

“NEARLY THERE.” DANIEL HARVEY HILL, PROPONENT AND TARGET OF THE
LOST CAUSE

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ABSTRACT

BRIT KIMBERLY ERSLEV: “Nearly There:” Daniel Harvey Hill, Proponent and Target of
the Lost Cause
(Under the direction of Joseph T. Glatthaar)

The life of Confederate Major General Daniel Harvey Hill (1821-1889) provides an ideal lens through which to explore the themes of honor, duty, southern identity and Civil War historical memory. A South Carolina native and product of the first formal American military educational institution at West Point, Hill combined a professional outlook with a belief in a superior Southern martial ethos and masculine duty to family and country. He was a born fighter with an irritable personality who incited controversy during his military and civilian careers. As a proponent and target of the Lost Cause, Hill actively shaped this civil religion while in the process nearly undermining his own efforts. By exploring the fluid and intertwined constructs of honor, duty, identity, and memory in one man’s experience, this dissertation will illuminate the complexity of southern attitudes before, during, and after the Civil War, and question generalizations regarding Confederate veterans’ approach to Lost Cause ideology.

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INTRODUCTION

On Sunday, September 22, 1889, two days before he died, Daniel Harvey Hill sat on the porch at his Charlotte, North Carolina home, “talking cheerfully in the sunshine for about an hour.”¹ The following afternoon, he sat and read the *New York Sun*. One can imagine the sarcastic and self-described “unreconstructed” Carolinian making audible comments about “Yankee” editorials just as he had done in writing a decade before in his own publication. The same day, however, he asked his second son Harvey if he had telegraphed his youngest son Joseph, because the old general thought he was shortly going to die. Hill also calmly asked his daughter Nancy to watch him Monday night as he slept in case he passed away. As Harvey later related to Joseph, their father “seemed entirely indifferent about death” those last days. He drifted in and out of consciousness his last day on earth, but Harvey and his sister were able to make out one final phrase from their father’s lips—“nearly there.”²

“Nearly there” neatly encapsulates Hill’s presence in historical literature. He is one of the few Civil War generals who lacks a full biography, and scholars have not consistently examined his formative influence on Southern education and historical memory. Living from 1821 to 1889, he experienced and played a heretofore unrecognized part in major American political events of the century, including the Mexican War, the Secession Crisis, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. He came to adulthood in a U.S. Army unsure of its position in

¹ D.H. Hill, Jr., to Joseph Hill, September 26, 1889, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives (hereafter cited as D.H. Hill Papers, NCSA).

² *Ibid.*

society and ended it unsure of his childrens' prospects for success in a rapidly changing world. Because of his varied experiences inside the military and out, Hill's life provides an ideal lens through which to explore the themes of honor (including reputation), duty (defined by military professionalism and masculine obligations), Southern identity, and the historical memory of the Civil War. Although I pose different questions for different times during his life, all four of these threads intersect repeatedly in the development of the individual and of society. By exploring the fluid and intertwined constructs of honor, duty, identity, and memory in one individual's experience, this dissertation will illuminate the complexity of Southern attitudes before, during, and after the Civil War.

Hill occupied a particular niche within the discourse of the Lost Cause as both a proponent and target of collective and historical memory. Starting from its earliest manifestations, the Lost Cause had always worked to exclude certain individuals who deviated from the prevailing interest, and this tendency increased after Robert E. Lee's passing and seeming deification by Virginian war veterans. Consequently, studying the nuances of the Lost Cause myth and historical memory of the South reveals how someone like Hill could support the myth while himself being supported by and at certain times criticized by it. The study of individuals such as Hill provides new angles from which to evaluate the trajectory and staying power of Lost Cause ideology.

The first part of this dissertation examines Hill's early life in South Carolina and at West Point in order to discover what values and lessons he learned from his upbringing and his attendance at the United States Military Academy, and to understand his development as a Southern American male in the nascent U.S. Army. Moving next to his Mexican War service and his return to civilian life as a college instructor, the work probes the beginnings

of Hill's distaste for federal bureaucracy and the North, an attitude that compelled him to resign his commission and express his opinions through lectures and an algebra textbook containing "anti-Yankee" mathematical problems.³ During these years he refined his particular world view which was grounded in an intense hatred of hypocrisy and an increasingly emotional reaction to sullied personal and regional honor.

The dissertation then takes up Hill's service as a Civil War general, evaluating his military performance on and around the battlefield to determine how effective his leadership was according to U.S. Army practices of the time, and noting the perceptions of supervisors, peers, and subordinates. It presents a more holistic look at Hill the military officer and commander than the usual historical caricatures of eccentric, one-dimensional crank or beloved tactical leader. This part of the dissertation focuses especially on two controversial episodes in Hill's Civil War career: his role as the addressee of Robert E. Lee's "Lost Dispatch" prior to the Battle of Antietam/Sharpsburg, and his participation in the "revolt of the generals" after the Battle of Chickamauga, which resulted in his removal from corps command. How did accusations of wrongdoing affect the rest of Hill's wartime career, and what was their collective impact upon his and other people's perceptions of himself as an officer and man? As the Lost Dispatch in particular entered "official" Southern histories of the war during and immediately after the Confederate surrender, the topics of Hill's honor and reputation carried through to his postwar activities and heralded the beginning of contested Southern and national memories of the war.

The final third of the dissertation addresses Hill's post-war publishing career, other public writings and speeches, and private correspondence, all with an eye toward his active

³ See Hal Bridges, "D.H. Hill's Anti-Yankee Algebra," *Journal of Southern History* 22 (1956): 220-222, and Marguerite Gilstrap, "Daniel Harvey Hill, Southern Propagandist," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 2 (1943): 43-50.

participation in the creation of the Lost Cause. Hill's magazine *The Land We Love* (1866-1868) and newspaper *The Southern Home* (1870-1877) enjoyed robust circulation throughout several states, not just the former Confederacy, and readers far and wide took notice of the print debates he engaged in with other editors and writers. These pen-and-ink battles kept Hill very much in the public eye as did the lingering issues surrounding the results of the war, through which he was able to tap into the increasing national discontent over the policies of Radical Reconstruction. In the same vein I look at articles and speeches Hill wrote for the Southern Historical Society, various veteran organizations, college commencements and the *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* series, along with available responses by contemporaries, to understand how he influenced the promulgation of Lost Cause rhetoric and historical memory among veterans and young Americans coming of age before the turn of the century. Hill's private correspondence with fellow veterans further reveals his grievances concerning the state of postwar Southern society and the United States. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of posthumous writings about Hill by family members and friends, the nature of his representation in subsequent histories and memorials, and his continued influence on Southern historical memory.

When D.H. Hill is mentioned in the historical record, his Civil War career and personality in comparison to other officers tends to be emphasized almost exclusively over other aspects of his life, while students of English literature have focused on his contributions to Southern writing. Between 1865 and the 1930s, authors of various stripes occasionally mentioned Hill in battle narratives and eulogistic articles. Retired Union and Confederate officers, including Hill himself, contributed to the enormously popular *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* series of the 1880s, republished by the *Century* magazine in a four volume set.

Indicative of the spirit of white reconciliation after the war, the narratives were largely sanitized versions of battlefield exploits emphasizing gallantry and tactical prowess. Any controversy over interpretations was confined to private correspondence and journal publications such as the *Southern Historical Society Papers*. After Hill's death, friends and family, through other venues such as newspapers and speeches, focused attention on him more as the dedicated Christian, husband, father, and teacher. Indeed, the first attempt at a biography of Hill came from one of his former students, whose self-appointed mission was not only to show Hill's "softer" side, but also to vindicate what he saw as Hill's damaged reputation. Two of the general's sons were dissatisfied with Dr. Henry Shepherd's preoccupation with the controversies of Chickamauga and the Lost Dispatch, feeling that he slighted their father's military and educational accomplishments. Shepherd grew frustrated with what he saw as the family's lack of cooperation and eventually dropped the project, instead publishing a series of biographical sketches on Hill in the magazine *Confederate Veteran*.⁴

Between the world wars, professional historians led by retired British officers began in earnest to tackle the military history of the American Civil War, focusing their attention on comprehensive evaluations of leaders' conduct. They appraised the moral qualities of officers as well as their tactical and strategic genius and emphasized how leaders worked together (or not) to prosecute the war effort. Ulysses S. Grant, for example, benefited early on from this scholarship, transforming from a butcher into a calculated strategist in concert with Abraham

⁴ See Joseph Hill to D.H. Hill, Jr., March 6, 1915, D.H. Hill Papers, NCSA, and Henry E. Shepherd to Thomas J. Arnold, October 28, 1915, Jackson-Arnold Collection, Russell-Arnold Archives, Presbyterian College.

Lincoln.⁵ On the Confederate side, historians started to reevaluate Lee's subordinates as well as those officers who operated in the Western theater. Hill's tendency to criticize bluntly those with whom he disagreed and to follow orders too literally was disparaged by historians who otherwise acknowledged his tactical acumen, and he thereafter appeared in scholarship as one of Jefferson Davis' difficult generals.

Douglas Southall Freeman set the standard for others to follow with his three-volume *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command* (1942-1944). Freeman, the last president of the Southern Historical Society, was a Richmond journalist and professionally trained historian whose scholarship combined a strong whiff of the Lost Cause with the leadership and character analysis of the British historians. His sketch of Hill described him as "five feet ten, thin, critical of eye, slightly bent from spinal affection and cursed with an odd humor; he was stiff and sharp when on duty and was wholly unpretending when not in command."⁶ He attributed Hill's carping nature to chronic illnesses (back problems and dyspepsia), but paid him a backhanded compliment in saying that even when sick and overly critical of others, Hill was better suited to be trusted with the lives of Confederate soldiers in battle than most other generals. Right after he published Volume One of *Lee's Lieutenants* in 1942, Freeman wrote Joseph Hill that he believed his father was one of the greatest combat commanders in the war, but that he did not do as well in independent departmental command because he disliked administrative duties.⁷

⁵ See for example British Major General J.F.C. Fuller's *The Generalship of Ulysses S. Grant* (1929; rpt. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958), and *Grant & Lee: A Study in Personality and Generalship* (1933; rpt. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957).

⁶ Douglas S. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command, Volume One: Manassas to Malvern Hill* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944/1970), 20-21.

⁷ D.S. Freeman to Joseph M. Hill, November 17, 1942, D.H. Hill Papers, NCSA.

Evaluation of Hill's personality continued after World War II, as authors provided revisionist, critical accounts of generals while starting to delve into the lives of soldiers and flesh out the social ramifications of war. In Volume Two of his widely read 1963 Civil War narrative, Shelby Foote called Hill "an accomplished hater, with a sharp tongue he was never slow to use on all who crossed him."⁸ Thomas Connelly, in his 1971 classic work on the Army of Tennessee, *Autumn of Glory*, also emphasized the troublesome side of Hill's nature, noting that his combat career in Virginia and Maryland was "outstanding but stormy," the result of single-mindedness, inflexibility, and a strong sense of right and wrong.⁹ Steven Woodworth's 1995 book *Davis and Lee at War* was unkind to many Southern generals, including Hill, who was described as having a "tremendous capacity for hating and for fighting."¹⁰

In the midst of the explosion of literature on generals, Professor Hal Bridges, formerly of the University of Arkansas, completed *Lee's Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill*, the only pseudo-biographical work on the man. Bridges had previously published two articles on Hill and higher education in the South, but in what he described as a "study," he focused on Hill's Civil War career. He used a brief first chapter and epilogue to provide anecdotes about Hill's early life, U.S. Army years, and post-war activities. Bridges tended to drift on tangents about dissent in the Confederate high command, but he left future scholars with numerous endnotes and a bibliography to mine for additional insight. This

⁸ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative, Fredericksburg to Meridian* (New York: Random House, 1963), 817.

⁹ Thomas L. Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 155.

¹⁰ Steven E. Woodworth, *Davis and Lee at War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 143.

dissertation fleshes out Bridges' introduction and conclusion and exploits sources to which he did not have access.

Scholarship on the debate over the existence of antebellum military professionalism and the widely touted martial proclivity of Southerners has relevancy for my discussion of duty and identity. William Skelton took successful issue with Samuel Huntington's assertion that the military did not take positive steps towards coalescing as a recognizable profession until after the Civil War.¹¹ Likewise, Marcus Cunliffe and Don Higginbotham separately pointed out the difficulty in asserting that the South had more martial spirit than the North, particularly in light of the long-standing tradition of militia service in New England.¹² During his first military career, Hill considered himself a professional soldier compared to "political generals" and volunteers, and he continued to stress martial discipline in his civilian teaching capacity. Because of his mounting sectional attitude in the 1850s, however, he developed a fervent belief in the fighting prowess of the boys in gray who willingly volunteered for the war effort. In conjunction with family tradition, Hill applied a particularly Southern flavor to his definition of military professionalism.

Closely related to the concept of martial spirit is that of Southern honor. Bertram Wyatt-Brown's *Southern Honor* (1982) remains the basis upon which he and other scholars have expanded the study of national and regional notions of honor. He described the prestige of military service in a society where the only other recognized professions were planting, medicine, and the law. In essence, Southerners celebrated soldiering because "it was the most

¹¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957); William B. Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784-1861* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992).

¹² Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968); Don Higginbotham, "The Martial Spirit in the Antebellum South: Some Further Speculations in a National Context," *Journal of Southern History* 58, No. 1 (Feb., 1992): 3-26.

efficacious means of exhibiting and defending personal, family, regional, and national honor.”¹³ Hill, who, ironically, resigned from the U.S. Army partly in response to his wife’s wishes, clearly subscribed to the notion of defending hearth and home from Yankee marauders—the capitalists before and after the war as well as the bluecoats during the war. But was Hill’s attitude particularly Southern? Newer scholarship has questioned Wyatt-Brown’s original thesis that honor was more fundamental to Southern culture than were religion or slavery and more important than in Northern culture. Joanne Freeman, for example, reminds us that there was a common culture of honor in early America. “In a sense,” she explains, “northerners and southerners spoke different dialects of the language of honor, balancing the conflicting value systems of honor, religion, and the law in regionally distinct ways.”¹⁴ Kenneth Greenberg has argued that the language of honor used by antebellum Southern gentlemen directly reflected the culture of the slave society in which they lived.¹⁵ In other words, honor and slavery reinforced each other and were intertwined; one was not automatically more important than the other. In addition, Southerners had various ways of expressing honor—through such acts of kindness as hospitality, or at the other end of the spectrum, the duel.¹⁶ Examination of Hill’s own words reveals his thoughts to be most in line with Greenberg’s interpretation of honor as a fluid construct, a changing yet continuous language imprinted with multiple meanings, yet most avowedly Southern.

¹³ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 191.

¹⁴ Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 168-169.

¹⁵ Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, The Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) xi.

¹⁶ Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery*, xii.

The dissertation also draws on and contributes to scholarship describing the evolution of the myth of the Lost Cause. Beginning with Richmond editor Edward Pollard's book of that name, the myth was used to vindicate and rationalize Southern defeat. According to proponents, the Confederacy may have lost the Civil War due to the overwhelming materiel and manpower resources of the Northern states, but its cause—constitutional freedom and property rights (i.e. slavery)—was just and honorable. This view was later supplemented by the elevation of Robert E. Lee to white-male "sainthood" in an image that "became the ultimate proof of the superiority of Southern life and Anglo-Saxon supremacy."¹⁷ This collective memory, described by some historians as a civil religion, was sculpted by southerners to fit their particular needs in postbellum America, yet was malleable only to a certain extent. Those who by the turn of the century strayed too far from the consensus view espousing Lee as the preeminent soldierly, masculine model, and, by extension, criticized the soldiers under his command, ran the danger of subtle to outright ostracism. The Lost Cause also provided a thin veil for the underlying anxieties of male southerners concerned about the loss of manhood in the wake of military defeat. With the exaggerated image of a petticoat-clad Jefferson Davis surrendering to Union cavalry fresh in their minds, white Southern men took refuge in an increasingly deracialized view of honorable struggle.¹⁸

¹⁷ Thomas L. Connelly, *The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), xi.

¹⁸ On the Lost Cause, see Rollin G. Osterweis, *The Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865-1900* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1973); Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1980); Thomas L. Connelly and Barbara L. Bellows, *God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Gaines Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, The Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Laura Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan, eds., *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001) and W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The*

The way ex-Confederates framed the memory of the war had implications for how they presented its history. Indeed, before the professionalization of history in the United States, they retained public authority over this historical memory. Essentially, unlike scholars today, they thought of history and memory as one and the same; the veterans sought to vindicate “the truth of Confederate history” as they saw it.¹⁹ Ex-Confederates crafted historical memory, through the use of history and historical records, as a way to reconcile the experiences of individuals and groups through a broad narrative that achieved an accepted degree of credibility for the greater collective audience.²⁰ In this sense, Hill and others constructed particular historical memories—through dialogue and debate in print and speech—within a larger framework of collective memory about the Civil War. These historical memories were not only hotly contested within the veteran group, they were in turn questioned and then finally condoned by selective audiences.

Current scholarship emphasizes the development of an increasingly monolithic white construction of the Lost Cause that aided and abetted the emergence of hyper-patriotism by the time of World War I, but this work brings attention back to the contentiousness of this public memory among living survivors of the Civil War in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It does so primarily by exploring the links between the Lost Cause and Hill’s postwar anxiety over his reputation. For example, Hill’s position as both a vocal proponent and target of the Lost Cause placed him uncomfortably close to the likes of former Confederate Lieutenant General James Longstreet, who supported many of his colleague’s

Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

¹⁹ *Southern Historical Society Papers* 1 (Jan 1876): 39.

²⁰ On historical memory, see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “Introduction: No Deed But Memory,” in *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 5-6.

views but was ostracized by the Virginians after joining the Republican Party. Men such as Hill and Longstreet found themselves boxed in to a certain extent vis à vis their ability to influence the historical memory of themselves and other wartime actors. At the same time, they continued to stake their claim to this memory by using non-Virginia dominated outlets such as the *Century* to forward versions of battlefield events that remained nationally influential well into the twentieth century.

The boom in memory studies in the last twenty-five years offers a wealth of models and theories from which to choose to discuss Hill's role in the Lost Cause. As historian David Thelen points out, "the similarities and differences in the ways individuals and groups construct memories open new possibilities for exploring how individuals connect with larger-scale historical processes."²¹ Within scholarly work on collective memory, the subfield of "reputation studies" assists in understanding the efforts of Hill and his fellow veterans to influence historical memory. Exemplified by the work of sociologists Gary Allan Fine and Kurt and Gladys Lang, studies of reputation explain not just how individuals lived, but how individuals are remembered. The Langs dissect the dynamics of recognition and renown through their study of the reputations of British and American etchers. They identify four factors essential for keeping a particular reputation before the public: the artist's own efforts to "protect or project" his/her reputation; the efforts of interested parties in furthering the posthumous artistic reputation; the artist's association to tangible networks that would allow entry into the "cultural archives" (i.e. school, museum, or organization) of his/her field; and the person's symbolic linkages with the political and cultural identities of the public at

²¹ David Thelen, "Memory and American History," *The Journal of American History* 75, No. 4 (Mar., 1989): 1118.

large.²² In his work on largely forgotten public figures or those considered to have unsavory reputations—Warren G. Harding and Benedict Arnold in particular—Fine’s construct of the reputational entrepreneur dovetails nicely with the Langs’ second factor about the presence or absence of interested parties.²³ Hill spent a great deal of his life during and after the Civil War utilizing reputational entrepreneurs, including himself, and through these combined efforts, he was largely successful in reaffirming his reputation before his death.

The overall approach used to discuss Hill and integrate these themes of honor, duty, identity, and memory is the biographical narrative. This is a medium perhaps more celebrated in the literary than in the historical community. Some scholars consider biography a different discipline from history, but this work takes its cue from Frank Vandiver, a self-described military biographer. He wrote that one reason biography in the military realm is important is that it focuses not on the details of war, important though they are, but on the character of the military leader. Human character is an essential element of history, Vandiver said, and biography “is history made personal.”²⁴ He and other biographers have also noted the importance of literally walking in the footsteps of the biographical subject in order to gain a sense of what that person experienced. Few have made the attempt to systematically analyze Hill as a person perhaps because of some of his unlikeable traits. By fleshing out Hill as an individual, though, we can begin to not only better understand him, but to better understand the context of the times in which he lived. By investigating the complex intersection of

²² Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, *Etched in Memory: The Building and Survival of Artistic Reputation* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 6 & 318-19.

²³ See for instance Gary Alan Fine, “Reputational Entrepreneurs and the Memory of Incompetence: Melting Supporters, Partisan Warriors, and Images of President Harding,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 101, No. 5 (Mar. 1996), and his compilation of reputation studies (including this article), *Difficult Reputations: Collective Memories of the Evil, Inept, and Controversial* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

²⁴ Frank E. Vandiver, “Biography as an Agent of Humanism,” in *Biography as High Adventure: Life-Writers Speak on Their Art*, ed. Stephen Oates (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 61.

honor, duty, identity and memory in a single life, this dissertation reveals the equally complex relationship of these constructs in nineteenth-century America.

Daniel Harvey Hill's story begins not in the year he was born, but much earlier, during the gloomiest days of the American Revolution in the new state of South Carolina. In a way unfamiliar to many of us today, Hill's family history very much influenced the man he became and colored the way he dealt with personal and public adversity throughout his life.

CHAPTER I

FOLLOWING TRADITION: CHILDHOOD AND CADET YEARS

Daniel Harvey Hill was born on July 12, 1821 in York District, South Carolina, into a family with a rich historical legacy. His birthplace was the site of Hill's Iron Works, originally built and run by his grandfather, William Hill. Colonel "Billy" Hill, as he was known, emigrated with his family from Ireland as a small child in the 1740s, and by the 1770s established himself as one of the upcountry elites in the Piedmont borderlands of the Carolinas. Hill ultimately purchased close to 5,000 acres of land in York District around Allison Creek, a tributary of the Catawba River. He started with a small business making farming and kitchen implements, but in 1777 used a ten-year loan from the state to expand the iron works to produce cannon, ammunition and supplies for the Revolutionary armies and militias. By 1780, Hill and partner Colonel Isaac Hayne ran a large complex of saw and grist mills on Allison Creek along with the iron furnace and employed several hundred skilled slave and free workers, many hired from Virginia because of the lack of local labor.¹

¹ Keith Krawczynski, "Hill, William," in *American National Biography 10*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 804-05; Michael C. Scoggins, *The Day It Rained Militia: Huck's Defeat and the Revolution in the South Carolina Backcountry, May-July 1780* (Charleston: The History Press, 2005), 59; D.H. Hill (Jr.), *Col. William Hill and the Campaign of 1780* (no publication information, 1919), 7; Ernest Jackson, "Where Warriors As Well As Implements of War Were Fashioned," *Charlotte Observer*, March 27, 1927, 2 and 4 (hereafter cited as *Observer 1927*). Sources do not completely agree on whether the Hills were originally from Scotland or England, but all state that the family moved to northern Ireland during the seventeenth century. The Hills then immigrated to Pennsylvania, and from there different branches of the family spread out into the southern English colonies. Isaac Hayne, a prominent Low country planter who provided much of the capital for Hill's Iron Works, was one of the highest-ranking Americans executed by the British for treason during the Revolutionary War. He was hanged in Charleston in 1781.

The success and reputation of Hill's Iron Works as the only major weapons and armament foundry south of Virginia, along with its owners' connection to the rebel (Whig) cause, attracted the attention of the British as they refined their military strategy for the Southern colonies. British and Loyalist leaders wanted to root out opposition in the Carolina Piedmont and conducted a series of raids in York District between May and July 1780. On June 17, 1780, one of these leaders, Captain Christian Huck, with his dragoons and Loyalist militia, flanked and attacked the Whig encampment at Hill's Iron Works. Huck's men killed and took prisoner several rebel militiamen, looted the plantation, and proceeded to destroy all of the buildings, mills and the works. As Hill later reported, the British also took ninety slaves and stole his wife's jewelry.² Already a lieutenant colonel of the New Acquisition Regiment and ally of famous partisan Thomas Sumter, Billy Hill committed full time to the Whig militia and took part in several other skirmishes and battles, including Hanging Rock, where he was severely wounded, and King's Mountain. He was also politically active, serving several terms in the state General Assembly and Senate between 1776 and 1790. He received additional public and private loans and acquired fifty slaves in order to rebuild his iron works, but although he built a second furnace, he had difficulty getting payment for products produced during the war, and was forced to sell his business to Isaac Hayne's son in 1796. Nevertheless Hill retained influence in local politics and the Presbyterian congregation and his family kept the plantation on Allison Creek. His estate was valued at close to \$6,000 shortly before his death in 1816.³

People described Billy Hill as a charismatic, courageous man and confident public speaker, although not that impressive in height or looks. He did not get along with

² Krawczynski, "Hill, William," 805; Scoggins, *The Day it Rained Militia*, 80-82; *Observer* 1927, 2.

³ Krawczynski, "Hill, William," 805; Scoggins, *The Day it Rained Militia*, 150-51; *Observer* 1927, 2.

everybody, notably William Bratton, patriarch of another prominent York District family, and did not hesitate to pillory his enemy in his memoirs. Hill, perhaps more concerned with how to improve the future prosperity of his area of South Carolina, voted against ratification of the new Federal Constitution as a delegate to his state convention in 1788.⁴ The twentieth-century highway marker near the Iron Works site describes Billy Hill as “the steadfast Whig and uncompromising leader who kept the faith in the darkest hour of the struggle for freedom.”⁵ His grandson, as it turned out, would share some of the same traits of moral courage sprinkled with obstinacy in times of trial.

Billy Hill’s third son, Solomon Hill, inherited what remained of the family’s holdings upon his father’s death. He married Nancy Cabeen, daughter of Thomas Cabeen, who was lauded as one of the bravest scouts under Sumter’s command during the Revolution. Together they had eleven children, and the family lived well for a time, enabling the oldest children to obtain good educations. Respected in the community and an Elder in the Presbyterian Church like his father before him, Solomon nevertheless continued to struggle with debts remaining on the estate. When he died in 1825 at the age of forty-nine, his widow was forced to sell their slaves and most of their remaining land. On top of that, she still had several children to raise, including the youngest, Daniel Harvey, who was four.⁶

From an early age, therefore, Harvey, as he was known, was used to hard work and privation. His oldest brother William, twenty-one years his senior, was somewhat influential

⁴ Krawczynski, “Hill, William,” 805.

⁵ Author’s visit to marker, 2007. Two local chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the United Daughters of the Confederacy erected the William Hill/D.H. Hill stone marker off Hwy 274 in York County, South Carolina in October 1919.

⁶ Joseph M. Hill, *Biography of Daniel Harvey Hill, Lieutenant General, Confederate States of America: Educator, Author, Editor* (Little Rock: Arkansas History Commission, n.d.), 8; Hal Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961/Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 16.

in his early life as a kind of father figure, but his mother Nancy did the most to mold his character. A devout Presbyterian, she instilled in Hill a deep sense of familial and religious duty. The family always gathered for prayer before breakfast and traveled to the local church for Sunday service, where Nancy made sure the children stayed awake and paid attention.⁷ Although Hill never described his childhood as happy—in fact, Hal Bridges quoted him as saying, “I had no youth”—he never seemed to rebel from his mother’s tutelage, but rather embraced the strict precepts she passed on to him.⁸ He commented many years later to his wife, “I had always a strong perception of right and wrong, & when corrected from petulance or passion, I brooded over it, did not forget it, & I am afraid did not forgive it.”⁹ This proclivity certainly manifested itself in his viewpoints and the relationships he developed throughout his life. Not everything in young Hill’s life was gloomy, though; he recalled that his brother John used to make him laugh by seeking the shortest Bible verse he could find at breakfast prayer. Harvey’s son Joseph, who never knew his grandmother but must have heard stories about her, would later write of Nancy’s “sweetness” and humor and her commitment to her youngest children’s education.¹⁰

Harvey Hill developed some sort of spinal ailment at an early age, and suffered from backaches throughout his life. As he told fellow veteran Bradley Johnson in 1887, “I had a

⁷ Dan L. Morrill, “Daniel Harvey Hill: The Pre-Civil War Years,” Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, <http://www.cmhpf.org/educationhill.htm> (accessed 17 October 2006), 4.

⁸ Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General*, 16.

⁹ D.H. Hill to Isabella Hill, January 26, 1862, The Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, 1861-1875, United States Army Heritage Collection, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks; Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General*, 16-17.

¹⁰ Joseph Hill, *Biography*, 8-10; A.C. Avery, “Memorial Address on the Life and Character of Lieut.-General D.H. Hill,” *Southern Historical Society Papers* 21 (1893): 113; Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General*, 17.

spell of sickness in my boyhood, which left me with a weak & suffering spine.”¹¹ One modern author speculates that the future general had poliomyelitis, but Hill later described his symptoms as consistent with sciatica.¹² At times, especially during the Civil War when he spent many hours on horseback, Hill was in excruciating pain, and during the relatively immobile winter months he also suffered from extreme colds. He even tried to resign his Confederate commission in January 1863 because he felt too chronically ill to adequately exercise command.¹³ Hill’s health afflictions, coupled with his strict Calvinist upbringing, surely encouraged his adult tendency to tackle setbacks head-on and regard them as manifestations of God’s will. His poor health also appears to have made him rather cavalier in his exposure to combat, much to his wife’s chagrin, yet this attitude was also in keeping with his sense of fatalism as well as his desire to die a noble, honorable death.

Stopping to consider the historical context of the culture of Southern honor sheds some light on Hill’s place within that culture and its relationship to his belief system. Many authors have written about how Southern whites of all classes bonded over the concepts of liberty and honor. Most Americans saw the terms “liberty” and “slavery” as antithetical during the Revolutionary period, and Southerners, who lived with chattel slavery, particularly

¹¹ D.H. Hill to Bradley Johnson, May 18, 1887, Bradley Johnson Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

¹² D.H. Hill to Joseph Hill, Jun 12, 1886, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives. According to the Mayo Clinic website (“Sciatica,” <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sciatica/DS00516>), sciatica, which refers to pain along the sciatic nerve from the back to the legs, is a symptom of another problem like a herniated disc. Hill could have injured himself doing chores when young and his back might not have healed properly. On the other hand, his reference to a sick spell in childhood might indicate a form of non-paralytic poliomyelitis that has symptoms of fever, backache, and muscle stiffness (see “Poliomyelitis,” Medline Plus, a service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health, <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001402.htm>). Whatever the case, Hill suffered back pain throughout his life, which sounds more akin to a chronic nerve problem.

¹³ Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General*, 147 and 162. Hill wrote a letter of resignation to Confederate Adjutant General Samuel Cooper on January 1, 1863. I could not locate the original in the National Archives but there are several follow-up pieces of correspondence in Volume 18 of *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901).

honed in on the dichotomy. Southern rebel leaders appealed to the emotions of the people through speeches and pamphlets bemoaning British rule. A particularly potent strategy was to convince slaveholders that the British would free their property or induce slaves to run away (some of which did happen in Virginia among other places). Since Southerners and most Americans believed blacks to be inferior to whites, they explained away the contradiction between calls for political liberty and keeping humans in bondage.¹⁴ To be called a slave was the worst possible insult. Most whites also believed that slaves were habitual liars, so if a gentleman called another gentleman a liar, he was in effect calling him a slave. Most white Southern men made conscious efforts to distinguish themselves from the surrounding slave population, and the way they did this was through a universal code, or as Kenneth Greenberg argues, a shared language of honor.¹⁵

Bertram Wyatt-Brown, in his landmark study *Southern Honor* (1982), defines honor as “the cluster of ethical rules, most readily found in societies of small communities, by which judgments of behavior are ratified by community consensus.”¹⁶ He further refines his definition by identifying three basic components of honor: internal belief in self-worth, proclamation of that self-worth in public, and the public’s acceptance of that claim.¹⁷ Joanne Freeman defines honor as “reputation with a moral dimension and an elite cast,” and finds a

¹⁴ William Cooper, *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 32, 35-36, 38, 42-43. One of the best books that describes the development of African slavery and white solidarity in the colonial and antebellum South is Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, Norton, 1975).

¹⁵ Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, The Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), xii-xiii.

¹⁶ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), xv.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

shared national dialect of the language of honor identified by Greenberg.¹⁸ She narrowly focuses on political leaders of the New Republic, but this assertion is also true of populations that are not necessarily considered elite in terms of financial or social status; the antebellum U.S. Army is a perfect example of a group of men who ascribed to notions of honor. If Freeman is right and there was a common culture of honor in the United States, how and when did the concept of regional honor, and particularly Southern honor, come about? Such notable historians as William Taylor, C. Vann Woodward, John Hope Franklin, and Rollin Osterweis, seeking to explain the antebellum differences between North and South, all identified a turning point in the late 1820s and early 1830s. The United States experienced much economic and political upheaval during that decade; most of the Revolutionary generation died during this time period, and Americans were experiencing the often competing pulls of industrialism and romanticism.¹⁹ Northerners and Southerners dealt with the uncertainty in different ways, placing the sections on divergent and ultimately conflicting courses. In terms of European influence, the North picked up on the humanitarian strain of romanticism, which would manifest itself in the abolitionist movement. Much has been made of how Southerners were entranced by popular English literature and found corollaries between their native gentry and Sir Walter Scott's romantic medieval heroes.

Whether this supposed fascination with the cavalier is exaggerated or not, the South coped with national changes by turning within itself. One historian argues that it is useless to identify a window of time when this happened, for Southern alienation was a long, drawn-out

¹⁸ Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), xx, 168-169.

¹⁹ William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (New York: G. Braziller, 1961/Oxford University Press, 1993), 16-18; C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History, Revised Edition* (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1969), 143; John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South: 1800-1861* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 87; and Rollin G. Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 11.

process dating back to the Revolution.²⁰ Billy Hill's preference for local interests over the new national Constitution demonstrates this regional attitude. Nevertheless, certain events in 1830 and 1831, along with the politics of President Andrew Jackson's administration, caused Southerners to become increasingly defensive about their way of life and, to use one of Osterweis's metaphors, throw up dikes against perceived political and economic attacks from outsiders.²¹ South Carolinians, particularly Vice President John C. Calhoun, clashed with Jackson over national tariffs, feeling betrayed by a son of the state whom they had elected to serve their interests. Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison published his first issue of *The Liberator* in January 1831, and later that year Nat Turner led his ill-fated slave revolt in Tidewater Virginia. Ironically, Virginians were at the forefront of those who advocated letting the institution of slavery gradually die out, but after an inconclusive legislative session in 1831, never thoughtfully engaged the issue again. Instead, William and Mary Professor Thomas Dew shortly followed with his written review of the legislative debates in which he defended the "slavery as positive good" thesis.²² The new generation of Southern politicians, along with the old converts like Calhoun, felt progressively alienated and threatened, and started to distrust the federal government more and more. Some in South Carolina started to wonder if the fruits of the American Revolution were lost.²³ For the South, combating the pressures without and finding solidarity within was a matter of survival.

Hill clearly bought into the notion of Southern honor and first and foremost defined himself as a Southerner. Growing up in genteel poverty, he valued the personal and public

²⁰ Cooper, *Liberty and Slavery*, 48.

²¹ Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism*, 215.

²² Cooper, *Liberty and Slavery*, 175-178; Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism*, 21-22; Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery*, 107-109.

²³ Taylor, *Yankee and Cavalier*, 58, 63, 261-263.

accomplishments of relatives who fought and suffered for American freedom during the Revolution and the War of 1812. Even had his grandfather not made a successful business, the Presbyterian Scotch-Irish settlers of the upcountry were unified culturally as well as racially with the Episcopalian low-country planters by the early nineteenth century.²⁴ Hill's upbringing differed from that of most established Southern families through his mother's emphasis on self-regulation and education—practical necessities in a large clan of limited means. At the same time, his relatives raised him on stories of Southern partisan heroism, and he absorbed the military ethos and a sense of regional honor. As Bridges put it, Hill grew up “in the unalterable conviction that within the larger nation Southern manhood was the bravest, Southern civilization the finest.”²⁵ He came of age during the period in American history when his state was starting to become the standard bearer for resistance against central governmental authority. Hill, who tended not to forget or forgive slights made against him, over time started to internalize attacks made on his region of the country. No primary source material exists to describe Hill's beliefs concerning “Southernness” before his Army career, but a speech he made at Davidson College in 1855 illustrates his mature thoughts about his Southern heritage. In an address to students titled “College Discipline,” Hill described South Carolina thusly:

...what shall I say of the noble State in which I was born? I have loved her with a love stronger than that of women. Yea, that love has only been strengthened by the abuse she has received from abolitionists, fools and false-hearted southrons. I pride myself upon nothing so much as having never permitted to pass, unrebuked, a slighting remark upon the glorious State that gave me being . . . Thy sons have ever

²⁴ Cooper, *Liberty and Slavery*, 13; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 124.

²⁵ Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 16-19.

been foremost in the battle-field, foremost in the councils of the nation, and foremost in devotion to the great interests of the South.²⁶

Many people could make similar profuse statements about their home state, but the forcefulness of Hill's language in this quote clearly demonstrates that he believed what he said, whether all of the facts were true or not. He believed in the superiority of South Carolina, and his sense of honor was riled by the state being under attack—literally suffering abuse—at the hands of evil outsiders and even enemies within. He depicted the state as having feminine and divine characteristics, appealing to his own and his audience's sense of chivalry and piety. Hill formulated this attitude starting in his youth and it was further amplified during the course of his military service in Mexico.

Financial straits certainly encouraged Nancy Hill to seek a school offering free tuition for her youngest son, but the family's tradition of military service must have influenced the move as well. In addition to his grandfathers, his uncles William and Robert had served in the U.S. Army during the War of 1812 and in various campaigns against the Native Americans.²⁷ The Hills and their Piedmont neighbors—people who occupied a place in the social strata between the rich and the poor—looked favorably on the military as a worthy occupation for a young man, as opposed to the low-country elite who, despite their endorsement of the establishment of Southern state-sponsored military academies, did not send their sons to these establishments or put as much emphasis on public education in general.²⁸ Hill and other Southern boys who entered the United States Military Academy at

²⁶ D.H. Hill, *College Discipline: An Inaugural Address Delivered at Davidson College, N.C., on the 28th February 1855* (Salisbury: The Watchman Office, 1855), 4.

²⁷ D.H. Hill, Jr., *Campaign of 1780*, 10-11; Family genealogical sheet, D.H. Hill Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²⁸ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 192-195; Franklin, *The Militant South*, 129-131, 156, 173, 190-91. Franklin said the flurry of Southern military schools founded in the two decades before the Civil War demonstrated

West Point (USMA) and derivative schools such as the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) attended as much for practical reasons as to uphold regional and familial honor.²⁹ These schools fulfilled the function of providing vocational education for a variety of future occupations while helping to reinforce notions of duty, honor, and manhood in a mixture unique to young men of Hill's origin and upbringing.³⁰

Hill's health issues did not prevent his appointment to the Academy in 1838. Indeed, antebellum West Point did not have very strict health standards for admission partly because the school often needed candidates to justify its existence to hostile politicians who believed the Academy was a breeding ground for a military aristocracy. Appropriations for USMA fluctuated based on Congressional, War Department, and even Presidential support. During the years when Hill was a cadet West Point's infrastructure was in a state of disrepair. The library burned down in early 1838, its contents saved mostly through the efforts of cadets and faculty rushing books and scientific models out of the burning building. Although the Academy received funds to build two new stone buildings to replace the library, the cadet barracks desperately required enlargement. As an 1844 guide book for West Point noted:

...sufficient appropriations have not yet been made by Congress. The buildings at present in use are inconvenient and uncomfortable; they contain but 96 rooms for the accommodation of 237 cadets, and the consequence is that from two to five persons

regional anxiety, but most Southern elites did not directly support these schools; rather, they condoned them as decent educational alternatives for middling whites whose political support was increasingly important. Planters and other Southern elites funneled their own military aspirations mainly through local volunteer militia organizations, which were more properly social gatherings, and the use of honorific titles, as in the case of Harvey Hill's brother William, who adopted the title of "Colonel" later in life.

²⁹ Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 191. Wyatt-Brown tends to sympathize more with the existence of the peculiar Southern military ethos. For the opposite argument, see Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968).

³⁰ Jennifer R. Green, "'Stout Chaps Who Can Bear the Distress': Young Men in Antebellum Military Academies," in *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South*, ed. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2004), 175-176.

are crowded into one apartment, which must answer the purposes of a sitting room, bed room, and study.³¹

Jokes about what constitutes comfortable barracks aside, the cadets did live in cramped conditions, through humid summers and freezing winters, which probably did little to alleviate Hill's back problems.

Despite issues of money and material, the West Point of the late 1830s and early 1840s boasted many officers and instructors who were recognized as some of the leading military, academic, and artistic minds of their time. Major Richard Delafield was in his first term as Superintendent (and Commandant) and Robert Weir of the Drawing department contributed to the Hudson school of landscapes in his spare time. The two most influential professors at the antebellum Academy were William Bartlett (Natural and Experimental Philosophy) and Dennis Hart Mahan (Civil and Military Engineering). Mahan in particular exercised a good deal of influence with the Academic Board, and carried on the seminar classroom style of teaching instituted by his mentor and "father" of USMA, Colonel Sylvanus Thayer.³²

South Carolina Congressman William Clowney sponsored Hill's application for appointment to USMA, and on June 26, 1838, the Academic Board placed him on the list of young men qualified for conditional admission as a cadet.³³ Hill officially started his cadet career on July 1, 1838, at not quite seventeen years of age. By the end of his plebe, or freshman, year, he ranked thirty-three out of eighty-five in his academic class, a very good

³¹ *A Guidebook to West Point and Vicinity; containing Descriptive, Historical, and Statistical Sketches of the United States Military Academy, and of other objects of interest* (New York: J.H. Colton, 1844), 95-96.

³² James L. Morrison, Jr., *The Best School in the World: West Point, the Pre-Civil War Years, 1833-1866* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1998), 36-60. Chapter Three describes each of the men in detail.

³³ Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 17-18; *Post Orders No. 1, Feb 19, 1838 to June 3, 1842*, United States Military Academy Special Collections (hereafter cited as USMA Special Collections).

standing for someone who did not have much formal schooling.³⁴ The typical plebe course of instruction included mathematics and French. Third classmen (sophomores) were required to take mathematics, French, drawing, and English grammar. Hill excelled in French, but scored near the bottom of his class in drawing and performed at an average level in math and English. During his second class (junior) year, Hill placed in the top half of his class overall and in natural philosophy and chemistry, despite his abysmal drawing skills. Military classes in infantry and artillery were reserved for the first class (senior) year, along with ethics, mineralogy and geology, and engineering and the science of war. Hill received his lowest mark in Professor Mahan's engineering class (thirty-nine out of fifty-six).³⁵ His academic standing upon graduation precluded him from the exclusive corps of engineers, but he performed well enough to secure a billet in the artillery, and he ended up applying his mathematics skills to his civilian teaching career.

In terms of conduct, Hill finished number 154 out of the total student population of 231 his plebe year.³⁶ He appears to have rebelled somewhat against the discipline of military life, as evidenced by his demerit sheet. In fact, he started off his cadet career by arriving late to dinner roll call on his first day of class. The very next day he was marked delinquent for

³⁴ *Register of the Officers and Cadets of the U.S. Military Academy*, June 1839, p. 15, USMA Special Collections. The Board of Visitors arrived at West Point each June to examine the cadets, after which the Academy staff prepared the register based on exam results and demerits accumulated through the end of June. Each school year began on July 1. Contrary to what Hal Bridges says, Hill attained his highest class rank his plebe year (top 40%), then settled in at the very middle of his class the other three years.

³⁵ *Register of the Officers and Cadets of the U.S. Military Academy* (West Point: June 1840), 14; *Register* (June 1841), 11; *Register* (June 1842), 7, all in USMA Special Collections. Starting in June 1840, the *Register* recorded the order of merit for each subject of instruction in addition to the overall academic rankings by class.

³⁶ *Register* (June 1839), 23, USMA Special Collections.

“inattention marching from dinner.”³⁷ He accumulated his most demerits—eighty three—during his plebe year, often for visiting other cadets during study time or after hours, but most egregiously, for twice sitting down while on guard duty. As Hill progressed toward his first class year, his typical offenses consisted of various uniform violations such as an unbuttoned coat or a loose belt. Interestingly, the future artillery officer tended to incur most of his infractions at battery inspection. And just as may happen to today’s cadets, he was once caught “beyond limits”—that is, beyond the authorized distance a cadet could travel on pass from post—which gained him eight demerits near the end of his second class year.³⁸ Apparently Hill acted like the teenager he was and enjoyed his freedom away from home.

Besides allowing some breathing room from his family, West Point gave Harvey Hill the opportunity to meet other young men from across the United States. The Class of 1842 included William Rosecrans, Alexander Stewart, John Pope, Abner Doubleday, Richard Anderson, Lafayette McLaws, Earl Van Dorn, and James Longstreet—all future Civil War generals. Two of the best friends he made in his class were Southerners who ended up fighting for the Union: George Sykes of Maryland and Theodore Laidley of Virginia. Hill also stayed friends with his plebe year roommate, John Clark of North Carolina, until the latter’s early death, as well as Stewart and McLaws, with whom he would correspond on and off throughout his life.³⁹

Unfortunately, there is no available record of Hill’s contemporary impressions of West Point. Unlike other cadets who attended the Academy at the same time, he does not

³⁷ Registers of Cadet Delinquencies, Daniel H. Hill, p255, Volume two for 1838-1842, Records of the Department of Tactics, Administrative Records, Record Group 404: Records of the U.S. Military Academy, National Archives-Affiliated Archives: records on deposit at U.S. Military Academy Archives, West Point, NY.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General*, 18.

have a surviving library record to indicate if he checked out any books or read outside of class.⁴⁰ Based on Hill's subsequent observations about military schools and his knowledge of current events and military history his time at USMA both reinforced and added to his conceptions of duty, honor, and regional identity. As Jennifer Green notes in her perceptive study of antebellum Southern military academies and their student populations, successful cadets figured out how to balance the competing and contradictory impulses of independence and submission. Young white Southern men from middling backgrounds may not have had realistic chances of becoming affluent players in their society, but they still aspired to be honorable gentlemen and masters of their family and accumulated possessions, including slaves. Education, personal industry, and self-discipline were attainable goals facilitated through the crucible of the military school environment. These ideals when realized in turn promoted an "alternative version of manhood" to the prevailing planter ethos but one that was recognized and respected by all white Southern men.⁴¹ Hill arrived at the Academy in 1838 already having been exposed to the often competing notions of self-regulation, imbued through his mother, and allegiance to personal, family, and regional honor. Occasional disciplinary actions notwithstanding, Hill appeared to strengthen the linkage between those two facets of his character while at West Point.

USMA was different from Southern military academies in that it had a specific mission to commission young men into the U.S. Army, while the latter focused on utilizing

⁴⁰ The library record in and of itself would not necessarily be an important indicator, as the facility was intended primarily as a resource for the faculty and not for student browsing (Morrison, *The Best School*, 111). Still, the Academy boasted an impressive collection of books on military theory, history, and philosophy by the 1830s, so it is interesting to speculate if Hill ever perused any of the volumes given his many references to these subjects in his adult writings. See *Catalogue of the Library of the U.S. Military Academy at West-Point* (New York: J. Desnoes, 1830), which for example lists 273 titles under "Military Art" and 235 titles under "Military History, Memoirs, Campaigns, etc."

⁴¹ Green, "Stout Chaps," 174-175, 181. See also Green's published dissertation, *Military Education and the Emerging Middle Class in the Old South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

discipline and austere environments to facilitate scientific education and the inculcation of sound morals to produce future middle class professionals.⁴² West Point graduates like Hill, however, were not only able to fulfill their sense of duty to family, state, and country through military service (within a rank structure with subtle similarities to that of social classes), but could further contribute to their society by communicating values of self-discipline and independence through the foundation of “junior West Points.” Indeed, Hill later modeled his North Carolina Military Institute (circa 1859) on the USMA curriculum and regulations. These various academies, founded in large part by West Point graduates, in turn educated and influenced an entire cross-section of Southern society. The political firebrands might have given the final push to the Southern population to secede, but men like Hill and the generation he taught did a lot of the preparing and the fighting. In order to discern how Hill’s thought process and attitudes concerning honor, duty, and identity matured between 1842 and 1861, it is necessary to examine his service in the U.S. Army and participation in the Mexican War.

⁴² Bruce Allardice, “West Points of the Confederacy: Southern Military Schools and the Confederate Army,” in *Civil War History* 43, No. 4 (Dec 1997): 315.

CHAPTER II

“A SUBLIME AND EXALTED FEELING:” LIFE IN THE OLD ARMY¹

Harvey Hill graduated twenty-eighth out of fifty-six cadets on June 18, 1842 and was commissioned a brevet second lieutenant in the 1st Artillery Regiment on July 1. His first posting was at Fort Kent, Maine, bordering Quebec and the site of the recent so-called “Aroostook War” between Great Britain and the United States. Hill was a member of an outpost with the task of enforcing the terms of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842, which settled the border dispute between the two countries over the Maine frontier. After approximately one year he transferred to the 3rd Artillery Regiment in Savannah, Georgia for a few months, and then moved to Fort Moultrie, South Carolina in 1845.² Hill might have been doomed to an uneventful career in coastal artillery if not for the rumblings of war with Mexico. In 1844, the uncertain state of negotiations between the U.S. and Mexico over the future of Texas and national boundaries prompted President John Tyler to send a “corps of observation,” consisting of two infantry regiments and one dragoon regiment under Brevet Brigadier General Zachary Taylor, to the U.S.-Texas boundary at the Sabine River. The purpose of the corps was to protect Texas, whose annexation treaty was under Congressional

¹ Quote from Nathaniel C. Hughes, Jr. and Timothy D. Johnson, eds., *A Fighter From Way Back: The Mexican War Diary of Lt. Daniel Harvey Hill, 4th Artillery, USA* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2002), 126 (hereafter cited as *War Diary*).

² *Post Orders No. 2, June 1, 1842 to June 22, 1846*, USMA Special Collections; George Washington Cullum, comp., *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy, Vol. II* (West Point, NY: Association of Graduates, U.S. Military Academy, 1891), 135; Aroostook War (2009), In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved October 20, 2009, from Encyclopædia Britannica Online: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/35937/Aroostook-War>.

review, through a show of force to the Mexican government. As the move for annexation stalled in the Senate and became a huge issue in the 1844 Presidential campaign, Taylor's army remained in limbo on the Sabine, with little authority to conduct missions and running low on supplies. Everything changed when Democrat James K. Polk won the presidency and the lame duck Congress approved annexation. In the summer of 1845, in anticipation of the government of Texas accepting statehood, Polk added artillery units to Taylor's force, renamed it "The Army of Occupation," and ordered it to the far Texas frontier near the mouth of the Nueces River.³ Hill's Company E, 3rd Artillery, under the command of First Lieutenant Braxton Bragg, was part of this movement.

Hill recorded much of the detail of his deployment to Corpus Christi in an anonymous article for the *Southern Quarterly Review*, a well-known regional journal published in Charleston. Appearing in the April 1846 issue during Hill's brief return to the United States, "The Army in Texas," under the pen name "H.S. Foote," was a biting commentary on the inefficiency and lack of martial knowledge of the civilian masters of the U.S. War Department. He narrated the trials and tribulations of Taylor's little army, sarcastically critiquing the lack of logistical support it received and questioning the overall national strategy of seeking war with Mexico. Hill began his essay by pointing out that the Army, in comparison to the Navy, had to contend with political scrutiny and augmentation by "raw levies" and untrained, undisciplined militia. He argued that there was a perception among Americans, based on past experience and wars involving citizen soldiers, that the Army

³ K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York: Macmillan, 1974/Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 6-12. The Texas Convention voted for annexation on July 4, 1845. The War Department added other artillery and infantry regiments to Taylor's force throughout the course of the year, and the U.S. Navy maintained an aggressive presence in the Gulf of Mexico near the Mexican ports of Tampico and Veracruz.

lacked professional competence and effective leadership.⁴ The importance Hill placed on military discipline was in line with his own views about self-discipline and regulation founded on his upbringing and West Point education. It would become a constant theme during his wartime service in Mexico as he observed, compared, and wrote about the conduct of regulars and volunteer soldiers.

Hill went on to describe how his unit left Fort Moultrie in June 1845 outfitted as an infantry company, with no idea what their mission was and, most importantly, without their guns. Upon arrival at New Orleans, where the company rendezvoused with Taylor and the 3rd and 4th Infantry Regiments for sea movement to Corpus Christi, Hill noted that the infantry soldiers “were enfeebled by their long exposure” to the elements during the past year and that the dragoon regiment contained many new troops who did not know how to ride horses. “Such was the ‘splendidly appointed’ army” of 1,500 men, he declared, “sent to a distant frontier, to repel the invasion of a country numbering nine millions of inhabitants.”⁵ Hill complained how long it took for his company to receive their guns and that once they arrived, there still were no horses to pull them. Because the guns were late and the dragoons traveled slowly overland, the soldiers landed at Corpus Christi without combined arms support, prompting Hill to declare, “Surely our Secretary [of War William L. Marcy] deserves at least a Congressional medal for inventing a new mode of invasion.”⁶ Indeed, Hill spared no words when critiquing Marcy, claiming he knew nothing of military art or science,

⁴ H.S. Foote, Esq., “The Army in Texas,” *Southern Quarterly Review* IX, No. XVIII (April 1846): 434-436. Editor Daniel K. Whitaker confirmed to William Hill that Harvey was indeed the author of two articles in the *Review* (the second dated July 1848 and referenced later in this chapter): Whitaker to W.R. Hill, July 16, 1848, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives.

⁵ Foote, “The Army in Texas,” 441.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 444.

calling the entire operation a “wretched farce” and comparing it to the United States’ bungled attempt to invade Canada during the War of 1812.⁷ In Hill’s eyes, the reason Taylor’s force was not worse off was because the Mexicans were too disorganized to contest the Corpus Christi lodgment.

Hill’s opinion of Marcy is not surprising given the very real frustrations he encountered during his deployment in Texas. He blasted the Pay and Quartermaster Departments of the Army for not consistently sustaining the soldiers, a problem he had to deal with daily as a platoon leader. He genuinely feared for the safety of the deployed army and believed that the Polk Administration was leaving him and his soldiers to die along the unhealthy Texas Gulf coast. At the same time, he either was not fully aware of or ignored the constraints under which the War Department labored to get Taylor’s force to Texas. There was no formal declaration of war, and therefore no authorized expansion of the small peacetime U.S. Army, nor was there money appropriated for an expeditionary force. As Mexican War historian Jack Bauer noted, Taylor also bore some responsibility for his army’s problems. He possessed some tactical skill, but failed to conduct adequate reconnaissance or coordinate with the Navy for information on landing sites along Texas coast.⁸ The ad-hoc nature of the deployment, built around a small national army, occurring within a murky political context and hundreds of miles away from Washington, contributed to the many issues faced by the Army of Occupation.

Hill’s essay also reveals a well-educated individual who considered himself part of a group and profession that received little respect because of current political attitudes as well as past blunders. He constantly alluded to the War of 1812 and the tendency to appoint

⁷ Foote, “The Army in Texas,” 446.

⁸ Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 18-19.

generals from civilian life “selected for their political influence, rather than their military knowledge.”⁹ What really upset him, however, was that West Point graduates like him had to work for political generals during times of crisis. “Why are thousands yearly lavished upon the national academy, for imparting scientific and strategic knowledge,” Hill pointed out, “when this knowledge must ever afterwards be subordinate to ignorance?”¹⁰ To Hill’s mind, USMA graduates were trained by the United States government to conduct combat operations, and should therefore be given a mission to command and let alone to execute that mission. Putting untrained personnel into the mix, especially for political purposes, contaminated the system and put other soldiers at risk.

Hill was also raised and considered himself a Whig, and one of the main platforms of the Whig Party in the 1840s was opposition to what they considered an unjust war and Polk’s practice of appointing Democratic allies to newly-created general officer vacancies.¹¹ His feelings were not unique among regular officers, and comprise part of the long-standing debate over the degree to which civilians should control the national military. For someone like Hill who was devoted to carrying out his military duty to the United States, political “interference” was especially galling, as the wartime generals would simply resume their civilian titles while the regulars would remain stuck in an institution with slow rates of advancement. The seeming injustice and corruption associated with the administration jarred Hill’s sense of right and wrong, causing him to lash out. Three years in the Army had already jaded him, and he would find much more to complain about in the months ahead.

⁹ Foote, “The Army in Texas,” 437.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 448.

¹¹ Richard B. Winders, *Mr. Polk’s Army: The American Military Experience in the Mexican War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 11-12.

Hill was promoted to full second lieutenant on 13 October 1845 and a few months later sent back to Fort Monroe, Virginia to take a position in the 4th Artillery Regiment.¹² Four companies of the regiment were already in Texas and took part in the first battles of the war at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma in May 1846. Hill deployed with Company H for the mouth of the Rio Grande on June 8, 1846.¹³ Fortunately for historians, he kept a comprehensive journal of his military exploits in Mexico and his perceptions of the people and the geography. As one might expect of “H.S. Foote,” he also commented on facets of the U.S. Army and freely offered opinions of officers and civilian administrators.¹⁴

Hill landed with elements of the 4th Artillery at Point Isabel on July 7, 1846. They stayed near the coast for approximately three weeks until ordered upriver in support of General Taylor’s advance into the interior of Mexico. This was the start of the Monterrey Campaign, planned by General-in-Chief Winfield Scott as one of three simultaneous operations to send U.S. Army forces to occupy the northern Mexican states and compel the Mexican government to relinquish all claims over Texas.¹⁵ En route, Harvey ran into his

¹² Cullum, *Biographical Register II*, 135; Appointment certificate to second lieutenant in the Fourth Regiment of Artillery, from October 13, 1845, signed February 13, 1846 by Sec. War Marcy and President Polk, Hill Papers, NCSA; Hal Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961/Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 19. Bridges implies that Hill received word of his impending (and back dated) promotion in January 1846 as he traveled back to Virginia.

¹³ Returns of Fourth Artillery Regiment, June 1846, M727 Fourth Regiment: Jan. 1841-Dec. 1850, Returns from the Regular Army Artillery Regiments (Jun. 1821-Jan 1901), Record Group 94: Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as RG 94, NA); First Lieut. Alexander B. Dyer, “The Fourth Regiment of Artillery,” in Theophilus F. Rodenbough and William L. Haskin, *The Army of the United States: Historical Sketches of Staff and Line with Portraits of Generals-in-Chief* (New York: Maynard, Merrill and Co., 1896), accessed at <http://www.history.army.mil/books/R&H/R&H-4Art.htm>.

¹⁴ In 1955, the University of North Carolina purchased the surviving journal volumes from the Hill family, and Nathaniel C. Hughes, Jr. and Timothy D. Johnson transcribed them for publication in 2002, making scholars more aware of this key eyewitness account to the Mexican War. The originals are small, leather-bound pocket-size notebooks, written in a small but legible hand, and filled with observations alternating between the natural beauty of Mexico and the harsh reality of military campaigning.

¹⁵ Stephen A. Carney, *The U.S. Army Campaigns of the Mexican War: Gateway South, The Campaign for Monterrey* (Washington: U.S. Army Center of Military History, n.d.), 7-9, accessed at <http://www>.

older brother Albert, who was a volunteer stationed at Brazos Island, another staging point for troops.¹⁶ They had several opportunities during the campaign to visit each other, which must have been comforting as the mail service was problematic and letters from home infrequent. Upon reaching Matamoros, now under American control, Hill made his first observation about the behavior of the volunteers, claiming their “wanton excesses” caused the intelligent and wealthy townsfolk to flee.¹⁷ His unit continued to Camargo, the Army’s last garrison in the Rio Grande Valley. While there, Hill attended two Catholic Masses and wrote down his observations about the Mexican people. Mass provided Hill an opportunity to worship, to experience another culture, and to draw comparisons between Catholicism and the Presbyterian faith. As he traveled throughout the country, he made a point of visiting churches to see how the Holy Trinity was portrayed in imagery and idols. He ultimately approved of the devout nature of Mexicans but characterized the Catholic Church as a corrupt institution that routinely mislead and stole from the public. A newspaper article he wrote a few months later simultaneously praised the ability of the Church to include all classes of worshipers and condemned priests for living “in open concubinage” and allowing shops and houses of ill repute to conduct business on Sundays.¹⁸

history.army.mil/brochures/The%20Campaign%20for%20Monterrey/The%20Campaign%20for%20Monterrey.htm. The fourth part of the strategic plan was the naval blockade of the eastern coast of Mexico. The Navy would also conduct operations along the west coast and would play a key role in the U.S. occupation of (Upper) California.

¹⁶ *War Diary*, 1. For a description of the U.S. military operations in northern Mexico between May and August 1846, see Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 84-89. Hill’s portion of the 4th Artillery arrived in country as one of the last Regular units and in conjunction with the first volunteer units called up by President Polk.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁸ ‘An Actor,’ “Life in Saltillo,” *Charleston Mercury*, January 5, 1847, 2. For Hill’s longer descriptions of the practice of Catholicism in Mexico, see *War Diary*, 7-8, 31-32, 39, 48-49, 140-141, 148-149, and 160.

Hill's company was assigned with seven other artillery companies trained and equipped as infantry, a light artillery company, and six infantry companies to 1st Brigade, 2nd Division, commanded by Brigadier General William J. Worth. Between August 18 and 20, Taylor ordered Worth to lead the army's advance toward Cerralvo. The march was extremely dusty and hot as over 6,000 men moved during the middle of the day. Hill personally witnessed one of his strongest men collapse from heatstroke. "Our field officers display marvelous imbecility in their selection of encampments and every thing else they do," Hill complained.¹⁹ Units sounded reveille at 2 o'clock in the morning in order to get started before the temperature rose, yet did not move until after sunrise. Hill sounded a lot like a modern-day officer when he concluded, "Such unnecessary annoyance is inexcusable."²⁰ Although he had a grudging respect for Worth as a regular officer, he accused the general of pushing the troops too hard in order to salvage his own reputation, damaged after a spat over promotion earlier in the year.²¹

While stationed near Cerralvo, Hill had the opportunity to mingle with the locals, some of whom hosted *fandangos* (dances) for the American officers. He revealed his romantic strain as he described the sunsets and cool nights and how he flirted with a young *senorita* under the watchful eye of her mother. Overall he found the town disappointing, but used his spare time to visit a schoolhouse and inquire about borrowing books to improve his Spanish, something he continued to do throughout his deployment. There were some scares when Mexican scouting parties came out from Monterrey to probe the U.S. camps but, overall, Hill observed that the dreaded guerrilla warfare had yet to materialize.

¹⁹ *War Diary*, 11; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 89.

²⁰ *War Diary*, 11.

²¹ *War Diary*, 11; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 35-36.

It was also during this time that Hill wrote the first of his four articles for the Charleston *Mercury*, one of the main newspapers in his home state. As “An Actor,” Hill returned to the theme of public perception addressed in his first article, and was determined to reveal “the folly and madness” of the volunteer system.²² Invoking the phrase “gallant patriots,” used by the contemporary press to describe volunteers, Hill laid out a list of their alleged crimes, using Matamoros as his main example. The town was quiet until the volunteers arrived in July, when it changed “into a Pandemonium; murder, rape and robbery were committed in the broad light of the sun, the semi civilized Mexican looked with horror and disgust upon scenes of beastly depravity and awful wickedness never before witnessed in this corrupt and barbarous land.”²³ Hill continued in this melodramatic vein for most of the article, although he acknowledged near the end that there were some volunteers that came to Mexico out of high motives and were simply corrupted by the system.

Historians agree that there were countless incidents of soldier misbehavior in Mexico. Taylor and his subordinates failed to maintain discipline within the volunteer units of his army, and many young men away from home for the first time behaved badly, no matter the regiment.²⁴ The sense the reader gets from Hill’s commentary is that Americans should not only behave better than Mexicans, but had a duty to behave fairly towards them while on their soil. They might be inferior people, but if the U.S. Army did not conduct itself honorably, it could have a difficult insurgency on its hands, as the French had in Spain earlier in the century. “Our success,” Hill wrote, “like that of all invading armies, depends as much

²² ‘An Actor,’ “The Volunteer System,” Charleston *Mercury*, October 12, 1846, 2.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 83, 101-102; Carney, *Monterrey*, 14 and 31.

upon the respect for the private rights and religious prejudices of the invaded nation, as upon the valor and efficiency of our troops.”²⁵ The article reveals that Hill was rather perceptive for a young lieutenant when it came to a potential weakness in American strategy, and the treatment of Mexicans appealed to his strong sense of honor and of right and wrong. He shared the prejudices and sense of alienation of the small regular officer population yet also agreed with the broader public perception of Mexicans as ‘others.’ Interestingly, Hill’s insistence on writing newspaper articles critical of the War Department bordered on insubordination, but this did not appear to disturb his sense of duty. Despite the pseudonym, some suspected or discovered his identity, and he reported in his diary entry of December 4, 1846 that someone had written a “virulent” response to his volunteer article. “How this matter will end I cannot even conjecture,” he wrote, but did not dwell on it and moved on to his next observation.²⁶

The push to Monterrey continued on September 14, and by the 19th Taylor’s army was within a few miles of the city. Hill began his second journal book at this time, commenting on the inside front cover that he heard hostile guns for the first time when the Mexicans fired shots at the American reconnoitering party. “I hope to be in battle tomorrow, Sunday, the 20th,” he wrote, adding, “My worldly affairs all right. I owe nothing and there is nothing due me.”²⁷ Like many soldiers, Hill itched for his first fight and had certain expectations about what it would be like to “see the elephant.” Despite his political and professional misgivings about the war, he was caught up in the perceived romanticism of

²⁵ ‘An Actor,’ “The Volunteer System,” 2.

²⁶ *War Diary*, 47.

²⁷ *War Diary*, 21. Hill usually spelled the city’s name as “Monterey,” a common mistake, but easily confused with Monterey, Upper California, also a U.S. Army operational objective during the war. The correct spelling for the capital of Nuevo Leon, which I use throughout, is “Monterrey.”

battle and the potential glory to be gained. He likely recalled stories of his grandfathers' actions during the American Revolution, and the successes of Napoleon and other leaders in military history he studied at West Point. Moreover, many nineteenth-century Americans were enthralled with the Napoleonic Wars and saw parallels between France's revolutionary expansion and their own "manifest destiny."²⁸ In addition, Hill clearly relied upon his religious convictions in articulating that he was comfortable in leaving this world if called upon to do so.

As a practical artilleryman, however, Hill expressed anxiety at the lack of heavy guns in Taylor's army. Not only did the 4th Artillery lack field pieces, having been converted to infantry on purpose, but he reported that the biggest guns the Army possessed were two 24-pound howitzers. There was one 18-inch mortar and most of the remaining guns were 6-pounder, light artillery pieces, hardly the kind of equipment designed to breach the defenses of a fortified city. Hill anticipated that the Mexican artillerists would have a field day aiming at the approaching American columns.²⁹

The young lieutenant would not be disappointed in his role in the Battle of Monterrey (September 21-23, 1846). It was not until six days later that he had the time to record what had taken place. The commander of the Mexican Army of the North, Lieutenant General Pedro de Ampudia, defended Monterrey with 7,300 men emplaced on roofs, at key intersections, and in forts and on high ground around the city. Taylor's plan, with 6,600 men, was to conduct a double envelopment of the city. Worth's Division, augmented by the Texas

²⁸ Robert W. Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 74-77.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 16-17, 21; Carney, *Monterrey*, 22. Carney's pamphlet concurs with Hill that Taylor had only three indirect fire weapons—the mortar and two howitzers—which were attached to his headquarters. Of the divisions, Worth's contained the most light artillery pieces; BG David Twiggs' 1st Division had only two batteries, and the two volunteer divisions had none.

Volunteer Division, would move around the west and southern side of the city to cut the Mexican escape route to Saltillo (and Mexico City), neutralize the defenses on the hills, and assault into the city. Taylor's other two divisions were to demonstrate in the east to prevent Ampudia from moving troops to counter Worth's advance, and then attack the eastern fortifications and enter the city.³⁰ In addition to outclassing their enemy in artillery, the Mexicans outnumbered the Americans. Taylor could not get enough transportation assets to haul additional guns or his sick troops. Volunteers untrained in basic field sanitation techniques fell ill along with the regulars; Hill suffered from chronic diarrhea and was running a fever the day before the assault on Monterrey.³¹ The problems encountered by Taylor and his army factored into General-in-Chief Scott's revised strategy for approaching Mexico City the following year.

Worth's attack took place over two days and was very successful, while the other divisions, under Taylor's direct control, took heavy casualties and got bogged down trying to flush out the eastern Mexican defenses. Hill's company took part in the attack on Federation Hill on September 21, 1846. He described how his force had to cross cornfields and ford a river under constant but inaccurate artillery fire. They reached a protected position where they stayed for about an hour while the company commander reconnoitered the very steep hill. The company finally advanced, "under a heavy fire and ascended an almost perpendicular height," according to Hill, continuing, "before reaching the summit we saw the enemy running in all directions."³² In their haste the Mexicans left one of their cannon which

³⁰ Carney, *Monterrey*, 18-23; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 90-93.

³¹ Carney, *Monterrey*, 17-18; *War Diary*, 22.

³² *War Diary*, 23.

the American artillerymen put to good use while the rest of the force pursued on foot. By 2 o'clock in the afternoon, Hill's unit had seized another gun and chased the defenders off Federation Hill. The Americans spent the rest of the day trading shots with the Mexican forces on Independence Hill. In the meantime, the unit doctor forced Hill to take salt to prevent further dehydration after his illness and the day's exertions. "Had I not done so," he claimed, "I must have died that night."³³ The sick lieutenant spent a very wet, chilly night on top of the hill, but could be satisfied that he had taken part in a successful offensive.

The next day, Worth sent another assault force to take Independence Hill. In support of this, Hill took charge of an ammunition escort to help replenish the artillery firing on Fort Libertad on the western side of the mountain. Once again, the Americans overpowered the defenders, but Ampudia's cavalry was able to cover the retreat of much of the Mexican force, and Worth's men suffered more casualties than the day before. Fortified by a good breakfast and sheltered within the fort, Hill slept much better that night, "although the shrieks of the wounded were appalling and the stench of blood horrible."³⁴ The Americans had Ampudia surrounded, but Hill still considered the Mexican forces in the city a threat, especially after Worth got word of Taylor's troubles on the east side. Taylor considered enemy reinforcements an even greater threat, and soon Hill was sent with the foot artillery and infantry to guard the Saltillo mountain road. He despaired of missing the street fight in Monterrey "on account of the novelty and excitement and 'twas with the bitterest feelings imaginable that I went with my company to the pass, although we there expected hot and

³³ *War Diary*, 23.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

heavy work.”³⁵ Hill did not need to wait too long, however; Worth soon recalled the detachment to join the rest of the division in the city. The other divisions also resumed their advance from the east. Hill described the “constant stream of fire” from rooftops, doors and windows; nevertheless his unit made good progress before nightfall.³⁶

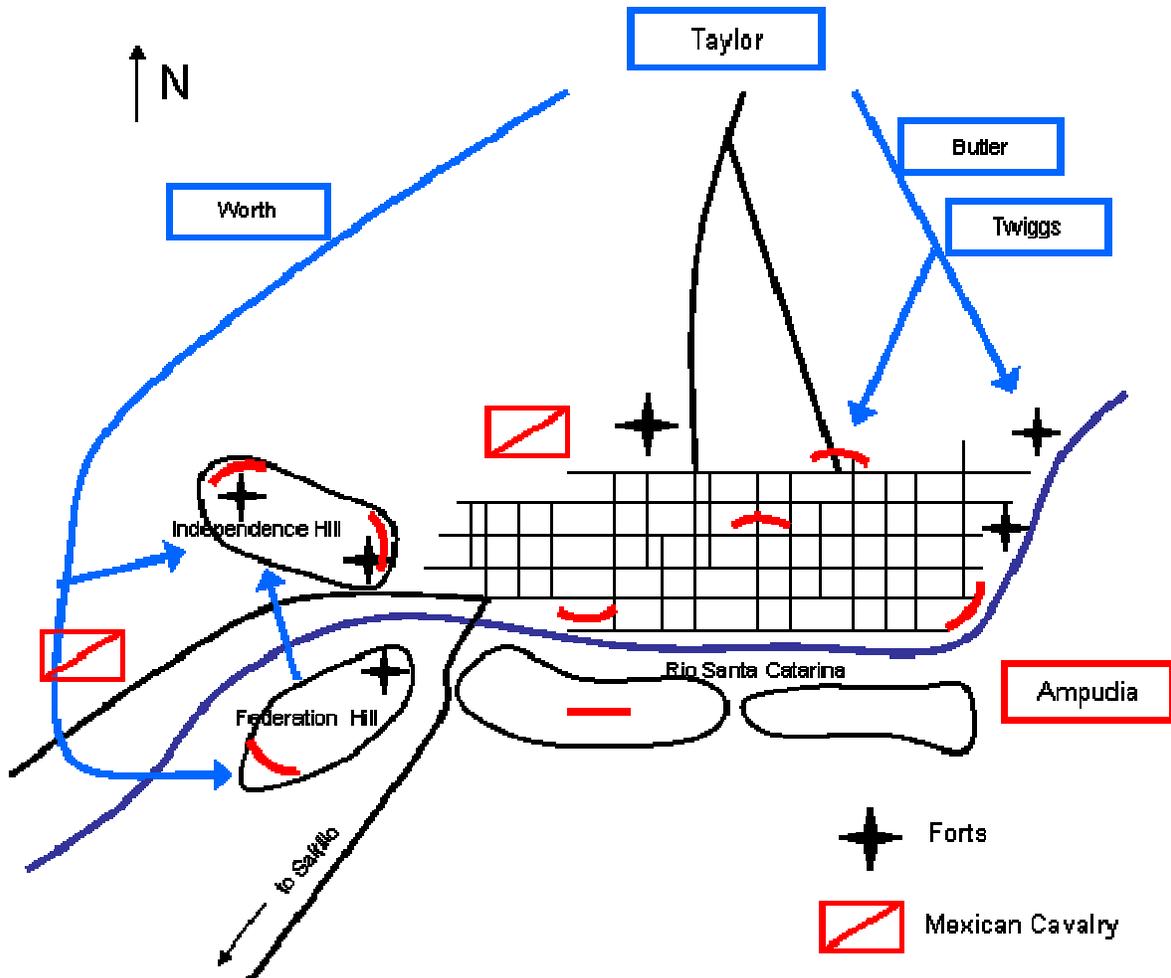


Figure 1. Battle of Monterrey, September 21-23, 1846

³⁵ *War Diary*, 25.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 26; Carney, *Monterrey*, 29; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 99.

The U.S. mortar threat to civilians and the large store of munitions in the city's Cathedral impelled the governor to ask to evacuate residents and Ampudia to request negotiations. The generals agreed to an armistice which allowed Ampudia's army one week to leave the city and keep one six-gun battery and all of their personal weapons. Taylor also agreed not to advance more than fifty miles south of Monterrey.³⁷ According to Hill, his division was not very happy that the Mexicans were allowed to just walk out of the city. The U.S. Army had continued preparations for an assault during the truce, and Hill argued that they would have only needed one hour to blow up the Cathedral and capture the enemy army. "All were eager to crush the enemy now that we had them in our power," Hill wrote of the night of September 23.³⁸ He and his comrades probably hoped for an end to the war. In any case, President Polk's reaction to Taylor's armistice precluded any realistic chance of ending hostilities. Polk was absolutely furious; he considered the general an imbecile for being so generous with Ampudia. Although he did not immediately recall Taylor, Polk decided that another general would have to get the job done in Mexico. He authorized Scott to begin planning and to lead an alternate campaign toward Mexico City. In defense of Taylor, he had a very real problem on his hands: the health, resupply and refitting of his army. His force suffered over 500 casualties, soldiers like Hill were still sick, and the wounded and the healthy were susceptible to gangrene and malaria.³⁹ Even had he defeated Ampudia, Taylor still had to worry about the possibility of another Mexican army marching north from the capital city. In either case, the Mexican government still resisted the Americans.

