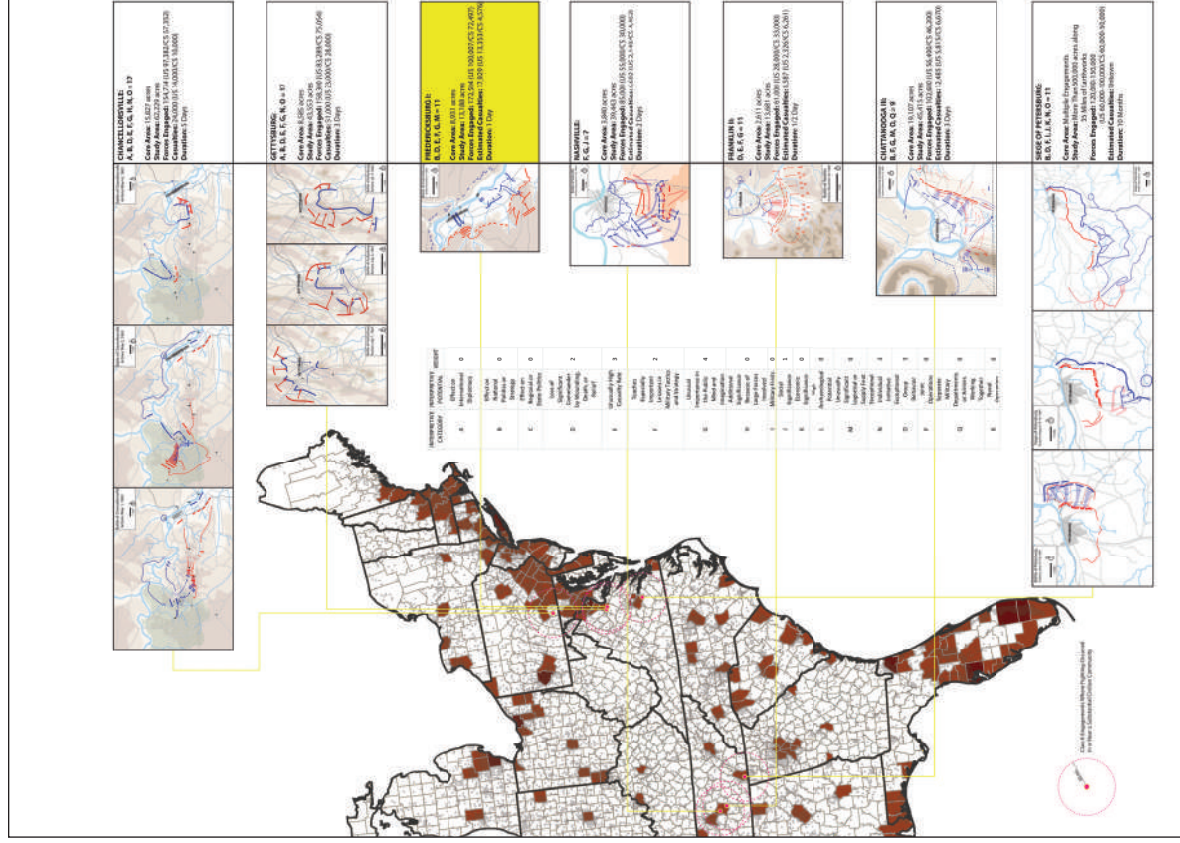
Although this would seemingly narrow the field of potential battlefields to the Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania area, the requirement for inclusion of a historic and current civilian community reduced the number of potential sites, while increasing their geographic dispersal.

Seven Class A battlefields incorporated a significant historic and contemporary civilian community and were within the local commuting area of a high veteran/civilian population nexus:

- Chancellorsville, VA Chattanooga III, TN
- Gettysburg, PA Petersburg, VA
- Fredericksburg, VA
- Nashville, TN
- Franklin II, TN

The CWSAC report evaluated each battlefield according to a list of potential interpretive categories. For this study, each interpretive category was assigned a numerical weight. Higher weight was assigned to those categories involving the actual combat experience or the cultural importance of the battle. For example, category “G”, “unusual importance in the public mind and imagination” received the highest numerical weight of “4”, while category “L”, “high archaeological potential” received the lowest weight of “0”. Each battlefield’s score was the sum of its numerically weighted potential interpretive categories. Chancellorsville and Gettysburg both scored 17 points, while Franklin II, Petersburg, and Fredericksburg I tied with 11. When individual battlefield factors were examined more closely, however, Fredericksburg rose to the top (CWSAC Appendix L, p 190).

The Battle of Fredericksburg had the highest concentration of combatants and fighting packed into the smallest contiguous land area; and therefore the highest ‘intensity of experience’ of all the analyzed



[Figure 2.2] Battlefield Interpretive Potential and Intensity of Experience

battles. The interpretive potential of the Fredericksburg battlefield is likewise concentrated in a relatively small, dense area. Central to that area was and is the city of Fredericksburg. Fredericksburg is the only one of the analyzed battles where major fighting actually occurred in the civilian community. In fact, Fredericksburg was the sole instance in the war of sustained urban combat between major armies; combat which resulted in the destruction of the pre-war city. It also marked the first river crossing under fire in American history. When the city's added cultural significance as George Washington's boyhood home, its position astride the Interstate-95/US Route-1 travel corridor, and its location within 50 miles of three major international airports (Dulles, Reagan National, and Richmond) is factored in, it is clear that Fredericksburg is an ideal site for this design exploration.

CHAPTER THREE: FREDERICKSBURG

Halfway between Washington, DC and Richmond, Virginia is the city of Fredericksburg, Virginia. The community of 28,000 sits just below the fall-line of the Rappahannock River, nestled on the southern bank in a natural amphitheater formed by two river-parallel ridges. First settled circa 1671, the community of 4,000 was a bustling river-port and mill town in the antebellum period. The town was well-entrenched in American cultural memory as the boyhood home of George Washington, who spent much of his childhood at Ferry Farm, just across the Rappahannock from the city's downtown commercial district.

With the start of the Civil War in 1861, Fredericksburg found itself mid-way between the warring capitals, on a railway that provided the shortest route to Richmond, and smack-dab in the center of the natural invasion route from Washington to Richmond. The Rappahannock River served the Confederates as a major barrier to invasion for much of the war, and several major battles were fought in Fredericksburg's immediate vicinity, resulting in over 100,000 combined casualties (Stackpole, p xviii).

Fire in the Streets

In mid-November 1862, Union General Ambrose Burnside marched his Army of the Potomac to Falmouth, on the Rappahannock's north bank opposite Fredericksburg. He intended to take the direct route to Richmond, marching swiftly and crossing the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg before the Confederates could move into position to stop him. Although Burnside arrived in force opposite Fredericksburg several days before the defending Confederates, late arrival of pontoons needed to cross the river cost him the initiative, giving Confederate General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia time to establish itself on the heights behind the town. Thus began an extended period during which each army fortified the heights overlooking the town on their respective sides of the river.

While Burnside occupied Stafford Heights, determining how to cross, Lee fortified the high ground west of the city while defending fording sites over 32 miles of river. After reconnoitering up and down-river,



[Figure 3.1] Fredericksburg from the Union-occupied north bank, 1863.
Source, Library of Congress

Burnside decided that the Confederates, stretched thin to guard the far-flung fords, would be most surprised by a crossing at Fredericksburg itself.

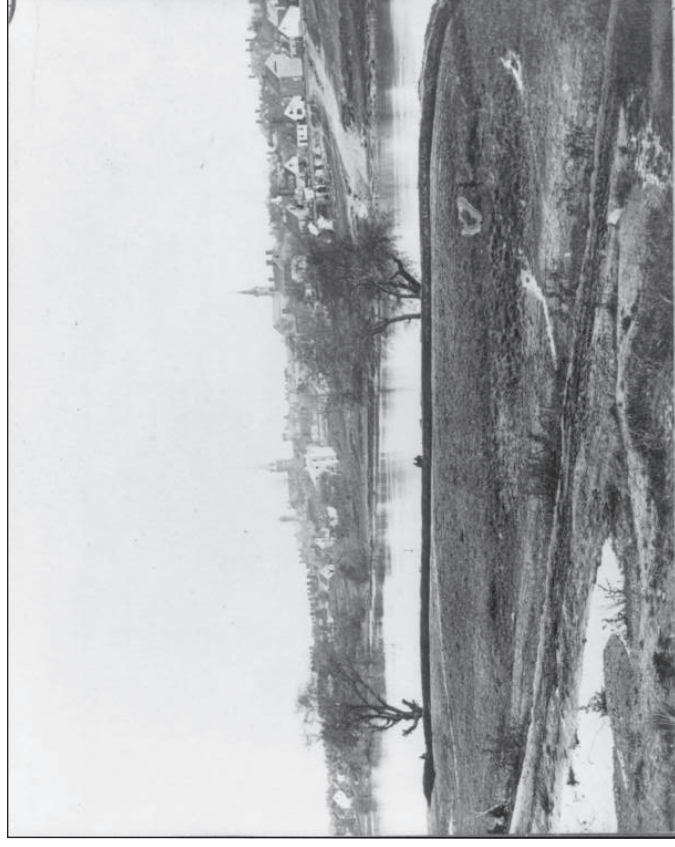
Planning against such an eventuality, Lee stationed Brigadier General (BGen.) William Barksdale's Mississippi Brigade in the city. Barksdale's orders were to delay Union forces long enough for Lee to consolidate the bulk of his army on the heights behind town. With parts of the army as far as 15 miles away, that meant for at least the better part of a day.

The Army of the Potomac was organized in three "Grand Divisions". The right Grand Division was commanded by Major General (MajGen.) Edwin V. Sumner, who made his headquarters at Chatham Manor, a large Georgian mansion on Stafford heights that afforded commanding views of Fredericksburg. The center and left Grand Divisions were commanded by MajGens. Joseph Hooker and William Franklin.

Burnside planned to cross the Rappahannock at three points. Sumner's Right Grand Division would cross at the base of Stafford Heights below Chatham Manor, attacking into the north-central portion of the city. Hooker's Center Grand Division would cross adjacent to the Fredericksburg City Docks into the southern end of the city, and Franklin's Left Grand Division would cross south of the city. These points were designated the upper, middle, and lower crossings.

Before midnight on December 10, 1862 three pontoon trains rumbled toward their respective crossing points while 147 artillery pieces moved onto Stafford Heights in support. When the moon set around 1 AM, the engineers began their work, stealthily bridging the icy Rappahannock while Confederate picket fires burned 300 feet away on the opposite bank. As dawn approached, a thick fog blanketed the river valley, muffling sound and sight.

Barksdale had anticipated the crossing, however, and had his Confederate defenders in position well before dawn. The lower pontoon crossing, with farther to travel, began later and escaped Confederate



[Figure 3.2] The Upper Crossing Site, February 1863. Brady Collection, Library of Congress

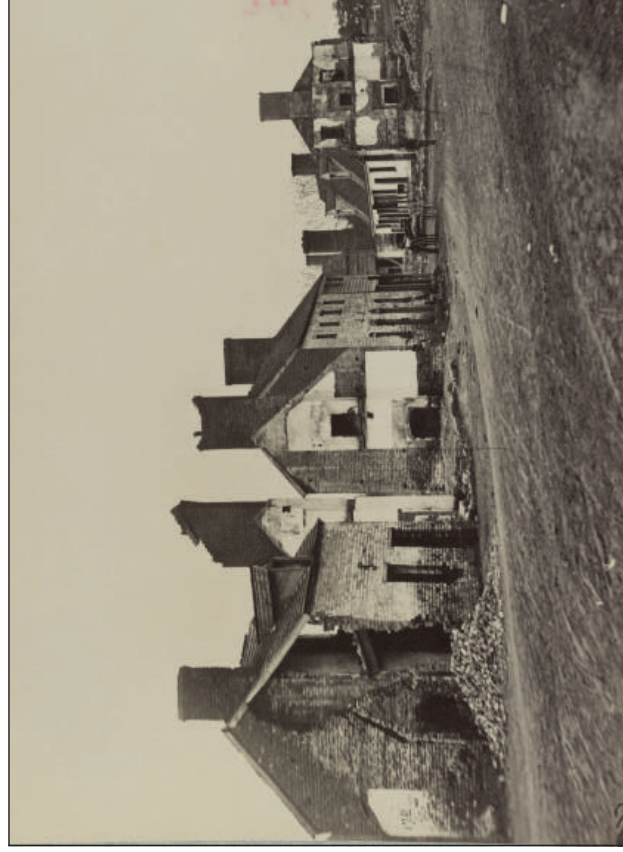
attention. At 05:00 AM the silence was shattered by two cannon shots, the pre-arranged signal for Lee's army to concentrate. Ten minutes later, when the outline of the pontoon bridges mid-stream materialized through the fog, the Confederate's opened fire. Union engineers, unarmed and without cover on the open spans, fled from the withering fire, leaving their dead on the unfinished bridges. Union artillery opened immediately from Stafford Heights, attempting without success to suppress the Confederate sharpshooters.

Firing from loopholes and covered positions behind walls and inside houses, the defenders proved impossible to dislodge, and their fire forced the engineers to abandon their work each time the artillery lifted.

Without Confederate interference, bridge at the lower crossing was completed by 11:00 AM. Burnside, worried that Franklin's Grand

Division would be un-supported on the far side of the river, would not allow him to cross until the upper and middle bridges were also complete.

At 12:30 PM, the frustrated Union commander ordered a general bombardment of Fredericksburg, and “all the batteries that could be brought to bear were now, by order of General Burnside, turned upon the town” (O’Reilly, p 77).



[Figure 3.3] Fredericksburg After Bombardment, December 1862.
Source, Library of Congress

For an hour, nearly 150 artillery pieces concentrated on the city. A Rhode Islander described the barrage:

“The roar of the cannon, the bursting of shells, the falling of walls and chimneys; added to the fire of the infantry on both sides, the smoke of burning houses, made a scene of wildest confusion, terrific enough to appall the stoutest hearts”, and

Confederates described streets “ploughed by shot and shell as though a disk plow had run over it” (O’Reilly, p 77-78).

Although the bombardment caused massive damage to the town, it failed to silence the defenders, and by 2:30 PM Burnside was flailing for options. BGen. Henry Hunt, Burnside’s chief of artillery, passed on the suggestion that infantry paddle pontoons across and drive the Confederates away from the river to allow the engineers to finish their work. Although this had never been done before and was considered a suicide mission, Burnside assented, provided that those participating were volunteers.

Colonel (Col.) Norman Hall’s 7th Michigan volunteered to assault at the upper crossing. At 3:00 PM, the Union artillery opened with redoubled fury, pounding the bridgeheads for 30 minutes. When the guns fell silent, the 7th Michigan rushed to their pontoons and took heavy casualties as the first waves began to paddle and pole their way across. Then an unexpected thing happened; as the attackers passed mid-stream, the defenders’ fire slackened. They had passed under cover of the river bank, into an area of relative safety where the steep banks of the river blocked Confederate fire (O’Reilly, p 83, 85). Watching Union soldiers on Stafford Heights cheered as the Michiganders climbed the steep bank and drove the Confederates from their waterfront positions along Sophia Street. (O’Reilly, p 83). The fight for the city was just beginning, however.

The terrain in Fredericksburg rises from the river to a low, river-parallel ridge upon which BGen. William Barksdale anchored his defense of the city. Barksdale established a defense in depth, using the three primary river-parallel streets; Sophia, fronting the river; Caroline, running along the base of the riverfront ridge; and Princess Anne, along its crest. When Confederate sharpshooters were driven from their riverfront positions by the successful Union landings, they fell back to the backyards and houses between Sophia and Caroline Streets. For the remainder of the day, Union and Confederate forces engaged in a see-saw street-fight over the 600-foot between Sophia and

Princess Anne Streets, in “the first and... only instance in the war of a fierce and deadly contest for the control of a populous town” (O’Reilly, p 101).

Confederates hid in attics, chambers, and cellars of houses, and “stole out of every corner and even from buildings behind the Yankees to trap them in a crossfire” (O’Reilly, p 87). Climbing fences, slipping through backyards, and kicking in doors, Union forces gradually fought their way to Caroline Street. The Confederates grudgingly gave ground, withdrawing southwest towards Barksdale’s headquarters at the Market House. As full darkness fell, Barksdale withdrew his brigade behind a thin rear-guard deployed along Princess Anne Street. Quietly, they marched westward down George and Hanover Streets to rejoin Lee’s main force.

Fredericksburg lay in ruins and federal troops camped along Caroline Street. Union troops had executed the first bridgehead landings under



[Figure 3.4] View from Confederate Positions on Marye’s Heights. Source, Library of Congress

fire in American history and wrested the city from a determined foe in North America’s first urban combat. In this, “one of the hardest fought battles of the war”, the two armies shifted the conflict towards total war and “set the stage for the way modern armies would fight from then on” (O’Reilly, p 101). Barksdale’s brigade had exceeded expectations. He had delayed the Union attack for an entire day, thoroughly disrupting Burnside’s plans and buying Lee time to concentrate his army on the heights behind town.

