

# THE CIVIL WAR

BY ROBERT PAUL JORDAN



# THE CIVIL WAR



*By* Robert Paul Jordan

Prepared by the  
Special Publications Division  
National Geographic Society  
Washington, D. C.



## THE CIVIL WAR

By ROBERT PAUL JORDAN

National Geographic Assistant Editor

Published by

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

ROBERT E. DOYLE, *President*

MELVIN M. PAYNE, *Chairman of the Board*

GILBERT M. GROSVENOR, *Editor*

MELVILLE BELL GROSVENOR, *Editor Emeritus*

HOWELL WALKER, *Consulting Editor*  
for this book

Prepared by

THE SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

ROBERT L. BREEDEN, *Editor*

DONALD J. CRUMP, *Manuscript Editor*

MARY ANN HARRELL, *Assistant to the Editor*

MARGERY G. DUNN, TADD FISHER, MARY

ANN HARRELL, TEE LOFTIN SNELL,

PENELOPE W. SPRINGER, PEGGY D.

WINSTON, *Research*

RICHARD M. CRUM, RONALD M. FISHER,

TADD FISHER, MARY ANN HARRELL,

H. ROBERT MORRISON, *Picture Legends*

DOROTHY M. CORSON, VIRGINIA THOMPSON,  
*Index*

JUDITH C. FORD, CAROL R. TEACHEY,

SANDRA A. TURNER, BARBARA J.

