

## Seasons in Gray

by David M. Frantum

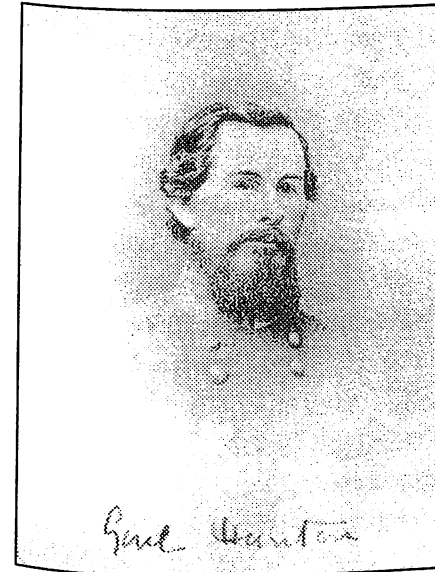
*Loudoun County, Virginia was occupied by the Confederate army during the fall and winter of 1861-62. What follows is an account of Loudoun's "seasons in gray."*

The sounds of war came to Loudoun County in the lazy summer days of 1861. On July 21st, the boom of artillery along Bull Run was heard in many parts of the county. People in Middleburg and Leesburg paused to listen to the ominous rumble from the southeast. A farmer near Sugarland Run stopped his plow to puzzle over the deep growl to the south. The very ground along the road to Gum Springs trembled to the frightful ripping sounds of musketry and the terrifying thunder of cannon. The people trembled as well, knowing that many of the sons, husbands and fathers of Loudoun were caught under that horrible sound. War. War at last and on the very doorstep of lovely, pastoral Loudoun County.

On July 23rd, the Loudoun Cavalry returned to Loudoun County from the Bull Run battlefield to picket the Potomac River crossings. Captained by William W. Mead, the company had been raised by Daniel T. Shreve in 1858 as the Leesburg Cavalry. They were followed the next day by the Chesterfield Light Dragoons. Three days later, the

8th Regiment of Virginia Infantry, made up primarily of Loudoun men, arrived at Leesburg accompanied by the 13th Mississippi Infantry. On August 10th, the First Company of Richmond Howitzers rumbled through the streets of Leesburg. Recruited from among Richmond's finest young gentry, they would be the artillery support for the occupying infantry and cavalry. On the following day, the 17th and 18th Regiments of Mississippi Infantry marched into Loudoun to swell the numbers of the Leesburg garrison to nearly four thousand men.

The mission of the Leesburg garrison was to establish and hold a defensive line along the Potomac River from just below Harper's Ferry to Goose Creek. Maj. Gen. Thomas J. Jackson picked up the defenses from Harper's Ferry westward. The command at Manassas and Centerville, first under the direction of General Pierre T. G.



Col. Eppa Hunton

Beauregard, followed by General Joseph E. Johnston, covered everything downriver from the Great Falls of the Potomac. Cavalry patrols established by Brig. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart provided coverage in the gap between the falls and Goose Creek. Col. Eppa Hunton, commanding the officer of the 8th Virginia Infantry, assumed initial command of the troops in Loudoun County. In early August, Col. Nathan G. (Shanks) Evans, of Bull Run fame, replaced Hunton in overall command and the four infantry regiments were brigaded together as the Seventh Brigade of the First Corps of the (Confederate) Army of the Potomac.

Immediately following the establishment of picket posts and initial defensive positions was the need to establish permanent encampments. The 8th Virginia assumed responsibility for the upper reaches of the garrison's area of responsibility. They established their camp on two of

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the Hough family farms just north of Waterford.<sup>1</sup> Union sentiment was very strong among the several Hough families in the Waterford area. It was often a matter of political consideration as well as strategic need in the choice of a campsite for a large military unit. Seven or eight hundred men, with their need for wood, water, proper ground for tenting and drilling and the grazing of animals could do substantial damage to the best of farms. This ruin was something to be wrought on those who were in sympathy with your enemy and not those who were your friends.

