

THE ROCKBRIDGE ARTILLERY, C. S. A.

by

Robert Raymond Mitchell, Jr.

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APPROVED:

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James I. Robertson, Jr., Chairman

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Thomas C. Longin

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Leslie R. Mellichamp

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## PREFACE:

### THE ARTILLERY BATTERY

Artillery is popularly known as the "King of Battle." This description refers to the artillery's ability to influence warfare while remaining slightly above the conflict itself. Cavalry and infantry units are forced to fight on a primitive level, but the artillery is usually able to remain on a higher plane by avoiding hand-to-hand combat and using their power of indirect fire in the majority of their fighting.

The Civil War occurred before artillery could fully develop the skill and technology necessary to elevate itself above the other combat branches. Artillery units moved as integral parts of cavalry and infantry. They were frequently forced to perform the chores of infantry and to provide their own support. Despite these similarities, the artillery was entirely distinct from either of the other combat branches.

The role of cavalry and infantry units is relatively easy to understand because they have always been utilized

and organized in much the same manner. Artillery, however, has been forced to adapt itself to constantly changing conditions. Terminology, tactics and organization in the "King of Battle" are different than other combat branches and change with each new war.

For these reasons, a brief study of the Civil War artillery battery is included. The reader should carefully consider this material in order to understand properly the complexity of the unit to be discussed.

The Confederate army did not establish a tactical organization table for its artillery units, the number of men and artillery pieces varying from battery to battery. The armament of the Rockbridge Artillery, for example, fluctuated throughout the war. The unit left Lexington with two pieces, increased to eight guns in 1862, and was later reduced to six pieces. The battery normally carried from four to six guns, with six being the optimum number. This lack of uniformity extended to the type and caliber of weapons within the battery, thereby creating many problems of ammunition resupply.<sup>1</sup>

The number of men in an artillery unit also varied. Seventy-eight initially enlisted in the Rockbridge Artillery.

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<sup>1</sup>Edward A. Moore, The Story of a Cannoneer under Stonewall Jackson (Lynchburg, 1910), 263-65. Hereafter cited as Moore, Cannoneer.

On April 21, 1862, when the unit had 250 members, the Confederate government established a limit of 150 men per battery.<sup>2</sup>

The term "battery" was used to denote a company-sized artillery unit of about 150-200 men and was the basic unit upon which maneuvers were based. The battery was composed of two or more "sections," each containing two platoons. The combination of one piece and one caisson comprised an artillery platoon. The battery commander held the rank of captain, with lieutenants and sergeants leading sections and platoons, respectively. The first lieutenant generally remained in command of the battery wagons and handled all matters of resupply.<sup>3</sup>

The battery "trains" (resupply and baggage vehicles) normally consisted of at least six extra caissons, a travelling forge, a battery wagon and any wagons required to carry extra fodder, food or equipment. As the war progressed, the number of extra wagons allowed each battery greatly diminished. Each vehicle in the unit required the use of three drivers and six horses. Numerous other individuals with special duties found themselves attached to

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<sup>2</sup>Muster rolls of the Rockbridge Artillery, Rockbridge County Courthouse, Lexington, Va.; L. M. Blackford to his mother, Apr. 24, 1862, Blackford Family Papers (typescript), Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

<sup>3</sup>Jack Coggins, Arms and Equipment of the Civil War (New York, 1962), 63.

battery headquarters: the blacksmith, the surgeon, two buglers, the guidon bearer, two staff sergeants, and other individuals with special functions.<sup>4</sup>

A sergeant led each artillery platoon, which normally contained eighteen men. His platoon was divided into two parts, each commanded by a corporal. The weapon and its limber comprised one portion; the caisson with its limber was the other.<sup>5</sup> The gun crew consisted of nine men, while the sergeant (chief of piece), six drivers, and two men detailed to restrain the horses during engagements composed the remainder of the artillery platoon.

When engaged in battle, each member of the gun crew had a specific duty to perform. The following is a list of the individuals in the gun crew by position and their functions in battle. The "Number One" man swabbed the barrel and operated the handspike (to ram the shell home). "Number Two" placed the shell in the barrel. The function of the "Number Three" man was to hold his finger on the vent until the shell was rammed home. "Number Four" pulled the lanyard that fired the weapon. The "Number Five" man carried the shell from the limber chest to the piece.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>The term "limber" refers to the detachable portion of the piece or caisson to which the horses were attached. The caisson carried the ammunition chests.

Ideally, this distance was six yards. "Number Six" and "Number Seven" stayed at the limber chest and handed rounds to "Number Five." The responsibility of cutting the fuses to the proper lengths also fell to "Number Six." The "Number Eight" man remained with the caisson (eleven yards behind the limber) and helped resupply the limber chest when it ran low. The ninth man in the gun crew was the corporal who aimed the piece.<sup>6</sup>

Each artillery platoon carried four ammunition chests as an integral part of its equipment. One chest rode with the gun and three on the caisson. Each chest contained from thirty-two (for a twelve-pounder) to fifty rounds of ammunition (for a six-pounder). When fully loaded, each platoon thus carried a minimum of 128 rounds of ammunition. The type of ammunition usually varied from piece to piece, there being no set amount of any one type required.<sup>7</sup>

The artillery battery was normally deployed on the firing line, sometimes even in advance of the infantry. The twin factors of terrain and relatively short range of the pieces limited the effectiveness of the battery. The cannoneers also contended with problems of faulty ammunition and fuses. These problems frequently forced the unit

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<sup>6</sup>Coggins, Arms and Equipment, 63-65, 70.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 69.

to accompany the infantry in the attack. While moving, the battery utilized only two basic formations: the column when moving in a non-tactical situation and the line when enemy contact was imminent. The battery column became the primary formation because it facilitated control. In this formation the platoons moved in single file. The line formation was favored in the attack because it made full use of the unit's potential firepower. In this formation the platoons moved forward abreast. Artillerymen adapted their tactics to fit the prevailing conditions.<sup>8</sup>

The only tangible advantage to be gained from becoming an artilleryman during the Civil War was that guard duty was generally less frequent there than in other branches of the army. The battery usually furnished one man to watch the pieces and one man to look after the horses. The unit was not responsible for providing a perimeter guard; infantry and cavalry units generally encircled the artillery, thus providing a protective barrier. This protective force allowed the cannoneers to escape the tedium of guard duty.

The standard Confederate artillery battery is impossible to describe because no such battery existed. A typical, yet in many ways totally unique, battery was the Rockbridge Artillery.

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<sup>8</sup>H. G. Bishop, Field Artillery: The King of Battles (Boston, 1935), 54.



## CHAPTER I

### THE ROCKBRIDGE ARTILLERY IS BORN AND BAPTIZED

Confederate shells bursting over Fort Sumter in April, 1861, elicited President Abraham Lincoln's call for volunteers. This plea forced Virginia to secede from the Union and brought into existence one of the most celebrated and distinct units in the Civil War, the Rockbridge Artillery.

Much of the Rockbridge Artillery's fame and uniqueness can and should be attributed to the individuals comprising it. The unit attracted many of the South's finest youths. These men were not poorly educated; they were fine examples of Southern manhood--the best she could offer. A brief summary of the educational background should be sufficient to illustrate this point. In May, 1861, the roster of the Rockbridge Artillery contained seven men who held the Master of Arts degree from the University of Virginia. During the war, twenty-eight college graduates and twenty-five theological students joined the battery, and forty-five of its members eventually obtained commissions in the Confederate army. This impressive record can be attributed to two factors: the battle record of the unit and the fame of one

of its commanders, the Rev. William N. Pendleton. Proof of Pendleton's fame is evidenced by the fact that the unit was constantly besieged with requests for positions with the battery. At one point the Confederate government even considered expanding the battery to battalion size (at least twice that allowable for a battery) but eventually discarded the idea. One prospective member of the unit informed his parents that he "wrote this morning to Col. Pendleton to ask a place in his company, unconditionally, provided he remains in command . . . If he gives up the Company I should think again before entering it."<sup>1</sup>

The fine men initially attracted by the fame of Pendleton, a well-known Episcopalian minister and skilled artilleryman, eventually induced other equally well-prepared individuals to join the unit. This process continued throughout the war and helped make the Rockbridge Artillery famous.

Following Virginia's secession from the United States, war fever gripped Rockbridge County. On April 19, 1861, a group of individuals decided to form an artillery company. Several other volunteer units had already left Lexington for the Confederate encampment at Harper's Ferry, Virginia.

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<sup>1</sup>Confederate Veteran, XXXVI (1928), 49. See also ibid., XVII (1909), 340; L. M. Blackford to his father, Aug. 3, 1861, Blackford Family Papers.

Within two days, seventy men joined the new company. It then held formal elections for its officers, with John McCausland, the principal organizer, elected first battery commander.<sup>2</sup>

McCausland was born September 13, 1837, in St. Louis, Missouri, yet his family soon moved to Point Pleasant, Virginia. In 1857, he graduated from the Virginia Military Institute at the head of a class of twenty-three. McCausland continued his education for an additional year at the University of Virginia. In 1859, he returned to his alma mater as Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Assistant Instructor in Tactics.<sup>3</sup>

Although McCausland was elected to fill the post of battery commander, he was allowed to remain in that position only eight days. On April 29, he was transferred to the Kanawha Valley district for the purpose of recruiting troops.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Muster rolls of the Rockbridge Artillery, Rockbridge County Courthouse, Lexington, Va.

<sup>3</sup>John McCausland alumni file, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Va.; Confederate Veteran, XXXV (1927), 88.

<sup>4</sup>McCausland organized the 36th Virginia Infantry Regiment and became its first commanding officer. He then transferred to the cavalry and, on May 24, 1864, was promoted to brigadier general. In July, 1864, he captured Chambersburg, Pa., and ordered it put to the torch. McCausland never surrendered to the Federal army. After the war he exiled himself from the country for two years; upon his return, he farmed until his death in 1927. McCausland file, V. M. I.

During his short term as commander of the Rockbridge Artillery, Captain McCausland had his battery of recruits spend as much time as possible in daily drill. The battery had no skilled artillerists or weapons at this time; yet the unit learned artillery drill quickly and well. Proficiency was attained only through hard work and long hours of practice. The men drilled enthusiastically with the cadet battery of two pieces from nearby Virginia Military Institute. The commander of the unit, early in its formative period, instituted a schedule of three drill sessions per day on the parade ground of the Institute: one before breakfast; one at about 11 A.M.; and the third five hours later. The first drill period was generally devoted to the imaginary loading and firing of the pieces. This drill provided the men with a sound knowledge of the fundamentals of artillery fire. The last two daily sessions utilized, whenever possible, the full complement of horses and men and stressed tactical maneuvers in the field. These maneuvers enabled the men to acquire confidence in themselves and gave them at least an acquaintance with basic artillery tactics. Later commanders of the battery continued this policy of frequent practice sessions even after the unit became combat-hardened. Although unable to maintain the three-per-day schedule, the cannoneers did drill frequently and thus

retained their high level of proficiency.<sup>5</sup>

When Capt. McCausland received orders transferring him to the Kanawha Valley district, two members of the battery-- John McD. Alexander and J. Bowyer Brockenbrough--approached the Rev. William N. Pendleton and asked if he would consent to drill the unit, for he was one of the few skilled artillerymen in the area. He readily agreed to do so and conducted the drills with great enthusiasm. He refused, however to accept formal command of the unit when it was first offered him. On May 1, 1861, he changed his mind and donned the "butternut gray" of the Confederacy as the new commander of the Rockbridge Artillery.<sup>6</sup>

William Nelson Pendleton was born December 26, 1809, in Richmond. In 1830, he graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point as the fifth-ranked member of his class and entered the army as a lieutenant of artillery. He served three years on active duty. In 1838, the Episcopal Church ordained him a priest, and, in 1853, he arrived in Lexington, where he served as the rector of Grace Episcopal Church until the outbreak of the war.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Clement D. Fishburne, "Memoirs," Alderman Library, University of Virginia, 127, 129.

<sup>6</sup>Susan P. Lee (ed.), Memoirs of William Nelson Pendleton, D.D. (Philadelphia, 1893), 137-38. Hereafter cited as Lee, Pendleton.

<sup>7</sup>William G. Bean, Stonewall's Man: Sandie Pendleton (Chapel Hill, 1959), 4-5; Lee, Pendleton, 137-38.

Although the new commander encouraged the battery to devote as much time as possible to daily drill, a welcome break in the routine occurred when, on May 3, 1861, the ladies of Lexington presented the battery with its first and only unit flag. Sergeant J. Cole Davis accepted the flag on behalf of the unit and delivered an appropriate address to the assembled townspeople.<sup>8</sup>

Captain Pendleton left Lexington on May 9 to journey to Richmond in an attempt to procure two more weapons and other necessary equipment for his unit. The following day, the remainder of the battery left Lexington and proceeded north to join Col. Thomas J. Jackson's brigade at Harper's Ferry. Colonel Jackson, a professor at the Virginia Military Institute before the war, had assumed command of the Confederate forces at Harper's Ferry immediately after its capture. Captain Pendleton's orders required him to proceed to Jackson's location with all possible speed. The unit was to bring with it all artillery pieces and integral equipment. The armament of the Rockbridge Artillery at this time consisted of only two light six-pounder smooth-bore pieces (formerly the property of the cadet battery at V. M. I.). On May 11, the unit, under the command of executive officer J. Bowyer Brockenbrough, arrived in Staunton

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<sup>8</sup> Lexington Gazette, May 9, 1861.

and rejoined Pendleton. On the following day, the battery officially enlisted in the service of the Confederacy. At this time, a total of seventy-eight men (4 officers, 3 sergeants, 6 corporals, and 65 privates) constituted the battery.<sup>9</sup>

A list of the prewar occupations shows that the unit had great diversification and a rather urban background to combine with its high educational level.

Laborers	14
Farmers	9
Lawyers	8
Students	7
Teachers	6
Carpenters	5
Blacksmiths	3
Distillers	3
Plasterers	2
Merchant's Clerks	2
Hotel Clerks	2
Wagoners	2
Stone Masons	2
Miners	2

Other occupations initially represented in the battery included; the clergy; cooper; manager; trader; blacksmith's apprentice; harness maker; baker; physician; miller; cobbler

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<sup>9</sup>Lee, Pendleton, 140; U.S. War Department (comp.), War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, 1880-1901), II, 822. Hereafter cited as OR. A discrepancy exists in the date of the mustering and the number of men mustered in with the unit. The muster rolls of the Rockbridge Artillery, Rockbridge County Courthouse, Lexington, Va., state that only seventy-seven men enlisted on May 11, 1861. For a roster of the original battery members, see Appendix I.

and coppersmith. The Rockbridge Artillery drew its members from all walks of life, a factor which helped it considerably during the war. The combination of urban background and high degree of education helped make the unit's weeks in camp more enjoyable.<sup>10</sup>

As the battery marched briskly northward, civilians along the route waved and cheered. The residents of the Shenandoah Valley did not yet know of war's horrors and hardships, but they would soon learn. On May 15, the unit arrived at Harper's Ferry and joined Jackson's brigade. The battery's armament was soon supplemented by the addition of two weapons: a brass U.S. Army six-pounder of the usual weight and a brass U.S. Army twelve-pounder. The battery now possessed four pieces, but, owing to an absence of caissons, it still had no means of carrying an adequate supply of ammunition. To resolve this problem, the men converted ordinary farm wagons into acceptable caissons that served them well through two major engagements.<sup>11</sup>

The battery passed the time at Camp Stevens in drill. Although several individuals improvised shelters that provided them with some measure of protection, the men did not

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<sup>10</sup>Original muster roll of the Rockbridge Artillery, William N. Pendleton Papers, Duke University Library.

<sup>11</sup>Lee, Pendleton, 144; Fishburne, "Memoirs," 123.



have the proper equipment and slept without the benefit of tents. The attitude of the unit at this time was simply that the war scare was overemphasized. Many of the men considered the expedition to Harper's Ferry an enjoyable manner to spend the summer months. Private Clement D. Fishburne regarded the whole affair as a picnic.<sup>12</sup>

Life at Camp Stevens was not without alarms. On at least two occasions, reports of enemy activity in the area interrupted the easy routine. When Gen. Joseph E. Johnston assumed command of the Valley forces, the battery was divided into its two sections: one section, under Capt. Pendleton, together with a protective force of infantry, was moved to the newly-established Camp Johnston in Berkeley County, Va.; the other section, under the command of Lt. Brockenbrough, was sent to Shepherdstown. Captain Pendleton stated that, even though his battery had been required to do a great deal of marching and hard work in establishing the new camp, the men drilled with their usual enthusiasm. The state of a unit's morale can usually be measured in terms of the number of men on sick call and the number of deserters. Pendleton was proud of the fact that sickness

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.; Lee, Pendleton, 144; Fishburne, "Memoirs," 129.

was not a problem in his unit. The relatively few malingerers and deserters from the battery stand as a tribute to the individuals who comprised it.<sup>13</sup>

On June 15, the Confederates advanced toward Martinsburg, Va., to protect the area from a suspected Federal threat. The battery quickly established its position and prepared itself for impending hostilities. None of the inexperienced members of the Rockbridge Artillery anticipated the long and bitter struggle that lay ahead. Hearts and minds were filled with the glory of doing battle for their homeland. The Confederate cause, they felt, was just; therefore, God would protect them. The fortunes of war soon removed these illusions.<sup>14</sup>

The first notice of impending hostilities appeared on July 2, when a Federal army under the command of Gen. Robert Patterson crossed the Potomac River at Williamsport and moved on Martinsburg. At 7:30 A.M., the advance was reported to Col. Jackson, who ordered Col. Kenton Harper's regiment of infantry and the Rockbridge Artillery forward to halt the Federal advance as long as possible. Jackson decided to march his small force in a checking movement on

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<sup>13</sup>Lee, Pendleton, 142-44.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 144-45.

