Mary Shellman's Veterans:

Finding the Forgotten

Mimi Ashcraft
and Ned Landis

They are strange bedfellows indeed, the five Civil War soldiers lying in a single cemetery lot. Although they never met in life, they have lain side by side in Westminster Cemetery for more than a hundred years, united by the fact that Mary Bostwick Shellman (1849-1938), an ardent Union supporter from Westminster, Maryland, wanted "to keep soldiers from pauper burials." Viewed together, the war and post-war experiences of Robert Clark, William Frazer, Orville Andrews, Malachi Buckley, and Ernest Kohler represent thousands of ordinary Civil War soldiers, while Mary Shellman's lifelong involvement in veterans' welfare shows how deeply the four years of conflict affected her.

Mary Shellman, daughter of Westminster's first mayor, James M. Shellman, was a remarkably energetic and capable woman who never married and devoted her long life to a wide range of social causes. Her father came from Georgia to study law in Maryland and met his future wife, Catherine Jones, while she was visiting in Westminster where she had lived as a young girl. James died in 1851, leaving his widow with four children under the age of ten. Catherine Shellman began teaching school, probably to make ends meet, and her brother eventually purchased a lovely home for the family in 1864. Although always prominent in the community, the Shellmans were not wealthy. During the Civil War, their loyalties were divided, with Mary and her older brother pro-Union, and her older sister a known Confederate sympathizer.

Evidence of Mary Shellman's commitment to the welfare of Civil War veterans appeared in 1868 when, at age eighteen, she organized Westminster's first Decoration Day observance, a parade of children to Westminster Cemetery where they laid flowers on soldiers' graves. For the next sixty years, she continued that involvement, but her name also appeared countless times in connection with other causes she championed – political reform, the Red Cross, improving conditions at the local Alms House, and promoting temperance through the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Still, it was the veterans of the Civil War, and later those of World War I, who were probably nearest and dearest to her heart. She received honorary memberships in several posts of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) and was active in its auxiliary, the Women's Relief Corps. Her patriotic fervor was evident in the impassioned poetry she wrote about veterans, some of it widely distributed.

Courageous and dynamic, she was probably Westminster's most notable woman activist from the 1870s through the 1920s.

In the early 1930s, Shellman left Westminster permanently to live with a relative in Texas, but she traveled back in May 1937 to lead one last Memorial Day Parade. That grand spectacle also commemorated the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of Carroll County, an event in which her father had played a significant role. Although she was then eighty-eight, she still had many friends who welcomed her "home" for a long visit. The following year, as patriotic as ever, she helped her little Texas town establish its own Memorial Day tradition. She died there peacefully in October 1938.

Even before her final visit, Shellman had begun to put her affairs in order as seen in a 1936 letter she wrote to a Westminster friend. That letter, now owned by the Historical Society of Carroll County, stated that she had just given the deed to her Westminster Cemetery lot to the American Legion post and she reminisced briefly about each of the five men she knew were buried there. They were "good brave soldiers," she said, "but their other records were not much."[1] Who were these men, and why did Mary Shellman care so much about them?

Shellman had not quite reached the age of fourteen when she was called upon to minister to a dying soldier at Westminster's McAllen Hotel on June 30, 1863.[2] Private Robert Clark was part of the Sixth Corps, Army of the Potomac, marching toward Gettysburg when he developed a raging fever, was placed in an ambulance, and dropped off at the hotel. Mary could do little more than fan him during his final hours of suffering, but she never forgot that and many other dramatic experiences while coming of age in Carroll County during the Civil War.

The 1860 U.S. census showed Robert Clark as a twenty-two year old common laborer, born in New Brunswick, Canada, but living in Washington County, Maine with his sixteen year old wife. He was apparently illiterate because he signed his enlistment papers with an "X" when he joined the 7th Maine Infantry Volunteers in August 1862. The regiment fought at Chancellorsville, Virginia, in May 1863 before it began the long trek to Pennsylvania in the heat of summer. People in Westminster concluded sunstroke was the cause of Clark's fever, but military records attributed it to typhoid fever, a common killer during the war.[3] Shellman remembered he had called out a name in his delirious final hours. She wrote Maine Senator James Blaine and discovered Clark had left behind a young son. In later years, she corresponded with the boy and cherished a photograph he sent her.[4] It was typical of the countless efforts she made on behalf of veterans after the war.

