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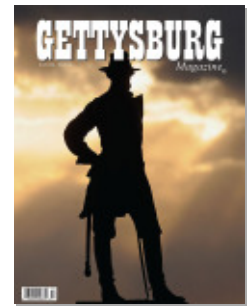
Where Honor Lies: An Incident at Taneytown

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Where Honor Lies

An Incident at Taneytown

TERENCE G. CROOKS

Near Gettysburg on July 4, 1863, Lt. Sam Porter, commanding Company F of the 108th New York infantry, wrote home to his father that his regiment “had fierce fighting for the last two days. Yesterday the position occupied by the division was attacked by a tremendous force. We drove them back but it was with fearful loss to us. Our Regt lost nearly half its number. Co. F in particular suffered fearfully. Losing 19 of 32. The rebel loss is dreadful & the division has taken 14 stand of color & I should think 2100 prisoners. *I did not receive a scratch.* To day what is left of our Regt is awaiting another attack.”¹ The 108th New York supported the battery commanded by Lt. George A. Woodruff on the right of Brig. Gen. Alexander Hays’s Third Division line of the Second Corps, which received the attack of A. P. Hill’s brigades, part of what is popularly called Pickett’s charge. Positioned about two hundred to three hundred yards south of the 108th New York infantry was someone much better known to Gettysburg history than Lt. Porter. His name was Frank Aretas Haskell; and three days after Independence Day, he would shoot Sam Porter at Taneytown.

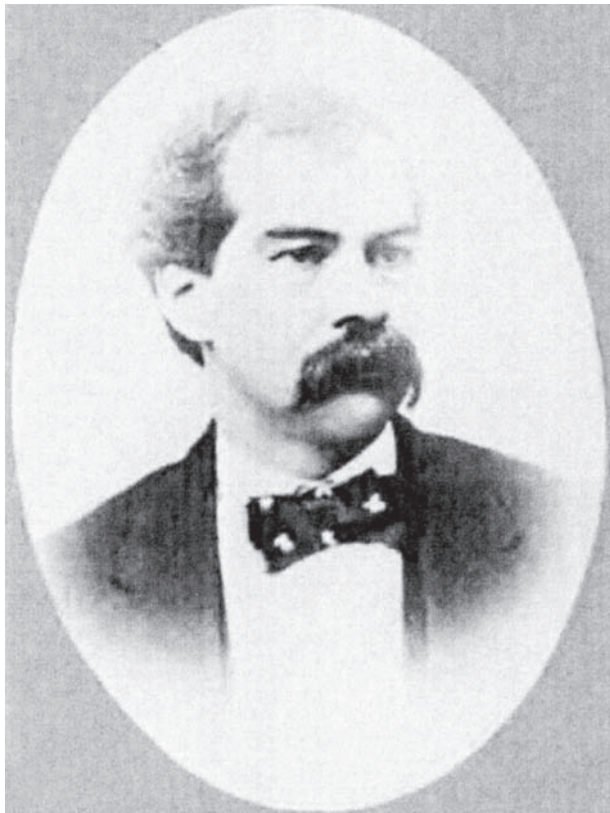
Col. Charles James Powers of the 108th New York submitted the following details of the shooting on July 7, 1863, to Lt. Seville, acting assistant adjutant general of the Second Brigade in Hays’s Third Division:

¹ Samuel Porter to Father, July 4, 1863, (my italics). A. P. 84, Porter Family Papers, box 1, folder 10. Originals in the Department of Rare Books, Special Collections and Preservation, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY (hereafter cited as Porter Letters).

We had just arrived in Camp since our Div was crowded closely together sinks had not been dug then and Mr. Porter having severe diarrhea was called to ease himself. He went as he supposed to a secluded spot across from the road and far to the rear of the Barn, no tents or any thing apparently to be nuisanced when immediately this Haskell came rushing across the field with cocked pistol in hand and demanded that he should “double quick” off the field. Mr. Porter once rose and commenced buttoning up to comply when Haskell demanded he should go “double quick” again saying “go Goddamn you or I will shoot you.” Mr. Porter then started but not moving fast enough for Lt. Haskell, he ran up and kicked him severely. Mr. Porter then turned round and said to him that he would not take that abuse but go out of the field like a gentleman. Scarcely had he commenced speaking when Lt. Haskell fired on him depositing a pistol bullet in his right shoulder wounding him severely.²

In this instance, the shooter was also the same self-reported hero of Gettysburg whose famous

² Colonel Charles Powers, 108th New York Infantry, to Lt. Seville AAAAG, Second Brigade, 2nd Corps, July 7, 1863, Sam Porter Pension File 35635 Cert. # 236721, National Archives, Washington, DC (hereafter cited as Porter Pension File). Colonel Powers also included the following list of witnesses: Hamlen H. Murphy, Co. H, 19th Maine; Lewis E. Hopkins, Co. H, 19th Maine; Augustus C. Smith, Co. G, 19th Maine; Henry Niles, Co. K, 108th New York; Henry E. Williams, Co. D/F, 14th Connecticut; Lieutenant Smith, 1st Minnesota Cmdg. (could be either Lt. Dewitt C. Smith or William E. Smith, see Soldiers and Sailors Database [film number M546 Roll 9; accessed April 26, 2015], www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm; hereafter cited as Soldiers and Sailors).



Col. Charles James Powers, 108th New York. Courtesy of the U.S. Army Military History Institute.

hundred-page-plus letter to his brother has been used as a reference in most discussions of the battle, especially the climactic charge on July 3, 1863.³ Haskell's modern biographer seemed to be unaware of his act of violence against Porter, since it is not mentioned in the work or in Haskell's published correspondence. In his only reference to July 7, 1863, Haskell recalls to his brother, "I rode back to Gettysburgh [*sic*] the day I wrote you last [July 5], in an ambulance and on the 7th resumed duty at Div. Headquarters as an Aide with Gen'l Harrow who

³ The works on Gettysburg where Haskell is referenced are too numerous to enumerate, but two works do reflect an interesting reaction to Haskell and his claimed activity on July 3, 1863, at the height of Pickett's charge. In Carol Reardon's, *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), Haskell is referenced fourteen times, and his words open and close her book. Reardon uses Haskell since his viewpoint is conducive to her thesis, but one gets the impression that she believes Haskell's exploits and seems to wonder why Webb got a Medal of Honor and Haskell did not (30). David L. Ladd and Audrey Ladd, editors of *The Bachelor Papers*, 3 vols. (Dayton, OH: Morningside House, 1994), go one step further and actually award Haskell a Medal of Honor for Gettysburg, but unfortunately it is the wrong Haskell and the wrong battle (2:855n199). Sgt. Frank W. Haskell of the Third Maine infantry was awarded a Medal of Honor on December 8, 1898, for his actions at Fair Oaks (Seven Pines) on June 1, 1862 (Soldiers and Sailors). Frank Aretas Haskell did not receive a Medal of Honor, but his influence in these works testifies to the convincing power of his prose.

now commands."⁴ Evidently shooting a fellow officer during the afternoon seemed to have slipped his mind or perhaps he decided against recording the event since such an admission could be used as evidence (he was a lawyer); or more than likely, given his nature, it was too trivial to mention.

