

“A Mainer From Rockland: Adelbert Ames in the Civil War.”

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Introduction

Surrounded by rough seas and located along the Cape Fear River, Fort Fisher was considered by the destitute Confederacy to be of vital importance to their survival. By early 1865, the salient fortification remained the last gateway between the Confederate States of America and the Atlantic Ocean. Located 18 miles south of the prized city of Wilmington, North Carolina, the formidable fortress had evaded capture while Federal forces held Charleston, Mobile, and every meaningful fortification along the Mississippi River.¹ Its capture would most certainly deliver a severe moral and logistical blow to the weakening Southern armies. Robert E. Lee declared that the fort must remain in Confederate hands at all costs or else he and the Army of Northern Virginia could not endure.²

The United States War Department and its senior commanders were well aware of the strategic importance of Fort Fisher and the morale which it provided to the weakened Confederacy. In December 1864, 7,000 troops from the Army of the James, under the eccentric Major General Benjamin F. Butler set sail from the Virginia coast eventually joining forces with Rear Admiral David D. Porter and a massive flotilla of 60 warships.³ Prior to the arrival of the infantry, Porter's naval command sailed within striking distance of the southern stronghold but failed to force the fort's defenders to surrender. After Butler's expeditionary force arrived on December 23, a landing was scheduled for Christmas Day. In the end, the subsequent battle became a debacle.

¹ Rod Gragg, *Confederate Goliath: The Battle of Fort Fisher*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 2-3.

² Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume IV*, (Secaucus, NJ: Castle Books, 1887), 642.

³ Gragg, "Confederate Goliath," 35-36.

On the morning of December 25, the first Union troops landed ashore. As the Federal navy continued to bombard Fort Fisher, half the landing force, a division from the Twenty-Fourth Corps, captured the Fourth and Eighth North Carolina reserve battalions and a battery of Confederate artillery, then quickly established a defensive line, while moving a brigade forward to attack. However, before the brigade could commence their assault, the unit and the 2,500 men who had already landed received orders to withdraw. A majority of the Union force did not engage the enemy. Believing that the fort was undamaged by the naval barrage, fearing Confederate infantry reinforcements, and concerned about the weather, Butler ordered that the troops return to the ships. Before long, the entire expeditionary force left the Carolina coast and returned to Hampton Roads—the original point from which they embarked.⁴ The entire operation was flawed from the start, something that infuriated the officers on the ground primarily because they were initially ignorant of the orders to retreat.⁵ The unceremonious retreat exasperated the division commander whose troops were recalled shortly after their landing. His name was Adelbert Ames, a West Point officer with a penchant for discipline and courage. While the Union Army failed to take the fort during that expedition, the capable division commander would ultimately play a pivotal role in the successful Second Battle of Fort Fisher. In the end, his success during the second attempt to take the fort would prove to be one of the shining moments of Ames' military career.

The conduct of Ames during the war was one of valor and fortitude. Serving with distinction in nearly every capacity, Ames fought from the first battles of the war all the way until the capitulation of the Confederacy. Severely wounded at the Battle of First Bull Run, while fighting with or against twenty-one of his West Point classmates of 1861, Ames received the

⁴ Ibid., 87-89, *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* (referred to as *O.R.* in future), Series I, Vol., XLII, Part I, 976-983.

⁵ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XLII, Part I, 983.

Medal of Honor for his actions.⁶ He would go on to fight during almost every major campaign in the Eastern Theatre of the Civil War. Whether commanding artillery batteries at Malvern Hill or anchoring Cemetery Hill during the Battle of Gettysburg, Ames garnered acclaim from superiors and subordinates alike. Ames' aide-de-camp, Colonel Henry C. Lockwood, noted after witnessing the general's courageousness during the Wilmington Campaign that Ames was, "The beau-ideal of a division commander, and such there was no more efficient and gallant officer in the armies of the Union."⁷ Ames exemplified the characteristics and embodied the elements of the essential soldier. He, and other mid-level commanders like him, provided pivotal and instrumental leadership that helped the Union win the war. In short, Ames was one of the most talented and highly regarded young officers in the Union Army, and boasts perhaps the finest record of any "boy general" who fought for the North during the American Civil War.

Ames graduated fifth in his class at West Point, demonstrating superb knowledge in military tactics while possessing a demeanor that exhibited confidence and discipline.⁸ His skills and abilities became quickly apparent and nearly every peer, superior and subordinate ultimately agreed. Ames was not the only highly regarded, prodigious officer to serve in the Union Army, however, the praise directed his way from noteworthy officers and figures represents the adoration and respect many shared regarding Ames. "I know of no officer of more promise," declared Major General Joseph Hooker in a letter to Vice President Hannibal Hamlin. "I feel no doubt that he will reflect great credit upon himself and his state."⁹ Describing Ames as a gallant soldier, future Major General Charles Griffin, who commanded Ames during First Bull Run and

⁶ Mark M. Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary*, (New York, NY: David McKay Company Inc., 1959), 11.

⁷ Henry C. Lockwood, "A True History of the Army at Fort Fisher." *Maine Bugle*, (January 1894), 40.

⁸ Blanche Ames Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, (London, UK: MacDonald & Company, 1964), 60.

⁹ Joseph Hooker to Hannibal Hamlin, November 16, 1862, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

the Peninsula Campaign, wrote, “To add to all he is able and ambitious and has that pride as a soldier which always brings successful results.”¹⁰

From George G. Meade to Oliver O. Howard, Ames’ intellect and his courage became quite apparent to his superiors. During the Battle of Chancellorsville, Meade lauded the “intelligence and zeal” of Ames who served as a staff officer during the engagement.¹¹ Perhaps the most impressive aspect of Ames’s career, as noted by historian Harry King Benson, was he managed to rise through the ranks not merely because of personal connections or political favors but also because of his courageous actions on the field of battle and impressive demonstrations of his military capabilities.¹² Officers were not compelled to write praise-laden letters because of political pressure from an Ames family member, they wrote letters that accurately described Ames’ worth and reliability. Ames did require assistance to rise through the ranks, but he did not have a powerful political sponsor and most of his promotions came after meritorious conduct in a particular engagement. For instance, after the Battle of First Bull Run, Ames received a promotion and commanded his own battery. Following his service in the Battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, Ames was promoted to the rank of brigadier general.¹³

Ames ascended to the rank of general quickly, becoming a brigadier general at the age of only 27. He became one of the famed “boy generals” a specific group of officers who served in the Union Army. Most were West Point Graduates, and many of them became division commanders before the age of 30. Of all of the boy generals, Ames is one that does not necessarily obtain the most attention. Most of the boy generals were notable and successful

¹⁰ Charles Griffin to Maj. Gen’l Hooker, April 5, 1863, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA..

¹¹ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXV, Part I, 509.

¹² Harry King Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*. (Dissertation, University of Virginia, Charlottesville: Proquest/UVA, 1975), 46.

¹³ George W. Cullum, ed., *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891) II, 772.

soldiers. Hugh Judson Kilpatrick fought throughout the entire war, participating in major campaigns in both the Eastern and Western Theatre.¹⁴ Hot-headed and aggressive, Kilpatrick was a cavalry man like most of the boy generals. Emory Upton graduated from West Point the same year as Ames—finishing only three spots behind the Mainer. Upton successfully commanded troops in the artillery, infantry, and cavalry fighting in battles from Virginia to Georgia while contributing greatly to tactical changes in army.¹⁵ Wesley Merritt and Elon Farnsworth also received brigadier general commissions in their twenties.¹⁶ Notable cavalryman George Armstrong Custer became a brigadier general at the age of 23, and Galusha Pennypacker's promotion to brevet brigadier general, due to his bravery during the Second Battle of Fort Fisher, made him the youngest boy general at 20.¹⁷

While the careers of his fellow boy generals are distinguished, Ames' career boasts similar, if not greater, accomplishments which help differentiate him as possibly the most successful officer of the group. Most notably, Ames fought the entire course of the war, trained artillery and infantry units that would go on to have major success, while assuming and acquiring greater responsibility than many of his fellow boy generals. Besides graduating in the top percentile in his West Point class, Ames served admirably and with distinction in the artillery, infantry, and engineer corps, validating his adaptability and leadership. In comparison, most of his fellow boy generals mostly served in the cavalry.

Ames also has the distinction of training and leading one of the most highly regarded volunteer infantry regiments during the Civil War. Granted leave of duty with the engineers in the summer of 1862, Ames arrived in Portland, Maine to assume command of a recently formed

¹⁴ Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary*, 459.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 862.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 275, 544.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 640.

regiment, the Twentieth Maine.¹⁸ While Ames commanded the regiment for only a few months, he instilled in them the mental acumen and discipline that would carry the regiment through the war. The success of the Twentieth Maine is mostly attributed to Ames who served as an inspiration to them and their accomplishments helps bolster the excellent military record of their original commander.¹⁹

The Civil War career of Ames included an impressive and meteoric rise through the ranks. He was not merely an average officer. It is inappropriate to compare Ames to Union generals such as Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, or Philip Sheridan; these men were significant figures that deserve credit for leading the Union to victory. However, Ames' service is comparable to notable division and corps commanders during the Civil War who had important roles. These men supported the leaders like Grant and Sherman and compensated for the mistakes and indecisiveness of superiors on the battlefield. Generals Francis Channing Barlow, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, Emory Upton, and Wesley Merritt are examples of Union generals who fit this mold. Each have received scholarly monographs dedicated towards their lives and specifically their military careers. Their accomplished feats and achieved statuses are similar to that of Ames. Every one of these men rose through the ranks, became generals in the Union Army, and served valiantly and meritoriously, receiving applause for their heroic conduct. Yet unfortunately, the military success of Ames has gone under-researched and largely ignored even though his leadership epitomized this class of officer and he fought valiantly during important Union victories like Gettysburg and Fort Fisher.

¹⁸ Excerpt from Special Order No. 190, from E.D. Townsend, Assistant Adjutant General, Washington D.C., August 14, 1862, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

¹⁹ John J. Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine: A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War*, (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1957), 1.

Past scholars have directed attention towards Ames, but not specifically towards his military career. Following his service in the army, Ames became a senator and governor in the state of Mississippi during the Reconstruction. It was a trying period both for Governor Ames and his constituents.²⁰ His political career ended when he resigned from his office after an impeachment trial began, led by his political rivals in the Mississippi State Senate.²¹ This tumultuous period of history in both Ames' life and the American South is what has garnered the most attention from scholars and has likely marred and overshadowed his role in the Civil War. Yet, his time as a soldier is the cornerstone of his life and should be the highlight of his legacy. It was during this era that he made a name for himself as an able soldier and war hero, built friendships and relationships that impacted his personal and political life, and demonstrated the characteristics that would shape and define his long, and by most standards, productive life.

As detailed in official reports, newspapers, and personal correspondence, Ames was highly regarded for his ability to manage his command in the midst of dire scenarios while exhibiting a calm collectedness. Whether as a lieutenant at Gaines Mill, or a general during the Bermuda Hundred Campaign, Ames displayed his military acumen whether he led several guns in an artillery battery or an entire infantry division. Therefore, the unfortunate fact that his military career has remained mired in relative obscurity and has evaded academic attention is unfortunate, albeit understandable.

Ames did not have a singular moment, like his former subordinate Chamberlain at Gettysburg. He was not as colorful as his fellow boy generals, like George Armstrong Custer or

²⁰ Richard N. Current, *Three Carpetbag Governors*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 85-88.

²¹ Journal of the Senate of the State of Mississippi. *Court of Impeachment in the Trials of Adelbert Ames, Governor; Alexander K. Davis, Lieutenant-Governor; Thomas W. Cardozo, Superintendent of Public Education*. (Jackson, MS: Power & Barksdale State Printers, 1876) 5.

Hugh Judson Kilpatrick, who led their cavalry divisions with aggression and courage.

Additionally, there were extended periods of time in which Ames was away from combat, either due to injuries sustained on the battlefield or futile military excursions (which were not attributed to his own actions). For periods of time, Ames served in armies and fought in campaigns that are not particularly notable nor were they fundamentally vital to the Union victory. He spent months in Florida as member of a failed mission to establish a Union presence in the swampy state.

Ames also served under Benjamin Butler during the Bermuda Hundred Campaign, a military operation that, for the most part, failed. For months, Ames wallowed as a member of fruitless campaigns. Yet, at the same time, Ames did fight in notable campaigns such as the Peninsula, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Overland, Petersburg, and Wilmington Campaigns. Furthermore, other officers with comparable careers—Barlow, Chamberlain, Upton and Custer—missed large swaths of time due to injury and did not participate in portions of notable battles and campaigns due to their particular assignments.

As impressive as Ames was, he was far from perfect. Born with an impatient temperament, Ames was easily provoked to anger. He could be very temperamental and obstinate.²² While Ames' skill and abilities evoked jealous feelings towards him by other officers, dislike for the Mainer from Rockland could have most certainly been born from the fact that Ames was demanding, unwaveringly obdurate, and in some instances, nearly volatile.²³ Ames was an gifted soldier and most of his detractors grew to admire him, but even though his

²² Alice Rains Trulock, *In the Hands of Providence: Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and the American Civil War*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 16.

²³ William E.S. Whitman and Charles H. True, *Maine in the War for the Union: A History of the Part Borne by the Maine Troops in the Suppression of the American Rebellion*, (Lewinston, ME: Nelson Dingley Jr. & Co. Publishers, 1865), 499.

rank was similar to older, more seasoned men, he was nonetheless still a young officer, in his twenties, who was a perfectionist that was prone to outbursts and mistakes.

While young, with flaws, and spending portions of time away from the battlefield, Ames was not just an average soldier or a mere participant in a large volunteer army. He was not a military figure who found himself in situations with which he was unable to cope. He was not a political character who achieved a generalship that lacked tactical shrewdness, nor was he a volunteer who rose through the ranks by means of favors or fortunate chances of fate. In contrast, Ames received field promotions, accolades, and praiseful prose from his commanders and lieutenants because of his actions. Furthermore, he epitomized the characteristics exhibited by the young, mid-level generals who were instrumental in the Union victory while also shining as arguably the finest boy general the Union Army produced during the struggle.

Scholars have gravitated towards other young generals during the war while focusing on the postwar life of Ames rather than his military service. While reasons for Ames being overlooked, as previously noted, might be attributed to his post-war political controversy and periods of dormancy during portions of the war, the ample time he spent in battle and in significant campaigns provides evidence of his worthiness and valor. Considering his abilities, responsibilities, discipline, and superb talents as an officer, Ames deserves to be considered one of the finest young generals to help the Union achieve success during the war. His actions are noteworthy, but the class of soldier he represented is what makes his career worth considering. When analyzing and describing the Civil War service of Ames, it becomes apparent that he epitomized the ideal of an officer while serving admirably in a vast array of capacities.

Chapter 1- From Cadet to Colonel

Prior to becoming a highly respected boy general, Adelbert Ames spent his formative years in the quaint New England town of Rockland, Maine. Permanently settled in 1769, the settlement officially became a charter city in 1853 (the official name of the city was not Rockland until just three years prior).¹ With a population of roughly 5,000, Rockland was, for such a relatively small town, a prosperous one with an economy supported by lime burning kilns and shipbuilders.² It was in this coastal community that Captain Jesse and Martha Ames welcomed their son Adelbert into the world on October 31, 1835. Described as a “venturesome people,” the ambitious Ames family traced their ancestry back to Scotland and England yet they had lived in the Americas for six generations.³ Like Ames patriarchs before him, Jesse Ames was a mariner, and a master mariner at that. Owning, as well as operating, multiple vessels, Adelbert Ames’ father had navigated European seas, Cape Horn, and the Pacific. A rugged, yet trustworthy man, he garnered respect from his crew and held a significant influence over the development of his son.⁴

Young Ames quickly embodied the innate characteristics of his family. Ambitious, Ames excelled at his studies, and from an early age he craved a higher education. While intelligent, thoughtful, and known for being jovial—cracking jokes was common place for Ames—the sea captain’s son was disciplined and capable. It was noted in his formative years that he was courageous and prideful, unwilling to yield against gangs of young men and boys he encountered

¹ A.J. Coolidge, and J.B. Mansfield, *A History and Description of New England, General and Local*, (Boston: MA, Austin J. Coolidge, 1859), 284-285.

² Ibid 285.

³ Blanche Ames Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, (London, UK: MacDonald & Company, 1964), 1,

Pauline Ames Plimton, *The Ancestry of Blanche Butler Ames and Adelbert Ames*, (New York, NY: Wizard Graphics, 1977), 154-155.

⁴ Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 1.

who hovered around the Rockland harbor.⁵ Even as a young lad, Ames possessed a high level of intelligence while also repeatedly revealing a seemingly endless determination to succeed.⁶

His family, both due to their standing in the community and their own personal temperaments, frequently discussed politics, a topic which regularly captured the attention of Ames. Although the Ames family directed their focus towards local politics that affected Maine, the family was also aware of and opinionated regarding the significant political shifts that occurred in Washington D.C.. While the Ames family shared and expressed a variety of different views, the one that was perhaps the strongest was their disdain for slavery. Due to the beliefs of his parents and the community in which he lived, Ames grew to abhor slavery. Applauding the speeches of Daniel Webster and holding *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in high regard, Ames detested the institution of slavery.⁷ During one of his voyages on his father's ship, Ames witnessed the repulsiveness of southern slave markets which only reinforced his hatred for the practice.⁸ As the northern and southern regions of the country began to drift further apart, Ames left childhood for manhood having a strong set of convictions and ideals.

Ames gained practical experience sailing with his father, but he also displayed an ability to excel in the classroom as well. Although quite able to self-teach, Ames quickly mastered formal education while studying at local private institutions in Maine.⁹ However, Ames' ultimate goal was to attend the West Point Military Academy. An acceptance to the school was rare and difficult to obtain, yet it was exactly the school where the ambitious Ames wanted to enroll. In 1856, after his twentieth birthday, Ames was accepted into West Point primarily due to his

⁵ Ibid 3.

⁶ Ibid 3.

⁷ Ibid 14.

⁸ Ibid 23.

⁹ Ibid 23.

uncle's friendship with state representative and future Maine Governor, Abner Coburn.¹⁰ In the future, Ames did not rely solely on personal connections or political backing for advancement. Harry King Benson argues that Ames did not use "political strings to pull to hasten his own advancement."¹¹

Immediately upon arrival at West Point, Ames felt comfortable with his new surroundings. After desiring the opportunity to study there for some time, Ames eagerly applied himself to his work and education. He quickly assumed leadership roles among the new cadets. According to Blanche Ames' biography on her father, "To Ames, West Point was an inspiring experience and with enthusiasm and native drive he took leadership not only in military drills and maneuvers but also in his intellectual work."¹² In 1857, Ames' name appeared on the list of the academy's most distinguished cadets and he received the rank of corporal his first year.

Besides excelling at parade ground maneuvers, Ames put his quick and analytical mind to work. Shining in mathematics, engineering, artillery tactics, and mechanical draftsmanship, Ames devoted an exceeding number of hours to book-learning. Interestingly, the student received demerits, but not for rambunctious behavior or disregarding orders. In fact, Ames received demerits for "spending too much time reading and drawing" and not returning his books to the academy library at the proper time.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., 23

¹¹ Harry King Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*. (Dissertation, University of Virginia, Charlottesville: Proquest/UVA, 1975), 85.

¹² Ibid., 24

¹³ Ralph Kirshner, *The Class of 1861: Custer, Ames, and Their Classmates After West Point*. (Carbondale, IL: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1999), 7.

