Crampton's Gap:
"Aperture to Antietam"

Timothy J. Reese

Big things come in small packages, so the axiom reminds us. This is certainly true of Crampton's Gap, a conspicuous notch in the otherwise uniform crest of South Mountain, outlining the western wall of the Catoctin Valley. Lying six miles north of the Potomac River, seven south of Turner's Gap where the National Turnpike crosses, one can easily spot Crampton's Gap from virtually any vantage point throughout the valley.

Since time immemorial, this gap conveyed the Conococheague Trail from tidewater Maryland to the upper reaches of the Potomac watershed. Native American moccasins wore a clearly discernible hunting path through the gap, which in turn became a seminal wagon road for European settlement beyond the mountain. Its strategic location eventually brought it to the national stage.

Rugged Resource

Beginning in the early 1730s, colonial authorities hired one Thomas Crampton to lay out and build north and south approach roads, sidling up the mountain's west slope to the gap, also a principal thoroughfare down Pleasant Valley to the Potomac at Weverton. In payment for his ample labors, Crampton was deeded all lands lying within the massive triangle outlined by his roads.[1] Concurrently, a tiny crossroads settlement slowly evolved at the gap's eastern foot, first dubbed "Harley's Store," ultimately recasting itself as Burkittsville in 1828.[2] Some of Crampton's offspring slipped over the gap into the Catoctin Valley, attaching the family name from both sides.

The region's principal thoroughfares were laid down well to the north and south of the gap enroute to Harpers Ferry, Hagerstown, and points west, relegating Burkittsville and its secondary byway to local traffic coming out of Frederick, winding its way through Elk Ridge and Red Hill to Sharpsburg. Like most shortcuts it had its drawbacks, especially in the rainy season.
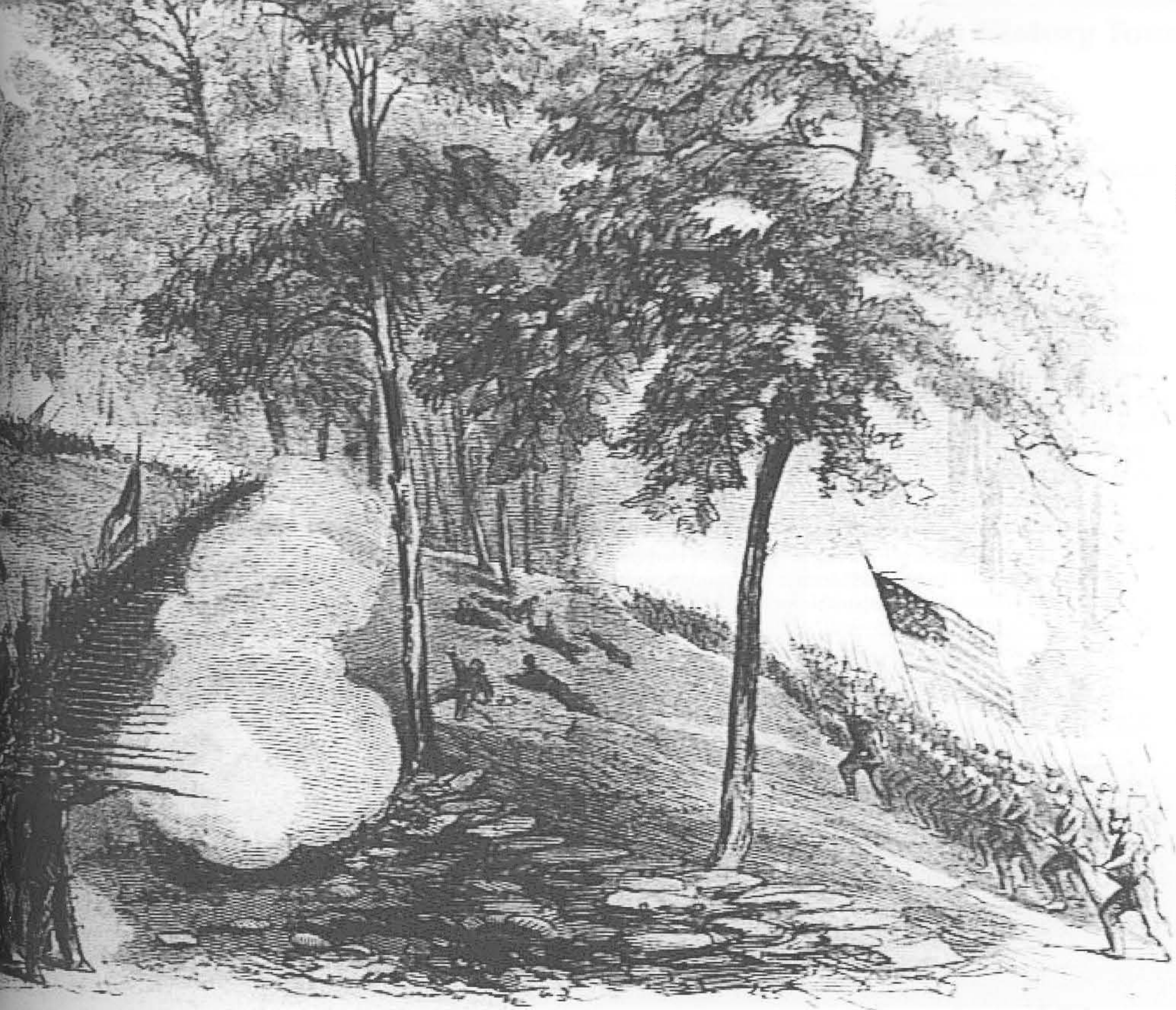
Mountain Strategy

Sharpsburg was purposely laid out as a potential county seat. When Washington County was formally established in 1776, an election was held to choose the seat of government. Sharpsburg narrowly lost out to Hagerstown by a single vote, condemning both town and road to secondary importance.[3] The boundary between Washington and Frederick counties was set at the mountain summit traversing Crampton's Gap.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the valley floor had been completely deforested for farmland, the gap road now lending itself to more primal need. Nearby farmers found it wise to purchase one or more wood lots aloft on South Mountain to furnish fuel for stoves and fireplaces throughout long, frigid winters. Driving their sweating teams into the gap, farmers wore wagon tracks snaking off from the main road into dense woods to access these lots where corded wood was cut, stacked, and seasoned until autumn. For generations, this remained the sole attraction to Crampton's primeval gap, a dented skyline placidly towering over a serene agrarian valley. All this abruptly changed in late summer of 1862.