Understandably, the Articles of War in 1863 do not cover the possibility of the deliberate shooting of a brother officer. Article 9 comes closest to the situation since it states that any "officer or soldier who shall strike his superior officer or draw or lift up any weapons or offer any violence against him, being in the execution of his office, on any pretence whatsoever or shall disobey any lawful command of his superior officer shall suffer death or such other punishment as shall, according to the nature of his offence, be inflicted upon him by the sentence of a court of inquiry." If article 9 could not apply, then the offense could be covered by article 83, the rather all-purpose "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman." Although not specifically spelled out in regulations, it seems fair to assume that Haskell's action would be viewed as a court-martial offense, one that could lead to dismissal from the service. Therefore, the question is, Why would Frank Haskell jeopardize his carefully crafted military career with an overreaction to such a trivial occurrence?⁵

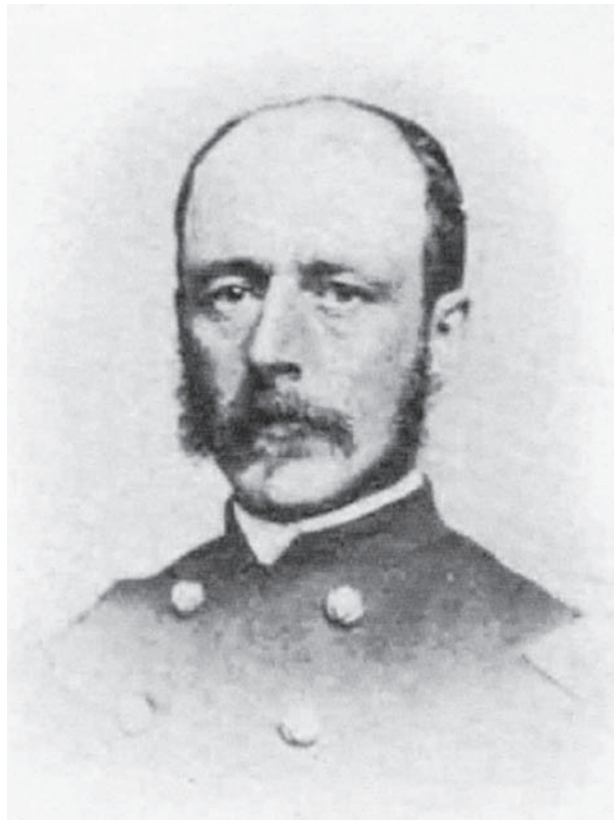
At just under six feet tall, Frank Haskell was not a towering figure but still managed to intimidate people, not with his height, but with his "erect almost martial bearing," which made him seem bigger.⁶ Early in the war, he certainly made such an impression on the young captain Rufus Dawes, who, with his volunteer company, had just arrived in the camp of the Sixth Wisconsin to join the regiment that would become part of the famed Iron Brigade. Dawes's men were totally untrained and "carried every variety of valise and every species of bundle, down to one shirt tied up in a red handkerchief."⁷ Under the eyes

⁴ Frank L. Byrne and Andrew T. Weaver, eds., *Haskell of Gettysburg: His Life and Civil War Papers* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1989), 89.

⁵ U.S. War Department, *The 1863 Laws of War* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2005), 5, 22. Perhaps in Haskell's mind, he felt justified under article 9 since he considered Porter an inferior officer—assuming of course he noticed that Porter was commissioned—and therefore shot him for disobeying "the lawful command of his superior officer." Even so, article 9 does not endow Haskell with the right to impose sentence. Porter at the time was brevet captain of Company F and thus not an inferior. Furthermore it would seem that Haskell had not yet reported to General Harrow, so under whose orders was he acting? His own?

⁶ Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 16.

⁷ Rufus R. Dawes, *Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers* (Marietta, OH: E. R. Alderman and Sons, 1890), 11–12.



Frank Aretas Haskell, aide to Gen. John Gibbon. Courtesy of the U. S. Army Military History Institute.

of the men already in camp who were gathered to welcome the arrival of the new company, Dawes felt embarrassed for himself and his unmilitary-looking collection of recruits. Moments later Dawes's embarrassment and confusion were compounded when he "was met at the gate way of Camp Randell by Frank A. Haskell, the Adjutant of the sixth regiment, who was mounted on a spirited charger and quite stunning in his bright uniform and soldierly bearing."⁸ Haskell requested Dawes and his men, escorted by himself and the "best drilled company in the state" from the Fifth Wisconsin infantry, to march to headquarters; but the young captain, only too conscious of his men's lack of soldierly appearance and drilling, declined the offer to parade and found his own way at his "own gait." With the passing of time Dawes learned to appreciate the glittering adjutant, although he "never forgot the humiliation of his arrival at the camp."⁹

⁸ Dawes, *Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers*, 11–12.

⁹ Dawes, *Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers*, 11–12.

When Haskell graduated from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire in 1854, his Latin teacher characterized the twenty-six-year-old student "as ambitious as Lucifer," and his biographer added that he "would risk his being in his quest for glory."¹⁰ He may well have been as ambitious as the rebel angel; however, Haskell's approach was less overt and relied more on cunning, craft, and most importantly appearance. He made it quite clear that he chose not to serve with the common man and desired "a position equal to his expectations."¹¹ He reveled in the role of playing the officer. After Bull Run, when McClellan was creating the Army of the Potomac, the numerous drills, parades, and more drills gave the "ambitious former drillmaster" of the Sixth Wisconsin "every opportunity to shine."¹² Rufus Dawes recalled that to "see Haskell 'About face' and salute the Colonel before the regiment when we were on dress parade was an object in military bearing" and perhaps sarcastically added that if "you are going to be an Adjutant, set to work at once, learning how to 'About face' gracefully."¹³ For Haskell, "the spirit of war" and the appearance of military competence provided a channel for his Luciferian drive and fed his elitist needs, but the perceptive young Dawes saw the image for what it was.

