



# Stone Wall

The Newsletter of the Bull Run Civil War Round Table — Vol. XXXI, Issue 9, SEPTEMBER 2024

## **HISTORIAN & AUTHOR MELISSA WEEKS SPEAKS ON "RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY: CONFEDERATE GENERAL J.E.B. STUART AT SPOTSYLVANIA COURTHOUSE, MAY 1864" AT THE SEPTEMBER 12th, 2024 MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**By Mark Trbovich**

During the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House in May 1864, the Federal Army of the Potomac and the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia were engaged in an exhausting series of attacks and counterattacks lasting nearly two weeks. It was Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart's job to prevent the Federals from reaching Spotsylvania. For two days, a division of Stuart's cavalry led by Fitzhugh Lee had battled Federal cavalry for control of the Brock Road, the most direct route to Spotsylvania Courthouse. With the rest of the story, an old friend will visit us from the Shenandoah Valley at our September meeting.

Melissa Weeks first became intrigued by the Civil War when, as a youth, she discovered her soldier ancestors, who served in the 42nd Mississippi. Robert Krick suggested that she use a summer to work for the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, which turned into a few years of full-time employment. She has written several articles: "A Memoir of John E. Curran" for *The Journal of Fredericksburg History*; "The Country Loses a Noble Soldier: The Battles of Brigadier General John Marshall Jones" in *Civil War Regiments: A Journal of the American Civil*

## **MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**THURSDAY, September 12,  
2024**

**6 P.M. Social Hour**

**7 P.M. In-person at the  
Centreville Regional Library &  
Streamed on Facebook Live &  
Zoom**

## **GUEST SPEAKER:**

**Melissa Weeks**

## **TOPIC:**

**"Rendezvous With Destiny:  
Confederate General J.E.B.  
Stuart At Spotsylvania Court-  
house, May 1864"**

*War*; and "Lightning Strike in the Valley", about Stonewall Jackson at the Battle of Front Royal, in *Military History Magazine*. She has also co-published *The Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse: May 1864*. After her Park Service tenure, she continued to research, write, speak, and lead battlefield tours while pursuing her career as a high school teacher in Rappahannock and Botetourt Counties. Her current project is entitled "In the Time of Heroes: The Letters of James and David Jenkins (146th NY Infantry)."

Come join us early at our September 12th, 2024, Membership Meeting to have an opportunity to chat with Melissa and your colleagues before the meeting begins. Doors open at 6:00 PM; hope to see you there.

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The **Bull Run Civil War Round Table** publishes the **Stone Wall**.

**Newsletter Team:** Sandra Cox, Janet Green-tree, Melissa Winn, Debbie and Mark Whitenton.

For meeting dates and other information, please visit the Web site: <http://bullruncwrt.org>

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For the **October 2024 issue**, e-mail articles by **October 1st** to the editor, Don Richardson, at: [don.richardson@erols.com](mailto:don.richardson@erols.com)

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**UPCOMING MEETINGS**

- September 12** Melissa Weeks - "Rendezvous with Destiny: Gen. J.E.B. Stuart at Spotsylvania Courthouse"
- October 10** Sarah Bierle - "What If Rienzi Stumbled? A Different Look at the Battle of Cedar Creek, October 1864"
- November 21** Gene Schmiel - "The Battle of Nashville, TN, December 1864"
- December 12** Eric Buckland - "Mosby: When The Story Ended, The Legend Began"
- January 9, 2025** Melissa Winn - "Sideways Sites: Civil War History In An Indirect Way"
- February 13** Scott Patchan - "Shenandoah Summer: The 1864 Valley Campaign"
- March 13** Dawn Diehl & Linda Harrison - "The Healing: Conversations With Civil War Nurses"
- April 10** Garrett Kost - "The Spirit Fled to God Who Gave It: The Medical Treatment of Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theater"

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## THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Kim Brace

It's now September, with a calendar change. One last vacation trip (I'm heading for Ireland for a quick photography tour of the country) and while most kids have already started school, your Round Table has a number of planned activities for the fall. Thankfully the heat of the summer is changing to cooler nights and soon leaves will be changing colors. Which means we can go back to our tour schedule, without fear that the heat will again spoil our efforts. Elsewhere in this newsletter there's a flyer about our Cedar Creek tour coming up on October 5 and being led by our own Jim Lewis and Blake Myers. Be sure to sign up for it.

But you won't have to wait that long to get together with your fellow Civil War enthusiasts. Our annual picnic at the Bull Run Winery will take place on Sunday, Sept 22nd. Owner Jon Hickox had agreed to open his marvelous Civil War museum in the Barrel Room (basement) an hour before the start of the picnic. If you haven't seen it yet, plan on showing up at 10 AM that day. At 11 AM we'll move outside to one of the large tents (as we've done in the past). We'll have plenty of The Bone's bar-be-que to please the palate, along with non-alcoholic beverages. If you like wine, Jon is unveiling a new blend this fall, so you can purchase a bottle at several locations in the main house.

I've asked the speaker for the day (our own Jim Burgess) to use his experience as a Manassas Battlefield ranger and historian to talk about what took place on the winery grounds during both of the Manassas One and Two battles. While many

people have heard the story of the log-jam of troops at the Stone Bridge, I've asked Jim to paint a verbal picture of the confusion on the winery grounds for each of the two battles. Bring your imagination (and an empty stomach) for a great time on the 22nd.

There are two interesting feature articles this month: John Carter tells the colorful story of Lafayette C. Baker (page 9) and Ms. Rebelle is back (page 16) with the life of Union Gen. Alexander Schimmelfennig, whose name alone is pretty colorful.

Later in the fall the Round Table's Executive Committee will gather for an evening of dinner, along with talking and planning for the upcoming year. If you have thoughts of "wouldn't it be cool to do..." or "we should tour...", pass your ideas on to a member of the Committee. The listing of Committee members is on Page 2 of each edition of the Stone Wall.

### PRINTS TO BE AUCTIONED!

One feature of our Annual Picnic on September 22nd will be a silent auction of three fine Civil War prints by the famous historical artist Don Troiani. These framed prints were donated to the BRCWRT, so every dollar taken in during the auction will go to aid the Round Table's preservation efforts. See the following page for the details and consider acquiring one of these vivid portrayals of Civil War history.



# Civil War Prints to be Auctioned at the Picnic!

*Three Civil War prints will be auctioned on September 22 at the BRCWRT's Annual Picnic at the Winery at Bull Run.*

There will be a silent auction at the BRCWRT picnic to auction off these three Civil War prints. These framed prints are all by famous historical artist Don Troiani. Please be generous in your bids. Since these prints were donated to the BRCWRT, all the sales receipts are directly dedicated to the BRCWRT's Preservation efforts. See suggested starting bids with each print. All subsequent bids should be in \$25 increments.