In September of the Civil War's second year, General Robert E. Lee decided that the time was ripe to make an impression on Union voters in upcoming midterm elections, as well as foreign powers contemplating intervention. Marching his Army of Northern Virginia across the Potomac River into Maryland, Lee gathered his host at Frederick and laid plans. The army would split itself in two, half going to Harpers Ferry to lay siege to the federal garrison there, the other half moving on Hagerstown via Boonsboro on the National Pike.

Learning that Lee was running free in western Maryland, Union General George B. McClellan was ordered to go after him. McClellan had no clue where Lee was or where he was going, and so fanned out his army on every road between Washington and Frederick, probing for the wily Confederate. Just when everything was going Lee's way, the bottom dropped out. As Lee marched on Hagerstown, a copy of his campaign orders was inadvertently left behind in Frederick and picked up by a Union corporal. Historians are still trying to explain that one.[4] Now the ball was in McClellan's court, he

▲ Alfred Waud's sketch of Crampton's Gap battlefield, *Harper's Weekly,* October 25, 1862.

knowing exactly what Lee was up to, the two halves of the Rebel army separated by a dozen miles or more, the Potomac River lying between them. As opportunities go, this one was without parallel.
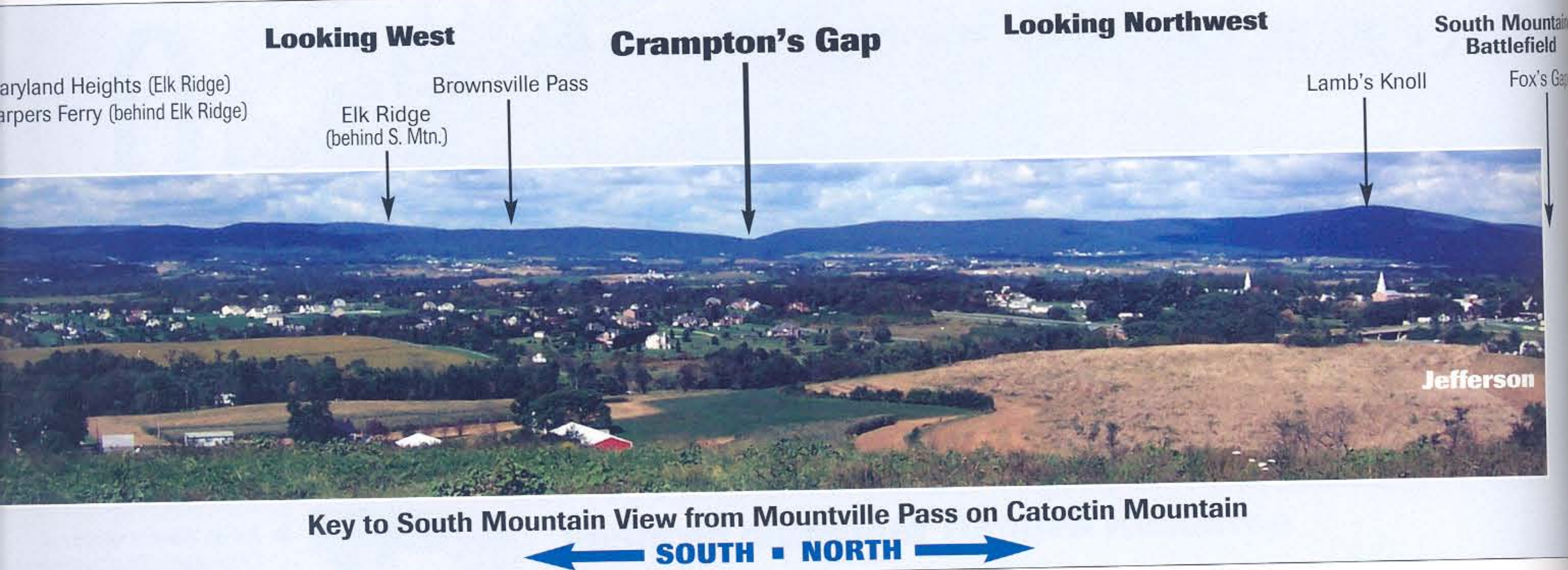
McClellan pondered his map, then decided to drive a wedge between the two Rebel halves with his left wing at Crampton's Gap to prevent their re-joining. Meanwhile, McClellan would personally batter Lee's half over South Mountain with his right wing and center now piling into Frederick. Then he could jump Lee with vast numerical superiority beyond the mountain.

McClellan's pursuit to Frederick appeared rather like the fingers of a hand plying the roads. The thumb or left wing, represented by the Sixth Army Corps, marched closer to the river at a distance from the main army. Ideally positioned for the role, if McClellan could get the Sixth Corps to Burkittsville, then through Crampton's Gap to the relief of Harpers Ferry, the corps could continue westward unopposed, making it nearly impossible for Lee to reunite his forces while on

ordered upriver to join him. No one appeared, so the Sixth Corps pushed on to Burkittsville five miles away, arriving at high noon. At this point even a blind man could have seen that speed was vital. Franklin, however, allowed his First Division to stand down for a midday meal at Burkittsville, while his Second Division trailed in from Jefferson. Things were already unraveling.