In modern terminology, Haskell was a West Point wannabe, and he seemed to spend a great deal of energy emulating the West Pointers, with whom he wished to be identified. When the newly appointed brigadier general John Gibbon, a former artillery officer *and* a West Point graduate, took command of the Iron Brigade in May of 1862, all of Haskell's aspirations and posturing crystallized in the person of this no-nonsense old army regular. Although Gibbon was born in Holmesburg, Pennsylvania, he was raised in North Carolina and graduated West Point in 1847 with future Civil War notables such as A. P. Hill, Ambrose Burnside, and "life long friend Henry Heth."¹⁴ With the advent of the war, the true divisive and tragic nature of the conflict struck Gibbon and his family. When he decided to honor his oath of loyalty "as an officer in the United States Army" and his three broth-

¹⁰ Dawes, *Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers*, 21, 23.

¹¹ Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 1.

¹² Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 15.

¹³ Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 18, 19.

¹⁴ Larry Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2003), 45.

ers followed North Carolina into the Confederacy, Gibbon was disowned by his family and labeled a traitor to the Southern cause.¹⁵ Thus, by the time Gibbon took command of the all-western brigade, he was a hard-bitten regular, “steel cold” and “the most American of Americans” with an “up and down manner of telling the truth, no matter whom it hurts.”¹⁶ Gibbon was Haskell’s idea of the perfect soldier, someone to be admired and emulated.

By Special Order No. 106 on June 17, 1862, Frank Haskell became the aide-de-camp for John Gibbon after losing two earlier efforts at self-promotion. Although as an aide he would remain a lieutenant and a staff officer, his position allowed him to interact with the upper realms of command, where he could continue “to win the favor of powerful superiors.”¹⁷ Unfortunately, the more Haskell inhaled the heady air of the general staff, the more his life became defined by the pomp and pageantry of soldiering. To the ambitious aide, George Brinton McClellan was “the idol of all the army,”¹⁸ and even though the “idol” was no longer in command, Haskell parrots Little Mac’s contempt for the president, with unsubtle remarks about Lincoln’s presence at a review in April of 1863. The first lady did not escape his notice or venom either. Haskell’s boss, John Gibbon, mentions the same review but, unlike his aide, refrains from sarcasm and simply notes, “the President came down and reviewed the troops.”¹⁹ Lt. Sam Porter, also present at the review, wrote to his sister Mary that the president was there and that “Abe certainly is the homeliest man I ever saw.”²⁰ These comments on the president reveal a great deal about each of the individual observers. Gibbon maintains a professional level and simply states the facts. Porter, with an abolitionist background, feels close enough to the president to call him Abe and makes an affectionate observation that few could argue with. Though Haskell makes a similar observation as Porter about Lincoln, there is a sneer and a feeling of contemptuous superiority in the former.

15 Theodore Lyman, *With Grant and Meade from the Wilderness to Appomattox* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 107.

16 Lyman, *With Grant and Meade*, 107.

17 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 19; see also “Frank A. Haskell,” Compiled Service Record File, National Archives, Washington, DC.

18 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 43, 58.

19 John Gibbon, *Personal Recollections of the Civil War* (Dayton, OH: Morning-side Press, 1988), 110.

20 Samuel Porter to his sister Mary, April 11, 1863, Porter Letters, box 1, folder 10.

When dealing with Frank Haskell, it should be understood that most of the knowledge about Haskell is provided by himself. If he had not penned his famous letter to his brother, would he just be another faceless citation in the *Official Records*?

In fact, the letter to his brother is Haskell’s only claim to fame in an otherwise competent career as a staff aide who, through various political connections, became the short-lived colonel of the Thirty-Sixth Wisconsin. To understand why Haskell shot Porter with such apparent lack of regard, one has to look no further than his famous letter to his brother. All of what Haskell was or imagined himself to be comes to fruition in his firsthand account of the battle of Gettysburg, often cited as an important source for primary information on the battle, especially the culminating event known popularly as Pickett’s charge. Although hailed as “classic of Civil War scholarship,” hardly any historians have noted that the letter is primarily a literary work—an epistle in epistolary form—that was revised, rewritten, and recast into an *in medias res* account to his brother, which all the while Haskell probably had an eye to publish as would be in keeping with his excessive pride and ambition.²¹ Even though Haskell’s version of his actions at the battle has been called exaggerated and fanciful, the epistle as a literary work may still contain historically accurate information, but the central focus is the *persona*, or first person narrator, of the letter. In this case, the *persona* is the idealized self-created image of Frank Aretas Haskell, or more accurately *Haskell of Gettysburg*.²²

21 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 87–88. See also Steven J. Wright, “John Gibbon and the Black Hat Brigade,” in *Giants in Their Tall Black Hats* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1998), 64. The claim of “scholarship” is somewhat puzzling since the letter attempts to relate an event experienced by the author; and while the letter and details are carefully selected and crafted, to call it a work of *scholarship* seems quite inappropriate, since the work is a personal narrative not insightful research. “The *epistle* differs from the common letter in that it is a conscious literary form rather than a spontaneous chatty, private composition,” William F. Thrall, A. Holman, and C. H. Holman, *A Handbook to Literature*, rev. ed. (New York: Odyssey Press, 1960), 178–79.

22 The scope and intention of this work is not to enter into the controversy of the accuracy of Haskell’s account of Gettysburg. When his work was published in the 1890s, the Philadelphia Brigade Association took great umbrage at Haskell’s portrayal of their performance on July 3, 1863, during Pickett’s assault. They published their own rebuttal entitled “The Battle of Gettysburg: How General Meade Turned the Army of the Potomac over to Lieutenant Haskell” (Philadelphia: Bowers Printing Company, 1910). In the course of the broadside, the writers label Haskell’s letter as a foolish and absurd narrative and spend a great deal of spleen and vituperation on the actions of Gibbon’s aide—some of which do engender legitimate concerns about accuracy and veracity. For the purpose of clarity in the ensuing discussion, when speaking of the writer’s *persona* in the letter, “*Haskell*” will be used; and when speaking of the real person, “Haskell” will be used.

Quite clearly Haskell perceived the significance of the epic struggle at Gettysburg; and so appropriately, as a student of literature, he structured his letter in a manner similar to the classical epics with which he was intimately familiar. At the start, the invocation to the deity is omitted, but instead the modern Homer delineates the epic struggle of the war so far and begins with the march to Gettysburg in heroic intonation—“but a mighty work was before them. Onward they marched—night and day were blended.”²³ They moved through the fire of “broiling sunshine” and through “flooding rain.”²⁴ All the ingredients of the epic are there and occur throughout the work. However, the central concern of this study is the modern Homer or Virgil, who unlike previous epic poets places himself directly in the action. The hero of Haskell’s epic is, of course, himself, and in his work he is quite an accomplished soldier. When reviewing the Union high command, he disapproves of Hooker but approves of Meade, whom he implies to know quite closely. Even though he was not physically present on the first day of the battle, *Haskell* confidently reports that the First Corps was undermined by the “feeble opposition” of the Eleventh Corps to the advance of the enemy, which in turn left the First Corps without support and lost the first day of battle.²⁵ As a former member of the Iron Brigade of the First Corps, he experiences complete disgust at the Eleventh Corps. Derisively labeled the “Flying Dutchmen” after the Chancellorsville battle, the Eleventh Corps collapsed after “Gnl. Barlow was badly wounded”—Barlow being a natural American, not a German immigrant—and “their retreat quickly degenerated into a disgraceful rout.”²⁶

