

Clinton Hatcher: Citizen, Soldier, Hero Part 2

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Part 1 (in our 2011 issue) described the 1757 arrival of the Hatcher family in Loudoun County and their settlement in the Purcellville, Hamilton and Lincoln areas. Thomas Clinton Lovett Hatcher, born in 1839, was a student at Columbian College (later George Washington University) in Washington City (later Washington, D.C.), and graduated in 1860, a year before the Civil War began in April 1861. By late May, Hatcher had enlisted in The Blue Mountain Boys, which would become Company F of the 8th Virginia Infantry Regiment.

Part 1 used excerpts from Hatcher's letters to Miss Mary Ann Sibert of Mount Solon, Augusta County, Virginia, to describe Clinton's life in and around Leesburg and Loudoun County in the early days of the war.¹ Part 2 continues with excerpts from Clinton's letters to "Miss Mary" where he describes his life in camp, his eagerness for battle, and his growing fondness for his correspondent (whose return letters, alas, do not survive).

¹ For full texts of all Hatcher/Sibert letters excerpted in this article, see <http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/VoS/personalpapers/search/intro.html>



Clinton Hatcher, August 1861. Image taken from United Confederate Veterans poster circa 1889; cleaned and reworked by Becky J. Fleming

The article concludes with a description of Clinton's heroic actions and death at the Battle of Balls Bluff on October 21, 1861.

In his ninth letter to Mary Sibert from Camp Johnson, Clinton talks little of military or community news. He mentions briefly a search for Federal troops reportedly on the Virginia side of the Potomac River and of a small exchange of gunshots between Confederate and Union forces across the river. Had there been any remaining doubts in Mary's mind as to Clinton's love for her, this letter would have laid them all to rest.

Note: these letter entries are excerpted from their full texts; ellipsis marks (...) denote original letter text not shown for space reasons. Original spelling and grammar is maintained in lieu of 'sic' notations; occasional illegible words in the letters are so noted. Underscoring shown as in originals. Additional background information appears in brackets.



Camp Johnson, located 1.5 miles southeast of Waterford, drawn by 2nd Lieutenant Arthur W. Follin, Co. H, 8th Va. Infantry and as described by Clinton in his August 26, 1861 letter to "Miss Mary." Lt. Follin died on October 4, 1861 from typhoid fever while at home on furlough. From the research papers of John E. Drvine, courtesy of John W. Rozzles.

See <http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/VoS/personalpapers/search/intro.html> for complete texts of these letters (search "Hatcher" in the "Author" field).

Sept 24th 1861
Camp Johnson

Dear Miss Mary:

Your very long and interesting letter arrived yesterday evening and was perused with the greatest pleasure. I have several correspondents but no other, who can spare the time rather or has the inclination to write me such long and interesting epistles. You need not fear that I ever can become wearied with a correspondence which gives me so much pleasure without being the slightest inconvenience, for I do not consider it a trouble to write to you no matter how often a letter may be due you. My actions also prove this for I think I always answer your letters at the earliest possible moment after receiving them. Camp is rather duller than usual this week. Last Friday night the pickets brought in the report that several hundred Yanks had crossed the river and were encamped within about eight miles of this place; we were aroused about two O'clock and two hundred of us marched off in search of them. We walked about eighteen miles; half of it in the rain and saw not a trace of the federals. We have orders now to have our knapsacks packed and be ready to march at a moment's warning; but I think it quite probable that we will be left to protect Loudon for some time yet.

I hope we will not be left behind when the attack is made on Washington, for I would not miss marching in there for anything in the world, but I had rather remain here until they are ready to commence fighting at once. My cousin and I went on a pear-stealing expedition yesterday evening and managed to get about half a bushel, so green that you can hardly keep from whistling after eating one or two. But anything is good in camp.

Oh! How I wish you could have wings if you would favor the 8th Regiment with a visit, of all my dear friends there is none, I would welcome with such pure, heartfelt joy, none in whose company the hours would pass so delightfully, as a fair inhabitant of Mount Solon. I would give so much to be in your company now even for a short time; to see you and freely tell all I think and feel. I fear to write all; to

tell you how the image of one seen but three times, has lingered round my waking fancies, added sweetness to my dreams, and driven away the gloom which would inevitably have hung round one leading a life so indolent, and seemingly employed to so little purpose. But I must not proceed. I am almost certain that I possess your friendship and I fear to lose even it, which I prize so much by straining for more. ...