A handful of apprehensive Confederates had been watching his progress from atop South Mountain. General Lafayette McLaws was preoccupied with the siege of Harpers Ferry, but scurried to make a defense when Franklin's blue masses swarmed into Burkittsville. To be brutally candid, the last-minute, patchwork Rebel defense of the gap closely resembled the antics of a decapitated chicken. Federal encroachment was completely unanticipated. Consequently, few troops were on hand for defense. McLaws nevertheless slapped together marginal opposition because Franklin waited until 4 P.M. to start the show, his men

Looking West   **Crampton's Gap**   **Looking Northwest**   **South Mountain Battlefield**

aryland Heights (Elk Ridge)   Brownsville Pass   Lamb's Knoll   Fox's Gap
arpers Ferry (behind Elk Ridge)   Elk Ridge (behind S. Mtn.)

Jefferson

Key to South Mountain View from Mountville Pass on Catoctin Mountain
← SOUTH ▪ NORTH →

▲ View of South Mountain taken from Mountville Pass on Catoctin Mountain.

the run—divide and conquer, as the saying goes. In fact, McClellan might have ignored Harpers Ferry altogether, had he wished, without compromising his counter-strategy. However, both he and his Washington superiors felt its garrison could further enlarge McClellan's left wing.

Emboldened by his windfall, McClellan sent a dispatch flying to his Sixth Corps commander, General William B. Franklin. His Sixth Corps was encamped at the east foot of Catoctin Mountain opposite Jefferson when the letter arrived that evening. It spelled out all of the foregoing with heavy emphasis on likely benefits—"My general idea is to cut the enemy in two and beat him in detail"—even going so far in his enthusiasm as to ask Franklin for "all your intellect, and the utmost energy that a general can exercise" to oblige "the decisive results I propose to gain."[5] Strong stuff.

Instead of shoving his troops over Catoctin Mountain to Jefferson that night, Franklin got them going next morning, Sunday, September 14, then loitered at Jefferson for over an hour to await other troops

fighting on full stomachs at least.

Confederate forces tied down the First Division for roughly an hour along Mountain Church Road running parallel to the mountain at its foot, trading long-range ballistic insults between stone fences until Union troops charged them at 5:30. The Rebel line quickly snapped and fled up the mountain, Federals right on their heels. At this untimely moment, panting Confederate reserves, racing from Pleasant Valley, were just getting into place about halfway down the mountain slope. These were surrounded and nearly annihilated. Union troops then climbed onward into the gap itself to cut up their last stand. Nightfall brought down the curtain. Franklin could savor the first victory over any portion of Lee's army to date, a sparkling success— 12,800 Federals pitted against 2,100 Confederates, or six to one odds.[6]

Next morning, McLaws' troops cobbled together a line of defense across mile-wide Pleasant Valley, knees knocking, their only avenue of escape shut tight at Harpers Ferry. Instead of attacking again with two

fresh divisions, Franklin stood idly by and did nothing. Nor did he attempt to push troops through the mountain passes west of Crampton's Gap in wedge fashion to Sharpsburg as he had been ordered. Toward midday of the 15th, Harpers Ferry ran up the white flag, leaving the way open for McLaws to get out of harm's way. During the afternoon and next morning, he gingerly fell back down the valley, crossed the Potomac at the ferry, and breathed a sigh of relief. Plagued with fear and doubt, Franklin stood in place for two days until McClellan ordered him to Sharpsburg for the showdown where his corps mostly stood in reserve and watched the carnage. Lee had narrowly gathered his army to face McClellan for the endgame, courtesy of Franklin.

Suppressed Milestone

Bloodiest single day of the war, Antietam was an incomplete tactical draw. Lee ultimately had no choice but to fall back to Virginia, lending the appearance of

was the pivotal battle of the pivotal campaign, of America's most pivotal war. This is not conjecture, but clearly demonstrated by the decisive words and actions of Lee and McClellan.

One must also differentiate that the 1863 battle of Gettysburg, far-famed though it is, was simply the obstinate "high-water mark" of Lee's field forces. Preceding it in contrast, the 1862 Maryland Campaign, strategically catapulted through Crampton's Gap, was the beginning of the end for the Confederacy because afterward it stood precariously alone, wholly dependent on its own limited resources without sympathy from either side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Three times Lee lamented that the fall of Crampton's Gap had wrecked his initiative, the first written the day before Antietam: "Learning later in the evening that Crampton's Gap (on the direct road from Fredericktown to Sharpsburg) had been forced, and McLaws' rear thus threatened, and believing from a report from General Jackson that Harper's Ferry would fall next

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▲ Crampton's Gap as seen from the northeast.

defeat which was sufficient for European ministers to look the other way, and for Union voters to uphold a thin Republican majority. President Abraham Lincoln then used this marginal success, five days afterward, as the springboard for his Emancipation Proclamation, putting war aims on an entirely new footing which made Confederate States morally repugnant to all.