**“Give Them Cold Steel Boys”**  
Suggested starting bid: \$250

**“Little Round Top”**  
Suggested starting bid: \$150



**“Rock of Erin”**  
Suggested starting bid: \$200



**BULL RUN CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**

## Bull Run Civil War Round Table



### Upcoming 2024-2025 Program of Events

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
September 12	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Melissa Weeks - "Rendezvous With Destiny: Gen. J.E.B. Stuart at Spotsylvania Courthouse, 1864"
September 22	<a href="#">Annual BRCWRT Picnic at The Winery at Bull Run</a>
October 5	<a href="#">BRCWRT's Fall Tour: "The Battle of Cedar Creek"</a> - Tour leaders Blake Myers & Jim Lewis (rain date October 26th)
October 10	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Sarah Bierle - "What If Rienzi Stumbled? A Different Look at the Battle of Cedar Creek, October 1864"
November 21	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Gene Schmiel - "The Battle of Nashville, Tennessee, December 1864"
December 12, 2024	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Eric Buckland - "Mosby: When The Story Ended, The Legend Began"
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February 13, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Scott Patchan - "Shenandoah Summer: The 1864 Valley Campaign"
March 13, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speakers: Dawn Diehl & Linda Harrison - "The Healing: Conversations with Civil War Nurses"
April 10, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Garrett Kost - "The Spirit Fled to God Who Gave It: Dr. Charles Leale & The Medical Treatment of Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theater"
May 8, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Patrick Schroeder - "Myths About R.E. Lee's Surrender At Appomattox VA, April 1865"
June 12, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: John Hennessy - "The People's Army: The Life and Mind of the Army of the Potomac"
July 10, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Ronald Coddington - "Civil War Portrait Photography: Reflections of a Generation"
August 14, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Dana Shoaf - "Gutbusters: The Development of the Ambulance During the Civil War"
September 11, 2025	Monthly Meeting Speaker: Theodore Savas - "Handshakes, Gambling, and Gunpowder: How George W. Rains and Jefferson Davis Changed the Course of The Civil War"

Monthly Meetings in "Black"   [Tours/Field Trips & Special RT Events in "Red"](#)   [County or outside sponsored events in "Green"](#)

# Bull Run Civil War Roundtable

8th Annual Picnic

Sunday, September 22, 2024

The Winery @ Bull Run

New Museum Tour 10 am – 11 am

BBQ Served 12-2 pm

Food Provided by...

**THE BONE**

hand-shredded pulled pork platter

(OR)

certified angus beef brisket platter

*platter includes*

*Sandwich + homemade sides: cole slaw, potato salad, ranch beans*

*A drink (coke, diet coke, sprite, water)*

*and cake*

Individual Members @ No Cost

Family Memberships (husband & wife or equivalents) plus children

@ No Cost

All others will be considered as "guests"

Guests: Pork (or) Beef brisket platter @ \$17.00



*Silent Auction  
With Civil War Prints*

*Proceeds go to our  
Preservation Fund!*



To sign up, go to <http://www.brcwrt.org>. Please list each person separately.

## IMAGE OF THE MONTH

### Damaged Goods

By Melissa A. Winn

Major General Dan Sickles used the Trostle Farm as his headquarters during the Battle of Gettysburg, forcing the Trostles from their home, even leaving dinner on the table, which was enjoyed by Sickles' staff. The Trostles returned to find most of their belongings looted or destroyed.

The stand of the 9th Massachusetts Battery here on July 2 left the property in tatters, including a shell hole in the barn that is still there today. The damage to the property impacted the Trostle family for years after the battle as they searched for a way to recoup their losses.

Catherine Trostle, Abraham Trostle's wife, went to a notary to file her claim on October 20, 1868, since she could not read or write. She represented the family since Abraham had been admitted into a lunatic asylum after the war. In her testimony, she stated there were over 100 horses across the yard and the home was used as a field hospital. She signed her statement with an X. Also included in the damage claim were 16 tons of hay, 20 acres of oats and corn lost, 2000 fence rails, and destruction of the farm lane. According to the claim, Catherine cited \$3,344.77 (\$61,025.82 today) worth of property damage to her \$5,200 (\$95,181.24) estate.

Agent A. F. Nye, the claims agent assigned, was extremely hesitant to give a definite answer to Catherine's claim. He argued that he had no eyewitnesses to attest that any of the damage was caused by Union forces. The claim investigation lasted until February 2, 1882. Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs ultimately decided "the nature of damages from ordinary casualties of war, and not within the jurisdiction of the Quarter Master General under Act of July 4, 1864, and the claim therefor is not allowed." Catherine Trostle filed multiple claims over 10 years for the \$3,344.77 she estimated she was owed. She never received a cent.



# BRCWRT Fall Tour

## The Battle of Cedar Creek

### Saturday, October 5



**Subject matter:** The last major battle of Gen. Phil Sheridan's 1864 Valley Campaign, August thru October of 1864, three weeks before the November presidential election. Believing Gen. Jubal Early's Army of the Valley is beaten, Sheridan leaves for Washington D.C. on October 15 for a strategy meeting with Lt. Gen. Grant and Sec. of War Stanton regarding next steps for Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah. The stage was set for one of the most audacious counterattacks in the Civil War and its profound ramifications.

- 15 tour stops and several relevant drive-bys

**Tour Guides:** Blake Myers & Jim Lewis (BRCWRT members)

**Assembly Time/Location:** 8:00 AM / Centreville Regional Library

- Consolidate into as few cars as possible for the tour caravan

**Tour Start Time:** 9:30 AM

**Lunch:** c. 12 Noon (Italian Touch, Middletown) - Individual tabs

**Tour Duration:** Approx. 6 Hrs.

**Mode of Transportation:** Caravan

**Uniform of the Day:** Dress for the prevailing weather conditions

- Nominal amount of walking

**BRCWRT Contact:** Jim Lewis – [antietam1862@verizon.net](mailto:antietam1862@verizon.net) / 703 593-2956

**The tour is FREE! If interested in attending, please sign up via BRCWRT's website or at the September BRCWRT Membership meeting.**

**The detailed Marching Orders are on the website as well.**

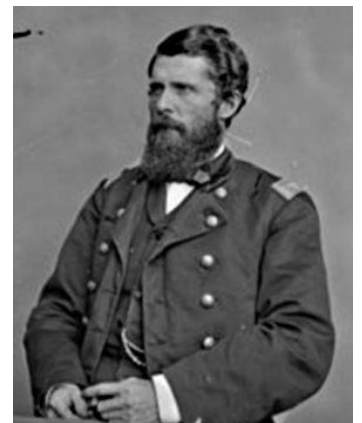


## THE MANY FACES OF LAFAYETTE BAKER

By John Carter

I was going through old newspaper articles looking for reports on engagements of Col. John Singleton Mosby, the Gray Ghost, as I was compiling what I hoped would become a comprehensive list of his engagements between 1863-1865 for the Stuart-Mosby Civil War Cavalry Museum. I ran across an article that struck me as rather odd, since it was not a typical report of a Mosby engagement. The *Washington Star* of April 16, 1863 had reported that nine Mosby Rangers had captured a certain J. (James) Harvey Sherman, a Baker detective, near Sherman's home in Dranesville, Virginia. Sherman had been investigating and providing information on citizens in Northern Virginia for the Union. Although he was initially reported to have been hung, I found that he had instead been imprisoned at Castle Thunder in Richmond. An attempt had been made quickly to secure his exchange. A memo sent to Col. William H. Ludlow, Agent for Exchange, in Washington, D. C, in May 1863 said, "The guide or scout, J. Harvey Sherman, who was said to have been captured near Winchester and hung by some of Mosby's Rangers, it appears, is confined in Castle Thunder. Please make some inquiries about him and if you can make some arrangement for his exchange... Very respectfully, your obedient servant, W. Hoffman, Colonel Third Infantry, Commissary-General of Prisoners" (\*1)

The request had come from a noted authority - William Hoffman had worked with President Abraham Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to develop the procedure where Confederate prisoners of war and deserters could swear allegiance to the Union to gain their release. He was also responsible for processing and evaluating prison release requests coming from Union officials, Confederate soldiers, and Southern family members. Repeated attempts, however, had failed to procure Sherman's release or exchange, and he would have spent the rest of the war in prison had he not escaped. Why was this one man so important, and who was "Baker?" The last question turned out to be a difficult one to answer.