WALKER, *Editorial Assistants*

DR. JAY LUVAAS, *Consultant*

*Professor of History, Allegheny College*

*Illustrations and Design*

DAVID R. BRIDGE, *Picture Editor*

JOSEPH A. TANEY, *Art Director*

JOSEPHINE B. BOLT, *Assistant Art Director*

RICHARD SCHLECHT, *Paintings and inset*

*maps, pages 88-89, 102-103, 106-107,*

*123, 130-131, 138-139, 159*

GERALDINE LINDER, TEE LOFTIN SNELL,

BETTY STRAUSS, PEGGY D. WINSTON,

*Picture Research*

VIRGINIA L. BAZA, BOBBY G. CROCKETT,

JOHN D. GARST, JR., *Map Research and*

*Production, pages 24, 92*

*Production and Printing*

ROBERT W. MESSER, *Production Manager*

ANN H. CROUCH, JUDY L. STRONG,

*Production Assistants*

JAMES R. WHITNEY, JOHN R. METCALFE,

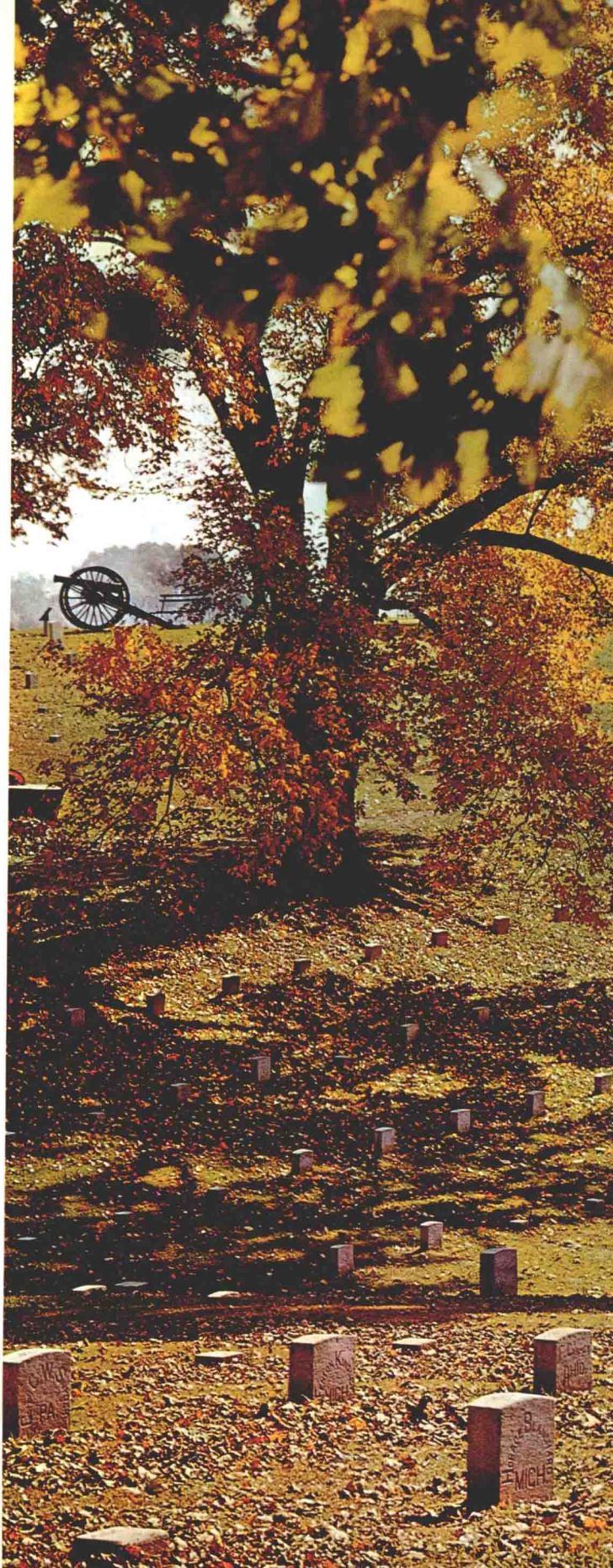
*Engraving and Printing*

Copyright © 1969 National Geographic Society. All rights reserved. Reproduction of the whole or any part of the contents without written permission is prohibited. Library of Congress Catalog No. 76-94656.

Fourth Printing 1978

*Stillness pervades Virginia's Fredericksburg National Cemetery, solemn reminder of the Civil War and 600,000 Americans who fell like the leaves of autumn. Title page: Union soldiers rally round the flag—symbol of the lofty cause that triggered four years of hatred and strife. Page 1: His generation sacrificed to war, 16-year-old Georgia private Edwin Francis Jemison—killed at Malvern Hill, Virginia—haunts the conscience of a new century.*

THOMAS NEBBIA (RIGHT); TITLE PAGE: WILLIAM E. WINNER, WEST POINT MUSEUM, ALEXANDER MCCOOK CRAIGHEAD COLLECTION; PAGE 1: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS









# CONTENTS

*Foreword* 5

1 *1820-1860: The Years of Compromise* 9

2 *1861: Battles for the Border* 41

3 *1862: Year of Lost Victories* 73

4 *1863: War Stalks the Land* 111

5 *1864: Design for Desolation* 147

6 *1865: An End and a Beginning* 181

*Index* 212

*Union scout, a far-ranging observer for his unit, halts his lathered steed on a dusty country lane and searches the distance for signs of the enemy.*