Soon after the arrival of the 13th Mississippi Infantry, a second permanent encampment was established on the Meade farm one mile south of Leesburg.<sup>2</sup> Located on the west side of present day Route 15, this camp was occupied by one or more of the Mississippi regiments throughout the Confederate occupation and was known as Camp Mississippi. Soon after the arrival of the 17th and 18th Mississippi, a camp was established near Carter's Mill at Oatlands.<sup>3</sup> Initially, one regiment was assigned to this area to picket along Goose Creek and in the Aldie area. Within a few weeks, it was determined that the danger of enemy incursion in this area was minimal and all but one or two companies were relocated to Camp Mississippi. This was a favorite camp area of the Mississippians. Private Robert Moore of the 17th Mississippi Infantry kept a pocket diary during his stay in Loudoun County. Concerning the "camp on Goose Creek" he wrote, "Several of us went out this evening to an old house containing part of James Monroe's library. Found many relics of his furniture, some of his books and part of a piano...brought away several books...his residence is but a quarter mile distance from the old house. Rocked in his old rocking chair. Wish I could visit his residence. Do not know who owns it."<sup>4</sup> The residence he wished to visit was Oak Hill and its owner John Walter

1. The site of the Hough farms along Catocin Creek north of Waterford remains much as it was in 1861.
2. The Meade farm is now the subdivisions of Greenway Farms and Woodlea Manor.
3. Several sites between present day Route 15 and Evergreen Mills Road were utilized as campgrounds.
4. Robert A. Moore, *A Life for the Confederacy*. (Wilmington, N. C.: Broadfoot Publishing Co. 1991 [hereafter cited as *A Life*]), p. 68.

Fairfax of General James Longstreet's staff. Of Aldie, Moore wrote, "Came out here this morning, are about five miles from camp. Find Aldie to be a very small village under the peaks of the Blue Ridge Mts. Took supper at the Aldie Hotel, felt a little awkward at a table."<sup>5</sup>

The Richmond Howitzers encamped north of Leesburg at Big Springs on the land of George Washington Ball.<sup>6</sup> The Howitzers found this to be a pleasant campsite and the elderly Mr. Ball to be a receptive host. One of the Howitzers later recalled that, although they were always well received by the old gentleman, he was "seldom cheerful."<sup>7</sup> The men of the Howitzers would occupy the Big Springs site until late September when they would move to what would become permanent winter quarters on the west side of Goose Creek, near the "burnt bridge" where Leesburg Pike crossed the high banked, placid stream.

Work was started on three forts. Fort Evans, a small earthen fortification located about a mile east of Leesburg, guarded the road from Edwards' Ferry to Leesburg.<sup>8</sup> Fort Beauregard was a larger fortification on the heights about a mile south of Fort Evans.<sup>9</sup> This bastion was intended to guard both the Leesburg Pike to the north and the Old Carolina Road to the south. Fort Johnston, atop the Catocin Mountain west of town, guarded the Winchester and Martinsburg roads.<sup>10</sup> None of these forts were completed during the Confederate occupation.

Now began what many would remember as the golden days of their stay in Loudoun and in the army in general. Robert Stiles of the Richmond Howitzers recalled after the war, "If ever soldiers had a more ideal time than we enjoyed in Leesburg, then I cannot conceive when

5. Ibid., p. 79.
6. The George Washington Ball farm is now the subdivisions of Big Springs Hamlet and Big Springs Farm.
7. George N. Morton, "The Richmond Howitzers and the Battle of Ball's Bluff," *Confederate Veteran Magazine*, Vol. 32 (1924), p. 13.
8. The remains of Ft. Evans are located east of Fort Evans Plaza between Ft. Evans Road and Edwards' Ferry Road, flanked by the subdivisions of Edwards Landing and Evans Ridge.
9. Ft. Beauregard was located in the present day subdivision of Beauregard Estates.
10. The remains of Ft. Johnston are located on Catocin Mountain at the end of Ft. Johnston Road on private property.

or where it was."<sup>11</sup> Food is always a concern of the soldier and the men of the Leesburg garrison ate well. On September 3rd, Robert Moore noted in his diary, "There are great quantities of apples and peaches brought into camp now, and any quantity of green corn. We had for supper last night boiled corn and coffee."<sup>12</sup> This, with a ration of fresh beef and plenty of fruit, made a wonderful meal. The local farmers took advantage of the influx of potential customers. Farm wagons filled with produce soon were lined up at the entrances to the various camps. Private George A. Gibbs, a lad of sixteen years when he arrived in Loudoun as a private in the 18th Mississippi, would remember his stay in Loudoun to the end of his days. Many years later he would recall, "I enjoyed my stay at Leesburg more than any period of the war. We lived high, and good living is the delight of a soldier's heart. I never saw a country where there was greater abundance of things to eat. Chickens, eggs, butter, the fattest and best beeves, turkeys, honey; in fact, everything that hungry soldiers would like to have."<sup>13</sup>

