



# Battle Cry

Founded 1961,  
Newsletter of the Sacramento Civil War Round Table  
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**Battle Cry deadline is**  
**1:00PM Wed. two weeks**  
**before the regular meeting.**  
Items can be given the  
editor by hand, mail or e-  
mail.

## President's Message:

Thanks for asking—I had a wonderful trip to Colorado, Minnesota, and Idaho. I visited my son in Colorado, one daughter in Colorado and the other daughter in Idaho, and finally, a sister in Minnesota. My sources tell me that Dennis Kohlmann ably performed as both president and speaker at the August 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. I particularly regret missing all the scoop on the Southern Cavalry in the Pennsylvania campaign since I know so little about it! So it goes, my mother once told me that, try as we might, you can't have it all!! My thanks to Dennis for again stepping up!

Unless you have become a Roundtable member within the past year, you most likely attended some or all of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual West Coast Civil War Conference that your Roundtable hosted. During that meeting, a representative of the Las Vegas CWRT volunteered to sponsor this year's conference in Las Vegas. Even though the conferences have traditionally been held at California locations, this proposal seemed very workable and absent other voices requesting to be host for this year, the group at the business meeting handed the responsibility off to Las Vegas. The best information now available to us (which is no information) leads us to believe that there will not be a West Coast CW Conference in Las Vegas this year.

Our friends in the San Joaquin Valley CWRT (Fresno) have reached the same conclusion regarding the possibilities in Las Vegas. They have proposed hosting a "last minute" one-day conference in Clovis (Fresno). They have asked us for our thoughts on the subject which we will discuss at our upcoming board meeting. As this letter goes to press, I have no firm details regarding this possible Conference substitute. I will pass along information as it becomes available. The Conference has traditionally been held the first weekend after the general election in November – that will be November 10<sup>th</sup>. Please pencil in Civil War Conference on your calendar for that date in anticipation of attending an interesting day about the Civil War. Whatever does or doesn't happen in 2007, the Fresno group will be hosting the 2008 edition of the conference. Our hats are off to the San Joaquin Valley CWRT!

Don't miss our upcoming evening meeting on Wednesday, September 12<sup>th</sup>! Ron Perisho's topic will be "3D Photos" – that's all I know about it, but I'll bet it is one of the year's high-lites! See you at the Hofbrau – come early and stay late!

**Paul Ruud—President**

## Treasurer's Report

The cash balance following the August 8, 2007 meeting was \$1,991.20. Thanks to members and guests, the raffle brought in \$54.00.

**George W. Foxworth, Treasurer**

**MINUTES**  
**SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE**  
**AUGUST 8, 2007**  
**HOF BRAU RESTAURANT, WATT AVE, SACRAMENTO**

Attendance-26

Members-25

Dennis Kohlmann, Vice-President  
George Foxworth, Treasurer  
Eddie Keister, Secretary  
Ken Berna  
Roy Bishop  
Terry Bowen  
Ardith Cnota  
Mitchell Cnota  
Lydia Donaldson  
Bill Donaldson  
Brad Friedman  
Alan Geiken  
Kyle Glasson

Bob Hanley  
Don Hayden  
Lowell Lardie  
Grace Long  
Jim Middleton  
Betty Mitchell  
Maurice Mitchell  
Horst Penning  
Ron Perisho  
Bob Williams  
Silver Williams  
John Zasso  
Guest-1  
Dudley Albrecht

1. Meeting started at 7:05. Vice-President Dennis Kohlmann, filled in for President Paul Ruud. Members were welcomed. V.P. Kohlmann made announcement, Ken Burns will be appearing at the Crest Theater, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>. Stay tuned for details. Member Ron Perisho told he will be presenting a Civil War slide show in 3-D, sounds great!
2. After a modest introduction of himself-V.P. Dennis Kohlmann presented "The Confederate Calvary at Gettysburg." His talk featured five officers and their maneuvers leading to the battle. Thanks Mr. Kohlmann, good job.
3. Raffle was held, meeting adjourned at 8:20.