I believe that the human race is naturally inconstant and the female portion especially so, but there are many high and noble exceptions to this general rule and I am firmly convinced that you are one. My heart is not so invulnerable, as you think, to Cupid's darts. I like the "free and sociable" way in which you write and although our acquaintance has been short I think we are far from being strangers. But to answer your question: Candidly, I do not think you are a flirt, I hope you are not. I may have "misconstrued your sentiments," but have never thought you capable of "hypocrisy": what I most fear is that I may have misconstrued them in the vain hope that you cared more for me than you really do. ...

I was very sorry to hear of the loss of our North Carolina forts,² they were especially valuable to us as a refuge for our privateers, but in the end it may be an advantage to our cause, for it is arousing the brave sons of the old tar state and she will send thousands of volunteers into service now who would otherwise have remained idly at home, thinking the seat of war too far removed for them to offer their services. ... One of our companies went down to the river yesterday and exchanged about a dozen rounds with the enemy. None of our men were hurt and they hope they did some execution among the federals as they were within musket range.

I would not mind having a slight wound if I could only be taken to the Mossy Creek hospital.³ I am sure I should never think of pain if I could have your kind and tender attentions. I envy those soldiers who will be near you and hear your sweet voice speak words of comfort. But I am afraid I shall weary you this time for although I do not write so many pages as you, my mammoth sheet almost makes up the difference. ... But I know that you will overlook all my defects. Otherwise my letter should be committed at once to the flames. Please write me another of your long and interesting letters very soon. I ask no more interesting than your last...

² Likely a reference to the loss of two Confederate forts at the Battle of Hatteras Inlet Batteries, August 28-29, 1861
³ Mossy Creek is located in Augusta County, Virginia, where Miss Sibert lived during the war.

I remain as ever, most devotedly and unchangingly
 Your true friend
 Clinton

In the tenth and last known surviving letter to Miss Mary, Clinton talks about the rumored report of moving the Eighth Virginia Regiment into Longstreet's Brigade and tells Mary of the brigade's reputation and his desire to go and fight. More stirring are the words he chooses to describe his growing love for her. With the skill of an accomplished poet and pen in hand, Clinton professes his love to Mary, each word carefully chosen and softly spoken from his heart. In closing, he asks Mary to "*tell me all, even the worst.*" His question posed— could she ever love him? — he would wait "*impatiently*" for her reply.

October 8th 1861
 Camp Johnson

Dear Miss Mary:

Your very welcome letter was received from the courier yesterday and although he may have borne dispatches of more importance to the Southern Confederacy, yet I am certain that none contained half so much to interest the recipients as did that fair missive. I was afraid at first that you would finally grow weary of writing such long letters to one who could offer so poor a return for them and it rejoices me exceedingly every time I receive another practical assurance that such is not, yet at least, the case.

It is currently reported here that we are soon to be attached to Longstreet's Brigade, which you know is in the very vanguard of our army. They have been down nearly to Alexandria and are still the advanced Brigade. If I was certain that a battle would take place very soon I would like very much for the "eighth" to be placed under Longstreet as he is a brave man and will be one of the first to commence fighting, but if we are only to be wearied out with marching and picket duty I had much rather remain here in Loudon until we cross into Maryland. ... But I am tired of writing on a subject which I hear discussed so incessantly therefore I will change the current to a theme which interests me infinitely more than all else on earth your own dear (pardon me) self ...

You bid me write all I feel, yet I cannot summon courage to tell what I have never told before. I fear—everything. Yet I have already told you in effect all I would say; my last letter must have conveyed all to your mind; Can you bid me hope? I know I have no right to infer anything from what you have said previous to this; it is true you have expressed friendship for me but friendship is cold and formal, and I fear you can give nothing more. Oh! If I could only hold your hand and look into those eyes which have lit the darkest hours of our separation you could then no longer doubt with what feelings I regard you, you would then know how much I love. I confess I have dared to hope, from the free and confiding style of your letters that perhaps you could reciprocate my affections, but if I have misconstrued your manner and from false premises formed wrong conclusions please do not blame me, my wishes may have biased my judgment, but if so I deserve sympathy rather than censure. I shall in that event try to love you more as a sister, and be a friend to the one, who more fortunate than myself, shall gain your hand and priceless love. ...

Although not usually considered sentimental, I do not think love to be a fairy legend of the Poet's brain, but a powerful, enduring passion which binds the heart to that of another, firmly and forever. Such is the love I would offer. Can you receive and requite it? You ask who it is I would [unclear: bide] you love and encourage me with the assurance that you "could not be so cruel as to deny him all the deep devotion of your fond heart." But you have just said the one you love must be "embellished with the charms of refinement nobleness and goodness." Oh! that the one of whom I spoke could pass that hard ordeal, then it is I, I would bid you love but I feel that the aspirant for that greatest of all earthly prizes if weighed in the balance would be found wanting.