After five years of research and study, Ames graduated fifth in his class out of forty-five students, accomplishing a goal that had held a preeminent position in his thoughts.¹⁴ Both West Point classes of 1861 would produce bright, intelligent, and gifted young officers, but regrettably many would find themselves opposing each other on the field of battle. The chaos of the national crisis that came to fruition in the 1860s caused dozens of cadets to change their loyalties from the Union to the newly established Confederacy. While twenty-four of Ames' classmates resigned their commissions to fight for the South, Ames, the Yankee from Maine, never once doubted his allegiance. Following his graduation on May 6, 1861, Ames received his first of many commissions; the commission promoted Ames to the rank of second lieutenant in the U.S. 2nd regiment of artillery.¹⁵ Only eight days later, Ames would receive another promotion making him a First Lieutenant.¹⁶ A week later, Ames received word that he would assist in training volunteer troops in the nation's capitol while also being a member of Charles Griffin's West Point Battery.¹⁷

He—along with other recent West Point graduates—trained new recruits and did their utmost to prepare the masses of volunteer soldiers that flooded the streets of the District of Columbia. While senior officers in the Union attempted to develop an organized, structured army, Ames provided disciplined and detailed instruction to the troops that would comprise the fighting force.¹⁸ Meanwhile Ames and thousands of Union troops penned inside the confines of the stagnant and muddled capitol awaited their first battle. Unfortunately, none of Ames' letters

¹⁴ George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy, Volume 2*, 2nd ed., (New York, NY: D. Van Nostrand, 1879), 1892, 772., Mark M. Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary*, (New York, NY: David McKay Company Inc., 1959), 12.

¹⁵ War Department commission, May 11th, 1861, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

¹⁶ Harry King Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames*, 23.

¹⁷ General Order No. 21, War Department Adjutant General's Office, May 17, 1861, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA., Special Order No. 88, War Department Adjutant General's Office, May 20, 1861, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA..

¹⁸ Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 23.

written during this time exist. Nevertheless, both the vast majority of the public and the troops wanted action. As Harry King Benson noted, they believed that one major clash against the Confederate forces in Northern Virginia could bring the war to a swift conclusion. American pride “demanded reprisal and resolution of the issue.”¹⁹ As July 1861 arrived, both the public and Ames would soon become acquainted with a war that embodied the antithesis of their expectations—the battles would be far bloodier and the war would last much longer than anticipated.

The First Battle of Bull Run tested the mettle of the untried lieutenant and nearly cost him his life. Taking place on July 21, 1861, the engagement, also known as Manassas, was exceptionally chaotic as fledgling, and poorly organized armies clashed in rural Virginia. Ames, along with Griffin’s battery, left the confines of Washington D.C. on July 16. Their march toward the battlefield was congested and their advance on the day of the battle, which began at 2:30 in the morning, was long and arduous as well. As Bvt. Major General James B. Fry noted, the early portion of the battle consisted of feeble and tedious advances.²⁰ Griffin’s battery advanced through woods on the edge of the battlefield and moved within a thousand yards of the Confederate defensive line which gathered along the Warrenton turnpike. While being supported by infantry, Griffin’s Battery D, including Ames’ command, assembled at 11:30 am and then opened fire from their position near the western spur of a knoll called Henry Hill.²¹

The battery delivered a lethal and relentless barrage, silencing Confederate batteries situated across the field. “At this time my brigade occupied a line considerably in advance of that first occupied by the left wing of the enemy,” Colonel Andrew Porter noted. “The Battery was

¹⁹ Ibid 23.

²⁰ James B. Fry, “McDowell’s Advance to Bull Run,” in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel’s, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume I*, (Secaucus, NJ: Castle Books, 1887), 183.

²¹ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., II, 383-385, 394.

pouring its withering fire into the batteries and columns of the enemy whenever they exposed themselves.”²² Another quote noted that, “The batteries of Ricketts and Griffin, by their fine discipline, wonderful, daring and matchless skill, were the prime features in the fight.”²³ However, due to confusion, the tide of the battle shifted and Ames nearly lost his life.

As Griffin’s battery prepared to fire canister into an oncoming column of troops, they received orders to hold their fire. Assuming that it was a regiment of troops to support the battery, the artillerymen relaxed. A moment later, a deadly volley ripped through the battery felling men and horses. Instead of a Union reserve unit, it was a Confederate force wearing similar uniforms.²⁴ During the volley, a musket ball struck Lieutenant Ames in the thigh, dropping him to the ground. However, as noted by Captain Griffin, Ames doggedly refused to leave his command and unwaveringly continued to direct his troops:

In addition, I deem it my duty to add that Lieutenant Ames was wounded so as to be unable to ride a horse at almost the first fire; yet he sat by his command directing fire, being helped on and off the caisson during the different changes of front or position, refusing to leave the field until he became too weak to sit up.²⁵

After rallying from a disastrous start, the Confederates drove the Union Army from the field. With a significant loss of men and horses, Griffin’s battery abandoned half of their artillery pieces behind. As Griffin reported, “impossible to take more than three pieces from the field.”²⁶ Ultimately, the battery would hold on to only two of their cannons after a third was lost in the shuffle of army’s pell-mell retreat. After suffering significant losses, their commander could not help but praise their efforts. “I would state that my officers and men behaved in a most gallant

²² Ibid., 383-385.

²³ “*McDowell’s Advance to Bull Run*,” Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume I*, 188-189.

²⁴ Ibid., 188-189.

²⁵ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., II., 394.

²⁶ Ibid.

manner, displaying great fearlessness, and doing their duty as becomes brave soldiers.”²⁷ Ames’ troops helped their lieutenant onto an ammunition wagon that bounced and listed the young officer all the way back to Washington D.C. Without springs, the wagon contributed to the misery of Ames’ wound and made the journey an excruciatingly painful one.²⁸ However, in just his first battle, Ames displayed the determination and discipline that allowed him to rise through the ranks of the Union Army. Nevertheless, the battle was a demoralizing defeat. “It is a sad duty to record a defeat accompanied with the loss of so many valuable lives,” stated Colonel Ambrose Burnside. “But defeat should only make us more faithful still to the great cause.”²⁹

After spending several weeks in a military hospital in the District of Columbia, Ames finally recovered from his wound. Almost immediately after being discharged from the hospital, the army requested that he take part in training fresh recruits just as he had done so superbly prior to Bull Run. In good spirits, Ames wrote his parents and informed them regarding his situation. From October 1861 to the end of the war, Ames’ letters to his parents and relatives help provide insight into his actions, experiences, and most importantly, his thoughts. Writing home on October 3, Ames was feeling jubilant. Besides being able to move about and ride a horse without inconvenience or significant pain, he now commanded his own battery. After just one engagement, the army rewarded Ames for his gallantry, and he received a promotion to brevet major.³⁰

“I am in command of the battery,” Ames wrote his parents. “The Captain [Griffin] has been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on Gen. McClellan’s staff. I shall be a Lieutenant

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 68.

²⁹ *O.R. Series I, Vol., II*, 398.

³⁰ Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 24.

commanding a battery.”³¹ Ecstatic, Ames reveled in the fact that the unit would now be known as ‘Ames’ Battery’. Earlier, Ames contemplated resigning his commission in the regular Army and commanding volunteer troops from his native Maine. While tempting, Ames likely changed his mind when his promotion came through to command Griffin’s old battery. Although volunteer officers held higher ranks in the volunteer regiments, Ames, and his fellow West Point graduates, possessed more military intellect and skill. Instead of enjoying the rapid succession through the volunteer ranks, Ames elected to command his regular army battery rather than accepting a commission from Maine, “I shall not have to ask my native state to do anything for me now,” he declared.³²

From September 1861 to March 1862, Ames and his new command defended Washington and the surrounding area. Simultaneously, Ames gave instruction to new volunteer units, something he did with discipline, vigor, and success.³³ The new Union commander, George B. McClellan, began to assemble and organize the Army of Potomac into a larger, better equipped and structured fighting force. As 1861 gave way to 1862, Ames and his battery would participate in the largest military operation the continent of North America had ever witnessed.

While a major campaign hovered on the horizon, Ames impatiently waited for his opportunity to lead his battery in battle. With the exception of one lone excursion into Maryland, where Ames and his troops did scuffle with the enemy in a brief skirmish, the young officer and his battery remained in the vicinity of Washington—Ames continuing to drill and instruct his own troops and other volunteers.³⁴ “I brought my battery back to the city recently [from

³¹ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, October 3, 1861, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA. (Ames was a brevet major but referred to himself as a 1st Lieutenant in this letter).

³² Ibid.

³³ Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 71.

³⁴ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, December 4, 1861, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

Maryland], where I shall remain until an advance is made,” Ames wrote to his mother and father. “My health is excellent,” he noted, “and I have been laboring very, *very* hard.”³⁵ As Ames and his troops waited, he felt the utmost confidence that his battery would develop into one of the finest in the army. In a letter dated December 21, 1861, “My battery is progressing finely. At Camp Hooker in Maryland my men were frequently under fire, and I hope when they meet the enemy they will not disgrace me.”³⁶ While confident, Ames repeatedly told his parents that it was not vanity—although it possibly was—with which he described his command, but rather pride in their efforts.³⁷

Since early January, General McClellan had made his intentions known. Intending to outflank Confederate forces, the young major general wanted to transport his army to Urbanna, Virginia and then advance 50 miles overland to capture the Confederate capitol of Richmond, Virginia. Sharing a similar impatience to that of Ames, President Lincoln issued an order which required that McClellan proceed with his operation. However, in a lengthy letter of rebuttal, McClellan explained his objections to the president’s order. “Although never formally revoked,” McClellan recalled, “it is to be assumed that my letter produced, for a time at least, the desired effect.”³⁸ However, the initial plan was nullified when southern troops under the command of Joseph E. Johnson withdrew south of the Rapidan River. With political pressure in Washington mounting and frustration among the troops noticeable, McClellan finally began to move his forces—transporting thousands of troops to the peninsula fortification known as Monroe.³⁹ Ames and his command became participants in the largest field operation in the entire war. When the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Adelbert Ames to Martha and Jesse Ames, Washington, D.C., December 21, 1861, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ George B. McClellan, “The Peninsular Campaign,” in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel’s, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume II*, (Secaucus, NJ: Castle Books, 1887), 167.

³⁹ Ibid., 169.

lengthy Peninsula Campaign of the spring and summer of 1862 finally commenced, Ames was more than prepared. “No one is more anxious for an advance than I,” he said.⁴⁰

The elation in Ames’ letters signifies his joy that he and his command were finally on the march and away from the familiar confines of the Washington D.C. area. As Ames and his command of 150 men proceeded towards Alexandria, Virginia he admitted that, “The war is, in my opinion, drawing to a close. These continued reverses must of necessity dishearten the rebels. They *must* yield sooner or later.”⁴¹ At the time, the Confederacy had reason to fear. A massive army had mobilized against them, panic ensued. The *Richmond Dispatch* nervously declared, “The enemy are at the gates. Who will take the lead and act, act, act?”⁴² As the Confederacy awaited the bayonets of McClellan’s massive command, Ames and his battery moved into position outside of the town known for its involvement in the American Revolution, Yorktown.

With Confederate forces holding the town, Ames and his battery awaited orders, most likely, to dig in and prepare for a siege. In a letter home, Ames speculated about the potential outcomes of the stalemate. “I am not permitted, or rather orders forbid all persons writing about military operations in the field. I can only tell you we are to have a siege here. Of this I am not certain; it is simply my opinion.”⁴³ A siege did in fact occur. Due to Ames’ engineering skills, Colonel Henry Hunt, commander of the Union Artillery Reserves, ordered the young lieutenant to oversee the construction of earthworks for the Federal forces.⁴⁴ Although the lack of action likely exasperated the young officer seeking to demonstrate the aptitude of his battery, Ames

⁴⁰ Adelbert Ames to Jesse and Martha Ames, Camp Duncan, D.C., January 14, 1862,”Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

⁴¹ Blanche Butler Ames ed. *Chronicles From the Nineteenth Century: Family Letters of Blanche Butler and Adelbert Ames Volume I, 1861-1874*,(Privately Issued by Colonial Press Inc.,Clinton: MA, 1957), 8.

⁴² Stephen W. Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond: The Peninsula Campaign*, (New York, NY:Ticknor & Fields, 1992), xi.

⁴³ Adelbert Ames to Martha and Jesse Ames, 5th Arty. Camp near Winfield Scott before Yorktown, V.A., April 18, 1862, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

⁴⁴ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XI, Part II, 352.

remained in relatively good spirits, informing his parents the names of his subordinates, the occupations of their fathers, and the weather which Ames described as “delightful.”⁴⁵ However, the earthworks created during this spell saw no action. By May 5, after delaying the Federal advance for a month, the Confederates withdrew from the city leaving behind an army that was developing logistical issues and emulating the hesitant idiosyncrasies of its commander.⁴⁶

After leaving Yorktown, Ames and the Fifth Artillery lumbered towards West Point, Virginia where he wrote to his parents saying that, “I have yet seen no fighting...It is possible, however, that they may retire South, giving up Virginia without a struggle.”⁴⁷ Even though unable to display his leadership, Ames was in relatively good spirits. Believing that the Confederate forces would falter against the Army of the Potomac, Ames was confident that a decisive battle would soon unfold. “We all have the greatest confidence in General McClellan—politicians notwithstanding,” said Ames. “A successful battle here will soon terminate the war.”⁴⁸ That decisive battle did not come, nor did any battle, or even a skirmish, that involved Lieutenant Ames and Battery A.

By early June, the minimal action and delayed march had worn down Ames’ patience, an attribute that Ames did not naturally possess in great quantity. His parents, who decided to leave the coast of Maine for the plains of Minnesota, most certainly could sense their son’s frustration when they received his notes. “I must express my disappointment at my success,” wrote the Mainer, “or because of want of success thus far; notwithstanding the many minor fights that have

⁴⁵ Adelbert Ames to Martha and Jesse Ames, 5th Arty. Camp near Winfield Scott before Yorktown, V.A., April 18, 1862, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

⁴⁶ Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 81.

⁴⁷ Adelbert Ames to Martha and Jesse Ames, Camp at Cumberland Landing, May 14, 1862, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

taken place since we started I have not been in one.”⁴⁹ As his fellow classmates, such as Edmund Kirby, intrepidly led their commands, Ames almost resigned himself to the fact that, “I probably shall not get into any [battles]...I do not think I could be in a more secure [and safe] place than I am now.”⁵⁰ Two weeks later, Ames remained in camp along the Chickahominy. The officer who would go on to fight at Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, and Cold Harbor bemoaned his current and dull position. “I have not been in any of the engagements that have taken place here,” Ames lamented. “And I think it very doubtful if I have the fortune to be in any. I am quite disgusted with my own ill luck.”⁵¹ Ames was certainly upset and his pride hurt. However, in an expedient turn of events, Ames and his command became key participants in a pair of significant battles.

It was during the climax of the Peninsula Campaign, from June 27-July 1, that Ames and his battery finally engaged the enemy. Following a battle the previous day at Mechanicsville, the bulk of the Confederate force, now under the leadership of former West Point superintendent Robert E. Lee, attacked the Union Fifth Corps which was isolated on the Northern side of the Chickahominy (even though the Union troops held a strong defensive position). In a rare instance, the Confederates outnumbered the Federals, however only slightly, and the battle proved to be the costliest and arguably the most gruesome of the campaign. After the war ended, veterans from both sides insisted that the volume of fire was unmatched when compared to any other battle in which they had participated.⁵² A large number of these soldiers would fight at Antietam and Gettysburg, yet they insisted that Gaines Mill provided a unique and overpowering experience. Although sources vary in regards to the loss of life and limb, conservative estimates

⁴⁹ Adelbert Ames to Martha and Jesse Ames, Camp at near New Bridge, Chickahominy River, V.A., June 3, 1862, Ames family papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ames ed. *Chronicles From the Nineteenth Century*, 12.

⁵² Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond: The Peninsula Campaign*, 249.

project that the Union suffered 6,837 casualties and the Confederacy amassed 7,993.⁵³ Of all of the battles to test the leadership and abilities of a young artillery commander, Gaines Mill was far from the easiest.

Unable to pull back the Fifth Corps, which McClellan feared would expose the rear of the Union Army, the tentative commander ordered all disposable troops to reinforce the corps as the remaining Federal forces marched to Malvern Hill along the north bank of the James River.⁵⁴ As an artillery battery already assigned to the Fifth Corps, Ames' Battery A was primed and prepared to engage the enemy. In his first official report, Ames detailed the actions of his command. Stationed near Garnett's Farm, just adjacent to Gaines Mill, Ames and his battery positioned themselves along the banks of the Chickahominy. At high noon, Ames and his men came under heavy fire from an estimated five Confederate batteries.⁵⁵ "Their [Confederates] distances varied from 800 to 1,500 yards," Ames described. "After a cannonading of about an hour and a half they were silenced. Their loss is supposed to have been considerable."⁵⁶ Lieutenant John L. Massie, a Confederate artilleryman who engaged against Ames' battery described the Yankee volume of fire as "warm" and with little to no cover, Massie's battery withdrew.⁵⁷ Stephen D. Lee, acting Chief of Artillery of General John B. Magruder's division also noted the viciousness of the Union artillery. "He [Union artillery] replied with alacrity, showing he was still strong."⁵⁸ As a whole, the Confederate batteries suffered moderate casualties during the fight.⁵⁹

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁵⁴ Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 85.

⁵⁵ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XI, Part II, 252.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁵⁷ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XI, Part II, 545.

⁵⁸ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XI, Part II, 747.

⁵⁹ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XI, Part II, 748.

As the afternoon heat intensified, all of the batteries except Ames' withdrew leaving the young officer in command of the only Union battery at Garnett's Farm.⁶⁰ In the report, Ames noted the marksmanship of the Rebel gunners and an additional, yet brief, fight that ensued during the sunset. The Confederate force did not drive the Union troops from the field, although they did break the Union lines, however, Ames beamed at the conduct of his men and his subordinate officers.⁶¹

The Union Army had repulsed a slew of aggressive, yet discombobulated, Confederate attacks. Although a broad statement, Fifth Corps commander Brevet Major General Fitz-John Porter described his disciplined and courageous officers which included Ames. "Their [the troops] commanders were not excelled by those in any other corps in ability or experience; they had the highest confidence in each other, in the army, and in their own men, and were fully competent to oppose their able adversaries."⁶² However, the corps which had fought so valiantly against the Confederate onslaught withdrew hastily. While the troops at Gaines Mill were outnumbered, McClellan exaggerated the contrast in numbers.⁶³ Like the entire campaign, the higher command of the Army of the Potomac was rife with delusions and lethargic tendencies. Ultimately, Ames and his battery later found themselves positioned in what would be the final battle of the campaign.

Malvern Hill, the site of the final battle of the campaign, was where Ames would garner great distinction and praise. Positioned north of the James River and forming a massive plateau, the piece of land was where General McClellan regrouped and arranged his army. Awaiting the rebel attack, McClellan formed his troops into a large semi-circle. Once the Fifth Corps, and

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Fitz-John Porter, "Hanover Court House and Gaines Mill," in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel's, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume II*, (Secaucus, NJ: Castle Books, 1887), 343.

⁶³ Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond: The Peninsula Campaign*, 250-251.

Ames, arrived at Malvern Hill, orders sent the young lieutenant's battery to a position along the River Road.⁶⁴ Although supported by nearly 18,000 infantrymen, Ames and the other batteries along the crest of Malvern Hill were conceivably the most invaluable units on the field.⁶⁵ The Union troops amassed on the hill may have looked daunting to the approaching Confederate regiments, especially because of the significant artillery presence on an open field. However, the skilled Yankee gunners did not thwart the intentions of the Rebel force and the battle commenced on July 1, 1862.

