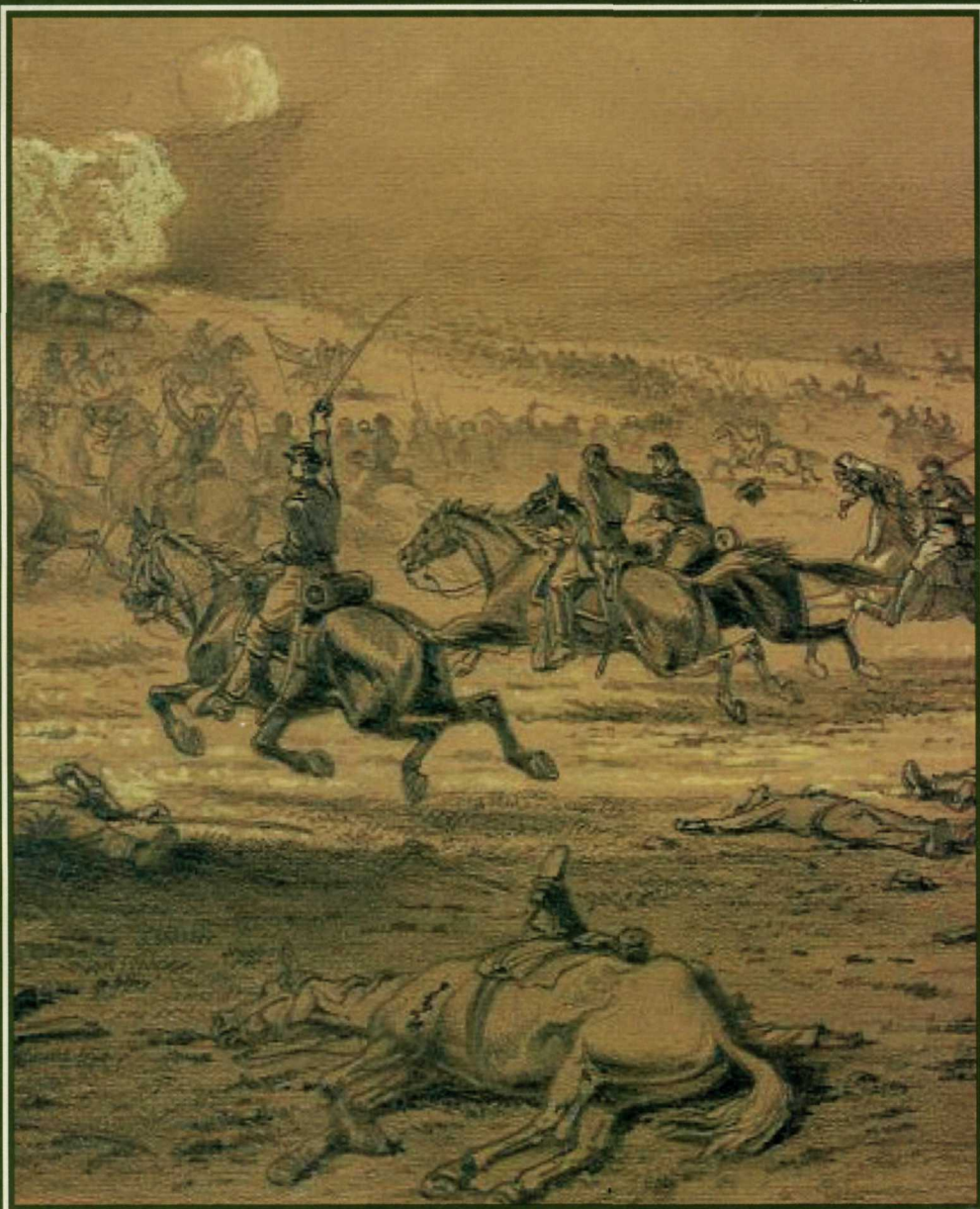


The Burdens of Beasts

From the Second Battle of Manassas through the Maryland Campaign: Animals Caught in Conflict



Animals of the Armies: Transportation, Food, Mascots

Animals played important roles in the Civil War for a variety of reasons. Horses, mules, and oxen were used for transportation. They pulled supply wagons, ambulances, artillery pieces, and anything else that needed to be moved. Officers directed battle from horseback, messengers on horses made communication more efficient, and cavalrymen lived and fought in the saddle. Acquiring, feeding, and caring for these animals was a massive, but necessary undertaking. The men often developed close bonds to particular horses and mules and were devastated when they were killed.