But I know you will make sufficient apologies to your own mind for a letter which is from the heart and not the intellect. Please do not neglect to answer all these things in your next for you have no idea how eagerly and impatiently I shall await an answer. You need not fear of wearying me no matter how much you may write on that subject or indeed on any other. ...

Oh! If I could only be free once more and go to the spot, to which my thoughts ever tend, I could be supremely happy, now I cannot help like Moore's lover sighing for the placid "Lake, and the light canoe

of my dear."⁴ To be your companion in those boat rides and mountain strolls, to be your escort when you ride and sit beside you when no one else is near and tell you all I feel, all the depth of my affection for you, that would be the ultimatum of happiness, my imagination can paint nothing which nearer realizes my idea of the "Sumum bonum"⁵, the greatest good of all on earth.

But I must close, I have already wearied you I fear and must not try your patience too far. Please write to me at once a long, confiding letter; tell me all, even the worst. I shall wait so impatiently for your next letter, but I know you will be punctual, you always are. Please think sometimes of one who always remembers you, and most truly your devoted,

Clinton

THE BATTLE OF BALL'S BLUFF

It is doubtful that Clinton ever received the answer he so "*impatiently*" awaited. On the afternoon of October 21, Clinton and his regiment went into action in front of the bluffs that overlooked the Potomac River, just two miles northeast of Leesburg. In the all-day battle, units of the Confederate Seventh Brigade under Col. Nathan Evans (including the 8th Virginia and 13th, 17th and 18th Mississippi Infantry) repelled an incursion into Loudoun County by three brigades of Brig. Gen. Charles Stone's Division, including the 15th and 20th Massachusetts Infantry and the First (California) under Col. Edward Baker—a sitting U.S. Senator from Oregon and a close friend of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln. As the battle raged through the afternoon and into the evening, the men of the 8th Virginia began to run dangerously low on ammunition. As early evening approached, 8th Virginia Colonel Eppa Hunton gathered up and re-distributed one round of ammunition to each man.

In what would prove to be the beginning phase of the last and final Confederate charge that day, soldiers of "The Bloody Eighth" fixed their bayonets and charged the center of the field. Accounts of Clinton Hatcher's activities during the battle differ, but according to a letter written to "Miss Mary" after the battle by Clinton's cousin and Hamilton merchant, Thaddeus Hatcher, Clinton's last known words

⁴ Hatcher confuses "light canoe" for Thomas Moore's "white canoe," *The Lake of the Dismal Swamp*, 1806.

⁵ Another minor Hatcher misquote: 'sumum bonum' is Latin for "the highest good"

were, "Come on Boys, let's give them one more charge!"⁶ Hatcher, as the color sergeant selected to carry the Confederate national flag for Company F (The Blue Mountain Boys) of the 8th Virginia Infantry, led this late afternoon charge that drove the already faltering Union forces over the rim of the bluff. At this very moment, a Union counterattack, organized and led by Captain William Bartlett of the 20th Massachusetts, was also heading up the rise to the top of the bluff. In a letter to his mother, Capt. Bartlett later wrote,

"I called for Company I for one last rally. Everyman that was left sprang forward and also about six men (all who were left) of Captain Dreher's company and ten men of Company H under Lieutenant Hallowell, all of whom followed me up the rise. As we reached the top, I found Little [Lt. Abbott] by my side. We came upon two fresh companies of the enemy which had just come out of the woods; they had their flag with them. Both sides were so surprised at seeing each other—they at seeing us coming up with this handful of men, we at seeing these two new companies drawn up in perfect order—that each side forgot to fire. And we stood looking at each other (not a gun being fired) for some twenty seconds, and then they let fly their volley at the same time we did. If bullets had rained before, they came in sheets now. It is surprising that anyone could escape being hit. We were driven back again. I had to order sharply one or two of my brave fellows before they would go back. Everything was lost now."⁷

This would be the charge that would complete the second dramatic Confederate victory in as many engagements on Virginia soil, a charge that would end with men of the southern army firing down from the top of the bluff as soldiers from the Union army threw their rifles into the Potomac and swam for their lives.

Such are the victories that soldiers savored for a lifetime. Clinton would have been proud standing atop that bluff, watching the invaders flee from the shores of his beloved Virginia. He would have taken a small measure of satisfaction in knowing he had held true to his duty. True to both his

6 Evans/Sibert Letters, Library of Virginia collection, (Richmond, Virginia) located at <http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu/personalpapers/documents/augusta/p2evanssibertletters.html>

7 Kim Bernard Holien, *Battle of Ball's Bluff, The Fateful Clash of North and South at Leesburg, Virginia - October 21, 1861*, Publisher's Press, Inc. Orange, Virginia, 1985, p.69

faith and his honor, he had charged the field and led his regiment to victory.