Local citizens buried Robert Clark in a lot near the entrance to Westminster Cemetery and erected a headstone that read, "Sacred to the memory of R. H. Clarke [*sic*], Co. B, 7th Maine Volunteers, who was sunstruck on the march from Virginia to victory at Gettysburg. Brought in an ambulance to Westminster and

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▲ Mary Bostwick Shellman in 1877

"Toil-worn and faithful to his country and her service to the last."

unable to proceed farther, he here died June 30, 1863, aged 24 years. *Toil-worn and faithful to his country and her service to the last.*" The stone, with its weeping willow motif and nearly illegible inscription, still stands over his grave. His family was too poor to have his body shipped back to Maine.

William Frazer was probably the second soldier laid to rest in that cemetery lot.[5] Frazer was born in Maryland about 1832. In the 1860 Westminster census he was listed as a "silversmith," and a number of advertisements for his jewelry and clock shop appeared in Carroll County newspapers between 1860 and 1862.[6] Several children and a servant were included in his 1860 household, but no wife. His military service was short – August to December 1862. According to Wilmer's *History and Roster of the Maryland Volunteers, War of 1861-1865*, he enlisted in Company F, 7th Maryland Infantry, a company raised in Carroll County, but deserted on December 14th. Mary Shellman recalled the circumstances surrounding his death in her 1936 letter as follows: "In a drunken quarrel one night he fell down the steps & broke his neck." Frazer's body rests beside that of Robert Clark. A small headstone, which does not appear to have been issued by the government, gives only his name, Civil War unit, and a death date of 1864.

There is more to Frazer's story, however. In 1881, his service record was officially altered to show he had a leave of absence to return home on December 14th and he died there of pleurisy on January 1, 1863. According to War Department records he became a "casualty" instead of a "deserter."[7] Efforts to resolve the conflicting aspects of Frazer's story were unsuccessful and he may have been buried before Private Clark.

Lieutenant Orville Andrews was the third soldier placed in the lot upon his death in 1885. Andrews was born in New York State about 1843 but was working as a clerk in Rockford, Illinois in 1860 according to the census.[8] He received the rank of sergeant upon enlistment in the 15th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, a unit that fought primarily in the western theater, and within months was promoted to second lieutenant.[9] On April 6, 1862 a minie ball struck him during the bloody battle at Shiloh, Tennessee. He had not been in uniform a year or reached the age of twenty when doctors amputated most of his right leg.

Although his wound healed well, the army declared him totally disabled and discharged him in August of the same year with a $15 per month pension.[10] Initially he returned to Rockford, but in the 1870 census he appeared as a married schoolteacher with two young daughters living near Chattanooga, Tennessee.[11] A decade later he was in the Westminster census as a divorced (or widowed) bookkeeper; no children were listed. His obituary said Tennessee was his home, yet he had been a local resident about eight years. People around town called him "Captain."

Andrews paid his dues to the Burns G.A.R. Post in Westminster, but he was not an active member. At one point he apparently had a room in the same hotel where Robert Clark died. Mary Shellman wrote her friend, "You surely remember Capt. Anders [*sic*] with his artificial leg which he used some times [two words unreadable] against the wall of the Main Court [Hotel]. People passing would say,

Mary Shellman, far right with flag, lining up more than fifty flower-laden children for Westminster's Memorial Day Parade, c. 1900.

'Poor old Cap was on a [spree?] last night.'" In spite of Shellman's recollection of his binges, Andrews' obituary in the city's *Democratic Advocate* on February 21, 1885 said, "He was a man of many good qualities and above the average in intelligence. His remains were buried in Westminster Cemetery on Monday with military honors by Burns Post of this city."

Mary Shellman was given the lot that held Clark, Frazer, and Andrews free of charge in 1886 by the Westminster Cemetery Company, probably because the officers knew of her deep interest in veterans' welfare. This was a period when she was devoting much of her energy to the G.A.R. and Women's Relief Corps. She even attended some of their national encampments. Another motive in giving her the lot may have been that it was not in a prime location and could not be readily sold. Shellman must have welcomed the gift because it guaranteed "her" veterans would have a decent burial in a cemetery which was well-maintained. She knew Clark, Frazer, and Andrews would soon be joined by others.