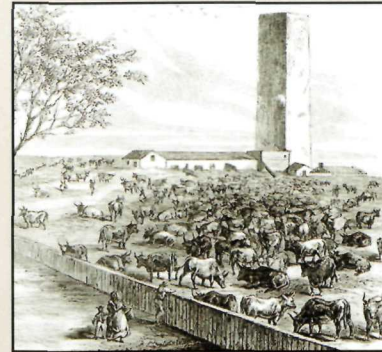
Army regulations made no provisions for mascots, but many units adopted them as symbols of loyalty and devotion. Most mascots were dogs, but cats, pigs, and goats also served in that honorable position for units on both sides. One of the most famous mascots of the war was "Old Abe," a bald eagle, who flew over the 8th Wisconsin Volunteers at 36 different battles. He survived the war and lived in the Wisconsin capitol building until he was killed in a fire at the age of 44.

"A horse for military service is as much a military supply as a barrel of gunpowder or a shotgun or rifle."

~ Union Quartermaster Montgomery C. Meigs



Sketch of a mounted band



(Left) Union cattle graze on the National Mall. (Lower Left) Captain George A. Custer in a Union camp with his dog (Below) Mule trains were critical to the supply lines of both armies.



Other mascots included gamecocks, donkeys, and a camel named Douglas, who carried supplies for the 43rd Mississippi. There were also several regiments who kept bears as pets. The 26th Wisconsin, honoring the "Badger State," kept one of those ferocious animals as their mascot.

Not all animals were lucky enough to be treated as heroic mascots or loyal mounts. Many animals, especially cattle, were used as an important food source for both armies. Columns of troops and wagon trains were often followed by huge herds of "beef on the hoof." Chickens, pigs, and cattle were slaughtered and served in camps. Millions more were processed in factories and salted for shipment to hungry soldiers. When the armies didn't have enough, local animals served as meals. Sometimes buying, sometimes just taking, soldiers used private farms and barns to fill their bellies, often decimating local stores and herds.

A Horse Named Tartar

When the Civil War began, Battery B of the 4th U.S. Artillery traveled by rail to Washington, D.C. from service in Utah. Coming with them was Lt. James Stewart and his horse, Tartar, who had conquered disease and the deserts of the West. Together they served with the artillery at the Second Battle of Manassas.

The bloodshed of the battle began in the twilight of August 28, 1862. Deploying onto a ridge off the Warrenton Turnpike, Battery B supported the Union advance up the sloping fields at Brawner Farm against the Confederate troops of Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. For over two hours, until nightfall, troops stood in disciplined lines of battle less than 80 yards apart and unleashed blistering musketry fire upon one another, inflicting horrendous casualties in one of the most concentrated and stubborn infantry encounters of the war. Artillery supported the close lines of foot soldiers, and the guns of the opposing batteries dueled.

During the artillery exchange, Tartar was struck by splinters of a burst shell and wounded in both hips. The horse's tail was also severed by the blast, and his wounds reddened the dirt under his hooves. Stewart believed the horse too seriously maimed to ride further, and released his mount into a fenced farmyard. Tartar, though, was not ready to be put out to pasture. He jumped the fence and followed the battery. The tailless horse quickly recovered and loyally remained with his unit.