Sadly, Clinton was not standing on the bluff, nor would he ever see the day's final victory. Somewhere amid the roar of battle, the mayhem and confusion, something struck him in the chest, something sudden and hard that drove the sound of battle from his ears. Still clutching his flagstaff, the heroic young man lay dead, a single gunshot through his heart.⁸

As local and national newspapers hurriedly set their type, word spread quickly throughout Loudoun County about the great Confederate victory. On Tuesday, October 22, a local Leesburg paper, the *Washingtonian*, went to press with a story by an unknown author entitled, "Description of the Battle By a Southern Lady." In the brief story the author stated that Confederate losses were "about 30 killed" but named only "Clinton Hatcher and Donahue of Loudoun County and the son of Governor Pettus of Mississippi." This article also appeared in the *Richmond Enquirer* on Oct. 22 and the *New York Times* on Nov. 3.⁹ The impact on the Hatcher family and their response to news of Clinton's death can be surmised based on the recorded travails of similarly afflicted Loudoun families, and would have occurred to some degree as follows.

Sometime late that night, a persistent knock at the door would have awakened Jonah and Adeline, and a messenger would have delivered the bad news. Early the following morning, Jonah would have hitched a team of horses, and he, a close family friend or neighbor and perhaps one or more of his slaves would have headed off for Leesburg. Clinton's body, most likely already removed into town, would have been loaded into Jonah's wagon for the short trip home. Once at home, his body would be bathed and dressed in his finest suit of clothes. As was customary at the time, Clinton would be laid out in the family's parlor or in a bedroom where a twenty-four hour around the clock vigil would be kept. Neighbors would arrive with food and offer help and condolences

8 Marks, *Armed Only With Courage: The Story of T. Clinton L. Hatcher*, Leesburg Today archives (paraphrased) p. unknown

9 <http://hatcherfamilyassn.com/getperson.php?personID=14695&tree=QHatcher>

while visiting with the family to pay their last respects. In keeping with rituals and customs of the time, candles would have burned throughout the room while flowers were constantly brought in, not only as a gift of remembrance but to mask the odor of the decaying corpse.

A wake of up to four days would then precede the funeral and burial service at the Ketocin Baptist Church. Clinton's wake may have been shorter in duration than most, due in part to the open chest wound that he received during the battle. An additional consideration for Jonah would be to not allow his wife's birthday on October 26th, to also be the date their only child was laid to rest.

On December 24th, Christmas Eve, Thaddeus Hatcher wrote his letter to Miss Mary Sibert, who had written Thaddeus asking to have a tribute to Clinton published in the local paper. Thaddeus described his efforts to oblige her request and promised to send her copies when it was finally done. He then provided the particulars concerning Clinton's death and promised to plant a rose at her request.

December 24th 1861

Miss Mary A. Sibert

On the 15th of the present month I received a note from you containing a tribute of respect to my much lamented cousin Clinton Hatcher with a request to have it published in one of the Leesburg papers which request I complied with so far as I was able.

I took it to the Editor of the Washingtonian and he gave me a promise to have it published in the next issue of his paper but it failed to appear for reasons entirely unknown to me.

I will see him before the next issue and learn the cause of it being delayed and will forward the copies desired immediately after its appearance.

You asked for particulars concerning his death.

I will give them so far as I know them. He fought like a hero all day with his company and in the evening in making a charge on the enemy he rushed on and became separated from his company and fell in with the Hillsborough Border Guards where he did good service until just at dark when my Brother who fought with him during the day and was then detailed to bring off our captured Mountain Howitzers saw

him and Clinton waved his hat to him and cheered him on.

The fight was just closing and Clinton going on to the river bank, when within thirty yards of the bluffs the enemy discharged one more and the last volley when Clinton fell with a ball shot through his heart. His last words were come on Boys let's give them one more charge. He fought fearlessly and well, but poor fellow, I fear he was too rash. I sometimes think if he had have had less courage he would not have been killed.

He thought it his duty to defend to the uttermost his native country and in so doing sacrificed his life.

Poor Clinton, He sleeps his last sleep long happy sleep May he rest in peace I will plant the rose as you requested.

