Major General Daniel Butterfield (Union College Class of 1844) served as chief of staff for two leaders of the Union's Army of the Potomac. Wounded during the Civil War battles of Gaines Mills and Gettysburg, Butterfield received the Congressional Medal of Honor and created the bugle call "Taps." Shortly before his death in 1901, Congress granted his wish to be buried in the West Point Cemetery, despite the fact that he was not an academy graduate. His gravesite monument, at left, is the largest and most ornate in the West Point Cemetery. (Photo by Tom Werner)
PROFOUND & POIGNANT:
Union College Connections to the Civil War Era
A Glossary of Personal Experiences

In 2015, the country commemorated the 150th anniversaries of the end of the Civil War and the Lincoln assassination. A total of 577 alumni from the classes 1813 to 1870 served in the Union Army (507), Union Navy (23) or the Confederacy (47). War deaths totaled 61 for the Union and six for the Confederacy. (To put this in some perspective, West Point graduates serving in the war numbered about 900 with just under 100 deaths.) Union College alumni participated in major Civil War battles such as First and Second Bull Run, the Peninsular Campaign, Antietam, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg and Sherman’s March to the Sea. The only Union College faculty member ever to be killed in war as well as the son of another faculty member were among the Federal dead. One civilian death resulted from a massacre in Lawrence, Kansas by the infamous pro-Confederacy guerrilla group known as Quantrill’s raiders that included members of the future outlaw gang led by Jesse James.

While these numbers for the college are dwarfed by the more than three million men who served in the Union and Confederate militaries, the contributions and experiences of Union alumni, and others associated with the college, far exceed what these relatively small numbers would imply. The age of the College at the start of the war, its location in the state that sent more men to military service than any other, and the fact that Union regularly enrolled students from the South all contributed to its influence. Moreover, the innovative curriculum of Elihu Nott, offering science and engineering as well as a classical course of study, enabled the College to produce leaders in a wide range of disciplines.

Several alumni rose to become prominent military leaders in the Union army, including its general-in-chief. Five alumni were Medal of Honor recipients. One of these recipients created the haunting bugle call “Taps” while convalescing from a war wound and was later buried, with special permission from the secretary of war, under what is still the most ornate monument in the West Point Cemetery. Fourteen alumni served as white officers in United States Colored Troop regiments, and one Native American alum was instrumental in leading the Chickasaw nation to an alliance with the Confederacy and served as a colonel in its army. General Grant learned of General Lee's intention to surrender at Appomattox Court House in a letter from Lee delivered by a Union graduate, who then led a military escort for Lee back to his headquarters after the surrender. Just days before Lee’s surrender, a Union alum was charged with leading the first Federal troops into Richmond, the now-abandoned Confederate capital, and restoring order to the city, a task he completed to considerable acclaim.

Union alumni assumed important roles as political leaders, diplomats, war administrators and advisors during this era. Indeed, the secretaries of state for both the North and South at the start of the war were Union graduates; one became Lincoln's most trusted political advisor, while the other turned into a bitter critic of the Confederacy government and ultimately a disgruntled military leader. Still another graduate took on the role of Lincoln’s spiritual advisor. College alumni played key roles in providing men and resources for the Union cause and in convincing France not to aid the Confederacy. An engineering graduate with exceptional talent rose to be chief engineer of the Army of the Potomac and was later commissioned to supervise the construction of the Washington Monument.
A Union graduate and officer and his fiancée, the daughter of another Union alum, were sitting in the president's box at Ford's Theater as guests of the Lincolns on the night of the president’s assassination. After shooting the president, John Wilkes Booth also seriously injured the soldier. The tragic aftermath of this event for the soldier and his fiancée is the subject of a novel by Thomas Mallon. A father and son, both Union alumni and government officials, were brutally attacked on the evening of the assassination as part of an intended larger plot by Booth’s co-conspirators. Still other alumni were present at the Lincoln deathbed vigil, participants in the Lincoln funeral and responsible for the execution of the assassination co-conspirators nearly three months later. Three alumni warned Lincoln of possible assassination attempts earlier in his presidency, and a fourth assisted the president to safety when he came under enemy fire in a battle near the capital.

Using both artistic illustrations and hard reporting, Union alumni became well-known and highly effective chroniclers of the battlefield. A moving tribute by a graduate, while reporting for the New York Times at the battle of Gettysburg, to his son who was killed in the battle may even have inspired a portion of the Gettysburg Address.

Because of these examples, and others, connections between Union College and the Civil War era are both profound and poignant. These connections are exemplified by the personal experiences contained in this glossary.

**Organization of the Glossary**

Individual narratives in the glossary appear in alphabetical order; entries fall into one or more of the following topic areas: Political Leaders, Military Leaders, Alumni Leading African-American Regiments, Sacrifice and Valor, The Lincoln Assassination, Union for the Union and Chroniclers of the Civil War Era. A listing of the individuals in each category is given below (some appear in more than one category). There are more than 60 entries; all but three are considered Union alumni because they attended Union for some period of time, although not all graduated from the college (Union class year is the date following the name of each individual). Of the three non-alums, one was both the fiancée and daughter of Union graduates and the other two were honorary degree recipients.

The starting point for choosing glossary entries was the volume published in 1915 by Thomas Fearey entitled Union College Alumni in the Civil War, 1861-1965, Cornell University Library. This source contains limited information (length of service, rank, etc.) on all 577 Union alumni who served in the Civil War. A second source for glossary entries was the book edited by Wayne Somers entitled Encyclopedia of Union College History, Union College Press, Schenectady, NY, 2003. When the information from these sources for a given alum contained sufficient depth on his wartime experiences, a web search was employed to confirm and expand on the biographical material for that individual. In this way, a sort of “triage” process was employed to choose glossary entries with the most relevant Union connections to the Civil War era. Asterisks after the names below indicate the individuals that appeared in the exhibit Profound & Poignant: Union College Connections to the Civil War Era, on display in the Nott Memorial throughout 2015.

