



"AND THEY DID SAVE IT": THE MONUMENTS OF MONOCACY

Hannah Grant and Dean Herrin

On July 9, 1864, Confederate and Union forces clashed on the banks of the Monocacy River near Frederick, Maryland, in what later became known as "The Battle That Saved Washington." In the Confederates' last desperate incursion onto Northern soil, Lieutenant General Jubal Early's army crossed the Potomac River at Shepherdstown, West Virginia, intending to march on Washington, D.C., while General Robert E. Lee was engaging most of the Union Army near Richmond, Virginia. The Confederates rolled through Hagerstown, Middletown, and Frederick before meeting Union Major General Lew Wallace's outnumbered troops positioned on the east side of the Monocacy River. The ensuing battle on July 9 lasted most of the day, and although Early eventually won the battle and forced Wallace's Union force to retreat, he had lost valuable time. The Battle of Monocacy cost Early a day in his march on the nation's capital, just enough time to allow Union reinforcements to buttress Washington's defenses. By the time Early's army came within sight of the Capitol dome on July 11, veteran Union troops were swarming into the forts and trenches in front of the Confederates. The two armies traded fire for a time, but Early realized he was too late, and started his men on their retreat back to Virginia.

In terms of attention from historians and from the public, the Battle of Monocacy was always overshadowed by the more prominent and nearby Antietam and Gettysburg battlefields. But for the soldiers who had fought at Monocacy on that day in 1864, and who had lost comrades in the fight, the battlefield was no less hallowed ground than the larger battlefields. Only a month after the battle, in closing his report to his superiors about

◀ Veterans of the **14th New Jersey Regiment** at the dedication of their monument on the Monocacy battlefield in July 1907.

the engagement, Major General Lew Wallace wrote:

Orders have been given to collect the bodies of our dead in one burial ground on the battle-field, suitable for a monument upon which I propose to write, 'These men died to save the National Capital, and they did save it.'¹

But no monument was erected. Two other attempts to erect a monument also failed. In 1889, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the battle, many Union veterans returned to Monocacy and created an organization, the "Monocacy Monument Association," to raise funds for a monument. Insufficient funds were raised, however, and this was repeated when another effort was attempted at the fortieth reunion in 1904.²

With plans for a national monument failing to gain traction, states began to erect their own monuments in honor of their veterans who had fought at Monocacy. The first to be built was for the 14th New Jersey Regiment in 1907, followed by a monument to the 67th, 87th, and 138th Pennsylvania Regiments in 1908. In 1914, the local Frederick chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy funded a monument for the Confederate soldiers who had fought in the battle. The following year, the 10th Vermont Regiment erected its monument.

The land on which these monuments stood was all purchased from private landowners, since there was no state or national park to commemorate the Battle of Monocacy. Each state was thus responsible for its monument, but this long-distance custodianship did not bode well for the permanent maintenance of the monuments. *The Confederate Veteran*, the magazine of Confederate veteran's organizations, called attention to this problem in 1928: "...since the relocation of the Georgetown road these monuments are no longer accessible, at least, they are very much neglected and some of them almost hidden from view by bushes and

briars growing up around them."³ The magazine also called attention to the efforts of many in Frederick to have the Monocacy battlefield declared a national park. Judge Glenn Worthington, who had witnessed the battle from his family's farm, was one of the most ardent leaders of this project. Finally, in 1934, the Monocacy National Military Park was created, but operating funds were minimal and no money was authorized for land acquisition.

So little money was available, in fact, that the existing monuments were still neglected. *The Burlington Free Press and Times* in Vermont lamented in 1939 that the 10th Vermont's monument at Monocacy was "long-forgotten" and "very hard to find," as it was "[a]lmost hidden from the light of day by a heavy growth of underbrush and briars."⁴ *The Baltimore Sun* complained that same year that even though the battlefield had been designated a national military park, "the funds appropriated were so meager that there is little evidence of it." The Vermont and Pennsylvania monuments, according to the paper, "are now lost to sight, uncared for and overgrown."⁵ A writer for the *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society* cited similar conditions for that state's monument in 1941 in an article titled "Forgotten New Jersey Monument." The monument for the 14th New Jersey "keeps lonely vigil" over the former battlefield, and stands "as a lonely and abandoned sentinel over a forgotten field in the green hills of Maryland."⁶ The situation had not improved eleven years later. An article in the *Times-Herald* of Washington, D.C., described the 14th New Jersey monument as "untended, inaccessible, seemingly forgotten ... its granite is weathering, its bronze plaque blackening, and at its base, cinder-strewn from the adjacent railroad traffic, weeds weave a rough blanket." The brave who try to get to the monument have to work their way "through burr and thistle, down a rough embankment and over a rusty barbed-wire fence...."⁷

The maintenance of the monuments must have improved by the centennial of the battle in 1964, because elaborate ceremonies were held to both unveil a new monument and to rededicate the old monuments. The new monument placed on the field by the state of Maryland commemorated both the Union and Confederate soldiers who had participated in the battle. Wreath-laying ceremonies were also held at each of the other monuments. The perpetual care of the monuments and of the battlefield was finally ensured when Congress appropriated funds in 1976 for the acquisition of battlefield lands, and authorized transfer of ownership to the National Park Service by 1980.