Months later, during the Fredericksburg campaign, the Union Army of the Potomac was reviewed by President Abraham Lincoln. The President's son, nine-year-old Tad, rode along mounted on a pony. Lincoln noticed the tailless Tartar, and called for the officer who rode the horse, as he wished to see the wound. When Stewart rode up to Lincoln, the president declared, "This reminds me of a tale!" and he told a humorous anecdote. Unfortunately, Stewart could not hear the gist of the tale as the generals clustered around Lincoln crowded out the lieutenant on his tailless mount who had given rise to the president's comic story. Tad approached Stewart astride Tartar and launched into some horse trading, insistent that Tartar be given to him. Stewart "had a hard time to get away from the little fellow" but kept his horse.

In the ensuing Battle of Fredericksburg (December 13, 1862), Tartar, fearless up to this point, was again wounded and became shy of the rattle of musketry. Nevertheless, Stewart rode Tartar in further campaigning, and on the march to Gettysburg, the horse was injured in his fore hoof by a nail and lamed. Tartar was left with a Pennsylvania farmer, but a month later in August 1863, Stewart heard that his tailless horse was tied up in the herd of mounts for Judson Kilpatrick's Cavalry Division. Stewart investigated the story and found Tartar there. He retrieved his horse, and Tartar served as Stewart's mount until the war ended at Appomattox Court House. Stewart was promoted to a captaincy in the 18th U.S. Infantry in 1866, and sadly left Tartar with the artillery, after a decade of faithful service from the horse.

Union men and horses of an artillery battery



Cavalry: Fast and Flexible

Cavalry acted as the eyes and ears of the army for both the Union and Confederacy, conducting reconnaissance and gathering intelligence. In addition to combat, cavalry also screened marches of infantry, guarded wagon trains, and raided enemy supplies. Troopers and their mounts trained to deploy and perform maneuvers in disciplined coordination. Although cavalry charges occurred, the troops more commonly engaged in combat dismounted. Mounted troops could move quickly while on campaign, but were dependent on the health of their horses, and the availability of fodder and water.

Early in the war, under commanders such as the audacious Gen. James Ewell Brown "Jeb" Stuart, Confederate cavalry developed a reputation of superior horsemanship. Repeated victory over their Union foes only increased their fame. Punishing raids on the rear of the Union army, destruction of railroads and telegraph lines, and valuable intelligence gleaned from reconnaissance forays by Rebel troopers demonstrated the Confederate cavalry's initial superiority over Union mounted troops. By the Second Battle of Manassas in August 1862, the Union cavalry was improving its skill, confidence, and leadership.

On August 30, 1862 Confederate Gen. Beverly Robertson's cavalry brigade dashed behind the Union line, expecting to easily sever their route of retreat. Gen. John Buford's Union cavalry brigade engaged Robertson in a swirling mêlée of horseflesh, clanging steel, acrid smoke, and searing lead. Although driven back over Bull Run, Buford's troopers blunted the Confederate attack and preserved the Union avenue of withdrawal. With this critical action, Federal cavalry began to demonstrate the prowess and competence that would define their future success.

CAVALRY!
TO THE FIELD!

20 RECRUITS WANTED
FOR THE
1ST BATTALION N. Y. MOUNTED RIFLES!
COLONEL DODGE,
NOW IN SERVICE NEAR SUFFOLK, VIRGINIA.

THE SECRETARY OF WAR HAS ORDERED THAT THIS EFFICIENT BATTALION BE INCREASED TO A REGIMENT AT ONCE!
Young, able-bodied Men will be sent to the Regiment. Horses, Arms and Equipments are ready and waiting for us! Come on, then, and see active service!

\$4 WILL BE PAID TO EACH MAN IMMEDIATELY AFTER ENLISTMENT!
ONE MONTH'S PAY AS SOON AS THEY REACH THE REGIMENT!
\$50 STATE BOUNTY AS SOON AS MUSTERED IN!
\$25 U. S. BOUNTY AS SOON AS MUSTERED IN!

PAY FROM \$13 TO \$23 PER MONTH!
HEADQUARTERS, STATE ST., OPP. GIVEN'S HOTEL.
Capt. A. G. FATTON, Recruiting Officer.
Capt. L. E. REYNOLDS, Recruiting Officer.