The volume of the Union artillery barrages pummeled the oncoming waves of Confederate troops. The Yankee gunners raked the Southern regiments leaving thousands of dead and wounded men on the field piled up "like cordwood."⁶⁶ In his own words, Ames described the heavy cannonade. "Early in the afternoon the enemy charged a battery on our right, but were entirely cut up, with the loss their colors. In this instance of canister was very effective," Ames said.⁶⁷ At times Ames and his men were under heavy musket fire yet they continued to unleash a relentless and effective barrage on the oncoming enemy. "During the battle," Ames noted, "1,392 rounds of ammunition were expended."⁶⁸ That total was for Ames' command alone, and the salvos remained effective even when the ammunition train was removed from the battlefield. "Had not the ammunition train been removed, we would not have failed of ammunition at any time."⁶⁹ Lauding his subordinates, Ames praised his lieutenants and enlisted

⁶⁴ Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond: The Peninsula Campaign*, 311, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XI, Part II, 252-253.

⁶⁵ Sears, *To the Gates of Richmond: The Peninsula Campaign*, 311-312.

⁶⁶ Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 41.

⁶⁷ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XI, Part II, 252-253, (report is also found in Ames Family Papers).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 252-253.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 252-253.

men for behaving coolly and courageously—traits that the battery commander possessed as well. Ames went on to boast that even, “Every private of the battery nobly did his duty.”⁷⁰

Ames received a great deal of praise for his conduct. In a report to Henry J. Hunt, one of the highest ranking artillerymen in the army, Lieutenant Colonel George W. Getty described the events of the battle. A West Point man himself—and an eventual Major General in his own right—Getty lauded the conduct and displayed admiration for Ames and his command:

At the Battle of Malvern Hill, July 1, Ames’ Battery was posted on the right of the main road leading by the House, and with other batteries, was supported by the division of General Morrell. The battery remained on the field during the entire day, and was handled with great skill...First Lieutenant Adelbert Ames, commanding Battery A, Fifth Artillery, deserves particular mention for his gallantry and skill at the battles of Chickahominy and Malvern.⁷¹

Due to Ames’ conduct at Malvern Hill, he received another promotion. Now a brevet Lieutenant Colonel, Ames was a proven and recognized field officer.⁷² Up until this point, Ames seemed comfortable in his surroundings. He had bypassed the rank of captain, was made a brevet Major and then a brevet Lieutenant Colonel while commanding one the most highly regarded batteries in one of the most highly respected artillery regiments in the entire army. However, by mid-1862, President Lincoln recognized the need for more troops and authorized a call for an additional 300,000 volunteer soldiers. Needing veteran officers to command these green recruits, the War Department relaxed its aversion to Regular Army officers serving in volunteer regiments. It was due to this influx of new soldiers, and Ames’ impressive, record that the young lieutenant colonel found himself in command of what would become one of the most respected, decorated, and storied volunteer regiments in the Union Army.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XI, Part II, 252-253.

⁷² Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 41. Ames ed. *Chronicles From the Nineteenth Century*, 13.

Temporarily assigned to the Topographical Engineers after the Peninsula Campaign, for reasons unknown, Ames, by order of the War Department, took a special leave of absence to assume command of a newly formed regiment in his native state of Maine.⁷³ One of five new regiments from the state of Maine, the Twentieth Maine volunteers appeared to be the antonym of their new, refined, yet occasionally impatient commanding officer. Like Ames, every soldier was born and raised in the sometimes inhospitable climate of Maine. The livelihoods and lifestyles that the Mainers were accustomed to were familiar to Ames. Many were farmers, fisherman, and woodsmen. However, the greatest contradistinction between Ames, now a Colonel, and his troops was that Ames had a top-tier military education and was a polished military man who had seen action while his new regiment lacked the same tutelage and had never experienced the terror of combat. Understandably and ultimately, the greatest difference between the recruits and their commanding officer was the disciplined military lifestyle, a way of life for Ames and an alien routine for his new soldiers. This would cause friction between the men and their commanding officer. Training new recruits was something Ames was accustomed too. He understood the difficulties from past experiences, but he was also well aware that not every recruit possessed the same temperament of a fisherman from Camden or a farmer from Bangor. Mainers were a different breed entirely and Ames knew it.

Arriving in Portland, Maine in August 1862, Ames, now a full-fledged Colonel, felt the pressure from his superiors to provide the Union with a regiment of the highest quality. The disciplined officer encountered his troops for the first time at Camp Mason. As noted in John J. Pullen's *The Twentieth Maine: A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War*, the recruits did not salute officers but rather said, "How d'y'e do, Colonel," and while the men had the desire to become

⁷³ Excerpt from Special Order No. 190, from E.D. Townsend, Assistant Adjutant General, Washington D.C., August 14, 1862, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

soldiers and act accordingly, they had no notion of military affairs or conduct.⁷⁴ Upon encountering his rough, uncouth regiment, with varying degrees of military competence, Ames supposedly fumed, “This is a hell of a regiment!”⁷⁵ While Ames saw promise in his new regiment, he by no means anticipated greatness. During his first viewing of the troops, he saw able-bodied, patriotic volunteers and men who had experience with firearms. However, the fact that only one officer in the regiment, Major Charles D. Gilmore of Bangor, had any military experience, made Ames’ job more difficult.⁷⁶ Not only would the Colonel have to train his rank and file infantrymen, but his officers also. Although his second in command, Lieutenant Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain of Brunswick, was an intelligent man, his lack of military experience would require tutoring in order to acclimate him to military tactics and responsibilities.⁷⁷ It was a difficult task that would test the patience of an ambitious and occasionally temperamental Ames.

With little time to appropriately train the Twentieth Maine, Ames aptly, yet with some difficulty, had to accelerate training of the regiment and its officers. Wanting to demonstrate that his versatile abilities to train and lead could apply anywhere, Ames quickly began to teach his new regiment the fundamentals in marching, maneuvering, and firing. At night, Ames and his inexperienced officers laboriously studied available military texts.⁷⁸ The training wore on Ames’ already depleted patience since his officers and troops had difficulty mastery even the rudimentary, yet essential commands. The complexities of marching, forming columns, and the general movements a regiment needed to perform efficiently and effectively on the battlefield

⁷⁴ John J. Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine: A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War*, (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1957), 1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁶ William E.S. Whitman and Charles H. True, *Maine in the War for the Union: A History of the Part Borne by the Maine Troops in the Suppression of the American Rebellion*, Lewinston, ME: Nelson Dingley Jr. & Co. Publishers, 1865), 490.

⁷⁷ Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine*, 5.

⁷⁸ Trulock, *In the Hands of Providence*, 16.

were too much for the young recruits to master in such an abbreviated time.⁷⁹ Before long, however, the troops realized that it would be best for the regiment, and their ears, if they learned quickly and adapted. More often than not, Ames would address his troops the traditional way if they failed their assignments—loudly and brashly.⁸⁰ A soldier described him as a “savage man” and a number of the volunteers wished that Ames would find himself locked away in a prison.⁸¹ For all of the positive qualities Ames possessed, he was still a newly commissioned officer, with great responsibility, who was prone to frequently vociferate.

Nevertheless, Ames produced positive results with his disciplined and sometimes explosive training. As Pullen notes, the men of the Twentieth Maine were raw materials that had potential and Ames did his utmost to prepare them as quickly as possible.⁸² In the past, Ames had an abundance of time to prepare soldiers to the best of his ability. Now, he had to train a regiment and prepare them for combat with a minimal amount of time—roughly three weeks—while also managing extremely independent, albeit willing, individuals.⁸³ The month of August 1862 was ultimately a test for both the new volunteers trying to adjust to military life, and the ambitious Ames prone to impatience and perfectionism. Eventually, the regiment did begin to take the shape of a well-organized, hard-nosed unit. Most importantly, as Benson writes, “A certain pride and *esprit de corps* began to emerge; eventually, even the regimental attitude towards Ames would change.”⁸⁴

After a few weeks, Ames still had doubts regarding his soldiers. However, he had no choice but to hope for the best. Officially mustered into the U.S. Army on August 29, 1862, the

⁷⁹ Ibid., 16., Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine*, 9.

⁸⁰ Trulock, 16.

⁸¹ Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 43.

⁸² Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine*, 14.

⁸³ Ibid., 14-15.

⁸⁴ Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 43..

regiment had taken significant strides since its conception.⁸⁵ While the results of the few weeks of training in Camp Mason still left plenty to be desired, especially for the perfectionistic Ames, the young colonel had done a masterful job. By Ames' standards, however, the regiment still needed more instruction and better supplies, yet they were summoned to join the Army of the Potomac post haste.⁸⁶ Boarding the vessel *Merrimac* (not the ironclad), the regiment consisting of 965 officers and men left Portland, Maine on September 3; many soldiers would never again return to their native state. After three days at sea, the regiment disembarked in Alexandria, Virginia on September 6.⁸⁷

Once off their ship, the Twentieth Maine boarded a train to Washington D.C. and arrived the following day. In Washington D.C., Ames nearly lost total control of his temper. After picking up their new muskets and ammunition from the U.S. Arsenal, the Twentieth Maine, according to Pullen, wanted to make a grand display. The regimental band began to play as they marched, but the regiment was so enamored with their new weapons and the music that the "march turned into a frustrating draggle, with onlookers laughing and old soldiers jeering."⁸⁸ No longer able to contain his emotions, and with his pride likely hurt, Ames shouted, "If you can't do any better than you have tonight, you better all desert and go home!"⁸⁹ Colonel Ames could handle whizzing shot and shells, but humiliation was an entirely different challenge; he was almost entirely exasperated with his new command.

Assigned to a six-regiment brigade under the command of Daniel Butterfield, the Twentieth Maine found themselves alongside veteran and seasoned soldiers who, like Ames, had fought and bled during the Peninsula Campaign earlier that year. Butterfield's brigade was in the

⁸⁵ William E.S. Whitman and Charles H. True, *Maine in the War for the Union*, 491.

⁸⁶ Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine*, 16.

⁸⁷ William E.S. Whitman and Charles H. True, *Maine in the War for the Union*, 491.

⁸⁸ Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine*, 18.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 19

same corps that Ames had fought in earlier, the Fifth Corps under the command of General Fitz-John Porter.⁹⁰ The first month of the Twentieth Maine's existence had been trying for the green recruits as well as their commander. Both the best and the worst qualities of Ames were on display in the month of August 1862. His brash behavior and perfectionistic tendencies alienated his own troops. At the same time, Ames demonstrated his ability to instruct the rank and file while also providing tactical mentorship to his officers—giving them an accelerated course in military leadership. This was just one of many instances in which Ames, and young officers like him, were placed in positions of difficulty and succeeded. The first several weeks of Colonel Ames and the Twentieth Maine's partnership were not pretty, but it would ultimately benefit both parties as well as the Union itself.

⁹⁰ Ames ed. *Chronicles From the Nineteenth Century* 13., O.R., Series I, Vol., XIX, Part I, 169-175.

Chapter 2- Becoming a Boy General.

Colonel Ames was familiar with the perils and chaos of combat. Having fought in one of the more disorderly battles of the war in First Bull Run, the ambitious officer understood the importance of discipline. After fighting during the Peninsula Campaign, Ames had seen the value of training and the importance of remaining calm and resolute under enemy fire. Discipline and steadfastness defined Ames, and his start with the Twentieth Maine was rocky at best. His methods were not popular, but it did help equip his regiment and led to their support and praise. As the regiment prepared for the upcoming campaigns of 1862-1863, the green recruits and their commander faced challenges and adversity far greater than they could have anticipated.

The Twentieth Maine would ultimately face a blistering baptism under fire, but their introduction to the carnage and chaos had to wait. On September 17, 1862, the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia clashed along Antietam Creek outside of Sharpsburg, Maryland. The most significant battle during the Maryland Campaign of 1862, Antietam proved to be the bloodiest single-day battle in American history with casualties exceeding 22,000.¹ In the end, Robert E. Lee and his Confederate force to withdrawl from Union soil, but the Union Army failed to truly capitalize on the situation against an outnumbered foe. This was just one of many blunders under the command of George. B. McClellan.

For a majority of the battle, Ames and his regiment remained in reserve with most the Porter's Fifth Corps. They saw minimal action, as they spent most of the battle on the opposite side of Antietam Creek, yet a number of the Twentieth Maine's officers believed that they were actual participants in the engagement. Ames disagreed. In a letter home to his parents, Ames

¹ James M. McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam, The Battle That Changed the Course of the Civil War*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

exuded both impatience and frustration. “As for being in the battles in this vicinity,” he wrote, “I have to say—my officers think we were in (a little at least) but I do not think we were in enough to speak of it.”² As doubtful as Ames may have felt about his command, the young Colonel wanted to fight and continued to display his revulsion for inactivity that he expressed during earlier campaigns.³ Quite often during the interim between engagements and in times of inactivity, Ames continued to train his soldiers and did his utmost to prepare them.

While some of Ames’ subordinates in the Twentieth Maine had begun to alter their perspective regarding their colonel, many still viewed him through a prism that painted him as an overbearing, draconian disciplinarian. However, his superiors viewed Ames as an exceptional talent, a superior officer, and even though he had yet to command his regiment in battle, the young officer received glowing praise from Union generals who became aware of the Mainer’s attributes. In a letter to Vice President Hannibal Hamlin on November 16, 1862, Major General Joseph Hooker, who had great influence at the time, wrote a glowing letter about Ames:

Young Ames was of my command last winter, in charge of a Battery, and I assure you gained my esteem and confidence for his intelligence, zeal, and devotion to duties. Since he has had the honor to command a Regiment he has displayed no less capacity and excellence. He is now of my Division and it would be me great satisfaction to have him advanced... I know of no officer of more promise, and should he be promoted I feel no doubt but that he will reflect great credit upon himself and his state. You will have no cause to regret any assistance you may be able to render this young officer.⁴

A week later, a second letter directed towards Vice President Hamlin recommended Ames for promotion. Brigadier General Hiram Berry, who was a native Mainer and had worked closely with Ames, knew the officer personally and was well aware of his many talents and

² Blanche Butler Ames ed. *Chronicles From the Nineteenth Century: Family Letters of Blanche Butler and Adelbert Ames Volume I, 1861-1874*, (Privately Issued by Colonial Press Inc., Clinton: MA, 1957), 14.

³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴ “Joseph Hooker to Hannibal Hamlin, November 16, 1862,” Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

skills. With the death of General Charles David Jameson on November 6, 1862, there was an opening for a brigadier generalship in the Army of the Potomac. Hoping to promote a fellow Mainer, Berry believed that Ames would represent the state of Maine as well as provide the army with a gifted and impressive young general:

I find no name that stands higher than that of Colonel Ames of the 20th [Maine]. I am well aware that his appointment to a higher position at this time may be considered hurried and premature by some—still in the present emergency of our country such considerations should not avail. Colonel Ames is a soldier and a good one. He has already won a name, by his bravery and skill on the battle-field, that any man may well be proud of. . . He has the benefit of an excellent Military education, is brave, intelligent, intrepid, and devoted—and is also an excellent disciplinarian.⁵

As high ranking officers lauded Ames, the most senior officer in the Army of the Potomac was relieved of his command. In early November, President Abraham Lincoln removed McClellan from his duties and replaced him with General Ambrose E. Burnside. Burnside was considered a likable soldier who had fought at First Bull Run and Antietam, but by most standards he was an average soldier at best.⁶ As Ames and his regiment remained in camp in Falmouth Virginia, between Washington and the Rappahannock River, Burnside assumed command of the army. The upcoming battle brought misery and exasperation to the Union, and in addition, it would also test the mettle and resolve of Colonel Ames and his inexperienced regiment.

On the heights west of Fredericksburg, Virginia, Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia assumed positions along the ridges and hills on the opposite side of the Rappahannock. With nearly 80,000 troops accounted for, Lee and his army held strong strategic positions south

⁵ “Hiram Berry to Hannibal Hamlin, November 24, 1862,” Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

⁶ Harry King Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*. (Dissertation, University of Virginia, Charlottesville: Proquest/UVA, 1975), 46.

at the crest of Prospect Hill and along Marye's Heights just outside of the city.⁷ The Confederates had constructed earthworks and awaited the Union advance that would ultimately have to cross an open field sated of obstacles with Confederate batteries positioned to rake the terrain with lethal fire. According to sources, Burnside did not have a detailed plan of attack. Francis Winthrop Palfrey described Burnside's strategy or lack thereof, "He abandoned strategy, and tied himself down to narrow tactical possibilities, and cross as he did, it was simply a question whether his attack or attacks should be more or less directly in front."⁸

On December 11, Union engineers began to construct bridges for the river crossing. However, due to the expert marksmanship and tenacity of a lone Confederate brigade, primarily comprised of Mississippians, the Union Army was not able to enter Fredericksburg until later that day and not until opening fire on the city with their batteries on the heights northeast of the town.⁹ Once the Confederates withdrew from the city, the Union spent the next two days bringing across the infantry divisions that would make the futile and dangerous advance across the open fields to Marye's Heights.

The Battle of Fredericksburg became a debacle. The colossal failure and the carnage fell directly on Burnside. On December 13, 1862, which began with a misty morning and low visibility, the Union commander ordered wave after wave of troops to march against the Confederate defenses. The casualties quickly mounted, yet the Union forces continued to send brigade after brigade against the earthworks and stone wall of Marye's Heights.¹⁰ "As they [Union troops] came within reach of this brigade," Confederate James Longstreet recalled, "a

⁷ Ibid., 101.

F.W. Palfrey, *The Antietam and Fredericksburg*, (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 2002, originally published in 1882), 141

⁸ Ibid., 143.

⁹ James Longstreet, "The Battle of Fredericksburg", in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel's, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume III*, (Secaucus, NJ: Castle Books, 1887), 75.

¹⁰ Palfrey, *The Antietam and Fredericksburg*, 143.

storm of lead was poured into their advancing ranks and they were swept from the field like chaff before the wind.”¹¹ Even though the Confederate infantry and artillery were unloading their ordnance with astounding volume and veracity, fresh Union troops continued to march forward. “Hardly was this attack off the field,” Longstreet continued, “before we saw the determined Federals again filing out of Fredericksburg and preparing for another charge.”¹² The battlefield, littered with the dead and the dying, forced the final waves of Union troops to maneuver over the thousands of casualties that impeded their advance.

As the afternoon began to wane, the Twentieth Maine and the entire division, under the command of Ames’ former captain, now general, Charles Griffin, received their orders to move forward. In between the battles of Antietam and Fredericksburg, Ames had continued to train his officers and enlisted men. Ames, well aware that discipline and obedience were essential for the regiment’s success and survival, continued to instruct his troops, and most notably, the regiment’s highly respected second in command, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain.¹³ While the regiment’s first experience in the heat of battle would test both officer and enlisted man, their natural ruggedness as Mainers and highly disciplined training helped ensure the survival of many. According to Theodore Gerrish of the Twentieth Maine, “This was our first baptism of fire that our regiment ever received, but with the inspiration derived from such a man as Colonel Ames, it was a very easy thing to face danger and death.”¹⁴ Although the regiment would go on to fight in a number of pivotal and gruesome battles, and Ames would participate in significant

¹¹ Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel’s, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Volume III, 79.

¹² *Ibid.*, 79.

¹³ Alice Rains Trulock, *In the Hands of Providence: Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and the American Civil War*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 77.

¹⁴ Theodore Gerrish, *Army Life: A Private’s Reminiscences of the Civil War*, (Portland, ME: Hoyt, Fogg, & Donkham, 1882), 77.

campaigns in the future, Fredericksburg proved to be arguably the most important battle for both the Colonel and his command.

