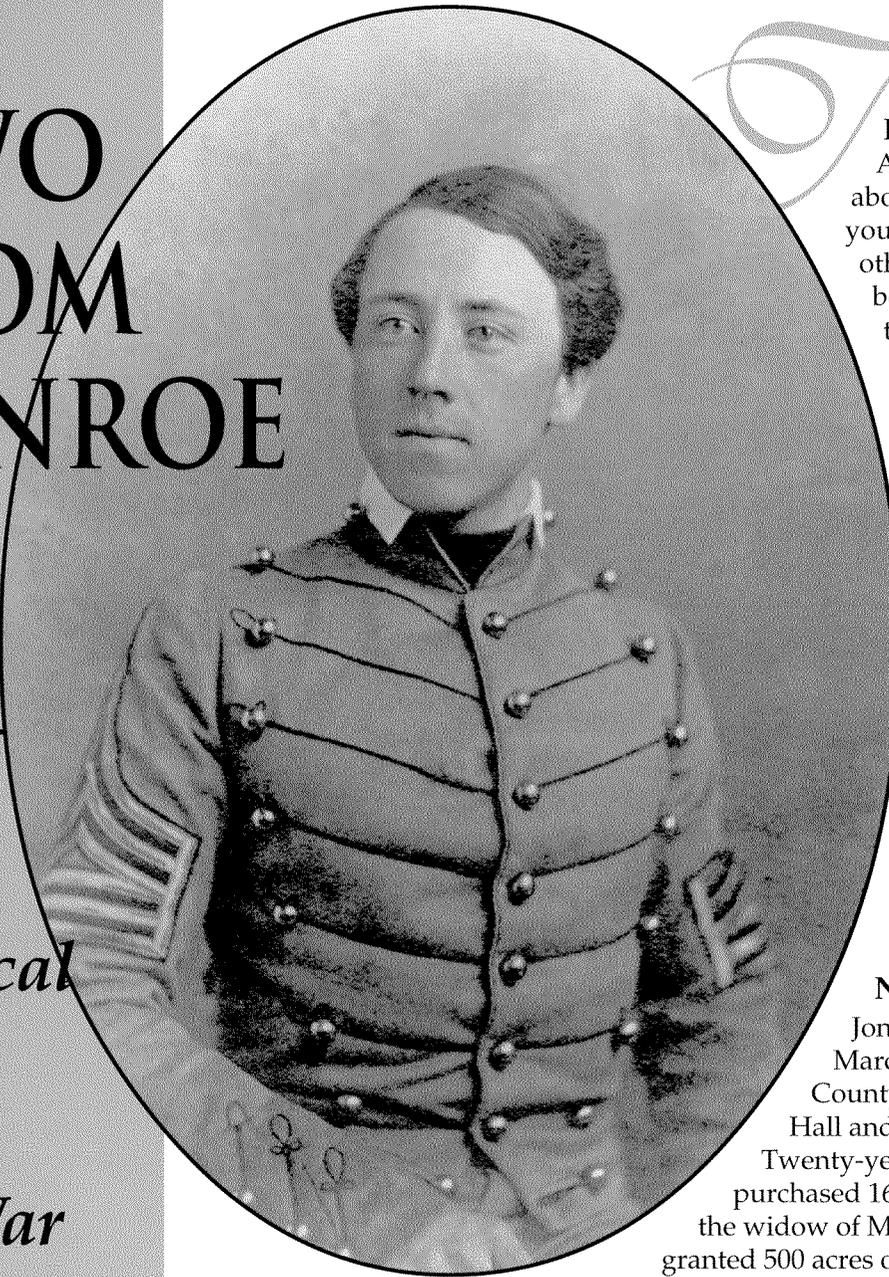


# TWO FROM MONROE

## An Historical Sketch of Two Civil War Heroes



**HIS** is not a story about George Armstrong Custer. This is a story about the relationship between two young men, one being Custer and the other a little known Civil War hero born Jonathan N. Hall, who took the name Norman J. Hall after graduating from West Point two ahead of Custer.

Hall was two years and eight months older than Custer. Their lives closely paralleled one another, from Monroe, Michigan, to West Point, through the early days of the Civil War, culminating at the Battle of Gettysburg.

In all the printed history of the Civil War and its aftermath, there is no indication either acknowledged the other in any way, commented on the other or their Civil War record, wrote to or about the other, or appear together in a photograph.

### Norman Jonathan Hall

Jonathan Norman Hall was born March 4, 1837 in Fayette, Seneca County, New York, to Edify Wolcott Hall and her husband Joseph Hall.

Twenty-year-old Joseph Hall, in 1820, purchased 160 acres of land in Fayette, from the widow of Minnah Hyatt. Hyatt had been granted 500 acres of land bordering Lake Geneva in Fayette for his service as a Revolutionary War Private.

Seneca County records show on March 18, 1820, "for and in consideration of twenty dollars" Rachel Hyatt executed a deed to Joseph Hall for 160 acres of land in Fayette.

Hall started his farm, married and raised a family on this fertile land bordering Lake Geneva. His property adjoined that of several famous persons of the time. Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon church, held meetings in a home about two miles away in 1829. The first Mormon public meeting was held there April 11, 1830.<sup>1</sup>

Across Lake Geneva in Jersey, Steuben County, Joseph Hall married Edify Wolcott in May 1830. They raised their two boys and two girls on the Fayette farm.

Jonathan Norman, the elder son, was named after Edify's brother and father. Oliver Wolcott, signer of the Declaration of Independence and Governor of Connecticut, was a distant relative of Edify Wolcott Hall.

Although Joseph Hall prospered in his farm venture, he sought additional land. Opportunity in the Western Territory beckoned. Many New Englanders and New Yorkers moved west in the 1830-60 period. Michigan had gained statehood in 1837. The Erie and other tributary canals and railroads had opened it to the west. After almost thirty years in Fayette, Joseph and Edify Hall sold their New York farmland, moved to East Raisinville, Monroe County, Michigan where they purchased a 333-acre plot along the Raisin River. Jonathan Norman Hall was twelve years old.

The Halls built a home along the River Raisin. The farm land was flat and fertile. Lots on both sides had been platted many years earlier in a form known as "ribbon" plats. Lots were narrow and long, extending back from the river. Thus, the lots allowed access to more farms on each side of the river.

**JOHN C. CALDER**

ABOVE: Cadet Norman Hall, from Class of 1859 Yearbook. 1859 was the first five-year class at the Military Academy. Courtesy West Point Library.

Here the Hall children grew up. Norman's letters to his sister written from West Point speak about the enjoyment of sailing on the river. The original one-room Papermill School was situated about a half mile east and across the river from a mill which produced wrapping paper. The present Papermill Schoolhouse, now a museum, was built in the 1860s on the site of the one which the Hall children attended. Regardless of the quality of education, Norman prepared to attend one of the more difficult schools in the country.

Shortly before the family arrived, the First Congregational Church of Raisinville was organized in 1849 at the Papermill School. A historian, citing the dedication in June 1850 wrote, "the society is feeble though the pulpit is supplied every Sunday." The Hall family attended church at this schoolhouse. Every other Sunday, the minister held church services at another school one-half mile west of the Hall property.<sup>2</sup>

East Raisinville was an active community. The river supported not only the paper mill, but grist mills, tanneries and distilleries. When the river froze in winter, ice was cut to use in the summer. Travelers and visitors had a choice of several hostels.

Young Norman helped on the farm. He gained a working knowledge of horses, advantageous for his future cavalry training at West Point. A search of Monroe newspapers, published in the early 1850s, reveals a sole mention of the Joseph Hall family. In 1853, Norman had won third prize at the County Fair in the green bean category.

Apparently early Jonathan Norman Hall preferred the name Norman, signing letters J. Norman Hall. His 1854 appointment to West Point by Jefferson Davis bears the name Jonathan N. Hall. The West Point Register of graduates shows both names in the alphabetical locator. After graduation, he only used the name Norman J. Hall.

Entrance to the Military Academy at West Point was open to all young men who could meet admission requirements. Records show that during the period in which Civil War classes entered, the majority of entrants were middle class with more rural than urban orientation. In the period 1842-79 almost twenty-five percent of parents' occupations were farmers.<sup>3</sup>

Entrance requirements to West Point in the 1850s were not difficult. As long as one was in good physical condition and could show basic skills in reading, writing, and basic



*Cadet George A. Custer, 1861.  
Courtesy Special Collections,  
United States Military  
Academy Library.*

arithmetic, and had an appointment, he could be accepted in the plebe class. More stringent entrance requirements were not required until after the Civil War. The 1854 entering class and three subsequent classes were divided according to age, those under eighteen being assigned to the five-year class.

On January 31, 1853, Michigan Representative E. J. Penniman placed the name of J. Norman Hall on the list of West Point applicants. On March 2, 1854 Hall, was

officially recommended by D. A. Noble, Representative from Michigan's Second Congressional District. On March 10, 1854, Norman received his conditional appointment in the first five-year class. It was signed by Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War. Hall accepted the appointment with the proviso "he will bind himself to serve the United States eight years unless sooner discharged." West Point was three months ahead.

Custer was attending his second year in Monroe, Michigan at Stebbins Academy when Hall received the appointment. It would seem that the local papers of the time might have been interested since Hall was Monroe's first appointee to West Point. No record has surfaced. Had there been a published notice, certainly the Reeds (Custer's step-sister married a Reed) or Custer, even at age fourteen, might have been aware of Hall's appointment.

### **George Armstrong Custer**

Probably every book of the many hundreds written about George Armstrong Custer gives a very thorough background of his family. The following is a brief sketch of his early years.

Emanuel Custer came to New Rumley, Ohio, from Maryland. Marrying in 1828, he was widowed in 1834 with three small children. He married a widow, Maria Ward Kirkpatrick, who also had three children. Into this ready-made family, their third child (after losing two) was George Armstrong Custer, born December 5, 1839. In the years following, Emanuel and Maria added three brothers and a sister to the household.

Many books do not relate that Custer's father, a black-

smith and farmer, moved his family from Ohio to Monroe in 1842. Thus, George Armstrong, just under three years of age, spent six months in Monroe before his father moved the family back to New Rumley. The rapid return was occasioned by Emmanuel Custer's horses being stolen. He apparently had enough of Monroe for awhile. He returned to New Rumley and purchased a farm outside of the town.