Patterson's army; he assumed command of the task force and moved it two miles closer to the Federals. At this point he ordered three of the battery's four guns left behind in order to avoid the loss of valuable equipment in the event his force was overpowered. Moreover, Jackson desired to avoid a pitched battle at all costs, owing to the superior numbers of Patterson's army.<sup>15</sup>

Harper's regiment and the remaining piece, still under Jackson's overall command, advanced approximately one mile farther until the enemy came into view. The infantry was deployed as skirmishers and the artillery piece was placed in the rear until its best possible position could be determined. As the Confederates advanced, they were met with a heavy volley of Federal fire. The Southerners then fell back in an orderly withdrawal.<sup>16</sup>

As the Federal troops surged forward to press their advantage, they made one costly mistake, a mistake that has destroyed many armies and taken away countless victories. In their enthusiasm the Federals concentrated themselves within the area of the road, thus providing an easy target for the Confederate artillery. The congestion proved to be

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<sup>15</sup>Confederate Veteran, XXX (1922), 93; OR, II, 472, 185-86.

<sup>16</sup>Lexington Gazette, July 18, 1861.

the one factor needed to call the single artillery piece into action, and Capt. Pendleton wasted no time in opening fire. He was a body of Federal cavalry forming on the road and ordered the gun aimed in that direction. His order for opening fire was: "Steady, now; aim at the horses' knees."<sup>17</sup> This command was to stand them in good stead for many battles throughout the long years of the war. The effect of this shot was spectacular, for the body of cavalry was no longer in evidence once the smoke cleared.<sup>18</sup>

The skirmish at Hainesville (or Falling Waters) did not last long, but it established the Rockbridge Artillery as an effective fighting force. Although the piece engaged at Hainesville fired only six to eight rounds, it fired them effectively. Not only did the unit become engaged with the Federal infantry and cavalry, but also silenced a Federal artillery piece. Although the Federal commanders could not have known exactly how many Confederates opposed them, they did estimate that they were fired on by a battery of four rifled pieces rather than the single smoothbore which actually opposed them. This was quite an achievement for an inexperienced artillery unit.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.; Lee, Pendleton, 146.

<sup>18</sup>Lexington Gazette, July 18, 1861.

<sup>19</sup>Lee, Pendleton, 146.

When the superior Federal forces were about to outflank the Confederates, Col. Jackson quickly withdrew his forces, again in an orderly manner. The inexperience of the Confederates became evident when one member of the battery complained to his corporal of the Federal forces continuing to fire on the Confederate withdrawal. He demanded to know if "any thing like this was ever heard of in civilized warfare!--firing on a retreating foe!!"<sup>20</sup> Needless to say, the corporal did not bother to slow his retreat in order to answer the misguided private.

The engagement proved very successful for the Confederates. Their goals (to protect the withdrawal of the baggage trains and to impede the Federal advance) were easily achieved with small cost to themselves. Total Confederate losses were two killed and ten wounded while the battery escaped unharmed. The Confederates proved themselves victorious in still another way. Colonel J. E. B. Stuart and his cavalry succeeded in capturing forty-nine prisoners, including two officers. All these factors pointed to a Confederate victory in the first skirmish in the Shenandoah Valley. The Rockbridge Artillery contributed significantly to this victory by providing excellent artillery support

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<sup>20</sup>OR, II, 472; Clement D. Fishburne, "Memoirs of Thomas J. Jackson," Alderman Library, University of Virginia, 16-17.

and, incidentally, firing the first cannon shot of the Civil War in the Shenandoah Valley.<sup>21</sup>

Upon their withdrawal from the battlefield, the Confederates consolidated their forces and readied themselves for the suspected Federal advance. The attack never took place; thus, on July 3, Col. Jackson marched his troops to Darksville and rejoined Gen. Johnston's command.<sup>22</sup>

On July 7, the army gathered its equipment and headed back to the old encampment at Winchester. The troops remained at this location for eleven days without serious incident. They readied themselves for the battles which all knew to be forthcoming. Equipment was cleaned and repaired. Drill was held daily. The general tedium of camp life was resumed as if nothing had happened. Letters were written to loved ones at home, books read, and religious services frequented. These methods of filling leisure time soon grew to be important parts of Confederate camp life, life that was still relatively carefree. Letters written home often served as diaries. The most popular books read by members of the battery were romantic novels, with Sir Walter Scott

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<sup>21</sup>OR, II, 185-86; Lee, Pendleton, 146.

<sup>22</sup>U.S. National Archives, "Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Virginia," Film No. 301. Hereafter cited as "Confederate Service Records."

being among the favorite authors.<sup>23</sup> Finally, frequent attendance at church services engaged much of the soldiers' leisure.

Service to God proved to be the most popular method of passing the weary hours in camp. The battery's members were a pious lot, partly because their captain was a minister, but largely as a result of their own convictions. Most Confederate soldiers were devout immediately before battle. This devotion is not unusual in the history of war. One member of the battery remarked that he could always tell when battle was imminent because of the profusion of playing cards along the roadside. He added that he "never saw or heard of a Bible or prayer-book being cast aside at such a time, but cards were always thrown away."<sup>24</sup> This spur-of-the-moment piety was not the type found in the Rock-bridge Artillery. With leaders such as Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson and Capt. Pendleton standing before them as examples, the men filled themselves with a genuine reverence for God. When no church services were available, an individual would often conduct prayer meetings in his tent. One such individual stated that the troops met for meetings

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<sup>23</sup>L. M. Blackford to his mother, Sept. 20, 1861, Blackford Family Papers.

<sup>24</sup>Moore, Cannoneer, 218.

twice during the week and twice on Sunday (when they were unable to attend formal church services). Commanding officers allowed troops to attend religious services whenever possible, but at times events precluded regular church attendance. Jackson, when forced to fight or march on Sunday, often designated another day of the week as the "Sabbath."<sup>25</sup>

On July 18, the serenity and tedium of camp life in the Confederate camp at Winchester was broken when Gen. Johnston received orders to proceed to Manassas Junction with all possible speed. The infantry units marched briskly to the nearby railroad junction, boarded trains, and were rapidly whisked eastward to meet the Federal threat. However, the Rockbridge Artillery, together with the other artillery batteries, was not so fortunate. Because the weapons and equipment of the artillery were so awkward and heavy, and the problems of transporting horses by rail were so numerous, the battery was forced to proceed to Manassas Junction afoot. The journey took two days and, at 2 P.M. on July 20, the tired and dusty unit moved into a protected position to rest the remainder of the day. Each man knew that a fierce battle would take place shortly and that he

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<sup>25</sup>L. M. Blackford to his mother, Jan. 16, 1862, Blackford Family Papers.



might not survive to see another day. Yet the few short hours of rest offered them were eagerly accepted and enjoyed.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Lee, Pendleton, 147-48.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SEASONING OF A BATTERY

Members of the battery awakened on the morning of July 21, 1861, somewhat refreshed from the long march of the preceding two days. Although battle was imminent, the unit was initially allowed to escape the horrors of war. Yet the respite was to be short-lived.

Although Pendleton had been promoted to colonel and held the post of Gen. Johnston's Chief of Artillery, he retained command of the Rockbridge Artillery during the battle of First Manassas. When hostilities commenced, Pendleton and the batteries of his command, with the exception of the Rockbridge Artillery and Alburtis' Battery, moved to the front and assumed battle positions. General Jackson initially ordered one gun of the battery to accompany Pendleton to the front but changed his mind later when it was noted that the gun would be placed in a highly exposed position. The two reserve batteries were positioned near the army headquarters and told to await further orders.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>OR, II, 977; LI, pt. 1, 34-35.

The long-awaited orders to advance came at 11:30 A.M., when Brigadier Generals Pierre G. T. Beauregard (the senior Confederate officer present at First Manassas) and J. E. Johnston ordered Pendleton forward with one reserve battery. Pendleton naturally chose the Rockbridge Artillery and they galloped forward together. The other reserve battery was ordered to follow Pendleton a short while later. The unit arrived at its new location, about four miles away, and established itself by noon. Upon its arrival, Jackson directed Pendleton in the placement of the pieces but allowed the commander to aim them. Pendleton supervised the aiming and the fuse-cutting as well as maintaining his position as overall artillery commander for the Army of the Shenandoah.<sup>2</sup>

Once the battery had assumed its position, it quickly opened fire on the enemy. It continued to fire for approximately three hours until ordered by Jackson to pull back to Lewis Ridge which was located behind their position on Henry House Hill. Enemy infantry had crept too near and the Confederate infantry was going to charge. This advance would leave the artillery unprotected. Jackson thus felt it necessary to withdraw the batteries from the immediate area.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 475, 481-82; Lee, Pendleton, 149.

Both Alburtis' Battery and the Rockbridge Artillery pulled back at this time, with one piece from the latter unit remaining in position to protect the withdrawal. The single piece continued to fire until the others were safely out of danger, then rejoined the battery in a reserve position. At 3:30 P.M., when Jackson gave the order to advance, his First Brigade moved forward and soon swept the enemy from the field. The charge won both the day and a place in history for the Stonewall Brigade.<sup>3</sup>

In his report of the battle, Johnston praised the conduct and effectiveness of the battery:

They were opposed to batteries far superior in the number, range, and equipment of their guns, with educated officers and thoroughly instructed soldiers . . . yet they exhibited as much superiority to the enemy in skill as in courage. Their fire was superior in both rapidity and precision.<sup>4</sup>

With praise such as this from its commanding general, it is small wonder that the Rockbridge Artillery was soon considered an invaluable asset to any unit fortunate enough to have its support.

The effects of battle did not show themselves until after the conflict. Men in battle do not usually realize

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<sup>3</sup>OR, LI, pt. 1, 34-36.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 476.

fear. They sense great danger but are able to cope with it. After the conflict is ended, however, the realization of what has just taken place, and the thought of what might have occurred, assume a dominant position in the mind. One soldier who had just experienced his first taste of battle stated that, during the conflict, "I was conscious of being in danger, but right there I felt was the place where I ought to be . . . My observing, thinking and reasoning facilities were normal."<sup>5</sup>

Another common characteristic of soldiers under fire is a sudden unquenchable thirst. Many members of the unit found this to be true and sought to alleviate the thirst at the battle's end. A diligent search produced only one well with potable water. This well was required for the use of the nearby hospital and had been declared "off limits" to the soldiers. In spite of the order against using the well, the battle-weary cannoneers of the Rock-bridge Artillery hoped to obtain relief; yet, on their return, they found the well guarded by a sentinel who refused to listen to their pleas. They were thus forced to endure their parched throats throughout the night.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Col. William T. Poague, "Some Reminiscences for my Children," 9. Typescript in W. T. Poague file, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Va. Hereafter cited as Poague, "Reminiscences."

<sup>6</sup>Fishburne, "Memoirs."

The men received permission to visit the battlefield that evening. Members of the Rockbridge Artillery did quite well for themselves in the search for spoils; no longer would they have to be content with the inferior Confederate equipment. The Federals, in their haste to escape capture or death, had thrown away canteens, tents, packs and much other valuable equipment that was eagerly seized by the Confederate soldiers.

The most important items to be acquired in this manner were caissons and artillery harness for the horses. As previously stated, the battery had been forced to convert ordinary farm wagons into acceptable caissons.<sup>7</sup> The conversion was to be temporary until regular caissons could be built. At Manassas the battery received new ones with the compliments of the Federal army. The Confederate army also captured large amounts of ammunition and weapons from the Union army, and replaced inefficient weapons with superior Federal guns. In addition to the caissons already mentioned, the battery received four additional weapons after First Manassas: two ten-pounder Parrott rifles and two U.S. Army six-pounders. The latter two weapons replaced the

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<sup>7</sup>Although the make-shift caissons were considered "acceptable," they still had one major fault. The ammunition chests were carried so high that the "Number Eight" man was forced to climb on top of the wagon to secure ammunition, thus exposing himself unduly to enemy fire. Fishburne, "Memoirs."

guns of the V. M. I. cadet battery. All guns were now fully-equipped with both harness and horses, most of which had been captured from the Federals.<sup>8</sup>

As dawn broke on July 22, torrential rains fell on the battlefield. Clement D. Fishburne and several of his messmates hit upon a plan for obtaining water. They decided to go to the Lewis house and catch the rain water running off the roof. This plan, which appeared feasible at the time, contained one major flaw: the house had been converted into a hospital, with the operating room located on the second floor. The roof below the room was strewn with amputated limbs, and the rain water passing over this bloody mass of human flesh quickly lost its appeal to thirsty soldiers who quickly decided to continue their search for water in another direction.<sup>9</sup>

Although the members of the battery were forced to endure their great thirst, no man complained too bitterly of war's horrors, for the unit emerged from the battle unharmed. Because of the nature of their work, artillerymen were forced to expose themselves frequently to hostile fire. Casualties normally ran high. First Manassas, however, was the second major engagement of the war from which

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

the unit sustained no casualties.<sup>10</sup>

On July 23, the battery received some unsettling news. Their commander, Col. Pendleton, had been relieved of his duties with the unit and given full responsibility for the artillery of Johnston's Army of the Shenandoah. Although the men had great confidence in their leader and did not want to lose him, they realized that Pendleton, with his experience and knowledge, could best serve the Confederate cause in a more significant position.<sup>11</sup>

The new commander of the Rockbridge Artillery was William McLaughlin, a Lexington lawyer. On April 29, 1861, he had joined the unit and was mustered into the Confederate army two weeks later. He served as the senior Second Lieutenant of the battery in the first two engagements. Although Pendleton retained command of the unit during the first battle at Manassas, Lt. McLaughlin directed much of the actual firing. One colleague said that McLaughlin's "bearing was superb, standing between his guns giving

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<sup>10</sup>Moore, Cannoneer, 25.

<sup>11</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 303. Pendleton continued as Chief of Artillery for the Army of the Shenandoah until April, 1862, when he was promoted to brigadier general and named Chief of Artillery for the Army of Northern Virginia. He served in this position until war's end, then resumed his duties as rector of the Grace Episcopal Church in Lexington until his death on Jan. 15, 1883. Bean, Stonewall's Men, 4-5; Lee, Pendleton, 137-38.



directions and watching the effect of the shots."<sup>12</sup> He was popular with his troops and proved an able officer.

The battery remained encamped on the battlefield for several days following the cessation of hostilities. On August 2, Jackson secured permission to move his camp to a new position one mile east of Centreville. The stench of rotting flesh, both human and animal, plus a threatened attack of typhoid fever necessitated the move. Members of the Rockbridge Artillery were more than willing to leave "Camp Maggot" for the more pleasant and healthy surroundings of Camp Harman.<sup>13</sup>

Lieutenant McLaughlin's initial tour as battery commander lasted only seventeen days. On August 10, executive officer J. Bowyer Brockenbrough returned to the unit and assumed his place as interim commander. Brockenbrough retained command only four days, for unit elections held on August 14, resulted in the elevation of McLaughlin to the battery's command. Brockenbrough did retain his post as battery executive officer but would not consent to serve under McLaughlin. Hence, on August 26, he resigned his

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<sup>12</sup>Original muster roll of the Rockbridge Artillery, William N. Pendleton Papers, Duke University Library; Poague, "Reminiscences," 9.

<sup>13</sup>Fishburne, "Memoirs."

commission and left the army.<sup>14</sup>

As the days at Camp Harman turned into weeks, the Rock-bridge Artillery grew in strength. Recruits arrived daily and the unit soon swelled to 147 members. This figure gave an average of approximately twenty men per gun, too large a group for effective control. Captain McLaughlin wrote to President Jefferson Davis requesting two more artillery pieces and authorization for additional officers, both commissioned and noncommissioned. Richmond authorities approved the additions and, by November 21, the battery had two new pieces.<sup>15</sup>

While awaiting the arrival of the weapons, the battery received three surprises that greatly upset camp routine. The first was the sudden shift of camp from Centreville to a point near Fairfax Courthouse. Here again the men established camp routine, with permanent shelters and furnishings becoming prominent. Several tents contained fireplaces with turf chimneys, making them more pleasant and inhabitable.

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<sup>14</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301.

<sup>15</sup>L. M. Blackford to his mother, Oct. 8, 1861, Blackford Family Papers; William McLaughlin to Jefferson Davis, Sept. 5, 1861, William N. Fendleton Papers, Duke University Library; L. M. Blackford to his father, Nov. 21, 1861, Blackford Family Papers.

Initially, life here was enjoyable as a result of the proximity of friends and relatives, the other units from Lexington being located within a few miles of the encampment. Apparently the visiting became too prolonged, for regulations regarding furloughs and visiting outside the camp limits became more strict. The men were no longer allowed to leave the battery area without prior permission from their commanding officer.<sup>16</sup>

The second surprise occurred on October 13, when Jackson was promoted to major general and given command of the Valley District. The promotion necessitated his leaving his beloved Stonewall Brigade. Jackson had proven to be a popular commander in spite of his eccentricities. Members of the battery bemoaned his transfer and wished they could return with their general to the Valley they loved so well.

On November 4, when Jackson was about to depart, his troops begged one final audience. He granted this request and, early in the afternoon, faced his former troops. Here he made his last farewell, and concluded with the statement:

In the Army of the Shenandoah, you were the First Brigade! In the Army of the Potomac you were the

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<sup>16</sup>L. M. Blackford to his mother, Oct. 23, 1861; L. M. Blackford to "Uncle John," Nov. 6, 1861, Blackford Family Papers.

First Brigade! In the Second Corps of this army you were the First Brigade! You are the First Brigade in the affections of your general, and I hope by your future deeds and bearing you will be handed down to posterity as the First Brigade in this, our second War of Independence. Farewell!

With these parting words Jackson departed, it was thought, from the camp and from the lives of the unit.