For the majority of the soldiers, soldiering was a new experience. Adjusting to military life came with its own perils, both great and small. Robert Moore recorded on August 20th, "We have been drilling. One of the Sam Benton Rifles fell down this evening and his gun went off and the ball cut the pantaloons off one of the color guard."<sup>14</sup>

Other problems arose as the men found certain aspects of civilian life difficult to forego. Camp life at this point had many amenities that would disappear in the coming months. One such amenity concerned meals. Food was plentiful and many of the young men from Mississippi had brought their family servants along with them. For those with servants, the servants did the cooking. If you had no servant, you were on your own as each man was issued individual rations to be prepared in any way he might devise. Many of the men divided themselves into a

11. Robert Stiles, *Four Years Under Marse Robert* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside House Inc., 1988), p. 60.

12. Moore, *A Life*, p. 56.

13. George Alphonso Gibbs, "With a Mississippi Private in a Little Known Part of the Battle of First Bull Run and at Ball's Bluff," *Civil War Times Magazine*, March 1965 (Vol. 4), p. 46.

14. Moore, *A Life*, pp. 51-2.

"mess" of several individuals and pooled their rations. If any one individual had any talent for cooking, he usually did the cooking for the mess. If all were equally lacking in culinary skills, each member of the mess took a turn as cook on a rotating basis.

Captain Claudius Sears, the commander of Robert Moore's company of Mississippians, created quite a stir when he announced a new policy concerning the servants of the private soldiers. Moore noted in his diary, "there is a great deal of dissatisfaction in camp about a new regulation made by the Captain. He is going to make the negroes of the Co. cook for the whole Co. & cook it all together. The boys say they will send their negroes home first."<sup>15</sup> At this early stage of the game the distinction between officers and enlisted men became a bit blurred when it involved what the men considered their individual prerogatives. Three days later Moore wrote, "Cpt. Sears refused to drill our company today, saying he would not have anything more to do with it as they would not obey him."<sup>16</sup> They would march, stand guard or fight at the Captain's order, but they would not give up their cooks. The passage of two more days brought the entry, "Cpt. Sears is still pouting like an old Granma."<sup>17</sup> It took several weeks of hard feelings before the Captain gave up and let the individual soldiers keep their cooks.

There were other subjects of interest to the men as well as food; and women were at the top of the list. The ladies of Leesburg and the surrounding countryside were always welcome in camp. On August 21st, Moore noted in his pocket diary, "There are a number of ladies from town and the countryside out this evening at battalion drill, some of them very pretty."<sup>18</sup> Lieutenant William Stratton of the 2nd Virginia Cavalry would write to a friend, "This is magnificent country. Any quantity of pretty young ladies."<sup>19</sup> Trips to Leesburg were rare but looked forward to by the soldiers in camp. In early September, Robert Moore was assigned to Leesburg on provost duty. That evening he

15. Ibid., p. 63.

16. Ibid., p. 64.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., p. 52.

19. Robert J. Driver, Jr. and H. E. Howard, *2nd Virginia Cavalry*, The Virginia Regimental Histories Series, (Lynchburg, Virginia, H. E. Howard Inc., 1995 [hereafter cited as 2nd Virginia]), p. 30.

noted in his diary, "Went to town today.... I never saw so many ladies promenading of a night in a town in my life!"<sup>20</sup> At a later date he wrote, "Several beautiful young ladies came to see us drill this evening.... I think Leesburg can boast of as fair daughters as any other town in the State."<sup>21</sup>

Whiskey was another item of interest. On September 4th, Moore noted, "Fifteen of us went to town this morning with the Captain. Had a pleasant time. Found plenty of whiskey and brought a bottle back home with us...."<sup>22</sup> The availability of whiskey brought with it the usual abuses. Moore also noted, "Two of our boys went to town this morning and got very drunk, had to send a guard after them."<sup>23</sup> And a week later, "Have two of our men under guard. Pat Smith and Campbell. They went to town & got drunk. Two tents are full of soldiers under guard...."<sup>24</sup> Eventually, the consumption of alcohol by the men of the Leesburg garrison was totally banned. This order led to innovation on the part of both supplier and consumer to circumvent the prohibition. When a soldier was apprehended for violation of this particular order, the consequences did not seem to be too serious. Moore noted in his diary after the establishment of this order, "Had Willingham of the Vindicators