All of the sources used in creating this glossary, and the Civil War exhibit in the Nott Memorial during 2015, are listed at the end of the glossary.
# Glossary list of entries

## Political Leaders
- Chester Arthur*
- John Bigelow*
- Austin Blair*
- Ira Harris
- Frederick Seward*
- William Seward*
- William Stillman*
- Robert Toombs*

## Military Leaders
- Daniel Butterfield*
- Holmes Colbert*
- James Duane*
- Thomas Fearey
- Henry Halleck*
- John Hartranft*
- Hamilton Mattison*
- Charles Pearce
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## Sacrifice and Valor
- George Bliss*
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## The Lincoln Assassination
- Robert Fuller
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## Alumni Leading African-American Regiments
- Abraham Bockee, Jr.
- George Camp
- Cleaveland Campbell*
- George De Costa
- Sylvanus Huested
- Edwin Malaney
- Edward Martindale
- Hiram Marvin
- Archibald McIntyre
- Hiram Scofield*
- Ira Terry
- Edgar Van Winkle
- John Wilder
- Leander Willis

## Union for the Union
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- Tayler Lewis
- Ulysses S. Grant*
- Edward M. Stanton*

## Chroniclers of the Civil War Era
- Thomas Fearey
- William Fox
- Henry A. Reeves
- Alexander Simplot
- Samuel Wilkeson, Jr.*
- Franc Bangs Wilkie
Allowing black men to enlist as soldiers in the Union Army signaled a dramatic shift in federal military policy, which challenged the racial prejudices of most white Americans, including those proposing and supporting such regiments. President Lincoln believed that in order to make these units more acceptable to the public, he would need to ensure that white men led all black regiments, thereby soothing the fears of northerners who saw “colored” soldiers as a threat. In May of 1863, the War Department created the Bureau of Colored Troops not only to systemize the recruitment of black soldiers but also to efficiently find qualified white soldiers to lead them. The units in which they would serve were referred to as United States Colored Troops (USCT). Those interested in obtaining an officer’s commission in a black regiment wrote to the bureau for permission to be reviewed by a board of examiners, who would judge the prospective candidate based on both general and military intelligence, morals, and attitudes about African Americans. Simply stated, the War Department wanted white officers who were smart, morally sound, and who genuinely wanted to work with black soldiers.

Most of the Union alumni who served with USCT regiments began their military careers as members of state volunteer units, such as regiments of the New York Volunteers. The USCT units in which Union alumni served fought in some of the war’s major campaigns, the sieges of Petersburg and Richmond, but many were engaged in campaigns in Florida, Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas. So, the Union alums’ USCT units service encompassed a much a wider region of combat operations than that of their fellow alums’ white volunteer units in the eastern theater of the war.
Chester Arthur, 1848

**Chester Arthur**, most famous for serving as America’s 21st president, also played an important role in aiding the Union during the Civil War. Prior to the war’s onset, Arthur worked at a prominent New York City law firm. In the 1850s, Arthur argued two important cases on behalf of African Americans: one freed eight enslaved blacks being transported through New York City; the other ended racial discrimination on the city’s streetcars. Early in the war, New York’s governor appointed Arthur, who was in the state militia, to serve as quartermaster general. As he efficiently raised and supplied volunteer soldiers, Arthur was also tasked with provisioning and housing thousands of New York soldiers. His family’s divided loyalties caused Arthur to avoid combat service, as his wife had family in the south and his sister had married a Confederate government official.

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John Bigelow, 1835

As consul general to France, **John Bigelow** bore major responsibility for keeping France from aiding the Confederacy. He was appointed consul general to France, primarily on the recommendation of **William Seward**. Bigelow used his media savvy as the former editor/co-owner of the *New York Evening Post* to persuade the French media to support the Union cause. His greatest contribution to the Union war effort was his success in preventing the French from constructing warships that the Confederacy could have used to decimate the Union Navy’s blockade of southern ports. As the United States’ Minister to France following the war’s conclusion, Bigelow succeeded in dealing tactfully with the problem of the French-backed Mexican empire of Maximilian. Bigelow published an account of some of his diplomatic experiences in *France and the Confederate Navy, 1862-1868* (1888).

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Austin Blair, 1839

**Austin Blair**, an outspoken abolitionist and proponent of women’s rights and equal suffrage, worked tirelessly as war governor of Michigan to raise and equip volunteers for the Union army. At the onset of war, Blair led Michigan to become the first western state to provide Lincoln with volunteers; by war’s end one in four Michigan men were serving in the Union army. Blair raised $100,000 in private donations to support and equip the men in the 1st Michigan Infantry, and eventually raised seven regiments, three more than requested by the secretary of war.

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George Newman Bliss, 1860

**George Newman Bliss** enlisted as a private with the 1st Rhode Island Cavalry in 1861. He rose to captain by 1862 and saw action in the second battle of Bull Run and the battle of Middleburg. Bliss spent nearly a year in 1863-1864 recruiting new soldiers, some of whom joined the newly formed United States Colored Regiments. In July 1864, Bliss served under General Philip Sheridan, fighting at the first battle of Deep Bottom. On September 28th, 1864, Bliss was captured at Waynesboro, Virginia and spent four months in Richmond at Libby prison, until he was exchanged for Confederate soldiers. Prior to his capture at Waynesboro, Bliss rallied retreating Union soldiers, and, without orders, joined the defense and led an attack on a greatly
superior force. While doing so, he suffered three saber wounds and had his horse shot from underneath him. The Medal of Honor was awarded to Bliss in recognition of his valor at Waynesboro.

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Abraham Bockee, Jr., 1860

Abraham Bockee, Jr. spent his entire military career as captain of the 78th United States Colored Troops (USCT), beginning in 1863 until 1866. The 78th USCT was initially posted at Port Hudson in Louisiana, and later stationed at various other points within the district of LaFourche. Bockee served alongside fellow Union alumni Leander Willis. Most white officers of USCT units began their careers in all-white volunteer units, but Bockee, Ira C. Terry, John Wilder and Sylvanus Huested all entered service in USCT units.

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Daniel Butterfield, 1844

“His services to the country in the Civil War, which raised him to the rank of Major General of U.S. Volunteers, are held in proud remembrance by all Union men, and his career as a public-spirited citizen is an illustrious example of the civic virtue which his Alma Mater inculcates.”