The youthful Custer, as had Norman Hall in New York and Michigan, attended a one-room Ohio school. In his formative years, Custer became attached to his step-sister Lydia Ann Kirkpatrick, who was fourteen years older than him. She helped her mother raise the newer additions to the Custer clan, George, Nevin and Thomas. In 1846 she married David Reed of Monroe and moved to Michigan.

Lydia Ann Reed, lonesome for her Ohio family, asked or suggested that young George come to stay with her in Monroe. Maria and Emanuel had sons born in 1842, 1845 and 1848, so perhaps they acquiesced quite readily. George, age ten in 1849, moved to Michigan. He attended the New Dublin School at the corner of Harrison and 6th streets in Monroe. Custer stayed with the Reeds during the school year, returning to New Rumley in summer to help with farm chores. In 1853 he attended Stebbins Academy, a new school in Monroe.

When Stebbins Academy closed after two years, Custer returned to Ohio to continue his schooling. To earn extra income he accepted a grade school teaching job. At the same time, he attended school to brush up on his mathematics. He, like Jonathan Hall, wished to advance his career by entering West Point. Though an 1856 request for an appointment had been turned down, he received an appointment from his Ohio Congressman in 1857. His conditional appointment was also signed by Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War. Custer, an Ohio resident, entered West Point when he was seventeen years old, in June 1857. Due to his age he was assigned to the Class of 1862 which proved to be the last of three experimental five-year classes.

From 1849 to 1854 Jonathan Hall of East Raisinville, and George Custer in Monroe lived about five miles apart. While Custer's stay in Monroe was off-again-on-again, Hall was a permanent resident from age twelve to seventeen years.

The combined population of Monroe and East Raisinville in 1850 was about 2000. One of the most prominent men in the area was Daniel Bacon, a bank president, Judge, and property owner who had come west in the 1820s. In April 1842 his second child, Elizabeth, was born. Libbie, as she became known, was a bright attractive youngster whose life would become linked with the name Custer until her death in 1933. The link has remained beyond their deaths.

In early November 1862, Hall received a letter from Judge Bacon<sup>4</sup> congratulating him on his appointment to lead the 7th Michigan Regiment. Bacon surmised that Hall



*Elizabeth Bacon and her father, Judge Daniel Bacon, in the 1850s. Courtesy of Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.*

would someday become a General. Hall sent a thank-you letter to the Judge. This is as close as this writer has found that Hall was known to the Bacons and to a prominent Monroe citizen.

Libbie Bacon was living in Monroe at the time of her father's correspondence with Hall.<sup>5</sup> It seems difficult to believe that she and the Judge might not have talked about the letter of congratulations or mentioned how proud he was to have Hall of Monroe as Colonel of a Michigan Regiment. Libbie, however, had her mind set on George Custer.

It is also difficult to believe that in the small town of Monroe, Jonathan Hall and George Custer did not know each other. There are conflicting, apocryphal stories about Libbie and George as youngsters. None mentioned Hall.

Trying to place Hall, Custer and Elizabeth Bacon in context is difficult. One unattributed story, dreamed up by an early writer to help his story along, tells of Elizabeth (Libbie), seeing Custer walking past her house, calling out, "Hello, you Custer boy." At the time, Custer would have been ten years old and Libbie six or seven. Custer does not mention the incident.

Norman Hall, in a letter to his wife, tells about his swinging Libbie Custer when she was nine or ten years old. He would have been thirteen or fourteen.<sup>6</sup> In her book on Elizabeth Custer, Shirley Leckie tells about Libbie

playing in her backyard where her father had constructed a swing.<sup>7</sup> Libbie, age ten, at the urging of her father began to write. Even so, no record has surfaced of Libbie Bacon, before or after her marriage, mentioning Norman Hall in Monroe or anytime.

### Hall at West Point

The Superintendent of the Military Academy from 1852 to 1855 was Captain Robert E. Lee. Lee frequently entertained large groups of cadets at his home. His daughter, Mary Custis, was a few years older but his younger daughters, Annie and Agnes, were in the same age group as the Class of 1859. Other Lee family members, Robert E. Jr. and Mildred, were also at West Point. Lee's nephew, Fitzhugh Lee, was in the Class of 1856.

Hall's limited correspondence from West Point does not indicate his attending parties at the Superintendent's home, although the Lees frequently entertained large groups of cadets.<sup>8</sup> Agnes Lee, in her diary, does mention several names of cadets who were entertained at the Lees' home. The whole cadet corps, which would include Hall, serenaded at the Robert E. Lee home the night before the Lee family left West Point. In 1855 Captain Robert E. Lee, promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, was assigned to a cavalry regiment in Texas.<sup>9</sup>

In any case, Hall, as a plebe, had some contact with Commandant Robert E. Lee. Lee's daughters would have known of Hall, one of 200 cadets. After the West Point 1854-55 relationship, Hall's attendance at John Brown's Insurrection in 1859, and the fighting at Gettysburg in 1863, mark Hall's and Lee's presence at the same place.

Following Lee as Superintendent was Captain John Barnard who had taught engineering at West Point. Barnard later was Chief Engineer of the Army of the Potomac during the Peninsular Campaign. This West Point relationship may have been a reason for Hall's assignment to Barnard's staff during the Peninsular Campaign and Seven Days' Battle.

Norman Hall was the sole Michigan appointee in the 1854 group which became the West Point classes of 1858/1859. Records at West Point show his was the first appointment from Michigan's Monroe Township. While it would appear to have some news interest for the small community, a review of Monroe publications fails to mention Hall's appointment in 1854 or Custer's Ohio appointment in 1857. Hall was the thirteenth Michigan resident and the first from Monroe to graduate from West Point. In July 1854, 103 plebes, divided by age group, were in the first experimental five-year class. Twenty-eight graduated in 1858 and twenty-two in Hall's Class of 1859. Two classmates had died in 1855. Fifty-one were non-graduates.

Two weeks following Norman Hall's West Point enrollment, his father died in Iowa where he had gone hoping to improve his health. While this must have been a very difficult time for a seventeen-year-old, letters from Cadet Hall to his family do not mention his reaction to his father's death in July 1854.

One of the first letters saved is the one to his mother,

dated November 1854. He is solicitous in trying to cheer her. She has apparently written because of concern about his possible failure. He tells her he is not afraid of failing if his health holds. He is proud to be at West Point. He tells of an eye inflammation caused by constant study. Rather than accepting the "surgeons [*sic*] medicine," he borrows medicines from a healthy Cleveland classmate, which apparently cured his eyes. (It was not until 1857 that gaslight was installed in the dormitory. Prior to that time, reading under whale-oil lamps and candles was the norm.<sup>10</sup> It is not surprising that a cadet might have eye problems.)

Cadet candidates accepted "conditional appointments" which entailed not only passing the entrance and physical examinations, but also fulfilling academic requirements for the first six months. Hall was certified in January 1855. Demerits up to 100 for a six-month period were allowable. Above 100 demerits, a cadet would be found deficient and subject to dismissal. Hall, in five years, while receiving his share, was never close to the limit.

At the end of year two, eligible cadets were given a two-month leave. Since Hall's family sold the East Raisinville land in 1859 and moved back to New York, he did not return to Monroe. On return to West Point for his third year, Hall received the first of his promotions being appointed Battalion Corporal. Following successively until he graduated were appointments as Sergeant, Color Bearer, Lieutenant and Quartermaster, then as acting Quartermaster. He graduated thirteenth of twenty-two in the fifth-year (1859) group of fifty-seven who had started.<sup>11</sup>

### Custer at West Point

Custer entered West Point June 1857, at age seventeen years seven months. His age assigned him to the five-year class of 1862. This would be the third and last five-year class program that had been instituted by Joseph Totten, chief of engineers and approved by Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War. Norman Hall finished his final two years at West Point as Custer completed his first and second years. Both were on leave in the summer of 1859. Custer was on his two-year interim cadet leave while Hall had two months graduation leave prior to permanent assignment at Fort Monroe, Virginia.

Norman Hall's family had moved east following his father's death. It is doubtful he returned to Monroe on graduation leave. His letters indicated he and a friend had purchased a boat and were sailing on Chesapeake Bay. During the summer of 1859, Custer spent time at his home in New Rumley, seeing his lady friend Mollie Holland in New Cadiz, Ohio, and in Monroe with the Reeds. Had Hall returned to Monroe, it would have been a virtual certainty he and Custer would have met there.

### Physical Appearance

Norman Hall's height on entering West Point was 5 feet 6 inches. George Custer's height was 5 feet 8½ inches. Physical exams were cursory at best. Weight was not recorded.

The height of an average American male of the period was 5 feet 4 inches. A review of the physical characteristics

of the 1854-57 entering classes show many cadets were just a few inches over five feet tall. Very few were over six feet in height. The tallest man in Custer's class was six feet. While cadets were weighed, records were not recorded. Eye tests were cursory. For some reason the measurement from armpit to finger tip was recorded as revealed in archival records. Only 7.5 percent of those tested were rejected for physical defects.<sup>12</sup>

Mental exams were less than stringent. For the arithmetic portion, the candidate solved a problem at the blackboard and then answered several mathematical questions. Next, each had to read aloud a passage from a book; as a test of spelling, punctuation and penmanship, the applicant had to transcribe a paragraph dictated by a professor. Exams finished, plebes were assigned by height to companies.<sup>13</sup>

It is virtually impossible to believe that Custer, constantly in difficulties, some serious, but mostly high-jinks, would not have come to the attention of Norman Hall. Custer's pranks were recounted in the barracks rooms and became part of academy lore.<sup>14</sup>

The total cadet population during Hall's final two years was just over 200. All lived in the same barracks and ate in the same mess hall. With such a small cadre, each undoubtedly knew one another by their first names and a good deal about each other.

Three Michiganders, none from Monroe, entered with Custer in June 1857. Two were assigned to the 1861 class and one to Custer's 1862 class. Though Custer's appointment was from Ohio, his affiliation with Monroe and Michigan would have been quite evident. Even so, during the two years when Hall and Custer were at West Point together, no mention is made by Hall to his family about Custer and none have been found made by Custer about Hall.

### Demerits

George Custer is well remembered at West Point for a number of reasons besides his antics. One his demerit record; the other, his last place class rank. At the West Point archives, researchers requesting access to Custer demerits will find a prepared list.