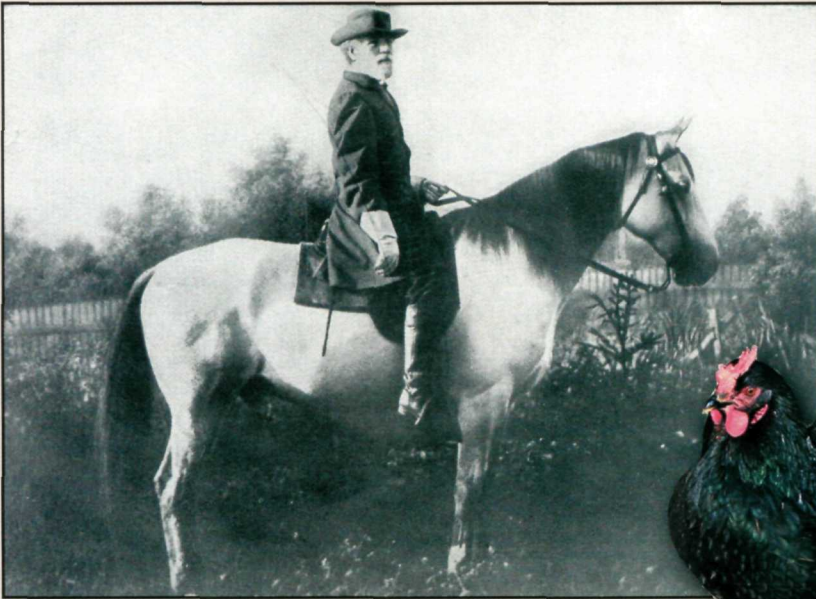
BANKS & GOSWIM, Printers, Printing Office Square, opposite City Hall, N. Y.

(Above) Recruitment poster for a Union cavalry unit (Background) Sketch of Confederate cavalry in Virginia in 1862

On the Backs of Friends

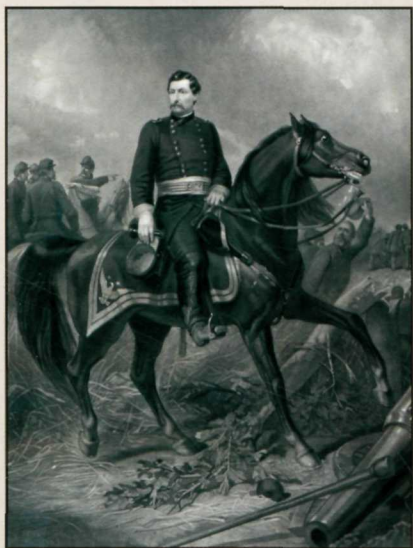
For a Civil War general, a horse could be much more than just transportation and a better view of the battlefield. A brave, dignified mount could be a symbol of authority and inspire the troops almost as much as the man in the saddle. Because of the harsh conditions, far movements, and long hours, any horse that dutifully served its officer earned a great deal of respect and admiration. Quite often, men would dedicate a great deal of personal attention to their animals, treating them more like friends. Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee was such a man, caring deeply for his favorite horse, Traveler. After the war, when an artist told Lee that he wanted to paint a portrait of the large gray, Lee replied with praise for the proud and faithful mount.

“Such a picture could inspire a poet, whose genius could then depict his worth and describe his endurance of toil, hunger, thirst, heat and cold, and the dangers and sufferings through which he has passed. He could dilate upon his sagacity and affection and his invariable response to every wish of his rider. He might even imagine his thoughts through the long night marches and days of battle through which he has passed.”



Perhaps the most famous horse of the Civil War, Gen. Lee's favorite mount, Traveler, served him well during and after the war. Less well known was Lee's hen, Nellie, which accompanied him on several campaigns, roosting under his cot and providing the general with fresh eggs.

The favorite horse of Union Gen. George B. McClellan was Dan, or Daniel Webster, named for the famous Massachusetts senator and eloquent orator, whom he admired. The horse was a tall, pure-bred, dark bay; his appearance as striking as his master's. Dan was tireless on campaign, and repeatedly bore the general into combat. Since the horse was so fast and powerful, McClellan's staff officers named him "that Devil Dan" because they could not keep pace on their slower mounts.