³⁷ *War Diary*, 27; Carney, *Monterrey*, 29-30; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 99-100.

³⁸ *War Diary*, 26-27.

³⁹ Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 233; Carney, *Monterrey*, 30-31.

Hill took pride in his army's accomplishments despite his opinion of the armistice. Worth's Division marched into the Citadel on September 25th for the flag changing ceremony, with Hill's company in the lead, to the tune of "Hail Columbia." "I never felt so proud in my life," he wrote of hearing the martial music and witnessing the departure of the Mexican troops.⁴⁰ The U.S. Army then settled in for occupation duty in Monterrey as Taylor and the senior leaders figured out what to do next. Hill spent the next six weeks on guard duty and touring the city when he could, but he continued to suffer from bouts of diarrhea and fever. Like many officers, he lodged at quarters run by local matrons. He credited his landlady Senora Tato and her family with nursing him through a particularly bad period of illness in mid-October. Through conversations with the Tato family and local farmers Hill became even more convinced of widespread corruption in Mexico. "I have observed a bitter spirit of discontent among the lower classes," he observed, declaring, "We are fighting the Army and the Aristocracy *not* the *people* of Mexico."⁴¹

By early November, U.S. soldiers started to receive newspapers from home containing articles about the Battle of Monterrey. Of the accounts, Hill was succinct: "They are grossly inaccurate."⁴² Since the armistice, there had been several instances of bad behavior on the part of soldiers, mostly the volunteers. The Texans of Worth's Division, headquartered in the city, appeared to be most at fault, particularly after one of them shot a disarmed Mexican soldier in broad daylight. Hill assisted a sick former acquaintance from

⁴⁰ *War Diary*, 27.

⁴¹ *War Diary*, 29-30; Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*, 168-169. For more on the power of the ruling elite and political instability in Mexico, see Stephen A. Carney, *The U.S. Army Campaigns of the Mexican War: The Occupation of Mexico, May 1846-July 1848* (Washington: U.S. Army Center of Military History, no date), 5-7, accessed at <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/Occupation/Occupation.htm>.

⁴² *War Diary*, 33.

Texas by paying for his room at Senora Tata's, and found that the man was hard to manage and cursed constantly. This experience, along with the drunken volunteers he periodically dealt with as Officer of the Guard, reinforced to Hill "that religion alone can make a good character."⁴³ He wrote the second of his *Mercury* articles while in Monterrey and emphasized the valor and success of his 2nd Division and the regulars in general, often decried as the "licentious hirelings" of the government. He lamented that regular army units suffered high casualties due to mistakes by their volunteer officer augmentees. Invoking the Peninsular War yet again, he cautioned against injuring the Mexican public, claiming that if not for the professionalism of the regulars, Monterrey could have turned into another Badajoz, the Spanish city where the British victors infamously pillaged and destroyed property.⁴⁴ Hill's message, now better informed by conversations with the locals, was clear: the U.S. Army could not afford to make enemies of the Mexican people.

On November 13 Worth's Division departed Monterrey for Saltillo. The march was uneventful as the Mexican army had given up their defensive positions in the mountain passes. Hill observed the poverty of the villages juxtaposed with the large herds of cattle owned by rich absentee businessmen. His division reached Saltillo on the 16th and was met by a crowd of friendly citizens trying to sell food to the soldiers. Saltillo was a smaller, less affluent city than Monterrey and the officers had trouble finding adequate quarters for themselves and their men. Life alternated between dull guard duty and entertainment at shows and dances. Company grade officers received little guidance on what was happening in the war or what their next mission was going to be; Hill and others had to rely on

⁴³ *War Diary*, 28; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 101.

⁴⁴ "An Actor," "Affairs at Monterey," *Charleston Mercury*, November 13, 1846, 2. The Battle of Badajoz, preceded by a three week long siege, took place on April 6, 1812 between 15,000 men commanded by the British Earl of Wellington and 4,700 men commanded by French Major General Armand Philippon.

newspapers delivered via Monterrey or conversations with local Englishmen and Americans. There were rumors that the other American offensives in northern Mexico had been defeated or were threatened by troops sent out by the new Mexican president, General Antonio López de Santa Anna. On November 21, Hill assessed the current situation of the force: “The prospect of the Regular Army is not very flattering. The enemy in front. Cowardly, lying and villainous Volunteers here to defame and misrepresent us and false-hearted Knaves in Congress to take away from us that reputation which is dearer to the soldier than his life.”⁴⁵

Three days earlier, Hill was even more frank in a letter home to friend William Latta. He implored him not to believe what he read in the papers about Monterrey. There were several “scribblers” in camp who wrote trash for the newspapers and inflated the deeds of the volunteers, even if they did give proper credit to 2nd Division for its role in the battle. Most notable was Hill’s overall attitude:

My youthful fancies in regard to the battle field have been sadly altered of late. I had always pictured to myself an extensive plain, covered with armed hosts in gay uniforms, with banners streaming, music playing, bright armor glittering in the sun-beams &c &c. Instead of which, we had to wade deep streams, climb mountain heights and charge upon strong batteries without any other music than the concert of cannon balls and without any other banners than our ragged clothes streaming in the breeze, and then after the battle had been won, we had to lie down among the dead and dying in the wet and cold without food, fire or blankets. . . and then the afterclaps, the lies that are told to pull down this man and exalt that, the miserable tricks & intrigues to gain newspaper notoriety.⁴⁶

Hill increasingly regarded General Worth as a hypocrite and incompetent officer. When he filed a protest about living conditions after one of his fellow lieutenants became very ill, Hill claimed Worth gave him “an insulting answer.” He also regarded as unreasonable Worth’s

⁴⁵ *War Diary*, 43.

⁴⁶ Daniel Harvey Hill to William Latta, November 19, 1846, Gilder Lehrman Collection, New-York Historical Society.

demand that soldiers be clean-shaven and their uniforms neat when they did not have the necessary supplies or facilities to comply.⁴⁷ The behavior of the Mexicans vexed Hill just as much, prompting him to write his article about Saltillo for the *Mercury*, which was published in early January 1847. Fifteen years later, Hill remembered all of the administrative, environmental, and social issues of his deployment; his experiences in Mexico help explain many of his criticisms of Civil War-era general officers and Confederate policy makers.

There was, however, a bright spot in Hill's life during his time in Saltillo. He became infatuated with a Mexican girl named Mariana Ramos, the mayor's daughter. Throughout the month of December, he did everything he could to see his "little Bonita," from attending the same Mass to walking several times by her house. He had seen other pretty girls, including the Americans at the local cotton mill, but Mariana probably stood out for him because she appeared pure and pious, especially compared to the "strumpets" who thronged the streets of Saltillo. Hill managed to talk to some of her friends, who informed him that she was engaged to a Mexican officer, but that did not stop him from seeking her out. On New Year's Day 1847, he wrote that he had "the good fortune to see the little bonita coming from Church and to bow to her for the first time."⁴⁸ From the diary descriptions, it appears that Hill never actually got the chance to talk to Mariana before his unit departed Saltillo. As he prepared to leave, Hill commented, "It seems to me that her presence alone has kept this cursed town from sinking into perdition."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *War Diary*, 46.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 57. Most soldiers commented on the beauty of Mexican women; see Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*, 169-170.

Echelons above Hill's level, General-in-Chief Scott secured President Polk's approval for an amphibious assault at Veracruz, a major port and citadel on the Gulf of Mexico. From Veracruz, the National Road of Mexico led to the capital. Although the President called up more volunteers and filled more officer billets with political cronies, Scott decided he needed to recall the bulk of the regulars from Taylor's force in Saltillo and Monterrey to form the nucleus of the new invasion army. Santa Anna was well aware of what the Americans were trying to do and took the opportunity to attack the isolated Taylor at Buena Vista, ten miles south of Saltillo, in February 1847. U.S. artillery again helped save the day in open battle, but Hill's company had long since departed for the Rio Grande and was awaiting transport to Veracruz.⁵⁰

Hill left Saltillo on January 9, 1847, retracing with his artillery battalion their route through Monterrey and back to the river and Gulf coast. He had an emotional reunion with the Tato family but only stayed in Monterrey one night, and observed that the city had taken a turn for the worse because of the volunteers. This time, the march was cold instead of hot, and his self-described rheumatism flared up each night. He found Matamoros better than before but very Americanized.⁵¹ By February 1, the Regulars occupied several camps near the coast, awaiting orders and transports south. At this point, Scott still did not have all the personnel or naval assets necessary, and he needed to execute his operation during a small window between the "Northers" (seasonal storms) and the onset of the dreaded "vomito," or yellow fever season, in the lowlands.

⁵⁰ Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 204-218. Santa Anna gained intelligence in part from the capture and killing of U.S. Army Lieutenant John Ritchie, a courier carrying orders from General Scott to General Butler, commanding at Monterrey, to send General Worth's force to the coast in support of the Veracruz operation.

⁵¹ *War Diary*, 57-61.

Hill was sick yet again in February and very pessimistic about the campaign, calling it “a forlorn hope” and claiming that the troops were “fast becoming demoralized and brutalized” from the weather conditions and the lack of activity.⁵² Not surprisingly, he fired off another article to the *Mercury*; with an astounding lack of what we would call operational security, he stated up front that Worth’s Division was in the process of preparing to join other forces destined to attack Veracruz. Hill was not the only one openly writing about current military operations but given his repeated assertions about the professionalism of the regulars he should have known better.⁵³ Yet it was necessary for him to mention this in light of the larger themes of the article—volunteer misbehavior and War Department bungling. The guerrilla war was now a reality because of the volunteers, just like he had warned his readers in previous articles. Because of this, he predicted, “the war bids fair to last to all eternity.”⁵⁴ What was worse, any new regiments added to the Regular Army would be officered by “broken down gentlemen, or dismissed Cadets,” due to “the extraordinary antipathy to the Military Academy,” and he had seen the terrible results of this practice at Monterrey.⁵⁵ The

⁵² *War Diary*, 62-63.

⁵³ A quick perusal of the 1846 and 1847 issues shows the Charleston *Mercury* regularly ran feature articles from other correspondents in theater during the war, as did many other major U.S. papers. The *Mercury* published Hill’s last article only three weeks after he sent it and was still waiting with his unit for orders, showing that the mail between Mexico and the U.S. was finally operating with some regularity by February 1847. In his November 21, 1847 diary entry, Hill related how a lieutenant colonel admitted to writing an article about the battles around Mexico City a few weeks after the events, and that he was arrested for violating a War Department order forbidding soldiers and officers from writing about active campaigns until one year after their completion. He was referring to paragraph 650 of the General Regulations of the Army, March 1, 1825, which Polk ordered Scott and his generals to enforce as of January 1847; Scott’s headquarters issued General Orders No. 349 on November 12, 1847 reinforcing this order, partly because some subordinates were taking undue credit for the victories in Mexico. Hill was incorrect about the time frame within which it was illegal to discuss campaigns—it was one month, not one year, after completion.

⁵⁴ ‘An Actor,’ “Army Matters,” Charleston *Mercury*, February 25, 1847, 2. Hill mentions in his diary that this was his fifth article for the newspaper, but the *Mercury* only published four, so one might have been lost in transit.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Veracruz operation was doomed in Hill's opinion, and the regulars would go down fighting, leaving the U.S. with no standing army. And for what cause, and for whom, he asked his readers. According to Hill, regular officers and soldiers were wasting their health and the best years of their lives for countrymen who did not appreciate their sacrifice, and were "turned pensionless adrift by that country which expects them to be willing to pour out their heart's blood in its defence [sic]."⁵⁶

Hill's published and private comments reveal a man increasingly disillusioned with the war, the U.S. government, his prospects within the military profession of arms, and his status as an American. His attitude changed in the heat of battle or when he was doing something he considered meaningful, like studying Spanish and learning about another culture. With the prospect of a large operation on the horizon, he was not about to shirk his duty, even though he might have been able to resign for health reasons. He had many friends in the army and genuinely cared for his soldiers, and would not leave them behind now. Somebody, after all, needed to reassert the honor of the regulars and try to finish the war. Hill cared so much for Army professionals that he defended them in print; he was emotionally invested in this cause as personal inclination to defend honor was buoyed by grievance. As part of an early corporate culture, he felt any slight on the regulars as a slight on himself.⁵⁷ Slow to forgive perceived injustice, he carried this sense of wounded pride out of the Mexican War. He went from feeling unappreciated as a soldier to feeling unappreciated as a Southerner. Hill rationalized his anonymous articles as a natural and

⁵⁶ 'An Actor,' "Army Matters," *Charleston Mercury*, February 25, 1847, 2.

⁵⁷ For a discussion of the level of professionalism of the antebellum U.S. Army, see William Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784-1861* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992).

justified response to mismanagement and hypocrisy. His experiences in Mexico clearly instigated his turn toward anti-Northern and anti-Federal government sentiment during the years leading up to the Civil War.

Finally on a ship at the beginning of March 1847, Hill wrote about his conflicting feelings. He felt indifferent to the important events ahead, but whatever happened, he was resigned to his fate and trusted “to be pardoned through the merits of my Redeemer.”⁵⁸ The atmosphere on the ship was a strange mix of melancholy and hilarity, of soldiers singing songs, laughing, or like him, “still dreaming, ever dreaming.”⁵⁹ Calm weather improved his spirits and within a couple of days he was ready for a fight and back to making caustic comments. Generally considered to be one of the most successful amphibious operations in American military history, the landing at Veracruz failed to impress Hill. At first excited that his company was transferred to the 3rd Division of Major General David Twiggs, he very quickly all but in name labeled the officer a coward. As for Commodore David Conner, commander of the naval task force, he was a “Granny” who kept delaying the debarkation. Many of Hill’s comments were predicated on his belief that the Mexicans would forcefully oppose the American landing. Although he conceded that the Army reached shore and surrounded Veracruz with little difficulty, he continued to find fault with individual commanders and the Navy, specifically for not landing the heavy artillery soon after the troops.⁶⁰ “[M]ay be [sic] we will do better,” he suggested, “when the Staff overcome their aversion to having their nice boots soiled.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ *War Diary*, 68.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 71-75.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

Twiggs's Division was responsible for the northern part of the siege perimeter, and for the next couple of weeks the American forces crept closer and closer to the city walls. Hill's company performed skirmisher duty on designated days until given the opportunity to man some of the siege guns on March 26. He boasted of the role his men played in the final bombardment of Veracruz before town officials raised the white flag on the 27th, even though at one point they had to stop firing because of a sandstorm. Many soldiers celebrated with liquor liberated from the city, and Hill reported that as a result many of the regulars were out of control and disrespectful; he "was compelled to give one of them a sound drubbing with [his] own hands."⁶² Instead of moving immediately up the National Road to exploit Taylor's victory at Buena Vista and indecision in Mexico City, Scott encountered the usual logistical issues and could not march his main body out of Veracruz until April 8.

At this point, Hill's diary is missing one volume for the time period between April 3 and August 6, 1847. During this time, Scott's army marched up the National Road and defeated Santa Anna's army at Cerro Gordo and Puebla. Hill's artillery unit did not take part in the first fight on April 17, but hauled guns up on a captured hill to prepare for the next day. Scott ordered Twiggs to capture an adjacent hilltop and seal Santa Anna's escape route while the rest of the army demonstrated in front. Colonel Bennet Riley's brigade, to which Hill now belonged, was one of the units responsible for cutting the National Road. Twiggs' troops carried out their part of the battle plan on April 18 with great success. Portions of Riley's brigade assisted in the clearance of the hill while others stumbled upon the Mexican camp in Cerro Gordo. Because Riley sent companies of the 4th Artillery with each column, Hill could have been with either force, but in the absence of the diary it is hard to tell. He noted nearly a year later, upon his return through the area, that Twiggs' Division alone was responsible for

⁶² *War Diary*, 88, 90-91.

the victory and “drove the enemy like a frightened flock of sheep from the field.”⁶³ The Mexican army suffered 33 percent casualties, but most of the force escaped west before Scott could surround it.

From Cerro Gordo, Hill’s unit proceeded to Puebla, eighty miles from Mexico City, where Scott halted the army to release his initial volunteers and await the arrival of new ones. No doubt Hill held strong opinions about the recruits who arrived in the city; nearly half of the 10,000 soldiers destined to march on Mexico City were new to Scott’s army.⁶⁴ Twigg’s 2nd Division finally received its orders and departed Puebla on August 7. Hill commented on the beautiful scenery in the highlands, including the famous Iztaccihuatl and Popocatepetl mountains and the pine trees, which appeared to him taller than any he had seen in Maine. He and his soldiers were even more excited to get their first glimpse of the Valley of Mexico, whose lakes looked impressive from a distance. As the army descended from the mountains, however, Hill became less and less impressed, describing poor villages and a lack of vegetation in the valley floor.⁶⁵ The great Valley of the Aztecs was already much altered in the three centuries since the Spanish arrived, but most of the lakes still existed around Mexico City, limiting Scott’s avenues of approach to narrow causeways and circuitous routes around defensive positions. After reconnaissance, Scott ruled out as too costly an advance straight into the city from the east and on the 14th convened a council of war to determine how to proceed.

In the meantime, Hill served as a Judge Advocate on a Military Commission that handed out sentences of lashings to soldiers accused of stealing from Mexicans. “It seems

⁶³ *War Diary*, 100-102, 178; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 263-268.

⁶⁴ *War Diary*, 104-105.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 106-107.

inconsistent and cruel that regular soldiers, the veterans of so many fights, should be punished so severely for foraging upon the enemy under the very guns of his forts when the Volunteers commit far worse acts in times of tranquility with perfect impunity,” Hill observed.⁶⁶ These courts were held in accordance with Scott’s declarations of martial law in occupied areas and specific orders against taking supplies from the Mexican populace without payment. Hill objected to the lack of standards and enforcement across the board and through the entire war, although he likely applauded Scott’s efforts to keep from alienating the Mexican populace.

Ultimately, Scott determined to approach Mexico City from the south around and through the Pedregal lava field, believed by Santa Anna to be impassible to an army and its trains. Hill mentioned walking the rocky Pedregal but complained mostly about the hot days and rainy nights which left the roads like quagmires. On August 19, Twiggs’s Division drew the task of attacking an enemy fort at the town of Padierna, at the southwest corner of the Pedregal and along a major road into Mexico City, while the other divisions proceeded north toward Churubusco. Hill wrote that General Gideon Pillow took command of Twiggs’s forces and ordered Riley’s brigade, including the 4th Artillery, to move around the flank of the fort and cut off the garrison from reinforcements in Mexico City, while he conducted a demonstration in front. Thus began Hill’s running criticism of Pillow’s skills as a general. Pillow, a Tennessee planter and lawyer, gained division command through his friendship with President Polk. His decision to bombard a well defended fortification with field guns—as usual, the Americans lacked heavy artillery—drew Hill’s ridicule. “Human stupidity can

⁶⁶ *War Diary*, 107.

go no farther than this,” Hill declared, adding, “Sage general, the Army appreciates you if the Country does not.”⁶⁷

Riley and his unit encountered Mexican cavalry as it moved around Padierna but held them off, and moved into an orchard to escape detection from a relief column coming from Mexico City. While the general officers decided how to deal with the two different threats, Riley’s brigade marched and countermarched, finally settling in a ravine behind the fort, from which they attacked in the early morning hours of August 20. Hill reported that the enemy was not surprised, but their defenses were still incomplete, and the 4th Artillery quickly stormed the hill. “Cannon now opened upon us, charged with grape and canister, but owing to the fright of the gunners did but little injury,” he later wrote.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, artillery fire killed the color bearer and damaged the regimental colors, and the unit suffered thirty-seven casualties, fourteen of them from Hill’s company. Interestingly, although most of his company was composed of new recruits, Hill attributed their high casualty rate to their heroism, not lack of experience or other shortcomings, implying that raw troops could perform well under trained and experienced regular officers. The regiment also recaptured two guns previously lost at the Battle of Buena Vista, and Hill claimed to have captured three Mexican guns. At this point, the rest of Twiggs’s Division and part of Pillow’s met the fleeing Mexicans and blocked their retreat. Thus ended the Battle of Contreras, named for the town a few miles south of Padierna. Hill received a brevet promotion to captain for the bravery he exhibited at this battle.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *War Diary*, 111.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 111-113; Cullum, *Biographical Register*, 135; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 293-295.

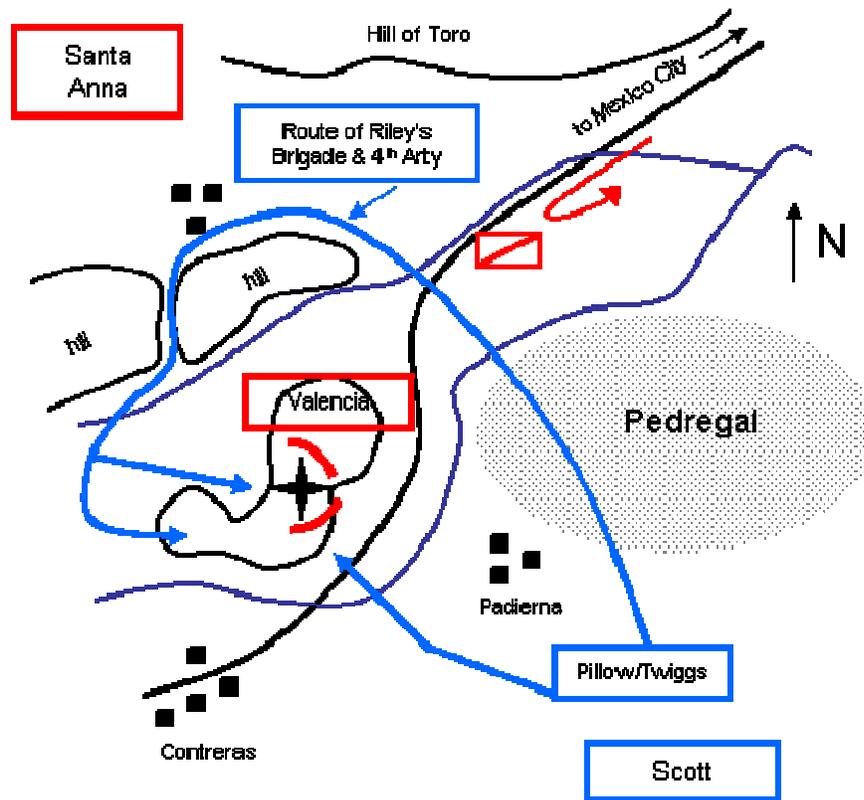


Figure 2. The Battle of Contreras, August 20, 1847

There was no doubt in Hill’s mind that nothing in the war to date had been “so brilliant as the storming of the heights of Contreras . . . I shall always feel proud to have commanded the company which suffered most severely.”⁷⁰ General Scott agreed that the 4th Artillery did well, and complimented the regiment “in the most extravagant manner” on its victory.⁷¹ Contreras is usually paired with the Battle of Churubusco, which took place later on the 20th to the northeast. Hill and his troops did not take part in this fight but observed the movements of Worth’s and Twiggs’s troops from the fort they had just captured. He believed

⁷⁰ *War Diary*, 117.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

the two generals grossly mismanaged the battle through unnecessary frontal attacks because they were rivals who wanted to claim credit for a victory. After the Mexican retreat from Churubusco, General Scott received a request for an armistice from Santa Anna, which became effective for a two month period beginning August 23. “No one seems to have any confidence in the armistice, nor would any of us be surprised at the immediate resumption of hostilities,” Hill wrote on the 24th, anxious that Mexican forces would try to take advantage of an American army low on rations and supplies.⁷²

Army officers were correct to doubt Santa Anna’s intentions, and within a couple of weeks it was clear that he was flouting the terms of the armistice by resupplying his forces and preparing the defenses of Mexico City. The armistice formally ceased to exist on September 7. Hill glumly remarked that the Americans would undoubtedly suffer many more casualties now than if they had continued the fight in the first place. Riley positioned his brigade astride the Nino Perdido causeway on the south side of the city in anticipation of an order to support Worth’s assault of Molino Del Rey to the west. The next morning, Pillow moved the brigade over to support Worth, but the generals never committed it, and Hill and his troops sat out in the broiling sun all day awaiting orders as Mexican artillerists lobbed rounds from the nearby Castle of Chapultepec. Riley finally received permission to move back to his previous position, which the Mexicans had fortified in his absence. “So much for the strategy of Major Genl. Pillow,” Hill wrote.⁷³

Hill’s troubles with Pillow continued. Riley ordered Hill to take his company up the Nino Perdido causeway and drive in the enemy pickets, after which the lieutenant observed a

⁷² *War Diary*, 115.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 123; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 307-311.

strong force anchored by batteries on the high ground. One of Riley's aides ordered Hill to withdraw, while one of Pillow's aides ordered him to stay until he was relieved by another company. According to Hill, he did not believe Pillow to be in his chain of command and "of course obeyed the orders of the veteran Riley rather than those of an ignorant puppy."⁷⁴ The situation then got ugly. Hill described what happened next:

Genl. Pillow used harsh and insulting language to me for disobeying his order, and I thereupon shook my sword at him and peremptorily forbade him to use such language again. He then arrested me and I immediately reported the fact to Col. Riley who interested himself about me and the Genl. *magnanimously* released me and retracted his offensive language.⁷⁵

The sight of a young lieutenant dressing down a superior officer, and ultimately getting away with it, must have been quite something for the troops who witnessed this encounter. Hill saw nothing wrong with his conduct. He probably would never have behaved that way toward General Worth, whom he increasingly despised, because Worth was a regular. Despite the fact that Pillow appears to have given him a lawful order as a superior officer, Hill did not feel inclined to obey. His mind was already made up in regards to Pillow's ability, so when the general used "harsh and insulting language," Hill took even more offense. Whatever Pillow said, he insulted Hill's honor, and if this was done in front of an audience, the lieutenant would have been mortified and even more inclined to clear his name. Likewise, Pillow needed to protect his honor and military rank by arresting Hill. Riley played the role of mediator between the two men and evidently convinced Pillow to concede, since Hill made a point of saying he took back what he said. This episode had its parallels in civilian society, but the difference here was that a war was going on, and all three knew they had more important business with which to attend.

⁷⁴ *War Diary*, 123.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

After his release from arrest, Hill rejoined his soldiers on picket as senior leaders finalized plans for the assault on Mexico City. On the 12th, Twiggs's Division served as a diversion for the main attack on Chapultepec by conducting a demonstration along the Nino Perdido causeway. Hill assessed the operation as unsuccessful because Twiggs kept the infantry largely concealed and the American artillery was too small to contest their Mexican counterparts. Meanwhile, the other U.S. forces damaged Chapultepec but failed to breach the thick, tall walls, prompting General Scott to decide to send storming parties in advance of a general assault on the fortress. He asked Twiggs for thirteen officers and 250 men to complement a similar force from Worth's Division. Hill promptly volunteered for the duty along with thirty soldiers from the 4th Artillery. Officers were promised brevet promotions and NCOs the chance to rise in the ranks or become second lieutenants, along with permanent mention on the regimental rolls and pecuniary incentives. The men drew scaling ladders and pick axes, then after dark moved into position within range of the fort's guns.⁷⁶

The morning of September 13, Hill's column approached Chapultepec from the main road while the column from Worth's Division moved against the rear. Most of the defenders trained their guns on the obvious target to their front; in addition, the Mexicans posted batteries along the road. The commander of Hill's column fell wounded, and his successor attempted to lead the men to the left of the lower batteries to capture them, but the force became disorganized and had to fall back and regroup. The Marines assisting the Army forces also fell back in confusion when their commander was killed. Hill's column rallied, charged down the road again, and "drove the Mexicans before [them] with great slaughter."⁷⁷

⁷⁶ *War Diary*, 125-126.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.

The attackers met up with the other column, which had already hoisted the American flag inside the castle. The storming parties together swept and cleared Chapultepec, and enemy forces that escaped were greeted outside the walls by fire from several volunteer regiments.

Hill described the chaos and his role in it:

The havoc among the Mexicans was now horrible in the extreme. Pent up between two fires they had but one way to escape and all crowded toward it like a flock of sheep. . . Our men were shouting “give no quarter to the treacherous scoundrels” and as far as I could observe none was asked by the Mexicans. I collected my little party and for more than a mile was far in advance of all our troops in the chase of the enemy. They frequently formed across the road, but a few well directed shots from my little party put them promptly to flight again. ‘Tis a sublime and exalted feeling that which we experienced whilst chasing some five thousand men with but little more than a dozen.⁷⁸

Hill detached himself from the activities going on inside Chapultepec, although appearing to agree with actions taken against the Mexican soldiers. As at Monterrey, he experienced a feeling of exhilaration chasing down the enemy and succumbed to a romanticization of the incident as he wrote about it in his diary the next day. He confidently declared the Battle of Chapultepec to be “the most brilliant operation of the whole war.”⁷⁹

Hill believed that the Mexicans lost because of their repeated defeats and guilt over breaking the terms of the armistice, while the Americans were victorious in all major engagements and held the moral high ground. In addition, he was proud that he and his soldiers led the charge down the causeway and insinuated that they, though small in numbers, were more honorable than the thousands of retreating Mexicans. Although horrific and sometimes marred by the mistakes of commanders and volunteers, this was the glorious war in which Hill hoped to participate. Synthesizing his beliefs and everything he learned during his deployment, he framed the fight for Mexico City as an event that would determine the

⁷⁸ *War Diary*, 126.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 127; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 316-318.

future reputation of each belligerent's army. By extension, Hill wanted to contribute to and share in an honorable victory because he felt this helped define him as a man. The quest for honor drove him to volunteer for the dangerous task of storming Chapultepec. Indeed, as promised, he was promoted to brevet major because of his recognized actions.

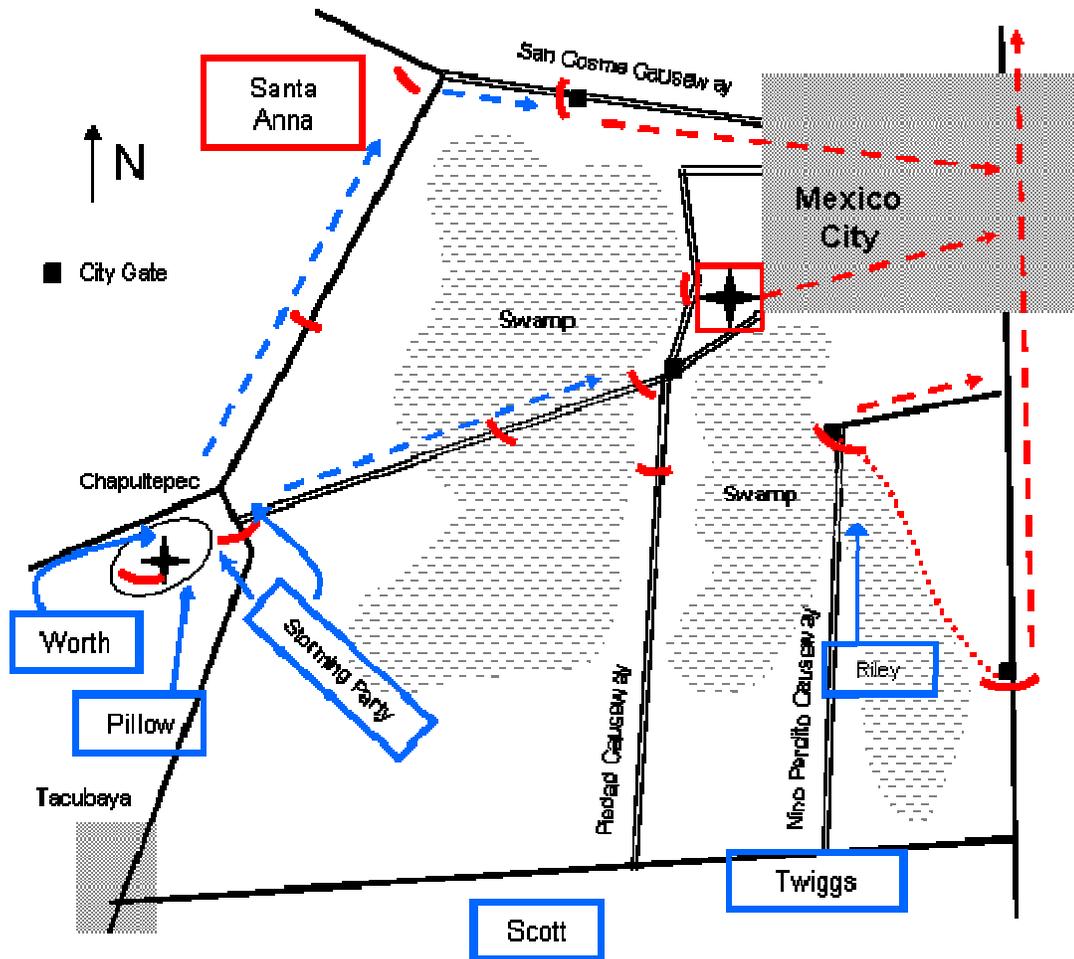


Figure 3. Battle of Chapultepec, September 12-13, 1847

The fight for Mexico City did not end at the castle; Scott's army literally knocked on the gates of the capital within a few hours of the fall of Chapultepec. The Mexicans put up a

stout defense, and Hill described how one of his sister units lost most of its key leaders to indirect fire as well as the failure of the new infantry recruits to support the battery. Early on September 14, the soldiers received word of the city's capitulation, although Santa Anna had escaped with most of his army to the north. Hill marched with his brigade into the city center at 7 AM. As the residents stared at the American formations, shots rang out a few blocks away. For the next two days, Mexican resisters sniped at U.S. troops, who responded by firing artillery at armed crowds and moving house to house to flush out anyone who was armed. The pacification efforts seemed to work but Hill reported that they "corrupted our men most fearfully. Many of them were perfectly frantic with the lust of blood and plunder."⁸⁰ The Americans were also disappointed to find their quarters in the National Palace overcrowded and dirty, and their expectations of comfortable lodging in the "Halls of the Montezumas" dashed. As the army spread out throughout the city and military leaders instituted martial law, the street fighting diminished and the overcrowding eased in the makeshift barracks. Hill commended Major General John A. Quitman, a lawyer in civilian life whom Scott appointed Military Governor of the City, for restoring order and calm to the streets which enabled civil servants to resume their duties and merchants to reopen their stores by the 18th. Within days he visited the reopened Cathedral and the University of Mexico Museum, where a caretaker showed him several Aztec artifacts and explained their significance, a cultural immersion Hill genuinely enjoyed. Despite these improvements, he noted that the Americans were in fact very isolated, with Scott having cut off his regular

⁸⁰ *War Diary*, 128-129.

communications with Vera Cruz weeks before and Santa Anna still at large with several thousand troops.⁸¹

For the next three months, Hill often found himself in charge of his regiment because illness and other duties took his superior officers away. Occupation duty could be very boring, and as Officer of the Guard he often had to deal with as many rowdy regulars as volunteers. Every few days, he recorded in his diary his observations about Mexican politics and treaty negotiations; he also continued to interact with citizens and visit local sites of interest. The security situation remained tenuous, as guerrilla bands roamed the countryside and cities sniping at American troops. In fact, the 4th Artillery regimental commander applied to take the unit back to Vera Cruz for safer duty, but Hill and his comrades protested the move. “I feel it to be a disgrace,” he wrote, referring to the prospect as an exile.⁸² As usual, Hill did not want to be removed from the action, and he was ashamed that a regular army unit would give up its post. The appeal carried and the regiment remained in Mexico City.

Hill continued to express his disappointment in many of the general officers. He criticized Scott for stooping to the level of Pillow and Worth when the three engaged in a very public feud over who deserved the most credit for taking Mexico City, calling the commanding general “a very small man.”⁸³ When Scott offered a toast to West Point at a dinner attended by high ranking officers, most of whom were Polk appointees, Hill predicted that the same men who echoed the sentiment would go back to the U.S. and bash the regulars and the Academy. In December, Scott ordered a reorganization of the army that intermixed

⁸¹ *War Diary*, 129-131.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 143.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 145.

regular and volunteer regiments, “to the infinite disgust of us of the old Army,” in Hill’s words.⁸⁴ The last straw for Hill was Scott’s official report of the August 1847 battles. “Genl. Scott in his conversations here is free to acknowledge that but for the Military Academy he could have effected nothing,” Hill lamented, “But seeking popularity, in his Report he has lavished praise most profusely on raw levies and Volunteers who he knew did not merit it.”⁸⁵ His sense of justice injured, Hill became further jaded about the prospects of the Regular Army and his role in it.

Hill spent his last months in Mexico commanding an artillery section assigned to the 9th Infantry and conducting counterinsurgency operations north of the capital. He started to get more letters and newspapers from home and was able to keep up with national politics and strategy, but his morale sunk lower and lower. On January 7, 1848, he wrote:

I am daily more and more disgusted with the Service and anxious to leave it. After four years of hardship at West Point I entered the Army and have now served nearly six years faithfully and well, and yet I am still a Lieutenant and every day subject to orders of men absolutely without military knowledge and without any experience whatever. . . Our most glorious President has done all that man could do to outrage the feelings and destroy the morale of the Old Army.⁸⁶

Hill particularly resented the appointment of West Point dropouts as his superiors and the fact that they entered service at the rank they would have been entitled to had they stayed in. In addition, the Mexican papers printed articles about the dissention in the U.S. Congress over the outcome of the war, and Hill warned, not unreasonably, that Mexican citizens would rise up in resistance as a result of American political vulnerability. Polk’s decision to recall General Scott in February after the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo was signed also appeared to

⁸⁴ *War Diary*, 147 and 149.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 158-159.

Hill to be a bad sign. More kindly disposed to Scott than a few months before, Hill blamed Pillow for the move, saying he was trying to get revenge for the previous controversy between the two men.⁸⁷ Everywhere it seemed that leaders were behaving solely according to political motives and not for the good of the Army. Hill clearly had no faith anymore in the institution that employed him.

In early March 1848, Hill returned to Mexico City for the last time. Influenced by disturbing news from home that his mother was sick, he applied to Scott's replacement, General William Butler, for a leave of absence. Hill had previously asked to be assigned to the Recruiting Service in the U.S. to be near Nancy Hill but evidently his request was denied beyond his brigade chain of command. He carried to Mexico City the request for leave of absence endorsed by his infantry commander in which he emphasized his mother's illness and anxiety over her son's deployment.⁸⁸ Butler initially refused the application, and Hill replied by tendering his resignation; the lieutenant indicated in his request that he would take this step if higher denied his leave. The general at first accepted this, then changed his mind and gave Hill the leave of absence. Unhappily for Hill, he traveled to Vera Cruz with a volunteer regiment whose men spent the nights randomly shooting their weapons into the air and days foraging the countryside. He also passed familiar sites like Cerro Gordo along the way, allowing him to reminisce about more positive events. Hill reached Vera Cruz on the 19th, and within a week departed for the United States.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ *War Diary*, 167; Bauer, *The Mexican War*, 373-374.

⁸⁸ 1st Lt. D.H. Hill to Capt. H.L. Scott, December 24, 1847, and Hill to Maj. L. Thomas, March 4, 1848, Mexican War, Army of Occupation, Letters Received From Officers (A-K), RG 94, NA.

⁸⁹ *War Diary*, 173-180.

Hill reached Canton, Mississippi sometime around the beginning of April and carried out some administrative duties before departing for home. On April 25 he wrote the Adjutant General's Office for a one month extension of his leave of absence on account of the "delicate state" of Nancy's health, which the Army granted.⁹⁰ By mid June, he was back in Canton awaiting transportation to rejoin the 4th Artillery at Vera Cruz, but he wrote again to the Adjutant General for permission to stay in the continental U.S. Hill argued that the general officer at New Orleans told him it was possible to stay, and that it did not make sense to go back to a sickly region when the regiment would soon redeploy anyway. He did not again want any part of the "bilious fever" of the Mexican lowlands.⁹¹ Given his previous health issues and the redeployment timeline, his argument made sense, although it was a questionable decision for a troop leader to make.

Apparently, Hill got his wish, because there is no record of him returning to Mexico. On the contrary, he spent his time writing another article for the *Southern Quarterly Review*. This submission served as a bookend of sorts to the one he wrote in 1846. He recapped his previous diatribe against Secretary Marcy, again calling his competency into question. Most of the article dealt with the early campaigns of 1846 and blamed Marcy for all of General Taylor's supply and transportation issues. Hill wove in his usual historical references as a foil to highlight Marcy's alleged stupidity, and even praised a previous Secretary of War, Joel Poinsett (a South Carolinian, no less) for introducing the light artillery that performed so well against the Mexicans.⁹² Many things went wrong with the Army of Occupation, but during

⁹⁰ Hill to Gen. R. Jones, April 25, 1848, M567 Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series) 1848, RG 94, NA.

⁹¹ Hill to Gen. R. Jones, June 17, 1848, M567 Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series) 1848, RG 94, NA.

⁹² 'H,' "The Army in Texas—No. 2," *Southern Quarterly Review* XIV, No. XXVII (July 1848): 194.

that time and since, one thing remained steadfast—the American soldier. No matter what hardships they faced on the march, during battle, or on guard duty, and despite an ungrateful public, the regulars did their duty. “We have seen them nobly sustaining [America’s] honor in the hour of peril, and triumphantly unfurling its star spangled banner over the city of its foes,” Hill concluded, and they possessed the same spirit “as in that fearless band that battled for their altars and their firesides in the dark days of seventy-six.”⁹³ No one could take their honor away from them.

Harvey Hill could not understand how and why American politicians and the public could not do right by their military. He took as a personal insult the conditions he and his soldiers endured in Mexico; to his methodical mind, there was no excuse for the lack of planning and preparation. To appoint amateurs who had barely or never served in the Army added insult to injury. Because of his experiences during the Mexican War, Hill decided to resign his commission. He felt unappreciated by the American public, political leaders, and even some generals. Several years later, he would have similar complaints about the Confederacy. Hill saw issues in black and white; there were no shades of gray in between. Believing so strongly and emotionally in certain notions and concepts, he defended them to the utmost against incompetency and hypocrisy. Accordingly, Hill did not view his arguments as contradictory or insubordinate but rather as a natural response to perceived or actual injury, in this case to soldierly duty and honor. The Mexican War, however, was not the only event that drove Hill out of the Army; an encounter in the spring of 1848 spurred him to rejoin civilian life and embark on a new and potentially more rewarding career.

⁹³ ‘H,’ “The Army in Texas—No. 2,” *Southern Quarterly Review* XIV, No. XXVII (July 1848): 197.

CHAPTER III

“UNSOUGHT PRIMACY:” HILL IN THE CLASSROOM¹

When Brevet Major Harvey Hill was on leave of absence from the Army in the spring of 1848, he visited a married sister in Lincoln County, North Carolina. While there he met the family of the Reverend Robert Hall Morrison, the well-known Presbyterian cleric who served as the first president of nearby Davidson College, founded in 1837. The Reverend Morrison had several daughters, and the oldest, Isabella, caught Hill’s eye. She was known as a local belle, having been introduced to society in Raleigh, was well educated, and was the niece of William A. Graham, governor of North Carolina and soon-to-be secretary of the U.S. Navy and later Confederate senator. Apparently Nancy Hill had misgivings about Isabella, believing her to be “haughty,” but Harvey courted her through the summer, and the two married at the Morrison residence on November 2, 1848. Serving as one of Hill’s best men was John Gibbon, West Point Class of 1847 graduate and fellow artilleryman. Born in Philadelphia, Gibbon grew up in Charlotte and stayed with the U.S. Army during the Civil War while three of his brothers joined the Confederacy. Ironically, the two friends would face off at South Mountain, Maryland fourteen years later, when Gibbon commanded the Union’s Iron Brigade.²

¹ Quoted in Dr. Henry E. Shepherd, “Gen. D.H. Hill: A Character Study,” in *Confederate Veteran* 25 (September 1917): 411.

² Hal Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961/Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991) 23; Declaration of Widow for Pension, January 18, 1890, Application # 8659, Case Files of Mexican War Pension Applications, Record Group 15: Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, 1773-2007, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.; Dennis S. Lavery and Mark H.

Hill claimed the main reason he wanted to leave the military was to shield Isabella from the hardships of Army life, but disillusionment with the service as expressed during his deployment was a big factor as well. For several months he made it clear to many officers that he intended to resign, but according to his regimental commander, Lieutenant Colonel J.L. Gardner, he never submitted a formal request. Hill had returned to Fort Monroe with the 4th Artillery, where he took command of Company M in September 1848; the Adjutant General's office also forwarded him his brevet promotion paperwork that month. Within a few weeks he requested a leave of absence for his wedding. According to notes made by Adjutant General (Colonel) Roger Jones, his office granted this leave on October 21, and then extended it per Hill's request until February 21, 1849. During this time Hill moved forward in establishing a new life for himself and his wife in Lexington, Virginia. Whether he thought he had formally resigned or was taking advantage of War Department bureaucracy is unclear, but in either case his commander did not appreciate his actions. By April, Gardner noted that Hill had been on leave for fourteen out of the past sixteen months and was in fact absent without leave from February 21 to 28, 1849, even drawing pay for that period. Finally in May Jones wrote Hill to tell him he still needed to formally resign; the major submitted his resignation letter and became a civilian again effective February 28, 1849.³

Jordan, *Iron Brigade General: John Gibbon, A Rebel in Blue* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 14. Most of the Morrison girls married future Confederate generals, the most famous being Mary Anna Morrison, Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's second wife.

³ D.H. Hill to Gen. R. Jones, September 11, 1848; LTC J.L. Gardner to Jones, April 27, 1849; Hill to Jones, May 18, 1849, M567 Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General (Main Series) 1848 and 1849; Returns from Fourth Artillery Regiment, September 1848-May 1849, M727 Fourth Regiment: Jan. 1841-Dec. 1850, Returns from the Regular Army Artillery Regiments, Jun. 1821-Jan 1901, all in Record Group 94: Records of the Adjutant General's Office, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. Jones made administrative notes pertaining to his correspondence with Hill on the May letter. Gardner told Jones he was

In the meantime, Hill applied to Washington College (now known as Washington and Lee) in Lexington for a position as a mathematics instructor. He also applied at the adjacent college, the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), and was assisted in this endeavor by none other than John C. Calhoun, former Secretary of War and senator from South Carolina, Hill's home state. In a letter to Colonel Francis Smith, commandant of VMI, Calhoun wrote that he did not know Hill personally but could recommend him for a position based on what he had heard about the young army officer and his grandfather's reputation as an "ardent Whig."⁴ Calhoun's father had been good friends with Billy Hill; the letter demonstrated that there were still ties between Carolina families based on the late colonial period. Although VMI decided not to hire Hill, he got better acquainted with other Army veterans on the Institute's staff, notably Major Thomas J. Jackson, fellow alum of the Chapultepec assault. Hill's oldest daughter, Eugenia, later remembered how Jackson helped her exhausted parents by staying up with her one night and nursing her through her bout of pneumonia. Isabella also introduced Jackson to her younger sister Mary Anna after the deaths of his first wife and daughter. Eugenia had many fond memories of time spent with her aunt and new uncle before the Civil War.⁵

As Chair of Mathematics at Washington College, Hill was responsible for teaching and designing courses from algebra to calculus. A former student of Hill's, Clement Fishburne, later described the major (as he was still called), his challenges and his strengths as a teacher to son D.H. Hill, Jr. Fishburne remembered Harvey as a man of slight build, "of

aware that Hill wrote other officers in the regiment saying that he had resigned sometime prior to February 1849.

⁴ John C. Calhoun to Col. Francis Smith, October 22, 1848, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, NCSA).

⁵ Eugenia Hill Arnold, "Confederate Generals whom I have known" (1933?), Jackson-Arnold Collection, Russell-Arnold Archives, Presbyterian College; Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 25.

serious aspect,” and careless in dress considering his background as a West Pointer and a war hero. He was “somewhat ‘rusty’” on the subject of mathematics and had to work hard to prepare his lessons for his students; Fishburne believed Hill would have rather studied and taught literature.⁶ He balanced these shortcomings, however, with a flair for instruction:

[Hill] had the rare faculty of interesting his pupils and of compelling them to use their faculties, often it seemed unconsciously, in a manner that surprised themselves. He made constant use of the black-board and his methods of teaching compelled his pupils not only to comprehend the subject under discussion but to learn to elucidate and explain it themselves. He taught them to teach and many very successful teachers have traced their success to him. His influence on his classes was always good, for he trusted them and taught them to despise any indirectness and unmanliness in their behavior. He was regarded as strictly impartial and very generous in recognizing and encouraging any originality and unusual ability among his pupils.⁷

Fishburne’s comments described well Hill’s conceptions of duty and honor. Although math was not his forté, Hill disciplined himself to learn the material and during instruction relied on his ability to communicate and relate to students. Borrowing teaching methods from USMA, Hill strove to encourage intellect while inculcating sound morals, values, and responsibility. These were the traits he believed his students, like himself, needed to be able to be successful in life. Over the next ten years, he began to develop specific ideas about educating a particular segment of young Southern men.

While in Lexington, Isabella gave birth to three children: Robert Hall Morrison, Eugenia, and Randolph. Although Hill enjoyed a stable family and social life, he was not completely happy at Washington College. He admitted to an Army friend, as Fishburne independently discerned, that math was not his best subject and that he sometimes struggled

⁶ Clement D. Fishburne to D.H. Hill, Jr., February 8, 1890, 1-2, Daniel Harvey Hill, Jr. Papers, North Carolina State Archives (hereafter cited as Fishburne).

⁷ Fishburne, 2-3.

to master the lessons. Already in December 1850, he told the same friend that he wanted to leave the school.⁸ He was unsatisfied with the pay and housing provided which was barely adequate for his growing family, and at some point he filed a complaint with the Board of Trustees. The Board responded that they believed they had acted “in accordance with his wishes” on the subject.⁹ Hill resigned in May 1854 to assume the chair of mathematics at Davidson College to which he had been nominated the previous August. Nevertheless, he publicly stated that he left an institution and locale known for its “warm-hearted, generous, hospitable people,” where the Board of Trustees invested confidence in him and the students consistently treated him with courtesy and respect.¹⁰

The move to Davidson enabled Hill and his wife to be closer to both of their families and, in his words, “to labor in a College, founded in the prayers, and by the liberality of Presbyterians,” his life-long church.¹¹ It also gave him a greater role in the day-to-day administration of a school and proved to be a case study of sorts for Hill’s ideas about reforming higher education. In fact, Hill was hired largely to turn Davidson College around from a precipitous decline in academic standards and discipline. Despite the religious roots of the college, it was not uncommon for students to start riots and damage school property when they disagreed with faculty actions. Fishburne, who followed Hill to Davidson in 1855, described a lax atmosphere in which students circumvented a plan to start a model farm by

⁸ Hill to John W. Phelps, July 19, 1849 and December 18, 1850, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁹ Extract from Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Washington College, July 6, 1854, Hill Papers, NCSA.

¹⁰ Washington College resolutions, May 9, 1854, Hill Papers, NCSA; Davidson College Board of Trustees Minutes, August 10, 1853, Davidson College Archives, Davidson College; D.H. Hill, *College Discipline: An Inaugural Address Delivered at Davidson College, N.C., on the 28th February 1855* (Salisbury: The Watchman Office, 1855), 3.

¹¹ Hill, *College Discipline*, 4.

throwing all of the necessary tools down the local wells.¹² While still in Lexington in the fall of 1853, Hill evidently forwarded suggestions to the Davidson faculty on how to correct some of the disciplinary problems at the school. In November the body voted to approve his ideas and recommended them to the Board of Trustees.¹³ Most of the Trustees wanted to correct the problems and supported Hill's appointment as professor. When he arrived on campus in 1854, he immediately locked horns with the popular college president and sitting mathematics chair, the Reverend Samuel Williamson, but the majority of the Board backed Hill and Williamson resigned.¹⁴

Perhaps Hill had Dennis Hart Mahan of West Point in mind when he went about his duties, and there was no doubt that he modeled the educational and disciplinary system at Davidson after that at USMA. Hill used money appropriated by the Trustees to hire Fishburne as professor of natural philosophy and astronomy, scientific subjects taught at West Point.¹⁵ He proceeded to lay out rules for grading and demerit systems, which involved penalties for such acts as missing class, being drunk, and dressing improperly in Chapel. The faculty was even given the authority to conduct unannounced inspections of students' rooms. Predictably, the student body, roughly ninety strong and still resentful of Williamson's ouster, pushed back against the new policies. Hill and his colleagues awoke in the middle of the night several days before Christmas 1854 to find students throwing eggs and rocks at professors' houses. He rushed from his house on the outskirts of campus into the middle of the melee, allegedly waving his Mexican War service sword at the rowdy students. He and

¹² Fishburne, 6-7.

¹³ Davidson College Faculty Minutes, November 2, 1853, Davidson College Archives.

¹⁴ Fishburne, 7-8; Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 24.

¹⁵ Hill's first choice for the position was another former student and Fishburne's cousin, Robert Massie, who was unable to accept the appointment.

the other three faculty members dispersed the crowd but followed the students to their dorms where they did bed checks to see who had participated in the riot. Hill, bleeding from where a rock struck him in the head, chopped through a locked door with an ax to find one of the alleged perpetrators in bed with his boots still on. In the following days, after the faculty suspended the young man for leading the riot, over 50 percent of the student body walked out of class in protest.¹⁶

Fishburne recalled how when he arrived at Davidson in January 1855, very few of the students had returned after Christmas break. Nonetheless, Hill's agenda prevailed. Although the student body remained small during the spring semester, the Board of Trustees took the opportunity to hire a new president and faculty, and by the fall of 1855 some of the old students returned and many new ones arrived on campus.¹⁷ This purge convinced a wealthy benefactor to contribute over \$250,000 to the college—at that time the largest bequest ever to a southern school—which further reinforced the Trustees' support of Hill. By 1858, new students and visitors commented on the level of control this one professor exercised over the school. James Ratchford entered Davidson that fall and soon learned from the other boys that Hill was “the controlling spirit in the institution” and was believed to be nearly omniscient when it came to bad behavior and guilt, thereby inducing the culprits to come to him and

¹⁶ Dan L. Morrill, “Daniel Harvey Hill: The Pre-Civil War Years,” Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission (accessed at <http://www.cmhpf.org/educationhill.htm>), 13-14, 17-18; Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 24. Chalmers Davidson, professor of history at Davidson in the 1960s, expressed doubt about the sword-waving incident in his review of Bridges' book. Both Morrill and Bridges rely on the Davidson College faculty minutes and Fishburne's reminiscence. Whatever the truth, we know from these sources that Hill acted decisively in breaking up the riot, in a manner consistent with his personality and military training. See Chalmers Davidson, “Lee's ‘Maverick General’ Was a Gifted Pessimist,” *Charlotte Observer* (December 3, 1961).

¹⁷ Fishburne, 16-18.

confess all before confronted by him.¹⁸ Another student, Henry Shepherd, described Hill's position as one of "unsought primacy."¹⁹

Like Fishburne, Ratchford identified with Hill and became good friends with him, following him to his next school and serving on his general staff during the Civil War. He agreed that Hill had the ability to "draw out what a boy knew" and assist him in articulating his thoughts to others. At the same time, Hill's demeanor did not signal approachability or familiarity, and Ratchford conceded that his mentor could appear "cold and indifferent."²⁰ One unmistakable characteristic of the major was his religiosity. "It was a steady, unswerving faith that never seemed to fluctuate," Ratchford wrote years later, "such as took God at His word and believed He was perfect in all His attributes. The same on the battlefield as at home...I never knew such faith as his."²¹

Hill codified his thoughts on the intersection of higher education and religion in "College Discipline," an address he delivered before Davidson's Board of Trustees in February 1855 at the height of the post-Christmas riot crisis. This is the same speech in which he proclaimed his great love for South Carolina. He expressed his desire to work at a place that balanced intellectual and religious pursuits. "To educate the head and leave the heart untouched, is to increase the capacity of the scholar for evil,--to make him tenfold more the child of hell than before," Hill said, citing the strengths and weaknesses of the proponents

¹⁸ Jennifer Fernandez, "Chambers - The Old and the New," *Davidson Encyclopedia* (October 2003), <http://library.davidson.edu/archives/ency/chamb.asp>; James W. Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., 1890, pg. 1, original in D.H. Hill, Jr. Papers, typescript in D.H. Hill Papers, NCSA. All citations and page numbers are from the typescript version. Wealthy North Carolinian Maxwell Chambers donated the money in 1856, and the college used it to build a grand new academic building named after him.

¹⁹ Shepherd, "Gen. D.H. Hill: A Character Sketch" in *Confederate Veteran* 25 (September 1917): 411. *Confederate Veteran* published Shepherd's reminiscences in the July, August, and September 1917 issues.

²⁰ Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., pg. 1-2, Hill Papers, NCSA.

²¹ Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., pg. 2, Hill Papers, NCSA.

of the French Revolution as proof.²² The main problem with young men at mid-century, he felt, was that their elders indulged them and encouraged them to grow up too soon. In sum, they had no sense of self-discipline; these were the very boys who showed up at Davidson expecting to get their way with the faculty. On the other hand, a young man who had been brought up from birth to respect his parents' authority and the truths of the Bible, and "has learned that subordination to government does not involve meanness and cowardice, will be distinguished by a manly, an upright and an honorable deportment through the whole of his College career."²³ Essentially Hill was talking about himself. He allowed for boys to be boys and to test the system, as he had done at West Point, but good upbringing and/or molding through schooling would ensure the "*sober second thought will be right.*"²⁴ His statement also helps explain how he was able throughout his life to reconcile his sense of duty to a military organization or collegiate institution with an unabashed tendency to critically evaluate and even question those in authority. This tension between submission to duty and voicing his opinions challenged Hill throughout his life. Indeed, it is inherent in the military of a republic, and members of the U.S. military continue to deal with the tension. In Hill's case the tension was not only a product of his military service but his upbringing, and instead of shying away from the challenge he embraced it.

"College Discipline" was essentially Hill's blueprint for saving Davidson, and because the school still fell under the jurisdiction of an active religious denomination, he felt more positive and lasting good would be accomplished there as opposed to secular state

²² Hill, *College Discipline*, 4.

²³ Hill, *College Discipline*, 9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; italics are Hill's.

universities which were infected by “diluted christianity [sic].”²⁵ Where parents failed, faculty and the college president were supposed to step in and provide the discipline missing in a young man’s life. Most colleges in the U.S. at that time were pass/fail, but Hill believed along with other educators that instituting a grading system raised standards of scholarship by creating incentive for the average students who might otherwise see no point in applying themselves. He could point to many schools which applied this system with success, including West Point. Hill intended the demerit system to work in conjunction with grades and faculty supervision to impress upon the individual student and their parents the penalty for vice and delinquency. The other key component of his system was student self-governance. Again drawing on the USMA model, Hill insisted on treating students as adults; faculty were not to go looking for trouble. Instead, the student body should be able to police itself, applying pressure to those who did wrong and thereby maintaining the common interest.²⁶

While Hill’s efforts to impose a military school-style administrative system may at times have been overzealous and seemingly unrealistic for a civilian college in rural North Carolina, his motives were sincere and his ideas progressive for nineteenth-century Southern educators. The boys who attended small colleges like Davidson and Washington were typically from the local area and of middling means, similar to the population that attended West Point and the Southern military schools. These young men, with few exceptions, were not of the elite class nor destined to run plantations. While an admirer of literature and languages, Hill realized that this group needed a practical, scientific education like he had received in order to make a living in professions such as engineering and architecture. It

²⁵ Hill, *College Discipline*, 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 10, 12-13, 15-16.

helped his argument that he could point to graduates of the classical programs at state universities as being more prone to dissolution and sin. Perhaps he also felt the imperative to educate students to cope with the growing national political and economic issues. He did not say as such until much later in life, but a theme he harped on was the difference between northern and southern contributions to the republic. Even though the South produced great politicians and soldiers, it was unappreciated by and could not adequately compete with Northern industries and literature.²⁷ Despite his unhappiness with what he identified as the negative effects of modernization on personal character, he supported scientific advances because he believed the South need to embrace them in order to adapt and survive. Hill recognized that non-elite Southerners needed to be intellectually and morally equipped to operate in this new world, and a scientific-based education would provide the foundation for fairer competition with Northern counterparts. His ideas of the 1850s would be reflected in the post-war rhetoric of the New South.

The Davidson Board of Trustees fully implemented Hill's system and faculty-student relations finally mellowed. He started to invite students over to his house for intellectual conversations and to convince them that teasing or assaulting professors in their quarters was not in their best interest. According to Fishburne, Hill made it clear to students that he would react violently if they showed up at his house, and accordingly he and his family remained undisturbed during his tenure at Davidson.²⁸ He no longer needed to rely on the shotgun he kept in his study for self-defense, although the sight of this probably drove his words home with visiting students even more. As a diversion from teaching and administration, Hill

²⁷ See for example D.H. Hill, "The Old South," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 16 (1888): 423-443.

²⁸ Fishburne, 22.

bought two slaves and a few acres of land north of Davidson and kept a small farm; Fishburne recalled going “possum hunting” one night with his mentor and the slaves.²⁹ Throughout his life, Hill bought and sold parcels of land in Charlotte, where he lived after the Civil War, and in surrounding Mecklenburg County. For someone in the emerging Southern middle class, owning property, including some slaves, would have conveyed a degree of status. He fully concurred with the institution of slavery, which fit into his conception of levels of social and military authority and subordination. Hill continued to hold on to his land and a household servant or two even through bad financial times and when he still had several young children at home.

Hill also kept busy during the Davidson years by writing an algebra textbook and two religious tracts. *Elements of Algebra* (1859) was structured for faculty use with instructions on and examples of problem sets to assign to students. The thoroughness and length of the book (507 pages) reflected Hill’s attention to detail, but many parts are very dry, and it is easy to imagine students’ dread at seeing the text on the professor’s desk. The first page included testimonials from other educators attesting to its value. Brother-in-law Thomas Jackson, blind to any nepotism, proclaimed it “superior to any other work with which I am acquainted on the same branch of science,” and Charles Phillips, professor of civil engineering at the University of North Carolina, concluded that the book was “the product of a mind intensely in love with Algebra.”³⁰ Obviously Hill’s meticulousness hid well his struggles with the subject.

²⁹ Fishburne, 14.

³⁰ Major D.H. Hill, *Elements of Algebra* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1859), iii-iv.

What makes *Algebra* interesting and allows insight into Hill's character and education is the text of selected problem narratives. He worked geography, history, religion and industry into the problems while injecting criticism of topics related to the northern United States, thereby revealing his growing sectionalism. For example, he featured New York and Boston milkmen in problems that required students to calculate how much water was mixed in with the milk, thereby alleging dishonesty. A similar problem asked students to figure out how many wooden nutmegs a Yankee mixed in with real ones given the price of each, the total price charged, and the profit gained by fraud.³¹ Other favorite targets were New England Calvinists and abolitionists whom he considered hypocrites for past and current transgressions. Reaching back into American history, Hill wrote:

In the year 1637, all the Pequod [sic] Indians that survived the slaughter on the Mystic River were either banished from Connecticut, or sold into slavery. The square root of twice the number of survivors is equal to $1/10^{\text{th}}$ that number. What was the number? *Ans.* 200.³²

One final example illustrates that Hill had not forgiven or forgotten what happened in Mexico with the volunteers:

The field of battle at Buena Vista is $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Saltillo. Two Indiana volunteers ran away from the field of battle at the same time; one ran half a mile per hour faster than the other, and reached Saltillo 5 minutes and $54\frac{6}{11}$ seconds sooner than the other. Required their respective rates of travel. *Ans.* 6, and $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles per hour.³³

Ironically, J.B. Lippincott & Company of Philadelphia published the textbook, reflecting the dearth of publishers in the southern states. Fishburne warned Hill that Northern schools might not adopt his textbook because of his political problem sets, to which the major

³¹ Hill, *Algebra*, 120-121, 124. See also Marguerite Gilstrap, "Daniel Harvey Hill, Southern Propagandist," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 2 (1943): 43-50, and Hal Bridges, "D.H. Hill's Anti-Yankee Algebra," *The Journal of Southern History* 22, No. 2 (May 1956): 220-222.

³² Hill, *Algebra*, 318.

³³ *Ibid.*, 322.

“received [his concerns] very pleasantly but suggested that he did not care whether his book was received favorably by the Northern people or not.”³⁴ The book offered an alternative to up-and-coming Southern colleges, military schools, and universities that desired a home-grown text and reflected Hill’s emphasis on the importance of an education grounded in the sciences.

Hill’s religious works, which grew out of his extensive study of the Bible and preparations for Sunday school classes, were titled *A Consideration of the Sermon on the Mount* (1858) and *The Crucifixion of Christ* (1859). He dedicated the first to his deceased sons Morrison and Willie. Morrison was his first born, and Willie died when he was only a year old. Fishburne described Hill as beside himself with grief at the death of Morrison, and that writing his religious commentaries seemed to help him cope with his loss.³⁵ Indeed, in *A Consideration*, Hill took a cue from the gospel of Matthew in declaring that despite earthly feelings, it was certainly God’s will that a child be taken from his parents and spared evil in his life.³⁶ He spent 282 pages explaining and analyzing chapters five through seven of Matthew, often illustrating his points through historical and everyday references. The Beatitudes in particular are very indicative of Hill’s outlook on life. He could expect to be disliked and even persecuted, but if he knew he was right and following God’s plan, then it did not matter. He also abhorred liars, noting that Jesus did not deceive his disciples about the trials before them like false prophets or, significantly, the recruiting sergeant who failed to mention “the hot, weary marches, the dreary night-watches, the mangled limbs, and

³⁴ Fishburne, 12.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁶ Maj. D.H. Hill, *A Consideration of the Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia: William S. & Alfred Martien, 1858), 18, 197.

crushed carcasses of the battle-field.”³⁷ Hill dedicated *The Crucifixion of Christ* to his uncle Dr. John Cabeen, the last surviving family member on his mother’s side. At 345 pages, it comprised an in-depth comparison of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Like many scholars before and since, his purpose was to discern truthfulness and agreement between the narratives. In this endeavor he was satisfied and believed this unsurprising in the end as all four were “controlled and directed by the spirit of God.”³⁸ Hill secured an endorsement in the form of a preface by the Reverend N.L. Rice, a well-known Presbyterian cleric, who praised the layman’s efforts. The Philadelphia firm of William and Alfred Martien published both manuscripts, and *Crucifixion* was represented in London by James Nisbet & Co., meaning Hill gained at least a small audience overseas.³⁹

Meanwhile, down the road in Charlotte, a group of businessmen worked to raise money to open a state military school. Led by a prominent local physician, Dr. Charles J. Fox, the group secured funds from individuals and the city government via public referendum to purchase land on the southern outskirts of town for the North Carolina Military Institute (NCMI). Contractors broke ground on July 31, 1858 for the academic building modeled by the architect after structures at West Point. That year Fox’s group approached Hill about becoming the first superintendent of NCMI.⁴⁰ In accepting the post, Hill had to work within state guidelines, but otherwise had the leeway to mold the institution

³⁷ Hill, *A Consideration*, 19-20.

³⁸ Maj. D.H. Hill, *The Crucifixion of Christ* (Philadelphia: William S. & Alfred Martien, 1859), 344-345.

³⁹ Family tradition had it that Queen Victoria of England owned copies of Hill’s religious texts; see Isabel Arnold notes, January 6, 1970, Isabel Arnold: Lost Dispatch, J-A Collection, Presbyterian.

⁴⁰ Morrill, “The Pre-Civil War Years,” 20. Another military school in North Carolina, the Hillsborough Military Academy (in the town of the same name), opened its doors in January 1859. It started as a private school and did not receive a state charter until 1861. Its first superintendent was Charles C. Tew, who with Hill became the first two commanders of the 1st and 2nd North Carolina Regiments in 1861.

from the ground up. According to youngest son Joseph, Hill took the job because he thought he could be of use in training students for what appeared to be an impending war.⁴¹ In September 1858, he accepted the group's proposal and finished his last year at Davidson while the Institute was built. The Davidson Board of Trustees reluctantly accepted Hill's resignation and expressed its regret at losing "such a pure and high minded Christian gentleman, diligent and untiring student; thorough and ripe scholar, and able faithful, and successful Instructor."⁴²

NCMI was the latest in a procession of state-funded (along with many private) military schools founded in the South since VMI opened its doors in 1839. Historian Jennifer Green estimates that these schools collectively educated more than 11,000 students out of the growing southern middle class. She persuasively argues that this phenomenon helped develop the southern middle class in the years before the Civil War, giving it identity not only as a regional group but as part of the national middle class.⁴³ These military schools provided an environment in which southern boys learned to reconcile the competing impulses of submission and independence. The young men accepted the hierarchical model of the Old South and adjusted or replaced the emphasis on honor, mastery, and wealth with education and self-discipline. Many of them, per the terms of their state-funded education, became teachers at their alma maters or other like institutions, allowing the system to perpetuate itself. In addition, these schools provided the only classes and sometimes degrees in

⁴¹ Joseph M. Hill, *Biography of Daniel Harvey Hill, Lieutenant General, Confederate States of America: Educator, Author, Editor* (Little Rock: Arkansas History Commission, n.d.), 11-12.

⁴² Quoted in Morrill, "The Pre-Civil War Years," 19.

⁴³ Jennifer R. Green, *Military Education and the Emerging Middle Class in the Old South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1-2, 12-13. She also argues that the growth of the Southern military schools says more about the emerging middle class efforts to seek education than simply militarism (pg. 30-31).

engineering available outside of West Point and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and were fairly affordable ways for Southern families with multiple children to educate sons for future careers outside of agriculture and the law.⁴⁴

NCMI, which opened on October 1, 1859, actually consisted of two schools—a “Primary Department” for boys aged twelve to fifteen, and a “Scientific Department” for boys aged fifteen to twenty-one. The first served as the prep school for the second, whose curriculum and disciplinary system were closely modeled after that of USMA. The North Carolina legislature bestowed upon the Scientific School degree-awarding status, and Hill relied upon state funds for arms and equipment for cadet drill and training. As with other state military academies the cadets supplied the guard force for state arms. A veritable “who’s who” of North Carolina politicians comprised the Board of Visitors, including current and future governors John Ellis, Zebulon Vance, and William Holden, along with Hill’s patrons by marriage, the Reverend Robert Morrison and William Graham. James Ratchford, Hill’s student from Davidson, became the ranking cadet and First Sergeant during the 1859-1860 school year. Many South Carolina boys like Ratchford who lived closer to Charlotte than to Columbia or Charleston chose to attend NCMI instead of The Citadel. Naturally, Hill took on the role of mathematics and artillery instructor. His chair and that of the professor of engineering, drawing and architecture were the top posts at the school, and all others were to be filled by lieutenants. Charles Lee, fourth in his West Point Class of 1856, became the new commandant and instructor of chemistry, mineralogy, geology, and infantry tactics. Other subjects taught included natural philosophy, moral and intellectual philosophy, Belles Lettres, and French. Cadets were required to attend non-denominational

⁴⁴ Green, *Military Education*, 100-105; 41 and 195; 144-145.

morning and evening prayer in the Institute's Chapel and on Sundays a morning service and afternoon Bible class.⁴⁵

Dr. Henry Shepherd, who attended both Davidson and NCMI between 1859 and 1860, provided a detailed if sometimes melodramatic description of NCMI's first year for the 1917 installment of *Confederate Veteran* magazine. Hill selected skilled VMI graduates, including Lieutenant James Henry Lane, later a distinguished Confederate brigadier general, to fill instructor positions. Shepherd confirmed that math formed the core of the curriculum and Hill's *Elements of Algebra* the main text. Not particularly strong in the subject, the young cadet voiced his concerns to the superintendent, who replied with sympathy yet firmness, "I have been fighting nature all my life."⁴⁶ Like other observers, Shepherd picked up on Hill's more natural affinity for literature and history through his readings at chapel services. "The Major was a devout believer in the inspiration of the Scriptures," he recalled, "and during his Biblical readings in the chapel he would dwell with earnestness and fervor upon passages which seemed especially adapted to the illustration of their divine origin."⁴⁷

Hill had a lot to celebrate in the fall of 1859. He wrote an acquaintance, likely a bookseller, about his satisfaction at hearing that his *Crucifixion* was already in its second edition. He also expressed confidence about the future of his fledgling school, then seventy cadets strong, and enclosed a list of books he wanted for instruction, including *Hardee's*

⁴⁵ Morrill, "The Pre-Civil War Years," 21; *Catalogue of the Officers and Cadets of the North Carolina Military Institute, Charlotte, N.C. First Session. 1859-60* (Charlotte: 1860), 5, 8, 15-17, and 23, in Daniel Harvey Hill, Carolina Military Institute File, Davidson College Archives. Typically, military academies did not award bachelor's degrees but rather a certificate stating simply "Degree." The North Carolina Legislature, however, enabled NCMI to award bachelor's degrees from its inception: Green, *Military Education*, 5-6.

⁴⁶ Shepherd, "Gen. D.H. Hill: A Character Study," in *Confederate Veteran* 25 (August 1917): 367.

⁴⁷ Shepherd, "Gen. D.H. Hill: A Character Study," in *Confederate Veteran* 25 (September 1917): 412.

Tactics, which was the newest infantry instruction manual of the U.S. Army.⁴⁸ Ever cognizant of growing sectional tension, Hill took every opportunity he could to impress upon his cadets the gravity of their education and training. Three weeks after NCMI opened, news reached the school of John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Hill addressed the cadets in chapel with, in Shepherd's words, "a vehemence and impassioned earnestness such as I never knew him to display" in later crises.⁴⁹ He told the students that it was time "for every Southern man to arm. Unless we assert and maintain our rights, in due season we shall become, like Italy, the football of nations."⁵⁰ Shepherd also claimed that NCMI received some of Brown's confiscated weapons to store in the school armory. In spite of national issues and even in the wake of South Carolina's secession, Hill urged cadets from that state to remain at school and continue studying until the situation developed further.⁵¹

As his school thrived, Hill further refined his views on the usefulness of military education, speaking before the North Carolina Legislature's Committee on Education and publishing a pamphlet on the subject. Hill observed that young men educated at military schools were trained "to come out boldly, and to come out always on the side of law and order."⁵² He did not want them to be indecisive or timid like other men in society. He also advised that "[t]he setting up the man's own conscience as superior to his duty of obedience and as superior to his allegiance to Government is a monstrous evil which military schools

⁴⁸ D.H. Hill to Mr. Martien, October 12, 1859, D.H. Hill Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Library, Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁴⁹ Shepherd, "Gen D.H. Hill: A Character Study," in *Confederate Veteran* 25 (September 1917): 413.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., pg. 2, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁵² Quoted in Green, *Military Education*, 116.

can in a great measure correct.”⁵³ By this point, Hill’s injunction to follow law and order did not refer to that administered by the Federal government, for he believed the government had just about forfeited its authority. Through his remarks and in how he lived, Hill represented what Green and other historians refer to as “restrained manhood,” with an emphasis on industry, morality, and self-discipline, and in his case within a setting tinged with Southern ideals of honor.⁵⁴ His comments would have resonated well with a state government and elite preoccupied with sectional tensions and the question of political support; Hill could at least assure them that they had nothing to fear from a growing segment of the white southern population. Concurrently, Hill’s belief in the supremacy of science mirrored the thinking of many Northern intellectuals. “Science has made the most enlightened people the most formidable in war,” he wrote at the end of the decade, for how else had an outnumbered American force defeated thousands of Mexicans in 1847?⁵⁵ Hill was sold on the effects of American artillery in Mexico, and likewise on the need for civil engineers during peacetime. He did not see scientific progress as incompatible with the Southern way of life.