Start the tour at the **Monocacy National Battlefield Visitor Center**, located at 5201 Urbana Pike, Frederick, MD, to get an overview of the Battle of Monocacy.



Turn left out of the Visitor Center and almost immediately on your right are two monuments. There is a narrow pull-off on the right-hand shoulder. Please use caution when parked on the shoulder.

United Daughters of the Confederacy Monument

On July 9, 1914, on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Battle of Monocacy, the Fitzhugh Lee Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) in Frederick, Maryland, unveiled a rectangular monolith, made of unpolished granite and a bronze plaque. This was the third monument erected on the battlefield, and the only one dedicated solely to the Confederate troops who fought and won the Battle of Monocacy. There was a bit of controversy as to the placement of the monument, with at least one letter-writer at the time complaining that the spot more appropriately marked the location of General Robert E. Lee's headquarters site

COURTESY OF MONOCACY NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD



The **Maryland** Monument on the left and the **United Daughters of the Confederacy** Monument on the right.

during the Maryland Campaign of 1862 than it did the Confederates' position at the Battle of Monocacy.⁸ But the UDC pointed out that the spot provided a grand overview of the entire battlefield, and the ceremony on July 9 featured the grandson of General Robert E. Lee, Colonel Robert E. Lee, and General John F. King, a Confederate veteran who had fought at the Battle of Monocacy.⁹ On the front of the monument a rectangular bronze plaque bears the following inscription:

This boulder overlooks the Monocacy Battlefield and is in memory of the southern soldiers who fell in the battle fought July 9, 1864 which resulted in a Confederate victory. Erected July 9, 1914 by the Fitzhugh Lee Chapter United Daughters of the Confederacy of Frederick, Maryland

Maryland Monument

The fifth and final monument to be erected on the battlefield was dedicated on July 9, 1964 by the Maryland Civil War Centennial Commission to commemorate both Union and Confederate troops on the Centennial of the Battle of Monocacy. The

monument is a granite monolith with the date "1864 – 1964" carved into the front of the rock. On the top of the monument sits a bronze plaque which is molded in the shape of an open book and bears the following inscription:

The Battle of Monocacy

The Battle that Saved Washington

Here along the Monocacy River on July 9, 1864, was fought the battle between Union forces under General Lew Wallace and Confederate forces under General Jubal A. Early. The battle, although a temporary victory for the Confederates, delayed their march on Washington one day, thereby enabling General Grant to send veteran reinforcements from Petersburg, Virginia to the defenses of Washington in time to forestall the attack by the Confederates and thus save the Capital from capture. Dedicated on July 9, 1964 to honor the Maryland soldiers who fought here for the Union and the Confederacy.

J. Millard Tawes, Governor of Maryland

Maryland Civil War Centennial Commission, George L. Radcliffe, Chairman



Proceed southeast on Urbana Pike 0.5 miles. Cross the

railroad tracks and immediately take the first right on to a small gravel road. The monument will be to your right.

14th New Jersey Monument

On July 11, 1907, 180 survivors of the 14th New Jersey Regiment gathered together to witness the unveiling of a monument dedicated to them by the State of New Jersey. The regiment helped delay the Confederate soldiers during the Battle of Monocacy, and in so doing lost two-thirds of its men — the most casualties to a single regiment during the battle. Today the State of New Jersey continues to own the monument and works with the National Park Service to keep it maintained. The monument was the first to be placed on the battlefield. It is made of granite and consists of a pedestal, which bears four bronze plaques — two original on the front and two added later, one at the Fiftieth Anniversary in 1964 and one at the Centennial Rededication in 2007, on the back. A statue of a soldier stands atop the pedestal making the monument approximately twenty-four feet in height. On the middle and lower portions of the pedestal, the original bronze plaques state:

Erected by the State of New Jersey to commemorate the heroic services of the 14th Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, 1st Brigade, 3rd Division, 6th Army Corps, Army of the Potomac, at the Battle of Monocacy, MD. July 9, 1864.

The 14th Regiment New Jersey Volunteers was organized on the Monmouth Battle Ground, and mustered in the United States service near Freehold, New Jersey August 26th, 1862, and was mustered out June 18th, 1865, near Washington, D.C.

and

The Union forces commanded by General Lew Wallace on the battlefield so stubbornly opposed the Confederate troops under General Jubal A. Early as to assure the safety of the National Capital.

The commission to erect the monument - Major John C. Patterson, President, Adjutant William H. Foster, Secretary,

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The **14th New Jersey** Monument.