Mark Twain once said "There are lies, damned lies, and statistics." That seems to apply well to Baker, only substitute "Lafayette Curry Baker" for the word "statistics". Or you could use the name which he provided on the cover of his post-Civil War book: La Fayette C. Baker. Contemporary colleagues and historians have all described him as a man who constantly lied and spun the truth about who he was and his contributions during the war. He had plenty of aliases, starting with the name he used as an author, La Fayette. That spelling of his name would lead one to assume that he claimed a French ancestry. Baker, however, was born in 1826 at Stafford, in western New York State, and he claimed to be the great-grandson of Remembrance Baker, a member of the famous Green Mountain Boys of the American Revolution. He also claimed that he was named after another hero of the American Revolution - the Marquis de Lafayette. His real name, however, was Sam Munson and he was not related to, nor named after, either man. It will be less confusing to refer to him from this point as Lafayette Baker.

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## LAFAYETTE BAKER

His standard biographical note (\*2) states that his father moved the family to Michigan when Baker was young, and that he may have worked there as a mechanic. Very little is known about his early life, or even his years in California, where he moved as a young man to try his luck in the California Gold Rush. Things didn't pan out well in the gold fields, but he was able to procure employment as a bouncer in a San Francisco saloon, and later joined a San Francisco vigilance committee in 1856, which controlled the city government and forcibly attempted to put a stop to the crime and corruption created by the Gold Rush. Later, he was offered a position with the San Francisco Police. During his time on the force, charges of brutality and several lynchings were directly attributed to him. When the Civil War broke out, Baker left California and headed first to New York City and then to Washington, D.C., where he offered his services as a spy. He was turned down on his first attempt, but his persistency and bravado finally led to an audience, because as one historian has noted, "he had the ability to artfully lie while unblinkingly staring into the eyes of America's greatest leaders." (\*3) The leader who granted him an audience was General Winfield Scott, the Commanding General of the Union Army in 1861.

At first glance, Lafayette Baker appeared to be a man who excelled at intelligence operations, enough so, as he claimed, to be named Chief of United States Intelligence, the United States Provost Marshal for Washington, D.C., and the first Director of the United States Secret Service. While Baker was actually named the Provost Marshal, the other two positions were titles which he claimed for his own purposes. Baker must have been one of those people who could walk into a room and command everyone's attention. Unknown to anyone in Washington before he arrived, Baker had managed to quickly win over General Winfield Scott by passing himself off as an accomplished spy and telling Scott that he had lived in Richmond, Virginia and knew the city well. He offered to go to Richmond disguised as a traveling southern photographer, and that he would collect military intelligence for Scott. Scott sent Baker on his mission with no promise of a position or even a salary (only his expenses would be paid).

Things did not start well as Baker was immediately arrested by Union forces before crossing the Potomac River who thought he was a southern spy; he was released, crossed the river, and was then captured by Confederate forces in Manassas as a Union spy and sent to prison in Richmond.

In Baker's telling of his story, when he reached Manassas he had met with Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard and convinced him that he was a southern photographer. Beauregard then arranged a meeting in Richmond with President Jefferson Davis and other high-ranking Confederate officials, with whom Baker would confer as well as taking their pictures. Afterwards, he was allowed to go on his way photographing the Confederate positions in Richmond and Fredericksburg, before he was arrested for spying in the latter place. Baker made his escape from prison and made his way back to Scott, who was so impressed that he gave him a commission as a captain and made him Chief of his Intelligence Service.

The reality was that Baker had not convinced the southern officials that he was a photographer, and he was never allowed to photograph the officers or any military

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## LAFAYETTE BAKER

establishments. In fact, he had lost his camera even before he reached Richmond, probably when he was arrested in Manassas. He was imprisoned in Richmond but did escape, and was arrested again at Fredericksburg, where he escaped once again. Beginning with the Richmond event, his whole career was one long litany of fantastic tales and lies, most of which he documented in his post-war book *The United States Secret Service in the Late War*, published in 1867. (\*4) Scott, while less than impressed with Baker's work in Richmond, still found his story so interesting that he told the story to several members of the administration, including Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton.

Stanton liked what he heard about Baker and asked to meet him. As one author has noted, "When Scott introduced the brash, young Baker to him, Stanton immediately recognized a man of his own stripe, one to whom conspiracy and collusion were second nature. He saw a man who would say or do anything to gain prestige and, more importantly, power, a man that Stanton himself could use to his own good ends." (\*5) At the time, however, Stanton had his own intelligence service, one that competed with Gen. George C. McClellan's Intelligence service under Allan Pinkerton. Without being given a formal position, Baker became the Secretary's personal intelligence agent who would conduct surveillance on those whom Stanton distrusted, including members of Lincoln's cabinet. Stanton also wanted Allan Pinkerton to be removed from his position, and when McClellan was removed from command after the Battle of Antietam, he appointed Baker to command his Intelligence Service.

Baker ran the National Detective Bureau, also known as the "National Detective Police Department," and was also named Provost Marshal of Washington, D. C. from September 12, 1862 to November 7, 1863. Baker had asked for, and was given, a commission as colonel of the 1<sup>st</sup> District of Columbia Cavalry (Baker's Rangers) on May 5, 1863. Day-to-day operations, however, were turned over to his second-in-command, Lt. Col. Everton J. Conger, and Baker used parts of this command for his own intelligence operations. Four companies were organized at Washington, D.C. for special service in the District of Columbia, subject *only* to orders by the War Department. They were attached to the 22nd Army Corps for the defenses of Washington, D. C., and later in the war, they would be transferred to the Richmond theatre of operations, without Colonel Baker. (\*6)

His operations focused on tracking down deserters from the Union Army and going after profiteers, while lining his own pockets. "Baker arrested and jailed those who refused to share their illegal spoils from selling off government supplies, violating their Constitutional rights without fear or reservations since he was wholly backed by Stanton. He routinely made false arrests, conducted illegal searches without warrants, and blackmailed government officials into making endorsements of his almost non-existent espionage service. No one misused his authority or office more than Lafayette Baker." (\*7)

He also went after counterfeiters and lesser-known spies; one of his agents, Frankie Able, befriended and captured Antonia Ford. Able had uncovered Ford's

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## LAFAYETTE BAKER

intelligence connection to J.E.B. Stuart and Mosby, and Baker had her arrested. Baker used several agents in the field like Able in attempting to apprehend the Gray Ghost, John Singleton Mosby, but they were unsuccessful. In July 1864, Col. H. M. Lazelle of the 16<sup>th</sup> New York Cavalry proposed creating a stockaded fort on James S. Purdy's Anandale farm to protect the approach to Washington, D.C. along the Little River Turnpike, especially from Mosby's Rangers. The fort was built to the east of Accotink Creek and was commanded by and named after Capt. Joseph Schneider of the 16<sup>th</sup> New York Cavalry. Before the fort was built, Baker had used the same site for his operations between October 1863 and January 1864 to gather intelligence, conduct raids on counterfeiter, and intercept Confederate guerrillas.