Norman Hall had his share of demerits. While not quite up to Custer's speed, he was by no means a model cadet. He never reached the limit of 100 in a six month period requiring dismissal. Custer had enough demerits for dismissal his first year but someone deleted enough points allowing him to remain with his class. Hall was late to formation, to drill and to breakfast. Some of the demerit offenses were serious such as leaving his post as sentry or talking to visitors while on guard duty. He, too, appears to have been a fun lover. One entry is "crossing his legs marching in such a manner as to trip his rear file." Another, "repeatedly jumping up and down after taking his seat." And yet another, "not giving the initials of a cadet when he reported, there being another of the same name in the corps." This was a reference to Robert Henry Hall, Class of 1860.

### General Winfield Scott

The legendary Winfield Scott served as an officer of the United States Army from 1808 to 1861. Though not a West Pointer, Scott was a hero of the War of 1812 with Britain. For a period from 1821 to 1861, until relieved by McClellan, he was General of the Army. He led his troops through a difficult Mexican War in 1847. He was the military leader in Washington at the opening of the Civil War. He counseled Presidents Buchanan and Lincoln in the early trying days of secession. He was in active service under fourteen presidents of the United States.

Norman Hall and George Custer each had official meetings with Lieutenant General Scott. Hall's meetings were in Washington with Scott and President Buchanan. In the early days of January 1861, following South Carolina's firing on the *Star of the West*, Governor Francis Pickens sent two emissaries to Washington. Major Robert Anderson sent twenty-three year-old Lieutenant Norman Hall to accompany them.

Attorney General Hayne of South Carolina and his assistant Robert Gourdin were never given an audience with the President. Their time was spent with Secretary of War Joseph Holt regarding the sale of Fort Sumter.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, Lieutenant Hall conferred with the President and several times with General Scott about the conditions at Fort Sumter and how it might be defended.

In February 1861 Hall returned to Fort Sumter. It was during his time in Washington that the often published picture of Fort Sumter officers was taken.<sup>16</sup> Lieutenant Theo. Talbot, shown in the photograph, was not present at the April 1861 Fort Sumter bombardment.

General Scott retired in late 1861. In retirement, he spent much time at West Point and at his home in New York City at 24 W. 12th Street. In answer to a letter from Hall to the Assistant Adjutant General regarding flags captured by his brigade at Gettysburg,<sup>17</sup> an acknowledgement was sent to his home at 34 W. 12th Street.<sup>18</sup> Scott and Hall, for a short time, lived within two doors of one another. The Scott residence, now owned by New York University is on the National Register of Historic Places.

On June 1, 1866, General Winfield Scott, age eighty, was buried at West Point. His plot is the only one in the West Point cemetery surrounded by a fence. Records do not show if Hall attended the Scott burial services. Almost exactly one year later Norman Hall, age thirty, would be buried within a few yards of Scott.

### Custer and Scott

George Custer graduated from West Point in June 1861 in the accelerated Class of 1862. Prior to assignment to a military unit, he was involved in a minor dispute. He was not sent directly to join the Union army until July. When he reported to the adjutant general's office in Washington, he was ushered in to meet General Scott. Custer had seen the aging general at West Point but they had never met. The general greeted Custer warmly, asking him what duty he preferred. Scott, at Custer's request, sent him to the

field immediately. Custer was urged to find a horse and return. Scott wanted to send dispatches to Brigadier General Irwin McDowell whose Union troops were facing Confederate troops at Bull Run.

Nothing is found in Custer's records to show he had other meetings with the aging general. Custer's next proximity to Scott would be his 1877 burial a few yards from the fenced-in plot of General Winfield Scott and his family.

### McClellan's Staff

In 1861, because of a reorganization of the Cavalry Corps, Lieutenant Custer was assigned to the Staff of Brigadier General Philip Kearney, New Jersey Volunteers. This assignment only lasted a few weeks. A directive was issued forbidding Regular Army officers from serving under volunteer officers. Custer took a leave from the army which extended four months to February 1862. Again, his time was divided between Ohio and Michigan.

While the two armies were in winter encampment, Major General George McClellan planned his Peninsula Campaign and began readying his forces.

Custer became involved in a cavalry action involving the rear guard of Confederate troops moving south toward central Virginia; this was his first foray as a cavalry leader.<sup>19</sup>

Custer was first appointed to the staff of Brigadier General Andrew A. Humphreys, and then detached to Brigadier General William "Baldy" Smith. Being a staff officer, he had considerable leeway on where he was to go. Once, ordered by Brigadier General John Barnard, the army's Chief Engineer, to cross a river for reconnaissance, Custer jumped in, crossed the river, and discovered a Confederate sentry post.<sup>20</sup>

Custer was, somewhat unwillingly, assigned to part-time duty as a balloon observer. The daring officer was a bit less sure of himself a thousand feet in the air. On his first ascent he remained seated with a firm hold on the sides of the basket. Eventually, he learned to relax in a balloon and took notes on the scene spread before him.<sup>21</sup>

Custer took credit for discovering the evacuation of Yorktown on the nights of May 3-4, 1862. Thaddeus S. C. Lowe, the chief balloonist, disagreed with this account. Custer had failed to note the difference between the number of campfires in the evening and the next morning when the Confederates withdrew their forces.<sup>22</sup>

With this and other exploits, plus recommendations from

RIGHT: 24 W. 12th St., New York City. Residence of General Winfield Scott during the 1863 Draft Riots.

BELOW: 34 W. 12th St., New York City. Residence of Norman and Louisa Hall following the Battle of Gettysburg and during the 1863 Draft Riots. Photos courtesy of author.



senior officers, Custer caught the attention of General McClellan. The general asked Custer if he would be interested in being an aide-de-camp. He accepted immediately.

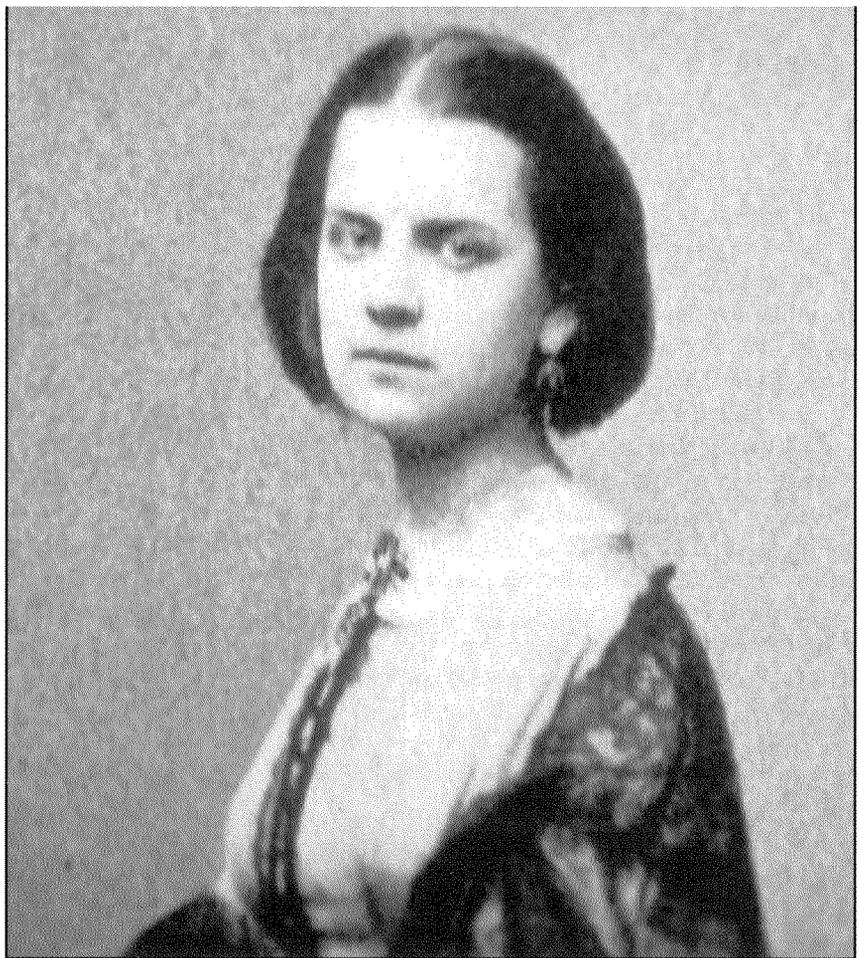
Norman Hall was appointed by McClellan to the staff of Brigadier General John Barnard, the West Point commandant the year following Robert E. Lee's departure. Barnard, as Chief Engineer on McClellan's staff, held the second most important job in the Army of the Potomac.

Hall, at the time Custer was appointed to McClellan's staff, was assistant adjutant general to General Barnard. Hall, in a letter to his family from Yorktown, said he had been a balloonist. A map in the Official Military Atlas of the Civil War<sup>23</sup> is attributed to Lieutenant N. G. Hall, 5th Artillery. The aerial drawing of the Yorktown fortifications accompanied Barnard's extensive report.<sup>24</sup> Hall was recommended for a brevet for his ballooning, but he wrote "that was nothing compared to other works that he had performed." On marches, he wrote, "I have only to ride along and in engagements go with General McClellan to perform whatever services may be necessary."<sup>25</sup>

Hall and Custer, both on McClellan's staff, traveled with the Army of the Potomac up the Peninsula and through the Seven Days' Battle. It is virtually impossible that the two would not have had some reason to communicate. In the endless number of photographs taken of McClellan and his staff, Hall is never present. Custer appears in most, posing, hat tilted at a rakish angle. Someone may have a photograph showing the two men (now young officers from Monroe) but none has appeared in print.



RIGHT: Louisa Hall, wife of Norman Hall.  
 ABOVE: \$1 bank note issued by the Latham Bank of  
 Washington City (Washington, DC). The Hon. Robert  
 Latham was Louisa Hall's father.  
 Photos courtesy Hall Family Collection.



### Hall and Custer Marriages

When or where Norman Hall met his bride-to-be, Maria Louisa Latham, is unknown. She was the daughter of a wealthy Washington business man. The 1850 Federal Census records show six children living in their Baltimore residence. Robert E. Latham's profession is listed as broker. In the Hall family collection is a \$1 scrip note issued by R. W. Latham Co. Bankers, Washington City, D.C. An 1861 letter from Norman Hall to a sister mentions his engagement. Her father preferred they not marry until Louisa is older and he could give them a house. Louisa was eighteen at the time Hall wrote his letter; he was twenty-three.