Like many of his cadets, Hill had trouble harmonizing the impulses of submission and independence. Perhaps a vignette from a former student says it best. While at NCMI in April 1860 Shepherd got into a fight with another cadet in the dining hall. Both were censured and brought before the faculty and superintendent. Hill admonished Shepherd for behaving in a way unbecoming to a church member, upon which the cadet at length explained how the “provocation” had been so bad that he could not let the matter pass. The major reflected on

⁵³ Quoted in Green, *Military Education*, 116.

⁵⁴ Green, *Military Education*, 101. See also Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁵⁵ D.H. Hill, “Fellow Citizens,” undated manuscript, Hill Papers, NCSA.

what the young man said, and declared, “Well, I think it highly probable that in the same circumstances I should have done the same myself.”⁵⁶ Shepherd, an unabashed admirer of Hill, probably embellished the story years after the fact, but his comments nonetheless reveal that Hill was acutely aware of how difficult it was to reconcile the tension between restraint and the desire to speak out and avenge honor. Ironically, he was not unlike Northern evangelicals in his preference for self-discipline, a fact he would not have cared to admit. His strong sense of right and wrong, coupled with devotion to duty, sometimes came into conflict with his need to protect his honor. Within a couple of years, he would find himself trying to balance these competing tendencies within himself during the most stressful time of his and of the nation’s life.

⁵⁶ Shepherd, “Gen. D.H. Hill: A Character Study,” in *Confederate Veteran* 25 (July 1917): 307.

CHAPTER IV

AN OLD HAND AT DODGING BULLETS: SECESSION, BIG BETHEL, AND WILLIAMSBURG

Harvey Hill observed the growing sectional turbulence and the secession of South Carolina with grim determination. With an eye to the future while fulfilling his role as manager of one of North Carolina's arsenals, he wrote to two friends in December 1860 inquiring about obtaining muskets and rifled cannon. Benjamin Huger, one of the foremost ordnance officers in the antebellum U.S. Army, told Hill that he feared South Carolina had seceded too fast but hoped public opinion supporting resistance to the Federal government would prevail. West Point classmate Theodore Laidley, who continued in the U.S. Army as an ordnance officer through the Civil War and beyond, indicated that he was sorry that "the necessity exists for such information, but the South must be prepared."¹

The full extent of Hill's wrath as well as fully developed sectional world view may be gleaned from a letter, probably to his publisher, Alfred Martien, on January 15, 1861. The two had been talking politics in previous letters. Hill wrote, in response to current events, "I have told you all along that our people would not submit to Black Republican rule."² He seems to have had John Brown's aborted raid in mind as he continued:

¹ Benjamin Huger to D.H. Hill, December 29, 1860, and Theodore T.J. Laidley to Hill, December 31, 1860, D.H. Hill Papers, 1860-1888, Library of Virginia, Richmond (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, LOV).

² D.H. Hill to "My Dear Friend," January 15, 1861, Kynett Book—C.S.A. Officers: Portraits and Original Autograph Letters and Documents, Jan. 1858-May 1869, Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter cited as Kynett Book, Brockenbrough Library, MOC).

We will not have a party to reign over us, who have sought in every way in their power to foment insurrection & murder. If you had lain down night after night, as I have done expecting to be aroused by the mobs incited by this most infernal party: if you had contemplated as often as I have done the butchery of wife and children through the agency of these same fiends, you would not wonder at our determination to die rather than have our blood-thirsty enemies rule over us. How long would your people consent to a union with us, if we sent agents and emissaries among you to incite your white negroes, the Irish, to rebellion & murder; if we employed assassins to poison your families and incendiaries to burn your towns and villages? Bring these matters home to yourselves, and ask yourselves in the presence of God if the South is not right in her determination to resist to the last extremity.³

Hill undoubtedly read a lot of news reports and kept up with political happenings at the local, state, and national level. Given his distrust of government bureaucracy, his past experience with what he considered political meddling in military affairs, and his duty as a head of household, his paranoid response to a party alleged to support transgressions against its citizens—specifically women and children—is not surprising. By 1861 he clearly believed that a certain segment of the population north of the Mason-Dixon Line was trying to subvert law and order in the South. His remarks to his friend marked the maturation of his long-growing antipathy to perceived and actual hypocrisy on the part of the Federal government. Hill meant for his words to be inflammatory. He deliberately referred to the immigrant Irish in the northern states as “white negroes,” touching on a sensitive economic and cultural issue that he knew might upset his correspondent and invoke understanding and sympathy. He also tried to circumvent abolitionist claims by continuing, “The few slaves I own I love, and I know they are devoted to me. But I would give them up if it were right, at any moment.”⁴

³ D.H. Hill to “My Dear Friend,” January 15, 1861, Kynett Book, Brockenbrough Library, MOC.

⁴ Ibid.

To Hill, defending his family was most important; as he put it, “I will feel that in taking up arms against the Black Republicans, I am engaged in the holiest of causes.”⁵ In this case, restraint was out of the question; familial and regional honor demanded action. His religious convictions backed him up in this endeavor, and in both his more cheerful and reflective moments during the war, he would talk often of his faith in God, no matter the situation. Harvey may have been the only West Point graduate in the family but clearly he was not the only one who felt duty-bound to the Confederate cause. In addition to his soon-to-be-famous brother-in-law, Thomas Jackson, four of his brothers served the Confederacy in the field, including Albert, the Mexican War veteran. Hill mentioned to Isabella early in the war that one brother was en route all the way from California and the other in the process of leaving his new wife to join the ranks.⁶

On April 24, 1861, Governor John Ellis appointed Hill a colonel of North Carolina volunteers and ordered him to Raleigh to oversee a training camp for state troops. North Carolina had not yet seceded, but Ellis was reacting to President Abraham Lincoln’s call for troops and threw his support toward the new Confederate States of America.⁷ NCMI’s superintendent brought the majority of his faculty and cadet corps with him as trainers for the raw volunteers. The contingent boarded the train to the cheers of Charlotte’s citizens who had come out to wish Hill and his young charges well. North Carolina did not lack for

⁵ D.H. Hill to “My Dear Friend,” January 15, 1861, Kynett Book, Brockenbrough Library, MOC.

⁶ D.H. Hill to Isabella Hill, July 5, 1861, The Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, 1861-1875, United States Army Heritage Collection, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, USAMHI). Hill refers to Albert in another surviving letter but I have not seen any further mention of the other brothers or their records in Confederate service.

⁷ John W. Ellis to D.H. Hill, April 24, 1861, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, NCSA).

volunteers—four regiments of twelve-month enlistees were in Raleigh by mid-May.⁸ Hill, however, was skeptical of their abilities when he wrote Isabella on May 3 that they probably still needed a month to prepare before they moved anywhere for field service.⁹ Per Ellis' order, Hill became colonel of the First Regiment of North Carolina Volunteers effective May 7, and was sworn in as commander on May 17. Charles Lee became a lieutenant colonel and his second in command, and James Lane was appointed major. Within days the 1st North Carolina was en route to Richmond, Virginia. The residents of Raleigh turned out to wish the troops luck, to the tune of various patriotic songs.¹⁰ After a brief stop in Richmond, Hill's regiment joined Virginia state troops under Colonel "Prince" John B. Magruder, an old compatriot from the Mexican War. Hill was not impressed with the reunion. "We are unfortunately situated here," he wrote Isabella at the end of May. "Col Magruder in command is always drunk and giving foolish and absurd orders. I think that in a few days, the men will refuse to obey any order issued by him."¹¹ As for Magruder, he indicated to the War Department that Hill appeared to be sensitive over the rank structure and the fact that the Virginian was in charge, but he was obeying orders and Magruder expected Hill would continue to do so.¹²

⁸ Ellis to Walker, May 17, 1861, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. I, 1: 488 (hereafter cited as *OR*, unless otherwise noted all citations are from Ser. I).

⁹ D.H. Hill to Isabella Hill, May 3, 1861, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

¹⁰ Commission from Governor John W. Ellis, May 7, 1861, Hill Papers, NCSA; James W. Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., 1890, pg. 3, original in D.H. Hill, Jr. Papers, typescript in Hill Papers, NCSA. All citations and page numbers are from the typescript version; John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 22.

¹¹ D.H. Hill to Isabella Hill, May 30, 1861, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

¹² Magruder to [Col. Garnett?], June 2, 1861, *OR*, 2: 901.

Magruder commanded provisional Confederate forces whose task in June 1861 was to defend the peninsula between the James and York Rivers from Federal forces expected to move out by land and sea from Fort Monroe at its tip. The Confederates commenced building defensive positions with batteries near Yorktown and further east in the direction of Newport News and Hampton. They established an outpost at Little Bethel, the site of a small church eight miles equidistant from the two towns and eleven from Fort Monroe and conducted patrols to ascertain the strength of the Union forces and position. Hill, with 1,400 troops including his own regiment, a Virginia infantry battalion, and an artillery battalion, was sent out on June 6 to construct a defensive line in the vicinity of Big Bethel, a larger church three miles west of Little Bethel. His reconnaissance on the 7th revealed the advantages of using the marshy Back River and a dense wooded area as part of his defensive plan, and he put Lieutenant Colonel Lee to work. Maj. George Randolph, his artillery commander, sighted six of his pieces on the main road to Hampton and overlooking two river crossings.¹³

Hill may have been slightly familiar with the terrain around Big Bethel from being stationed at Fort Monroe as a lieutenant, but he also benefited from trusted subordinates and eager troops whom he had personally trained and disciplined. On June 8, he learned about two different Union scouting parties headed toward Little Bethel. Lieutenant Colonel Lee and Major Lane assumed command of detachments sent out to counter the threat and quickly pushed the Federals back toward Hampton. The next day was a Sunday, which meant two kinds of work to be done; as Hill put it, “when not engaged in religious duties, the men

¹³ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 2: 93; Magruder to Garnett, June 3, 1861, *OR*, 2: 902-903; Magruder to Garnett, June 8, 1861, *OR*, 2: 912-914.

worked vigorously on the intrenchments [sic].”¹⁴ All the while he kept pickets and cavalry out to watch Union movements.

In the process of securing the area Magruder requisitioned men, slaves and supplies from nearby farms and towns, a move that rankled Union Major General Benjamin Butler, in command at Fort Monroe. Butler decided to send nearly four regiments, approximately 4,400 men, to cut off Little Bethel from the Confederate defenses and destroy its camp. In order to ensure surprise he started the men at 1 o’clock in the morning on June 10 on separate routes to rendezvous at daylight and attack. Unfortunately, one regiment mistook another for the enemy and fired as it approached the designated junction point, resulting in Federal casualties and alerting Hill and Magruder, who had decided to send forces out early that morning as well. Lieutenant Ratchford, now aide to his former instructor, felt that the purpose of the Confederate advance was unclear, as if Magruder merely wanted to send the North Carolinians toward Fort Monroe as a “dare” to Butler. Hill also received information from a local woman who described the Union troop movements and mistaken engagement.¹⁵

Once Hill realized what Butler was doing, he withdrew to his defenses at Big Bethel. Between 9:15 and 9:30 in the morning, Butler’s forces under Brigadier General Ebenezer Pierce advanced towards the Confederate position, at which time Randolph opened fire with his artillery. According to Hill, the enemy in his front “attempted no deployment within musketry range during the day, except under cover of woods, fences, or paling.”¹⁶ Union Colonel Alfred Duryea’s Zouave regiment, however, nearly succeeded in flanking Hill’s

¹⁴ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 2: 94.

¹⁵ Report of Butler, June 10, 1861, *OR*, 2: 78; Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 2: 94.; Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., 1890, pg. 4-5, Hill Papers, NCSA.

¹⁶ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 2: 94.

right, held by 180 Virginia troops, until Hill repositioned artillery and one of his companies to assist. Union troops then attacked the Confederate left, but Hill and Magruder were again able to shuffle companies to meet their advance. Pierce took Little Bethel and burned the church, but his piecemeal attacks failed to carry the Confederate works at Big Bethel, and at mid-afternoon his forces withdrew. Only one Confederate was killed and seven were wounded; Ratchford was one of them, suffering a grazing wound on his forehead. Hill and Magruder received reports from sympathetic locals of Federal forces taking several groups of wounded back to Hampton in wagons and realized they had come out decidedly on the better half of the fight.¹⁷ Local reports were correct—Federal casualties were seventy-nine killed and wounded.

Writing his first battle report, Hill took time to describe the peculiar details of the engagement he had just fought. In regard to the Federal attack, he described how the Confederate soldiers asked their field grade officers, “‘May I fire?’ ‘I think I can bring him.’” Hill continued, “‘They were all in high glee, and seemed to enjoy it as much as boys do rabbit-shooting.’”¹⁸ He admired the courage of a Union major who died at the head of his troops, citing him as the only truly brave enemy combatant he had seen all day. Of his own soldiers he had nothing but praise. Although only about half of his 800 troops had fired in anger, the others had “‘remained manfully at the posts assigned them, and not a man in the regiment behaved badly.’”¹⁹ Hill had finally found volunteer soldiers he could work with, and their actions reflected well on his leadership and courage. One of these soldiers wrote his

¹⁷ Magruder to [Garnett or Walker], June 12, 1861, *OR*, 2: 92.

¹⁸ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 2: 95.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

fiancée about encountering his commander during the heat of the battle. He remembered Hill saying to the men, ““boys you have learned to dodge already, I am an old hand at it’ & at the same time dodged a bullet, & shook his finger at the enemy saying ‘you dogs you missed me that time.’”²⁰

Magruder was also happy with the performance of Hill and his regiment, noting that Hill’s “judicious and determined action was worthy of his ancient glory,” a reference to his gallantry in Mexico.²¹ Major Randolph indicated in his report that his only casualty from enemy artillery fire was one mule, and that his guns fired a mere ninety-eight projectiles, which he observed drily, “tends to show that the firing was not too rapid.”²² Indeed, Hill’s command put up a good fight, but would have had a rougher time of it had the Federal troops been better organized and led. Despite Butler’s explanations that he was merely conducting a reconnaissance-in-force, the Northern press labeled Big Bethel a Union defeat while the Confederacy played up its success. Butler very nearly lost his promotion over the incident and subsequently lost his command at Fort Monroe, while both Magruder and Hill won promotion to brigadier general in the Provisional Confederate Army.²³

In the weeks following Big Bethel, Hill remained in command at Yorktown proper while Magruder coordinated operations on the entire peninsula, which included continuing to defend against Union patrols. Five days after the battle, Hill wrote General Robert E. Lee,

²⁰ William Lewis to Millie, June 12, 1861, William Gaston Lewis Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

²¹ Magruder to Garnett, June 10, 1861, *OR*, 2: 91.

²² Report of Randolph, June 12, 1861, *OR*, 2: 99.

²³ Butler to Scott, June 16, 1861, *OR*, 2: 80; Hal Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961/Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 29. For a good narrative of the battle based on the *OR*, particularly Hill’s report, and the controversy in the Union press, see “Battle of Bethel: First Engagement of the War Between the States,” *Southern Historical Society Papers* 29 (1901): 197-207.

commander of Virginia forces, for additional troops and guns. He estimated that he needed six thousand troops, twice as many as he currently possessed, to adequately defend the Yorktown-Williamsburg line and east to Big Bethel so that the units were not defeated in detail. As he anticipated an enemy siege or turning movement, he wanted a dozen siege guns for his batteries including those on the York River. Lee replied the next day that Hill needed to hold Yorktown at all costs, that he would forward troops as they became available, but that he had no siege guns to send. He suggested that the colonel contract his lines “so as to render them defensible by the force you can command for that purpose.”²⁴ Hill was not satisfied with Lee’s response, for he directed Randolph to write him two days later with another request for artillery and a proposal for obtaining the guns from the Confederate Navy. Lee approved Randolph’s request, but by early July most of the guns were instead diverted north to the Confederate army near Manassas, Virginia, where the needs were deemed greatest.²⁵ For Hill and other Confederate commanders, this was the first of many requests and arguments over who should get what from a limited pool of military equipment and resources. He would prove tenacious in his attempts to get the best troops and artillery or address personnel issues within his commands. Lee, perhaps as early as the summer of 1861, became somewhat frustrated with Hill’s repeated demands and unwillingness to take “no” for an answer.

For his part, Hill vented his frustration over military operations and Confederate affairs in frequent letters to his wife, which he started writing within a month of leaving home. He relied on their correspondence to provide an affectionate lifeline to family and

²⁴ Hill to Lee, June 15, 1861, *OR*, 2: 927; Lee to Hill, June 16, 1861, *OR*, 2: 930.

²⁵ Randolph to Lee, June 18, 1861, *OR*, 2: 939-940; Randolph to Magruder, July 8, 1861, *OR*, 2: 968.

home. At the same time he frequently chastised her for worrying so much about him, telling her that he was in God's hands and for her to concentrate on raising their children. It was no wonder that Isabella worried from the beginning because he told her about his frequent illnesses, which started soon after he went into the field. Upon reaching the Yorktown area in early June 1861, he told her that he had been ill the day before with a bowel complaint but was better now and using the flannel shift she sent. Many Civil War soldiers suffered from similar sickness, but Hill likely had permanent digestive issues, perhaps even a bacterial infection, stemming from his Mexican War service.²⁶ The same day he expressed confidence in his troops and doubt that there would be any real fighting because the armies were too big to attack each other, chiding Isabella for her expressed anxiety.²⁷ Of course, this all changed in a week, and soon Hill switched his focus to reassuring her that he was prepared for anything that might come. "I have no personal anxiety. I am in the hands of God and do not believe that my work on earth is yet accomplished," he confidently asserted.²⁸ He even felt it was a positive sign from God that his first success in the war came near the Bethels, for that was the name of his family's church in York District. Along with this, Hill believed that God could not possibly be on the side of the Yankees, to whom he attributed atrocities committed against local residents, incidents which furthered his commitment to the Southern cause.²⁹

²⁶ D.H. Hill to Isabella Hill, June 3, 1861, Hill Papers, USAMHI; there are actually two letters from this day, and Hill addresses his illness in both. Hill's letters reveal that he felt best when he stayed active, even if he just went on a horseback ride to inspect fortifications, versus when he had a lot of administrative duties or when his unit was relatively stationary, especially during the winter. Isabella herself literally got sick with worry, suffering from bad headaches; although most of her side of the correspondence is lost, Hill refers to her illnesses in many of his letters.

²⁷ D.H. Hill to Isabella Hill, June 3, 1861, Hill Papers, USAMHI, specifically what I believe to be the later of the two letters.

²⁸ D.H. Hill to Isabella Hill, June 9, 1861, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

²⁹ D.H. Hill to Isabella Hill, June 20, 1861, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

Despite Hill's success at Big Bethel and his belief in God's guiding hand, he was still prone to his gloomy moments. Depressed about a recent expedition resulting in the death of another officer and wondering about his promotion, Hill wrote his wife on July 7 that he would just as soon be home than in command. With his fortieth birthday looming, he complained about being tired, having "a diseased and suffering body," and living a sad life. Hill's emphasis on negative events could not have been comforting to Isabella, and the following declaration is also illustrative of his frame of mind:

I feel too distrustful of my own skill, coolness & judgment. I think that I can manage a Regiment and it is certainly responsibility enough to have the lives of 1200 men committed to my care. I have never coveted and have always avoided positions of trust and responsibility. The offices that have been given me have not been of my asking.³⁰

Here is a war hero doubting not only his own military skill, but admitting that he did not want to be a leader. On the surface, Hill's anxieties about leading a large formation are understandable. Prior to the war he (and most other Civil War commanders) did not have experience leading a unit larger than a company. The second part of Hill's statement is more peculiar because he seemed to be a natural-born leader, specifically in his educational roles and his ability to inspire those who worked with or for him. This discrepancy can be explained partly by Hill's religious nature; that is, he believed God had a purpose for him that placed him in positions of responsibility, whether he sought them out or not. Overall, though, Hill usually cared more about being in charge than this statement, written in a moment of despondency, would suggest, because he cared about his livelihood, and also about his honor and his reputation. Especially for someone of his position, as a military officer and educator in the nineteenth-century South and United States, Hill's livelihood

³⁰ D.H. Hill to Isabella Hill, July 7, 1861, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

depended on taking charge and being respected by his family and even more so within his professional communities. As he wrote in mid-September, “The ties of family are very powerful, but duty should be preferred above every thing else.”³¹

Hill moved closer to home when on September 29 he was assigned to defend the coast of North Carolina between Albemarle Sound and the Neuse River, including the huge Pamlico Sound. The new governor of the state, Henry Clark, wrote Confederate Secretary of War Leroy Walker to request the general because of his record and experience, but perhaps his kinsmen also influenced the choice.³² However, Hill was stationed in North Carolina for only six weeks and spent much of the time touring the extensive coastline and requesting additional forces, artillery, and ammunition. His commander, Brigadier General Richard Gatlin, backed up Hill’s requests and appreciated his expertise, but the two encountered issues including lack of resources, apathy and hostility among portions of the populace, and most obviously, the sheer size of the territory they were required to defend. Union forces established a toehold at Cape Hatteras in late August and Hill feared a subsequent attack on Roanoke Island and from Fort Macon inland to New Bern, so he focused most of his attention on better fortifying those places.³³

Hill had problems locating artillery supposedly forwarded south by the Confederate Navy in Norfolk, and the service was unwilling or unable to give up more rifled guns. He also made an enemy of his new subordinate Colonel Ambrose R. Wright, commanding

³¹ D.H. Hill to Isabella Hill, September 16, 1861, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

³² Clark to Walker, September 7, 1861, *OR*, 4: 643; “Special Orders, No. 166,” *OR*, 4: 662. BG R.C. Gatlin requested two officers so he could split up the coastal district into more manageable areas, but only Hill was ordered to North Carolina; his command became the “District of Pamlico.”

³³ Hill hoped to bring his family to live with him in New Bern, and complained often to Isabella about how incomprehensible it was to him that the local citizens did not do more to defend themselves against a possible enemy attack: see Hill to Isabella, October 2, 7, and 17, 1861, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

troops on Roanoke Island. Hill ordered Wright to improve his defenses and discontinue any plans for attacking the isolated Federal troops at Hatteras, whom Wright believed he could defeat based on previous skirmishes. The colonel also took umbrage when Hill directed an adjustment to one of the coastal batteries without his knowledge, and he asked that his command be reassigned.³⁴ Hill's opinion of Wright is unknown, but Hill's artillery background and perpetual dissatisfaction with the readiness of his area of responsibility led him toward micromanagement. After spending two weeks touring the extensive coastline of the North Carolina sounds and going to Portsmouth, Virginia himself to try to get guns, he reported to both the secretaries of the Army and Navy his concerns about the current status of the defenses and his requirements. In late October, coinciding with what turned out to be a false alarm about Union troops landing at Fort Macon, Gatlin endorsed a second request on Hill's behalf, and Governor Clark appealed to Richmond for additional support for his state. Confederate authorities, however, had few resources to send and were dealing with multiple threats. Clark granted Hill the authority to call out the militia of counties along Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds if he determined he needed them, but the state did not have enough weapons to equip the troops.³⁵ The frustrated Gatlin then lost Hill to reassignment in Virginia and received a less-experienced officer in his place. In his after-action report, Gatlin gave Hill credit for what he had accomplished in a short time and complained about the challenges

³⁴ Wright to Huger, October 18, 1861, *OR*, 4: 683-684; Wright to Huger, October 20, 1861, *OR*, 4: 685.

³⁵ Hill to Mallory, October 18, 1861, *OR*, 4: 682-683; Hill to Gatlin, October 27, 1861, *OR*, 4: 693-694; Riddick to Hill, October 30, 1861, *OR*, 4: 695; Martin to Gatlin, October 30, 1861, *OR*, 4: 696; D.H. Hill to Samuel Cooper, October 18, 1861, Hill Papers, LOV; Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina*, 62-64.

of the overall command. He refused to take blame for the weaknesses that allowed a Union expedition to capture Roanoke Island and New Bern in the spring of 1862.³⁶

Hill's new assignment, effective November 16, was as 1st Brigade Commander of North Carolina troops, the Third Division of Major General James Longstreet, in General Joseph E. Johnston's Department of Northern Virginia.³⁷ He reported to Centreville a few weeks after the reorganization of various military districts into one under Johnston and as the armies of both sides entered a period of reduced campaigning during the winter months. In less than three weeks, however, he was reassigned to the garrison at Leesburg, near the Potomac River, which fell under the jurisdiction of General P.G.T. Beauregard. At Leesburg Hill commanded just over 2,700 troops consisting of a brigade of Mississippi infantry, the Second Virginia Cavalry, and an artillery battalion.³⁸ His main mission was to guard against any attempted Federal crossing of the Potomac River and also to ascertain if enemy activity masked a crossing north or south of Leesburg. Union forces had already attempted a crossing at nearby Ball's Bluff on October 21. Hill started corresponding with their commander, Brigadier General Charles Stone, about Federal soldiers he caught stealing from Virginia residents. He wanted to take harsh measures against these men and others he accused of far worse, and suggested as such to Johnston through Beauregard. Beauregard replied to hold off

³⁶ Report of Gatlin, October 1, 1862, *OR*, 4: 573-579. On the surface, Gatlin and Hill appeared to get along very well; Gatlin helped Hill arrange to take leave in Charlotte en route to his new assignment in Virginia (see Gatlin to Hill, November 23, 1861, Hill Papers, LOV). A few months later, however, Hill assumed that Gatlin recommended against his promotion to Major General, and alluded to a situation where Gatlin did not publicly back his call-up of some of the county militias in North Carolina (see D.H. Hill to Isabella Hill, March 28, 1862, Gilder Lehrman Collection, New-York Historical Society).

³⁷ "Special Orders, No. 224," November 16, 1861, *OR*, 4: 700.

³⁸ "Special Orders, No. 565," December 4, 1861, *OR*, 5: 981; "Abstract from return of the Department of Northern Virginia, commanded by General Joseph E. Johnston, C. S. Army, for the month of December, 1861," *OR*, 5: 1015; Johnston to Benjamin [Inclosure, "Potomac District"], January 14, 1862, *OR*, 5: 1030. Hill was assigned to the Potomac District, Beauregard's sub-command under Johnston, the entire time, but when posted at Leesburg did not report to Longstreet but rather directly to Beauregard.

on dispensing justice against Yankees unless Hill caught them red-handed in thievery. Johnston did not want to give Union forces any more reason to attack and in any case could not immediately assist Hill with reinforcements. That winter, Johnston and Beauregard wanted Hill to observe enemy movements, spread disinformation about Confederate reinforcements, continue to construct defensive works around Leesburg, and use his best judgment in delaying Union forces should they cross the river, but not to risk the annihilation of his command.³⁹

Hill in theory agreed with his superiors' defensive stance, but did not relish being in a relatively passive role, and he regarded as foolish some of the Confederate operations in the area. Brigadier General J.E.B. Stuart, the local cavalry commander, incurred Hill's wrath when he was surprised by Federal forces at nearby Dranesville on December 20, resulting in the loss of 230 men. Hill's disapproval of Stuart made it all the way to President Davis.⁴⁰ Hill also complained about his job to old friend Major General G.W. Smith, commander of Second Division under Johnston, who assured him that his position on the left flank of the army was "difficult and important; bide your time; all will be right."⁴¹ He had more to worry about than his military situation, for his youngest child, baby James Irwin, had been sick since October and his health had not improved. Hill sympathized with his wife for having to deal with the crisis on her own, and tried to reassure her that, especially during that time of

³⁹ McClellan to Stone, November 29, 1861, *OR*, 5: 669; Beauregard to Hill, December 14, 1861, *OR*, 5: 995; Johnston to Cooper, December 16, 1861, *OR*, 5: 998; Hill to Beauregard, December 16, 1861, *OR*, 5: 999; Beauregard to Hill, December 16, 1861, *OR*, 5: 999-1000; Beauregard to Hill, January 4, 1862, *OR*, 5: 1019-1020; Jordan to Hill, January 6, 1862, *OR*, 5: 1021-1022. See also Charles Stone to D.H. Hill, January 15, 1862, Hill Papers, LOV. Stone's correspondence with Hill along with the fallout from the botched operation at Ball's Bluff led to his imprisonment on charges of treason. Ratchford also refers to this correspondence in his reminiscences.

⁴⁰ Davis to Johnston, February 6, 1862, *OR*, 5: 1063; Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 30.

⁴¹ Smith to Hill, December 26, 1861, *OR*, 5: 1008.

“wickedness and bloodshed,” it could be a blessing for God to remove their child from contamination.⁴² The way Hill stressed this theme over nearly four pages lends the impression that he was trying very hard to convince himself as well, in light of the deaths of two of his children the previous decade. He also worried about family finances. Keeping abreast of Confederate diplomatic affairs, he feared that English assistance was a dead issue and warned Isabella to pay off her debts and sell their bonds in case of financial calamity; he did not want to go through his mother’s experience of dealing with family debt.⁴³

By mid-January 1862, Johnston and Beauregard considered making a surprise attack across the Potomac into Maryland if, as they suspected, Union commanders were repositioning their forces, but Hill reported that Stone still seemed to have numerous sentinels along his side of the river in addition to patrols near Harpers Ferry. However, he made some preparations for a potential crossing in conjunction with brother-in-law Thomas Jackson, now a major general commanding in the Shenandoah Valley. The two corresponded frequently throughout late January and early February about useful ferry sites and obtaining boats.⁴⁴ Nevertheless Hill gloomily predicted a year of reverses after receiving news about the Union landing at Roanoke Island and the fall of Fort Henry in Tennessee. The Confederates remained in their positions and monitored the developing strategic situation until the first week of March. Hill received creditable intelligence that the Federals had indeed crossed the Potomac upstream and were in Charlestown. Along with other indicators to include Union success in North Carolina, this prompted Johnston to start to withdraw his

⁴² Hill to Isabella Hill, December 18, 1861, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

⁴³ Hill to Isabella Hill, December 26 and 28, 1861, Hill Papers, USAMHI; Hill to Isabella Hill, January 27, 1862, Hill Papers, NCSA; Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General*, 31-32.

⁴⁴ Hill to Beauregard, January 17, 1862, *OR*, 5: 1035; Thomas Jackson to D.H. Hill, January 28, February 12, 16, and 26, 1862, Hill Papers, LOV.

army toward Richmond. Jackson appealed to Johnston to send Hill his way to help hold Winchester in the Shenandoah Valley, but was denied, and his brother-in-law's command fell back in with Longstreet's men along the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.⁴⁵

Subsequently, Confederate leaders in Virginia worked feverishly to deal with the new threat posed by Union Maj. Gen. George McClellan's attempt to envelop Johnston's army, fight it on ground of his choosing, capture Richmond, and end the war. McClellan moved 66,700 troops from Washington, D.C. down the Chesapeake Bay to Fort Monroe and then intended to march his men up the Peninsula in conjunction with naval support on the James and York Rivers. At the same time, separate Union forces were to threaten the Confederates in the Shenandoah Valley and along the corridor between Washington and Richmond. Johnston, along with President Davis and his new military advisor, Lee, had to come up quickly with a plan to defend Richmond from all of these threats.⁴⁶

During the retreat from Leesburg, Hill took command of a division and became a major general on March 26, 1862.⁴⁷ "The affairs of our country are desparate, desparate [sic]," he lamented to Isabella from a camp on the Rapidan River on March 19. "Those who heard me express my views, thought me a croaking fool. It is unfortunate to have views different from the rest of mankind. It secures abuse."⁴⁸ Hill alluded to slanderous comments directed against him as a result of calling out portions of the North Carolina militia and speculated that a coterie of state politicians and military officers had convinced President

⁴⁵ Hill to Isabella Hill, February 9, 1862, Hill Papers, USAMHI; Johnston to Davis, February 28, 1862, *OR*, 5: 1083; Jackson to Johnston, March 8, 1862, *OR*, 5: 1094-1095; Smith to Hill, March 9, 1862, *OR*, 5: 1095-1096.

⁴⁶ See Stephen Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond: The Peninsula Campaign* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992).

⁴⁷ Confederate War Department to D.H. Hill, March 26, 1862, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁴⁸ Hill to Isabella Hill, March 19, 1862, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

Davis to delay his promotion. He managed to send off letters to his family every few days, enclosing specific instructions to each of the five children and recommending to Isabella that she leave Charlotte, which he considered an unhealthy town. As of March 28, Hill had no idea where Johnston's army was headed next, and he warned his wife that once campaigning began he might only be able to write once a month.⁴⁹ Within a few days, however, he was ordered to Richmond and from there to take command yet again under Magruder at Yorktown. McClellan had landed his army at Fort Monroe and threatened to annihilate Magruder's small command on the Peninsula.

Hill reported to Magruder with his four-thousand man division on April 11, 1862. Johnston arrived soon after to take command of the entire operation, leaving Hill on the left covering Yorktown, Magruder protecting the right to the James River, Longstreet in the middle, and G.W. Smith as a reserve, for a total of 55,600 troops plus the reserve artillery. Magruder had succeeded in holding his main line against McClellan's first probing attacks in early April, and as Johnston's army filed into position, the area was relatively quiet except for occasional Union bombardments.⁵⁰ Within two days of arriving, Hill reconnoitered his sector and, not surprisingly, found the situation wanting. He immediately fired off a letter to his former subordinate, George Randolph, who had just been appointed Secretary of War. He used his connection with Randolph not only to request resources (especially knowing that the secretary would understand his artillery needs) but also to advance his opinions on Confederate operations and strategy. Although he conceded that Magruder had done the best

⁴⁹ Hill to Isabella Hill, March 28, 1862, Gilder Lehrman Collection, New-York Historical Society.

⁵⁰ "General Orders, No. 1," April 18, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 448; "Organization of the Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by General Joseph E. Johnston, on the Peninsula, about April 30, 1862," *OR*, 11 (3): 484; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 35-39.

he could with what he had, Hill declared Yorktown “totally unprepared for a siege.”⁵¹

Actions he wanted completed the year before, like cutting down woods close to the redoubts in order to deny the enemy concealment, had not been done, and Union sharpshooters regularly picked off Confederate soldiers within the works. He requested heavier guns, ammunition, and more infantry.⁵² On this occasion and others, Hill had no qualms about bypassing his chain of command to get equipment he needed, and he had a near-obsessive desire to perfect his tactical dispositions in order to both protect his troops and damage the enemy as much as possible. These wartime tendencies were in complete accord with his character although increasingly unrealistic in terms of the evolving strategic context.

Two days later, Hill reported that two Federal gunboats bombarded his works and he had little to throw back at them. He assumed McClellan delayed an advance merely to bring up more mortars and naval guns. He then suggested to Randolph that the Confederacy consolidate its forces in the east to crush McClellan on the Peninsula:

By attempting to hold so many points we have been beaten in detail, and are losing all that we have been trying to hold. We are no match for the Yankees at an artillery play with our wretched ordnance, poor in quality and feeble in quantity. We must fight on the field and trust to the bayonet. If we had 100,000 men here we could march out of the trenches and capture McClellan, unless he has a swift-footed horse. He has been anxious to dine in Richmond and we would be glad to send him up with an escort.⁵³

Sarcasm about McClellan aside, Hill’s suggestion reflected his military education and professional experiences. He had seen how an inspired frontal assault or well-executed defense by infantry could defeat an enemy that seemingly had an advantage in quality or quantity of men and materiel. Hill could also cite cases from history where audacious

⁵¹ Hill to Randolph, April 13, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 439.

⁵² Hill to Randolph, April 13, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 439. As Hill amusingly put it in his battle report, the Union sharpshooter fire was “very annoying.”

⁵³ Hill to Randolph, April 15, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 442.

commanders took advantage of scattered forces. Indeed, in a later letter to Randolph he specifically cited the example of the Austrian army in Italy in the 1790s and how Napoleon was able to defeat the parts in detail.⁵⁴ Interestingly, he advocated letting the Yankees into his beloved Carolinas if it meant the Confederacy could decisively defeat the Union Army of the Potomac; he correctly deciphered the importance of McClellan's expedition to the Union war effort and how a knockout blow might end the war. On the other hand, surprisingly given his short experience in command in coastal North Carolina, he did not acknowledge the near-term political consequences or logistical issues associated with pulling various armies out of other states. No doubt Hill was aware on some level of these issues, but he was more concerned with two things: achieving a decisive victory that sent a clear message to the Union to end the war and personally taking part in this action. On the day he arrived at Yorktown, he wrote Isabella, "I have wanted to be in one more battle that I might go home with credit, feeling that I had done my duty."⁵⁵ Hill felt it was his military duty to help Johnston's army win and he felt an obligation to his family and community to render honorable service to the Confederacy.

Randolph did his best to push supplies and reinforcements down the Peninsula, encouraging Hill to keep writing with concerns. Write Hill did, in one instance requesting infantry over guns so he could "make sorties," presumably patrols that would shoot at McClellan's gun crews.⁵⁶ He also accused the Confederate Ordnance Department of being a "Yankee concern" that deliberately manufactured defective guns and shells, for he had

⁵⁴ Hill to Randolph, April 24, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 461.

⁵⁵ Hill to Isabella Hill, April 11, 1862, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

⁵⁶ Randolph to Hill, April 15, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 442; Hill to Randolph, April 18, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 447.

experienced several instances of burst barrels and duds. This comment went too far even for Randolph, who explained that the foundries were short of metal and forced to use inferior materials to cast guns.⁵⁷ To his commander, Joe Johnston, Hill sent also sent reports of constant Federal shelling and troop fatigue owing to the non-stop digging of trenches and artillery positions. Johnston agreed with the abysmal state of the defenses, arguing with the authorities in Richmond that he should withdraw his army closer to the capital. As McClellan continued to add troops and artillery, Johnston became convinced that he needed to move before his ground troops were pounded into submission and the Union Navy steamed up the York and James Rivers on his flanks. On April 29, Johnston informed Lee that he was going to withdraw his army toward Richmond.⁵⁸

Hill received Johnston's movement order on May 2, which required him to split his command, sending the bulk of his infantry west that night while his heavy artillery stayed in position for several more hours covering the army's retreat.⁵⁹ Johnston directed his army along two roads toward Williamsburg and the bulk of his divisions filed through the city on May 4. The Army of the Potomac rather anticlimactically took control of Yorktown the same day, fooled by the sudden Confederate withdrawal, but soon McClellan put two infantry divisions and his cavalry in pursuit. Both armies labored along the muddy Virginia roads and Johnston realized he would have to buy some time to get his supply trains and most of his artillery further west, so he ordered Longstreet to block the Federal pursuit. Longstreet took up position in previously prepared defensive positions east of Williamsburg (including a fort

⁵⁷ Hill to Randolph, April 24, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 461; Randolph to Hill, April 25, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 464.

⁵⁸ Johnston to Lee, April 27, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 469; Johnston to Lee, April 29, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 473.

⁵⁹ "General Orders, No. --," May 2, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 489.

Magruder named after himself). Longstreet arranged with Hill, just ahead of him in line of march, to be prepared to provide reinforcements should he need them.⁶⁰

The Battle of Williamsburg kicked off on the morning of May 5, 1862 when Longstreet's guns opened on a battery of Union artillery in front of Fort Magruder. He remained well in control of the fight at that location throughout the day, as the Federal forces, reminiscent of the debacle at Big Bethel the year before, had trouble coordinating their attacks from two different routes. However, the immediate Union commander on the ground, Brigadier General Edwin Sumner, was finally convinced by information from a local contraband to send a brigade to check out the reportedly open left Confederate flank. Brigadier General Winfield Scott Hancock drew the assignment, and in confirming the validity of the report, Hancock was able to nearly outflank Fort Magruder. He occupied an empty redoubt and trained his guns on the Confederate forces. Luckily for Longstreet, Sumner did not send Hancock reinforcements. The Confederate general called for Brigadier General Jubal Early's brigade of Hill's division to take care of the threat.⁶¹

Hill described in his report of operations on the Peninsula that his command left Williamsburg on the morning of May 5, only to be called back by Longstreet. Once Early went forward and figured out where Hancock's brigade was, he appealed to Hill to attack; Longstreet approved and directed Hill to accompany Early. Doing his own reconnaissance and consulting with Longstreet, Hill could not see Hancock's exact position, but decided that Early's brigade should try to get around the Union right (west) flank. Hill took command of the right wing, consisting of the 23rd and 5th North Carolina, while Early led the 24th and 38th Virginia Regiments on the left. All of the troops had to cross a stream and heavily wooded

⁶⁰ Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 65-70, 78.

⁶¹ Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 70-79.

area, but while Hill stopped to realign his forces, Early proceeded more rapidly with the 24th Virginia. As Hill sent Major Ratchford to coordinate with Early, he heard firing and discovered that his brigadier was already attacking part of Hancock's force. Hill's wing entered a clearing where it was raked by enemy artillery, and he decided it was just as well to move forward and press the attack. He sent the 5th North Carolina forward to help Early; finally locating the 38th Virginia, which had fallen behind on the advance, he ordered it to flush out enfilading fire from the left. Hill called back for the 23rd North Carolina to assist the 38th Virginia, but for the majority of the engagement, the 5th North Carolina and 24th Virginia did most of the fighting and took the brunt of the casualties. Adding to the confusion, Early was wounded and visibility decreased due to smoke, mist, and waning daylight, for the attack had only started at about 5 P.M. Hancock ordered a counterattack which threw the Confederates back into the woods. Blaming mostly ineffective drill and discipline, Hill withdrew his forces beyond the creek, posting a fresh brigade in front but keeping Early's troops in line of battle overnight. Early's brigade suffered 508 casualties; the 5th North Carolina alone lost 302 men, 68 percent of its strength. Hancock lost 100 troops, partly because he had started to abandon his vulnerable position and was caught by surprise.⁶²

During the advance, Hill and Early came out of the wood line in front of Hancock's redoubt instead of on its flank. Because the four regiments were on line, the failure of the 38th Virginia and 23rd North Carolina to advance with their fellow units created a large gap between the remaining two regiments; Hill had to make up about an 800-900 yard distance to support Early and the 24th Virginia. By that time, Hancock had his forces back in position—3,400 infantry and eight guns against 1,200 Confederates with no artillery support. Hill

⁶² Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 11 (1): 602-605; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 78-81.

lauded the courage of the 24th Virginia and 5th North Carolina, but “regretted that General Early, carried away by his impetuous and enthusiastic courage, advanced so far into the open field.”⁶³ As for the commanders of the 23rd North Carolina and 38th Virginia, they tried their best, but had failed to train and discipline their soldiers adequately to execute combat operations. Hill complained that his division was so new that he hardly knew it and his subordinates, and that he and his officers had little knowledge of the terrain or enemy situation. Given these constraints, he argued, it was no wonder that Early’s Brigade had difficulty executing its mission. Far from indicting himself or his command, he noted that despite these challenges, the fight had given McClellan pause and assisted the Confederate retreat.⁶⁴ Could and should Hill have understood and prepared his division better for offensive operations? He had little time to train because the soldiers were either building or manning the Yorktown defenses while keeping their heads down dodging sharpshooters’ bullets. On the other hand, it seems that he should have had the opportunity in the three weeks at Yorktown to get to know his subordinates and do the best he could with what he had.

Early’s own report of the engagement points to a potential cause for the confusion on May 5. As he understood the plan of attack, he and the 24th Virginia were to emerge from the woods in front of the Union position to attack the battery, just as transpired. He even said he used the sound of Hancock’s artillery to guide his advance.⁶⁵ If Hill intended, as he said he

⁶³ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 11 (1): 604-605.

⁶⁴ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 11 (1): 605.

⁶⁵ Report of Early, June 9, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 607-608. Early sent Hill a note two days after the battle saying that the reason he accompanied the 24th Virginia was because he knew they were going to exit the woods right in front of Hancock’s position; he determined he needed to provide his leadership at that location since Hill had the right wing covered: Jubal Early to D.H. Hill, May 7, 1862, Hill Papers, LOV.

discussed with Longstreet, to flank Hancock's position, he either did not make this clear to his brigadier or Early was trying to protect himself from blame. Early also indicated that he sent orders to his regiments at various times during the battle, but sometimes these would reach units after Hill ordered a different movement. Longstreet may have intended Hill to keep an eye on Early, a relatively new brigade commander, but despite their talents and aggressiveness, the two generals failed to achieve unity of command. In his own report, Longstreet refused to hold anyone in particular to account for what happened, commenting merely that "in the hurry of bringing the troops into action some of the officers failed to take due advantage of the ground and exposed them to a fire which was not absolutely necessary."⁶⁶ In retrospect, the attack was unnecessary, but at the time the Confederates identified a legitimate threat on their flank. Hill and his colleagues believed, based on their experiences in Mexico, that the most effective way to stop Hancock's guns from firing on Longstreet's men was to attack them. They discovered that a frontal assault against a similarly trained force in 1862 was a much more deadly endeavor than against the Mexicans in 1847.

The Confederate retreat continued on May 6 with Hill's division designated as the rear guard. Johnston had to leave behind wounded in Williamsburg, and the army lost many more troops to straggling, something that Hill abhorred and constantly complained about in his reports and correspondence. Ratchford described a particular instance when the general discovered two surgeons about to leave behind an ambulance full of medical supplies because it was stuck in the mud. When they refused to follow his order to push the wagon out

⁶⁶ Report of Longstreet, May 16, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 565. Hill told Longstreet years later that he did not blame Early for the defeat: Hill to Longstreet, August 31, 1885, James Longstreet Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

of the muck, Hill threatened to tie them to the tails of cavalry horses and make them walk.⁶⁷ For the most part, however, he was impressed with the morale and fortitude of the bulk of the soldiers who remained despite the continued bad weather and lack of substantial commissary support.⁶⁸ At this time, he became involved in the controversy over the actions of one of his brigade commanders, Gabriel Rains. Rains, whose background was in ordnance, designed and ordered the deployment of anti-personnel mines (at the time referred to as torpedoes or shells) around Yorktown and along the Confederate retreat route. Longstreet considered the use of mines inhumane and ordered Rains to stop, to which the latter responded that he was reacting to reports that McClellan intended to mine the redoubts at Yorktown during the siege. Hill endorsed his subordinate's appeal, writing with characteristic bluntness, "In my opinion all means of destroying our brutal enemies are lawful and proper."⁶⁹ Randolph tended to agree with Longstreet but thought torpedoes were acceptable to use against enemy warships, and later approved Rains' transfer to the James River defenses, where he could apply his expertise.

In the meantime, Johnston's army, trying to stay out of range of Federal gunboats, continued to withdraw toward Richmond until it finally halted behind the Chickahominy River, the troops laid out in an arc five miles or less in some places from the city. By May 24, the leading Union forces arrived opposite the Confederate flanks at Mechanicsville and Seven Pines.⁷⁰ Although convinced of McClellan's tentativeness, Hill appealed again to Randolph to reinforce the army before the enemy reinforced his own. Understanding that the

⁶⁷ Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., 1890, pg. 7, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁶⁸ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 11 (1): 605-606.

⁶⁹ Hill's notation on Rains' endorsement, O/A May 12, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 510.

⁷⁰ Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 109-110, 117-118.

Confederate army was in a vulnerable position that allowed McClellan considerably more room to maneuver than before, Hill continued to believe the answer was to mass all forces at Richmond. “I do not think that I am an alarmist, and I trust in God that I may be able to discharge my duty faithfully, but the scattering of our forces makes me fear the worst,” he wrote.⁷¹ Within days, he got the chance to do his duty and attempt to alleviate the Confederacy’s strategic disadvantages with which he was so concerned.

⁷¹ Hill to Randolph, May 25, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 544.

CHAPTER V

NOT WAR BUT MURDER: SEVEN PINES AND THE SEVEN DAYS

General Joe Johnston, like Major General D.H. Hill, was concerned that Major General George McClellan would continue to build up overwhelming combat power on the Peninsula. For military and political reasons, he could not permit his opponent to besiege Richmond into submission. He observed McClellan's dispositions and decided to take advantage of a key terrain feature. The Federal Army of the Potomac sat astride the flooded Chickahominy River, with three corps on the north side and two on the south. During the last days of May 1862 Union engineers worked non-stop to repair and build bridges over the river in order to establish a line of communication between the units. Johnston, inadvertently echoing Hill's suggestion to Secretary of War Randolph, made plans to attack the two isolated corps on the south side of the river and defeat McClellan's army in detail before the Union commander completed his preparations. Hill's division, which directly faced the corps of Union General Erasmus Keyes at the crossroads of Seven Pines, was to be the spearhead of the assault.¹

Johnston's plan called for a coordinated attack by three columns along three different avenues of approach to overwhelm the front and flanks of Keyes' lead division, commanded by Brigadier General Silas Casey. Hill was responsible for starting the attack at 8 o'clock in the morning with his four brigades moving due east on the Williamsburg Stage Road toward

¹ Stephen Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond: The Peninsula Campaign* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), 117-118.

Seven Pines. The supporting attacks were to start once those commanders heard the sound of Hill's guns. Major General James Longstreet, whom Johnston put in charge of the overall operation at Seven Pines, was to retain his division command as well and march his troops down the Nine Mile Road to meet Hill at the crossroads. In the south, Major General Benjamin Huger was scheduled to march out the Charles City Road, relieve one of Hill's detached brigades, and then proceed up a small dirt road to Seven Pines. Johnston designated troops from his other two divisions as additional supporting efforts and reserves. On May 28, he ordered Hill to reconnoiter the area in front of his division. Based on Hill's assessment of Keyes's positions, Johnston decided to proceed with the attack on May 31.²

The Battle of Seven Pines (or Fair Oaks Station) is best known as the fight in which Johnston was wounded, which helped pave the way for Robert E. Lee to take command of the newly designated Army of Northern Virginia. In many ways, leader errors over the seventy-two hours leading up to and including the battle directly contributed to this critical change of command. Although Johnston's plan in theory was sound, he did not ensure that his subordinates completely understood his intent, and all of them had problems coordinating the attack columns over muddy roads and wooded terrain to achieve mass at the decisive point west of Seven Pines. Delays on the part of Huger and Longstreet caused Hill to postpone his opening attack until 1 o'clock P.M., at which time his fourth brigade finally reached his position.³

² Report of Hill, 1862, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. I, 11 (1): 943 (hereafter cited as *OR*, unless otherwise noted all citations are from Ser. I); Garland to Hill, May 29, 1862 (two dispatches), *OR*, 11 (3): 559; Johnston to Smith, May 30, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 563; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 118-120. Johnston also wanted to take advantage of the rainstorm on May 30 that put the Chickahominy in flood.

³ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 943; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 120-124.

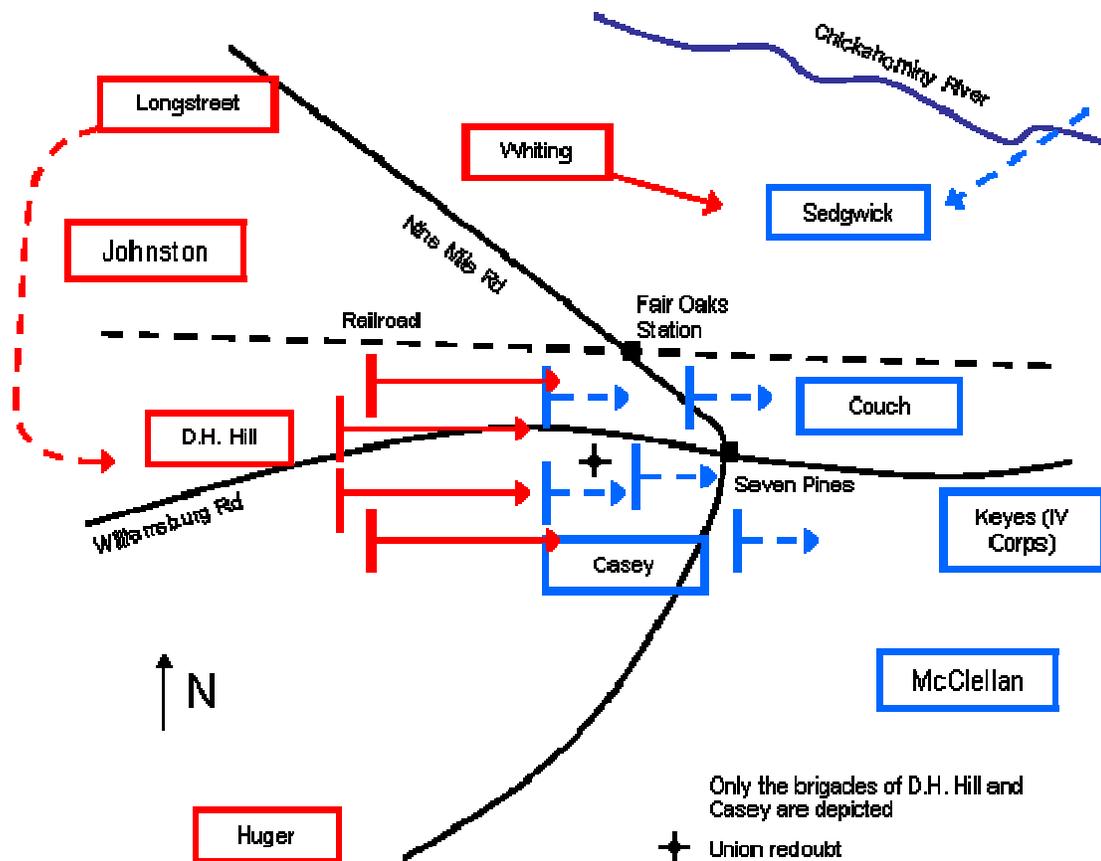


Figure 4. Battle of Seven Pines, afternoon-evening of May 31, 1862

Brigadier General Samuel Garland, who had taken over command from the wounded Jubal Early, led the assault on the north side of the Williamsburg Road. The terrain was so water-logged, as Garland described it, that his men fell into muddy ponds “knee-deep, and occasionally sinking to the hips in boggy places, almost beyond the point of extrication.”⁴ Nevertheless, the brigade efficiently pushed back Union skirmishers through the forest and entered the clearing west of Seven Pines, where Casey had arranged a rudimentary defense-in-depth consisting of abatis and gun batteries supported by free-standing and dug-in

⁴ Report of Garland, June 3, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 961.

infantry. Casey had even had time to construct a redoubt for his artillery near the crossroads. The Union troops, initially surprised by the assault, quickly regrouped and took deadly aim at Garland's regiments. The maligned 23rd North Carolina bore the brunt of the Federal fire, but help was soon on the way. Hill's brigades under Brigadier General Robert Rodes and Colonel George B. Anderson arrived and started to flank Casey's positions; as the infantry made progress and captured or put Union guns out of commission, the Confederate artillery was able to target the masses of soldiers in blue. Although some of Hill's regiments, particularly in Rodes's brigade, continued to take heavy casualties, they sent several storming parties against the Union redoubt. Combined with the entry of Brigadier General Gabriel Rains' brigade into the fight, they pressured Casey's forces into a hurried withdrawal to the next line of Federal defenses at Seven Pines proper.⁵

At this point, the fight was two hours old, and although McClellan and his subordinates had their own problems reacting to the Confederate assault, Johnston's were worse, for he did not even know the battle was going on, and both he and Longstreet failed to funnel many reinforcements to Hill. By late afternoon, Hill engaged the second division of Keyes' corps along with portions of the Union Third Corps, and both sides were locked in a stalemate at Seven Pines. Hill, however, felt he still had momentum on his side and sent back to Longstreet for help. Major Ratchford helped guide forward brigades, and upon asking the wing commander for advice, Longstreet replied, "Hill is on the ground and knows his business and we can trust him to do the best under the circumstances."⁶ Colonel Micah

⁵ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 943-944; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 126-128.

⁶ James W. Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., 1890, pg. 8, original in Daniel Harvey Hill, Jr. Papers, typescript in Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, NCSA). All citations and page numbers are from the typescript version.

Jenkins arrived with fresh troops and led them on a flanking maneuver away from the main fight, north and east through the woods, and succeeded in driving back a handful of Union regiments. This threat caused the Federal forces to give up their line of defense and fall back one and one-half miles behind Seven Pines. Hill gained almost three miles of ground that day. To his north, Johnston had finally sent Brigadier General Chase Whiting forward with his division, which gained some ground as well but was stopped by Union reinforcements that had been able to cross the swollen Chickahominy. It was during this fight that Johnston was wounded. All told, Johnston committed less than ten brigades out of a planned twenty-two in two uncoordinated assaults.⁷

Hill's friend G.W. Smith now found himself in charge of the Confederate army, and he ordered Longstreet to continue the advance the next morning with fresh troops. Longstreet placed Hill in tactical command again, committed his remaining four brigades along with two belonging to Benjamin Huger, and sent them north of the Williamsburg Road toward the rail line. The Union line, reinforced overnight, was ready for them, repulsed the Confederates, and counterattacked. Most of Brigadier General Lewis Armistead's brigade, despite the best efforts of that officer, broke for the rear, but Brigadier General George Pickett was able to plug the hole with his troops and stop the Union penetration.⁸ Brigadier General William Mahone's brigade also fled the field and Hill chewed out Mahone and his troops in the

⁷ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 944; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 129-134, 138. Whiting commanded G.W. Smith's division since Smith acted as left wing commander and second-in-command to Johnston.

⁸ Report of Smith, June 23, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 992; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 945; Report of Pickett, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 982-984; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 142-143. Hal Bridges asserted that Smith did not renew the advance, but Smith stated in his report written three weeks after the battle that he told Longstreet to resume the attack on June 1 (he also claimed the same in a book and article he wrote years later about Seven Pines). The official record is contradictory; Hill said he ordered his brigades to consolidate their lines around Casey's abandoned headquarters to absorb an expected Union attack, which occurred before the Confederates completed their movement, while Union Brigadier General William French and a subordinate reported being attacked first by Hill's troops at 6:00 A.M.: Report of French, June 3, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 782; Report of Zook, June 3, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 787; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 945.

middle of the battle. Not able to make any forward progress, Hill called off the engagement by 11:30 A.M., but Federal forces failed to capitalize on the opportunity to launch a more substantial counterattack. Since Union troops recaptured some terrain along the Nine Mile Road, Hill's division sat exposed in a forward position, and Longstreet ordered its withdrawal to its original positions the night of June 1, which it completed with no enemy interference.⁹

During and after the war, Confederate officers and commentators assigned blame to certain individuals who participated in the botched assault at Seven Pines, with Huger getting the most criticism. Many contradictions exist in the written record, particularly concerning what exactly division commanders understood their orders to be on May 31. Johnston, as army commander, must bear the brunt of the accusations, but both he and Longstreet clearly failed to communicate adequately with each other and their subordinates before and during the battle. Given that their actions had a direct bearing on Hill's mission, his performance must be assessed based on what he knew about the plan, his situational awareness on May 31 and June 1, and his resulting decisions.

Hill definitely understood that he was to attack at 8:00 A.M., on the condition that Huger's division was in position on his right flank and relieved Rodes's brigade. This did not happen until 1:00 P.M., and although Rodes got into the fight, Huger's forces did not until the following day.¹⁰ Hill appealed to Longstreet to attack earlier, before Rodes reached him,

⁹ Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 143-144.

¹⁰ Huger contested the reports of Longstreet and Johnston, both of which predicted a Confederate success had his division advanced on the Charles City Road on May 31. Hill referred to the delay in his report and also briefly described the problems with Armistead's and Mahone's brigades on June 1, but did not criticize Huger. Huger lobbied Jefferson Davis and George Randolph for a court-martial or court of inquiry with no success, and Randolph removed him from field command after the Seven Days battles and appointed him inspector of artillery and ordnance.

but the wing commander denied the request.¹¹ Despite Rodes's brigade stepping off several minutes behind Garland's and the difficulty of the spongy and wooded terrain, Hill and his brigadiers did a very good job of keeping their units together and supporting each other in the attack on Casey's division. In tactical execution, the assault was a marked improvement over the affair at Williamsburg. Unfortunately for Hill, he figured out within two hours that none of the other Confederate units were attacking according to Johnston's plan. Hoping to exploit his success while he had a Union division on the run, he asked higher for reinforcements, which he eventually received but in a piecemeal manner. As he wrote Isabella a week later, "Had my boys been supported [McClellan's] whole force would have been driven like chaff before the wind."¹² Longstreet clearly had confidence in Hill's tactical ability and had no qualms about continuing the fight, but after several hours of marching he could not place enough brigades into their designated positions to assist his subordinate fully. When Whiting finally advanced, he engaged an entirely different Union division which had subsequently arrived on the battlefield, so the armies became involved in two fights instead of the one planned by Johnston.

The next day, Smith and Longstreet, trying to rest Hill's mauled division, failed to commit enough forces against a strongly reinforced Federal line. As the Union troops attacked, Hill again became tactical commander for a division-sized sector and could only

¹¹ Report of Longstreet, June 10, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 940; James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1896/Secaucus, NJ: The Blue and Grey Press, no publication date), 93. Longstreet's memoir (originally published in 1896) is often criticized for lack of accuracy, but there appears to be no reason to doubt him in this case since he concedes that he told Hill to wait to attack on May 31. It was a good decision given that most of the Confederate army was not yet close enough during the late morning hours to support Hill's division and mass forces against Keyes' corps.

¹² D.H. Hill to Isabella Hill, June 7, 1862, The Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, 1861-1875, United States Army Heritage Collection, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, USAMHI).

hope that the brigade commanders, with whom he was not familiar, would do their part. George Pickett aptly summed up Hill's predicament and the communications problems inherent in the entire Seven Pines operation. During the action on June 1 he repeatedly sent back to Hill for more troops to shore up his defensive line but received no reply. Unbeknownst to him, Hill had ordered his entire line back 400 yards to consolidate his position because some of the regiments had fled or had already withdrawn against orders, leaving Pickett alone in front.¹³ The frustrated brigadier lamented the lack of overarching guidance in his battle report. "I do not mean to cast any blame on the brave and heroic Hill," he wrote, "for after the fall of the master spirit [Johnston] there seemed to be no head, and Hill, I know, was bothered and amazed with countermanding orders."¹⁴ Pickett referred specifically to certain Confederate forces in the left wing which remained stationary all day and did not join the fight. His fellow brigade commander, Brigadier General Cadmus Wilcox, similarly critiqued higher headquarters, specifically his division commander Longstreet, and stated, "Seven Pines, the successful part of it, was D.H. Hill's fight."¹⁵ Consumed by the battle and with his blood up, Hill did not always communicate effectively with his subordinates, but he tried to do the best he could with the resources at hand. Lost opportunities on the first day of the battle which allowed McClellan the time to reinforce his position south of the Chickahominy made Hill's task on day two much more difficult.

Hill emphasized in his report that his four brigades bore the brunt of the Seven Pines casualties since they conducted the main assault on day one and because Federal

¹³ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 945; Report of Pickett, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 983-984.

¹⁴ Report of Pickett, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 983.

¹⁵ Report of Wilcox, June 12, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 989.

reinforcements on day two did not fight as well as Casey's men. He was impressed with how his troops fought and claimed in hindsight that "they infused a spirit into the whole army which told with powerful effect in all the subsequent engagements, ending in the total rout of McClellan."¹⁶ He also, not surprisingly, praised the artillery batteries for delivering accurate fire despite the difficulties of operating the guns on water-logged terrain, and the crews for capturing and using Union guns.¹⁷ As a new brigade commander, Samuel Garland performed well, and Hill would place increasing responsibility on him in a future campaign. Although fairly dispassionate in his report about the performance of Longstreet's and Huger's brigades, he became more candid about the fight decades later. To Longstreet, he described Armistead's brigade being "stampeded" and how Mahone's brigade replaced it only to "come streaming back in a short time."¹⁸ Both brigades belonged to Huger's Division. To be sure, Hill and Longstreet were scouring each others' memories for information to support their respective reminiscences about the war, but Hill tied these setbacks to what he perceived as a lack of adequate respect for the challenges he faced and what his command as a whole did during Seven Pines. When he discovered that Mahone's troops had not fled the battle but were obeying orders to fall back, Hill apologized for calling the men cowards but affixed the label on their commander. To Hill's thinking, Mahone's order opened a gap in the Confederate line that the Union opponent could exploit, plus the brigadier had not informed his immediate commander of his intentions. Mahone was so upset at being called a coward that he tried to challenge Hill to a duel. A friend convinced him otherwise by reminding

¹⁶ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (1): 946.

¹⁷ Hill and Rodes disagreed over the specific role Rodes' artillery battery played in forcing Casey's troops out of the Williamsburg Road redoubt: see Report of Rodes and Hill's addendum, *OR*, 11 (1): 970-976.

¹⁸ D.H. Hill to James Longstreet, May 14, 1885, James Longstreet Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

Mahone that Hill was known to be so brave and high-principled that the army would look down on any challenger.¹⁹ Hill received credit for his bravery and actions in other generals' reports of the battle, but years later he still felt that his division had not received its due for its entire catalogue of operations on the Peninsula in 1862. Indeed, his post-war correspondence with Longstreet convinced him that "Old Pete" had on his own colored the historical record concerning Seven Pines.

General Lee assumed temporary command of the Army of Northern Virginia, relieving the hapless Smith. As Lee began the task of reorganizing the army and McClellan prepared for the siege of Richmond, Hill found time to write Isabella. He complained he had received only one letter from her lately which arrived right after June 1, "the most anxious & harassing day of my life," and implored her to write that she loved him.²⁰ He relayed the contents of a captured Union diary and boasted about all of Casey's equipment he had shipped back to Richmond. Three days later he marked the one year anniversary of the Battle of Big Bethel and rejoiced that God had protected him for a year. "There is awful wickedness as well as noble Christian virtue in R[ichmond]," Hill reported to Isabella, speaking of the ladies of the city who tended to the Confederate wounded while deserters drank, whored, and gambled their cares away.²¹ While news of Jackson's victories in the Shenandoah Valley encouraged him, he criticized Lee for not pursuing McClellan's forces upon taking command. As a result, he observed, "The enemy has ditched himself up to Richmond and

¹⁹ Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., 1890, pg. 8-9, Hill Papers, NCSA; Hal Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961/Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 49-50.

²⁰ Hill to Isabella, June 7, 1862, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

²¹ Hill to Isabella, June 10, 1862, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

unless there is some master stroke of policy, the city cannot be saved.”²² Using the same turn of phrase, he wrote to Secretary Randolph about their shared Bethel anniversary and again suggested massing forces to outflank and finish off McClellan. “I have been over the ground, understand it, and the spirit of our troops. I think I know what they can do and what they cannot do,” Hill pleaded, adding, “My deep, almost agonizing interest in this struggle must be my apology for again intruding upon your time.”²³

Throughout the month, Hill continued to fret about the position of Lee’s army and his soldiers. As the Union Navy continued to try to force its way up the James River, he supervised Brigadier General Henry Wise’s efforts to build up Confederate defenses at Drewry’s Bluff. As for his own division, he described having only 8,000 out of 14,000 men available for duty, with “the rest sick, wounded or shamming.”²⁴ Fortunately, during the reorganization of the Army of Northern Virginia, Hill retained three battle tested brigade commanders—Garland, Rodes, and G.B. Anderson. With Rains off to torpedo duty on the James River, Colonel Alfred Colquitt took command of his brigade, and Brigadier General Roswell Ripley’s brigade joined Hill’s division from South Carolina. Ripley’s presence indicated that Lee, like Hill, thought that the Confederate army outside Richmond needed reinforcements. By the latter part of June, both armies had dug in further along the Chickahominy, but had switched emphasis on their dispositions. McClellan moved two-thirds of his army south of the river, leaving one corps under Brigadier General Fitz-John Porter positioned north of the river and east of the hamlet of Mechanicsville to guard the

²² Hill to Isabella, June 10, 1862, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

²³ Hill to Randolph, June 10, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 588.

²⁴ Hill to Isabella, June 18, 1862, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

Union supply line and facilitate a link-up with a corps approaching from Fredericksburg. Lee placed the divisions of Longstreet, Hill, and Major General A.P. Hill opposite Porter on the south side of the Chickahominy; these represented the bulk of his force. To the south, near Seven Pines, Huger's and Magruder's divisions defended the Williamsburg and Nine Mile Road axes against four Union corps, with Major General Theophilus Holmes' division recently arrived from North Carolina to guard the James River approach.²⁵

On June 23, D.H. Hill, along with Longstreet, Jackson, and A.P. Hill, attended a council of war at Lee's headquarters, where the commanding general revealed his tactical plan for defeating McClellan. While Lee had previously called up units from the Carolinas, he had also reinforced Jackson with troops from the Richmond area to support his Valley Campaign. He now proposed to bring Jackson and some of those units back to the capital to take part in a massive turning movement against Porter's corps. From north to south, Jackson was to attack Porter in the flank and rear while A.P. Hill demonstrated and applied pressure to his front. Once A.P. Hill drove Porter out of Mechanicsville, Longstreet was to reinforce him while D.H. Hill moved north and east to support his brother-in-law. As Lee's General Orders Number 75 stipulated, the four divisions would advance en echelon down the Chickahominy and push the enemy away from New Bridge, a major crossing site. Jackson's follow-on mission was to threaten the Richmond and York River Railroad (the Union supply line) and force Porter further downriver. Huger and Magruder were responsible for demonstrating against the bulk of the Union army with the latitude to attack and pursue if given the opportunity. J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry was assigned the task to screen both flanks of the Confederate army. The council agreed to start the offensive early on the morning of June

²⁵ Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 59-62; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 154-156, 158-160.

26, allowing time for Jackson's troops to arrive at their designated stepping-off point.²⁶ Lee's plan went beyond Johnston's tactical penetration at Seven Pines; it took advantage of the available terrain for maneuver to drive deep into the enemy rear and turn him out of his positions. The plan was also complex, relying on coordinated multiple routes of advance between divisions, one of which (Jackson's) was making a hard march of several days duration.

Coincidentally, McClellan planned to attack Lee around the same time period; he wanted to gain ground west and northwest of the Seven Pines area to place his siege guns within easier range of Richmond. He received intelligence that Jackson was on his way from the Shenandoah Valley to threaten his right flank and ordered Porter to improve his defensive positions, but also proceeded with his original attack plan. At 8:30 A.M on June 25, three brigades of III Corps under Major General Samuel Heintzelman advanced west along the axis of the Williamsburg Road. They soon encountered pickets from Huger's division spread out through a wooded area known as Oak Grove. After two hours the Federals fell back under McClellan's orders, but tried again in the afternoon. Huger's men fought off both attacks, giving up only about 600 yards of ground. Thus began the Seven Days Battles. Hill contributed a "supporting force" to Huger but, although exposed to Union artillery fire, it did not enter the fight. Lee as scheduled put his plan into motion while McClellan, overwhelmed by inflated intelligence reports of enemy strength, instructed his army to prepare for a

²⁶ "General Orders, No. 75," June 24, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 498-499; Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 62-63; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 153, 176-177.

Confederate onslaught. McClellan also made conditional preparations to abandon his York River supply line for one on the James River.²⁷

Per Lee's plan, Hill marched his division the night of the 25th to the Mechanicsville Bridge to be in position for next morning's advance. Meanwhile, Jackson's march was behind schedule, which threatened to delay Lee's intended turning movement. Wooded terrain, the effects of fatigue on senior leaders, and a lack of accurate maps gave both armies a hazy picture of each other's intentions. On the Confederate side, Jackson's command did not get as close to Porter's position on June 26 as planned, halting instead about three miles northeast of Mechanicsville. The supporting elements, however, went ahead with the attack. An impatient A.P. Hill crossed the Chickahominy River at 3:00 P.M. and drove toward Mechanicsville, assuming that at some point he would join up with Jackson. Union outposts fell back to a prearranged defensive position at Beaver Dam Creek, which was manned by Brigadier General George McCall's division of Pennsylvania Reserves. Geography created a natural engagement area between ridgelines on either side of the creek, giving a defender on the heights a marked advantage over an attacker. Union soldiers accentuated the marshy obstacle by cutting down trees to create abatis and open up fields of fire. The position was so strong that Lee had no intention of attacking it; he planned Jackson's envelopment to make McCall's location moot and induce him to withdraw. In the absence of Jackson and with A.P. Hill's forces already significantly engaged, Lee decided there was no going back and that he had to gain and hold the ground along the west side of the creek.²⁸

²⁷ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 623; Report of Huger, July 21, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 787-788; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 181-191.

²⁸ Report of McCall, August 12, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 384-385; Report of Lee, March 6, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 491; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 623; Report of A.P. Hill, February 28, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 835-836; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 197-203. For a good explanation of the terrain, offense, and defense of this battlefield

A.P. Hill sent three brigades toward the Union right in hopes of linking up with Jackson but was repulsed. As daylight waned, he sent a fresh brigade toward the Union left which was promptly greeted with horrific firepower. D.H. Hill pushed up his reserve artillery battalion to assist in neutralizing the Federal guns, but they were delayed two hours because the Confederates needed to repair the Mechanicsville Bridge. In order to help extricate one of A.P. Hill's brigades, Lee sent word back to D.H. Hill for reinforcements. Hill sent up Ripley's brigade, which came into the southern edge of the battlefield and attempted to cross the creek at a millrace. The Union artillery that Hill's gunners had previously engaged was now behind the creek with a full view of Ripley's men. Hill's reaction to the battlefield conditions echoed that of other witnesses. "The enemy had intrenchments [sic] of great strength and development on the other side of Beaver Dam and had the banks lined with his magnificent artillery," he recalled, taking due appreciation of his favorite combat arm. "The approach was over an open plain, exposed to a murderous fire of all arms, and an almost impassable stream was to be crossed. The result, as might have been anticipated, was a disastrous and bloody repulse."²⁹ Ripley's men, even after receiving artillery support, had no more success than their predecessors. The battle finally died out about 9:00 P.M., with A.P. Hill's division retaining their foothold along the creek. Instead of gaining a two to one advantage over Porter—55,000 to 28,000 troops—Lee had only committed 11,000 men against 14,000 at Beaver Dam Creek and lost over 1,400 in an unintended battle. Hill's first

per modern U.S. Army principles of war, see Captain Scott T. Glass, "Battle of Beaver Dam Creek: FM 100-5 Lessons Learned," *Infantry* 84, No. 6 (November-December 1994): 10-14.

²⁹ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 623. Hal Bridges argued that D.H. Hill delayed sending Ripley to A.P. Hill's support because he did not think the frontal assault on Beaver Dam Creek was a good idea. I do not see any specific evidence that he particularly delayed or rushed to help; the bigger question concerns why neither D.H. Hill nor Longstreet put more effort into repairing the Mechanicsville Bridge when they were located nearby for several hours facing only a small Union picket on the other side: Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 67.

command, the 1st North Carolina, suffered 142 casualties, but its sister unit, the 44th Georgia, lost 335 men, or 65 percent of its soldiers.³⁰

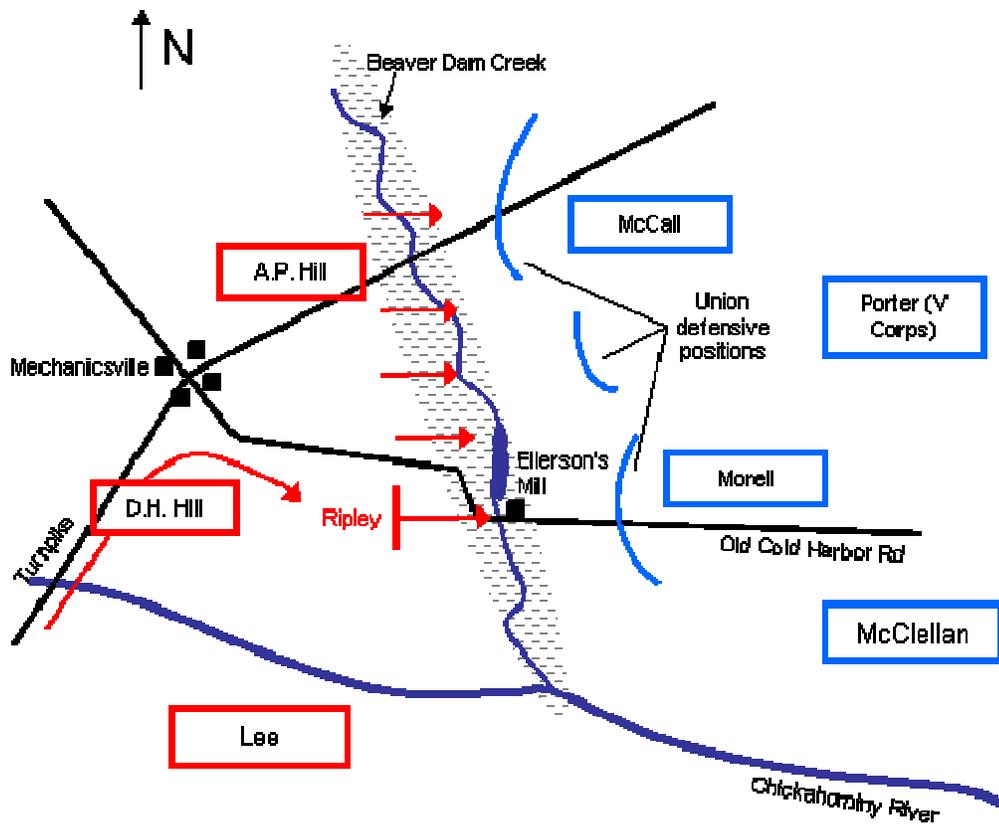


Figure 5. Battle of Mechanicsville, June 26, 1862

Mechanicsville demonstrated the difficulties the Army of Northern Virginia continued to have with communication and synchronization of forces, difficulties that Lee would not be able to resolve during the Seven Days Battles. Of note, Hill made scant mention of the delay in crossing the Chickahominy, but the inability of the artillery to cross the damaged Mechanicsville Bridge quickly made a huge impression on Ripley, who had no

³⁰ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 623-624; Report of A.P. Hill, February 28, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 835-836; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 202-208.

battery under his control and whose men suffered greatly at the hands of accurate Union fire.³¹ On the other hand, Lee's aggressiveness, along with that of subordinate commanders like D.H. Hill, overcame some of the tactical issues to impart operational and strategic advantages in the following days.