Interlude

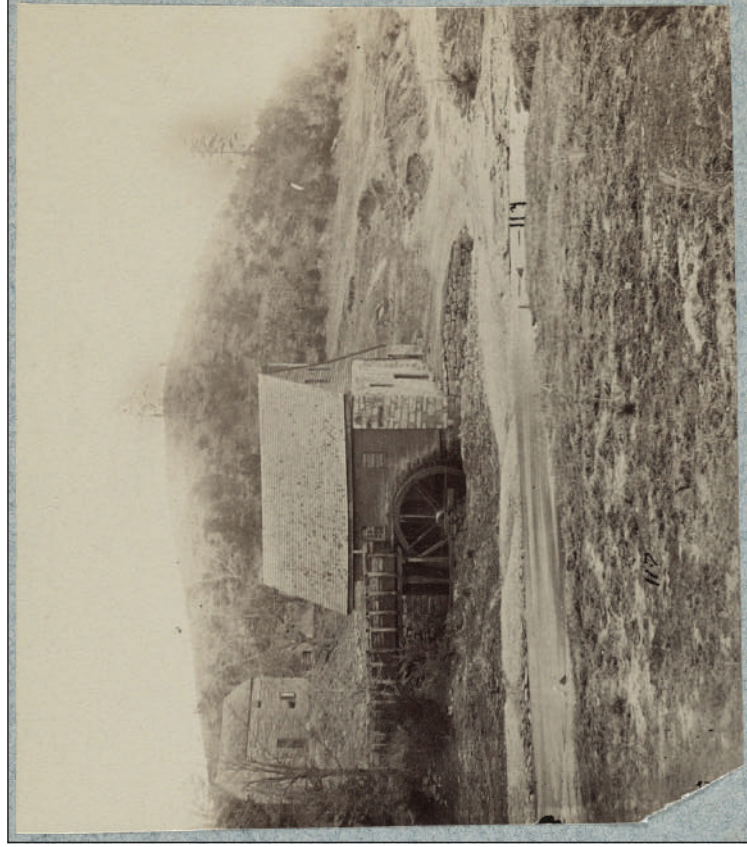
Burnside spent December 12th consolidating his hold on Fredericksburg and planning his next move, while Lee spent the day improving his defenses. Lee’s army held an eight-mile concave front along the high ground west of town, its northern flank anchored on the Rappahannock River above the city, its southern on Massaponax Creek below. James Longstreet’s 1st Corps held six miles of the line from the Rappahannock to Deep Run, including Taylor’s Hill, Marye’s Heights, Lee’s Hill, and Howison Hill. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson’s 2nd Corps was concentrated along the remaining two miles from Deep Run to Prospect Hill. Jackson’s less-advantageous terrain meant that his line had to be more heavily manned. Opposite the city itself, Marye’s Heights bulged toward the river, the closest portion of Lee’s line to Fredericksburg.

Between the heights and the town, a 600-yard field soon to be known as the Bloody Plain sloped gently downward to a millrace tracing the city edge. Fifteen feet wide and seven feet deep, with sheer walls and filled with five feet of icy water, the millrace posed a major obstacle to any federal advance from Fredericksburg. Union engineers managed to drain the water down to three feet, but that was all.

Three bridges spanned the millrace at Prussia (Lafayette Boulevard), Hanover, and William Streets. The Confederates left only the stringers and carefully registered artillery on these crossing points. A sunken road, lined with 4-foot high stone walls provided an expedient infantry fortification along the base of the heights, whose crest bristled with

dug-in guns of the elite Washington (Louisiana) artillery. An unfinished railroad cut ran from town past the heights' southern tip. Artillery pieces on Lee's and Howison Hills were trained directly down the cut to protect the flank of the Marye's salient. The Confederates even cut a crude road up the ravine on the back side of Marye's Heights to provide a covered and concealed route for reinforcements. BGen. Thomas R.R. Cobb, commanding the infantry in the sunken road wrote, "we have a magnificent position... perhaps the best on the line" (O'Reilly, p 249).

Cobb deployed three Georgia regiments behind the stone wall and placed a fourth in reserve, safely ensconced on the backside of the heights.



[Figure 3.5] Mill and Confederate Road Behind Marye's Heights, 1861-1865. Source, Library of Congress

The Slaughter Pen

Meanwhile, Burnside finalized his plan. Franklin's Left Grand Division would be the main effort; he would turn the Confederate southern flank at Prospect Hill, while Sumner's Right Grand Division simultaneously attacked Marye's Heights to prevent the Confederates from sending reinforcements. When Burnside's long-delayed orders arrived on the early morning of December 13th, they were unclear. Franklin misinterpreted them and initially attacked with only BGen. George Gordon Meade's 4,500 man Pennsylvania division, his right flank protected by BGen. John Gibbon's division.

Meade stepped into the attack just before 10:00 AM. From their riverside bivouac, the Pennsylvanians moved westward up Smithfield ravine to the Richmond Road. Running parallel to the river and the Confederate line, the Richmond Road was both blessing and curse. Lined by cedar-topped berms, it was a useful control feature, which Meade used to align on the enemy and deploy his division into line of battle. The berms provided cover from Confederate artillery, while the cedar windbreak provided concealment.

Past the Richmond road lay a wide, flat farm field. Soon to be known as "The Slaughter Pen", the half-mile expanse was bisected by five-foot deep irrigation ditches. The field led to a railroad embankment at the base of heavily wooded Prospect Hill, slopes crowded with concealed Confederates.

As Meade deployed his division and prepared to advance, cannon-fire from the south announced the presence of Confederate Major (Maj.) John Pelham and two horse-drawn artillery pieces. Positioned well forward of the Confederate lines, Pelham and his small force enfiladed Meade's left flank, keeping it pinned to the Richmond road for over an hour. When Pelham finally withdrew to the Confederate line just after 11:00 AM, Union artillery commenced an hour-long preparatory bombardment of Prospect Hill. Beneath the trees, Confederate gunners slipped to covered positions behind their cannon and weathered the

storm.

At noon, Meade advanced into the Slaughter Pen. When several Federal shells exploded prematurely over Meade's troops, Gen. John Reynolds ordered supporting fire ceased and "silence fell over the field except for the odd order and the steady tramp of 8,000 Northerners sloggng through the muddy hollow" (O'Reilly, p 153).

As Meade's men passed a lonely sapling 800 yards from the Confederate line, between forty and fifty-three Confederate cannon opened simultaneously from the right, left and center. Meade's men were caught in a massive crossfire. Unable to withstand the concentrated shelling, Meade's troops withdrew behind their own artillery, where they pressed themselves to the muddy ground. The Confederates had unmasked their positions however, and when the federal cannon answered, it was with telling effect.

When at 1:00 PM shells blew-up two Confederate caissons, Meade seized the initiative and ordered his men to charge. The Pennsylvanians surged across the open field. A portion of them moved through a jutting finger of woods, penetrating a 600-yard gap in the Confederate line. Believing the marshy ground in that area impassable, the Confederates had neglected to defend it. Meade's men gained the Confederate military road on the crest of the high ground. Spreading left and right, they began to exploit their breakthrough. Union commanders failed to recognize the situation however, and in the confused melee that followed, the Federals were ultimately unable to capitalize on their initial success.

Meade's and Gibbon's (who had finally been fully committed) divisions had achieved their objectives, but were disorganized, overextended, and without reinforcement. At this critical juncture, Confederate Gen. Jubal Early counter-attacked, sending the Federal troops reeling back toward the Richmond Road. Early's Confederates surged forward, stopped only by close-range artillery fire and the timely intervention of BGen. David Birney's infantry division.

The situation stabilized. Confederates remained in possession of Prospect Hill and the railroad at its base, Federals facing them across The Slaughter Pen. Although both sides prepared to resume the fight that had already cost over 8,000 combined casualties, Early's counterattack proved the last major action on the southern portion of the field.

The Bloody Plain

While Meade was attacking the southern flank, Sumner readied his attack on Marye's Heights. Gen. William French's division was to lead the assault, with Gen. Winfield Hancock's in support. Sumner's plan called for skirmishers to rush the millrace bridges at Prussia and Hanover streets, seizing them intact from the Confederate pickets. They would continue to advance at the run, entering Confederate lines with the retreating pickets. The remainder of the division would follow in two columns, each crossing its respective bridge and deploying into line of battle behind the cover of the mill-race embankment. This sharp rise on the far side of the mill-race constituted the last covered position for the attackers; choosing to leave its protection meant full exposure to the enemy and irrevocable commitment to the attack. Literally a point of no return, it would be remembered by many as "the valley of death" (O'Reilly, p 293). The Federal troops were to advance in a compact "column of a division", each successive brigade 200 yards behind the previous (O'Reilly, p 247).

As 11:00 AM approached, the two divisions formed in the streets of Fredericksburg. Avoiding the intersections, which were exposed to artillery fire from the west, they filed into the north-south running streets behind the river-ridge and prepared to attack. Confederate artillery opened as swarms of Union skirmishers exposed themselves at city's edge and raced toward the mill-race bridges. Confederate pickets gave way before them, leaving only the stringers behind. Without pausing to rest, the federal troops scrambled up the millrace embankment and followed them at a run. The winded soldiers in blue could not keep up with their Confederate counterparts, however.



[Figure 3.6] *The Bloody Plain as Seen From Federal Hill, 1862. Source, Library of Congress*

Bogged down by the clinging mud, they struggled across the plain under withering artillery fire. When the Confederate infantry opened on them from the sunken road, the survivors took cover behind a small fold in the ground, trying to avoid the storm of lead.

The main federal attack was close behind. Along George, Hanover and Prussia Streets, Federal columns snaked out of town. As the Union troops porpoised onto the exposed western face of the river-ridge, they came under artillery fire from Marye's Heights. Marching down the exposed slope, they bottlenecked at the mill-race crossings and suffered the accurate artillery fire as those ahead made their way across the deckless bridges or clambered through the yet three-foot deep water of the millrace. Lieutenant Colonel (LtCol.) St. Clair Mulholland of the Irish Brigade wrote, "After crossing the stream a sharp rise in the ground hid the regiment from the enemy and gave the men a chance to take a breath and dress the ranks" (NPS blog, retrieved 4/24/15). Union troops packed the muddy embankment, jockeying for position in the small area

of cover. There they caught their breath, dressed their formations, and shed extra gear before going over the top onto the artillery-swept plain beyond.

Crossing The Bloody Plain, they were flayed by steady fire from the Washington Artillery, who were proving Confederate artillery chief E. Porter Alexander's boast, "A chicken could not live on that field when we open on it" (O'Reilly, p 267). Still the Federals kept on, until, as they approached 100 yards from the stone wall, the densely-packed Confederate infantry in the sunken road rose and delivered concentrated musket volleys into their already decimated ranks. One Federal recalled, "so continuous was the roar of musketry on the firing line, that I do not remember hearing the reports of the cannon" (O'Reilly, p 258). The survivors dropped prone. The fortunate managed to find the swale, that small fold of ground offering the sole cover on The Bloody Plain.

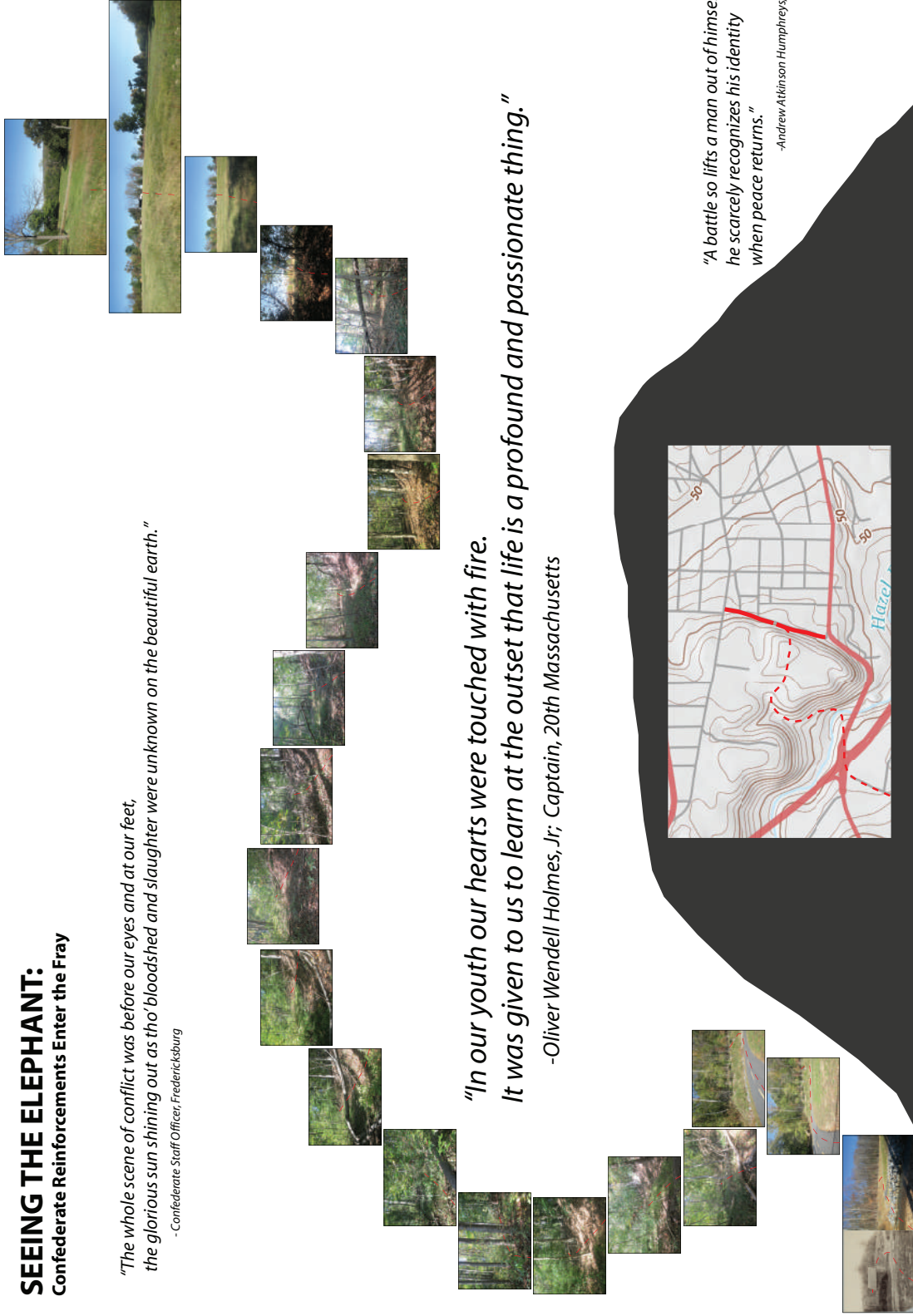
Realizing that his troops in the sunken road would soon run out of ammunition at such a high rate of fire, Confederate BGen. Thomas R. R. Cobb sent several requests for reinforcement. First to answer was Gen. Robert Ransom, who believed himself in command of the entire salient, and whose division lined the rear of Marye's Heights. Ransom immediately sent four regiments to Cobb's aid.

Winding up the backside of the heights via the military road, the 15th, 46th, 48th, and 27th North Carolina formed into line of battle and dropped their knapsacks in the hollow behind the Willis family cemetery. Ahead of them, silhouetted against the horizon, members of the Washington Artillery worked their guns. The Carolinians reached the summit and lay down beneath a "merciless fire and storm of minnie balls and shell" (O'Reilly, p 259). The 27th North Carolina halted only briefly before tumbling down the exposed forward slope of the heights into the sunken road, suffering twelve casualties in the process. Reinforcements eventually packed the sunken road four-deep; those in the rear loaded and passed muskets to the firing line, allowing the Confederates to maintain a prodigious rate of fire disproportionate to their numbers.

SEEING THE ELEPHANT:
Confederate Reinforcements Enter the Fray

"The whole scene of conflict was before our eyes and at our feet, the glorious sun shining out as tho' bloodshed and slaughter were unknown on the beautiful earth."

- Confederate Staff Officer, Fredericksburg



*"In our youth our hearts were touched with fire.
It was given to us to learn at the outset that life is a profound and passionate thing."*

-Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr; Captain, 20th Massachusetts

"A battle so lifts a man out of himself that he scarcely recognizes his identity when peace returns."

-Andrew Atkinson Humphreys, BGen USA

[Figure 3.7] Confederate Reinforcement Route from Behind Marye's Heights

Brigade after brigade, French's division disintegrated before the stone wall. Survivors either streamed back towards Fredericksburg or sought protection in the swale, its small declivity filling with prone blue figures. Gen. Darius Couch, commanding II Corps, ordered Hancock's Division to French's support before climbing the cupola of the courthouse on Princess Anne Street for a better view of the field. Couch, veteran of the Mexican-American War, the Seminole Wars, and much of the bloodiest fighting in the Civil War's eastern theater, later wrote

“I had never before seen fighting like that, nothing approached it in terrible uproar and destruction.” As he watched, each brigade in succession “would do its duty and melt like snow coming down on warm ground” (O'Reilly, p 274).

Hancock's division moved to the attack shortly after noon. Like French's had an hour earlier, Hancock's brigades filed out of town to the millrace crossings. It took BGen. Thomas Meagher's famed Irish Brigade thirty minutes to cross the millrace at Hanover Street, under a galling shellfire. After deploying behind the millrace embankment, they too pushed past the point of no return.