Lafayette Baker was usually trying to do something sensational, especially in his attempts to hunt down Mosby and his men. While he personally apprehended only a few spies, *all* spies came under his supervision and were subject to his brutal interrogations. Along with Antonia Ford, his other most celebrated Confederate spies were Belle Boyd and Wat Bowie, a Mosby Ranger. Bowie escaped from the Washington, D. C. jail and Boyd was released in 1863. (\*8)

His claim to have been the Director of the U. S. Secret Service is patently false. Despite his own references to the title, he never held that position since there was no Secret Service until after the war. During the war, almost one third of the money in the United States had been counterfeit, and to combat this, on April 14, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln had created the United States Secret Service. The Secret Service did not officially begin work until July 5, 1865; its first chief was William Wood. In 1866, its headquarters was established in the Department of the Treasury building in Washington, D.C.

In 1868, Baker's 400-page book was published commemorating his activities in the U. S. Secret Service. It is a massive work in which he describes his operations and activities throughout the war. It is rich in detail, narrative and anecdotes, in which Baker comes across as a true Union patriot who did his duty. He is, of course, at the center of the war and his book. The greatest question in reading the work is deciding whether what you are reading is fact or fiction. It is difficult to obtain supporting documentation for his covert operations. The *full* title of his book says a lot about the author and his motive for its publication:

*The United States Secret Service in the Late War containing Author's Introduction to the Leading Men at Washington, with the Origin and Organization of the United States Secret Service Bureau, and a Graphic History of Rich and Exciting Experiences, North and South, Perilous Adventures, Hairbreadth Escapes, and Valuable Services of the Detective Police by General La Fayette C. Baker, Organizer and First Chief of the National Secret Service Bureau of the United States, Etc. Embellished With a Profuse Galaxy Of Magnificent Full-Page Illustrations of Exquisite Beauty. Engraved on Steel, Wood, and Stone by our Special Corps of Artists Including F. B. Schele, E. B. Bensell, J. M. Butler and Others.*

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## LAFAYETTE BAKER

The term "Secret Service" was frequently used to describe secret (covert) intelligence operations. It did not have the meaning that it has today, as an agency designed for protecting the President and government officials, as well as combating counterfeiting. General George McClellan's own intelligence officer, Allan Pinkerton, also referred to the intelligence organization that he led as the Secret Service. Each Union general had his own intelligence command, and there was no centralized agency. Baker was an intelligence officer who managed to move from one intelligence command to another, acting more as a field agent than as a director. Baker also ran a spy ring in southern Maryland (southern Prince George's, Charles, and St. Mary's counties), where he conducted his operations against counterfeiters, deserters, and profiteers. To do this he had used his own command - the 1<sup>st</sup> D.C. Cavalry.

Baker was known to take money from profiteers who were willing to share their wealth with him, but he would arrest and jail those who refused to share their illegal spoils. Baker often violated Constitutional rights "without fear or reservations" with the support of Stanton. He routinely made false arrests, conducted illegal searches without warrants, and blackmailed government officials. A Treasury Department employee once remarked, "he instituted a veritable reign of terror. He always lived in the first hotels and had an abundance of money." Gideon Welles, the Secretary of the Navy, once described Baker as "wholly unreliable, regardless of [the] character and the rights of persons, incapable of discrimination, and zealous to do something sensational." (\*9)

Lafayette Baker's loyalty to individuals changed when he needed them to. He owed his appointment largely to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, but he had suspected the secretary of corruption, and would eventually be demoted for tapping Stanton's telegraph lines. Baker was sent off to New York where he would ride out the rest of the war. After the assassination of President Lincoln, Baker was immediately recalled to Washington by Stanton, and became directly involved with the assassination investigation. During his absence, his command had been placed in charge of the details protecting the President, including the Union officer who left his post at Ford's Theatre, allowing John Wilkes Booth access to the President's box. Secretary of War Stanton declared martial law, recalled Baker and sent him after the conspirators. For a man who admitted later that both he and Stanton had no knowledge of the conspiracy, within two days, Baker had tracked down all of the conspirators, and had sent his cousin, Luther B. Baker, and his second in command, Colonel Everton J. Conger, in pursuit of Booth and David Herold.

Like the other conspirators, their escape route and hideout were quickly discovered. Herold was captured and Booth was killed. A diary was discovered on Booth's body and was turned over to Baker in the presence of Edwin Stanton. Baker received a generous share of the \$100,000 reward that was offered for the apprehension of Lincoln's killer and the arrests of the other conspirators. He was later rewarded by President Andrew Johnson, who nominated Baker for appointment to the grade of brigadier general of volunteers on April 26, 1865. The United States Senate never confirmed the appointment, and Baker was mustered out of the volunteers on January 15, 1866.

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## LAFAYETTE BAKER

Stanton would later come under suspicion that he had a hand in Lincoln's assassination, and it was believed that Baker had kept fifteen pages which he had torn out of Booth's diary. Stanton continued to support Baker until Stanton was fired by President Andrew Johnson, who would later fire Baker for spying on him. Baker went downhill mentally and physically and he died in 1868, supposedly from meningitis. In a typical Baker scenario, it has been claimed that he was deliberately poisoned by government agents from the War Department. (\*10)

According to family records, La Fayette Curry Baker died in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on July 3, 1868 of meningitis. However, it's possible that his story didn't end quite like that. Baker's death, like his life, is shrouded in mystery and speculation. After the capture of the Lincoln conspirators, Baker not only claimed to have had in his possession the fifteen missing pages of Booth's diary, but suggested that Secretary of War Stanton and other government officials were involved in the conspiracy. The missing pages were never produced, and Baker could never offer any evidence to support his charges. After President Johnson dismissed Baker from the intelligence service, Baker would claim that he was in constant fear for his life and that War Department agents were out to kill him.

In 1977, *The Lincoln Conspiracy* was published by David W. Balsiger and Charles E. Sellier, Jr., which promoted various conspiracy theories concerning the 1865 assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. The central premise of the book is that historians have perpetuated a cover-up by Edwin M. Stanton along with some of the Radical Republicans. The book claims that Baker was involved in various plots to kidnap Lincoln and remove him from office and also claims that Baker and others supposedly provided John Wilkes Booth with money and information on Lincoln's movements. The authors also claim that Baker was murdered by ingesting poison over a long period of time. The book has largely been dismissed by historians as unsubstantiated conspiracy theory.

There is, however, one detail that has arisen. Baker's body was supposedly exhumed, and using an atomic absorption spectrophotometer to analyze several hairs from Baker's head, Ray A. Neff, a professor at Indiana State University, determined that Baker was killed by arsenic poisoning and not meningitis. Baker had been unwittingly consuming the poison for months, mixed into beer provided by his wife's brother, Wally Pollack, a detective at the War Department. A 19<sup>th</sup> century doctor who examined Baker's body after his death reported that it showed traces of arsenic. Interestingly, Neff never mentions that analysis in his papers, or in *Dark Union*, a Lincoln Conspiracy book which he co-authored with Leonard Guttridge. Neff donated his extensive collection of papers on Baker and the Lincoln assassination to Indiana State University.