(Left) McClellan on Daniel Webster
(Above) Jackson on Little Sorrel at the First Battle of Manassas, where he earned the name "Stonewall"

In April 1861, Col. Thomas J. Jackson, later known as "Stonewall", took command of the Confederate forces at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. A few days later, his men seized an eastbound train carrying cattle and horses. Jackson had no regular mount so he and his quartermaster selected two horses—a large sorrel gelding and a smaller sorrel. Jackson planned to give his wife, Anna, the small horse he named Fancy.

Within a day, however, Jackson found the larger animal to be uneven in gait and difficult to control. He much preferred the smooth gait, even temper, and endurance of "Little Sorrel," who also proved to be steady under fire on the battlefield. Henry Kyd Douglas described Jackson's mount as "a remarkable little horse. Such endurance I have never seen in horse flesh. We had no horse at Hd. Qrs. That could match him. I never saw him show a sign of fatigue."

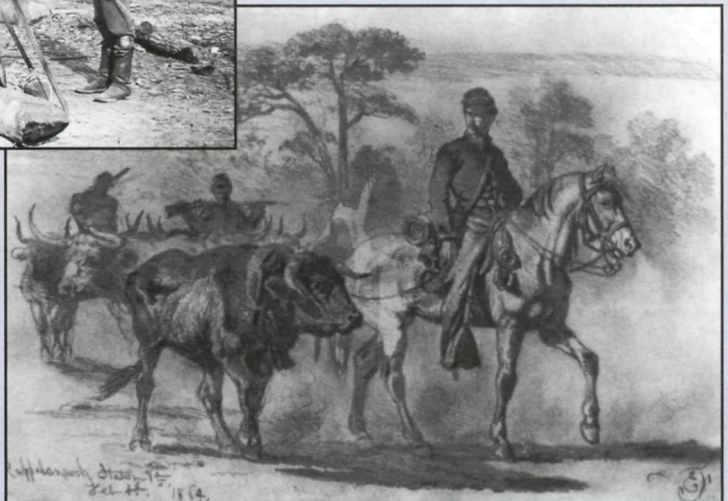
Feeding an Army

Napoleon once said, “An army marches on its stomach,” meaning to have an effective army, the men must be fed. While cornmeal, hardtack, potatoes, beans, salt, sugar, and coffee were all part of a soldier’s diet, meat remained the most important source of protein for men marching, working, and fighting on long campaigns. Chickens, hogs, and cattle were all transported with the armies on the march, with larger quantities slaughtered by civilian contractors and shipped to the front. Second only to ammunition, quartermasters worked tirelessly to keep soldiers supplied with food.

During the Maryland Campaign, in fields around Frederick, army butchers took cattle from the large herds moving with the wagon trains and distributed the meat to the men along with salt pork in barrels. When the men felt that these rations were not enough, they sought bigger and better meals on their own. Sometimes they hunted deer and fished in rivers. Packages from relatives and friends also often contained some kind of food. Sutlers, private sellers, also mingled with men in the camps, selling them what the army could not provide. All too often, though, men on the march took what they needed from farms and villages. Confiscating animals and stripping fields of crops helped feed the armies, but depleted the supplies for civilians, often leading to poverty and famine.



(Top) A cook in a Union camp
(Right) Sketch of cattle being driven with a Union column



The Mules of War

Mules powered C&O Canal boats. Teams of four animals, two pulling while two rested in the boat mule barn, pulled the boats laden with up to 130 tons of coal or other cargo. At its peak, over 500 boats traveled the canal, bringing the total number of mules on the 184.5 mile towpath to over 2,000.

During the Civil War, mules also pulled wagons and guns in the Confederate and the Union supply trains. During the Maryland Campaign, the Union Army used over 10,000 mules to help transport their supplies. During the war, canal workers feared their mules may be confiscated by troops or raiders, leaving the canal boats without their source of power.