Eddie Keister  
Secretary

<b>Coming Programs 2007</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Sept. 12 <sup>th</sup>	Ron Perisho	3D Photos
October 10 <sup>th</sup>	Brad Schall	Battle of Fair Oaks
Nov. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Katrina Worley	Home Spun Uniforms-The Real Story
Dec. 12 <sup>th</sup>	Maurice Mitchell	"Fire in the Rear"
January 9 <sup>th</sup>	Susan Williams	War Horses
February 13 <sup>th</sup>	Sebastian Nelson	Capt. Henry Green, Calif. Infantry
March 12 <sup>th</sup>	George Beitzel	TBA

### **Possible one-day Conference for November 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Apparently, the annual 3-day conference typically held on Veterans Day weekend will not be held this year. Originally, it was supposed to be sponsored by Las Vegas CWRT. Since we have not heard from them, we assume it will not be held. The SJVCWRT is trying to put together a one-day conference on Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> at Clovis. They are known for coming to the rescue among Civil War groups. If possible, hold that day and the Friday before to attend the mini conference at Clovis. Check with Don Hayden or Paul Ruud at the September meeting for further information.

Jim Middleton, Editor

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Today I learned that some flags from the California State Capitol Museum's flag collection would be going on public display in the rotunda of the State Capitol building soon. Preliminary information states that two of the flags are Civil War flags that belonged to the Second Massachusetts Volunteer Cavalry, the famous California Battalion (see below for images of these two flags). The display is supposed to be open to the public on September 7th. I do not know how long the display will stay up. Be sure to keep checking the California State Capitol Museum's website for further information:

<http://www.capitolmuseum.ca.gov/virtualtour.aspx?Content1=1282&content2=2490&content3=2488>

<http://www.capitolmuseum.ca.gov/VirtualTour.aspx?Content1=1282&Content2=1696&Content3=1694>

Cheers, Sebastian Nelson <sebnelson@gmail.com>

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Here is a link where you can get free tickets to see filmmaker Ken Burns speak: <http://kvie.org/thewar/rsvp.htm>

Cheers, Sebastian Nelson [sebnelson@gmail.com](mailto:sebnelson@gmail.com)

## **Want to read this summers Civil War blockbuster?**

Elizabeth Brown Pryor's latest book, *Reading the Man, A Portrait of Robert E. Lee Through His Private Letters*, has received national acclaim since its release in May this year. This thoroughly researched and elegantly written biography gives a plainspoken portrait of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, commander of the Army of Northern Virginia during the Civil War. Pryor begins each chapter with Lee's own words drawn from newly discovered correspondence. Lee's letters are remarkably open and guileless and give an intimate look at his thoughts and aspirations.

Lee writes about revolutionary war heroes, his classical education, achievements at West Point, his marriage to Mary Custis and family life at Arlington. His map, *Plan of the Battle Ground of Contreras*, illustrates the bold maneuvers he took to cross the Pedregal during the Mexican War. Returning to Virginia, he speaks of his need to atone for earthly disappointments and of his growing relationship with God. When his father-in-law, George Washington Parke Custis, died in 1857, he struggled to settle the estate that required that he free all slaves within five years. But when Lee hired away the youngest and strongest slaves to pay the significant debt, the abolitionist press accused him of plotting to keep the slaves in bondage. Stung by this interference in his personal affairs, Lee concludes that the antislavery zealots, have neither the right nor the power to force a change in the

South. With the election of a Republican president and the reality of succession, Lee writes on 20 April 1861 of his fateful decision to resign his Army commission and draw his sword against his country in defense of his native state, his relations, his children and his home.

Lee's disavowal of his lifelong allegiance is at the heart of the continuing public debate about States Rights vs. Slavery as the cause of the Civil War. Pryor stands firm on the issue and uses every opportunity to discuss Lee's attitudes about the dilemma of slavery. In choosing to defend his state from the tyranny of the North, she maintains that Lee's trust in God and his hierarchical worldview sustained him in battle as it did in surrender. She concludes that Lee could not accept anything that approached egalitarianism even after the war.

Viking, a division of Penquin Group (USA) Inc., is to be commended for the readability of this impressive biography. Rarely seen photographs and drawings are placed appropriately throughout the text and enhance the importance of the original letters. Pryor's scholarship, funded in part by Mellon Research Fellowships awarded by the Virginia Historical Society two years running, is shown in the extensive Notes and Selected Bibliography found at the end of the book. Robert E. Lee, the South's iconic Military Hero, becomes far more human in Pryor's *Reading the Man*.