Flanks aligned on Hanover Street, Hancock's three brigades marched onto the bloody plain in succession. With sprigs of boxwood in their caps to celebrate their heritage, Meagher's Irishmen followed Colonel Samuel Zook's brigade toward the heights, 600 yards distant. Hancock's troops suffered under the fire of the increasingly practiced Confederate artillery, which tore large gaps in their formations. Although several batteries of Union artillery had pushed to the edges of town to answer their counterparts on Marye's Heights, they were ineffective against the well protected Confederate guns.

As Hancock's infantry advanced toward the heights, they were disrupted by the accurate artillery fire as well as by various fences that surrounded the fairgrounds. When they reached the swale they had another, more serious obstacle to deal with. The ground in and around the swale was covered so thickly by the survivors and casualties of



[Figure 3.8] Battle of Fredericksburg. Jacob Wells, 1886. Source, Library of Congress

French's division that Hancock's men had to pick their way through. Men tripped over living and dead bodies, or were tugged down by the pant-leg by survivors imploring them not to go forward. Officers tried to get the survivors to either join the attack or get out of the way, but they would not budge. Nonetheless, elements of all three of Hancock's brigades managed to push past the swale into the musketry of the sunken road defenders.

Now reinforced by multiple regiments, Cobb's men were able to deliver an even more intense fire than before. Witnesses described the stone wall erupting in a continuous sheet of flame along its length when the gray-clad infantry engaged. Hancock's soldiers could not withstand the onslaught. Survivors of the shattered brigades sought shelter in the swale with survivors of previous attacks. The dead, evicted in favor of the living, were stacked, along with anything else available, to provide a few more inches of protection.

By 1:00 PM, it was clear that Hancock's attack had also failed. The plain was littered with union dead, the swale packed with survivors. Unable to move forward, rearward, or sideward, unable to even stand, they lay pinned down in front of the sunken road.

Burnside was unaware that the attacks on the southern end of the field had failed. Still believing that the fate of the battle hung in the balance, he was determined to keep the pressure on the Confederates and increasingly desperate to achieve a breakthrough.

Throughout the rest of the afternoon, the Federals conducted four more fruitless attacks while the Confederates steadily fed reinforcements into the sunken road. Cobb was mortally wounded and succeeded in command by BGen. Joseph Kershaw, who immediately fed his South Carolina brigade into the battle.

Winding up the rear of the heights, the Carolinians took most of their casualties as they approached the summit and ran down the forward slope under shellfire. One Private recalled, once "behind the stone wall I felt pretty much at home", and that anyone wounded "after we got

behind the fence did it by their own carelessness" (O'Reilly, p 333).

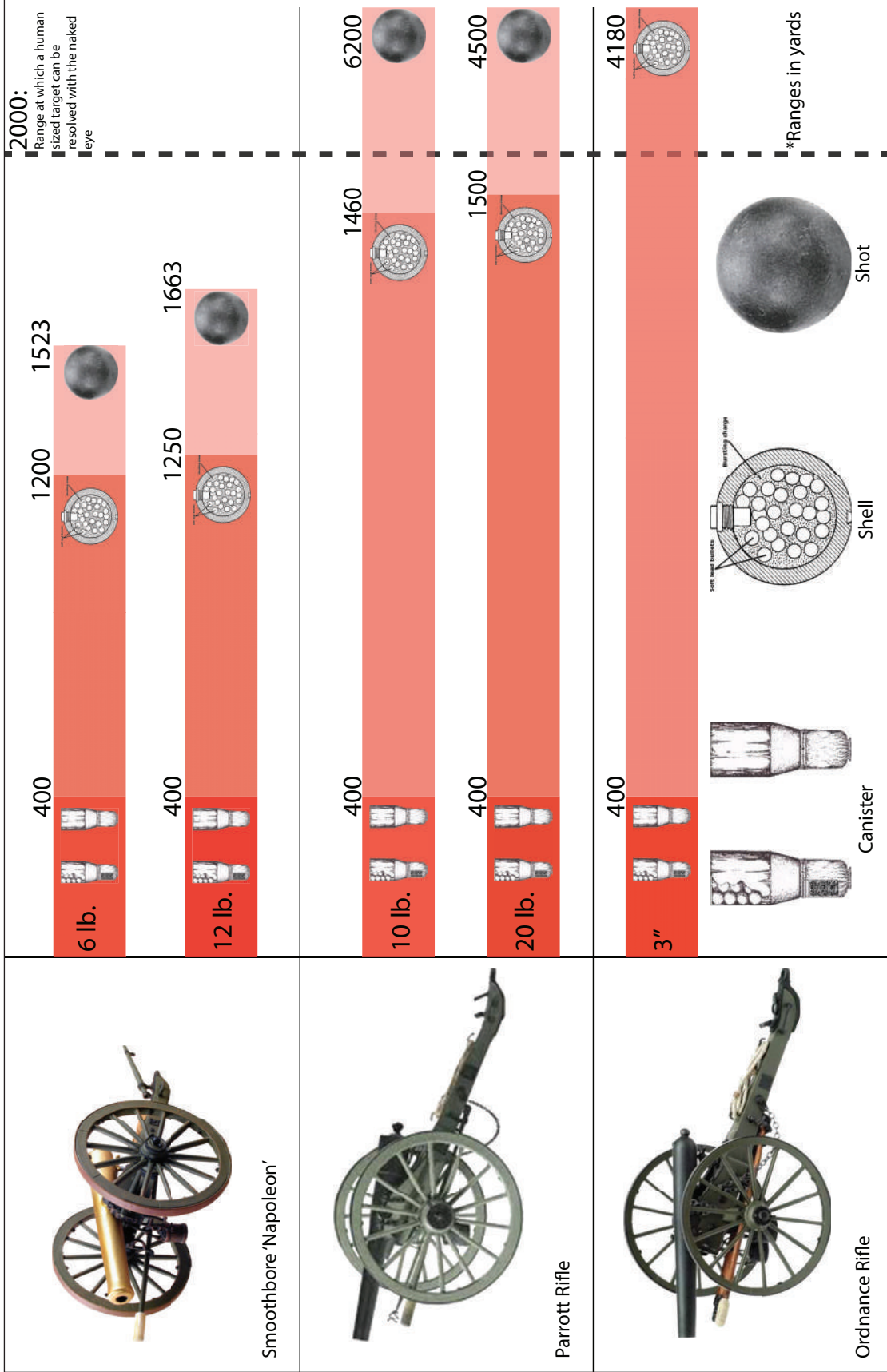
Seven Federal divisions smashed themselves against the Confederate defenses, suffering nearly 8,000 casualties in the process. By contrast, the Confederates suffered only 1,200. Nearly 40,000 Federal troops attacked across the Bloody Plain on December 13th. Not one reached the stone wall.

The night of December 13th was bitterly cold, and the combination of wounds and exposure killed many wounded men trapped in front of the stone wall. Gen. Couch wrote, "As fast as men died they stiffened in the wintry air and on the front line were rolled forward for protection to the living. Frozen men were placed for dumb sentries" (Stackpole, p 226).

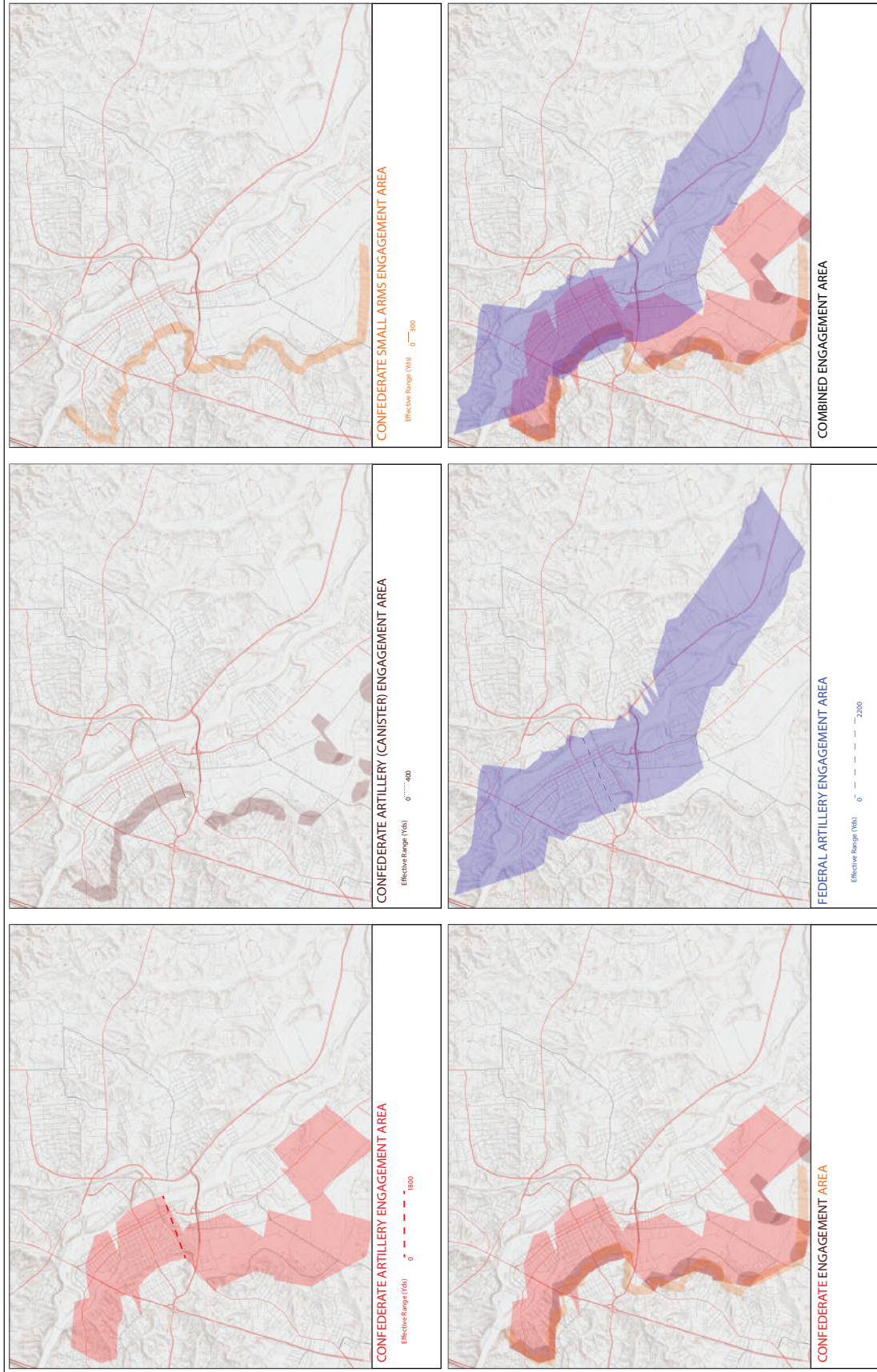
When December 14th dawned, the men of George Sykes' division, who had reinforced the swale shortly after nightfall, were surprised and dismayed to learn just how close they were to the enemy. The Confederates fired on every movement, and Sykes' men soon learned that lying prone was their only protection; even rising to their knees could take them above the lip of the swale. They remained there through the 14th and half of the 15th, while Burnside pondered courses of action and Lee improved his defenses.

On the afternoon of the 15th Burnside proposed a truce to bury the dead and relieve those wounded who still lived. Lee assented, and Federal burial parties spread across the field. The truce held for the rest of the day, and night fell on the 15th with Lee confident that battle would resume in the morning. Burnside, however, withdrew his army across the Rappahannock in the night. When the 16th dawned, the Confederates were surprised and chagrined to find their enemy gone and the bridges removed.

The battle of Fredericksburg was over. It had cost the combatants over 18,000 casualties and destroyed the community and landscape of Fredericksburg. Shelled by the artillery of both sides, burned, and ransacked by a Federal army which had apparently given up all pretense



[Figure 3.9] Civil War Artillery Pieces, Projectiles, and Effective Ranges



[Figure 3.10] Confederate Engagement Areas from Marye's Heights, Overlapped with Federal Artillery Engagement Area from Stafford Heights

to chivalry, the town would never be the same.

Fredericksburg Today

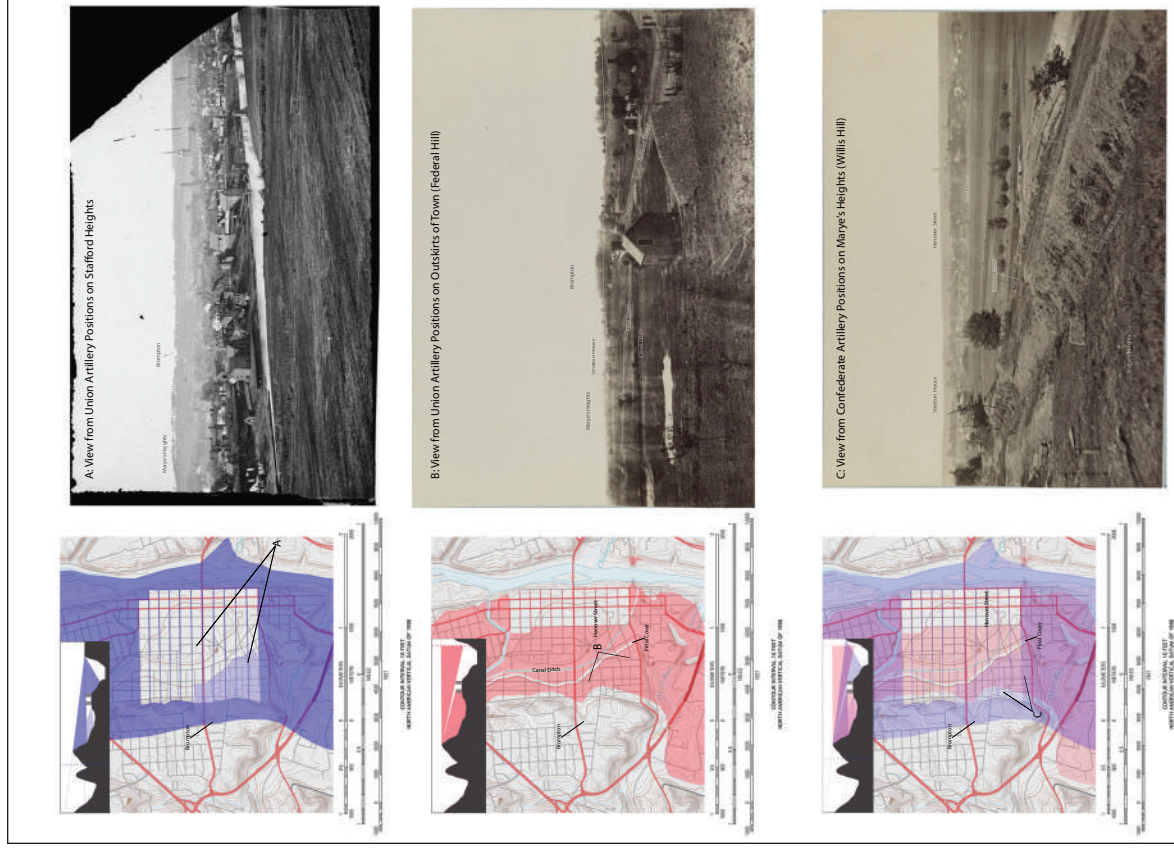
Fredericksburg's population has increased seven-fold in the more than 150-years since the town's destruction. Caroline Street is still the mercantile center of town, lined by shops and restaurants. Buildings in the historic downtown still bear the scars of bombardment and display cannonballs lodged in beams.

The topography that so shaped the events of November and December 1862 is unchanged; only the trappings of civilization covering it are different. Marye's Heights command the Bloody Plain as in 1862, but rather than being crowned by artillery, they are crowned today by Fredericksburg National Cemetery, National Park Service (NPS) interpretive exhibits, and the University of Mary Washington.