Union College Board of Trustees

Daniel Butterfield graduated from Union College at the age of 18 in 1849. The country was moving towards war, and wishing to do his part for the abolition of slavery, he began his military career as a private in the Utica Citizen’s Corps eventually rising to major general of U.S. volunteers by 1862. In June of that year, Butterfield’s brigade was attacked by Confederates at Gaines Mill, Virginia, and, although he was wounded in battle, he seized the flag of the 83rd Pennsylvania to rally his troops, thus earning the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1892. While recovering from his wounds after the battle, Butterfield summoned his bugler to his tent and composed the enduring, emotional and most recognizable lights-out call, “Taps.”

Selected as chief of staff by Joseph Hooker, commander of the Army of the Potomac, Butterfield greatly increased morale and improved efficiency. He developed the army’s system of corps badges, which later spread to other Union armies and continues in a modified form today. When George Meade replaced Hooker before Gettysburg, Butterfield stayed on as chief of staff; during the Confederate bombardment before Pickett’s Charge, he was again wounded. After recovering, he rejoined Hooker in the West and fought at Chattanooga. Butterfield commanded a division in the Atlanta campaign, but, hampered by his Gettysburg wound, he returned to New York in July 1864 on recruiting duty.

Butterfield’s military career was not without controversy. Some considered him bad tempered and meddlesome, earning him the nickname “Little Napoleon.” After Gettysburg, Meade dismissed Butterfield as chief of staff, and the two engaged in a bitter argument over whether Meade really intended to fight or retreat at Gettysburg.

Butterfield remained involved with Union College for the rest of his life and established a course of thirty lectures given by many notables of the day, including Andrew Carnegie, General P.S. Michie, and his classmate Frederick Seward. He presented the commencement address in 1895.

when he was appointed honorary chancellor of Union University. He was elected president of the Alumni Association in 1895 and later became a Trustee. As he neared death in 1901, he asked the secretary of war for permission to be buried at West Point even though he was not an academy graduate. Permission was granted and his monument is the most ornate in the West Point Cemetery, rising 35 feet in height with 16 columns and documenting 38 battles and engagements of his career.

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George Camp, 1836

George Camp enlisted with the 176th New York Volunteers in December of 1862 as a private, and served as corporal within that regiment until his discharge to become 2nd lieutenant of the 87th U.S Colored Troops (USCT) in January of 1864. While serving with the 176th New York, Camp helped defend New Orleans and was captured in Brashear City, Louisiana but returned to duty shortly afterward. Upon exit from the 176th, Camp and the 87th USCT were stationed in Brazos Santiago, Texas and attached to the Department of the Gulf.

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Cleaveland J. Campbell, 1855

Initially enlisting in the 44th New York Volunteers as a private in 1861, Cleaveland Campbell spent the bulk of his military career serving with the 152nd New York Volunteers as both 1st lieutenant and then captain. He participated in the defense of Washington, the quelling of the New York City draft riots, and the Mine Run campaign. After passing a “most brilliant examination,” he was commissioned as lieutenant colonel and then colonel in the 23rd United States Colored Troops (USCT). Campbell was wounded from a bursting shell as he led his USCT troops in the battle of the Crater during the siege of Petersburg. Nearly 400 of his men were either killed or wounded in the attack, and he eventually perished from the lingering effects of the wound. The 23rd suffered the highest number of casualties among the black units from the 4th Division in the Battle of the Crater, a fight depicted in early scenes from the movie Cold Mountain.

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Holmes Colbert, 1853

Holmes Colbert, a prominent member of the Chickasaw tribe, aided in the creation of the Chickasaw Constitution in 1857, which created a three-branch form of government very similar to that of the United States. He also was instrumental in forming Native American regiments that served with the Confederate army. The Cherokees, Creeks, Seminoles, Choctaws and Chickasaws were approached by General Albert Pike of the Confederate army, who was chosen by the Confederate government to form a commission aimed at earning the loyalty of the Native American tribes residing in southern states and Indian territory. The tribes faced a difficult choice: siding with the North would turn their lands into a battlefield, while allying with the South would void all treaties with the United States. General Pike asked all five tribes to send a delegate to Fork Village in July of 1861, but only the Choctaws and Chickasaws actually participated. On behalf of the Chickasaws, Colbert negotiated a treaty with the Confederacy that resulted in the formation of the Chickasaw Brigade, which served underneath Confederate General Sam Maxies’ division. Colbert served as a colonel in this division.
Colbert and his wife owned numerous adult slaves and children on about 100 acres of land in what is now Oklahoma. After the war, the government required the Chickasaws to sign a new treaty that required them to emancipate their slaves. Colbert represented the Chickasaw nation during the negotiations in Washington, DC that resulted in the treaty.

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John D. S. Cook, 1859

John D. S. Cook was a Union College Phi Beta Kappa graduate who went on to earn a degree from Albany Law School. Cook helped organize a company to fight for the Union in 1861, and served as 1st lieutenant and then captain of the 20th New York state militia of the Army of the Potomac. At the battle of Gettysburg, Cook survived the barrage preceding the infamous Pickett’s Charge, which resulted in over 50 percent Confederate casualties. While supervising a detail to bury dead Rebels after the battle, Cook came across the body of Colonel James Gregory Hodges of the 14th Virginia Regiment. After reserving a separate space for Colonel Hodges’ body apart from those of the enlisted men, Cook officiated at the burial using a passage from the Episcopal book of common prayer. Cook’s men then presented him with the sword belt of Colonel Hodges, which had become loose when a bullet shattered Hodges’ sword.

In 1903, Cook struck up a chance conversation at the Library of Congress with Virginia senator and Civil War veteran, John W. Daniel. He told Daniel the story of Hodges’ burial and said that he would be willing to return the sword belt to the colonel’s family. Daniel contacted a relative of Colonel Hodges who informed Hodges’ widow, Sarah, of Cook’s offer. She gratefully accepted the offer, and Cook sent the sword-belt at once with a letter expressing his sympathy and containing information about her husband’s fate. After more than 40 years, Sarah Hodges used this information to visit the spot at Gettysburg where her husband was killed.

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George Washington De Costa, 1859

Prior to his service with the 2nd Arkansas Infantry of African Descent (what would become the 54th USCT), George Washington De Costa served with the 5th Kansas Cavalry. De Costa was stationed at various forts within Kansas and Arkansas and participated in escorts for supply trains. By September of 1863, he had been discharged to serve as lieutenant colonel of the 2nd Arkansas Infantry of African Descent, and conducted raids along the Mississippi River near the town of Napoleon. His superiors described the conduct of his soldiers as “credible and good-willed.” By December of 1863, De Costa was discharged from the 2nd, which concluded his military service.