As Confederate troops passed through the Antietam area, canal worker Jacob McGraw noted, "Stragglers were running around robbing the houses of people who'd gone away, and they got in my house and just took everything... Besides, they took five mules of mine out of a field where I kept 'em. They were mules that did my towing on the canal."



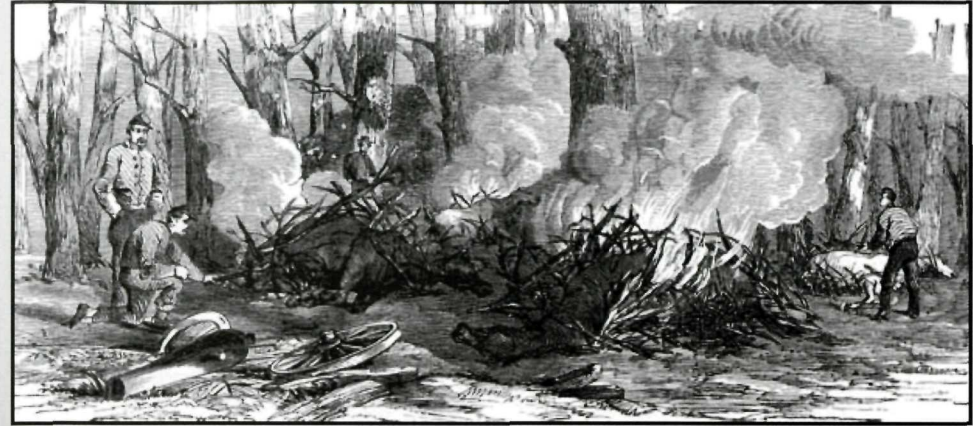
(Top) Mules on the C&O Canal
(Left) Mules pulling a Civil War supply wagon

Death on Four Legs

Thousands of horses and mules were killed over the month of the Maryland Campaign. Many were lost in combat; shot out from under officers and cavalry troops. Artillery horses were often struck down when their batteries came under enemy fire. In one instance, 80 out of one battery's 88 horses were killed in a single battle.

Like their human counterparts, horses also faced the problem of disease. One condition that plagued the horses of both armies was known as "greasy heel," a skin disease. Col. Rufus Ingalls, McClellan's chief quartermaster called the epidemic, "A most powerful and destructive disease... which put nearly 4,000 animals out of service." Other diseases, overuse, injuries, and combat could also make the lives of horses short.

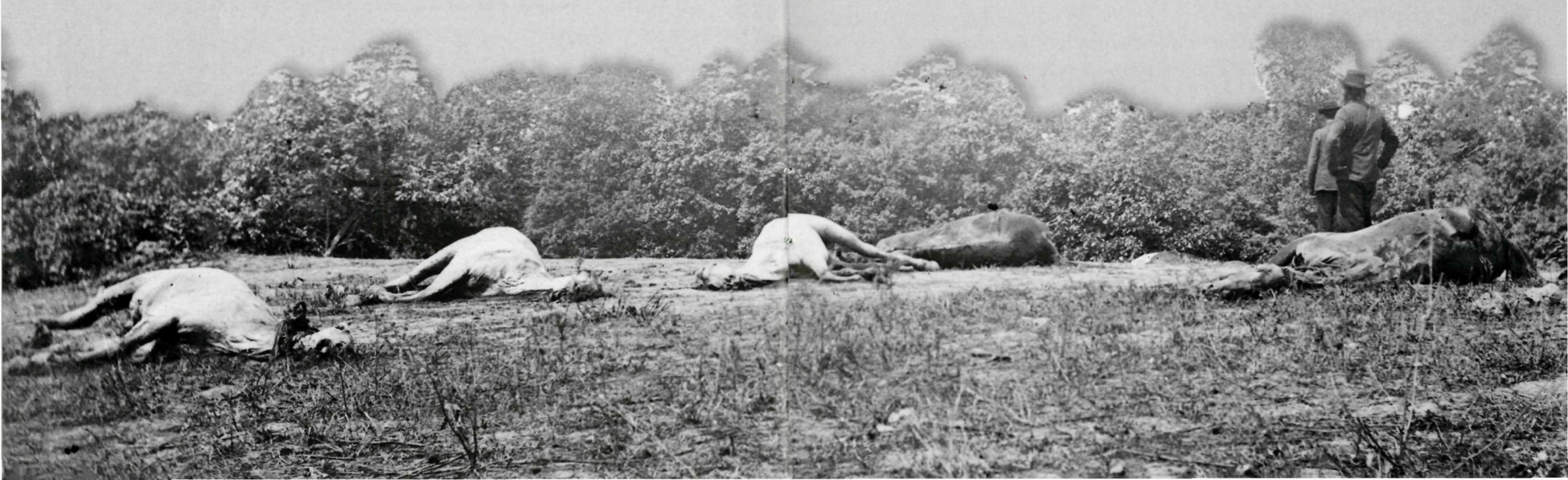
No matter how they died, the bodies of the dead horses had to be disposed of. Almost every account of a battlefield mentions the sight and stench of rotting horses strewn across hills and roads. Already overburdened with human casualties, both armies resorted to the practice of burning the bodies of the noble animals that had sacrificed so much in this war.