Brigadier General Nathan Evans

20. Moore, *A Life*, p. 62

21. Ibid., p. 66

22. Ibid., p. 56

23. Ibid., p. 52

24. Ibid., p. 55

arraigned before the high Cangaroo court for buying spirituous liquors from a negro. Find it a very pleasant way of killing time in camp."<sup>25</sup>

If whiskey was plentiful, many other items of everyday life were becoming difficult to obtain for the people Loudoun County. Prior to the opening of hostilities, most manufactured goods sold by local merchants had been obtained from Washington, D. C. or Baltimore. Both of those centers of commerce were no longer available to the people south of the Potomac River. The extraordinary demand for material goods occasioned by nearly four thousand new customers rapidly depleted the stock on hand of most local retailers. After a trip into town in early September, Robert Moore noted in his diary, "One can find but few things he wants in Leesburg. They are nearly sold out."<sup>26</sup>

As the men settled into the close confines of camp life, health became a growing problem. Many of the young men from isolated rural areas of the Deep South had not been exposed to many of the more common diseases. Consequently, they had developed no natural immunities. An epidemic of measles struck the Confederate camps in the Manassas-Centreville area before the men who were to make up the Leesburg garrison departed and they brought the disease with them to Loudoun County. According to the records of the 7th Brigade Hospital in Leesburg, many of the Mississippians contracted the disease, with four dying of complications in the months of August and September.<sup>27</sup> All were buried at Union Cemetery on the northern edge of town. Among the most deadly diseases to confront the men of both the Union and Confederate armies was typhoid. Before the boys from Mississippi would leave Leesburg, more than thirty would die of the disease. Most of those deaths need not have happened, since typhoid was an easily preventable disease. Simple good camp and personal hygiene would have prevented many deaths. One major conveyor of the disease was the common fly. With cooler weather eliminating the problem of flies, the disease would abate somewhat, but not entirely subside.

25. Ibid., p. 89.

26. Ibid., p. 56.

27. David M. Frantum and Clifford E. Henry, *No Sound Can Awake Them to Glory Again*, (Gaithersburg, Md.: Signature Book Printing, 1998 [hereafter cited as *No Sound*]), pp. 17-25.

The Civil War soldier was subjected to many deadly maladies other than typhoid and measles. Among the causes of death in the garrison, hospital records list such illnesses as "congestion of the brain," "toxicum opium," and "febris congestion." Other more recognizable illnesses such as pneumonia, meningitis and chronic diarrhea also took their toll. Some deaths were recorded as "general debility" or simply as "disease." Robert Moore noted in his pocket diary, "Heard today of the death of one of our company, Mr. T. Marks. He was a recruit & has been in service but a short time. Disease bilious fever first & afterwards inflammation of the bowels."<sup>28</sup> The 7th Brigade hospital records indicate Thomas Marks died of typhoid fever. Everyone seemed to have his own explanation for camp illness. Sgt. George Carperon of the 2nd Virginia Cavalry observed, "The climate in Loudoun is indeed fickle and puts to the severest test the constitution of the soldiers. Hardly a day passes that we do not hear the three volleys fired over the grave of some poor patriotic soldier. Many are buried in the neat and pretty cemetery here; some were killed in the battle of Leesburg, but many from disease caused by the uncharitable climate."<sup>29</sup>

The military situation along the Potomac was reasonably stable through September and early October. There were occasional alarms that brought the long roll through the camps but they all came to naught. Sharpshooters made life hazardous in certain locations along the banks of the river and on occasion, the artillery would exchange a few dilatory rounds across the wide waterway. Most of what occurred was for show. In late September, Robert Moore's company took its turn with his battalion as the infantry support for Fort Johnston. The infantry camp was located well below the fort on the eastern slope of Catoctin Mountain. Moore seemed to have a low opinion of this duty. On September 27th, his diary recorded his thoughts on the military usefulness of his role when he wrote, "We had dress parade on the mountain this evening. Can see everything for a long ways around but I do not think it will pay to walk up there often. I think we were marched up on the mountain for the Yankees to see us."<sup>30</sup> And see them