Sixteen year-old Malachi Buckley and his sister Margaret left their home in Cork, Ireland, to seek their fortunes in America. Malachi was identified as a "laborer" and Margaret as a "servant" on the passenger list of the *Calhoun* when it docked in New York harbor on June 23, 1855.[12] By 1860 he was working on a farm in northern New Jersey.[13] He and other single, immigrant men earning low wages probably felt they had little to lose by enlisting in the army. He joined the 69th New York Infantry that was recruiting in New York City in 1861-62. That unit, part of the famous "Irish Brigade," saw plenty of action during the war. Private Buckley, however, did not have "the luck of the Irish" as a soldier. The 69th was ordered to attack the Confederate position in the Sunken Road during the Battle of Antietam.[14] Sometime on September 17, 1862 Buckley was shot in the right wrist, a wound that required the amputation of his forearm.

In May 1863 he was discharged from DeCamp General Hospital, Davids Island, New York with an $8 monthly pension and resided in New York City for several years.[15] For at least fifteen more years he lived in military hospitals. The first, located in Dayton, Ohio, was known as the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers.[16] The second was in Togus, Maine, outside Augusta. Both hospitals were established immediately after the war in response to the huge number of veterans needing care. By 1890 his $30 monthly pension checks were being sent to Woodsboro, Frederick County, Maryland. Later in the 1890s he received his checks in Westminster where he boarded with a family. He never joined the local G.A.R. Post. Upon his death in March 1895, there was no one to claim his body.[17] In her letter, Mary Shellman said, "They were going to take him out to Potters Field without even a word of prayer. I heard of it – got old Mr. Crouse [Methodist minister] to have a prayer & let them bury him in my lot."

As of 1900, the veterans Clark, Frazer, Andrews, and Buckley lay side by side in Shellman's lot. Other veterans were buried in Westminster Cemetery after the war, but usually had local connections and were interred in family plots. One more veteran was destined to join the little "band of brothers" and be saved from a pauper's burial by Mary Shellman.

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In Shellman's 1936 letter she wrote of that remaining veteran, "Old Ernest Coler [sic] died at the County House. I could not get a government stone for him because he was rated as a deserted [sic]. He was not. He was sun struck on the march and was at a country house all summer & fall & then went to the County House. He never had much mind after that." After discovering Shellman's letter in 2005, a visit to the cemetery lot confirmed there were only four headstones with a conspicuous empty space in their midst. Who was "old Ernest Coler?"

It is probably safe to say that no one in the world, not even Shellman, spent much time thinking about Ernest Kohler between his death in 1907 and the discovery of her letter, but the many questions surrounding his existence and the lack of a headstone prompted the authors to piece together the fifth and final story.

Ernest Kohler was born in November 1822 and arrived in New York on November 13, 1850 on the *Guttenberg*, which sailed from Hamburg, Germany.[18] The passenger list indicated he was twenty-six years old. He arrived too late in 1850 to be included in that year's census and could not be conclusively located in the 1860 census.

COURTESY OF THE PIPE CREEK CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

▲ The graves of Robert Clark, William Frazer, Orville Andrews, and Malachi Buckley in the Westminster Cemetery in 2005. Ernest Kohler's grave is in the center, unmarked.

On October 3, 1861, Kohler signed up as a private in Company A of the 57th New York Volunteer Infantry for three years of military service. His enlistment paper states his residence as Milltown, New Jersey, a community in the northern part of the state close to New York City. Company A's Descriptive Book listed him as thirty-seven years old, 5 feet 10 inches tall with blue eyes, dark hair and a light complexion. His civilian occupation was "farmer."[19] He apparently could read, write, and speak English, although this information only appears in the 1900 census.

The 57th New York Volunteer Infantry regiment was raised in New York City; recruiting began in August 1861. The 57th was assigned to the Army of the Potomac, 2nd Corps, 1st Division, 3rd Brigade. Training started in New York and continued in Washington, D.C. and northern Virginia. The unit was disbanded in December 1864.