That night, Lee ordered Hill to move northeast and join Jackson. He planned to try his turning movement again the next day by way of Old Cold Harbor while A.P. Hill and Longstreet demonstrated in Porter's front. There was no question in Lee's mind of resuming the offensive, plus he received intelligence that Porter was withdrawing from Beaver Dam Creek. What he did not know was that McClellan was so alarmed at the news that Jackson was in the neighborhood that he ordered Porter to withdraw more than three miles south, thereby re-orienting his forces almost ninety degrees and giving up the road network around Old Cold Harbor that supported his York River supply line. By the time Jackson crossed upper Beaver Dam Creek, Porter had moved most of his forces out of Lee's trap and onto a plateau behind another defensible creek bed known as Boatswain's Swamp. This position protected multiple crossings over the Chickahominy for either reinforcement or retreat. Porter placed two divisions (those of Brigadier Generals George Morell and George Sykes) in two lines, one in the swamp and the other halfway up the slope. McCall's division composed the reserve and third line at the crest of the plateau and shared the ground with ninety-six guns. Because of the layout of the local road network, Jackson's and Hill's marches brought them straight toward the north and northeastern sides of Porter's defenses, while Longstreet and A.P. Hill approached from the west and northwest; all found themselves facing another tough water obstacle in front of high ground massed with artillery.

³¹ Report of Ripley, July 11, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 648; Report of Jones, July 15, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 652.

Union long-range guns from south of the Chickahominy also stood by to repulse the Confederate advance.³²

Just before daylight on June 27, Hill set out with his division traveling east of Mechanicsville along the Old Church Road. He was to meet up with Jackson coming out of bivouac to his north. Both commanders reported seeing some of McCall's men in the process of withdrawal from Beaver Dam Creek. While Hill had little difficulty executing a rapid march, Jackson, on a parallel road, ran into obstacles and Union sharpshooters, and ended up backtracking and following his brother-in-law. This delay meant that Hill reached Old Cold Harbor ahead of Jackson, but he decided to proceed alone. Keeping his skirmishers out, Hill sent two brigades on the road toward Turkey Hill and the Chickahominy River. All of the sudden, his forces encountered small arms fire from behind a ravine. Hill hurried a battery up to contest the crossing, only to have it fired upon by twelve Union rifled guns on the high ground. Here was a surprise; an unanticipated water obstacle (courtesy of bad maps) and a strong Federal defense by Sykes, Hill's West Point roommate. Porter had taken position further back than Lee anticipated, so for the second day the Confederates had failed to get in the rear of the Union Fifth Corps. Hill withdrew back to Old Cold Harbor to wait for Jackson and assist in Lee's adjusted plan, now taking shape over two miles away.³³

At the same time that D.H. Hill engaged Sykes, A.P. Hill's lead brigade approached Boatswain's Swamp from Gaines's Mill and met with a similar reception from Porter's

³² Reports of Porter, July 7-8, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 222-224; Report of McCall, August 12, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 387; Report of Lee, March 6, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 491-492; Report of Jackson, February 20, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 553; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 624; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 210-217.

³³ Report of Tidball, July 6, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 244; Report of Weed, July 5, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 354; Report of Buchanan, July 6, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 358; Report of Lee, March 6, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 491-492; Report of Jackson, February 20, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 553; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 624; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 219-220.

troops. Lee came up to confer with A.P. Hill and decided to attack, believing Jackson would be up soon as previously arranged. He was not aware that D.H. Hill had already run into Porter's right flank or that Jackson was still in the process of retracing his steps to Old Cold Harbor. More than two hours passed before Jackson's lead division under Brigadier General Richard Ewell arrived to assist A.P. Hill. Longstreet, his division now also on the scene, sent in a brigade. Through the afternoon, these Confederate units attacked in a piecemeal fashion and were repulsed by the Union defenders. Fortunately for them, they put enough pressure on Porter that he had to commit McCall and the designated reserve division from Sixth Corps.³⁴

To the east, Jackson instructed D.H. Hill to stand by to engage the Federal units he expected to flee from the western assaults. When this did not occur, Hill and some of Jackson's forces moved forward at 3:30 P.M. to relieve pressure on the forces to the west. With his five brigades on line, Hill followed the axis of the same road he used at midday. His men literally got tangled up in the dense undergrowth of the creek bed, and as the regiments jostled against each other, some were pushed back toward the rear, including three from Colquitt's brigade. Sykes's men came down to meet them and a fierce fight erupted in the headwaters of Boatswain's Swamp. Those that made it out of the creek then had to cross an open, sloping field exposed to a Federal battery. Hill discovered his brigadiers Anderson and Garland discussing an attack across this open yardage toward the exposed flank of Union infantry. He agreed to their proposal, and to support this advance detached five regiments to take out the Union artillery battery. Only one regiment, the 20th North Carolina from Garland's command, briefly succeeded before Union troops counterattacked and retook the battery, but the maneuver bought time for the rest of Hill's division to join adjacent units

³⁴ Report of Porter, July 7, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 224; Report of Morell, July 21, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 273; Report of Lee, March 6, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 492; Report of A.P. Hill, February 28, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 836-837; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 222-233.

from Jackson's command and advance up the plateau. This movement became part of a coordinated advance Lee ordered against the entire Federal line involving sixteen brigades or roughly 32,000 men. A brigade out of the Union Sixth Corps relieved Sykes's men and put up a stout defense near the McGehee House on the plateau, but the combination of Jackson's and Hill's troops overwhelmed the unit.³⁵ Hill quoted Garland in his account, who proudly reported that "[t]he effect of our appearance at this opportune juncture, cheering and charging, decided the fate of the day."³⁶ Two miles away on the Confederate right, troops in Longstreet's sector also finally broke through the Union defenses. Veterans of both assaults would claim the honor of being the first to penetrate Porter's line. As it grew dark, Hill regrouped his command, having heard cheering to his front (in fact Union forces covering Porter's retreat) and anticipating a Union counterattack. He commented in retrospect that had the Confederates advanced, they might have routed McClellan's army and captured thousands of prisoners. As he also admitted, however, "I was unwilling to leave the elevated plateau around McGehee's house to advance in the dark along an unknown road, skirted by dense woods, in the possession of Yankee troops."³⁷ Hill did not want any more surprises that day.

The Battle of Gaines's Mill (sometimes called First Cold Harbor or Chickahominy by the Confederates) was the bloodiest of the Seven Days' battles. The Union lost 6,800 men, while the Confederates lost almost 8,000 killed, wounded, captured, and missing. Hill's

³⁵ Report of Tidball, July 6, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 244-245; Report of Sykes, July 7, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 348-349; Report of Weed, July 5, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 354; Report of Buchanan, July 6, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 359; Report of Lee, March 6, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 492-493; 554; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 624-626; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 234-242.

³⁶ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 626; Report of Garland, July 14, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 641-642.

³⁷ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 626.

division suffered at least 1,300 casualties.³⁸ Hill had nothing but praise for Garland, Anderson, and Rodes, the last of whom directed his brigade despite not being fully recovered from a Seven Pines wound. Of Colquitt and Ripley, Hill was less charitable, stating that the two brigadiers failed to keep their units “in hand” and commit all of their regiments to the fight, thereby putting the onus on the other three brigades.³⁹ The accusation against Ripley was rather unfair, given that Hill detached the 1st and 3rd North Carolina to take part in the attack against the Union battery, while the 48th Georgia went to the aid of Anderson and the 44th Georgia was a shell of its former self after Beaver Dam Creek. Perhaps Ripley’s statement that his losses at Gaines’ Mill were rather small influenced Hill’s opinion. Colquitt’s relatively unengaged regiments still suffered between twenty-nine and forty-four casualties apiece because of their exposure to Union artillery fire.⁴⁰ Hill’s decision to press on past Old Cold Harbor at midday without waiting for Jackson to support him was questionable given the lack of accurate maps or knowledge of where exactly Porter was located. He may have been confident that Jackson would support him if he became involved in a general engagement. Like many of the other Confederate commanders in Lee’s army that day, Hill appears to have sensed that the Army of the Potomac was on the run, and that they needed to take advantage of the circumstances. That Hill’s confidence did not extend to a night attack makes sense in light of the disorganization of his division and his lack of knowledge about the status of the rest of the Army of Northern Virginia after the day’s fight.

Throughout his military career to that point, he had demonstrated that he could take initiative

³⁸ “Return of Casualties in the Confederate forces during Seven-days’ Battles, June 25-July 1, 1862,” *OR*, 11 (2): 975-976; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 249. The casualty list in the *OR* does not list the specific return for Anderson’s or Garland’s brigades at Gaines’ Mill; my number is based on my estimate of those two brigades plus specific numbers from the other three in Hill’s division.

³⁹ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 626.

⁴⁰ Report of Ripley, July 11, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 649; “Return of Casualties,” *OR*, 11 (2): 976.

in the course of a battle, but he respected the chain of command and lacked the audacity of a Jackson to forge out on his own with little or no guidance to develop a vague tactical or operational situation.

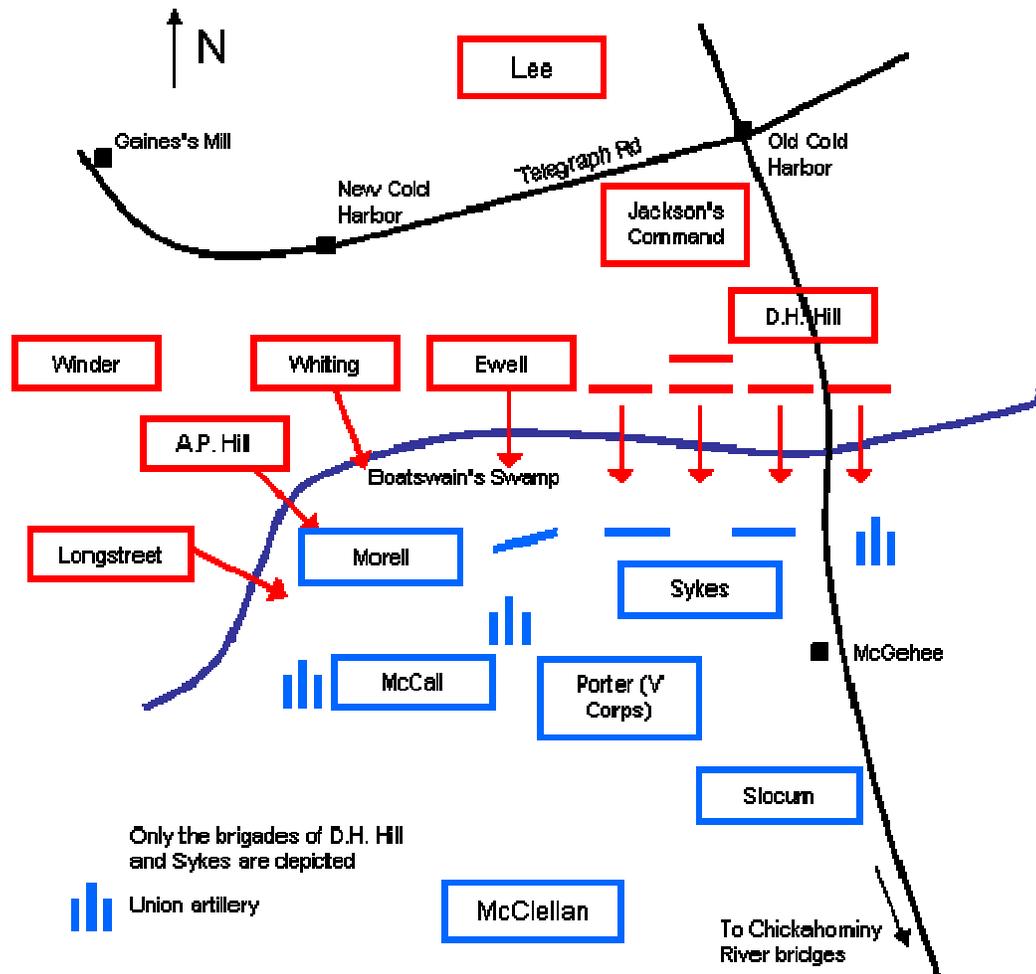


Figure 6. Battle of Gaines's Mill, afternoon of June 27, 1862

Hill took the McGehee House as his headquarters while his division, along with the others engaged at Gaines' Mill, spent June 28 evacuating the wounded, burying the dead, and sorting out captured Union prisoners and supplies. His men brought in their own special prize: Brigadier General John Reynolds, one of McCall's brigade commanders who had

collapsed from exhaustion and was left behind in the Union retreat. The former Old Army comrades greeted each other with Reynolds expressing chagrin at his predicament. Hill assured him that “there was no bad feeling on my part, and that he ought not to fret at the fortunes of war, which were notoriously fickle.”⁴¹ Meanwhile, Lee spent the greater part of the day trying to figure out McClellan’s next move. Magruder’s demonstrations on June 27, including an unintended engagement, convinced McClellan that Lee was bearing down on him north and south of the Chickahominy in overwhelming numbers, and he made official his decision to withdraw toward the James River. Discovering that his foe had abandoned his York River supply line and slipped out of his entrenchments near Seven Pines, Lee decided to set his army in motion on June 29 to intercept the Union retreat. Magruder and Jackson, including D.H. Hill, were to pressure McClellan from the rear, while Huger, Longstreet and A.P. Hill marched to attack Union forces as they were strung out piecemeal on several Tidewater-area roads. Holmes was ordered to advance along the River Road and mop up any remaining resistance.⁴²

Magruder, pushing down the Williamsburg Road, engaged elements of three Union divisions at the Battle of Savage Station on June 29, but he broke contact and the action failed to stop the Union retreat. Lee directed Magruder to march south and join A.P. Hill and Longstreet, who were making the long march to join Huger’s command in the vicinity of Glendale, a major road intersection through which most of McClellan’s forces would have to

⁴¹ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 626; Daniel H. Hill, “Lee Attacks North of the Chickahominy,” in *North to Antietam: Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Vol. II*, ed. Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (New York: The Century Company, 1884-1888/Castle Books, 1956), 360. Ratchford remembered the episode a little differently; according to him, Reynolds initially said nothing until Hill assured him that no one would think less of him for his capture. Ratchford may have been trying to play up his general’s chivalrous actions, but Hill did offer Reynolds and another captured friend, Major Henry Clitz, money and safe passage in an ambulance to Richmond: Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., 1890, pg. 10-11, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁴² Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 260-262.

pass to reach the closest James River landings. On June 30, seven Union divisions held off Longstreet's and A.P. Hill's attacks at Glendale (Frazier's Farm); Huger never showed up, and Holmes halted after meeting resistance from Federal infantry, artillery, and gunboats.⁴³

As for Jackson and his subordinates, they made slow progress over the same two days. D.H. Hill, his division in the lead, directed his engineers to repair the Grapevine Bridge over the river, which took most of the day on the twenty-ninth. At 3:00 A.M. on June 30 his division crossed the bridge and reached Savage Station a few hours later. En route, he encountered so many Union stragglers, wounded, and equipment that he detached two regiments to escort and guard the 1,000 prisoners and spoils of war. At about midday Hill's lead elements reached the burned-out bridge at White Oak Swamp. On the other side stood two Union divisions belonging to Brigadier Generals Israel Richardson and William F. Smith, the former commanding the rear guard of the Army of the Potomac. The two commanders were resting their troops while awaiting further orders concerning the withdrawal. White Oak Swamp Creek presented an excellent barrier for this short period of relaxation. The creek itself was not that deep, but as with most of the local waterways it contained heavy undergrowth and vines, and the swampy area extended for two to three miles up and downstream. It was a significant obstacle for large numbers of troops; in fact, it took Richardson most of the night and morning to get the rest of the Union army across. However, there was one other major crossing site nearby for wagons and artillery and a number of footpath-sized fords. With knowledge of the area, a dismounted force could cross the creek simultaneously on multiple avenues of approach.⁴⁴

⁴³ Report of Lee, March 6, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 494-495.

⁴⁴ Report of Richardson, July 6, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 55; Report of Lee, March 6, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 495; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 627; Matt Spruill III and Matt Spruill IV, *Echoes of Thunder: A Guide to the Seven Days*

Jackson and Hill could see the Union troop presence on the other side of the creek and called for artillery support. Twenty-six of Hill's own guns plus five from Whiting's division opened, in his words, "a sudden and unexpected fire upon the Yankee batteries and infantry. A feeble response was attempted, but silenced in a few minutes."⁴⁵ Colonel Stapleton Crutchfield, who as Jackson's artillery chief directed the firing, placed the guns behind a crest where the Union forces could not see them move into position. After the artillery preparation forced the forward Federal battery and sharpshooters out of the bottomlands of the swamp, Hill and Jackson accompanied cavalry and skirmishers across the creek. Just as the Confederates gained a foothold, fresh Federal artillery moved into a hidden position of its own and drove the two generals back and their cavalry downstream. Richardson consolidated his defense along the wood line on higher ground along the southern edge of the swamp, from which he could strongly contest any crossing. The artillery duel continued until dark, while Hill's skirmishers remained forward. No other Confederate forces crossed the creek that day.⁴⁶

The inability of Jackson to force the crossing at White Oak Swamp has stumped historians and armchair generals for years. Most agree, drawing on the accounts of his staff officers, that the fatigue of the campaign caught up with him and he simply could not process information or demonstrate his trademark initiative. At least two subordinates discovered some of the fording sites that may have allowed Confederate infantry to approach undetected

Battles (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 150-152; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 283-285.

⁴⁵ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 627.

⁴⁶ Report of Richardson, July 6, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 55; Report of Smith, July 11, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 464; Report of Jackson, February 20, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 557; Report of Crutchfield, January 23, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 561; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 627; Spruill and Spruill, *Echoes of Thunder*, 152-155; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 285-288.

the Union right flank. When briefed about this intelligence, Jackson is said to have grunted, nodded, or walked away with no comment. Also cited is the lack of communication between Jackson and Lee (who was rather busy at Glendale) as to what was going on in their respective areas of the battlefield.⁴⁷ As the commander of Jackson's lead element, Hill also declined to force the crossing. Much like the situation at the end of the Battle of Gaines's Mill, he had little idea about the enemy disposition beyond the woods on the far side of the swamp, except that, judging from the artillery response, it could be a large force. By keeping his skirmishers across the creek, he could at least develop the situation, but his wartime and postwar accounts are silent regarding his stationary position.⁴⁸ If Jackson had told Hill to attack, he probably would have done so, with confidence that he could call on his friend's support. As with the earlier fight, however, in the absence of orders or knowledge of how his effort could support the rest of Lee's army, Hill was not about to attack and get his soldiers needlessly killed.

Richardson and Smith withdrew their forces during the night as the rest of the Army of the Potomac successfully slipped through Glendale. Their route led south past Willis Church, across a creek named Western Run, and up a gradual slope onto the top of another plateau. This was the last significant piece of high ground before the James River and dominated western and northern approaches to the Union depots at Haxall's and Harrison's Landings. McClellan realized its importance and ordered it fortified as the Battle of Glendale

⁴⁷ Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 77; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 288-289; see also Robert K. Krick, "Sleepless in the Saddle: Stonewall Jackson in the Seven Days," in *The Richmond Campaign of 1862: The Peninsula and the Seven Days*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 66-95.

⁴⁸ In one of his *Century* magazine articles, Hill described his and Jackson's reconnaissance and offered many excuses for his brother-in-law's inaction, including Jackson's pity for his tired troops and his inability to work under other commanders: Daniel H. Hill, "McClellan's Change of Base and Malvern Hill," in *North to Antietam: Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Vol. II*, ed. Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (New York: The Century Company, 1884-1888/Castle Books, 1956), 388-390.

raged to the north. Named Malvern Hill after a local family who once owned most of the surrounding land, the plateau, roughly one and one quarter miles long by three quarters of a mile wide, was now farmland belonging to the Crews and West families. Woods and creeks framed all approaches except the northwest, from which ran Carters Mill Road past the Carter farm. Willis Church Road met Carters Mill Road at the northern end of the hill and continued south (as a track sometimes referred to as the Quaker Road), eventually descending to the River Road. Starting June 30, Porter and his artillery chief, Colonel Henry Hunt, prepared a defense with two brigades straddling the Willis Church Road between the Crews and West properties. Hunt arranged thirty-seven field artillery pieces on the crest of the hill and maintained three batteries of heavier guns available in his nearby reserve. As the Federal army passed through his position, Porter detailed Sykes's division to protect the guns, while he placed the divisions of Morell and Brigadier General Darius Couch (from Fourth Corps) across the northern end of the plateau. Two corps extended east and south of Couch's position, ready to provide reinforcements. Having again drawn the task of defending against an anticipated Confederate attack in McClellan's absence, Porter did a good job of creating another thorny tactical problem for Lee. Indeed, Porter's artillery had already thwarted Holmes' advance along the River Road, which left Lee with two choices—attack from the north or maneuver around the eastern flank of McClellan's army.⁴⁹

After the Union defenders left White Oak Swamp, Jackson's corps crossed the creek in the early morning hours of July 1 while he reported to Lee for instructions. Along the way, the Confederates collected even more Union stragglers and equipment but managed to march more rapidly than two days previously. Lee informed his subordinates that he intended to

⁴⁹ Two reports of Porter, July 8, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 228-229; Report of Hunt, July 7, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 238; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 310-312.

pursue McClellan toward Malvern Hill. Magruder and Huger, moving down Carters Mill Road, and Jackson down Willis Church Road, had the offensive mission; after fighting hard at Glendale, Longstreet and A.P. Hill were placed in reserve. Even without those two divisions, Lee could commit twenty-four brigades against the Army of the Potomac.⁵⁰ D.H. Hill rode ahead and found Lee and Longstreet on Willis Church Road. Finding out about the day's plan, he cautioned the two generals that a chaplain in his division described Malvern Hill as a strong defensive position. Concerned as he had been at Gaines Mill and White Oak Swamp, Hill recalled saying to the group, "If General McClellan is there in strength, we had better let him alone." Longstreet laughed at this comment and replied, "Don't get scared, now that we have got him whipped."⁵¹

Lee knew he had a psychological advantage over McClellan as well as operational momentum, which was why he considered another attack at all, but like Hill he anticipated quite a fight at Malvern Hill. His plan depended on his three commanders positioning and advancing their forces in concert against the Union defenses. In addition, after he and several individuals conducted a reconnaissance of the Federal positions, he issued orders to establish two grand artillery batteries whose purpose was to provide a concentrated crossfire on the enemy guns. Lee envisioned a classic combined arms battle in which his artillery supported his infantry attack; he had no intention of sending his regiments forward unless Federal artillery capability was sufficiently degraded.⁵²

⁵⁰ Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 312-313.

⁵¹ Hill, "Malvern Hill," in *Battles and Leaders II*, 391.

⁵² Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 316-317; Keith S. Bohannon, "One Solid Unbroken Roar of Thunder: Union and Confederate Artillery at the Battle of Malvern Hill," in Gallagher, ed., *The Richmond Campaign of 1862*, 222-223.

Unfortunately for the Confederates, their persistent communication problems and lack of local maps, coupled with battlefield losses, immediately affected the course of the day's events. On their right (west) flank, Magruder took the wrong Quaker Road and did not reach Malvern Hill until late afternoon, where he also assumed command of two of Huger's brigades when their commander and the other two brigades were nowhere to be found. Before Magruder showed up, Jackson arrived on the field and tied Huger's two brigades (commanded by Brigadier Generals Ambrose "Rans" Wright and Lew Armistead) into his own line straddling Western Run. From west to east, the Confederate forward positions consisted of Wright, Armistead, and from Hill's division Rodes, Anderson, and Ripley. Garland and Colquitt composed Hill's second line. Rodes occupied the center of the Confederate line that guided down the Willis Church Road. During the course of the afternoon, Anderson and Rodes advanced across the creek into the woods below the Union position, and Anderson's men moved even further into a farm field where they were immediately raked by Union artillery, their commander going down.⁵³

Lee had his chief of staff, Colonel Robert Chilton, draft an order to his commanders as follows: "Batteries have been established to act upon the enemy's line. If it is broken as is probable, Armistead, who can witness effect of the fire, has been ordered to charge with a yell. Do the same."⁵⁴ This order has been much criticized since for its vagueness and its dependence on a brigade commander to initiate the advance of the entire army. Arguably the most glaring problem with Chilton's text was that it took the establishment of the grand batteries for granted. In reality, these never existed to the extent envisioned by Lee, for

⁵³ Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 315; Report of Jackson, February 20, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 557; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 627.

⁵⁴ Chilton to Magruder, July 1, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 677.

various reasons. In Jackson's sector, he simply did not have all of his guns. Hill possessed the majority of the artillery in Jackson's command and incredibly he had sent all seven batteries to the rear for refitting and replenishment after the previous day's artillery duel. Maybe he dismissed the thought of another large battle so soon given the obvious Union retreat, but mainly the decision reflected his constant desire to keep his force properly maintained. Part of the reason Hill was nervous about attacking at Malvern Hill was because he did not have his artillery support. Crutchfield was sick that day and not on hand to direct guns out of the jumble of forces on the Willis Church Road, and Brigadier General William Pendleton, commander of Lee's artillery reserve, was never in touch with army headquarters that day to bring his battalions into position. The situation degenerated into one of division commanders working below their level of responsibility and trying to direct three and four-gun batteries of artillery, often from units not their own. If they were lucky enough to get a couple of batteries in action simultaneously, the Union artillery responded and decimated or chased off the Confederate crews. Most batteries entered the fight in a piecemeal fashion, and as noise and smoke increased, so did the inability to coordinate efforts or transmit clear orders.⁵⁵ The Confederate failure to attrit Porter's artillery boded ill for an infantry attack.

As Hill consolidated his brigades that afternoon in the concealment offered by the woods bordering Western Run, he observed the scene before him. He could tell that Porter had established strong successive defensive positions anchored on each flank—"Tier after tier of batteries were grimly visible on the plateau," he would later write—and commanded an open area of 300 to 400 yards over which Hill's forces would have to advance. Porter's disposition confirmed the concerns Hill voiced earlier to the command group. "An

⁵⁵ Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 317-319; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 629; Bohannon, "Artillery at Malvern Hill," 225-227, 234-237.

examination now satisfied me that an attack could not but be hazardous to our arms,” he concluded.⁵⁶ Upon receiving Chilton’s direction from Jackson, Hill was even more skeptical of making an assault; he knew how the few guns in the eastern “grand” battery were faring against their Union counterparts. He drew his brigadiers together, showed them Jackson’s note, and discussed the situation. Based on this conversation, Hill sent a note back to Jackson expressing his concerns and his opinion that their artillery efforts to that point had been of a “most farcical character.”⁵⁷ Rapidly running out of patience, Jackson repeated the order to advance on Armistead’s cue.

At approximately 5:30 that evening, Hill and his subordinates heard to the west the distinct sound of shouting followed by musket fire. Assuming this was Armistead’s advance, Hill ordered his brigades forward. His lead units immediately encountered resistance from Couch’s division and the ubiquitous Union artillery, now reinforced by guns from Second Corps. Garland worked his way up to the front to support his peers, but it soon became apparent to Hill that no other units to his immediate right or left had advanced up Malvern Hill. The noise he had previously heard came from Wright’s brigade on the far side of the Confederate line. Magruder ordered Wright and Billy Mahone (Hill’s would-be dueler) forward in obedience of Lee’s order; Armistead was already engaged trying to defend the western “grand” battery. Hill’s report captures well his frustration and the confusion of the battlefield. Rodes and Garland led their brigades close to Union lines at the top of the hill but were compelled to withdraw. Hill rode around the battlefield seeking reinforcements and found Brigadier General Robert Toombs’s brigade. Like Hill’s own brigades, Toombs’s

⁵⁶ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 627-628.

⁵⁷ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 628.

“advanced handsomely to the brow of the hill, but soon retreated in disorder.”⁵⁸ The men fell back in the direction of the parsonage and soon created a huge traffic jam on the Willis Road. Magruder and Jackson each sent a brigade forward to help Hill but parts of only one brigade arrived while the other was caught up in the congestion. “The division fought heroically and well,” wrote Hill, “but fought in vain.”⁵⁹ Magruder meanwhile fed other brigades into the battle on the Confederate right. However, a quarrel of sorts between him and Huger over the chain of command concerning the latter’s brigades affected Magruder’s ability to mass combat power and support Hill’s right flank.⁶⁰ Jackson and Magruder had only so much ground through which to push reinforcements without adding further confusion to the battlefield. In addition, the Confederates had once again committed to a battle late in the afternoon, leaving Lee little daylight in which to accomplish his objectives.

Reports on both sides agreed about the effectiveness of Union artillery in stopping Lee’s army, but commanders also emphasized a fierce, close infantry fight. From Couch’s perspective as he faced Hill’s division, he saw continual reinforcement and the available reserves (the rest of Jackson’s command) beyond Western Run, not merely disjointed attacks. Two of his brigade commanders pushed their soldiers out in front of their guns to hold off Hill’s advance and suffered from friendly as well as enemy fire. Lee acknowledged that the Confederate charge succeeded in breaking the first line of Union infantry. Confederate artillery also managed to effect a semi-coordinated bombardment at 4:30 P.M. that was not

⁵⁸ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 628.

⁵⁹ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 628-629.

⁶⁰ Report of Magruder, August 12, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 670; Ransom to Magruder, July 1, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 678; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 323-324. The controversy over Huger’s fitness for command continued with Malvern Hill, although he certainly was not the only one to blame for what occurred.

very accurate but forced Union soldiers to keep their heads down and wreaked some havoc on the reserve forces south of the main defensive line.⁶¹

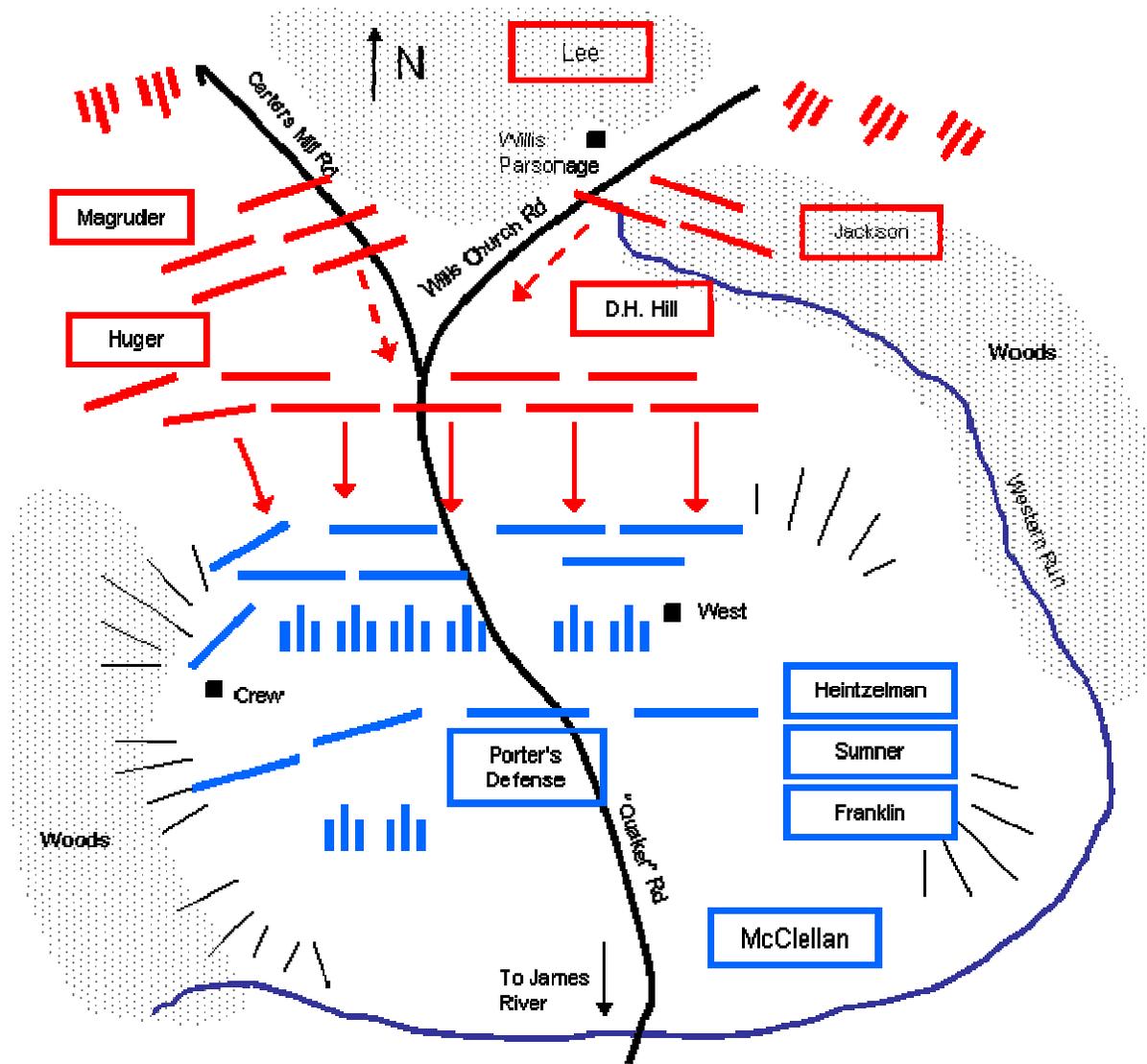


Figure 7. Battle of Malvern Hill, July 1, 1862

⁶¹ Report of Couch, July 5, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 204; Report of Abercrombie, July 12, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 212; Report of Palmer, July 4, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 214; Report of Lee, March 6, 1863, *OR*, 11 (2): 496; Bohannon, "Artillery At Malvern Hill," 228; Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond*, 319.

Lee and his commanders worked feverishly to impose some order on the fight, but to little avail. The narrowness of the plateau, waning daylight, and high numbers of wounded and stragglers amplified the level of disorganization behind the Confederate lines. Portions of only fourteen brigades were committed at Malvern Hill, for the most part at different times and places. Hill was the only one who sent in an entire division at once. From reports written soon after the battle and reminiscences written years later arise conflicting views over what Lee and his subordinates thought the Army of Northern Virginia was going to do that afternoon on Malvern Hill. We know that because of his artillery issues Lee considered trying to turn McClellan's eastern flank instead of sticking to his original plan. New intelligence convinced him otherwise and prompted him to send discretionary orders to Magruder to attack.⁶² Within twenty-four hours of the Union's tactical victory, however, many soldiers on both sides understood who had won the campaign. McClellan continued his army's withdrawal to the southeast and dug in at Harrison's Landing on the James; Lee pursued at first but ultimately decided to leave the Army of the Potomac alone and march back to Richmond to recuperate his own army. The results of the Seven Days Battles were not quite what Lee desired, but he achieved the near-term strategic goals of compelling McClellan to withdraw from the Richmond area and preserving his army to fight another day.

For D.H. Hill, the events of the evening of July 1 validated his worst fears. The battle inspired his oft-quoted line, "It was not war—it was murder." He lost at least 1,700 men that

⁶² Spruill and Spruill, *Echoes of Thunder*, 213. Bohannon summarizes the viewpoints in "Artillery at Malvern Hill," 230-231. Sears tends to emphasize Magruder's drug-induced state over the course of the Seven Days and thinks he took Lee's orders to advance too literally (*To the Gates of Richmond*, 323). Whatever the case, Lee and other officers learned the power of words in official communications.

day.⁶³ Like many others in retrospect, he lamented the inability of the Army of Northern Virginia to effectively coordinate its infantry movements and criticized the decision to attack without adequate artillery support. From his perspective, the Confederacy, through the Army of Northern Virginia, had the opportunity and capacity to destroy an enemy army and perhaps end the war, but wasted the chance. Hill had seen how disjointed strategy and operational plans affected execution at the tactical level; it was one of his biggest critiques about the Mexican War. Bad plans led to soldier casualties, although to him, the Malvern Hill casualties would have been worth it if the entire Confederate line had acted in concert and achieved a breakthrough as at Gaines' Mill.

Another matter of immediate importance to Hill as a division commander was the skill and discipline of the soldiers and their leaders, both of which varied widely among units. Hill expected everyone to give a maximum effort to the Confederate cause, just like he considered it his duty to remain in field service despite his health and home issues. This is why he got so upset at officers and soldiers when they did not perform up to his standards. At the same time, Hill acknowledged what we call the Clausewitzian concept of the friction of war, for it had similarities to his belief in an uncontrollable and pre-ordained fate. He exerted everything in his power to control what he could and left the rest to God; he had a hard time understanding why other leaders could not achieve a similar balance. Two episodes which occurred on July 1 demonstrate these tendencies.

Hill had no tolerance for perceived cowardice or shirking of duty. He was extremely angry about the conduct of Toombs's brigade, the unit that he had tried to bring up to the fight as reinforcement for his division. Hill actually grabbed only a portion of the brigade, the

⁶³ Hill, "Malvern Hill," in *Battles and Leaders II*, 394; "Return of Casualties," *OR*, 11 (2): 975-976. Again, this is my best estimate based on less detailed returns from Garland and Anderson. Sears cites a figure of 1,756: *To the Gates of Richmond*, 329.

rest being with Toombs elsewhere. When he saw the Georgia political general after the battle he publicly berated him for not being present to rally his troops and keep them organized in battle. What followed was practically a repeat of the Mahone episode from Seven Pines, with Toombs challenging Hill to a duel. Hill answered that a duel was against military law and would be distracting to the army; two weeks after Malvern Hill he considered the episode closed and refused to entertain Toombs's continued grievance. Hill's military prestige at this point was such that Toombs knew he could push the challenge no further.⁶⁴

Colonel John Gordon related the second incident, which occurred as he observed his division commander that afternoon before the ill-fated charge. He described how Hill sat against a tree writing orders as Union ordnance fell nearby. When Gordon suggested that the general at least sit on the north side of the tree away from the guns, Hill replied, "Don't worry about me; look after the men. I am not going to be killed until my time comes." Suddenly, a shell exploded nearby; a piece of shrapnel tore Hill's coat and the blast rolled him over several feet. He stood up, dusted himself off, and without a word walked to the other side of the tree and sat back down. Gordon marveled at his commander's calmness and deep belief in predestination.⁶⁵

These two episodes demonstrate that Hill understood that some incidents in war were uncontrollable, but felt that there was no excuse for certain human errors or inaction. He understood but did not fully appreciate the effects of friction in the wider context of the war. By the end of the Seven Days, he was one of the most practiced and successful division

⁶⁴ Robert Toombs to D.H. Hill, July 6, 1862, and Hill to Toombs, July 15, 1862, D.H. Hill Papers, Library of Virginia; Toombs to Hill, July 13, 1862, D.H. Hill Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 85-87. Toombs actually offered to resign his commission so he could fight Hill (legally) as a civilian.

⁶⁵ John B. Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), 67-68.

commanders in the Army of Northern Virginia because he had been involved in almost every fight over a two month period. He tended to forget that Lee and other generals did not yet have a similar level of experience leading brigade or higher organizations. In many cases, officers tried to do the right things, like a simple reconnaissance of enemy lines.

Unfortunately, multiple factors along the way—fatigue, weather, and lack of experience, to name a few—intervened to mitigate the success of Lee’s plan. Jackson’s chief of staff, Robert Dabney, recalled a conversation he had with Hill on the march to Savage Station. He said Hill complained about the Army of Northern Virginia being too dispersed in unfamiliar territory, and that if Lee could get all the parts to work in concert, it would be “against every established law of strategy.”⁶⁶ Hill of course was right—the tactical plan did not work—but he tended to criticize the architect or intent and not the constituent parts. He was one of those parts, and never fully explained, for example, his thought process during an afternoon of relative inaction at White Oak Swamp or why he sent all of his artillery to the rear in the middle of a pursuit. Hill’s tactical skill and bravery contributed to the successes the Confederacy enjoyed during the Seven Days’ Battles. His weaknesses were an inability to fully appreciate the complications surrounding the broader context of real-time military operations and strategy and his unrealistic demands to maintain a fully ready combat force.

Although triumphant over McClellan’s army, Lee’s men and the surrounding countryside had suffered mightily. Over 20,000 Confederate soldiers were killed, wounded, and missing. Hill lost over 3,700 men, or thirty-seven percent of his division, killed, wounded and captured. On July 3 he wrote Isabella to let her know he was well and tell her about the battle and his unit’s role in it, already concerned that its suffering would go

⁶⁶ Dr. Robert L. Dabney to D.H. Hill, January 8, 1886, Jackson-Arnold Collection, Russell-Arnold Archives, Presbyterian College.

unnoticed by the public.⁶⁷ Hill's division spent the week after the Battle of Malvern Hill sorting through the wreckage of the campaign, caring for the wounded, and burying the dead of both sides. "We then returned to our old camp near Richmond," Hill wrote, attempting to overcome his pessimism, "with much cause for gratitude to the Author of all good for raising the siege of that city and crowning our arms with glorious success."⁶⁸ Just as he feared, however, he was not done tangling with McClellan or his army.

⁶⁷ Hill to Isabella Hill, July 3, 1862, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁶⁸ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 11 (2): 629.

CHAPTER VI

FROM THE GAP TO BLOODY LANE: THE MARYLAND CAMPAIGN

“The art of lying can go no farther,” D.H. Hill wrote wife Isabella on July 9, 1862, in response to General McClellan’s public claims of victory in the Seven Days Battles.¹ The Union commander and his army remained only a few miles away on the James River, yet Hill was so confident that no fighting would resume that he invited Isabella to visit him in Richmond. She took him up on his offer, and as James Ratchford recalled, she and at least some of the children stayed with Hill while he was stationed in Petersburg, Virginia.²

Hill tackled two new areas of responsibility that summer. First, General Lee gave him the mission of representing the Confederate government in working out an acceptable prisoner exchange agreement with the North. Hill first met with the Union representative, Major General John Dix, on July 18 at Haxall’s Landing, and in four days the two produced a document. Known as the Dix-Hill Cartel, it was supposed to encourage prompt exchange, but there were many issues it failed to address, such as uniform rules for prisoner treatment should either side stop releasing soldiers. Neither side ended up enforcing the cartel very well. With the exception of the Union’s General Orders 100, a legal code issued the

¹ D.H. Hill to Isabella Hill, July 9, 1862, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, NCSA). Later that fall Hill alluded to his children being in good health at Petersburg: Hill to Isabella, October 8, 1862, D.H. Hill Papers, United States Army Heritage Collection, United States Army Military History Institute (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, USAMHI).

² Hill to Isabella Hill, July 9, 1862, Hill Papers, NCSA; James W. Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., 1890, pg. 12, D.H. Hill Papers, NCSA.

following year, both governments struggled to articulate their policies concerning prisoners of war.³

As the cartel neared completion, Hill received word that he was going to be assigned back to the Department of North Carolina. Lee chose him to replace Major General Holmes, with whom he was not completely satisfied as an independent commander. This time, Hill took charge of the entire department from North Carolina up to the south bank of the James River, including Drewry's Bluff and the river defenses just south of Richmond. His Peninsula brigades remained behind with the Army of Northern Virginia, on paper still known as D.H. Hill's Division, while his new brigades made up D.H. Hill's Command.⁴ Hill issued an effusive farewell address to his troops on July 21 that praised them for performing head and shoulders above their peers. He commended them on their discipline and good behavior, noting approvingly that their actions demonstrated that "they did not believe whisky, bluster, and profanity and rowdyism to be necessary adjuncts to the soldier."⁵ In true Napoleonic fashion, Hill concluded his address thusly:

May you ever maintain your present proud position. May you ever rebuke with proper scorn the wretches who desert your colors in battle or straggle from your ranks on the march or in camp. May your future deeds be such that when your

³ See *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. II, 4: 239, 266-268 for the terms of the cartel; George G. Lewis and John Mewha, *History of Prisoner of War Utilization by the United States Army, 1776-1945* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1982), 29-30.

⁴ "Organization of the Army of Northern Virginia," July 23, 1862, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. I, 11 (3): 650-652 (hereafter cited as *OR*, unless otherwise noted all citations are from Ser. I). Both Brigadier General Ripley and Major General G.W. Smith held temporary command of D.H. Hill's Division from July-August 1862.

⁵ "General Orders, No. --," July 21, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 646.

name is mentioned it may send a thrill of joy through the heart of him who once had the honor of commanding you.⁶

By the end of July, Hill established his department headquarters in Petersburg, Virginia. His new command consisted of four brigades plus seven artillery batteries and two independent Virginia infantry and cavalry regiments. Importantly for Hill, when he replaced Holmes, he gained a new aide and confidant in Lieutenant Colonel Archer Anderson. A member of the family which owned Richmond's Tredegar Iron Works, Anderson served Hill for over a year as his adjutant general. He became one of Hill's trusted inner circle along with James Ratchford and defended the general's interests during times of controversy.

As an independent departmental commander, Hill received guidance and orders directly from President Davis and Lee. Lee was particularly anxious that Hill do all he could to harass Major General McClellan's naval transports on the James River. In addition to containing the threat the Union commander still posed to Richmond, Lee wanted to make sure McClellan did not detach significant pieces of his command to the new Federal army forming under the command of Major General John Pope in northern Virginia. Confederate authorities also continued to worry about Union forces returning to North Carolina's Outer Banks and sounds from the Norfolk area. As early as July 28, Hill made arrangements to send two brigades along the south side of the James.⁷ He formed an expedition that succeeded in placing forty-three artillery pieces on Coggins' Point opposite McClellan's encampment at Harrison's Landing. The guns fired at the camp and damaged Union ships anchored at the landing. McClellan responded two days later by seizing Coggins' Point, bringing an end to Confederate harassment from that location. Unsure whether his foe was

⁶ "General Orders, No. --," July 21, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 646.

⁷ Hill to French, July 28, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 656.

going to stay put or intended on advancing on Richmond from this new direction, Hill pulled back one brigade to assist with the construction and improvement of defenses near Petersburg. He reported the situation to Lee, who responded that no matter which side of the river McClellan chose for an advance on Richmond, it would have to be resisted. Lee told Hill to assess the situation and figure out the best way of protecting against a potential Union movement.⁸

Lee felt he could rely on Hill to use his best judgment, but within a few days he started to doubt his subordinate's ability to handle independent command. It appeared to the commanding general that Hill had missed some opportunities to delay and disrupt Union operations on the James. For instance, Hill's discretionary orders to Brigadier General William Pendleton, his artillery commander, did not carry enough weight to convince the latter to fire on a Union gunboat grounded close to shore. By the time Hill sent more strongly-worded guidance, it was too late to make the risk to Confederate assets worthwhile.⁹ Hill's cavalry regiment also performed poorly. After hearing about all of this, Lee expressed disappointment about the lack of resolution of both issues. "You must endeavor to make your present division superior to your former, and I have great confidence of your accomplishing it," he gently chided Hill, adding, "I hope you will lose no opportunity of damaging the enemy in every way."¹⁰ Lee also reminded Hill that he needed to finish the defenses as soon as possible since Hill and his troops might be needed in an upcoming fight.

⁸ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1019; Lee to Hill, August 3, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 660-661.

⁹ Hill to Pendleton, August 3, 1862, and Pendleton to Hill, August 3, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 661; Pendleton to Hill, August 5, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 665.

¹⁰ Lee to Hill, August 7, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 667.

As the summer wore on, there were multiple reports of Federal forces moving near Richmond and, most distressing to Lee, the departure of McClellan's troops from the Peninsula. On August 13 he told Hill to send observers downriver to report continuously on Union activity.¹¹ Within four days, however, McClellan and his army were gone. A disappointed Lee wrote President Davis: "This induces me to say what I have had on my mind for some time. I fear General Hill is not entirely equal to his present position."¹² The commanding general considered his subordinate a good executive officer who could accomplish much during kinetic operations in the presence of superiors but faltered in a more complex departmental command. This was ironic given Hill's skill at administrative tasks and his prior exposure to a multifaceted military occupation in Mexico, but the Department of North Carolina and its peculiar geographical and political concerns would have challenged any commander. Despite his weaknesses, Hill performed good work gathering labor to construct defensive positions around Petersburg in the form of trench works that the army would come to rely heavily upon within two years. As a result of Lee's comments, Davis decided to return Hill to his division. Hill departed Petersburg on August 21, picking up Brigadier General Lafayette McLaws' division and his own en route to Rapidan Station. He and his troops arrived too late to take part in the Second Battle of Bull Run/Manassas and met up with Lee and the rest of the Army of Northern Virginia in Chantilly on September 2, 1862.¹³

Shortly after Lee defeated Pope at Second Manassas, he moved across the Potomac River into Maryland as part of the Confederacy's strategy to take the war onto northern soil.

¹¹ Lee to Hill, August 13, 1862, *OR*, 11 (3): 673-674.

¹² Lee to Davis, August 17, 1862, *OR*, 51 (2): 1075.

¹³ Davis to Lee, August 21, 1862, *OR*, 12 (3): 938; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1019.

During the course of the campaign, he decided that he would need to secure objectives (specifically towns such as Harpers Ferry) along his supply line back through the Shenandoah Valley. On September 9, his headquarters issued Special Orders Number 191 (S.O. 191) detailing the missions of each division in the army. Hill and his division initially fell back under “Stonewall” Jackson’s command during the movement into Maryland and then acted as the rear guard of the army as it moved west from Frederick to Hagerstown.¹⁴ Meanwhile, McClellan and his Army of the Potomac cautiously pursued Lee toward the mountains. The risk in Lee’s order lay in the division of his army into five major parts that were separated by several square miles of water and mountainous obstacles. If McClellan moved fast enough, he could engage these isolated units and defeat Lee’s army in detail.

Lee’s assistant adjutant general, Colonel Robert Chilton, prepared S.O. 191 and directed its distribution. He addressed copies to each major subordinate commander, including Hill. The order detached Hill’s division from Jackson’s command, but Jackson, noting that the chain of command stayed intact until execution of the order, personally duplicated his copy of the order and forwarded it to Hill. Hill received the order in his brother-in-law’s handwriting; this was the copy that he and his family would later take pains to preserve. On September 13, after the Confederates moved out of Frederick, McClellan’s army reached the city and encamped in many of the same spots that Lee’s troops had occupied days before. It was on this day that Union Corporal Barton Mitchell and First Sergeant John Bloss discovered an unmarked envelope on the ground. Inside was a piece of paper wrapped around three cigars. The top of the paper included the name of Lee’s

¹⁴ “Special Orders, No. 191,” September 9, 1862, *OR*, 19 (2): 603-604. On Confederate strategy in fall 1862, see Stephen W. Sears, *Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983), 64-68.

headquarters and was labeled “Special Orders No 191” and at the bottom was addressed to “Maj Gen D.H. Hill Comdg Division.”¹⁵

The soldiers forwarded this important piece of intelligence through their chain of command to McClellan’s headquarters, where an officer with some acquaintance with Chilton recognized the adjutant general’s signature on the paper. Convinced he had a genuine document on his hands, McClellan exultantly transmitted the news to Washington. As it turned out, he did little to press his advantage; among other issues, S.O. 191 led him to believe that he faced both Longstreet’s and Hill’s units at or near South Mountain, which lay between Frederick and Hagerstown. In reality, only Hill with his five thousand men occupied the main pass through the mountain, and, unassisted for most of the day, he held off Federal troops on September 14. Nonetheless, Union actions made Lee consolidate his troops more quickly and withdraw to Sharpsburg, Maryland, where McClellan met him on September 17 for the Battle of Antietam.

Whether or not Lee or any of the Confederate generals found out about the loss of the order during the Maryland Campaign is still a matter of debate, but someone leaked McClellan’s find to Northern newspapers by September 15, two days after its discovery.¹⁶

¹⁵ Stephen W. Sears, “The Twisted Tale of the Lost Order”, *North and South* 5, Issue 7 (2002): 54. Sears’ article is one of the most recent accounts about the finding of the Lost Order. Despite later Confederate claims and accusations against Hill dropping the order or leaving it on a table, the story of how Barton and Bloss found the paper in a field is the currently accepted one. Northern controversy on the subject deals with Bloss’ efforts to eclipse Barton (who died a few years after the war) as the one who found the document, how McClellan responded (or not depending on point of view) to the intelligence, and what happened to the cigars.

¹⁶ Articles on the finding of the order appeared in the New York *Herald* (Sept 15), Washington *Star* (Sept 15), Baltimore *Sun* (Sept 16), and Baltimore *American* (Sept 17): Scott M. Sherlock, “The Lost Order and the Press,” *Civil War Regiments* 6, No. 2 (1998): 174-176. Concerning when Lee found out his order was compromised, Douglas S. Freeman and James Murfin believe he already knew the night of September 13, while Stephen Sears thinks Lee’s postwar memory was clouded by the publicity the loss received in 1863, and that he did not know until he read about McClellan’s testimony. Lee wrote Jefferson Davis on September 16 that the night of the 13th he found the enemy was “advancing more rapidly than was convenient” from Frederick, causing him to shift Longstreet’s forces back east to be able to support Hill: Lee to Davis, September 16, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 140.

The following March, McClellan testified before the (U.S.) Congressional Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War that the discovered dispatch was addressed to D.H. Hill, and information about the hearing eventually reached the Confederate press. The *Savannah Republican* conjectured on June 4, 1863, that Hill must have dropped the dispatch in his tent before moving out to South Mountain. McClellan's movements now made sense and Lee lost the opportunity to consolidate and ready his forces for battle. "We can never know what would have been the result if that order had not fallen into the hands of the enemy," correspondent "P.W.A." wrote, "and yet it is not impossible, had it not reached the Federal general, that we should this day be in Maryland."¹⁷ Getting wind of the media coverage, Hill immediately sensed that his military reputation might suffer injury over the incident. As a precaution, he sent his field papers, including the order in Jackson's hand, to his wife Isabella for safekeeping. "Fearing that there might be a stain upon my memory, if I fell in the approaching battle [Chickamauga] without some explanation of the mystery," Hill stated in 1868, "I wrote home that the copy of Lee's order, which governed me in all I did while in Maryland, could be found among my papers..."¹⁸

Unaware of the brewing controversy, Hill returned to tactical form at the Battles of South Mountain and Antietam. With the bulk of the Army of Northern Virginia split up and trying to capture Harpers Ferry, he established headquarters near Boonsboro and prepared to delay McClellan's westward march if needed or prevent Union forces from escaping up Pleasant Valley from Harpers Ferry. On the morning of the September 13, Brigadier General J.E.B. Stuart sent word to Hill that he should send back a brigade to occupy Turner's Gap,

¹⁷ "Army Correspondence," *Savannah Republican*, June 4, 1863.

¹⁸ D.H. Hill, "The Lost Dispatch," *The Land We Love* 4, No. 4 (Feb., 1868): 275. Jackson of course was dead by the summer of 1863 and could not back up his brother-in-law's statements.

through which ran the National Road between Frederick and Boonsboro. Several other passes ran through South Mountain, which protected Pleasant Valley; if the Union army seized any of the gaps, it could capture or destroy two Confederate divisions and force Lee to return to Virginia. Stuart's cavalry fought two delaying actions that day and in the process only discerned two brigades worth of Union troops. Seeing that Hill had posted Alfred Colquitt's brigade in Turner's Gap, Stuart moved one mile south, dropping off a cavalry detachment under Colonel Thomas Rosser at Fox's Gap, and continued another five miles to Crampton's Gap to assist another Confederate infantry brigade. Hill also moved Samuel Garland's brigade up in support of Colquitt and positioned his remaining brigades near the western foot of the mountain.¹⁹

On the morning of September 14, McClellan sent two corps toward Turner's and Fox's Gaps and one toward Crampton's Gap.²⁰ A previous Union cavalry reconnaissance indicated that Colquitt's position could be turned via Fox's Gap. In the intervening hours, however, Garland's men moved south and took up a position behind a stone wall just south of Fox's Gap. The positions offered good observation of the large Federal army as it approached the mountain, the sight of which both impressed Hill and made him anxious. "It was a grand and glorious spectacle," he recalled over twenty years later, "and it was impossible to look at it without admiration. I had never seen so tremendous an army before..."²¹ As a result, Hill ordered G.B. Anderson's brigade up the mountain to a road

¹⁹ Report of Stuart, February 13, 1864, *OR*, 19 (1): 816-817; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1019.

²⁰ The battle at Crampton's Gap developed later in the day and will not be discussed here as it did not involve Hill's command. However, McClellan's success in seizing this gap by nightfall, along with what happened in Hill's sector, influenced Lee's decision to reunite his army the next day at Sharpsburg.

²¹ Daniel H. Hill, "The Battle of South Mountain, or Boonsboro'," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Vol. II*, ed. Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (New York: The Century Company, 1884-1888/Castle Books, 1956), 564.

running along the crest of the ridge (today's Appalachian Trail), from which he could support Colquitt or Garland. Meanwhile, Union cavalry probed Fox's Gap again and discovered Garland's troops, prompting their commander to send for infantry support. Union Brigadier General Jacob Cox sent up one of his brigades to attempt to turn the Confederates out of their position.²²

The Battle of South Mountain began at 9:00 A.M. when Cox's division of Major General Jesse Reno's Ninth Corps, following farm roads up the mountain, made first contact with Garland's skirmishers. With the exception of one regiment that fled the scene the brigade fought as hard as it had done during the Peninsula Campaign. Garland was killed early in the fight and Colonel D.K. McRae took over, repositioning his forces as best he could in the rocky and woody terrain and even succeeding in taking out a Union battery. The pressure of a division against a brigade was too much, however, especially when Cox's troops used another local road to maneuver around McRae's right flank. Demoralized by the death of their commander, the Confederates began to give way down the western side of South Mountain. G.B. Anderson moved his brigade up to bolster McRae's line and prevent Cox from seizing the road to Sharpsburg, and Rosser assisted with his artillery and sharpshooters. The ridge road allowed Hill to shift artillery and troops quickly along the mountain top; he later described how he sent two guns to Fox's Gap accompanied by cooks, staff officers, and anyone else not actively engaged in the fight, to give the appearance of fully-manned crews.²³

²² Report of Pleasonton, September 19, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 210.

²³ Report of McRae, October 18, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1040-1042; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1020; Hill, "Battle of South Mountain," in *Battles and Leaders II*, 566; Sears, *Landscape Turned Red*, 130-132.

The fight at Fox's Gap subsided for a couple of hours as both sides brought up reinforcements. Hill hurried Roswell Ripley's brigade to Anderson and sent a message back to Longstreet, who at that time was force-marching his troops from Hagerstown. By the time the fight started again near 4:00 P.M, two of Longstreet's brigades took part in a counterattack with Anderson and Ripley. However, Reno had most of his corps on hand by now and stopped the Confederate advance. Following up with a Union counterattack, Reno was mortally wounded. Two more brigades under the command of Brigadier General John Bell Hood arrived from Longstreet to help hold the ridge and Sharpsburg roads. By nightfall, Union troops held Fox's Gap but failed to seize the roads descending into Pleasant Valley.²⁴

As the battle at Fox's Gap played out, Union forces struck Hill's defenses in the vicinity of Turner's Gap. He not only faced a direct thrust up the turnpike but a turning movement from the north. Federal Corps commander Major General Joseph Hooker hoped to seize a spur that jutted out from South Mountain and commanded Colquitt's defensive positions. North of this spur was a ravine containing a narrow road that allowed access north and west over the mountain to the rear of Hill's position. Hill realized early the need to defend this approach and reinforced Colquitt's pickets with Rodes' brigade, followed eventually by four brigades from Longstreet.²⁵ Longstreet's units enjoyed relative parity against three Union brigades, but Rodes, who moved to the far side of the ravine to try to protect the mountain road, absorbed the full brunt of a division attack. As he proudly reported, "We did not drive the enemy back or whip him, but with 1,200 men we held his whole division at bay without assistance during four and a half hours' steady fighting, losing

²⁴ Report of Cox, September 20, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 459-460; Report of Hood, September 27, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 922; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1020-1021.

²⁵ Report of Hooker, November 7, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 214; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1020-1021.

in that time not over half a mile of ground.”²⁶ As fate would have it, John Gibbon, Hill’s best man at his wedding, led the Union charge up the National Road with his Iron Brigade. The approach to Turner’s Gap ran through a steep defile and Colquitt’s men made Gibbon’s advance an unpleasant one. By nightfall Gibbon dislodged Colquitt from his forward positions but at the cost of 318 men.²⁷ Neither Gibbon nor the rest of his corps gained the actual summit of South Mountain that evening.

Hill pronounced the battle a success, as he delayed any Federal interference with Harpers Ferry for another day. As he wrote his report a few weeks later, he emphasized the hurdles his division overcame since leaving Richmond, including straggling stemming from “heavy marches, deficient commissariat, want of shoes, and inefficient officers.”²⁸ Hill may have had Ripley in mind when he made his last comment, as this officer’s brigade ended up not taking part in the Confederate counterattack at Fox’s Gap. “I received a note from Ripley saying that he was progressing finely; so he was, to the rear of the mountain on the west side,” Hill sarcastically wrote years later in his *Battles and Leaders* article about South Mountain.²⁹ He felt that Anderson and Colquitt performed well, but saved his biggest praise for his other two commanders. Of Rodes, Hill wrote, “Had he fought with less obstinacy, a practicable artillery road to the rear would have been gained on our left and the line of retreat cut off.”³⁰ Hill understandably mourned the loss of his other aggressive brigade commander,

²⁶ Report of Rodes, October 13, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1036.

²⁷ Report of Colquitt, October 13, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1052-1053; Report of Gibbon, September 20, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 247-248.

²⁸ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1021-1022.

²⁹ Hill, “Battle of South Mountain,” in *Battles and Leaders II*, 569.

³⁰ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1021.

“that pure, gallant, and accomplished Christian soldier, General Garland, who had no superiors and few equals in the service.”³¹

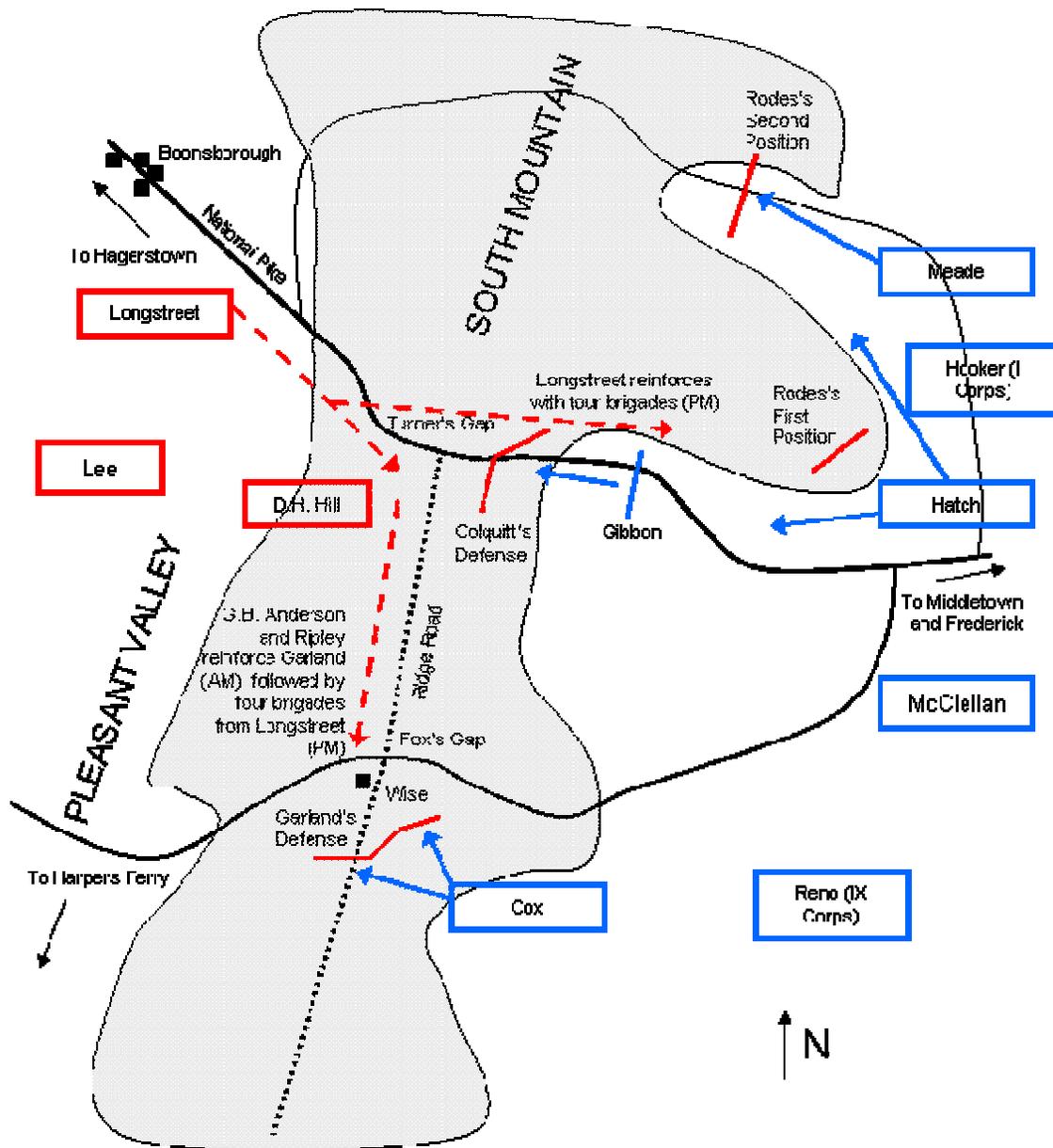


Figure 8. Battle of South Mountain, September 14, 1862

³¹ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1020. In the same paragraph, he described Reno as “a renegade Virginian, who was killed by a happy shot” from a Confederate regiment—justice served in Hill’s opinion.

Also in his official report, Hill blamed the dispersion of the Army of Northern Virginia for Longstreet's inability to support him until late in the day; McClellan's army therefore remained relatively undamaged and it retained the ability to challenge Lee three days later at Sharpsburg. Longstreet agreed with Hill, noting in his own report that his men were exhausted from their march and could have done more damage to the enemy had they arrived sooner. He would go on in later years to be more vocal about his reservations concerning S.O. 191.³² Hill made his comments with the memory still fresh in his mind of seeing an entire Federal army bearing down on his solitary division. He had great respect for the fighting qualities of the U.S. Army, if not always for individuals within that organization, having tangled with it so often in the previous months. He still struggled to see the strategic advantage Lee was trying to obtain by dividing his army and to understand his own place as a rear guard commander within that concept. Nevertheless, none of the Confederate commanders expected such a fight at South Mountain. It was one thing for Hill to be told to hold off the advance guard of the Army of the Potomac but quite another to have to stall two entire corps. His close-run experience at South Mountain would color his defense of his military reputation after the war, especially concerning the "Lost Order."

Lee, Longstreet, and Hill held a council of war in Boonsboro that night. The commanding general knew that he could not hold South Mountain and that he needed to reunite his army. Having received word from Jackson that he expected Harpers Ferry to surrender the next day and counting on McClellan's usual cautiousness, Lee felt he still had the opportunity to salvage his campaign and invite the Army of the Potomac to battle on his own terms. Accordingly, he instructed Hill and Longstreet to disengage from South

³² Report of Longstreet, October 10, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 839; see also James Longstreet to D.H. Hill, July 28, 1885 and August 13, 1885, Hill Papers, NCSA.

Mountain overnight and march their commands southwest through Boonsboro to the town of Sharpsburg. The high ground near Sharpsburg west of Antietam Creek offered good defensive positions and ready access to Potomac River fords for a withdrawal back into Virginia.³³

Hill quietly moved his men out of the gaps that night and marched his division to Sharpsburg on the morning of September 15. His troops initially occupied positions north of the Boonsboro Pike and its “middle” bridge over Antietam Creek. This was the main east-west approach to Sharpsburg, but there were also parallel and adjacent roads which ran over upper and lower bridges across the creek. The lower, or Rohrbach Bridge, would become famous as Burnside’s Bridge. As the rest of the Army of Northern Virginia filed into Sharpsburg over the next twenty-four hours, Hill moved his command a few hundred meters northwest into a narrow, twisting farm lane closer to the north-south Hagerstown Pike.

As Lee anticipated, McClellan followed him to Sharpsburg and positioned his army on the east side of Antietam Creek. The Union commander developed a plan for a double envelopment of Lee’s line using the upper and lower bridges, followed by an exploitation force in the middle via Boonsboro Pike. The execution proved far more difficult than formulating the plan.³⁴ With the benefit of a concave defensive line, Lee was able to repel (although sometimes barely) uncoordinated Federal assaults by shifting troops and artillery back and forth. Occupying the center of the Confederate line on September 17, Hill both contributed and received reinforcements within this reactive scheme. By mid-morning, he

³³ Lee to Davis, September 16, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 140; Report of Lee, August 19, 1863, *OR*, 19 (1): 147.

³⁴ Report of McClellan, October 15, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 30. This is how McClellan described his plan in his after-action report. He did not issue written orders on the battlefield and some of his post-war accounts differ from his report, so his exact plan and intent is still unclear as exists in the surviving historical record.

committed the brigades of McRae, Colquitt, and Ripley to the bloody fights in the Cornfield and the East Woods. All three units suffered enormous casualties; all of Colquitt's field grade officers were killed or wounded. McRae's men, feeling like they were reliving South Mountain all over again, panicked when a Union force appeared on their right flank, and the officers could do little to control the retreat. Still possessing a large number of guns, Hill tried to array his artillery to fire directly into Union infantry columns in the northern part of the battlefield, but more often than not long-range artillery from across the creek silenced his batteries. He was forced to withdraw his guns behind his infantry, in the vicinity of his headquarters at the Piper Farm.³⁵

Hill's main engagement during the Battle of Antietam developed by accident, at least from the Union point of view. Major General Edwin Sumner led his corps across the creek to exploit success on the northern side of the battlefield by attempting to move around Lee's left flank. Instead, two of his divisions became separated from each other in the confusion of the fight. The middle division under Brigadier General William French lost contact with the first and veered toward the middle of the Confederate line, where Hill's men occupied the farm lane. The road was so well used by locals as a shortcut between the pikes that it had in most parts sunk below the level of the surrounding fields, creating a natural trench. During the battle, it earned the sobriquet "Bloody Lane." Rodes's and G.B. Anderson's brigades were the only intact units in the road, with the remnants of Hill's other brigades filling in positions at the west end.³⁶

³⁵ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1022-1023; Report of McRae, October 20, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1043; Sears, *Landscape Turned Red*, 205, 208-210.

³⁶ Report of French, September 20, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 323-324; Report of Kimball, September 18, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 327; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1023.

At approximately 9:00 A.M., French's division approached the Sunken Road in orderly lines, uncontested by Confederate artillery. Lee, Longstreet, and Hill were conducting a reconnaissance on horseback along Hill's lines when a random scene of battlefield ridiculousness ensued. As Union artillery fire increased, Lee and Longstreet dismounted, but Hill remained on his horse. Just as Longstreet suggested that Hill move away so as not to present such a target to the group, a Federal shell hurtled in and struck Hill's horse, taking off its front legs. The horse fell forward on its stumps, leaving Hill in the saddle leaning precariously over its head. Years later, Longstreet reminded him of the incident and publicized it in an article. The horse's plight put Hill "in a most ludicrous position. With one foot in the stirrup he made several efforts to get the other leg over the croup, but failed. Finally...he got down."³⁷ Hill certainly led a charmed existence. Ratchford, ever present at his side, could not understand why his mentor recklessly exposed himself and risked leaving his children fatherless. "God will take care of them, if he allows anything to happen to me," Hill told Ratchford, patiently explaining that it was his duty to demonstrate to the troops that he would not send them into an unknown situation or anywhere he would not go as well.³⁸

Back at the front, Rodes described how the Union soldiers emerged over the crest of a slight hill in front of his position, about eighty yards away, at which point his brigade opened fire. Although they fell back, the Federals reformed their line and kept attacking. 6th Alabama commander John Gordon let the enemy come even closer, telling his soldiers to be patient and wait until his order to fire. Union brigade commander Brigadier General Nathan Kimball

³⁷ Longstreet to Hill, March 11, 1885, Hill Papers, NCSA; James Longstreet, "The Invasion of Maryland," in *Battles and Leaders II*, 671.

³⁸ Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., pg. 16, Hill Papers, NCSA.

confirmed the “murderous fire” his unit encountered as the fight raged back and forth for three hours while each side attempted local counterattacks.³⁹ Rodes led one of these counterattacks, on Longstreet’s order, but he was unable to coordinate all of the regiments under his command. By this time, portions of Brigadier General R.H. Anderson’s division showed up to reinforce G.B. Anderson’s end of the road, and Rodes tried to grab one of the new regiments. In his absence, the acting commander of the 6th Alabama, pressured by Union inroads on his right flank, misunderstood Rodes’s orders to adjust his formation and instead withdrew the regiment from the Sunken Road. Other regiments followed suit, and before Rodes could correct the problem, a huge hole opened in the Confederate lines of which French’s forces took advantage. By the time the mass exodus ended, Rodes could rally only 150 men at the Piper Orchard.⁴⁰

At the other end of the road, the fresh Union division of Major General Israel Richardson, including the soon-to-be-famous Irish Brigade, attacked the two Andersons. R.H. Anderson’s men were exposed coming through the Piper Cornfield and Federal troops focused much of their fire on them. Some of Richardson’s men also made progress around G.B. Anderson’s right flank. The combination of this move plus Kimball’s success to the west transformed the Sunken Road from a shelter into a killing zone.⁴¹ The following day, Kimball described the scene. “The corn-fields on the front are strewn with their dead and wounded,” he wrote, “and in the ditch first occupied by them the bodies are so numerous that

³⁹ Report of Rodes, October 13, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1037; John B. Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1904) 86-87; Report of Kimball, September 18, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 327.

⁴⁰ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1023-1024; Report of Rodes, October 13, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1037-1038.

⁴¹ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1023-1024.

they seem to have fallen dead in line of battle, for there there is a battalion of dead rebels.”⁴² “One of my officers long afterward assured me that he could have walked on the dead bodies of my men from one end of the line to the other,” said Gordon, who was forced to leave the battle after his fifth wound.⁴³ He admitted this comment probably was not literally true, but photographs and casualty counts confirm Gordon’s and Kimball’s impressions of the magnitude of the fight. Two general officers—G.B. Anderson and Richardson—suffered mortal wounds in the fight. By noon, Richardson’s and Kimball’s men finally drove Hill out of the Sunken Road.