Oddly enough, just as Norman took his middle name, Louisa dropped the "Maria" and in later correspondence is always referred to by her middle name. Wedding vouchers and widow's pension claims only refer to the name Louisa Latham Hall.

Envelopes from Hall to the Lathams show addresses in Baltimore, Maryland, and Washington City. Why the family moved to New York from Baltimore just prior to the Civil War is speculation. This might have been due to the strong southern sentiments still dividing Maryland. War seemed imminent. In any event, Robert and Catherine Latham and children moved

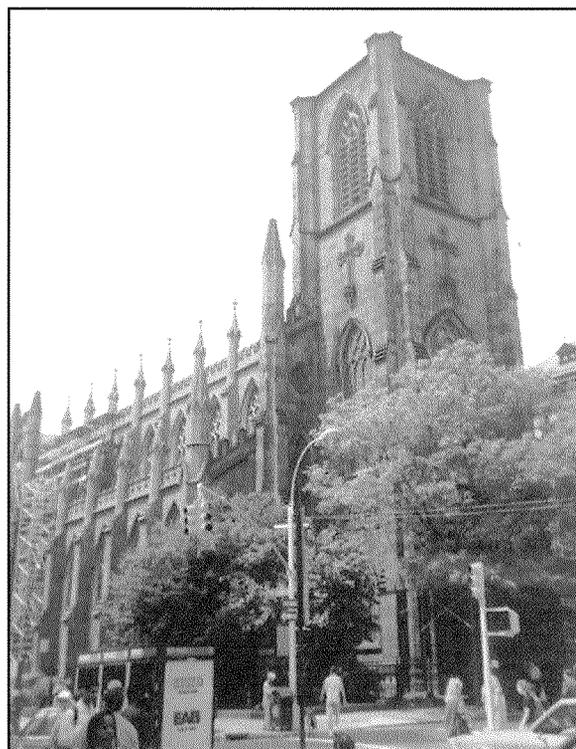
to Brooklyn Heights, New York, then the finest residential area of the metropolis. It is referred to by some historians as the first suburb in the country.<sup>26</sup> Brooklyn at the start of the Civil War was the third largest city after New York and Philadelphia.

Brooklyn was noted for its churchgoers and many fine churches with important clergymen in the pulpit. Henry Ward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, was pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church. In the 1850s, his church was the largest and most influential in the country. The Brooklyn Bridge had not been built yet so extra Sunday ferries were added to bring churchgoers from Manhattan.

Holy Trinity Protestant Episcopal Church was another important church in Brooklyn. Constructed in 1847, the large gothic structure stands, darkened and silent, in downtown Brooklyn today. Due to a consolidation in the mid-1900s the church, though inactive, today is known as St. Ann's and the Holy Trinity Church.

There is no church steeple on Holy Trinity today. Tunnel blasting for the 1904 subways made the steeple unsafe and it was removed.<sup>27</sup> An interesting side note is that, today, at an exit under the church, one may see decorative ceramic tiles showing "Church of the Holy Trinity" as a subway stop.

In 1988 Holy Trinity was placed on the list of important New York land-



RIGHT: Church of the Holy Trinity,  
 Brooklyn, New York where Norman  
 and Louisa Hall married in February  
 1862. Courtesy of author.

marks to be renovated as finances permit. The large Gothic structure is particularly noteworthy as a historic site because it is the first church in the United States to have stained glass windows. Windows were installed in 1846 by William Jay Bolton of England. Following the installation, Bolton returned to England and did not return. One person described the Bolton windows: "there is nothing...to compare with the vigor and fire of these remarkable windows." Another described it as "English Gothic with a ceiling to rival King's Chapel in Cambridge."

Norman and Louisa Latham were married by Reverend E. J. Stearns, assisted by Reverend Dr. Littlejohn, Tuesday, February 18, 1862, in the Church of the Holy Trinity. No list of those attending has been found. Details of a certain reception undoubtedly held at the Latham home are lost in history. Robert Latham's residence, still standing and appearing to be in excellent condition, is at 140 President Street, a half mile or so from the church.

### Custer Wedding

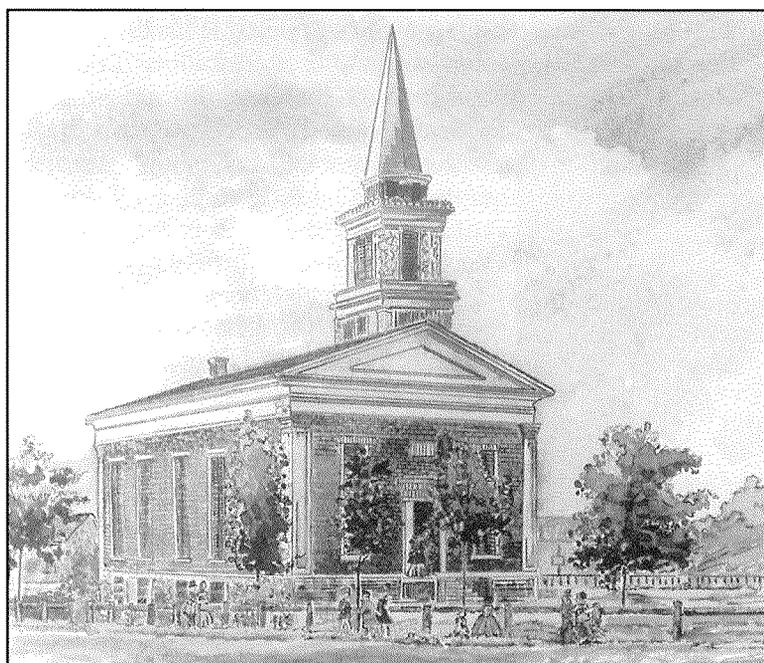
The First Presbyterian church in which George Armstrong Custer and Elizabeth Clift Bacon were married was completed in 1848. This church was somewhat smaller than the one seen today in Monroe. The earlier Monroe church was extensively remodeled and enlarged in 1873-74 with a bell-tower addition.

Founded in 1820, the Monroe church is Michigan's oldest Presbyterian congregation. For the first twelve years of its existence services were held in members' homes or at the log courthouse. In 1832 a small brick structure was built to serve the congregation for sixteen years. By 1845, a larger church was needed. Land for the church at the present location was part of a ribbon plat given by Colonel Oliver Johnson, an early church organizer. The cornerstone was laid in 1846. When the new church was completed in 1848, there were 200 members.



The building was of colonial design with three-storied windows of clear glass protected by green wooden shutters. There was a small steeple. Though no photographs of the 1848 church are available, a watercolor drawing may be seen in the church vestibule today. The handmade bricks used in construction were made by James Nelson, a church member who operated a brick yard near the city. The clay was trodden in a pit to the proper consistency by oxen.<sup>28</sup>

It was in this church that Libbie Bacon and George Custer were married on Tuesday evening, February 9, 1864. Judge Bacon wrote his sister "it is said to be the most splendid wedding ever seen in the state."<sup>29</sup> The Judge may have overreached a bit by writing "hundreds more in the church than ever before and many turned away." While the church was completely full, it was a smaller structure prior to its renovation. A person present at the reception at the Bacon residence notes: "three hundred following the ceremony" which is probably closer to the actual number inside the church at the wedding.



ABOVE: Elizabeth Custer in her twenties. Courtesy Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. LEFT: Artists sketch of 1864 Presbyterian Church, Monroe, Michigan, where Custers married in February 1864. Photo by Christine Cull, courtesy of Monroe First Presbyterian Church and Monroe County Historical Commission.

Though Louisa and Libbie were born in the same year, the Tuesday 1864 Monroe wedding took place when Libbie was age twenty-two. Louisa was just twenty at her Tuesday 1862 marriage. Custer and Hall were in their twenty-fourth year on their wedding day.

It is interesting to note the Brooklyn and Monroe churches, 600 miles apart, were under construction at approximately the same time, 1846 to 1848.

### Seven Days' Battle

Much is made about Custer's exploits during the Peninsula campaign which brought him to McClellan's attention. Suffice it to say that Custer and Hall, as staff officers, had their work cut out for them during the Seven Days' Battle.

Hall, on General John Barnard's staff, surveyed roads for maps, assisted at bridges over the Chickahominy, at White Oak Swamp, at Gaines Mill and Glen-Dale [sic]. According to records from the Judge Advocate General's file in Washington, Hall was in every one of the battles, helping to move men, and equipment, and reforming columns to cross bridges. He was "sent to Harrison's Landing to examine the ground with reference to its fitness for defense ... to find if it could be reached by the Army by any other than known roads."<sup>30</sup> General McClellan was planning to extricate his army from the Peninsula after the disastrous campaign ending with the Battle of Malvern Hill.<sup>31</sup>

Custer was equally occupied with staff duties, and being a personal messenger to carry messages from McClellan to his regimental commanders on the progress of battles. We are told Custer spent four consecutive days in the saddle, catching only a few hours of sleep when he could take the time.<sup>32</sup> He and Norman Hall had to be two of the busiest staff aides on the Peninsula as the Army withdrew to Harrison's Landing.

Those two McClellan staff officers traveled with the Army of the Potomac up the Peninsula and through the Seven Days' Battle for almost three months. It was virtually impossible Custer and Hall would not have some reason to communicate with the other.

### Michigan Regiments

Hall and Custer were both to command Michigan regiments though under somewhat different circumstances. Colonel Ira Grosvenor, who later became Lieutenant Governor of Michigan, was ill suffering from cholera. He resigned on July 8, 1862, as leader of the 7th Michigan Regiment. Following his departure, General McClellan appointed Norman Hall to command the 7th Michigan.

Following the battle of Malvern Hill, General John Sedgwick in a letter to Governor Austin Blair of Michigan, July 12, 1862,<sup>33</sup> wrote, "General McClellan has appointed Hall Acting Colonel of the 7th Michigan." Sedgwick asked the Governor to "commission this officer accordingly." Hall was given leave of absence from the regular army and immediately joined his regiment. A letter to his wife, requests his brother-in-law, Edward Latham, to order a proper (Colonel's) uniform from Brooks Brothers in New York and have it sent within two days.<sup>34</sup>

Sedgwick's original request never reached Governor Blair. A second request in September was sent and that, too, was lost. Not until November 1862 did Hall receive his official commission from Michigan, backdated to July 7, 1862.<sup>35</sup>

At this point, Hall's path and Custer's diverge for a few months. (Custer remained as a McClellan aide.) Their paths join again at Antietam, in September 1862. Custer and Hall at Antietam are permanent Regular Army first lieutenants; Hall is now a Colonel of Volunteers, Custer is a temporary staff Captain.