There is no narrative of Private Kohler's army experience or of any other part of his life. He left no diary, no letters – only a sprinkling of muster roll entries between October 1861 and July 1863. Those entries document him in essentially three words: pioneer, casualty, deserter. Other information comes from his pension application during the 1890s. Using this material, other contemporary sources and modern medical understanding, we have reconstructed parts of the life of this very ordinary Civil War soldier and veteran.

During the twenty months Ernest Kohler served with the 57th, his unit participated in four major campaigns or battles – the Peninsula Campaign of spring 1862, the battles at Antietam and Fredericksburg in the fall and winter of 1862, and the battle at Chancellorsville in May 1863. The regiment ultimately lost about ten percent of its men to combat-related deaths; twenty percent died from disease; and about thirty percent were wounded over the three years of its existence.[20] Still, this unit did not suffer the massive casualties experienced by some regiments of the Union Army.

For the first seven or eight months of service, Kohler was listed as a "pioneer" on Company A's muster rolls. Pioneers were "skilled" soldiers detached from their units to clear or build roads, construct bridges, fell trees – anything that would help the army move efficiently across the countryside. Although "skilled" often meant only that the soldier could distinguish the work end of a shovel or axe from its handle, it probably indicated Kohler was capable of hard labor, the kind he might have experienced while farming in civilian life.

The 57th fought in the Battle of Fair Oaks, near Richmond, Virginia on May 31 – June 1, 1862. Kohler and ten other men from the regiment were casualties. A bullet wound to his left knee was serious enough to land him in the hospital according to his pension application, but his hospital stay does not appear on his military service record. He later stated that one of the treatments had been "cold water applications to my limbs."[21] After July 1862, he was no longer listed as having pioneer duty on the

company's muster roll, although in his pension application he claimed he continued to serve in that capacity.

In spite of his injury, Kohler said he never left his regiment, so he probably fought at Antietam, Maryland and Fredericksburg, Virginia later in 1862. He certainly participated in the May 1863 battle at Chancellorsville, Virginia because he was part of the massive troop movement toward Pennsylvania during June. The Second Corps was among the last to leave the Union line along the Rappahannock River because its job was to cover the withdrawal or destruction of all Union supplies and protect the rear of the departing army.

The weather during the 150 mile, month-long march to Pennsylvania was often ugly for the Army of the Potomac's roughly 100,000 men plus animals and wagons. From early June through the 17th, conditions were reported to be extremely hot and dry. Fortunately, the Second Corps rested on June 18th, 19th and the 21st through the 25th, but the infantryman's other tormentors – rain and mud – also affected the march. A soldier recorded, "The men were wet and tired; the vast number of troops that had preceded us had trod the ground into a complete mortar bed, through which our men floundered along for nearly 16 hours...."[22]

Of the march on June 14th, a member of the Second Corps wrote,

> It was one of the hottest days we had experienced, and then being loaded down with our full accoutrements and three days' rations, and extra ammunition, the men could hardly get along. Over 500 in our Corps alone were sun struck or overcome with the heat, some dropped in the ranks as they marched along. The writer was one of them; without a moment's notice as he was marching at the head of the regiment, he dropped in his tracks as though shot down and unconscious, was lifted to one side of the road, placed in the shade, and left, how long he remained there he knew not, but late in the afternoon he regained consciousness... and about 9 o'clock reached the camp of his regiment and soon was asleep.[23]

When people are subjected to continuing hot weather, constant direct sun, and high humidity, they are easily (and literally) felled by sunstroke (hyperthermia). Many soldiers fell out of the ranks as they were overcome. Some were able to later catch up to their units; some were too debilitated to continue, and it has been estimated that as many as two hundred men died of sun or heat stroke or exhaustion.