At this point, with Union forces gaining a foothold on the Piper Farm and threatening to take the high ground dominating Sharpsburg and the Confederate rear, Hill dryly commented, “Affairs looked very critical.”⁴⁴ He managed to find an idle battery and ordered it to fire at the Union artillery, which it did with some effect while coming under counter-battery fire. Trying to take advantage of the resulting confusion, Hill ordered Rodes and other colonels to gather their remaining men and make a counterattack. Shouldering a musket, he personally led 200 of these men toward the Union lines but met “with a warm reception, and the little command was broken and dispersed.”⁴⁵ Another group of 200 men to his right suffered a similar fate. Meanwhile, Longstreet took over an artillery battery, ordering his staff officers to man the guns after Union sharpshooters took out its crews. Through these efforts, the Confederates convinced Union commanders that they still presented a substantial threat. McClellan ordered no further attempts to penetrate Lee’s line in that sector. As

⁴² Report of Kimball, September 18, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 328.

⁴³ Gordon, *Reminiscences*, 88.

⁴⁴ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1024.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Brigadier General Winfield S. Hancock, Richardson's replacement, later wrote, he had no reserves and his troops were under constant fire from Confederate artillery northwest of his position.⁴⁶

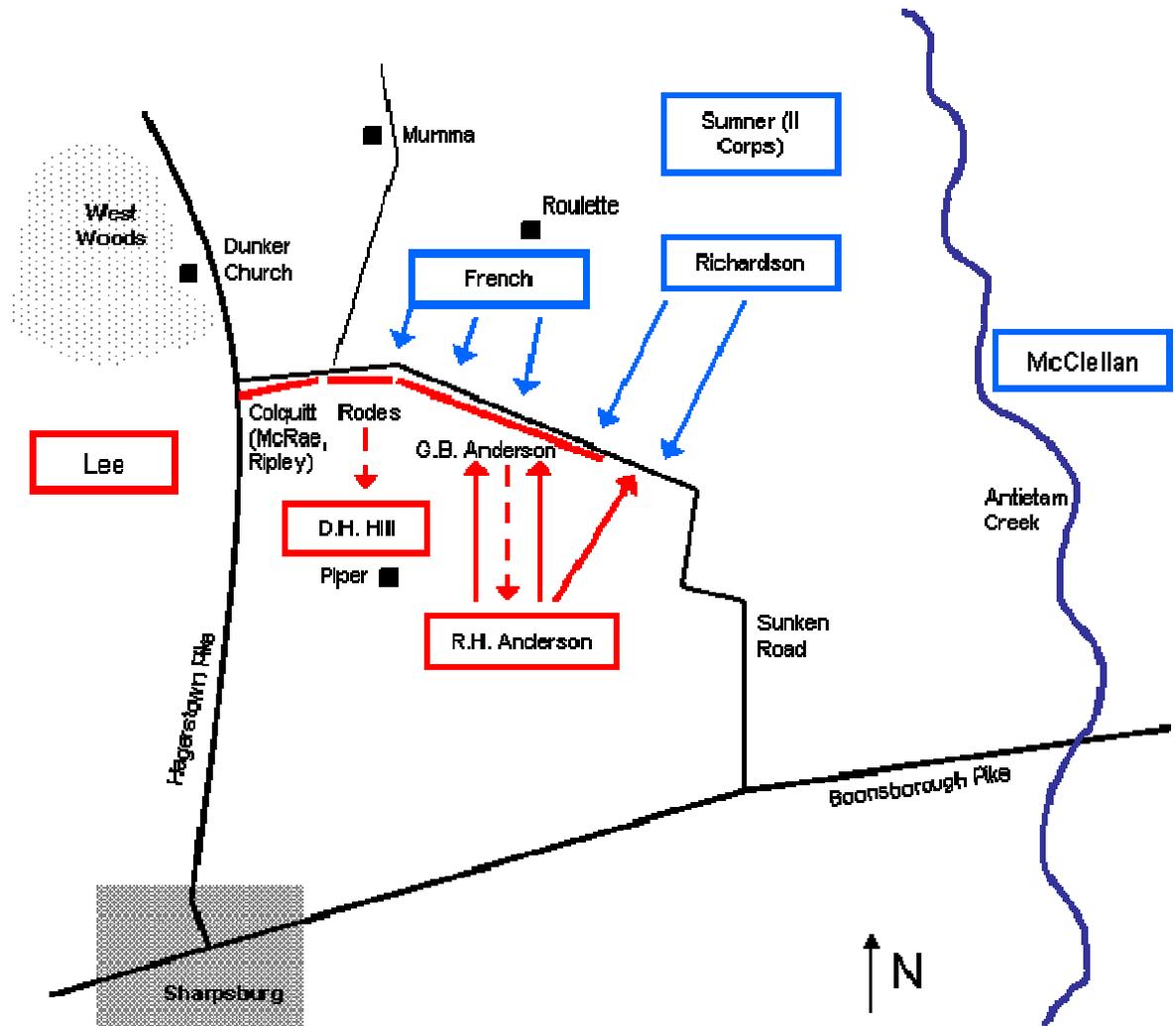


Figure 9. Battle of Antietam, Sunken Road, morning of September 17, 1862

⁴⁶ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1024; Report of Rodes, October 13, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1038; Report of Hancock, September 29, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 279; Sears, *Landscape Turned Red*, 251-253.

Hill did not directly participate in any of the other engagements that day, except to send some infantry and artillery to contest Union advances up the Boonsboro Pike and from the southeast. Late in the day, a Maine regiment wandered into Hill's lines near the Hagerstown Road; upon being greeted by musketry they promptly withdrew. By nightfall, his division occupied a position roughly 200 yards to the rear of where it had started in the morning. As Hill consolidated his forces and waited for McClellan's next move, he could count on no more than 1,700 available troops out of the 5,000 with which he began the Maryland Campaign. Besides two brigade commanders killed, the majority of his field grade officers were wounded, and he reported 925 men missing.⁴⁷ "The skulkers and cowards had straggled off, and only the bravest and truest men of my division had been left," Hill reported, but he sympathized with all of the men as they suffered from fatigue and hunger. The soldiers lived off the land for three days because most of the wagon trains had been sent back to Virginia. One image in particular stuck out in his mind. "In charging through an apple orchard at the Yankees, with the immediate prospect of death before them," he wrote, "I noticed men eagerly devouring apples."⁴⁸

Although a tactical draw, the Battle of Antietam resulted in Lee's withdrawal to Virginia and the end of his Maryland Campaign, a strategic victory for the Union that finally gave President Abraham Lincoln the leverage to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. Not mincing words, Hill concluded his official report of the campaign with three critiques of Confederate operations. First, he returned to the problem of the divided army. Hill believed that if some of the divisions marching from Harpers Ferry had arrived earlier in Sharpsburg,

⁴⁷ Report of Carter, October 14, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1030-1031; Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1025-1026; Sears, *Landscape Turned Red*, 292-293.

⁴⁸ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1025.

the battle would have lasted a mere two hours. Second, he criticized the use of artillery as a primarily indirect fire weapon. Confederate artillery, he noted, was not of a quality to compete with Union long-range artillery and should have been used only against enemy infantry. Finally, Hill again addressed the issue of straggling. The cumulative effect of this evil meant Lee had less than 30,000 men with which to contest McClellan at Sharpsburg. “The straggler is generally a thief and always a coward, lost to all sense of shame; he can only be kept in ranks by a strict and sanguinary discipline,” intoned Hill.⁴⁹ He implied that stragglers had no honor and certainly no sense of duty unless it was rammed into them via drill and orders. They were the antithesis of what he held dear, and, in Hill’s opinion, the main reason why the Confederacy had not yet won the war.

The Army of Northern Virginia crossed the Potomac River the night of September 18 and marched up the Shenandoah Valley. Two weeks later, Hill updated Isabella from Winchester, where he was resting his division and recruiting new soldiers. As usual, he told her, the men did well and did not receive the proper credit, but he was personally satisfied as long as he had her support.⁵⁰ Isabella passed on reports from the Richmond papers and was concerned for her husband about the “injustice” of the press. Hill assured her that he was not concerned about what reporters said or failed to say about his actions. “I want the love of wife & children & not newspaper puffs,” he wrote back, adding rather wistfully, “I would be content to be totally unknown to the world never to be mentioned or thought off [sic], to have a quiet home of love & confidence, where jealousy suspicion & fretfulness never intruded.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ Report of Hill, 1862, *OR*, 19 (1): 1026.

⁵⁰ Hill to Isabella Hill, October 3 and 4, 1862, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁵¹ Hill to Isabella Hill, October 8, 1862, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

Although Hill feared the war would continue for a long time and bring death to many, he continued to put his faith in God having a plan for him. “Be cheerful always,” he advised Isabella in closing.⁵² Hill may have been putting up a noble front for his wife, but he still cared a great deal about public perception of his military reputation, especially as the war went on and the demand for competent senior generals increased. The Hills’ faith would indeed be severely tested over the next several months.

⁵² Hill to Isabella Hill, October 8, 1862, Hill Papers, USAMHI.

CHAPTER VII

DEALING WITH SKULKERS: THE DEFENSE OF NORTH CAROLINA

During its brief fall break from campaigning, Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia reorganized into two corps and refilled its ranks. Hill's division became part of Stonewall Jackson's corps; he retained Robert Rodes and Alfred Colquitt as brigade commanders and gained Brigadier Generals George Doles, Alfred Iverson, and Colonel Brian Grimes and their troops. As the Union Army of the Potomac moved back into Virginia and appeared to threaten Richmond once again, Lee sent James Longstreet's corps east of the Blue Ridge Mountains to block the enemy at Culpeper. Abraham Lincoln replaced George McClellan with Major General Ambrose Burnside. Assuming Lincoln would give Burnside a mandate to press forward where his predecessor did not, Lee called Jackson's corps east from the Shenandoah Valley. Longstreet moved to further block the next logical avenue of approach through Fredericksburg and in late November Jackson moved south and east of the colonial-era city on the Rappahannock River. By December 3, Hill's division took position at Port Royal, a town fifteen miles southeast of Fredericksburg. Occupying the right flank of Lee's army, Hill's job was to harass Union gunboats coming up the river and prevent the crossing of enemy forces.¹

¹ "Organization of the Army of Northern Virginia," dating from July 23, 1862 and subsequent assignments and reports, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. I, 21: 541 (hereafter cited as *OR*, unless otherwise noted all citations are from Ser. I); Francis A. O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 12, 42-43.

Unaware of Jackson's location near the south bank of the Rappahannock, a Union detachment attempted to cross the river at an unguarded location between Fredericksburg and Port Royal. On December 4, four gunboats ascended the river in support, only to encounter Confederate rifled cannon and part of the Stuart Horse Artillery firing from bluffs above and below Port Royal. The officer in charge settled into what he thought was a protected anchorage near the town until Hill brought his own batteries into play, including a long-range Whitworth gun which fired from three miles away. Throughout the day on December 5, Confederate sharpshooters in and around Port Royal fired on the gunboats as Hill's gunners continued to lob shells. The Union crews responded by firing their cannon into town, which prompted Hill to label them "piratical cruisers." His artillery along with the Stuart Horse batteries succeeded in driving off the U.S. Navy but to Lee's disappointment did not gravely disable any of the watercraft. Hill's defense, however, did buy time for Jackson to shore up the threatened crossing point below Fredericksburg, causing Burnside to adjust his operational plan.²

Late on December 12, Hill received word to move his division promptly to Fredericksburg. After a nearly twenty mile overnight march, the division filed into line behind that of Jubal Early, whose own unit was positioned behind the front line division of A.P. Hill. D.H. Hill's division became the reserve for Jackson's Second Corps, occupying the right side of Lee's defense. As such, his men, except for his artillery batteries, witnessed very little action on December 13 during the Battle of Fredericksburg. As Early moved his brigades up to relieve A.P. Hill during the fight, D.H. Hill moved his men forward so that by the end of the day he occupied the second line of Jackson's corps. At one point when Union

² Report of Hill, December 5, 1862, *OR*, 21: 36-37; Endorsement of Lee on letter, W.H.F. Lee to Stuart, December 5, 1862, *OR*, 21: 38; O'Reilly, *Fredericksburg*, 51-52.

forces threatened the Confederate right flank, Jackson rushed Hill over to block the way, but the division soon returned to bolster the main defensive line. Hill's division artillery relieved A.P. Hill's batteries and engaged the Union 1st Corps. Toward late afternoon Jackson decided to counterattack and called for volunteers from Hill's division to precede the infantry assault with artillery. Three of Hill's battery commanders stepped forward, but as they and other artillerymen set out across the battlefield, the Union guns opened up on them with such ferocity that Jackson called off the entire attack. Hill, who was at the far end of the line with his infantry, did not at first hear of the cancellation, and went forward with Rodes, Doles and Grimes's brigades through a thick area of woods. At the same time as he and his troops started coming under Union artillery fire, he received Jackson's order to fall back. Hill's division then resumed its place on the line behind Early's division.³

The following day, as the Federal army licked its wounds, Hill moved his Whitworth gun to a position where it could enfilade the enemy artillery, while sharpshooters and skirmishers traded shots with their Yankee counterparts. Hill's division replaced Early's on the front line before dawn on December 15 as the battlefield remained relatively quiet. Perhaps hoping the Union would resume its advance, Hill asked Jackson if he could keep his troops in the van another day, to which his brother-in-law agreed. The fight was not to be; during the night, Federal troops slipped away to the north bank of the Rappahannock, and the next day Hill's pickets found nothing but discarded equipment and wounded soldiers. Another scare at Port Royal put Jackson's corps on the road later that day, but the Federal threat disappeared, and Hill's division took position about nine miles southeast of Fredericksburg. Although by Hill's standards none of his troops had actively engaged the

³ Report of Jackson, January 31, 1863, *OR*, 21: 633-634; Report of Hill, December 24, 1862, *OR*, 21: 643; O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, 427.

enemy, he still lost 172 soldiers, mostly to artillery fire.⁴ He praised the leadership of his brigade commanders and the steadiness, patience, and conduct of the men, considering how they were rushed to and fro with little resulting action. Sensing the importance of the battle in bolstering Confederate morale, he wrote, “In no battle of the war has the signal interposition of God in our favor been more wonderfully displayed than at Fredericksburg, and it is to be earnestly hoped that our gratitude will correspond in some degree with his favor.”⁵

As the two armies stared each other down across the river, Lee ordered his corps commanders to entrench, but soon after all units dispersed to go into winter quarters. It was during this time of furloughs, according to James Ratchford, that Hill made one of his more famous comments. Members of a brigade band applied to take leave at the same time in order to perform as a group in towns along their route home. With a sense of humor but keeping his combat soldiers uppermost in his mind, Hill wrote on the application, “Disapproved [sic] and respectfully forwarded. Shooters before tooters.” Unfortunately for the musicians, Hill’s endorsement prevailed.⁶

In the meantime, controversy flared within the Army of Northern Virginia. Adjutant General Samuel Cooper wrote Lee that the War Department had received several complaints and strongly-worded statements from certain subordinates about personnel actions within the Army, and implied that Lee needed to get his outspoken officers under control. Around this same time, Hill became personally involved in helping a soldier and captain in his command resolve enlistment and promotion issues, but his habit of complaining directly to the War

⁴ Report of Jackson, January 31, 1863, *OR*, 21: 634; Report of Hill, December 24, 1862, *OR*, 21: 643-644; List of killed and wounded in the battle of Fredericksburg (Army of Northern Virginia), January 10, 1863, *OR*, 21: 560-561. The last report lists Hill’s casualties as 172; he claimed 173 in his battle report.

⁵ Report of Hill, December 24, 1862, *OR*, 21: 644.

⁶ James W. Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., 1890, pg. 21, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, NCSA).

Department leadership to cut through the bureaucratic red tape upset his superiors. Lee forwarded Cooper's note through Jackson to Hill, clearly indicating that Hill should cease his correspondence.⁷ Shortly thereafter, however, Lee defended Hill to Cooper, saying that his subordinate did not mean any disrespect and always acted with his soldiers' best interest in mind. Secretary of War James Seddon actually wrote a letter of truce to Hill, evidently in response to one from the general, expressing his wish that they all get along.⁸

Hill probably welcomed these sentiments, but with the onset of winter, he again suffered from his recurring health problems. Likely encouraged by Isabella, who along with their children was often in poor health herself, Hill tendered his resignation from the Confederate Provisional Army on January 1, 1863. Acknowledging that he had many motives for leaving the service, he described how he had been in constant pain for the previous twenty months, but that during all of the battles in which he had been involved, he tried to do his duty.⁹ Stonewall Jackson understood better than anyone Hill's health issues but was still hesitant to lose him, implying in a note that he hoped to persuade his brother-in-law to stay in Virginia a little longer.¹⁰ Lee also intervened, suggesting that in light of the successful Union incursion into central North Carolina in mid-December, Hill could serve Governor Zebulon Vance in some capacity. Seddon accordingly wrote Vance that he was sending Hill home to help advise the governor with the defense of the state and because of

⁷ Samuel Cooper to Robert E. Lee, December 17, 1862, D.H. Hill Papers, Library of Virginia (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, LOV); in same file see also correspondence between November 19 and December 19, 1862 regarding soldier Matthew Flannery; James Seddon to Hill, December 12, 1862 re: the captain's promotion; and statement by Jasper Whiting, December 15, 1862, commenting on Hill's "unbecoming" behavior in the Flannery case.

⁸ Lee to Cooper, December 24, 1862, and Seddon to Hill, December 26, 1862, Hill Papers, LOV.

⁹ Quoted in Hal Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961/Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 162.

¹⁰ Jackson to Hill, January 13, 1863, Hill Papers, LOV.

his ever-present health issues. Officially, Lee was unhappy with his current department commander in North Carolina, G.W. Smith, and contemplated giving Hill the command. On January 14, 1863, Hill was reassigned to Richmond with a follow-on offer of command of Confederate troops in North Carolina.¹¹ Longstreet replaced Smith as overall commander of the department which encompassed both southern Virginia and North Carolina. The prospect of a semi-autonomous command must have appealed enough to Hill to induce him to stay in the service although he told his aide, Archer Anderson, that he preferred his old division command. He also hoped to be able to help his home state, preferably through offensive operations against Union forces occupying coastal towns.¹²

As with his previous tour in North Carolina, Hill conducted a command reconnaissance of his area of operations. From his headquarters at Goldsboro, he provided Seddon with a candid assessment of the situation. The defenses of Wilmington were still very weak after two years, and he needed more heavy artillery to defend against an expected Union bombardment of the forts. Hill requested another brigade of infantry to provide civil security, gather crops and forage from the largely untapped eastern counties, and harass Union detachments. He also asked to swap out his current cavalry brigade with a more “efficient” one.¹³ Hill did not get his wish with the cavalry and constantly sparred with his brigade commander, Brigadier General Beverly Robertson, over the discipline and effectiveness of his horse soldiers. Significantly, however, Seddon and Davis approved of Hill’s efforts to protect and gather needed foodstuffs for the Confederacy and bolster the state

¹¹ Lee to Seddon, January 5, 1863, *OR*, 18: 819-820; Seddon to Vance, January 17, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA; “Special Orders No. 14,” January 14, 1863, *OR*, 21: 1093; Seddon to Hill, January 27, 1863, *OR*, 18: 861; “Special Orders No. 32,” February 7, 1863, *OR*, 18: 872.

¹² Hill to Anderson, February 2, 1863, Archer Anderson Collection, Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia.

¹³ Hill to Seddon, February 23, 1863, *OR*, 18: 890-891.

defenses. Hill's ability to gain Davis' ear with sensible suggestions paid off in the coming months.

After Hill wrote Seddon, he published an address to his troops that appealed to their sense of honor and set strict standards for their actions. "Soldiers!" the missive began, "Your brutal and malignant enemy is putting forth efforts unexampled in the history of the world. Having failed to subjugate you, he is maddened with the thirst for vengeance, and is pushing forward his foreign mercenaries to plunder your property and lay waste your homes."¹⁴ He reassured them that if they defeated their enemy over the next few months, Federal soldiers would decline to reenlist and the war would end that summer. In the process, however, the troops would endure severe hardship due to their depleted ranks. "Our cities, towns, and villages are full of young and able-bodied skulkers, wearing the semblance of men, who have dodged from the battle-field under the provisions of the exemption bill," reported Hill. These "abortions of humanity" had no shame, but their day would come when their descendants accused them of cowardice.¹⁵ Hill went on to praise the infantry and artillery but found his cavalry wanting, telling them he would provide them with many opportunities to do their job but that there would be consequences for failing to do their duty. "Those who have never been in battle will thus be enabled to enjoy the novel sensation of listening to the sound of hostile shot and shell," he commented, implying that Robertson's force was never in the thick of the fight.¹⁶

¹⁴ Hill's address to troops, February 25, 1863, *OR*, 18: 894.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 895.

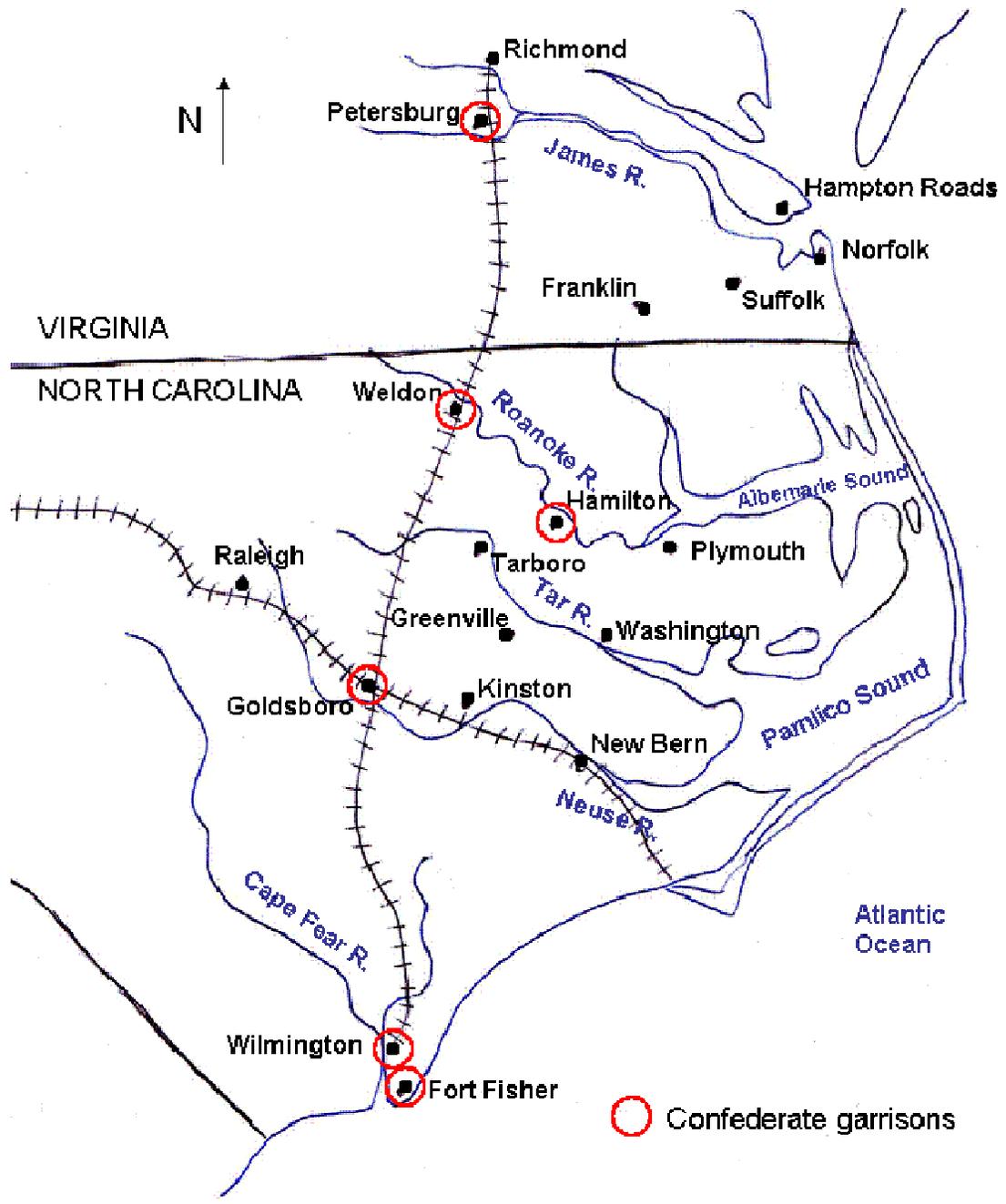


Figure 10. North Carolina theater of operations, January-July 1863

Although Hill did not have enough forces or the authorization to conduct robust offensive operations, he still wanted to take advantage of the recent reduction in Union

troops in North Carolina by harassing isolated garrisons and detachments requisitioning local supplies. Major General John Foster, based out of New Bern, had 14,000 Union troops left in his command after sending reinforcements south to support an attack on Charleston. Hill had just under 16,000 troops, but these included 3,000 holding Confederate garrisons in the state. Brigadier General Chase Whiting had an additional 10,000 men in the vicinity of Wilmington, but he commanded the Cape Fear District, which lay outside of Hill's purview and reported directly to Richmond. This situation caused friction between Whiting and Hill and was ironed out only by special order in April when the War Department finally clarified that all troops in North Carolina were under Hill's command.¹⁷ Because of bad weather and lack of soldiers, Hill could not conduct simultaneous operations against New Bern and the other major Union outpost at Washington, so he concentrated first on New Bern. Longstreet agreed with Hill's plan, urging him to threaten the railroad and lines of communication leading east in order to induce Union forces to come out of the city and fight.¹⁸

Hill planned a three-pronged attack on New Bern, which sits on a peninsula at the confluence of the Trent and Neuse Rivers. Brigadier General Junius Daniel's brigade would move on the main land route into New Bern, Robertson's cavalry brigade would break up the railroad leading into town from across the Trent River, and Brigadier General James Pettigrew's brigade with the reserve artillery would shell Union gunboats and Fort Anderson across the Neuse River. Hill accompanied the main effort, Daniel's column. On March 13,

¹⁷ "Abstract from Report of the Troops of the District of Cape Fear, commanded by Brig. Gen. W.H.C. Whiting, for February, 1863," *OR*, 18: 901; Whiting to Cooper, March 7, 1863, *OR*, 18: 913; "General Orders No. 34," April 1, 1863, *OR*, 18: 953. The exception to Hill's command was western North Carolina, which fell under General Joe Johnston's Department of the West. Whiting had two infantry brigades that accounted for almost two thirds of his strength, with the remainder manning the forts and garrison at Wilmington.

¹⁸ Longstreet to Hill, March 1, 1863, *OR*, 18: 902-903. The original plan involved making a demonstration against New Bern while attacking Washington, the weaker garrison. Longstreet told Whiting to prepare to help Hill but did not order him to send either of his brigades.

Daniel's scouts made contact with Federal pickets ten miles outside of New Bern and easily pushed them back to a line of defensive works along a creek. Daniel successfully charged the position and the Union troops were unable to recover it, and they withdrew to the city on March 14. Pettigrew, however, proved unable to capture Fort Anderson; his long range guns malfunctioned, and he was forced to withdraw. Robertson simply failed to carry out his mission. Hill disengaged on March 16 to regroup.¹⁹

Hill was pleased with Daniel and judged his part of the operation a success, but in his report to Longstreet he ticked off a laundry list of external issues which prevented him from taking New Bern. If he had had better long range guns, Pettigrew could have effectively fired on the gunboats. If Whiting had provided one of his crack brigades to reinforce Daniel, all of the infantry in concert could have taken the city. Hill pointed out how his orders ostensibly gave him command of all troops in North Carolina, yet he had no control over Whiting. "If I am to be cut down to two brigades," he griped, "I will not submit to the swindle."²⁰

Longstreet sent one of his brigades south to help, but it did not arrive in time. As for the cavalry, Hill wrote: "Robertson sent me out a lieutenant, who partly cut the railroad. He sent out a colonel, who saw some Yankees and came back. Robertson did not go himself. We must have a better man."²¹ Certainly Hill had real issues with the quality of soldiers and equipment in a secondary Confederate theater, so his plan to take New Bern with a complex coordinated attack was ambitious and in the end unrealistic. A recent illness might have affected Hill's preparation for the operation; he admitted to Isabella that he had been

¹⁹ Report of Hill (to Longstreet), March 16, 1863, *OR*, 18: 188-189.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 189.

²¹ *Ibid.*

confined to his tent per doctor's orders in early March and had suffered three days of intensive pain.²² Somehow, an erroneous report made the papers that Hill's command captured 1,500 prisoners and that the operation was a glorious success. The Confederate soldiers knew better and started to wonder what had been the point of the expedition. As one enlisted man quipped, "These big generals don't always have such deep laid plans as people give them credit for."²³

Undeterred, Hill prepared to lay siege to Washington. He now had another infantry brigade from Longstreet under the command of Brigadier General Richard Garnett. Longstreet also detailed a brigade to gather foodstuffs from the surrounding counties, freeing Hill's three brigades to focus on the siege and prevent Union reinforcements.²⁴ Hill placed gun batteries on either side of the Pamlico River below Washington and his men laid water obstacles. Other batteries ranged Washington from across the Tar River. Garnett's brigade entrenched around Washington and conducted the siege while Daniel and Pettigrew set up blocking positions and patrolled toward New Bern to intercept any rescue columns.

General Foster found out about Hill's plans and reached Washington before the Confederates. He only had 1,200 men in the garrison but immediately put them to work shoring up the existing defenses and clearing fields of fire. The siege started on March 20 and amounted to an on-again, off-again artillery duel. By the beginning of April, Garnett commented to Hill that his artillery was inferior to that of the Union force and that he

²² Hill to Isabella, March 8, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA.

²³ Quoted in John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 156.

²⁴ Longstreet told Hill he was sending General Pickett with two brigades, including Garnett's, to take charge of the Washington operation in order to free up Hill to stay at Goldsboro to focus on departmental issues, but Hill requested a brigade from Wilmington instead, so Pickett stayed in Virginia: Longstreet to Hill, March 20 and 21, 1863, *OR*, 18: 931-932.

doubted he was having much effect on their strong defensive positions. Hill, ever the artilleryman, requested better guns from higher authorities. Longstreet sent six pieces, but he repeatedly warned Hill that he could not keep them for long depending on the situation in Virginia and that there was not enough ammunition for an extended bombardment.²⁵ Nevertheless, Foster and his men felt pressured, and he sent messages to his brigadiers to send relief forces. They proved unequal to the task; one was stymied by the sight of Hill's batteries and Pettigrew's brigade chased the other one off after a light skirmish. However, some Union steamers had been able to run past the Pamlico batteries and deliver one regiment and supplies, and Foster made his escape on one of these April 15 to fetch more troops himself from New Bern. He need not have bothered as Hill decided that he could no longer sustain or gain anything useful from the siege. Only Longstreet's side of his correspondence with Hill exists in the *Official Records* and other archives, and it implies that Hill gave inconsistent assessments of his ability to reduce Washington. Conflicting reports of enemy reinforcements in North Carolina and the Western theater further complicated the operational picture, and Hill had to release a brigade to Charleston.²⁶ These factors, combined with inevitable delays in communication, reduced the importance of Hill's operations in relation to known threats in Virginia and South Carolina.

Hill's offensive operations in North Carolina that spring netted no tactical victories or anything of value to the casual observer, but he did keep Foster busy trying to protect his garrisons and enabled the Confederates to gather badly needed food and forage from still-

²⁵ Garnett to Hill, April 2, 1863, *OR*, 18: 955-956; Longstreet to Hill, April 4 and 6, 1863, *OR*, 18: 962 and 965.

²⁶ As early as April 2 Longstreet told Hill, based on his subordinate's most recent assessment of Washington's impregnability, that he was recalling two brigades and two long-range rifled Whitworth guns for use in Virginia: Longstreet to Hill, April 2, 1863, *OR*, 18: 956-957; see also Longstreet to Hill, April 7, 1863, *OR*, 18: 968-969, and Seddon to Hill, April 13, 1863, *OR*, 18: 983.

productive eastern North Carolina.²⁷ The soldiers were not thrilled to be conducting what appeared to them as unglamorous or pointless operations, so Hill continued to appeal to their sense of duty and manhood. When President Davis declared a day of fasting and prayer on March 27, Hill urged his men to observe the occasion and put their trust in God. He also cautioned:

Although our cause is just, and holy, we have committed many grievous sins, whereof, it behooves us to repent. When we reflect upon the immorality of the camp, and the gross, mammon worship of the cowardly skulkers from the field, who are amassing fortunes, upon the sufferings of the families of the poor soldiers in the ranks, we have enough to convince us, that we ought to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in due season.²⁸

In a similar vein, Hill exhorted the soldiers to emulate Stonewall Jackson. In an address to his troops sixteen days after his brother-in-law's death, he said: "Let us drop our laurel upon his bier, but remember that we may best honor him by striving day and night, and with his unwavering trust in God, to secure the independence for which he gave his life."²⁹

Addressing desertion and recruitment issues became a major focus for Hill and Governor Vance, whom Hill constantly urged to take strong action against recalcitrant North Carolinians. "One of your stirring appeals would do good," the general wrote the governor in mid-April, adding: "Your scathing rebuke of deserters and skulkers makes even cowards blush."³⁰ Hill also believed that certain stories published in the newspapers induced soldiers to leave the ranks and frightened state residents. Vance responded that he would appeal to the

²⁷ Although Longstreet would have liked Hill to capture Washington, he also viewed the siege as a diversion tactic to let his brigades gather supplies in eastern North Carolina, and told Lee so: Longstreet to Lee, April 4, 1863, *OR*, 18: 959.

²⁸ "General Orders, No. 7," March 23, 1863, Hill Papers, LOV.

²⁹ "General Orders, No. 20," May 26, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1073.

³⁰ Hill to Vance, April 21, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1011.

people and newspaper editors to help the war effort. Both also struggled over the propriety of employing the militia in times of crisis, for most of its members were the very skulkers Hill decried, and pulling in able bodied men would also affect the agricultural productivity of the state.³¹ Hill evidently questioned Vance's actions at one point, prompting the governor to remind the general that he had a lot of issues to balance for the welfare of North Carolina. Vance pledged to persuade citizens to give up deserters and then pass on their locations so that Hill could send soldiers to round them up.³²

Hill did not hesitate to provide similar advice to the Confederate government about the issue of deserters and disloyal civilians. "Unless the Government will boldly take this matter into hand and arrest the editors and speakers who are daily uttering treason, the crime of desertion will go on, and I fear that there will be thousands in armed resistance," warned Hill. In response, Davis directed Seddon to take the matter up in civilian channels with Vance.³³ As for recruiting, Hill suggested to Lee after the Battle of Chancellorsville that the commanding general send his most decimated brigades to North Carolina to be refilled with fresh soldiers while Hill exchanged them with his healthier units. Although Lee acknowledged the problem of North Carolina soldiers deserting from the Army of Northern Virginia, he did not agree to the troop swap, preferring to keep the smaller brigades with their core of experienced soldiers.³⁴

³¹ Vance to Hill, April 23, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1019.

³² Vance to Hill, May 4, 10, and 13, 1863, Hill Papers, LOV.

³³ Hill to Seddon (with Davis endorsement), May 9, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1053.

³⁴ Lee to Hill, May 16, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1063; see also Lee to Seddon and Lee to Longstreet, April 18, 1863, *OR*, 18: 998-999, reference his opinion that Hill should not send North Carolina deserters back to the Army of Northern Virginia.

As the Virginia theater became active once again, Lee recalled Longstreet's corps and looked to Hill's department for additional combat power. Some of Hill's brigades originated from the Army of Northern Virginia, and with the situation relatively quiet for the time being in North Carolina, Lee expected their return. In the meantime, the Union's failure to take Charleston convinced Hill that the enemy would turn its attention back to Wilmington or at the very least send reinforcements to Foster. By April 21, Hill received reports of Federal forces reaching the state coast and heading for New Bern; within a day of passing the news to Richmond, Seddon ordered two brigades back north from Charleston.³⁵ Although within a week scouts indicated fewer Union reinforcements than previously believed, Vance sent his own appeal to Seddon, saying that Wilmington deserved the same protection as Charleston. No doubt influenced by Hill's professional advice, Vance pointedly wrote that "I shall not pretend to say that our defense is intentionally neglected, but that it is very poorly provided for is a fact too patent to deny . . . It is discouraging to know this when we consider what North Carolina has done for the cause in men and means."³⁶

The question of troop distribution in the eastern theaters in May 1863 exacerbated civil-military tensions within the Confederacy. Lee, President Davis' most trusted army commander, argued for troops to fight and later exploit his spectacular victory at Chancellorsville via a second campaign into the Union heartland. On the other hand, Davis had to placate a well-connected governor and department commander pleading for help in a theater already under partial Union occupation and threatened by seaborne invasion. At stake were several brigades, particularly Brigadier General Robert Ransom's, and naturally both Lee and Hill wanted quality veteran troops versus newer enlistees and weak commanders.

³⁵ Seddon to Beauregard, Beauregard to Hill, and Beauregard to Whiting, April 22, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1012.

³⁶ Vance to Seddon, April 28, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1027-1028.

The tug of war over personnel started on April 30 when the adjutant general told Hill that Lee needed a brigade and would prefer Ransom's force. Hill sent Pettigrew's brigade instead. On May 6, Seddon "urged" Hill to send Ransom if he could safely do so. Hill ignored the request, being under orders from Longstreet to guard against Union cavalry moving through southern Virginia and assumed to be linking up with Foster.³⁷ He wrote Seddon about the activities of Daniel, Ransom, and his newest brigade under Brigadier General John R. Cooke and compared them to the disposition and estimated strength of the enemy force. Then, instead of offering his opinion, he left it up to the Secretary's judgment as to whether or not a brigade should be pulled out of the state.³⁸

Lee, who retained oversight of operations in North Carolina, empowered Hill to make the call on whether or not he could afford to send more brigades to Virginia. Nevertheless, he expected Union commanders to move more troops from North Carolina to Virginia, enabling Hill to get by with fewer men and still harass the posts left behind. "Every man not required for this purpose I desire you to send to me and rely upon your good judgment to proportion the means to the object in view," Lee wrote on May 16.³⁹ At that point, Hill gave Lee reason to believe the Federal threat in North Carolina was subsiding, prompting the army commander nine days later to ask for two brigades.⁴⁰ Yet just as Hill worked to comply, on May 22 Ransom and Cooke engaged a Union brigade out on a raid in the first substantial fight since the siege of Washington. Simultaneously, Hill's spy network started to go dark as

³⁷ Cooper to Hill, April 30, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1032; Cooper to Lee, May 1, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1034; Seddon to Hill and Longstreet to Hill, May 6, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1047.

³⁸ Hill to Seddon, May 7, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1051.

³⁹ Lee to Hill, May 16, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1063.

⁴⁰ Lee to Hill, May 25, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1071. The brigades belonged to Ransom and Brigadier General Micah Jenkins, the latter of whom Longstreet left behind in southeast Virginia to watch Suffolk.

Foster tightened security around the Union-held towns.⁴¹ The Union raid, along with rumors of a slave insurrection and captured mail that claimed up to thirty-one regiments were in New Bern, gave Seddon and Davis pause when they saw that Lee had ordered two brigades north. The convoluted command structure and lag time in telegraph transmission and message delivery during the last week of May also played a part; Seddon was surprised to learn about Lee's directive to Hill and believed the commanding general had ordered yet a different brigade to Virginia. Concurrently, Hill took over Longstreet's department command, moving his headquarters to Petersburg and leaving a very nervous Whiting in Wilmington. Seddon told Hill to stand by on further troop transfers while he and Davis consulted with Lee.⁴²

A frustrated Lee did not believe the situation in North Carolina as dire as Hill, Whiting, and Vance represented it to be, for his own intelligence indicated that Union troops gathering east of Richmond were formerly part of Foster's command. He pointed out to Davis that Hill still had six brigades in his department, four of which belonged to the Army of Northern Virginia, while the large Federal army facing him in Virginia continued to grow. Lee explained how he gave Hill "discretionary instructions" on apportioning his force, but:

[h]e declined to act under those instructions and requested positive instructions. He now offers objections which if previously presented I should not have issued the latter. You will see that I am unable to operate under these circumstances, and request to be relieved from any control of the department from the James to the Cape Fear River.⁴³

⁴¹ Hill to Whiting, May 27, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1073; Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina*, 162-164.

⁴² Seddon to Hill and Whiting to Hill, May 28, 1863, and "Special Orders, No. 127," May 28, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1076-1077.

⁴³ Lee to Davis, May 30, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1078. Hill actually had seven infantry brigades on the books as of the end of the month after receiving reinforcements from South Carolina and including what Longstreet left behind in southern Virginia: see "Abstract from Monthly Return of the Department of North Carolina, Maj. Gen. D.H. Hill, commanding, for May 31, 1863," *OR*, 18: 1086. There was also a separate Department of Richmond, under the command of Major General Arnold Elzey; Pettigrew's troops were part of this command in May 1863.

The aggressive Lee wanted more troops to make a preemptive move against the Army of the Potomac before it could threaten Richmond or in the worst case scenario fight and force the enemy back as he had the previous year. He deferred the decision to Seddon and Davis, writing Hill the same day to ignore his previous order and await instructions from the President, but he was clearly unhappy about the administration taking Hill's side.⁴⁴

In response, the Executive Branch tried to placate both commanders. Seddon sent one of Lee's assessments to Hill to help explain why the commanding general was so adamant about getting troops and that they needed to listen to his advice. In the same letter, however, he privately disagreed with Lee's belief that Richmond was in great danger and essentially told Hill he could retain Ransom as a district commander in order to watch the enemy to the south and east. Davis wrote Lee an apologetic note saying he now understood the general's intent in marching north and that he would receive two brigades although not the ones he originally requested, for political and operational reasons. He also declined to relieve Lee of responsibility for Hill's department. Hill received orders from the adjutant general to detach the two brigades and place Ransom in division command in southern Virginia.⁴⁵ Lee accepted Davis's judgment but regretted that he could not get more experienced troops. As for oversight of the country down to Wilmington, he had asked to be relieved of responsibility because he feared to retain it "might be productive of harm." Lee continued, "I could only exercise it beneficially by relying upon the judgment of General D.H. Hill, who declined to act upon discretionary orders, and I thought it best for the service to leave him to

⁴⁴ Lee to Hill, May 30, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1079.

⁴⁵ Seddon to Hill, May 30, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1079-1080; Davis to Lee, May 31, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1083-1084; Cooper to Hill, May 31, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1084-1085. Hill said he could part with Cooke's brigade, and Davis decided to send only that one North Carolina unit to keep Vance happy. Eventually though Cooke remained near Richmond and Pettigrew's brigade joined the Army of Northern Virginia. The other brigade was commanded by Davis' nephew Brigadier General Joseph Davis; it had a tough time at the Battle of Gettysburg.

his own discretion. The only object of command, in my opinion, is the benefit of the service.”⁴⁶

For his part, Hill remained concerned that Foster would strike out again for the railroad as he had done before. Whiting reported that newspapers claimed Hill had sent all North Carolina troops to Lee and urged Foster to act now to take Wilmington.⁴⁷ Whether the information was true or not, Hill feared that the growing reconciliation faction in North Carolina would come to terms with the enemy if Federal troops made further inroads within the state. He preferred to keep Ransom in North Carolina proper.⁴⁸ Despite the propaganda, however, Foster made no major moves during the month of June, and only small sporadic engagements occurred between Union and Confederate forces. Activity in Virginia was more substantial, with Hill ordered to station two brigades north and east of Richmond while Lee moved his army north. In the middle of the month, Hill’s men stopped a Federal reconnaissance outside Suffolk. He came to agree with Lee that the main Union threat was in Virginia and he told Seddon that he was making “arrangements quietly to throw every available man in North Carolina to Richmond, in case of an emergency.”⁴⁹ At the same time, he questioned Lee’s decision to take his army into the Northern states, no doubt annoyed that it forced him to adjust his operational priorities. “The folly of the movement is transparent,” Hill told Isabella as he worked to defend Petersburg and Richmond against forces massing on

⁴⁶ Lee to Davis, June 2, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1088.

⁴⁷ Whiting to Hill and Whiting to Seddon, May 30, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1080-1081.

⁴⁸ Hill to Seddon, June 3, 1863, *OR*, 18: 1092.

⁴⁹ Cooper to Hill, June 10, 1863, *OR*, 27 (3): 879-880; Report of Hill, June 18, 1863, *OR*, 27 (2): 790; Hill to Seddon, June 21, 1863, *OR*, 27 (3): 911; Hill to Seddon, June 25, 1863, *OR*, 27 (3): 936.

the Peninsula, adding in a follow-on letter that if Lee was going to go anywhere, he should have gone to Vicksburg.⁵⁰

In early July 1863, the Union Fourth Corps attempted to fix Hill at Bottom's Bridge east of Richmond while sending a division north to destroy bridges and railroad lines. Cooke's brigade repulsed the division in the north while the swollen Chickahominy River and Confederate actions near Bottom's Bridge managed to convince the wary Union commanders to rethink an attack.⁵¹ Now in temporary command of all the troops in the field around the capital, Hill commented that "the [Union] design on Richmond was not a feint but a faint." On the other hand, he told Seddon, summarizing the key operational challenge, "it is mortifying to have them play around us as they have done; but with our imperfect information and defective system of scouting, I know not how it is to be stopped, especially as the Yankees have control of the water."⁵² Fortunately for Hill and the Confederate capital, the Union had its hands full in Pennsylvania and Mississippi and could not focus on or coordinate its military actions along the Atlantic coast that summer.

As the harried Confederate authorities struggled to manage Union threats from multiple quarters, Hill received the welcome news that his name was on the latest list for promotion to lieutenant general. His new rank was provisional pending approval by the Confederate Senate, but he could immediately start using the title. His promotion gave Davis the flexibility to shuffle senior commanders around, particularly in the West, where a clash of personalities among generals threatened to seriously hamper operations. Accordingly, Hill

⁵⁰ Hill to Isabella, Jun 23 and 25, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁵¹ Reports of Keyes, July 2 and 15, 1863, *OR*, 27 (2): 854-857; Report of Cooke, July 5, 1863, *OR*, 27 (2): 857-858; Report of Hill, July 3, 1863, *OR*, 27 (2): 858-859.

⁵² Hill to Seddon, July 5, 1863, *OR*, 27 (3): 972-973.

received orders on July 13 to report to General Joe Johnston in Jackson, Mississippi. These orders were further amended two days later when Seddon telegraphed Hill to report instead to General Braxton Bragg in Tennessee.⁵³ Hill traveled west optimistic about returning to a true field command and pleased that he would be working for one of his Old Army commanders.

D.H. Hill faced many of the same command challenges the second time around in North Carolina. Understandably he tried to get the best soldiers and equipment for his department knowing that he had to compete with other Confederate requirements. He was obstinate but no one can argue that he did not care for the safety of North Carolina. With little guidance on how to conduct affairs in his department (something both the Union and the Confederacy struggled to articulate given widely varying contexts), he tried to do the best he could. Hill definitely was not as comfortable conducting what was in essence an area defense as he was division-level offensive operations. Although he identified key tasks he needed to accomplish, he focused as usual on perfecting his organization and not as much on organizing a campaign around what assets he already had on hand and was likely to have in the short term. In addition, he was often unable to get accurate intelligence with the few sources he had on hand throughout such a large area of operations and had to depend on Whiting and others to pass information that was often suspect. As a department commander, Hill got involved in political issues like recruitment and desertion on which he had strong opinions which often colored his actions. Yet, when he became frustrated with the War Department over troop strength, he tended to pass decisions off to higher instead of giving direct advice, a trait that upset Lee and may have contributed to Davis' decision to reassign

⁵³ "Special Orders, No. 165," July 13, 1863, *OR*, 27 (3): 1003; Seddon to Hill, July 15, 1863, Hill Papers, LOV. Davis telegraphed Hill in late June about the possibility of being reassigned out west: see Hill to Isabella Hill, June 25, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA.

Hill to a tactical command. Quite simply, Hill was uncomfortable translating discretionary orders into decisions which had strategic ramifications; he did not fully grasp that Lee and Davis required sound advice from department commanders in order to make decisions which affected the entire Confederacy. Despite Hill's personality quirks and struggles in independent command, Confederate authorities acknowledged that he was a committed fighter to their cause, and all expected that he would perform well in Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee.

CHAPTER VIII

A “BARREN VICTORY:” CHICKAMAUGA¹

When Hill joined Braxton Bragg’s Army of Tennessee in July 1863, the army was struggling through a hot summer in the Chattanooga area after Union Major General William Rosecrans forced it out of Tullahoma, Tennessee the month before. Fighting a high desertion rate, the army was also in the midst of a command upheaval with several of Bragg’s subordinates openly expressing no confidence in his abilities.² Although Bragg had a fairly good strategic grasp of what needed to be done to contain Rosecrans’ army, he often vacillated over his orders and adjusted them hours before a battle, resulting in haphazard execution.³ In addition to indecision, other problems plagued Bragg. Many of his subordinates were Kentucky and Tennessee natives who felt Bragg had abandoned their constituencies during his maneuvers south, and some of his officers, such as cavalry chief Major General Joseph Wheeler, often simply ignored orders. Distrust became mutual, and Bragg increasingly blamed others when his orders were not successfully carried out. With his retreat from Tullahoma, he conceded nearly all of Tennessee to the Union and brewed further

¹ Quoted in Daniel H. Hill, “Chickamauga—The Great Battle of the West,” in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War III*, ed. Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (New York: The Century Company, 1884-1888/Castle Books, 1956), 662.

² Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 4, 18-20, 27; Judith Lee Hallock, *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat*, Vol. II (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1991), 7-9, 13-26, 30-32; Thomas L. Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 69-73, 121-134.

³ Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 5-6; Hallock, *Braxton Bragg*, 3-6; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 71.

discontent within the army.⁴ Not a healthy man when the campaign started, he grew noticeably more haggard and irritable through the month of September. Hill recognized the change from when he had previously worked for Bragg in Corpus Christi prior to the Mexican War. “[Bragg] was silent and reserved and seemed gloomy and despondent,” Hill recalled. “He had grown prematurely old since I saw him last, and showed much nervousness.”⁵ Bragg and Hill were not dissimilar in health and temperament, boding ill for their relations in the upcoming campaign.

Bragg was situated to take advantage of the terrain around Chattanooga and make quick work of Rosecrans’s army, and he also possessed an excellent map of the region, yet he remained in ignorance of the Union main effort until early September.⁶ Since Cherokee days, people had viewed the Chattanooga area as a gateway to all compass points because of the confluence of the Tennessee River with several valleys and ridges, most notably Lookout Mountain, which towered over the small city. Nineteenth-century railroad and water transportation routes enhanced the strategic value of the former trading post with its connections to Knoxville, Nashville, and Atlanta. As long as the Federal army decided not to climb them, the screen of mountains and plateaus to the north and west protected

⁴ Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 4; Hallock, *Braxton Bragg*, 23-27, 30-32; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 69-73.

⁵ Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 5-6 and 27; Hallock, *Braxton Bragg*, 25-26, 33-34; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 71-72; Hill, “Chickamauga,” 639.

⁶ James Ogden III (CCNMP Historian), conversation with author, March 15, 2006. The map of the Confederate area of operations in George B. Davis, Leslie J. Perry, and Joseph W. Kirkley, *The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War* (New York: Arno Press, 1978/Barnes and Noble Books, 2003), 136 is a reprint of the volume accompanying the reports in *The War of the Rebellion* and is based on Bragg’s campaign map. The map accurately depicts terrain features and landmarks, yet Bragg seems to have put little faith in it. His original is in the files of Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park (hereafter cited as CCNMP). It is not known if Hill had a copy of this map. Bragg had also previously operated in the Chattanooga area as a young U.S. Army officer supervising the Cherokee Indian removal, which should have aided his knowledge of the terrain.

Chattanooga.⁷ Rosecrans, however, proved willing to send his three corps through separate passes in these mountains. Wheeler's cavalry failed to provide intelligence of Union whereabouts, and Bragg was unaware of Rosecrans's location until August 31 when a local civilian informed scouts that a large Union force was crossing the Tennessee River and ascending Sand Mountain, west of Lookout Mountain. Bragg correctly surmised that Rosecrans was trying to move around his rear and cut off his supply and communications lines, but did not know exactly where the large force was going, and was also transfixed by a Union corps bearing down on Chattanooga.⁸

In late August, Hill's Corps, composed of two divisions commanded by Major Generals Patrick Cleburne and Alexander Stewart (one of Hill's close friends from USMA), occupied positions upstream from Chattanooga and guarded against an expected Union crossing. Between August 28 and September 1, the division of Major General John C. Breckinridge, the former vice president and 1860 presidential candidate, replaced Stewart's.⁹ Cleburne, an Irish immigrant who had settled in Arkansas, and Breckinridge, the kind of soldier-politician which Hill usually hated, got along well with their commander, especially after he came to share their views of Bragg's handling of the army. All three also shared a

⁷ Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 21-22; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 138-146. Connelly gives the best description and analysis of the terrain surrounding Chattanooga.

⁸ Brent to Polk, September 1, 1863, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. I, 30 (4): 579 (hereafter cited as *OR*, unless otherwise noted all citations are from Ser. I); Bragg to Seddon, September 2, 1863, *OR*, 30 (4): 583-584; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 170. For a description of Rosecrans's and Bragg's simultaneous movements between August 16 and September 8, 1863, see Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 33-60.

⁹ "Special Orders, No. 231," August 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (4): 561; "Special Orders, No. 14," September 1, 1863, *OR*, 30 (4): 578.

love for their soldiers and a strong sense of duty.¹⁰ Hill later wrote of both commanders, “Surely, there were never nobler leaders than Breckinridge and Cleburne.”¹¹

Hill moved his corps closer to Chattanooga and anxiously awaited developments. On September 3, he recommended that Bragg take the initiative against Rosecrans. He advised: “If we wait until the meshes [sic] be thrown around, we may find it hard to break through.”¹² As Rosecrans’s USMA classmate, Hill had a healthy appreciation for his adversary’s talents. He previously said of the Union general, “Rosecrans has fine practical sense, and is of a tough, tenacious fiber.”¹³ After several days of indecision, Bragg finally ordered the army south on September 7, with Hill’s corps in the lead, to the town of LaFayette, Georgia, which sat east of Pigeon Mountain twenty-two miles south of Chattanooga. Another of Bragg’s corps, under the former Episcopal bishop and current lieutenant general Leonidas Polk, followed Hill on the LaFayette Road, while the two smaller and newly formed corps of Major General Simon B. Buckner and Major General William Walker followed a parallel route to the east.¹⁴

Concerned about a Union threat from the south, Hill positioned Breckinridge’s division just outside LaFayette. He kept Cleburne’s troops around the town or sent them west

¹⁰ William C. Davis, *Breckinridge: Statesman, Soldier, Symbol* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 368-369; Craig L. Symonds, *Stonewall of the West: Patrick Cleburne and the Civil War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 134 and 137.

¹¹ Hill, “Chickamauga,” 656.

¹² Hill to Bragg, September 3, 1863, *OR*, 30 (4): 588.

¹³ Hill, “Chickamauga,” footnote bottom of 638.

¹⁴ “Circular, Headquarters Army of Tennessee,” September 6, 1863, *OR*, 30 (4): 610-611; “Circular, Headquarters Army of Tennessee,” September 7, 1863, *OR*, 30 (4): 621; (Second) “Circular, Headquarters Hill’s Corps,” September 7, 1863, *OR*, 30 (4): 622; “Circular, Headquarters Hill’s Corps,” September 8, 1863, *OR*, 30 (4): 627; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 55-57; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 171-174.

to assist the cavalry in picketing and blocking the gaps in Pigeon Mountain.¹⁵ On the other side of the gaps lay McLemore's Cove, a dead-end valley formed by the offshoot of Pigeon Mountain from Lookout Mountain. A main road led from LaFayette west through Dug Gap in Pigeon Mountain to Davis' Crossroads in the Cove, where it intersected with a north-south road from Chattanooga. It then crossed over the slight elevation of Missionary Ridge to another road junction, Bailey's Crossroads, before climbing Stevens' Gap in Lookout Mountain and descending into the next valley. Control of Davis' Crossroads in particular was critical for protecting the gaps in Pigeon Mountain. West Chickamauga Creek paralleled Pigeon Mountain and flowed northward along the Cove floor, providing an obstacle to east-west travel.¹⁶

On September 7, Union corps commander Major General George Thomas's advance elements drove the cavalymen of Brigadier General William Martin, commanding one of Wheeler's divisions, off Lookout Mountain. By early the following morning Martin fell back into McLemore's Cove, obstructed the gaps in Pigeon Mountain, and prepared to defend them.¹⁷ On September 9, a brigade of Cleburne's division joined Martin's troops per orders from Army headquarters. By evening, the Confederate cavalry was tracking the descent of Union Major General James Negley's division (of Thomas' corps), initially estimated to be 11,000 men strong, from Stevens' Gap to Bailey's Crossroads.¹⁸

¹⁵ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 137; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 173-174.

¹⁶ Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 30; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 144. I will thereafter refer to West Chickamauga Creek as simply Chickamauga Creek or the Chickamauga.

¹⁷ Report of Martin, September 8, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 522-523.

¹⁸ George Brent to D.H. Hill, September 9, 1863—7 ½ AM, in Braxton Bragg Papers, 1833-1879, MSS 2000 Microfilm Edition, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio (hereafter cited as Bragg Papers, WRHS); William Martin to Braxton Bragg (typescript), no date, William T. Martin Folder, CCNMP (original in William T. Martin Letters, University of Texas). Negley's division was closer to 7,000 men strong.

Bragg decided to act, and at 11:45 PM on the 9th directed that Hill send or take Cleburne's division to meet the division of Major General Thomas Hindman at Davis' Crossroads the following morning and attack Negley's formation. "If unforeseen circumstances should prevent your movement, notify Hindman," counseled Bragg, adding, "Open communication with Hindman with your cavalry in advance of the junction."¹⁹ Hindman's division belonged to Polk's corps and had an easy trek to McLemore's Cove. Together, Hill and Hindman could potentially drive Negley's force back against the face of Lookout Mountain, trapping it in the valley.

McLemore's Cove was Hill's first chance to shine in front of Bragg; his corps had not been seriously engaged with the enemy since he took command in July. Instead, his troops ended up playing a small role in a fruitless chase after a retreating Federal division, and Bragg missed his chance to defeat a unit of Rosecrans's strongest corps. Bragg's plan depended upon a high level of coordination between two commanders who were divided by a mountain. After Hindman received his orders at 12:30 AM on September 10, he took only eight hours to move his division to within four miles of Davis' Crossroads. Then he suddenly stopped his advance, waiting to hear from Hill while seemingly losing his nerve.²⁰ Bragg ordered Buckner to support Hindman with two divisions and issued new orders for the two commanders to strike Negley early on the morning of September 11. Hill sent Cleburne through the gaps to support Hindman upon the sound of his guns.²¹

¹⁹ Falconer to Hill, September 9, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 28; W.W. Mackall to D.H. Hill (copy), September 9, 1863—11 ¾ P.M., Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, NCSA).

²⁰ Report of Hindman, October 25, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 292-293.

²¹ Report of Hindman, October 25, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 293-295; Report of Bragg, December 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 29; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 71-72.

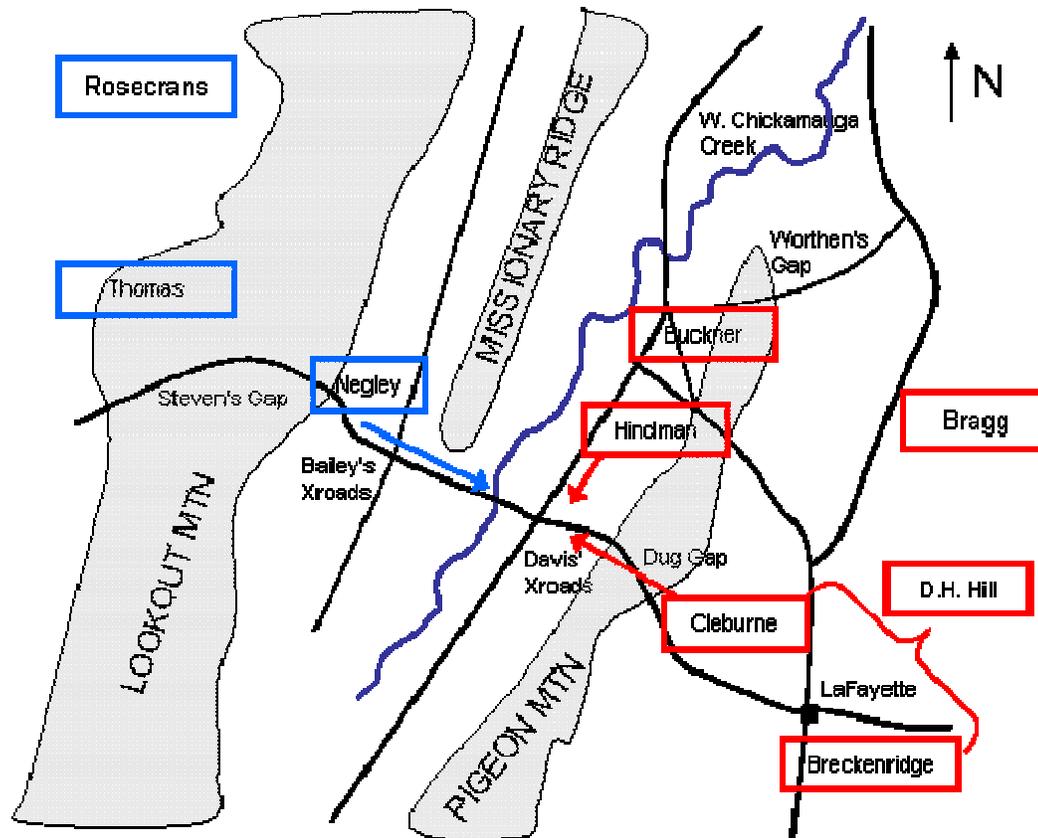


Figure 11. Situation at McLemore's Cove, 8:00 AM, September 11, 1863

Bragg, Hill, and Cleburne waited all morning at Dug Gap to see and hear Hindman attack, and when nothing happened, Hill finally sent Cleburne toward Davis' Crossroads. Although Bragg kept sending couriers to Hindman during the day to find out what was happening with his command, Hindman, instead of responding, occupied himself by finding a good retreat route.²² By this time, Negley's own cavalry and pickets had alerted him to the danger from his flank and front, and with Thomas's concurrence he retreated across the

²² Report of Hindman, October 25, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 295-296; Report of Bragg, December 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 29-30.

creek. Hindman discovered what was happening and sent his troops forward, and with Martin and Cleburne helped push Negley back to Bailey's Crossroads, where the Federals regrouped and then moved to the safety of Stevens' Gap. Bragg met Hindman and Buckner at Davis's Crossroads in the late afternoon and loudly upbraided them for not attacking sooner.²³

What was Hill's role in this debacle? His original orders dated September 9 gave him discretionary power as to whether he or Cleburne took the division through Dug Gap and to deal with "unforeseen circumstances."²⁴ It took five hours for the order to reach Hill's headquarters, which was twelve miles from Bragg's. The orders arrived at 4:30 AM, while Hindman had received his copy almost immediately and had been on the march since before 2:00 AM. Hill immediately replied back to Bragg that he "believed the intended junction would be impossible, and certainly no surprise could be effected" due to several reasons.²⁵ Cleburne was ill in bed, the brigade manning Dug Gap would need relief if it moved forward, the gaps were blocked with timber and other obstructions and would take time to clear, he was waiting on two regiments to rejoin the division after the withdrawal from Chattanooga, and the message had reached him at a late hour. "Under the circumstances, I have not ordered the movement, as it could not possibly be simultaneous," Hill wrote to Bragg's chief of staff, adding, "Either Hindman should be stopped or the movement postponed till to-night."²⁶ "These reasons appeared satisfactory to the commanding general," Hill later noted in his

²³ Report of Hindman, October 25, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 296-297; Martin to Bragg, no date, Martin Folder, CCNMP (Martin Letters, University of Texas).

²⁴ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 138.

²⁵ Statement of Lieutenant Colonel Archer Anderson, Assistant Adjutant General, and J.H. Erskine, Medical Director, Hill's Corps, on copy of Mackall to Hill, September 9, 1863—11 ¾ PM, Hill Papers, NCSA; Report of Hill, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 138.

²⁶ Hill to Mackall, September 10, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 300.

official report, “as he made no complaint in regard to my not making the movement, and met me the next day with his usual cordiality.”²⁷ Bragg made no judgment in his own report, merely acknowledging Hill’s note and his matter-of-fact response in ordering Buckner to support Hindman instead.²⁸

Some of Hill’s excuses for his inaction appear rather unsatisfactory today, but others had much merit. He was the only one to note that Cleburne was sick that day, but that fact alone should not have precluded movement since Cleburne could have recommended a competent subordinate to take his place. The gaps, according to Cleburne and Martin, could be sufficiently cleared in one or two hours to let troops pass, which belied Hill’s concern.²⁹ In the 1860’s, however, Dug Gap was a particularly narrow cut that would slow down any unit advance considerably, even without obstructions. William Preston of the 33rd Alabama reported navigating the gap “in Indian file, one behind another, crawling under, around or over trees, log and brush that had been cut and fell on the road through the gap, at times in deep cut [sic] in the road full of brush and logs with high walls on each side that we could not see in the dark, but gave the impression that we were in a hole in the ground.”³⁰ Hill would have confirmed Preston’s account as he checked on his troops. The problem of deciding when to consolidate Cleburne’s division and how to get him relieved from picket duty was directly related to the location of Bragg’s units, the lack of intelligence on the enemy, and the

²⁷ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 138.

²⁸ Report of Bragg, December 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 28.

²⁹ Patrick Cleburne to D.H. Hill, September 10, 1863—6 o’clock PM, D.H. Hill Papers, Library of Virginia (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, LOV); Martin to Bragg, no date, Martin Folder, CCNMP (Martin Letters, University of Texas).

³⁰ William Preston, “Tennessee River, Chattanooga, Tyner’s, and Harrison,” in *Memoirs* (typescript), CCNMP (original in Alabama State Department of Archives and History, Montgomery).

lack of a clear mission. The Army of Tennessee was dispersed in order to guard against Union maneuvers from multiple directions. Bragg's order to Hill and Hindman did not specify a time of attack or a purpose; it just told them to move upon the enemy, and nothing further, raising the question as to whether or not Pigeon Mountain would have to be defended in the meantime. Bragg assumed Hill and Hindman would meet up around dawn and immediately attack. Hill seemed to infer this when he indicated he had received the order too late to do anything effective in the morning hours.³¹ Because there was no timeline, however, Hindman and Hill, in their own ways, took their time getting ready on September 10.

Hill's postwar statement about Bragg's leadership skills is often quoted as proof that he and his peers consciously ignored the commander's orders if they did not agree with them. Late in the 1880's he wrote: "Bragg's want of definite and precise information had led him more than once to issue 'impossible' orders, and therefore those intrusted [sic] with their execution got in the way of disregarding them."³² It does appear at this stage in the campaign that Hill already doubted the feasibility of Bragg's orders, but he clearly considered military operations imminent because he prepared Cleburne's division throughout the day for a possible attack, ordering the entire unit to Dug Gap at 1:30 P.M.³³ He was too conscientious and experienced a general to ignore a Yankee advance on Pigeon Mountain, and realized the import of Bragg's concentration plan with its chance of bagging a large enemy force.

Hill erred, however, in taking too much time to inform Hindman that he could not immediately support the attack, and he did not offer constructive advice to Bragg beyond

³¹ Hill to Mackall, September 10, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 300.

³² Hill, "Chickamauga," 646.

³³ Hill to Mackall, "1.30 p. m." (September 10, 1863), *OR*, 30 (2): 300; Symonds, *Stonewall of the West*, 140-141. Ironically, Cleburne and Hindman were good friends and law partners in Arkansas, so they probably would have worked well together on this mission.

suggesting the movement should wait until dark. Hindman was unsure about what to do the first day in the Cove partly because he had not heard from Hill.³⁴ As for advising Bragg, Hill did not show any more imagination than he did while working for Lee. He continued to interpret vague orders in very practical terms, explaining when he could not accomplish a task while simultaneously preparing his troops to comply with the spirit of the orders. Just as during his time as a department commander, he lacked the initiative to suggest specific courses of action to his superiors. Hill also seems to have had trouble adjusting from Lee's army, where the staff was much more organized and intelligence more forthcoming, to an army that most of the time seemed to have no clue what was going on or failed to receive positive direction from its commander.³⁵ Bragg may have ignored advice tendered, but Hill did not even try to offer any, blaming (with truthfulness) his commander, who should have had a better knowledge of the situation and personally ensured prompt execution of his orders.³⁶ In his defense, Hill could do little about the length of time it took his couriers to negotiate Pigeon Mountain and its blockaded passes in the absence of further guidance from higher headquarters, and his negative reply would not have inclined Hindman to move any further than he did on September 10. In addition, judging by his comment that Hindman should delay his movement until dark, Hill seemed to concur in theory with Bragg's plan and

³⁴ Report of Hindman, October 25, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 299.

³⁵ One difference between the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of Tennessee, as noted by a former staff officer, was that an adjutant in the former organization held the power to give orders on the battlefield in the name of his commander, flexibility unfamiliar to the western army. See Robert E.L. Krick, *Staff Officers in Gray: A Biographical Register of the Staff Officers in the Army of Northern Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 3-5, 8-9.

³⁶ Hill, "Chickamauga," 641.

believed that the army still had a chance to execute it.³⁷ Once Hindman failed to engage Negley, further operational decisions were Bragg's to make, not Hill's.

Cleburne backed up Hill's decision to delay on September 10 in a note sent over a month later. He confirmed that it would have taken several hours to consolidate his division for a movement through Dug Gap and that the distance from LaFayette to Davis' Crossroads, roughly eleven miles, precluded the execution of the order that morning.³⁸ Cleburne took a similar no-nonsense approach to battle preparation as Hill did, but when he was ready to attack, did not want to be held back.³⁹ With Bragg essentially micromanaging Hill and Cleburne at the gap on the eleventh instead of checking on Hindman or altering his plan, little was accomplished, and the Federals slipped away. One junior officer wrote in his diary approving of Hill's role that afternoon on Pigeon Mountain: "About 4 o'clock Lt Genl D H Hill came up and ordered us forward and went with us himself thus attracting our admiration for the Lt Genl who was not afraid to go with his front line of skirmishers."⁴⁰ Prudent or not, Hill was putting himself close to the action as always and inspiring his troops. Concern for his men and the mission would put Hill at the forefront of a controversy waiting to explode fourteen miles to the north.

By mid-afternoon on September 19, the Union and Confederate armies had maneuvered to oppose each another along a front four and one-half miles-long and one mile deep, west of and parallel to Chickamauga Creek. Hill's corps occupied Bragg's left at Lee

³⁷ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 138; Report of Hindman, October 25, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 297-298.

³⁸ Patrick Cleburne to D.H. Hill, October 15, 1863, Hill Papers, LOV.

³⁹ Symonds, *Stonewall of the West*, 53-55, 134, 141-142.

⁴⁰ Entry for Friday 11th (September 1863), D. (Daniel) Coleman Diary, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

and Gordon's Mill, where the LaFayette Road crossed the Chickamauga, until Bragg ordered first Cleburne, then Breckinridge to the northern end of the Confederate position.⁴¹ Bragg's battle plan for the nineteenth had been to attack the Union left flank, committing each of his units from north to south in sequence until he pushed Rosecrans away from the LaFayette Road and re-secured the route to Chattanooga. He did not, however, accomplish his objective, and as both sides settled into a nighttime truce, he decided what to do on the following day.⁴² Rosecrans took the opportunity to reposition his corps in better defensive positions with Thomas's men remaining closest to the Confederate front line.⁴³ By sunrise on the 20th, the northern portion of the Confederate army consisted of, in line, Breckinridge, Cleburne, and Major General Benjamin Cheatham's division of Polk's corps, with Walker's corps as the reserve situated behind the two. The remainder of the army stretched south from a position in front of Cheatham and would soon be commanded by Lieutenant General James Longstreet, newly arrived from Virginia.⁴⁴

When Longstreet reached Army headquarters that night, Bragg revealed his organizational and battle plan for September 20. Knowing Longstreet was now one of the

⁴¹ Report of Bragg, December 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 30-33; Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 140; Report of Cleburne, October 18, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 154; Report of Breckinridge, October --, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 198; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 263-279, 300; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 186-207; Symonds, *Stonewall of the West*, 143-146. Cozzens provides the most detailed and recent narrative of both sides' actions between September 11 and 19 on pages 76-262 of his book. When Cleburne reached his new position, Bragg ordered him to make what became a nighttime attack against the Union lines. Hill accompanied Cleburne on the attack but was not the major decision maker for this movement. The attack was only moderately successful; Cleburne succeeded in pushing the Union troops opposite him back two miles, but they had already been in the process of withdrawing into new defensive positions.

⁴² Report of Bragg, December 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 32-33.

⁴³ Report of Rosecrans, October --, 1863, *OR*, 30 (1): 58-61; Report of Thomas, September 30, 1863, *OR*, 30 (1): 251-253.

⁴⁴ "Circular, Hdqrs. Right Wing, Army of Tenn.," September 19, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 52; Report of Longstreet, October --, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 288.

senior generals on the field, and perhaps suspecting that he coveted Bragg's job, Bragg gave Longstreet command of what he designated the Left Wing of the Army of Tennessee.⁴⁵ Bragg gave Polk command of the Right Wing, which included Hill's and Walker's corps and Cheatham's division. Polk was ordered to attack the Federal positions in his front at sunrise, beginning the assault with Breckinridge's division and, much like the previous day's plan, following with each successive division down the line. Longstreet would commit his northernmost division when Polk was fully engaged, and so on.⁴⁶ No other corps commanders received instructions directly from Bragg that night. By virtue of being almost a carbon copy of the previous day's plan, Bragg's nighttime instructions betrayed a lack of awareness of the ever-changing Union positions.⁴⁷ His plan would also require detailed coordination between several commanders who had little experience working together.⁴⁸

Bragg had good intentions when he decided to split his army in half for command and control purposes, but he never put the order to Longstreet and Polk in writing, and instead relied on these two commanders to disseminate the orders to their new subordinates.⁴⁹ In the case of Hill, Walker and Buckner, who until that point had reported directly to Bragg, Army headquarters should have directly informed the three commanders that they were now

⁴⁵ For information on Longstreet's lobbying to leave the Virginia theater and perhaps replace Bragg as army commander, see Thomas L. Connelly and Archer Jones, *The Politics of Command: Factions and ideas in Confederate Strategy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 68-69, Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 101, and Hallock, *Braxton Bragg*, 79.

⁴⁶ Report of Bragg, December 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 33.

⁴⁷ Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 300-301; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 207-208.

⁴⁸ The Army of Tennessee, due to its reinforcement shortly before the battle, contained a hodgepodge of new units from Virginia, East Tennessee, and Mississippi. Hill, Polk, Buckner, Cheatham and Walker had worked together for less than one month.

⁴⁹ Report of Bragg, December 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 33; Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 140-141; Report of Longstreet, October --, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 288; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 301; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 210.

subordinate to other generals. Second, the order left Hill, the remaining lieutenant general on the field, without any real command role commensurate with his rank.⁵⁰ For Bragg to subordinate Hill to another lieutenant general appeared very odd; it would have been more appropriate to put him in command of the independent reserve or split the Confederate front line into thirds. Bragg never explained why he left Hill adrift within the command structure; William Polk, Leonidas Polk's son and staff officer, claimed that Bragg stated he was annoyed with Hill for failing to link up with Hindman at McLemore's Cove.⁵¹ As a dutiful soldier, Hill never made any direct complaint about his subordination to Polk.⁵² The confusion resulting from the command restructuring and lack of written orders to all subordinates exacerbated the murky intelligence situation and directly affected Confederate actions on September 20.