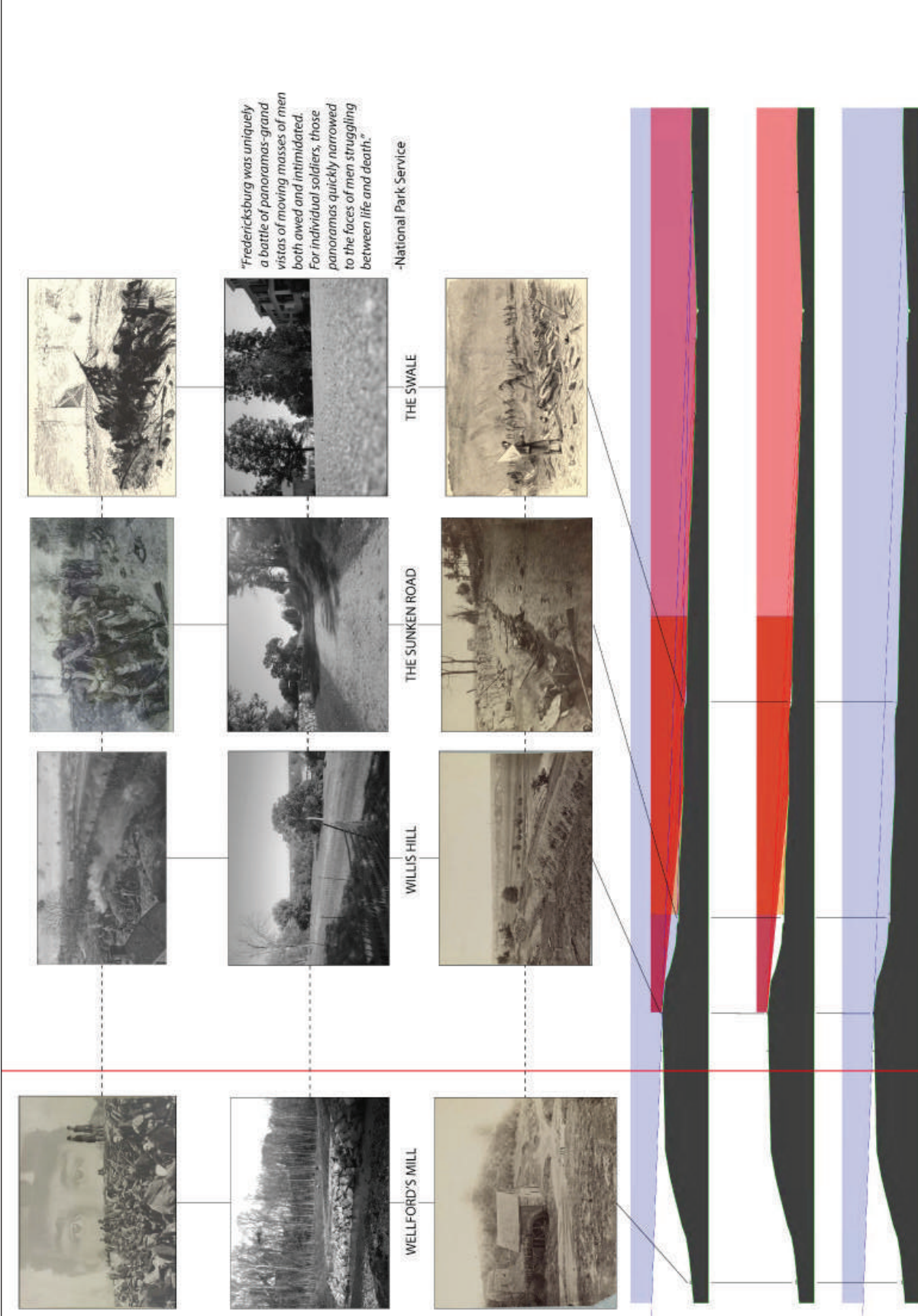
The Bloody Plain, rather than being covered with dead and dying men, is covered by single-family homes built between 1910 and 1940. The swale that saved so many still exists, although much of it is obscured by pavement and residences. The millrace that proved such a terrible obstacle to the federal advance still runs beneath Kenmore Avenue, a cluster of interpretive signs all that marks the bloody Hanover Street crossing. The millrace embankment provides the same amount of cover that it did in 1862; only today it is covered by front lawns, retaining walls, and ornamental groundcovers rather than by frightened young men preparing for battle.

The rear-slope of the river-ridge still faces Marye's Heights; the intersection where the Irish Brigade first came under fire is now home to the Fredericksburg Area Veteran's Memorial. The sunken road still traces the base of the heights, restored stone walls commanding the NPS visitor center parking lot.

It is largely through NPS efforts that the story of Fredericksburg



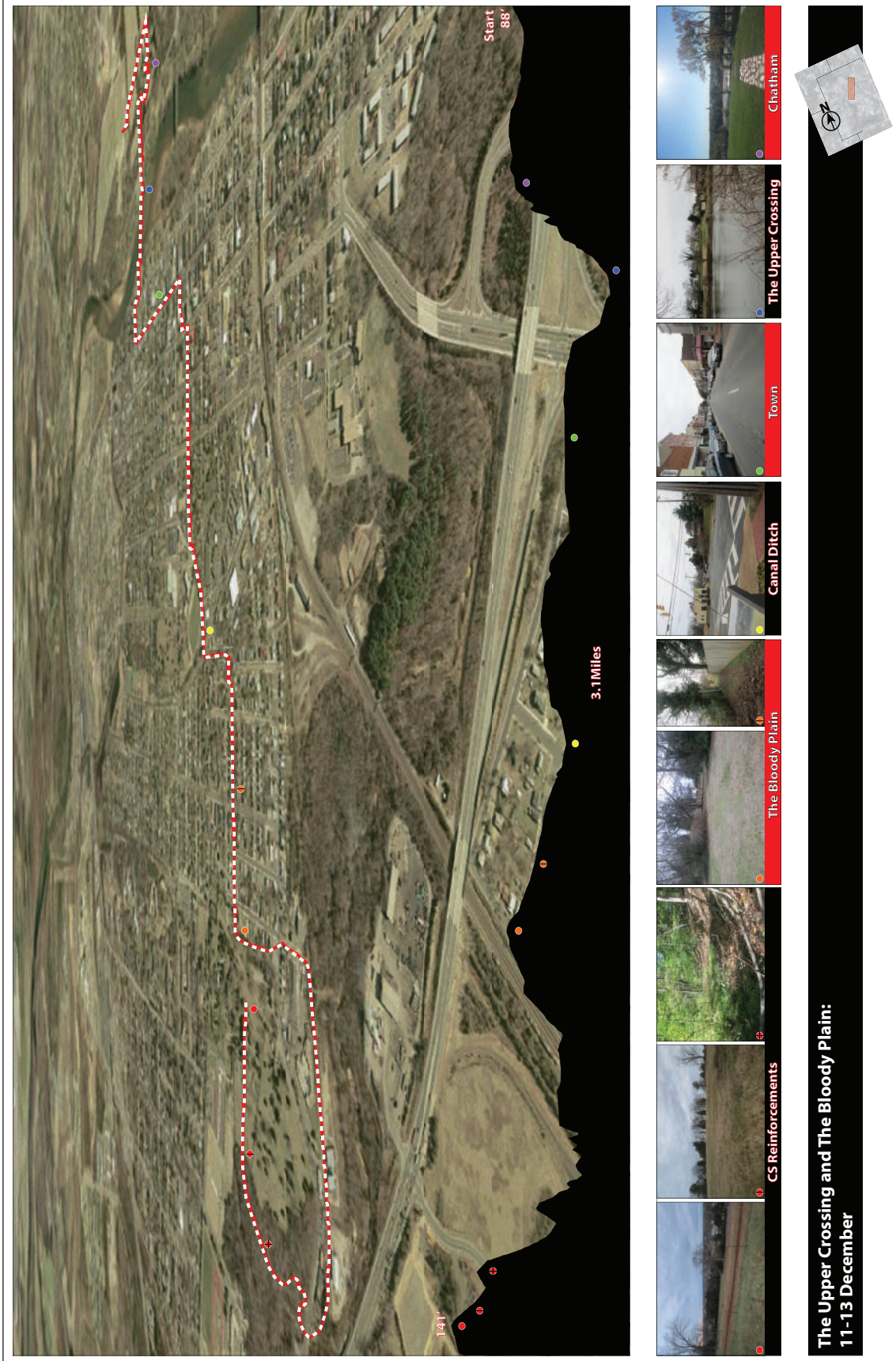
[Figure 3.11] Visibility and Weapons Coverage of the Bloody Plain from Federal and Confederate Positions



[Figure 3.12] Significant Sites at Marye's Heights and the Bloody Plain, Past and Present



[Figure 3.13] Federal Attack Route and Significant Sites on the Southern End of the Battlefield



[Figure 3.14] Significant Sites on the Northern End of the Battlefield

Fredericksburg Today



[Figure 3.15] The Richmond Road



[Figure 3.17] The Slaughter Pen



[Figure 3.16] Drainage Ditch



[Figure 3.18] The Railroad Embankment



[Figure 3.19] Swampy Finger of Woods



[Figure 3.20] Meade's Breakthrough



[Figure 3.21] View of Fredericksburg and the Upper Crossing from Chatham



[Figure 3.22] The Upper Crossing



[Figure 3.23] View Down Caroline Street Along the Base of the Riverfront Ridge



[Figure 3.25] The Miltrace Crossing at Hanover Street



[Figure 3.24] Hanover Street Sloping Down to the Miltrace



[Figure 3.26] Lee Avenue Along the Miltrace Embankment



[Figure 3.27] Top of the Millrace Embankment. Looking Across the Bloody Plain



[Figure 3.29] Bottom of the Swale



[Figure 3.28] Approaching the Swale



[Figure 3.30] View of the Stone Wall Over the Top of the Swale



[Figure 3.31] View of the Swale from the Stone Wall



[Figure 3.32] The Stone Wall and Forward Slope of Marye's Heights

is told. Chatham Manor, Gen. Sumner's Headquarters during the battle, still overlooks the upper crossing site. Restored and open to the public, it is the administrative headquarters for Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (FSNMP).

FSNMP also owns and interprets the upper crossing site, the southern half of Marye's Heights, and much of the Army of Northern Virginia's position from Prospect Hill to Lee's Hill. The Civil War Trust purchased the Slaughter Pen in 2001, and keeps the property open to the public looking much as it did in 1862, interpreted according to the battle.

Though the city's growth and modern development have obscured many portions of the historic battlefield, the very shape of the ground still tells the story of those who fought there.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE VETERAN'S WAY

A path connecting sites important to Fredericksburg's historic combatant experience meets design objectives in a number of ways. It offers the stress-relieving benefits of exercise while leaving the choice of intensity and duration to the user. By traversing the terrain, users gain a kinesthetic appreciation of the historic experience; they feel the story of Fredericksburg. Through this mechanism, veterans of other conflicts can empathize with those who fought at Fredericksburg. By comparison with their own experience, they can recognize the commonalities of experience that all veterans share and contemplate their own experience in the context of the experiences of those who went before.

Route Selection and Marking

The primary goal of the Veteran's Way routing is to connect key battle experiences together, in keeping with the historic narrative. The battle unfolded, however, in parallel on two separate pieces of ground; the agricultural plain south of Fredericksburg, and from the river to Marye's Heights through the center of the city. The Veteran's Way follows this parallel structure while maintaining coherence within the historic battle narrative and remaining divisible into stand-alone

components. It accomplishes this by following events on the southern half of the battlefield, then circumnavigating the field back to Chatham Manor before following events in the northern portion of the battlefield through the town. This is an effective route strategy primarily because all Federal units, whether they fought on the northern or southern end of the field, started out from the vicinity of Chatham Manor.

A secondary goal of the Veteran's Way is to impart an appreciation of the terrain in and around Fredericksburg from a military perspective. In other words, to provide a topographical overview of the land that influenced the events the path links together. Therefore, portions of the path not actively following the battle narrative are routed to give the user a kinesthetic appreciation of the area's key terrain features.

Although terrain is a huge factor in all battles and certainly was throughout the Civil War, in few battles has it been as pervasively decisive as it was at Fredericksburg. The influence of the terrain on the course and outcome of the battle was so profound that it was readily apparent to all participants, from the lowliest private to the loftiest general, even while the battle still raged. Therefore, underpinning the two previously discussed route selection criteria is terrain emphasis. This is accomplished by the simple method of maximizing elevation change. Where there is change in elevation, the path goes straight up or down it, thereby imparting a kinesthetic appreciation of the terrain. This strategy also widens the range of exertion levels available to users.

The Veteran's Way uses existing infrastructure as much as possible in order to conform to established patterns and fit into the existing community. Existing improved and unimproved trails, sidewalks, roads, parking lots, public lands, and unclaimed lands are used to the maximum extent feasible. Where the Way traverses unimproved areas, it is marked according to Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) standard trail-blazing techniques, with red blazes on trees or rocks.

Sections of the Way passing through developed areas on surface streets and sidewalks are briefed via interpretive panel in military strip-map

format. At the beginning of the section, a panel displaying a simple map of key terrain features depicts the route and provides a written route description in relation to those key terrain features.

Route Description

The Veteran's Way begins at Chatham Manor. The Georgian mansion overlooking the upper pontoon crossing was used by Gen. Sumner for his headquarters during and as a hospital after the battle. In these capacities it was also a start and end point for many a Union soldier. From Chatham, which is interpreted according to its significance to the battle by the NPS, the Way follows the experience of Franklin's left Grand Division on the southern half of the battlefield.

Chatham is flanked north and south by ravines. The Way follows existing single-track hiking trail down the southern ravine to the river. It then runs southward as unimproved surface trail along the base of Stafford Heights, approximating the route of Franklin's units to the lower crossing through undeveloped riparian buffer-lands along the river. It turns inland to cross the sites of Federal artillery positions on the low bluff of George Washington's Ferry Farm, from where it picks up the remnants of an unimproved road-trace to the lower crossing site.

Crossing the river, the Way continues south through riparian buffer-lands to Smithfield Ravine. Ascending the ravine westward toward the Richmond Road (Route 2), the Way follows the covered and concealed route of Meade's Pennsylvanians on the morning of December 13th.

The Way crosses the Richmond Road and follows Meade's attack across the Slaughter Pen Farm. Traversing the same irrigation ditches that the Union soldiers had to navigate, it enters the still-swampy finger of woods that the Federals used to penetrate the Confederate line and ascends Prospect Hill onto NPS property. Bursting through the Confederate line at the "Meade's Breakthrough" NPS interpretive marker, the Way crosses Lee Drive. A paved NPS access road which follows the path of the Confederate military road, Lee Drive runs



[Figure 4.1] Public Land, Road, and Access Overview

behind the Confederate front-lines from Prospect Hill to Lafayette Boulevard.

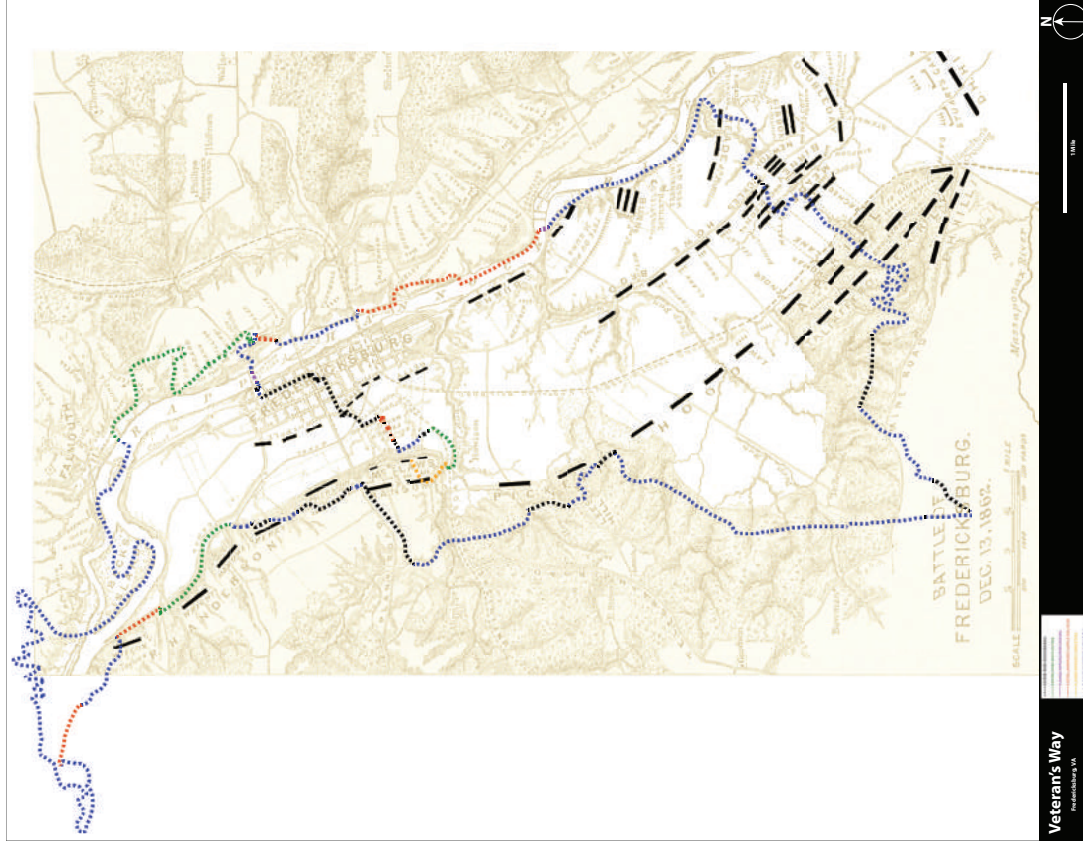
The Veteran's Way crosses Lee Drive and winds through the heavily wooded area where confused fighting eventually contained the Federal breakthrough, before rejoining the NPS road. After continuing north along the Lee Drive, the route turns westward up Lansdowne Valley, a natural cleft in the terrain and site of a federal probe during the battle. The trail parallels Lansdowne Road, a transportation route pre-dating the Civil War, up the valley to the crest of the high ground that formed the backbone of Lee's position.

A power-line cut runs along that high ground to the Rappahannock above Fredericksburg. This cut is one of the sole remaining places in Fredericksburg where the topography, devoid of any obscuring development or vegetation, is visible over distance. The Way follows this cut in order to communicate the nature of the landform to the user, before dropping back down to the main Confederate defensive line at the base of Lee's Hill. This eminence from which General Lee watched and directed the battle is the highest point on the line, and the trail ascends it to Lee's NPS interpreted vantage point.