On November 7, the third surprise occurred when the battery received orders to rejoin its former leader at Winchester. Rumors of the transfer had run through the unit ever since Jackson's departure, but the men dared not hope they might prove true. Jackson had requested experienced troops to aid in the Valley's defense and specifically requested his former brigade. Johnston protested vehemently the loss of these troops. Jackson, he charged, would be opposed by only raw forces, while he faced the elite of the Federal army. Confederate Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin placated Johnston by promising him twice the number of troops transferred.<sup>18</sup>

Rarely in the history of warfare has an order been so cheerfully and quickly obeyed. On November 8, the troops broke camp and marched to Manassas to board trains for the

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<sup>17</sup>OR, II, 909; Henry Kyd Douglas, I Rode with Stonewall (Chapel Hill, 1940), 16-17. See also William Couper, One Hundred Years at V.M.I. (Richmond, 1939), IV, 166.

<sup>18</sup>OR, V, 940; LI, pt. 2, 372. See also ibid., V, 389.

journey to Strasburg. The battery had to march the entire distance to Winchester, but not even this hardship could dampen the men's spirits. Morale jumped higher when several members of the unit procured whiskey for the journey westward. By the time the battery reached Castleman's Ferry, a number of artillerymen were reported to be "dead drunk."<sup>19</sup>

On November 10, the battery met the Stonewall Brigade at Strasburg and, on the following day, turned north toward Winchester. The brigade spent the night at Kerntown and moved through Winchester the next day. The units encamped in an area approximately four and one-half miles north of town. When the weather changed at an inopportune moment, the area soon became a sea of mud and complaints about the poor choice of bivouac site arose.

With the elements seemingly against them, the battery felt even more oppressed when Jackson issued orders restricting the men to camp. Only two men per company were allowed to be absent at one time. Jackson felt the restriction was necessary as punishment for the brigade's conduct on the trains from Manassas. The restriction seemed unfair to battery members who had walked the entire

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<sup>19</sup>L. M. Blackford to his mother, Nov. 12, 1861, Blackford Family Papers; Poague, "Reminiscences," 10.

distance--they had conveniently forgotten their own drinking experience on the march.<sup>20</sup>

The weather during this period of the unit's history can be described in a word: wet. Heavy rains did not aid either the men's health or the condition of the camp. The rain, combined with low temperatures, led to much discomfort among the troops. The men were ready to establish winter quarters, and complaints on the present site mounted. The grumbling was largely a result of boredom, for the weather had hampered drill and given the men too much idle time. On November 16, the men received fortunate news in one respect when Jackson ordered the camp moved to a more suitable location on the other side of Winchester.<sup>21</sup>

By November 21, the armament of the battery was increased to eight upon the arrival of a twelve-pounder howitzer and an iron six-pounder. The other six weapons manned by the unit at this time were two ten-pounder rifled Parrotts, three brass smoothbore six-pounders, and one iron six-pounder. The iron six-pounders were among the first crude efforts turned out by the Tredegar Iron Works in

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<sup>20</sup>The fact that any man who made a serious effort to break the restriction generally succeeded should be noted. See James I. Robertson, Jr., The Stonewall Brigade (Baton Rouge, 1963), 52; L. M. Blackford to his mother, Nov. 12, 1861, Blackford Family Papers.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. to his father, Nov. 21, 1861, Blackford Family Papers. See also Fishburne, "Memoirs."

Richmond. They proved to be of poor quality and were soon discarded.<sup>22</sup>

Because life in the new camp proved more endurable than in the previous site, the men's morale rose accordingly. They were still anxious to move into winter quarters, but they trusted Jackson to protect their interests. Their hopes were dashed, however, when, early in December, Lt. Poague took one section of the battery to aid Col. Turner Ashby's cavalry. The journey to Charlestown proved a welcome relief from the tedium of camp life and occurred without any serious combat.<sup>23</sup>

On December 5, the battery received orders to proceed to Martinsburg. Two sections under Poague's command left immediately. The purpose of the movement was to aid Ashby in the destruction of Dam No. Five on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad canal. Jackson felt the dam to be the key factor in the disruption of Federal trade to the area.

On December 7, the initial attempt by the "Hibernians" of the 27th Virginia Regiment to destroy the dam proved unsuccessful. Federal sharpshooters located on the far bank of the canal were easily routed but soon returned with a full battery of artillery for support. The Federal

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<sup>22</sup>L. M. Blackford to his father, Nov. 21, 1861, Blackford Family Papers; Moore, Cannoneer, 265.

<sup>23</sup>Poague, "Reminiscences," 11.

cannon fire forced the Confederates to abandon the project and retire to a more protected area. The 27th Virginia returned later to attempt completion of its task. This time enemy sharpshooters drove them back.<sup>24</sup>

Jackson decided that the dam's destruction was a task of the highest priority. For this reason, late on December 16, the entire brigade left Winchester and executed the fifteen-mile march to Martinsburg at night. On the following day, the brigade arrived at the bluffs commanding Dam No. Five and prepared positions. Upon the arrival of the Confederates at the dam site, workers immediately began undermining the dam's "cribbing."<sup>25</sup> They worked unmolested until discovered near daybreak the following morning. One gun from the Rockbridge Artillery took a position beside a piece from Captain R. Preston Chew's battery of horse artillery. If the Federals discovered the workers, the artillery was to destroy a brick house on the opposite slope that had afforded the enemy sharpshooters excellent protection.

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<sup>24</sup>L. M. Blackford to his father, Dec. 6, 1861; L. M. Blackford to his mother, Dec. 9, 1861, Blackford Family Papers.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., Dec. 20, 1861; L. M. Blackford to his father, Dec. 21, 1861, Blackford Family Papers. The "cribbing" was the squares of large logs filled with stones that were used to support the dam.



The first Confederate shells drove the enemy from their shelter but were soon answered by an effective cannonade from the Federal side. Captain McLaughlin ordered the men to take cover, a move that left the pieces unmanned and exposed to hostile fire.

Members of the 27th and 33rd Virginia volunteered to return to the dam that night (December 19) and continue the work. By daybreak on December 20, the men had erected a parapet of stones to shield themselves from the Federal sharpshooters. Work continued on the cribbing until December 21, when the dam was sufficiently destroyed to satisfy Jackson.<sup>26</sup>

During the four days spent at Dam No. Five, the battery concerned itself with protecting the workers and dodging shells. It was at this location that the unit suffered its first serious casualty, when Joshua Parks, a new recruit, was killed.<sup>27</sup>

On December 21, the brigade returned to its encampment at Winchester. Once again rumors began to circulate concerning the establishment of winter quarters. As the cold was gradually becoming bitter, the light summer tents

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<sup>26</sup>Robertson, Stonewall Brigade, 55-58; L. M. Blackford to his father, Dec. 21, 1861, Blackford Family Papers.

<sup>27</sup>Poague, "Reminiscences," 12; Robertson, Stonewall Brigade, 57; OR, V, 390.

and tarpaulins used as shelters proved inadequate, and the men wanted to build more substantial shelters from mud and logs.

Jackson was not yet ready to move into winter quarters, for he felt sufficient time existed for one last blow to the enemy's morale. He realized that entry into winter quarters would produce a virtual cessation of hostilities until the "Spring thaw." The cessation would eliminate all apprehensions that the Federals might hold. Therefore, Jackson postponed entry into winter quarters as long as possible and initiated plans for a winter march to the area surrounding Romney, Virginia.

On January 1, 1862, the entire First Brigade under Jackson's direct command left Winchester and marched fifteen miles. The battery began the march with twenty-two vehicles (eight weapons, eight caissons, four baggage wagons, one travelling forge, and one ambulance) and 145 men. All officers, commissioned and noncommissioned, and drivers rode horses in the march, while the cannoneers were forced to walk.

As the day initially seemed very pleasant, members of the unit threw their heavy overcoats onto the battery wagons, which were to follow shortly. The weather quickly turned bitter cold, but the troops were forced to suffer

without the protection of their overcoats.

Upon their arrival at the bivouac site, a field of underbrush, the men established themselves as comfortably as possible and awaited the arrival of the baggage vehicles which still carried their overcoats. As they waited, the temperature continued to drop while the wind blew severely. Several battery members started small fires to warm themselves. The gusty wind soon blew the fires out of control and the soldiers were forced to move the guns from the vicinity by hand. As each gun was carrying from 1800 to 2000 pounds of powder, the fire presented a major hazard to the battery members. In order to prevent a recurrence of the incident, the unit spent the remainder of the night in an open field on the other side of the road.

By January 4, 1862, the brigade had reached the southern bank of the Potomac River opposite the town of Hancock. In retaliation for the Federal shelling of Shepherdstown, Jackson ordered the Rockbridge Artillery to bombard Hancock. Before the cannonade began, however, he gave two hours warning to permit an evacuation of civilians. The signal gun then boomed out and a concentrated shelling ensued until the following day.

On January 6, upon learning of a Federal advance, Jackson's forces retired in the direction of Unger's Crossroads.

The men still had no firm idea of their commander's plans. Some felt the objective was the complete destruction of Dam No. Five, while others correctly deduced that the ultimate goal was Romney.

The army began the march to Romney on January 13, and arrived there two days later. The march itself deserves mention, for Jackson's troops suffered hardships not unlike those of Napoleon in his retreat from Moscow. The wagons carrying such "nonessential" items as blankets, tents and overcoats remained far behind. Men shared whatever blankets they could gather. While the cold at night forced the troops to remain awake, the icy roads and steep mountains travelled during the day provided them no relief. Private Randolph Fairfax observed: "'During this trip my patriotism was put to a severe test by marching through the mountains over the icy roads as smooth as glass, bivouacking at night in the snow, and rolling the heavy guns up the . . . steps by day.'"<sup>28</sup>

On January 15, Jackson's troops trudged into Romney, only to find it deserted by the Federals. In their rapid

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<sup>28</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; L. M. Blackford to his mother, Jan. 11, 1862, Blackford Family Papers; Fishburne, "Memoirs;" OR, V, 390-91; Philip Slaughter, A Sketch of the Life of Randolph Fairfax (Baltimore, 1878), 21. In order to prevent the loss of valuable horses and weapons, the Confederates were often forced to cut small trenches across the road to provide a "step" for both wagons and men.

departure, however, the Yankees had left behind much equipment that the Confederates now collected. Most units in Jackson's army were forced to improvise shelters during the sojourn in Romney, but the Rockbridge Artillery was more fortunate than the others. Battery members found quarters in a small church and utilized its graveyard for cooking purposes. The men soon received uninvited guests in the form of "gray backs" (vermin). The officers were the only members of the battery spared, for they slept in the church's pulpit. The experience of the unit in Romney would not soon be forgotten.<sup>29</sup>

Jackson's forces remained in Romney for nine days. On January 24, the units headed back down the turnpike toward Winchester. William T. Poague described that night's repose as a pleasant change from the vermin-infested quarters of Romney, even though the unit had to sleep in the snow. On January 26, the battery arrived in Winchester, having survived one of the hardest twenty-five-day periods of the war.<sup>30</sup>

Two days after the return to Winchester, the long-awaited orders finally appeared. Jackson decided to

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<sup>29</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Poague, "Reminiscences," 14-15.

<sup>30</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Poague, "Reminiscences," 15.

establish winter quarters. His forces gladly obeyed the order and "Camp Zollicoffer" rapidly took shape. The month of January had proven to be an especially difficult one for the Rockbridge Artillery, which had marched 130 miles through rough terrain in the worst possible weather.

When Jackson ordered the establishment of winter quarters, weary members of the Rockbridge Artillery were grateful for the relief from the rigors of the march. The unit's morale quickly returned to a normally high level, for the men now faced only the tranquility of camp life. They could forget the horrors of battle. The unit had been truly baptized into the worst aspects of war but had not yet realized the shame of defeat. It would not be long, however, until the Rockbridge Artillery, now composed of well-seasoned recruits, would experience this feeling. In the process, it would become a combat-hardened unit.

### CHAPTER III

#### DEFEAT, THEN VICTORY

The battery, firmly established in winter quarters, expected to pass the winter months regaining health rendered poor by the Romney campaign. The men had suffered dreadfully from overexposure to the January weather, and the illness rate of Jackson's troops was staggering. Hospitals were filled to capacity with men suffering from pneumonia and frostbite. As usual, there were also a few malingerers. However, as the men regained their strength, their high spirits returned.

The temper of the camp changed when Major General William W. Loring, Jackson's subordinate in the Romney campaign, bypassed the normal chain of command and wrote directly to Secretary of War Judah Benjamin requesting permission to leave Romney and return to the Valley. The Secretary approved the request, which so infuriated Jackson that he resigned his commission. The Confederate government, fearing the loss of such an able commander, rescinded the order recalling Loring's division and ended the furor.

As winter continued, peace and quiet finally returned to Camp Zollicoffer. The daily arrival of new recruits supplemented the numbers of the battery. Although unable to maintain a schedule of daily drill, the men practiced whenever the weather permitted. For the most part, however, the cannoneers devoted their work hours to repairing harness and equipment and cleaning weapons in preparation for the spring campaign.

Winter ended early in 1862 and brought a Federal advance to the area near Winchester. Jackson left winter quarters and advanced to meet the enemy forces of General Nathaniel P. Banks, but the latter decided against doing battle (although his army was numerically superior to that of Jackson). On March 11, Jackson's army withdrew through Newtown to Mount Jackson and established "Camp Buchanan," approximately forty-two miles from Winchester.

At Camp Buchanan, sixty new recruits for the battery arrived. These new soldiers, when properly trained and merged with the original members of the battery, were to form the nucleus from which a battalion of artillery would be developed. A recruiting drive began on February 19, when the battery placed advertisements for enlistees in the Lexington Gazette, principal newspaper of Rockbridge County. Each new recruit received a bounty of fifty



dollars, but the principal factors motivating the enlistees were patriotism and the desire to join good units before being drafted into poor ones.<sup>1</sup>

On March 22, Jackson's army broke camp and headed south. Then they executed a turn-about, headed north for approximately twenty miles, and bivouacked. The next day, March 23, saw them march twelve miles farther before being ordered into bivouac early in the afternoon. Jackson planned to camp near the Federal forces at Kernstown, then attack early the next morning. He decided to attack immediately, however, in order to prevent his enemy from being reinforced. A plan of attack quickly formed in his mind.<sup>2</sup>

As members of the Rockbridge Artillery prepared their camp site for the coming night, a cannon shot rang out in the distance. The Confederates fired an answering shot, and battle erupted. These shots were the first warning given the battery of the enemy's proximity, although several members thought the Federal forces to be near. The men repacked their belongings and girded themselves for battle.

Ambulances carrying the Confederate wounded soon began to appear on the road leading from the battlefield.

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<sup>1</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Lexington Gazette, Mar. 27, 1862.

<sup>2</sup>OR, XII, pt. 1, 380-81.

This sight was the first contact many of the recruits had had with war and they were, quite naturally, frightened and sickened by the scene.<sup>3</sup>

Jackson initially ordered the unit to a hill that covered the approaches to Winchester. Captain McLaughlin placed his eight weapons on the hill and waited until 1 P.M., when he was directed to move his battery to another hill in support of the infantry. On the way to the new position, the battery took several incoming rounds from Federal artillery that disabled two pieces and severely wounded two men. The battery thus arrived at its new position with only six of its guns, although a seventh was eventually brought into the action. The 21st Virginia moved with the battery and acted as support until the foot soldiers expended their ammunition. When the regiment retired from the field, the battery was left virtually unprotected.<sup>4</sup>

At 3:30 P.M., Jackson ordered one section of the battery under Lt. Poague to support the guns of Captains James H. Waters and Joseph Carpenter. The section remained an hour, then returned when an enemy probe threatened their position. Federal infantry then advanced all along the Confederate line and forced the withdrawal of the Southern

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 381-84; Moore, Cannoneer, 29-30.

<sup>4</sup>OR, XII, pt. 1, 396-97.

troops. They advanced to within 250 yards of the Rockbridge Artillery before four rounds of canister brought them to a temporary halt. These four guns then moved to the rear behind the 5th Virginia. When the Federals renewed their advance, another volley of canister halted them at a distance of 150 yards. This section then withdrew to the battery's new position.

The Confederate retreat now became general, and Jackson ordered the Rockbridge Artillery to protect it. However, he changed his mind, and the unit rejoined the First Brigade on the turnpike. During the retreat, Federal small arms fire killed or wounded five horses pulling one weapon, and it was abandoned. This gun was the first to be lost by the unit in combat.<sup>5</sup>

The retreat was orderly, for Jackson wanted to protect himself against an attack from the rear. One soldier reported that the troops did not behave despondently during the retreat, but that they "seemed ready and willing to fight at any time that Gen. Jackson might desire it."<sup>6</sup> Yet the battle itself had taken a severe toll on the Confederates in general and, more specifically, the Rockbridge

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 396-98, 402-03; Fishburne, "Memoirs."

<sup>6</sup>Lexington Gazette, Apr. 3, 1862.

Artillery. The battery lost one piece (a six-pounder taken at Manassas) and two caissons. The loss of equipment was not nearly so great as the human toll exacted from the unit, for ten men suffered severe wounds (three of whom later died), and one was captured. The unit also experienced its first taste of defeat, a bitter taste not soon to be forgotten.<sup>7</sup>

The battery spent the night after Kernstown approximately two miles from the battlefield. The withdrawal continued the following morning. The retreat began prematurely when Federal artillery opened fire on the Confederate troops at breakfast. Captain McLaughlin ordered two guns forward to protect the battery while the remainder of the unit made a hasty escape.<sup>8</sup>

Jackson kept his forces occupied for the next twenty-eight days mainly on picket duty and on quick marches to confuse their Federal opponents. On April 20, 1862, the army arrived at Swift Run Gap, where it established a new camp and reorganized the battery. As previously stated, the Rockbridge Artillery had been enlisting new members for the purpose of increasing to battalion strength. Captain McLaughlin was to be promoted to major and given

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<sup>7</sup>OR, XII, pt. 1, 380-81; Moore, Cannoneer, 36-37. See also Slaughter, Life of Randolph Fairfax, 22-23.