Baker has become embedded in several of the Lincoln-Booth alternate histories, including one where Baker and Booth faked their deaths and were alive and well living elsewhere. Historians and the general public have come to know more about La Fayette Curry Baker's alleged activities in the Lincoln assassination than of his documented actions during the Civil War. Even those covert actions, however, remain

(cont on page 15)

## LAFAYETTE BAKER

murky. For more on the official line on Union military intelligence and La Fayette Baker see *The Secret War for the Union - the Untold Story of Military Intelligence in the Civil War*, Edwin C. Fishel, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996).

And what of James Harvey Sherman? Sherman was simply one of La Fayette Baker's numerous intelligence agents who had been sent to observe and collect military intelligence in Northern Virginia. The attempt to exchange Sherman probably had more to do with officials currying favor with Baker than in the actual value of Sherman himself. Sherman, however, had the last laugh. After his escape from prison and return to Union lines, during the last days of the war he was assigned to help track down President Jefferson Davis as he fled south. After the search party had tracked Davis to the vicinity of Macon, Georgia, Davis was captured by another Union search party.

### NOTES

1. OR, v.5, p. 737.
2. Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue, Lives of the Union Commanders*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1966, p. 16-17. A typical short biography of Lafayette Baker.
3. Mark Hageman, Civilwarsignals.org.
4. *The United States Secret Service in the Late War*, La Fayette C. Baker, John H. Potter & Company, Philadelphia, n.d., reprint, 1996.
5. Edwin C. Fishel, *The Secret War for the Union: The Untold Story of Military Intelligence in the Civil War*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1996, p. 24-28.
6. Frederick H. Dyer, *Compendium of the War of the Rebellion, Regimental Histories*, Morning-side, Dayton, 1979, v. 2, p. 1018-1019.
7. Fishel, 27-28. Civil War Subversion Investigations, the "Turner-Baker Papers" are digitized from microfilm: Case Files of Investigations by Levi C. Turner and Lafayette C. Baker, 1861-1866. Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's-1917, Publication Number M797; National Archives, Washington. For comments on intelligence sources, see Fishel, p. 596-599.
8. For more on Belle Boyd, see Fishel, p. 64-66. Lt. Walter "Watt" Bowie was a native of Prince George's County MD and was charged with spying in that county and sent to Old Capitol Prison, where he escaped on November 11, 1862. Hugh C. Keen and Horace Mewborn, *43rd Battalion Virginia Cavalry Mosby's Command*, H. E. Howard, Lynchburg, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1999, p. 299.
9. Welles, Gideon. *Diary of Gideon Welles: Secretary of the Navy Under Lincoln and Johnson*, 3 vols. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911. For more of his disreputable operations, see Fishel, 284-286
10. Brian Redman, *Union - Lafayette Baker AKA: Sam Munson, Union Spymaster and Self-Proclaimed Chief of U.S. Intelligence During American Civil War (1826 - 1868)*.



## **CIVIL WAR TRAVELS WITH MS. REBELLE**

**By Janet Greentree**

### **Brigadier General Georg Alexander Ferdinand von Schimmelfennig, USA**

Ms. Rebelle has 73% German heritage, mostly through her maiden name Schrader. My mother's Baker side has German heritage as well. When adding both sides together, I am more German than either of my parents. General Schimmelfennig is the fifth general in my series of German generals including Carl Schurz, Johann August Von Willich, Godfrey Weitzel, and August Kautz to be profiled. Schimmelfennig's last name has always intrigued me. There were more than 200,000 German men who served in the Civil War. General Schimmelfennig has a very interesting story from his time in Gettysburg, but we must find out about his background first.

There is some controversy as to where he was born. He was born in Germany but the area where he was born is now part of Poland. His cemetery marker says that he was born in Litauen (Lithuania), Prussia. Both Ancestry.com and Familysearch.org have him born in Bromberg, Germany; Findagrave.com has him born in Bydgoszcz, Poland. Bromberg is the name the Germans gave to Bydgoszcz when they controlled it. He was born on July 20, 1824 to Henrich Daniel von Schimmelfennig and Helene Rosalie Clara von Knokke. His siblings were his older brother Herrmann Julius and younger brother Julius Conrad. Other than his older brother dying at the age of 24, there is not much to be found about his family. Either he or his family dropped some of the name, as he generally went by Alexander Schimmelfennig.



Schimmelfennig

At age 16 he entered the Prussian Army, training in Berlin. By 1842, he had become a lieutenant. He studied skirmishing and outpost duty. He became a captain in the Schleswig-Holstein War against Denmark. An armistice was signed with Denmark in August, 1848, which required the Prussian troops to retire. He left Prussia to join the Army of the Palatinate. His duty was to organize and equip the army for the field. He was wounded twice while fighting under future Civil War General August Willich at Rinnthal on June 17, 1849. The Palatinates were forced towards Switzerland. Schimmelfennig and many Germans crossed the border into Switzerland. After the Prussian victory, the Palatinates brought charges of armed rebellion and high treason against 333 soldiers. Due to these charges Schimmelfennig was not able to go back to Germany. He then lived in Zurich, Switzerland and studied engineering and drafting. He would move again, this time to England.

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## MS. REBELLE

Following the European revolutions in 1848, many soldiers emigrated to the US and became known as "Forty-Eighters". Three future 48ers were friends of his: Carl Schurz, Franz Sigel, and Louis Blenker; after 13 years all would become Civil War generals. Several other German 48ers were in the Civil War as generals: Max Weber, Peter Joseph Osterhaus, Frederick Salomon, Joseph Weydemeyer, Gustav Struve, and Frederick Hecker. Hungarians included in the 48ers were: Albin Francisco Schoepf, Julius Stahel, and Alexander Asboth. Thomas Francis Meagher was an Irish 48er. Włodzimierz Krzyżanowski was a Polish 48er. Though not a general, Heros von Borcke was a Prussian Lt. Colonel for the Confederates. The 48ers were mostly German immigrants who fought in the 1848 revolutions that swept Europe. They believed in the unification of Germany along with a democratic government and human rights. Schimmelfennig would become part of a German democratic movement within the Communist League. The league was led by Karl Schapper and August Willich. The league was in opposition to the main body of the Communist League led by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. In 1854 he authored a book entitled *The War between Russia and Turkey*.



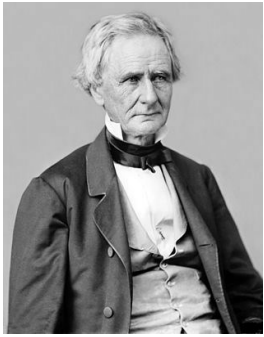
German Generals: Carl Schurz, Friedrich Hecker, Franz Sigel, Lt. Col. Heros von Borcke, Alexander Schimmelfennig

While in London, he married his fiancé Ottilia "Sophie" von Glummer on September 15, 1852 which was Sophie's birthday. In 1853 he and his family immigrated to the U.S. arriving in Philadelphia and joining Carl Schurz, who was living there. The family later moved to Washington, D.C. and he worked for the War Department as a military engineer. Alexander and Sophie would have four children: Bertha Marie, Agnes Sophie, Helene Ida, and Hermann Alexander Rudolph. Not much is known about his children except for Helene. She became a translator of German books after she married Maurice Putnam White. One of the well-known books she translated was *Heidi*.