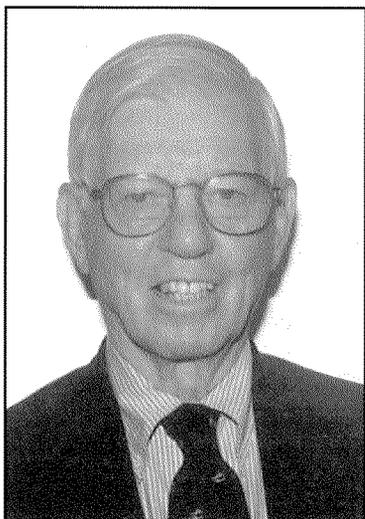
### Antietam

Hall was in the thick of the fight at Antietam with his 7th Michigan. Brigadier General Napoleon Dana, severely wounded in the early morning, directed that Hall take command. He took over the Third Brigade, Second Division, Second Corps. which consisted of the 7th Michigan, 42nd New York (Tammany), 59th New York, 19th and 20th Massachusetts (Harvard) regiments. With the addition of the 127th Pennsylvania at Fredericksburg, this would be his command through the Gettysburg campaign.

Hall received a brevet for "covering with the Seventh [Michigan] the retreat of its Division [Sedgwick's] holding the entire force of the rebels in check until the Division had re-formed in rear."<sup>36</sup>

Custer watched most of the Battle of Antietam, the bloodiest battle of the Civil War, at McClellan's side far removed from the action. He is given credit for making suggestions to McClellan about the use of Pleasanton's Cavalry in support but McClellan and senior staff members disagreed.

When Lee's army seemed ready to give way, Custer saw that a Union cavalry charge might change the tide. However this would have left his own



**JOHN CALDER** began his historical research project in 1995 following a visit to the West Point Cemetery with the grandson of Norman Hall. The Hall descendants have an extensive collection of letters and memorabilia from Norman J. Hall which had never been opened for publication. Calder's research led him to Monroe, Michigan where Hall and George Custer had lived prior to entering West Point. Much of the material was found in the West Point Archives. This article is a culmination of tracing the two Civil War heroes from Monroe to West Point, through the Battle of Gettysburg and burial at the Military Academy Cemetery.

Calder, a native New Yorker, lived in Colorado for forty years before retiring to Sun City, Arizona twelve years ago.

line vulnerable and without reinforcements. McClellan, ever cautious, declined to heed his suggestion. The support which might have changed the outcome of the battle never materialized.<sup>37</sup> The Battle of Antietam (Sharpsburg) was essentially a stalemate. The event didn't settle anything except it left more casualties on the field than any other Civil War battle.

### **Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville**

President Lincoln relieved McClellan as General of the Army of the Potomac in November of 1862. Custer, dropped from staff duty, reverted to First Lieutenant. Even so, he wore the uniform of Captain while on leave in Monroe. While two of the most important campaigns of the Civil War took place, Custer was on leave or limited duty for the better part of six months. He did not return to duty until April of 1863, missing the devastating (to the North) Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville battles. On extended leave, he was in Monroe paying attention to the young ladies, particularly Libbie Bacon.

At Fredericksburg, Colonel Norman Hall volunteered his Brigade led by the crack 7th Michigan, followed by the 19th and 20th Massachusetts regiments to cross the Rappahannock in pontoon boats. Under withering fire from Confederate sharpshooters, his Brigade crossed the river and secured the city. At Fredericksburg, his troops stormed Marye's Heights and later covered the withdrawal of troops from the battlefield.

Newspaper reports of the day gave extensive coverage of the Fredericksburg battle. Custer would certainly have known of the gallant crossing of the 7th Michigan. In the December 1862 archival Monroe newspapers at the Monroe County Historical Commission Museum, the pages on the battle of Fredericksburg have been neatly cut out. Though Hall was given credit for his outstanding effort, the city of Monroe never acknowledged his part in one of the major confrontations in the Civil War. No comments have been found in the Custer correspondence about the 7th Michigan's effort at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville which might have mentioned Hall (of Monroe) in command of his brigade.

A December 19, 1862, entry in the Official Records is a recommendation for promotion to brigadier general for Hall by Brigadier General O. O. Howard following Fredericksburg. Howard had previously recommended Hall for brigadier for his Antietam service.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Road to Gettysburg**

Custer, on his return to duty in April of 1863, was detailed to the staff of Brigadier General Alfred Pleasanton. Pleasanton, through political maneuvering, was able to undermine Major General Julius Stahel when Major General Joseph Hooker was reorganizing the Union cavalry units. Stahel had been slated to take over command of the Union Cavalry.

Up to this time, Union Cavalry forces were not well organized and had not been used effectively in engagements. Confederate Cavalry units, on the other hand, had

been very effective. General Hooker was replaced in June 1863, by Major General George Meade. Pleasanton, consulting with Meade, convinced him that he was the one to reorganize the cavalry corps. Meade gave him the authority to replace and promote officers in his corps.<sup>39</sup>

Through some political maneuvering, helped along by letters from Captain Elon Farnsworth (on Pleasanton's staff) to his uncle, Congressman John Farnsworth, Pleasanton was made a Major General. This boost in rank allowed Pleasanton to promote brigadiers to his staff. Although many cavalry officers deserved promotion ahead of Custer, Farnsworth and Wesley Merritt, Pleasanton, unpopular with many senior officers, knew he could count on the younger officers' backing.

Pleasanton on June 28 requested promotions to Brigadier General for Captains Wesley Merritt, Elon Farnsworth and Brevet Captain Custer. Meade had, earlier in June of 1863, promoted Judson Kilpatrick to Brigadier. Approval of promotions by Congress could ordinarily take weeks if not months. While Custer's appointment was approved in two days, it was never officially confirmed until the following January 1864, and only after a protracted fight with a member of Congress from Michigan.<sup>40</sup>

On June 29 Brigadier General Custer rode north from Frederick, Maryland, towards Emmitsburg, Maryland, to meet his new Brigade consisting of the 1st, 5th, 6th and 7th Michigan cavalry regiments. He saw his first command action near Hanover, Pennsylvania, late in the afternoon of Tuesday, June 30. He and newly-generated Elon Farnsworth took on Jeb Stuart's troops flanking the Union movement to Gettysburg. They "proved themselves a powerful combination."<sup>41</sup>

Custer was not involved again until July 2, at Hunterstown, Pennsylvania, northeast of Gettysburg. He led a small group against a vastly superior force of Confederates led by Brigadier General Wade Hampton. Here, Custer almost had his undoing. His horse was shot from under him. He was "saved only by the courage and agility of a 1st Michigan trooper."<sup>42</sup>

Starting from Falmouth, Virginia, Hall moved his brigade 190 miles to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, almost under a forced march. His personal diary states "when the army moved, the corps made the long marches having a brisk engagement at Haymarket, Virginia. Nothing but ordinary duties till Gettysburg except that no man straggled from my command during those marches."<sup>43</sup> The "brisk engagement" referred to was Major General Winfield Hancock's Second Corps being confronted by Major General Jeb Stuart's Confederates while Stuart was trying to encircle the Union forces.<sup>44</sup>

Hall moved his Brigade to the crest of Cemetery Ridge in the early morning of July 2, (Day 2). It was placed in a column of battalions which stretched from the cemetery to Little Round Top.<sup>45</sup>

On the second day, when Major General Daniel Sickles made his "strange move"<sup>46</sup> by moving his Third Corps into the Peach Orchard and Wheat Fields, Hall was requested to release his 42nd New York and 19th Massachusetts

regiments in support. This left him with three undermanned regiments at the center line on Cemetery Ridge.

After the rebel assault on Little Round Top late in the afternoon of day two, the Union army lost two of its finest young officers. Colonel Strong Vincent was mortally wounded and Colonel Patrick O'Rorke, 140th New York, lost his life while saving Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's 20th Maine, about to be overrun by Texas and Alabama Regiments.<sup>47</sup> O'Rorke, a West Point legend, was number one in Custer's Class of June 1861. Brigade commander Strong Vincent, not a West Pointer, was an officer of great promise.

Contrary to popular belief, the close of battle at Little Round Top was not the end of the second day at Gettysburg by any means. Late in the evening Confederate Brigadier General William Barksdale's regiments moved up Cemetery Hill and came within thirty-forty yards of Hall's position before being driven back. Assaults on Cemetery Ridge continued through the darkness until 11 P.M. The undermanned and under-officered Hall Brigade sustained many casualties in the evening assault. With only three regiments, Hall's troops helped withstand the night assault in which Confederate General Barksdale was mortally wounded and two rebel flags captured.<sup>48</sup>

### Custer's Day Three at Gettysburg

On the early morning of July 3, Custer moved his Brigade to Two Taverns, a site about five miles southeast of Gettysburg. After only a few hours rest, Custer moved east to an area between the Hanover Road and York Pike. As the artillery barrage prior to Pickett's attack started at Gettysburg about 1 P.M., it was almost as a signal for Confederate Jeb Stuart about three miles east of Gettysburg to start his cavalry action.

There was some early skirmishing but the main action between opposing cavalry took place about 3 P.M. Confederate horse artillery fell on Custer's position at the front line of Union cavalry. Custer moved his troops and called for an artillery response. As horse artillery fire slackened, Colonel John MacIntosh moved units of his brigade forward to relieve the Michigan regiments on the front line. As they did so, Custer saw MacIntosh was in danger of being flanked and moved a 5th Michigan skirmish line forward. Dismounted in open fields they were easy targets.<sup>49</sup>

Brigadier General David Gregg, who had been to the rear, arrived to take over the Union forces. After a lengthy exchange of artillery fire, the Confederates withdrew to regroup. Part of Custer's troops had been ordered by Pleasanton to rejoin Kilpatrick. Gregg, now in charge, countermanded the order and Custer had his units back together as Brigadier General Fitzhugh Lee began to advance four regiments. Fitzhugh Lee, Robert E. Lee's nephew, had bedeviled Union forces with his cavalry maneuvers on the road to Gettysburg.