From Lee's Hill, the Veteran's Way parallels the high ground north to the river through the University of Mary Washington campus and along portions of the Canal Path, an existing paved multi-purpose trail. With the aim of terrain appreciation, it runs along some extant portions of the Confederate defenses, primarily seeking to define the landform behind the town that made it defensible.

Reaching the river, the Way traverses the rugged and constricting Rappahannock gorge and crosses the river above the fall line before ascending Stafford Heights and circling back to Chatham Manor. This section demonstrates the difficulties Burnside faced in maneuvering his force through the area.

Following the northern half of the battle, the Veteran's Way departs Chatham Manor via the northern ravine to the river. Crossing the



[Figure 4.2] Historic Overview

Hawke Street from Sophia to Caroline, then south along Caroline, the street that marked the front-line and along which so much blood was shed.

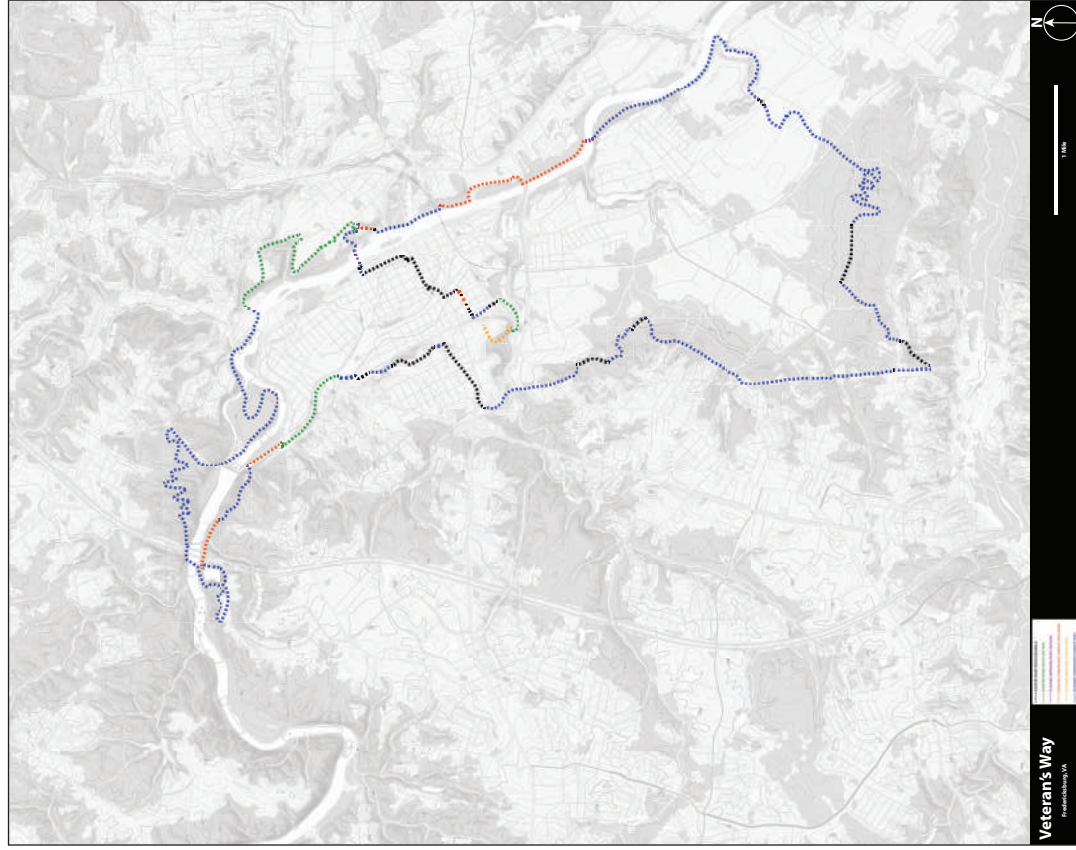
Tracing the base of the river-front ridge that was the key to Barksdale's defense, the Way passes through the modern and historic heart of Fredericksburg. Between William and George Streets, it ascends the ridge through Market Square, which fronted Barksdale's headquarters and is where he ordered his units to concentrate as they withdrew from the city.

From Market Square, the Way follows the Confederate withdrawal of December 11th and the Union advance of the 13th via George and Hanover Streets. As it descends the west slope of the river ridge which became known as Federal Hill, the trail passes through the Fredericksburg Area War Memorial.

The Way crosses the millrace at Hanover Street, today covered by Kenmore Avenue and marked by NPS interpretive signage, and deploys southward along Lee Avenue under cover of the millrace embankment. Proceeding along the base of the millrace embankment, the Way makes an abrupt ninety-degree turn into a narrow, unclaimed alley and scrambles over the top, onto the Bloody Plain.

Entering the narrow alley that transects the city to the base of Marye's Heights, the Way follows the attacking Federal brigades past the point of no return, cutting across the Bloody Plain to the stone wall. Prior to Littlepage Street, the Way dips through the swale that sheltered so many Union survivors a scant stone's throw from the sunken road. Just a block from Marye's Heights, it bursts from the confines of the alley into the open expanse of Haw Street and continues onto NPS property at the base of the heights.

Like the Federal attackers, the Veteran's Way does not reach the stone wall. Instead, it turns south. In the shadow of the heights, the path parallels the stone wall, fully exposed to the Confederate front, past the NPS visitor's center to the intersection of Lafayette Boulevard (the



[Figure 4.3] Topographic Overview

open river-plain below Chatham to the upper pontoon site, it follows Sumner's assault cross-river and into the city. It ascends the steep riverbank and follows the bloody street-fighting through the city; up

Commonwealth Railroad (VCR) multi-use trail to round the southern tip of Marye's Heights. Passing under Lafayette Boulevard at Hazel Run, it intercepts the Confederate military road used to reinforce the Marye's salient.

Running north beneath the back-side of the heights, the Way follows the remnant Confederate military road, curving up the heights in a sweeping arc. Leaving the tree-line of the forested slope, it crosses an upward sloping, scooped plateau to the crest. To the right, the headstones of Fredericksburg National Cemetery are visible over a low brick wall. The Way climbs the open plateau to its terminus on the crest, from where it overlooks the sunken road, the Bloody Plain, and the rebuilt and rejuvenated city of Fredericksburg.

Points of Intersection

Examination of Fredericksburg's landscape through the lens of the historic battle narrative reveals several points of intersection. These are places where the combination of extant topography and historic experience create opportunities to present reminders of the commonality of the combat experience through design intervention. The sites that offer the best opportunities in this regard are the Upper Crossing, the entrance to the Bloody Plain Alley, the Swale, the Confederate military road behind Marye's Heights, and the summit of Marye's Heights.

At these places, obstacles highlight terrain attributes that affected the historic combatant experience, creating a physical experience linked to the historic experience through common terrain. By navigating the obstacles, users gain understanding of those terrain attributes, and are encouraged to think about the Civil War combat experience over that same terrain.

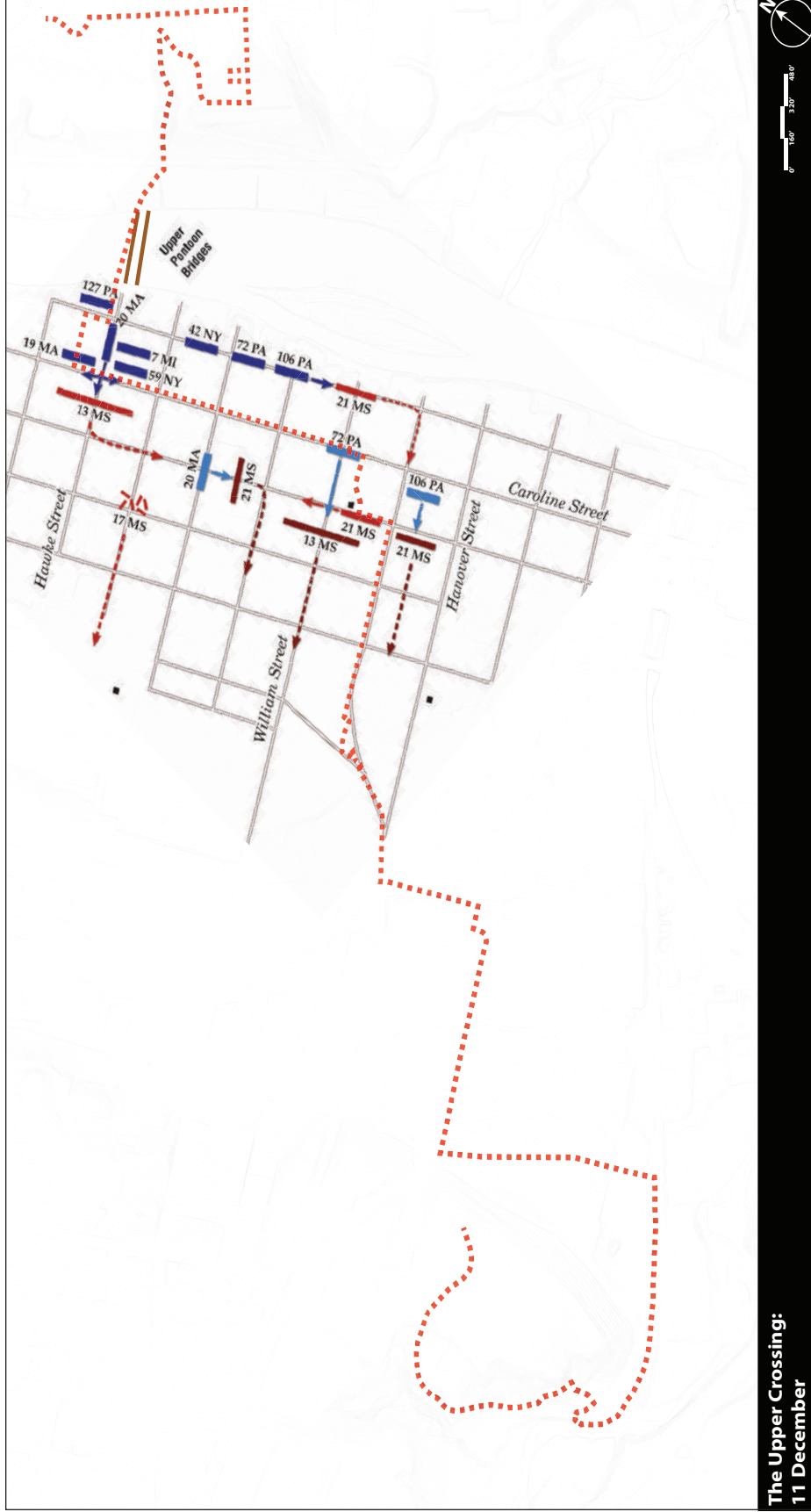
The physical exertion required to overcome the obstacles provides a low-level, non-threatening reminder of the physical exertion/autonomic nervous system response to life-threatening situations. At the same time that it provides an outlet for stress relief, it is a window to the common



[Figure 4.4] Aerial Overview

railroad cut) and Willis Street.

Extending south along Willis Street, the Way connects with the Virginia



[Figure 4.5] Topography of the Fight for the City

combat experience of combat shared by all veterans. For veterans, this chosen because they are standardized forms, familiar to veterans of encourages association of the historic experience with their own combat all services and widely recognized in popular culture as military-style experiences, and catalyzes rumination on their common aspects. The obstacles. Constructed primarily of telephone poles and dimensioned lumber, they are simple, rugged, low-maintenance, naturalistic, and for veterans to access and process their experiences, in their own time physically demanding. and at their own pace.

The obstacles are standard United States Marine Corps obstacles, Marye's Heights, by way of their prominence in the historic experience, physical vantage over the battlefield and community, and



**The Upper Crossing:
11 December**

[Figure 4.6] Fight for the City Overlaid on Modern Aerial

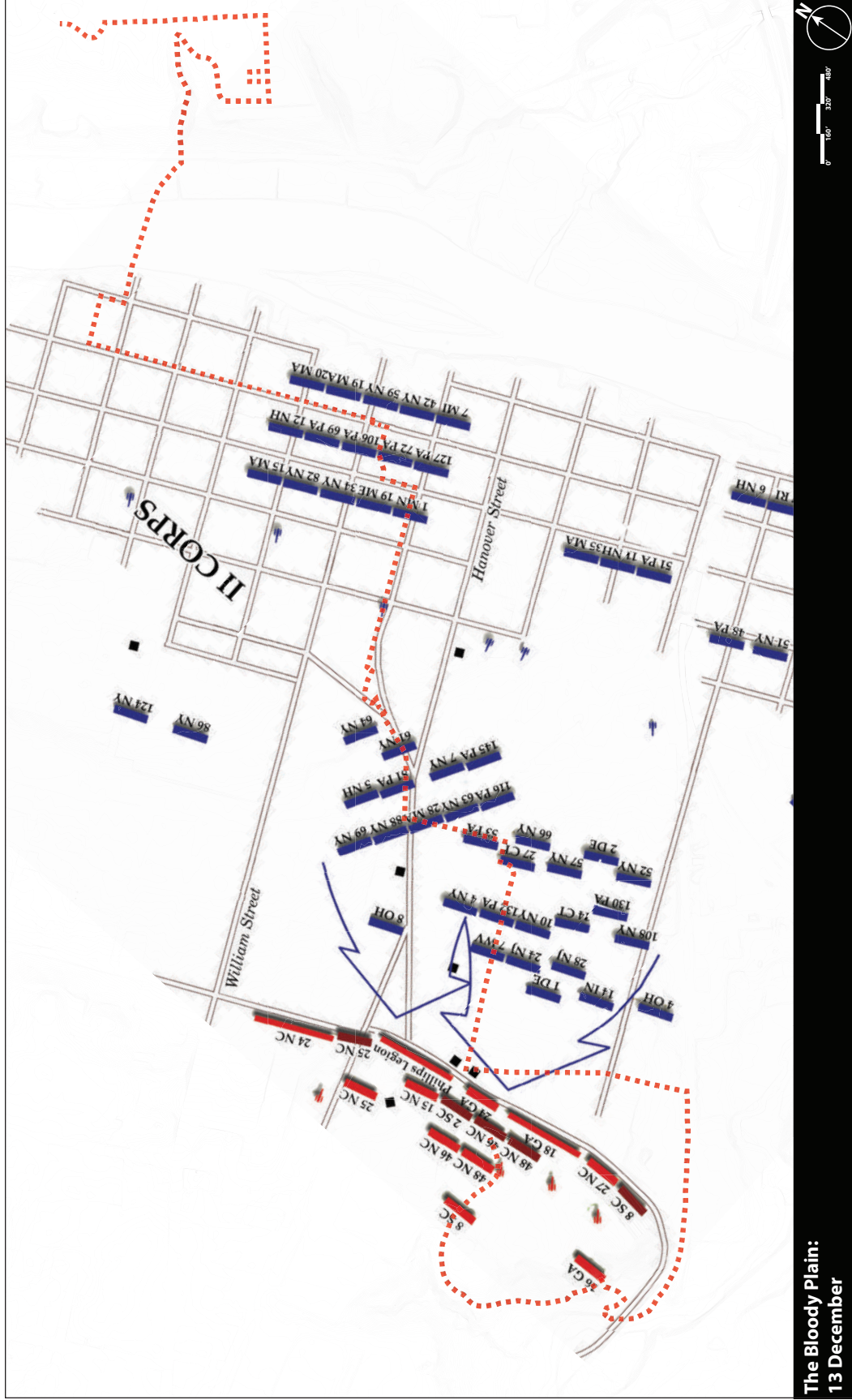
accessibility, are the most appropriate place for a public gathering and communalization space.

The design of this space capitalizes on the heights' historic use as an artillery position, using the design language of military earthworks to create a space for the community and veterans to together work on

healing the invisible wounds of war.