<sup>8</sup>OR, XII, pt. 1, 398. See also ibid., 384.

command of the new battalion of three batteries. Lieutenants Poague, Archibald Graham, and J. Cole Davis were to receive promotions to captain and assume command of the new batteries. The recent recruits swelled the battery to approximately 250 men. The Confederate authorities knew of the unit's plan and initially granted approval; yet those same officials soon substituted new orders for the original plan.

The orders forced the battery first to reduce to 150 men and then to elect new officers. McLaughlin was allowed to choose the men he wanted to remain, but he declined to do so on the grounds that he would be tempted to select only men who would support him for re-election. For this reason, he declined to stand for re-election and subsequently established a different method for selecting the men who were to remain.<sup>9</sup>

The 150 men who had served with the battery for the longest period of time were automatically allowed to remain in the unit. However, these men could transfer to any unit they desired. If a man wished a transfer, the man with the

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<sup>9</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Poague, "Reminiscences," 17-18. In a petition to their superiors, members of the unit protested the battery's reduction. The men desired that the battery be divided into two batteries of 125 men each and allowed to recruit to the allowed level. The petition was denied. L. M. Blackford to his mother, Apr. 24, 1862, Blackford Family Papers.

next longest service to the battery could remain. This process continued until 150 men chose to stay with the battery.

On April 22, the unit held elections and selected Lt. William T. Poague to fill the post recently vacated by Capt. McLaughlin, with Archibald Graham, William M. Brown, and J. Cole Davis to serve as his lieutenants. Captain McLaughlin then left the unit, and Capt. Poague became the battery's fourth commander.<sup>10</sup>

The new captain was born December 20, 1835, in Rockbridge County, Va. In 1857, he graduated from Washington College and attended law school for three years. In 1860, he opened his law practice in St. Joseph, Missouri, but soon returned to his native county. When the Civil War began, his partner persuaded him to postpone his enlistment; but patriotism soon outweighed Poague's promise and he joined the battery as its first junior second lieutenant. He rose rapidly to the grade of first lieutenant and battery

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<sup>10</sup>Poague, "Reminiscences," 18. McLaughlin, upon taking leave of the battery, was promoted to major. By war's end, he had risen to lieutenant colonel and commanded an artillery battalion in Gen. Jubal Early's division. In 1863, citizens of Lexington urged McLaughlin to run for the state senate. He ran but was defeated, finishing last in a field of five contestants. In 1865, he resumed his law practice and later became judge of the Thirteenth Judicial Court of Virginia, a post he retained until his death in 1898. Lexington Gazette, Apr. 8, 1863; Samuel H. Letcher alumni file, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Va.

executive officer which he retained until elected to the battery's command.<sup>11</sup>

The men forced to leave the battery and not allowed to choose their new command received temporary assignments with the 33rd Virginia to guard the Federal prisoners captured at Kernstown. They then were assigned to other commands. Before May 1, the twenty-one men fortunate enough to choose their new assignments left the unit. Most of them transferred to Ashby's cavalry. Their departure cost the battery several of its most experienced members, many of whom would later accept commissions as officers in other units. The loss of these men did not seriously impair the battery's efficiency, for the new men had gained invaluable experience at the battle of Kernstown. With the reduction of personnel came a reduction in the number of weapons to be manned by the unit from eight to six. The two guns from the Tredegar Iron Works, having proven inferior, were discarded.<sup>12</sup>

Brigadier General Charles S. Winder, the newly-appointed commander of the Stonewall Brigade, created discipline problems for Capt. Poague by his insistence on maintaining

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<sup>11</sup>William T. Poague file, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Va.

<sup>12</sup>L. M. Blackford to his mother, Apr. 23, 1862, Blackford Family Papers; "Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Moore, Cannoneer, 45, 265.

camp "by the book." The men of the battery, being accustomed to McLaughlin's lax methods, resented Poague's attempts at discipline. Yet he could not relent. He ran the camp and battery in strict accordance with military regulations and offenders received appropriate punishment. A small minority of men never forgave Poague for the punishment; but when the majority realized that the new discipline would eventually be beneficial, the men accepted it in that light.

Any problems of low morale that Poague's strict discipline might otherwise have caused were quickly forgotten in the events of the next two months. It was during this time that Jackson executed his brilliant "Valley Campaign" that was to win him undying fame. General Robert E. Lee, commander of the Virginia forces, informed Jackson that Richmond was in grave danger and that the forces under Banks must be attacked in order to relieve the pressure on the Confederate capitol. Jackson quickly formulated his basic plan of action.

At this time, the Federals had three armies located in the Shenandoah Valley. Any two of them presented a force far greater than that of Jackson. Secrecy, speed and suspicion were the important factors incorporated into Jackson's plan, for without them his strategy could not work



effectively.

Jackson requested that General Richard S. Ewell's division be ordered to the Valley to assume a defensive position at Swift Run Gap. Ewell's troops soon arrived; and, on April 30, Jackson's troops began the march that was to culminate in a great victory. Initially the Confederates headed south along the river toward Port Republic. Spring rains had turned the Valley's roads into a vast sea of mud, in some places as deep as two feet, and Jackson's vehicles often required the use of brute force to maneuver slowly through the mire.

On May 1, the army finally reached Port Republic. On the following day, it crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains at Brown's Gap. The battery then proceeded to Cox's Tavern on the Mechum River, arriving there the next afternoon. On reaching the railroad junction, infantrymen boarded trains and headed west toward Staunton. The artillery units, however, were again unfortunate and had to journey through the mountains on foot. On May 5, the battery arrived at Staunton and rejoined the remainder of Jackson's forces.

The dawn of May 7 saw Jackson's division moving rapidly northward. After travelling some seven miles, the division shifted direction and headed west toward McDowell, a march of some twenty miles. Although Jackson attacked and soundly

defeated the Federal forces under General Robert E. Milroy on May 8, the mountainous terrain precluded Jackson's artillery from taking an active role in the battle. Yet Jackson did keep his artillery prepared for battle. The Southerners spent the next two days pursuing the Federal army, and, on May 11, caught Milroy's troops who halted only long enough for a brief skirmish.<sup>13</sup>

On May 12, Jackson forsook further pursuit of the Federals and established camp at Mount Solon, where his troops enjoyed a well-deserved respite from the rigors of long marches under adverse conditions. The battery left Mount Solon a week later with the remainder of Jackson's forces and headed eastward until the Massanutten Mountains shielded them from watchful eyes. Jackson then swept down the Luray Valley and, on May 23, struck Banks's flank at Front Royal.

At 4 P.M., Jackson ordered the battery forward, but it did not arrive in time to participate in the first day's fighting. On the following day, however, one section of two rifled guns joined Chew's Battery of Ashby's cavalry to provide added artillery fire power for the protection of Ashby's troops in pursuit of the Federals. While travelling

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<sup>13</sup>Couper, One Hundred Years at V.M.I., IV, 174-76; "Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Moore, Canon-  
noneer, 49-50.

with Ashby's cavalry, the section helped disperse the cavalry escort of a Federal wagon train, thus supplying the Confederate army with an unexpected source of equipment. Unfortunately, neither the cavalry nor the artillery could stop to examine the captured Federal wagons. The need to keep after the retreating Federals was too great.<sup>14</sup>

At 5 P.M. on the same day, a volley of hostile fire greeted the advancing Confederates. A lively duel ensued until dusk brought a halt to the action. Two members of the Rockbridge battery received slight wounds in the day's fighting, which had seen the Confederates advance to Newtown.<sup>15</sup> Artilleryman Ned Moore poignantly described the joy of the village's residents on seeing the Confederates arrive: "a very portly old lady came running out on her porch, and, spreading her arms wide, called out 'All of you run here and kiss me!'"<sup>16</sup>

Even when darkness had fallen, Jackson's warriors could not afford the luxury of rest. One of "Stonewall" Jackson's chief maxims of war was "pursue a defeated enemy to the limits of your troops' endurance." He was most intent on following the axiom on this occasion. The army

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<sup>14</sup>OR, XII, pt. 1, 760-61.

<sup>15</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; OR, XII, pt. 1, 761. See also ibid., 735.

<sup>16</sup>Moore, Cannoneer, 55.

marched through the night, a march undisturbed except for an occasional musket shot, until approximately 3 A.M. By then the town of Winchester was in view.

When Jackson halted his troops, the men simply lay where they had stood. Many were too fatigued to care what happened next. Robert Barton reported that "the next thing I knew was a popping sound . . . I thought I was at home and that it was the Fourth of July."<sup>17</sup> Private Barton soon realized that the sounds he recognized as the popping of firecrackers were in reality musket shots from advancing skirmish lines.

The battery's two best guns, the rifled Parrotts, moved forward with the remaining four in close pursuit. The first gun got caught between two gate posts and completely blocked all traffic behind it. No amount of pushing, pulling or swearing could get the weapon through the gate. As the blocked road made the remainder of the battery an easy target for Federal sharpshooters, Capt. Poague requested a volunteer to chop down the post. Private Algernon S. Whitt promptly volunteered, seized an ax and set to work on his task, seemingly oblivious to the hail

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<sup>17</sup>Robert T. Barton, "Sketch of a Battle at Winchester, Va., 1862." Typescript in possession of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va. Hereafter cited as Barton, "Sketch." Although Barton was a native of Winchester, his homecoming was not a happy one, for his brother died in the battle.

of Yankee bullets flying about him. Whitt survived the feat and, for his heroism, instantly received promotion to corporal.<sup>18</sup>

Once the battery was free to follow its guide to the assigned battle position, another misfortune occurred. The guide became misoriented and exposed the battery's first section to what should have been a devastating Federal fire. For some reason the Federal artillery did not choose to open on the section, which promptly returned to a safe location and regained contact with the battery's other components.<sup>19</sup>

At this point Jackson ordered the battery to "rest in place" at its location behind a hill. On command three batteries, including the Rockbridge Artillery, with a total of sixteen guns were to advance up this hill and open fire on the enemy. The batteries complied with the order and both maintained and received a heavy fire for approximately two and one half hours. A Massachusetts regiment had stationed itself behind the protection of a stone fence, approximately 200 yards in front of the battery. Its deadly fire accounted for the majority of the casualties sustained

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<sup>18</sup>Barton, "Sketch." Other accounts of the "Whitt Incident" can be found in Poague, "Reminiscences," 20, and Moore, Cannoneer, 58.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.; OR, XII, pt. 1, 761.

by the battery in this battle. General Richard Taylor, whose Louisiana Brigade served under Jackson in the battle, stated that "the Rockbridge Artillery, was fighting at a great disadvantage, and already much cut up . . . With scarce a leg or wheel for man and horse, gun or caisson, to stand on, it continued to hammer away at the crushing fire above."<sup>20</sup>

At 8 A.M., a desperate charge by members of the Louisiana Brigade and the forces of General William B. Taliaferro broke the Federal lines and insured victory for Jackson's army. The Confederates noisily entered Winchester, where residents greeted them just as noisily. Banks's army evacuated the city and surrounding territory as rapidly as possible, once again leaving Jackson with huge piles of stores and equipment. Jackson pursued the Federals for a few miles to protect himself from a possible counterattack. His forces then established a new camp about five miles from Winchester.

The battle of Winchester proved costly for the Rockbridge Artillery: 2 killed in action and 15 seriously wounded. After the battle, Gen. Winder wrote, "Opposed by a greater number of guns . . . , they coolly and manfully

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<sup>20</sup>Richard Taylor, Destruction and Reconstruction (New York, 1879), 57.

stood by their guns, working them with such precision as to silence a greater portion of the enemy's."<sup>21</sup>

Although the Federals feared Jackson might push northward in an attempt to capture their capitol, Jackson had another plan in mind. He felt that the remaining Northern forces in the Valley District should be removed, and he thereupon proceeded to accomplish this goal. The battery remained in camp for two days during which period it received a ten-pounder Parrott rifle in the place of the Tredegar rifle.<sup>22</sup>

On May 28, the battery moved with the Stonewall Brigade toward Charlestown in an attempt to drive the enemy toward Harper's Ferry. Four guns travelled with the brigade's advance element, while the remaining section accompanied the wagons. The rear weapons, supposedly in a secure position, received a rude awakening when a party of Federal cavalry suddenly appeared less than a hundred yards away. When the battery members rapidly unlimbered their pieces, the commanding officer of the Federal cavalry surrendered. Nearby Confederate cavalry received credit for the capture, but members of the section always took

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<sup>21</sup>OR, XII, pt. 1, 737, 762.

<sup>22</sup>Couper, One Hundred Years at V.M.I., IV, 178-79; Barton, "Sketch;" "Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301.

exception to their claim.<sup>23</sup>

The Confederates established a camp at Halltown and prepared to attack the Yankee forces at Harper's Ferry. Before the attack began, however, Jackson received word of a Federal trap in the offing. Unless Jackson could prevent the forces of Generals John C. Fremont and James Shields from uniting, the Confederates would be caught between two huge, converging Federal armies. To prevent this union from occurring, Jackson, on May 30, left the Confederate encampment at Halltown with all his forces except the Stonewall Brigade, which began its journey the following day. In a valiant attempt to close with the remainder of Jackson's army at Strasburg, Winder marched his brigade to Newtown, a distance of approximately twenty-eight miles. The brigade spent the remainder of the night there, then left at 7 A.M. to rejoin Jackson's army. The forces united at noon and the battery rested until the following day.<sup>24</sup>

On June 2, Jackson's men began a forced march southward to the area of Port Republic. Before the army reached its goal, four days elapsed--four days of constant contact

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<sup>23</sup>L. M. Blackford to his father, June 13, 1862, Blackford Family Papers. See also Moore, Cannoneer, 62-63.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 64; Robertson, Stonewall Brigade, 101-03; Poague, "Reminiscences," 21.



and harassment by the Union army of Fremont. Winder's brigade protected the rear of Jackson's column and thus bore the brunt of enemy action. When forced to stop and fight, the battery held its ground well; unfortunately, the same could not be said of the cavalry attached to the brigade. At one point, the Confederate horsemen panicked and stampeded through the battery, injuring two members of the unit. After the long and tiring race of the past four days, the men deserved a rest. Yet Jackson had other plans for the battery.<sup>25</sup>

Sunday (June 8) dawned bright and clear. The members of Poague's battery were looking forward to a leisurely breakfast when the sound of a cannon shot in the distance broke the silence. The Federal fire brought an immediate response from the unit as Poague ordered his troops to "limber up" and prepare to advance. When the pieces were ready, the battery broke toward the sound of the firing. The unexpected cannon fire was the result of an attack by Shields's Federals upon the Confederate rear. The attack was so unexpected that Jackson, caught visiting in the village of Port Republic, barely escaped. Although the Federals pushed a diversionary attack on Jackson's army, the

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<sup>25</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Poague, "Reminiscences," 21. See also Moore, Cannoneer, 66.

main Union thrust was aimed at Ewell's forces stationed at Cross Keys. The Southern forces were victorious in both engagements, the Federal armies being driven in opposite directions with great loss.

Although the battery felt the following day would be devoted to breaking camp and heading back toward Staunton, Jackson had another surprise in store. Instead of following the baggage trains over the Blue Ridge Mountains, the unit travelled the route taken the preceding day by Shields's retreating army. One battery member reported that decapitated corpses, victims of the preceding day's fighting, literally lined the road.<sup>26</sup>

The advancing Confederate force covered only one mile before the Federals discovered their presence and placed them under heavy artillery fire. Once again the Parrott section of the battery, being more suited for long-range fire, moved to the brigade's head and deployed on either side of the road.

Recent rains had softened the earth to such an extent that the recoil from shots fired by these pieces dug deep furrows through the soil and thus affected accuracy. The other four guns of the battery soon moved forward, although they were not initially engaged. When a superior number

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<sup>26</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; OR, XII, pt. 1, 739; Moore, Cannoneer, 69-70.

of Federal guns virtually pinned down the unit, a force of Confederate infantry made a flanking attack on the Federal left. The assault eventually succeeded, forcing the Northern artillerists to abandon their pieces. The Yankees fled on foot; most of their horses were found dead and still attached to their limbers.<sup>27</sup>

The battle at Port Republic on June 9 was a significant victory for the Southern cause. The battery's losses were nominal (only 4 wounded and 1 missing) when compared to the amount of hostile fire to which the men had been subjected. The major significance of the battle was that it gave complete control of the Valley to the Confederacy.<sup>28</sup>

Immediately after the victory, Jackson's troops began following baggage trains back over the Blue Ridge Mountains. The rigorous exercise of the day had exhausted the men, and they spent the night in Brown's Gap. Jackson ordered his army into camp near Weyer's Cave to recover from the hardships of the march. On June 16, he sent the battery to Staunton for the purpose of "recruiting and refitting."<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps no troops in history have ever won such a place in the hearts of their countrymen as did those of

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<sup>27</sup>OR, XII, pt. 1, 763.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 717.

<sup>29</sup>Moore, Cannoneer, 74-77; Poague, "Reminiscences," 21-22.

"Stonewall" Jackson during the Valley Campaign. In less than two months, Jackson's men marched over 600 miles and defeated three numerically superior armies. The men of the Rockbridge Artillery travelled each mile afoot. The campaign brought relief to the besieged Confederate capitol when President Lincoln recalled General Irwin McDowell's division to protect Washington. Jackson's Valley Campaign was but one of many Confederate victories during 1862. However, it has been recorded in history as perhaps the most significant victory of that year, and the Rockbridge Artillery played a major role in it.

