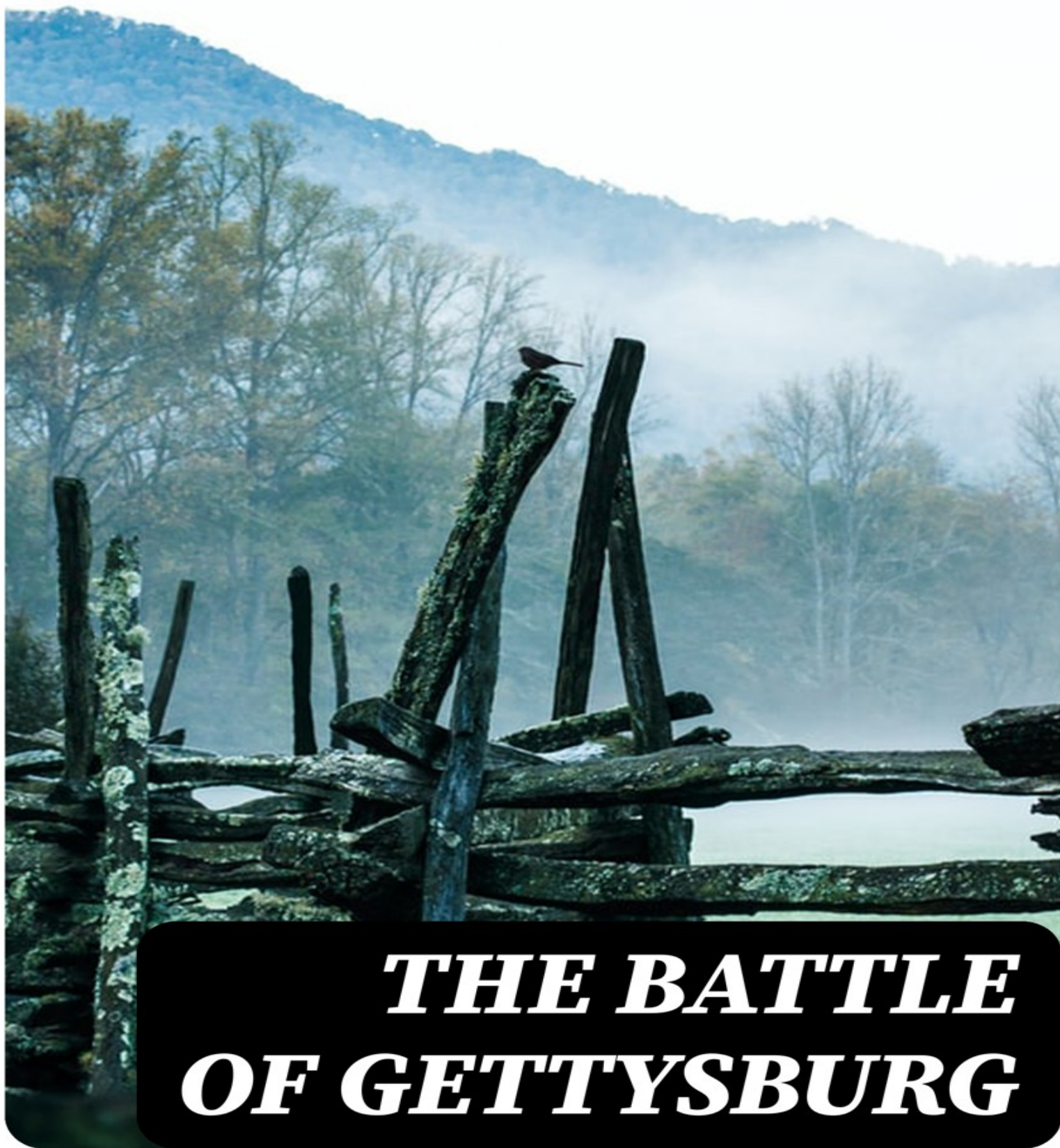


***FRANKLIN ARETAS  
HASKELL***



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OF GETTYSBURG***

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**Franklin Aretas Haskell**

# **The Battle of Gettysburg**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Cover](#)

[Titlepage](#)

[Text](#)

# **PREFACE**

## [Table of Contents](#)

Frank Aretas Haskell was born at Tunbridge, Vermont, the son of Aretas and Ann (Folson) Haskell, on the 13th of July, 1828. Graduating from Dartmouth College with distinguished honors, in the class of 1854, the young man came to Madison in the autumn of that year, and entered the law firm of Orton, Atwood & Orton. His career in this profession was increasingly successful, until in 1861 it was interrupted by the outbreak of the War of Secession.