Custer faced a formidable foe in Fitzhugh Lee. Custer's 5th Michigan, sent on a relief mission, ran into a post-and-rail fence. As Fitzhugh Lee moved ahead, Custer led his inexperienced 7th Michigan cavalry in a headlong charge. In the confusion which followed part of the 7th ran into



Major General George Armstrong Custer, January 3, 1865. Tintype by Mathew Brady & Co., courtesy of Library of Congress.

the fence which had stopped the 5th Michigan. Custer, still in front of units of the 7th, charged ahead attempting to take over a Confederate battery.

Custer had gone too far. His momentum gone, he sounded retreat. General Wade Hampton pursued the 7th Michigan in their withdrawal until he was too far from his support. As Custer moved his cavalry back he saw major elements of Confederate cavalry moving for attack. Sensing disaster, Custer called on his only uncommitted regiment, his experienced 1st Michigan. Colonel Charles Town, regimental commander, led the charge with Custer right beside him. In the resulting clash, Custer was unhorsed a third time. Remounting, Custer and Town's 1st Michigan took on parts of three Confederate brigades.<sup>50</sup>

General Gregg and Colonel John McIntosh, seeing Custer was greatly outmanned, gathered Cavalry units together, including parts of Custer's scattered 5th and 7th Michigan to join the fight saving Custer and the 1st Michigan. The combined attack of Wade Hampton and Fitzhugh Lee was turned back and cavalry elements slowly withdrew from the field. Though the days battle was called a stalemate, the combination of Gregg, McIntosh and Custer had pushed Jeb Stuart back decisively.<sup>51</sup>

### Hall's Day Three at Gettysburg

During the night and through the early morning hours Hall's men, with no tools available, strengthened their line as much as possible. Rails, stones and earth were thrown up with sticks and boards for protection against the inevitable assault.

At 1 P.M. the Confederate artillery barrage commenced. Hall, in his report, states the concentration of fire on Cemetery Ridge was at the position of the 2nd (Brigadier General Alexander Webb) and 3rd (Hall) Brigades indicating where the real attack would be made. It is worth repeating his words. "The experience of the terrible grandeur of that rain of missiles and that chaos of strange and terror-spreading sounds, unexampled, perhaps, in history, must ever remain undescribed, but can never be forgotten by those who survived it."<sup>52</sup>

When the cannonade ceased about 3 P.M., the long gray line of Confederates moved across the Emmitsburg Road. It became clear the assault would hit Hall's and Webb's Brigades. Hall's experienced troops held fire until the enemy was within 200 yards, others until 100 yards and some regiments waited until the enemy was 50 yards away. On Hall's right, one of Webb's Pennsylvania regiments gave way. Confederates came over the wall. In Hall's words "there was but a moment of doubtful contest in front of the position of this brigade."<sup>53</sup>

Hall moved his three front line regiments out of line, charging toward the "Clump of Trees" where the line had broken. His reserve regiments, the 19th Massachusetts and 42nd New York, led by Colonel Arthur Devereux, were joined by Brigadier General William Harrow's Brigade and the Pennsylvania regiments who had been reformed by Webb. There was little semblance of order. Brigadier General John Gibbon and Major General Winfield Hancock were both wounded and left the field. In desperate hand-to-hand fighting, the Confederates threw down their arms and were taken prisoner. Others, if able, streamed back to their own lines.<sup>54</sup>

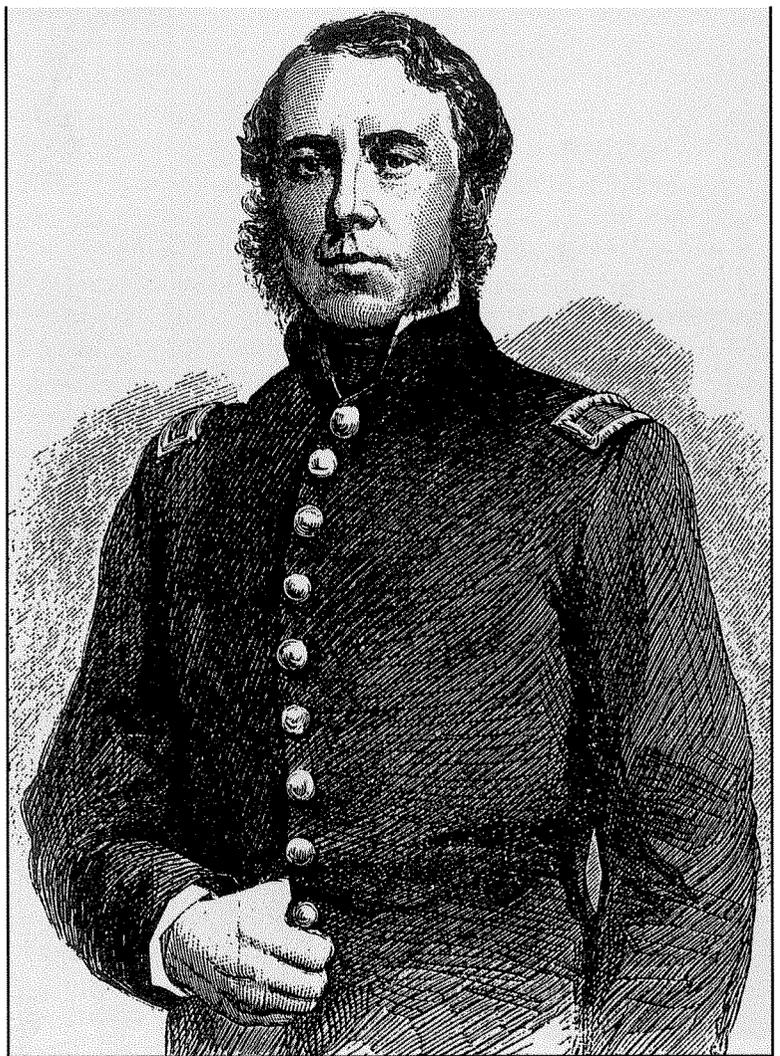
This was the end of Pickett's Charge. While no one knew it at the time, it proved to be the high point of the Confederate campaign. Often called the "defining moment," this combined repulse might be called the "defining moment of the defining moment."

This was to be Norman Hall's last battle. His chronic illness perhaps contracted as far back as Fort Moultrie in 1860 was more than he could take. Captain Henry Abbott of the 20th Massachusetts wrote to his family after Gettysburg \* "Col Hall from all I hear will never come back, & I am afraid has a short lease on life. He has borne his sufferings as nobly as any man that ever lived." Abbott and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. of the 20th Massachusetts were great admirers of Norman Hall.

General Alexander Webb's report on the third day at Gettysburg states "...the enemy would probably have succeeded in piercing our lines had not Colonel Hall advanced with several of his regiments to my support. Defeated, routed, the enemy fled in disorder."<sup>55</sup>

In 1891 General Webb was awarded the Medal of Honor for his third day at Gettysburg. His gravesite at West Point has a plaque indicating the award. In accepting the honor, Webb said "he must share his credit with Colonel Hall who had helped him at the right time, and who for his initiative and skill deserved more credit than he got."<sup>56</sup>

\*letter to his father August 1863.



Lieutenant Norman Hall, engraving made from a photograph by Brady. Courtesy of West Point Library.

### Bachelor Papers

A most interesting sidelight to the tumultuous three days at Gettysburg is the story of John B. Bachelder. He, in 1862, attached himself to the Army of the Potomac as an artist and observer. While he had been given the courtesy title of Lieutenant Colonel of the Pennsylvania Militia, he remained a civilian. Arriving at Gettysburg a few days after the battle, he interviewed hundreds of wounded Union and Confederate troops hospitalized in the town and surrounding countryside to get their recollections of the three days.

For three months he stayed on to collect first hand accounts from Northern and Southern survivors. He drew maps of troop positions. From then on, he virtually lived at Gettysburg, kept up voluminous correspondence with members of both armies, and served as a battlefield guide. The Congress named him Government Historian of the Battle of Gettysburg which wasn't much more than a title.

For the next thirty years Bachelder kept up his correspondence and was in charge of approving monuments where military units wanted to place memorials. After his death in 1894 his papers disappeared. Dr. Edwin Coddington, who wrote the definitive history of the Battles, discovered the papers in the 1960s at the New Hampshire Historical Society. This find opened up much information which had not been available to late Nineteenth and Twentieth century historians.



LEFT:  
Original 1867  
Hall West  
Point monu-  
ment as it  
appeared in  
1995.  
BELOW:  
Restored  
monument in  
1999. Photos  
courtesy of  
author.



## Captain Hall/Captain Custer

While the rank of Colonel and Brigadier General were handed out almost like cotton candy during the Civil War, officers in the Regular Army were not treated with easy promotions. This was especially true for West Point graduates until the Mexican War, when the need for more trained officers was apparent. Many regulars stayed in rank for years. Robert E. Lee, an 1829 graduate of West Point, who served in the Mexican War, held the rank of Captain when appointed Superintendent of West Point in 1852. In thirty-three years he had advanced two grades in the Regular Army.

Of 1080 Regular Army Officers on active duty in 1861, only 142 became Union generals during the war. One hundred and sixty-one West Pointers who started the war as Captains were still Captains or had been promoted only to Major when the war ended.<sup>59</sup>

There were so few openings for new officers in the Army in June of 1859, at Hall's graduation, that he was designated only a Brevet Second Lieutenant, only receiving his full commission six months later. Due to the start of the Civil War in April of 1861, and the need for officers, George Custer graduated in June 1861 as a Second Lieutenant in the accelerated Class of 1862.

Both Norman Hall and George Armstrong Custer ended their Civil War careers with the permanent rank of Captain. Norman Hall received Brevets to Lieutenant Colonel. George Custer's highest Regular Army rank following the Civil War was Lieutenant Colonel, which did not change for the last ten years of his life.<sup>60</sup>

Bachelder corresponded with many who were at the third day, including Norman Hall, though (perhaps) not directly with George Custer. Hall relied on his report in the Official Records.<sup>57</sup> Custer's report on his active third day role is found in *Michigan In War*,<sup>58</sup> a report on which Bachelder relied. Custer gave the time of his cavalry battle as 10 A.M. This did not match Bachelder's account with others involved. His correspondence with Michigan Brigade officers is interesting in that, universally, they could not understand why Custer would have given the incorrect time. Custer did not live to see the letters submitted by members of his Michigan Brigade and thus could not affirm why he had given the time as 10 A.M.