Haskell also interacts freely with Corps commanders. On the evening of July 1, while still at Taneytown, he converses with an exhausted General Hancock on his way from the front to report to Meade, who, nevertheless, gives the lieutenant “a detailed account of the situation at Gettysburg and what had transpired after his arrival there.”²⁷ So *Haskell*, the lieutenant, hears about the situation before the general in command; and of course,

knowing that Hancock will eventually be aware of this “letter,” Gibbon’s aide gives a heroic—almost sycophantic—description of the Second Corps commander. Inspired perhaps by the meeting with Hancock, *Haskell* next moves on to impart words of wisdom about skillful “generalship and good fighting.”²⁸ Like his spiritual idol McClellan, *Haskell* overestimates the number of rebels as “a little upwards of a hundred thousand men of all arms”; and as a seasoned veteran staff officer, he feels that Meade’s alignment on Cemetery Ridge “was a good defensive position.”²⁹

However, *Haskell* has little patience with Maj. Gen. Daniel Edgar Sickles, commander of the Third Corps, who “was neither born nor bred a soldier” but was “a man after show and notoriety and newspaper fame and the adulation of the mob.”³⁰ Now, the real Frank Haskell was neither born nor bred a soldier. That man was a teacher and lawyer, but the narrator of the letter is the fictionalized *Haskell of Gettysburg* and is thereby free to demonize the hapless Sickles. Similarly to Gibbon, the hero feels that politicians should not interfere with professional soldiers and that political military appointments should be viewed with contempt, yet the real Haskell engaged in two unsuccessful attempts to gain promotion through political connections. Continuing his assessment of the Union command, *Haskell of Gettysburg* comments freely on each of the generals at Meade’s council of war on July 2, implying that he too was present. Once more, the descriptions of Hancock and Gibbon border on the embarrassing, while his appraisal of the other officers reveals a condescending, almost paternalistic, viewpoint. For example, O. O. Howard is a “well dressed little gentleman,” and Pleasanton is “a nice little dandy.”³¹ Nevertheless, at the end of the meeting and having the benefit of hindsight, Haskell approves the decision of the generals and concludes that their “heads were sound”—an approval which must have provided a degree of reassurance for the Union high command.³²

As the narrative continues, the description and language are florid and hyperbolic, typical of

23 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 92.

24 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 93.

25 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 95.

26 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 96.

27 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 101.

28 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 112.

29 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 115.

30 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 117.

31 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 19–21.

32 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 134–35.

nineteenth-century Victorian melodrama. All the men are noble “and stand nobly to their work,” and a “sublime heroism seems to pervade all.”³³ His descriptions of the wounded actually reflect the real Haskell. His pictures of the men are sanitized and generalized so that no real emotion can be generated. “Men are dropping dead or wounded on all sides by scores and by hundreds; and the poor mutilated creatures” with varying degrees of injury “are limping and crawling towards the rear.”³⁴ Since they are part of *Haskell’s* tapestry, they are all stoic sufferers who “make no sound of complaint but are as silent as if dumb and mute.”³⁵ Even if they did speak or scream in agony, would the staff aide have heard them? Ironically, despite all his posturing and wonderful about-faces, Haskell never did understand the common soldier in the way that Gibbon did, nor did he want to. As a regular army and career officer, Gibbon entered the war with more than a doubt about the volunteers’ ability to function as soldiers, but he learned how to deal with them and how to turn them into an efficient fighting force. Gibbon realized that these raw recruits were men—free men who had volunteered to serve their country in its time of need—and that they would respond to his discipline since “the hope of reward was more powerful than the fear of punishment.”³⁶ In this way, he was able to reach the volunteers on a human level while still motivating with discipline and inculcating military skills. Gibbon was proud of his men and even encouraged his wife to visit “some of my poor fellows in the hospitals [in Baltimore]. I hope you will keep up your good intentions of visiting them often. Money spent in buying them little delicacies is well laid out, and I hope you will not spare it.”³⁷ In dealing with the rank and file, Haskell never achieved this level of concern or intimacy. A friend of Haskell recalled “that he had little sympathy for the raw soldier no matter how much he was suffering from heat, dust and thirst when on duty or on the march.”³⁸

The climax of the letter (and the battle) is, of course, Pickett’s charge, and it is here where *Has-*

kell of Gettysburg comes forward in all his glory. His tactical prescience is remarkable. Hours before the attack, he quickly spots the weakness of the Second Corps line and correctly wonders what would happen if “the enemy should make an assault here [at the Angle] today, with two or three heavy lines,—a great overwhelming mass.”³⁹ Uncannily, he even guesstimates the approximate size and formation of Longstreet’s attack and quickly follows his insight by pointing out that Meade did not agree and chose not to reinforce the position. In fact, an important point to notice in *Haskell’s* version of the repulse is that the Union general officers are either not present at the point of the attack or are completely ineffectual. Webb cannot get his men to do anything. Only *Haskell* can motivate them, which he does, saving the day and the battle. As the attack at the Angle finally subsides, *Haskell* makes sure to mention that Meade arrived *after the fight* and had no idea what happened. Naturally, the heroic aide is magnanimous in victory, generous to the gallantry of his foes and suddenly “sorrowful” at the sight of “so many wounded”; but unsurprisingly, he has to rush off this great stage to find his wounded general, at whose “request I had to tell him and a large voluntary crowd of the wounded who pressed around” the “story of the fight”—in other words, the first performance of *Haskell of Gettysburg*.⁴⁰

Two days after the climactic charge that essentially ended the battle, the men of the Second Corps were ordered to march to Two Taverns as Meade’s army roused itself to the pursuit of Lee. After waiting for rations that did not appear, the Second Corps left Two Taverns and moved on to Taneytown on July 7. In a strange reversal of stereotypes, Meade’s soldiers were starving and shoeless, while Lee’s Rebels, perhaps not much better in the way of sartorial splendor, were well fed and had a ready supply of food on hand. The men in Porter’s 108th New York were ravenous since they entered the battle on the morning of July 2 with only a small supply of food and as yet had not been resupplied. After waiting vainly at Two Taverns for supplies and spending a “miserable night without tents,” they moved on July 7 toward Taneytown, which they reached early in the afternoon and went “into

33 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 124–125.

34 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 124.

35 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 124.

36 Gibbon, *Personal Recollections of the Civil War*, 38.

37 Wright, “John Gibbon and the Black Hat Brigade,” 62.

38 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 13.