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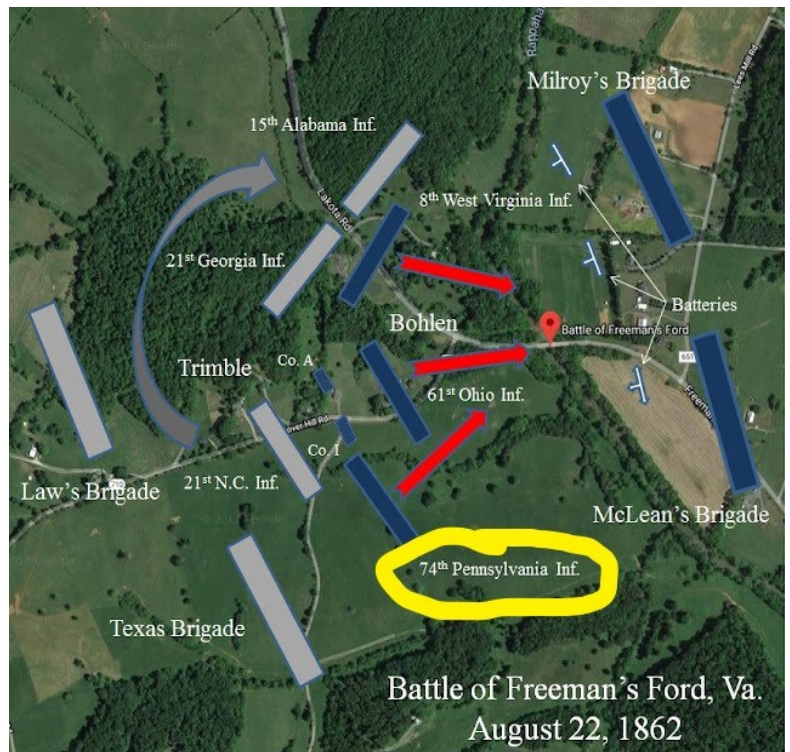
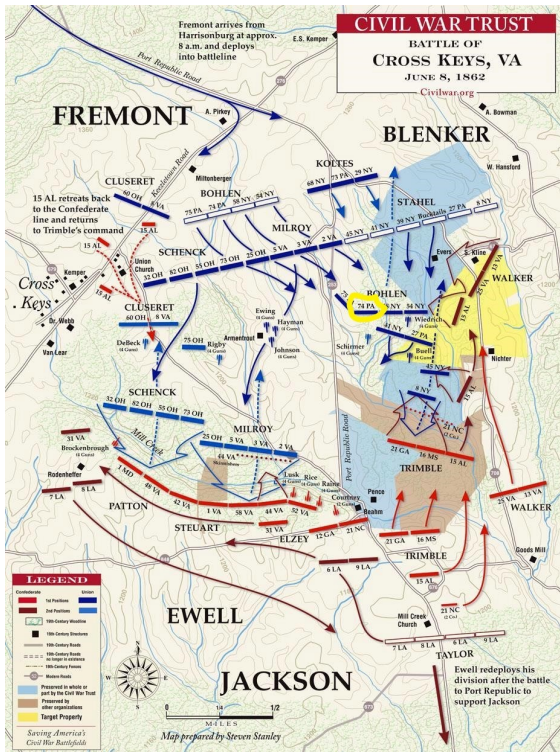
## MS. REBELLE



Simon Cameron

In 1861, President Lincoln was looking for men to appoint as Civil War generals. He was interested in Germans who were 48ers. The first Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, showed Lincoln a list of eligible Germans. Lincoln said, "That's my man." Simon told Lincoln he could do a lot better than Schimmelfennig. Lincoln replied: "Yes, but none of them have his name S-C-H-I-M-M-E-L-F-E-N-N-I-G" as he spelled it out for Cameron. Lincoln appointed him as a brigadier general. Schimmelfennig helped raise the 74<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry in Philadelphia at the start of the Civil War.

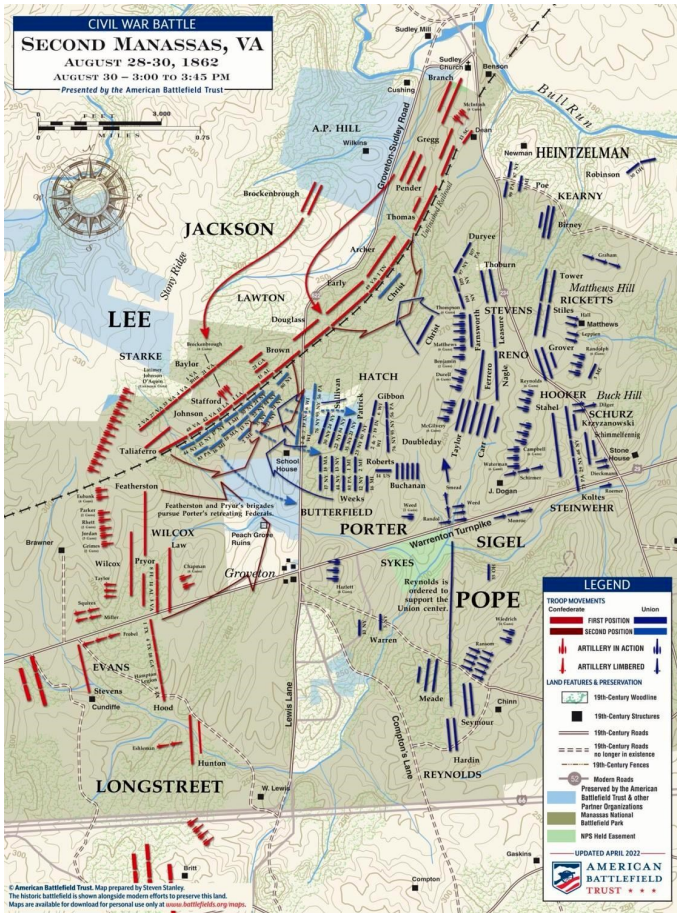
Schimmelfennig's first fight was at Cross Keys; his second was at Freeman's Ford on August 22, 1862 which was his first experience leading his Union German troops, the 74<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania. Schimmelfennig crossed the Rappahannock River and saw a Confederate wagon train moving slowly north. It was a part of Stonewall Jackson's rear element and had been left unguarded. Schimmelfennig attacked the wagon train and captured eleven heavily loaded mules and several soldiers. Seven days later, he was heavily engaged at 2<sup>nd</sup> Bull Run/Manassas.