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James C. Duane, 1848

James C. Duane began his military career as a captain in 1861, but his engineering ability soon led Duane to become chief engineer of the Army of the Potomac in late 1862, chief engineer of the Department of the South from November 1862 until June 1863, and finally chief engineer of the Army of the Potomac again between July 1863 and June of 1865. Duane was regarded as an extremely talented engineer, as evidenced by a report concerning the Peninsular Campaign in mid 1862: “… he seemed to know no fatigue and allow himself no repose. The
pontoon bridge built by him over the Lower Chickahominy was one of the most extensive known to military history… he possessed a more extensive and thorough practical and experimental knowledge of military bridges than any man in this country.” His engineering prowess was utilized at the siege of Yorktown, the battle of Chickahominy, Harper’s Ferry, and the siege of Petersburg. Duane also published a book in 1862 entitled *Manual for Engineering Troops* that drew on European war engineering concepts to instruct American engineers. His military maps and engineering sketches of pontoon bridges and trestles were published in *The Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Duane’s engineering skills led to a commission to supervise the construction of the Washington Monument following the war’s end.

**Thomas Fearey, 1863**  
Thomas Fearey was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Signal Corp in 1863 and served in the defense of Washington and on the staffs of Generals Meade, Sykes and Wright. He received a commendation from General Wright after being in charge of the Tower Signal Station in front of Petersburg. After the war, Fearey had a series of widely varying careers, including ownership of a shoe manufacturing company with his father, a professorship in applied physics at Vanderbilt University, and development of the trolley system in Nashville, Tennessee. He was elected by the Alumni Association to a four-year term as a College trustee in 1880. As chairman of the Graduate Council Committee on Civil War Records (1915), he prepared a monograph entitled *Union College Alumni in the Civil War, 1861-1865* describing the service and sacrifice of Union College alumni during the war.

**William Fox, 1860**  
William Fox entered military service in 1862 as a captain in the 107th New York Volunteers and attained the rank of lieutenant colonel by the time he was discharged for disability from wounds at Antietam, Chancellorsville and Resaca, Georgia. He became known as an important chronicler of the war, especially for his highly-regarded reference book entitled *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War, 1861-1865: A Treatise on the extent and nature of the mortuary losses in the Union regiments, with full and exhaustive statistics compiled from the official records on file in the state military bureaus and at Washington*. For over a century, this work was used to estimate the number who died in the war from both the North and the South. Not until 2011 has this number been increased by 20% to 750,000 from careful reading of census data. Fox also wrote several articles about the war and a three-volume series examining the contributions of New York regiments at the battle of Gettysburg, where he was a participant.

**Robert Fuller, 1863**  
After graduating from Union, Robert Fuller entered Albany Medical College and obtained his medical degree in 1865. While a student at the medical college, he was sent to Virginia to bring back a badly wounded Union soldier for treatment at an Albany hospital. On April 14, 1865, on his way to Virginia, he stopped in Washington and decided to view a play at Ford’s Theater. In doing so, he became one of four with Union connections—Clara Harris, Henry Rathbone and Charles Lewis were the others—to witness the assassination of President
Lincoln. Dr. Fuller later practiced medicine in New York City for 40 years and became known for his contributions in devising new ways to prepare drugs that resulted in better accuracy in dosage measurement.

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Ulysses S. Grant
Union College awarded an honorary degree to General Grant in 1865.

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Phineas Gurley, 1837
“I like Gurley. He don’t preach politics. I get enough of that through the week, and when I go to church, I like to hear the gospel.”

Abraham Lincoln on his family’s pastor, Dr. Phineas Gurley

Phineas Gurley graduated from Union with highest honors and then studied at the Princeton Theological Seminary. He accepted the position as pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC and was chosen Chaplain of the Senate in 1859. In his former role, he became Lincoln’s spiritual advisor and a frequent visitor to the White House with his wife. Gurley’s link to the president strengthened in 1862 when he ministered to the Lincoln family after the death of their son, Willie, and then presided over Willie’s funeral service. He used his contact with the president to lobby for appointments, pardons, better treatment of the clergy by the Union army and for introductions of religious delegations. Lincoln appreciated Gurley’s faith in the ultimate success of the war.

He was called to attend Lincoln on his deathbed. Secretary Stanton asked Gurley to pray over Lincoln’s corpse moments after the president died. Gurley informed the president’s wife of the husband’s passing and then accompanied her to give the news to her son, Thomas. In his words, I “felt as though I had been engaged all night in a terrible Battle and had just strength enough to drag myself off the field.” Gurley preached the White House funeral sermon on April 19, 1865, spoke at a gathering before Lincoln’s funeral train left the Washington, D.C. station and also presided at Lincoln’s burial service in Springfield, Illinois.

Six weeks after the assassination, Gurley gave a sermon in which he recounted the following story: “It is said that when the multitudes were looking upon the remains of our departed President in Philadelphia, a venerable and intelligent colored woman came up, and gazed for a moment upon the faded form as it lay silent and lifeless in the coffin, she clasped her hands in agony, while tears were flowing fast, and exclaimed in a loud voice, ‘O, Abraham Lincoln! Are you dead? Are you dead?’ You may imagine, if you can, but I cannot undertake to describe the effect of this exclamation on all who heard it. Many a time within the last few weeks have we all felt as she felt and our hearts, if not our lips, have said, ‘O Abraham Lincoln! Are you dead? Are you dead?’ Yes, he is dead; and his death has plunged us into the lowest depths of sorrow.”

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Francis B. Hall, 1852
Francis B. Hall served as chaplain with the 16th New York Volunteers and is one of only six chaplains to have received the Medal of Honor in American history. He saw combat at the first battle of Bull Run, the battle of Gaines Mill, and participated in the Chancellorsville

3 Ronald C. White, Jr., Lincoln’s Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural, p.139.
Hall’s receipt of the Medal of Honor came following his actions at the battle of Salem Heights on May 3, 1863, where his regiment suffered high casualties. During the battle, he courageously endured a barrage of enemy fire in an attempt to save numerous wounded men, repeatedly carrying them to the rear for medical treatment.