When Polk returned from his meeting with Bragg at 11:00 PM on the 19th, he dictated orders to his adjutant for an attack to commence at daybreak the next morning, led by Breckinridge's troops. The staff prepared copies for Hill, Walker, and Cheatham. Walker picked up his copy directly from headquarters, and a courier delivered Cheatham's, returning with acknowledged receipt.⁵³ John Fisher, the courier sent to Hill, searched the area near Thedford's Ford and in the rear of the lines for four hours without finding the general. He ran into Cheatham and Breckinridge along the way, but neither man knew where Hill was. Fisher

⁵⁰ Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 300; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 209. Walker and Buckner, although they commanded corps (and Buckner had previously commanded the East Tennessee department), were still major generals and had not been recommended for promotion to lieutenant general.

⁵¹ William Polk, *Leonidas Polk: Bishop and General*, Vol. II (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1915), 255.

⁵² Hill never complained in official or public documents, and when he discussed the command situation commented specifically on Bragg's battlefield conduct and leadership ability, not his orders.

⁵³ Polk to Brent, September 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 47; Polk to Brent, October 7, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 48; "Circular, Hdqrs. Right Wing, Army of Tenn.," September 19, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 52.

returned to Army headquarters, but did not inform the adjutant of the undelivered order as he had been instructed not to disturb him.⁵⁴ Polk's backup plan was to send word to his commanders that he wanted to meet with them at his sleep wagon, and he posted soldiers at the nearest creek crossing and road junction to guide Hill, Walker and Cheatham.⁵⁵

While Fisher was searching for Hill, Hill was searching for Bragg. He left Cleburne's lines around 11:00 PM to go to Thedford's Ford, where Bragg's headquarters was, as he had not heard of a plan for the next day. He probably missed Polk by a half hour, and when Hill reached the ford with one of his staff officers, they could not find any sign of Bragg nearby.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, Hill's adjutant, Lieutenant Colonel Archer Anderson, had run into Polk and received word of the new command scheme, as well as Polk's request to see Hill. Anderson (who had no trouble finding his commander that night) told Hill that Polk's wagon was located just east of Alexander's Bridge over the creek. Since the bridge was not far away, Hill decided to rest for three hours to help alleviate his chronic back pain before riding again.⁵⁷ At this point, all he knew was that he was working for Polk, and had no knowledge of the attack that was supposed to take place in the morning, led by his troops. Polk later claimed that he had told Anderson about the attack and the two had discussed troop dispositions, but Hill and his engineer said Anderson mentioned nothing about this.⁵⁸ Hill woke up about 3:00 AM and with three of his staff officers resumed the search for Polk east

⁵⁴ Polk to Brent, September 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 47; Deposition of John H. Fisher, September 29, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 57-58.

⁵⁵ Polk to Brent, September 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 47; Deposition of L. Charvet, September 30, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 58-59; Deposition of J.A. Perkins, September 30, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 60.

⁵⁶ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 140.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Polk to Hill, September 30, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 63; Statement of CPT Thaddeus Coleman, October 13, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA.

of Alexander's Bridge, but could not find him. Frustrated, he instructed an aide to continue searching for Polk and to tell the wing commander that he was returning to his lines.⁵⁹

Unfortunately, John Fisher never informed Polk or his staff about the undelivered order, so they did not know that Hill remained in the dark about Bragg's plans.⁶⁰

In addition to Hill's troubles getting guidance from higher headquarters, his subordinates did not attempt to get in contact with him overnight to see if they had missions for the next day. Informal conversations were no better; Breckinridge camped with Polk that night and the subject of an attack came up only in vague terms as they parted. In fact, Polk had allowed Breckinridge to bivouac farther in the rear than the other Confederate troops because he had marched farthest that day, countermanding Hill's order to file into position before resting.⁶¹ J.A. Perkins, the soldier guide posted near Alexander's Bridge, stated that Polk told him to stay for a couple of hours by the campfire after which he was allowed to leave.⁶² If Hill showed up after the soldier left, he had no one to guide him to Polk's headquarters. What compounded the communications problem was the inherent confusion and business of the rear of an army in unknown country. In addition to the wounded and dead scattered everywhere and the medical staff trying to deal with them, there would have been teamsters with wagons full of equipment, including ammunition and rations. There were several fords and bridges over the Chickamauga, and it was easy to get confused in the dark with soldiers from different commands still intermingled from the day's fighting. Neither

⁵⁹ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 140-141; Statement of Archer Anderson, Thaddeus Coleman, and George West, October 13, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA; Hill, "Chickamauga," 653.

⁶⁰ Polk to Brent, September 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 47; Deposition of John H. Fisher, September 29, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 57-58; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 301-304; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 211-216.

⁶¹ John C. Breckinridge to D.H. Hill, October 16, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA; Hill, "Chickamauga," 653.

⁶² Deposition of J.A. Perkins, September 30, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 60.

Bragg nor Polk occupied known landmarks for their headquarters, and the exact location of Polk's headquarters was disputed for several years after the war.⁶³ Fires still burned in the woods as a result of exploded artillery shells from the day's battle, and a thick fog lay over the field that night. The final irony is that Hill likely bivouacked a few hundred yards from where Bragg was sleeping near Thedford's Ford.⁶⁴

Before dawn on Sunday morning, Breckinridge moved into position north of Cleburne, and Polk awoke to find out that Fisher had never reached Hill with orders and Hill had not reported to headquarters. The silence at the front persuaded Polk to reissue new orders, this time directly to Breckinridge and Cleburne, to attack immediately.⁶⁵ Hill was conferring with his commanders when Polk's staff officer arrived with the orders. He wrote Polk that he could not start the attack right away, as the soldiers were receiving rations after not having eaten for two days. In addition, he encouraged Polk to ride out and reconnoiter the lines since there was no security to Breckinridge's right, and Cleburne's left brigade sat at right angles with one of Cheatham's. He estimated that he would be ready to attack in about two hours.⁶⁶ Hill remembered receiving the order at 7:25 AM, but the statements of Polk's staff place the time closer to 6:30 AM, and Polk himself sent a message to Bragg's

⁶³ Polk, *Leonidas Polk*, 253-254. General Polk seems to have had two different headquarters locations on September 19—one west of Chickamauga Creek during the day, and the nighttime location east of Alexander's Bridge. CCNMP recognizes both locations.

⁶⁴ William Glenn Robertson and others, "Appendix D: Meteorological Data Relevant to the Chickamauga Campaign," in *Staff Ride Handbook for the Battle of Chickamauga, 18-20 September 1863* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1992), 173. Bragg's headquarters was near Thedford's Ford. Longstreet also slept nearby, so the ground was pretty crowded with generals within a quarter-mile radius.

⁶⁵ Polk to Brent, September 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 47.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; Polk to Mackall, September 20, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 53; Statement of J. Frank Wheless, September 30, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 61; Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 141.

headquarters at 7:00 AM.⁶⁷ Polk rode out to Hill's lines to evaluate the situation and spent little time there, accepting Hill's explanation and not commenting on any ill effects from the delay. The division commanders partially corrected the seam between their lines and Hill took the initiative of contacting Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest to bring some of his cavalry in to support Breckinridge and guard his flank.⁶⁸

After Polk left, a highly agitated Bragg showed up at Hill's headquarters looking for the wing commander and demanding to know why an attack had not occurred. Hill explained that he had only heard about the order an hour previously.⁶⁹ At this point, though, Hill's troops were finishing eating and getting ready, so there was not much for Bragg to do but wait for Breckinridge to move. At approximately 9:30 AM, the division's three brigades moved on line forward through the woods toward the LaFayette Road. The northern and center brigades, under Brigadier Generals Daniel Adams and Marcellus Stovall, encountered little Union resistance because they bypassed Thomas's position where it curved around the north side of Kelly Field. As the two brigades emerged into a clearing near the LaFayette Road and brushed away token resistance, Breckinridge realized he had moved past the end of the Federal line and could readjust his brigades to attack the flank and even rear of Thomas's

⁶⁷ Polk to Brent, September 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 47; Deposition of J.A. Perkins, September 30, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 60; Statement of J. Minick Williams, September 30, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 60; Statement of J. Frank Wheless, September 30, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 61; Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 141. According to Robertson and others, *Staff Ride*, 173, sunrise on September 20, 1863 was at 5:47 AM.

⁶⁸ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 141; Report of Forrest, October 22, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 525; Statement of A.C. Avery, November 3, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA. Avery was one of Hill's staff officers, and he remembered Hill sending him on a mission to place cavalry on the Confederate right flank about one hour before the first attack. One mission of cavalry during the Civil War was to observe enemy movements and by providing a security buffer, or screen, along an army's flank, give early warning of an enemy approach or counterattack. Mounted cavalry could also extend further out from an army's lines than a dismounted infantryman, called a picket, pulling guard duty. Until Hill asked for Forrest's help, there was no such cavalry screen on the Confederate right.

⁶⁹ Report of Bragg, December 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 33; Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 141.

salient. He applied to Hill, who granted him permission to attack down the LaFayette Road, and soon Adams and Stovall advanced south, using their artillery to silence the Union guns and create chaos around the Kelly homestead.⁷⁰

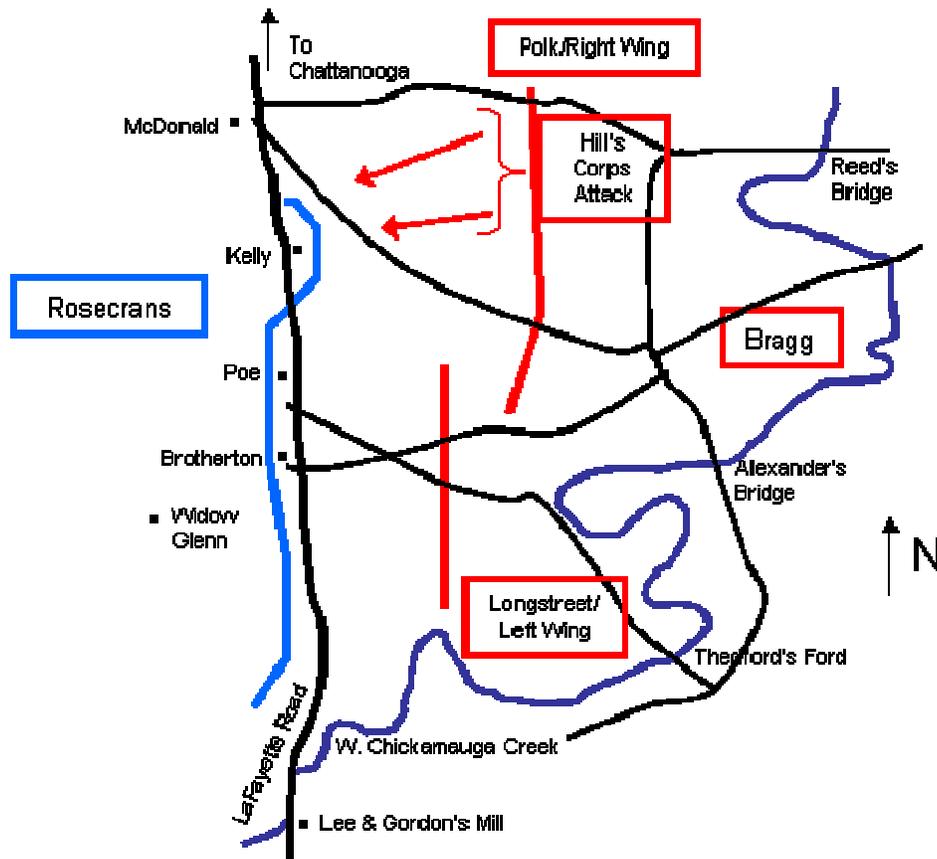


Figure 12. Chickamauga, Union and Confederate troop dispositions, morning of September 20, 1863. Bragg's lines reflect how Longstreet's Left Wing deployed slightly in front of and overlapped the southern part of Polk's Right Wing.

Breckinridge's third brigade, under Brigadier General Benjamin H. Helm, was not as lucky; its route of march led it directly into the entrenchments of the Regular Army regiments in Thomas's command. Helm, Abraham Lincoln's brother-in-law, led his troops

⁷⁰ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 141-142; Report of Breckinridge, October --, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 198-200; Report of Gibson, September 26, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 216-217.

through the woods and a small glade but was repulsed by the Federal defenses. As he rallied his troops for a second try, he was mortally wounded. Meanwhile, Adams and Stovall penetrated the Union rear behind Kelly's, but Thomas quickly brought in two brigades' worth of reinforcements and by noon drove the Confederates out of the field. Breckinridge did not have any reserve troops to bring in, and on Hill's order his brigades withdrew, leaving the wounded Adams to be captured by the Yankees.⁷¹

At 10:00 AM, Hill sent Cleburne forward, instructing him to dress his command on Breckinridge's division.⁷² Cleburne's three brigades were arrayed in line running north to south and were commanded by Brigadier Generals Lucius Polk, S.A.M. Wood, and James Deshler. Lucius Polk, nephew of the wing commander, ran into the same trouble that Helm had minutes earlier, and his brigade and part of Wood's were engaged by the regulars on Thomas's line.⁷³ Thomas was able to use the horseshoe shape of his defensive position to easily reinforce wherever the Confederate pressure was the greatest; once he handled the threat from Breckinridge in his rear, he concentrated on Cleburne.⁷⁴ To add to the confusion, Wood's brigade ran into part of Longstreet's wing, blocking Deshler's advance. Cleburne brought Wood back and sent in Deshler, but the Union fire checked his advance at a low rise in the ground. Deshler was killed while consolidating his troops, and Lucius Polk fell back to

⁷¹ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 142-143; Report of Breckinridge, October --, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 199-200; Report of Lewis, September 30, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 203-205.

⁷² "To dress on" in this context means to adjust the formation of the division to align closely with that of its neighbor so that both advance simultaneously in a straight line and do not form gaps. Terrain and bullets usually foiled this attempt at order.

⁷³ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 141-143; Report of Cleburne, October 18, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 154-155; Report of Wood, October 9, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 161-162; Report of Lucius Polk, October 10, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 176-177.

⁷⁴ Report of Thomas, September 30, 1863, *OR*, 30 (1): 251-253.

Wood's position.⁷⁵ Hill searched for a reserve to plug the hole where Helm had fallen back and grabbed one of Walker's brigades, commanded by Colonel Peyton Colquitt. Colquitt had no more success penetrating the Federal defenses, and his luck under Hill ran out as he became the third brigade commander in Bragg's Right Wing to fall mortally wounded that day. By 1:00 PM, the Right Wing withdrew several hundred yards from Thomas' salient, which stood shaken but firm.⁷⁶

The fight passed to Longstreet's sector of the battlefield, where he was able to take advantage of a gap in the Union lines and roll back Rosecrans's right flank to a group of hills called Horseshoe Ridge.⁷⁷ About 3:30 PM, Leonidas Polk put Hill in charge of a coordinated attack, which utilized nearly the entire Right Wing. The command swept forward in conjunction with Longstreet, forcing Thomas to withdraw to the gaps in Missionary Ridge.⁷⁸ After sunset, Confederate scouts probed the old Union line, and Forrest watched the withdrawal with his cavalry, providing confirmation that Rosecrans had left the field. Some of the Confederates settled in along the LaFayette Road and celebrated their victory while soldiers from both sides lay grievously wounded and dying.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 143-144; Report of Cleburne, October 18, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 155-156; Report of Mills, October 6, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 188.

⁷⁶ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 144; Report of Walker, October 18, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 241; Report of Gist, October 14, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 245-246.

⁷⁷ Report of Bragg, December 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 34; Report of Longstreet, October --, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 288-289. One of the Union divisions pulled out of the front line and was not replaced by other troops. In one of the coincidences of war, Longstreet happened to attack as the division was leaving.

⁷⁸ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 144-145.

⁷⁹ Report of Bragg, December 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 34; Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 145; Report of Longstreet, October --, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 289; Report of Forrest, October 22, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 525; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 513-517; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 227.

Two issues regarding Hill's conduct on September 20 arose after the Battle of Chickamauga. First was the issue of why his troops were receiving rations that morning when, according to Bragg's orders, they were supposed to be carrying three days supply in their haversacks. Hill wrote in his official report that his headquarters had continually issued orders to that effect but "owing to difficulties, and possibly to want of attention, some of the men had been without food the day before, and a division (Cleburne's) had its rations for the day unissued, but cooked and on hand."⁸⁰ A regimental quartermaster in Lucius Polk's brigade wrote in his diary that on September 19 he took only one day's cooked rations out to the battlefield.⁸¹ Hill also reported to Polk that Breckinridge's wagons had gotten lost between the creek and the front, implying that the division had no food on hand in soldiers' haversacks.⁸² Hill was no different from other corps commanders in relying on his subordinates to make sure provisions were distributed. The confusion of the battlefield and faulty communications structure likely exacerbated the rations situation although Hill noted in his report that his commissary and quartermaster captains "attended faithfully to their respective departments."⁸³ Hill did not seem to find an overwhelming problem with his supply situation.

The second question concerns whether the delay caused by feeding the troops on September 20 affected the course of the battle. With Cleburne's troops involved in the fight on September 19 and Breckinridge's just moving up to the line after a long march, Hill

⁸⁰ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 141.

⁸¹ *The Diary of Sergt. John W. Sparkman, Sr., of the Quartermaster's Department, 48th Tennessee Regiment, C.S.A., 1861-1865* (Birmingham, Alabama: Copied from the Original Manuscript by the Birmingham Public Library, 1940), 50, CCNMP.

⁸² Hill to Polk, September 20, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 53.

⁸³ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 147.

clearly looked at the ration problem as a morale issue. The order Polk sent to Breckinridge and Cleburne the morning of September 20 stated to “move upon and attack the enemy so soon as you are in position.”⁸⁴ The dispatch did not say to attack immediately or to make haste, and since Hill and his generals had received no prior communication about the specific time for the battle, they proceeded to finish their preparations. Given Hill’s experience at Malvern Hill, among other places, he would not have been inclined to advance toward a strong Union defense (the construction of which could be heard overnight) without making sure his forces were tied into the larger tactical plan at a specific time with a specific objective.

In addition, the top commanders on the field argued in their official reports over who was responsible for the employment of Walker’s reserve corps. When describing the advance of Stovall and Adams on the Union flank, Breckinridge succinctly observed that “a good supporting line to my division at this moment would probably have produced decisive results.”⁸⁵ Hill went further in his report, complaining not only of the lack of reserve commitment to the morning attack but the placement of the Right Wing. “The important results effected by two brigades on the flank proved that, had our army been moved under cover of the woods a mile farther to the right, the whole Yankee position would have been turned and an almost bloodless victory gained,” he wrote, adding, “a simple reconnoissance before the battle would have shown the practicability of the movement and the advantage to be gained by it.”⁸⁶ Walker, on the other hand, griped that when Hill called for the reserve, he

⁸⁴ Jack to Cleburne and Breckinridge, September 20, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 52.

⁸⁵ Report of Breckinridge, October --, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 200.

⁸⁶ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 143.

employed the brigades piecemeal and that “had he permitted me to fight my Reserve Corps according to my own judgment,” Walker’s troops could have pressed a flank attack and carried the enemy’s position more quickly and with fewer casualties.⁸⁷ Polk’s original order did not give Hill authority over the reserve; rather, Polk informally conceded command of the reserve during the battle, and stood by without interfering as Hill and Walker argued about which brigade to bring forward.⁸⁸

Hill, by his own account, said he had discovered the previous night that by placing Breckinridge on the extreme right of the Confederate line, his division could outflank the Union defenses.⁸⁹ While it was Polk’s responsibility as wing commander to conduct a reconnaissance of the front to look for such exploitable opportunities, Hill, as a direct subordinate who actually made the reconnaissance, never informed him personally or through staff officers due to the communications issues of that evening. Anderson evidently did mention to Polk in their brief conversation that Hill wanted to place Breckinridge on the right of Cleburne, but whether the reason for doing so was transmitted and accepted is unclear.⁹⁰ In addition to his reply to Polk’s morning attack order, Hill also said he “reminded” Polk later that his corps was moving to battle in a single line with no depth or reserve.⁹¹ The Bishop, who never wrote a complete official report of his units at Chickamauga, mentioned in a brief defense of his conduct only how he found Hill mistaken

⁸⁷ Report of Walker, October 18, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 242.

⁸⁸ “Circular, Hdqrs. Right Wing, Army of Tenn.,” September 19, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 52; Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 144; Report of , 1863, Report of Walker, October 18, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 241-242.

⁸⁹ Report of Hill, no date, 30 (2): 141.

⁹⁰ Polk to Hill, September 30, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 63.

⁹¹ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 141.

about the misalignment between Cheatham and Cleburne, and nothing about his own preparations for the battle.⁹² Walker did have a legitimate complaint about Hill's use of his troops once they were available; in trying to salvage the temporary gains made by Breckinridge, Hill rather uselessly committed troops against a reinforced position. Hill, however, did what he thought would help win the battle, which was more than his superiors did. Bragg's and Polk's lack of personal supervision of the front ensured a continued communications breakdown. Perhaps the most positive accomplishment of the Right Wing between 11:00 AM and 2:00 PM was that its attacks caused enough confusion within the Federal high command to facilitate Longstreet's breakthrough.

Both sides suffered horrendous casualties at Chickamauga, from talented brigade commanders down to privates. Out of the 68,000 men Bragg brought into battle between September 19 and 20, he lost close to 18,000 killed, wounded or missing. Hill's Corps lost 2,990 men out of 8,884, mostly on the second day. Rosecrans suffered 16,179 casualties out of 57,840 committed.⁹³ After losses at Gettysburg and Vicksburg the Confederacy tried to believe Chickamauga was worth the victory, but with Rosecrans holding on in Chattanooga and a groundswell of discontent peaking within the Army of Tennessee, observers had their doubts.

The Army of Tennessee did not immediately pursue the Army of the Cumberland as it fled to Chattanooga. Bragg laid siege to the city with its Federal inhabitants in late

⁹² Polk to Brent, September 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 47. Polk did not write a report after being transferred from Bragg's army. An artillery shell struck and killed him the following spring at Pine Mountain, GA. Polk's defense of his conduct included several erroneous statements; Hill was indeed right about the misalignment of Confederate troops.

⁹³ Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 146; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 534. Bragg's numbers are estimates as his aggregate count is missing from the *OR*; Hill's numbers are taken from his own report.

September as his subordinates fumed over the lost opportunity to crush Rosecrans.⁹⁴ On September 29, Bragg, dissatisfied with Polk's explanation of the late attack on the twentieth, suspended him for disobeying a direct order. He also removed Hindman for disobeying the order to attack at McLemore's Cove on September 11.⁹⁵ Polk retreated to Atlanta where he wrote angry letters to Jefferson Davis while Longstreet penned letters of his own to Lee and Secretary of War Seddon and met with Hill and Buckner to decide what to do about Bragg. The generals concocted a petition to Davis requesting the relief of Bragg from command for health purposes, but in truth it was a vote of no confidence in his overall leadership ability. Buckner, Longstreet, Hill, Cleburne, and several brigade commanders signed the petition, but it was never sent to Richmond as Davis decided to visit the army that week.⁹⁶ The president called a meeting with Longstreet, Buckner, Hill and Cheatham and asked them to voice their opinions while, incredibly, Bragg sat in a corner of the room listening to the entire conversation. In the end, Davis decided to keep Bragg in command and sent Polk to another theater of operations.⁹⁷

While Davis was still in Georgia, Bragg wrote him to formally relieve Hill of corps command. Through rumors and hearsay, Bragg may have believed Hill wrote the petition or

⁹⁴ Report of Bragg, December 28, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 35; Report of Hill, no date, *OR*, 30 (2): 145; Report of Longstreet, October --, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 289-290; Hal Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961/Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 225-227; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 518-520; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 231-233; Hill, "Chickamauga," 662.

⁹⁵ Bragg to Cooper, September 29, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 55; "Special Orders, No. 249," September 29, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 56; 1863, "Charges and specifications preferred against Maj. Gen. T.C. Hindman, Provisional Army, Confederate States," 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 310.

⁹⁶ Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 227-237; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 529-532; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 235-242.

⁹⁷ Davis to Polk, October 29, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 70; Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 238-239; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 532-533; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 245-246. Davis had already decided to keep Bragg in command before the meeting, so it is unclear why he held it. Few written accounts of the meeting remain other than Longstreet's.

that it was mostly his idea, so this made Hill the perfect substitute for blame with Polk already gone.⁹⁸ “Possessing some high qualifications as a commander,” Bragg told Davis, “[Hill] still fails to such an extent in others more essential that he weakens the morale and military tone of his command. A want of prompt conformity to orders of great importance is the immediate cause of this application.”⁹⁹ Davis concurred with this rather vague letter, and Bragg’s adjutant notified Hill on October 15 that he was thereby relieved and should report with his staff to the Adjutant General in Richmond for further instructions.¹⁰⁰

Hill was stunned, as were many of his peers and soldiers. Taking his adjutant Anderson with him, Hill went to Bragg’s headquarters to find out why he was being dismissed. Anderson documented the conversation between the two generals immediately after the meeting.¹⁰¹ Bragg offered varying explanations every time Hill asked a question. First he explained how he had asked Davis to remove Hill for “the harmony and efficiency of the service” and that he had no formal charge to file against his subordinate.¹⁰² When Hill asked him what he meant by harmony and efficiency, Bragg replied that he did not hold Hill to any military offense (such as dereliction of duty), but there had been orders that “had not been executed as they should have been,” such as at Davis’ Crossroads although he did not

⁹⁸ Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General*, 234-237; Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound*, 531-532; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, 238-240. Connelly supports the widely accepted view that General Buckner drew up the petition because of the prominent placement of his signature. Hill always denied writing it but because he ended up with the petition at his headquarters (and in fact kept it after the war) he drew Bragg’s suspicion.

⁹⁹ Bragg to Davis, October 11, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 148; Braxton Bragg to Jefferson Davis, October 11, 1863, Bragg Papers, WRHS.

¹⁰⁰ Davis to Bragg, October 13, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 149; “Special Orders, No. 33,” October 15, 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 149.

¹⁰¹ Statement of Archer Anderson, October 16, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

hold this against Hill at the time.¹⁰³ Rather, he felt he did not have the “cordial cooperation” of Hill, due to previous reports he had received, and that he could not command the army without the support of his subordinates.¹⁰⁴ If Bragg was referring to the petition, Hill answered, the fact was that “he had put his name to that paper with great reluctance and as a matter of simple duty;” furthermore, he had never expressed want of confidence in Bragg until the morning of September 20 when the commanding general did not personally appear on the field to reconnoiter the front and flanks, place cavalry or adjust the lines.¹⁰⁵ As for Davis’ Crossroads, Hill claimed that “nothing short of Almighty Power could have accomplished what was required” on September 10.¹⁰⁶ Hill charged that Bragg’s vague statement about want of harmony and efficiency so soon after the battle would severely damage his reputation, and he asked for specific charges “in some plain, palpable shape” so that he could defend himself.¹⁰⁷ Bragg repeated that he would file no charges and that he did not hold Hill to account for anything that occurred up the night of the twentieth. When Hill asked for this statement in writing, Bragg told him to apply for it through proper channels. Anderson added that Hill also asked Bragg why he was singling him out from the other commanders but that he received no reply.¹⁰⁸

Before he left Chattanooga, Hill collected statements from his staff members and subordinate commanders concerning the communications fiasco on the night of September

¹⁰³ Statement of Archer Anderson, October 16, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

19 and the timing and placement of the units at the front the following morning.¹⁰⁹ Several of his peers also wrote letters of farewell and encouragement. Hill's old friend Alexander Stewart wrote with three other generals to express confidence in his corps leadership. "I regard [Hill] as an active, intelligent, brave and competent officer, possessing the confidence of this division, and I believe of the corps," Stewart stated.¹¹⁰ Breckinridge added in his own note to Hill: "I have had more than one occasion to express my admiration of your fidelity to duty, your soldierly qualities and your extraordinary courage on the field. It may gratify you to know the feelings of one of your subordinates, and to be assured that in his opinion they are shared by his Division."¹¹¹

Turning the corps over to Breckinridge, Hill departed for Richmond, focused on clearing his name. His main concern throughout was how odd his dismissal looked so soon after Chickamauga as if he had blundered greatly on the battlefield. Only eleven days after his firing, the *Charleston Courier* published an article linking the inability of Bragg to pursue Rosecrans's army to the delay caused by Hill feeding his troops. Similar articles in the *Richmond Dispatch* and the *Raleigh Register* addressed the same theme. By harping on the timing of ration distribution, the authors also questioned Hill's ability to properly care for his men.¹¹² Fully aware of at least the *Charleston* article and camp rumors, Hill felt deeply that

¹⁰⁹ Statement of Thaddeus Coleman, statement of Archer Anderson, Thaddeus Coleman, and George West, and statement of CPT H.C. Semple, October 13, 1863, and statement of John C. Breckinridge, October 16, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA. The staff officer statements dated October 13, before his formal relief, suggest Hill was concerned about the fallout of Polk's suspension and had heard rumors he might be next.

¹¹⁰ A.P. Stewart, J.C. Brown, B.R. Johnson and W.B. Bate to Hill, October 15, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA.

¹¹¹ John C. Breckinridge to D.H. Hill, October 15, 1863 (certified as true copy by M.A. Small on March 12, 1868), Hill Papers, NCSA.

¹¹² "From the Army Correspondence of the *Charleston Courier*, October 26," 1863, *OR*, 30 (2): 152; *Richmond Dispatch*, October 20, 1863; *Raleigh Register*, October 20, 1863. Hill enclosed the *Courier* article in correspondence to the Confederate War Department. It insinuates that if Hill had not stopped to feed his troops, the Confederacy might have reclaimed Tennessee.

his military competence and honor were on the line and by extension his devotion to the South.

Unaddressed and therefore unresolved communications breakdowns within the army high command during the Chickamauga campaign hampered Hill's otherwise capable decision-making on the battlefield. He never disagreed with the spirit of Bragg's plans but chose which aspects he believed he could obey and was quick to point out the deficiencies with the rest while offering few alternatives. Bragg's poor leadership and the myriad problems besetting the Army of Tennessee disappointed Hill. Hill also cared for and had confidence in his new troops and his subordinate commanders and was not afraid to send them into the fight with expectations of success. A more imaginative officer might have compensated for the weaknesses in the communications structure and his superiors but this was not in Hill's nature. He continued to fall back on his strengths: following reasonable orders to the utmost ability, personally supervising and leading his units into battle, and placing his troops first and his comfort and safety second.

In Southern minds, things went downhill after Chickamauga, reinforcing the belief that if victory had been pressed on September 20 and 21, the Confederacy would have still had the chance to negotiate with the Union. Ever pessimistic about the fighting will of his beloved South, Hill later reflected on soldier morale:

There was no more splendid fighting in '61, when the flower of the Southern youth was in the field, than was displayed in those bloody days of September, '63. But it seems to me that the *élan* of the Southern soldier was never seen after Chickamauga—that brilliant dash which had distinguished him was gone forever. He was too intelligent not to know that the cutting in two of Georgia meant death to all his hopes . . . he fought stoutly to the last, but, after Chickamauga, with the sullenness of despair and without the enthusiasm of hope. That “barren victory” sealed the fate of the Southern Confederacy.¹¹³

¹¹³ Hill, “Chickamauga,” 662.

Hill could have easily been speaking of his own despair as he fought against a government bureaucracy to clear his name after Chickamauga.

CHAPTER IX

FROM THE MILITARY DOLDRUMS BACK INTO THE FRAY: THE FINAL YEAR OF THE WAR

In early November 1863, Hill traveled to Richmond and applied to Adjutant General Samuel Cooper for a formal military court of inquiry concerning his relief at Chickamauga. While awaiting an answer, he had a tense meeting with Davis and came away with the impression that his request for a court would be denied.¹ A couple of days later, Hill wrote Davis a letter that started out apologetic in tone but turned into a passionate defense of his character. He said he had been singled out for punishment when other generals had expressed a similar want of confidence in Braxton Bragg. “Justice should be even-handed,” Hill bluntly stated.² After all, Leonidas Polk received a “complimentary letter” from Davis upon reinstatement to command and was cleared of any negligence at Chickamauga, making it seem that only Hill was to blame in the eyes of the president.³ A court was necessary to establish the facts. “There have been many disgraceful surprises, defeats, surrenders & other disasters and the responsible officers not held to account,” Hill said, and summed up, “at Chickamauga, there was a glorious victory & all accord that I contributed my share in

¹ D.H. Hill to Samuel Cooper, November 13, 1863, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, NCSA); Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961/Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 250-51.

² D.H. Hill to Jefferson Davis, November 16, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA.

³ *Ibid.*

winning it and yet I am virtually condemned for my connection with that great battle. Can this be just?"⁴

Davis probably did not appreciate Hill's tone and wanted to ignore the general altogether, but in his response he assured him that he had taken no offense and considered "the whole matter...restored to its official character."⁵ He and Bragg seemed determined to put the matter behind them; one historian suggested that they purposely "cleaned house" in the Army of Tennessee that fall, moving regiments around to break up the Kentucky and Tennessee opposition.⁶ The War Department turned down Hill's application for a court of inquiry, and he went back to Davidson to wait for notification of a suitable position for his rank.⁷ Two months later, a friend and fellow officer from the Army of Northern Virginia, Lafayette McLaws, wrote that he had met with Bragg the day after Hill's dismissal and asked him for reasons. McLaws reported that Bragg said he had "the kindest feelings" for Hill but that the two could not be in the same army.⁸ "You were, as you always are, open and outspoken, made no secret of your opposition to him, and you were looked on as the head and front of the coalition against Genl B," McLaws reminded Hill.⁹ His words probably soothed Hill little, since the press already labeled him the general who stopped the battle to

⁴ D.H. Hill to Jefferson Davis, November 16, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁵ Davis to Hill, November 17, 1863, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. I, 52 (2): 562 (hereafter cited as *OR*, unless otherwise noted all citations are from Ser. I).

⁶ Thomas L. Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 250-53.

⁷ Samuel Cooper to D.H. Hill, November 16 and 20, 1863, Hill Papers, NCSA; the November 16 communication is also in *OR*, 31 (3): 701; see also James Seddon to Hill, December 1, 1863, D.H. Hill Papers, Library of Virginia (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, LOV).

⁸ Lafayette McLaws to D.H. Hill, January 23, 1864, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁹ *Ibid.*

let his soldiers eat. McLaws, however, was right. Hill had spoken out publicly against a superior officer when commiserating with his fellow generals after the battle, and Bragg could not let this go unaddressed. Davis and Bragg, however, unfairly singled out Hill and made an example of him. Other generals had been just as outspoken and yet were allowed to leave Chickamauga with reputations intact.

Hill did not give up without a fight, acting as his own reputational entrepreneur and enlisting others to help him. During his downtime, he exploited kinship networks to get a statement of confidence in his military abilities from Davis. He enlisted his oldest brother and father figure William to meet with Cooper and Davis to secure a guarantee of endorsement for follow-on commands. Colonel William Hill hoped to be able to use his friendship with Davis, a fellow Mississippi planter, to prevail upon the president for the desired statement. During the same month of February 1864, General P.G.T. Beauregard, now in charge of the Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, requested Hill as his assistant commander in South Carolina. He applied to Cooper as well as directly to Hill, valuing the latter's expertise in a department under increasing pressure from Union naval expeditions. Having secured verbal guarantees of an impending statement of confidence from the Richmond authorities, William advised his younger brother to go ahead and report to Beauregard in Charleston.¹⁰

The day after he met with William, Cooper wrote Harvey Hill the following:

After due consideration of the terms and intent of the law authorizing the appointment of lieutenant-generals it has been concluded that officers of that rank are only available for the command of army corps. The President, desiring that the public should not hereafter lose the service of an officer whose zeal and gallantry have been so conspicuous as your own, has deemed it better not to ask for your confirmation in

¹⁰ Beauregard to Cooper, February 9, 1864 (8:30 A.M. and 3:15 P.M.), and Beauregard to Hill, February 9, 1864, *OR*, 35 (1): 581; William Hill to Samuel Cooper, March 25, 1864, Hill Papers, NCSA; Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 255-257.

the rank of lieutenant general, in order to leave you in that to which you have been already confirmed, and has directed me to offer you service as a major-general in the Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. You will, therefore, with as little delay as practicable, repair to Charleston and report to General Beauregard, commanding that department.¹¹

Cooper's claim that there was no vacancy for another lieutenant general was disingenuous at best because since Hill's relief, another officer (John Bell Hood) was appointed to that rank. The phrase expressing some confidence in Hill still came across as unflattering because it seemed to indicate that he was a good officer but not good enough to qualify for a permanent three-star commission. Significantly, Cooper "offered" Hill service in Beauregard's department, and did not expressly order Hill to Charleston. Nevertheless, Hill trusted his brother, if not the government, and prepared to leave his family once again but not before penning a reply to Cooper. He emphasized that he could not take formal command in Charleston until he received the statement promised to William and proceeded to list his grievances. "My being relieved from duty just after a great battle, my banishment from the field for so long a period, my reduction from rank, and supersedure [sic] by a junior officer—are all calculated to impair the confidence of the troops in me as a commander," Hill wrote.¹² Although he "waive[d] all considerations of wounded sensibility as an officer and a man," public perception of his military abilities limited his usefulness to the Confederacy, no matter how much he wanted to help. "It is reasonable to suppose that the soldiers will view with distrust one who has been treated as no other Confederate officer has been," he concluded.¹³

After he arrived in Charleston on February 28, Hill stayed true to his word and acted as an advisor to Beauregard and his other subordinates, refusing to take command until he

¹¹ Cooper to Hill, February 16, 1864, *OR*, 42 (3): 1165.

¹² Hill to Cooper, February 23, 1864, *OR*, 53: 312-313.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 313.

received his statement. Hill's plea to Cooper, with its mix of chivalry and complaint, failed to move the Adjutant General, who replied that the awkward sentence in his February 16 letter fulfilled Davis's promise and that he saw no need to restate it or put it in official orders. Davis "would scarcely have offered you the command in question if he did not feel confidence in your capacity, gallantry, and fidelity," Cooper wrote.¹⁴ Still not satisfied, Hill wrote Cooper three times thereafter reminding him that he stood by in Charleston awaiting the proper statement; William Hill also chimed in with his own appeal and, for good measure, notes from their interview.¹⁵ In early April, the correspondence between the two men brought the war of words to full pitch. Cooper claimed that William Hill had misunderstood his authority to promise Harvey Hill a statement which only Davis could provide, and that for Davis to issue an order of that type about one officer was "unprecedented in military history."¹⁶ Hill shot back that if Davis and Cooper did not intend to follow through with their promise, they should have said so to William in the first place. Perhaps a statement of confidence was indeed unprecedented, Hill conceded, but so was the situation in which he found himself, having lost all he earned in the war "upon vague allegations made by another officer, the investigation of which has been constantly refused."¹⁷ Although Hill assured Cooper that he appreciated his kind words, he criticized the wording of the February letter, emphasizing that he was *offered* the Charleston command and not *ordered* to take it. Cooper forwarded this latest letter to Davis, who commented tersely,

¹⁴ Cooper to Hill, February 29, 1864, *OR*, 42 (3): 1165-1166.

¹⁵ D.H. Hill to Cooper, March 4, 17, and 29, 1864, *OR*, 42 (3): 1166-1167 (including note at bottom of 1167); William Hill to Cooper, March 25, 1864, Hill Papers, NCSA. Cooper claimed that he did not receive Harvey Hill's first two letters, which explains Hill's tenacity in the absence of a response.

¹⁶ Cooper to Hill, April 4, 1864, *OR*, 42 (3): 1167-1168.

¹⁷ Hill to Cooper, April 9, 1864, *OR*, 42 (3): 1168-1169.

“If General Hill does not willingly accept the offer of command, it is not deemed well for the service to force him to such a high and responsible duty as that proposed.”¹⁸

Beauregard shared his subordinate’s frustration with Richmond but Hill’s insistence on principle hampered his ability to command his department. He wrote Cooper several times about rectifying Hill’s situation. Upon notification in mid-April that Beauregard was taking over the Department of North Carolina and Southern Virginia, he proposed Hill as his replacement in Charleston, adding that he was sure that Hill would obey “with alacrity” a War Department order.¹⁹ In light of Cooper’s and Hill’s correspondence and Davis’ comment, this appointment was not going to happen. Even before the President’s verdict (unknown to Hill), Hill informed Cooper that unless orders arrived, he planned on leaving Charleston on April 25 and returning home.²⁰

The following month, Hill applied for help to North Carolina Senator William Graham, his wife Isabella’s uncle, who went one step farther than William and lobbied for Hill’s reinstatement as lieutenant general. Hill corresponded with Graham about the various reasons the administration had given him for not being able to remain a lieutenant general. He had been told there was no vacancy, corps command or otherwise, for him at that rank, yet other officers had been promoted to that grade and given assignments. Hill had nothing against these other generals; he had simply not been given a sufficient reason for being passed over. Referring back to his November interview with Davis, Hill conjectured, “the

¹⁸ Hill to Cooper, April 9, 1864, *OR*, 42 (3): 1169; Endorsement of Davis, April 23, 1864, *OR*, 42 (3): 1169.

¹⁹ Beauregard to Cooper, April 16, 1864, *OR*, 35 (2): 434. Beauregard’s earlier letters to Cooper reflecting his concerns about the chain of command in his department and Hill’s position are: February 19, 1864, *OR*, 35 (1): 112; February 26, 1864, *OR*, 35 (1): 113; and March 23, 1864, *OR*, 35 (2): 370. He also wrote Hill on March 16, 1864, regretting Hill’s “ill success” in his endeavor to get Davis’ statement, but that he needed a commander: *OR*, 35 (2): 361. Beauregard’s official report of departmental command also reflected his frustration with Hill’s situation: *OR*, 35 (1): 323.

²⁰ Hill to Cooper, April 20, 1864, *OR*, 42 (3): 1170.

whole brunt of my offense is that...I made him angry by telling him that he had discriminated between me & Genl Polk...For this, the President resolved to punish me, wound my feelings, and degrade me in public estimation.”²¹ A week later, he thanked Graham for his efforts on his behalf. Graham and a delegation of his peers had evidently tried to place Hill back in Lee’s army, but Hill felt better men than he deserved that honor. “All I wish is the vindication of my past history,” he wrote, adding, “I can neither live nor die satisfied with a stain upon my character. I would be content with a statement from Mr Davis that he had no fault to find with me as a soldier & had refused to nominate me to the Senate out of personal pique.”²²

At this point, all Hill was looking for was a cleared military record, not promotion, and some duty position through which he could help the struggling Confederacy. Hill knew that Davis, as a former military man, understood the concept of honor and the desire to appear courageous, competent, and forthright in front of soldiers. However, Hill was naïve to think that Davis, given his aloof character and political troubles, would publicly or even privately admit that he was wrong in any way. Both men, in fact, were too proud to budge on the decisions that had brought them to this impasse. As Hill stood on principle and semantics, Richmond interpreted his actions as disinterest in any new command, which made it hard for Graham to make any headway on Hill’s behalf.²³ Hill even appealed to Bragg, who by June

²¹ D.H. Hill to William Graham, May 27, 1864, William A. Graham Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as Graham Papers, SHC). See also the petition of the North Carolina delegation to Davis to reinstate Hill as a lieutenant general in Hill’s Service Record File, Jun 1, 1864, M331 Compiled Service Records of Confederate Generals and Staff Officers and Non-Regimental Enlisted Men, Record Group 109, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.

²² D.H. Hill to William Graham, June 4, 1864, Graham Papers, SHC.

²³ Samuel Cooper to D.H. Hill, February 16, 1864, and James Seddon to Senator W.A. Graham, June 6, 1864, Hill Papers, NCSA; D.H. Hill to William Graham, June 13, 1864, Graham Papers, SHC.

was working as Davis's military advisor in Richmond, for justice. His letter was mostly calmly worded, but in closing, Hill asserted, "I must candidly tell you that I do not regret my course whilst connected with the Army of Tennessee. I acted solely from a sense of duty and, with a full knowledge of all the suffering attendant upon the act, would renew it again."²⁴ As Hill complained to his wife that winter, he believed that there was a double standard in the Confederate armies that allowed less capable officers to escape censure while the honest and forthright ones like him got short shrift. The situation must have brought a sense of déjà vu to Hill after his experiences in the U.S. Army. "Is it wonderful that I am thoroughly sick, sick of such a service?" he mused while biding time in Charleston.²⁵

In the meantime, the family did not forget the matter of the Lost Dispatch. Isabella Hill was concerned about the implications of the incident in the aftermath of the Chickamauga affair. In a January 1864 letter to Senator Graham, she relayed information "in regard to this order, said to be lost by him [Hill]." She reported that the order, "in our dear Brother Jackson's own handwriting," was filed in Hill's "most important papers" in their home. Isabella sent a copy of this order to Graham along with a testimonial by a friend, saying "They will show the absurdity of the whole affair & ought in justice to my Husband be published in the Richmond papers."²⁶ With her name at stake as well, she actively took steps to help vindicate her husband.

With no resolution concerning the statement of confidence, Hill returned to Davidson but kept in touch with Beauregard, offering his services as a volunteer aide. Concerned about

²⁴ Hill to Bragg, June 11, 1864, *OR*, 52 (2): 677.

²⁵ Hill to Isabella, March 8, 1864, Hill Papers, NCSA; underlining is Hill's own.

²⁶ Isabella Hill to William Graham, January 5, (1864), Hill Papers, NCSA.

an impending Union expedition up the James River, Beauregard accepted the offer, and Hill travelled to Petersburg, Virginia, to assist local commander Major General George Pickett.²⁷ Beauregard and his subordinates were in the midst of hastily moving troops up from North Carolina to the Richmond area to support Lee's army, then fighting the Overland Campaign, or to react to the threat on the James. Pickett had only one regiment on hand in Petersburg and received no reinforcements on May 5, the day Union Major General Benjamin Butler landed the first portion of his army at nearby Bermuda Hundred and City Point on the James River. By the time Hill showed up on May 6, Butler's entire army was ashore and poised to cut communications between Richmond and Petersburg and wipe out Pickett's miniscule force.²⁸

Hill telegraphed Beauregard for troops, which the department commander was trying to send north as fast as possible. Richmond finally authorized Pickett to stop one of the northbound brigades at Port Walthall Junction, five miles north of Petersburg and a likely Federal target. That evening, approximately 600 Confederates held off a Union brigade-size reconnaissance-in-force at the railroad junction.²⁹ Pickett reinforced the position overnight to two brigades, and Hill, always anxious to be in the fight, rode out with an advanced guard the next morning. The brigade encountered Union cavalry, soon followed by infantry, and fell back to its original position. The 8,000 man strong Union force threatened to envelop the Confederate flanks; when one South Carolina regiment on the far left of the line broke, Hill

²⁷ "Special Orders, No. 3," May 5, 1864, *OR*, 36 (2): 960.

²⁸ William Glenn Robertson, *Back Door to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign, April-June 1864* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1987) 66-71.

²⁹ Robertson, *Back Door to Richmond*, 79-82. Beauregard, who was farther away in Weldon, North Carolina, authorized Pickett to communicate directly with the War Department. Until late in the day on May 6, Davis, Cooper, and Braxton Bragg (now Davis's military advisor) either failed to answer Pickett's repeated requests for reinforcements, or told him he was not authorized to stop North Carolina brigades bound for Richmond.

and other officers acted quickly to herd the soldiers back into formation. The Federals succeeded in damaging one portion of the railroad north of the junction, but did not dislodge the Confederates.³⁰ After the battle, Brigadier General Bushrod Johnson commented officially that Hill's "skill, counsel, and active supervision" on May 7 at Port Walthall Junction "contributed in an eminent degree to the success attained."³¹

A week later, Beauregard instructed Hill to assist Major General Chase Whiting in an attack on Butler's army. At that time, the Confederates had the potential to strike Butler's army in the front and rear as it occupied ground astride the railroad between Richmond and Petersburg.³² Ordered to advance rapidly once he heard the sound of artillery at Drewry's Bluff, Whiting dithered at Port Walthall Junction, not able to hear fighting to the north and fooled into thinking there were more than two Union regiments opposing his division. Hill tried in vain to get Whiting to push aside the smaller enemy force. He twice scouted the Federal positions with other officers and confirmed their disposition, but conflicting reports of enemy forces to the west convinced Hill to temporarily withdraw a few hundred meters. Whiting went further and withdrew his forces first to the high ground above the railroad, then another two miles toward Petersburg. In the meantime, Beauregard's plan to trap Butler fell to pieces, despite his success that day in forcing a withdrawal of much of the Union force away from the Confederate defenses during the Battle of Drewry's Bluff.³³

³⁰ Robertson, *Back Door to Richmond*, 85-89.

³¹ Report of Johnson, May 31, 1864, *OR*, 36 (2): 240.

³² Order of Beauregard, May 15, 1864, *OR*, 36 (2): 200.

³³ Report of Hill, May 26, 1864, *OR*, 36 (2): 210-211; Report of Whiting, May 19, 1864, *OR*, 36 (2): 257-258; Robertson, *Back Door to Richmond*, 210-214.

Hill's official report of the day's events is intriguing. He described several short discussions he and Whiting had on the battlefield concerning their difference of opinion over what to do and did not cast his peer in a favorable light. Hill admitted that he walked away from their final conference because the two were at an impasse and he did not want to contribute to an embarrassing situation in front of other officers and the troops. Nevertheless, Hill gave Whiting, his former subordinate, the benefit of the doubt, affirming that the general was not drunk (despite rumors to the contrary), performed bravely, and admitted his mistakes with "a frankness, generosity, and magnanimity above all praise."³⁴ Hill no doubt saw similarities in their respective positions regarding what he felt were unfair accusations that harmed their reputations. He sympathized with Whiting being stuck in a difficult position as a commander new to an operational area. Hill could have taken control of the situation and marched the division toward Richmond in line with Beauregard's instructions. However, he respected the chain of command too much and was extremely sensitive to how such a move would denigrate Whiting in front of the command; he would not want to be treated in such a fashion himself. Hill may also have been thinking in the back of his mind that such an action, particularly if it ended badly, could endanger his future chances for redemption in a command offered by President Davis.

When Whiting asked to be relieved from command, Beauregard decided to put Hill in the post and told Davis he was doing so. However, he also told the president that Hill would apply to the War Department for orders. The stalemate continued; Davis expected a letter from Hill but Hill refused to compromise his honor and integrity, and therefore he asked

³⁴ Report of Hill, May 26, 1864, *OR*, 36 (2): 211.

Beauregard for relief and reassignment once more as a volunteer.³⁵ As Hill pointedly told Senator Graham, “If [Davis] needed me, he could order me upon duty, but . . . I would not descend to the humiliation of begging him for a position.”³⁶ Two days later, Beauregard directed Hill to take charge of the new Confederate defensive line at Bermuda Hundred, giving him administrative authority over the engineers, workers, and soldiers constructing the fortifications.³⁷ As more and more units were sent north to assist Lee, Hill had to figure out how to build and man the lines with fewer and fewer men while Federal raids menaced Petersburg. By June 11, he suggested Beauregard tell the War Department in no uncertain terms that he could not defend both locations. After all, Hill told his superior in confidence, Grant had managed to slip around Lee four times already, so he could surely send 10,000 or 20,000 more men up the James behind the Confederate commander’s back to join Butler. Beauregard acknowledged Hill’s views but told him he had already said much the same thing and that it was useless to try again.³⁸ As it turned out, less than a week later, Lee and Grant arrived with their armies and settled into a ten month-long siege.

Besides a brief foray to Lynchburg to advise on defensive preparations in that city, Hill remained in the Petersburg area until late July. During this time, Beauregard appointed him “inspector of the trenches,” in which capacity he worked with the chief engineer on

³⁵ Beauregard to Davis, May 17, 1864, *OR*, 51 (2): 939; “Special Orders No. 8,” May 18, 1864, *OR*, 36 (2): 1022; Davis to Beauregard, May 18, 1864, *OR*, 51 (2): 943; “Special Orders No. 10,” May 21, 1864, *OR*, 36 (3): 821. Robertson and Bridges take the position that Davis was more stubborn than Hill concerning the Bermuda Hundred division command, but in this case the President was merely reacting to Beauregard’s statement that Hill would apply for command: Robertson, *Back Door to Richmond*, 218-219, 223; Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General*, 263-264.

³⁶ Quoted in Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General*, 264.

³⁷ “Special Orders No. 11,” May 23, 1864, *OR*, 36 (3): 827; Earl J. Hess, *Trench Warfare Under Grant & Lee: Field Fortifications in the Overland Campaign* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 113-114.

³⁸ Hill to Beauregard, June 11, 1864, and response, June 12, 1864, *OR*, 36 (3): 896.

bolstering the defensive lines.³⁹ He reassured Isabella that he would be home soon and entreated her to remain calm and focus on the house and the children's schooling.⁴⁰ Working above his pay grade and getting nowhere (as was Senator Graham) with Davis or the War Department, Hill decided to go home to Davidson. He kept up an active correspondence with his uncle-in-law and friends and continued to monitor the Confederate military situation. During this time, Graham's North Carolina congressional delegation worked to place Hill's after-action report of Chickamauga on the public record, but someone in the Davis administration initially suppressed the document. Despite this setback, Hill commented to Graham that he had made the right choice for family reasons to return home that year, especially since both he and Isabella had been ill.⁴¹ Privately, however, he itched to return to the field. His brother Albert, still serving near Petersburg, weighed in on the command controversy, urging Harvey to "Forgive and try to forget any injustice that may have been done you, and be above any complaint" for the sake of the Confederacy.⁴² In October, Hill preempted his brother's advice and asked North Carolina governor Zebulon Vance to write Richmond on his behalf and offer his services "in any capacity" to the Confederacy.⁴³

In writing to Davis, Vance requested that Hill take command of troops in eastern North Carolina; if the War Department had no need for Hill, Vance would find some kind of state employment for the general. Davis received the letter in early November and forwarded

³⁹ "Special Orders No. 43," July 10, 1864, *OR*, 40 (3): 760, and W.H. Stevens to Hill, July 12, 1864, *OR*, 40 (3): 771.

⁴⁰ Hill to Isabella, May 23 and 26, 1864, and June 7, 1864, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁴¹ Hill to Graham, December 7, 1864, Graham Papers, SHC.

⁴² A.P. Hill to D.H. Hill, November 11, 1864, Hill Papers, LOV.

⁴³ Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 269.

it to General Lee, who advised against assigning Hill to North Carolina because Bragg was already in theater. Lee was not willing to move Bragg and he rightly feared a “want of harmony” between Bragg and Hill.⁴⁴ The letter then passed to Cooper, who attached the correspondence of the previous winter between Hill and the War Department in order to remind Davis of Hill’s obstinacy over the issue of the statement of confidence. The matter languished for over a month before the administration finally informed Vance that Hill would be granted a new assignment in South Carolina. As Hill subsequently found out, Graham’s success in finally getting the general’s Chickamauga report before the Confederate Senate bore fruit, as influential colleague Robert Barnwell of South Carolina also took up Hill’s cause before Secretary of War James Seddon and Davis.⁴⁵ The combination of Hill’s outreach (via Vance), Graham’s efforts, and the Confederacy’s dire need for experienced commanders ended the months-long impasse over the command issue, but Hill’s core grievance regarding the reason for his dismissal from corps command remained unaddressed.

On December 23, Seddon ordered Hill to report to Beauregard in Charleston. Some confusion ensued as Confederate authorities shuffled generals and troops around to deal with debacles at Nashville and Savannah; Hill followed Beauregard to Montgomery, Alabama, before settling in Augusta on January 20 to command the District of Georgia.⁴⁶ Through the end of February, he attempted to build some semblance of defensive works around the city, managed troops passing through from the west, and directed cavalry operations to harass

⁴⁴ Vance to Davis, October 25, 1864, with November 8, 1864 endorsement by Lee, *OR*, 42 (3): 1163.

⁴⁵ Endorsement of Davis to Cooper, December 31, 1864, and attached enclosures, *OR*, 42 (3): 1164-1170; Graham to Hill, December 23, 1864, Hill Papers, LOV; Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General*, 270-271.

⁴⁶ Seddon to Cooper, December 23, 1864, M474 Letters Received by the Confederate Adjutant General and Inspector General, 1861-1865, RG 109, NA; Cooper to Hill, January 6, 1865, and Hardee to Cooper, January 6, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 991; Cooper to Hill, January 19, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1023.

Union Major General William T. Sherman's army as it advanced north from Savannah. Seddon also directed him to dispose of all government or privately-owned cotton stores in Augusta and to be prepared to burn whatever he could not move.⁴⁷

Hill lacked both manpower and horsepower to fulfill his tasks and luckily for him did not end up having to confront a major Union force since Sherman bypassed the city.⁴⁸ However, Federal troops came close near the end of January and Hill was less than impressed with his cavalry's ability to delay the enemy advance. "This falling back without a fight ought to be stopped; it will ruin the bravest men in the world and make them timid," he complained to Major General Joseph Wheeler, overall Confederate cavalry commander in South Carolina and Georgia.⁴⁹ Friction developed between the two men over the activities of the cavalry units in Hill's department. Wheeler thought Hill unduly frightened the citizens of Augusta by publicly criticizing his soldiers' abilities and conduct. He protested to Bragg that his cavalry was well trained and disciplined and that no citizens had complained about maltreatment.⁵⁰ Hill became particularly annoyed with Brigadier General Alfred Iverson, whose cavalymen gave up a good thirty miles of territory near Augusta. He later found out that Iverson was doing the best he could and wrote him to apologize. Hill told Iverson that he hoped he had not done his subordinate and his men an injustice, but explained that "my experience with cavalry in this war has not been favorable, and I have made no secret of my

⁴⁷ Seddon to Hill, January 21, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1032; Bridges, *Lee's Maverick General*, 271-272.

⁴⁸ For example, see Hill's request for horses to pull his artillery and the necessity to pull men out of the hospitals to man batteries: Hill to Hardee, January 23, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1038.

⁴⁹ Hill to Wheeler, January 28, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1054.

⁵⁰ Wheeler to Bragg, January 29, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1120. Even before Hill arrived on the scene, his immediate commander, Lieutenant General William Hardee, thought Wheeler's cavalry had discipline issues, but Beauregard disagreed: see Beauregard to Cooper, January 27, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1048.

opinion.”⁵¹ Hill was attempting to be more diplomatic and not jump to conclusions, but he still had a city to defend. He gradually gained more confidence in the mounted arm, even praising Wheeler on occasion for his efforts.⁵²

While operations around Augusta played out, Hill continued to hope that the Confederate Congress would address his case and hold Davis responsible for what he believed to be public humiliation. Writing to Graham at the end of January, Hill showed how clearly both the Lost Dispatch and Chickamauga weighed on his mind:

Mr. Davis has done all that the Executive could to blacken my character & reputation. I may fall any day in this bloody strife and my name go down to my children with the Executive’s stain upon it. Is there no remedy? Congress can ask for my restoration to rank or can demand the reasons of my degradation. This would cancel in public estimation the wrong done through private spite. The myth about the Lost Dispatch is but a specimen of the temper exhibited towards me . . . I deeply regret the trouble I give you, but educated as a soldier, I naturally feel very keenly any reflections upon my character as such; and as I have no legacy to leave my children but a good name, I cannot bear that to be taken away without an effort to receive their & my right to it.⁵³

With the South as he knew it falling apart around him, Hill feared that he would lose his honor as well. He knew he was running out of time to vindicate his military reputation and saw grave implications for his family’s future if he could not do so. Ironically, Hill had to set aside one point of honor concerning his quest for truth in order to recapture for posterity what he perceived as his wounded reputation.

Beauregard and his subordinates could do little but react to Sherman’s moves as they gave up in turn Columbia and Charleston. By the end of February, Hill left Augusta for North Carolina and soon found himself temporarily in command of 2,000 men, survivors of the

⁵¹ Hill to Iverson, January 30, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1064.

⁵² Hill to Wheeler, February 4, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1096; and February 11, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1164.

⁵³ D.H. Hill to William Graham, January 30, 1865, Graham Papers, SHC.

once-mighty Army of Tennessee.⁵⁴ In the meantime, General Joseph Johnston assumed command of all remaining Confederate forces in the southeast and gained a second chance to stop Sherman. On March 7, Hill stood by in Smithfield, North Carolina awaiting the arrival of the remainder of the Army of Tennessee. To the east, near Kinston, Bragg maneuvered his contingent of North Carolina troops to block Major General Jacob Cox's Union XXIII Corps, which was enroute to Goldsboro, a major railroad junction, to link up with the rest of Sherman's army. Johnston ordered Hill to aid Bragg and then return to Smithfield for further orders. Aware of the history between the two men, Johnston implored Hill to "forget the past for this emergency."⁵⁵ Bragg and Johnston hoped to take advantage of Sherman's divided army by striking what they considered the weaker force.

Hill put his small command on the train and joined Major General Robert Hoke's division early the next morning at Southwest Creek. The creek presented a natural defensive position against forces approaching Kinston from the direction of the Union garrison at New Bern. Bragg, however, had an attack in mind, and directed Hoke to move out of his position and turn the Union left flank, while Hill attacked Cox's front and exploited Hoke's success.⁵⁶ In a pleasant change from Chickamauga, the Confederate generals enjoyed good communications with each other for much of the day and caught the Yankees off guard with their attack, pushing them back about three miles. Things appeared to be going so well that both Hoke and Bragg sent messages to Hill to move his force into a blocking position behind the retreating Federals. By late afternoon, however, Hoke's attack stalled and failed to push

⁵⁴ Announcement of Hill, March 3, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1317.

⁵⁵ Johnston to Hill, March 7, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1338.

⁵⁶ "Special Orders No. 57," March 8, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1350.

Cox's unit into Hill's trap. Hill and his brigadiers considered marching even further to block another retreat route but ruled the option out on account of nightfall and the presence of Union cavalry in their rear. Under Bragg's discretionary orders, Hill returned to the scene of the fight to link back up with Hoke.⁵⁷ Bragg could claim a real tactical victory at the Battle of Southwest Creek (Wise's Forks), having pushed Cox back a couple of miles and capturing several hundred prisoners and three artillery pieces. He reported to Generals Lee and Johnston, "Major-Generals Hill and Hoke have exhibited their usual zeal, energy, and gallantry in achieving this result."⁵⁸

The next day, the Confederates continued to probe the Union line and on March 10 Bragg tried to repeat his prior success by following a battle plan similar to that of two days earlier. The experienced Cox was not so easily fooled the second time. Hoke left no report of his attack, but Hill's summary indicates that his own brigades advanced more rapidly, easily overran Federal pickets, and subsequently found their flanks uncovered. Two brigades withdrew after suffering heavy officer casualties, thereby isolating another brigade. Seeing Union forces outside their entrenchments, Hill thought about counterattacking, but received word that Hoke was falling back.⁵⁹ Bragg ordered his entire force to withdraw to the captured skirmish line. Although satisfied with his commanders and troops, he knew Federal reinforcements were en route and informed Johnston that he was going to abandon Kinston and move west to link up with the rest of the army. In addressing his soldiers, Bragg tried to spin the retreat into a positive event by lauding their fortitude, courage, and skill and stating

⁵⁷ Report of Hill, March 29, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1086-1087; Parker to Hill, March 8, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1350.

⁵⁸ Field Report of Bragg, March 8, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1078.

⁵⁹ Report of Hill, March 29, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1087-1088; see also John G. Barrett, *The Civil War in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 285-290.

that “more important work” called most of them to another battlefield. He also publicly thanked Hill and Hoke for their “able, prompt, and gallant support.”⁶⁰ Hill, however, would have none of Bragg’s compliments. He wrote Johnston to ask that he be assigned under a different commander, because he could not “feel otherwise than unpleasantly situated” while working for Bragg.⁶¹

By March 15, Johnston reorganized the various Confederate units in North Carolina into the Army of the South. Lieutenant General Alexander Stewart took command of the Army of Tennessee contingent and within that headquarters Hill took charge of Lee’s Corps, consisting of most of the same units he commanded at Wise’s Forks. The grandiose names of the units could not cover up the fact that all were severely undermanned. Only 4,500 men made up Stewart’s army, and Lee’s Corps accounted for 2,600 of that number—roughly the same size of the brigade Hill commanded at Leesburg during the winter of 1861-1862.⁶² Despite the state of the army, Hill could at least feel confident working for his classmate Stewart, with whom he had a warm rapport.

Based upon the reports of Johnston’s cavalry commander, Lieutenant General Wade Hampton, the commanding general decided to mass his infantry and attack Sherman’s left wing at the Willis Cole plantation two miles south of Bentonville, which lay roughly halfway between Goldsboro (Sherman’s objective) and Fayetteville.⁶³ Between 8:00 and 10:00 on the morning of March 19, Hill placed his corps in position one half mile north of the Cole house

⁶⁰ “General Field Orders, No. 20,” March 10, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1366.

⁶¹ Quoted in Mark L. Bradley, *Last Stand in the Carolinas: The Battle of Bentonville* (Campbell, CA: Savas Woodbury Publishers, 1996), 171.

⁶² Bradley, *Bentonville*, 137, 168.

⁶³ Johnston to Hampton, March 18, 1865, *OR*, 47 (2): 1429; Bradley, *Bentonville*, 142.

and west of the Goldsboro Road, comprising the middle of Stewart's formation. To the southeast, Hoke, working for Bragg on the Confederate left, had already engaged the lead elements of the Union XIV Corps. Hill moved forward to conduct a reconnaissance and spotted the Federal skirmishers in a wooded area to the south. He pushed out his own skirmishers and the Federals withdrew, according to their brigade commander because they were ordered to do so and not because of Confederate pressure.⁶⁴ After several minutes and no movement on either side or orders to advance, Hill decided to be prudent and entrench. "These [breastworks] were about half completed," he wrote, "when [at noon] some thousand or more Yankees appeared in our front...and charged until they got within forty yards, when they ran back in great confusion."⁶⁵

Because the Union skirmishers west of the Goldsboro Road failed to develop the Confederate strength in their front, their division commander, Brigadier General William Carlin, attacked under the impression that he faced predominantly cavalry units. Federal attackers first encountered Hill's reinforced skirmish line, then a wall of fire as they approached the rude breastworks. Hampton's horse artillery on the Goldsboro Road raked the Union regiments with enfilading fire. Carlin's men almost broke through the small corps holding the Confederate far right flank, but they became demoralized when their officers were shot down. Thus ended the noontime Union attack in Hill's sector.⁶⁶

Based upon the repulse of the XIV Corps across the entire front, and with the knowledge that he was losing time to exploit his numerical advantage on the field, Johnston

⁶⁴ Report of Buell, March 25, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 468; Report of Hill, March 31, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1089; Bradley, *Bentonville*, 172.

⁶⁵ Report of Hill, March 31, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1089-1090.

⁶⁶ Bradley, *Bentonville*, 183-189.

decided to launch a mid-afternoon coordinated counterattack. The commanders of the Confederate right wing busily prepared for their advance and adjusted their line to extend past the Federal left flank. Hill's corps still composed the center of this wing and his middle division was designated the "division of direction," meaning all others would guide on its advance. The unit's commander, Major General Carter Stevenson, had been with the Army of Tennessee long enough to understand how important this task was and placed extra officers up front to guide the lead brigade.⁶⁷ Hill surely approved of Stevenson's diligence.

At 2:45 P.M., the Confederate right wing stepped off per Johnston's instructions. The effort to guide on Stevenson did not completely work because of the partially wooded and broken terrain but the line generally kept together and swept away three Union brigades in its path. Stevenson estimated that his men advanced about three-quarters of a mile, breaking through two enemy lines and capturing one artillery piece, before he had to halt and reorganize his division, part of which had crossed the Goldsboro Road. Hill confirmed this report and stated that it took his command about a half hour to reach the Goldsboro Road, at which point Stewart told him to halt and re-consolidate. Meanwhile, Bragg's left wing failed to advance in concert with the right wing, and Bragg only ordered Hoke to attack at 3:45 P.M., an hour after Johnston's order. Luckily for Johnston, his wings were in a position to link up on the Goldsboro Road to attack the Union right but he also had to worry about a Federal counterattack on his own right.⁶⁸

Still in the center of the action, Hill started moving individual brigades around as he tried to establish a solid line of infantry along the Goldsboro Road. A Union brigade changed

⁶⁷ Report of Stevenson, March 30, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1094; Bradley, *Bentonville*, 193, 198.

⁶⁸ Report of Stevenson, March 30, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1094; Report of Hill, March 31, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1090; Bradley, *Bentonville*, 204-208, 222-223.

front from the east side of the road and attacked toward a gap between Hill and the corps to his right. Stevenson and fellow division commander Major General Henry Clayton assisted Hill, not always with his knowledge, by moving portions of their brigades to fill this gap and stop the Union brigade's counterattack. Four of Hill's brigades then pursued their foes across the road and closed in on the rear of the two remaining Federal brigades defending against Hoke's assault.⁶⁹ To buy time, a Union captain with a small escort approached one of Hill's brigade commanders and demanded his surrender. The story came up to Hill as an "actual negotiation with a Yankee general for the entire surrender of his command."⁷⁰ At this point, fortunes swung abruptly in the Union's favor. A fresh Federal brigade suddenly approached from the south, crossing a swamp and surprising Hill's forces in their rear. Meanwhile, Hoke withdrew his attackers, freeing up the beleaguered Union defenders to turn their full attention to Hill's troops. Now it was the Confederates who were surrounded and most of Hill's men ran as fast as they could out of the trap. A group of roughly seventy men from different regiments hid in the swamp to escape detection; the ranking Confederate officer organized them and led them on an eight day exfiltration through Union lines (incredibly with prisoners) to Raleigh.⁷¹

Hill searched for units to shore up his salient, finally finding one of his uncommitted brigades and getting help from Stewart's old corps under the command of Major General William Loring. Old friend Lafayette McLaws, now a division commander under Bragg, sent two more brigades from the middle of the Confederate line to Hill's assistance to stop the

⁶⁹ Report of Hill, March 31, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1090; Bradley, *Bentonville*, 223-226, 231.

⁷⁰ Report of Hill, March 31, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1090; Bradley, *Bentonville*, 247-248.

⁷¹ Report of Hill, March 31, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1090; Bradley, *Bentonville*, 253-258.

Union brigade's advance. As night approached, the combatants in the center of the battlefield maintained their positions and their rate of fire, often unable to see each other.⁷² Hill remembered the daytime confusion resulting from the mixture of units but "after nightfall, when natural darkness was much increased by the smoke of battle and from thousands of smoldering pine stumps and logs, it was greater than I ever witnessed before."⁷³ Hill directed one of McLaws's brigades forward, adjusting its placement once he found out a sector of Loring's line was running out of ammunition. The brigade commander advanced in the darkness toward Union lines but with too few men to do any good. Once the unit returned to the main line, McLaws ordered it to the rear. By 8:30 P.M., the fire finally slackened in Hill's sector. At 11:00 P.M., Johnston ordered a withdrawal to the original Confederate lines, with pickets holding the abandoned Federal works to the west of Goldsboro Road.⁷⁴

As usual, Hill placed himself in the thick of the battle and tried his best to direct soldiers where they were most needed, but he did not always have a good sense of his units' locations once his corps advanced down the road. No one seemed to be in overall command of the division-sized counterattack against the Union right; Hill did not mention the activities of his third division commander, Colonel John Coltart, who should have been the one in charge. He also believed that Bragg changed his orders to Hoke from a flank attack to a frontal attack, which the Federals repulsed, allowing them to about face and attack Hill's division.⁷⁵ Communication remained a problem for the Confederates, as evidenced by

⁷² Bradley, *Bentonville*, 261-266.

⁷³ Report of Hill, March 31, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1091.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*; Bradley, *Bentonville*, 267-270.

⁷⁵ Report of Hill, March 31, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1091. Hill said Hoke told him about Bragg's order. At this point in time, Hoke, like Hill, was not on very good terms with Bragg.

generals routinely directing units from other commands and sub-echelons without consulting each other. Hill, as historian Mark Bradley observes, at least appeared (mainly by his own word) to be the busiest commander in this regard.⁷⁶ He seemed to forgo his usual strict attention to the chain of command and instead concentrated on keeping tactical momentum. Hill did his part to help stop Sherman for one day, but Johnston still had to contend with the rest of his opponent's army, including the right wing bearing down on Bentonville.

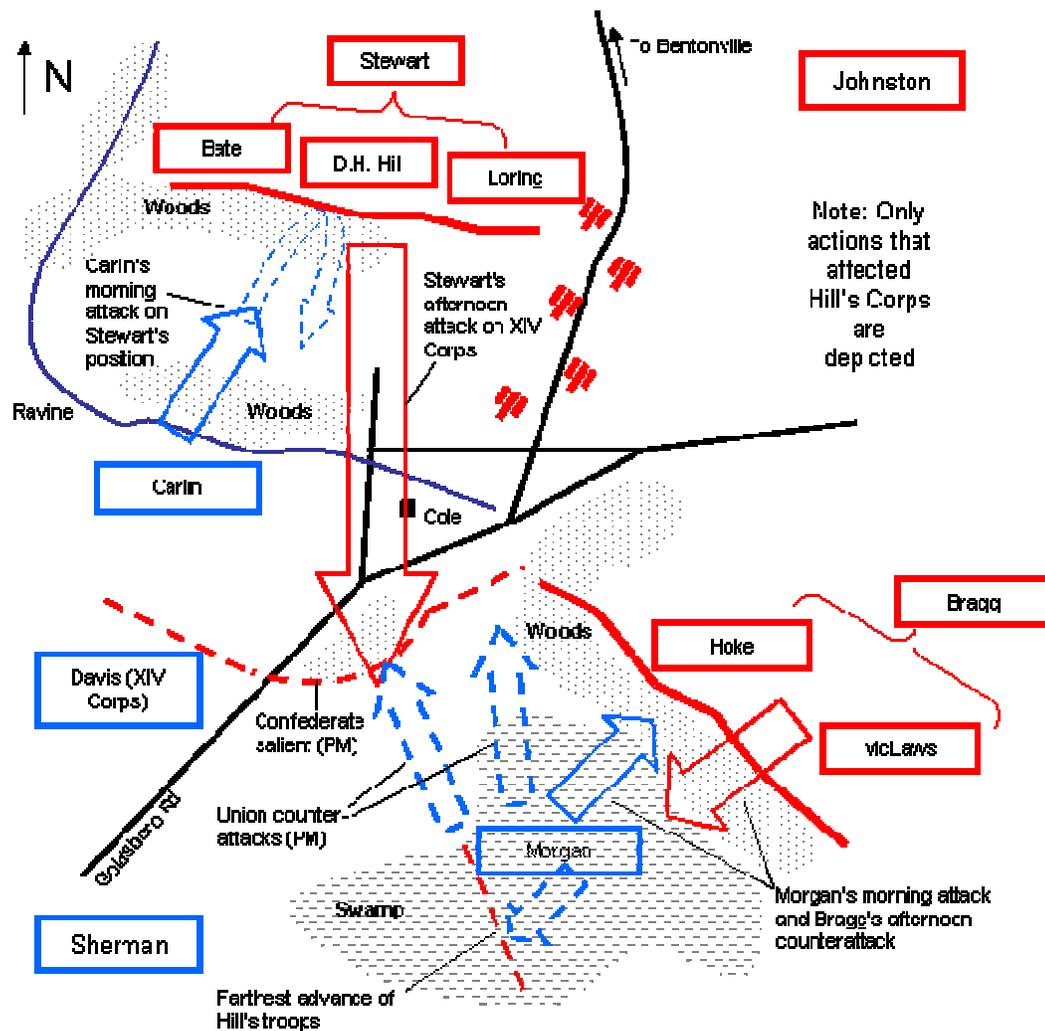


Figure 13: Battle of Bentonville, March 19, 1865

⁷⁶ Bradley, *Bentonville*, 304.