28. Moore, *A Life*, p. 90.

29. Driver-Howard, *2nd Virginia*, p. 36.

30. Moore, *A Life*, p. 61.

they did. The Union signal station on Sugarloaf Mountain on the Maryland side of the Potomac had a magnificent view of most of the Confederate activity in the Leesburg area. Duty on the mountain had hazards of a different nature. On the same day Moore commented on the usefulness of the duty, he had started his diary entry with the following, "Camp west of Leesburg: wind has been blowing very hard all evening. The boys have all been out in the rain propping and holding their tents. Several have fallen down. The Colonel had about a dozen men holding his and yet it fell. The Colonel is sitting out on the floor of his tent looking like an old dove whose nest has been robbed."<sup>31</sup>

About the middle of October there began to be increasing activity on the part of the Union army opposite Loudoun County. There was an obvious increase in the number of Federal troops on the Maryland side of the Potomac, and Confederate suspicion grew that some move was about to take place. On October 14th, the 8th Virginia Infantry and a two-gun section of the Richmond Howitzers were sent to Loudoun Heights to assist some of Jackson's Valley troops in an operation against Bolivar Heights near Harper's Ferry. Robert Moore observed, "The 8th Va. Reg. was sent up towards Harpers Ferry. Some think they will have to fight up in that section. Gen. Evans was a little fretted about them leaving Waterford and coming down here without orders." What Evans was "fretted" about was Colonel Eppa Hunton's decision to abandon the encampment at Waterford and move his regiment to the Swann farm about a mile north of Leesburg. Hunton had neither orders nor authority to make such a move but Evans apparently got over his "fret" without ordering Hunton back to Waterford after the 8th Virginia's supporting role at Bolivar Heights had ended. This site, located on the grounds of Morven Park, would become a permanent encampment with the camp at Waterford relegated to a post manned by one or two companies assigned to picket the river crossings. The camp on the Swann property would be named Camp Carolina for its proximity to the Old Carolina Road.<sup>32</sup>

31. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 67.



There was a minor engagement at Bolivar Heights on the 16th of October. Neither the 8th Virginia nor the Richmond Howitzers were actively engaged. At the time of this engagement, there was sudden activity among the troops in the Leesburg area. For a reason never fully explained, Colonel Evans became spooked and withdrew his troops from the Leesburg area. Lt. William Palmer of the two-gun section of Howitzers that had remained at Leesburg wrote to a friend on the 16th, "It is now 8 o'clock at night and we have orders to remove our camp once more. Something has turned up. I know not what. Our orders are to retire to the woods near our old camp near Mr. Meade's preparatory to retiring further in the direction of Thoroughfare Gap."<sup>33</sup> In the pre dawn hours of the 17th of October, the 17th Mississippi was roused from its camp near Fort Johnston and started south to Oatlands. Robert Moore noted in his pocket diary, "Left camp just before day. Arrived here at 11 o'clock A. M. Have pitched our tents near Carter's Mill. A very fine residence nearby, said to be that of Mrs. Carter. 13th and 18th camped in sight of us. Some think we will go back to Leesburg tomorrow."<sup>34</sup>

Colonel Evans had no orders to withdraw his troops from the Leesburg area. On October 17th, General Beauregard's Assistant Adjutant General wrote to Evans from Army Headquarters at Manassas for an explanation of his move stating, "Your note of this date has been laid before the general, who wishes to be informed of the reason that influenced you to take up your present position, as you omitted to inform him. The point you occupy (Leesburg) is understood to be very strong, and the general hopes you will be able to maintain it against odds should the enemy press across the river and move in this direction. To prevent such a movement...you will be expected to make a desperate stand, falling back only in the face of an overwhelming enemy."<sup>35</sup> On the 19th, Evans moved everyone back to the positions they had occupied prior to the 16th of October. No satisfactory explanation

33. William P. Palmer, "The Richmond Howitzers, Another Chapter in Their Early History," *The Times* (Richmond), March 5, 1893.

34. Moore, *A Life*, p. 67.

35. United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 Vols, (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The National Historical Society), rpr 1987, Series I, Vol. 5, p. 347.

nation of his actions was ever provided by the commander of the Leesburg garrison. Evans may have become concerned by the reported movement of Union troops to his east in the Dranesville area. In any event, the developing military situation would soon overshadow his unauthorized abandonment of Leesburg.