Henry Halleck, 1837

After attending Union College, Henry Halleck entered West Point, graduating third in his class of 31 in 1839 with a budding reputation as a military scholar. He burnished this reputation after West Point by studying fortifications in Europe and then returning home to give a series of lectures on the military arts that ultimately became a publication entitled Elements of Military Arts and Science. The work was well received and widely used among military professionals, earning him the nickname “old Brains.”

Halleck served in California during the Mexican War (1846-1848) and was influential in writing California’s first constitution. He was nominated, but not elected, to be one of the first U.S. senators from the state.

At the start of the Civil War, Halleck was appointed major general and ranked fourth among all Union military leaders, primarily due to his reputation as a military scholar. In November of 1861, he was assigned to the Department of Missouri, where he transformed a chaotic department into one of organization and efficiency. As a result, General William Sherman called Halleck a “directing genius” in recognition of his administrative skills. Hoping to capitalize on these skills, Lincoln appointed Halleck to be commander-in-chief of all Union forces in July 1862. But it soon became apparent that his knowledge and administrative skills did not translate into effective and successful battlefield tactics. In March of 1864, Halleck was demoted to chief of staff for his former subordinate, General Ulysses S. Grant. He spent the rest of the war doing what he did best and doing it exceedingly well: making sure that the Union armies were well-equipped, staffed and fed. He also served as an effective go between for Lincoln and Grant on discussions of war strategy.

Despite his demotion by the president, Halleck remained close to Lincoln, attending his death-bed vigil and serving as a pall-bearer.

The College awarded Halleck an honorary degree in 1862.

Ira Harris, 1824

Ira Harris held seats in both houses of the New York State legislature and was on the state supreme court before replacing William Seward as senator from New York when the latter became secretary of state in 1861. Harris visited Lincoln so frequently that he benefitted a great deal from Lincoln’s patronage and became a conduit for Union officials who wanted to contact President Lincoln. Harris owed his senate seat to Thurlow Weed’s political machine, and his career was largely uneventful as he lost his re-election bid in 1867.

Harris was the father of Clara Harris and father-in-law of Henry Rathbone, the unfortunate couple who was sitting with President Lincoln in Ford’s Theater when he was shot by John Wilkes Booth.
John Hartranft graduated from Union with a degree in civil engineering and worked as a railroad engineer before switching to law, politics and the military. He joined the Norris Rifles militia company in 1857 as lieutenant, and later as captain. In 1859 he was appointed lieutenant colonel in the state militia. With this background, he responded to Lincoln’s call for 90-day troops after the fall of Fort Sumter by raising the 4th Pennsylvania, which elected him colonel. The regiment’s term ended one day before the battle of First Bull Run in July 1861. Hartranft pleaded with his regiment to fight, but to no avail. Hartranft volunteered as a staff officer for General William B. Franklin, participating in the battle in that capacity. Franklin wrote, “His services were exceedingly valuable to me, and he distinguished himself in his attempts to rally the regiments which had been thrown into confusion.” For this, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1886, an honor he deeply appreciated because of the stain on his honor from his men’s actions at Bull Run.

In the fall of 1861, he formed a new regiment, the 51st Pennsylvania, and fought at Roanoke Island, Second Bull Run, and South Mountain. At Antietam, after three earlier charges had failed, Hartranft and the 51st stormed the Burnside Bridge, with the 51st New York under Colonel Robert B. Potter, taking it from defenders commanded by Robert Toombs. Promoted to brigade and division command, he fought at Fredericksburg, Vicksburg, Knoxville, and the 1864 campaign in Virginia. On March 25, 1865, his division re-took Fort Stedman, after a Confederate attack captured it and threatened to lift the siege of Petersburg. His commander wrote, “Great praise is due to Hartranft for the skill displayed in handling his division, which behaved with great gallantry.”

At the war’s conclusion, Hartranft was appointed governor of the military prison at the Washington Arsenal and special provost marshal tasked with overseeing the incarceration and eventual execution of the four Lincoln assassination conspirators: Mary Surratt, Lewis Paine, David Herold, and George Atzerodt. On July 7, 1865, Hartranft read them the execution orders, and the executioner carried out the hangings. Mary Surratt described Hartranft’s treatment of her prior to her execution as being extremely gracious and accommodating, which is consistent with his treatment of Confederate Captain Julien Picot (1852), a friend from Union, captured by Hartranft at Roanoke Island. Picot was shown every courtesy and was paroled shortly after his capture.

After the war he was twice elected governor of Pennsylvania. He supported giving African Americans voting rights and fought special interests in state politics. He was nominated for president as a favorite-son candidate in 1876. While he supported working class rights, he also opposed violence; after the Molly Maguire disturbances in the state’s coal mines, he refused to pardon 20 Mollies who had been sentenced to death and called out troops to put down riots after a railroad strike in 1877. Outside of politics, he was chief marshal of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1875, represented Pennsylvania at the Universal Exposition in Paris in 1889, and was President of the Board of Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania.

A statue of Hartranft stands in front of the state capital in Harrisburg. His eulogist said of him, “Great in warfare, he also excelled in civil life. He was not rich, but no temptations of opportunity or necessity could swerve him from his high integrity.”

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Sylvanus B. Huested, 1861

Sylvanus Huested began his military service in a newly formed United States Colored Troop (USCT) unit, specifically the 116th USCT. Huested enlisted as 1st lieutenant and served
with from July until December of 1864, when he was discharged and then re-enlisted as captain in the 37th USCT. While with the 116th, Huested engaged in operations in Virginia and siege operations against Petersburg. He also fought in the siege of Richmond and the capture of Fort Powhatan, and continued to serve with the United States Volunteers for two years following the conclusion of the war. Most white officers of USCT units began their careers in all-white volunteer units, but Huested, Ira C. Terry, John Wilder and Abraham Bockee, Jr. all entered service in USCT units.

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Isaac Jackson, 1826 and faculty member

Isaac Jackson taught at Union, first as a tutor and then as professor of mathematics and natural philosophy, from 1826 until 1877, the second longest tenure of any Union faculty member. In July 1861, Jackson toured Union army camps to inform the United States Sanitary Commission of their condition. His letter reporting on the state of the army camps was published in the Albany Journal on July 18, 1861. He is the only Union faculty member to lose a son during the war; his son, William Jackson, died of a fever in 1861 while serving as a colonel in the Union army.