Symptoms of heat-related conditions can include exhaustion, fainting, feeling sick, mental confusion, loss of muscle control, increased heart rate, sweating followed by clammy skin, pallor, shallow heartbeat and respiration, convulsions and/or a body temperature reaching up to 108 degrees. These symptoms usually work in a progression as the body tries to compensate for overheating. The heart works harder to increase blood flow so that perspiration can cool the body; however, sweating leads to loss of electrolytes. With this loss comes mental confusion, inability to control muscle movements and make sound judgments. The body works to save the critical organs so sweating stops and the skin becomes clammy, followed by a temperature

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▲ Mary Shellman placing a flag and flowers on the grave of Private Robert Clark on Memorial Day, c.1890, Westminster Cemetery.

rise, often leading to heat stroke and multiple body system failure. Death can easily result, leading to a heat stroke mortality rate of fifty percent.[24] Even if the victim survives, permanent neurological damage may result. For men on the march there was very little medical care available; if they survived, it was often through the kindness of civilians or their own hearty constitutions.

On Monday morning, June 29, 1863, the Second Corps headed northeast from its encampment at Monocacy Junction outside Frederick toward Uniontown in Carroll County via Liberty (also called Libertytown) and Johnsville. One member of the Second Corps wrote that the day's march was "the most severe the regiment ever performed. The day was intensely hot, and we marched over 33 miles with scarcely a halt for dinner and none for supper until two o'clock in the morning when we came to a halt [at Uniontown]."[25]

Union commanders had realized Confederate troops were knocking on the doors of Harrisburg and York, so speedy troop movement was essential. Citizens of Frederick and Carroll Counties passed out food and milk or water to the men along their journey, but commanding officers allowed little time for any activity that might slow them down. Ernest Kohler, older than many soldiers and marching on a leg wounded one year earlier, was reported as a "straggler" on a muster roll recorded during the period of the march.[26]

Somewhere between Johnsville and Uniontown, Private Kohler simply collapsed. Later, the 57th could not decide where it lost track of him, listing him as having "deserted" from Johnsville, or near Uniontown, or at Uniontown.[27] When trying to clear his name of the desertion charges and obtain a pension, his claim was supported by another soldier, Israel Simonson, who swore he'd seen Ernest "lying near Uniontown … on the public highway" on June 29th.[28] Kohler himself said he "became exhausted and fell senseless near Uniontown, Md." His knee was badly swollen. Apparently farmers took him in and cared for him over a period of days so that he "recovered himself to some extent, but before being able to join his regt the Gettysburg Battles had been fought and his regt returned to Va…."[29]

COURTESY OF THE PIPE CREEK CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

▲ The new gravestone for Ernest Kohler, purchased by members of the Pipe Creek Civil War Round Table and other donors.

Ernest Kohler probably had much the same experience as the soldier quoted on June 14th with the exception that he never caught up with his unit, and he suffered neurological damage that may have affected and limited him for the rest of his life. There is no direct proof he had sunstroke, but the description of his mental condition by people who knew him later does match the symptoms of permanent neurological damage. Kohler did not attribute his collapse on June 29th to sunstroke. He claimed he left the ranks because of "my inability to march with the army on account of a swolen [*sic*] nee [*sic*] caused by an injury received at Fair Oaks, in Va," but Mary Shellman referred to sunstroke in her letter. Richard Manning, Israel Simonson, and Shellman all mentioned Kohler's "weak brained" condition in describing him.[30] There is no way to judge his intelligence before his collapse, but we assume he functioned normally in the army. He could read and write, which was more than some soldiers could do.

The July muster roll of Company A, 57th NY Infantry recorded him as a deserter and a final (undated) entry on the "Descriptive List of Deserters" canceled his name on the roll. Gone with him was $28.56 worth of army equipment he had been carrying. Thirty years later, Kohler said the army owed him six and a half months of back pay at the time he collapsed.[31]

The Union Army did not forget about Private Kohler. Lieutenant Polhemus Bowman, Company F, 150th N.Y. Infantry was the provost marshal on duty in Westminster during the summer of 1863. He tracked down Kohler living in a shanty in the woods north of town and arrested him. In a pension affidavit, Kohler stated, "I did not know I had to report, as I was not able to march any further; I was arrested in the latter part of the summer of 1863 after I left the army, by a Provo Marshall [*sic*] and when he knew my condition, he released me as I was not fit for military duty…."[32] Richard Manning, a prominent citizen who owned property near Kohler's shack, later wrote, "I told the officer his condition, and that he was doing some work for me at the time, and the Provo Marshall [*sic*] released him…. I have always considered him [Kohler] a weak minded man." In the

COURTESY OF THE PIPE CREEK CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

▲ The Memorial Day service in 2006 to commemorate Ernest Kohler and to dedicate his new gravestone.