**Happy reading.**

**Reviewed by Susan Williams**

## Summary of the Battle of Cold Harbor

In March 1864, U. S. Grant was promoted to lieutenant general, a rank that had been newly reactivated by the Congress, and he assumed the position of general-in-chief of all Armies of the United States. Almost immediately, Grant moved to execute a new grand strategy for defeating the Confederacy. For the first time, all Union armies would move in a coordinated fashion on all fronts. This was both to prevent the Confederates from using their interior lines of communication to reinforce one another and at the same time put unrelenting military pressure on them. Essentially, Union forces would pound and hammer the Confederate armies, inflicting losses in both men and supplies that they could ill-afford to sustain, while attacking the economic and social infrastructure of the South.

While Grant initially considered returning to the West to oversee the execution of his strategy, he eventually decided to conduct his command of the war from the field, alongside the Army of the Potomac, under command of MG George Meade. In Grant's strategy, this army would have a vital mission: to draw the Army of Northern Virginia into the open and destroy it. In Grant's view, if Lee's army was destroyed, Richmond would fall by default and the war would end. For his part, Meade was publicly supportive, courteous and subordinate to Grant. Privately, he was not a happy person, and for good reason. In keeping Meade in his position and by placing himself so close to the Army of the Potomac, Grant was creating a command problem that could eventually result in calamity. Such a calamity did occur, the Battle of Cold Harbor. (Term means a Country Inn, not serving hot food.)

In the Overland Campaign of 31 April-12 June 1864, LTG Grant with the Army of the Potomac battled Gen R.E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia for six weeks across central Virginia. At the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna and Totopotomoy Creek, Lee repeatedly stalled, but failed to stop, Grant's southward progress toward Richmond. The next logical military objective for Grant was the crossroads at Old Cold Harbor (about 9 miles ENE of

Richmond). After sparring along the Totopotomoy northeast of Richmond, Grant ordered MG Phil Sheridan's cavalry to move south and capture those crossroads. Arriving near the intersection on 31 May, the Union force ran into MG Fitzhugh Lee's Confederate cavalry. A sharp contest ensued. Union cavalry drove the Confederates beyond the crossroads. The Rebels then started digging new positions a half mile to the southwest. On 1 June, Lee, wishing to retake Old Cold Harbor, increased his forces for a morning assault. The short and uncoordinated effort was easily repulsed by Sheridan's troops, armed with Spencer repeating carbines.

Encouraged by this success, Grant ordered up, presumably through Meade, reinforcements and planned his own attack for later the same day. If the Union frontal assault broke through the Confederate defenses, it would place the Union army between Lee and Richmond. After a hot and dusty night march, MG Horatio Wright's VI Corps arrived and relieved Sheridan's cavalry, but Grant had to delay the attack since MG W. J. ("Baldy") Smith's XVIII Corps, Army of the James, marching in the wrong direction under out-of-date orders, had to retrace its route and arrived late and very tired.

The Union attack finally began at 5 p.m. Finding a fifty yard gap between two enemy divisions, VI Corps veterans poured through, capturing part of the Confederate lines. A Rebel counterattack however, sealed off the break and ended the days fighting. Confederate infantry strengthened their lines that night and waited for the battle to begin next morning.

Disappointed by the failed attack Grant planned another advance for 5 a.m. on 2 June. He ordered MG Winfield Hancock's II Corps to march to the left of the VI Corps. Exhausted by a brutal night march over narrow, dusty roads, the II Corps did not arrive until 6:30 a.m. Grant postponed the attack until 5 p.m. Later that day, he approved a postponement until 4:30 a.m. on 3 June because of the spent condition of Hancock's men. The Union delays gave Lee valuable time to strengthen his defenses. The Confederates had built simple trenches by daybreak of 2 June. Under Lee's

personal supervision, these works were expanded and strengthened throughout the day. By nightfall, the Confederates occupied an interlocking series of trenches with overlapping fields of fire. Additional Rebel units under MG John Breckinridge and LTG A. P. Hill arrived and fortified the Confederate right. Lee was ready, but the Federals were not. Due to late arrivals and perhaps also a result of the awkward command structure, many Union troop commanders had not been able to reconnoiter their extended fronts and the now elaborate Rebel field fortifications they were about to attack. This was a bad mistake. Some historians think it resulted from Grant getting into too big of a hurry.