Commissioned on June 20 of that year as First Lieutenant of Company I of the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry of the Iron Brigade, he served as Adjutant of his regiment until April 14, 1862. Contemporaneous accounts state that "much of the excellent discipline for which this regiment was distinguished, was due to his soldierly efforts during its organization."

He was called from the adjutancy of the Sixth to be aide-de-camp to General John Gibbon, when the latter assumed command of the Iron Brigade, and remained in such service until (February 9, 1864) he was promoted to be Colonel of the Thirty-sixth Wisconsin. While aide to General Gibbon he was temporarily on the staffs of several other generals, including Edwin V. Sumner and G. K. Warren, and won wide repute as a soldier of unusual ability and courage. With the Iron Brigade, he participated in the campaigns of the Army of the Potomac, taking part in reconnoissances at Orange Court House and Stephensburg, in skirmishes at Rappahannock Station and Sulphur Springs, and in the



battles of Gainesville, Second Bull Run, South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg. Reporting upon the battle of December 13, 1862, at Fredericksburg, General Gibbon alluded to his favorite aide as being “constantly on the field, conveying orders and giving directions amid the heaviest fire.”

Writing of Gettysburg, which is herein so graphically depicted by Haskell, General Francis A. Walker, in his *History of the Second Army Corps*,<sup>[1]</sup> refers to our author as one who was “bravest of the brave, riding mounted through an interval between the Union battalions, and calling upon the troops to go forward.” He further says: “Colonel Frank A. Haskell, of Wisconsin, had been known for his intelligence and courage, for his generosity of character and his exquisite culture, long before the third day of Gettysburg, when, acting as aide to General Gibbon, he rode mounted between the two lines, then swaying backward and forward under each other’s fire, calling upon the men of the Second Division to follow him, and setting an example of valor and self devotion never forgotten by any man of the thousands who witnessed it.”

General Winfield S. Hancock, officially reporting upon the battle, thus alluded to Haskell’s deed: “I desire particularly to refer to the services of a gallant young officer, First Lieutenant F. A. Haskell, aide-de-camp to Brigadier-General Gibbon, who, at a critical period of the battle, when the contending forces were but 50 or 60 yards apart, believing that an example was necessary, and ready to sacrifice his life, rode between the contending lines with a view of giving encouragement to ours and leading it forward, he being at

the moment the only mounted officer in a similar position. He was slightly wounded and his horse was shot in several places."

General Gibbon's report said: "I desire to call particular attention to the manner in which several of the subordinate reports mention the services of my gallant aide, Lieutenant F. A. Haskell, Sixth Wisconsin, and to add my testimony of his valuable services. This young officer has been through many battles, and distinguished himself alike in all by his conspicuous coolness and bravery, and in this one was slightly wounded, but refused to quit the field. It has always been a source of regret to me that our military system offers no plan for rewarding his merit and services as they deserve." In later years, the General again publicly alluded to Haskell's heroic conduct on this field: "There was a young man on my staff who had been in every battle with me and who did more than any other one man to repulse Pickett's assault at Gettysburg and he did the part of a general there."

General William Harrow spoke of Haskell as having "greatly distinguished himself by his constant exertion in the most exposed places."

Colonel Norman J. Hall, of the Michigan Seventh Infantry, and then commanding the Third Brigade, thus referred to the incident: "I cannot omit speaking in the highest terms of the magnificent conduct of Lieutenant Haskell, of General Gibbon's staff, in bringing forward regiments and in nerving the troops to their work by word and fearless example."

Upon receiving his appointment as Colonel of the Thirty-sixth Wisconsin, Haskell returned at once to this State, and

recruited and organized the regiment for the field. Although his commission was dated from February 9, he was not mustered into service as Colonel until March 23. The regiment, which had been assigned to the First Brigade, Second Division of the Second Army Corps, left Madison May 10, and seven days later was acting as reserve during the battle at Spottsylvania. Its experiences thenceforth were of the most active character.