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William Jackson, 1851

Son of Professor Isaac Jackson, William Jackson resigned as Inspector General of New York to enlist as colonel with the 18th New York Volunteers, which was attached to the Army of the Potomac. Shortly after departure from Albany, the unit saw combat in the first battle of Bull Run where Jackson was commended for his actions by his superior, who described how an unauthorized soldier ordered a retreat and all but Colonel Jackson moved to the rear: “Colonel Jackson most gallantly offered his regiment as support for the battery, saying that it should remain by me as long as there was any fighting to be done there.” Jackson died shortly after on November 10th, 1861 in a Washington military hospital, the result of a fever.

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Charles Lewis, 1864

Charles Lewis, son of Professor Tayler Lewis, enlisted as a private with the 119th New York Volunteers in August of 1862 and rose to major by July of 1864. Until April of 1863, the 116th was stationed in Washington to aid in its defenses but was then sent to Virginia where it fought in the battle of Chancellorsville. Lewis was wounded in the battle, the same battle in which his brother-in-law, Elias Peissner, was killed. The 116th would go on to fight in the assault on Petersburg and at Fort Harrison. On July 30, 1864 Lewis was discharged due to disability because he had lost use of the arm injured at Chancellorsville. But, Lewis’ links to the Civil War era were not over; he was one of four associated with Union College to witness the assassination of President Lincoln at Ford’s Theater on April 14, 1865. (The others were Henry Rathbone, Clara Harris and Robert Fuller.)

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Tayler Lewis, 1820 and faculty member

Tayler Lewis taught Greek language and literature, Oriental language and lectured on the Bible at Union from 1849 to 1873. He was also a prodigious scholar and commentator,
especially on biblical interpretation. His initial views on slavery were consistent with that of a Northern conservative, even arguing that the Bible should not be used to oppose slavery. By 1858, the fight over whether Kansas should be slave or free converted him to the anti-slavery camp. A prolific author, Lewis penned a newspaper article, “Negrophobia,” a fiery denunciation of racism in the North after the the violence committed against African Americans during the New York City draft riots in July 1863. During the Civil War, he also published essays arguing against the breakup of the Union and lauding President Lincoln, and after the war he produced another pamphlet criticizing President Johnson for reconstruction policies that were not consistent with the reasons that the war was fought. The war caused Lewis serious personal losses: his son, Charles Lewis, lost the use of an arm at Chancellorsville and his son-in-law, Elias Peissner, was killed at the same battle.

Edwin Malaney, 1863

Edwin Malaney left Union college to enlist in the 81st New York Volunteers in October of 1861 as sergeant, serving with the unit until his discharge and promotion to captain of the 30th United States Colored Troops (USCT) in April of 1864. While serving with the 81st, Maloney took part in McClellan’s advance on the peninsula, the siege of Yorktown, and the battles of Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, and Cold Harbor. Following his promotion to captain of the 30th USCT, he participated in the sieges of Petersburg and Richmond, the battles of Hatcher’s Run, Fort Fisher, Wilmington, and served in occupied Raleigh.

Hiram Leonard Marvin, 1861

The Marvin family suffered during the Civil War, as both Hiram Martin and his brother William were captured and imprisoned by the Confederacy. Hiram enlisted as a private in the 85th New York Volunteers in September 1861 and was promoted to sergeant major by April 1862. While with the 85th, he fought while performing trench duties at Yorktown and at the battles of Williamsburg and Fair Oaks. In October 1863 Marvin was discharged and promoted to second lieutenant of the 37th USCT. In April of 1864, Marvin was captured at the battle of Plymouth in North Carolina. He was subsequently freed in a prisoner exchange and resigned in June 1865.

Edward Martindale, 1853

Edward Martindale served as a lieutenant within the 26th New Jersey Volunteers from January 1863 until February 1864, at which point he became colonel of the 83rd United States Colored Troops (USCT). In August of 1864, Martindale was discharged to become colonel of the 81st USCT. With the 26th, Martindale took part in the “Mud March”, the battle of Williamsburg, and the Chancellorsville campaign. While leading the 81st USCT, Martindale was stationed at Fort Smith in Arkansas and then was garrisoned at Fort Hudson in Louisiana while he was colonel of the 83rd USCT.

Hamilton Allen Mattison, 1860
Hamilton Allen Mattison’s Civil War experiences were extraordinary by any standard. He enlisted in the 12th New Jersey regiment in 1862, rising to major. He was wounded three times at Chancellorsville and twice more afterward. Mattison was taken prisoner at the battle of the Wilderness in 1864, after his horse was shot from under him, whereupon he spoke with General Robert E. Lee. He spent several months as a Confederate prisoner, suffering from inadequate rations, exposure to the elements and Union fire during the shelling of Charleston. In November 1864, he escaped confinement in Columbia, South Carolina, with no money, food and only scant clothes. Mattison managed to travel nearly 1500 miles through enemy country, by moving at night and hiding in woods and swamps by day, to link up with General Sherman’s army in Savannah. He rejoined the Army of the Potomac in March 1865 and fought in all of its engagements until Lee’s surrender one month later.

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Archibald McIntyre, 1864

Archibald McIntyre began his enlistment with the 3rd New York Cavalry, where he served as 2nd lieutenant from September 1862 until December of 1863. While fighting with the 3rd New York, McIntyre aided in the defense of Washington and engaged in reconnaissance near Trenton, New Jersey. In December 1863 he was promoted to captain and transferred to the 1st United States Colored Troops (USCT), where he spent the next three years. During his tenure with the 1st, McIntyre was promoted to lieutenant colonel and engaged in Butler’s operations on the James River, the sieges of Petersburg and Richmond, the capture of Bermuda Hundred, the attack on Fort Darling, and action at Deep Bottom.

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Charles Edward Pearce, 1863

Charles Pearce was commissioned as a captain in Battery D, 16th Regiment, New York Heavy Artillery in 1863 and was promoted to major the next year. When the Union army occupied Wilmington, North Carolina, he was assigned to be the provost marshal general of the eastern district of the state. After the war, he moved to Missouri, took up law and was instrumental in establishing the Missouri National Guard. Pearce was a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1888 and was elected to two terms as a Republican congressman from 1897 to 1901.