The Upper Crossing

For the soldiers who fought at Fredericksburg, the Rappahannock River represented a literal and symbolic threshold between friendly and



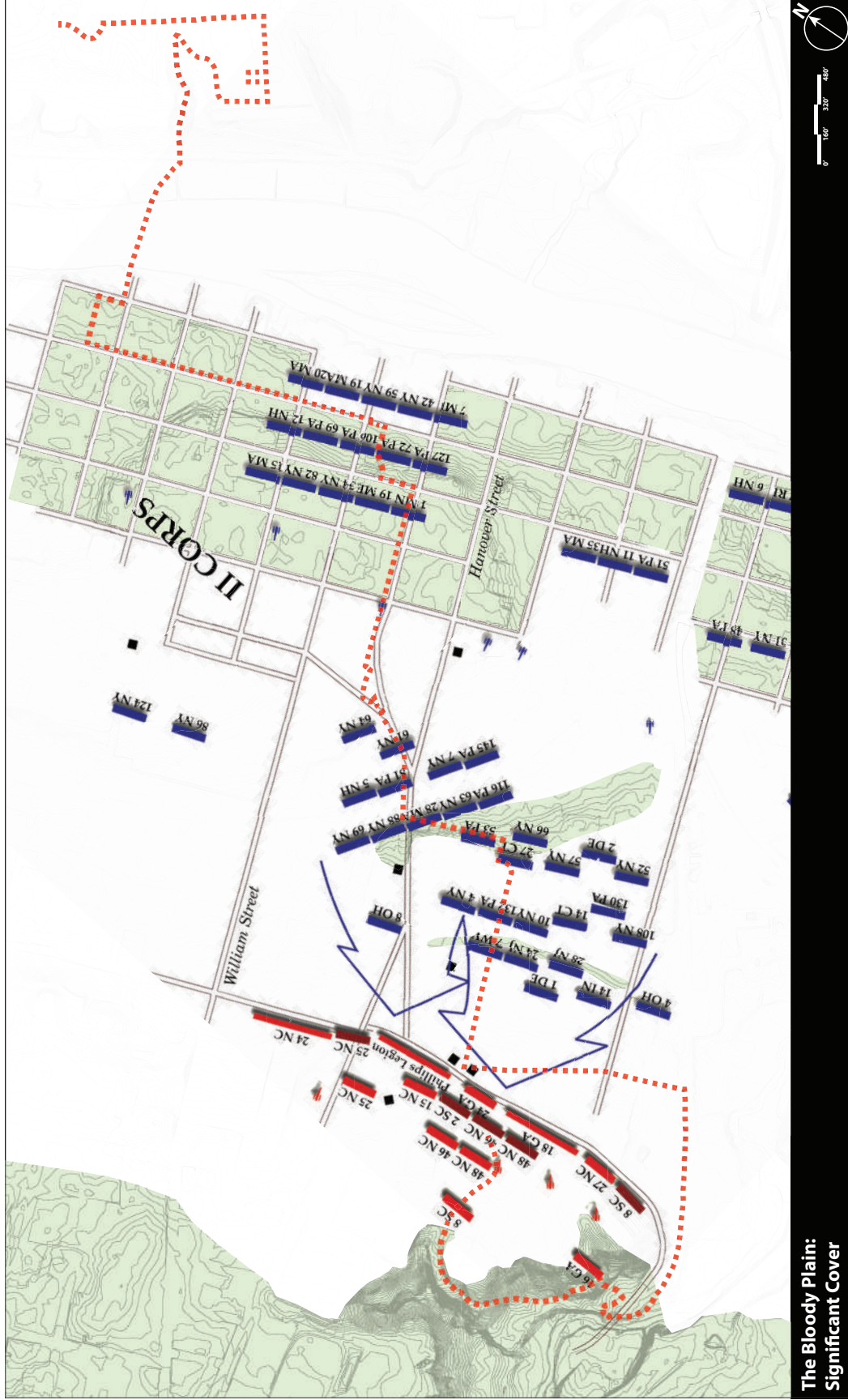
**The Bloody Plain:
13 December**

[Figure 4.7] Topography of the Bloody Plain

enemy, ordinary and extra-ordinary, known and unknown. For some, it was a threshold between life and death; and for all, between before and after.

of December were attempting what was considered a suicide mission. Emotionally, they had to prepare themselves for their own death, and then willingly enter the situation that would cause it. This is something that every warrior in history has had to deal with, but is particularly

The Union volunteers who rowed across the Rappahannock on the 11th



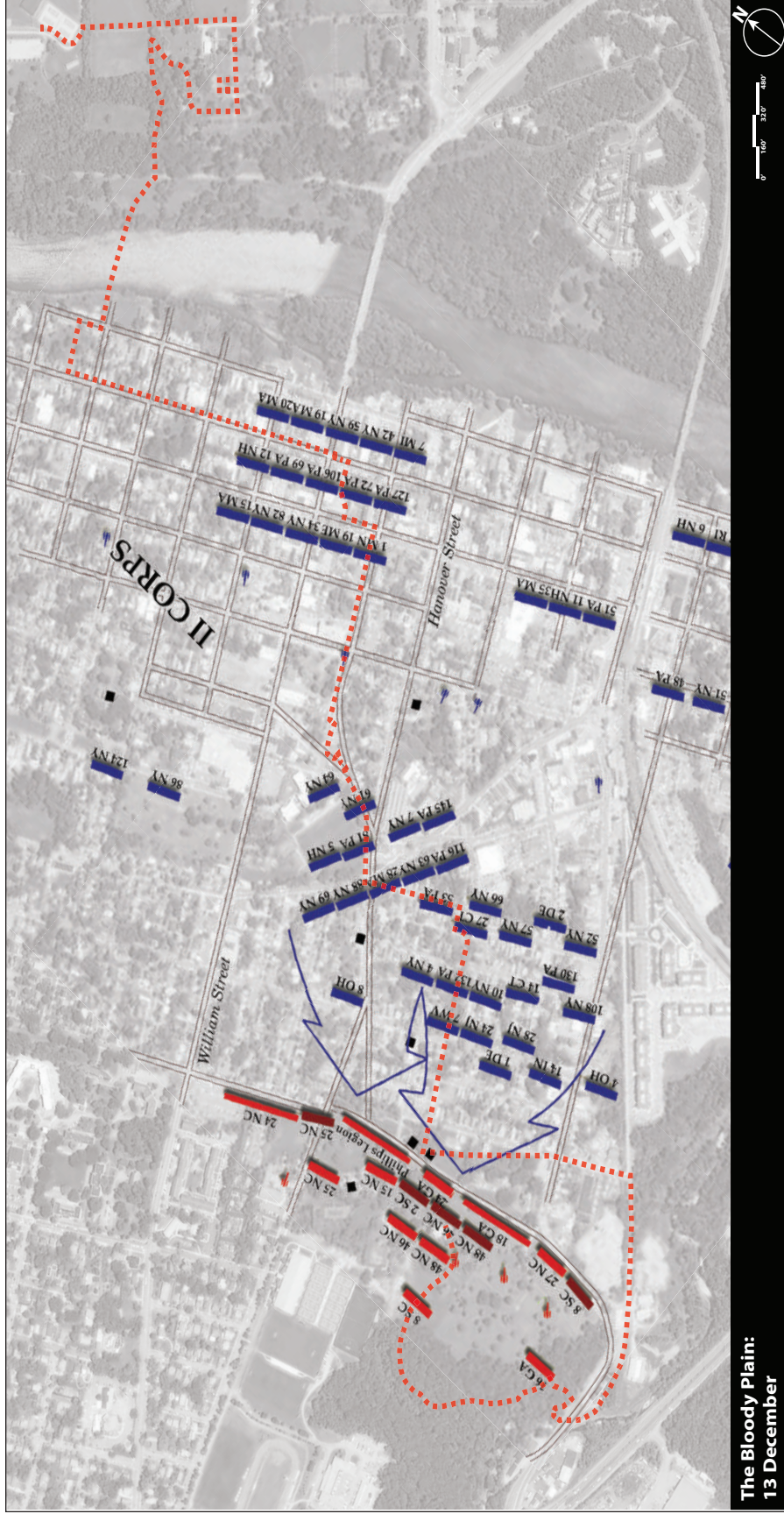
**The Bloody Plain:
Significant Cover**

[Figure 4.8] Areas of Significant Cover in the City and on the Bloody Plain

poignant at the Upper Crossing due to the specifics of the historic situation and the physical attributes of the site.

Due to the inconsistencies of Civil War artillery ammunition and the limitations of the guns themselves, Union guns on Stafford Heights

couldn't provide covering fire for the crossing attempt, only a preliminary bombardment. Musket fire from supporting infantry units was ineffective against the Confederates, who were well protected in houses, behind walls and fences, and other prepared positions. This



[Figure 4.9] Assaults on Marye's Heights Overlaid on Modern Aerial

meant that the exposed Federal troops in the pontoons (essentially oversized dugout canoes), who had to use both hand to paddle, were completely at the mercy of the Confederate defenders once they began crossing.

The Michiganders initially took heavy casualties, but Confederate fire unexpectedly slackened as the pontoons crossed mid-stream. They had passed under the cover of the riverbank, into an invisible zone of protection where the steep bank blocked Confederate fire. This

unexpected reprieve allowed the Federals to complete the landing in relative safety. Once ashore, however, they had to scramble up the bank, out of its protection and into the point-blank fire of the waiting Confederates.

Every warrior in history has had to accept, at least on a conceptual level, the possibility that they may lose their life. That conceptual acceptance made in relative safety and comfort is a far cry from the acceptance of probable or certain death when one chooses to continue



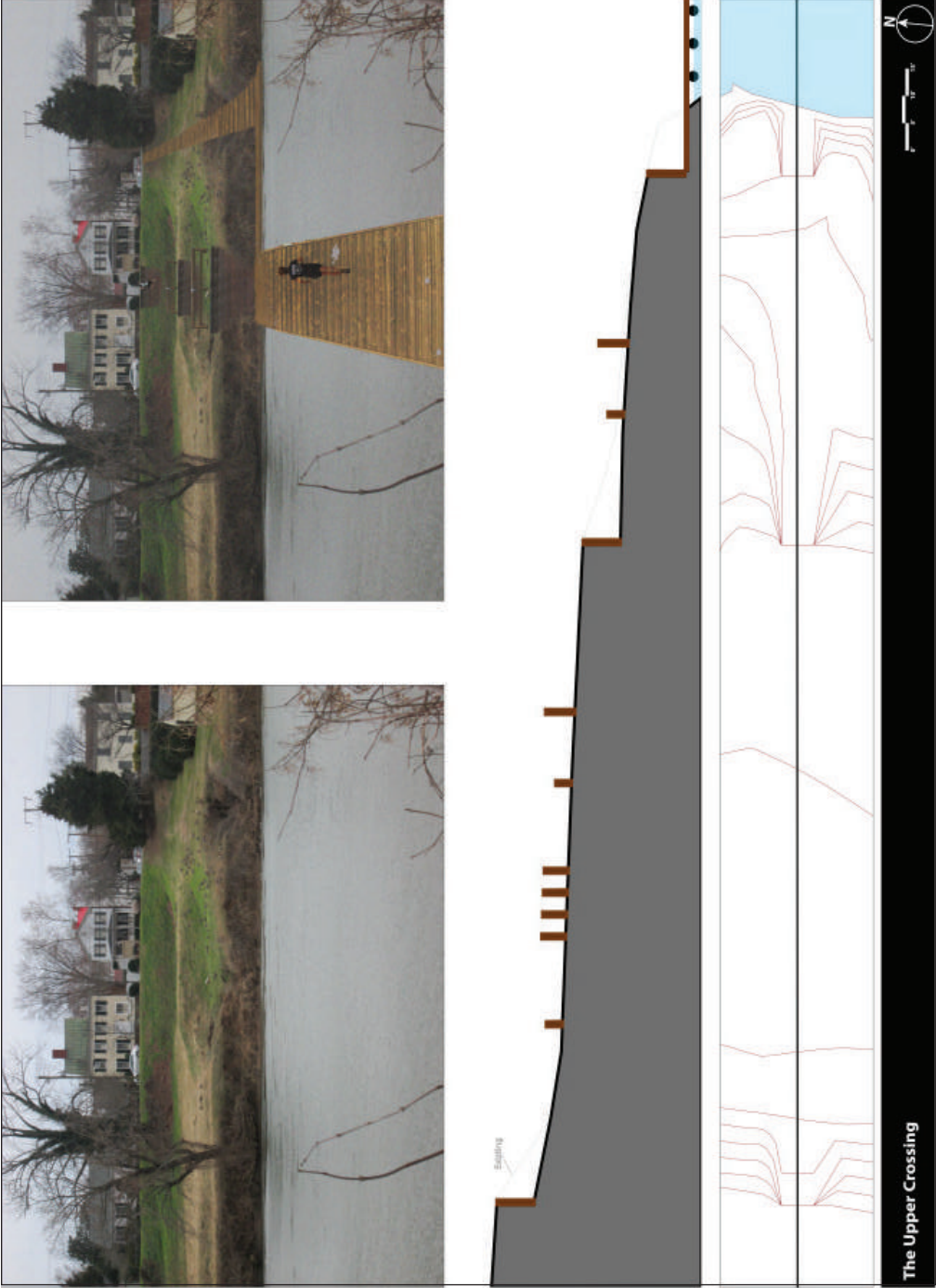
**Stafford to Marye's Heights 5K:
Significant Intervention Sites**

[Figure 4.10] Intervention Sites from the Upper Crossing to Marye's Heights

when already in a combat situation. All who have been in combat are familiar with this choice; it is a fundamental part of the warrior's experience. The Union troops at the upper crossing had to make that choice twice. Once when they began paddling across the river, and again when they chose to scramble out of the protection of the river bank. Fredericksburg veteran Frederick Hitchcock said of this universal choice,

“One may ask how such dangers can be faced. The answer is, there are many things more to be feared than death. Cowardice and failure of duty with me were some of them. I said to myself, this is duty. If I fall, I cannot die better” (NPS Interpretive panel, FSNMP Visitors' Center, 10/09/14).

Recently Sergeant Dakota Meyer, who earned the Medal of Honor



[Figure 4.11] Obstacles Emphasize the Cover Offered by the Riverbank

in Afghanistan, expressed the same sentiment when he said of his actions, “I didn’t think I was going to die, I knew I was” (cbsnews.com, retrieved 4/28/15).

The design intervention at the upper crossing consists of a low, wooden pontoon bridge and a series of wooden obstacles designed to highlight

the steepness and height of the Rappahannock river bank. A wooden ramp, leading up the foot of Hawke Street, offers a less-strenuous option for those unable to navigate the obstacles.

The pontoon bridge, floating on the river surface, lowers users to

river-level. This by contrast raises the riverbank higher overhead and increases its perceived prominence. As users approach the bank and enter its cover, the city of Fredericksburg and the houses on Sophia Street disappear behind it, until the steep bank and the intimidating obstacles fill both the field of view and the mind of the user.

Three, 7 foot-high wooden walls separate the river bank into tiered levels. Interspersed between the three walls, 5 ½-foot high “low-roll-over logs”, 4 ½-foot high “vault logs”, and 3 ½-foot high “low-vault logs”, are installed to increase physical difficulty and disrupt momentum. Negotiating the intermediate obstacles requires greater energy expenditure and denies the opportunity to optimally “set-up” for the walls, thereby increasing the exertion required to negotiate them. This increases their stature, and by extension the stature of the riverbank, in the experience of the user.

The intervention encourages rumination on the Civil War combat experience of crossing the river under fire and assaulting up the riverbank into the defended city. For non-veterans, this creates a basis from which to begin to build an understanding of the experiences that veterans have gone through. For veterans, it invites comparison with their own combat experiences. For both veterans and non-veterans, it creates a shared experience as potential foundation for storytelling, understanding, and communalization of trauma.

Bloody Plain Alley

When Federal troops pressed themselves against the millrace embankment along today’s Lee Avenue, they were taking advantage of the last covered and concealed position available to them. By going over the top of the millrace ravine onto the Bloody Plain, they fully committed themselves to the assault. The millrace ravine was a one-way threshold; a point of no return past which, for soldiers caught in the inexorable flow of the battle, the only option was forward.

In 1862, Union soldiers crossed onto an open plain dominated by the 600-yard-distant bulk of Marye’s Heights. Today the plain is covered

with streets and homes. One piece remains, however. Cutting across the plain without regard for the urban grid or other patterns of domestic life, a one-lane alleyway follows the path of the Federal assaults. Unimproved and overgrown, it cuts a narrow swath across the plain from the top of the millrace embankment at Lee Street nearly to the sunken road. This alleyway’s entrance is co-located with the historic threshold of the millrace embankment.

The alley’s constricting narrowness symbolizes the decreasing options available to the advancing Union soldiers. It also symbolizes the mind’s narrowing field of regard in response to increasing situational complexity. In combat situations, soldiers are often aware of only what is directly in front of them and to their immediate right and left. This tunnel-vision is a common human physiological response to the violent stresses of combat (Grossman, *Psychological Effects of Combat*, p 159).

The design of the Bloody Plain Alley entrance emphasizes its function as a threshold, and consists of grading, obstacle emplacement, and vegetation. The existing 3½-foot hill at the alleyway entrance is steepened and shortened, to create a sharper, more discernible threshold. This enhanced threshold is further emphasized by placement of an “up-and-over-bar” at the top of the slope. This obstacle consists of two, 8½-foot sections of telephone pole, installed vertically 12 feet apart and connected by a 1½-inch metal pipe mounted eight-feet high. It is navigated by gripping the bar in a hang position and then propelling the body over bar without using either of the wooden side posts.

The obstacle frames the alley entrance and performs a gateway function similar to that of a Torii; the traditional Japanese gate often marking the transition from profane to sacred space. Its position at the top of the slope increases difficulty by requiring users to approach and jump up to the obstacle from an uphill slope. This added difficulty raises the intensity of the kinesthetic experience and highlight the alley entrance to the user.



[Figure 4.12] Grading, Obstacle, and Plantings Form a Gateway to Bloody Plain Alley

A Black Tupelo (*Nyssa Sylvatica*) allee begins at the “up-and-over bar” and continues down the alley, emphasizing the linearity and narrowness of the space. It also minimizes outside views, creating a tunnel-effect that symbolizes the tunnel-vision often experienced in combat and draws the user’s attention down-alley. The combined effect

is reminiscent of the inexorability of the attacks across the Bloody Plain once they left the safety of the millrace embankment.

Black Tupelo is hardy, tolerant of a variety of soils, and amenable to a wide range of light exposures. These qualities make it a good choice for a planting plan that is spread over a large area with varying levels

of development, soil quality, and sun exposure. The tree's foliage, however, provides the most compelling reason for its use. Black Tupelo's thick, glossy, dark green leaves provide deep shade and texture in the spring and summer, further heightening the tunnel effect of the alleyway. In the fall they turn brilliant shades of red.