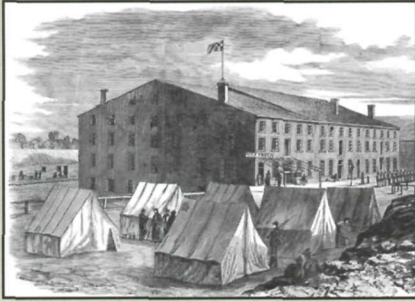


"The number of dead horses was high. They lay, like the men, in all attitudes. One beautiful milk-white animal had died in so graceful a position that I wished for its photograph... Until you got to it, it was hard to believe the horse was dead."

~ Union Gen. Alpheus Williams, September 22, 1862

(Above) Sketch of soldiers burning dead horses after a battle
(Background) Dead horses litter the Cedar Mountain battlefield in August 1862.





(Above) Libby Prison in Richmond, VA
(Right) Sketch of “Hero”



“Hero” the Prison Guard Dog

For Union soldiers unlucky enough to be captured, a long and bleak experience in a Confederate prison awaited them. Many of them spent time in Richmond, held in converted warehouses, before being shipped farther South. At Libby Prison and Castle Thunder, many of those men met a unique and memorable animal: a Russian bloodhound named Hero; guard dog of the Confederacy.

“Hero is a dog about seven feet in length from tip to top, weighing nearly two hundred pounds. He is a splendid cross between a russian bloodhound and a bull-dog, and combines the faithfulness of the one with the ferocity of the other. We have seen him seize little dogs that came around his heels, shake them and cast them twenty feet from him. The stoutest man he would bring to the ground by one gripe on the throat, and it was always a difficult matter to get him off if he had once tasted or smelled blood.”

~ The Richmond Whig, May 19, 1865

The fearsome appearance of Hero surely caused some initial terror in the captured Federals. However, according to some sources, Hero’s looks could be deceiving.

“There was absolutely nothing formidable about the dog but his size, which was immense. He was one of the best natured hounds whose head I ever patted, and one of the most cowardly. If a fise or a black and tan terrier barked at him as he stood majestic in the office door, he would tuck his tail between his legs and skulk for a safer place. I never heard that he bit anything but the bones that were thrown him, and he was quite a playfellow with the prisoners when permitted to stalk among them.”

~ Recollection of Libby Prison by Rev. J.L. Burrows, D.D.

The Loyal Dog

Captain Werner Von Bachelles served with the famous “Iron Brigade” of the Union army during the Maryland Campaign. During the summer, the men of the 6th Wisconsin gave the captain a dog that had wandered into camp. Von Bachelles, a former officer in the French army, found the dog to be exceptionally clever and loyal. The Newfoundland was immediately embraced by the troops and became a good friend to many of the soldiers on the march and in camp. By several accounts, the dog was known to stand in formation and could perform remarkable tricks, including offering a salute.