Waiting along the corridors of Fredericksburg's war-torn streets, Ames received orders from Griffin that the third brigade was to advance. Along with the Eighty-Third Pennsylvania, Sixteenth Michigan, and Twelfth, Seventeenth, and Forty-Fourth New York, the Twentieth Maine awaited the bugler's call. Upon hearing the signal, Ames yelled over the cacophony of battle, "Forward the Twentieth!" However, as if the attack was not going to be difficult enough, two of the New York regiments on Ames' right did not hear the order. Thus, the Twentieth Maine surged towards Marye's Heights with their right flank exposed.¹⁵

Like the previous assaults, the Union troops fell victim to disorganization and overpowering fire. Having to cross over railroad tracks, break through fences, and pass through a ditch brimming with two feet of ice water, the regiments' columns understandably broke down and the officers did their best to quickly reestablish lines of battle.¹⁶ The Confederate artillery fired and resounded in its destructiveness. Lieutenant Colonel Chamberlain noted that, "The artillery fire wrecked havoc. Crushed bodies, severed limbs, were everywhere."¹⁷ Ames quickly asserted himself at the head of the regiment, and as Chamberlain recalled, Ames motioned his second in command to the right flank, while he "went to the front, into the storm."¹⁸

As the regiment pushed forward towards the hail of lead, an officer on the field described the Twentieth Maine's advance. "Once I looked over my shoulder. I saw the Twentieth Maine, which was in our division, coming across the field in line of battle, as upon a parade, easily recognized by their new state colors, the great gaps plainly visible as the shot and shell tore

¹⁵ Trulock, *In the Hands of Providence*, 95.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 95

¹⁷ Joshua L. Chamberlain, "My Story of Fredericksburg," *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, Vol. 54, 148-159, 1913), 152.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 153

through the now tremulous line,” the soldier recalled. “It was a grand sight,” he continued, “and a striking example of what discipline will do for such material in such a battle.”¹⁹

The Soldier went on to describe Ames singularly:

Shortly after, a tall, slim colonel coolly walked over our bodies. “Who commands this regiment?” he asked. Our colonel responded. “I will move over your line and relieve your men,” he quietly rejoined. It was Colonel Adelbert Ames... We fell back through the lines a few yards. The Twentieth Maine swept forward, and as it was its first engagement the rattle and roar instantly grew furious.²⁰

The blazing and relentless fire from the Confederate position once again stalled and shredded the oncoming regiments. With no support on their right, the Twentieth Maine continued their advance led by their intrepid colonel who, with his sword drawn, remained at the pinnacle of the Union attack. “On we pushed,” Chamberlain described, “up slopes slippery with blood, miry with repeated unavailing tread. We reached the final crest, before that all-commanding, countermanding stone wall.”²¹ As darkness began to fall on the battlefield, Ames directed the Twentieth Maine to open fire. As both sides exchanged volleys, the Mainers fell down on the hard, bloody, frosty soil in order to avoid being slaughtered as they returned fire. Lying alongside their fallen comrades, Ames and his regiment faced a blistering exchange of gunfire. As Chamberlain notes, “The situation was critical. We took warrant of supreme necessity. We laid up a breastwork of dead bodies, to cover our exposed flank. Behind this we managed to live through the day.”²² As the Twentieth Maine spent the entire evening on the icy battlefield, bullets from the unrelenting Confederate defenses thudded into the corpses that provided shelter, and a gruesome form of insulation, for the living.

¹⁹ Robert G. Carter, *Four Brothers in Blue: Or Sunshine and Shadows of the War of the Rebellion*, (Washington D.C., Gibson Brothers, 1913,) 196.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 196.

²¹ Chamberlain, “My Story of Fredericksburg,” 153.

²² *Ibid.*, 156

The Twentieth Maine, enduring the frigid temperatures, received orders to hold fast. With no relief coming their way, Ames and his officers did their best to keep the regiment intact and protected. According to Colonel T.B.W. Stockton, the regimental and brigade commanders were told “that we must hold our positions until 10 o’clock next day, when the Ninth Corps would attack.”²³ In the same report, Stockton made note of the precarious and dangerous position of Ames and his command. “The enemy’s sharpshooters were very vigilant, and had evidently obtained such a position that they could almost fire upon the men when lying down.”²⁴ Following the harrowing evening, between 200-300 Confederate sharpshooters attempted to move closer to the stranded Federals in order to pepper the troops with an even more suppressive dose of lead. However, Ames and his troops, with the aid of the other regiments marooned on the open battlefield, turned them aside.²⁵ As darkness fell once again, the survivors of the Twentieth Maine, albeit cold and exhausted, remained steadfast.

At last, the Union high command ordered the attacks to desist. Although, when the orders reached the regiment, the Twentieth Maine in particular did not return to Fredericksburg immediately. Covered with mud and using only their bayonets, the Mainer’s buried their dead in shallow graves, erecting small headstones by using broken musket butts.²⁶ As the Aurora Borealis made flowing patterns of vivid light in the night sky, the regiment withdrew to the confines of Fredericksburg, passing corpses of men and horses encircled by ammunition cases and discarded weapons.²⁷ The next day, Ames received orders to move the Twentieth Maine and form a picket line on the cusp of the city. Fearing a potential attack from the Confederates,

²³ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXI, Part I, 411-412.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 411-412.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 411-412.,

John J. Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine: A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War*, (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1957), 55.

²⁶ Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine*, 55.

²⁷ Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine*, 56.

particularly Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson’s regiments, the Twentieth Maine prepared for the worst. Fortunately, the attack never commenced as anticipated, and Ames led a systematic withdraw from their picket position all the way across the Rappahannock River.²⁸

As Benson notes in his dissertation on Ames, “Under the most difficult conditions, the 20th Maine had received its baptism of fire and proven its mettle. In the process, the men of the regiment gained a new respect for their commander.”²⁹ In a strenuous scenario, Ames calmly handled his tasks and inspired his men. Even during a dark chapter for the Army of the Potomac, Ames, and officers like him, exhibited poise and intelligence when their superiors did not. The defeat marked a low point for the morale of the Army of the Potomac. The army, “always better than its commanders, always ready to ‘stand in the evil hour’”, again suffered defeat at the hands of their southern foe.³⁰ Yet, even though the Twentieth Maine lamented the loss as much as their fellow Yankees did, the Battle of Fredericksburg induced a sense of pride and accomplishment. Ames was extremely satisfied with the valor and conduct of his regiment. He wrote home admitting that his men had doubts in him, but, “at that battle the feelings in the regiment changed completely. I was the only Colonel in the brigade who went in front of his regiment and *led* his men into the fight.”³¹ Ames went on to say that, “My men now have confidence in me; and the battle taught them the necessity of discipline.”³²

The Battle of Fredericksburg tested the regiment and its young commander, and while noteworthy praise was directed to both, the battle ultimately served as a period of maturation for both regiment and colonel.³³ Naturally, the battle had a profound impact on the regiment because

²⁸ Chamberlain, “My Story of Fredericksburg,” 156-157.

²⁹ Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 49.

³⁰ Palfrey, *The Antietam and Fredericksburg*, 190.

³¹ Ames ed. *Chronicles From the Nineteenth Century*, 16.

³² *Ibid.*, 16.

³³ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXII, Part I, 405-406, 411-412.

it was the first in which they had seen significant action. However, Fredericksburg changed both the rank and file private as well as the West Point Colonel. After experiencing such a terrifying and trying ordeal, the regiment acknowledged, as Ames alluded to in his letter, that their Colonel may actually know what he was doing and that the training and staunch discipline inflicted upon them was vital to their survival. At the same time, Ames' perspective changed. These men were no longer a rabble of inexperienced lumberjacks and fisherman that needed reprimanding, they were soldiers who had fought admirably and deserved his respect.

A newly gained mutual respect between Ames and his command was timely as the winter of 1862-1863 was a demoralizing one as a whole for the Union. In January 1863, General Burnside attempted another crossing of the Rappahannock. The operation quickly became another failure as the army became ensnared by a quagmire of mud and sludge. Meanwhile, the Confederates on the other side of the river literally laughed and jeered at the Federal misfortune. Following the failed march, the Twentieth Maine and the Army of the Potomac settled into their winter quarters. The men constructed wooden huts to protect themselves from the bitterly cold winter. Other than participating in the construction of roads and picket duty, the winter of 1862-63 was uneventful for Ames and his regiment.³⁴

As both sides waited with great anticipation for spring to arrive, Ames wrote to his parents expressing optimism in his future and pride in his regiment. "My regiment has an excellent reputation," Ames noted. "I cannot ask for better success than what I have had." Additionally, Ames wrote with assurance that a promotion would arrive. "I consider my chances for a promotion very good. Gens. Hooker, Howard, and Berry have given me strong letters. Gov.

³⁴ Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine*, 63-68.

Washburn has written to the Secretary of War and aids me all he can.”³⁵ A combination of skill and support assisted Ames in his advancement.

One of Ames’ staunch advocates for promotion, Major General Joseph Hooker, received a promotion himself during the winter months of that year. Replacing the inept Burnside, “Fighting Joe” Hooker displayed a level of bold aggressiveness that, in the opinion of most, his predecessors had lacked. While an excellent corps commander, he was not an ideal fit for an army commander. In fact, the same boldness that made him an ideal candidate in the eyes of many, dissipated when he faced the difficult task of commanding tens of thousands rather than merely several. Nevertheless, Hooker began a military operation in the spring of 1863 that yet again delivered the North another demoralizing defeat.

During the changes made at the top of the Union command, Ames faced the possibility of missing yet another engagement. To the disdain of the ambitious Colonel, he had watched most of the battles during the Peninsula Campaign, Second Bull Run, and Antietam pass him by. As the Army of the Potomac prepared to launch a new campaign, Ames remained in camp with his regiment. The Twentieth Maine received inoculations, rather than vaccinations, against the lethal scourge of smallpox. Thus deemed unfit for duty, the regiment remained confined to their camp.³⁶ Ames had no patience for inactivity, and the Colonel desperately sought an escape from his figurative prison. He contacted Major General Daniel Butterfield, hoping to join an active unit, but apparently Butterfield misunderstood Ames to some degree. In a letter seeking to clarify, Ames pleaded his case. “It seems unnecessary for all the field officers of the Regiment to remain in charge of a hospital camp, especially when it is earnestly recommended by the surgeon

³⁵ Adelbert Ames to Martha and Jesse Ames, Hd. Qrs. 20th Maine Camp near Falmouth VA., January 10, 1863, Ames family papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

³⁶ Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 109.

that as few officers as possible should be thus detained.”³⁷ Furthermore, Ames went on to note that he lamented the notion of serving without his regiment, he cared for his command, but he felt that it was his duty to serve if he felt able to do so.³⁸

While Ames contacted Butterfield directly, he also received assistance from notable generals in the army who wrote directly to Joseph Hooker. “I beg leave to call to your favorable attention Colonel Ames, 20th Maine,” Charles Griffin wrote, “to add to all he is able and ambitious and has that pride as a soldier which always brings successful results.”³⁹ In a letter dated April 19, 1863, Major General O.O. Howard referenced and supported Griffin’s claims in his own letter. Describing Ames as “one of our most able and efficient officers,” Howard suggested that while the Twentieth Maine remained in camp the army could benefit from Ames serving elsewhere. “If there is a Brigade for him in the Army I know of no officer who would command it better.”⁴⁰ Eventually, Ames received his desired outcome. Told that he could report to a different command if his regiment remained unfit, Ames ultimately did so, serving on the staff of Major General George Gordon Meade of the Fifth Corps during the Battle of Chancellorsville.⁴¹

In what would become a major Union defeat in an unforgiving wilderness, the Union Army once again forfeited the field of battle to a numerically inferior foe. Chancellorsville inflicted over 17,000 casualties for the Federals, and forced another retreat across the familiar

³⁷ Adelbert Ames to Daniel Butterfield, near Falmouth, Virginia, April 10, 1863, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ames ed. *Chronicles From the Nineteenth Century*, 17.

⁴⁰ “O.O. Howard to Joseph Hooker, Head Quarters Eleventh Corps, Army of the Potomac, April 19, 1863,” Ames family papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

⁴¹ Ames ed. *Chronicles From the Nineteenth Century*, 19.

Rappahannock River. It was an embarrassing battle for the Union army, one that included humiliating retreats and tentative decisions from its most superior officers yet again.⁴²

It was a particularly dark time for two of Ames' prominent supporters. O.O. Howard and his Eleventh Corps endured a shameful reputation when Stonewall Jackson's troops turned the unprotected flank of the Union army and sent Howard's troops running on May 2, 1863.

Although Howard had received word from Hooker of the possible Confederate advance, the Eleventh Corps' commander did not make any effort to form a line of defense nor even post pickets.⁴³ The next day, General Hiram Berry and his division retreated under the pressure of a Confederate attack. However, Berry remained on the battlefield. A sharpshooter's bullet felled the officer in the early morning hours.⁴⁴ Once Berry died, his entire division began to weaken and before long his former division retreated. The lack of ammunition and the unfortunate retreat of some key units determined the outcome of the fighting on May 3.

Although the army withdrew in the wake of another loss, Third Corps commander, Major General Daniel Sickles, applauded the efforts of the troops. "The most difficult and painful of duties remains to be performed, a tribute to the fallen and the just commendation of those most distinguished for good conduct." Sickles went on to say that, "I shall fail in giving adequate expression to the obligations I feel toward division, brigade, regimental and battery commanders."⁴⁵ Other more reputable officers, like General Darius N. Couch and Winfield Scott Hancock, shared similar sentiments as they lauded the courage of their troops even during a defeat.⁴⁶

⁴² Abner Doubleday, *Campaigns of the Civil War: Chancellorsville and Gettysburg*, (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 188),. 34, 55.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 29-34.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 49

⁴⁵ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXV, Part I, 394.

⁴⁶ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXV, Part I, 308, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXV, Part I, 315-316.

During the battle, Ames admirably served General George G. Meade, a leader who displayed his abilities at the Battles of South Mountain and Fredericksburg, and the Fifth Corps. The corps served with distinction during the engagement. Meade lauded the conduct and actions of his men, noting, “It is such a service as this that tries and makes the real soldier.”⁴⁷ In his official report, Meade expressed his gratefulness for the gallantry of his staff officers, including Ames. “I desire to call particular attention to the intelligence and zeal exhibited by Lieutenant-Colonel Webb, assistant inspector-general, and Colonel Ames, Twentieth Maine, throughout the whole of the operations.”⁴⁸ One of Ames’ duties during the campaign was to command a guard that protected a vital telegraph line to Washington during the Union’s retreat.⁴⁹ Repeatedly praised, Ames garnered recognition for service and yet again received a promotion.

Due to his gallant service during Chancellorsville, and with his name being pressed by his superiors, Ames received the rank of brigadier general in the U.S. Volunteers on May 20, 1863.⁵⁰ At the age of 27, Ames became one of the youngest generals in the entire Union Army. One of the first young officers in a distinctive group known as the “boy generals”, Ames, along with Judson Kilpatrick, Wesley Merritt, Elon Farnsworth, and George Armstrong Custer played important roles in the upcoming campaign, a military operation which impacted the war far greater than most others. Even though Ames received a promotion and a new command, his loyalty to the Twentieth Maine compelled him to know that regiment was going to remain in good hands. Ames thought highly of Chamberlain, and the former lieutenant colonel appropriately received a new commission as colonel and commanding officer of the Twentieth Maine. Although Ames moved on from the Twentieth Maine, his impact and influence

⁴⁷ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXV, Part I, 509.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 509.

⁴⁹ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXV, Part I, 519.

⁵⁰ George W. Cullum, ed., *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891) II, 772.

remained—the regiment continued to maintain the highest form of discipline and drilled twice a day.⁵¹

Assigned to the Eleventh Corps, Brigadier General Ames assumed command of the second brigade of the first division.⁵² Comprised of three regiments from Ohio and one from the New England state of Connecticut, the regiments had a 27 year old brigade commander in Ames, who reported to a 29 year old division commander, Brigadier General Francis Channing Barlow. While admittedly young for their positions, both officers were experienced, and “with his usual display of confidence and energy, Ames was determined to show that he was capable of handling the assignment.”⁵³ In a *New York Times* article published three days after Ames’ promotion, newspaperman L.L. Crouse described how once again the Union forces had floundered during Chancellorsville. However, while he berated the conduct of the Eleventh Corps, the war correspondent took a paragraph to applaud the promotion of the Corps’ new and capable brigadier general. “Col. Adelbert Ames, of the Twentieth Maine regiment, yesterday received his appointment as Brigadier-General,” Crouse wrote. “This is fitly bestowed. If all our appointments had as much merit as this, there would be fewer instances of incompetency and neglect of duty.”⁵⁴

After assuming command of the brigade, Ames received orders to join Major General Alfred Pleasanton’s Cavalry Corps as a special, independent attachment. Upon achieving massive success in consecutive battles, Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia, as they had done in 1862, marched northward, hoping to carry the offensive onto northern soil.

⁵¹Thomas A. Desjardin, *Stand Firm Ye Boys From Maine: The 20th Maine and the Gettysburg Campaign*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18.

⁵² Doubleday, *Campaigns of the Civil War*, 218, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXV, Part II, 582.

⁵³ Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 52.

⁵⁴ L.L. Crouse, “The Army of the Potomac: An Explanation The Conduct of Gen. Schurz's Corps in the Battle at Chancellorsville, Miscellaneous Items,” *New York Times*, May 28, 1863.

Pleasanton's cavalry, along with Ames' infantry, received instructions from Joseph Hooker to ascertain the whereabouts of Lee's army and General J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry.⁵⁵ What transpired was the largest cavalry battle of the war and the first in which Ames led his new brigade of infantry.

Supporting Brigadier General John Buford's First Cavalry Division, Ames and his infantry brigade served admirably during the Battle of Brandy Station and another engagement known as Beverly Ford.⁵⁶ Both sides claimed victory. J.E.B. Stuart asserted that the Confederates were victorious due to the fact that they held the field at the end of the day and repulsed Pleasanton's attack. However, the aftermath proved more favorable to the Union. While Pleasanton was criticized for not being aggressive enough with his cavalry, the battle diminished the efficiency of the Confederate Cavalry, separating the reconnaissance wing of Robert E. Lee's army from the main body and enticing Stuart to make rash movements to reaffirm the ability of his cavalry. Thus, Lee and his army, while shielded from the Federal forces marching parallel to them on the other side of the Blue Ridge Mountains, could not rely on desperately need intelligence as they invaded the Union states of Maryland and Pennsylvania.⁵⁷

General Ames and his brigade played a pivotal role in the engagement fought primarily by horseman. According to Pleasanton's report, Buford's division, including Ames' infantry, played a decisive role in the contest, bearing much of the responsibility of driving Stuart's cavalry from its strongest positions.⁵⁸ In Ames' report, the young brigadier general noted that, "a very superior force of the enemy's infantry and cavalry was discovered," and his troops engaged

⁵⁵ Doubleday, *Campaigns of the Civil War*, 80.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 82-84.

Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 123-125.

⁵⁷ Doubleday, *Campaigns of the Civil War*, 84.

⁵⁸ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXVII, Part I, 903-904.

the enemy for the latter half of the ten hour battle.⁵⁹ As a new brigade commander, Ames served admirably leading an independent infantry unit alongside cavalry. In his official report dated June 15, 1863, Pleasanton mentioned the new brigadier:

To Brigadier-Generals Russell and Ames, with their respective commands, I am under many obligations for the effective co-operation they gave at all times. The marked manner in which General Ames held and managed his troops under a galling fire of the enemy for several hours, is entitled to higher commendation than I can bestow.⁶⁰

The valuable information quickly arrived at General Hooker's headquarters. Hooker considered the information vital enough to thwart the Confederate advance.⁶¹ As the month of June concluded, Ames and his brigade had returned to the Eleventh Corps, and Hooker was relieved of command, replaced by Major General George G. Meade who first met Ames during the Battle of Chancellorsville. Continuing the march north to intercept Lee's invasion, the Army of the Potomac remained between Lee and the cities of Baltimore and Washington D.C. while Lee and his forces had already entered Pennsylvania—in close proximity to York and the state capitol of Harrisburg. On July 1, 1863, both sides met at the sleepy town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Ironically, the Union army approached the cross-road laden town from the south while the Confederates entered the village from the north.