39 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 142.

40 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 190, 192, see also 168–70.

bivouac for the remainder of the day and night” after drawing some much-needed rations.⁴¹ Before, during, and after the battle, Sam Porter, like a large number of his compatriots, suffered from severe diarrhea occasioned by poor diet (when available, that is), exhaustion, and stress. When they stopped near Taneytown in the early afternoon, Hays’s division “was crowded closely together”; the “sinks had not been dug”; and Sam, “having severe diarrhea was called to ease himself.”⁴² The timing could not have been poorer since who should appear but none other than that “prince of good soldiers” *Haskell of Gettysburg*.⁴³

Unlike Frank Haskell, Sam Porter and his regiment, the 108th New York, have been lost in the passage of time and, with the exception of a few interested researchers, are unknown to most historians and the general Civil War audience. As did hundreds of other regiments and hundreds of thousands of men, the 108th New York and Sam Porter fought in the war between the states, did their daily duty, achieved no outstanding notoriety, and then simply went home and tried to get on with what was left of their lives. Shortly before his nineteenth birthday, Porter packed up his schoolbooks and left the University of Rochester in his third year and joined the 108th New York volunteer infantry on August 9, 1862, where he was mustered in with the rank of second lieutenant.⁴⁴ Porter’s family was well-known and socially active in nineteenth-century Rochester, especially because of their involvement in the abolitionist movement. Sam’s father, Samuel D. Porter, concealed slaves en route on the Underground Railroad to Canada by housing them in the barn on his property. At one time, Sam senior got wind of a U.S. deputy marshal “on



Lt. Sam Porter, 108th New York. From George H. Washburn, *A Complete Military History and Record of the 108th Regiment N.Y. Vols* (Rochester, NY: E. R. Andrews, 1894; repr. ed., Salem, MA: Higginson Book Company, 2000).

his way to Rochester to arrest a runaway ‘nigger’ for whom he had a warrant.”⁴⁵ The so-called runaway was Frederick Douglass, Porter’s good friend. As soon as the older Porter discovered the object of the warrant, he rushed to Douglass’s home and urged him to flee to Canada, which the renowned ex-slave did. Sam’s mother, Susan Farley Porter, like her husband, actively campaigned for the demise of slavery and was one of the six founding members of the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Sewing Society, in which she served as its first president. In the prewar years, this group of ladies raised money through festivals and bazaars to support not only Douglass’s newspaper, *North Star*, but to sponsor lectures and to publish works, such as *Autographs for Freedom*, that would draw attention to the iniquity of slavery. The Porter family also rubbed elbows with such notables as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Harriet Beecher Stowe as well as the colorful local celebrity

41 Francis Moses Wafer diary, Francis Moses Wafer Collection, Douglas Library, Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, p. 57. See also, U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), ser. 1, vol. 27, part 1, 145–46, 222 (hereafter cited as OR and followed by the volume, part, and page numbers, with all subsequent citations referencing series 1); George H. Washburn, *A Complete Military History and Record of the 108th Regiment N.Y. Vols* (Rochester, NY: E. R. Andrews, 1894; repr. ed., Salem, MA: Higginson Book Company, 2000), 125; Kent Masterson Brown, *Retreat from Gettysburg* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 34–36; Francis A. Walker, *History of the Second Army Corps* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887; repr. ed., Maryland: Olde Soldier Books, n.d.), 308.

42 Powers to Seville, July 7, 1863, Porter Pension File.

43 James P. Sullivan, *An Irishman in the Iron Brigade*, ed. W. Beaudot and L. Herdegen (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993), 53.

44 Frederick Phistester, *New York in the War of the Rebellion 1861–1865*, 3rd ed. (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon Company, 1912), 4:3279.

45 Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass Written by Himself* (Hartford, CT: Park Publishing, 1882), 345–46. See also Alma Lutz, “Susan B. Anthony and John Brown,” *Rochester History* 15, no. 3 (July 1953): 16.

Susan B. Anthony.⁴⁶ Not surprisingly, then, when the opportunity to join the fight for the union presented itself in August of 1862 with the formation of the second regiment from Rochester, Sam Jr. obviously followed the civic-minded examples of his parents and became a second lieutenant in Company F of the newly formed 108th New York.

On September 17, 1862, almost a month after its inception, the untrained men and officers of the 108th New York were thrown into the grinder at Antietam, where the regiment suffered a loss of 195 casualties in the fight for Bloody Lane, south of the Roulette farm.⁴⁷ Sam Porter was part of this statistic since he suffered a wound to the right foot that sent him home to Rochester until his return to duty on November 18, 1862. The young lieutenant returned to a different Army of the Potomac. Eleven days earlier Maj. Gen. George Brinton McClellan was replaced by his close friend Ambrose E. Burnside. Upon his return, Porter made no mention of the change in command but did retain his optimistic outlook for better things to happen in the near future. However, such optimism was severely shaken by the fiasco at Fredericksburg, when on December 13 the 108th New York of Palmer's brigade and numerous other brigades were hurled futilely at the Sunken Road at the base of Marye's Heights. Shaken by the disaster, the lieutenant confessed that the "attack was a piece of folly" and that he "felt that God's protecting hand had been over me and shielded me in that terrible time of danger."⁴⁸ After an experience such as Fredericksburg as well as an unseemly squabble over promotion, Porter learned about discretion and valor and left a request with his father to use his influence in "getting me an appointment to Palmer's or any other General staff"—in other words, a staff position away from the firing line.⁴⁹ The "Picture Book War" as Catton called it and the glamor of battle had faded quickly for Lt. Sam Porter of the 108th New York.⁵⁰

No staff position became available over the ensuing months, but Porter continued to do his duty while the Army of the Potomac floundered along

in an effort to establish itself as a successful combat unit. So far, under mediocre to incompetent leadership, the performance of Lincoln's principal army approached the level of tragicomedy—neither an outright joke nor an obvious disaster. The problem was not the common soldier, who fought with uncommon courage and tenacity, but rather a lack of audacity and moral courage on the part of its commanders. Starting the third spring of the war, the army was now under the command of Joseph "Fightin' Joe" Hooker, who revitalized the army after Fredericksburg. Before the spring campaign, the young lieutenant of the 108th looked forward to the "chance to test Hooker's generalship" and "hoped that he may succeed in anything he undertakes."⁵¹ For only a victory "can convince the army that there is more than one general in the world and to hear men constantly saying that nobody but McClellan can command this army with success is enough to make one sick." At Chancellorsville when the decisive test came, Hooker followed the pattern of previous commanders and could not summon the audacity, and thus once more Lincoln's army was outgeneraled by Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. Sam Porter, like most officers, experienced frustration yet remained practical and refused to become despondent. When Hooker's congratulatory order of May 6, 1863, "was read to our Regt," Porter "was glad to see that he [Hooker] does not feel so much discouraged as most of the army officers do."⁵² However, he wished that Hooker "would try not to smooth over our disaster quite so much. We that were in the fight know that we were whipped," yet Porter still believed "that we can lick the Rebs and [was] willing to try it at any time." Two months later at the small crossroads town of Gettysburg and once again under a new leader, George Gordon Meade, the Army of the Potomac took a major step toward self-assurance when it defeated Robert E. Lee and the vaunted Army of Northern Virginia. It was here also that Frank Aretas Haskell made sure his name would be remembered to Civil War history and to Sam Porter of the 108th New York.