At 4:30 on the morning of 3 June, almost 60,000 Federal troops from the II, V, VI, IX and XVIII Corps launched a massive frontal assault. The Confederate position, now well entrenched, proved too strong for the Union attackers. In less than an hour, thousands of Federal soldiers lay dead and wounded between the lines. Pinned down by a tremendous volume of Confederate infantry and artillery fire, Grant's (Meade's) men could neither advance nor retreat. With cups, plates, bayonets, and bare hands they dug makeshift trenches. After darkness fell, these trenches were joined and improved somewhat.

Later that afternoon an order was sent out to try another assault, but the reaction it received varied. There were some isolated moves forward, but they apparently amounted to nothing more than brief exchanges of rifle fire. For his part, Baldy Smith flatly refused to obey the order. Interestingly, he was never sanctioned for that move. Finally, while some senior officers would deny it ever happened, there were units that simply refused to advance. One soldier who witnessed that phenomenon later wrote: "The army to a man refused to obey the order, presumably from Grant, to renew the assault. I heard the order given, and I saw it disobeyed". The common soldier had put in his vote, and the battle for the crossing at Cold Harbor was over. Many had earlier pinned their names on so they would not be among the "unknown" when killed. There were no "Dog Tags" in the 1860's.

Grant's initial report to Chief of Staff MG Henry Halleck, sent at 2 p.m., was shocking in its understatement. He reported, "Our loss was not severe, nor do I suppose the enemy to have lost heavily." The magnitude of what had happened and the ghastly cost of this command blunder would soon become apparent, however. While the exact number of casualties has become an item of debate, no matter their total, Cold Harbor had been an unmitigated Federal disaster. Grant had gambled and lost. The estimated Union casualty rate for the 3 June assault had been *7,000 in 30-minutes*.

That night Grant finally made his feelings known to his staff: "I regret this assault more than any one I have ever ordered. I regarded it as a stern necessity, and believed it would bring compensating results; but, as it has proved, no advantages have been gained sufficient to justify the heavy losses suffered". With that said, as was his manner, Grant focused his energies on planning his next moves. He seldom spoke of Cold Harbor again, except briefly in his memoirs.

The great attack at Cold Harbor was over, but the killing was continuing. Hundreds of wounded Federal soldiers remained unattended to on the battlefield for *four days* as Grant and Lee argued over the wording of a cease-fire truce to retrieve the wounded and bury the dead. Few of the wounded survived the ordeal. It is difficult to rationalize an excuse for this delay; and, it is perhaps equally difficult to think of anything more heartless?

From 4-12 June both armies fortified their positions and settled into siege warfare. The days were filled with minor attacks, artillery duels and sniping. With the Union defeat at Cold Harbor, Grant changed his overall strategy and abandoned further direct moves against Richmond. On the night of 12 June, Union forces withdrew and marched south towards the James River. During the two week period along the Totopotomoy and at Cold Harbor, the Federal army overall loss had been 12,000 killed, wounded, missing and captured while the Confederates suffered 4,000 casualties. The Union army was badly defeated and they had gained absolutely nothing.

So what caused this tragic event to take place? Most historians consider that there were two fundamental reasons: The first was that Grant had totally misjudged the rebels' ability and willingness to fight from their extensive and well-built defensive positions. Following the brutal and inconclusive fighting at Spotsylvania, Assistant War Secretary Dana reported to Secretary Edwin Stanton that the "Rebels have lost all confidence and are already morally defeated and that Stanton could be certain "the end is near, as well as sure." Meanwhile, Grant told MG Henry Halleck that the Confederate army was "really whipped" and added, "I may be mistaken, but I feel that our success over Lee's army is already assured." This miscalculation of Lee's strength and will by Grant and his staff would prove to be a critical element in the Cold Harbor disaster. The "Lessons Learned" earlier in the War should have been adhered to in this case: 1) Overconfidence is very hazardous, particularly when planning a frontal attack against a well fortified enemy with rifles and strong artillery support. 2) The attacker must have *at least* a 3 to 1 numerical advantage to assure success, and still be prepared to accept heavy losses. (Grant's ratio was only 2 to 1) R.E. Lee, you will recall, had learned this "Lesson" very well at Gettysburg, but less well at Malvern Hill. Sherman also had a refresher course at Kennesaw. Hood never learned; Burnside was nearly as bad.