In the early morning hours of July 1, 1863, the Battle of Gettysburg commenced. Initially fought between dismounted Federal cavalrymen and brigades from General Henry Heth's Confederate infantry division, the battle soon blossomed into a full-scale engagement when Union infantry under the command of General John F. Reynolds arrived on the field. Ames' brigade arrived that morning, and along with the Eleventh Corps, marched to the north and east

⁵⁹ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXVII, Part III, 1043.

⁶⁰ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXVII, Part III, 1046.

⁶¹ Doubleday, *Campaigns of the Civil War*, 84.

of the town to engage the arrival of General Richard S. Ewell's Rebel force. However, the day quickly turned against the Union troops. Ames and his command faced an opponent with superior numbers and nearly became their captives. Although General O.O. Howard, who assumed command of all troops on the field after General Reynolds' death, requested that Generals Sickles and Slocum make haste to the battlefield to reinforce the line, the Union positions quickly succumbed.⁶²

Ames and his brigade had marched to the north of Gettysburg near a rise called Blocher's Knoll and engaged in fierce fighting during the oppressive heat of the July day. Ames' brigade and the entire division fought valiantly while facing a numerically superior enemy that sent torrents of lead into the Union lines.⁶³ As the Eleventh Corps was on the precipice of crumbling, like they had done at the previous battle of Chancellorsville, Ames faced another challenge that thrust him into a difficult role that he struggled to manage.

"At this time," Ames noted in his official report, "General Barlow was wounded, and the command of the division devolved upon me. The whole division was falling back with little or no regularity, regimental organizations having become destroyed."⁶⁴ General Ames left his brigade in command of the capable Colonel Andrew L. Harris of Ohio while the *de facto* division commander tried his utmost to keep the division intact. Howard issued orders for a retreat around 4 pm that afternoon, urging his officers to lead an orderly retreat that disputed every inch of soil.⁶⁵ While officers like Ames exhorted every ounce of effort in preventing a disorganized retreat, the day nearly ended in a rout of the Union troops. As Union soldiers spilled into the modest municipality of Gettysburg, streams of retreating Federals mixed together which broke

⁶² *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXVII, Part I, 701-705.

⁶³ O.O. Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard*, (New York: NY, The Baker and Taylor Company, 1907), 416-418.

⁶⁴ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXVII, Part I, 712-713.

⁶⁵ Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard*, 418-419.

down organization and contributed to chaos and confusion.⁶⁶ In his autobiography, Howard applauded the efforts of the troops on the field—First and Eleventh Corps and Buford’s cavalry division who had fought admirably against difficult odds. Nevertheless, the retreat was embarrassing and the losses were significant.

Fortunately, Howard left a division from the Eleventh Corps in reserve on the heights of a geographic rise known as Cemetery Hill. As the Confederate advance slowed, the Second, Third, and Twelfth Corps of the Army of the Potomac arrived, reinforcing and extending the Union line along the hills and ridges outside the town.⁶⁷ Ames’ division dug in along the eastern crest of Cemetery Hill. Supported by artillery, and with a portion of his troops behind a stone wall, Ames oversaw the casualty reports of his command. Ames’ brigade, by the end of the day, reported that only 650 men were fit for duty.⁶⁸ While the fighting did inflict serious losses, a significant number of men from Ames’ division were now prisoners of the Confederate army which was camped in and around the town.

The first day of the battle encapsulated both the best and worst aspects of Ames’ character and leadership. In dire circumstances, and thrust into precarious scenarios, Ames remained cool and calm under the mounting pressure.⁶⁹ During his military career, whenever Ames was thrust into situations of grave importance, he never broke under pressure. Although his lines eventually gave way, Ames aptly managed the situation as best as was possible. Colonel Charles S. Wainwright, an artillery commander on Cemetery Hill who served meritoriously and alongside Ames during the battle, described the Mainer as both a gentleman and the ideal soldier,

⁶⁶ Ibid. 418-419.

⁶⁷ O.O. Howard, “General Howards Official Report,” in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel’s, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume III*, (Secaucus, NJ: Castle Books, 1887), 289.

⁶⁸ Harry W. Pfanz, *Gettysburg: Culp’s Hill & Cemetery Hill*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 242.

⁶⁹ Terry L. Jones, *Cemetery Hill: The Struggle for the High Ground, July 1-3, 1863*, (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003), 28.

“the best kind of man to be associated with, cool and clear in his own judgment.”⁷⁰ Yet at the same time, Ames exhibited his perfectionist tendencies, mistrust of his soldiers, and slightly aloof expectations, all of which had impacted his time spent as the colonel of the Twentieth Maine. Even though his troops had fought their hardest on July 1, Ames minimized their role, and according to historian Harry W. Pfanz, did them a disservice by not crediting them more.⁷¹ Later in the battle, Colonel Samuel S. Carroll of the Second Corps said of Ames, “Damn a man who has no confidence in his troops.”⁷² In the case of the Twentieth Maine, Ames eventually placed greater trust in his command, but Ames, as displayed at Gettysburg, habitually struggled to put faith in his troops and hold them to realistic standards. July 1 was a trying experience for Ames and his division, but during the following day Ames and his command yet again bore the brunt of one of the Confederate attack that threatened to split the flanks of the Union army.

While the most dreadful and vicious fighting on July 2 occurred south of Cemetery Hill, Ames and his division were equally tested by the resolute attack that the Confederates brought their way. With a clear view, the troops on Cemetery Hill could see the Confederates amassing their forces while some portions of the Union line were threadbare at best.⁷³ Looking towards the southern flank of the Union Army, Robert E. Lee directed General Longstreet’s troops to attack the left flank of the Union Army. The fighting raged in that section, but the combat to the north was relatively light. Colonel Andrew L. Harris reported that Ames’ division skirmished with Confederate sharpshooters until 4 pm that afternoon; Captain John M. Lutz of the 107th Ohio reported the same.⁷⁴ Once dusk began to fall, the fighting intensified exponentially.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁷¹ Pfanz, *Gettysburg: Culp’s Hill & Cemetery Hill*, 242.

⁷² Stephen W. Sears, *Gettysburg*, (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003), 340

⁷³ Jones, *Cemetery Hill*, 57-59.

⁷⁴ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXVII, Part I, 716, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXVII, Part I, 720.

While the early combat on Cemetery Hill consisted of minor skirmishing and probing the Federal defenses, the evening witnessed a full assault. After lying quietly under cover for most of the day, General Jubal Early's troops of Ewell's Second Corps surged towards Cemetery Hill after a brief cannonade from the Rebel artillery.⁷⁵ At 7 pm, Confederate troops from the Bayou State, known as "Louisiana Tigers," smashed into Ames' division, breaking through one of his brigades.⁷⁶ While Ames' original command, the Second Brigade (also known as the Ohio Brigade) held fast, the other brigade under the command of Colonel Leopold von Gilsa retreated to the entrenched batteries of Major Osborn of the Eleventh Corps.⁷⁷ Fortunately for Ames' command, an 800 man brigade of reinforcements arrived. As Howard notes, "Ames' men were assisting them [Eleventh Corps reinforcements] with their rifles, they were wielding hand spikes, abandoned muskets, sponge staffs, or anything they could seize."⁷⁸ Eventually, the batteries were cleared of any Confederate soldiers, but a large portion of the Eleventh Corps was once again greatly disorganized.

The remainder of Ames' division fought valiantly and did not yield. Even when Ames made the questionable move to shift the Seventieth Connecticut further away from the other regiment of the Second Brigade to fill a gap left by von Gilsa's men, the three Ohio regiments held fast. Multiple accounts described the how von Gilsa's men, most of them German, panicked and fled, but not all of the troops under Ames did so. His original brigade, primarily the Seventeenth Connecticut and Seventy-Fifth Ohio bore the brunt of the Confederate attack and

⁷⁵ Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard*, 428.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 428,

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 429

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 429. (Other reports from Eleventh Corps officers reaffirm Howard's statement *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXVII, Part I, 722-728).

held their own against the Confederate divisions comprised of North Carolinian and Louisianan troops.⁷⁹

Both sides detailed the tenacity of the fighting. Major Samuel Tate of the Sixth North Carolina noted that members of his regiment and the Ninth Louisiana scaled the Union positions and planted their colors on the Union artillery pieces. “The enemy stood with tenacity never before displayed by them,” Tate reported, “but with bayonet, clubbed musket, sword, pistol and rocks from the wall [stone wall on Cemetery Ridge] we cleared the heights and silenced the guns.”⁸⁰ Initially, the Confederates succeeded, but accounts from officers in Ames’ division minimized the actual success of the Confederate attack. An officer from 107th Ohio described the enemy appearing in force as the Louisianans and North Carolinians approached the stone wall that the Ohioans used to protect themselves. “The enemy made a desperate charge upon us, but without success. They were repulsed with great loss. It was at this point the regiment captured a stand of colors from the Eighth Louisiana Tigers,” said Captain John M. Lutz who found himself in command of one of Ames’ regiments after its Colonel, Seraphim Meyer, suffered a wound the previous day.⁸¹

Quickly, Cemetery Ridge and Ames’ portion of the line became the most vulnerable, yet important, part of the Union line. With half of his division in shambles and with only undermanned regiments as support, Ames faced a calamitous situation. His division had held on, but they had been nearly overrun and still faced an aggressive Confederate attack. Fortunately, reinforcements from the Second Corps arrived, and regiments under the command of Colonel Samuel S. Carroll passed by the Cemetery Hill gatehouse and charged the Confederate troops.⁸²

⁷⁹ Jones, *Cemetery Hill*, 82-83.

⁸⁰ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXVII, Part II, 486.

⁸¹ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXVII, Part I, 720.

⁸² Pfanz, *Gettysburg: Culp’s Hill & Cemetery Hill*, 273

Carroll's brigade, in dark of night, helped save the Eleventh Corps and Ames' position. However, after his successful charge, Carroll was unaware of his position and whether or not any organized regiments from the Eleventh remained in the area. When one of Carroll's couriers found General Ames, he requested that Carroll remain where he was because he honestly had no faith in his troops.⁸³ It was at this instance that Carroll damned Ames for not having confidence in his recently acquired division. Interestingly, O.O. Howard shared the same sentiments as Ames.⁸⁴ While portions of the Eleventh Corps, including Ames' Ohio Brigade, the Seventeenth Connecticut, and the Thirty-Third Massachusetts fought admirably, the bulk of the Eleventh Corps was a disorganized rabble that had been driven from their positions.

The vicious fighting finally subdued as both the Union defenders and Confederate attackers attempted to reorganize their lines and gather stragglers. On both the extreme right and left of the Union line, the Confederates nearly broke through the Federal defenses. While the Confederates experienced some success on Cemetery Hill, and captured half of the trenches on nearby Culp's Hill, the Union army still held the defensible high ground.⁸⁵ As Ames' men rested, the general accompanied the medical personnel and ambulances as they sought to the hundreds of wounded soldiers along the hillside.⁸⁶ During the evening, the corps commanders of the Union army discussed whether or not to stay and continue the fight. Howard voted yes. Even though his corps suffered severe casualties during two consecutive days of battle, he believed that, "These partial successes determined me to continue the assault next day."⁸⁷ His divisions, most notably Ames', had fought too valiantly to concede the hill they had bled, died, and sacrificed greatly to maintain. Retreating would be an embarrassment.

⁸³ Pfanz, *Gettysburg: Culp's Hill & Cemetery Hill*, 274

⁸⁴ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 340.

⁸⁵ Doubleday, *Campaigns of the Civil War*, 182-183

⁸⁶ Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 135.

⁸⁷ Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard*, 431.

July 3 was a less stressful day for Ames and his command. From their defensive positions, Ames' troops skirmished with the Confederate Second Corps.⁸⁸ Little came from the fighting, and the Confederate lines withdrew further towards the town. During the day, Cemetery Hill experienced an artillery barrage as a precursor to the ill-fated charge led by General George E. Pickett on the Union center. Ames and his troops avoided taking any casualties, but other units in the Eleventh Corps were not as fortunate.⁸⁹ At day's end, the Union army repulsed every Confederate regiment it faced and the Army of the Potomac still held the coveted high ground.⁹⁰ The following morning, on a dismal, overcast Independence Day, Ames and his troops along the crest of Cemetery Hill noticed the lack of noise coming from enemy skirmishers. Sending the troops to investigate, Ames received word that the Confederates were gone and had retreated from the battlefield.⁹¹ Ames' troops were the first to enter the town of Gettysburg where just three days prior they nearly became prisoners. Now they were the victors.

Upon the Army of Northern Virginia's withdrawal, Ames visited the other portions of the battlefield. It was during this excursion that Ames came across his old command. In a letter home, Ames described the surprise:

After three days' fight I was riding over the field in front of our works with General Warren of Meade's staff. Passing some troops I found soon that cheering and swinging their hats in the air were being given for one of us. As General Warren [V Corps] was one of the heroes of the day, I thought it was for him—he told me it was for me. I found it was the 20th [Maine]. They gave me three times three.⁹²

⁸⁸ Pfanz, *Gettysburg: Culp's Hill & Cemetery Hill*, 357

⁸⁹ Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard*, 437

⁹⁰ Doubleday, *Campaigns of the Civil War*, 190-196

⁹¹ Pfanz, *Gettysburg: Culp's Hill & Cemetery Hill*, 367

⁹² Adelbert Ames to Martha and Jesse Ames, August, 1863, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

Like Ames, the Twentieth Maine endured the vicious Confederate attacks made on July 2. Positioned on Little Round Top, the extreme left flank of the Union army, the regiment faced a relentless foe storming up the slopes of the mountain. Remaining steadfast and disciplined, the regiment held their ground against multiple Confederate attacks. Ames' influence remained with both enlisted man and officer. Colonel Chamberlain, remembering his mentor's collected nature and courageousness, continued to lead by example even as the battle caused great fatigue and stress.⁹³ Outnumbered three to one, with nearly half of their men dead and wounded, nearly no rounds of ammunition left, and with no reinforcements, the Twentieth Maine faced yet another Confederate advance.⁹⁴ In one of the most storied events of courage during the battle, if not the war, Colonel Chamberlain ordered his men to fix bayonets and charge down the slope. "Almost before he [Chamberlain] could yell 'charge!' the regiment leaped down the hill and closed in with the foe," a veteran remembered.⁹⁵ The shock of the charge took the surging Confederates by surprise; the Mainers captured dozens and drove the remaining Confederates down the face of Little Round Top.⁹⁶ As John Pullen writes, "It had not been a group of amateurs that had turned the Confederates back at Little Round Top, but a well-trained and highly effective regiment of infantry. And who could they thank most for that, if not General Ames?"⁹⁷

After the battle's conclusion, Ames sent a warm and praise-laden letter to Chamberlain applauding him and the entire regiment. I am very proud of the 20th. Regt. and its present Colonel." Ames said. "I did want to be with you and see your splendid conduct in the field. God Bless you and the dear old regiment. My heart yearns for you; and more and more, now that

⁹³ Desjardin, *Stand Firm Ye Boys From Maine*, 51

⁹⁴ H.S. Melcher, "The 20th Maine at Little Round Top," in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel's, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume III*, 315.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁹⁶ Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine*, 125.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

these trying scenes convince me of your superiority. The pleasure I felt at the intelligence of your conduct yesterday is some recompense for all that I have suffered.”⁹⁸

In his letter home after the battle, Ames noted a gift from the officers of his former command. “The officers of the 20th have now in hand an elegant sword, sash and belt which they are awaiting for the opportunity to give me. The sword is very elegant.”⁹⁹ Less than a year ago, Ames was a battery commander, Chamberlain a college professor, and the rest of the Twentieth Maine were fisherman and farmers. After 12 months had passed, Ames had risen to the rank of brigadier general; Chamberlain demonstrated poise and leadership as the regimental commander, while the regiment had become one of the finest in the army displaying the discipline instilled in them by Ames. After the Battle of Gettysburg, Ames, his fellow boy generals, and other exceptional mid-level commanders were quickly becoming the cornerstones of the Union Army and invaluable leaders on the battlefield.

Ames did not remain in the Eleventh Corps for long. While the majority of the Army of the Potomac remained dormant for the remainder of 1863, Ames and his brigade received orders to report to the Department of the South. On August 6, 1863, Ames’ brigade departed to participate in the siege that the Union Army was waging on Charleston.¹⁰⁰ Described as a symbol of the Southern rebellion, Charleston was a city that the Union believed exuded arrogance and sedition, and it was a major port that allowed the Confederacy access to the Atlantic Ocean. Thus, the Union Army desperately wanted to take the city for both tactical and morale purposes.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Desjardin, *Stand Firm Ye Boys From Maine*, 91.

⁹⁹ Ames ed. *Chronicles From the Nineteenth Century*, 20.

¹⁰⁰ Ames ed. *Chronicles From the Nineteenth Century*, 21.

¹⁰¹ Rear-Admiral C. R. P. Rodgers, "Du Pont's Attack at Charleston," in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel's, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume IV*, 32.

The Union Army had made two previous attempts to take the port city. In June 1862, the Union attack on the Confederate defenses failed. Less than a year later, in the spring of 1863, the Union navy barraged Fort Sumter but did not inflict enough damage to force the abandonment of the former Federal stronghold. By the summer of 1863, the Union approved of an expedition to take Morris Island, on the cusp of Charleston's harbor, and to finally take the besieged city. Landing on the southern end of the island, the Federal army began its assault on the Confederate stronghold of Battery Wagner. Interestingly, one of the regiments to participate in the assault was the famed Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts comprised of free black troops.

As noted in Harry King Benson's dissertation, the concept of assaulting the Confederate salient and laying siege to a city did not sit well with an officer with the impatience and ambitiousness of Ames. Shortly after his arrival, Ames proposed a plan to take Fort Sumter. Fort Sumter lacked the military importance it once had. Portions of the fort consisted of rubble and most of the guns were inoperable. Taking the fort, albeit lacking in tactical importance, would have provided a morale boost for the army and a feather in Ames' proverbial cap. However, as noted by some historians, Ames' plan was countermanded and pushed aside for unknown reasons but possibly due to jealousy.¹⁰² Perhaps it was envy; perhaps it was Ames' ambitiousness that irritated his superiors in South Carolina. Nevertheless, Ames and his command remained in Charleston participating in the siege operations which Ames loathed.

In the future, Ames would spend time in the city of Charleston, a period he enjoyed. However, siege duty on the humid Morris Island was hellish for Ames, and he made note of it in his letters home. Lacking supplies, most notably tents, Ames lamented the conditions of his troops. Many did not have knapsacks and the exposure to the natural elements of the sun, wind,

¹⁰² William E.S. Whitman and Charles H. True, *Maine in the War for the Union: A History of the Part Borne by the Maine Troops in the Suppression of the American Rebellion*, (Lewinston, ME: Nelson Dingley Jr. & Co. Publishers, 1865), 499.

and sea air caused a number of Ames' men to be sick.¹⁰³ Other than digging trenches, Ames' brigade languished in South Carolina. In late November, the army granted Ames a leave of absence during which he visited Washington D.C. and New York City. By early January, General Ames returned to his brigade, stationed on Folly Island, where he and his command remained for several weeks more.¹⁰⁴

By the close 1863, an interesting to increase Union strongholds which captured the attention of even the President of the United States and required the services of Ames and his brigade. Hoping to encourage a loyal government in the Confederate state of Florida, Lincoln instructed Ames' superior, General Quincy Gilmore, to give as much military supervision and assistance as possible to the operation of asserting a Union presence in Florida. Devoid of a large Confederate force, and easily accessible for the Union navy, a pro-Union Florida was an attractive endeavor to pursue.¹⁰⁵ With that in mind, Gilmore sent General Truman Seymour to Jacksonville, Florida on February 5 to help support Lincoln's plan. Roughly two week afterwards, a ragged Confederate force at the Battle of Olustee soundly beat the Union expeditionary army. Losing almost a third of its force, the Department of the South sent an additional brigade, Ames', to support the troops in Jacksonville.¹⁰⁶ The hope of establishing a loyal government failed due to poor planning and an opportunity was lost. Afterwards, the Union force suffered needlessly in the humid brush and forests.