Your sympathetic friend

Thaddeus A. Hatcher

P. S. Your letter was directed 8th Reg. Va. Vol. and forwarded to Centerville and as I was not in the service it had to be returned to Leesburg before I received it. My office is
Hamilton
Loudoun Co. Va.¹⁰



This envelope carried Thaddeus Hatcher's letter containing the particulars of the death in combat of his cousin Clinton Hatcher to Clinton's sweetheart, Mary Anna Sibert in Mt. Solon, Virginia. The envelope, mailed December 25, 1861, remains the only known existing Confederate patriotic cover mailed from Hamilton VA. Courtesy K.M. Fleming collection.

¹⁰ Evans/Sibert Letters, Thaddeus Hatcher, Dec. 24th, 1861; letter 11 of 11

THE AFTERMATH

The smoke had not yet settled over the battlefield before stories and rumors began to spread. Writing to her son in Missouri on November 30th, Susan Q. Curlette of Waverley, near Piedmont Station (now Delaplane) wrote:

"... We have had an awful battle at Leesburg—said to be the most brilliant achievement of the South—General Evans, our commander, in which the notorious General Baker was killed by young Hatcher of Loudoun, an only child, but poor fellow, it cost him his brave young life. . . ." ¹¹

For many years after the war, Clinton would continue to receive the credit for the death of Colonel Edward D. Baker. Baker was an early friend of Abraham Lincoln's in Illinois, and they remained close friends until Baker's death. Baker rode in Lincoln's carriage after Lincoln's first inaugural; Lincoln named his son, Edward Baker Lincoln ("Eddie") after him. Later elected U.S. Senator representing Oregon, Baker held that seat when he enlisted in the Union army and remains the only sitting Senator to be killed in combat. ¹² As such a well known figure, Baker's death in a bungled incursion into Virginia became a national scandal. The Union loss at Ball's Bluff, following its defeat at First Manassas, led to Congressional hearings and the formation of the Congressional Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. In short, any individual that could be identified as killing Baker in battle would clearly deserve much notoriety—but there is no clear or confirmed information directly linking Clinton Hatcher to Baker's death.

In September 1898, Judge C.C. Cummings, formerly of the 17th Mississippi Volunteer Infantry, wrote the first article to appear on the Battle of Ball's Bluff for *Confederate Veteran* magazine. Of the death of Col. Baker, Judge Cummings wrote:

"... soon after landing, while tugging at a field piece to get it into position... Private Hatcher, of Hunton's Eighth Virginia Regiment, ran out of the line and fired the fatal shot . . ." ¹³

In the February 1902 issue of *Confederate Veteran*, T.J. Young, formerly of the Eighth Virginia Infantry, wrote an article to correct a story published in the September 1901 issue. Mr. Young wrote, in part;

"It was claimed at the time that a young man named Clinton Hatcher, who belonged to the Eighth Virginia, killed Col. Baker. This is as near a correct account as I can give of this battle from memory..." ¹⁴

However, there are at least two other individuals that have been given credit for killing Colonel Baker. The second person named was Colonel Erasmus R. Burt of the 18th Mississippi Infantry, who was fatally wounded in the final hours of the battle ¹⁵. In an article written for the September 1901 issue of *Confederate Veteran*, an unnamed author recalled hand-to-hand combat at Ball's Bluff:

"...He [Baker] and Col. Burt had a hand-to-hand conflict on the field of battle, and Col. Burt killed him..." ¹⁶

Colonel Elijah V. White, formerly of the 35th Battalion of Virginia Cavalry, responded to the hand-to-hand conflict story. In the November 1901 issue of *Confederate Veteran*, Colonel White stated that

"... I was as close to Col. Burt when he was mortally wounded as two men can well be on horseback. We were in the immediate rear of his regiment, the Eighteenth Mississippi..." ¹⁷

11 Fauquier County Civil War Centennial Committee and the Board of Supervisors, *The Years of Anguish – Fauquier County, Virginia 1861 – 1865*, (Annandale, Virginia: Bacon Race Books, 1965)
12 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Dickinson_Baker

13 Judge C.C. Cummings, Leesburg, Or Ball's Bluff, October 21, 1861, *Confederate Veteran Magazine*, (Vol. VI, No. 9, 1898) p.431

14 T.J. Young, Battle of Ball's Bluff, *Confederate Veteran Magazine*, (Vol. X, No. 2, 1902) p.68

15 Col. Burt was taken to Harrison Hall (now Glenfiddich House) in Leesburg after being wounded in the hip and stomach; he died there five days later.