Corporal R. A. Clark, Treasurer, Captain Jarvis Wanser, Sergeant John Grover, Thos Manson & Son, Builders

The two plaques added later on the back of the pedestal state:

This site rededicated July 5, 1964 - Civil War Centennial Commission - State of New Jersey

and

We commemorate the 100th anniversary of this monument and rededicate it in honor of those who served with pride and distinction in the 14th New Jersey Volunteer Infantry. One hundred years ago, in a time of healing, the surviving veterans came here to remember their comrades and their sacrifices. We gather here today to honor them anew. Their struggle to preserve the Union must never be forgotten.



The **Pennsylvania** Monument.

The New Jersey Civil War History Association - July 7, 2007



From the turnoff, turn right and continue to head southeast on Urbana Pike. Cross over the Monocacy River and take the first right onto Araby Church Road (Araby Church Rd. will eventually turn into Williams Avenue – continue on Williams Ave.). A monument will be on the left. There is no official parking lot, so be careful parking on the side of the road.

67th, 87th, and 138th Pennsylvania Monument

This monument, which towers at an impressive thirty-five feet high, was dedicated on November 24, 1908 by

the State of Pennsylvania. It honors three Pennsylvania Regiments, the 67th, 87th and 138th. A total of 250 survivors from those three regiments attended the dedication. Even though the monument is dedicated to all three regiments, only two – the 87th and the 138th – actually fought during the Battle of Monocacy. The 67th Pennsylvania Regiment was not able to aid their fellow Union soldiers because they were held up in New Market, Maryland, before the battle and after the war became known as part of the “missing brigade.” However, the State of Pennsylvania decided to honor all three regiments by creating a singular, unique monument. It is made out of blue westerly Rhode Island granite and is composed

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of three main parts (from bottom to top): a large ten-square-foot base which supports a polished cube that is surrounded by four Doric columns, one on each corner; a large stylized column atop the cube; and, perched at the very top of the monument, a polished granite sphere which bears the Greek cross – the symbol of the Union Army's VI Corps, of which these regiments were a part. On the west side of the base, a tablet bears the following inscription:

Erected by the Commonwealth of Penna in commemoration of the bravery, sacrifices, and patriotism of the 67th, 87th, and 138th regiments that fought on this battlefield July 9, 1864. Commissioners - Wm. H Lanius, Capt. Co. I. 87th, Robert T. Cornwell, Capt. Co. I 67th, M. Coppleberger, Priv. Co. A. 138th



Immediately after the Pennsylvania Monument, turn right onto Baker Valley Road, and the next monument will be on the right as you are turning.

10th Vermont Monument

This small monument honors the 10th Vermont Regiment. It was dedicated in 1915 by the State of Vermont. The 10th Vermont fought on the Thomas Farm, located directly behind the monument, and at Monocacy Junction. Two members of Company D of this regiment were awarded Medals of Honor for their bravery during the battle. The monument is made of white granite and stands at eight feet tall in the shape of a rectangular monolith. On the front of the stone, one bronze tablet in the shape of a Greek cross bears the following inscription:

This monument was erected by the state of Vermont to designate the position of the 10th Vermont Infantry during the battle fought here on the ninth day of July 1864 to save Washington, "and we saved it." Seven companies occupied the Washington Pike, while three companies occupied the Buckeystown Road opposite the Thomas House. 1915. ¹⁰ ❄

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- 1 United States, War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*; Series 1 - Volume 37, Part I (Washington: Washington Govt. Print. Off., 1891), 200.
- 2 Marc Leepson, *Desperate Engagement* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2007), 234; Form Letter from Monocacy Monument Association, in file "Monocacy Monument Association," Monocacy National Battlefield Archives; and *Frederick Daily News*, July 11, 1904. See also, B. Franklin Cooling, *Monocacy – The battle That Saved Washington* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing, 1997), 234-238.
- 3 "Memorial Park on Monocacy Battle Field," *Confederate Veteran*, XXXVI (Feb. 1928), 44.
- 4 *The Burlington Free Press and Times*, May 31, 1939, in file "75th Anniversary of Monocacy," Monocacy National Battlefield Archives.
- 5 *The Baltimore Sun*, July 2, 1939, in file "75th Anniversary of Monocacy," Monocacy National Battlefield Archives.
- 6 George T. Ness, "Forgotten New Jersey Monument," *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, v.59 (1941), 257-261, in file "NJ Monument," Monocacy National Battlefield Archives.
- 7 "Volunteer Hero of Monocacy Strides Alone," *Times-Herald* (Washington, DC), May 16, 1952, in file "Miscellaneous Articles," Monocacy National Battlefield Archives.
- 8 "Monocacy Marker Site Picked," *The Frederick News Post*, April 2, 1914, and "Two Markers to Settle Dispute Over Location," *The Daily News*, Frederick, Maryland, April 4, 1914.
- 9 "Col. R.E. Lee to Be U.D.C. Speaker," *The Frederick News Post*, June 23, 1914.
- 10 All inscriptions were taken from the Monocacy National Battlefield's website. "Monocacy National Battlefield," National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/mono/index.htm>.



The 10th Vermont Monument.