While in Florida, Ames assumed command of his division consisting of three brigades, as he awaited action of some sort. Considering that military operations were likely to commence in the Mid-Atlantic once spring began, Ames anticipated the opportunity to once again serve with

¹⁰³ Ames ed., *Chronicles From the Nineteenth Century*, 22.

¹⁰⁴ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXXV, Part I, 464.

¹⁰⁵ Samuel Jones, "Battle of Olustee or Ocean Pond," in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel's, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume IV*, 76.

¹⁰⁶ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXXV, Part I, 491.

the Army of the Potomac.¹⁰⁷ At his current position, a battle seemed unlikely. Breastworks and defenses encircled the Union position, and an attack would certainly prove disastrous for the small Confederate force in the area.¹⁰⁸ Ames' overall experience during his two months in Florida was not necessarily unpleasant. He enjoyed boating and even acquired a carriage to ride around the city.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Ames felt the lack of importance in his role as a protector of a Floridian city. In a letter home, Ames told his father, "Florida is a place into which the rebels should be driven, not *out* of it."¹¹⁰

During the early spring, senior officers in the Union army sought to bring Ames back to the Army of the Potomac. As Benson notes, "It was not likely that a commander of Ames' talents would remain for long thus employed."¹¹¹ Initially, Generals Meade and Pleasanton, who both knew of Ames' skills and aptitude, asked Lincoln to transfer the young general to the cavalry to assume command of a division. General Henry W. Halleck, once the commander-in-chief of the army and now the chief-of-staff, balked at the idea of sending a fine infantry officer like Ames to the cavalry.¹¹² However, when the Department of the South consolidated into the Tenth Corps in the spring of 1864, Ames received a new command. Although he would temporarily assume command of the corps, Ames, for the majority of his time spent in the corps, commanded a division. Ordered to report to Major General Benjamin F. Butler, commander of the Army of the James, Ames left Florida on April 15, 1864.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, March 8, 1864, Head Quarters division Jacksonville, Florida, Ames family papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

¹⁰⁸ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, March 20, 1864, Head Quarters division Jacksonville, Florida, Ames family papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

¹⁰⁹ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, March 27, 1864, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

¹¹⁰ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, April 24, 1864, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

¹¹¹ Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 62.

¹¹² Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 146.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 146.

Ames was elated that he was leaving Florida and returning to the Virginia. He looked forward to commanding a division in the upcoming campaign. Upon getting his promotion, Ames received word that his new division was comprised of troops he had never served with nor commanded. As was the case in the past, the young general would have to overcome the obstacles he often encountered with a new command, sometimes self-imposed by his strict standards. As the spring of 1864 began the final chapter of the war, Ames again demonstrated the worthiness of the praise he received from his superiors, subordinates, and colleagues, as well as validating the many promotions he received. Epitomizing the young officers that had risen through the ranks of Union Army, Ames prepared for the upcoming campaign. In a letter home, Ames appropriately predicted the imminent maneuvers. “Everything will be concentrated in Virginia for the final struggle,” he said.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, April 24, 1864, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

Chapter 3- Scaling Earthworks and Conducting Sieges.

When Ames arrived in Virginia, it was eerily similar to his second major campaign in which he was a participant two years earlier. The Union amassed an army of over 100,000 troops, and prepared to launch a campaign with the intention of taking the Confederate capitol and ending the war in a decisive fashion. The campaign would take place in familiar terrain that featured familiar the tributaries and landmarks of Northern Virginia. However, the leadership of the Union forces was drastically different. Instead of General McDowell, a newly appointed and highly anticipated general arrived who President Lincoln believed could deliver victory to the North. The Peninsula Campaign of 1862 ended with futility. The Overland Campaign, while demonstrating instances of futility, eventually brought about Union victory and the capitulation of Robert E. Lee's skilled and fierce Army of Northern Virginia. For Ames, the campaign provided tests and brought him praise.

On March 9, 1864, Ulysses S. Grant, who successfully waged war west of the Appalachian mountain range, became Lieutenant General as well as the commander of all Union armies.¹ As part of his Overland Campaign, Grant intended to use the brute force of his army to apply unyielding pressure on his weakened foe. Establishing his headquarters with the Army of the Potomac, Grant prepared for the upcoming series of battles which he hoped would dismantle the Confederate armies in Virginia. A pivotal extension of Grant's command was the Army of the James, stationed in relative proximity to Richmond at Port Monroe. Under the command of the divisive and controversial General Benjamin Butler, the 36,000 man army had an important role in Grant's strategy. The cigar-gnawing Grant envisioned Butler's army severing any opportunity for reinforcements to assist Lee while simultaneously threatening Richmond with

¹ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXXII, Part I, 3.

capture (and possibly taking it.) If Grant's main body of troops experienced difficulties, Butler's command could cooperate as an independent extension of the army.

Ames arrived and assumed command of his division. As Benson notes, "Ames, in command of a division under Butler, performed creditably, if without unusual distinction, throughout the early stages of the operation."² Unfortunately, the campaign, known as Bermuda Hundred, was maligned for the ineffectiveness and bumbling of its senior officers most notably Butler and his corps commanders.³ However, Ames did serve credibly, did receive praise for his actions, and did display self-control as he managed to quell his sometimes volatile temper and impatience.

While Grant and his army struggled to break through Lee's army during the battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Courthouse, Butler and his army did manage to make progress towards Richmond. However, believing the Confederate force to be greater and without any assistance from Grant, Butler grew nervous and withdrew his forces, placing his army in a narrow piece of land between the James and the Appomattox Rivers (an area known as Bermuda Hundred.)⁴ Due to the confines of Butler's chosen ground, a smaller Confederate army, led by early war hero P.G.T. Beauregard, tied down Butler's army and effectively held a large contingent of Federal troops in check. The campaign created the moniker "Bottled-up" Butler and was viewed as an abject failure.⁵ In the end, Butler received criticism as the general in charge, his corps commanders displayed timidity, and the campaign became one of missed opportunities with an underwhelming conclusion. While the senior officers in the army received

² Harry King Benson *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, (Dissertation, University of Virginia, Charlottesville: Proquest/UVA, 1975), 63.

³ William Glenn Robertson, *Back Door to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign, April- June 1864*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 9-10.

⁴ Benson *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 63.

⁵ Robertson, *Back Door to Richmond*, 247-248.

scorn, officers like Ames and the enlisted men, according to Edward G. Longacre, “encountered more than their fair share of adversity and had few victories to sustain them. Still, most served gamely and effectively to the last, refusing to quit short of that final triumph to which their fortitude and fidelity entitled them.”⁶ Without officers like Ames to lead the brigades, the Army of the James would have suffered far greater from the foolishness of their senior commanders.

The campaign doused in controversy and wrought with stress began with optimism. Ames wrote home saying, “We are all in hopes this campaign will put Richmond in our hands and virtually end the war. Grant is confident—so are we all.”⁷ Interestingly, a letter home from Ames, dated May 7, aptly described the situation that the Army of the James would be in if the troops under Grant faltered. “Everything will depend on Grant,” the young division commander penned. “That is, if he is beaten we shall have to fall back and re-embark. If he beats we shall here render much assistance in the capture of Richmond.”⁸ Ames was right in his first assertion. Grant’s inability to bypass Lee’s army served as the primary reason Butler felt the need to order the Army of the James’ withdrawal. However, the Army did not “re-embark”, as Ames put it, thus they rightfully became the subjects of criticism as they were unable to push through a numerically lesser foe.

Ames’ command participated in several key battles during the campaign, including Chester Station and Drewry’s Bluff. The second phase of the Battle of Drewry’s Bluff was possibly the most trying for Ames as his command held a junction called Port Walthall. During the battle, Ames, protecting the rear guard of the army, was faced with a superior Confederate

⁶ Edward G. Longacre, *Army of Amateurs: General Benjamin F. Butler and the Army of the James, 1863-1865*, (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1997), 325.

⁷ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, May 4, 1864, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

⁸ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, May 7, 1864, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

force moving towards their position from Petersburg, Virginia. Corps commanders Gilmore and William Smith struggled to effectively command and their failures, particularly Smith's, eventually led to the Union withdraw to Bermuda Hundred. Ames and his command did their best to protect the rear of the Union army and, forcing the Confederate attack back while also providing support to other units in the field. At 1:30 in the afternoon of May 16, Ames sent a message describing his position. "I have pressed the enemy back to the hills beyond the crossing of the pike and the railroad. There he has taken a position and is now shelling my advance. The size of my force and the long front I cover do not justify, in my opinion, an effort to attempt to force the enemy from his position."⁹

Fortunately for Ames, the Confederates did not storm his position the following day. This short engagement resulted in heavy casualties during perhaps the most exhausting and vicious combat of the campaign.¹⁰ 3,000 Union soldiers were either killed, wounded or captured.¹¹ General P.G.T. Beauregard displayed his contempt for the order from the War Department to withdraw his troops to help in the defense of Petersburg for he was, "Then pursuing the enemy, and still driving him nearer and nearer to his base."¹² Considering Ames' command was outnumbered five to one while they protected the rear of the Union line, it was a much appreciated relief that Confederate forces did not resume their attack. Beauregard assumed that the Union resistance, particularly the commanders of the Army of the James, were demoralized and distraught, and he was correct.¹³ During the night, Union soldiers constructed earthworks

⁹ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXXVI, Part II, 837-838.

¹⁰ Robertson, *Back Door to Richmond*, 217-218.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 217.

¹² G.T. Beauregard, General, C.S.A., "The Defense Of Drewery's Bluff," in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel's, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume IV*, 204.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 204.

and Butler's self-imposed isolation began.¹⁴ Although the only direction from which they were barred movement was the West, the Army of the James did not "re-embark" as Ames assumed that they would.

Ames and his command remained stationary at Bermuda Hundred until later that month when they were reassigned to the Army of the Potomac to assist and replenish Grant's forces during the bloody Overland Campaign. In later years, Grant regretted the inability of Butler's army, admitting that perhaps too much was asked of them, particularly Butler himself.

Interestingly, Grant noted that if he had two corps commanders in the Army of the James possessing more skill and aptitude than Gilmore or Smith perhaps the campaign would have been successful. One of the names Grant mentioned, who would have made an ideal commander, was Ames.¹⁵

Ames wrote to his parents, describing his situation at Bermuda Hundred. "We have made advances towards Petersburg and Richmond," Ames wrote. "The first resulted in a little fighting, in which we had the advantage. But the latter was wholly against us."¹⁶ Ames and his troops were in high spirits, but they wallowed in inactivity. When Ames willingly accepted the order to join Grant, General Gilmore requested that Ames remain. In a letter to General Butler protesting the order, Gilmore stated:

The reorganization of Ames' and Turner's Division, Tenth Corps, under strange commanders, will materially diminish the efficiency of those divisions. On this ground, and this only, I earnestly request that no steps of the kind be taken or allowed. General Ames and Turner are educated, accomplished, and efficient soldiers, and have the entire confidence and the

¹⁴ *Army of Amateurs: General Benjamin F. Butler and the Army of the James, 1863-1865*, 101., *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXXVI, Part II, 40, 43-44.

¹⁵ Blanche Ames Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, (London, UK: MacDonald & Company, 1964), 161.

¹⁶ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, May 19, 1864, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

most zealous and enthusiastic cooperation of the officers and men of their commands at all times.¹⁷

Although Gilmore attempted to persuade his seniors to allow Ames to remain, his superiors denied his request. Along with 16,000 soldiers, Ames arrived in Grant's army just in time for one of the bloodiest and shamefully managed battles under Grant's leadership. Many veterans of the Battle of Cold Harbor disagreed with the decision to engage the enemy. "It never should have been fought," argued one survivor. "There was no military reasons to justify it."¹⁸ In yet another trying engagement, Ames demonstrated his propensity to excel in difficult circumstances and received another battlefield promotion.

While the maneuvering and countermeasures extended to nearly two weeks in length, the most demoralizing and violent day during the Union and Confederate's time at Cold Harbor took place on June 3, 1864. A member of the Eighteenth Corps, Ames and his command, along with the Second and Sixth Corps, slowly and steadily began their advance at 4:30 am. There is no mention of Ames in any report during the battle, nor does he detail the battle in any piece of correspondence. However, the troops fought admirably in a nearly impossible situation which was a clear reflection on Ames' leadership and he would receive a battlefield promotion for his role (captain in the regular army).¹⁹ The volume of fire that Ames and the Eighteenth Corps encountered during their assault across an open field was blistering. Passing through cover provided by foliage, the corps came under a heavy cross fire as they marched towards the entrenched Confederate position.²⁰ The advancing troops experienced volleys of fire that

¹⁷ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XXXVI, Part III, 282-283.

¹⁸ Martin T. McMahon, Brevet-Major General, "Cold Harbor," in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel's, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume IV*, 213.

¹⁹ Benson *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 65.

²⁰ William Farrar Smith, Brevet-Major General, "The Eighteenth Corps At Cold Harbor," in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel's, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume IV*, 225.

imitated, if not surpassed, the Battle of Fredericksburg. Some troops, such as Barlow's and Gibbon's divisions in Hancock's Second Corps, charged against lighter defenses but still suffered heavily. These veteran troops, bogged down by fire and marshy soil, underwent severe losses and their casualties, along with Smith's Corps, spread across five acres of land.²¹ The carnage was unparalleled in the time in which it occurred. Over 12,000 Federal soldiers became casualties in less than ten minutes.²² In fact, when General George Meade ordered General Smith's Corps, including Ames' depleted command, to make another assault, Smith refused.²³

Perhaps the most demoralizing part of the battle was that debatably the finest troops that the Army of the Potomac had were shredded in a poorly planned and coordinated attack. Soldiers that had served in the ranks since the army's formative months lay dead and dying, many of them cut in two by the overpowering Confederate cannonade and the crackling muskets of entrenched infantry men. In their massive volume on President Lincoln and the Civil War, John Nicolay and John Hay noted that, "Smith, with the Eighteenth Corps, did all brave men could do; his divisions were torn to rags in their assault."²⁴

During the months of May and June 1864, the Union Army under Grant suffered staggering losses. The Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Courthouse had not brought on the same level of disappointment and bitterness among the Union ranks as did Cold Harbor, but the loss of life was nonetheless overwhelming. Ames himself, who usually refrained from criticizing superiors, did begin to question Grant, hoping that he could manage the upcoming tasks. "I hope he [Grant] will prove equal to the emergency," Ames wrote.²⁵ Grant himself would

²¹ Shelby Foote, *The Civil War Narrative: Red River to Appomattox*, (New York: NY, Random House, 1974), 292.

²² McMahon, "Cold Harbor," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume IV*, 217.

²³ Smith "The Eighteenth Corps At Cold Harbor," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume IV*, 227.

²⁴ Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 165.

²⁵ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, June 9, 1864, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

admit that, “Cold Harbor is, I think, the only battle I ever fought that I would not fight over again under the circumstances.”²⁶ Undeterred as usual with the loss of life, Grant continued to put his foot to the proverbial throat. Moving the Army of the Potomac towards the James River, Grant joined forces with Benjamin Butler’s army. Together, the combined Union army brushed aside any resistance and marched towards Petersburg. In an impressive fashion, Robert E. Lee mobilized his army and moved them into position to protect the city of Petersburg. This played into Grant’s hands. With Lee’s army cornered at Petersburg, Grant’s army encircled the city and prepared a siege. Ultimately, this move directly led to the capitulation of the Confederate capitol and Lee’s army.

The siege proved vital for the Union victory and pivotal in the Confederate defeat. Yet, another siege which required the construction of more earthworks, semi-permanent positions, and a lack of combat exasperated Ames. His mood turned sour during parts of the Petersburg siege. Again, he and his command would remain motionless, which happens during war but was something that the officer could not stand. Ames did write to his parents describing his situation.

“Here we are all hopeful and confident,” Ames wrote. “We are justified in gathering hope from the fact that the rebels are putting every man, young and old, into the ranks. Their losses cannot be replaced.”²⁷ His letter on July 10 was perhaps his most joyful of the entire month. In it, he discussed sending a photograph to a Miss Lowell and the joy of the sinking of the ‘pirate’ ship the *CSS Alabama*.²⁸ While slightly optimistic, Ames’ impatience also prompted pessimism. Ames told his parents he “was well, though a little discontented at the inactivity of our forces.”²⁹

²⁶ McMahan, "Cold Harbor," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume IV*, 220.

²⁷ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, July 10, 1864, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, July 21, 1864, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

The impatient pessimism soon gave way to misery. As Benson notes, “Nothing could be more illustrative of the young soldier's aggressive temperament and impatience with siege type warfare than the tone of despair which had crept into his letters by the end of the month.”³⁰

Ames admittedly mentioned that he was experiencing depression. His mere inactivity contributed to it, but also the state of the nation. The Union, exhausted by war, disgusted by the loss of life, and in the midst of an election year, was rife with raw emotions. In a tirade-laden letter to his father dated July 30, Ames denounced Lincoln—a man who the Republican Ames initially supported as the leader of his party. No other letter during his service referenced Lincoln, but this piece of correspondence, during a despondent time for Ames, did:

Lincoln is not a fit person for the Head of this nation in its hour of trouble and grief. He evidently has not the *nerve* or brain needed by one in his high and responsible station. If I had the opportunity to vote I should vote for some other candidate, not Fremont, who would insist upon a vigorous prosecution of the war. We, here, think Mr. Lincoln has prostituted his authority and responsibility to the vile purpose of self-aggrandizement—his re-election.³¹

The Second and Tenth Corps met little success in their endeavors north of the James River. The Fifth Corps also attempted to determine the Confederate's strength on the west side of the encircled city. “I heard the cannonading this afternoon, Ames wrote, “but as no word has been received in relation to the matter I think our efforts were unsuccessful.”³² Ames reiterated his unhappiness in the letter's conclusion. “I cannot tell you how depressed and sad I feel in the consequence of my belief that the Northern people are to show themselves unworthy the liberty

³⁰ Benson *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 66.

³¹ Blanche Butler Ames ed. *Chronicles From the Nineteenth Century: Family Letters of Blanche Butler and Adelbert Ames Volume I, 1861-1874*, (Privately Issued by Colonial Press Inc., Clinton: MA, 1957), 24. Interestingly, Ames remained a life-long Republican and, as a member of the Republican Party, served as a senator and governor in the state of Mississippi during the Reconstruction.

³² *Ibid.*

won them by their fathers.”³³ Ironically, as Ames grieved his current state of dormancy, one of the most infamous battles of the war took place that same evening. It was more of a *mêlée* than a battle, but one that would feature some of the bloodiest fighting of the siege, and Ames and his troops would play a role in it.

Following a proposed plan to explode a mine positioned beneath Confederate defenses, Federal soldiers under the command of Ambrose Burnside ignited a fuse that set off a massive explosion creating a huge gap, a crater, in the earth. A questionable plan to begin with, the Battle of the Crater was disastrous. The debris that soared into the air due to the violent explosion actually impeded the first Union columns that were struck by the soot and sod.³⁴ Union attackers, many of them black, surged into the crater where chaos and disorganization ensued inflicting severe losses. According to a Confederate general on the scene “our troops on both flanks and in the rear had caused many of the enemy to run the gauntlet of our cross-fires in front of the breach, but a large number still remained unable to advance, and perhaps afraid to retreat.”³⁵ The debacle, highly noted and publicized, forced Ambrose Burnside’s dismissal from his duties, and he never received another command.