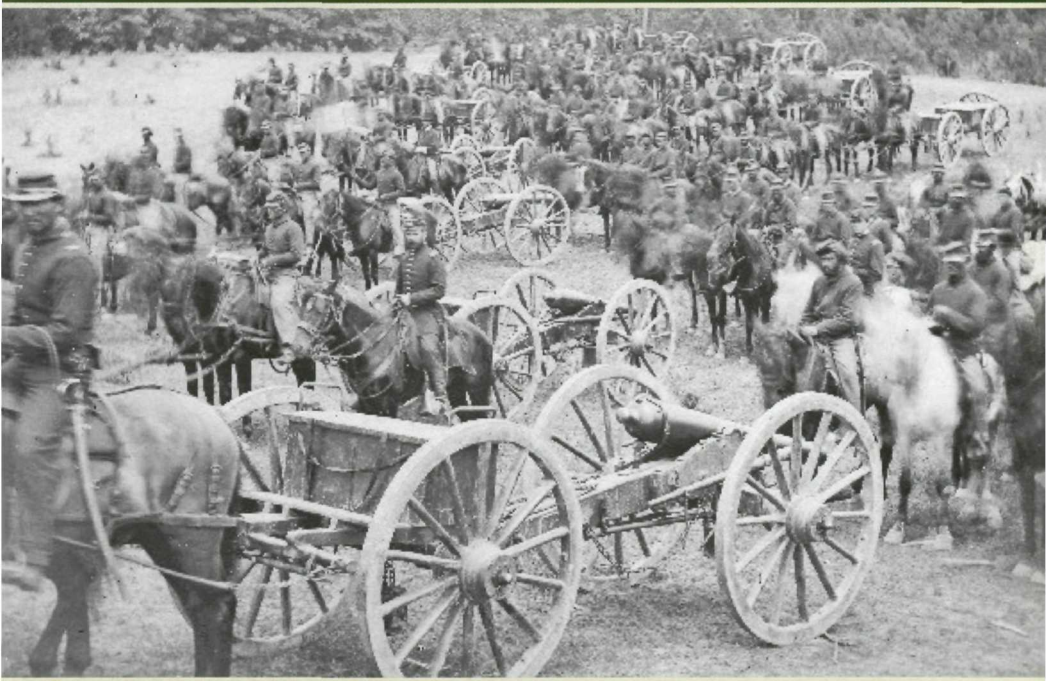
On September 17, 1862, Von Bachelles commanded Company F as they advanced along the turnpike approaching Dunker Church, his dog at his side. Musket fire raked the Company and the captain fell dead. The action grew fierce and the 6th Wisconsin was forced to fall back. The men retreated, leaving the dead and most of the wounded on the field. The dog, however, did not retreat. Looking back, the soldiers saw him guarding his master’s body.

Two days later, the men returned to the turnpike. There they found Von Bachelles and the Newfoundland, laying dead together. The dog preferred death to leaving his friend behind. As a tribute to his loyalty, the dog was buried with his master with full military honors.



Sketch of a dog guarding the body of a dead Civil War soldier

The desperate events of the Civil War created a strong dependence of humans on animals. With their uses as food, transportation, and companionship, animals were much appreciated by the armies that kept them. Through some of these extraordinary examples, we see that they are worthy of our respect and remembrance.



“The Sesquicentennial of the Civil War is a time to commemorate those who fought and died during this pivotal era in American history. At the same time, it is an opportunity for us to renew our commitment to the ongoing march for freedom and equality for all people.”

~ Ken Salazar, US Secretary of the Interior

This series of booklets allows us to tell stories “beyond the battlefield” and examine how this terrible conflict affected ordinary people and the communities around them. Thank you for your support and interest.

Participating Parks and Partners:

Antietam National Battlefield
Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
Manassas National Battlefield Park
Monocacy National Battlefield
South Mountain State Battlefield
Eastern National

Unless labeled otherwise, all images in this booklet are in the public domain from sources such as the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and Civil War era periodicals.

Printed in the USA

National Park Service

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

Ranger National