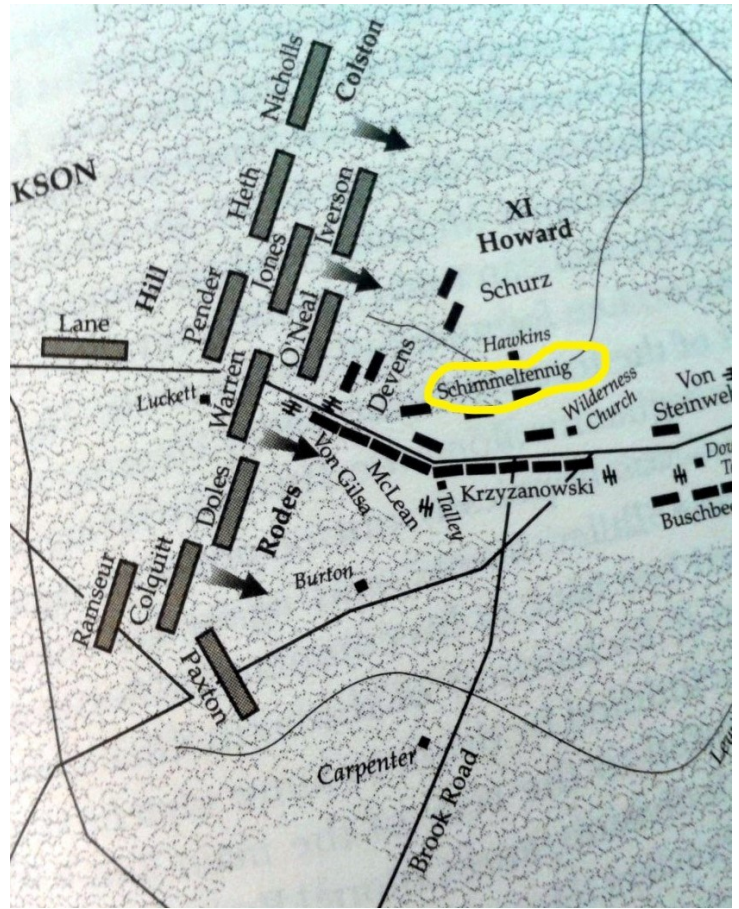
Schimmelfennig fought in the battle of Chancellorsville in 1863 under General O.O. Howard in the XI Corps; Schimmelfennig commanded a brigade of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. Howard wasn't happy with the German troops, who retreated when they were flanked by Gen. Stonewall Jackson. The Germans took most of the brunt of the intense scorn from the newspapers of the day.

(cont on page 19)

# MS. REBELLE

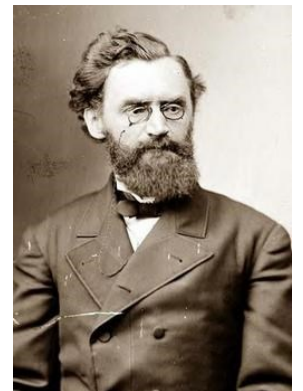


Battle of Second Manassas



Battle of Chancellorsville

During the Gettysburg Campaign he and Carl Schurz were together on their way to Gettysburg. Schimmelfennig at this time was a brigade commander. They spent the night of June 30, 1863 at Mount St. Mary's College in Emmitsburg, MD. In the morning they began their march to Gettysburg, leaving at 7:00 a.m. with Gen. John Reynolds and the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps. Upon getting closer to Gettysburg, Gen. Howard issued an order that fighting was occurring north of Gettysburg and the Union were being fired on by cannons of Rodes' Division, Ewell's Corps. In present day Gettysburg, Rt. 34 (Carlisle St./Biglerville Rd.) just across from the new "Beyond the Battle" Museum, Howard Avenue goes west and east. On West Howard Avenue there are two monuments to Schimmelfennig: a shield marker and a statue listing him as a commander. The shield marker reads in part: "Army of the Potomac, Eleventh Corps, Third Division, First Brigade, Brig. Gen. Alex Schimmelfennig, Col. George Von Amsberg, 82nd Illinois, 45<sup>th</sup> & 157<sup>th</sup> New York, 61<sup>st</sup> Ohio, 74<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry. July 1. Arrived at 1 P.M. and advanced to connect with the right of the First Corps on Oak Hill but was met by heavy artillery and



Carl Schurz

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## MS. REBELLE

musketry fire and after being engaged between two and three hours and pressed closely upon the front and flank by superior numbers the Brigade was compelled to retire with the Corps at 4 P.M. through the town to Cemetery Hill. The streets and alleys of the town became congested with the mass of infantry and artillery and many were captured. The Brigade formed and took position on Cemetery Hill between the First and Second Divisions of the Corps.” Schimmelfennig’s line began with von Amsberg’s Brigade on the left at the Mummasburg Road. On his right was Krzyzanowski’s Brigade which stretched to near the east end of the Carlisle Road. He was then ordered by Gen. Howard to proceed through town to Cemetery Hill with the First & Third Divisions of the 11<sup>th</sup> Corps and place them with Gen. Steinwehr. There were 6,000 men marching towards the town of Gettysburg.



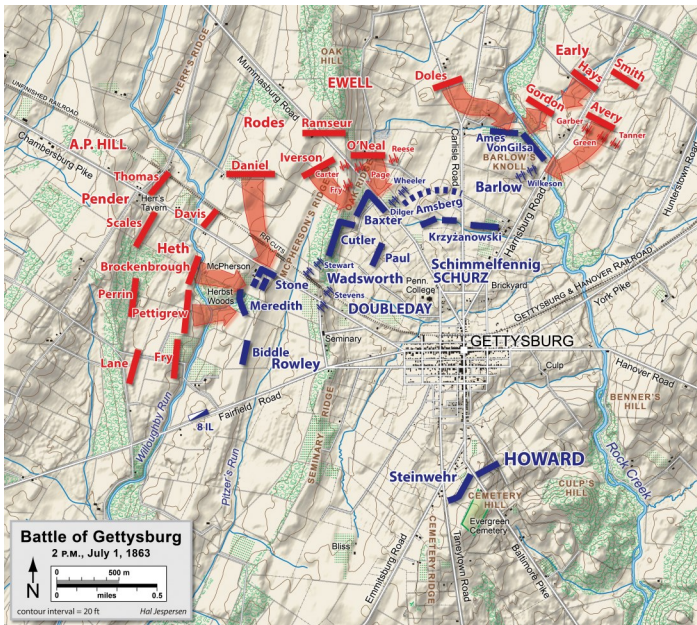
74th PA Monument (left) & marker for Schimmelfennig’s Brigade (right) (Janet Greentree)



Now here is where it gets interesting. As they were marching north towards Cemetery Hill, there were many Confederates in town. Only 2,400 people lived in the small town and they were unprepared for a three-day fight between 165,000 soldiers. One of the residents said that the Confederates were on his back porch and the Yankees on his front porch. When Schimmelfennig was in the vicinity of Chambersburg Street, everything was in disarray and the street was full of men, horses, and other accoutrements of war. He was able to get onto Baltimore Street, where he got pushed into a blind lane and ran into a high fence. The Confederates were right behind him. He was unable to jump the fence with his horse and decided to climb the fence. When he was on the top rail, one of the Confederates knocked him on the head with the butt of his gun. Schimmelfennig fell to the ground acting as if he were dead. He was wearing an overcoat over his uniform so the men had no idea he was a general.