Ames’ division played a minor role in the flawed operation. As the charging Federal troops attacked through the crater, Ames’ division remained behind as reserves. At the zenith of the vicious fighting in the man-made depression, Ames received orders to move his division towards the battle. Due to the congestion and chaos ahead of them, the division never participated in the battle, turning back as the Union survivors retreated from the fray.³⁶ Ames was not criticized for not moving his division forward into the battle; perhaps Grant and Meade

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Charles H. Houghton, Brevet Major, "In The Crater," in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel's, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume IV*, 561.

³⁵ Ibid., 567

³⁶ *O.R.* Series I, XL, Part I, 108-109

were relieved that Ames had the sense to not risk a fine division in a useless, foolish endeavor.³⁷ In his official testimony in a military inquiry, Ames gave his opinion as to why the Battle of the Crater became a greater disaster than it could have been. He was relatively accurate in his assertion although it was his opinion nonetheless. “I think the trouble was no one person at the front who was responsible,” Ames testified, “in consequence of which there was no unity of action. It took a long time for commanders in the front to communicate with those in the vicinity of the 14-gun battery in the rear.”³⁸

After the Battle of the Crater, Grant sought other avenues through which the Union army could conduct aggressive tactics against the Southern defenses. On September 28, the Tenth and Eighteenth Corps crossed over from the south bank to the north side of the James River. The following day, the two corps assaulted two Confederate installations, Fort Harrison and Fort Gilmer.³⁹ Finding himself near the familiar terrain of Bermuda Hundred, Ames and his division fought admirably, fighting alongside David Birney’s famed black troops.⁴⁰

The fighting was ferocious, and the Union troops overwhelmed the Confederate defenders, taking the salient as well as over a dozen pieces of artillery.⁴¹ However, when Ames and Birney’s troops charged towards Fort Gilmer they were repulsed, suffering significant losses. Although the Union failed in taking Fort Gilmer, they held Fort Harrison and prevented the Confederates from reclaiming it during a large assault supported by Rebel artillery.⁴² The bravery of the Union troops was duly noted in Brigadier General R.S. Foster’s report written later that year. In Foster’s report, the officer took the time to highlight the conduct of all the

³⁷ Benson *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 72.

³⁸ “Record of the Court of Inquiry on the Mine Explosion,” *Official Records: Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Vol. 40, Part I, 108.

³⁹ U.S. Grant, Lieutenant-General, “General Grant on the Siege of Petersburg,” in Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel’s, ed, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume IV*, 577.

⁴⁰ Benson *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 73.

⁴¹ Grant, “General Grant on the Siege of Petersburg,” *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume IV*, 577.

⁴² Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 179.

combatants and mentioned Ames as well. To the recipient of the report, Foster writes, “I am glad to be able to congratulate you upon the fact that my successor to the command of the Second Division is that gallant young soldier and able officer, Brigadier-General Ames, of whose brilliant reputation you are already aware.”⁴³ Unfortunately, Ames’ individual actions are not mentioned, however, the opposition his troops faced and their courageousness were duly noted.⁴⁴

Ames relieved some of his boredom due to the recent fighting, but it quickly reasserted itself. “Here we have little to do,” Ames said. “No firing is going on this front. We come here to recuperate.”⁴⁵ Languishing, Ames applied for a leave of absence for the second half of September and early October. The leave was soon granted, and Ames travelled to Minnesota where he hoped to settle down after the war.⁴⁶ Ames returned to his division in mid-October. He participated in some minor engagements but nothing of great significance. For the most part, nothing of consequence was taking place on the multiple fronts of Petersburg as the Union Army slowly strangled the Army of Northern Virginia.

As 1864 was about to give way to 1865, General Grant turned his attention toward other fronts as his army and Lee’s remained deadlocked in siege. Fort Fisher, a Confederate stronghold in North Carolina, appropriately, drew significant attention from Grant. Guarding the final open port of the Confederacy at the mouth of the Cape Fear River in North Carolina, Fort Fisher’s fall would greatly accelerate the conclusion of the war. The fort permitted information and supplies to enter the city of Wilmington, thus providing the South with valuable intelligence, provisions, and munitions that managed to sneak through the suffocating and almost impenetrable Union

⁴³ *O.R.* Series I, Vol 42, Part III, page 801-802.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 801.

⁴⁵ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, September 1, 1864, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA. (A significant number of Ames’ command fell ill during this time after overseeing the construction of earthworks.)

⁴⁶ Benson *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 73.

blockade. The port also exported tobacco and cotton to Great Britain, and it remained in relative security thirty miles inland from the fort that dominated the coastline.⁴⁷ In early December 1864, Grant ordered that troops from the Army of the James would make the expedition to take Fort Fisher. Overseen by General Godfrey Weitzel, a gifted soldier with a copious amount of engineering knowledge, 7,000 soldiers embarked from the Virginian coastline and sailed south to the mouth of the Cape Fear River. Included in the expeditionary force was Ames and his division of 3,300 men, comprised of troops from Indiana, New Hampshire, New York, and Pennsylvania.⁴⁸

Grant believed that his troops could take the fort with only a fraction of the Army of the James. Thus, the landing force consisted of Ames' second division of the Twenty-Fourth Corps, which would spearhead the assault, while the all-black third division of the Twenty-Fifth Corps would be support.⁴⁹ Backed by expert leaders who were skilled engineers, the expeditionary army, with less troops than it should have had, received orders on December 6, 1864, to embark for the coast of North Carolina.⁵⁰ Ames and his troops left the Bermuda Hundred on December 8, reaching their rendezvous point at New Inlet, North Carolina on the December 15. During the weekend that ensued, Ames and his men awaited the coming of the Navy.⁵¹ In the past, the Navy had bludgeoned the defenses of Fort Fisher with solid shot and shells, but little damage resulted. Hopefully, a new barrage, and the landing of the infantry, would take the Confederate fortress.

The invasionary force was delayed by nature and by man. The day after Admiral David Porter and the navy arrived on December 18, exceedingly turbulent waters made the landing

⁴⁷ Adelbert Ames, *Capture of Fort Fisher*, (Library of Congress, 1897), 1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁹ Rod Gragg, *Confederate Goliath: The Battle of Fort Fisher*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 36.

⁵⁰ Ames, *Capture of Fort Fisher*, 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

seem unlikely to succeed. For the following week, a severe gale delayed transports bearing coal and other supplies needed for the Union fleet and troops.⁵² Ames, being more logistically diligent than in the past, managed to appropriately ration his supplies, thus his ship, which held one of his brigades, had enough provisions and did not make it necessary to attempt a harrowing landing on the Carolina coastline to resupply. An additional delay was due to the arrival of General Benjamin Butler. Technically, Butler commanded the sector in which the landing was taking place. Grant tried to be cautious with the situation. He wanted General Weitzel's oversight, yet Butler had the right to assume command as well. Butler, perhaps to improve the negative trajectory of his reputation, concocted a bizarre idea to send an old ship, laden with gunpowder, towards Fort Fisher. The ship would ignite, explode, and damage the outer defenses of the Fort obliterating defenders.⁵³ Grant pessimistically approved the plan, while Butler and Porter expressed optimism. Engineers and demolition experts, for an array of reasons, staunchly advocated against the plan.⁵⁴

The plan, as noted in Ames' account of the Battles of Fort Fisher, was a failure. The powder exploded at 2 pm on December 24.⁵⁵ The notorious scheme did little to inflict damage on the Fort; it was very anticlimactic, practically innocuous.⁵⁶ The vessel, which bore 215 tons of gunpowder, was described by a naval officer who said, "We all believed in it from the Admiral down, but when it proved so laughable a failure we, of the navy, laid its paternity upon Butler."⁵⁷ Indeed, Porter distanced himself from the attempt, justifying it as a last resort.

⁵² Ibid., 2.

⁵³ Foote, *The Civil War Narrative*, 716-717, Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 40

⁵⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁵⁵ Ames, *Capture of Fort Fisher*, 2.

⁵⁶ Foote, *The Civil War Narrative*, 718.

⁵⁷ Ames, *Capture of Fort Fisher*, 3.

Ultimately, the first attempt to take Fort Fisher became a failure, but fortunately, it did not imitate previous failures which cost the Union dearly like Fort Wagner and the Crater. The troops landed on Christmas day, following a barrage from Porter's fleet. Ames' division captured over 200 Confederate defenders and some artillery pieces as well.⁵⁸ As Ames instructed his division to charge and take the fort, Weitzel overruled him.⁵⁹ Having noticed that the fort was intact following the barrage, Weitzel advised against assaulting the position. Additionally, Butler, upon hearing word from prisoners captured by Ames that Confederate reinforcements outnumbering the Union force had arrived, ordered a withdraw. Both Confederate and Union armies suffered from inaccurate reports regarding how many soldiers actually participated in the battle.⁶⁰ However, due to the accelerated arrival of dusk, and the return of inclement weather, a portion of Ames' soldiers remained stranded on the beach, fearing capture.⁶¹ Ames' men avoided capture, which was never imminent, and the Union force withdrew from the mouth of the Cape Fear River in an embarrassing fashion.

Ames was livid and thus irritated by the events. Most notably, he had received word from his brigade commander, Newton M. Curtis, that the fort could be taken. However, as Ames ordered Curtis forward, counterming orders had halted the attack and eventually called Ames' division back to the transport boats.⁶² In a letter home, Ames expressed his dissatisfaction. "I feel disappointed and mortified at our failure, but have the consolation that the fault was not attributable to me in the least."⁶³ The first expedition to take Fort Fisher was a failure, and in the end the fact that Ames' assault never took place was a beneficial outcome. From the start, the

⁵⁸ Chris E. Fonvielle Jr., *The Wilmington Campaign: Last Rays of Departing Hope*, (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2001), 166-167.

⁵⁹ Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 186.

⁶⁰ Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 95-96.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 96, Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 165.

⁶² Ames, *Capture of Fort Fisher*, 6.

⁶³ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, January 2, 1865, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

plan was flawed. The Union force lacked proper oversight, as well as intelligence, regarding the state of Fort Fisher when the troops landed after the barrage. In short, most of the guns were still operable in Fort Fisher and the defenders were more than prepared with canister to shred the oncoming infantrymen. A battle that suffered from miscommunication, the First Battle of Fort Fisher had the possibility to be more than just embarrassing; it had the potential to be disastrous.

After the first expedition failed, the Union expediently assembled another force to take Fort Fisher. Now under the command of General Alfred H. Terry, the second expeditionary force consisted of over 8,000 men. Again, it was Ames' division that spearheaded the assault. Charles G. Paine's second division, an additional brigade from the Twenty-Fourth Corps led by Colonel Joseph C. Abbot, and a collection of marines and sailors comprised the rest of the landing force. However, Ames and his men would primarily face the daunting task on their own. The majority of Terry's force entrenched themselves to protect Ames' assault from a possible enemy counterattack from a Confederate position seven miles to the north.⁶⁴ The second expeditionary force would succeed where the first failed, and the battle displayed unequalled heroism as well as unfortunately unavoidable egotism.

The expedition, like the previous one, endured a grueling gale that greatly affected the large contingent of ships before they set sail for the stronghold on January 12, 1865.⁶⁵ Over eighty ships reached anchorage five miles outside of Fort Fisher that evening, compelling the Confederate commander, William Lamb, to request that General Braxton Bragg, stationed in Wilmington, send General Hoke's division from the north to reinforce the fortress.⁶⁶ As the Confederate defenders equipped themselves for the imminent assault, Ames' division prepared to make their landing. At the time, Ames and Newton Martin Curtis, found themselves in the midst

⁶⁴ Benson *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 78.

⁶⁵ Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 95-96.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

of a feud that stretched back to the first attempt to take the bastion. Curtis, believing that Ames did not oppose the order to retreat aggressively enough in the first battle, envied the young general's position and while also possessing a staunch dislike the attitudinal Ames. Ames had previously made accusations about Martin participating in trickery, and neither was talking to each other as the Union attack commenced.⁶⁷

The Second Battle of Fort Fisher, now led by Terry, and assisted by Admiral Porter, worked together to devise a strong strategy of attack. With a majority of the Union force protecting themselves against an attack from Hoke's division to the north, Ames' division would spearhead the assault from the land while 2,000 sailors and marines would charge the seaward end of Fort Fisher. On January 15, Porter's flotilla opened fire on the fort, and by midday had silenced a majority of the Confederate guns.⁶⁸ The navy excelled in its bombardment, but the sailors and marines failed miserably in their amphibious attack. Armed with cutlasses and pistols, the seamen and leathernecks charged in a discombobulated mass. The sailors and marines, unaccustomed to combat on the land, suffered significant losses. Still, their ill-fated attack did its job as it drew the Confederate's attention away from the section of the fort where Ames was to attack.⁶⁹

The defenders of Fort Fisher cheered when they repulsed the first surge of Union attackers, but that all changed when the primary assault under Ames soon commenced. Ames oversaw the entire operation, paying attention to every detail. Once everything was in order, Ames received permission from Terry to begin the attack. "Gentlemen," Ames told his staff, "we will now go forward."⁷⁰ Colonel Henry C. Lockwood, Ames' aide-de-camp wrote a detailed

⁶⁷ Ibid., 116.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 135.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 158-167

⁷⁰, Henry C. Lockwood "The Capture of Fort Fisher," *The Maine Bugle*, (January 1894), 39-64, 46.

account of the battle. “It was half past three when the steam-whistles shrieked out the signal for the attack,” Lockewood recalled. “The Confederate officers had scarcely ceased cheering at the repulse of the sailors when they were surprised to see Federal battle-flags on the left of their work. The ground over which the right of our column passed was marshy and difficult; sometimes the men sank waist-deep into the mire, and some of the wounded perished here.”⁷¹

Lead by Curtis’ troops, the division charged forward, closely followed by Colonel Galusha Pennypacker’s brigade. Once the Union troops surged over the parapets and walls, the hand to hand fighting became some of the most vicious of the war. “It was a charge of my brigades, one after the other,” Ames recalled, “followed by desperate fighting at close quarters over the parapet and traverses and in and through the covered ways. All the time we were exposed to the musketry and artillery of the enemy, while our own Navy was thundering away, occasionally making us victims of its fire.”⁷²

Ames’ brigades managed to gain a foothold in the fort, which was critical, but as the fighting continued, stretching to roughly seven hours in length, the Union soldiers encountered staunch defenders who refused to relinquish the many traverses of the fort.⁷³ Lockewood commented that the ability to hold the captured traverses while pressing onward into other portions of the fort was a difficult problem but one effectively managed by Ames. Giving ample credit to the veteran troops and immediate officers, Lockewood focused a great deal of his praise towards Ames. He described Ames as a commander in the thick of the fighting, bearing a great deal of the responsibility for the successful attack, which was accurate. While Terry remained over 800 yards away on the shoreline, Ames had complete authority over the details of the

⁷¹ Ibid., 46-47

⁷² Ames, *Capture of Fort Fisher*, 12.

⁷³ Traverses are walls which separate gun emplacements, building entrances, and other positions from enfilading fire.

engagement. In his account, Lockewood detailed a conversation, overheard by Captain Charles A. Carlton, between the two generals prior to the battle. After Terry agreed that the assault should begin, Ames asked if he had any specific orders. Terry replied, “No, you understand the situation and what it is desired to accomplish. I leave everything to your discretion.”⁷⁴ Thus, Ames actively attentively led in the midst of the chaotic struggle. “It is difficult to understand how Ames went unscathed at this time,” Lockewood recalled, “while exposing himself, as he did, for he wore a brigadier-general’s dress-coat.”⁷⁵ In a letter home, Ames expressed his surprise that he evaded injury or death during the fight. “My escape unhurt was quite miraculous,” Ames admitted. “Of the six staff officers whom I took into the fight with me, only two escaped unhurt. The fighting was of the most desperate character and reflects the highest honor upon all concerned.”⁷⁶

As the Union troops pushed through each traverse and parapet, the fighting escalated in ferocity.⁷⁷ Soldiers discharged their muskets at point blank range, officers wielded their swords in close quarters, and the disorganized regiments soon formed their own units comprised of soldiers from different brigades. Ames was unable to keep units intact, but he was able to keep the attack from halting, although at one point he considered entrenching and waiting for reinforcements.⁷⁸ The fighting did not diminish when the light of the sun did. Officers, whose voices were hoarse from giving orders over the inferno, led their men using the butt of their muskets and the cold steel of swords and bayonets to rush the defenders of each traverse.⁷⁹ One Confederate battery, called Buchanan, continued to pour shells into the fray “killing and

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁷⁶ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, January 30, 1865, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

⁷⁷ *O.R.* Series I, Vol., XLVI Part I, 399.

⁷⁸ Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 210.

⁷⁹ Lockewood “The Capture of Fort Fisher,” 54

wounded them [Federals] by the score.”⁸⁰ As recalled by Ames’ aide-de-camp, “The enemy still kept up an impetuous resistance, and would not permit darkness to put an end to hostilities.”⁸¹

In the midst of the fighting, Ames stood steadfast, calm, and collected. Most of Lockewood’s account of the fight, which is perhaps the most neutral of any given, described his commander during the zenith of the battle:

At last Ames stood within this circuit of fire amid the fragments of his division; every brigade and almost all of the regimental commanders had fallen, as well as most of his personal staff, so that for necessary duty substitutes for the latter had to be taken temporarily from the most available officers at hand. Ames, who had entered the fort at the head of the Second Brigade, remained there fighting with his men until the close of the action.⁸²

After seven hours of grueling fire, long after the sun had set over the Carolina coastline, Fort Fisher capitulated. At one earlier moment, Terry doubted the attack would triumph after the engagement extended beyond the light of day but it nonetheless succeeded.⁸³ The fight, which took place primarily at dusk or in the pitch darkness of night, concluded with Ames’ men in sole possession of the prized Fort Fisher, while the remaining Confederates who avoided death or capture retreated two miles away to Battery Buchannan.⁸⁴ General Terry, joining a contingent of Abbot’s brigade, marched towards the Confederate battery where, according to Abbot, the commanding officer of the Confederate force tendered the surrender of his despondent and depleted command as well as the battery itself.⁸⁵ Ames, in contrast, contended that Colonel Lockewood already accepted the surrender of the troops who positioned themselves in Battery Buchannan.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, by 10 o’clock that evening, the Union army had finally succeeded in

⁸⁰ Ibid., 54.

⁸¹ Ibid., 54

⁸² Ibid., 53

⁸³ Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 212.

⁸⁴ Ames, *Capture of Fort Fisher*, 16.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 16., Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 228.

⁸⁶ Ames, *Capture of Fort Fisher*, 16.

taking the last great Confederate salient, a crushing blow to the morale and a logistical loss for a weakening cause.

The North was ecstatic about the fall of Fort Fisher. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton arrived at Fort Fisher to conduct an interview with General Terry and discuss the details of the successful capture. Yet, in a common development, the senior commander accepted the credit for the capture even though he did little besides give the order to take the stronghold. In one of Terry's official reports, he applauds Ames, recommending him for a promotion, and gives ample credit to the brigade commanders who fought admirably as well.⁸⁷ However, that report found itself in the annals of War Department papers while another report from Terry, which highlighted himself as the primary decision maker, is what journalists relied on to chronicle the events of January 15, 1865. Ames' invaluable role in the taking of the fort was a glaring omission in the northern newspapers which exasperated Ames and confused soldiers like Lockwood who called it a "great injustice to a gallant officer."⁸⁸ In a later report, Terry said that, "On reflection, I feel that I have not done full justice to General Ames' merits."⁸⁹ Regardless of Terry's post-battle reflections, Ames did not receive the proper praise for his efforts. He did receive a promotion, making him a brevet-Brigadier General in the Regular Army, but regrettably only a few individuals knew of General Ames' role in taking Fort Fisher.⁹⁰

Ames wrote to his parents, saying, "I believe he [Terry] gives me the credit of my services in his report, but the newspapers do not. I was in hopes I should be made a Major General, but think it doubtful for the present."⁹¹ Ultimately, most of the participants in the Battle

⁸⁷ *O.R.* Series I, Vol., XLVI Part I, 400.