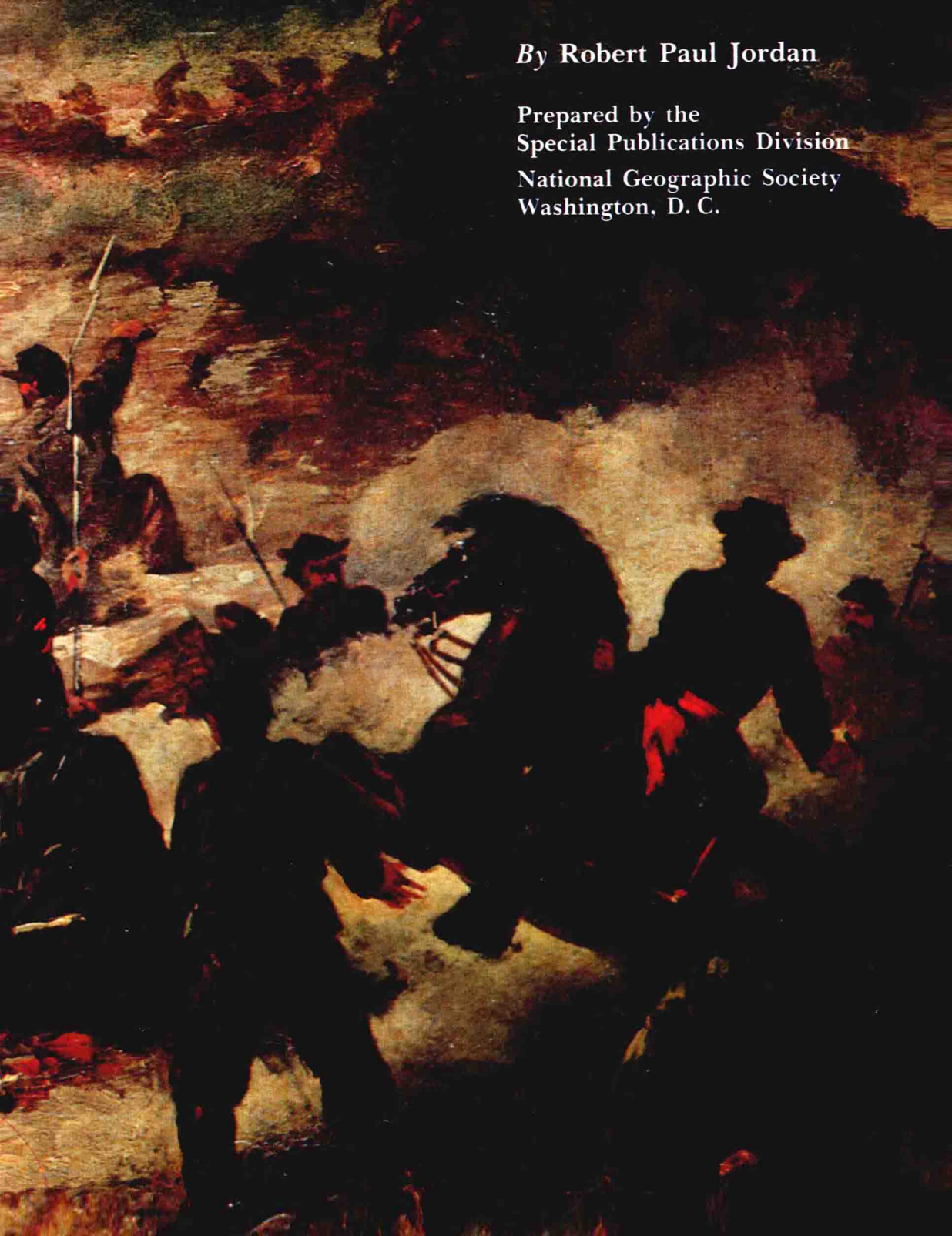




# THE CIVIL WAR

*By* Robert Paul Jordan

Prepared by the  
Special Publications Division  
National Geographic Society  
Washington, D. C.





## THE CIVIL WAR

By ROBERT PAUL JORDAN

National Geographic Assistant Editor

Published by

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

ROBERT E. DOYLE, *President*

MELVIN M. PAYNE, *Chairman of the Board*

GILBERT M. GROSVENOR, *Editor*

MELVILLE BELL GROSVENOR, *Editor Emeritus*

HOWELL WALKER, *Consulting Editor*  
for this book

Prepared by

THE SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

ROBERT L. BREEDEN, *Editor*

DONALD J. CRUMP, *Manuscript Editor*

MARY ANN HARRELL, *Assistant to the Editor*

MARGERY G. DUNN, TADD FISHER, MARY

ANN HARRELL, TEE LOFTIN SNELL,

PENELOPE W. SPRINGER, PEGGY D.

WINSTON, *Research*

RICHARD M. CRUM, RONALD M. FISHER,

TADD FISHER, MARY ANN HARRELL,

H. ROBERT MORRISON, *Picture Legends*

DOROTHY M. CORSON, VIRGINIA THOMPSON,  
*Index*

JUDITH C. FORD, CAROL R. TEACHEY,

SANDRA A. TURNER, BARBARA J.