The command went into action at Cold Harbor, Virginia, early in the morning of June 3. The official account of what followed, is contained in the report of the State Adjutant General:[\[2\]](#) “The whole line advanced upon the enemy by brigades, in column closed in mass by regiments, the Thirty-sixth being in rear of the brigade. On advancing about three-fourths of a mile across an open field, under a heavy artillery fire, and when within about twenty-five rods of the rebel works, partially protected by the brow of a low hill, the Thirty-sixth was found in the advance, leading the brigade. During the advance, Colonel McKeen, commanding the brigade, was killed, when the command devolved upon Colonel Haskell. After a moment’s rest, Colonel Haskell, by command of General Gibbon, ordered the brigade forward. The men rose to obey, and were met by a shower of bullets, when the other parts of the line halted. Colonel Haskell surveyed the situation for a moment, as if irresolute; he finally gave the order, ‘Lie down, men,’ which was at once obeyed. An instant afterwards, he was struck in the head by a rebel bullet, and instantly killed. Thus fell one of Wisconsin’s most gallant soldiers, a thorough disciplinarian, and an accomplished scholar.”



Colonel Clement E. Warner, then a Captain in the Thirty-sixth, but later its Major and Lieutenant-Colonel, has left us this report of the battle of Cold Harbor, so far as concerns Colonel Haskell's participation and death:[\[3\]](#)

"Frank A. Haskell was in every respect an ideal soldier, according to the highest and best definition of that term. I think he was by education, experience, association, natural ability, and temperament fully as competent to handle a Division as a Regiment, and in many respects the higher would seem the more appropriate position for him.

"He rejoined the Army of the Potomac with his regiment, the Thirty-sixth Wisconsin, about the middle of May, 1864, at Spottsylvania. The two armies were joined in a death struggle, which was destined to continue almost uninterruptedly until one was effectually wiped from the face of the earth. June 3 at Cold Harbor, our army was massed by division and in that formation projected upon the fortifications of the enemy. Their line of works was really the outer line of the defenses of Richmond, and were perfectly constructed for defense, and manned by General Lee's army, which when protected by works had thus far been able to successfully withstand General Grant's continuous attacks.

"With the general advance our Division moved at daylight for nearly two miles over undulating land, part of the time subject to the fire of the enemy and occasionally protected from it by slight depressions in the land. We moved forward as rapidly as possible, and in thirty minutes were in the immediate presence of the enemy's line, and

subjected to as murderous a fire as met Pickett's men at the celebrated charge at Gettysburg.

"Colonel Haskell, who was so largely instrumental in saving the day at Gettysburg, now finds his position exactly reversed from what it was on that memorable occasion. Now his men were charging and the enemy on the defense, protected by their works. He was standing nearly in front of the remnant of the Second Division which had thus far pressed forward through the murderous fire, and apparently seeing the hopelessness of further advance, and willing to save this remnant of his men, gave the order, 'Lie down, men,' which was the last order he ever gave. It was promptly obeyed. For an instant it seemed that he was the only man standing, and only for an instant, for as he stood surveying the havoc around him, and glanced toward the enemy's line, he was seen to throw up his arms and sink to the earth, his forehead pierced by a rebel ball. And this was the last of Frank Haskell's consciousness. He had fearlessly and freely given his young life for his country. Nearly fifteen thousand companions joined him in the sacrifice on that fateful morning, the greatest loss of any single charge in the war."

In his own report of the battle, General Hancock said: "General Tyler was wounded and taken from the field and the lamented McKeen,<sup>[4]</sup> after pushing his command as far as his example could urge it, was killed. The gallant Haskell succeeded to the command, but was carried from the field mortally wounded, while making renewed efforts to carry the enemy's works." In a field order, dated September 28, 1864, he further declared, "At Cold Harbor the Colonel of the

Thirty-sixth Wisconsin, as gallant a soldier as ever lived, fell dead on the field.”

General Gibbon, on receiving the sad news of the Colonel’s death, cried, “My God! I have lost my best friend, and one of the best soldiers in the Army of the Potomac has fallen!”

The late Hon. A. J. Turner, editor of the Portage *State Register*, who was well acquainted with Colonel Haskell, said of him:<sup>[5]</sup> “While commanding a brigade in the assault upon the enemy’s lines at the battle of the Chickahominy, near Richmond, Virginia, on the morning of Friday, the 3d of June, he was struck in the right temple by a Rebel sharpshooter’s bullet, and died in about three hours. His body was taken in charge by his young and faithful Orderly, John N. Ford, who, though himself wounded in the head and left arm, persevered through all difficulties and brought it home to Portage where, attended by a great concourse of people, it was buried in Silver Lake cemetery, June 12, 1864.”