On the evening of October 20th, events began that set in motion the largest military engagement to take place in Loudoun during the war. A Union reconnaissance party crossed the Potomac at Ball's Bluff north of Leesburg. The earlier withdrawal of Confederate forces from the Leesburg area had piqued the curiosity of the Union commander on the Maryland side of the Potomac. The objective of the reconnaissance was to determine if the Confederates still occupied Leesburg in force. Soon after dawn on the 21st, a clash between elements of the 15th Massachusetts Infantry and the 17th Mississippi Infantry escalated into a daylong battle. The Ball's Bluff area became the primary battleground with Edwards' Ferry the scene of secondary fighting. The fighting ended with nightfall. The Confederates had achieved an unqualified victory, having swept the Union troops into the river at the bluff.

The exhausted southerners spent the evening of the 21st and the morning of the 22nd rounding up Federal prisoners. When the smoke of battle had cleared, Union losses in killed, wounded and captured amounted to nearly nine hundred men, most of whom were prisoners. The men of the Leesburg garrison suffered nearly fifty killed or mortally wounded and another one hundred who would survive their wounds. Leesburg overflowed with the wounded of both sides. The courthouse, all the churches and many private homes became impromptu hospitals. Leesburg doctor Armistead Mott, the civilian physician in charge of the 7th Brigade hospital, and his staff were swamped. Many of the townspeople were pressed into service in an effort to save all that could be saved, regardless of the color of their uniform.

The South viewed the battle as a major victory that reinforced the popular belief that the southern soldier was far superior to his northern counterpart. The Confederate population of Loudoun County was overjoyed at the victory. Colonel Evans was hailed by the civilian pop-

ulation as a military genius and every southern soldier as a great hero. The private soldiers greatly appreciated the hero worship, although some may have had their doubts concerning Evans' military genius. Private W. Gart Johnson of the 18th Mississippi observed some years after the war, "General Evans, of South Carolina, commanded us in that fight, and whether it was by accident or grit, or good generalship, or all three combined, I know not, but anyhow we wiped up things so clean, and got so many compliments, both from home and everywhere else, and were feasted and toasted, and treated so kindly by the people of Leesburg, we didn't care how long the war lasted."<sup>36</sup> The feeling was quite different on the other side of the river. The 20th Massachusetts' Henry Abbott, who had fought at Ball's Bluff, viewed the battle and particularly the town of Leesburg in a much different light. To his father he wrote, "You can comprehend how much we want to visit the battlefield at Ball's Bluff and see the spires of Leesburg, to us a miniature Richmond."<sup>37</sup>

It took a while for things to settle down after the battle. Several of the Virginia dead and most of the Mississippians who lost their lives were buried in the town cemetery in Leesburg. Colonel Burt of the 18th Mississippi died of his wounds a few days after the battle. He was shipped home in a special lead lined coffin. Another casualty of Ball's Bluff who was returned to his family was Corporal Jack Pettus. A member of the 18th Mississippi's Company K and the son of Mississippi Governor John J. Pettus, he had fallen in the afternoon attack led by Colonel Burt. Many of the badly wounded were sent home. Those with lesser wounds were returned to duty when they had sufficiently recovered.<sup>38</sup>

The military situation quickly returned to what it had been before Ball's Bluff, and the men quickly returned to the rigors of camp life. One difference, of course, was the change in the weather. Although the

36. W. Gart Johnson quote is from an article in an unidentified magazine. A copy of the article is in the possession of the author.

37. Henry Livermore Abbott, *Fallen Leaves, the Civil War Letters of Major Henry Livermore Abbott*, (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991, [hereafter cited as *Fallen Leaves*]) p. 84.

38. Frantum and Henry, *No Sound*, pp. 30-32.

official decision to go into winter camp would not be made until January of 1862, the men began to establish permanent winter quarters on their own in early November. The Mississippi regiments continued their residence at Carter's Mill and Camp Mississippi. The 8th Virginia took up residence on the Swann property, detailing two companies on a rotating basis to the old campground at Waterford. On November 13th, the 21st Mississippi Infantry arrived from Centreville to relieve the 8th Virginia Infantry. This was in compliance with an earlier directive from President Jefferson Davis to brigade regiments from the same state together whenever feasible. The President considered this policy good for moral and of potential political benefit, as well. The 8th Virginia was not happy at the prospect of leaving "home" and taking up residence at Centreville, where it was to be brigaded with three other Virginia regiments. It may have been just as well that the 8th was sent to Centreville. Since their arrival in August, there had been a constant problem with the men taking "french leave" and going home without authorization for a day or more. Many of the men of the 8th were within an easy walk of their homes. By November, this unofficial leave taking had become almost epidemic.