From the night of July 3, Haskell spent his time with the wounded general John Gibbon, first at the

46 See Nancy A. Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change, Rochester, New York 1822–1872* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984) 56–59, 136, 206.

47 *OR*, 19.1:334.

48 Porter to his father, December 28, 1862, Porter Letters, box 1, folder 10.

49 Porter to his father, December 28, 1862, Porter Letters, box 1, folder 10.

50 Bruce Catton, *Mr. Lincoln's Army* (New York: Doubleday, 1951), 1, 54.

51 Porter to his father, December 28, 1862, [January–early February?] 1863, Porter Letters, box 1, folder 10.

52 Porter, letter May 6, 1863, Porter Letters, box 1, folder 10.

Second Corps hospital on Rock Creek and then at Westminster, Maryland, where Gibbon awaited a train to Baltimore. Gibbon, obviously impressed with Haskell's version of his "distinguished conduct" at the battle, no doubt conveyed his approval to his aide and would later write "that to him more than to any one man are we indebted for the repulse of Lee's assault."⁵³ So with Gibbon's words probably still ringing in his ears, Haskell revisited the scene of the battle before taking up his new job on July 7 "as an Aide with Gen. Harrow," Gibbon's temporary replacement. On his way to report for duty, however, what should offend his eyes but the sight of a Union soldier preparing to go to the bathroom in an open field. Probably in a typically imperious manner, Haskell "with a cocked pistol in hand" rode over to Porter "and demanded that he should 'double quick' off the field at once."⁵⁴

Just why Haskell saw it as his duty was not quite clear, since the area had not been designated, or "laid off," nor had it been stationed with guards to indicate the site as divisional headquarters. Perhaps the hero of Gettysburg, whose obsession with cleanliness was well-known in the Iron Brigade, saw a scruffy looking young man, without blouse, without insignia, not looking soldierly at all, attempting to go to the bathroom, and it offended his vision of warfare and soldiering. Obviously Porter did not respond with the correct amount of awe or deference to the presence of *Haskell of Gettysburg*. Slowly buttoning up and arranging his clothing, Porter clearly had had enough of Harrow's new aide, and the assault escalated as Colonel Powers clearly described earlier. Haskell's loss of control during the encounter is interesting. If his exploits on July 3 are to be given credence, then how could an aide with the self-proclaimed charisma of command move an entire regiment into the death trap of the Angle—a feat even the brigade commander could not achieve—but now could not command that same respect and awe from a disheveled, hungry, probably untidy, and unwashed lieutenant more intent on natural demands and apparently immune to the charismatic *Haskell of Gettysburg*? Even if Porter was not entirely the innocent victim and perhaps exchanged heated unpleasanties with the aide,

⁵³ Gibbon, *Personal Recollections of the Civil War*, 153.

⁵⁴ Powers to Seville, July 7, 1863, Porter Pension File.

Haskell's loss of composure is noteworthy. Had he actually come to believe that he was *Haskell of Gettysburg* and that as the savior of Gettysburg, he now supped with the Gods of battle? As he unabashedly confessed to his family, he was, after all, "too good an officer"; and he obviously saw himself above the level of a mere combat lieutenant.⁵⁵ He knew that he had done "more for the country in that battle than some who will be made Major Generals," and it gave him a "twinge to think I shall get no visible reward."⁵⁶ Furthermore, in his own mind, he *was* the confidant of division, corps, and commanding generals and thus beyond the reach of the young, poorly dressed ragamuffin who had the nerve to call himself a gentleman while in the presence of *Haskell of Gettysburg*.

On the other hand, surely some sense of cosmic or comic irony was not lost on Porter as he stumbled away bleeding profusely while the hole in his blouse still smoked from the proximity of the shot. He had survived the horror of the battle of Gettysburg; but now three days later, he had just been deliberately shot for no apparent reason by a fellow Union officer. As in any situation such as this, parameters cannot be simply black and white. Sam Porter did have an edge to him if provoked; and given what his regiment went through in the previous week, provocation would not be difficult. Porter prided himself on honesty and fair play. As mentioned earlier, he became involved in a volatile disagreement after Fredericksburg with his superior, over what Porter perceived as an injustice in promotion. Later he would be involved in a drunken dual with a fellow regimental officer, which resulted more in hangovers than in injury. So it is reasonable to assume that Lt. Porter was not entirely an innocent victim in the incident with Harrow's aide, but his recalcitrance, real or imagined, gave Haskell no grounds for shooting the younger soldier.

Shortly after the confrontation, Col. Charles Powers of the 108th New York submitted a report

⁵⁵ Dawes, *Service with the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers*, 21.

⁵⁶ Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 50, 204. Now, the age-old argument can be raised that twenty-first-century psychology or values are being applied to a nineteenth-century individual. Such an argument seems quite off the mark. Has human nature changed all that much in 150 years? Do men or women no longer pursue an image of themselves that they believe will fulfill their need for self-worth? Given our present-day celebrity-driven society, are there no such people as a Frank A. Haskell? The answers are obvious, and the objection irrelevant.

in writing and requested “that this outrage may be investigated and brought to the notice of the Division and Corps Commanders.”⁵⁷ Powers’s letter went through the usual chain of command until it arrived on July 8, 1863, at the headquarters of the Second Army Corps, where it seems to have settled and evaporated. Hancock had been wounded at the battle, so command of the Second Corps was turned over to Brig. Gen. William Hays, who had recently returned after his capture at Chancellorsville and who, to this time, had commanded nothing larger than a brigade. On July 11, 1863, Haskell was ordered, under Special Order No. 160, to report to Second Corps headquarters and was “detailed as Aide de Camp on the staff of the General Commanding the Corps,” and *that* seemed to be *that* as far as his shooting of brother officer Sam Porter was concerned.⁵⁸ Thomas Livermore, another Second Corps aide, recalled that Haskell “was sent to our headquarters under arrest” since he had “ordered an officer of some regiment, who was committing a nuisance close to the tents of the headquarters to move off and upon his refusing had shot him, not mortally, however.”⁵⁹ Apparently, the fact that Porter did not die seemed to somehow justify Haskell’s action. Finally, Livermore added, “his offense was not considered serious, and in fact I think his action was the cause of bringing him to our staff.” Ironically, this final comment may indeed explain why the War Department, twenty-two years after the shooting, would record the following:

Under orders of the 2nd Army Corps dated July 8th, 1863, a Court of Inquiry was Ordered to examine into the Circumstances of the shooting of Lieut. Porter, 108 New York Vols. by Lieut. Haskell on the 7 inst. The proceedings of said Court Of Inquiry are not on file in this office.⁶⁰

Almost 120 years later, the National Archives confirmed the War Department. The court of inquiry records, if there ever were any, seem to have also evaporated.⁶¹ Haskell was never charged with

⁵⁷ Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 225; *OR*, 27:3:503.