Feeling tributes to his memory were rendered by the Dane County Bar Association, and the Common Council of the City of Madison.

This story of the Battle of Gettysburg was written by Lieutenant Haskell to his brother, H. M. Haskell of Portage, not long after the contest. It was not intended for publication; but its great merit was at once recognized, and it was offered to Mr. Turner for insertion in his weekly paper. It was, however, too long a document for such purpose. About fifteen years later, it was published in a pamphlet of 72 pages, without even a title-page, for private circulation only. The account was widely read by military experts, and

received much praise for both its literary and its professional merit. The pamphlet having become rare, for the edition was small, was reprinted in 1898 as part of the history of Dartmouth's Class of 1854. Certain omissions and changes were, however, made therein by its editor, Captain Daniel Hall, who was an aide on General Howard's staff; the reason assigned being, that the account was written so soon after the battle that "although surprisingly accurate in minute details," the author was not fully informed relative to one or two facts which to him seemed to reflect on General Sickles. Captain Hall assumed that were Colonel Haskell now living, he would have justified these omissions. In March, 1908, the Dartmouth College version was reprinted by the Commandery of Massachusetts, Military Order of the Loyal Legion, under the editorship of Captain Charles Hunt.

In deciding to inaugurate its own series of Reprints with Colonel Haskell's brilliant paper, the Wisconsin History Commission has, in accordance with its fixed policy, reverted to the original edition, which is here presented entire, exactly as first printed. Whatever might have been the author's later judgment, in the event of his surviving the war, the Commission does not feel warranted in disturbing this original text in the slightest degree—the present being an unexpurgated reprint of a rare and valuable narrative written by a soldier in whose memory Wisconsin feels especial pride. Opinions or errors of fact on the part of the respective authors represented both in Original Narratives and in Reprints issued by the Commission, have not nor will they be modified by the latter. For all statements, of whatever character, the author alone is responsible.

The Commissioners are grateful to Mrs. W. G. Clough, public librarian of Portage, for the loan of that institution's rare copy of the original, for the purpose of this reprint.

R. G. T.

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## **THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG[6]**

[Table of Contents](#)

The Great battle of Gettysburg is now an event of the past. The composition and strength of the armies, their leaders, the strategy, the tactics, the result, of that field are to-day by the side of those of Waterloo—matters of history. A few days ago these things were otherwise. This great event did not so “cast its shadow before,” as to moderate the hot sunshine that streamed upon our preceding march, or to relieve our minds of all apprehension of the result of the second great Rebel invasion of the soil North of the Potomac.

No, not many days since, at times we were filled with fears and forebodings. The people of the country, I suppose, shared the anxieties of the army, somewhat in common with us, but they could not have felt them as keenly as we did. We were upon the immediate theatre of events, as they occurred from day to day, and were of them. We were the army whose province it should be to meet this invasion and repel it; on us was the immediate responsibility for results, most momentous for good or ill, as yet in the future. And so

in addition to the solicitude of all good patriots, we felt that our own honor as men and as an army, as well as the safety of the Capitol and the country, were at stake.

And what if that invasion should be successful, and in the coming battle, the Army of the Potomac should be overpowered? Would it not be? When our army was much larger than at present—had rested all winter—and, nearly perfect in all its departments and arrangements, was the most splendid army this continent ever saw, only a part of the Rebel force, which it now had to contend with, had defeated it—its leader, rather—at Chancellorsville! Now the Rebel had his whole force assembled, he was flushed with recent victory, was arrogant in his career of unopposed invasion, at a favorable season of the year. His daring plans, made by no unskilled head, to transfer the war from his own to his enemies' ground, were being successful. He had gone a day's march from his front before Hooker moved, or was aware of his departure. Then, I believe, the army in general, both officers and men, had no confidence in Hooker, in either his honesty or ability.

Did they not charge him personally, with the defeat at Chancellorsville? Were they not still burning with indignation against him for that disgrace? And now, again under his leadership, they were marching against the enemy! And they knew of nothing, short of the providence of God, that could, or would, remove him. For many reasons, during the marches prior to the battle, we were anxious, and at times heavy at heart.

But the Army of the Potomac was no band of school girls. They were not the men likely to be crushed or utterly