America's unified future came as the result of five events which, like a row of dominos, fell in sequence at a time when national division seemed assured: 1) the "Lost Order" negated Lee's plan to influence disaffected Northerners and push European powers off the dime, 2) McClellan's partitioning counter-strategy through Crampton's Gap worked only so far as Franklin would take it, 3) in reaction to the fall of Crampton's Gap, a panicked Lee hurried south to reunite his forces at Sharpsburg, 4) the armies fought it out at Antietam without anyone surrendering, and 5) Lincoln, astute politician that he was, permanently forestalled foreign intervention with his proclamation. One must, therefore, conclude that Crampton's Gap

morning, I determined to withdraw Longstreet and D. H. Hill from their positions and retire to the vicinity of Sharpsburg, where the army could be more easily united."[7]

Nearly a year later, Lee filed his overdue campaign report, reiterating that "Information was also received that another large body of Federal troops had during the afternoon forced their way through Crampton's Gap, only 5 miles in rear of McLaws. Under these circumstances, it was determined to retire to Sharpsburg, where we would be upon the flank and rear of the enemy should he move against McLaws, and where we could more readily unite with the rest of the army."[8]

Time allegedly heals all wounds, but not Lee's. He carried this salient frustration for the rest of his days. Two years before his death, Lee privately bore his soul to a confidante, one with the foresight to immediately record his final words on the subject. "This night Lee found out that Cobb had been pressed back from Crampton's Gap, and this made it necessary to retire

from Boonsboro [Turner's] Gap, which was done next morning and position at Sharpsburg taken."[9] Franklin's seizure of Crampton's Gap is comparable to a sky-rocket sputtering out midway to its target, its fuse-trail nevertheless plainly visible to Lee.

McClellan's unequivocal mandate to Franklin—born of the Lost Order, epitomized by Lee's thrice-stated testimony of its impact—indelibly branded Crampton's Gap as the pivotal battle of the pivotal campaign, of America's most pivotal war. Big things do indeed come in small packages, in this case the Lost Order and victory at Crampton's Gap, its direct corollary.

Thereafter, McClellan withheld the final portion of Franklin's strategic instructions from his report to conceal delegation of his counter-stroke. It finally came to light over thirty years later when it no longer mattered. Franklin too kept quiet to avoid censure. Here was a tacit partnership to suppress the truth, one that eluded analysts for generations to come. As a result, one still hears conflicting views on how the Lost Order did, or did not, influence Lee. Due to its comparatively small combat size, analysts tend to race blindly over Crampton's Gap in their haste to reach Antietam, seeking elsewhere a plausible explanation for the Lost Order's impact.

Mercifully, the testimony of Lee and McClellan, the yin and yang of campaign history, can still be dredged verbatim from war records to reveal why Crampton's Gap had suddenly become so important to both. Thus by their own words, Lee and McClellan quietly put an end to the Lost Order's strategic ambiguity, one through candor, the other despite concealment.

War's Footprint

Regardless of academic debate, the war put Crampton's Gap squarely on the historical map, not that neighboring residents were better off for it. The battle made itself disproportionately felt on the locals. At the time, all Marylanders were suspected of secessionist sympathy and so liberally suffered at the hands of Union soldiers and war claims agents. Besides crops being trampled flat or fed to army horses, houses were wrecked, furniture and housewares lost, stolen, or vandalized. Few claims were reimbursed, and several farms left family hands due to losses and debt, homesteads they had cultivated for generations.

The gap itself looked as though a whirlwind had swept through it. Long used by a Burkittsville resident named George Padgett to graze livestock, the small field at its summit lay scarred and worn. Confederate defenders were hastily buried in shallow trench graves within it. Less than a year later a Union officer, coming down the road into Burkittsville, observed that the east slope rising to the gap seemed to have had every tree struck by bullets, branches slumped over at odd angles as though a giant hand had angrily swiped the mountainside. While encamped on the mountain, Union soldiers had liberally helped themselves to stacked cordwood laid up for the coming winter before they moved on. The winter of 1862–1863 came early and stayed late, all the more difficult without fuel.

From late June to mid-July, 1863, South Mountain again presented a military obstacle. Virtually every corps in the Union army, or some portion thereof, tramped through Crampton's Gap, or near to it through Burkittsville, during the Gettysburg campaign, marching to or returning from the great battle. Ironically, the Sixth Corps was the sole exception, those who had fought for it. Again in July, 1864, soldiers plied their way through the gap, this time Confederate troops enroute to combat on the Monocacy River. On that occasion the mountain escaped further ravages, but down below in Burkittsville cattle and horses were seized in passing by the ravenous multitude. Even the town's venerable cherry trees were stripped of their annual output.[10]

Thereafter Crampton's Gap and environs permanently reverted to rural silence. Nature reclaimed mountain forests, and in time no discernible vestiges of battle remained. Confederate dead were removed to Hagerstown, fences were repaired, and the time-honored rhythm of farm life gratefully took up where it had left off. Axes again rang out on the mountain in preparation for winter, the gap left to haunted obscurity.

Castles in the Sky

No one had ever attempted to live in the gap, a towering locale considered far too wild and remote for civilized existence. War alone had given it fleeting notoriety. Then in 1885, a lone tourist found his way to Crampton's Gap and instantly decided to make it his own. George Alfred Townsend (1841–1914) worked as a teenage Civil War newspaper correspondent, making a name for himself by covering the war's closing scenes in great detail for the New York *World*. After the war he accepted a position as Washington correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*, the war having transformed most Americans into regular newspaper readers, now intrigued by national government affairs.

Townsend was one of those egotistical, overly confident, self-indulgent types who invariably devoted their lives to self-promotion and accumulation of wealth. His writing style tended to be overly discursive, highly critical, and at times libelous, his pen in perpetual motion. His readers loved it, paving the way for a regular column widely read in more than a dozen papers, each column unique to its carrier. By 1869, Townsend had recast himself in two key ways, first by adoption of the pen name "Gath," an acronym crafted by adding an *H* to his initials. His second personal twist required that he abandon comfortable Washington digs.