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Charles Elliott Pease, 1856

Serving with the 44th New York Volunteers, Charles Elliott Pease rose from the rank of 1st lieutenant in 1861 to major by 1864. Although Pease’s regiment fought in numerous important battles, including engagements at Hanover Court House, the second battle of Bull Run, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, the Wilderness Campaign and the assault on Petersburg, Pease will forever be remembered as the man who delivered General Lee’s letter requesting a meeting to discuss surrender terms with General Ulysses Grant. The letter arrived at General Meade’s headquarters, but as, General Grant was absent, Pease was asked by Meade to deliver the letter to the general. Upon receiving the letter, Grant is alleged to have remarked, “the headache I have had for the past two years has just gone away.” Pease accompanied Grant to Appomattox Court House, the site of the surrender, and then led a military escort for Lee back to his headquarters.
Elias Peissner (faculty member)

Elias Peissner, the son-in-law of Professor Tayler Lewis, was a professor of German and political economy at Union. He was a staunch abolitionist who also advocated for the preservation of the Union. Peissner helped to organize Union College's Zouaves, most of whom would later serve as officers in the Union army. In June of 1862, Governor Morgan of New York gave Peissner permission to recruit and raise a regiment (the 119th New York) as its colonel. Four Union alumni served under Peissner: Benjamin Willis, Charles Henry Odell, Henry Remsen Scherwin, and his brother-in-law, Charles Lewis. The regiment saw its first action at Chancellorsville on May 2, 1863, where Stonewall Jackson’s troops overran the corps; Peissner was shot and killed during battle. Following his death, Peissner's body was brought back to Union for burial in Vale Cemetery. A bronze bust of Peissner was presented to the college by the Class of 1863. He remains the only Union College faculty member killed in war.

Philip Sydney Post, 1855

Philip Sydney Post served as 2nd lieutenant, 1st lieutenant, major, and colonel with the 59th Illinois Volunteers between 1861 and 1863. He then led the 1st Brigade of the 1st Division, 20th Army Corps in Tennessee as brigadier general from 1863 until 1865. Post participated in the battle of Pea Ridge, where he narrowly survived a rifle shot that shattered his humerus, the battle of Stones River, the battle of Chickamauga, the siege of Chattanooga, and lastly the battle of Nashville. For Post’s actions at Nashville, he was awarded the Medal of Honor. Convinced that the capture of Overton Hill would remove one possible route of Confederate retreat at the cost of heavy Union losses, Post volunteered his brigade to lead the almost suicidal attack on December 16. After having come within a few feet of Confederate entrenchments, Post was caught in a volley that killed his horse and shattered his pelvis and spine. Remarkably, Post survived the attack and was promoted to brigadier general.

Robert B. Potter, 1849

Robert Potter was the grandson of Eliphalet Nott and the brother of the Nott Memorial’s designer, Edward Tuckerman Potter. After leaving Union, he studied law and, when the war began, joined the New York Rifles as a private before being appointed a major in the 51st New York. He eventually rose to the rank of major general and saw action in major battles such as Antietam, the Wilderness, Spotsylvania and the siege of Petersburg. At Antietam, newly-promoted Colonel Potter of the 51st New York joined with Colonel John Hartranft of the 51st Pennsylvania to take the Burnside Bridge from Confederate troops under the command of Brigadier General Robert Toombs. During the siege of Petersburg, Potter, now a brevet major general, commanded the Pennsylvania miners who dug the explosives tunnel that led to the battle of the Crater, which was featured at the beginning of the movie Cold Mountain. Potter was seriously wounded during the final stages of Petersburg but remained in service until his final promotion to major general shortly after the end of the war.
Henry Rathbone, 1857 and Clara Harris
The last persons to talk with President Lincoln, besides his wife, were Major Henry Rathbone and his fiancée, Clara Harris, the daughter of Ira Harris. The young couple had been invited by the Lincolns to share their box at Ford’s Theater the night of the assassination. Rathbone was severely injured by John Wilkes Booth as Booth escaped after shooting Lincoln. Despite his wounds, Henry helped Clara guide Mrs. Lincoln across the street to the Petersen house, where the wounded president had been taken. He eventually fainted from loss of blood, while she spent the rest of the evening trying to comfort the First Lady. In 1867, Rathbone and Harris married, but he never got over the stigma of not being able to prevent the attack on the president. After the war, Henry’s mental stability began to decline, a transformation that was exacerbated by his assassination experience, and he was unable to hold a job. In spite of this, President Chester Arthur appointed him to a U.S. consul position in Hanover, Germany in 1882. Nonetheless, his decline continued; on December 23, 1883, he attacked his three children, killed Clara with a knife and tried to commit suicide by stabbing himself. Although convicted for the murder of Clara, he was declared insane and spent the rest of his life in an insane asylum in Germany. He died on August 14, 1911 and was buried next to Clara in a German cemetery in Hanover. In 1952, the cemetery, having no record of visitation or family interest in the grave site, disinterred their bodies and disposed of their remains. Even in death this tragic couple was not allowed to rest in peace.

The story of the Rathbones’ fate is the topic of the novel Henry and Clara by Thomas Mallon.

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Henry A. Reeves, 1852
Owner and editor of the Republican Watchman on Long Island, Henry A. Reeves was a staunch, conservative Democrat. He sympathized with southern secession and opposed the war. Arrested on September 3, 1861 for treason because of the views expressed in his newspaper, Reeves was held in custody for several weeks but not tried or convicted. Although the specific cause of his arrest is not known, it has been suggested that he and Secretary of State William Seward met unexpectedly in New York City and that Reeves verbally attacked him and the Lincoln administration for its policies. After Reeves’ release, and for the remainder of his life, he continued to publish his conservative political views.