The winter of 1861-62 was a very snowy one in northern Virginia. The first snow of the year fell on the 24th of November. Some of the Mississippians had never seen snow and found it fascinating. It arrived on the same day the 17th Mississippi moved from Camp Mississippi to join the 21st Mississippi at Camp Carolina. On that day, Robert Moore noted in his diary, "Has been snowing all day a little and is now coming down fast. All seem to enjoy the snow very much."<sup>39</sup> The snow did, however, bring with it certain problems. Snowball battles among the troops were inevitable. Moore would note in his diary, "The sleigh bells have been jingling through the camp all day. The boys have had some fine sport fighting sham battles with snowballs."<sup>40</sup> As the winter progressed, what began as "fine sport" was soon to get out of hand. The battles grew in size from small groups to company strength to regiment against regiment. On February 3rd, Moore would write, "Began to

39. Moore, *A Life*, p. 82.

40. Ibid., p. 94.

snow this morning at daybreak and has continued all day. The snow is deeper than it has been this winter although we have had snow to fall nearly every day this year. Snowballing has been abolished by an order from Head Quarters."<sup>41</sup> The snowball fights had gotten so rough they were causing far more casualties than the Yankees.

After the Battle of Ball's Bluff, the Union army encamped on the Maryland side of the Potomac mirrored the Confederates on the Virginia shore with winter camp. On December 3rd, Brig. Gen. Daniel Harvey Hill relieved recently promoted Brig. Gen. Nathan Evans of command of the Leesburg garrison. The military situation remained in a state of watchfulness. On December 13th, the 20th Massachusetts' Henry Abbott wrote to his father in Boston, "Gen. Stone has had a balloon here for the last two or three days. Of course, it hasn't gone up yet."<sup>42</sup> The next day Robert Moore, on the Virginia side of the river, noted, "The Yankees raised a balloon at Edwards ferry this morning. I suppose they are trying to find out our strength at this place."<sup>43</sup> Most of the military activity during the winter was in the form of artillery exchanges. On the 13th of February, Lieutenant Abbott wrote to his mother concerning the rebels across the river, "I candidly believe, they are few in number (not more than 5,000 effectives and a few useless batteries that can't come within two miles of the line of anything they aim at)."<sup>44</sup>

Nearly all of the military activity that winter occurred along or near the river. The Lovettsville and Waterford areas remained hot beds of Union sentiment, but apparently not everyone was hostile to the occupying Confederates. In February, Robert Moore wrote, "Have attended the quarterly Quaker meeting at Waterford today. Enjoyed it very much. One gentleman and two ladies preached. The ladies were the most interesting. Saw several very pretty Quaker ladies. Dined at Waterford, a very fine table indeed.... Waterford is quite a small place."<sup>45</sup> Some of the men actually preferred duty in the area. On

41. Ibid., p. 99.

42. Abbott, *Fallen Leaves*, p. 84.

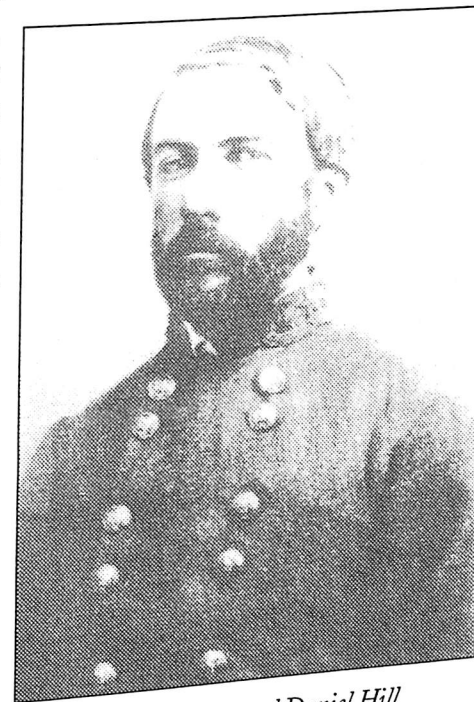
43. Moore, *A Life*, p. 87.