⁵⁸ “Frank A. Haskell,” Compiled Service Record File, National Archives, Washington, DC.

⁵⁹ Thomas L. Livermore, *Days and Events 1860–1866* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920; repr. ed., Salem, MA: Higginson Book Company, n.d.), 270.

⁶⁰ Powers to Seville, July 7, 1863, Porter Pension File.

⁶¹ David H. Wallace, National Archives, personal letter to the author, December 22, 2004.



Lt. Col. Francis E. Pierce, 108th New York. Courtesy of the U.S. Army Military History Institute.

anything! Livermore’s version of the event obviously derived from Haskell, since the story contains none of the details provided by Col. Charles Powers and Lt. Col. Francis E. Pierce.

Once Haskell joined Hays’s staff, he became the general’s bartender and played his man Friday. According to Livermore, there was an almost comic and pathetic ritual that Haskell orchestrated to solemnize the general’s fondness for whisky. Hays designated ten o’clock in the morning as the equivalent of the sun over the yardarm and therefore the time for the first shot of the day. However, about half an hour before the designated hour, with “his red nose shining in the morning sun,” the old man began to get twitchy and demanded from Haskell the time of day based on the position of the sun. Haskell, deferential, “glad to be of use,” politic, “cautious and meticulous,” would answer, “Half-past nine, General.” To which Hays would respond, “Suppose we call it ten, Mr. Haskell!” At this point, Haskell would “gravely go into the general’s tent and mix the morning toddy.”⁶² So once again, Haskell plays Polonius to Hays’s Claudius and becomes the darling of the general staff. Although his mornings may have been dulled in an alcoholic haze, Hays was quite aware of the incident with Porter, since after the war he recalled that Haskell “got into trou-

⁶² Livermore, *Days and Events 1860–1866*, 285.

ble by shooting an officer and he ought not to have done it, but I liked him and took him on my staff.”⁶³ Just one good ole boy looking out for another, and the affair “was hushed up and never came to trial.”⁶⁴ Later, when Hays was replaced by Warren as temporary commander of the Second Corps, Haskell still managed to ingratiate himself to the people who counted, until finally he received political patronage—obviously he managed to control his revulsion for political appointment when it involved himself—and was given command “of the new 36th Wisconsin Infantry Regiment.”⁶⁵ On June 3, 1864, as part of Gibbon’s division, Haskell was killed leading his men in the ill-advised charge at Cold Harbor. On the same battleground, to the south of Haskell’s charge, was the 108th New York of Smyth’s brigade, who as veterans had learned the folly of full-frontal assaults on an entrenched position. For Haskell, the boys of Rochester clearly felt nothing. They knew he “was the officer who unjustly wounded” Porter at Gettysburg; and as they watched the charge, they simply reported that Haskell “was killed in this charge which lasted an hour.”⁶⁶ In fact, the indifference of the 108th New York was echoed by at least one member of Haskell’s regiment who wrote home, “Our Colonel is not pitied much” since he had rushed them into combat and deserved his fate.⁶⁷

Sam Porter was not with the 108th at Cold Harbor. He was convalescing in Rochester with his fourth wound of the war. After Haskell’s unpunished assault—the second wound—Porter returned to duty in mid-August 1863, “not entirely recovered” from the shoulder wound, only to be wounded severely in the leg in the engagement at Bristoe Station. This wound festered and leaked all winter until he was sent home. So far, Porter suffered three wounds in this war—two in combat—but nevertheless he returned for Grant’s Overland Campaign, during which he suffered his final wound in

the Battle of the Wilderness. With the exception of Haskell’s shot to his shoulder, all of Porter’s combat wounds were to his legs and were severe enough to allow him to resign honorably, yet he returned and spent the majority of his time on staff assignment. Not another word was said of Haskell and his assault on Porter; but oddly enough when Porter returned to duty after Gettysburg, he started to acquire those staff-officer jobs that he so much coveted. After his return from the Wilderness wound, he spent the final months of the war as aide to Brig. Gen. Thomas Smyth.⁶⁸ Was Porter himself part of the cover-up and the code of silence surrounding Frank Haskell?

At war’s end, Porter returned to Rochester as a brevet major, but his health, which was always fragile, deteriorated rapidly as he attempted one occupation after another until finally settling into the vocation of barrel manufacturer. Unlike other members of the 108th New York, Porter seemed determined to forget the war, apparently eschewing the various gatherings of the Rochester veterans. The one event that he attended was the First Annual Reunion of the 108th New York, held at Irondequoit Bay on August 20, 1879, to commemorate the seventeenth anniversary of their enlistment and their “baptism of burnt powder” at Antietam. The “boys of ’62,” many approaching middle age, engaged in a good-natured game of baseball, which Porter, a prewar ballplayer, and his team lost 3–2. When the call came up for a football game, Porter declined, probably due to the damage of three leg wounds, and moved to the sidelines to sit with his good friend and ex-colonel, Charles J. Powers, who was also a prewar ballplayer—a pitcher—but who sat watching with his left arm powerless and virtually useless by his side. Porter never got together with his old regiment again. Shortly after the initial reunion, his health declined rapidly, and he died two years later on March 7, 1881, twenty-four hours after the death of his father. He was thirty-six years old.⁶⁹

The determining force that brought back to

63 Livermore, *Days and Events 1860–1866*, 311.

64 “Cramer Deposition,” Deposition A, no. 315.660, January 25, 1887, Porter Pension File.

65 Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 242, 245.

66 Terence G. Crooks, “Rochester’s Forgotten Regiment: The 108th New York in the Civil War,” (unpublished manuscript, May 2005), Word 95–2003, pp. 241–50; Washburn, *A Complete Military History and Record of the 108th Regiment N.Y. Vols*, 67.

67 David Coon to Son Herbert, June 6, 1864, “Transcription: Civil War Letters of Private David Coon (1824–1864),” Empty Nest Genealogy, accessed April 28, 2015, <http://www.emptynestancestry.com/transcription-civil-war-letters-of-david-coon/>.