Too young to fully understand war's complex issues, in postwar years Townsend sought out his own postmortem. By this he became a loyal, almost obsessive fan of John Brown, erstwhile 1859 raider of the Harpers Ferry Arsenal. The year he became Gath, he embarked on a voyage of personal discovery, touring all sites associated with Brown's raid—Harpers Ferry, Charles Town, Shepherdstown, Sandy Hook, the Kennedy farmhouse—piecing together what he per-

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ceived to be the path to war. As with many journalists, newspaper writing was never enough. Townsend had published several non-fiction works, then envisioned the great American novel embracing the events that had made him a minor celebrity. Returning from his upper-Potomac ramble, the whole idea was reluctantly put on hold to make way for other projects already in the works, these descriptive of his native Delaware and the Eastern Shore.

Finally in 1885, anxious to retrieve his train of thought, Gath retraced his steps to jog his memory. This time he sought out a single site that could knit together events and characters of his novel. Aware of its significance as a battleground, first sight of Crampton's Gap made up his mind. Within a month of viewing it, Gath purchased 110 acres of the gap and surrounding mountainside for a private literary retreat. Local land owners knew a sucker when they saw one, gladly unloading overgrown wood lots they no longer needed due to the advent of coal. Commuting to and from his Washington office as an architectural hobbyist, between 1885 and 1892 he oversaw construction of nine fanciful, elaborately decorated stone or wooden structures. Three houses, a den and library complex, guest house, stable, barn, and outbuildings nearly filled the gap from end to end. He called his place "Gapland" in unabashed imitation of the Gilded Age super-wealthy.[11]

Prolific as ever, his grand war novel was published the same year he took up residence, a maudlin affair spanning Brown's time to the Lincoln assassination, an incidental romance knitting it all together. Many of its scenes unfolded at Crampton's Gap. Townsend even found the brass to portray his battleground's saga in more or less hallucinatory terms. By this he forecast that throngs would pilgrimage to his gap to see the great author in his mountain lair. Unfortunately, *Katy of Catoctin, or The Chain Breakers* was a dismal flop outside the immediate area, nowhere approaching the literary sensation Gath had envisioned. Townsend's ego, however, could overcome any setback.

Aperture to Antietam

Taking note of battle monuments erected at nearby Antietam and farther afield at Gettysburg, what Townsend labeled the "Westminster Abbey of battlefields," Gath felt *his* battlefield should have one as well. Again his scheme was thwarted. Gath found no enthusiasm for the project among Sixth Corps veterans who had moved on with their lives. Not to worry; Gath always had a backup plan. Instead of a battle monument, Townsend predictably resorted to elevation of his own trade, and with it himself.

The "War Correspondents Memorial Arch" rose to the heavens during the summer of 1896 and was dedicated on October 16, anniversary of John Brown's infamous raid. Gath delivered a grandiloquent address, holding forth a tiresome hour or more. Casting about for a suitable historical metaphor for his gap, Townsend declared it the "aperture to Antietam," little comprehending how truly apt this expression was.[12]

Now he had a soaring monolith to proclaim his greatness. Surely this would bring admirers by the hundreds, and so further propel his fame. Alas, few outside his news fraternity took notice, condemning Gath, Gapland, and the monument to quick oblivion where they remain. Townsend never grasped the broad disparity between fame and greatness, achieving neither in large measure.

Gath spun out his final years at Gapland writing as always. At century's close he puzzled that editors no longer sought out his work, his verbose style now burdensome to modern readers impatient of his tortuous path to a simple point. He left Gapland for the last time in 1911, plagued with diabetes and other ills born of old age. Townsend died three years later at his daughter's New York City residence, a footnote to his era. Unlike his contemporaries, his name is not listed in the *Biographical Dictionary of American Journalism*. Gath could never live up to his lofty self-image, and so became its victim. By the same token, he had smothered the battlefield with his own personality and dreams.

Life Among the Ruins

Townsend never stooped to ingratiate himself with the locals, at times poking fun at them in his writings. The feeling was mutual, considering his lavish lifestyle and standoffish ways. After his departure, Gapland gradually fell to ruin through neglect. In time locals had their revenge by looting everything that had not been auctioned off. Doors, windows, sculpture, stonework, timber, all were carted off at haphazard leisure. Rural superstition naturally concluded that the place was haunted, and so the gap became a place infrequently visited, never at night.

By the 1940s, Crampton's Gap was well along in natural reclamation. Padgett's field and the south bank were littered with debris from Townsend's wrecked abodes. Gapland slowly receded into undergrowth, occasionally pointed out by locals inclined to play tour guide. No one remembered the battlefield, nor its pivotal role. Townsend had seen to that. Lightning struck the War Correspondents Arch in the summer of 1942 as if to mark the abandoned estate's death knell. Fortunately, Townsend had deeded the small plot of land on which his colossus stands to the federal government in 1904, conceding that he could no longer look after it.[13] Gapland had become a dangerous, derelict eyesore, forgotten by all but a few who happened by in automobiles on Sunday drives.

His daughter sold the land, then it traded hands several times for ambitious projects that never got off the ground. Finally a savior appeared. The Frederick County Historical Society formed a partnership with the Frederick Chamber of Commerce, in 1948, to acquire the derelict estate for $3,500. They then deeded it to the State of Maryland for a token $10 with the provision that it be converted into a historical park.[14] No specific period was suggested for restoration. By then virtually no one recalled that a Civil War battle had been fought there.

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Subsumed Identity

Years passed before funds were allocated for major rehabilitation. Most Townsend structures had either collapsed or had been so painstakingly gutted by looters that little remained to rescue. Ruins were dangerous death traps, the sort of places mothers warned their kids away from, urging complete removal of vestigial remains. In the end this was the only practical option. Wrecking crews ultimately accounted for most of Gapland.