The second reason for the fiasco was that the Federals had one too many overall field commanders during the Battle. It had been Grant's intention when he decided to accompany the Army of the Potomac that he would issue broad orders pertaining to "grand strategy" here, as well as to the Union Armies in other theaters, leaving the detailed day to day, hour to hour, tactical decisions to Meade. Halleck might probably have pulled that off; Grant could not; for Grant's actual words and conduct at the time indicated something entirely different. LTC Horace Porter, one of Grant's staff officers, wrote that, when speaking to his staff, Grant indicated he would take a more hands-on approach. Porter said that Grant referred to the practice of sending his staff to "critical points of the line to keep me promptly advised of what is taking place" and that when emergencies dictated, he wanted them to communicate his "views to

commanders, and urge immediate action directly" without awaiting specific orders from himself or Meade?

Further, Grant told them he would place his headquarters near Meade's and "communicate his instructions through that officer." This seemed to indicate a role unrestricted to mere broad strategic direction. As a result, the Army of the Potomac had two heads. Corps commanders were uncertain as to whom they were reporting to and frequently received conflicting orders. Contrarily, occasionally Meade and Grant each thought certain matters were the others responsibility, deferring to issue orders; and leaving the subordinate commanders with no instructions at all. It was an absurd and dangerous situation. Moreover, and not surprisingly under these conditions, the respective staffs surrounding Meade and Grant did not cooperate well and they added to the command cohesion problem.

The stakes at Cold Harbor had been high. There was no more maneuver room left for Lee. Had the Union defeated the Confederate forces, the Army of the Potomac could have gingerly walked into Richmond, and the Civil War in the East would have been concluded. Grant's next target was Petersburg and the railroads that provided needed supplies to the Confederacy. Cold Harbor proved to be Lee's last major field victory; since the course of the war for the Rebel Army of Northern Virginia henceforth changed, from one of maneuver to one of besiegement. And, to paraphrase an earlier statement made by R.E. Lee; "It was then only a matter of time". Regretfully, that "time" would become *ten* months and *thousands* of casualties later.

#### **References:**

"Battle of Cold Harbor—The Folly and Horror"  
By R. N. Thompson, 2006;  
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**Bob Williams: 8-20-07**