The color red in Western culture is symbolic of passion, danger, excitement, and sacrifice. The deep red color also symbolizes the "thin red line" made famous by Rudyard Kipling in his poem Tommy, and by World War II veteran James Jones in his famous war novel (and later movie) *The Thin Red Line*. Prominent examples of red being used symbolically in martial commemoration include the planting plan of the Marine Corps War Memorial and Great Britain's use of the red poppy to symbolize war dead. For the opening of the World War I centennial, the Tower of London's moat was filled with almost 900,000 red ceramic poppies, symbolizing British war dead. The height of fall foliage season in the Fredericksburg area is the end of October and beginning of November, which means that the Black Tupelos will be in full color around Veteran's Day, a time of great import to Americans and American veterans.

The Bloody Alley entranceway design emphasizes it as a threshold and transition point. As at the upper crossing, this catalyzes rumination on the commonalities of the warrior experience and builds on the shared user experience to encourage discussion, storytelling, and understanding between veterans and non-veterans.

The Swale

As the successive brigades of Union soldiers went over the top of the millrace embankment and attacked across the Bloody Plain, they suffered increasingly devastating artillery fire. Initially, the Confederates fired shell. These fused projectiles were designed to burst overhead and fling shards of metal (shrapnel) over a wide area. When the Federals closed to 400 yards, the Confederates switched to canister; cannon-sized shotgun cartridges which were the Civil War equivalent of

claymore mines. Absolutely devastating to massed infantry formations, the canister-fire cut large swathes through the advancing Northerners.

The Confederate infantry behind the stone wall held there fire, waiting until it would have greatest effect. When the attackers were approximately 200 yards from the sunken road, their numbers depleted and their momentum nearly spent, the Confederates rose and delivered concentrated musket volleys into their ranks. This shattered the remaining Federal cohesion, turning the attack into a one-sided struggle for survival. The surviving Union soldiers desperately searched for whatever cover they could find. For many, that meant the shallow swale they had passed over just before the Confederate infantry opened fire. Brigade after Federal brigade disintegrated before the Confederate defenses, leaving more and more soldiers lying in the swale like sea-foam left by a crashing wave. They were pinned down, trapped in a wide-open field. All of their options had been systemically stripped from them until only one remained; stay still, or die. Unable to advance or retreat, they could only cling to the small protection of that small fold in the ground, hoping for deliverance.

The Swale exists. Although experienced over most of the Bloody Plain only as a slight rise when approaching Littlepage Street from the east, it is fully present in Bloody Plain alley; the ground emphatically rises toward the street, the lip of the swale nearly at eye-level as one passes through it.

The design of the Swale calls attention to the terrain feature and its role in the 1862 combat experience, inviting rumination on that particular experience, and by extension the commonalities inherent in all warfare. It uses grading, obstacles, and continuation of the Black Tupelo alley to emphasize the swale and symbolize the historic experience. Vegetation infringing upon the view down the alleyway to the base of Marye's Heights is removed. The installed Black Tupelos are likewise pruned to provide an unimpeded view down the alley, intent being to enhance the tunnel-like effect created by the narrow alleyway and the alley of trees. This focuses attention forward, draws the user in, and fosters the

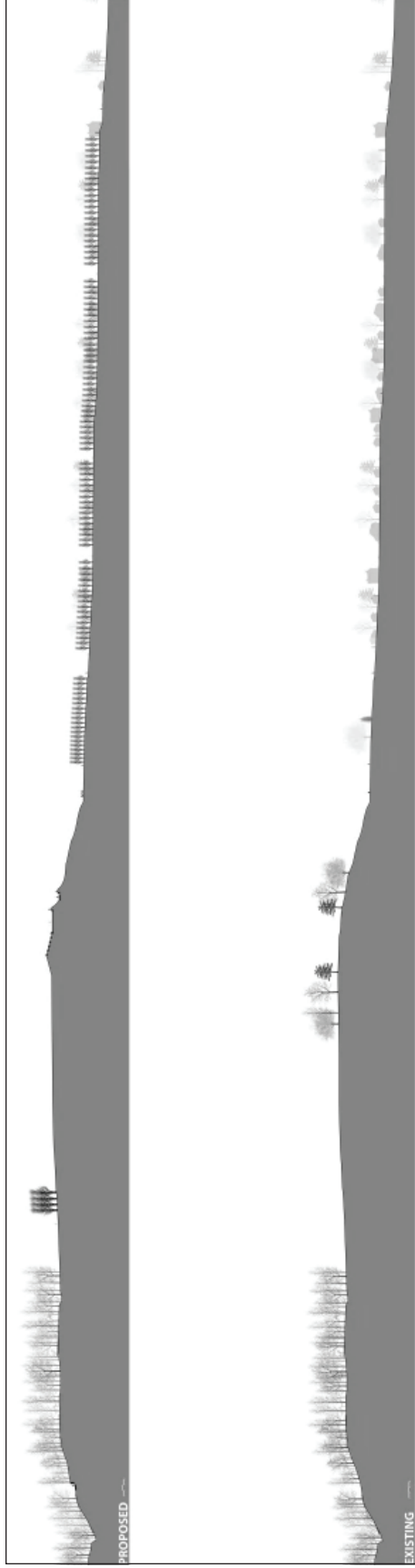


[Figure 4.13] Intervention at the Swale Emphasizes Tunnel-effect, Symbolizes Narrowing Options and Loss of Control

impression of inexorability.

Between Weedon and Littlepage Streets, grading gradually deepens the swale to a depth of ten feet. As the ground plane drops below grade, railroad tie retaining walls stabilize and delineate the sides of the swale

while decreasing its width from twelve to eight feet. As the swale descends, a series of four vault-logs are installed, ten-feet apart, at a height of 4½ feet. As users navigate the vault-logs the swale deepens, making each successive log more difficult. After the last log, users climb the concave forward slope, coming again into full view of the



[Figure 4.14] Proposed Changes to Marye's Heights and the Bloody Plain

stone wall as they leave the cover of the swale.

In combination, the narrow alleyway, the allee of trees, the deepened and narrowed swale, and the obstacles of increasing difficulty symbolize the dwindling options and concurrently increasing importance of the swale to the attacking Union troops. Paralleling the historic experience of attacking across the Bloody Plain, users enter the gradually constricting and deepening swale. When the vault-logs are encountered, the user's line of sight is below the swale's forward lip, creating a sense of full enclosure. Each successive vault-log, although at the same elevation above sea-level, is farther from the ground. Clearing the highest one, the user stands at the swale's deepest point, facing the concave slope at its end. Moving up that slope, users re-encounter the stone wall, now much closer and more imposing, in a moment of mutual exposure.

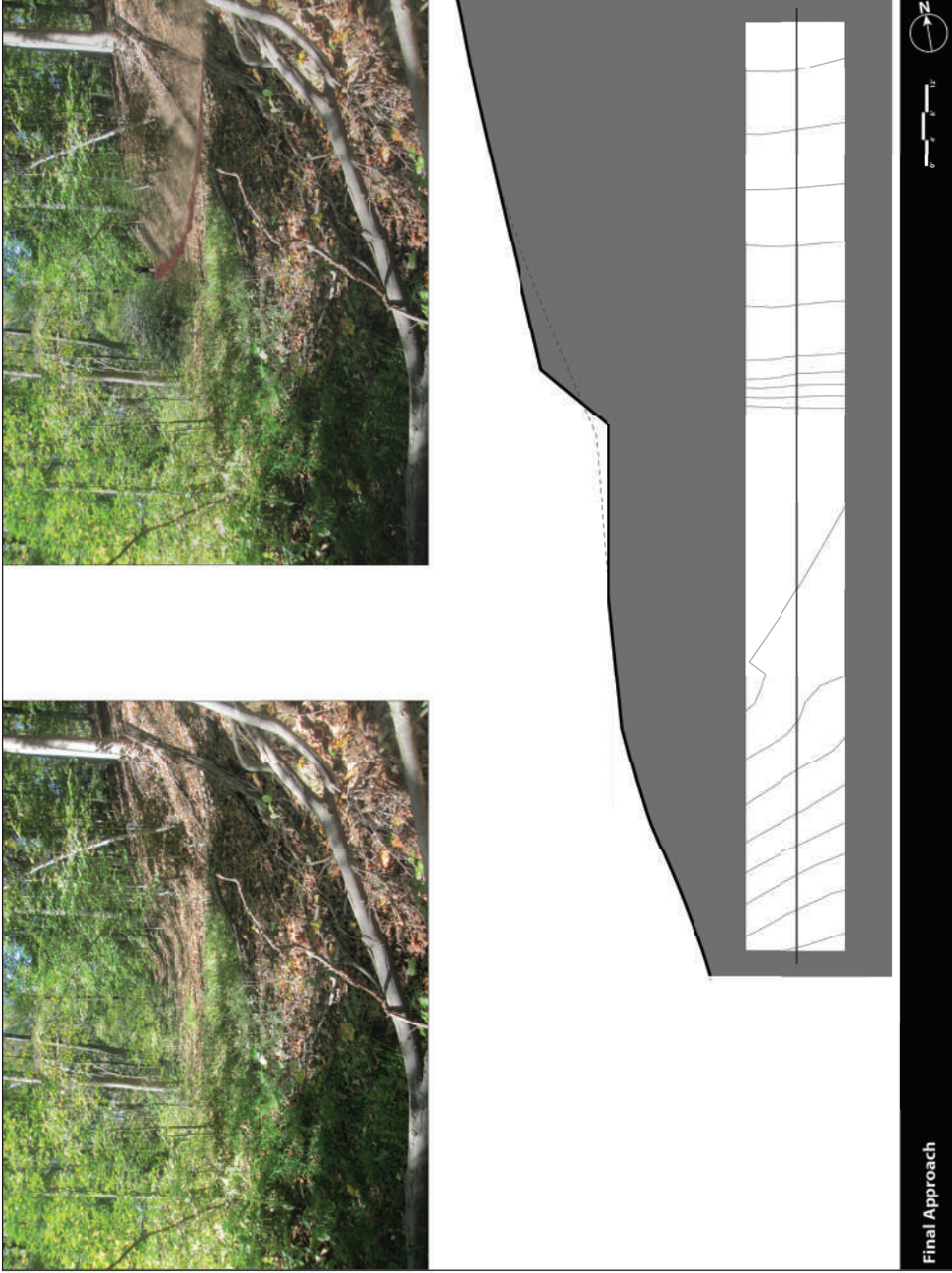
Final Approach Path

Marye's Heights created a stark transition for Confederate soldiers at Fredericksburg; a physical dividing line between combat and 'not combat'. They stood at the extreme range of the Federal Artillery on Stafford Heights, and most of their front slope was invisible to Union

artillerists due to the intervening city. The Federal artillery could only bombard the upper slope and summit of the heights; and then only with inaccurate and ineffective harassing fire due to the long range. Although several Federal batteries moved forward in tactical support, they too were ineffective. Positioned lower than their Confederate counterparts, they had to fire over the heads of their own troops. This increased their minimum allowable elevation and meant that they could likewise affect only the upper-front slope of Marye's Heights. So the heights themselves became a stark edge of the fight for the Confederate soldiers waiting behind them. On one side, the most dangerous place on the battlefield; on the other, the safest.

Thousands of Confederate soldiers crossed that edge and made abrupt entry into the midst of the battle via the Confederate military road. As reinforcements were fed into the fighting, unit after unit waited behind the heights. In near-complete safety, they listened to the clamor of battle less than 300 yards away and awaited their turn. When orders into the fray ended their nearly un-endurable anticipation, they filed up the, curving road over the heights to meet their test.

The Confederate road up the backside of Marye's Heights is still evident, cut deeply into the hillside. The Veteran's Way connects with



[Figure 4.15] Travelling the Confederate Road Trace Symbolizes Approaching Combat

the historic roadbed where it crossed Hazel Run, and where today the Virginia Commonwealth Railroad (VCR) meets Lafayette Boulevard. The Way follows the Confederate road trace as it enters the thick woods which crowd the back side of the heights.

cut and rough-laid fieldstone in the style of Rome's Appian Way, the world's first military road. Monumental, rustic, and timeless, the style is fitting for this climactic segment of the Veteran's Way. The stone used for the road-surface is Aquia Creek sandstone. Locally abundant in Stafford County Virginia, this soft sandstone is intertwined with the

This final section of the Way is ten feet wide and surfaced with rough-

history of America.

Mined at a quarry on Wigginton Island since the late 1600s, Aquia Creek sandstone was well known to George Washington, and in 1791, Pierre L'Enfant purchased the quarry on behalf of the United States government. Stone from Government Island was used to make the boundary markers of the District of Columbia, and it was also used in the construction of many early Federal buildings including the Capitol and the White House.

The very qualities that made it easy to work with proved its downfall, however. Aquia Creek sandstone was phased out by the time of the Civil War as its high susceptibility to weathering became evident. Due to its softness and porosity, it is prone to erosion, discoloring, and growths such as lichen, moss, and liverworts. For the Veteran's Way, however, those weaknesses make it an ideal surface.

The soft sandstone slabs of the road, wearing smooth and discoloring under the impacts of foot traffic and weather, tell the story of their use over time. The porosity of the stone supports lichen and moss growth, particularly where the Way passes through the deep shade of the forest canopy. These weathering processes impart a timeless quality to the road, symbolic of the universality of the warrior archetype and the unchanging nature of the warrior experience through the ages.

Beginning at the edge of the VCR pavement, the final approach segment climbs a short open slope before crossing the forest threshold and passing into the murky shadows beneath the trees. A sandstone stele at the edge of the woods marks the portal, inscribed with a quote from Supreme Court Justice and thrice-wounded Civil War (and Fredericksburg) veteran Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.: "In our youth our hearts were touched with fire. It was given to us to learn at the outset that life is a profound and passionate thing" (Posner, p 87).

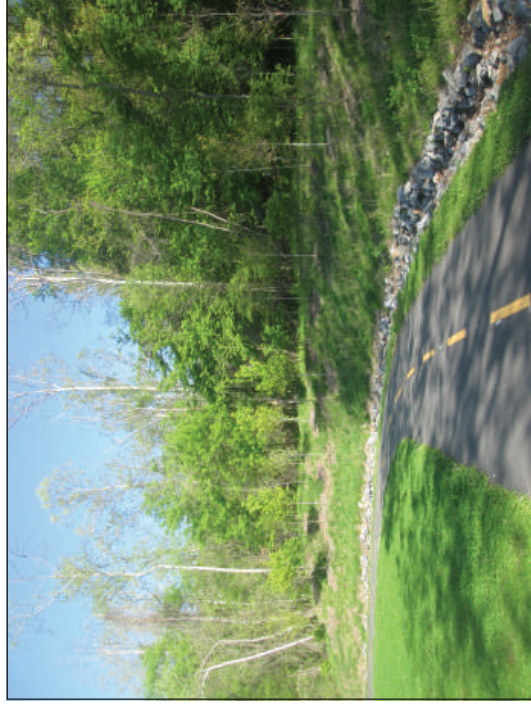
Upon entering the woods, the Way initially traces the base of the heights, squeezed between the thick vegetation and the steep heights



[Figure 4.16] Plan View of the Veteran's Way Terminal Area at Marye's Heights



[Figure 4.17] Enlarged Plan View of the Final Approach Path Entrance



[Figure 4.18] Existing Conditions, Final Approach Path Entrance



[Figure 4.19] Enlarged Plan View of Final Approach Curve and Wall



[Figure 4.20] Existing Conditions Along Final Approach Curve



[Figure 4.21] Enlarged Plan View of the Final Passage



[Figure 4.22] Existing Conditions at the Final Passage



Final Approach Path

[Figure 4.23] Slope and Forest Edge Form Portal to Final Approach Path

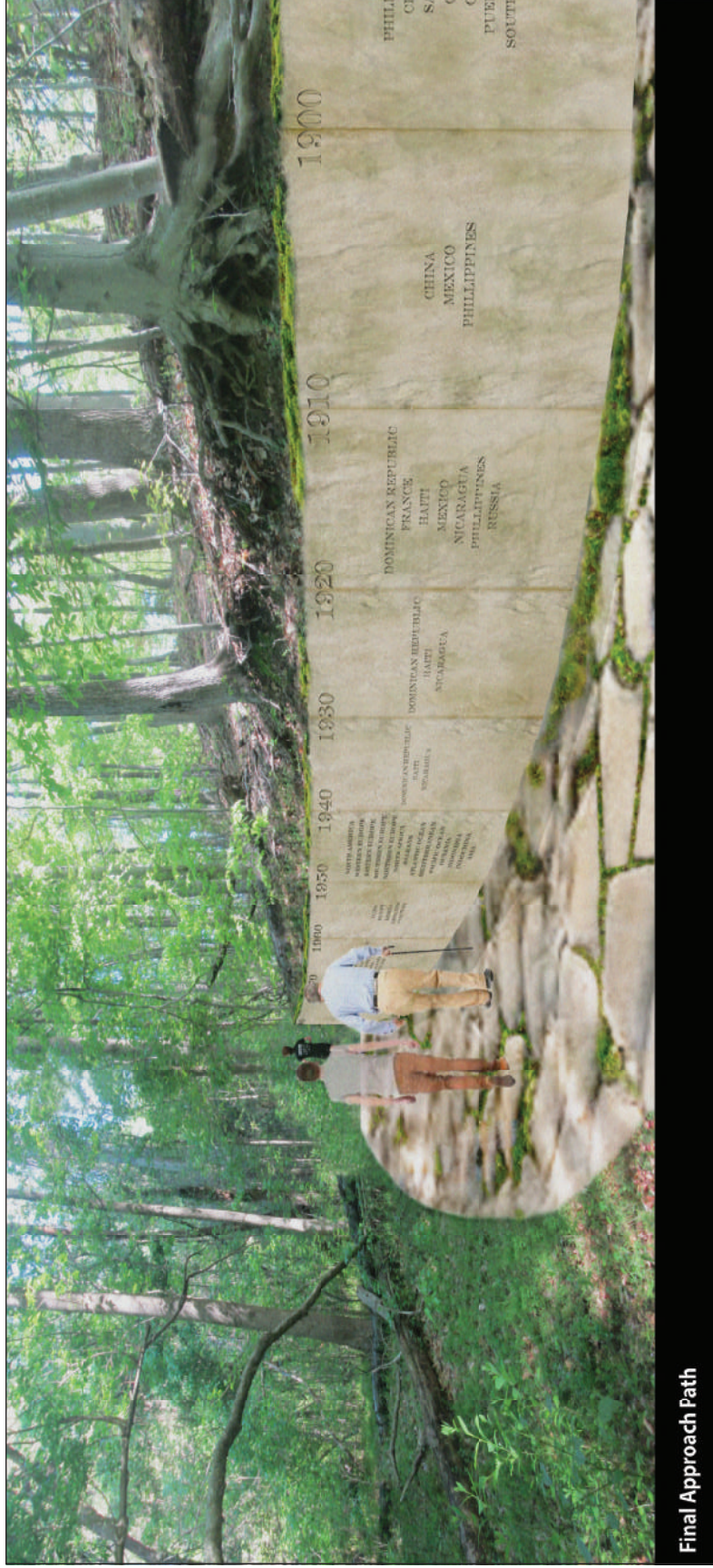
rising abruptly from the Hazel Run bottoms. After several hundred feet, the Way turns into the heights, curving over them in a long, continuous sweep.