From Gettysburg through the end of the Civil War, George Armstrong Custer advanced to Brevet Major General and continued his heroics. His Michigan Brigade served with great distinction, though having several close calls in battles. The Michiganders suffered severe losses in some of the most difficult campaigns of the war.

While there are conflicting accounts of his exact locale, Custer, at Appomatox, was apparently near the McClean House when Generals Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant signed the surrender in April, 1865. While one of the two young men from Monroe, Michigan was present the first day of the Civil War at Sumter, the other was present the final momentous day at Appomatox.

### May 29, 1867

Special Order No. 58 copied from the records, Head Quarters, Military Academy, West Point N. Y. May 28, 1867 state: "The funeral services of the late Provost Lieutenant Colonel Norman J. Hall, Captain, U.S. Army will be held at the Chapel at 4:10 P.M. tomorrow."

Norman Hall had been called from Boston to his home in Brooklyn, New York because of the serious illness of an infant son. While there, he succumbed to the chronic disease contracted in the line of Civil War duty and died on Sunday May 26, 1867.

It was Norman Hall's wish that he be buried at West Point, which had meant so much to him. On Wednesday, May 29, 1867, twenty-five year old widow Louisa Hall, father and mother, Robert and Catherine Latham, brothers and sisters, and friends accompanied Hall's remains by steamship up the Hudson to West Point.

Six officers, each of whom had attended West Point with Hall, were designated as pallbearers to accompany the body to the Chapel. One, Captain Abraham Arnold, was a Medal of Honor winner. The six officers were requested to be at the South Wharf at three o'clock to receive the body.

At the 4 P.M. services, Major Generals Robert Anderson, Daniel Butterfield, and Rufus Ingalls, with Brigadier Generals, Edwin Stoughton, Arthur Devereux, and Colonel Nicholas Bowen were pallbearers. Following the services, a Battalion of Cadets, the family and friends made the long trip to the cemetery.<sup>61</sup>

Norman Hall was buried with a formal gun salute by the Cadet Honor guard in what is known today as the "old" section of the cemetery. Directly behind his grave is a monument to two 1859 classmates who died at West Point. A few feet in front of his grave is the simple marker of Amos Alonzo Cushing, West Point Class of 1861, a friend of both Hall and Custer.

Alonzo Cushing is a renowned hero of Gettysburg, dying at his guns the third day. Hall's regiments and Cushing's batteries were side by side on Cemetery Ridge on the third day repulse at Gettysburg. It is interesting to note that General Robert Anderson (died 1871) and Norman Hall are the only two of nine Fort Sumter officers buried at West Point.

*A footnote to history: At the time of Hall's death, May 1867, Custer was on the path of Indians in Kansas and would not have had access to news. Monroe, Michigan newspapers did not print a Hall obituary.*

### October 10, 1877

A Western Union telegram from Lieutenant Colonel Michael V. Sheridan dated July 27, 1877 (Friday), wired to Major General John M. Schofield at West Point states, "the remains of Genl Custer started from Fort Lincoln (Dakota Territory) this morning by United States Express for West Point. The Secretary of War has authorized his interment

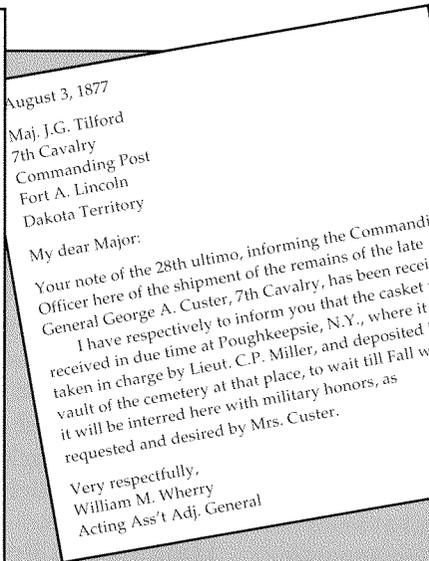
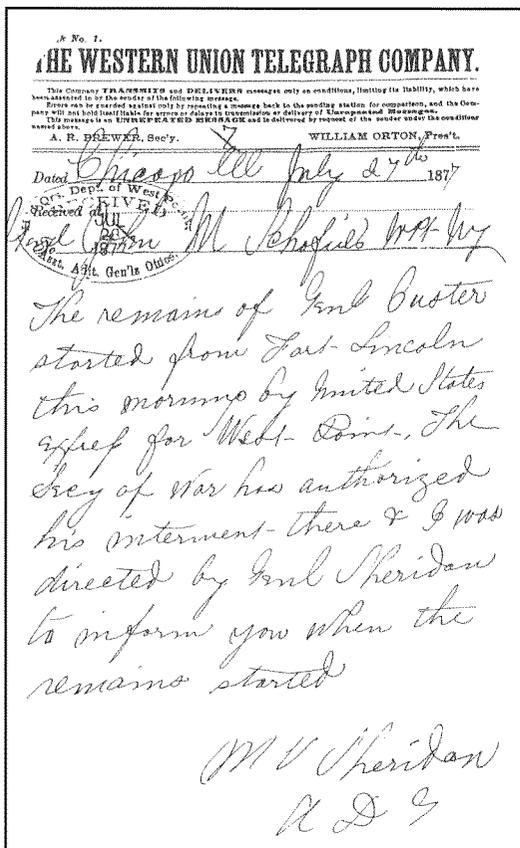
there & I was directed by Genl Sheridan to inform you when the remains started."<sup>62</sup>

Originally, the remains were scheduled to be met at West Point where funeral services were to be held in August. On Tuesday, July 31, Mrs. Custer went from New York to meet with General Schofield, Academy Superintendent, to "plan the funeral obsequies." Schofield advised Mrs. Custer that many officers were on furlough and there would not be enough notice to the many friends of Custer who wished to attend. As a consequence of that meeting, the box with the remains was diverted to Poughkeepsie, New York. The funeral would be set as a matter of convenience to friends and family. October 10, 1877 was the date picked by Mrs. Custer.

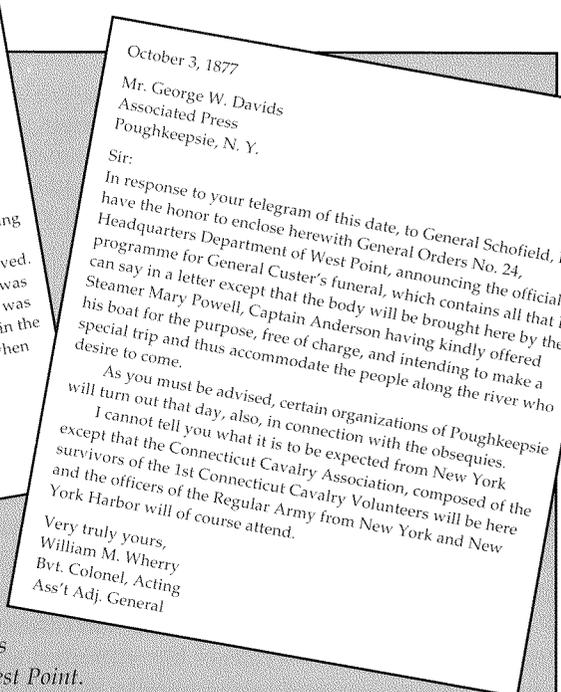
The body of General Custer arrived at Poughkeepsie in charge of the American Express Company, the casket containing it being encased in a strong wooden box. "On the box. . . was a written certification that the remains enclosed was those of Gen. Custer." The Custer box was placed in a vault at the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery Thursday, August 2, 1877, "the Trustees of the Cemetery giving cordial assent."<sup>63</sup>

Officials of Poughkeepsie planned a special funeral procession to carry the remains of General Custer to the ship at the Hudson River. On Wednesday, October 10, virtually the whole town was present to witness the entourage as it moved through the city to the river. A local newspaper reported:

The remains were in an elegant hearse drawn by four coal black horses and decorated with flags and black crape [sic] rolled in accordance with military custom. The casket containing the remains was draped with the flag that shrouded the son of Philip Hamilton



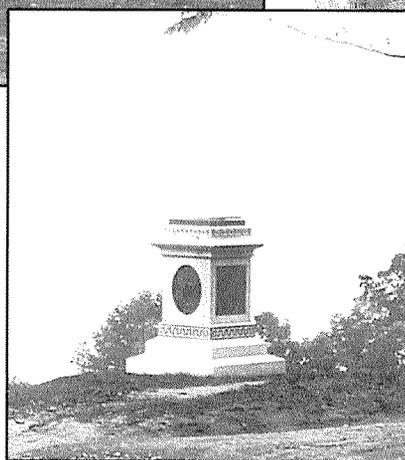
LEFT: 1877 Telegram from Lieutenant Colonel Michael Sheridan to General John Schofield informing him that Custer remains are being sent United States Express to West Point.



ABOVE: Contents of August 1877 letter regarding Custer remains being received in Poughkeepsie. RIGHT: Contents of October 1877 letter regarding Steamer Mary Powell transporting Custer remains to West Point. Two letters from Letterbook, Vol. 1, pages 48 & 75, Department of West Point. All courtesy of West Point Archives.



ABOVE & UPPER RIGHT: *Custer monument, by Wilson MacDonald, sculptor, erected at West Point in 1879 on Hudson River overlook. An engraving of this controversial Custer statue appeared in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, March 1879. This is the picture that may have upset Mrs. Custer who never saw the statue. Photos courtesy West Point Archives. RIGHT: Concept view of Custer monument after the statue had been removed in 1884, at the request of Mrs. Custer. Courtesy of author.*



approached," reported *Harper's Weekly*, dated October 27, 1877. The remains were placed inside at 12:40 P.M. to lay in state. The services commenced at 2 P.M. Mrs. Custer entered attired in "deep mourning" escorted by General John

who was killed by the Indians on the plains. The only floral offering was a shoulder strap, two feet in length and eight inches wide and on it were two stars. The strap was formed of geraniums and the stars of tube roses. It was placed at the head of the casket and was the offering of the Veteran Volunteers of Poughkeepsie.