On the south bank, stonework "Gapland Hall" and "Gapland Lodge" were restored, partially rebuilt for park use. Across the road only the barn walls could be stabilized, lending some idea of its former appearance. Finally in 1958, with the Governor, dignitaries, and Townsend descendants in attendance, Gathland State Park was officially dedicated and opened to the public, its grounds neatly mowed, but with the majority of its eccentric splendor long gone. The choice of park name was singularly unfortunate, a coined hybridization of Townsend's pen name with the estate title, creating never-ending confusion about both antecedents. The term *Gathland* never existed in any historical context.

The State Department of Forests and Parks actually created something of a public anomaly, lending itself neither to widespread recreational use, nor to historical visitation, the narrow gap inhibiting most uses. Moreover, with the main road running directly through it, charging admission was out of the question. Attempts to enhance limited uses merely underscored the problem. A picnic shelter was built in Padgett's field near the road, sadly on ground occupied by General Howell Cobb and his staff during their last stand in 1862. A rudimentary baseball diamond was laid out in the field itself, for years obscuring this sensitive ground until grass reclaimed it through disuse.

Self-guiding tour pamphlets were printed, explaining to tourists all features of Townsend's folly. Ample imagination was necessary to visualize most of it. Another pamphlet vainly aspired to battle description

Opportunity Lost. The red line through Red Hill indicates the route for Franklin to take to Sharpsburg, designated by McClellan in his 6:30 PM dispatch of Sept. 13. The orange line to Keedysville shows the route actually taken early on the 17th, while the guns were already booming at Antietam.

with marginal success. For years Gathland abided in this indistinct dual persona, frequented by picnickers, Appalachian Trail hikers, and the merely curious who stumbled onto it. Very much a white elephant, too confining for most holiday uses, and certainly no money-maker, Gathland plodded on in the shadow of larger recreational parks farther north on South Mountain where use fees paid the bills.
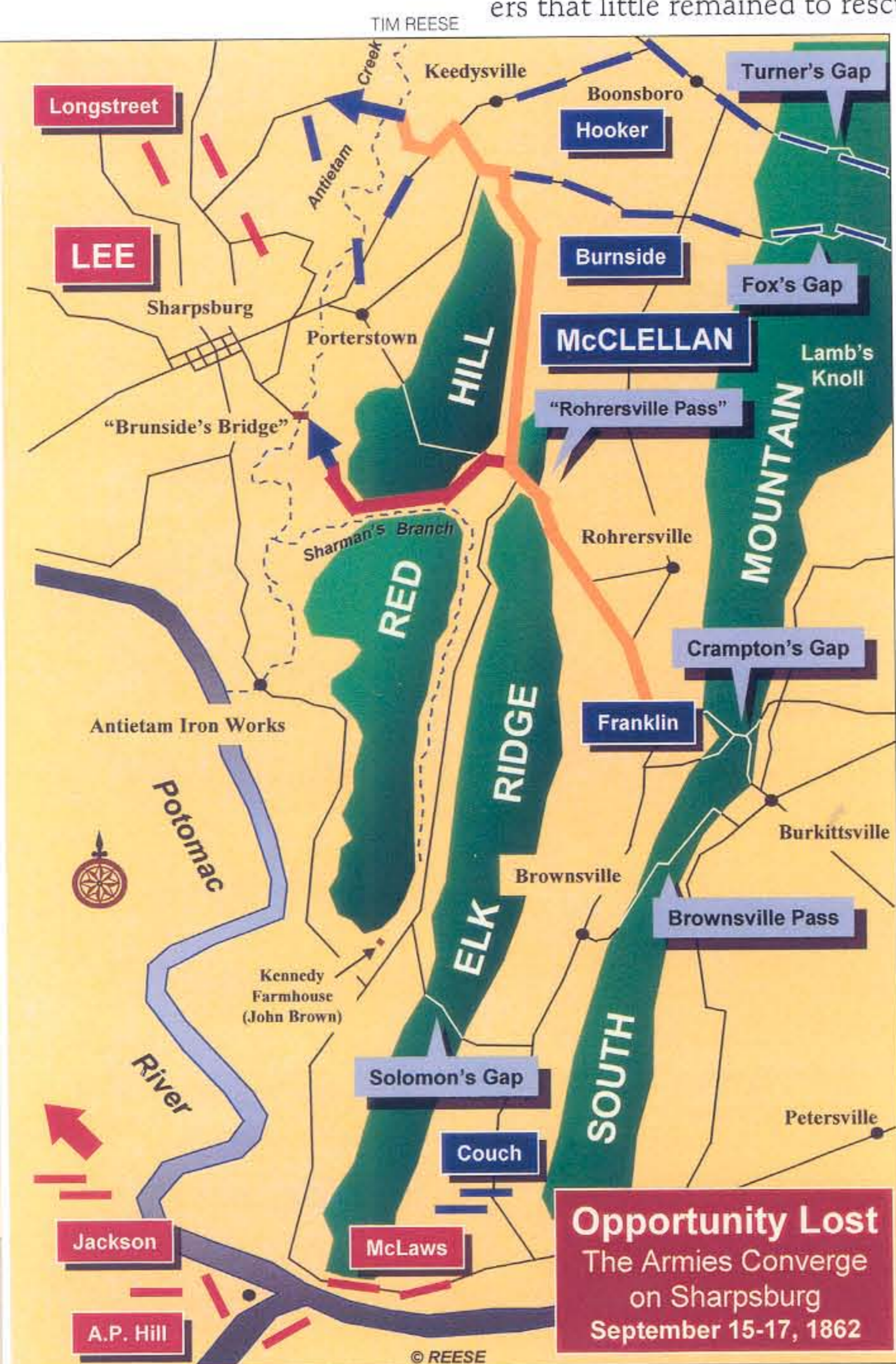
Then came the Civil War Centennial of the 1960s, both boon and curse to Gathland. Historical markers were erected in Pleasant Valley, reminding one and all that Crampton's Gap was indeed a battlefield. Tourism picked up, but commemorative observances had a knack for homogenizing things. The gap was arbitrarily incorporated as "an important part" of the larger South Mountain battleground six miles to the north, which in fact remains largely privately owned land. This set the trend for future analytical writings. Meanwhile, the Townsend epoch continued to hold center stage at the park, forgetting that Townsend had been lured there by its battlefield persona. Crampton's Gap had taken one step forward and two back. So it remained to the present, popular myth belligerently sparring with historical fact.