CHAPTER IV  
FROM MANASSAS TO MARYLAND

On June 16, the Rockbridge Artillery went to Staunton for the purpose of "recruiting and refitting." Members of the unit believed that they were to remain there for at least one month; thus, they labored hard the next two days in order to make the remainder of their rest more enjoyable. The men were more than a little disgruntled when, on June 19, Jackson sent word for the battery to proceed to Richmond with all possible speed.<sup>1</sup>

Once again the men packed their belongings and moved across the Blue Ridge Mountains. On June 28, the unit reached the battlefield of Gaines's Mill but was not engaged in the day's fighting. It assumed a defensive position and remained relatively stationary for the next two days. The men slept among the guns and the enemy dead; they made no attempt to improve their positions, as they were to move to a new location shortly.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>OR, XI, pt. 2, 552.

<sup>2</sup>Moore, Cannoneer, 83; OR, XI, pt. 2, 573.

Gaines's Mill was one of the first battles in a series known thereafter as the "Seven Days' Campaign." On June 30, the battery engaged a Federal artillery unit in an indecisive duel at White Oak Swamp and prepared for further combat the next day.<sup>3</sup> Early on the morning of July 1, the Stonewall Brigade advanced toward the Federal positions on Malvern Hill with the artillery batteries of Poague and Carpenter in front. At 10 A.M., the two battery commanders received orders from Jackson to report to General W. H. C. Whiting. While commanders vainly searched for the general, the batteries established themselves in a wheat field and opened fire on the Federal positions. A heavy barrage from Federal guns immediately answered the Confederate challenge. While the Rockbridge Artillery vainly attempted to return the fire, a rumor began to circulate that the artillery had been ordered to the rear. Captain Poague, having returned to his command, refused to believe this order until confirmation arrived. Therefore, he kept his battery in position when the others withdrew. One of his weapons, a six-pounder, soon left the field because of a lack of ammunition. The remaining members of its crew took the places of wounded personnel from other platoons. However, the

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<sup>3</sup>Poague, "Reminiscences," 23.

overwhelming Federal shelling soon forced the single opposing battery to cease fire and search for cover.<sup>4</sup>

A short while later, the other battery commanders found the rumor to be false and returned to the field, albeit rather shamefacedly. Upon the return of the other batteries, the Rockbridge Artillery again opened fire but received a response so feeble that they soon stopped firing in an attempt to conserve ammunition.<sup>5</sup>

Captains Poague and Carpenter then received another message to report to Jackson. On their arrival they found Jackson in conference with Generals Whiting and D. H. Hill. These officers had come to Jackson in search of an artillery battery that would stand in the face of superior enemy fire. It was much to the credit of the commanders when Jackson answered that either battery would be more than capable of doing the job. Hill and Whiting were highly impressed with Jackson's confidence in his commanders, and they requested the use of both batteries in an assault on the Federal lines. Jackson consented, and the battery commanders returned to their units and ordered them to prepare for action.

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<sup>4</sup>OR, XI, pt. 2, 573-74.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

The Rockbridge Artillery moved to the position assigned by Hill and awaited orders to advance. At 5 P.M., the guns pulled back to obtain ammunition and then rejoined the brigade. Darkness brought hostilities to a halt. The battery bivouacked in place with orders to be prepared to move by 3 A.M. the following morning. On July 2, reveille came all too soon for the cannoneers: Capt. Poague was forced to awaken many of the men individually. When no amount of verbal prodding could awaken one soldier, Poague then "used his foot to give it the body of the soldier a shake, when he discovered he was trying to rouse a dead Yankee!"<sup>6</sup>

Although the Confederate army again prepared to attack the Federals, the effort proved unnecessary. The Union army had abandoned its positions during the night. The Confederates pursued the retreating Federals to Harrison's Landing on the James River. Losses of the Rockbridge Artillery in the battle of Malvern Hill were 2 killed and 10 wounded.<sup>7</sup>

Southern forces remained in the general vicinity for a few days before retiring on July 8 in the direction of Richmond. Two days later, Jackson's forces began a march

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<sup>6</sup>Poague, "Reminiscences," 24; Moore, Cannoneer, 87-88.

<sup>7</sup>OR, XI, pt. 2, 574.



to Gordonsville, where they hoped to hold General John Pope's newly created army in check. On July 16, Jackson's forces arrived at Gordonsville and established camp.<sup>8</sup>

Jackson's command spent the remainder of July in a relatively stationary position with no engagements worthy of note. This break from the fighting was used to recover strength lost in the hard fighting and marching of the preceding two months. While in this comparatively care-free camp site, members of the battery received several wagonloads of supplies from home. These packages bolstered the troops' morale and provided a welcome supplement to the rations normally available to the Confederate soldiers. However, the long encampment did have its drawbacks.<sup>9</sup>

Besides providing Poague with an opportunity to rid himself of a backlog of administrative matters, the encampment made it possible for him to mete out punishment for past offenses committed by the unit's members. As stated previously, the brigade commander, Gen. Winder, was a stern taskmaster who demanded the maintenance of strict discipline in his units. Poague's predecessor, Capt. McLaughlin, did not require rigid adherence to military

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<sup>8</sup>OR, XI, pt. 2, 559.

<sup>9</sup>Moore, Cannoneer, 94; Poague, "Reminiscences," 26.

regulations.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the new regime was quite a shock to a certain element in the battery. The crime punished most frequently was "French leave" or being absent without permission. These nonsanctioned furloughs were common in the Confederate army; the men did not consider them to be serious offenses and often boasted of their excursions. The officers, although somewhat tolerant of "French leave," did not approve of it and were often forced to punish offenders.<sup>11</sup>

Jackson soon received word that Pope's army was advancing on the Confederate position. The "Victor of the Valley" resolved to do battle with the Federal forces. On August 7, Jackson ordered an advance, and two days later, the armies clashed at Cedar Run.

The advance elements of the two armies became engaged at noon, but the Rockbridge Artillery was not called into action until three hours later. At that time, Winder ordered Poague to station his section of Parrott rifles in a field along the road to Culpeper. This section, along with

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<sup>10</sup> Pvt. L. M. Blackford, describing McLaughlin, stated that he was popular but betrayed a weakness of character and was "too lenient to the offenders to keep them in order and takes it out in keeping those who behave well in too strict rule. He is an indolent, vacillating and inefficient man, though perfectly competent, I believe to his post." L. M. Blackford to his father, Nov. 21, 1861, Blackford Family Papers.

<sup>11</sup> Poague, "Reminiscences," 26.

one gun of Carpenter's Battery, was to divert the attention of enemy batteries from the Confederate artillery on the right. General Winder and his Chief of Artillery, Major R. Snowden Andrews, stationed themselves with the unit to ensure correct execution of the orders. This move proved unwise on the part of the men, for Winder was killed in action and Andrews fell severely wounded.

After only thirty minutes, one gun became unserviceable, thus necessitating its removal from the field. The withdrawal came at a fortunate moment for members of that gun crew, because shortly thereafter Federal skirmishers pushed the Confederate infantry back over the spot that the gun had recently vacated. Poague's other gun continued to fire until lack of ammunition forced its retirement.<sup>12</sup>

After their ammunition chests had been refilled, Jackson re-positioned two of the battery's pieces. The two guns, with two more from other units, opened a devastating fire on the opposing batteries. Enemy infantry advancing to their front threatened the position, but Confederate troops forced them to retreat. The battery continued to fire at the retreating Federals until the Confederate

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 27; Moore, Cannoneer, 97-100; William T. Poague to Maj. J. H. Fulton, Aug. 14, 1862, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Va. See also OR, XII, pt. 2, 213-14.

infantry "masked" their fire.<sup>13</sup>

The unit remained in position until 9 P.M., when it was ordered to return to the brigade's location. The army bivouacked on the field and retired the following day. When compared with the severity of the shelling, the Confederate losses were small, and those of the battery were light (one man slightly injured).<sup>14</sup>

After retiring from the battlefield on the morning of August 10, the battery returned to its camp at Gordonsville. There it remained for five days, enjoying visits from old friends and comrades-in-arms. The rest and recuperation period came to an end on August 15, when Jackson's lead elements moved to Pisgah Church. The men knew trouble lay ahead when they were told to leave everything behind that could not be carried on their backs. They did not know where they were to go or who they were to fight, but they did know that battle was imminent. The hot, humid August weather helped the men decide what were the essential items. The amount of equipment needed for survival is surprisingly small when one is forced to transport it by himself.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid. The term "masked" refers to the situation which occurs when friendly fire on an enemy force is impaired by the proximity of friendly forces.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

On August 18, still encamped near Pisgah Church, the members of the battery were compelled to witness the execution of several deserters. Ned Moore, relating this experience, said the division was marched to the gravesite as if in parade formation.

Here the three men, blindfolded, were directed to kneel in front of their open graves, and a platoon of twelve or fifteen men, half of them with their muskets loaded with ball, and half with blank cartridges (so that no man would feel that he had fired a fatal shot), at the word 'Fire!' emptied their guns at close range.<sup>15</sup>

The dead men fell into the graves and the troops were marched past to view the remains. The men never forgot the sight.

Jackson did not allow his army's thoughts to dwell on the gruesome sight for long, for more important goals were developing. He wanted to cross the Rappahannock River with his troops and secretly proceed northward. The battery left camp on August 19 and forded the Rapidan River the following day. That same day, the battery rolled through Culpeper and

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<sup>15</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Moore, Cannoneer, 101-03. A discrepancy exists in the number of deserters shot at this time. John O. Casler, Four Years in the Stonewall Brigade (Marietta, Ga., 1951), 114, agrees with Moore, while Mercer Otey in Confederate Veteran, VII (1899), 262-63, states five were executed. Moore and Casler are more reliable sources than is Otey, who, in the same article, named the wrong man as his commanding officer.

bivouacked near Brandy Station.<sup>16</sup>

On August 21, Jackson's army reached the banks of the Rappahannock River and, for three days, bivouacked in the vicinity of Sulphur Springs. Late on August 24, members of the battery received orders to leave everything behind except three days' cooked rations and ammunition. The men knew then that a forced march was in the offing.

When the army began the advance on the following morning, the battery remained in the rear with the Stonewall Brigade. The march proved to be a pleasant one; as pleasant as a forced march could possibly be. Jackson's lead elements maintained a rapid but not impossible pace. They marched fifty minutes, then rested ten, a pace especially suited for forced marches, as it could be maintained for long periods of time.

Despite the fact they were carrying only the minimum of equipment, the men grew tired as the day progressed. However, the Confederate army continued to march until midnight on August 25, when it came to a halt at Salem. The men were too tired to establish any formal security and just slept where they fell, oblivious to hard ground and insects.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>OR, XII, pt. 2, 641-42.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 642-43.

On August 26, Jackson's forces rose at an early hour and headed eastward through Thoroughfare Gap toward Manassas. The men in the battery, not unlike their comrades-in-arms of the other branches, were quite willing to stop and rest when the sun set that evening, but Jackson wanted to push on to Manassas Junction. The troops continued to march through the night until after dawn on August 27, when the old battleground of First Manassas came into view.<sup>18</sup>

Battery members stopped only for a brief rest, then pushed forward to avail themselves of Pope's storehouses. Some members were enjoying samples of what lay ahead when, apparently from nowhere, a line of bayonets appeared. The sun gleaming on fixed bayonets prevented the Confederate high command from determining whether the oncoming troops were friend or foe. However, they were soon discovered to be a New Jersey brigade under the command of General George W. Taylor.

Jackson ordered Poague's battery to unlimber its pieces and load them with canister. The cannoneers waited until the Federals advanced to within 125 yards before opening fire. The untested New Jerseyites could not withstand the Confederate canister and broke for the rear. In

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<sup>18</sup> Poague, "Reminiscences," 28-29; Moore, Cannoneer, 103-05.

the confusion, the Confederate batteries moved forward to take advantage of the situation. Apparently the battery's fire was not particularly effective on this occasion, for one member reported that "it was a fine sample of a sham battle, as I saw none of them killed and heard there were only very few casualties, and the only shot they fired was the one at General Jackson."<sup>19</sup>

Without infantry support, the battery continued to pursue the retreating Federals. The unit stopped only to unlimber and fire a few rounds to prevent the enemy from making a stand. The Confederates eventually discontinued the chase and returned to the railroad junction.

Jackson's artillery was not allowed to replenish their individual supplies from the Federal stores. The battery received permission to refill its ammunition chests and replace faulty battery equipment, but it had to leave the foodstuffs and personal equipment on the trains. Although much displeased with this turn of events, the battery members complied with the order.

Near sundown the men were told they could take anything they wanted from the trains, but to be prepared for a night march. Although some units were more fortunate than others, the Rockbridge Artillery was apparently one

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<sup>19</sup>OR, XII, pt. 2, 643-44; Moore, Cannoneer, 108.



of the last units to gain access to the trains before their destruction, for Ned Moore reported: "What we got was also disappointing, and not of a kind to invigorate, consisting, as it did, of hard-tack, pickled oysters, and canned stuff generally."<sup>20</sup>

When darkness fell, the men prepared to move again, this time northward in the direction of Groveton. As they trudged away from Manassas Junction, the men could see flames from the burning trains leaping skyward. Jackson, after carrying off as much food and equipment as possible, had ordered the remainder set ablaze in order to prevent its recapture by the Federals.

The battery reached its destination by midnight and bivouacked. When dawn broke on August 28, the men were pleasantly surprised at being allowed to continue their rest. They relaxed in the late summer sun until Federal troops were reported in the area. The Yankees, apparently unaware of the proximity of the Confederate forces, marched briskly and unsuspectingly down the road. They received a severe shock when the Confederates burst over a hill and

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 109-10. The food available at the Junction was apparently both nutritious and palatable to the first units given access to it. A soldier from another unit wrote: "Here were vast storehouses filled with everything to eat, . . . It makes an old soldier's mouth water now to think of the good things captured there." John H. Worsham, One of Jackson's Foot Cavalry, edited by James I. Robertson, Jr. (Jackson, Tenn., 1964), 70-71.

delivered a close-range volley.

Poague's men did not play an important role in the ensuing battle of Groveton except in support of the Stonewall Brigade. The major feature of the battle was the confrontation between the irresistible force and the immovable object, as the Stonewall Brigade collided with the Iron Brigade, its counterpart in the Northern army. This Federal unit, commanded by General John Gibbon, was as well-known to Northerners as was the Stonewall Brigade to the South. Neither side would yield and the fight continued until darkness halted it. Under the protective cover of night, the Yankees fell back to new positions. The battery considered itself fortunate in losing only one man killed during the fighting.<sup>21</sup>

The morning of August 29 found the Confederates resting in the same general area. They were surprised suddenly to see a force of Federals advancing across the field. Jackson rapidly diagnosed the situation and ordered Poague to remain in a reserve position to await further orders. The battery stayed in this position, approximately 500 yards behind the front lines, until Poague spotted an enemy battery moving into a position that would flank Jackson's line. With the decisiveness of a born leader, Poague

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<sup>21</sup>OR, XII, pt. 2, 644-45.

ordered his battery to "limber up." He then advanced to meet the threat. The new position, a point far out in the fields and away from the infantry's protection, provided a slight flanking action on the enemy battery. This movement proved successful in diverting enemy artillery fire from the Southern infantry. A brief artillery duel ensued, and the Federal battery soon departed from the field. Afterwards, Jackson rode up to the battery and exclaimed: "'That was handsomely done, very handsomely done.'"<sup>22</sup>

Poague's move required great courage, for his battery advanced without infantry support into a hostile area. Poague used his own initiative in moving the unit, thus proving to the men that he had been a wise choice for the battery's command.

Poague's guns then assumed the position vacated by the Federal battery and maintained that portion of the line against enemy assault. The battery remained there until darkness again brought a temporary cessation of hostilities. During the evening, many battery members attended a prayer meeting held by members of the "Liberty Hall Volunteers" of the 4th Virginia Infantry. The meeting allowed the men to relax for a short while and to prepare for the next day's

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<sup>22</sup>Moore, Cannoneer, 121.

hostilities.<sup>23</sup>

The first day's fighting presented the battery's members with an amusing incident. Having no duties assigned him, Lt. William G. Williamson, a former battery member, returned to the unit and assumed the position of "Number One" on one of the pieces. Major L. M. Shoemaker, brigade Chief of Artillery, rode up to the piece and snapped out a sharp command to which the men took exception. In no uncertain terms, Williamson gave the major his opinion of the order and the manner in which it was issued. Shoemaker grew red in the face and threatened Williamson with punishment for his insubordination. When the young lieutenant informed his superior that he too was an officer, Maj. Shoemaker immediately ordered him placed under arrest. Williamson started to protest the arrest but was advised by Poague to comply with it. Williamson agreed and retired from the field. He remained in Poague's tent until nightfall. At this time, Shoemaker, on hearing all sides of the issue, came to Poague's tent and apologized to the brash lieutenant. When reporting the incident, Poague stated that "those who were nearby and heard them said it was ridiculously funny, two deaf men swearing at each other and not knowing

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<sup>23</sup>Poague, "Reminiscences," 30-31. The "Liberty Hall Volunteers" was an infantry company in the Stonewall Brigade. It was organized in Lexington and composed largely of college youths from Washington College.

exactly what the other was saying."<sup>24</sup>

The second day's fighting did not begin for the Stonewall Brigade until afternoon, when Federals assaulted Jackson's lines. Three times the Federals threw themselves on the positions manned by the Stonewall Brigade, only to be repulsed each time with heavy losses. The intense fire maintained by the battery gave strong protection to the brigade. The Union assaults took their toll, however, for the Confederate fire grew weaker with each new attack. From their positions along the right of Jackson's lines, the cannoneers could see the Federals preparing for another charge. Just at the critical moment, Gen. James Longstreet launched a counterattack that relieved the pressure on the Stonewall Brigade and won the day for the Confederacy. The Federals retreated and the Southerners were preparing to give pursuit when approaching darkness brought a halt to the battle. A recount of the Confederate losses shows that the battery escaped serious injury in the two days of fighting.<sup>25</sup>

From its position on the battlefield, the battery pressed northward with the remainder of Jackson's forces.