44. Abbott, *Fallen Leaves*, p. 103.

45. Moore, *A Life*, p. 102.

January 7th, George Minor of the 2nd Virginia Cavalry noted in his diary, "I expect to go on picket again tomorrow; I hope it may be to the Point of Rocks, for although it is our most dangerous post, yet I prefer it to any other on account of the people in the vicinity; they always treat us hospitably; invite us into their homes, give us good dinners, etc. I was there Christmas and had a very pleasant time."<sup>46</sup> Of course, Point of Rocks was not Lovettsville and not everyone was friendly. Pvt. William Tatum of the Richmond Howitzers observed, "It seems all along the line of the Potomac that people are half Union men, but the other half are true blue and I have been told that neighbors are at daggers in some cases."<sup>47</sup> And finally, an observation by an anonymous member of the Howitzers on the residents of Lovettsville saw them as, "unprepossessing people with repulsive faces."<sup>48</sup>

As winter began to release its grip on the Loudoun countryside, increased activity in the Union camps became apparent. On February 25th, Robert Moore entered in his diary, "Received orders to have three days rations cooked up and hold ourselves in readiness to march. I think the enemy are crossing up about Harper's Ferry."<sup>49</sup> The young Mississippian was correct. On the 24th of February, Union troops had crossed the Shenandoah River from Harper's Ferry and



Brigadier General Daniel Hill

46. Driver and Howard, 2nd Virginia, p. 35.

47. Lee A. Wallace, *The Richmond Howitzers*, The Virginia Regimental Histories Series, (Lynchburg, Virginia: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1993, [hereafter cited as *Howitzers*]) p. 12.

48. Ibid.

49. Moore, *A Life*, p. 104.



occupied Loudoun Heights. The fifteen hundred men of Col. John W. Geary's 28th Pennsylvania Infantry, supported by a six-gun battery of artillery and a squadron of the 1st Michigan Cavalry, fanned out across northern Loudoun County. On the 26th, Moore noted, "A great commotion in camp all day...have sent our blankets back to Middleburg...All think some important move is on hand and would not be surprised to leave our quarters at any time."<sup>50</sup>

Union activity in the Edwards' Ferry area increased as well, but no attempt was made to cross the river. On March 1st, Moore wrote, "Had battalion drill this evening and the Yankees tried to shell us while we were drilling...the Yankees have been shelling Ft. Evans all evening."<sup>51</sup> On the morning of February 28th, Geary's men had occupied Lovettsville, much to the delight of the predominantly Union population. Skirmishing had been occurring between the advancing Federals and the Confederate cavalry since the 25th of February. On March 4th, the 17th Mississippi was dispatched to the northern part of the county to confront the invaders. Moore noted in his pocket diary, "The long roll was sounded this morning at 7 o'clock and the reg. formed and marched out to Waterford on a skirmish as the Yankees occupied Lovettsville for several days past & have been scouring the country in that vicinity looking for something to steal."<sup>52</sup> They soon returned to camp, but on March 6th Moore wrote, "Have received orders to pack the wagons at 3 o'clock & that we will leave at 5 o'clock. All are surmising as to where we will march. I think we will go towards Lovettsville."<sup>53</sup> What Moore did not know was Gen. Hill had received orders from Gen. Joseph Johnston at Manassas to abandon Loudoun. Moore's diary entry on the evening of March 7th would be his last in Loudoun County. From a bivouac near Middleburg he wrote, "Evacuated Leesburg this morning at 5 o'clock. Were not apprised of it when we left our winter quarters not knowing but what we were going to Lovettsville."<sup>54</sup> With only a few squadrons of gray cavalry left to

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid, p. 105.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid, p. 106.

54. Ibid.

slow the Union advance, Loudoun's seasons in gray had come to an end.

Colonel John Geary's infantry occupied Leesburg on the morning of March 8, 1862. Not everyone in blue was pleased by the turn of events. On the same day Geary marched into Leesburg, Henry Abbott of the 20th Massachusetts wrote to his father in Boston saying, "Tomorrow we set out for Leesburg, which I am deeply grieved to say is in the hands of Col. Geary...who advanced down and took it, the enemy fleeing at his approach. It is the grossest outrage & insult to us that a parcel of pickets should be allowed to come down and take the place, we who have been beaten off once from the place & been lying watching it for six long and dreary months in a muddy Maryland cornfield."<sup>55</sup> Loudoun's seasons in blue were about to begin.



55. Abbott, *Fallen Leaves*, pp. 105-06.