1890s, neither Kohler nor Manning could name the arresting officer.[33]

Perhaps Lt. Bowman released Kohler because of his aggravated leg wound, his limited mental capacity or a combination of both, but if any paperwork was ever filed in connection with the arrest and release, the 57th New York Infantry apparently did not receive it. Bowman's regiment was transferred south to the Army of the Cumberland in the autumn of 1863, and Kohler remained a deserter in the eyes of the army.

At that point, Kohler completely disappeared from any public record for nearly thirty years, although people living in and around Westminster were aware of him. Curiously, his common German surname was misspelled in Carroll County even though it was an area with a strong German heritage. He was listed as "Coler" in his obituary and in Shellman's letter; once he was "Cooler." He cannot be found in either the 1870 or 1880 census. He never bought property, did not marry, did not cause a disturbance which resulted in an arrest. Manning looked upon him as a "sober and steady man."[34]

The 1890 "Special Schedule of Surviving Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines, and Widows, Etc." for Carroll County documents Kohler living at the county-supported Alms House in October 1890, but his surname is spelled "Cooler" and there is no other information about him. Unfortunately, few records of Alms House residents from the late nineteenth century are available, so it is not known when he arrived, but he continued to live there until his death in 1907. Mary Shellman would certainly have known him because of her concern for veterans and her involvement in improving conditions at the Alms House. She constantly campaigned on behalf of the residents and organized Christmas celebrations for them.

Kohler's pension application provides our only information about him after he left the army. His statements indicate he thought he had been legitimately released from future

service when Lt. Bowman did not press charges in 1863. Perhaps a man of sounder mind would have questioned things further, but he probably did not expect to fight desertion charges when he first applied for an invalid pension in 1890. Affidavits from Richard Manning, Westminster businessman and Justice of the Peace, and Israel Simonson, former Union soldier, were filed in the early 1890s to support Kohler's application and defend him against the charges. Manning submitted his recollection of the incident with Lt. Bowman. He also testified, "As I frequently have the opportunity of seeing and conversing with him [Kohler], He is a sober and steady man, making a living as best he can, by making fish netts [*sic*] at the county alms house having no other home or means of support." Manning had known Kohler since 1863. Simonson stated, "He [Kohler] is a man of verry [*sic*] weak mind, and scarcely responsible for his acts. He told me he did not know that he had to report to the army when he was not able to do duty; and since then he has been making a precarious living by knitting Fish Netts [*sic*]. The last year or two he has been making his home at the Alms House in Carroll County Maryland. He is in verry [*sic*] indigent circumstances unable to make a living by manuel [*sic*] labour and is a sober steady man."

In a medical profile made in 1892 to support his pension claim, Kohler was described as "emaciated … veins of both legs greatly varicose … gait tremulous and uncertain … cataract vision," yet he survived for fifteen more years at the Alms House. Something must be said for his constitution because he lived to the age of eighty-five. Simonson died in 1893 and Manning in 1898. With the loss of those crucial witnesses, Kohler's chances of receiving a pension disappeared.

The 1900 federal census for Westminster offered important evidence about Ernest Kohler, whose name appeared among other Alms House residents. Whether he provided the information or it came from the superintendent is unclear. His birth (November 1822 in Germany), age (77), year of immigration (1850), and the proper spelling of his name helped us track him down in other records. The census also noted he could read, write and speak English and was a naturalized U.S. citizen.

Ernest Kohler passed away at the Carroll County Alms House on December 10, 1907. As was customary for indigents, he would have been buried in the pauper cemetery on the grounds, but Mary Shellman intervened and had him laid to rest in her lot among the four other veterans. A brief obituary in a Westminster newspaper listed him as "Ernest Coler" but revealed nothing significant about his past.

In 1909, Shellman was still looking after various "brave soldiers." A small notice in the *American Sentinel* of November 19th states, "Miss Mary Bostwick Shellman, who some time ago took up with the War department of the United States Government the matter of several unmarked soldiers graves in this county, has received a letter from the Depot Quartermaster, at Boston, Mass., notifying her of the shipment of five head stones, inscribed with the names of M. Buckley, O. T. Andrews, H. C. Gorsuch, G. E. Yingling, Israel Simonson." She never got Ernest Kohler a headstone because of his deserter status, so he lay in his unmarked grave – a man overlooked in death just as he had been in life.