As interest continues to grow, Civil War bus tours enroute to Antietam routinely come to Gathland in droves, a logical itinerary. Confronted with minimal facilities and diverted emphasis, historical visitors frequently depart dissatisfied, unsure of what they have seen. A severe state budget deficit closed Gathland in 1990, and its last on-site ranger retired. The park was partially revived three years later by weekend volunteers. Crampton's Gap was in danger of resuming post-Townsend neglect. With minimal state stewardship, volunteers and seasonal workers still keep it alive, just barely. The time for thoughtful re-evaluation has clearly arrived.

Struggling for Identity

For many years, tourists have observed that Gathland is poorly and inaccurately labeled. Broad name recognition revolves around Crampton's Gap, a geographical feature not found on most maps. Concurrently, interest in 1862 Maryland Campaign sites has grown dramatically. Visitation and intellectual exploration have skyrocketed. Time is long past when the Townsend epoch should have taken a back seat because few outside the immediate area ever heard of him. Site significance is indeed national rather than local.

To that end, in 1998 two park advocates approached then serving state Delegate Bruce Poole of Hagerstown, seeking his thoughts on how Gathland could be minimally refunded and re-staffed as "Crampton's Gap State Battlefield Park," thereby catering to its principal draw, at least for the sake of knowledgeable tourists trying to find it. Again, confusion with the South Mountain battlefield allowed advocates for that site to divert attention to their cause. No park exists on the South Mountain battlefield while Gathland State Park continues to languish, its very identity subsumed for fear of competitive interest and funding.

Two years later the Crampton's Gap initiative was mutated, by the Maryland House of Delegates, into creation of South Mountain State Battlefield, discreetly headquartered at Washington Monument State Park. This re-tailored objective emerges as a laudable but prematurely *ambitious program to highlight historical* ground the state does not own. Crampton's Gap remains subsidiary to it, silenced through hybridization, unacknowledged as a separate strategic entity unto itself as it always has been.[15] Confusion and frustration still plague tourists.

In 2002, a bill renaming Gathland as "Crampton's Gap State Battlefield Park" was crafted by Delegate Richard Weldon within whose district it lies. Administrative changes within the Department of Natural Resources postponed its introduction until close of that session of the General Assembly. The concept still waits on the back burner, braced for further resistance from South Mountain battlefield advocates.

Crampton's Gap Tomorrow

Diversionary politics, pseudo-history, and neglect notwithstanding, Crampton's Gap still stands as a diamond in the rough awaiting clarity and esteem, now primarily forthcoming from those outside the region who travel great distances to experience it. Acclimated to a U.S. National Park Service model at nearby Antietam and Gettysburg, it is inevitable that burgeoning, well-informed visitation will anticipate improvements in on-site accommodation. Even in tight economic times, this need not be a burdensome mandate for a forty-five-year-old state park.

Undeniably, Crampton's Gap is a historical, cultural resource of national importance. Nature has been its principal steward through the centuries, reclaiming its ancient natural beauty time and again from woodsmen, soldiers, journalists, looters, and bureaucrats. It patiently awaits self-realization, dormant even as its legitimate value struggles to the surface.

Maryland has shown deep foresight by instituting its Rural Legacy Program for preservation of the state's best natural assets, conspicuously manifest in the Catoctin Valley. The question arises, is this design compatible with the gap's benign neglect when so many wish it otherwise? The hallowed ground of Crampton's Gap, in all its facets, will be waiting when the next epoch arrives, presumably one more complementary to its past.