# Battle of Cold Harbor -- Graphics Page



Grant

Meade

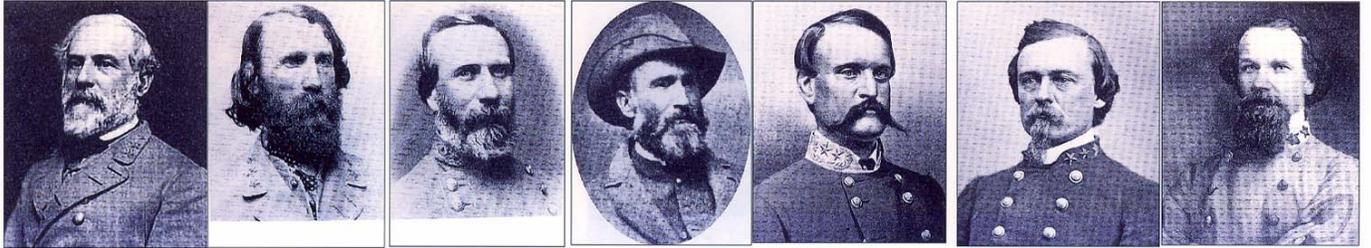
Hancock II

Warren V

Wright VI

Burnside IX

Smith XVIII



Lee

Hill

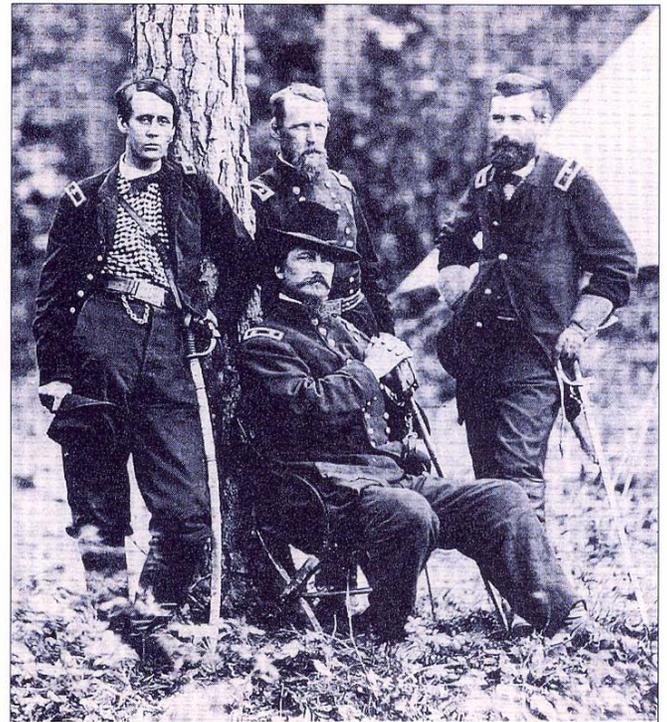
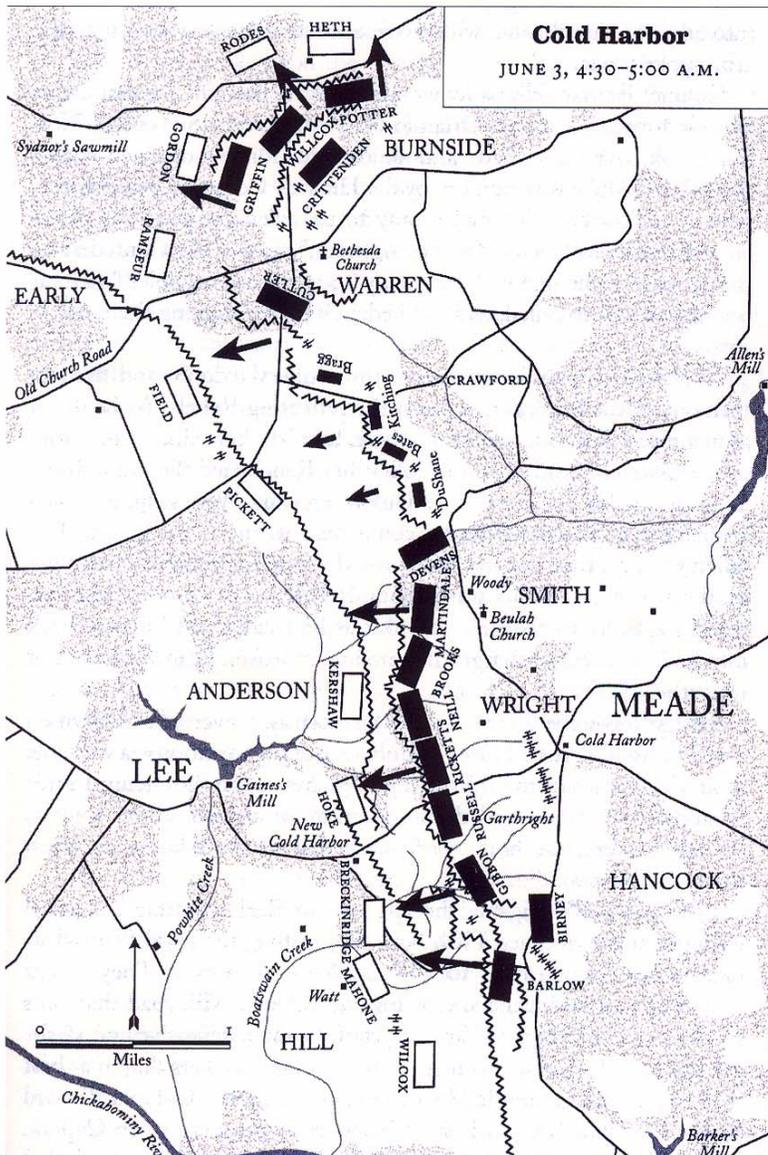
Anderson

Early

Breckenridge

Finegan

Keitt



Barlow

Birney / Hancock

Gibbon