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<sup>24</sup>William G. Williamson to "Tom," Mar. 19, 1898, William G. Williamson alumni file, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Va.; Poague, "Reminiscences," 29. See also Moore, Cannoneer, 116.

<sup>25</sup>OR, XII, pt. 2, 645-47; Moore, Cannoneer, 122-25.

The movement served two purposes: it kept the Federals on the defensive, and it drew them farther away from Richmond. As the Confederates reached Dranesville, they followed the contours of the Potomac River toward its source. On September 6, the Rockbridge battery crossed the river at White's Ford. Several days prior to this crossing, Jackson had forbidden artillerymen to ride on the caissons or carriages. The order was issued to conserve the horses' strength and also to prevent apparent favoritism to the cannoneers. Major Shoemaker interpreted the order to mean riding the caissons under normal conditions and not to include stream crossings. He informed the battery commanders of his interpretation and they agreed to abide by it.

When the battery forded the Potomac, Poague allowed his cannoneers to ride through the waters. A member of Jackson's staff saw the crossing and reported the incident to Jackson, who removed him from command and placed him under arrest for disobedience of an order.<sup>26</sup>

On September 7, the army arrived at Frederick, Maryland, and established camp. This was a welcome respite for the battery, as the city proved most enjoyable to the young Southerners. Confederates were in hostile territory, yet they were fairly treated. The men thoroughly enjoyed

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<sup>26</sup>Poague, "Reminiscences," 32-33.

themselves, some imbibing rather heavily. On several occasions drink got the best of the men and was the probable cause of the only combat in which the battery participated while encamped near Frederick.

For some unknown reason, a fistfight occurred between members of the Lynchburg Battery and Poague's men. The fight quickly grew into a general free-for-all, and the calmer persons present were unable to quell the disturbance. The men from Rockbridge fought bravely, giving as much punishment as they took, but their opponents' superior numbers gradually became overpowering. Suddenly the Lynchburg cannoners found themselves attacked from two directions, as members of the "Allegheny Roughs" joined the fray on the side of their comrades from the Stonewall Brigade. The fighting continued for a few minutes longer before officers from the three batteries were able to separate the combatants. As is usually the case in war, this minor incident was quickly forgotten and never impaired the relationships between the units, either in battle or in camp.<sup>27</sup>

On September 10, the Confederate army broke camp and moved to Boonesboro, where it spent the night. Prior to the battery's departure, Jackson released Poague from arrest and allowed him to resume his command. At this point,

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 33; Moore, Cannoneer, 139-40.

Jackson's plans were unknown to his subordinates. He was apparently afraid that if his plans were revealed the Federals might somehow learn of them and take advantage of the knowledge. Perhaps this was some inner warning of what was to occur in the campaign. Federal Gen. McClellan got possession of a lost copy of Lee's orders and was able to act with greater decisiveness than usual. He fought Lee to a standstill in the bloodiest single-day battle of the war.

The battery spent the night of September 11 encamped near Williamsport. On the following day, the army recrossed the Potomac River into Virginia. This last maneuver thoroughly confused the Confederate troops, who now had no idea of Jackson's ultimate objective. Members of the battery could only speculate as to their destination, but a few proved right when Jackson halted his forces near Harper's Ferry.

Jackson was to seize Harper's Ferry! The news electrified the members of the battery, for they were now at their peak of strength and confidence. Although the Federals had previously been defeated at Harper's Ferry, they still retained it as an arsenal. The Stonewall Brigade was ordered to the front and positioned on the bluffs overlooking Bolivar Heights. The brigade's artillery was ordered to fire down into the Federal positions, which they



did with great effect.

Finding his forces trapped in the area, and surrounded by Confederates, the Federal commander surrendered. For a few moments, the white flag carried by a horseman along Bolivar Heights went unseen by the brigade commander, Colonel Andrew Grigsby, who ordered the batteries to continue firing. When the cease fire order was finally received, Poague asked Grigsby what he was to do with his loaded weapons. Grigsby then replied that Poague should "'fire them off the way they are pointed. He won't kill more of the damn Yankees than he ought to!"<sup>28</sup>

The one-sided skirmish proved successful for the Confederates, although not as successful as it should have been. They captured seventy-three pieces of artillery; yet two Federal regiments, upon learning of Jackson's mission through the captured orders, had withdrawn with much of their equipment prior to Jackson's arrival. Poague's men were satisfied, however, to have participated in another battle and to have emerged unscathed.<sup>29</sup>

Jackson decided not to remain in Harper's Ferry for the surrender ceremonies that were to take place the next

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<sup>28</sup>Robertson, Stonewall Brigade, 155.

<sup>29</sup>Poague, "Reminiscences," 34-35; Lexington Gazette, Sept. 25, 1862; OR, XIX, pt. 2, 952, 954.

day. He ordered his forces to prepare to move out immediately. The men cooked their few remaining rations and readied themselves for the march. The preparations did not require much time, because the cannoneers still had nothing but what they carried on their backs.

At 2 A.M. on September 16, the battery left the vicinity of Harper's Ferry and, by dawn, had arrived at Sheperdstown. The troops were utterly exhausted, some even falling asleep while on the move. A driver, Henry Lewis, awakened the other drivers on his piece when he fell off his horse, asleep.<sup>30</sup>

The battery recrossed the Potomac at Sheperdstown and moved toward the sleepy Maryland village of Sharpsburg. As the Confederates approached the town, excitement began to mount, for the sounds of battle rose in the distance. The artillerymen arrived on the scene in midafternoon and assumed a position on the Confederate left.

Poague placed his battery, now consisting of three weapons, in its assigned position and awaited further developments. When an enemy battery began to fire on the Confederate infantry, the Rockbridge cannoneers attempted to divert the attention of the Federal guns. The Yankees, returning the fire, were unable to find the correct range to

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid.; Moore, Cannoneer, 146.

Poague's battery and missed its target with every shot. The burning fuses and gun flashes clearly revealed the location of the Federal guns and Confederate fire soon silenced them.

As darkness fell, Poague moved his guns away from the forward lines to avail himself of the infantry's protection. At daylight, the teams were again hitched to the pieces and the men resumed their positions of the previous evening.

The scream of a shell overhead broke the early morning stillness. It crashed to the ground, mortally wounding one member of the battery and maiming several horses. The battle of Antietam Creek now commenced in earnest. Federal infantry could be seen approaching Jackson's positions. In the past they had been humiliated all too often and were now determined to redeem their honor.

As the Federals drew closer and closer to the Southern positions, Confederate artillery fire raked their ranks. The battery's two Parrott rifles were soon withdrawn from the line in an attempt to conserve ammunition. Being especially effective at long range, the rifled pieces were not needed in the fighting at Sharpsburg. Two howitzers from the Lynchburg Battery took the position vacated by the Parrotts. Heavy fire from enemy skirmishers forced the cannoners to abandon the position and fall back with their

pieces to a less exposed location. Persistent Federal assaults soon necessitated yet another withdrawal.

Through neglect, a huge gap of some 200-300 yards was left in the Confederate lines. Poague saw the gap and placed his battery in position to offer covering fire. Jackson rode to the position, approved Poague's initiative and ordered infantry support to the area. Although the position was exposed and well within the range of two enemy forces, the cannoneers retained the position until the supporting infantry left the field. During this portion of the battle, two of the battery's weapons became partially disabled through lack of sufficient horses to maneuver the pieces.

About 11 A.M., Gen. Lee found the battery stationed near the Dunkard Church. Poague approached his commanding officer and requested instructions. Lee asked the condition of the battery, its men and ammunition. Poague replied that the present position could be easily maintained, but that rapid movement could only be accomplished with one piece. Lee pondered the information for a moment, then ordered Poague to take his one piece to the extreme Confederate left and join Major John Pelham.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Poague, "Reminiscences," 35-37; OR, XIX, pt. 1, 1009-10.

It was at this moment that Pvt. Robert E. Lee, Jr., a member of the battery, went to his father in order to inform him that he was uninjured. Lee congratulated his powder-begrimed son on successfully dodging the Federal shells. The young Lee then asked his father: "'General, are you going to send us in again?"

"Yes, my son," he replied with a sympathetic smile. "You all must do what you can to help drive these people back."<sup>32</sup>

Following Lee's orders, Poague ordered his remaining gun limbered up and moved to the Confederate left. General J. E. B. Stuart, the noted cavalry leader, was in command of this sector and placed Poague under Maj. Pelham's control. Stuart had gathered a large number of Confederate stragglers and shirkers and utilized these men in maintaining the position with thoughts of attacking and turning the Federal right.

Stuart directed Pelham's guns to test the Federal strength in that area and to "stir them up a little."<sup>33</sup> Pelham relayed this message to the battery commanders, who opened on the suspected Federal positions. The Confederate

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<sup>32</sup>Robert E. Lee, Jr., Recollections and Letters of General Robert E. Lee (Garden City, N. Y., 1904), 78.

<sup>33</sup>OR, XIX, pt. 1, 1009-10; Poague, "Reminiscences," 37-38.

fire created quite a disturbance and the Federals revealed the strength of their position when they returned the fire with a heavy barrage of shot from a battalion of more than thirty pieces. After determining the enemy's strength, Pelham skillfully led his command out of the danger and into a protected location.

This last maneuver marked the end of the battery's active participation in the battle of Antietam Creek. However fortunate the battery had been in previous engagements, the fighting of September 17, 1862, could not be considered successful. Poague's cannoneers had suffered greatly. Although only one man was killed, five more were severely wounded. All but one of its guns were at least partially disabled, and fourteen horses were injured. The fighting ceased when darkness fell, but the men slept with their weapons close at hand. On September 18, the armies remained in guarded positions, "like two exhausted monsters, each waiting for the other to strike."<sup>34</sup>

On September 19, the Army of Northern Virginia moved across the Potomac River to the safety of Virginia. Although neither side claimed victory at Antietam, the Federal army emerged in slightly better condition. It must be

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<sup>34</sup>OR, XIX, pt. 1, 1009-10; Moore, Cannoneer, 159.

noted, however, that the Confederates had battled a better-equipped army twice their size. That the Confederates performed as well as they did stands as a tribute to the valor of the soldiers and the skill of their leaders.

CHAPTER V  
THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Following the withdrawal from Maryland, the Confederate army established camp near Winchester where it remained for nearly two months. During this time, Gen. Pendleton undertook the task of a complete reorganization of the army's artillery.

All batteries achieved a measure of independence by being removed from the direct control of infantry brigades and formed into artillery battalions under the command of either a lieutenant colonel or major. A battalion of artillery was assigned to each division of infantry, and each corps contained at least one battalion of reserve artillery. The purpose of the reorganization was to consolidate the artillery and thus render it more effective in combat. The total number of batteries assigned to the Army of Northern Virginia was reduced from seventy-three to fifty-four, but the fifty-four remaining batteries were strong and well-equipped. The reorganization required a large-scale transfer of men and equipment throughout the army and took



nearly two months to complete.<sup>1</sup>

This reorganization ended the long association between the Rockbridge Artillery and the Stonewall Brigade. The new organization called for Poague's battery to be under the command of Col. J. Thompson Brown. The departure from Jackson's division saddened the men, for they bade farewell to many friends and relatives. Three companies from the old brigade were from Rockbridge County and the majority came from the Shenandoah Valley area. Moreover, the cannoneers were transferred from a famous fighting unit to one which had seen only limited action.<sup>2</sup>

The time spent in the new camp was largely devoted to reorganization. It officially reduced the battery's armament to four weapons: two twenty-pounder and two ten-pounder Parrott rifles. The men, not acquainted with the new weapons, required much drill to become thoroughly familiar with their characteristics. It was during one such drill session that the battalion executive officer, Lt. Col. Lewis Coleman, playfully mentioned that the drill of the

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<sup>1</sup>Jennings C. Wise, The Long Arm of Lee; The History of the Artillery of the Army of Northern Virginia (Lynchburg, 1915), I, 336-37, 358-60.

<sup>2</sup>Although no formal mention of the transfer was found in the Official Records, it apparently occurred prior to the official reorganization. The Rockbridge Artillery became associated with Brown's 1st Va. Regiment shortly after the battle of Antietam Creek. OR, XIX, pt. 2, 648.

battalion's other batteries far surpassed that of Poague's men. Poague was forced to admit the truth of Coleman's statement but offered as an explanation that "'Old Jack' had kept us so busy fighting that there was little time for drill."<sup>3</sup>

The battery remained encamped at Winchester until October 28, when the battalion received orders to join the Confederate forces stationed near Berryville. The routine of camp life was soon re-established and drill assumed major military importance in the camp. By this time, the men of the battery were restless and found army life boring. Moreover, winter was fast approaching and the troops looked forward to the establishment of winter quarters.

The early arrival of winter brought added hardships to the battery. Many men were without necessary shoes, overcoats and other winter apparel needed to withstand the cold weather. Pleas went forth to Shenandoah Valley residents, and especially to those of Rockbridge County, for either the needed articles or the money with which to buy them. The county residents responded enthusiastically, and supplies soon poured into the Confederate camp. Although the amount of supplies was not sufficient to fulfill the

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pt. 1, 837; Poague, "Reminiscences," 40.

needs of the Southern army, the supplies considerably relieved the cold weather's effect on the men.

On November 21, familiar orders to prepare three days' cooked rations appeared. The men knew their rest was at an end. Early the following morning, the battery left Winchester and began the long trek to Fredericksburg. The Southerners marched up the Shenandoah, then crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains at Thornton's Gap near Luray. Fourteen days of hard marching brought the battery to Rappahannock Academy below Fredericksburg. There the men remained until December 10, when they moved to a point six miles below Port Royal and became engaged with Federal gunboats. The new armament of the unit was especially effective in this situation, owing to the long range and accuracy of the rifled pieces.<sup>4</sup>

In the early evening of December 12, a messenger from Col. Brown ordered Poague to proceed immediately to Fredericksburg where the enemy was preparing an attack. Poague issued the appropriate orders and, by 6 P.M. his battery was prepared to move. As his commander had not specified the road to be taken, Poague selected a little-travelled alternate route. By inquiring at a nearby farmhouse, Poague

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<sup>4</sup>Robert E. Lee, Jr., to his mother, Oct. 30, 1862, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Va.; "Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Lexington Gazette, Nov. 20, 1862; Poague, "Reminiscences," 41.

learned that the proposed route was actually in better condition than the main road. He secured the services of the farmer as his guide and the unit moved on toward Fredericksburg. The men made excellent speed over the dark country roads and covered the twenty miles to Hamilton's Crossing before daylight. At this point, the battery rested and prepared breakfast. A short time after their arrival, the artillerists were amused to see the remainder of their battalion file past. Colonel Brown was pleased to discover the battery's presence and Jackson praised the unit for its night march.<sup>5</sup>

At 11 A.M., Brown's command was ordered to a reserve position behind Jackson's line of battle. One hour later, Brown directed Poague to send his section of ten-pounder Parrotts back to Hamilton's Crossing and to place it under the control of Maj. John Pelham. This section was heavily engaged all day, reportedly ceasing fire only once in order to change positions. Five members of this section died, but the remainder stayed at their posts. The guns fell back only when ammunition ran low.

Meanwhile, Jackson ordered Brown's artillery to leave its reserve position at the base of Marye's Hill in order to relieve the battalion of Lt. Col. R. Lindsay Walker.

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<sup>5</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Poague, "Reminiscences," 42; OR, XXI, 633.

At 2 P.M., the battalion moved out with Poague's remaining section at its head. Upon their arrival at Walker's position, a lull in the fighting occurred; thus Brown positioned the batteries with little actual danger to the cannoneers.

One hour later, Jackson approached Poague and ordered him to silence an artillery battery situated almost directly in front of the battery's position. If Poague's section was unable to stop the Federal battery, it was to open fire on the infantry and cavalry. Although the order seemed rather absurd to Poague, he complied with it. Poague did not understand how Jackson expected him to fire on Federal infantry or cavalry after his battery had already been silenced by enemy artillery. When the section opened fire with its twenty-pounder Parrotts, a thundering barrage of Federal fire replied, for the Yankees had already determined the range to the Confederate position. Poague reported that "such a tempest of shot and shell I never have witnessed any where during the war."<sup>6</sup>

The battery soon received orders to cease fire. This directive greatly relieved the men, because Federal fire had killed four battery members. The Federal salvos on the position gradually abated and then ceased at sundown. Darkness ended the fighting at the battle of Fredericksburg for

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 638-40; Confederate Veteran, XXXIV (1926), 258; Poague, "Reminiscences," 45.

the Rockbridge Artillery. However, the battery paid a heavy price for the victory: 1 officer and 8 enlisted men were killed.<sup>7</sup>

The early evening of December 13 was occupied in removing corpses from the battlefield. As the battery did not have sufficient horses to pull the caissons and guns, replacements had to be obtained from the battery trains and placed on the limbers. The men accomplished the removal of dead horses by midnight, then slept soundly, for they had been through an exhausting twenty-four hours. Men and horses from another battery now manned the battery's fourth piece. Fortunately no active fighting occurred that day, as the Federals busied themselves in the burial of their dead.