The horse with empty saddle had all the equipments belonging to the rank of a general. The Mayor, Common Council, throngs of Poughkeepsie citizens, regimental band, a number of military units, Civil War veterans and a "Guard of Honor" escorted Custer's remains in a scheduled march from the cemetery vault, through the town to the steamer *Mary Powell*. Once aboard, many of the dignitaries were to accompany the remains to West Point.<sup>60</sup>

The newspaper reports one thousand people boarded the steamer before reaching Poughkeepsie and at least another thousand boarded the *Mary Powell* between that city and West Point. A letterbook entry found at West Point indicates that Captain Anderson offered the use of the *Mary Powell* at no charge. He intended to "make a special trip to accommodate people along the river who desire to come."<sup>64</sup>

At the West Point south dock, the coffin had a military escort to the chapel. "Thousands of people lined the banks on either side of the roadway as the procession

Scofield. Custer's father and sister followed. At the conclusion of the service, a detachment of cavalry led the procession to the cemetery followed by a battalion of cadets and all the dignitaries. Throngs of people lined the roads to the cemetery.<sup>65</sup>

As the graveside burial service concluded, the cadet corps fired three volleys over the grave. The service was over. The crowd dispersed. Within view of Custer's burial place is the 1867 monument of Norman J. Hall. The two youngsters from Monroe who had lived but a few miles apart as youths in Michigan, were united in death, 200 feet apart.

### Hall's West Point Monument

Within a few weeks after Hall's burial, a handsome pedestal monument about six feet high was erected with a cross at the top. A simple inscription below Hall's name reads, "in hope of eternal life" on one side, "Hall" and "Fort Sumter 1861" in large letters on the front.

By 1995, Hall's 1867 marble monument was showing signs of serious deterioration. Winter weather along the Hudson is not kind to marble statues. Ice had expanded

cracks. The cross, broken once, was patched. Once an old monument falls at West Point, it is discarded and replaced by a simple marker with the name and date only. Famous names, once suitably marked, are now shown on small white markers.

West Point cemetery officials are reluctant to replace older monuments. With the approval of West Point authorities, a virtually exact duplicate in granite was replaced by Norman Hall's grandson and great-grandsons in November 1999.<sup>65</sup> The 1867 original, thanks to a generous Monroe benefactor, was moved to Michigan and installed indoors at the Monroe County Historical Commission.

### Custer's West Point Monument

No West Point cemetery records, photographs or drawings are available to determine what type of headstone, if any, may have marked Custer's grave in 1877. If there was a marker, it may only have been a standard government issue type used for Civil War veterans. If that was the case, not until seven years later, 1884, was there a change at the site.

In 1879 a controversial bronze statue of Custer was dedicated with great fanfare near the Post Headquarters overlooking the Hudson River.<sup>66</sup> Elizabeth Custer, who had only seen it in a drawing, despised the statue. In 1884, after years of effort by Mrs. Custer, with the help of Lieutenant General William T. Sherman in Washington, the figure was removed from the pedestal and placed in the base Quartermaster warehouse.

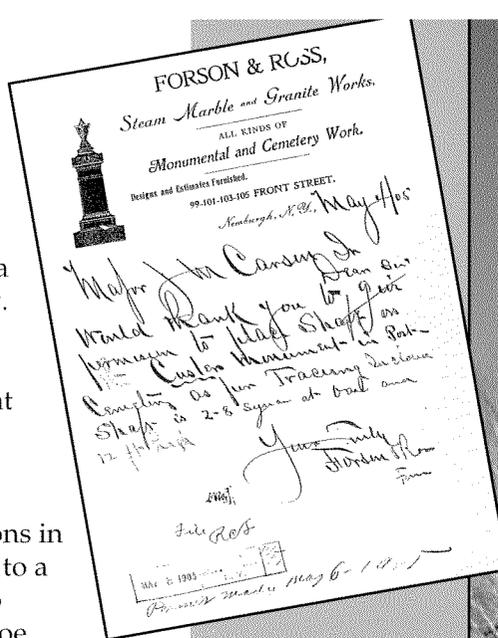
This left the pedestal standing alone. The six-foot high block of granite, large bronze medallions at each side, could be seen from the commandant's office. Colonel Wesley Merritt, who had served with Custer, though not an admirer of his, quickly tired of looking at the pedestal. Within a few weeks, it was moved to Custer's grave.

The six-foot pedestal was Custer's grave marker from 1884 to 1905. Had there been a government issue marker at the site, it would have been discarded. In 1905 Mrs. Custer, following a years earlier suggestion from General Sherman, had an Egyptian style twelve-foot high obelisk placed on the pedestal.<sup>66</sup> As seen today, the obelisk atop the base makes an imposing monument to Custer.

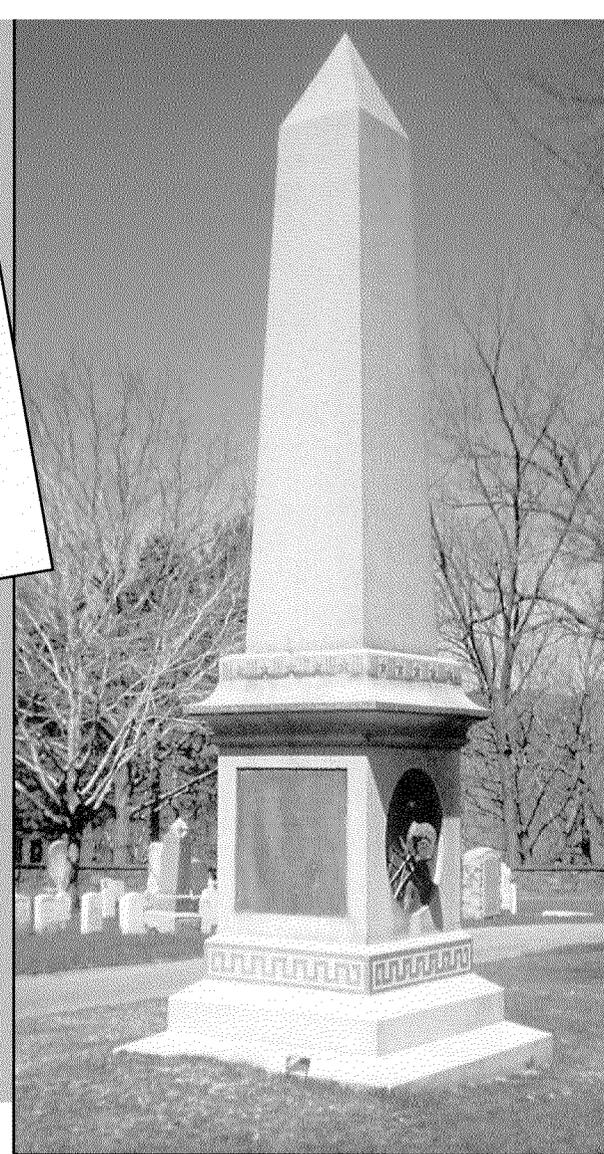
One hundred and forty years after Fort Sumter, Hall and Custer now have monuments in the city of Monroe, Michigan. The spectacular bronze statue now at the corner of Elm and Monroe shows Custer on horseback. Originally placed in Loranger Square, the statue was dedicated June 4, 1910, with President William Howard Taft attending. Hall's monument, removed from West Point is now situated at Monroe, three blocks south in a second floor exhibit at the Monroe Historical Commission.

### An Analysis

George Armstrong Custer's and Norman Hall's personalities were so different, it is unlikely they would have been



ABOVE: May 1905 request from Forson & Ross Monuments Co. for permission to install 12-foot high obelisk on Custer pedestal at West Point Cemetery. Courtesy West Point Archives. RIGHT: Custer gravesite after obelisk was installed in 1905. Courtesy of author.



good friends. Custer was a striver. From an early age he wanted to be someone, to get ahead in the world. He wanted to be recognized. He liked the adulation thrust upon him. Today we would call him a "hard-charger." He was courageous almost to a fault. He loved his wife dearly but also allowed time for other ladies in his life. He surrounded himself with loyalists and family members he could trust. While there is no agreement by Custer historians, some feel he was politically ambitious, others not. He, like Hall, died a young man, unable to show his true potential in a peace time setting.

Norman Hall was a journeyman, a hard worker. His earliest letters from West Point and in his personal diary show how deeply he cared about his country, his family, his young wife, two small children and West Point. He wanted to serve. He was brave without bravado. He was a leader. He was self-effacing in his official reports. He gave credit to others. He was fair and honest in his dealings. He was dedicated to his officers and men and they to him in return.

He was nominated more than once by a number of General Officers for Brigadier, but the Brevet and Regular Army rank eluded him. History passed him by. He died too young to be remembered for his outstanding military record. Had his health allowed, had he been able to serve to the end of the war after Gettysburg, Hall would have made an outstanding candidate to serve as West Point Superintendent, in the War Department or the United States Foreign Service. ★

## CAREER JUXTAPOSITIONS

- Norman Hall was present as the Civil War started at Fort Sumter.
- George Custer was present as the Civil War ended at Appomatox.
- George Custer's first command was at Gettysburg.
- Norman Hall's last command was at Gettysburg.
- Both came from humble backgrounds.
- Both fathers owned farms.
- Both moved to Michigan from another state.
- Both lived in or near Monroe, Michigan.
- Both attended school in or near Monroe, Michigan.
- Both were acquainted with Elizabeth (Libbie) Bacon as youths.
- Both appointments to West Point signed by Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War.
- Both entered in five-year classes at West Point.
- Both had meetings with General Winfield Scott.
- Both were photographed by Matthew Brady.
- Both served on General McClellan's staff at the same time.
- Both were balloon observers early in the Civil War.
- Both married young ladies from affluent families.
- Both wives were years younger than they.
- Both wives were born in 1842.
- Both were twenty-four years old when married during the month of February.
- Both were married in a church service. Both churches were new in 1848.
- Both commanded Michigan Regiments: Hall Infantry, Custer Cavalry.
- Both were heroes at the Battle of Gettysburg.
- Both completed the Civil War with permanent rank as Regular Army Captains.
- Both completed military career as Lieutenant Colonel (Custer), Brevet Lieutenant Colonel (Hall).
- Both had military funeral services in the old West Point Chapel.
- Both are buried (75 yards apart) at the West Point Cemetery.
- Both have monuments in Monroe, Michigan as of April 2001.

*Even so, there is no indication that one knew the other while at Monroe, West Point, on McClellan's staff during the Peninsular Campaign or at any time during or after the Civil War. There is no indication one acknowledged the other in any way, wrote to or about the other, or are seen together in a photograph. No references to Hall have been found in any Custer books. Since there are no books on Hall there can be no references to Custer. In the many letters written by Hall to his wife and family, Custer is never mentioned.*

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