WALKER, *Editorial Assistants*

DR. JAY LUVAAS, *Consultant*

*Professor of History, Allegheny College*

*Illustrations and Design*

DAVID R. BRIDGE, *Picture Editor*

JOSEPH A. TANEY, *Art Director*

JOSEPHINE B. BOLT, *Assistant Art Director*

RICHARD SCHLECHT, *Paintings and inset*

*maps, pages 88-89, 102-103, 106-107,*

*123, 130-131, 138-139, 159*

GERALDINE LINDER, TEE LOFTIN SNELL,

BETTY STRAUSS, PEGGY D. WINSTON,

*Picture Research*

VIRGINIA L. BAZA, BOBBY G. CROCKETT,

JOHN D. GARST, JR., *Map Research and*

*Production, pages 24, 92*

*Production and Printing*

ROBERT W. MESSER, *Production Manager*

ANN H. CROUCH, JUDY L. STRONG,

*Production Assistants*

JAMES R. WHITNEY, JOHN R. METCALFE,

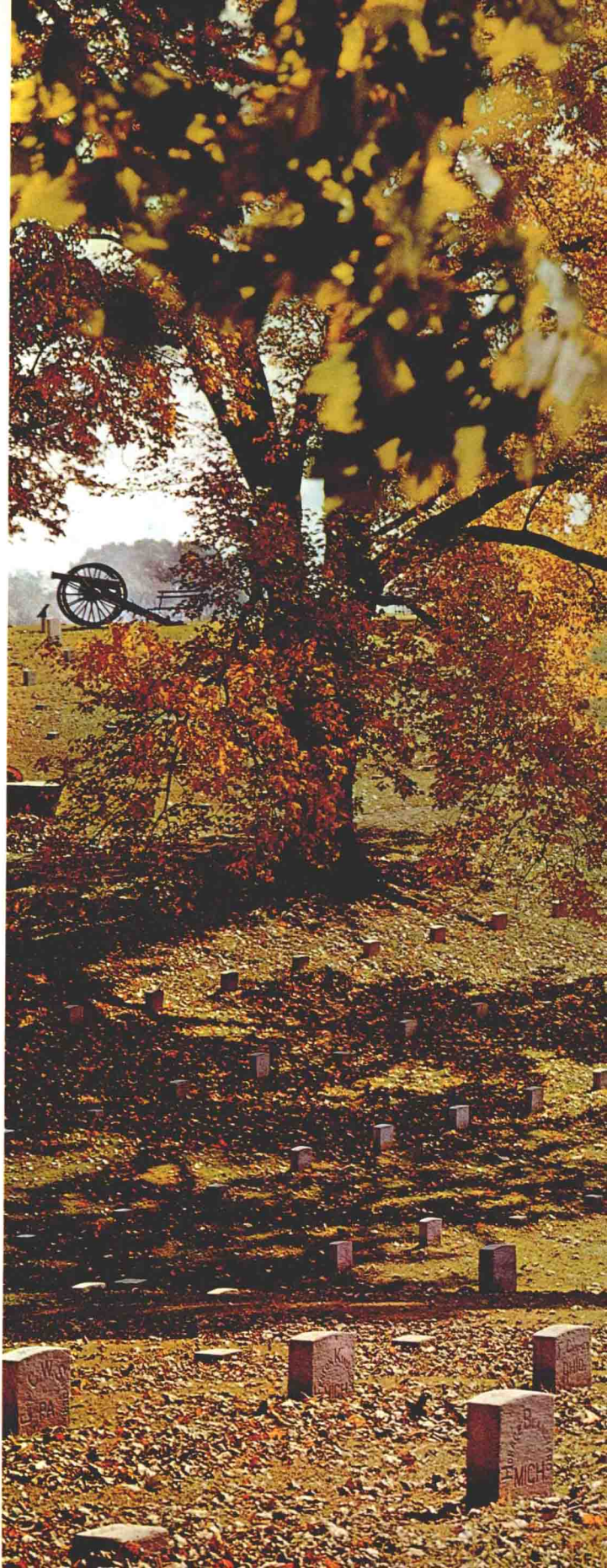
*Engraving and Printing*

Copyright © 1969 National Geographic Society. All rights reserved. Reproduction of the whole or any part of the contents without written permission is prohibited. Library of Congress Catalog No. 76-94656.

Fourth Printing 1978

*Stillness pervades Virginia's Fredericksburg National Cemetery, solemn reminder of the Civil War and 600,000 Americans who fell like the leaves of autumn. Title page: Union soldiers rally round the flag—symbol of the lofty cause that triggered four years of hatred and strife. Page 1: His generation sacrificed to war, 16-year-old Georgia private Edwin Francis Jemison—killed at Malvern Hill, Virginia—haunts the conscience of a new century.*

THOMAS NEBBIA (RIGHT); TITLE PAGE: WILLIAM E. WINNER, WEST POINT MUSEUM, ALEXANDER MCCOOK CRAIGHEAD COLLECTION; PAGE 1: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS





# FOREWORD

On a muggy July night in 1862 a brigade bugler sounded “lights out” and quiet settled over a Union encampment beside the muddy James River. Calls of other buglers in distant units drifted over the Virginia countryside, melting into the stillness.

A Union general, Daniel Butterfield, watched from his tent as darkness swallowed the flames of candles and cooking fires. As the last sharp notes of the bugle had sounded, they seemed harsh to him and inappropriate for the hushed mood at day’s end. Soon afterward Butterfield summoned his bugler and told him he wanted a new, more fitting call. Moreover, he would compose it!