Although the corps reserve artillery moved to Bowling Green, the Rockbridge Battery moved to Port Royal, where it was placed under Gen. Jubal Early's command. Upon their arrival, the men were pleased to learn that winter quarters were to be established immediately. Construction soon began on the huts and shanties which were to shield the men from the cold blasts of winter. Apparently winter quarters were not established in any proscribed manner, for the men

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<sup>7</sup>In OR, XXI, 640, Col. Brown lists only 6 men killed, but 2 others later died from wounds.

received no orders regulating the method of providing shelter for themselves. With such a large number of men concentrated in a small area, however, supplies for building soon became scarce.<sup>8</sup>

One section of the battery moved to picket duty twelve miles from the main encampment at Port Royal. The unit spent the winter months in these two locations, attempting to find some manner in which to break the monotony. The section fortunate enough to remain with the majority of Early's division thoroughly enjoyed the months spent in winter quarters. The Stonewall Brigade's encampment was located only seven miles distant; thus many visits were exchanged with old friends. Food, although not overly abundant, proved more than sufficient for the needs of the men. Daily the men ate two meals (which usually consisted of meat and bread) and drank large quantities of coffee. They also received numerous packages from home to supplement army rations.

According to one soldier, work was at a minimum in this encampment, the chief pastime being snowballing. Entire brigades lined up in proper battle formation and, with their officers in the fore, executed proper military maneuvers. The battles raged on until one side surrendered.

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<sup>8</sup>OR, XXI, 1077.

One of Early's brigades managed a brilliant maneuver during a mock battle and drove the enemy from its camp. While the foe gathered ammunition for a counterattack, the brigade executed a strategic withdrawal, retiring with their opponents' cooking utensils.<sup>9</sup>

The winter months spent on picket duty by the battery's other section did not prove so enjoyable. The men camped on the top of a wind-blown hill and slept in a cabin formerly occupied by slaves. When they awoke in the middle of the night, the men could never be certain exactly what would be found sharing their quarters. One night, for example, a sentinel returned to find a herd of sheep in the cabin and the inhabitants totally unaware of their presence.<sup>10</sup>

The battery remained encamped in these locations for nearly five months. During this period the unit moved into action only to engage some gunboats in the Rappahannock River. The monotony of the winter months was broken briefly in February, 1863, when a short visit by the Inspector-General of the Second Corps gave the men some military

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<sup>9</sup>Moore, Cannoneer, 166.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 167-68.



matters to occupy their time.<sup>11</sup>

In March, the site of winter quarters was shifted to Hamilton's Crossing, where the sections of the battery were reunited. Men supplemented their rations by catching fish from the Rappahannock River.

The only other significant event that occurred during the winter encampment of 1862-1863 was the promotion of Capt. William T. Poague to major. General Pendleton recommended Poague, asserting that he was "a superior officer, whose services have been scarcely surpassed."<sup>12</sup> The promotion forced Poague to leave the battery, whose command

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<sup>11</sup>OR, XXV, 637-38. Poague, however, in a letter to his superior, complained of conditions being almost opposite those stated in the inspection report. He described insufficient fodder, no medicines, and the horses' poor condition. William T. Poague to Col. J. T. Brown, Mar. 25, 1863, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Va.

<sup>12</sup>Moore, Cannoneer, 168-73; Poague, "Reminiscences," 48; OR, XXV, pt. 2, 617. Although Pendleton recommended Poague for a majority in Brown's command, he was appointed junior major in McIntosh's Artillery Battalion. After the battle of Chancellorsville, Poague received his own battalion of artillery, and, in 1864, was promoted to lieutenant colonel. Following the war, he returned to Lexington and was elected to the state legislature, serving from 1871 to 1873. In 1885, he was appointed Treasurer of V. M. I. and retained that position for twenty-eight years. On his retirement from active service at the Institute, Poague worked in an unofficial capacity until his death in 1914. OR, XXV, pt. 2, 619, 729; William T. Poague file, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Va.

now fell to Capt. Archibald Graham.

Captain Graham, son of a Lexington doctor, had joined the battery on April 29, 1861, and was included in the original muster roll. Before then he had been a student at the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. He then studied medicine until war's outbreak. Graham became a sergeant after the battery's first election and proceeded through the ranks until April 18, 1863, when he received promotion to captain and the battery's command.<sup>13</sup>

Soon after Graham assumed command, warm weather allowed the battery to resume training. Late in April, winter encampment officially ended and the battery moved to a position overlooking the town of Fredericksburg. On May 2, the entire battery of four rifled Parrotts positioned itself on Prospect Hill, which formed the left of Gen. Early's lines. Early's troops comprised the right of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

At 2 P.M., Early ordered his artillery to open on the Federal positions in order to draw fire and hence ascertain the enemy's location. Graham's battery unleashed a salvo and drew a good response from the enemy. Two hours later,

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<sup>13</sup>L. M. Blackford to his mother, Apr. 24, 1862, Blackford Family Papers; original muster roll of the Rockbridge Artillery, William No. Pendleton Papers, Duke University Library.

the men received orders to limber up and move out with Maj. R. Snowden Andrews' battalion. They departed for Chancellorsville in the late afternoon but soon returned when the rear element discovered that Gen. John Sedgwick was crossing the Rappahannock with his Federal army. Although three of the battery's weapons resumed former positions by midnight, the fourth did not arrive the next morning, after an all-night march.<sup>14</sup>

Firing commenced shortly after dawn, but the battery was not initially engaged. Some Federal troops successfully crossed the river and established themselves firmly on the Confederate side. They provided protection for Federal artillery batteries which followed shortly thereafter. The batteries laid down a thundering and damaging volley of fire on the Confederate left.

Two of the Rockbridge Artillery's guns soon received orders to support batteries on the left of the line. Although Graham's section strove valiantly to silence the Federal guns, it failed and suffered six casualties in the attempt. The arrival of other Confederate guns eventually forced the Federals to cease fire.

After waiting one hour for the Federals to renew the attack, the section retired to a protected position in the

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<sup>14</sup>Moore, Cannoneer, 179.

rear of the hill, where it joined the remainder of the battery. At 1 P.M., the battery rejoined the battalion on the line of battle, but it was not heavily engaged the remainder of the day.

Using the early morning fog of May 4 as a shield from enemy observation, the battery retired quietly in the direction of Salem Church. The following day, despite a torrential rain that made travel difficult, the men again moved. This time they went back to their winter camp which they reopened. The artillerists were happy when told that their immediate assignment was to remain at the crossing and to engage any gunboats passing along the river.<sup>15</sup>

The battery remained in camp for one month. Only once was it called into action. The Southerners fired on a packet boat carrying messages between two Federal gunboat squadrons. One section opened a devastating fire which eventually sank the packet boat. The battery took twenty-seven Yankee prisoners in this engagement.<sup>16</sup>

On June 4, the battery rejoined Col. Brown's forces at Gaines's Station. The battalion then headed back **over the mountains into the Shenandoah Valley. During the ten-day**

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 176-82; "Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301.

<sup>16</sup>Confederate Veteran, XXI (1913), 66.

period following June 4, the battery marched a total of 128 miles. On June 13, it arrived at Kernstown. The next morning the guns were posted on a hill overlooking Winchester and ordered to support an attack on the town. The Confederates seized the major Federal position on the following day and again recaptured Winchester. Following the battle, the battery received two twenty-pounder Parrott rifles to replace two other weapons. Thus, the unit had four weapons of the same caliber for the first time in the war.<sup>17</sup>

Several members of the battery received permission to visit friends and relatives in Winchester during this brief respite from the march. Private Jim Gilmer, a driver, was returning late one evening when an empty carriage overtook him. Gilmer recognized it as belonging to the corps commander, Gen. Richard S. Ewell, and halted the driver. Apparently believing Gilmer to be a member of Ewell's staff, the driver offered him a ride back to camp which he quickly accepted, not correcting the driver's assumption that he was an officer.<sup>18</sup>

The battery spent the next several days with Ewell's corps. On June 22, the battery crossed the Potomac River

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<sup>17</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Moore, Cannoneer, 186, 188.

<sup>18</sup>Confederate Veteran, XXXIV (1926), 289.

and bivouacked near Sharpsburg. As the men marched through Maryland and into southern Pennsylvania, their spirits rose. After two years of fighting the Federals in Virginia, they would finally have an opportunity to inflict damage on Northern soil. They were confident of their ability to defeat the Yankees in any pitched battle and looked forward to the next encounter, which all knew would be significant. Moreover, the men enjoyed excellent rations during the march. Coffee, sugar and flour were in abundance; meat was available for the taking; and luxury items such as butter and jams were readily obtained.

The battery spent the evening of June 30 encamped on the Baltimore Pike leading to Gettysburg. On the following day, Ewell ordered his corps to proceed to Gettysburg with all possible speed. On July 1, the Rockbridge Battery arrived after dark and bivouacked with Early's forces near the town.

The Rockbridge men escaped the fighting of July 2 until late afternoon when they joined Maj. Joseph Latimer's battalion in shelling the right side of the Federal lines. The Confederates hoped to divert Yankee attention from an advance by Gen. James Longstreet's forces on the Federal left. After an hour, the Confederates ceased fire; they

were no match for numerically superior opponents.<sup>19</sup>

As the men attempted to rest that night, they pondered the day's events. They knew that nothing of significance had been gained from the fighting thus far and that Lee needed to win a speedy victory. As they rested, they became certain that something unusual would soon occur, something apart from Lee's normal strategy.

At noon on July 3, the cannoneers were informed that, on a given signal, they were to open fire on the Federal positions and to continue as long as possible. The signal guns soon fired and the Confederate artillery thundered forth the challenge. The Federal guns initially answered the barrage but soon pulled back. Graham's cannoneers, encouraged by apparent success, maintained a brisk rate of fire. To their surprise, Federal cannon soon returned to their former positions and renewed their fire.

The artillery duel continued for an hour and served as the prelude for Pickett's Charge. As the advancing Confederates drew near the Union defenses, the Rockbridge Battery was forced to restrict its ammunition to solid shot. It thus lost much of its effectiveness. The Confederate infantry was repulsed with heavy loss, and for all practical purposes, the fighting at Gettysburg ended. Until after

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<sup>19</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; OR, XXVII, pt. 2, 446.

midnight, the battery remained in position, cared for its wounded and checked damage sustained in the fighting. It then returned to Col. Brown's reserve regiment. Although eleven men from the unit received wounds of varying degree, none proved fatal. During the two days' fighting, the battery fired 439 rounds of ammunition, an average of more than 50 rounds per gun per day, which was well below the Confederate average. In short, the battery did not play an extremely important role in the battle but was available when needed.<sup>20</sup>

The retreat commenced the following day. Brown's artillery followed Gen. Edward Johnson's division. On July 5, Federals made a surprise attack on the Confederate trains and captured twelve members of the battery (the 11 wounded and their surgeon, Dr. Herndon). Two days later, the battery halted at Hagerstown and remained there for three days.

On July 13, the battery recrossed the Potomac River at Williamsport and returned safely to the familiar soil of Virginia. Although prepared to fight if the need arose, the Rockbridge Artillerists hoped for a few weeks' rest. Unfortunately, the battery kept on the move through the remainder of the month. After marching back and forth through

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<sup>20</sup> Moore, Cannoneer, 198; Lexington Gazette, July 15, 1863; OR, XXVII, pt. 2, 456, 488. Average rounds expended for all Confederate artillery was 103 per gun per day. Wise, Long Arm of Lee, II, 693.



the Shenandoah Valley, the battery crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains and marching to the Blue Run Church in Orange County. The next few weeks proved exceedingly beneficial to the men, for they remained there and established camp. The proximity of many corn fields provided the men with an excellent supplement to their rations.<sup>21</sup>

The remainder of the summer and the early autumn were devoted to regaining lost strength. The poor quality of rations delayed the recuperative process; thus it took longer for the men to recover fully from the fighting. As forage grew scarce in one camp, the battery moved on to another, always remaining in the same general area.

On November 3, the serenity of camp life was broken when the battery moved to picket duty on the Rappahannock River. At 4.P.M., on the following day, Federals launched an attack on two Confederate brigades occupying the far side of the river. Although darkness ended the battery's participation, the fighting continued for some time. Much to the battery's surprise, the firing suddenly halted. The men had no idea what had occurred until a retreating infantryman informed them that both brigades had been captured. The capture made the battery's position extremely precarious,

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<sup>21</sup>OR, XXVII, pt. 2, 604-05; Lexington Gazette, July 15, 1863; "Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Moore, Cannoneer, 210.

for the only protection it now had was the river which could be crossed by a pontoon bridge which still stood.

General Early arrived with two brigades of infantry, rapidly assessed the situation, and decided that the strategic bridge must be destroyed. A member of the battery volunteered to burn the bridge and quickly accomplished his task. Early then ordered all forces to pull back and consolidate in a more secure location.<sup>22</sup>

On November 8, the battery rejoined Brown's force, which then retired to the old camp at Pisgah Church. The remainder of the autumn of 1863 was spent in the general area as different batteries performed picket duty along the Rapidan River. On November 27, the battery fully expected to be participants in a battle at Mine Run. Fortunately, however, the Federals decided against the battle when the artillery preparation proved ineffective. The Federal forces retreated four days later, leaving the field clearly in the hands of the Confederates.

On December 2, the battery left the area and prepared to establish winter quarters. The position selected for the encampment was Frederick Hall, a town about fifty miles from Richmond. Twenty days later, the men moved into the area

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<sup>22</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; Moore, Cannoneer, 212-14; OR, XXIX, pt. 1, 634.

and began preparations for their winter's rest.

The battery, although suffering from a lack of adequate provisions and clothing, did not lose its courage and patriotic zeal during winter encampment. In February, 1864, the battery re-enlisted as a unit for the war's duration. Morale remained high and the men drilled whenever weather conditions permitted. During this time, several cannoneers in the battery received muskets and bayonets in order that they might provide their own infantry support if necessary.<sup>23</sup>

On February 29, the monotony of the winter encampment ended when Col. Ulric Dahlgren led a Federal cavalry force through the area in search of the Confederate artillery. When Dahlgren inquired as to what type weapons the Confederates carried, local Negroes informed him that they had muskets with bayonets. This information convinced Dahlgren that they were infantry, and he avoided contact with the battery. Dahlgren's force then proceeded to Richmond--and ultimate disaster as the Federal force was routed and Dahlgren killed.<sup>24</sup>

On April 18, the battery left winter quarters but remained in the area for two additional weeks. On May 4, the

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<sup>23</sup> Lexington Gazette, Feb. 10, 1864.

<sup>24</sup> Moore, Cannoneer, 221-22; OR, XXXIII, 210-11; Lexington Gazette, Mar. 9, 1864.

battery learned of an impending Federal offensive and rejoined the regiment at Locust Grove. From here they marched two days to Spotsylvania Courthouse, where they assumed battle positions. Federal inactivity on May 10 gave the battery some needed hours of rest.

This respite came to an end in the late afternoon when Col. Emory Upton led an assault on the Confederate position. The Federal regiments actually succeeded in storming the position and seized a portion of it along with several gun crews from Capt. B. H. Smith's Battery of Richmond Howitzers. Although not technically engaged in the fighting, the cannoneers from Rockbridge could not stand idly by and watch the capture of the guns. As the Federals poured over the Confederate breastworks, the battery "sprang forward under their captain and served two of those guns with fine spirit."<sup>25</sup>

Canister fire from these guns forced the enemy from the Confederate lines with great loss. Although the unit remained in position the next day under heavy fire, only two men received severe wounds. Late in the afternoon of May 11, Lee ordered all artillery commanders to prepare batteries

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<sup>25</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; OR, XXXVI, pt. 1, 1043. Disagreement exists as to what battery actually manned that section of guns. Jennings C. Wise, Long Arm of Lee, II, 786, states that the unit involved was Capt. Asher W. Garber's Battery of Cutshaw's Battalion.

for a nighttime withdrawal. This order was issued to enable the men to leave without the Federal army detecting their movement. At 3 A.M. on the following morning, Lee countermanded the order; but the damage had been done. Because of the withdrawal of the majority of its artillery support, the Confederate infantry at the "Bloody Angle" was unable to defend itself properly when attacked. Federal hordes overwhelmed the infantry assigned to protect the salient and captured many men, including the majority of the Stonewall Brigade. Fortunately for the battery members, they had been pulled back and were not involved in the morning's fighting. Total casualties sustained by the battery at Spotsylvania were two men wounded.<sup>26</sup>

Following the battle of Spotsylvania, the battery participated in the jockeying for position that occurred during the next three weeks. The men moved ever eastward as the Federals attempted to find a weak spot in the Confederate lines. Late on June 2, the battery proceeded to Cold Harbor, where a battle had already developed.

Before dawn the following morning, the battery arrived on the field and assumed its position. The shrill whistle of Federal Minie-balls passing overhead heralded their arrival on the right side of the Confederate lines. The

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 787-88; Lexington Gazette, May 25, 1864.

battery arrived at the most opportune moment, for the Federals began their attack almost immediately. Enemy troops aimed the spearhead of the attack at the positions on the battery's right, thus allowing the unit to escape most of the incoming rounds. However, the position did afford the battery an excellent opportunity to open a devastating enfilade fire on the approaching Federals.

The tremendous artillery fire forced the Federal infantry to fall back with heavy casualties. The battery did not engage in the battle after this attack, although it remained in position for two more days. The casualties in the battery were light (two men slightly wounded), and the battle proved a great victory for the Confederate army. The conflict at Cold Harbor demonstrated artillery's power--power that allowed infantry support to rest for the next struggle.<sup>27</sup>

Although Lee's army continued to win victory after victory, the high tide of the Confederacy was clearly past. The men began to realize that the end was near, and that it would only be a matter of time before the vast Federal armies would completely surround them and starve them into surrender. Yet the artillerists did not relinquish hope for a miracle to effect the Confederacy's survival.

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<sup>27</sup>OR, XXXVI, pt. 1, 1048-50; "Confederate Service Records" Film No. 301; Wise, Long Arm of Lee, II, 832-33.