68 Washburn, *A Complete Military History and Record of the 108th Regiment N.Y. Vols*, 59; Powers to Seville, July 7, 1863, Porter Pension File.

69 See Washburn, *A Complete Military History and Record of the 108th Regiment N.Y. Vols*, 262, 301, 351; Bob Marcotte, “The University of Rochester and the Civil War: Three Heroes at Gettysburg,” University of Rochester, River Campus Libraries (based on a lecture given at Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester, December 17, 2002), <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/index.cfm?PAGE=1796>.

light the assault of Frank Haskell was Mary Porter, Sam's widow. In May of 1884 she applied for a widow's pension with the claim that Haskell's gunshot wound combined with other factors contributed to the development of tuberculosis in Sam Porter, which led to his subsequent death. Unfortunately, when Mary needed corroborating witnesses to the Haskell shooting, none were available. The only one alive who had been closest to the event was Lt. Col. Frank Pierce, now enrolled in the regular army as captain in the First Infantry. Although some doubt persisted about Mary's claim, the War Department eventually settled a monthly pension for her of seventeen to twenty dollars, until her death on February 25, 1918, at the age of seventy-two. Most of the deponents whom Mary called on to support her case remembered that Porter was unceremoniously shot by a staff officer for some perceived offense that had something to do with personal hygiene. Sometime before his death, even Sam apparently cleaned up the story for Mary and told her "that he was marching a squad across a certain lot, near Gettysburg, the next day after the battle when he was ordered by an inferior officer to leave the field."⁷⁰ The inferior officer grew abusive, and Porter felt he had no need to obey this subordinate, whereupon the staff officer shot him.

Given the apparent Victorian aversion to bodily functions, it is not surprising that Porter provided his wife with the hygienic version. To his cousin, Porter Farley of the 140th New York, Sam related a version closer to the truth. Overall, Sam Porter spoke very little about the wound or the wounding, perhaps because of the growing mythology of the war in general and the battle of Gettysburg in particular. After the war, the significance of the three-day fight at the Pennsylvania crossroads took on alarming implications. For the North, it was *the fight* that turned the Rebel tide and led to ultimate victory for the Union. Of course, the fact that the war continued with increased savagery for another twenty-two months after the battle was a "minor" forgotten detail in this version. For the South, Gettysburg came to represent *the great might have been* and provided the impetus for the postwar Lost Cause movement. So obviously the admission that

⁷⁰ Powers to Seville, July 7, 1863, Porter Pension File.

one was shot by a fellow officer while attempting to go to the toilet and not honorably wounded in combat during the war's greatest battle would not be seen as a heroic utterance or a circumstance to reveal to the social elite of Rochester. Recently a local Rochester historian marveled at the fact that Sam Porter, as well as others in his regiment, kept returning to the fray after being seriously wounded.⁷¹ Perhaps a contributing factor for Sam Porter was a sense of shame about the circumstances of his Gettysburg wound. He may have felt compelled to redeem himself. More than likely, Sam Porter returned simply because, like many of the boys of '62, he wanted to finish what he had started. No flourish! No hundred-page letter about his own heroics! Just a simple commitment to the Union cause.

In all fairness, Frank Haskell also felt that commitment, but he lacked the humility to accept a part in the war that he deemed beneath him. Ambitious as Lucifer, his teacher said, and determined to reign somewhere that would bring him glory, perhaps fictional; and to this end, he would serve those who could further his ambition. Frank Haskell escaped justice simply because Sam Porter chose not to pursue the assault. A court of inquiry can only be called by the president or if demanded by the injured party. Official inquiry into the shooting was never pursued. That Haskell was rewarded with a higher staff position only reinforced Haskell's arrogance and his heroic image of himself. Eventually, he would die for the image. Before the futile and fatal charge at Cold Harbor, the newly appointed Colonel Haskell of the Thirty-Sixth Wisconsin told a friend that he would be killed in the next battle. Haskell explained, "You see, I have a green regiment. . . . I cannot get behind the lines as I might in the case of seasoned troops. I shall be obliged always to lead. . . . And of course I shall be shot."⁷²

On June 3, 1864, during "one of the war's bloodiest disasters Frank Haskell fulfilled his ambition to command—and within three hours was dead."⁷³ Almost ironically, as his biographer suggests, the action at Cold Harbor was a Federal version of Pickett's charge almost a year after *Haskell of Gettysburg* had shone so brightly: "He died as a soldier should

⁷¹ See Marcotte, "University of Rochester and the Civil War."

⁷² Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 244.

⁷³ Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 245.

die fronting the enemy and taking more than his share of the danger.”⁷⁴

Sam Porter was also constrained within the Victorian belief of the manly image, which obliged him to cover up the truth of Haskell’s assault. Had a court of inquiry been pursued on Porter’s insistence, the embarrassing circumstances of the assault would have emerged; and thus, in what came to be regarded as the most significant campaign of the war, Porter was not wounded in honorable battle but rather three days afterward while attempting to relieve his diarrhea. Downplaying such an *unmanly* wound as well as the late nineteenth century’s public sensitivity about the needs of the physical body must have over-ridden Porter’s need to pursue justice.

The advent of the Civil War provided an ideal outlet for a man such as Haskell. His inflated self-concept of his own worth and his overweening pride and arrogance allowed him to move smoothly through the upper echelons of the Union command, where his unique attributes seemed to be encouraged and appreciated. His main claim to fame, his Gettysburg letter, is far from a work of Civil War scholarship but is rather a paean to Frank Aretas

⁷⁴ Byrne and Weaver, *Haskell of Gettysburg*, 1. See also James M. Aubrey, *The Thirty-Sixth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry* (n.p., 1900; repr., Salem, MA: Higginson Book Company, n.d.), 330; U.S. War Department, *1863 Laws of War*, 24; William P. Craighill, *The 1862 Army Officer’s Pocket Companion* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1861; repr., Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002), 282–83.

Haskell. Given the letter to his brother and his inability to empathize with the foot soldier, shooting Sam Porter was just another staff function too trivial to dwell on, and his subsequent promotion only validated his attitude and act. As Walt Whitman so poignantly affirmed, “the real war will never get in the books,” but “the official surface courteousness of the generals” and the romantic depiction of the heroic dead and nobly wounded will remain—in fact, still remains.⁷⁵ Frank Haskell made sure his version of the war got “in the books,” and he died in a futile, glorious charge that sealed his image forever. Unlike his assailant, Porter “never became famous” but did “become one of the solid reliable dedicated young officers without whom the war could not have been won.”⁷⁶

Four times wounded, he survived the war and went home to help the nation heal.

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⁷⁵ Walt Whitman, *Complete Prose Works* (Philadelphia: David Mackay, 1892), 80.

⁷⁶ Catharine S. Crary, ed., *Dear Belle* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1965), xviii.