Butterfield began to whistle; the bugler played, finally writing the melody on an envelope. Then he substituted it for the official version. It caught on. Other buglers copied it, and some carried it to distant fields of battle. Today we know that call as Taps, part of a legacy from a century past and from a war that split our Nation.

In this book Robert Paul Jordan reveals much of that legacy, taking us from the bitter prewar disputes over principles to the armed clashes over battlegrounds. Beginning at his Maryland home, not far from Manassas and Gettysburg, Bob traveled with his family—as others of us may wish to do after reading this book—to study well-known major battlefields, now serene and parklike. He also went to many of those hardly remembered, some of them swampy and overgrown with brush, just as they were when Rebels and Yankees tore through brier patches and thickets—and at each other.

With candor Bob Jordan strips away the romanticism so often associated with the war and exaggerated with time, bringing us up quickly to the reality of it all: the anguish of President Lincoln searching for a general who would fight, the gnawing hunger of a shivering and shoeless Confederate soldier, the fear in once-proud cities besieged and bombarded for weeks.

We see the tenacious U. S. Grant, capable of demanding unconditional surrender and of giving such generous surrender terms at Appomattox that history ranks him one of the most magnanimous men of the war. We stand near a somber Robert E. Lee as he struggles in his great personal dilemma, finally affirming with deep sorrow that duty calls him to his state and ultimately to the South. We watch him emerge the most revered losing general in history. We meet the lesser-known, but equally noble in spirit: Union Pvt. Leonidas Jordan, the author’s great-uncle, who wrote his mother: “. . . if I ever geet home again I will apriciate religious things more”; and Rebel Sgt. Richard Kirkland, who risked enemy fire at the Battle of Fredericksburg to carry water to the dying Yankees whose screams he could no longer bear.

Such intimate glimpses into the lives of the men who fought the war pervade this book—experiences we share through letters, paintings, photographs, diaries, and newspapers of the day—all brought together in this story of the great national tragedy that Lincoln’s Secretary of State once called the “irrepressible conflict.”

ROBERT L. BREEDEN, *Editor*







# CONTENTS

*Foreword* 5

1 *1820-1860: The Years of Compromise* 9

2 *1861: Battles for the Border* 41

3 *1862: Year of Lost Victories* 73

4 *1863: War Stalks the Land* 111

5 *1864: Design for Desolation* 147

6 *1865: An End and a Beginning* 181

*Index* 212

*Union scout, a far-ranging observer for his unit, halts his lathered steed on a dusty country lane and searches the distance for signs of the enemy.*







# 1820-1860: THE YEARS OF COMPROMISE

## CHAPTER ONE

ABRUPTLY THE SOFT MONOTONE pitched to high urgency in the earphones, fading and rising like a distant siren as Ken Parks swept his mine detector back and forth. He poised it where the signal echoed strongest. "Dig there," he directed his 12-year-old son and namesake, an old hand at these expeditions. Eagerly my own son, Robert, broke in— "Could I do it, please?" Young Ken graciously offered him the pick, and Robbie energetically began chopping the sticky Mississippi loam.

All city boys should enjoy such good luck, I thought. Clutching vines had tripped him, briars raked his face; he was cold, wet, and muddy—and he dug away happily oblivious to all. My 11-year-old lad hoped to unearth some relic of the Civil War; a shell fragment, perhaps, or a bullet, or even a bayonet.

What better place to search? This great battlefield lay unmarked and forgotten, though just north of us cars and trucks raced over the new superhighway between Jackson, Mississippi's capital, and Vicksburg. To me, the land seemed haunted in the pale winter sun, an eerie mélange of brush-snarled ravines and wooded ridges running to a commanding promontory, Champion Hill. Nearly 7,000 soldiers of North and South fell on this soil in a few hours in the crucial battle of the decisive campaign in the West. But time hangs motionless now over Champion Hill, and many another fallow field of combat. The elements work little change; it is memory the years blur.

Walking over such battlegrounds in the company of experts, you can bridge the century and see the conflict come alive. Ken Parks—a film producer based in Jackson and one of many Civil War students to whom I am indebted—literally brooms the path of Ulysses S. Grant's Vicksburg campaign with his mine detector. His trained eye pinpoints the fiercest fighting by the volume of the metal he unearths, and history touches today.

Suddenly Robbie linked past to present in his own fashion. "Here it is!" he yelled. Three inches deep he had grubbed up a Minié ball, a bullet undisturbed since May 16, 1863. I turned it in my fingers. The conical lead slug bore no rifling grooves, no flattening signs of impact. It had never been fired. It was a "drop."