The next day, Hill assisted Hoke as he withdrew north from his lines to contest the approach of the Union right wing. He sent Stevenson to take Hoke's place, but Stewart countermanded the order; the Confederates would have enough to do without inviting battle on two flanks. Hill contented himself with redirecting artillery to help cover Hoke's rear guard, which repulsed an aggressive advance by two Union regiments.⁷⁷ On March 21, as the main fight between Johnston and Sherman took place to the northeast, skirmishers from two Union corps probed Stewart's line. Hill's pickets, in a repeat of the episode from the nineteenth, easily repulsed the enemy. Perhaps these events inspired him to write in his report, "The Yankees fought worse than I have ever known them to do on any previous field of battle."⁷⁸ The threat of attack or envelopment remained high throughout the day, however, as Hill contributed troops to the general reserve and he and Stewart thinned out their lines as much as they dared in order to support the rest of the army. The Confederates held, but Johnston knew he could not remain at Bentonville much longer, and he began his army's withdrawal at 10:00 that night. Hill's corps started its journey at 2:00 A.M., the troops soaked by a steady rain.⁷⁹

For the next two and a half weeks, Hill and his command encamped at Smithfield with the rest of the army awaiting Sherman's next move. He could take comfort in the fact that his soldiers had "fought with great enthusiasm" and surprised the Union troops with their spirited resistance, but with 615 casualties, he knew that his division was barely combat capable.⁸⁰ On April 10, Sherman marched for Raleigh, forcing Johnston to give up the city,

⁷⁷ Report of Hill, March 31, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1091; Bradley, *Bentonville*, 331.

⁷⁸ Report of Hill, March 31, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1092.

⁷⁹ Bradley, *Bentonville*, 396.

⁸⁰ Report of Hill, March 31, 1865, *OR*, 47 (1): 1092.

and the Army of the South moved west to Greensboro to link up with President Davis and the remainder of the Confederate Cabinet that had fled Richmond. A few days after Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox, Sherman and Johnston met at Bennett's Farm near Durham Station to discuss terms, and Johnston signed a final surrender document on April 26. Hill received his personal acknowledgment of the peace terms on May 1 which formally permitted him to return home as long as he did not take up arms again against the U.S. government.⁸¹

Throughout the previous year and a half, Hill received support from friends and family for his plight, but did not obtain the acknowledgement he really wanted—a public apology and vote of confidence from Jefferson Davis. Frustrated by this failure and recurring health problems, Hill felt rather useless during the last year and a half of the war. With the end of the conflict, he no longer had to choose between his family and duty to his soldiers, but his standing in the future cultural archives of southern history was in jeopardy, and he still agonized over public opinion regarding his connections to the Lost Dispatch and Chickamauga. Time would soften his opinion of the Confederate president, who became a southern martyr for his stoicism during his postwar imprisonment at Fort Monroe, Virginia. Hill would soon have other people to spar with over his reputation.

⁸¹ Acknowledgement of peace terms, May 1, 1865, Hill Papers, NCSA.

CHAPTER X

WRITING *THE LAND WE LOVE*: A PUBLISHING CAREER BEGINS¹

D.H. Hill rejoined his family in Charlotte, North Carolina shortly after his parole. He chose not return to Davidson College to teach, and other avenues, such as politics, were closed to him per the surrender terms for Confederate officers.² Hill instead decided to start a monthly magazine, which suited his intellectual nature and his desire to help revive the defeated South. Fittingly titled *The Land We Love* (hereafter called *LWL*), the magazine provides much insight into its editor's shifting viewpoints concerning Federal policies toward the former Confederacy and the responsibility of Southerners to rebuild their society. *LWL* was also the medium through which Hill became a proponent of and shaper of Confederate Civil War memory, further honing his conceptions of honor, duty, and identity.

After the end of the war, writers throughout the southern states tried to make sense of the conflict they had just been through while also attempting to entertain the public during the turbulent years of Reconstruction. Several monthly and weekly periodicals sprang up in the ten years after Appomattox, some of which lasted only a few years, while others merged

¹ Parts of this chapter previously appeared in Brit Kimberly Erslev, "Controversy and Crusade: Daniel Harvey Hill and the Shaping of Reputation and Historical Memory" (Master's Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007).

² Son Joseph later wrote that Hill started a school right after the war "but students were scarce and he saw that there was no future for him in that line" (Joseph M. Hill, *Biography of Daniel Harvey Hill, Lieutenant General, Confederate States of America: Educator, Author, Editor* (Little Rock: Arkansas History Commission, n.d.), 32.). It is possible Hill tried to restart NCMH and could not for lack of state funding during Presidential Reconstruction; the school sat vacant (except for wartime use as a hospital) until 1873. Joseph's comment is the only mention of other activities Hill tried before he became an editor.

with more financially stable and larger publications.³ In addition to fiction and poetry, journals and newspapers also included articles on agriculture, education, politics, and increasingly, reminiscences about the late War Between the States. D.H. Hill's *LWL* was representative of many southern-based periodicals which in exploring various subjects contributed in a broad sense to the emergence of Lost Cause ideology during the 1860s and 1870s.⁴

The first issue of *LWL* appeared in May 1866 and the last in March 1869 before it merged with the *New Eclectic Magazine* of Baltimore. Hill charged three dollars for a one year advance subscription (five dollars on credit), which was reasonable in many parts of the country but difficult for impoverished southerners to afford. Although based out of Charlotte, Hill was forced to use New York engravers for any images he included, a fact that probably annoyed him greatly but could not be helped due to cost and lack of facilities in the South. His brother-in-law James P. Irwin served as business manager while Hill served as copy editor and contributor.⁵ The publication initially carried two subtitles: on the front cover, "A

³ For a sampling of the most well known Southern periodicals, including *The Land We Love*, and their shared characteristics with other nineteenth-century American conservative publications, see Ronald Lora and William Henry Longton, eds., *The Conservative Press in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century America* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999).

⁴ David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001): 149-151, 260-261. For a good overview of the organization, content, and purpose behind *LWL*, see Ray M. Atchison, "The Land We Love: A Southern Post-Bellum Magazine of Agriculture, Literature, and Military History," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 37, No. 4 (October 1960): 506-15. Atchison expanded this article for Lora and Longton, eds., *The Conservative Press in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century America*, 247-254.

⁵ See the back cover of the first (May 1866) issue of *LWL*, and Atchison, "The Land We Love," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, 508-509. Hill also used a New York printer for the first four issues of *LWL* until he could secure one in Charlotte. At one point he made a trip to New York City, probably to arrange a contract with an engraving firm; see D.H. Hill to Randolph Hill, November 24, 1867, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, United States Army Heritage Collection, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

New Monthly Magazine Devoted to Literature & the Fine Arts,” and on the title page, “A Monthly Magazine Devoted to Literature, Military History, and Agriculture.”⁶

Returning to teaching would have been fairly easy for Hill to do in 1865 so he must have felt very strongly about taking on instead the role of journal editor. He genuinely wanted to assist the South in getting back on its feet politically, economically, and socially. His initial views toward the restored Union were conciliatory, mirroring the lenient tone of President Andrew Johnson’s Reconstruction policies, but not necessarily because Hill hoped everyone would get along. He and many other North Carolinians desired a return to as close to the status quo antebellum as possible regarding the social and political hierarchy in the state.⁷ As usual, he strove to maintain the moral high ground and encouraged his readers to do the same. If they reached out to the victors, they might be treated well in return. Hill also put the impetus on Southerners to be proactive in rebuilding their region; not only did this stance accord with his attitudes regarding Christian and familial duty but self-reliance would also preclude help or unwarranted intrusion from Northerners. Hill continued to believe that something was rotten in the Federal bureaucracy and retained his highly sectional views. These beliefs became more extreme as Radical Reconstruction replaced Presidential Reconstruction. Over a three year period Hill found increasing evidence of local, state, and national corruption, coupled with what he regarded as heavy-handed policies for the reintegration of Southern states into the Union. His usual loathing of hypocrisy and wrongdoing amplified, he adopted more heated rhetoric and started to frame the South as a victim anew of Northern aggression. Sectional honor and virtue were at stake yet again. Hill’s way

⁶ See the covers of Volume 1 of *LWL*. The surviving copies of *LWL* are in various states of completeness, depending on the library. Many issues have also been scanned into Google Books.

⁷ Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 85.

of defending the South this time was through the pen, but in the next few years he would also condone other less benign measures as justified in light of the danger which he believed faced his region, along with his family and livelihood.

Another goal Hill hoped to accomplish through *LWL* was celebrating Confederate military prowess and in the process resuscitating his military reputation. As editor of a new journal he could set the tone from the start and he did so by publishing battle reports and vignettes that fulfilled both open and hidden purposes. He openly hoped to make *LWL* the mouthpiece of the Confederate veteran. At the same time, still scarred by Chickamauga, Hill felt the need to set the historical record straight regarding his role in the war, so he subtly shaped the content of his military articles. He got an extraordinary opportunity to affect his second goal when he found himself unexpectedly targeted by another writer who not only accused him of carelessness but threatened to usurp Hill's role as postwar chronicler.

Perhaps Hill hoped to lure in his initial body of readers by promising mainly fiction and poetry, but one of his main features from the start was "The Haversack," a section of military anecdotes intended "to receive the rich contributions of our army friends."⁸ With few exceptions, this column ran in every issue of the magazine. Hill continued to air his anti-Union sentiments in "The Haversack," commenting on how the winners would be able to write the history of the war by imposing their preferred names on battlefields, and lamenting how his friend Charles Stone was treated ill by the U.S. Army for, among other things, allegedly treasonable wartime correspondence with Hill.⁹ Hill supplied most of the material for *LWL* during its first six months of existence, but by January 1867 he used "The

⁸ D.H. Hill, "The Haversack," *LWL* 1, No. 1 (May, 1866): 67.

⁹ Hill, "The Haversack," *LWL* 1, No. 3 (Jul., 1866): 201-209 and No. 2 (Jun., 1866): 114-120.

Haversack” to appeal to his former comrades-in-arms for material. Acknowledging that former Confederate generals had promised him unpublished battle reports, he specifically requested narratives from company-grade officers and soldiers to provide a “picture of life in the ranks” and “authentic facts and anecdotes.”¹⁰ Hill increasingly received these desired tales which provided a continuity of military material over the life of the magazine and, through their sentimentalization of soldier life, appealed to a broad readership.

Before the content of “The Haversack” stabilized, however, Hill used significant chunks of prime text space to present plans and reports of Civil War campaigns and battles. From July 1866 to May 1867, each issue featured one of these types of documents written by a former Confederate general officer. In August 1866, Hill published “General Cleburne’s Report of the Battle of Chickamauga” with its accompanying map. This was followed by General Breckinridge’s Chickamauga report in September 1866, and finally Hill’s own report of the battle in the October 1866 issue. The authors of the remaining reports through May 1867 were ex-generals Wade Hampton, Joseph Johnston, P.G.T. Beauregard, and John Gordon. Indeed, Hill was able to make good on his hope that *LWL* would become “the organ of the late Confederate Army. . . [preserving] through its columns, the memory of those glorious deeds, which should never be forgotten.”¹¹

Certainly Hill was trying to establish a readership base by showing what kinds of articles his magazine would include and, to be sure, few outside authors submitted material to

¹⁰ Hill, “The Haversack,” *LWL* 2, No. 3 (Jan., 1867): 214.

¹¹ Hill explained that he planned on publishing complete military reports each month, and made his first appeal to the lower grades for material: Hill, “The Haversack,” *LWL* 1, No. 4 (Aug., 1866): 298; Patrick Cleburne, “General Cleburne’s Report of the Battle of Chickamauga,” *LWL* 1, No. 4 (Aug., 1866): 249-254; John C. Breckinridge, “Report of the Battle of Chickamauga, J.C. Breckinridge, Maj. Gen.,” *LWL* 1, No. 5 (Sep., 1866): 305-309; D.H. Hill, “Gen. D.H. Hill’s Report of the Battle of Chickamauga,” *LWL* 1, No. 6 (Oct., 1866): 393-404; Hill, “The Haversack,” *LWL* 2, No. 2 (Dec., 1866): 149. As far as I can tell, Hill did not edit any of the reports; there are some stylistic differences between the entries in *LWL* and the *OR*, like the use of quotation marks to bracket a subordinate’s report (*LWL*) versus using smaller font in a block quote (*OR*).

the fledgling enterprise the first year of its existence. However, he never printed any of his other battle reports. Chickamauga had happened recently enough to still anger Hill and his after action report was never published by the Confederate War Department. Hill still held Jefferson Davis partially responsible for his sidelined promotion to lieutenant general, but even more importantly, he felt that he had never enjoyed the professional confidence of the Confederate Commander-in-Chief after the Chickamauga debacle. He continued to fear that his military reputation was ruined along with his honor and good name.

If Hill perceived mischief on the part of Davis, he appears to have made sure his report went public by including it in one of the early issues of *LWL*. In it he gave his timeline and version of events on September 20, 1863, paying homage to the efforts of Breckinridge and Cleburne and discreetly criticizing wing commander Leonidas Polk for not committing reserve forces. Both division commander's reports backed up Hill; nobody could question Cleburne, who was killed in 1864, and Breckinridge continued to support Hill by endorsing *LWL*.¹² Coincidentally, Davis was still in Federal prison at this time and would have been hard pressed to respond. In the editorial section at the end of the October 1866 issue in which his summary appeared, Hill wrote: "The report of the battle of Chickamauga in this number was not published by the Confederate Government, though called for by the Confederate Congress. This must be our apology for its appearance in this magazine."¹³ With that simple comment, Hill the editor cleverly placed the Chickamauga reports out for his readership to receive and allowed them to draw their own conclusions about his professional conduct during the campaign. Davis in fact did respond over a year later after his release from prison.

¹² J.B. Hood et. al., "To the Editor of the New Orleans Times," *LWL* 6, No. 5 (Mar., 1869): back cover.

¹³ Hill, "Editorial," *LWL* 1, No. 6 (Oct., 1866): 444.

He told Hill that it pained him to see that the general was still so affected by the Chickamauga incident, explaining that he felt keeping Braxton Bragg in command at the time best served the public interest and that he never doubted Hill's military acumen or devotion to the South.¹⁴ Perhaps in part due to this letter along with the passage of time, Hill's attitude toward Davis softened over the years, culminating with several cordial letters the last year of their lives.

During the next year and a half, Hill left Chickamauga behind and diversified his magazine's topics, placing a spotlight on regional issues and providing suggestions for agricultural and industrial improvements. One of his earliest articles, a serial titled "Education," explained how the South needed to prepare its youth to deal with post-war reality. "We must abandon the aesthetic and the ornamental for the practical and the useful. We need practical farmers, miners, machinists, engineers, manufacturers, navigators, blacksmiths, carpenters, etc., etc., to develop the immense resources of our country, which war has not been able to destroy," Hill counseled his readers.¹⁵ This observation was in line with his antebellum focus on a practical curriculum at the North Carolina Military Institute as well as his own education at West Point. Hill also believed that the lack of diversified education was a cause of Confederate defeat.¹⁶ There was a real need for labor, and Hill warned his audience that it would be foolish to fall back on the Southern tradition of classically-educated statesmen and orators. The constrictions of Republican rule, which put Southerners in a "state of probation, pupilage, [and] vassalage," provided an opportunity to

¹⁴ Jefferson Davis to D.H. Hill, December 4, 1867, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, NCSA).

¹⁵ D.H. Hill, "Education," *LWL* 1, No. 1 (May, 1866): 2-3.

¹⁶ Hill, "Education," *LWL* 1, No. 4 (August, 1866): 235-237.

embrace manual labor as “the badge of manhood, patriotism, and unselfishness.”¹⁷ Barely a year after the end of the war, Hill was still fairly moderate in encouraging Southerners to get working and transform their regional economy to one more in line with the rest of the country; for these views, Hill has been seen as an early advocate of the New South Creed.¹⁸ His 1866 comments, however, already reveal him chafing under Federal Reconstruction policies and using the language of slavery to construct an argument morally elevating white southern labor above freedmen and Yankees.

Hill still demonstrated a somewhat conciliatory tone in July 1867 when he responded to a letter from a Virginia lady who took issue with his characterization of the Union as the South’s “late” enemy. As with other advice, he couched his answer in terms of morality, urging her and other readers to take the high road, forget past differences, and extend a hand to other Americans. Hill also took heart that publishers and stores in New York City were printing and selling Southern literature and that many Americans apparently sympathized with their fellow citizens in the former Confederacy.¹⁹ He then engaged, albeit sarcastically, with the editor of a Philadelphia newspaper who complimented *LWL* for its large circulation, editing, and format, but opined that it was too Southern in sentiment and that its editor needed “‘reconstructing’ badly.” Hill protested that he was trying to broaden his views and had made progress by accepting Federal cash for subscriptions and publishing articles about

¹⁷ Hill, “Education,” *LWL* 1, No. 1 (May, 1866): 9-10.

¹⁸ See Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 28-30, and Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 173-178. As of Summer 2006, the Levine Museum of the New South in Charlotte, North Carolina, featured a D.H. Hill quote at the start of their flagship exhibit.

¹⁹ Hill, “Editorial,” *LWL* 3, No. 3 (Jul., 1867): 267-269; “Editorial,” *LWL* 2, No. 2 (Dec., 1866): 154; Unknown Author, “New York Correspondence,” *LWL* 3, No. 1 (May, 1867): 82-84.

the hated Confederate cavalry. By building on these small steps, Hill hoped his opinions would one day be so much changed that he could consider the Philadelphia man “a *gentleman*.”²⁰ Hill could not afford to be overly political or he risked losing his journal, so he fell back on his trademark sarcasm to show his lingering defiance of Federal authority and its supporters.

Increasingly through 1867 and 1868, fresh off his pardon from President Andrew Johnson, Hill began to direct his sarcastic comments toward Republican politicians and their supporters. In mid-1867 he declared that he preferred military authorities over their civilian replacements within the Reconstruction bureaucracy. Hill still put trust in the honor of the American soldier and did not believe that Federal troops stationed in the southern states would willingly use force against the populace.²¹ He reserved most of his invective, however, for the changes in the electoral process promulgated by the Reconstruction Act of 1867. Hill argued that Radical Republicans were hypocrites because they blamed Southerners for keeping black slaves in a debased and ignorant condition, yet they immediately entrusted them with the franchise. He opposed the bill because it empowered freedmen to elect Republicans whom he considered unfit for office to southern legislatures and governorships.²² Hill was thinking specifically of North Carolinian William Holden, who Andrew Johnson appointed provisional governor in 1865 and was elected to the post in 1868. During the Civil War, Holden ran for office against Zebulon Vance on a peace platform, and he increasingly came to disagree with the Confederate cause, becoming a Republican after

²⁰ Hill, “Editorial,” *LWL* 3, No. 4 (Aug., 1867): 356-358. It should be noted that one of the cavalry sketches Hill allowed in *LWL* was written by his brother-in-law, Rufus Barringer.

²¹ Hill, “Editorial,” *LWL* 3, No. 2 (June, 1867): 177, and “Editorial,” *LWL* 3, No. 3 (July, 1867): 267.

²² Hill, “Editorial,” *LWL* 5, No. 1 (May, 1868): 91.

the war. Holden became involved in some shady political dealings involving the railroads, but his eventual impeachment from office in 1870 occurred as a result of newly elected Democrats who charged him with violating the state constitution by calling out the militia to deal with Klan-instigated violence in two counties.²³ Hill considered people like Holden and Governor William Brownlow in Tennessee traitors to the South, and he believed Radical Republicans manipulated free blacks who did not know better to vote for these men. He and other former generals like Wade Hampton thought that if the freedman could “*be trained to feel that he is a Southern man,*” he would vote responsibly, i.e. for candidates who best represented Southern or Conservative interests.²⁴ Aside from the obvious racism, as with Hill’s earlier writings about education, he saw that black suffrage had the potential to be used to reconstitute Southern political power and identity.

The combined events of Johnson’s impeachment and Republican political conventions in the summer of 1868 prompted Hill to forecast a time of great suffering for the South under Radical Reconstruction:

It means military domination, garrisons of soldiers every where, unequal taxation, favoring the rich and grinding the poor. It means the persecution for all time of as brave and as noble a people as the sun ever shone upon...It means the total destruction of all the products of the South, upon which the prosperity of the whole nation depends.—It means the erection of a huge centralized despotism. . . It means intolerance in all things, crushing out all semblance of opposition in speech and thought to ‘the party of great moral ideas.’”²⁵

Hill could only hope that the Democratic Party (which he noted with pleasure included a core of former Union generals) would remain viable and ensure that the feared despotism would

²³ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Perennial Classics, 2002), 440-441.

²⁴ Hill, “Editorial,” *LWL* 3, No. 1 (May, 1867): 85; see also Wade Hampton to D.H. Hill, March 28, 1867, D.H. Hill Papers, Library of Virginia (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, LOV).

²⁵ Hill, “Editorial,” *LWL* 5, No. 3 (July, 1868): 280-281.

not take place.²⁶ He also combed other newspapers and periodicals for criticism of the Federal government, finding Republican politicians who censured their peers for corruption, heavy taxation and questionable expenditures. Hill even congratulated Yankee activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton on her harsh condemnation of the ruling party and its presidential nominee and alleged drunk Ulysses S. Grant.²⁷ As Hill wrote that September: “The great danger now at the South is that the manhood, the independence, the integrity of the people will be destroyed,—a calamity, which the truly noble and high-toned at the North would deplore as much as we would ourselves.”²⁸ He was genuinely afraid that young southern men would emulate the bad examples set before them by Republican politicians. As issues in the Grant administration would demonstrate, Hill’s concern was not without merit, but his editorials were clearly emotional appeals to his sympathetic audience to not sit back but to play an active role in combating the vices of Radical Republicanism and preserving southern honor and virtue.

In the second to last issue of *LWL* in February 1869, Hill noted that southern states had recently enjoyed a good crop yield and related a news story about the growth of Baltimore, Maryland. Many Southerners migrated to Baltimore during Reconstruction to find work and the city welcomed them. Hill quoted a Baltimore newspaper as describing how everyone in the city worked together to literally rebuild prosperity, which he saw as a good example of what he had been telling his readers to do. “Spite of the ravages of war, and the

²⁶ See Hill, “Editorial,” *LWL* 5, No. 6 (October, 1868): 538-541, for his commentary on attendees at the 1868 Democratic Convention in New York and Wade Hampton’s call for Union veterans to speak out against their leaders who were perverting the Constitution that they had defended during the Civil War.

²⁷ Hill, “Editorial,” *LWL* 5, No. 4 (August, 1868): 365-366. Stanton disagreed with the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments (under Republican auspices) because they did not grant suffrage to women.

²⁸ Hill, “Editorial,” *LWL* 5, No. 5 (September, 1868): 444.

inhuman legislation against the South, it cannot always be kept down,” wrote Hill optimistically, adding, “Prosperity will once more bless our unhappy section.”²⁹

As political issues started to dominate the pages of *LWL*, the overall military content decreased outside of “The Haversack” until early 1868 when Hill became aware of allegations made about his conduct during the Maryland Campaign.³⁰ A friend had recently brought to his attention an excerpt from Virginia newspaper editor Edward A. Pollard’s *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates*. Pollard became famous throughout the former Confederate states for this book and other works on the late war.³¹ When describing the details of the 1862 campaign and the incident of the Lost Order, Pollard claimed of Hill that “this vain and petulant officer, in a moment of passion, had thrown the paper on the ground,” whereupon it was discovered by Federal troops and passed up to Union General George McClellan.³²

Hill fired back at Pollard in his February 1868 issue of *LWL* in an article full of anger and sarcasm. He denied ever receiving the order from Robert E. Lee’s headquarters and depicted himself as being forced to respond to Pollard for his as well as the public’s sake since the journalist spoke of “matters of general and not merely of personal interest.”³³ Hill suggested that the dispatch might have been lost at army headquarters, dropped by the

²⁹ Hill, “Editorial,” *LWL* 6, No. 4 (February, 1869): 352.

³⁰ Hill printed occasional sketches of Confederate military leaders and even narratives of Revolutionary War battles, but no more Civil War battle reports like those that would appear later in the *OR*.

³¹ Alan T. Nolan, “The Anatomy of the Myth,” in *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 13, and Rollin G. Osterweis, *The Myth of the Lost Cause, 1865-1900* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1973), 11-15.

³² Edward A. Pollard, *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates* (New York: E.B. Treat and Co., Publishers, 1868), 314.

³³ D.H. Hill, “The Lost Dispatch,” *LWL* 4, No. 4 (Feb., 1868): 273.

courier, or purposely lost through treachery. Hill also contended that the loss of the dispatch was actually a good thing for the Army of Northern Virginia because it did not reveal specifics about unit composition and strength. If not for the order, Hill claimed, a Union corps “could have crushed my little *squad* [of five thousand troops] in ten minutes” at the Battle of South Mountain.³⁴ The order led McClellan to commit an error in judgment that “saved Lee from destruction” by permitting him to consolidate at Sharpsburg, and for better or worse, allowed the war to continue for three more years.³⁵ Hill concluded with a swipe at Pollard, “I am not willing that my reputation should be blackened and my name made odious among my countrymen, through the malice and unfairness of one, who encountered no dangers, endured no hardships and suffered no privations for that ‘Lost Cause,’ of which he so presumptuously claims to be the historian.”³⁶

By framing his criticism of Pollard in a way that made the journalist’s scholarly transgressions appear insulting to Southerners in general, Hill was able to garner sympathy for his own sullied honor. In his article, Hill mentioned receiving letters from fellow veterans who criticized Pollard’s take on Confederate history. Additional supportive letters arrived in the following months that should have given Hill confidence that his military peers approved of his action. One friend noted that he “read with pleasure your article on the “Lost Dispatch” & other vagaries of Pollard the would be historian.”³⁷ Agreeing with Hill that Pollard seemed

³⁴ D.H. Hill, “The Lost Dispatch,” *LWL* 4, No. 4 (Feb., 1868): 274-275, 277.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 278. In his first after action report McClellan indicated that he moved his main body up the National Road to Turner’s Gap (Hill’s position) mainly because it was the widest point through which to get his army across South Mountain (Report of McClellan, October 15, 1862, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. I, 19 (1): 27.).

³⁶ Hill, “The Lost Dispatch,” *LWL* 4, No. 4 (Feb., 1868): 284.

³⁷ J.T. Holtzclaw to D.H. Hill, February 10, 1868, Hill Papers, NCSA.

to hold some sort of grudge against the general, another friend added: “But for the pictures in his [Pollard’s] book, I should be strongly tempted to consign it to the ignominious use to which has been devoted a large amount of the otherwise worthless trash of my library.”³⁸

Later that year, former Virginia governor and Confederate General Henry A. Wise wrote Hill in response to a letter inquiring if Wise had endorsed *The Lost Cause*. “He [Pollard] requested my approval and I expressly refused to sanction his utterly false & erroneous pretended history,” Wise answered. He disapproved of all of Pollard’s books, and mentioned that P.G.T. Beauregard felt the same. Pollard, Wise concluded, was “an utterly abandoned & shameless man & author, and writes for malice & for money.”³⁹

Even southern newspapers picked up on the controversy. The *Daily Journal of Wilmington, North Carolina*, advertised the February edition of *LWL*, drawing “special attention” to the Lost Dispatch article.⁴⁰ The *Galveston (Texas) Daily News* summarized Hill’s article, noting that the general “denies a charge which has been often published against him all over the country, greatly to the damage of his reputation as a military officer.” The paper concluded by telling its readers that they published the notice “in justice to a good man and an able officer,” and referred them to the original piece in *LWL*.⁴¹

Many people would have read Hill’s rebuttal to Pollard, for as of August 1867, *LWL* boasted twelve thousand subscribers across several states, including many north of the

³⁸ G. Wilson McPhail to D.H. Hill, February 17, 1868, Hill Papers, NCSA.

³⁹ Henry A. Wise to D.H. Hill, October 3, 1868, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁴⁰ *Wilmington Daily Journal*, February 5, 1868.

⁴¹ *Galveston Daily News*, March 5, 1868.

Mason-Dixon Line, and many communities pooled resources to share copies.⁴² The pen-and-ink fight between the two authors continued for several months, with Pollard publishing a response to Hill in the *New York News* that poked at the general's conduct at Chickamauga. Hill for his part accused Pollard of stealing anecdotes from "The Haversack" for the journalist's newest histories of the war.⁴³ Obviously tired of dealing with Pollard, Hill stated that he would no longer pay attention to him, for "I feel sure that he is harmless, however malignant," and trusted that Americans would not believe a man who "crept into a bomb-proof when the bullets began to fly."⁴⁴

Despite public declarations to ignore Pollard and the support of close friends and strangers, Hill remained unconvinced that his actions had resuscitated his reputation. He spent a good two years, starting even before his first editorial, corresponding with several men who had participated in the 1862 Maryland Campaign to try to establish who might have lost the dispatch and reemphasize that the incident was not his fault. Hill first contacted Lee's former Chief of Staff Robert Chilton and asked him about courier procedures at army headquarters. Chilton claimed "a very defective memory" and said he could not remember the particulars of how headquarters handled the dispatch. He stated that the standing orders for couriers delivering important documents were "to bring back the envelope, receipted, or some written evidence of delivery." Chilton continued: "This order was so important, that violation of this rule would have been noticed, & I think I should certainly recollect if

⁴² Hill, "Editorial," *LWL* 3, No. 4 (Aug., 1867): 358; see also Atchison, "The Land We Love," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, 508 (including Atchison's footnote 13). Hill claimed in a letter to Jubal Early that his magazine reached thirty-two states after only seven months of publication, quite a feat for a young magazine: Hill to Early, December 28, 1866, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁴³ Hill, "Editorial," *LWL* 5, No. 3 (Jul., 1868): 281-285.

⁴⁴ Hill, "Editorial," *LWL* 5, No. 3 (Jul., 1868): 285.

delivery had been omitted in any case.”⁴⁵ Seven months later, Chilton again begged forgetfulness, regretting he could not aid Hill more in his rebuttal against Pollard.⁴⁶ Charles Marshall, another staff officer, recalled the talk at Lee’s headquarters when McClellan’s congressional testimony was publicized, and stated that he, Chilton, and others finally realized in 1863 that the copy of S.O. 191 addressed to Hill had been compromised. Corroborating Chilton’s description of courier duties and document tracking, Marshall said he did not know how the order was lost but assured Hill that “[y]our simple statement that you never saw it, puts an end to all conjecture as to the way you lost it.” He suggested that Hill ignore Pollard and publish his own history of what happened in the Maryland Campaign.⁴⁷

Hill also approached Union veterans, including McClellan, then governor of New Jersey. In 1868, former Federal commander S.W. Crawford wrote Hill that his and another officer’s impression at the time was that they occupied A.P. Hill’s former encampment in Frederick. They seemed to assume that by virtue of location, the Lost Dispatch was addressed to A.P. Hill, not D.H. Hill.⁴⁸ McClellan stated: “My remembrance has always been that the order was addressed to you.” However, in contrast to his earlier testimony, he admitted it was not impossible that he had made a mistake in his report. He promised to look

⁴⁵ Robert H. Chilton to D.H. Hill, June 22, 1867, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁴⁶ Robert H. Chilton to D.H. Hill, January 11, 1868, Hill Papers, LOV.

⁴⁷ Charles Marshall to D.H. Hill, November 11, 1867, Hill Papers, LOV.

⁴⁸ R.B. Marcy to S.W. Crawford, August 17, 1868, and S.W. Crawford to D.H. Hill, August 22, 1868, Hill Papers, LOV.

through his papers to see if he could find the Lost Dispatch and verify to whom it was addressed.⁴⁹

Hill's article struck a much different chord with the president of Washington University than with other veterans. From his office in Lexington, Virginia, Robert E. Lee read the February 1868 issue of *LWL* and quickly responded in a private letter to Hill concerning his assertion about the benefits of the Lost Dispatch. Lee did not know what Pollard said about the matter as he had not read the book but "at the time the order fell into Genl McClellans [sic] hands, I considered it a great calamity & subsequent reflection has not caused me to change my opinion."⁵⁰ Lee pointed out that it was proper that Hill should have received one copy of S.O. 191 from his headquarters as well as one from Jackson's since the order changed the command structure by moving Hill from one authority to the other. Far from mystifying and deceiving McClellan, the dispatch caused him to issue orders to his subordinates to press toward the South Mountain gaps with the intent of cutting off Confederate forces sitting on the heights above the Potomac River and Harpers Ferry. Lee did not know how the order was lost and did not know it was the copy addressed to Hill until he read McClellan's report, but he emphasized again at the end of his letter that the incident was not a benefit "but on the contrary, 'an injury' to the Confederate arms."⁵¹

Given Lee's opinion of Hill—he allegedly called his subordinate a "croaker," no doubt in light of their wartime disagreements—he probably did not appreciate the liberties

⁴⁹ George McClellan to D.H. Hill, February 1, 1869, Hill Papers, LOV. McClellan wrote a follow-up letter to Hill but I have not been able to locate it. The Lost Dispatch itself (with D.H. Hill's name) resides in George McClellan's papers in the Library of Congress.

⁵⁰ Robert E. Lee to D.H. Hill, February 21, 1868, D.H. Hill Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, SHC).

⁵¹ Robert E. Lee to D.H. Hill, February 21, 1868, Hill Papers, SHC.

Hill took with an incident that compromised his plan to put pressure on the Union and was followed by the loss of much of his army.⁵² Lee also communicated his displeasure with Hill's assertion to Colonel William Allan and personal secretary E. C. Gordon, both of whom made notes about their conversations with the general. Allen revealed his concurrence with Lee in his posthumously published book on the Army of Northern Virginia in 1892.⁵³ Although Lee was not yet the preeminent icon of the Lost Cause and the contents of the letter remained private, Hill took the criticism seriously. Despite other supportive letters, he persisted in shoring up his reputation for posterity. The following month, Hill went so far as to get his brother-in-law, Joseph Morrison, a former Jackson aide, to swear an affidavit before a judge and make a notation on his copy of S.O. 191 that the dispatch was in Jackson's handwriting.⁵⁴ Perhaps he felt his reputation was all he could count on in the Reconstruction-era South—respect and recognition for one's support of the late Confederacy were just as or more important than financial stability, even with a wife and six children to support. Pollard actually gave Hill the perfect excuse to reassert his outstanding combat record to a sympathetic audience.

Although busy defending himself, Hill found time to correspond with his military peers about wartime reminiscences and current events. Indeed, the social network that Confederate veterans like Hill built and reinforced through written correspondence in the late

⁵² The croaking comment comes from the notes of William Allan, "Memda (Memorandum) of a conversation with Gen. R. E. Lee, held Feb. 15 1868," William Allan Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as Allan Papers, SHC).

⁵³ Ibid.; also, E.C. Gordon, "Memorandum of a conversation held with Genl R. E. Lee at Washington College, Lexington Va, 15 Feb 1868—In regard to the operations of the So. Army in Maryland preceeding [sic] the battle of Sharpsburg and the 'Lost Dispatch,'" Allan Papers, SHC; Colonel William Allan, *Stonewall Jackson, Robert E. Lee, and the Army of Northern Virginia, 1862* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995).

⁵⁴ Affidavit of Capt J.G. Morrison before the Mecklenburg County Court, North Carolina, March 17, 1868, and "Copy by Genl Jackson his handwriting" of S.O. 191, Hill Papers, NCSA.

1860s jump-started the construction of post-war Southern historical memory. He kept in touch with Jubal Early, who was living in exile in Canada and hoping for the fall of the Republican government. Former subordinate R.H. Anderson wrote about his struggles to run a farm but wistfully recalled a conversation the two men had at Seven Pines. Joe Johnston regretted that he had missed Hill during a visit to Baltimore but said he would try to stop by Charlotte on his way to Alabama. He particularly wanted to discuss the 1862 Peninsula Campaign with Hill as a recent book on Davis blamed Johnston for the destruction of property during the retreat from Yorktown. Not surprisingly, Johnston chided Hill for letting up on their shared enmity of Davis.⁵⁵ In the meantime, Hill openly reemphasized his love of the Carolinas in his March 1867 editorial and noted with alarm three months later that histories of other states' regiments were starting to crowd out his own. "It is unfortunate for North Carolina that none of her own sons has attempted a history of the war. There was scarcely a corporal in the ranks of the North Carolina troops, who could not write a more *truthful* history than any yet put forth," he complained, directing his attention at the Virginians of Pickett's division at Gettysburg who hogged the spotlight to the detriment of the North Carolinians who had fought there.⁵⁶ Barely two years after the end of the Civil War, Hill's comments foreshadowed a contest among Confederate veterans over due credit for wartime glory and successes.

Much of Hill's correspondence with former Confederate officers morphed into a campaign to get endorsements for *LWL*. In the March 1869 issue, he was able to devote the inside back cover to a letter sent to the *New Orleans Times* by six generals. The authors,

⁵⁵ Jubal Early to D.H. Hill, December 4, 1866 and March 27, 1867; R.H. Anderson to Hill, October 26, 1867; Joseph Johnston to Hill, June 3 and 26, 1868, and January 29, 1869, all in Hill Papers, LOV.

⁵⁶ Hill, "The Haversack," *LWL* 2, No. 5 (March, 1867): 367; "The Haversack," *LWL* 3, No. 2 (June, 1867): 155.

including Beauregard and John Bell Hood, wrote that Hill's magazine had "claims upon our people as a *home* monthly, representing our own sentiments and feelings." "To the late Southern soldier," they continued, "the 'Land We Love' has peculiar attractions; *it is the acknowledged organ of the late Confederate Army*; it preserves the record of the heroism and devotion of our soldiery, and is now almost the only channel by which the truth of history can be vindicated." The retired generals concluded by recommending that southerners take a look at the periodical, emphasizing its low price which would make it easier for people to afford. The bottom half of the page contained a list of seventy-six additional people who endorsed the magazine, including such names as Breckinridge, Johnston, Early, and Zebulon Vance.⁵⁷

Despite wide circulation and many patrons, *LWL* did not make money for Hill. As he often recounted in editorials, he lost subscription fees in the mail when unscrupulous postal clerks or thieves opened letters and stole the cash. He also did his best to pay his contributors whenever possible.⁵⁸ The death of five-year-old son James Irwin in 1866 distracted Hill for several months from his correspondence, and he felt the pressure of competition with other periodicals which forced him to diversify the content of the magazine. He liked to read and review novels but complained about the volumes of shoddy poetry readers sent to his office for publication.⁵⁹ On the positive side, however, Hill gained a measure of recognition from Northern editors and readers; the same time period witnessed the reissue of his *Crucifixion of*

⁵⁷ J.B. Hood et. al., "To the Editor of the *New Orleans Times*," *LWL* 6, No. 5 (Mar., 1869): back cover.

⁵⁸ Hill, "Editorial," *LWL* 2, No. 6 (April, 1867): 474, and "Editorial," *LWL* 4, No. 1 (November, 1867): 84-93; Paul Hayne to Hill, February 19, 1869, Hill Papers, NCSA. Hayne, who contributed several pieces to *LWL*, became a well-known Southern poet.

⁵⁹ D.H. Hill to Miss Sarah Thornton, November 14, 1866; Hill to P. Wroth, December 25, 1866; Hill to Jubal Early, December 28, 1866, all in Hill Papers, NCSA; Hill, "Editorial," *LWL* 4, No. 5 (March, 1868): 449.

Christ in a Presbyterian periodical.⁶⁰ The editorial experience agreed with Hill, and he seemed to genuinely enjoy providing a printed outlet for southern voices and engaging with other editors across the United States on current political and social issues of great import.

From a public perspective, Hill achieved a good measure of personal vindication through *The Land We Love*. He humiliated the first “historian” of the Lost Cause and his magazine was one of the few southern outlets for war-related articles in the years immediately following Appomattox, giving him an advantage in his local literary marketplace. Although many Americans, north and south, did not want to relive the war so soon in print, Hill published battle reports as early as 1866. In his willingness to enter the field of contested memory over wartime events, Hill preceded many mass-market publications (to which he would later contribute) such as the *Century Magazine* and its *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* series.⁶¹ Hill had an enormous sense of duty to his family and region, which likely influenced him to start *LWL* in the first place, but he also consciously used his journal to right what he perceived as past wrongs committed against him. He was never quite personally satisfied with how his reputation stood among his peers and would reengage with the Lost Order controversy in the 1880s, years after the last issue of his magazine. Nonetheless, from the lows of Chickamauga, Hill rebounded to facilitate his

⁶⁰ D.H. Hill to Rev. W.T. Findley, July 12, 1867, Kynett Book—C.S.A. Officers: Portraits and Original Autograph Letters and Documents, Jan. 1858-May 1869, Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia.

⁶¹ Thomas L. Connelly and Barbara L. Bellows noted that the late 1860s marked the beginning of an “Inner Lost Cause” period in which former Confederate officers assumed a defensive tone over controversies and looked for others to blame while resigning themselves to vindication in future histories. I argue that Hill was not so ready to rely on the future. David Blight agrees with Connelly and Bellows about veterans’ agendas in the immediate postwar years and notes that there were multiple publications in the northern half of the country that were publishing war stories around the same time as Hill in *LWL*. Connelly and Bellows, *God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982): 5-7 & 57; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 149-150.

entry into the southern cultural archives. At this stage, he not only actively salvaged his reputation, but was his own best reputational entrepreneur.

LWL also reflected Hill's increasing pessimism regarding the future of the South. From the initial optimism of his call for revamped educational and industrial pursuits to the fear of political tyranny and widespread demoralization, the general felt the opportunity for southern resurgence slipping away. Something needed to be done. Hill sold *LWL* but he was not finished with publishing. His next venture was even more ambitious and coincided with the culmination and decline of Reconstruction, a surge in memorialization of the war, and nation-wide reconciliation.

CHAPTER XI

UNRECONSTRUCTED EDITOR: HILL'S *THE SOUTHERN HOME*

Our rulers have got up the big comedy of "Reconstruction," and while the loyal North has been convulsed with laughter at the writhings and contortions of the South, the chain has been cunningly thrown around North and South, and both are now tied to the triumphal car of the centralized despotism.

--D.H. Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 1, No. 21, June 9, 1870

As the opening quotation demonstrates, in the nine months after giving up *The Land We Love*, D.H. Hill further developed his virulent antipathy toward Reconstruction, enough so to start a more streamlined and commercially viable publication. He also continued his correspondence with other Confederate officers and sympathizers and become decisively engaged in the formation of Lost Cause ideology through written and oral conversations coalescing around the newly formed Southern Historical Society. By the end of the Grant presidential years, Hill established himself as a forceful voice in the preservation of Southern historical memory. At the same time, he remained deeply conflicted about the need for his beloved South to become part of a modernizing world.

The Southern Home (hereafter referred to as *Home*), debuting on January 20, 1870, was a weekly four-page broadsheet newspaper. Hill retained some of the characteristics of the monthly magazine, such as his editorial and letters from readers, but focused on current local, national, and international news and greatly expanded available advertising space. Remaining in Charlotte, in close proximity to his childhood home in South Carolina, Hill

devoted at least one column a week to affairs in his native state. By the end of his editorship, he could still offer the paper at a subscription price of \$2.50 per year, which was fifty cents cheaper than *The Land We Love* yet allowed him to influence his readers on a weekly versus merely a monthly basis.¹

The seven and one half years during which Hill published *Home* witnessed two presidential elections, the Panic of 1873, the Congressional Ku Klux Klan hearings, the Civil Rights Act and other landmark legislation, and numerous North Carolina political races and scandals. These events provided Hill with only the most well known material for his editorials; he also commented on the schism between Northern and Southern Presbyterians, the national Grange movement, and “Radical outrages” in contested Southern states. He ran his editorial on Page Two of his four page paper, often printing concurring opinions from other North Carolina and Southern newspapers, and when warranted, from Northern papers. Hill sarcastically referred to himself in the third person as “the uncompromising Union editor” and to the Stars and Stripes as “the dear old flag.”

Three important themes stood out in the pages of *Home*. First, like many white Southerners in the aftermath of the Civil War, Hill was concerned about the retention of individual property rights and states rights in the face of calls for civil rights and an increasingly powerful federal government. His opinions also happened to align with the Liberal Republican movement and liberal reformers of the 1870s in that he feared the extremes of the increasingly volatile lower class of laborers and the very wealthy, Northern upper class capitalists (he referred to both groups as Communists). He felt that educated people like him who fell somewhere in the middle strata of society were getting squeezed by the upper and lower classes; the rich took middle class Southern money through taxes and

¹ *The Southern Home*, Vol. 7, No. 388, July 30, 1877.

cotton exports, and the poor encouraged freedmen to demand more rights and a fairer labor system.² At the same time, he aligned himself with elite North Carolinians who were determined to stop what appeared to be a mad rush toward democracy. As Paul Escott writes of the leading white citizens of the state, “Their fear of change revealed that Reconstruction was more than a contest over racial equality—it was a battle against the principle of equality itself.”³ Not surprisingly, Hill continued to insist that Southern people were more honorable, persevering, and peace-loving than those in the North, whom he claimed had imposed Reconstruction with the intent of stirring up race war and keeping the South permanently subjugated. Southerners who did not fit Hill’s standards of honor were the wartime “skulkers,” those who sided with blacks, and those who failed to take a stand against the Radical Republicans.

In a related vein, Hill railed against what he saw as the linked ascendance of progress and corruption. He characterized the efforts of the Conservatives against the Republicans as a fight with Biblical overtones between the forces of good and evil. He challenged the hypocrisy of Northern newspaper editors who commented on Southern (usually Ku Klux Klan-instigated) violence, often citing the escalating disputes between capital and labor and the high murder rates in big Northern cities. While acknowledging that Southerners retaliated against “carpetbagger” and “scalawag” Republicans and blacks, Hill claimed their actions were in self defense, that a corrupt and thieving Reconstruction-era justice system left the people with no choice, and that the resulting behavior was the fault of this same system and

² This middle-class fear of irrelevance and change is explored in Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). See also Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Perennial Classics, 2002), 488-493 on the rise of the Liberal Republicans during Reconstruction.

³ Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 85.

the Northern politicians who voted it into being in an effort to improve the country. In this scenario, Southerners were innocent victims of Radical tyranny who had nothing to do with instigating violence although they certainly were not helpless, as evidenced by riots and house burnings across the region. Hill denied the existence of an organized Klan in North Carolina despite the fact that his Associate Editor was a former leader of one of the county branches.⁴ Despite the outwardly twisted logic, Hill's lifelong hatred of hypocrisy and rebellious tendencies naturally culminated in this endorsement of violent retaliation.

Finally, Hill continued to demonstrate that he was deeply conflicted about what Southerners should do to combat alleged Northern misrule and move toward a brighter future. Through his support of the Grange movement, he hoped that the South would make progress in husbandry and other agricultural improvements while remaining as the anti-North: a traditional, Jeffersonian-style, rural, agrarian society. Hill held on to his realist views on education, putting his sons on track to become respectively a teacher, a doctor, and a lawyer, but he deplored the influence of worldwide social movements on time-honored virtues of honor and loyalty. As historian Anne Sarah Rubin notes, strategies of defiance and accommodation coexisted in the South during Reconstruction, and the goals of both were to maintain regional distinctiveness.⁵ Hill fluctuated between these strategies, becoming more defiant over time but never relinquishing the hope of accommodation.

⁴ D.H. Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 1, No. 31, August 18, 1870; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 433 and 457. Hill's associate editor was Randolph A. Shotwell, Rutherford County (North Carolina) Klan leader, who was sentenced during the 1871 KKK trials and spent time in prison before he worked for Hill. In the September 8, 1873 issue of the *Home* Hill mentioned that Shotwell continued to write for a local North Carolina newspaper from prison and that he had refused alleged bribery attempts from men sympathetic to President Grant.

⁵ Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 144, 199-200.

Hill printed the following “mission statement” in each issue of *Home* at the top of Page Two with the publication and subscription information:

The Southern Home: Published every Thursday by D.H. Hill.
Devoted to the vindication of the truth of Southern History, to the preservation of Southern Characteristics, to the development of Southern Resources, under the changed relations of the Labor System, and to the advancement of Southern Interests in Agriculture, Mining, Manufacturing and the Mechanic Arts.⁶

The order in which Hill listed the themes reflected his level of interest in each and they also conveyed the key themes of his editorials. His usage of the words “truth” and “preservation” indicated his desire to preserve and defend Southern honor, memory, and identity and declared his fight against lies and progress as represented by the Republican majority. The rest of the statement related to what Hill saw as the duty of Southerners to improve their economic lot. During the course of his editorship, Hill stayed true to his mission, providing information and opinion on all of these subjects while often engaging in debates with other newspaper editors and various public figures who took exception to his editorials.

Accordingly, Hill’s first editorial supported the mission statement and served as outreach to his former audience. He repeated the themes of oppression of Southern interests and the depravity of Republican leaders which he had started to develop in *LWL* the year before. “It is the part of every patriot to inquire what is his duty and the duty of his people” in this time of transition, Hill intoned, promising to ask hard questions about how the South could overcome the obstacles in its way. He encouraged readers to write in with suggestions for solutions, noting that the goal was to buttress “the peace, comfort and happiness of the SOUTHERN HOME.” Hill clearly signaled to his audience that they needed to engage with

⁶ *The Southern Home*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 20, 1870. The publication day changed from Thursdays to Tuesdays on September 20, 1870.

the problems at hand and not just sit back and watch; their “pluck, energy and endurance” would help them eventually triumph over the forces of evil.⁷

Nowhere was the fight for the Southern home direr than in North Carolina, which by 1870 started to feel the burden of high taxes and misplaced investments, particularly in railroads. As a landowner with property in Charlotte and outside Davidson (where he dabbled in new farming techniques), Hill felt the pinch of taxation.⁸ He was convinced that President Grant connived with Governor William Holden to see how much money they could steal from North Carolina citizens. Fortunately, 1870 was an election year, and Hill implored his readers to make their voices heard at the ballot box. He painted a picture of federal soldiers surrounding polling places to encourage people to vote Republican, but warned that it would be folly for voters to choose Radical candidates with the hope of finding peace and prosperity.⁹ Hill further appealed to the honor of white Southern men. “Do not sit straddle of the fence with a canteen of rebel commissary on one shoulder and a haversack of Radical *bon bons* on the other shoulder,” he admonished. “Choose your party boldly, and sustain it manfully. Stand by your own people, your own section and your own friends, against the world in arms.”¹⁰

Despite Hill’s efforts, Republicans remained in power in his state and in the federal government. His next target of wrath was the congressional deliberation over the Ku Klux Klan Bill in early 1871, which he followed in the pages of *Home*. When the bill passed the

⁷ D.H. Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 20, 1870.

⁸ Hill made several references to his “model farm” outside Davidson in the *Home* and in correspondence; he commuted from Davidson to his office in Charlotte. In the November 29, 1870 issue, Hill ran an advertisement to rent his Charlotte residence, touting the size of the house and lot (10 rooms, 4 acres), doubtless to get extra income.

⁹ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 1, No. 29, August 2, 1870.

¹⁰ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 1, No. 30, August 9, 1870.

House of Representatives, Hill declared it another example of the growing power of the federal government and a way to brand Southerners as violent-prone people. He acknowledged that the Klan “may have done lawless acts” in certain areas, but it only did so “under great provocation and where the guardians of the law had become guardians of criminals.” New York City, he argued, was much more violent in 1860 than the South was now. In the same editorial, Hill discussed how Southerners were at heart conservative people who did not chase after the latest social fad. He mockingly listed radical “isms” to which fanatical Northerners ascribed, including “Mormonism, Women’s Right-ism, [and] Free-love-ism.”¹¹ Hill often applied this technique of using a current event as a starting point to critique through additional examples an alleged sin of the North and/or Republican Party—in this case, hypocrisy.

Hill followed the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 and the resulting political upheaval in France with great interest and in certain European events found parallels to the social situation in the United States. The concept of “equality before the law” as brought about by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments especially bothered him as he saw African-Americans and Republican scalawags vote and win election to political office in South Carolina and Louisiana. Hill saw this not only as an affront to the great statesmen who had previously held these posts but also believed that the emphasis on equality put the country on the road to communism. After the right to vote, he warned his readers that equality would extend to “wages, to salaries, to professions, to property, to every thing which men hold. It is the doctrine of the Paris Commune, and that is the only logical sequel of

¹¹ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 2, No. 68, May 2, 1871.

Radicalism.”¹² In sum, at the heart of Hill’s increasingly paranoid views was a fear of change—that is, rapid, uncontrolled change from a purer, honorable society where everything was in its proper place to one that threatened to undercut the hard work of individuals like him.

Besides demonstrating his overt Conservative leanings in *Home*, Hill formally entered politics as a delegate to the North Carolina Democratic Convention in 1872. One of his brothers-in-law, former Confederate General Rufus Barringer, also became involved in politics, but on the Republican side, thereby incurring Hill’s wrath in the pages of his paper. Hill’s uncompromising stance even affected his first attempt to return to an educational institution. His beloved NCMi closed during the war and was up for sale for several years thereafter; evidently he could not afford to reopen it himself. In mid-1873, however, it reopened as the Carolina Military Institute (CMI) under a Colonel J.P. Thomas. Thomas lured Hill back as mathematics instructor that fall, but in December Republican Governor Tod Caldwell withheld funds for arms for the school because of Hill’s Confederate affiliation. Hill therefore resigned and returned full time to *Home* in January 1874. He continued to run advertisements for CMI and the Hillsboro(ugh) Military Academy and tout the merits of structured military school education.¹³

Grant’s re-election confirmed Hill’s fears about the competency of the black electorate. A supporter of Horace Greeley’s candidacy, Hill concluded that the abolitionist movement had gotten out of the hands of its original sponsors. “Greeley, Tilton and other

¹² Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 2, No. 102, January 9, 1872.

¹³ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 3, No. 119, May 6, 1872; Vol. 6, No. 284, July 26, 1875; Vol. 3, No. 182, July 28, 1873; Vol. 3, No. 185, August 18, 1873; Vol. 3, No. 186, August 25, 1873; Vol. 3, No. 203, December 22, 1873; Vol. 4, No. 204, January 5, 1874.

great leaders labored to free the black race and not to enslave their white brethren,” he wrote.¹⁴ Hill continued the following week:

It reads very charmingly to “make all men equal before the law.” The theory is beautiful. Unfortunately, in practice, it has resulted just as all thoughtful men believed it would result. The negro voters have been the dupes of designing knaves and have put in places of power the most thievish of Yankee adventurers and the most disreputable of native scalawags.¹⁵

With these comments Hill appealed to his educated white readership, simultaneously assuring them that the re-election of Grant was not their fault but that of uneducated former slaves and trying to scare them into doing something about the situation. His attitude foreshadowed the Dunning school of historiography in the early twentieth century, which saw Reconstruction as a dark and dismal period of misguided social experimentation characterized by “negro rule.”¹⁶ Hill saw nothing less than a revolution unfolding in the social fabric of America and in his gloomy mood following the presidential election, he was truly frightened by the prospect. He could not foresee that some of the changes would be temporary or at best evolutionary, in part due to the efforts of people like him.

When another major election year came around in 1874, Hill again roused his readers. With more forceful language than he used four years previously he pointedly blamed those “species of limp, uncertain, dish-water” Southerners who declined to vote or take a political stand against the evils of nine years of Republican rule. “In times like the present, neutrality cannot co-exist with patriotism,” emphasized Hill. He reminded his readers that many republics in history started irreversible declines when their citizens withdrew from politics.¹⁷

¹⁴ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 3, No. 151, December 16, 1872.

¹⁵ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 3, No. 152, December 23, 1872.

¹⁶ See Foner’s succinct overview of Reconstruction historiography in his *Reconstruction*, xvii-xxii and 609.

¹⁷ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 4, No. 215, March 23, 1874.

In the election month of August, Hill explicitly instructed white men in North Carolina to vote Democratic by reminding them that they outnumbered black voters by at least 40,000 and that if they did not vote, “it will be to [their] everlasting shame and disgrace.”¹⁸ To his delight, Democrats made resounding gains in the South and North, capturing the governorships of New York and Massachusetts. Recharged by the victories, Hill urged his readers to be conciliatory and patient toward “ignorant and deluded” Republican voters in order to win them away from their party and not do anything to give fuel to accusations of violence. “Nothing can defeat us at the next Presidential election but the old cry of ‘rebel and Ku Klux,’” declared Hill.¹⁹

As Hill kept in constant touch with current events, he likely had some idea that there was dissent within the Republican Party over Grant’s Reconstruction policies, but he continued to view most Americans as complacent toward reports of corruption and increased federal oversight. After several years of debate and argument, Republicans finally pushed through the Civil Rights Act of 1875, or as Hill called it, “The Bill to create disorder and distress at the South as a pretext for military interference to perpetuate the infamous misrule of the present Administration.”²⁰ His comment referred to Grant’s decision in January to send federal troops to Louisiana to enforce the seating of elected Republican legislators. Hill believed that the Radicals used the legislation to divert attention from other insidious designs. If the Democrats came to power, he hypothesized, they would reveal all of the fraudulent dealings of the Grant administration. “Therefore,” Hill concluded, “the Civil Rights bill is

¹⁸ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 5, No. 234, August 3, 1874.

¹⁹ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 5, No. 238, August 31, 1874.

²⁰ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 6, No. 261, February 15, 1875.

passed with the hope that it will provoke bloodshed in the South; fire the Northern heart; unite the Radical party, and give Grant an excuse for using troops to carry the elections in 1876.”²¹ Nevertheless, he urged continued forbearance on the part of his readers. Hill’s religious beliefs clearly showed in his writings; he took a gloomy Calvinist view of the current situation, but fervently believed in a coming redemption for the South.

Hill’s mercurial nature also showed in his reflections on the ten year anniversary of the surrender at Appomattox and the upcoming centennial of the United States. Of the former, he bemoaned a disastrous decade full of trials eclipsing even the war years, but instead of dwelling on the past, directed his readership toward a “brighter, freer future.”²² When talking about the centennial, Hill provided several examples of how Southerners helped the North in many of the nation’s wars to include those who chose to fight with the Yankees in the Civil War. He insinuated that in light of these contributions it would be disgraceful should the South still be held prisoner by unfair Northern policies on July 4, 1876.²³

Indeed, the initial election results placing Democrat Samuel Tilden ahead of Republican Rutherford B. Hayes gave Hill hope for a change in political regime. In mid-November 1876 he wrote that this event might have come sooner had other newspaper editors spoken out and the people gone more faithfully to the polls. Hill could say that he was “now fully vindicated by the magnificent victory won by the manly policy” he followed in avoiding a compromising stance in *Home*.²⁴ He was actually relatively fortunate compared to

²¹ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 6, No. 261, February 15, 1875.

²² Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 6, No. 269, April 12, 1875.

²³ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 6, No. 309, January 24, 1876.

²⁴ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 7, No. 352, November 13, 1876.

other Democratic editors whose newspapers were shut down by political opponents, although he received death threats and his youngest son Joseph was roughed up while walking down a Charlotte street.²⁵ Within days, however, it was clear that the election was in deadlock. In January 1877, Congress passed a bill to appoint a High Commission to decide the winner. Holding a one-vote majority, the Republican-led panel, by a margin of eight to seven, named Hayes the new president.²⁶ Hill was outraged; he firmly believed that the Democratic Party had foolishly compromised its principles by agreeing to the commission and allowing yet another fraudulent act by the Federal government.²⁷ From then on, he referred to the new president not as Rutherford B. but as “Returning Board” Hayes, a swipe at the state election boards which he believed (with some justification) had improperly counted ballots.

Hill could at least be relieved that President Grant was leaving office. The week of Hayes’s inaugural, Hill printed his parting shot against Grant. Predictably, he focused on the corruption which had been exposed in the administration, but he was still most upset about the expansion of federal authority over the states, accusing Grant of crimes against civil liberty:

He was inaugurated, eight years ago, as President of a Republic. He has assumed and exercised more power, than any monarch in Europe . . . The North has looked coldly on while this man was destroying our liberties, probably thinking that we miserable rebels deserved to be enslaved. They did not seem to realize that in enslaving us, Grant was destroying the Republic.²⁸

²⁵ Hal Bridges, *Lee’s Maverick General: Daniel Harvey Hill* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961/Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 273.

²⁶ The bill dictated ten Congressmen and four Supreme Court justices, equally divided between the parties, on the commission. The four justices received the authority to pick a fifth justice; they settled on Republican Joseph Bradley, who replaced a more Tilden-friendly judge at the last minute through Republican machination in the Illinois Congressional race: Foner, *Reconstruction*, 580.

²⁷ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 7, No. 364, February 12, 1877.

²⁸ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 7, No. 367, March 5, 1877.

Grant of course was allegedly destroying Hill's white, middle-class male republic. Hill's comments illustrated not only his worldview but his extreme pessimism about the condition of the United States. He saw little hope for a country that did not conform to his and what he believed was the South's moral and social code. Although he happily witnessed political redemption in the former Confederacy, he very seldom acknowledged the Radical Republican backlash in the North and how the attitudes of the country as a whole were shifting toward conservatism in the wake of the Panic of 1873.

Hill never hated Hayes as he hated Grant, especially after the new president formally ended Reconstruction that same year. If anything, Hill feared that Hayes, whom he believed morally superior to Grant, would try to further hoodwink the South through kindness and conciliation. In his last political editorials he continued to caution his readers to remain involved and work to keep the seats the Democrats had gained in governorships and state and federal legislatures. Urging boldness, Hill wrote, "We have gained all that has been gained through audacity. We will lose that all again, if we lower our standard and are beguiled once more into the compromise policy."²⁹ Feeling more comfortable with the South's political situation, Hill in the last few months of his editorship turned his attention back to his pet project, advocacy of the Grange movement, and how it could tread the middle ground in the growing conflict between capital and labor.³⁰ For Hill, the Southern farmer and Grange member was the national redeemer. He painted a picture of the Southern (white) land owner as quintessentially peaceful and virtuous, a symbol that would ultimately prevail over corruption and Radical Reconstruction.

²⁹ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 7, No. 369, March 19, 1877; see also March 26, 1877 on same theme.

³⁰ See for example Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 5, No. 251, November 30, 1874, and Vol. 7, No. 388, July 30, 1877.

Subscription numbers for *Home* are unavailable, but the paper was definitely a known entity across the South and in portions of the North, especially New York and Pennsylvania, judging by Hill's editorial sparring with peers from those states and from letters to the editor. Within eight months of the first issue, Hill boasted that *Home* had the largest circulation of any paper in North Carolina west of Raleigh, and in 1876 he remained impressed with the number of in-state subscribers.³¹ Without numbers the significance of this is hard to gauge, yet he did substantially increase the number and diversification of advertisers over the life of the paper, indicating he was reaching a wide audience. He often made note of the public feedback he received, such as complements from other papers and letters from those who disagreed with his statements.³² Nevertheless, as with *LWL*, Hill struggled to keep the paper financially afloat. He often appealed to his readers to spread the word about *Home* and get more native subscribers, reminding them to buy Southern versus Northern papers and thereby help increase the quality of the former, but in early 1877 he had to let his Associate Editor go because he could not afford to pay him.³³

One of the most overt acknowledgments of the *Home* in a Northern newspaper occurred on May 11, 1876, when the New York *Times* reported on the Memorial Day observance in Charlotte, which Hill had advocated celebrating on the anniversary of Stonewall Jackson's death. The *Times*' headline ran, "THE LOST CAUSE NOT DEAD" and went on to describe Hill, who was present at the ceremony, as a radical Conservative and

³¹ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 1, No. 34, September 8, 1870; Vol. 6, No. 310, January 31, 1876.

³² Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 3, No. 201, December 8, 1873; Vol. 3, No. 202, December 15, 1873; Vol. 6, No. 295, October 11, 1875.

³³ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 3, No. 170, May 5, 1873; Vol. 4, No. 211, February 23, 1874; Vol. 7, No. 364, February 12, 1877.

editor of *Home*.³⁴ The headline and description perfectly captured Hill's other interest during Reconstruction: participation in societies and public gatherings celebrating the historical memory of the Confederacy, the most prominent of which was the Southern Historical Society (SHS).

Founded on May 1, 1869 in New Orleans, the SHS was the brainchild of a group of veterans who expressed the desire to collect and save Confederate papers and artifacts from loss and destruction and also to use them to present a true history of secession, the Civil War, and its aftermath. The organization was also a reaction to Radical Reconstruction, which had been particularly felt in Louisiana, forming "at a time when conservative white southerners were striving to reassert themselves both politically and socially, and power relations in the South were in disarray."³⁵ During the first two months of its existence, the Society appointed regional vice-presidents from the old Confederate states. Hill became the first North Carolina vice president of the SHS, holding the post until he turned it over to Zebulon Vance in August 1873. The Society did not publish its own journal until 1876 but in the meantime sent articles on wartime events and editorials to existing periodicals. In an interesting twist, the SHS for a time had a twenty-page monthly agreement with *Southern Magazine*, the descendent publication of *The Land We Love*.³⁶

Hill also participated in historical societies closer to home, and one of his speeches appeared in the first issue of the *Southern Historical Society Papers* in May 1876. Naturally, Hill published his speech in *Home* first. He addressed the Mecklenburg (North Carolina)

³⁴ "The Lost Cause Not Dead," *New York Times*, May 11, 1876; "S" (probably Randolph Shotwell filling in for Hill), *The Southern Home*, Vol. 7, No. 326, May 22, 1876.

³⁵ Richard D. Starnes, "Forever Faithful: The Southern Historical Society and Confederate Historical Memory," *Southern Cultures* 2, No. 2 (Winter 1996): 177.

³⁶ "The Southern Historical Society: Its Origins and History," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 18 (1890): 362-364 (hereafter cited as *SHSP*); Starnes, "Forever Faithful," 178.

Historical Society on the question of why so few residents had attempted to write a history of the great events of the state. His thesis was that Southerners were not culturally inclined to write literature, practice science, or wax sentimental on history when there were practical matters at hand. Rather, the rural South excelled at politics and soldiering while the more urban North concentrated on accumulating money. Hill went on to give examples of Southern-born soldiers, starting with George Washington, who won battles in every war from the American Revolution to the Civil War. In the case of the last war, the conduct of such men as General George Thomas and President Abraham Lincoln proved to Hill that capable Southern-born officers and politicians helped the Union win. He also explained how most presidents to that point in the nation's history hailed from the South and how Southern statesmen were deeply involved in drafting the country's major political documents. If Southern politicians were often hot-headed and quick to speak, Hill wrote, at least they did not steal or get caught up in rings, as was the case with many in President Grant's inner circle. The South was making progress throwing off the Republican yoke, he told his audience, but in order to turn the corner they all needed to put in charge "Southern gentlemen, honorable, high-toned men of strict integrity and *straight hair*."³⁷

Hill on occasion travelled outside the Charlotte area to give speeches and attend commemorations. He spoke to the Orange County Grange about the superiority of agricultural societies, and went down to Furman College in South Carolina to address the Literary Society, where he confidently predicted that Confederate history would someday become American history. In late 1875 he journeyed to Richmond to see the statue of his famous brother-in-law Thomas Jackson unveiled on the State Capitol grounds. Hill became

³⁷ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 7, No. 321, April 17, 1876; Hill, "Address to the Mecklenburg County (N.C.) Historical Society," *SHSP* 1 (May 1876): 389-398.

involved in local Centennial observances in 1875 and 1876 (North Carolina claimed the Mecklenburg Declaration of 1775 as the predecessor to the Declaration of Independence). His old brigadier Jubal Early even invited him to become president of the North Carolina wing of the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia.³⁸ All of these activities spoke to Hill's life-long interest in history and education as well as his determination to sustain Southern and Confederate heritage against what he perceived as tyrannical Federal authority and the breakdown of civil society.

Although Hill spent most of the 1870s disengaged from his Civil War controversies and specific campaign narratives, he continued to correspond with his former peers in arms, further reinforcing the construction of historical memory among veterans. After a long period of silence, no doubt enhanced by differing political views, James Longstreet wrote Hill a couple of times to ask for his help with historical accounts of battles in which they both participated. Joe Johnston kept his former subordinate up to date on his family and jobs but also brought up as a point of discussion how he disagreed with some of the details of the battle narratives being published by the SHS. Hill also kept in contact with Early regarding politics and SHS business, especially after the former became president of the Society.³⁹ Hill would continue to correspond with these three gentlemen over the next decade as each

³⁸ D.H. Hill, "Brethren of Orange County Grange" and "Ladies and gentlemen of my native state and Gentlemen of the Literary Societies of Furman University," undated, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives; Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 6, No. 298, November 1, 1875, and Vol. 6, No. 268, April 5, 1875; Jubal Early to D.H. Hill, February 27, 1871, D.H. Hill Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

³⁹ James Longstreet to D.H. Hill, May 13, 1875 and November 5, 1877, and Joseph Johnston to D.H. Hill, September 24, 1872 and December 21, 1875, D.H. Hill Papers, Library of Virginia; D.H. Hill to Jubal Early, March 20, 1871 and September 28, 1875, Papers of Jubal Anderson Early, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

wrangled with how to preserve and present their memories of the war to each other and a wider audience.

The end of Reconstruction signaled another major life change for Hill and his family. Having mulled over offers from different institutions in the past decade, he decided to accept the post of President of Arkansas Industrial University in Fayetteville, one of the new land-grant universities established by the Morrill Act of 1862. Hill prepared to turn over *Home*, feeling confident that his paper had made a difference in educating and mobilizing its subscribers to become active opponents of Republican policies and the moral bankruptcy he believed plagued the nation. He was most proud of his accomplishments at the local and state level and sincerely enjoyed interacting with his readers and contributors. In a farewell address published July 30, 1877, Hill, with characteristic confidence in his sense of right and wrong, remarked, “I do not regret my zeal for the truth, but do regret that I have not been able to strike heavier blows in its behalf.”⁴⁰ Considering the battle over Reconstruction won, he thought the time was right to move on to the next challenge. Hill signed off by saying, “I wish for each and all of [my patrons] a long, useful and happy life, and a blissful end when the duties and trials of earth shall come to a close.”⁴¹ In private, Hill still had concerns about the future of the United States and the South’s role in it, especially as his oldest children reached adulthood, married, and built their own lives. His decision to become a university president in part reflected his constant commitment to the education of those who would build the New South, albeit according to his and his peers conception of a white, middle-class, morally stable republic.

⁴⁰ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 7, No. 388, July 30, 1877.

⁴¹ Hill, *The Southern Home*, Vol. 7, No. 388, July 30, 1877.

CHAPTER XII

EDUCATING THE SOUTH: UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT AND LOST CAUSE CHRONICLER¹

On September 1, 1877, Daniel Harvey Hill and his family arrived in Fayetteville, Arkansas, to the tune of the local band and were cordially welcomed by the citizens. At age fifty-six, Hill's hair was only starting to turn gray.² The ensuing three years proved to be some of the most satisfying of his life as he helped build the fledging Arkansas Industrial University (AIU, the future University of Arkansas) into a respected institution and his family settled comfortably into the local community. Starting in 1881, however, a series of personal and professional setbacks started to affect Hill and partially dim his fighting spirit. His underlying views on cherished topics from historical memory to education to religious and familial duty stayed constant, but his strenuous advocacy of them diminished due to the realities of local politics, economy, and his own failing health. By the mid 1880s, he little resembled the man who addressed the Fayetteville crowd that summer day in 1877: his hair had turned fully gray and white. Hill enjoyed a renaissance of sorts during his last years through a number of well-received public speeches and magazine articles on the late war and Southern history. Nevertheless, until nearly his last breath he entertained doubts about the

¹ Parts of this chapter previously appeared in Brit Kimberly Erslev, "Controversy and Crusade: Daniel Harvey Hill and the Shaping of Reputation and Historical Memory" (Master's Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007).

² Details of Hill's arrival in Fayetteville are taken from Hal Bridges, "D.H. Hill and Higher Education in the New South," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 15 (1956): 107. Compared to Charlotte, North Carolina, Fayetteville in 1877 was still a rather remote town; several years passed before a railroad line reached its residents.

security of the family name, which was a reflection of his fatherly devotion and his lifelong inculcation in the notions of duty, honor, identity, and memory.

AIU was barely five years old when Hill became its third president, and the opportunity to mold a new institution of higher Southern education into an entity more in accordance with his views was likely what convinced him to move his family almost halfway across the United States. Personal finances were certainly still an issue. Hill requested a guarantee in writing from AIU's board of visitors concerning his salary of \$3,000 per year.³ As Hill found out upon taking office, the school suffered from its own financial woes; money lay at the heart of all of the problems he tackled as president. The Arkansas state legislature barely appropriated funds in time for the school to open before the Morrill Act deadline of 1872 and since then had not provided much money to establish additional academic departments. The enrollment for the 1877-1878 school year stood at 256, significantly below peer schools in the South, and this number included the preparatory department.⁴ There were only seven faculty members, leaving Hill on his own to head the unwieldy department that included mental and moral science, political economy, and civil polity. He not only needed to be able to offer several types of degrees in order to attract more students, male and female, he needed to establish agricultural and mechanical classes and facilities in order to fulfill Morrill Act intentions and state guidelines.⁵

³ Unknown correspondent from AIU to Hill, June 26, 1877, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, NCSA); Bridges, "D.H. Hill and Higher Education," 109.

⁴ Most high school graduates in Arkansas and other Southern states were ill prepared to take college-level courses right away; such was the simple reality of the public school system at the time, which necessitated Hill keeping AIU's preparatory department. See Bridges, "D.H. Hill and Higher Education," 110-112, for background on academic standards in the South after the Civil War.

⁵ John Hugh Reynolds and David Yancey Thomas, *History of the University of Arkansas* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 1910), 111-113, 121.

In order to address these challenges, Hill lobbied the Arkansas legislature on an annual basis during its budgeting sessions and throughout the year worked with his faculty and the board of visitors to smooth out administrative issues. He wrote several fellow university presidents and distinguished professors across the South, soliciting their advice on salaries, state funding, and curriculum.⁶ This action, ironically, meant that Hill looked for models in schools with classical liberal arts curriculums which he had previously criticized as failing to adequately prepare Southern men for war. He used the information he compiled as leverage to convince the state legislature and the college board of what AIU needed to do to compete with other institutions, especially given the concern that Arkansas youth were choosing to attend schools outside their home state. Hill's efforts paid off; Arkansans respected his military and academic experience and he won many friends across the state. By 1880, AIU enrolled 450 students between its college and preparatory schools, added two faculty members, and secured increases in appropriations for departments and the library. The collegiate department also became tuition-free for Arkansas residents and the board took additional measures to provide for indigent students so that they were more likely to finish their degrees.⁷ A flattering newspaper profile written sometime between 1879 and 1880 lauded Hill's ancestry and his lifelong dedication to duty and public service. The writer chose to quote, of all people, U.S. Grant, who while visiting Little Rock, Arkansas, allegedly said he was glad to hear that Hill was succeeding at AIU and that he was a man of "very firm,

⁶ See for example A.H. Colquitt to Hill, December 6, 1878 (regarding Georgia schools), R.A. Hardaway to Hill, August 18, 1879 (regarding Auburn), Francis Smith to Hill, September 24, 1879 (regarding VMI), and William W. Folwell to Hill, November 4, 1879 (regarding University of Minnesota), all in Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁷ Reynolds and Thomas, 111-113, 116, 121.

decided character—thoroughly upright and conscientious.”⁸ One can only imagine what Hill thought of that comment from a man he despised.