⁸⁸ Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 199.

⁸⁹ *O.R.* Series I, Vol., LI, Part I, 1200.

⁹⁰ Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, 199.

⁹¹ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, February 9, 1865, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

of Fort Fisher wanted their just accolades and adoration for their part in one of the final, and one of the most impressive, assaults during the war. In the end, Ames felt slighted and years afterwards, in 1897, he wrote his own account of the battle. Ames' work, while backed by solid research, angered his former rival Curtis, who was still alive and won a Medal of Honor for his gallantry at Fort Fisher.⁹² The two officers, who feuded during the war, clashed years later. Curtis offered a well-investigated rebuttal to Ames' account, reprimanding Ames for bringing up the topic after one of the key actors, General Terry, had been deceased for nearly seven years.⁹³ While Ames described Terry as a spectator and minimized Curtis's role—actually calling into question the worthiness of his Medal of Honor—Curtis said that Terry deserved primary credit and that Ames would have rather entrenched around Fort Fisher than scale the ramparts.⁹⁴ The men did give credit to each other; Curtis did not disgrace his commander's intelligence or coolness under pressure and Ames applauded Curtis for his bravery and judgment.⁹⁵ Yet, Ames and Curtis took their quarrel to the grave and both refused to concede that they exaggerated their part in the battle. In the court of public opinion, Curtis' account initially gained a more supportive following.⁹⁶

However, in likely the most neutral account of the battle, Henry C. Lockwood details the superior management attributes and unquestionable courage of Ames. Yet, Colonel Lockwood also designates General Curtis as “herculean” and describes the valor of his leadership.⁹⁷ Additionally, Lockwood does not speak ill towards Terry in his account. In short, each officer, whose name Lockwood mentions, had a key role in the Union's success that day.

⁹² Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 228.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 266-267

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 266-267.

⁹⁵ Ames, *Capture of Fort Fisher*, 23.

⁹⁶ Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 267.

⁹⁷ Lockwood “The Capture of Fort Fisher,” 53.

Terry devised the operation that succeeded and allowed his capable subordinate to make decisions during the engagement, Ames directed and participated in the victorious maneuvers, and Curtis dauntlessly led the first wave of the attack and received a gruesome facial wound in the process.

Ames, although frustrated because his role in the battle had been diminished or completely bypassed, did not stop praising his troops for their efforts. “The conduct of the officers and men of this division was most gallant,” Ames reported.⁹⁸ In his official account of the battle, Ames applauded each of his brigade commanders, including Curtis, citing their bravery, efficiency, and zeal.⁹⁹ Colonel Lockewood’s account championed his general who championed his subordinates. Describing Ames as courageous, cool under fire, and eliciting the admiration of both officers and enlisted man, Lockewood contended that, “The nation should be thankful that we had the right man in the right place.”¹⁰⁰ Ames’ service, throughout the war but particularly during Fort Fisher, displayed the type of invaluable leadership young generals and mid-level commanders had in producing military success for the Union.

With Fort Fisher in Federal hands, Wilmington, North Carolina faced inevitable occupation. On February 22, Ames’ division entered the city of Wilmington.¹⁰¹ In the early morning hours, Terry’s army, led by Abbot’s brigade advanced with swords drawn and bayonets fixed toward earthworks outside of the city. The Union soldiers surged over the Confederate defenses, but the only obstacles they encountered consisted of spiked cannons and discarded ammunition boxes.¹⁰² Met by the chief of police bearing a white flag, Terry received word that the mayor of Wilmington had authorized the surrender of the city. At 9:30 am, Terry and the

⁹⁸ *O.R. Series I, Vol., XLVI Part 1, 416.*

⁹⁹ Ames, *Capture of Fort Fisher*, 23.

¹⁰⁰ Lockewood “The Capture of Fort Fisher,” 48.

¹⁰¹ *O.R. Series I, Vol., XLVII, Part I, 151.*

¹⁰² Fonvielle Jr., *The Wilmington Campaign*, 428.

leading columns entered the city, the Yankee bands blaring “Yankee Doodle” as they marched.¹⁰³ The capture of the city was a just reward to the troops, especially Ames’, who fought so valiantly to take Fort Fisher.

Following the capture of Wilmington, Ames and his division participated in the pursuit of Braxton Bragg’s force who had withdrawn from Wilmington. The two armies did not clash in a full-scale engagement, but the two sides did skirmish.¹⁰⁴ In addition to taking Fort Fisher and Wilmington, Terry’s army played a supportive role in replenishing General William T. Sherman’s army, which had entered North Carolina after torching Georgia and South Carolina.¹⁰⁵ As Grant’s army wore down the southern resolve in Virginia, Terry’s army joined forces with Sherman on March 21, making Sherman’s command 88,000 strong.¹⁰⁶ Ames served at First Bull Run with Sherman. Now, four years later, the two men were in the same army again, and Ames could see that the end of the war was in sight. In fact, the day after Wilmington fell, Ames told his parents, “The rebels now have only Richmond, and I do not believe they can remain there long on account of the difficulty of procuring subsistence... The Confederacy is going with a crash.”¹⁰⁷

Ames and his division did not participate in the final skirmishes in the Carolinas—his command supported Sherman’s troops—but he wrote home describing futile Confederate attacks. “Our forces were attacked by the rebels, and it is thought they intended to fight Sherman at a disadvantage and improve the only opportunity they probably will have to do anything

¹⁰³ Ibid., 428.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 430.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 435

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 435, Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, March 26, 1865, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

¹⁰⁷ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, February 23, 1865, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

positive to retrieve their waning cause,” Ames wrote.¹⁰⁸ When Ames dated his letter on March 26, 1865, he did so as a major general in the U.S. Volunteers. Brevetted two weeks prior, Ames’ promotion was considered an appropriate measure for a deserving officer.¹⁰⁹

Although Ames’ service during the Civil War began with the peril and excitement of First Bull Run, it ended quietly. Following three days of deliberation, Lieutenant General Joseph E. Johnson surrendered his forces as well as all active Confederate military from North Carolina to Florida. The surrender became official on April 26, 1865.¹¹⁰ Ames would remain in the Army, serving in several capacities in one of the districts established in the South following the end of the war. During his time in North and South Carolina, Ames began another chapter in his life which would significantly impact his career and livelihood. It would overshadow his military service and would regrettably draw scholarly and public attention away from a military career that incarnated the brand of leadership and the dedicated service of mid-level commanders that helped deliver victory to the North.¹¹¹

In the words of Harry King Benson, “The war was over. For Ames, a Major General at twenty-nine years of age, the long, bitter conflict had been a springboard to almost instant military success. Vigorous, able and dedicated, the young West Pointer had all of the prerequisites for military leadership.”¹¹² Although assisted by positive recommendations from senior officers and former commanders who were aware or had witnessed his actions, Ames also earned many of his promotions for his conduct. “Wherever circumstances placed him,” Benson said, “he earned the encomiums of superiors. If he frequently aroused animosity among

¹⁰⁸ Adelbert to Martha and Jesse Ames, March 26, 1865, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

¹⁰⁹ George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy, Volume II*, 2nd ed., (New York, NY: D. Van Nostrand, 1879), 1892, 773.

¹¹⁰ Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 85.

¹¹¹ Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 265.

¹¹² Benson, *The Public Career of Adelbert Ames, 1861-1876*, 85.

subordinates by his strict military discipline, it was turned, often as not, into respect and loyalty by his courage and willingness to endure the same hardships as his men.¹¹³

¹¹³ Ibid., 85.

Conclusion

Adelbert Ames' postwar life lacked the same exhilarating peril that battle brought him, but it was also far from underwhelming and routine. While still serving in the regular army, Ames requested a leave of absence to travel Europe, an excursion that opened his eyes to the world and made him question whether or not to remain in the army.¹ Upon his return, Ames, a lieutenant colonel in the peacetime army, arrived in Mississippi. He handled a variety of minor tasks over the next few years. Due to the inability to produce a new state constitution, Mississippi remained under military rule. Ames soon found himself as the provisional military governor, an appointment given directly by the new president, Ulysses S. Grant.² Regardless of any personal convictions Ames may have had, either for or against the policies of reconstruction, he did his utmost to enforce the law in an uncooperative environment.

In 1870, Ames married Blanche Butler, the daughter of his former commander Benjamin Butler.³ As their family began to grow, so did the opposition to the reconstruction. In Mississippi, inhabitants grew restless and Republicans quarreled over assuring rights and education to the freed slaves of the state.⁴ Ames, still in the army, ran for the U.S. senate seat in Mississippi following the Magnolia State's readmission into the Union on February 3, 1870; he won, but likely because rival opponents withdrew.⁵ During his time as Senator, Ames became increasingly aware of the defects developing in the reconstruction of post-war Mississippi, specifically its struggles after it returned to the Union. Free blacks took notice of their senator,

¹ Richard N. Current, *Three Carpetbag Governors*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 71.

² *Ibid.*, 71.

³ Pauline Ames Plimpton, *The Ancestry of Blanch Butler Ames and Adelbert Ames*, (New York, NY: Wizard Graphics INC, 1977), 257.

⁴ Richard Nelson Current, *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers: A Reinterpretation*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), 179.

⁵ *Ibid.* 179-181

believing him to be a force of good and a better alternative to the current governor, moderate Republican and a rival of Ames, James Alcorn.⁶ Ultimately, Ames defeated Alcorn in the gubernatorial race of 1873.

Ames' time as governor was rife with violence and corruption. He quickly became assimilated into the infamous group known as Carpetbaggers. However, while Ames was not a native southerner and did have some political aspirations, he was not of the same mold as the corruptible and malicious Carpetbaggers who infested the Deep South.⁷ While Ames managed to serve with integrity, his associates failed in upholding their duties and his detractors grew in number. By 1875, the Democratic Party united and captured the vote of nearly every white voter.⁸ The Democrats won the election and controlled the state legislature, and when Ames denounced their intentions, the state senate began the process to impeach Ames; the proceedings began on March 16, 1876 and the elected body called into question the governor's actions claiming they were "unmindful of the high duties of his office."⁹ Infuriated at the trial attacking his character, Ames, although wanting to resign, refused to do so with the Senate challenging his integrity. Interestingly, Ames' wife, Blanche, devised a simple solution that both parties agreed to—the Senate cancelled the impeachment trial and Ames readily resigned.¹⁰

Although quite done with politics, Ames' life continued to consist of fascinating encounters and events even though he was out of the public eye. With his family now in Minnesota, Ames lived there for a short period of time. During a visit to Northfield, Minnesota, Ames found himself as a witness and a participant in the gunfight between the local citizens and

⁶ Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War*, (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006), 53.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁸ Current, *Three Carpetbag Governors*, 86.

⁹ *Ibid.* 91, *Journal of the Senate of the State of Mississippi. Court of Impeachment in the Trials of Adelbert Ames, Governor; Alexander K. Davis, Lieutenant-Governor; Thomas W. Cardozo, Superintendent of Public Education.* (Jackson, MS: Power & Barksdale State Printers, 1876) 5.

¹⁰ Current, *Three Carpetbag Governors*, 92.

the Jesse James-Cole Younger gang while they attempted to rob the local bank. Ames downplayed his role, saying that he and other citizens were “apparently heroes.”¹¹ Ames went on to become prosperous, owning businesses in Minnesota, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. His private life was a success, but at an advanced age, he volunteered to serve his country once more as a brigadier general in the brief Spanish-American War. During the fighting, Ames participated in the Santiago Campaign, serving admirably in his ephemeral return to the army.¹² A golfing companion of the Rockefellers, who he befriended in his later years, Ames spent his final days in Florida, where he passed away on April 13, 1933 at the age of 97—the last surviving general to serve in the regular army during the Civil War.¹³

By most standards, Ames lived a long, fruitful life. However, perhaps the most impressive part of his life, his Civil War record and accomplishments, has received the least amount of attention from scholars. However, does Ames’ military life deserve more attention? Perhaps, the minimal scholarship directed his way is suitable enough? Was he was just one of many young men to fight during the War Between the States? Ultimately, Ames’ military career does deserve more recognition. The minimal scholarship is insufficient since it does not focus enough attention on Ames the soldier. He was not just a participant in a massive volunteer army comprised of thousands of individuals with many experiences. He was a gifted officer, a decorated hero, who obtained a nearly impeccable record, while providing the Union with one of its finest, and most highly regarded, young generals. Even more notable, he personified the characteristics of the fiery and adept secondary officer that helped the Union achieve victory.

¹¹ “General Ames Too Modest to Tell Part in Northfield Raid,” *Northfield News*, August 2, 1929, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

¹² Mark M. Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary*, (New York, NY: David McKay Company Inc., 1959), 12.

¹³ “Gen. Adelbert Ames dies,” *Florida Times Union*, April 14, 1933, Ames Family Papers, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

Ames was not another average officer in a volunteer army comprised of many. Ames was one of the most talented and esteemed young officers in the Union Army, and, when compared to his colleagues, deserves to be considered one of the finest if not the best boy general to fight for the North during the American Civil War. On the battlefield, he aptly demonstrated his military skills, which he learned while at West Point. Validating his skills and intellect in multiple capacities, Ames displayed his engineering abilities on multiple occasions, particularly during the Peninsula Campaign.¹⁴ Additionally, the officer exhibited his ability to train and instruct his soldiers for what awaited them on the battlefield. Although it stretched his tolerance, and Ames himself frequently succumbed to impatience and fury in the process, he deserves the credit for preparing and equipping one of the finest volunteer regiments in the war, the Twentieth Maine.¹⁵ Ames would only command the regiment for a few months, yet the accomplishments of the regiment, during and after Ames' leadership, are a direct reflection on the discipline Ames provided during training and the invaluable and prodigious leadership and poise he showed on the battlefield.

The high praise Ames received from his commanding officers attests to his intelligence, capability, and reliability as a commander. Whether in personal letters of correspondence, post-war memoirs, or official reports, Ames' superiors lauded his abilities. They detailed his intelligence, his courage, and his valor. The officers who noticed and acknowledged Ames' meritorious conduct were not unknowns but rather notable figures in the Union army. Grant, Meade, Hooker, Howard, Griffin, and many more extolled Ames' service, singling the young

¹⁴ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol., XI, Part II, 352.

¹⁵ John J. Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine: A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War*, (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1957), 1.

officer out of many for his demeanor and abilities.¹⁶ When examining Ames' talents and skills partnered with the high praise he received, it becomes apparent that he was one of the more heralded young officers in the army.

A defining characteristic of Ames' military career was his promotion to brigadier general at the age of 27. Becoming a general at that age, Ames joined an impressive fraternity of young officers in the Union army that became "boy generals" during the war. The boy generals served valiantly. Most of them garnered acclaim for their fearlessness and many received decorations and battlefield promotions. Unfortunately, while Ames is one of these esteemed young soldiers, his name is often unmentioned. In comparison, young generals like Emory Upton, Wesley Merritt, and George Armstrong Custer receive more acclaim and each have received recent scholarship detailing their actions. Yet, Ames' career is arguably the most distinguished of any boy general.

As noted previously, Ames' conduct on the battlefield was nearly impeccable. In addition, he was a West Point graduate who served in the engineers, artillery, infantry, and almost served in the cavalry, yet his superiors deemed his services as an infantry officer too valuable to allow him to command horseman.¹⁷ Furthermore, Ames received the Medal of Honor for his actions at First Bull Run and rose to the rank of major general, commanding infantry divisions during some of the most pivotal portions of major battles in the Eastern Theatre. The careers, courage, and conduct of Ames' fellow boy generals are, in most instances, above reproach; it is inappropriate to downplay their service. However, Ames' career is the most prestigious and impressive. In order to match the amount of responsibility and decorations Ames

¹⁶ Blanche Ames Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, (London, UK: MacDonald & Company, 1964), 98-100.

¹⁷ Blanche Ames Ames, *Adelbert Ames: General, Senator, Governor, 1835-1933*, (London, UK: MacDonald & Company, 1964), 218.

achieved, it would require the combination of nearly every other boy general's record. Moreover, Ames trained one of the finest Union volunteer regiments in the entire war—an achievement that none of his colleagues can match. The other boy generals, many serving predominantly in the cavalry, were daring and skilled and have justly garnered acclaim for their actions and supportive roles. However, while some of them served in the infantry, some of them earned the rank of major general, and two won the Medal of Honor, Ames was the only boy general to accomplish all of those feats. The finest boy general, Ames regrettably lacks the same attention yet boasts a more outstanding record.

When researching Ames, it becomes apparent that the lack of scholarship directed towards him is unfortunate. However, it is also vital to avoid placing him in pantheons where he does not belong. Sources indicate that Ames was a phenomenal soldier, but to elevate him to the status of one of his admirers, U.S. Grant, or men like Philip Sheridan or William T. Sherman, would be inappropriate based on their status and responsibilities for the entire Union cause. Additionally, in order to provide Ames the proper attention, it is important not to diminish the actions of comparable officers, Francis Channing Barlow, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, and the boy generals. Rather, Ames should receive praise for his actions and be placed within the appropriate context as a prime example of the type of secondary commander that enabled the campaigns led by Grant and Sherman to succeed. It was officers like Ames, in command of corps and divisions, who helped the Union Army win tide-turning battles. Ames was an unquestionably gifted and regarded general whose career was equitable to other noted corps and division commanders. He shined as probably the brightest and most successful of the renowned boy generals, and proved to be an invaluable mid-level commander whose leadership helped the Union win the war.

With zeal and fortitude, Ames served admirably during the war. While his name is somewhat obscure and portions of his career were spent as a member of failed and futile campaigns, his military career was far too impressive to overlook. Ames is mentioned sporadically in Civil War monographs; the more detailed the piece of scholarship, looking at the Battle of Fort Fisher for instance, the more frequently he is mentioned. In fact, while the accomplishments of his former regiment and subordinate, the Twentieth Maine and Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, are nearly legendary, the officer greatly responsible for their success goes unnoticed. Ames' career included stints in obscure and relatively insignificant and unsuccessful campaigns. However, he did serve in a significant amount of notable and important campaigns and engagements.

Ames was a man who braved the direst of circumstances during war, and while prone to react inappropriately due to his temperamental deficiencies, never failed to do his utmost on the battlefield. Not once did Ames ever ask his troops to do what he would not. He continually demonstrated discipline and repeatedly succeeded in his tasks. As a young, ambitious, heroic, yet imperfect officer, Ames repeatedly epitomized the characteristics that made him a valued officer and an important contributor to the Union cause. In short, and most importantly, Ames exemplifies the brand of soldier that gave the North exceptional field commanders that could be relied on to attain victory.

In an article published the day after Ames' death, J.R. Lewis of Holyoke, Massachusetts described the vast accomplishments of the Union officer. Having outlived many of his contemporaries from the Civil War era, Ames was described as "the last leaf on the tree and he must have been the last prominent figure of one of the most stirring periods in our history."¹⁸ In a prophetic statement, Lewis wrote, "Possibly the rush of modern times make the figures of a past

¹⁸ "Gen. Adelbert Ames dies," *Florida Times Union*, April 14, 1933.

age increasingly less concern to us.”¹⁹ Perhaps the rush of modern times has indeed made Ames less of a concern. While other individuals of significance from the distant war receive greater attention and notoriety, Ames does not. Even those individuals who share the same status and importance as Ames are more renowned in both amateur and academic circles. His entire life was one of unique and impressive experiences, the greatest of which was his gallant service in the American Civil War when he displayed the highest forms of heroism and contributed to the ultimate Union victory. If not for the Civil War, in all likelihood, Ames would have just been a Mainer from Rockland, a bystander, an unknown. Ironically, even though his accomplishments are worthy of study, he is still somewhat of an unknown.

¹⁹ Ibid.

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