16 Author Unknown, The Ball's Bluff Disaster: *Confederate Veteran Magazine*, (Vol. IX, No.9, 1901) p. 410

17 Elijah V. White, Concerning That Ball's Bluff Disaster: *Confederate Veteran Magazine*, (Vol. IX, No.11, 1901) p. 504

and later in the same article,

"...He turned to me, as two of his men were taking him from his horse, and said; 'Go tell Col. Jennifer that I am wounded, and will have to leave the field.'"¹⁸

Witnessing the destructive volley that struck Col. Burt and his regiment knowing the whereabouts of the Colonel before the volley, and that he had been removed from the field of battle after the volley was all Elijah White needed to set the record straight. He had no doubts: Colonel Burt had not been the slayer of Colonel Baker.

Judge C.C. Cummings also wrote a response to the same article that was published in the February 1902 issue of *Confederate Veteran* magazine. Again he gives Clinton the credit for killing Colonel Baker. Judge Cummings stated in part;

"... I never heard of Col. Burt's hand-to-hand conflict with Col. Baker on the Federal side, but the current credit as then given to the slayer of Col. Baker was to Private Hatcher, of Hunton's Regiment."¹⁹

The third and last individual to receive written credit for the death of Colonel Baker was John Fitzgerald. In the January 1902 issue of *Confederate Veteran*, J.T. Eason, formerly of the 17th Mississippi Volunteer Infantry Company I, wrote:

"... A Federal Colonel, Adjutant Baker, was killed by John Fitzgerald, an Irishman of my company, while carrying a dispatch from Gen. Stone, asking him if he needed more troops. Fitzgerald picked up the envelope containing this inquiry, and after the battle gave it to me, and I, thinking it might be of importance, handed it Col. Featherstone. Now, when the United States Congress began the investigation of this "disaster" Gen. Stone was under arrest, and this dispatch, I was informed, was sent by Gen. Beauregard under flag of truce to the Federal Commander..."¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 504

¹⁹ J.T. Eason, Mississippians In The Virginia Army: *Confederate Veteran Magazine*, (Vol. X, No.1, 1902) p. 23

Being unable to find a physical description of John Fitzgerald leads to many more unanswered questions. How tall was Fitzgerald, what color was his hair, did he have facial hair and how was he dressed that day during the battle? Colonel Baker was killed on the southeastern side of the open field at approximately 4:30 in the afternoon. At the time of Baker's death, the men of the 8th Virginia Infantry were located more to the western/northwestern side of the open field. The 17th Mississippi Infantry was in the battle before the approximate time of Colonel Baker's death and were engaged in heavy fighting on the southeastern, southern and southwestern sides of the open field during the battle. And finally, it was not until sometime between 5:30 and 5:45 in the afternoon before the 8th Virginia Infantry made their bayonet charge. Clinton was unlikely to have been in the area of where Colonel Baker was killed until well beyond the approximate time of Baker's death.

One additional rumor involving Clinton Hatcher at Ball's Bluff surfaced in early 1904. In the January issue of *Confederate Veteran*, Thomas (T.W.T.) Richards, formerly of the 8th Virginia Infantry and later Company G, 43rd Battalion of Virginia Cavalry ("Mosby's Men") wrote of what he saw during the final minutes of the battle, just shortly before darkness settled in.

"... It was getting dark. As we stood there Calvert looked down the incline of the bluff and saw a column advancing in line of battle. He called out: "There come the Yankees," I looked and saw the column, but in their center and front was the tall and unmistakable form of Clinton Hatcher, one of our regiment, and the soldier accredited in one of your former articles with the killing of Col. Baker. He was six feet seven inches tall, and I knew him well, as we were both students at Columbian College, Washington, D.C., when the war began. I said to Calvert: "They are not Yankees, for there is Clinton Hatcher among them." We continued our examination of the guns, when the advancing column fired at us. I started on a run to my regiment, about two hundred yards back, which I reached and reported what I had seen. We were ordered forward, and met this Federal column just at the top of the hill, when there was most terrific fighting for a few minutes. The Federals again fell back to the bank of the river. This was the last fight. After the battle I was walking over this part of the

field, when I saw the form of a very tall soldier lying on the ground with his face upward. I stooped down, and saw at once that it was Clinton Hatcher. A Mississippian told me that in the early part of the fight he was captured, and that the Federals also captured a tall Virginian, and in the last charge they put himself and this Virginian in front of their column. . . .”²⁰

Unbelievably, Mr. Richards’s recollection of the first reported “human shield story” from either side during the Civil War did not receive a single response. However, the letter Mary Anna Sibert received from Thaddeus Hatcher detailing the events leading up to Clinton’s death raise serious doubt to Mr. Richard’s human shield account. Again, the key excerpt from Thaddeus Hatcher’s letter to “Miss Mary”:

“... in the evening in making a charge on the enemy he rushed on and became separated from his company and fell in with the Hillsborough Border Guards where he did good service until just at dark when my Brother who fought with him during the day and was then detailed to bring off our captured Mountain Howitzers saw him and Clinton waved his hat to him and cheered him on”²¹

No matter what conditions might have existed on the battlefield at any given time, Thaddeus’ brother, Thomas, who was Clinton’s first cousin and tent mate, would have recognized him easily. If Clinton waved and yelled at Thomas while leading the final Confederate bayonet charge, then it would have been impossible for him to have been in front of any Union line leading them, moments before his death. Additionally, in the



Nearly unchanged by time, historic Ketocin Baptist Church, built circa 1854. The Hatch family plot is located behind the stone wall on the left. Courtesy Becky J. Fleming.