(cont on page 21)

## MS. REBELLE



Gettysburg, First Day (left) and looking north on Baltimore St from Cemetery Hill (above)  
 (Photo: Janet Greentree)

After the Confederates had left him for dead, he saw a small stable and shed which he used for shelter. The house at 323 Baltimore Street belonged to the Henry Garlach family. At the time of the battle the house comprised 319, 321, and 323 Baltimore Street. The house was about half way between the David Wills House in the center of town and Cemetery Hill. There is a historic marker on the left side of the house in the alley. The Confederates controlled the alley. He was able to find cover in their backyard where he first hid in a drainage ditch. He then hid for three days behind a stack of firewood and a hog slop barrel near the kitchen. The streets were filled with soldiers and the Garlachs were told to hide out in the cellar, but the family was unable to hide there because there was a foot of water in the cellar. The family and guests laid on the floor rather than sleeping in the beds of the house. Henry's wife Catherine saw Schimmelfennig hiding near the pig pen in the backyard. He said to her: "Be quiet and do not say anything." Catherine awakened early the next morning and went out to see if the man was still there. He was and she began bringing him food and water when she fed the hogs. Catherine had 15 people staying in her house at the time. Her husband's whereabouts were unknown at the time of the battle. She refused to let sharpshooters into her attic for the safety of all the people in her house. Schimmelfennig laid there from the afternoon of July 1<sup>st</sup> through the early morning of July 4<sup>th</sup>. He could hear the sounds of battle and then finally heard the Union cheer as the Confederates retreated.



Catherine Garlach

(cont on page 22)

## MS. REBELLE



The Garlach House (left) and Marker (right)

Garlach Alley, Historic marker plaque, and rear yard of the house (below)

(Photos: Janet Greentree)



Catherine’s daughter Anna, who also helped Schimmelfennig, stated: “In the retreat of the first day, there were more people in the street than I have seen since at any time. The street seemed blocked. In front of our house, the crowd was so great that I believe I could have walked across the street on the heads of the soldiers.” When Catherine came to check on Schimmelfennig on July 4<sup>th</sup>, she saw him limping towards Union soldiers who had thought he was dead. When the Federals took back the town, there were innumerable men who came out from hiding. Catherine’s husband Henry also returned to the home. On the first day of the battle he had walked south to Cemetery Hill to observe the battle. Since he was a carpenter, the Union employed him to make coffins for the huge number of dead soldiers in town. Schimmelfennig saw his friend General Schurz riding down the street while standing in the doorway of the house waving his hat and calling out to him. Schimmelfennig said to him: “Halloh! I knew you would come. I have been preparing for you. You must be hungry.” Catherine served them a big breakfast and they caught up on what each one had been doing since the battle started.



Anna Garlach  
(cont on page 23)

## MS. REBELLE

Schurz and his men captured 300 Confederates on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Anna lived in the house for years with her husband and family after the war. Descendants of the Schimmelfennig family came years later to visit and see where their ancestor had hidden for days to survive. The Gettysburg restaurant “The Appalachian Brewery” on Steinwehr Avenue has a sign in their restaurant with Schimmelfennig and the hogs on their wall.



After Gettysburg, Schimmelfennig was transferred to Charleston and the surrounding islands and swamps including Folly Island, where they guarded Fort Sumter, James Island, and Morris Island. The swamps were infested with insects, the water was brackish, and it wasn't a very nice place to be stationed. Diseases were rampant, including colds, pneumonia, consumption, dysentery, malaria, and sunstroke. He was in charge of part of the X Corps during Sherman's March to the Sea. Unfortunately, he contracted tuberculosis which later led to his death. He was in command of the District of Charleston and accepted the surrender of Charleston on February 18, 1865. The first troops arriving at Charleston were two regiments of the U.S. Colored Troops, the 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment of the USCT and the 55<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry. His headquarters were at the Miles Brewton House in Charleston. The house is still standing. When Nancy Anwyll and I toured Charleston in 2004, we spent a lot of time in the White Point Park on the Battery. King Street is on the left side of the White Point Park. We most likely walked by the house.



Entry of 21st USCT and 55th MA to Charleston



Miles Brewton House

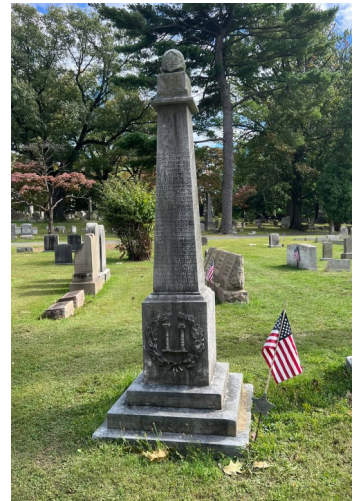
Gen. Schimmelfennig was suffering so much from a virulent form of tuberculosis that he went to Dr. Aaron Smith's Living Springs Water Cure Establishment in Cushing Hill Springs near Wernersville, PA to try to recuperate. Wernersville is west of Reading. On September 5, 1865, Schimmelfennig was sitting in a chair at the spa talking to his wife. He was cheerful, but in the middle of their conversation, he paused to take a drink of water. When he returned the glass to the table, he slumped forward in his chair and died at the age of 41. At a post mortem examination, his lungs were

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## MS. REBELLE

found to be almost entirely destroyed. He is buried in the Charles Evans Cemetery in Reading, PA, Section L, Lot 61, near Gen. David McMurtrie Gregg. I would like to thank James Scott for providing the picture of Schimmelfennig's grave. He became interested in finding graves of Civil War generals after reading my book *Civil War Travels with Ms. Rebelle*.

The Reading *Eagle* of March 21, 1909 stated: "Noted General Buried Among Strangers, a Hero of Chancellorsville was Alexander Schimmelfennig – Held Back Stonewall Jackson, Although Greatly Outnumbered – The Germans in the Civil War – A Mother's Tribute to her Son. In a corner of Charles Evans Cemetery, along an avenue that forms the line of demarcation between the old and new portions of this beautiful resting place of the departed, is the Schimmelfennig lot. There repose the remains of General Alexander Schimmelfennig, his wife Sophie, daughter Agnes and son Herman, who were the only representatives in this country of a famous German family, the graves of all other deceased members of which are in the burial plot in Litauen, Prussia, where the General was born. General Schimmelfennig commanded the First Brigade of the Eleventh Army Corps at Gettysburg. His last service was at Charleston, S.C. in February, 1865, when he prevented the outflanking of Sherman's army. The close of the war found him in delicate health. Desirous of being in a country where he would be near Germans and wishing to enjoy the salubrious climate of the South Mountain section of Berks country, he came to Pennsylvania and obtained accommodations at Dr. Smith's health resort, near Wernersville, now the Grand View Sanatorium of Dr. R.D. Wenrich. There, on Thursday, the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, 1865, he died. His remains were brought to Reading the following Saturday, and interred in Charles Evans Cemetery. There was a military funeral late in the afternoon of that day, the General's remains having arrived from Wernersville at 4:20 o'clock. They were met at the depot by a large concourse of citizens and various German societies – Schiller Verein, Maennereher, Harugarl, etc. Major John Teed had charge of the military, which comprised discharged officers in uniform and officers and men in civilian dress. Music was furnished by the Ringgold Band. The bearers were: Major General Gregg, Brigadier General Penrose, Colonels Keller, Mast, Bertollette and Young, and Captains Evans and Walters."



(Photo: James Scott)

*NOTE: Ms. Rebelle's hobby is traveling the country finding and honoring the graves of our 1,008 Civil War generals. So far she has located and photographed 427 - 169 Confederate and 258 Union. You may contact her at [jlgtree@erols.com](mailto:jlgtree@erols.com).*





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