Not surprisingly, during his tenure at AIU Hill also introduced two of the same initiatives that he had at Davidson College: the demerit system (enforced by a student and faculty-led monitorial system) and mandatory church attendance, in this case Sunday school. As two of the school’s early historians put it, Hill’s tenure “was characterized with the Christian spirit.”⁹ Discipline remained his watchword; one of the first actions he took during the 1877 fall term was to expel several male students for drunkenness. This would not have been so noteworthy had some of the young men not been members of prominent Arkansas families. By not backing down and again drawing corollaries with other universities, Hill convinced the school’s trustees that he and the rest of the faculty should exclusively handle the school’s internal affairs concerning curriculum and discipline.¹⁰

Despite the occasional disciplinary event and everyday challenges of running a university, Hill grew to love his students and took very seriously his role in preparing them for survival in the postbellum United States. “Knowledge is power,” he told the seven graduating seniors of the Class of 1881, and he expected great things from them, but he also warned the young men that success at AIU did not automatically bring riches. Most important was the “perseverance and pertinacity” they had exhibited as students and which would serve them in good stead as adults. He pointed out that two famous men of the era, Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and British Prime Minister William Gladstone,

⁸ Sketch of D.H. Hill, circa 1879-1880, unknown newspaper, Isabel Arnold Display Book, Jackson-Arnold Collection, Russell-Arnold Archives, Presbyterian College, Clinton, South Carolina (hereafter cited as J-A Collection, Presbyterian).

⁹ Reynolds and Thomas, 117.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

possessed these qualities. Finally, Hill told the graduates to be true to themselves for their good deeds would reflect upon their reputation.¹¹ Hill offered advice based on his own life experience and the principles of duty and honor which had guided his moral compass for many years.

Events, many beyond Hill's control, started to arrest some of the progress he made in his first few years as president. Backed by the governor, the Board of Visitors in 1880 drew attention to the overwhelming preponderance of local trustees on the school board. Behind this action was a concern that local interests would win out over those of the rest of the state which the university allegedly served, thereby hurting the school's reputation state-wide and keeping standards lower than they should be. Hill likely sympathized with these concerns but practically he could not suddenly raise academic standards or else he would attract fewer qualified students. A group of students in fact protested the high grading standards of one professor. Although Hill at first backed his colleague, he tended to side with the students, in one instance allowing two boys who had failed to come back to school. As these controversies dragged on for a couple of years, attendance gradually fell to 363 students by 1884, blamed at the time not only on the academic standards issue but on a smallpox epidemic and a regional drought. Despite increases in state funding, Hill had little means with which to establish the agricultural and mechanical programs, and he found that students were little interested in taking those types of classes anyway.¹² In sum, Hill dealt with problems universal to school presidents in the New South: widespread poverty and the desire

¹¹ D.H. Hill, "Class of 1881," undated speech, Hill Papers, NCSA.

¹² Reynolds and Thomas, 115, 118-119, 121. As of June 1880, AIU offered courses in classics, Latin letters, modern languages, English letters, normal, scientific, agricultural, civil engineering, and mining engineering, with corresponding degrees. Half of the courses, therefore, consisted of more "traditional" university subjects; Hill commented that he had to offer these classes in part to attract female students who were not interested in math and science.

of students to seek degrees in subjects which had previously been the ticket to upward mobility, not necessarily those which steered them toward agriculture and mechanical trades.

Hill might have ploughed through these difficulties but for a double misfortune that hit him in 1881. His beloved youngest daughter Harriet passed away suddenly from diphtheria while visiting relatives in North Carolina. Neither Hill nor Isabella ever fully recovered from the shock of their daughter's sudden, untimely death; three years later, he wrote of the event to close friend and wartime aide Archer Anderson as if it had happened yesterday.¹³ To make matters worse, Hill caught pneumonia when he travelled to Little Rock to lobby for AIU's annual appropriation. For the lowest amount of funding that he secured during his tenure as president, he contracted an illness that permanently affected his health. For the rest of his life, he complained of chills and fatigue in addition to his chronic back pain.

By 1882, critics within and outside of Fayetteville started to speak out against Hill, and the result was a free-flowing public debate that not only affected daily operations at AIU but crossed state lines. Although Hill had initially advocated more faculty control of everyday matters, he started to align himself more with certain members of the boards of visitors and trustees. He felt that the new, younger faculty members, mostly graduates of older eastern universities like Virginia, were hypocrites for advocating higher academic standards while ignoring moral education and student misconduct outside of the classroom.¹⁴ As usual, Hill did not hesitate to fire back at his detractors; he published editorials in at least two Arkansas newspapers arguing that AIU was doing just fine compared to other schools,

¹³ D.H. Hill to Archer Anderson, Aug 11, 1884, Archer Anderson Collection, Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter cited as Anderson Collection, MOC).

¹⁴ Reynolds and Thomas, 122-123; Bridges, "D.H. Hill and Higher Education," 119.

and in fact boasted the largest student population of all land grant colleges if one counted departments in satellite campuses. He could not help but indulge in his requisite sarcasm when he admonished his detractors to “dry their tears, anoint their heads and wash their faces and put away their habiliments of woe.”¹⁵ In another article, Hill published statistics showing that only forty-one young men were attending college outside of Arkansas, despite claims that more were leaving, but blamed the state for not doing enough to educate and retain its own talent.¹⁶ The charges and countercharges resulted in 1883 in a state-mandated reorganization of the board of trustees and the abandonment of Hill’s mandatory Sunday school. After these events, one of Hill’s key allies, A.W. Dinsmore of the Board of Trustees, wrote the editor of the San Francisco *Bulletin* in September 1883 to correct the allegation that Hill was unpopular among the student body and noted that both his organization and the Board of Visitors had recently unanimously endorsed their president’s actions.¹⁷

Hill, worn out by the combined effects of job-related stress, pneumonia, and his daughter’s death, tried to resign the presidency in the spring of 1882, but Dinsmore and others on the Board convinced him to stay. At one point he considered moving to Texas to continue teaching at the university level without the hassle of administrative duties.¹⁸ Even when away for a much needed break with daughter Eugenia’s family in San Diego in the summer of 1883, Hill continued to worry about the growing controversy at AIU. He wrote daughter Nancy and son Joseph about misinformation in the press regarding declining

¹⁵ Excerpt of editorial by D.H. Hill (originally in Fayetteville *Sentinel*), newspaper title unknown, date unknown, D.H. Hill Papers, Library of Virginia (hereafter cited as Hill Papers, LOV).

¹⁶ Editorial by D.H. Hill, Arkansas *Democrat*, date unknown, Hill Papers, LOV.

¹⁷ Reynolds and Thomas, 123; Editorial by A.W. Dinsmore, San Francisco *Bulletin*, September 26, 1883, Hill Papers, LOV.

¹⁸ L.S. Junkin to Hill, May 25, 1882, Hill Papers, NCSA. Hill was a candidate for a faculty position at the University of Texas.

enrollment and told Joseph to get a copy of his 1882 presidential report to the local paper.¹⁹ The last straw for Hill was a January, 1884, incident in which five students physically attacked one of their own for reporting their disorderly after-hours conduct in accordance with the monitorial system. Hill disagreed with the rest of the faculty and some of the trustees over if and how the accused should be punished, and the case dragged on until June when the students received some demerits but were allowed to stay. In February Hill submitted his resignation, giving the governor as his formal reason his declining health, but he agreed to serve out the rest of the semester before leaving Fayetteville in June.²⁰

Editorialists within and outside Arkansas lamented Hill's departure. One claimed that the event was "nothing short of a calamity" for AIU and cited a similarly sympathetic article in the New Orleans *Picayune*. A Fayetteville paper expressed the feelings of those who not only admired Hill's academic work but hated to see him leave because "many of us have learned to love and admire him as a man, and his presence and his influence will be sadly missed in our community."²¹ All provided a biographical sketch of the retired general emphasizing his military and academic accomplishments, providing support to Hill's reputation in which he could take comfort and pride.²² Joseph, who remained in Arkansas as a lawyer and judge, later claimed that well into the twentieth century former students of his

¹⁹ Hill to Joseph Hill, June 25, 1883, and Hill to Nancy Hill, June 28, 1883, Daniel Harvey Hill (Jr.) Papers, 1883-1955, North Carolina State University Special Collections Research Center.

²⁰ Reynolds and Thomas, 125-126.

²¹ "Gen. D.H. Hill. Resigns the Presidency of the State University," (unknown city) *Gazette*, date unknown; "General Hill Resigns" (editorial also quoting New Orleans *Picayune*), newspaper title unknown, date unknown; "General Hill's Resignation," newspaper title unknown, date unknown, all in Isabel Arnold Display Book, J-A Collection, Presbyterian.

²² In a letter to one of his sons (likely Joseph) in 1882, Hill acknowledged the praise he received from Arkansans for his work at AIU but admitted the comments made him nervous: Hill to "My Dear Boy," June 16, 1882, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, United States Army Heritage Collection, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

father used to tell him about the deep influence Hill had on their lives.²³ Hill in turn always cherished his Arkansas students but he nevertheless remained bitter about the whole experience, telling a neighbor that the trustees who opposed him were “stupid and unprincipled” and “ignorant and vicious.”²⁴ The Hills moved to Macon, Georgia, where they hoped to rest and recover in a milder climate while being closer again to family, and where he counted on having more time to start his memoirs and write articles about his Civil War experiences.

Hill’s hiatus in Arkansas did not completely divorce him from his participation in the construction of Southern historical memory, but with his time-consuming AIU duties and health issues he simply did not engage as much in war-related discussions until he moved back east. He corresponded with James Longstreet from time to time about articles Longstreet was writing, with Hill expressing the wish that his former colleague would vindicate his role at Seven Pines.²⁵ When Hill “reappeared” on the scene in 1884, he found an environment newly ripened for debate. As Rutherford B. Hayes’ election to the presidency in 1877 ushered in the end of Reconstruction and a spirit of national reconciliation, more Americans became interested in reading about Civil War battles and celebrating the veterans of the conflict. During this decade, as David Blight elegantly states, “Soldiers’ memory may have been more in a stage of incubation than hibernation—stored and unsettled, more

²³ Joseph M. Hill, *Biography of Daniel Harvey Hill, Lieutenant General, Confederate States of America: Educator, Author, Editor* (Little Rock: Arkansas History Commission, n.d.), 33-35.

²⁴ Quoted in Bridges, “D.H. Hill and Higher Education,” 122.

²⁵ See for example Longstreet to Hill, November 28, 1877, Hill Papers, NCSA, and Hill to Longstreet, August 29, 1879, James Longstreet Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University (hereafter cited as Longstreet Papers, Duke).

festering than sleeping, and growing into a cultural force.”²⁶ As the first issue of the *Southern Historical Society Papers (SHSP)* in 1876 attested to, former Confederates were ready and willing to impose their views on an increasingly sympathetic white audience. As memory and reputational entrepreneurs in their own right, the editors took on the responsibility of publishing articles “with the firm conviction that those who are interested in vindicating the truth of Confederate History will sustain the enterprise and make it a complete success.”²⁷

During the 1880s, the *SHSP* increasingly focused on contemporary commemorations and “the relation of Confederate historical memory to current events,” but the journal also continued to publish articles about wartime occurrences.²⁸ It became the platform for renewed public discussion of the Lost Dispatch and Chickamauga through battle reports and reunion speeches. The *SHSP* republished Breckinridge’s report of Chickamauga in April 1879, followed four years later by those of Bragg, Longstreet, and Simon Buckner. In 1884 and 1885, the journal published nine more official reports, but Hill’s was not among them. There could be many reasons for this, but Hill appears not to have cared, for none of the reports criticized him and initially he was too consumed with school duties and controversies to respond.

Archer Anderson’s keynote speech to the annual reunion of the Virginia Division of the Army of Northern Virginia (ANV) Association, printed in the *SHSP*, went far to alleviate any concerns Hill might have had. Anderson’s 1881 address was titled, “Campaign and

²⁶ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 150.

²⁷ *Southern Historical Society Papers* 1 (Jan 1876): 39 (hereafter cited as *SHSP* with volume number).

²⁸ Richard D. Starnes, “Forever Faithful: The Southern Historical Society and Confederate Historical Memory,” *Southern Cultures* 2, No. 2 (Winter 1996): 189.

Battle of Chickamauga.”²⁹ Speaking extemporaneously, he invoked the language of chivalry to describe how Longstreet and the “romantic presence” of his Virginia-based troops rescued the Army of Tennessee. He brought attention to how Hill had also come from the Army of Northern Virginia, describing him as “a stern and dauntless soldier . . . whose vigor, coolness and unconquerable pertinacity in fight had already stamped him as a leader of heroic temper.”³⁰ In speaking of operations at McLemore’s Cove, Anderson laid the blame fully on Bragg, claiming that the general “frittered away a brilliant opportunity;” he mentioned no other names in acknowledging that the operation could have succeeded.³¹ Of the communications issues of the morning of September 20, 1863, he was also vague, summing up the late start as the product of “annoying miscarriages” that at least allowed the soldiers to get some food in their empty stomachs.³² After complementing the élan of the troops at Chickamauga, Anderson foreshadowed the troubles ahead, but he spoke with a neutral tone about the Confederacy, with no reference to the command fallout or additional comments about Bragg’s leadership.

The audience received Anderson’s speech favorably, and it was not until a year and a half later that one of Bragg’s former cavalry commanders sent a response to the *SHSP* taking issue with the characterization of the commanding general. Former Confederate Major General Will Martin provided more detail than Anderson about McLemore’s Cove and

²⁹ The *SHSP* reprinted each annual address of the Virginia Division in its pages and as a separate pamphlet. The names listed in the proceedings of the reunions compared to the membership of the SHS show much overlap, of which the most obvious is the first *SHSP* editor, Rev. J. William Jones.

³⁰ Col. Archer Anderson, “Annual Reunion of the Virginia Division A.N. Va. Association—Address of Col. Archer Anderson on the Campaign and Battle of Chickamauga,” *SHSP* 9 (September, 1881): 387 & 390.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 397.

³² *Ibid.*, 410.

implied that Hill could have done more to help the situation.³³ Aside from this article and another one generally critical of all the senior commanders at Chickamauga, no one cast any sort of blame on Hill for the outcome of the campaign.³⁴ If Hill was concerned, it benefited him to keep quiet and let Bragg (deceased since 1876) take the heat. Indeed, he was pleased with Anderson's address, declaring it "the best account ever given of Chickamauga [sic]," and asked his former adjutant to send a copy to Harvey Junior, whom he had appointed his executor and keeper of his important personal papers."³⁵

Things changed in 1884, when the *SHSP* published former Confederate Brigadier General Bradley T. Johnson's "Address on the First Maryland Campaign," the keynote address of that year's Virginia Division of the ANV Association Reunion. Johnson provided a narrative of both the Union and Confederate actions in the fall of 1862. When he came to the Lost Dispatch, he wrote:

General McClellan says this order fell into his hands. The Count of Paris states that it was picked up from the corner of a table in the house, which had served as headquarters to the Confederate General, D.H. Hill. A story current in Frederick is, that General Hill sat for sometime at the corner of Market and Patrick streets inspecting the march of his column as it moved by, and was observed to drop a paper from his pocket, which was picked up as soon as he left, and delivered to McClellan on his arrival on the 13th. It was a copy of Special Order No. 191, which had been sent by Jackson to D.H. Hill, and was as follows:" (transcript of S.O. 191)³⁶

Johnson referred to a history of the war written in 1876 by the Comte de Paris, who along with many Europeans had traveled to the United States to observe the opposing armies between 1861 and 1865.

³³ General W.T. Martin, "A Defence of General Bragg's conduct at Chickamauga," *SHSP* 11 (1883): 203.

³⁴ Maj. W.W. Carnes, "Chickamauga," *SHSP* 14 (1886): 398-407.

³⁵ Hill to Archer Anderson, January 25, 1882, Anderson Collection, MOC.

³⁶ General Bradley T. Johnson, "Address on the First Maryland Campaign," *SHSP* 12 (1884): 519-20.

Not surprisingly, Hill could not remain quiet about an incident he thought he had long ago put to rest, and, having just left AIU, he had the time and energy to respond to Johnson's accusations. In Macon, Hill was already working on an article for the *Century* magazine about Chickamauga as part of his effort to capture recollections about the war. First, however, he sent to the *SHSP* "The Lost Dispatch—Letter from General D. H. Hill," dated January 22, 1885. After first observing that Johnson presented two different theories of the loss of the order in the same paragraph, Hill reminded readers of his exposé of Edward Pollard seventeen years previously. Hill's adjutant general, James W. Ratchford, had certified that the general's headquarters never received S.O. 191 from Robert E. Lee. Furthermore, Hill had occupied a tent, not a house, near Frederick. He then disputed Johnson's claim that the Confederates could have captured Washington and Baltimore and brought about circumstances leading to peace and independence. Lee never mentioned this aim at all in his reports, Hill argued—only that of holding on with the depleted Army of Northern Virginia until it got too cold for the Federals to move into Virginia.³⁷

"I have thought that McClellan lost rather than gained by the capture of order No. 191," Hill continued, reviving the claim that had so disturbed Lee in 1868.³⁸ McClellan and his commanders were quite simply misled by the number of rebel troops that were supposed to be at South Mountain. "To assert that the Federals were not under some delusion as to our numbers is to charge them with an imbecility unexampled in modern warfare," declared Hill. He concluded that "[t]his delusion could only have been caused by the captured order."³⁹ The

³⁷ "The Lost Dispatch—Letter from General D.H. Hill," *SHSP* 13 (1885): 420-21. Lee states his purpose in his report of the Maryland Campaign: August 19, 1863, *OR*, 19 (1): 144.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 421.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 422.

rest of his letter compared the Maryland Campaign with Gettysburg, arguing that Lee had more troops the second time around and no lost dispatch to contend with, yet the results were much worse. Very complimentary of Lee's generalship and the soldiers under his command, Hill took a swipe at Johnson by stating that Lee "did not look round to find a scape-goat...Let all who admire his greatness imitate his noble example."⁴⁰

Once again, public speculation about Hill's military reputation had put him on the defensive during a time when he was still recovering from a trying experience which had called his academic reputation into question. In particular, he was perturbed at the popularity and influence of Virginia veterans concerning the historical record of the Civil War. Ten years earlier, Hill commented to William Graham, "I think that some effort should be made to get a correct Confederate history of our State written. North Carolina did the fighting & Virginia has written the history & from that history, it is difficult to discover that our State took any part in the Confederate struggle."⁴¹ State bias aside, Hill was correct in his assessment of the Virginia influence. His friend Jubal Early carefully cultivated the image of Lee and Jackson as preeminent war commanders through his own publications, speeches, and early involvement in the Southern Historical Society. He focused discussion of the war on the eastern theater of operations, calling the defense of Richmond the key to the Confederacy: it was no coincidence that the *SHSP* were published in that city.⁴² Early and his fellow Virginians particularly criticized James Longstreet, who had the audacity to join the Republican Party. Refusing to ascribe fault to Lee, they cast about for someone to blame for

⁴⁰ "The Lost Dispatch—Letter from General D.H. Hill," *SHSP* 13 (1885): 423.

⁴¹ D.H. Hill to William Graham, April 28, 1875, William A. Graham Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁴² Gary W. Gallagher, "Jubal Early, the Lost Cause, and Civil War History: A Persistent Legacy," in *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 40-43.

Confederate failure during the third day at Gettysburg, and found him in Longstreet, who had not only allegedly disobeyed Lee's orders, but had spoken out against his former commander. Throughout the 1880s, the pages of the *SHSP* were full of articles and reports about Gettysburg; to former Confederates, this was by far a more important debacle than either the Lost Dispatch or Chickamauga. Debate over Gettysburg ensured that Longstreet, unlike Hill, was eventually pushed out of the southern cultural archives by former colleagues who feared he would taint Lee's ascendance as the saint of Confederate warriors.⁴³

Nevertheless, Hill found in Longstreet a sympathetic ear concerning the Virginia bias. He started corresponding with Longstreet again in 1884 about the facts of Chickamauga and the Seven Days battles around Richmond in 1862. In February, 1885, shortly after Hill issued his rebuttal, he addressed Longstreet about Bradley Johnson's speech. "The Virginians in order to glorify Lee assume that he would have conquered a peace, but for my carelessness," he complained bitterly.⁴⁴ Hill was certain that he did not lose the order and that the loss was beneficial to Lee. After spending a great deal of the letter providing Longstreet with information for the article he was writing for the *Century* and promising more to come, Hill wrote, "I confine myself today to the lost order, because I do hope that you will set that matter right. The vanity of the Virginians has made them glorify their own prowess & to deify Lee. They made me the scape-goat for Maryland and you for Pennsylvania."⁴⁵ He

⁴³ Thomas L. Connelly and Barbara L. Bellows, *God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 30-37; Jeffrey D. Wert, "James Longstreet and the Lost Cause," *The Myth of the Lost Cause*, ed. Gallagher and Nolan, 129-32. For a monograph on Longstreet's roles in the Lost Cause, see William Garrett Piston, *Lee's Tarnished Lieutenant: James Longstreet and His Place in Southern History* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1987). These works also explain how modern historians have treated Longstreet.

⁴⁴ D.H. Hill to James Longstreet, February 11, 1885, Longstreet Papers, Duke.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

continued in the same vein a few months later when he reported that Jones had attacked Longstreet's record in what was another effort at "the deification of Lee by the Virginia people."⁴⁶ Hill at this point felt like he was doubly under siege: from the Virginian academics and their allies at AIU as well as Virginia military veterans. He perceived his place in the southern cultural archives and as a spokesman for the South to be in danger.

As Hill worked on his response to Johnson, he also sent angry letters to the editor of the Arkansas *Gazette* and other papers regarding the conduct of faculty and certain trustees in the previous year's hazing affair. His friends in the state legislature likely helped bring the editorials to the floor, for by the end of March 1885 the politicians had investigated the affair and decided to reorganize the entire AIU faculty.⁴⁷ Hill must have taken satisfaction from afar when he heard that all of the professors had been fired. Now he could turn his attention back to an accurate portrayal of his wartime record and related events.

Hill may not have gotten along with some Virginia members of the Society but that did not keep him from contributing to the *SHSP* throughout the 1880s. In fact, he was the keynote speaker at the ANV Association the year after Johnson, lecturing on "The Confederate Soldier in the Ranks."⁴⁸ In this speech, Hill mastered the art of playing to his audience while defending himself and the Confederacy, all through a celebration of the proud soldier. He heaped praise upon famous Virginian historical figures and the sacrifices of the state's residents during the Civil War. He subtly criticized the indiscipline of the troops and blamed their officers for such, then turned the argument around to the relative lack of

⁴⁶ D.H. Hill to James Longstreet, May 21, 1885, Longstreet Papers, Duke.

⁴⁷ Bridges, "D.H. Hill and Higher Education," 123.

⁴⁸ *The Confederate Soldier in the Ranks: An Address by Major-General D. H. Hill of North Carolina, before the Virginia Division of the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia* (Richmond: Wm. Ellis Jones, Book and Job Printer, 1885); also reprinted in *SHSP* 13 (1885): 259-77.

Confederate resources as a cause for both. In light of recent interest in Seven Pines, Hill discussed his division's role in the battle, taking care to say that the unit captured the Union redoubt and camp with no assistance. He continued in a similar vein about South Mountain, stopping to point out about the Lost Dispatch, "I must disclaim here, as ever before, that I was the loser of it." In the last third of the speech Hill went into an excruciating analysis of the numbers in Lee's and McClellan's armies to demonstrate how well the Confederate soldier fought at Antietam despite being heavily outnumbered. Wrapping up with a tribute to Lee and Jackson, Hill was, as the *SHSP* related, "vociferously applauded as he took his seat, and was warmly congratulated on his speech."⁴⁹ The lecture was the best public rebuttal of a critic that Hill could ask for, and it demonstrated his skill at crafting a complex argument that served the multiple purposes of showcasing his support for the Lost Cause and defending his role in Confederate history.

In the meantime, the *Century* became the new print outlet for Hill, Longstreet, and other veterans to spread their views outside the Virginia-dominated publications to a national audience. Based out of New York City, the nationally-distributed magazine invited former generals to contribute to the "Century War Series" for the purpose of "interesting veterans in their own memories and of instructing the generation which has grown up since the War for the Union."⁵⁰ Under the editorship of Robert Johnson and Clarence Buel, the three year long series (November 1884-November 1887) published one article from a Union veteran and one from a Confederate veteran in each issue, and in 1887 the editors compiled all of the entries

⁴⁹ *SHSP* 13 (1885): 276.

⁵⁰ "Preface," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War I*, ed. Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (New York: The Century Company, 1884-1888/Castle Books, 1956), ix (hereafter cited as *Battles and Leaders* with volume number). All citations are from *Battles and Leaders*, with editors' notes, and not the original *Century* magazine articles.

into a four volume set entitled *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*. The series purposely avoided politics (in theory at least) and promoted reconciliation through a focus on “shared battle experiences,” and the authors liberally used reports from the newly compiled *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* to flesh out their narratives.⁵¹

Hill wrote several articles for the series, one of the first being “The Battle of South Mountain, or Boonsboro’,” published in May, 1885. He may have been working on the article for several months, depending on when the editors solicited input from him, but in timing it was another rebuttal to Bradley Johnson. Hill alluded to the Lost Dispatch in the opening sentence of his second paragraph when he stated that “The battle of South Mountain was one of extraordinary illusions and delusions.”⁵² Following the format of other narratives, he detailed the actions of September 14, 1862, on the Union and Confederate sides, with a tally of casualties at the end. In the middle of his article, however, he interposed a one page discussion of the Lost Dispatch to explain “the extraordinary caution of the Federals” that day.⁵³ Hill reiterated how two decades previously he had proved that he did not lose the order, as well as the old assertion that McClellan believed Longstreet to be closer to South Mountain than he really was. The editors added notes at the bottom of the page about a letter Hill sent to them reaffirming the chain of command through Jackson and the affidavit of Hill’s adjutant general that Lee’s order was never received. Before moving back to the main

⁵¹ “Preface,” *Battles and Leaders* I, ix-xi; Gaines Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, The Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 69-70.

⁵² Daniel H. Hill, “The Battle of South Mountain, or Boonsboro’: Fighting For Time At Turner’s and Fox’s Gaps,” *Battles and Leaders* II, 559.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 569.

narrative, Hill forcefully restated that “[t]he losing of the dispatch was the saving of Lee’s army.”⁵⁴

Besides sharing opinions with Longstreet, Hill wrote other people for information about the loss of the order much as he had done in the 1860s. One acquaintance, Thomas Moore, attempted to gather information for Hill from a family that lived near Frederick, but with no success. Instead, he lavished praise on Hill for affording him “genuine pleasure” through the South Mountain article.⁵⁵ A month later, Longstreet informed Hill that he had submitted his own article about the Maryland Campaign to the *Century*, saying that he thought his colleague would approve of his discussion of the dispatch.⁵⁶

Hill’s *Century* article appears not to have garnered a specific response in the *SHSP*, but Longstreet’s did when it was published a year later in 1886. Longstreet noted that the lost order had been the subject of “much severe comment by Virginians who have written of the war” and backed Hill’s assertion that he was innocent of losing the document.⁵⁷ He also condoned Hill’s opinion that the dispatch had fooled McClellan at South Mountain.⁵⁸ Colonel William Allan, one of Jackson’s staff officers and the same man to whom Lee had complained about Hill’s 1868 “Lost Dispatch” piece, critically reviewed Longstreet’s article for the *SHSP*. His main criticisms were over factual errors, but he also disapproved of the alleged benefits of the Lost Dispatch. “After defending General D. H. Hill from some imaginary assailant for the loss of the captured dispatch,” Allan wrote, “he [Longstreet]

⁵⁴ Hill, “The Battle of South Mountain,” 570.

⁵⁵ Thomas Moore to D.H. Hill, June 3, 1885, Hill Papers, LOV.

⁵⁶ James Longstreet to D.H. Hill, July 28, 1885, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁵⁷ James Longstreet, “The Invasion of Maryland,” *Battles and Leaders* II, 664.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 665.

adopts, more or less, General Hill's idiosyncrasy in regard to the value of that dispatch to McClellan and its effect upon the fortunes of the campaign."⁵⁹ Allan believed that Hill had never received the order from Lee, but did not speculate on how it was lost, saying that there was no way of finding out what happened at that point. Perhaps speaking for the Society as well as himself, Allan added at the end, "We regret the tone in which General Longstreet speaks of Virginians."⁶⁰

Longstreet could not escape criticism from Virginians even when the subject was other than Gettysburg. He also did not aid his cause by taking a self-important tone in his writings, something that would later cast doubt on his memoirs.⁶¹ Therefore, being associated with Longstreet did not help Hill's military reputation although it does not appear to have unduly damaged it either, for Hill could count on the other general to absorb most of the blows from angry Virginians. Regardless of Longstreet's intervention, Hill felt the need to nip any controversy in the bud, even though Allan, as a representative of the Lee/Virginia camp of Confederate veterans, had already accepted Hill's explanation that he did not lose the dispatch. Johnson came around to this point of view or at the very least reconciled with Hill, since he invited him to give a speech to veterans in Baltimore in 1887.⁶²

⁵⁹ Col. William Allan, "First Maryland Campaign," *SHSP* 14 (1886): 103.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 106 & 118.

⁶¹ See Connelly and Bellows, *God and General Longstreet*, Chapter 1; also Longstreet's memoir, *From Manassas to Appomattox: Memoirs of the Civil War in America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1896/Secaucus, NJ: The Blue and Grey Press, no publication date).

⁶² Hill and Johnson corresponded a few times in 1887 to exchange details about Hill's Baltimore trip. There is no hint of rancor in Hill's side of the correspondence; see Bradley T. Johnson Papers, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University (hereafter cited as Johnson Papers, Duke). However, Hill told son Joseph that he believed Johnson was persuaded to invite him due to pressure on the part of Hill's friends in Baltimore; see Hill to Joseph Hill, July 16, 1887, Hill Family Papers, Mulberry Plantation, Camden, South Carolina.

In addition to entries on South Mountain and the Seven Days Battles, Hill also wrote a long article on Chickamauga for the *Century*. Told in the first person, it described Hill's impression of Bragg throughout the campaign and quoted extensively from official reports. Like his adjutant a few years earlier, Hill blamed Bragg for the failure to attack Federal troops in McLemore's Cove. The main trouble with the commanding general, he claimed, was "first, lack of knowledge of the situation; second, lack of personal supervision of the execution of his orders."⁶³ Hill completely skipped over his actions during the two day period. By contrast, he described in detail his attempts to link up with Bragg and Leonidas Polk the night before the big battle, saying the first time he physically saw Polk's order to attack was in the *SHSP* nineteen years later. Aside from the feeding of the troops, Hill continued, the army was not ready to attack in the morning because Bragg had not performed his own reconnaissance to fix unit location issues or to see the exact disposition of the Union forces to the front.⁶⁴ Hill spent most of the narrative complimenting all of the soldiers involved for their gallantry in battle. In conclusion, he remarked, "Whatever blunders each of us in authority committed before the battles of the 19th and 20th, and during their progress, the great blunder of all was that of not pursuing the enemy on the 21st."⁶⁵

Hill did not mention anything about his quarrel with Bragg or Jefferson Davis, preferring to end his account with a tribute to the soldiers. If he had done so, he would have drawn renewed attention to the controversy over his reputation. Through a national medium outside the control of the Virginia clique, Hill forwarded his own version of Chickamauga, one that was factually accurate if not complete. Nevertheless, the narrative provoked an

⁶³ Daniel H. Hill, "Chickamauga—The Great Battle of the West," in *Battles and Leaders* III, 641-42.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 653.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 662.

angry editorial claiming that Hill blamed Bragg for the course of the battle because he wanted his job. To this Hill replied, “I never once thought of a thing so absurd as becoming Gen Bragg’s successor. Nor did any one ever hear me say one word derogatory of Gen Bragg *until after* “the barren victory” of Chickamauga... All that I did was open & above board from an imperative *sense of duty* & with not the remotest idea of self-aggrandisement [sic].”⁶⁶

By defending himself through the *SHSP* and *Century* articles, Hill reasserted his innocence not only to Confederate veterans but to a national audience. He established himself as a leading spokesman for the Lost Cause while simultaneously defending his own reputation. However, he very nearly damaged his military reputation in the long run. For people like William Allan, who championed the memory of Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia in the 1880s, the possibility that the Lost Dispatch did some good for the Confederates diminished the valor of the troops who had fought tooth and nail against the Federal army in Maryland. Many agreed that Hill and his troops had performed gallantly at South Mountain, buying time for Stonewall Jackson and the other divisions of the army to take Harpers Ferry and regroup at Sharpsburg. Ironically, though, Hill very nearly negated his unit’s accomplishment by stating that the soldiers could have been swept off the mountain by the Yankee hordes had McClellan not known about S.O. 191. In this sense, Hill did not realize how this part of his dispatch story ran counter to the mainstream memory of soldierly courage and sacrifice, a narrative he otherwise fully supported through his writings and speeches. A man intensely committed to his soldiers, Hill was able to believe that when he defended himself, he was defending them as well, in his role as a representative of the noble southern cause that defended hearth and home. He saw no conflict between what he

⁶⁶ D.H. Hill to Editor of *Picayune*, August 18, 1887, Hill Papers, NCSA (emphasis mine).

advocated in terms of the tactical and operational advantages of the Lost Dispatch with the avoidable casualties of South Mountain. Hill fully subscribed to the linkage of masculine courage on the battlefield with honor, and most obviously, its reception in terms of reputation.⁶⁷ This aspect justified both his pride in his soldiers' performance and blinded him to the troublesome implications of his argument.

Hill's counterfactual scenario was not unrealistic, except in perhaps overestimating McClellan's ability to act forcefully against an enemy whose numbers he tended to inflate. The point was that Confederate veterans did not see any use in dragging up "might have beens" when the nation was basking in the reconciliationist glow of the 1880s. A northern friend and West Point classmate even warned Hill about discussing controversial topics in the newspapers. Colonel Theodore Laidley, who periodically looked in on Hill's physician son Randolph in New York City, wrote the general: "The mass of the Northern people do not expect you to regret your action in the war, but they do think that it is better not to be always discussing the issues which are past and forever settled."⁶⁸ Perhaps Hill took his advice, for his *Century* article on Chickamauga was more ambivalent in tone. Even so, he got away with criticizing Bragg more than he might have in the pages of the *SHSP*, which Bragg had helped found along with the society itself.⁶⁹ Hill's correspondence with Longstreet also dropped off, for he started to resent the other general taking more credit for battlefield successes,

⁶⁷ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s-1880s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 209.

⁶⁸ Col. T.T.S. Laidley to D.H. Hill, May 22, 1885, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁶⁹ Judith Lee Hallock, *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat, Volume 2* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1991), 264.

especially the Virginia campaigns of the summer of 1862.⁷⁰ Hill realized that Longstreet was no longer a viable reputational entrepreneur for him and in fact was a liability.

Overall, Hill appeared to be in much higher spirits between the years 1885 and 1887. He put the trials of AIU behind him and was persuaded to become a college president yet again, this time at Middle Georgia Military and Agricultural College in Milledgeville. The institution was not properly a college but a secondary school for grades one through twelve that prepared students to enter the University of Georgia system.⁷¹ Hill's military reputation once again helped him secure funding for the school although the college suffered the same financial issues as other Southern institutions.⁷² Harvey Junior, an English professor at the college, took on many of the administrative duties for his father thereby allowing Hill to continue one of his great loves, teaching, as well as writing for the *Century*. The new job was no more lucrative than the last. Hill accepted Bradley Johnson's invitation to come to Baltimore in 1887 in part for the speaking fee and he sold twenty-one acres of property in Arkansas for \$3,000.⁷³ During this period, Isabella consulted specialists for her failing eyesight and Hill continued to worry about her and his five children, who, with the exception of Eugenia, were all starting careers as teachers, doctors, and lawyers and still partly relied on him for income.

⁷⁰ D.H. Hill to Joseph Hill, June 12, 1886, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁷¹ "History," Georgia Military College, http://www.gmc.cc.ga.us/page.php?page_id=107. The school changed its name to Georgia Military College (as it is still known) in 1900, and in the 1920s the state legislature ended the college's affiliation with the state university. It added a junior college division in 1930 and it is designated one of five junior military colleges in the United States.

⁷² Hill to Joseph Hill, July 23, 1886, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁷³ Hill to Bradley Johnson, November 8, 1887, Johnson Papers, Duke; Hill to James Ratchford, June 11, 1886, Hill Family Papers, Mulberry; Copy of Contract of January 7, 1887, Hill Papers, NCSA.

Hill was excited to give his speech on “The Old South” but confessed his health issues to Johnson, requesting a lectern to lean on while he talked.⁷⁴ The tone of Hill’s lecture revealed a more mellow and nostalgic approach to old arguments about the strengths of Southern society and its contribution to America although his sarcasm and hatred of hypocrisy reappeared in his last points.⁷⁵ “All passed off pleasantly. Audience very large & very enthusiastic,” Hill later scribbled to Joseph.⁷⁶ Eugenia and her children accompanied Hill to Baltimore to make sure he was comfortable during the trip and his stay in the city. She proudly watched her father deliver his speech and enjoy the response of the audience, which included a chorus of Rebel yells.⁷⁷ Afterwards, despite having been sick since the trip to Baltimore, Hill remarked on his satisfaction with the speech to Johnson and quipped that “the retributions of history are most wonderful.”⁷⁸ Hill recognized that the former Confederacy, through multiple forms of media, was winning the fight to get its version of the history of the South and the Civil War heard throughout the United States. The spirit of reconciliation even extended to his relationship with Jefferson Davis. Hill expressed regret on a couple of occasions that he was not able to travel to witness Davis’ speeches in Georgia in 1886 and 1887.⁷⁹ Davis for his part wrote about his sincere hope that he and Hill would be able to meet to clear up any misunderstandings and to express his belief in Hill’s unflagging fidelity to the Confederate cause. “Before I go hence forever,” Davis wrote in late 1886, “I would gladly do

⁷⁴ Hill to Bradley Johnson, May 18, 1877, Johnson Papers, Duke.

⁷⁵ D.H. Hill, “The Old South,” *SHSP* 16 (1888): 423-43.

⁷⁶ Hill to Joseph Hill, June 7, 1887, Hill Family Papers, Mulberry.

⁷⁷ Eugenia Hill Arnold to Thomas J. Arnold, June 7, 1887, J-A Collection, Presbyterian.

⁷⁸ Hill to Bradley Johnson, November 8, 1887, Johnson Papers, Duke.

⁷⁹ See Hill to Jefferson Davis, August 25, 1886, Jefferson Davis Collection, Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia.

what I can to prevent you from feeling I have caused your children to lose their enviable inheritance.”⁸⁰ The men never did meet again.

Unfortunately, Hill was not able to fully enjoy these personal and professional triumphs in his final years. Increasingly he stated to suffer, on top of all of his chronic illnesses, the symptoms of stomach cancer, along with side effects from medications. The cancer may have been a result of a bacterial infection picked up decades before in Mexico where he had been violently ill during the Monterrey Campaign.⁸¹ His correspondence throughout 1888 and 1889 demonstrated increasing exhaustion and depression. Responding to a request from Longstreet for Chickamauga material, Hill begged off, saying he did not have the health or patience to find the documents. “I have never been despondent about myself before,” Hill added in a rare admission, especially to someone with whom he was not that friendly anymore.⁸² Suffering daily from insomnia, chills, and stomach pain, he somehow willed himself to teach, putting on an appearance before his students that he was well, only to literally collapse at home after classes. Nevertheless in the summer of 1888 Hill returned to Arkansas to visit the hot springs and he also gave a speech at the University of Texas, which afforded him the opportunity to reunite with Ratchford, his favorite staff officer.⁸³

⁸⁰ Jefferson Davis to Hill, November 4, 1886, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁸¹ Hill referred to his stomach problems as “Mexican dysentery” (Hill to Joseph Hill, July 21, 1887, Hill Papers, NCSA). He may have had *Helicobacter pylori*, a bacterium still widely present today in certain populations which is known in extreme cases to cause stomach cancer; see http://www.helico.com/h_history.html. According to Hill’s great-granddaughter there is no history of stomach cancer in the family (Author interview with Marty Daniels, Camden, South Carolina, June 25, 2008).

⁸² Hill to James Longstreet, February 4 and February 11, 1888, Longstreet Papers, Duke.

⁸³ Hill to Archer Anderson, August 30, 1888, Anderson Collection, MOC.

Hill's thoughts and attitude during the last four years of his life are best reflected in his letters to youngest child Joseph, a recent college graduate and new lawyer. The poignant correspondence reflected a father's hopes for his son's professional success and anxiety about his and his siblings' characters during what seemed like increasingly immoral times. Hill often reminded Joseph to observe the Sabbath, not to get into debt (like his grandfather) or lend money to others, refrain from smoking or chewing tobacco, and to write home more often, implying that he was not observing his Christian duty to his parents. The old general also complained of a lack of temperance among the citizens of Milledgeville and his own faculty; he still preferred Fayetteville, Arkansas despite the unpleasantness at AIU.⁸⁴ Although Hill was thankful that none of the children had "brought reproach upon our good name," he lamented that none of them seemed "to be getting on in the world and some of them seem to have no concern about the next."⁸⁵ Hill's comments revealed a father's natural concerns compounded by his specific world view about duty to self, family, and God.

In September 1888, Hill consulted a doctor in Louisville, Kentucky, about his medical condition and was assured a cure was possible, but he mainly relied on home remedies. His constant worry over Joseph's debt (incurred from a loan to a friend) and the health of his other children and a grandchild exacerbated his physical symptoms as well as his sense of parental obligation. "Does not this make my life a failure?" he mused in a letter to Joseph. "I knew that I have been useful as a Teacher, but God expects most of us at

⁸⁴ Hill to Joseph Hill, January 23, 1886, March 31, 1886, April 9, 1886, April 26, 1886, and May 17, 1886, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁸⁵ Hill to Joseph Hill, April 13, 1886 and June 12, 1886, Hill Papers, NCSA. Daughter Nancy (who moved to El Paso, Texas to teach and never married) once told her father that she met some nice Yankees and that it was not worth it to make them feel badly because they couldn't help where they were born. One can only imagine Hill's response to that comment, which surely solidified his concern for his children (Nancy Hill to D.H. Hill, July 12, 1887, Hill Papers, NCSA).

home.”⁸⁶ After a brief respite during the winter, Hill started to suffer from bad cramps and nettle rashes and fell unconscious at home for a couple of hours at a time on several occasions.⁸⁷ He gave his resignation to the college board in June 1889 and that summer visited another doctor near Wilmington, North Carolina, who gave him some medication to relieve some symptoms. Hill hoped to visit the hot springs and Joseph in Arkansas, but weather delayed the trip and the family remained in Charlotte.⁸⁸ Although sensing the end was near for him, he expressed more optimistic thoughts about his children’s future. Harvey Junior had just been hired to teach English at North Carolina Mechanical and Agricultural College in Raleigh (today’s North Carolina State University), and Joseph was finally out of debt and making a name for himself as a lawyer. In one of Hill’s last letters to Joseph he wrote: “God has been very merciful to me and it looks as though he remembered the 2d & 3d generation. May his Holy Name be blessed ever more.”⁸⁹

Hill died in Charlotte on September 24, 1889. “The end came sooner than we expected,” Harvey Junior wrote Joseph the day after the funeral.⁹⁰ Davidson College suspended classes and the community came out to the railway station to meet the Hill family. After a brief eulogy by the college president, Hill was laid to rest in the college cemetery. Despite the children’s concerns, Isabella bore up fairly well after her husband’s death. As a result of legislation passed by Congress in 1887, Mexican War veterans—Union and Confederate—and spouses who proved eligibility were authorized government pensions.

⁸⁶ Hill to Joseph Hill, September 8, 1888 and October 29, 1888, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁸⁷ Hill to Joseph Hill, February 11, 1889, February 22, 1889, and March 13, 1889, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁸⁸ Hill to Joseph Hill, June 14, 1889 and July 29, 1889, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁸⁹ Hill to Joseph Hill, September 5, 1889, Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁹⁰ D.H. Hill, Jr. to Joseph Hill, September 26, 1889, Hill Papers, NCSA.

Hill, who years earlier argued that veterans should receive such a benefit, filed a claim before he died; Isabella followed up with her own and was granted her husband's pension which amounted to eight dollars a month for the rest of her life.⁹¹ She outlived Harvey by fifteen years, passing away in December 1904 at age seventy-nine.

Hill's had been a peaceful death for one who had fought so hard all his life for principles in which he truly believed. Whether people agreed with his views or not, no one could question his commitment to his family, friends, soldiers, students, and the region in which he was born and lived most of his life. With his death came the true test of his legacy—how would Hill, one of the key sculptors of the Lost Cause, be remembered himself?

⁹¹ Declaration of Widow for Pension, January 18, 1890, Application # 8659, Case Files of Mexican War Pension Applications, Record Group 15: Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, 1773-2007, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. Hill's claim was dated March 7, 1887. There is no record of his claim being denied; Isabella's appears to have replaced his original request in the records. Per the author's correspondence with NCSA state and university records analyst William H Brown, December 23, 2009, there is no record of Isabella Hill applying for or receiving a Confederate pension from the State of North Carolina when categories of eligible people expanded in 1901. Hill did not qualify under guidelines in existence when he was alive.

CHAPTER XIII

“THE BEST PART OF MILLEDGEVILLE:” REMEMBERING HILL¹

The morning after D.H. Hill's death, the Charlotte *Chronicle* published a comprehensive obituary of the general. Readers learned about his family background, a great deal about his Mexican War service, and the valor of his soldiers at Big Bethel, Seven Pines, Malvern Hill, South Mountain, and Chickamauga. The obituary also emphasized Hill's courage in battle and devotion to family. The Raleigh *News and Observer*, endorsing the *Chronicle*'s entry, added an expression of “personal appreciation of his sterling virtues, his robust patriotism, his high character and his splendid bravery.”² Neither obituary mentioned a hint of controversy about Hill's military competence, which was not surprising given most North Carolinians' regard for him and the reconciliationist tone of memorials in the late nineteenth century. For the next few decades, Hill's friends and family portrayed him as a virtuous man and successful commander, but within this community of reputational entrepreneurs there were different opinions on how to portray the controversies of his military career. Privately family members acknowledged their concern about the Lost Dispatch and Chickamauga but they did not want to publicly emphasize the incidents. The inability to agree on a public portrayal meant that no book-length biography was published

¹ William E. Boggs to D.H. Hill, March 19, 1889, Daniel Harvey Hill Papers, North Carolina State Archives. Boggs, Chancellor of the University of Georgia system, spoke with one of Hill's old soldiers who used this phrase to describe the general.

² Charlotte *Chronicle*, Wednesday, September 25, 1889; Raleigh *News and Observer*, Thursday, September 26, 1889. I have not discovered any obituaries from newspapers outside of North Carolina.

until 1961. With only sporadic public exposure over the course of the twentieth century, Hill became an object of regional rather than national interest, failing to garner the same level of publicity as many of his Confederate peers. His military career was finally rediscovered and reassessed when professional historians at mid-century started turning their attention more and more to the Civil War.

By the time Hill died notable Confederate veterans and members of the Southern Historical Society publicly accepted his military prowess as seen in the reception of his speeches and writings in the 1880s. The accolades continued in the months after his passing. In the spring of 1890, Charles C. Jones, Jr. of the Confederate Survivors' Association read the roll call of the previous year's deaths in a speech reprinted in the *SHSP*. In paying tribute to Hill he mentioned the same five battles as the original obituary and called the general "an uncompromising defender of the impulses and acts of the South," as well as "a brave soldier, capable educator, and Christian gentleman."³ The selection of battles was important because those were the five that Hill mentioned most often concerning his reputation and the credit he thought due his soldiers. Jefferson Davis, who himself passed away barely two months after Hill, responded to a newspaper sent from Joseph about his father's death. "I can say conscientiously, and not in the set phrase of eulogy, that a more pure vigilant and gallant soldier did not serve the Confederate cause," wrote Davis, noting that Hill stayed true to the cause in good times and bad. Hill would have taken satisfaction in Davis' closing words,

³ Col. Charles C. Jones, Jr., "The Siege and Evacuation of Savannah, Georgia, in December, 1864: An Address delivered before the Confederate Survivors' Association in Augusta, Ga., on the Occasion of its Twelfth Annual Reunion, on Memorial Day, April 26th, 1890," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 18 (1890): 61 (hereafter cited as *SHSP* with volume number).

which read, “I offer to you my cordial wishes for the welfare of all your Father’s household and can have no higher hope for you than to be worthy of your illustrious descent.”⁴

Hill’s family and close friends began taking steps to preserve his memory in artifacts and public historical documents. The sheer amount of material on Hill donated to and preserved in several archives across the United States is a testament to their diligence. More specifically, however, family members over the years worked on or commissioned a series of biographical sketches of the general, starting with brother-in-law A.C. Avery. At the time a justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, Avery delivered an address “On the Life and Character of Lieut.-General D.H. Hill” before the Ladies’ Memorial Association in Raleigh on May 19, 1893. The speech translated into a forty-one page article in the *SHSP* in which the judge alternated narratives of Hill’s personal traits with his battlefield exploits. Avery culled several anecdotes from his brother-in-law’s correspondence and did not hesitate to engage with the controversies of the Lost Dispatch and Chickamauga, declaring Hill innocent of wrongdoing in both cases. He also commented on Hill’s thoughts regarding those who held different opinions from his own. “He respected even the honest fanatic, who fairly and openly contended for his convictions,” said Avery, “but he hated cant and hypocrisy, despised duplicity and dishonesty, and leveled at them his most effective weapons—ridicule and sarcasm.”⁵ With this statement, Avery succinctly identified the core characteristic of Hill’s sectional worldview, which had its roots in the general’s upbringing and was bolstered by observations of the Federal government made during the Mexican War and beyond. The

⁴ Jefferson Davis to Joseph Hill, October 31, 1889, Hill Family Papers, Mulberry Plantation, Camden, South Carolina.

⁵ A.C. Avery, “Memorial Address: On the Life and Character of Lieut.-General D.H. Hill, Before the Ladies’ Memorial Association, at Raleigh, N.C., May 19; 1893,” *SHSP* 21 (1893): 116.

judge also used Hill's hatred of hypocrisy to turn character flaws like excessive sarcasm into strengths, for even "the most unscrupulous of his detractors never questioned his courage or his integrity" even if they took issue with his words.⁶

Avery received some of the information for his speech from James Ratchford. Harvey Junior, who intended to write a biography of his father, requested information from the former staff officer. Ratchford replied with a multi-page letter detailing Hill's Civil War career and his belief that Hill had been wronged by Braxton Bragg and Davis. Ratchford reiterated how Hill's colleagues and superiors held him in high esteem and that the general had taken the high road by not criticizing Davis in the pages of *The Land We Love*.⁷ Another major theme of the reminiscences was Hill's compassion, which Ratchford witnessed on occasion during the war and when invited into the family's confidence. Ratchford's anecdote about the encounter between Hill and John Reynolds after the Battle of Gaines's Mill made the *New York Times* in September 1893, further demonstrating turn-of-the-century reconciliationist rhetoric.⁸

With duties at North Carolina State University increasingly taking up his time, Harvey Junior next approached Archer Anderson in 1906 to write an entry on Hill for the forthcoming *Biographical History of North Carolina*. He forwarded to Anderson both Avery's sketch and Ratchford's reminiscences and asked Anderson to make it clear that Hill

⁶ Avery, "Memorial Address," 114.

⁷ James W. Ratchford to D.H. Hill, Jr., 1890, pg. 29, original in D.H. Hill, Jr. Papers, typescript in Hill Papers, NCSA.

⁸ "Two Stories of Gen. D.H. Hill," *New York Times*, September 25, 1893.

was not responsible for the Lost Dispatch.⁹ When Anderson reminded the professor that he had not served with Hill during the Maryland Campaign, Harvey Junior offered to send a copy of his father's rebuttal of Edward Pollard and suggested that Anderson just say Hill did not lose the order and "not go into further detail."¹⁰ Anderson wrote the sketch and Harvey Junior approved it, only to have Editor-in-chief Samuel Ashe determine that the entry was too long for the *Biographical History*. Anderson refused to cut anything out; Harvey Junior was "disgusted" with Ashe for imposing a limit on length when there had originally been no such stipulation. Neither resubmitted an entry on Hill to Ashe, and Harvey Junior kept the sketch for future use in the full biography.¹¹

Dr. Henry Shepherd, another of Hill's former students, took much the same view as Ratchford of people whom he believed had maliciously hurt the general, particularly Pollard. At some point after the failed attempt to get the sketch in Ashe's book, the Hill family commissioned Shepherd to write a full biography for publication. Between 1914 and 1915 Shepherd corresponded with Harvey Junior, Joseph, and Eugenia and her husband Thomas Jackson Arnold for material and sent them drafts for examination and comments. The feedback Shepherd received from the brothers was to his mind surprisingly negative. The book was "pitched in radically the wrong key," Joseph complained to Harvey Junior; it was written as a full-blown vindication of Hill's memory when "father's memory needs no

⁹ D.H. Hill, Jr. to Archer Anderson, October 4, 1906, October 9, 1906, and October 13, 1906, Archer Anderson Collection, Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter cited as Anderson Collection, MOC).

¹⁰ D.H. Hill, Jr. to Archer Anderson, October 16, 1906, Anderson Collection, MOC.

¹¹ D.H. Hill, Jr. to Archer Anderson, December 28, 1906; S.A. Ashe to Archer Anderson, April 20, 1907; and D.H. Hill, Jr. to Archer Anderson, February 22, 1908, Anderson Collection, MOC.

vindication, his service only need amplification.”¹² Essentially, Joseph believed (and apparently his brother agreed by this time) that Pollard’s accusations were old news and should be completely ignored as he had been disproved long ago. Shepherd directed so much rage against Bragg and figures irrelevant to the biography that his comments detracted from the main story and conveyed a vengeful spirit of which Hill himself would have disapproved. Joseph felt that the narrative should take the high road when talking about Hill’s deceased foes. More importantly, the book needed to focus more on a correct presentation of facts than a series of opinions about Hill. “It seems to me that [Shepherd] should have devoted more time is [sic] showing father’s achievements instead of merely praising them,” Joseph wrote his brother.¹³ Although Joseph appreciated Shepherd’s efforts and his passion for the subject, he thought Avery’s character sketch better and that it would be a bad idea for the proposed book to be published.

Shepherd vented his frustration to Thomas Arnold, who perhaps sympathized with the older man’s efforts to write a book on a Civil War general. Arnold at the time was working on a collection of his famous uncle and namesake’s letters. Shepherd did not agree with Harvey Junior and Joseph about the Pollard reference, saying that recent books on the Civil War repeated the slander of the Lost Dispatch and therefore proved that Hill’s reputation was still under attack. As he told Arnold, he intended to “vindicate Genl. Hill at every point with the utmost completeness.”¹⁴ In a subsequent letter to Arnold in late 1915, Shepherd accused

¹² Joseph Hill to D.H. Hill, Jr., March 6, 1915, Hill Papers, NCSA.

¹³ Joseph Hill to D.H. Hill, Jr., March 6, 1915, Hill Papers, NCSA.

¹⁴ Henry E. Shepherd to Thomas J. Arnold, January 30, 1915, Shepherd-Arnold Correspondence, Jackson-Arnold Collection, Presbyterian College (hereafter cited as J-A Collection, Presbyterian). See also note of Ernest J. Arnold to Chalmers Davidson, October 14, 1989, General Daniel Harvey Hill Folder, Davidsonia File, Davidson College, for a summary of the Shepherd-Arnold correspondence.

the sons of wanting to play down Hill's academic and literary achievements and complained that Harvey Junior wanted him to pay particular attention to the Lost Dispatch and Chickamauga yet criticized his approach. If he could not plainly describe the attitudes of Hill's persecutors, Shepherd declared, "the inevitable result will be a tame, cold and mechanical biography."¹⁵ Shepherd feared he was at an impasse with the family and he was ready to abandon the project. He informed Arnold as such a couple of weeks later, ultimately deciding instead to send installments to *Confederate Veteran* magazine, which published them over the course of three issues in 1917.¹⁶ Shepherd's articles turned out to be rather rambling, fawning, and anecdotally-based, as the brothers had feared, but the author, much like Avery nearly twenty-five years earlier, pointed out Hill's strict adherence to right and wrong through what he termed "the dominating power of moral fearlessness."¹⁷ He also decided not to discuss Hill's Civil War career or controversies, perhaps bowing to the family's wishes.

Harvey Junior was ultimately unable to write his father's biography due to time constraints and failing health.¹⁸ He and his brother Randolph passed away in the 1920s leaving Joseph, the retired Chief Justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court, as Hill's sole surviving son. Although Joseph professed his abilities inadequate for the task, he wrote an eloquent and concise biographical sketch of his father which the Arkansas History

¹⁵ Henry E. Shepherd to Thomas J. Arnold, January 30, 1915, Shepherd-Arnold Correspondence, J-A Collection, Presbyterian.

¹⁶ "Extracts from Dr. Shepherd's letter to me," November 13, 1915, Shepherd-Arnold Correspondence, J-A Collection, Presbyterian.

¹⁷ Dr. Henry E. Shepherd, "Gen. D.H. Hill: A Character Study," *Confederate Veteran* 25 (July, 1917): 307. The subsequent installments were published in the August and September 1917 issues.

¹⁸ After working his way up through the faculty ranks D.H. Hill, Jr. served as president of North Carolina State University from 1908 to 1916 and spent most of his final years working on a multi-volume history of North Carolina in the Civil War (featuring some discussion of his father).

Commission published in pamphlet form. He dedicated the work to the descendants of all of the people influenced by Hill: his family, his soldiers, and his students.¹⁹ Joseph summarized his father's Civil War service through official reports and excerpts from secondary sources, particularly Douglas Southall Freeman's *Lee's Lieutenants*. He retold the story of the Lost Dispatch in a very matter-of-fact manner by going over the details of the copy in Hill's file and refraining from speculation on the guilty party. The discussion of Chickamauga was similarly straightforward but Joseph did reprint the personal testimonials Hill received from his division commanders and others following his dismissal by Bragg. He gave Davis the benefit of the doubt based on the kind letter the former Confederate president wrote after Hill's death. In evaluating his father's character, Joseph agreed with Freeman's assessment of Hill as a critic who nevertheless was quick to praise hard working and courageous soldiers. "Primarily it was the burden of responsibility and sense of duty to his men" which caused Hill to be so critical of perceived or actual inefficiency and incompetence on the part of military authorities, said Joseph.²⁰ The son clearly admired his father's intellectual strengths, proclaiming him "an original thinker" who "did not follow the beaten path."²¹

As can be seen from the tone of Joseph's writings, some of Hill's children were not interested in publishing a biography of their father just for the sake of forwarding an interpretation to compete with others. If there was going to be a biography at all, it should be done in a way that remembered the man for what he did and his strengths of character, and

¹⁹ Joseph M. Hill, *Biography of Daniel Harvey Hill, Lieutenant General, Confederate States of America: Educator, Author, Editor* (Little Rock: Arkansas History Commission, n.d.), 6. Some library catalogues list the pamphlet as being published in the 1920s, but Joseph frequently cited all three volumes of Douglas Southall Freeman's *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command* (1942-1944). Unless he extensively re-edited the biography, he wrote it in the mid to late 1940s.

²⁰ Joseph Hill, *Biography*, 31.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

not for the purpose of settling a score. As the years went by and Civil War veterans passed away most Americans were not concerned about old controversies but focused on moving forward as a united republic while occasionally stopping to honor the deeds of the previous generation. Without a reputational entrepreneur drawing more attention to Hill, he continued to be regarded in death much as he was in life: not as famous as Stonewall Jackson and other Confederate generals but a great tactician, tireless educator, and man of uncompromising principles devoted to causes dear to his heart.

Eugenia Hill Arnold appeared to be the one immediate family member who still believed her father deserved a measure of vindication in regards to the Lost Dispatch. In 1931 Charles Dabney, son of Robert Dabney of Jackson's staff, borrowed some of Hill's wartime papers in an effort to locate the Jackson-penned copy of S.O. 191. He wanted to protect his father from being blamed for losing the order so he attempted to keep Hill's copy and place it in either the Dabney or Jackson papers at the Virginia State Library. Eugenia at first encouraged Dabney to write an article for *Confederate Veteran* to set the record straight about both their fathers and did not mind if he placed the document in another archive as long as the public knew where to find it. She also expressed relief that the order had been located since the papers were in a state of disorganization after her brother Harvey's death.²² Evidently Nancy Hill and niece Pauline Hill (and probably Joseph) did not agree with Dabney's proposal and the order returned to Hill's papers which the family donated to the North Carolina State Archives.

²² Charles Dabney to "cousins" Nancy Hill, Eugenia Hill Arnold, and Pauline Hill, September 30, 1931, and Eugenia Hill Arnold to Charles Dabney, October 10, 1931, D.H. Hill Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In the meantime, citizens in the region where Hill spent most of his life took the initiative to erect two monuments which commemorated him and related people and events. In October 1919, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) co-sponsored a granite pillar to be placed on the site of Hill's Iron Works near York, South Carolina. There was a formal ceremony at which Harvey Junior spoke at length about his great-grandfather, followed by a picnic.²³ The pillar, still standing on the side of State Route 274 by Allison Creek, is inscribed on one side with a tribute to Col. William "Billy" Hill and the Iron Works, another to D.H. Hill, a third marking the site of the Iron Works, and the last the names of the sponsor organizations. The general's side reads, "Birthplace of Daniel Harvey Hill, lieutenant general in the Confederate States Army. Soldier, educator, author. A worthy son of the land we love."²⁴ A journalist covering the event in 1919 and in a follow-up article in 1927 took the opportunity to educate his readers on the local history of the American Revolution. In devoting most of his text to Billy Hill and his involvement in the Patriot cause the author, much like the monument, emphasized the rebellious link between grandfather and grandson.²⁵

The other commemoration occurred in Charlotte in 1927 when the local UDC dedicated a boulder and plaque to Hill and NCMI. At the time the main NCMI building was still in use as a public school by the city and was renamed the D.H. Hill School. The plaque

²³ Ernest Jackson, "Marker to be Erected on Historic York Spot," *The State* (Columbia, S.C.), October 12, 1919. The organizations involved were the Kings Mountain Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Winnie Davis Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Harvey Junior's address was titled, "Col. William Hill and the Campaign of 1780."

²⁴ The monument, originally on the old Hill family property, was moved from its original site in the 1920s when a regional power company dammed the nearby Catawba River, in the process flooding Alison Creek and submerging the original site of the Iron Works. The pillar reportedly originally stood five feet tall but now is about three feet tall and placed far enough off the road and by brush as to be easily missed by drivers.

²⁵ Ernest Jackson, "Marker to be Erected on Historic York Spot," *The State* (Columbia, S.C.), October 12, 1919, and "Where Warriors as Well as Implements of War Were Fashioned," *Charlotte Observer*, March 27, 1927.

acknowledged the current name of the school and Hill's service as NCMI commandant and Confederate general. Similar to the York memorial, the Charlotte counterpart equally emphasized Hill's roles as soldier, educator, and editor. North Carolina Governor Angus W. McLean made an address portraying Hill as a pioneer in public education whose efforts were validated in the modern state school system. He also directly compared Hill to Robert E. Lee in noting that both men served as soldiers and educators.²⁶ D.H. Hill III, Joseph, and Nancy each wrote the UDC chapter president to express their gratitude for the organization's sponsorship of the monument and getting the school renamed in honor of Hill. Fittingly, D.H. Hill IV, great-grandson of the general, attended the school at the time.²⁷ As the city built new schools elsewhere and rerouted roads in the area, the building fell into disrepair and was torn down in the 1950s. Today a YMCA stands on the site at the intersection of East Morehead Street and South Boulevard, but the UDC plaque remains and is now affixed to the back of a newer granite column.

Hill was occasionally remembered in other forums in the Charlotte area, including an effusive 1923 Memorial Day address by former Secretary of the Navy and Raleigh newspaper editor Josephus Daniels and in an article as part of a series of reminiscences of the city by a life-long resident.²⁸ In 1954, a Milledgeville journalist wrote a brief article about the "illustrious" general's connection with the town. Ironically, he cited a letter Hill wrote to an

²⁶ "McLean Pays Glowing Tribute to Memory of Gen. D.H. Hill," *Charlotte Observer*, September 29, 1927.

²⁷ "The Open Forum: Daniel Harvey Hill School," unknown paper, 1927, Hill Papers, NCSA.

²⁸ "Daniel Harvey Hill: Extracts from Memorial Day Address of Josephus Daniels at Charlotte, May 10, at 4 p.m.," *Raleigh News and Observer*, May 11, 1923; Mrs. Sam Presson, "Reminiscences of Charlotte: Career of Gen. D.H. Hill," unknown newspaper, 1930, Hill Papers, NCSA.

Arkansas friend unfavorably comparing the military college students to those at AIU.²⁹ Otherwise, most discussion of Hill from the 1930s on took place in the growing historical literature on the Civil War. However, in 1970 Hill's ninety-two year-old granddaughter Isabel Arnold took the time to correct some factual errors about the general in a recent UDC article and commented that she was glad the copy of S.O. 191 was safe in the state archives in Raleigh.³⁰ Hill and his reputational entrepreneurs insisted on his innocence based on the existence of a paper that is now more highly prized as a surviving example of Jackson's handwriting. This copy of the order does not in fact prove that Hill never received the actual Lost Dispatch, but given his unfailing integrity there is no reason to doubt him. As with Chickamauga a year later, Hill's name happened to be associated with a crucial document at the wrong place and time.

Within the fertile fields of antebellum and Civil War historical memory Daniel Harvey Hill, with help from friends and family, gradually changed himself from a target of criticism into a respected chronicler of the Lost Cause. He did this by tempering his views of past controversies and for a time switching his focus to educational and political issues which were of greater concern to his audience in the 1870s and 1880s. Ironically, becoming more accepted into the Southern cultural archives as an editor and educator meant that his military accomplishments were downplayed relative to the other two roles. In other words, a reason why Hill is not as famous a Confederate division and corps commander as other generals is because his life was so well-rounded. Over time his three careers received equal weight by chroniclers and no one accomplishment stood out enough to elevate him uniquely above his

²⁹ James C. Bonner, "Historical Notes on Milledgeville: General D.H. Hill," *The Union-Recorder* (Milledgeville), December 23, 1954.

³⁰ Isabel Arnold notes, January 6, 1970, Isabel Arnold: Lost Dispatch, J-A Collection, Presbyterian.

peers. For the same reason the controversies of his career have largely faded away, a fact which he would likely applaud over the alternative.

Hill believed in and held on steadfastly to certain principles throughout his life. In death he has been lauded for the more moderate examples of these principles. What historians have since written about Hill and his sarcastic, carping personality is true, but there were reasons for his behavior not usually brought out in the literature. His often extreme devotion to military duty, soldierly honor, and martial identity had its roots in his family history and schooling at West Point and matured as a result of his experiences during the Mexican War. Religious beliefs and regional ideals of honor and identity inculcated at an early age combined with martial influences to mold a person who, admirably, held to his convictions, but regrettably was unable to see shades of gray in any argument and often followed a chain of logic to its extreme. Beginning with articles Hill wrote as a lieutenant and continuing through his years as journal and newspaper editor, he rationalized his questioning of authority by insisting that he was defending his (and his cause's) viewpoint against hypocrisy and injustice. By doing this he could argue, for example, that the North thumbed its nose at the South's many civic and political contributions to the United States, thereby insulting regional honor and eventually justifying secession and war. This ability to rationalize also allowed Hill to condone ideas that were often incompatible with mainstream views such as his continued confidence in the integrity of the U.S. soldier on Reconstruction duty or his implicit approval of Ku Klux Klan activities. In the case of the last point, it resulted in a highly ideologically-based manipulation of reality.

Hill's beliefs and actions concerning generic notions of duty, honor, identity, and memory demonstrate that he was a representative member of his social order, his region, and

both militaries with which he served. At certain times, however, he held different views from the norm and was completely unapologetic about the fact. His willingness to speak out publicly against perceived or actual injustice and incompetency was one thing that set him apart from most of his military peers in both armies in which he served. Among the group of highly politicized and contentious nineteenth-century American military officers, Hill was guilty on several occasions of insubordination, albeit in the interest of his troops and the public good. He took the concept of military honor to an extreme with his dogged efforts to secure vindication from Jefferson Davis, and of regional honor to an extreme with his willingness to condone violence in support of white supremacy. Hill did not hesitate to spar with Virginia veterans over the historical interpretation of the Civil War and stood by his analysis of the merits of the Lost Dispatch even when he nearly undermined his own argument. During the infancy of the New South movement Hill advocated the introduction of industry and more efficient agricultural practices along with an increased emphasis on practical education. Indeed, his views on education predated the Civil War and put him at the forefront of reforms targeting the emerging white Southern middle class. He pushed for changes in education at the same time as he celebrated the illustrious regional political and military traditions. Hill believed that all Southerners had their assigned roles to play in reviving their communities.

Only near the end of his life did Hill soften the edges of his criticism. He never stopped trying to balance the competing requirements of restraint and independence. In a sense he figured out how to reconcile them. If restraint encompassed his conception of what was right and honorable, and outspoken critique represented independence, Hill was able to say he was defending the former by doing the latter. He reconciled these two facets of

southern manhood in a way he was never able to regarding his views of South versus North. Returning full circle to the question of regional versus national honor, there is reason to believe that many other men (and women) besides Hill struggled, and still do so today, to balance independence and restraint in their daily lives. This dichotomy makes Hill's story American and not just southern, yet he reconciled the two in a unique way that remained remarkably steadfast over the course of six decades. For good and ill, Hill refused to compromise. Dangerously stubborn and outright paranoid at times, he was also a loyal and devoted son, husband, father, and friend who convinced himself that everything he did was for the benefit of the people he loved and for God. We can take a cue from his depth of conviction but must always remain vigilant where it may lead us.

EPILOGUE

“Rest in peace.” “Happy Birthday.” “Thank you for your service.” “To an unsung hero of the Lost Cause.” “God bless you.” “I look forward to meeting you one day.” These are some of the messages (or “flowers”) left by visitors to Daniel Harvey Hill’s page on Find A Grave, a website where one can look up the burial sites of famous and ordinary people. As of this writing, Hill has 113 flowers, forty of which are from the same person.¹ He is remembered by many but still has far fewer flowers than Robert E. Lee. As the sesquicentennial of the start of the Civil War approaches, Hill continues to receive on the whole the same amount of attention in historical literature that he has over the past several decades. One change of note is that more scholarly attention is being paid to his life outside of Confederate service. The last twenty years also witnessed new memorializations of Hill in the form of the aforementioned Find-A-Grave testimonials and a monument in Charlotte.

Before the 1961 biography of Hill, Hal Bridges briefly explored the story behind *Elements of Algebra* and wrote a longer article on the general’s tenure as president of AIU, but until recently there was little focus on Hill’s role as educator during the 1850s. Jennifer Green has done much to correct this gap through her reading of Hill’s antebellum essays on Southern education, including his speech *College Discipline* and shorter articles and addresses he wrote for the benefit of the North Carolina state legislature upon assuming the

¹ “Daniel Harvey Hill,” Find A Grave, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=hill&GSfn=daniel&GSmn=harvey+&GSbyrel=in&GSdyrel=in&GSob=n&GRid=4432&df=all&>.

position of superintendent of NCMI.² In addition, Dan Morrill of UNC-Charlotte, who has written several works on North Carolina history, has posted an online essay about Hill's life before the Civil War and the forces that shaped Hill's worldview. He provides a succinct narrative of the Davidson and NCMI years, drawing on archival sources, particularly those of Clement Fishburne and James Ratchford.³

Hill's wartime controversies are also periodically reassessed in scholarly and popular literature on the war. In a new compilation of essays on the Chickamauga campaign, Alexander Mendoza assesses Hill's performance and concludes much as this dissertation does that the general was unfairly made a scapegoat but nevertheless "failed to take his responsibility as a corps commander in Bragg's army seriously, putting personal biases and animosity ahead of his duties."⁴ The Lost Dispatch remains a favorite topic of discussion, prompting a 1997 article in *Civil War Regiments* in which author Wilbur Jones tried to figure out who really lost the order. He concluded that one of Stonewall Jackson's staff members was the likely culprit and that Hill successfully cleared his name in conjunction with the event.⁵ Stephen Sears followed in 2002 with an article in the more widely-read magazine *North and South* that expanded upon a short appendix in his book on the Maryland Campaign. He discussed Lee's displeasure with Hill's insistence that the Lost Order was beneficial to the operations of the Army of Northern Virginia and argued that the loss was

² Jennifer R. Green, *Military Education and the Emerging Middle Class in the Old South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³ Dan L. Morrill, "Daniel Harvey Hill: The Pre-Civil War Years," Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, <http://www.cmhpf.org/educationhill.htm>.

⁴ Alexander Mendoza, "The Censure of D.H. Hill: Daniel Harvey Hill and the Chickamauga Campaign," in Steven E. Woodworth, ed., *The Chickamauga Campaign* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010): 80.

⁵ Wilbur D. Jones, Jr., "Who Lost the Lost Orders? Stonewall Jackson, His Courier, and Special Orders No. 191," *Civil War Regiments* 5, No. 3 (1997): 1-26.

indeed a turning point for the campaign. Sears agreed that Hill did not lose the order and noted that Lee's chief of staff Robert Chilton was "something of a sloppy administrator" concerning this incident as well as the infamous attack directive at Malvern Hill.⁶

Scholars of historical memory also recognize Hill's influence on the construction of Lost Cause rhetoric. In the highly lauded *Race and Reunion*, David Blight noted Hill's role as post-war author and how *The Land We Love* became the basis for the *Southern Historical Society Papers*. Blight implied that Hill worked mostly with the Virginian veterans to craft the historical memory of the war, thereby glossing over the angst Hill felt about the Virginians' lead role in this endeavor.⁷ Richard Starnes looked more in depth at the Southern Historical Society, characterizing its formation and existence as a Civil War campaign in its own right. Reviewing Hill's post-war career as editor and educator, Starnes concludes that Hill's views on the old and new South "surely had an effect on his students, and thus helped to perpetuate the reconstruction of the southern past that the Southern Historical Society had adopted."⁸

On the 133rd anniversary of the Battle of Big Bethel, a Civil War general with few monuments to his memory finally received one in his adopted hometown. At the site of NCMI and the D.H. Hill School on East Morehead Street in Charlotte, the Egbert A. Ross Camp of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) erected a new monument on June 10, 1994. As the inscription relates, the organization's namesake was a former NCMI cadet who commanded the Charlotte Grays (a company in Hill's 1st North Carolina Regiment) at Big

⁶ Stephen W. Sears, "The Twisted Tale of the Lost Order," *North and South* 5, Issue 7 (2002): 56.

⁷ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 78, 256, 261.

⁸ Richard D. Starnes, "Forever Faithful: The Southern Historical Society and Confederate Historical Memory," *Southern Cultures* 2, No. 2 (Winter 1996): 190.

Bethel and was killed at Gettysburg. The monument describes how Colonel Hill led his cadets to war and “became one of the premier generals in the Confederacy.” The inscription also briefly describes the different uses of the school over the years before it was torn down. The 1927 UDC plaque is affixed to the back of the granite pillar. The monument is not immediately noticeable from the street although it is located right next to the sidewalk. More apparent is one of the ubiquitous gray North Carolina Highway Historical Markers posted in the curb strip in front of the Ross monument. The sign specifically commemorates NCMI and identifies Hill as the first superintendent. According to the state website it was cast in 1972; it may have served as the only identifying marker for NCMI on the increasingly busy street between the 1950s and 1990s.⁹ What is interesting about the memorials is that neither focuses exclusively on Hill. Naturally the Ross Camp of the SCV wanted to honor its namesake and the state commemorated the former site of an important school in its Civil War-era history. Nevertheless, when it comes to monuments dedicated to Hill alone, aside from his grave marker, the old general is still “nearly there.”

⁹ “L-80, North Carolina Military Institute,” North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program, <http://www.ncmarkers.com/Markers.aspx?ct=ddl&sp=search&k=Markers&sv=L-80 - NORTH CAROLINA MILITARY INSTITUTE>.

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