CHAPTER VI  
THE END OF A DREAM

Following its departure from the battlefield of Cold Harbor, the Rockbridge Artillery moved to New Market Heights which overlooked the James River. On June 23, they arrived at the position and constructed gun emplacements. Two other batteries from the battalion arrived three and five days later, respectively. On June 29, one man was wounded in a duel with a Federal ironclad, which was severely damaged by the battery's fire.<sup>1</sup>

The unit then retired from New Market Heights and moved to a point overlooking Deep Bottom. After preparing positions, the battery on July 26 shelled the Yankee camp at Deep Bottom. The bombardment proved successful as the entire crew of one Federal gunboat was either killed or wounded. The Federal commanding general, Ulysses S. Grant, was in the camp at the time of the bombardment and only narrowly escaped injury.

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<sup>1</sup>OR, XL, pt. 1, 800.

On July 27, three brigades of General Joseph B. Kershaw's division followed the battery as it resumed its position overlooking Deep Bottom and again prepared to bombard the Federals. The drivers took the horses to a less exposed position. Union General W. S. Hancock, meanwhile, glanced over the Confederate position and decided it could be carried by a determined assault, possibly with the capture of a Confederate battery. He then set a battle plan into action.

Attacking Federal infantry met a devastating fire from the Confederate batteries. When it looked as though the Federals would be forced back, a sudden flanking movement completely surprised the Southerners. Kershaw's brigades broke in utter confusion, leaving the four guns of the Rockbridge Artillery completely unprotected. The cannoneers struggled manfully against the overwhelming odds but could not stem the Federal tide. They remained at their posts until the last possible moment, then retired, leaving their weapons in the possession of the enemy. Through a stroke of good fortune the battery retired with the loss of only one man, Pvt. Andrew M. Darnall, who was captured at his post with the weapons.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; OR, XL, pt. 1, 759; 800; Lexington Gazette, Aug. 9, 1864; Moore, Cannoneer, 276.



After the guns were captured, the men feared the battery would be disbanded and the cannoneers transferred; yet, on July 28, the arrival of four ten-pounder Parrott rifles allayed these fears. On July 29, the battery returned to its position on New Market Heights and remained there for two days.

The unit then retired from the front lines for a brief rest. On August 9, it proceeded to the vicinity of Dutch Gap, where the Federals were constructing a canal. General Lee wanted the work on the canal ended. On August 13, Confederate gunboats and artillery opened fire on the Yankee diggers and drove them from the works. Federal shore batteries and gunboats returned the fire but caused no significant damage to the Confederate position. The battery again retired to New Market Heights, where it remained for the next six weeks.<sup>3</sup>

The dawn of September 29 brought a highly-successful Federal attack on the Confederate positions. To prevent a separation from the main body of the Army of Northern Virginia, the Rockbridge Artillery limbered up and quickly departed. It moved to the breastworks beside "Fort Gilmore" (a strong point in the defenses of Richmond), where it

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<sup>3</sup>"Confederate Service Records," Film No. 301; OR, XLII, pt. 2, 1168, 1173.

remained as long as the Army of Northern Virginia defended Richmond. Although the battery changed positions on several occasions, the changes amounted to less than a mile at any one time. The men prepared themselves for the siege and the long winter months ahead.

The time devoted to military matters was normally spent in repairing and strengthening fortifications. Negro slaves performed the heavy labor, while artillerists accomplished most of the minor tasks. The men quickly established the routine of camp life and adapted it to meet the new requirements of trench warfare. They built "bomb-proofs" to protect themselves from Federal mortar fire. Shelters and huts constructed for protection from the elements assumed all possible sizes and shapes, the only limitations being the building supplies at hand and the imagination of the men.<sup>4</sup>

Members of the unit described the situation as being almost pleasant. Spirits ran high and passes into Richmond were often available. A varied life in the trenches proved an antidote for monotony. A form of baseball made its appearance in the battery. Obtaining a suitable ball proved the most difficult problem, because the type readily available would normally last no more than one inning before

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<sup>4</sup>Moore, Cannoneer, 277, 279-80.

bursting apart at the seams. Ned Moore stated that, when the ball burst, an argument usually ensued because "the batter would claim that there were not enough remains caught by any one fielder to put him out."<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the winter months, the battery remained entrenched in the defenses of Richmond. The long, dreary days provided the soldiers with an opportunity to think about the war and the future of the Confederacy. Most men now realized the hopelessness of the Confederate cause but refused to surrender their dream. All did not feel this way, however, as Confederate desertions rose alarmingly during the winter. At one point the desertion rate was so great that Gen. Lee published an order pardoning all deserters who voluntarily returned to duty. This order also requested civilians to surrender all privately-owned weapons to the Confederate government. The Army of Northern Virginia was clearly on its last legs, but its members refused to admit defeat.<sup>6</sup>

On April 2, 1865, the stalemate came to an end when Grant's army broke Lee's lines and soundly defeated the Confederates at Five Forks. The defeat forced the Army of Northern Virginia to abandon the Richmond and Petersburg

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 289.

<sup>6</sup>Lexington Gazette, Feb. 22, 1865.

lines. When the order came to leave the works, members of the battery calmly accepted the news. They quickly packed their meager belongings and prepared the guns for travel.

The battery officially left its position late that same evening taking one section of weapons, the other remaining with the Otey Battery which relieved them. They marched through Richmond and, marching day and night, finally reached Amelia Courthouse, where they rejoined the army and expected to receive provisions. Through a misunderstanding, the train carrying the provisions continued to Richmond, thus leaving the army hungry. Yet the retreat could not be halted for want of food. The men continued marching, unaware of their ultimate destination.

On April 7, the battery reversed its march at Cumberland Church and prepared to meet a Federal attack from the rear. Since the battery now had only two weapons, the extra cannoners armed themselves with muskets and fought as infantry. The men repulsed the Federal assault. One private in the battery, William McCauley, received a mortal wound in the engagement and became the last man from the unit killed in the war.<sup>7</sup>

The Confederate success in the engagement at Cumberland Church proved to be of little importance, however,

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<sup>7</sup>Moore, Cannoneer, 292-93, 297.

because Lee surrendered his army to Grant less than forty-eight hours later. The men received the news quietly, at the same time expecting severe surrender terms. Grant's generosity pleasantly surprised the soldiers.

Ninety-six men surrendered with the Rockbridge Artillery at Appomattox. Several other members surrendered with other units in order to retain their horses. One man, Thomas Williamson, refused to surrender and escaped to Lynchburg with McCausland's cavalry. Of the seventy-eight original enlistees, only seventeen now remained with the battery. In order to retain a small portion of their dignity, the men refused to relinquish the battery flag, the same flag presented to them nearly four years before by the ladies of Lexington. The men tore the flag into shreds, each man retaining a piece to avoid its surrender.<sup>8</sup>

Four years of pain and hardship ended in Federal victory and a nation's reunification. Although the Confederates had been defeated, their spirit remained unbroken, for they were "buoyed with the consciousness that we had fought a good fight . . . and that the cause for which we had undergone it all was not one we thought was right but that we knew was right."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Southern Historical Society Papers, XVI (1888), 277-80; Confederate Veteran, XVI (1908), 229. For a list of the members present at the surrender, see Appendix II.

<sup>9</sup>Moore, Cannoneer, 307.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

To attempt a compilation of all sources relevant to a study of the Rockbridge Artillery is a cumbersome task not applicable here. In this essay, the writer seeks to describe only the works which were of major value to him in the research for this thesis in the hope that it may prove beneficial to future researchers on the subject.

### Manuscripts

The Blackford Family Papers (typescript) in the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia provided the largest source of letters relevant to the thesis. Launcelot M. Blackford, a private in the battery until 1863, was a prolific writer who used his letters to family and friends as substitutes for a diary. They describe day-to-day events, both in camp and on the march.

Two "memoirs" found in the Alderman Library also gave much useful information on the early years of the battery's history. Clement D. Fishburne's "Memoirs of Thomas J. Jackson," as well as that soldier's own recollections, vividly portray scenes of death and the feelings of the Confederate

soldier in battle.

The files of the Virginia Military Institute contain excellent information on several battery members. Two of the unit's captains were closely associated with V. M. I., and their files contain valuable biographical information. Nine members of the battery attended the Institute and several others were associated with it. The file of John T. Gibbs, Jr., contains a letter briefly describing the Romney Campaign; and the file of William G. Williamson has a letter recounting the incident of Williamson with Maj. Shoemaker at Groveton.

V. M. I.'s most important contribution to this thesis was the William T. Poague file. In addition to the usual biographical data, the collection also holds a typescript copy of Col. Poague's memoirs, written in 1903. These reminiscences, written for his children, proved invaluable in research on this thesis.

The William N. Pendleton Papers, located in the Duke University Library, proved a valuable source of information on the unit's early period. They contain a copy of the battery's original muster roll which lists the occupations of its members. This collection is largely military in nature, however, and contains little of Pendleton's personal correspondence.

Another collection of Pendleton papers located in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina has many of Pendleton's personal letters to family and friends, in addition to requisitions and orders.

Several other sources contained information that was useful in the development of this thesis. The Virginia State Archives has a complete roster of all battery members, although some duplication of names does exist. The Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond holds two letters relevant to a study of the battery: a copy of Poague's report on the battle of Cedar Run and an 1863 letter from Poague to Col. Brown. The Virginia Historical Society possesses a letter from Robert E. Lee, Jr., and a typescript copy of Robert T. Barton's description of the 1862 battle of Winchester.

Battery returns are located on microfilm in the Carol E. Newman Library at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. These returns show a detailed itinerary of the battery's movement and contain the service records of almost all members.

#### Printed Primary Material

The 128 volumes of the War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, 1880-1901) provided a firm base upon which the thesis was developed. These volumes contain many



reports, casualty figures and orders which were necessary for an adequate treatment of the subject. The Official Records is a source which cannot be neglected when doing research on any subject dealing with the Civil War.

#### A. Personal Narratives and Reminiscences

The most useful reminiscence written about the Rock-bridge Artillery is Edward A. Moore's The Story of a Cannoneer under Stonewall Jackson (Lynchburg, 1910). Moore's work provides many interesting anecdotes and fairly accurate accounts of major battles participated in by the battery. The book is vital for researchers on this subject.

Susan P. Lee, ed., The Memoirs of William Nelson Pendleton, D. D. (Philadelphia, 1893), discusses the battery's first two engagements in detail and gives a commander's view of early camp life. Portions pertaining to the Rock-bridge Artillery are taken largely from Gen. Pendleton's letters. Philip Slaughter, A Sketch of the Life of Randolph Fairfax (Baltimore, 1878), describes the life of a young private in the battery who served from August 13, 1861, until his death at Fredericksburg.

William T. Poague's Gunner with Stonewall (Jackson, Tenn., 1957), is merely the published version of the "Reminiscences" already mentioned. The editor of the work, Monroe Cockrell, includes some biographical information not

contained in the typescript, plus a map showing Jackson's campaigns.

Three other works deserving brief mention are Robert E. Lee, Jr., Recollections and Letters of General Robert E. Lee (Garden City, N. Y., 1904); Richard Taylor, Destruction and Reconstruction (New York, 1879); and John H. Worsham, One of Jackson's Foot Cavalry (Jackson, Tenn., 1964). The first work contains mention of Gen. Lee's touching encounter with his son at Antietam and a few comments on young Lee's life in the battery. The second work describes action in the Army of Northern Virginia through the Seven Days' fighting in 1862. The last work is perhaps relevant more as support for other sources than as a direct source of information on the battery.

R. U. Johnson and C. C. Buel, eds., Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (New York, 1884-1887) gives well-written accounts of battles as told by actual participants.

#### B. Newspapers and Periodicals

The Lexington Gazette, 1861-1865, is the best source of local information on the unit. Several important issues are missing, but it still proved worthwhile in researching the battery's history. The Confederate Veteran (40 vols., 1893-1932) is a helpful magazine, yet the articles must not be accepted as valid without further research. The Southern

Historical Society Papers (52 vols., 1876-1959) is an indispensable aid in research. Especially valuable are Volume XXIII (1895), which contains a general sketch of the unit's history written by Clement D. Fishburne, and Volume XV (1887), which is a roster of Confederates who surrendered at Appomattox.

#### Printed Secondary Material

Jennings C. Wise, The Long Arm of Lee; The History of the Artillery of the Army of Northern Virginia (New York, 1959), is the best general work on Lee's artillery. Used primarily to obtain an overall view of the artillery, it serves to locate the battery's position in battle.

The accounts of Jackson's military campaigns, found in Col. William Couper, One Hundred Years at V. M. I. (4 vols., Richmond, 1939), are both interesting and well-written. Charles D. Walker, Memorial, Virginia Military Institute (Philadelphia, 1875), and John L. Johnson, The University Memorial (Baltimore, 1871), give biographical sketches of alumni of V. M. I. and the University of Virginia, respectively, who died during the Civil War.

James I. Robertson, Jr., The Stonewall Brigade (Baton Rouge, 1963), proved indispensable in the preparation of this thesis. Not only did it provide valuable information, but this socio-military history of the Stonewall Brigade served as the model upon which this thesis was based.

## APPENDIX I

### ORIGINAL MEMBERS OF THE ROCKBRIDGE ARTILLERY

Joseph S. Agnor	James Lepard
John McD. Alexander	Henry P. Lewis
S. D. Anderson	Robert P. Lewis
James J. Ayres	John Leyburn
Napoleon B. Ayres	David A. McCampbell
Samuel R. Bain	William H. McCampbell
John R. Beard	John G. McCluer
William B. Beard	J. Baxter McCorkle
J. Bowyer Brockenbrough	William McLaughlin
Willoughby N. Brockenbrough	Thomas Martin
William M. Brown	J. Livingstone Massie
William N. Bumpus	William G. Montgomery
R. Blain Conner	David E. Moore
George W. Conner	John D. Moore
James A. Conner	Samuel R. Moore
John C. Conner	George W. Morgan
A. Whitfield Coffee	Kinloch Nelson
John B. Craig	Frank O'Rourke
William G. Crosen	J. Lewis Paxton
Daniel Curran	William N. Pendleton
J. Cole Davis	James H. Phillips
Mark Davis	William T. Poague
Richard G. Davis	Frank Preston
John Doran	Daniel P. Rader
Robert M. Dudley	Archibald G. Raynes
Henry Ford	Jacob N. Rhodes
James A. Ford	Adam Schmidt
J. T. Gibbs, Jr.	Joseph S. Smith
John M. Gold	Samuel C. Smith
William C. Gordon	James A. Strickler
Archibald Graham, Jr.	James A. Silvey
Alexander Harris	William L. Strickler
Bolling Harris	Benjamin F. Tharp
Norborne S. Henry	John A. Thompson
Ferdinand Hetterick	Samuel G. Thompson
George W. Hostetter	John F. Tompkins
Lawson W. Johnston	Daniel J. Trevey
William F. Johnston	John A. Wallace
John W. Jordan	S. A. Wilson

APPENDIX II

MEMBERS PRESENT AT THE SURRENDER AT APPOMATTOX

Blackburn Adkins	Barton McCrum
Augustus Agner	Davenport N. Magruder
John D. Agner	Horatio E. Magruder
Charles J. Armistead	John J. Marshall
Edloe P. Bacon	Samuel Mateer
Edloe P. Bacon, Jr.	Francis A. Meade
William L. Baldwin	Benjamin D. Montgomery
William G. Barger	David E. Moore
Benjamin F. Black	*Edward A. Moore
Daniel Blain	John H. Moore
Henry Boteler	William Mooterspaw
John M. Brown	John Myers
William N. Bumpus	*Powell Page
G. Newton Byers	James G. Pollard
William Carson	George Pugh
Robert K. Compton	John A. Pugh
Alexander Conner	John W. Robertson
Henry C. Conner	Erastus Root
John C. Conner	Jefferson R. Ruffin
Richard D. Cooke	James Sandford
John B. Craig	Joseph Shaner
*A. Stephen Dandridge	Campbell A. Shaw
Henry T. Darnall	Jacob M. Shoulder
Charles W. Davis	James A. Silvey
J. Cole Davis	Samuel C. Smith
James M. M. Davis	Thomas Sparrow
Henry Dixon	John J. Strickler
Calvin M. Dold	William L. Strickler
W. C. Estill	William C. Stuart
Benjamin C. M. Friend	William M. Swann
Robert A. Gibson	Benjamin R. Swisher
George Ginger	George W. Swisher
James T. Gooch	Samuel S. Swisher

## APPENDIX II (cont.)

Archibald Graham, Jr.	James F. Tate
J. Campbell Heiskell	Stevens M. Taylor
Norborne S. Henry	John A. Thompson
Edward H. Hyde	Lucas P. Thompson
William F. Johnston	*Samuel G. Thompson
John W. Jordan	Thomas Tidball
Otho G. Kean	Daniel J. Trevey
John P. Leathers	Leroy F. Trice
James M. Leech	J. Alexander Tyler
Samuel H. Letcher	D. Gardner Tyler
Henry P. Lewis	Thomas M. Wade
James P. Lewis	William H. White
William H. McCampbell	Algernon S. Whitt
John E. McCauley	Calvin Wilson
William S. McClintic	William M. Wilson
Thomas E. McCorkle	John Withrow
William A. McCorkle	

\* denotes men who surrendered with another unit.

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THE ROCKBRIDGE ARTILLERY, C. S. A.

by

Robert Raymond Mitchell, Jr.

(ABSTRACT)

"The Rockbridge Artillery, C. S. A." is a socio-military history of an artillery battery during the Civil War. Initially composed of men strictly from Rockbridge County, Va., the battery eventually drew its members from throughout the Confederacy.

Taken largely from personal reminiscences, letters and official records, this thesis describes the hardships and pains of serving with the Army of Northern Virginia. It traces the development of the Rockbridge Artillery from its conception in April, 1861, to the surrender at Appomattox in April, 1865--four years of American history that will long live in the minds of man. The thesis describes the battles in which the battery fought from Falling Waters to Cumberland Church. The thesis does not attempt an overall view of the Civil War, but rather a smaller picture as might have been witnessed by a member of the Rockbridge Artillery.