As we assembled this story, it became obvious that something more needed to be done – at least a headstone placed on Kohler's grave and an attempt made to clear his military record. Thanks to Mathias Monuments, members of the Westminster-based Pipe Creek Civil War Round Table, and area residents, a marble marker engraved like other veterans' headstones was purchased. Stories about the project in two local newspapers enabled the Round Table to raise $678 from twenty-three donors.

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However, something else happened when the public read Ernest Kohler's story in the newspapers. The veteran's plight sparked a moment where the past touched the present in a unique way. An elderly Westminster man with a thick German accent offered a generous donation toward the headstone. He explained that he had grown up in Germany during World War II. His brother had joined the German army, died fighting on the Russian front, and was buried somewhere in a roadside ditch. The donor felt that by helping to honor Ernest Kohler, a German immigrant, he was honoring his brother as well. Additionally, a local veterans' group voted unanimously to cover any remaining expenses of the project – a vote that helped correct a past sorely in need of correction.

Was Kohler truly a deserter? The U.S. Army had no problem retaining that status, even after Kohler presented his case. Looking at his story from our perspective, the issue appears less clear-cut than it did to government officials

in the nineteenth century. He did not willfully desert and, in actuality, the army "deserted" him on a number of occasions. It left him helpless beside the road near Uniontown. It left him without proper paperwork when Lt. Bowman released him. It left him without means of support during years of poor health, and it left him without a headstone for his grave.

After the show of support from the public, the Pipe Creek Civil War Round Table decided there was enough evidence to ask the army once again to drop the desertion charge and change it to a medical discharge. Again, Ernest Kohler was turned down. In 1893, the responsible official wrote, "As the affidavits herewith submitted do not change the status of the case, the Department [of the Army] must adhere to the adverse decision of January 7, 1893." On February 22, 2007, a reply read, "Since there are no records which show you or the Friends of the Court can demonstrate a proper interest in this case, the ABCMR (Army Board for Correction of Military Records) cannot consider the request which you submitted on the behalf of Mr. Kohler. As a result, your application will be administratively closed and returned without action." At the risk of being unfair to the army, we wonder if the person on duty in 1893 was still making decisions in 2007.

Ernest Kohler, like most immigrants, came to this country with a dream. Many of them from his era chose sides and fought during the Civil War and many are now nameless and lost to us, but Private Kohler is no longer one of them.

Mary Shellman wrote a poem for the veterans of the 6th Maryland Infantry in 1884. We offer the closing lines of "The Boys in Blue" – fitting for Ernest Kohler, for those buried beside him, and for thousands of other forgotten Civil War veterans out there:

As one by one, they go to rest,
And join the armies of the blest,
We drop our tears upon the sod,
And with our tears give thanks to God,
That men have lived so brave and true,
As these, our gallant "Boys in Blue."[35]

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1 Mary B. Shellman to "Test" Kimmey, June 22, 1936, Rockport, Texas, Mary Bostwick Shellman Papers, Historical Society of Carroll County, MD.
2 Jay Graybeal, "Burial of a Maine Soldier," *Carroll County Times*, May 25, 1997.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Also spelled Frazier.
6 *American Sentinel* (Westminster, MD), August 3, 1860.
7 Military Service Record of William R. Frazer, Adjutant General's Office, April 2, 1881, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
8 1860 Federal Census, Rockford Post Office, Winnebago County, Illinois.
9 Orville T. Andrews, Certificate No. 10040, Military Pension Record, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
10 Ibid.
11 1870 Federal Census, Cleveland Post Office, Bradley County, Tennessee.
12 Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1820-1897, Records of the U.S. Customs Service, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
13 1860 Federal Census, Metuchen Post Office, Middlesex County, New Jersey – spelled Malachi "Bucklin."
14 Stephen W. Sears, *Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam* (NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 242-243.
15 Malachi Buckley, Certificate No. 17773, Military Pension Record, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
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