In mind's eye the drama flashed before me: All about, I see Union soldiers crouching in the shelter of this gully, waiting to resume the attack. Hot, thirsty troops, some of them boys in their early teens, pull at uptilted canteens; rivulets of sweat streak powder-blackened faces. At my side, an infantryman draws his ramrod and fumbles in the cartridge box on his hip. A Minié ball drops unnoticed from it to the earth while he rams another down his muzzle-loading rifle-musket.

*Worn-out field hands symbolize the institution of bondage that by the mid-1800's had cut deep and increasingly bitter divisions between the South and the rest of the Nation. By 1860 the need to resolve the inflammatory issue had become unmistakably more urgent—and far more difficult.*



ENGRAVING BY ROBERT WHITECHURCH AFTER PETER F. ROTHERMEL, 1855

*Henry Clay of Kentucky pleads for compromise before a somber Senate as a crisis of disunion racks the Nation in 1850. Southerners demand as a right the freedom to take slaves into western land recently acquired from Mexico; free-soil leaders oppose them; the rancor of this dispute spreads to other issues. Next to Vice President Millard Fillmore (presiding), John C. Calhoun of South Carolina listens grimly. Mortally ill, he will reply that compromise betrays the South—if need be she will secede “and part in peace.” Daniel Webster, head in hand, will speak for the Union above all, with a stronger fugitive slave law to placate the Southern states. But William H. Seward, seated at extreme left, will warn that God’s opposition to slavery’s expansion is “a higher law than the Constitution.” The Compromise of 1850 resulted. It gave only an interval of harmony, and left the clash of principles unresolved. As the decade passed, new crises arose.*



These Yankees soon scrambled up and over the gully and moved down the other side, into a vicious hail of Rebel lead. We followed, and I shuddered at the murderousness of it as Ken's mine detector led us to ball after ball. Many were mashed almost flat. Fired at 50-foot range, they impacted against the Union onslaught with crushing force.

The Battle of Champion Hill raged from midmorning to late afternoon. Some terrain was fought over three times. "What was it really like?" Robbie asked.

I told him about the Confederate colonel who galloped along his brigade's lines, a knight-errant of old. He clutched the reins and a large magnolia flower in one hand while waving his sword with the other. "Charge!" he cried, and charge his men did.

I read my son the words of a terrified Federal corporal who had run for his life: "It was terribly hot... and an enemy on flank and rear shouting and firing. The grass, the stones, the bushes, seemed melting under the shower of bullets that was following us to the rear.... Like ten thousand starving and howling wolves the enemy pursued...."

And I recalled the little mound of pine boughs heaped on a grassy knoll we had visited earlier. Newly-placed, they marked the shallow grave of an unknown Confederate, buried where death caught him and discovered by chance only recently. The soldier's uniform had turned to dust; its metal buttons remained, resting in perfect alignment.

In the end the Federals prevailed at Champion Hill. After this crucial defeat the Rebels chose to retreat into Fortress Vicksburg, 20 miles west on bluffs above the Mississippi River. Starvation siege followed. Inevitably the citadel surrendered, severing the rebellious states to the west. Now the North would crack the South into smaller bits, although nearly two more years of agony must elapse before the task was finished.

What caused the Civil War? Why did Americans fight one another four long years, at a cost of more than 600,000 lives? What did it all mean? What does it signify today?

I sought out scholars, both in books and on the scene, and they supplied a multitude of answers. They agreed on no overriding cause, only that slavery and secession lay at the crux.

How odd, then, to realize that not one Southerner in ten owned slaves—the census of 1860 listed just 383,637 slaveowners out of 1,516,000 families. Many had misgivings about the "peculiar institution," as they called it. In fact, up to 1830 the South led the country in efforts to achieve gradual emancipation or recolonize Negroes in Africa. As for secession, probably only a scant majority at most ever favored disunion before the final crisis.

Incongruities like these beset Civil War students at every turn. Northerners wore Rebel gray, Southerners donned the Federal blue. At the siege of Vicksburg, Missouri supplied the Union with 22 units and the South with 17. Pro-Union men held firm all through the war in the Appalachian country of western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee, and farther south; a cavalry company of white Alabamians rode with Sherman on his march to the sea. Virginia's western counties, with old grudges against the tidewater planters, seceded from the rest of the state, and in 1863 joined the Union as West Virginia.

Several of Abraham Lincoln's in-laws served with the South, one as