²⁰ Richards, Ball’s Bluff, p. 32

²¹ Evans/Sibert Letters, Thaddeus Hatcher, Dec. 24th, 1861; letter 11 of 11

August 1902 issue of *Confederate Veteran*, fifteen months before Thomas Richards “human shield story” appeared, Judge C.C. Cummings (17th Mississippi Infantry) wrote of the final charge:

“We barely had time to dress our lines in solid array ready with pieces poised for the last advance when there suddenly debouched from an oblique ravine in our front a line of blue, twenty-one in number, headed by a tall, fine looking captain, whose name we found to be Shaw, of the Fifteenth or Twentieth Massachusetts (not remembering as to number), a six footer and a two-hundred-pounder, magnificent-looking man”²²

The conclusions to be drawn from this and other written materials on Clinton and the Battle of Ball’s Bluff are simply this: this early battle was marked by mass confusion; the noise, the smoke, the blood, and the approaching darkness were all contributing factors to this confusion. It is apparent that there was more than one tall man on the field that day and likely more than one with red or even facial hair. Clinton clearly did not do it all.

THE CLINTON HATCHER MEMORIAL

As today’s visitor walks the protected grounds of the Ball’s Bluff battlefield, now owned by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, they will come upon the National Cemetery where James Allen and 53 other unknown Union soldiers are buried. Directly to the west of the National Cemetery stands a lone granite monument dedicated to Clinton Hatcher. For many years, visitors have wondered why a single Confederate soldier was



Clinton Hatcher memorial stone, Ball’s Bluff Battlefield. Photo courtesy of Becky J. Fleming.

²² Judge C.C. Cummings, Strange Actions Of Some Federals, *Confederate Veteran Magazine*, Vol. X, No. 8, 1902

buried on the battlefield. The fact is he was never buried there, but in the graveyard of Kectoctin Baptist Church northwest of Purcellville.

At the turn of the century, a group of Union veterans who had served in the 20th Massachusetts Infantry at Balls Bluff, returned to the scene of their baptism to battle. Their guide that day was a local Confederate veteran and a participant of the battle, Colonel Elijah White. Sometime near the end of the tour, it is said that they were asked if they would like to place a monument to their fellow comrades on the field at Ball's Bluff, to which they replied that "the cemetery was monument enough." When asked about the flag bearer they had seen leading the final charge that fateful day, Colonel White told them of Hatcher's sacrifice. Being moved by his display of courage and honor to duty, upon their return to Massachusetts, the Veterans had a monument stone cut from Massachusetts granite, inscribed and sent to the Veterans of Loudoun to be placed at the spot on which he fell. Today, the marker stands on the battlefield as a tribute to a brave fallen soldier and the symbol of a nation reunited.²³

Beyond this narrative above (from Kim Holien's *Battle at Ball's Bluff*, little other documentation has been found to prove or disprove how or when the monument appeared. Local legend says the monument arrived in Leesburg by rail, addressed to Clinton Hatcher Camp, United Confederate Veterans, between the 1900 Elijah White Veterans tour and the May 28, 1908 Confederate Soldier Monument dedication service on the Leesburg Courthouse lawn. The Veterans are said to have had the stone installed, most likely by members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, but again no records have been found in existing camp notes or minutes. Most who have studied the battle doubt that the monument marks the spot where Clinton fell. Instead, it is generally agreed that it was set within the originally maintained area that surrounds the cemetery, in the corner closest to the spot where Clinton fell.