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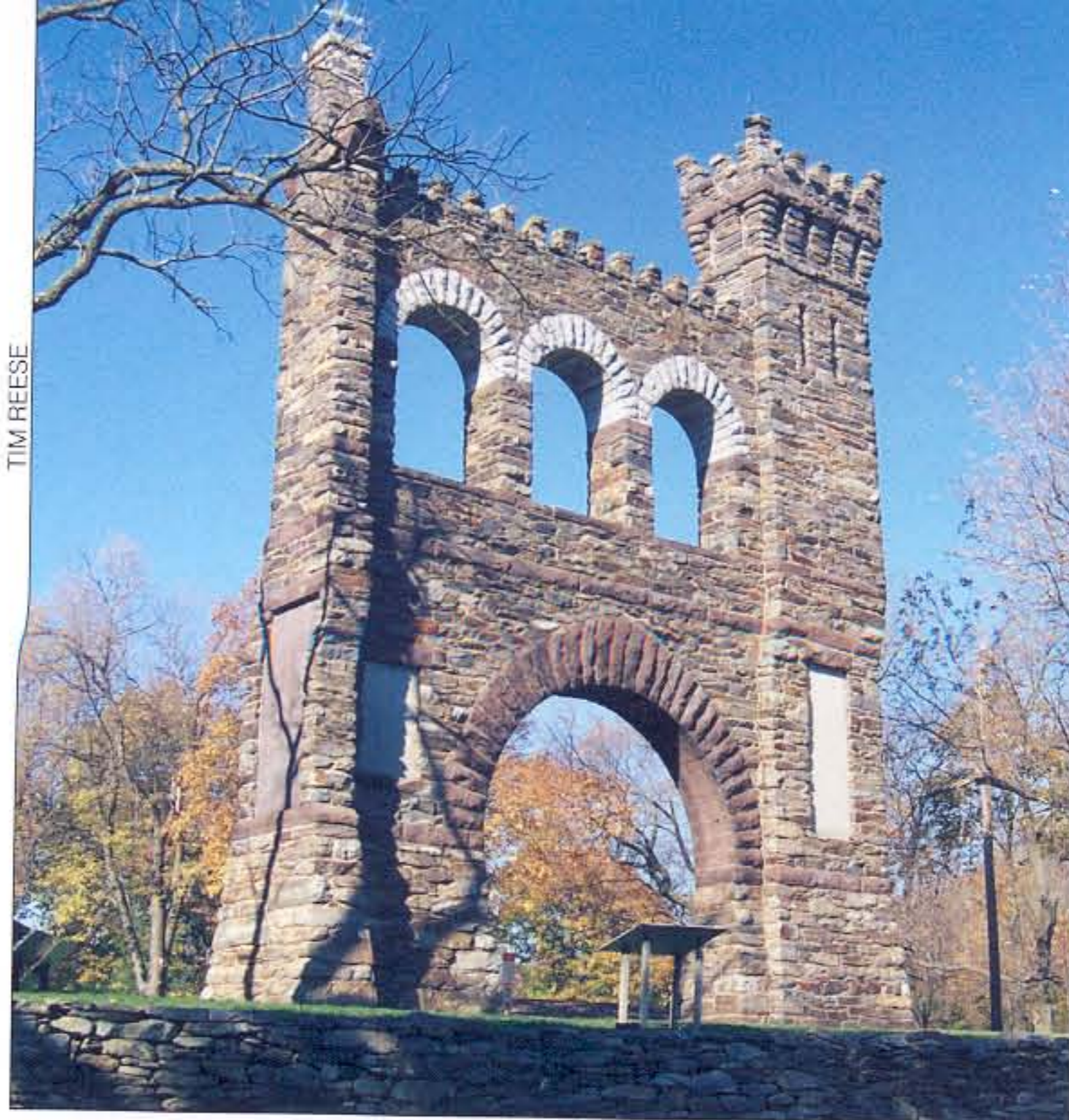
The War Correspondents Memorial Arch, constructed in 1896.

1   Thomas Crampton's reciprocal deed of land grant was examined by the writer in 1988. All pre-1776 Washington County records were subsequently moved to the Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis, hence the absence of citation herein.

2   Timothy J. Reese, "Coming Home: The Deardorff Family in Burkittsville, Frederick County, Maryland, 1769–1803," *Maryland Genealogical Society Bulletin*, 29, No. 3 (Summer, 1988): 252–266.

3   J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Western Maryland. Being a History of Frederick, Montgomery, Carroll, Washington, Allegany, and Garrett Counties…* 2 vols. (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co., 1968 [reprint of 1882 original edition]), vol. 2, page 1204.

4   Stephen W. Sears, "The Twisted Tale of the Lost Order," *North & South*, 5, No. 7 (Oct., 2002): 54–65.

5   U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1880–1901) vol. 19, pt. 1, pp. 45–46; (cont.) vol. 51, pt. 1, pp. 826–827 (hereinafter cited as "*OR*").

6   Timothy J. Reese, *Sealed With Their Lives: The Battle for Crampton's Gap, Burkittsville, Md.* (Baltimore, 1998) passim (hereinafter cited as "*SWTL*").

7   *OR* 19, pt. 1, p. 140.

8   *OR* 19, pt. 1, p. 147.

9   Douglas S. Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command*, 3 vols. (New York, 1942–1944) vol. 2: Appendix, p. 721. A verbatim transcript of the William Allen memorandum more recently appeared in Gary W. Gallagher, *Lee the Soldier* (Lincoln, Neb., 1996) pp. 7–19.

10 Events and conditions described in this section are taken from *SWTL*, passim.

11 Timothy J. Reese, "One Man's Battlefield: George Alfred Townsend and the War Correspondents Memorial Arch," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 92, No. 3 (Fall 1997): 356–385.

12 "A Memorial to War Correspondents," *Washington Evening Star*, October 16, 1896. This lengthy, front-page article was probably written by Editor Crosby S. Noyes, who was in attendance. Noyes was a close friend of Townsend and adept at shorthand. Timothy J. Reese, *Written in Stone: Brief Biographies of the Journalists, Photographers, and Artists Whose Names Appear on the War Correspondents Memorial Arch, Gathland State Park, Crampton's Gap, Maryland…Compiled and Written…for the Friends of Gathland State Park* [privately printed] 2000 (available at the park).

13 Frederick County Land Records, Liber STH267, Folio 367.

14 A full citation of "Gapland" land conveyances, 1884–1890, can be found in Frederick County Land Records, Liber JGW260, Folio 395, wherein all earlier acquisitions are cited. Lands were purchased from David Arnold, Joseph E. Claggett, Manasses J. Grove, John Violet, David L. Smith, Ezra Williard, Eliza Smith and David M. Whipp.

15 The two advocates were William van Gilder and the author. Mr. van Gilder is owner/operator of the van Gilder Pottery located on Townsend Road adjacent to the park. For legislation creating South Mountain State Battlefield, see House Bill 1183, 2000 Regular Session, accessible on Maryland State Government web site.

Undeniably, Crampton's Gap is a historical, cultural resource of national importance.