At this point, where the Way turns definitively towards the battle, an Aquia sandstone retaining wall, rising to six feet high, supports the uphill side of the road cut. Chiseled into the wall are simple inscriptions of the times and places where Americans have fought, from 1775 to the present. Each wall panel spans ten years, inscribed with the places Americans fought during that decade. Many of the conflicts, incidents and places are unfamiliar to most Americans, but the better known

among them serve to explain what all display. The inscriptions show the frequency with which American warriors have been called to action over the course of our relatively short history; a frequency much higher than most Americans realize.

Following the curve of the road as it completes its sweep up onto the gently sloping summit plateau, the wall fades into the ground just before the Way bursts from the forest canopy into the open field leading to the crest of the heights.

Across the open expanse is a long line of Black Tupelo trees. Angled



Final Approach Path

[Figure 4.24] Walking in the Footsteps of Past Warriors

across the field of waving broom-sedge, they draw the eye into the manicured grounds of the Fredericksburg National Cemetery, to rest on the tombstones of those who have seen the end of war.

After this brief view of the final resting place of over 15,000 Union soldiers, the Way passes beneath the band of trees. In their shade, primary, secondary, and tertiary paths converge, bringing disparate user groups together for the final passage.

In sharp contrast to the deep shade of the trees, a wide field of broom-sedge rises to meet the sky, its horizon broken by the narrowing cleft through which the Veteran’s Way passes. The Way passes through

the hill via a gradually deepening and narrowing trench. As it passes through the crest of the heights, the trench is 10-feet wide by six feet deep, backed by a 12-foot, broom-sedge covered earthen parapet on its uphill side.

The front wall of the trench, level with the horizon, draws the user’s view through the hill to the open sky beyond. A lawn of short-mown turf grass extends from the edge of the Way to the base of the forward trench wall. The wall is footed by a two-by-two foot Aquia Creek sandstone bench/firing step. Its face is stabilized by fascines; a common and readily recognizable earth stabilization technique used in military engineering since Roman times.



Veteran's Way

[Figure 4.25] The Final Passage

As users pass through the hill, they suddenly find themselves at the tip of a “V” shaped earthwork, on a small platform jutting from the forward slope of Marye’s Heights. Backs to the earthen rampart rising close behind, they gaze out over the sunken road, the Bloody Plain, and the town that has risen from the devastation of 1862. Receding into the distance, the long allee of Black Tupelo trees marks the Veteran’s Way across the Bloody Plain, visual reminder of both the historic and contemporary journeys to the heights.

Believing that the rampart of the earthwork offers a higher vantage, or perhaps curious about what is up there, users continue down the southeastern face of the earthen structure, climbing gradually out of the receding rifle trench. As the trench walls sink back into the ground, a switchback trail provides access to the top of the parapet, along which users walk, looking out over the city and battlefield, back towards the tip of the “V” and the Theater of War.

Theater of War

The Theater of War is the culmination of the Veteran’s Way, but also stands alone as a gathering place for the communalization of warrior trauma through sharing and storytelling. It is a place where elements

of the community can gather with their warriors, help to tend their invisible wounds, and share the burden of peace.

The Theater of War borrows its design language from the design of a Civil War-era redan, as described in BGen. John Gibbon’s *Artillerists Manual*, the U.S. Army’s principal artillery manual during the Civil War era. A “V” shaped earthen fortification, open to the rear, a redan protected artillery pieces and their crews from frontal attack.

Fronted by a trench, the thick earthen parapet rose to a height of approximately 12 feet and provided the primary protection. Inside the parapet, a lowered, flat shelf called the terreplein provided firing platforms for the cannons. It was dug to a greater depth at intervals, to provide areas of greater protection for the gun crews. The area behind the terreplein and between the arms of the redan was likewise dug to a greater depth for increased protection.

In reference to the site’s historical use as an artillery position, the overall plan of the Theater of War takes the shape of a redan. The Veteran’s Way passes down the parapet-fronting trench to the tip of the “V”, where the trench wall is removed to create a first view over the

Bloody Plain.

Atop the parapet, out of view from below, is the Theater of War. It is accessed by continuing along the southwestern face of the redan to a path that switches back along the top of the parapet. The path traces

the parapet-edge, passing between it and the stepped retaining wall that



[Figure 4.27] Existing View from Theater of War Site

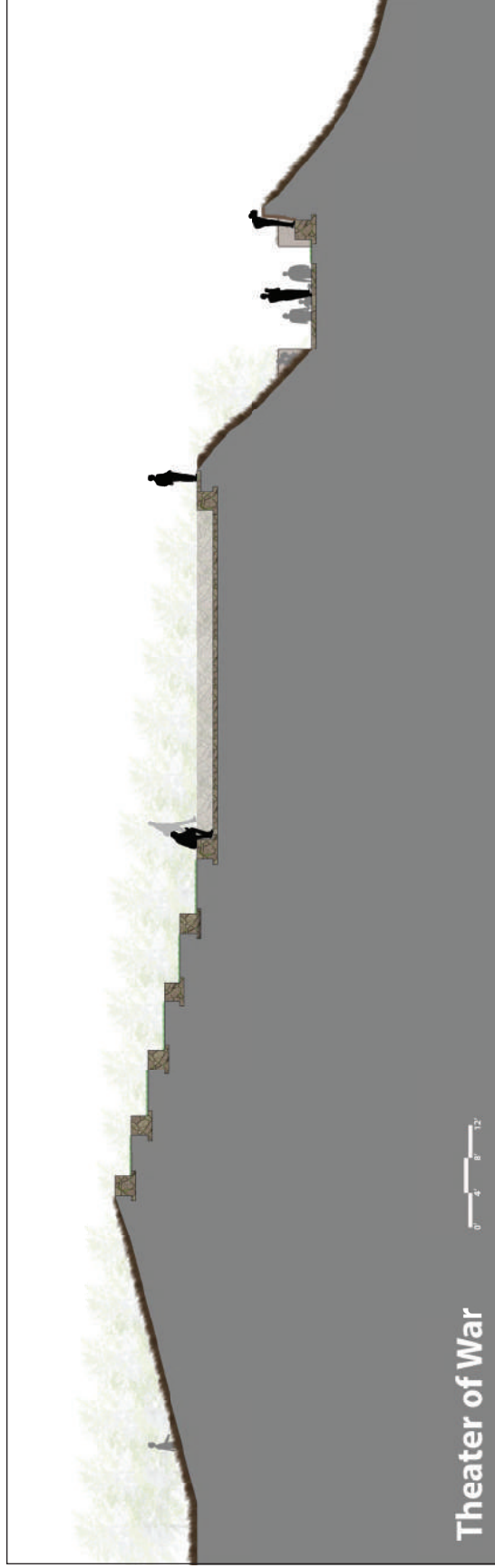
edges the amphitheater seating.

The amphitheater stage, like the terreplein, is sunk two feet below the top of the parapet. This gives the space a protected feel. It also allows for full encirclement during intimate gatherings, the two-foot parapet doubling as a seat-wall.

The Theater of War seating borrows from the Scott outdoor amphitheater at Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.



[Figure 4.26] Enlarged Plan View of the Theater of War



[Figure 4.28] Theater of War Longitudinal Section

Six-tiered, semi-circular seating raises a total of 12 feet from stage level to the top of the amphitheater. Each tier is two feet higher than the last, seven feet wide, surfaced with close-mown turf-grass, and fronted by two foot-square sandstone retaining walls.

The rear-slope of the Theater of War is planted with Virginia Bluestem, blending with the open field leading to the heights' crest. This safeguards the sense of unbroken horizon along the crest of the heights as seen from behind, drawing users through the opening in the horizon created by the lower trench.

The space created by the Theater of War is at once intimate and public, protected and open. The raised seating coupled with the sunken stage creates a sense of enclosure, while the height of the redan parapet acts to form a view without foreground. The battlefield in the background is viewed from a detached vantage, the parapet visually severing it from the land connecting the two places.

From the base of the heights, and from below and behind on the

Veteran's Way approaches, the Theater of War is only partially visible; it is on top of a hill, hidden from view. The combined result is a protected vantage from which one can view the battlefield and contemplate the experience of war in safety. Large enough to accommodate up to 350 people, but small enough for intimate gatherings, the Theater of War sets the view over the historic battlefield of Fredericksburg as backdrop, lending the power of that sacred ground to the space and to the programs which will occur there.

The location of the Theater of War on Marye's Heights situates it on a focal point of the battle, co-located with the nation's first National Cemetery. Below the cemetery is the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park visitor's center. The complex includes car, bus, and recreational vehicle parking, as well as a museum focusing on the Battle of Fredericksburg through traditional, multimedia, and interpretive presentations. When tourists visit Fredericksburg to see any of the nearby battlefields, this is where they go first; it is the focal point for the area. The NPS provides ADA accessibility to the area as well as interpretive exhibits. The Veteran's Way terminal area and the Theater

of War augment this existing infrastructure.

The amphitheater format supports a wide variety of events and community ceremonies. One example of a program for which the Theater of War is uniquely suited is also called Theater of War, and is presented by social impact company Outside the Wire:

“Theater of War presents readings of Sophocles’ Ajax and Philoctetes to military and civilian communities across the United States and Europe. These ancient plays timelessly and universally depict the psychological and physical wounds inflicted upon warriors by war. By presenting these plays to military and civilian audiences, our hope is to de-stigmatize psychological injury, increase awareness of post-deployment psychological health issues, disseminate information regarding available resources, and foster greater family, community, and troop resilience. Using Sophocles’ plays to forge a common vocabulary for openly discussing the impact of war on individuals, families, and communities, these events will be aimed at generating compassion and understanding between diverse audiences” (<http://www.outsidethewirellc.com>, retrieved 05/11/15).

CONCLUSION

Benjamin Franklin said, “Wars bring scars” (Tick, Warrior’s Return, p 35). Warriors have always carried the invisible wounds of war. Inevitable and universal, they are inherent to warrior-hood. The condition that we call PTSD today has been known by at least 80 different names since ancient times (Tick, Warrior’s Return, p 53).

“To be traumatized is to be wounded --- in visible or invisible ways. War wounds are inevitable. Warriors return transformed, both wounded and enlightened, displaced, and confused regarding civilian life. They also return matured, skilled, and experienced in the ways of surviving in hell ... They essentially come home as different people than they were when they left

us. In the core sense of the term, they have been initiated; their old self has died and a new self has emerged” (Tick, Warrior’s Return, p 54).

Veterans can travel the path of post-traumatic growth and come to terms with their experiences, grow into their new identities, and complete the warrior’s journey; or they can travel the path of PTSD, warrior’s journey incomplete, stuck in the trauma of war or vainly trying to recapture the person they were.

Many societies, including root societies of the western tradition such as the ancient Greeks and Hebrews, understood the invisible wounds of war more fully than we do today. They understood that far from being strictly a medical pathology, these wounds have complex spiritual, moral, and social dimensions.

In these societies, members of the community were not shielded from the realities of warfare. Everyone understood that the role of warriors was to kill for the community when the community deemed it necessary. They also understood that in addition to their visible wounds, warriors would be spiritually, morally, and psychologically wounded in the process. Just as warriors were trained to kill to protect the community, non-warriors were trained to protect and nurture them when they returned home, changed, with the burdens of their experiences. That protection and nurturing, from the Athenian sacred theater to the Navajo Enemy Way ceremony, involved the community listening to their warrior’s stories, then accepting them back, not as who they were before, but as who they had become.

By listening to their stories, good and bad, and accepting them back, communities take communal responsibility for their warriors’ actions and provide them the support needed to grow into their new identities and social roles. American society has grown apart from this model. Just as veterans can’t be forced to examine their experiences and come to terms with their new selves, people cannot be forced to give witness to veterans’ stories. Therefore, it is helpful to prepare both citizens and

veterans for communalization experiences.

In this sense, the Veteran's Way is preparation for the Theater of War. Travelling all or a portion of the Way encourages veterans to think about their own experiences in the context of others' while providing the stress-relieving benefits of exercise. For non-veterans, it instills a level of insight or understanding, preparing them for receptive listening to veterans' stories. For both, it provides an experiential foundation for discussion, mutual understanding, and restoration of the reciprocally protective relationship between society and its warriors.

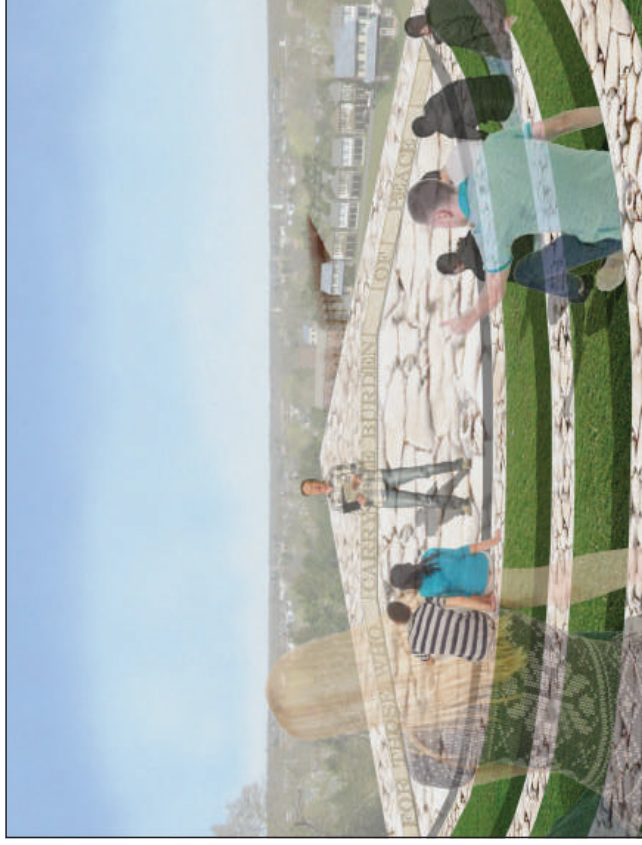
To restore that relationship, Dr. Edward Tick believes that communities should:

- create safe and sober gathering places for veterans.
- invite veterans to educate the young on the realities of war and service.
- foster programs where veterans tell their stories to civilians and civilians honor and help veterans.
- pair elder veterans with new returnees for mentoring purposes; and create literary and artistic programming through which vets can offer their artistic products to the community, encouraging discussion and further educating the public. (Tick, Warrior's Return, p 158-160)

The Veteran's Way and Theater of War concept is a way for communities to create landscapes to facilitate veteran's reintegration and foster mutually-supportive relationships between the community and its veterans. There are over 10,500 Civil War engagement sites on American soil; and there are many more from other conflicts. Communities across the nation could use the ideas and concepts espoused here to re-envision and re-vitalize their local battlefields.

Battlefields will always be hallowed ground. Like veterans, they are

different because of the events they have experienced. Let us use them not as historical artifacts, but as portals to the unchanging nature of war and warriors. Let us remember history not just for history's sake, but to inform, influence, and guide the future.



[Figure 4.29] View Over the Veteran's Way, the Bloody Plain, and the City of Fredericksburg, from the Theater of War

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