However, evidence exists to support the Massachusetts origin of the granite marker. First, if Loudoun citizens had ordered the monument, they almost certainly would have ordered granite from any southern

²³ Holien, *Battle of Ball's Bluff, The Fateful Clash of North and South at Leesburg, Virginia – October 21, 1861*, p. 148

state—and ensured that the information on the marker would have been correct. Clinton's year of birth was 1839, not the 1840 which has been inscribed on the stone. But perhaps the most telling evidence of the origin of the monument is not what has been found in written record, but rather what has been learned by the author through further research. In a chance encounter on the battlefield, I met Lea Coryell of Lovettsville, whose family has operated a monument supply and restoration company for three generations. I followed up this research with written correspondence with another expert in monument restoration. Without hesitation, both individuals identified the monument as being made of Black Quincy granite from Quincy, Massachusetts. Both advised that it was no longer available.²⁴ As these experts noted:

"Monument company people have to know how to recognize the different kinds of granite. Reason being they frequently receive orders to match old stones on family plots. Customers often want their new stone to match Granddad's stone "EXACTLY" – same granite, same style monument, same style lettering..."



Veterans of the Fifteenth Massachusetts Infantry revisit Ball's Bluff, 1886. Courtesy of George Tabb, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority.

²⁴ Written correspondence from Sheffield Monuments, Chagrin Falls OH and Lea Coryell (Coryell Cemetery Lettering Service, Chagrin Falls OH and Richmond VA) to the author, March 27, 2007 through February 20, 2011

"...The company will have no problem matching the same style monument and lettering. However, matching the same kind of granite is another story. Some granite[s], like "Black Quincy Granite" found only in Quincy, Massachusetts, are no longer available, the vein having run out in the early 1900's. If the old stones are "Black Quincy", the company will have to explain to the customer that it is no longer available. They'll offer their best and closest substitute instead."

These monument experts also noted that:

"Veterans from granite producing states deliberately used the granite from their state. [By doing so,] They were putting a piece of their home state on the field to honor their comrades who never came home. Veterans from non-granite producing states, like Ohio, most likely used granite from sister northern states. That way, at least they could say the stone came from the North.

"The Hatcher stone is a piece of Massachusetts. Makes perfect sense it was placed there by Veterans from the 20th and 15th Massachusetts."

If the aging Union Veterans did in fact order and send this granite monument to Loudoun's Confederate Veterans to honor Clinton Hatcher, as this evidence strongly supports, it places a lasting piece of Massachusetts on the field of honor—and remains a lasting reminder of the spirit of reunification that marked the years after the Civil War.

POSTSCRIPTS

In 1896, male descendants of aging Confederate veterans joined together to form the Sons of Confederate Veterans. The SCV is the direct heir of the United Confederate Veterans, and the oldest hereditary organization for male descendants of Confederate soldiers. Organized at Richmond, Virginia, the SCV continues to serve as a historical, patriotic, and non-political organization dedicated to ensuring that a true history of the 1861-1865 period is preserved. The Loudoun County camp was the twenty-first camp to join the National Organization; its members also choose, just as their aging fathers had chosen, to honor Clinton Hatcher as their local hero and camp's namesake.

THE JONAH HATCHER FARM

The last living family member in Clinton's immediate family was his father, Jonah. With his death in 1887, the farm passed to Guilford Gregg, a family member from his mother, Adeline's side of the family (Will book 3 H, page 235).

Guilford Gregg would retain

ownership of the property

until 1905, when it would be sold to John T. Hirst (book 8 A, page 158).

John T. Hirst would retain ownership of the property until 1986, when it would be sold to Wade & Slater (book 908, page 1352). Wade & Slater,

most likely land speculators, would retain ownership of the property until 1993, when Wade would become the single owner (book 1227, page

1778). Wade would retain the property until 1999, when he would sell

a 40.99 acre portion of the property to the Town of Purcellville (book 1660, page 1492).²⁵ This purchase would spell the end of the Jonah

Hatcher farm.

Today, the house and all but one of the outbuildings that were located on the east side of the small creek are gone. The only remaining structural reminder of the homestead is a small stone springhouse (photo). The Town of Purcellville's Basham Simms Waste Water Treatment Facility is now located on that area of the property. The remaining farm structures on the west side of the creek stand only as neglected ruins, reminders of long ago. The once fertile farm fields of the Jonah Hatcher farm are now a part of the Hirst Farm subdivision.



A stone spring house, the last remaining structure of "Maplegrove," the Hatcher homestead near Purcellville.
Photo by Becky Fleming

Ken Fleming is an eighth-generation Loudoun County resident and past commander of the Clinton Hatcher Camp, Sons of Confederate Veterans. He is an avid student of history and collector of Civil War artifacts, and volunteers to restore tombstones and

²⁵ Loudoun County Circuit Court Clerk's Office, Deed books as listed

monuments dating to that era. He is a winner of the Thomas Balch Library History Award for 2012.

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Note: The full text of the letters of Clinton Hatcher to Mary Ann Sibert are also viewable courtesy of the Library of Virginia collection, Richmond VA, at: <http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu/personalpapers/documents/augusta/p2evanssibertletters.html>