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Edward Hastings Ripley, 1862
Edward Ripley served in the 9th Vermont Volunteers, eventually rising to brigadier general. Ripley was only a junior at Union College when he enlisted with the 9th Vermont Volunteers, and he would go on to fight in the Shenandoah Valley, the battle of Harpers Ferry where he was captured by the Confederate army and paroled at Camp Douglas in Illinois. Following this parole, Ripley participated in the siege of Suffolk and was wounded while leading a brigade at Fort Harrison. As brigadier general of the 1st Brigade, Ripley and his brigade were the first to enter Richmond, and he was dubbed the “Duke of Richmond” as he quickly and efficiently subdued mobs, put out fires, and restored order in the city. While in Richmond, Ripley was alerted by a Confederate soldier to a supposed assassination plot against President Lincoln during the president’s visit to the Southern capital soon after it fell to Union troops. Lincoln ignored Ripley’s subsequent warning with an ominous foreshadowing of events to come:
No, General Ripley, it is impossible for me to adopt and follow your suggestions, I deeply appreciate the feeling which has led you to urge them on me, but I must go on as I have begun in the course marked out for me; for I cannot bring myself to believe that any human being lives who would do me any harm.”

Warren Gilman Sanborn, 1867

Warren Sanborn, a private in the 27th Maine Volunteers, was Union's sixth Civil War Medal of Honor recipient - until 1917. With the enlistment period of the 27th Maine about to expire just as Lee’s army was moving north in 1863, Secretary of War Stanton urged members of the 27th to remain in service. When Sanborn and about 300 others agreed to stay on, Stanton promised them the Medal of Honor for doing so. After the war, the names of those who re-enlisted could not be confirmed, so all 864 members of the 27th were awarded the Medal of Honor. This decision was reversed in 1917 when Congress, at the suggestion of a board of retired military officers, revoked all of the medals, including those from soldiers who chose to stay, like Warren Sanborn.

Henry Remsen Schwerin, 1863

The unfortunate demise of Henry Remsen Schwerin, who was mortally wounded at Chancellorsville on May 2, 1863, is an example of how fraternity brotherhood could transcend even the enmity of bitter rivals. Schwerin, a brother in the Zeta Psi fraternity at Union, was a captain in the 119th New York State Infantry Regiment, the same regiment headed by Union faculty member, Elias Peissner. As Schwerin lay wounded on the battlefield, a Confederate soldier, also a Zeta brother, noticed a Zeta Psi badge pinned on his clothing. The soldier carried Schwerin to medical help. When he succumbed to his wounds eight days later, Schwerin’s watch, sword and other personal effects, including his fraternity badge, were returned to his family, who ultimately gave the badge to the fraternity, in whose possession it remains.

The Zeta Psi chapter at Union was founded in 1856 and disbanded in 1871 due to “loss of men during the Civil War.”

Hiram Scofield, 1853

Hiram Scofield rose through the regimental ranks from private in the 2nd Iowa Volunteers to become colonel of the 47th United States Colored Troops (USCT) regiment, which was formerly called the 8th Louisiana Regiment of Colored Troops. From 1863 to 1865, he wrote three pocket diaries detailing his experiences during the war. His diary entries are particularly interesting in that they express Scofield’s respect and sympathy for the black soldiers he commanded, as well as his optimism for the future of black-white relations in the United States. After leading the 47th USCT, Scofield became brigadier general in command of the 47th, 50th and 52nd USCT regiments and was engaged in campaigns in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas.

Frederick Seward, 1849
In 1861, Frederick Seward was appointed assistant secretary of state in charge of consular service by his father, Secretary of State William Seward. He served throughout the Civil War era until 1869, including a stint as acting secretary of state in 1865 when the elder Seward was injured in a carriage accident. He also returned to the position of assistant secretary of state under President Rutherford Hayes from 1877 to 1879.

Frederick Seward was severely injured in the attempt on his father’s life as part of the larger plot that included the Lincoln assassination.

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William Seward, 1820

William Seward practiced law after leaving Union but gravitated to a political career when elected to the New York Senate. A loss in the 1834 governor’s race cooled his interests until an alliance with the prominent journalist Thurlow Weed led to his twice being elected as governor beginning in 1838 and then to two terms in the U.S. Senate beginning in 1849. Seward became known as a critic of the Compromise of 1850, a document championed by Henry Clay, Daniel Webster and others that would preserve the Union at the cost of permitting slavery to persist. Seward denounced the Compromise, declaring that “inalienable human freedom” made slavery unacceptable. A leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination in 1860, he lost the nomination to Abraham Lincoln, primarily due to the depth of his antislavery views and party divisions. Upon Lincoln’s election, Seward accepted the position of secretary of state and became a close friend and trusted advisor to the president. Because of Seward’s views on slavery, he was considered a more polarizing national figure than even Lincoln; nonetheless, his influence on Lincoln, and his leadership in purchasing Alaska (Seward’s Folly) under President Johnson, made him one of the most prominent political figures of the 19th century.

As a sign of his influence in the government, Seward was also an assassination target of John Wilkes Booth’s co-conspirators in the plot to kill President Lincoln. On the night of the Lincoln assassination, Seward and his son, Assistant Secretary of State Frederick Seward, were attacked by one of the co-conspirators in the elder Seward’s home. Both were seriously injured but recovered to serve in the Johnson administration, where the elder Seward received criticism for his lenient stance on dealing with the southern states during Reconstruction. He left the cabinet in 1869 at the beginning of the Grant administration.

The Sews had previously been involved in alerting Lincoln about an earlier possible assassination attempt. Lincoln was scheduled to make a train stop in Baltimore on the way to his inauguration in Washington, D.C. in February of 1861. Frederick Seward delivered a letter from his father to Lincoln in Philadelphia containing evidence that secessionists planned to kill the president-elect in Baltimore, which confirmed warnings from other sources. As a result, Lincoln traveled through Baltimore in the dead of night without stopping.

William Seward’s namesake, his son, William Seward, Jr., rose to the rank of brigadier general in the Union Army after being severely wounded in the Battle of Monocacy. Seward’s oldest son, Augustus, was a West Point graduate who served in the western territories. Augustus Seward was among the Seward family and household members who were injured during the attack on William Seward by Lewis Powell on April 14, 1865.

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Alexander Simplot. 1858
Iowa-born Alexander Simplot gave a commencement address at Union entitled “Plea for Artists.” His parents, however, were not pleased with his choice of an artistic career. Despite this, Simplot went south at the beginning of the Civil War with a group of journalists, including Franc Bangs Wilkie, who called themselves the “Bohemian Brigade,” to chronicle the war with his art: drawing. His initial travels took him on an expedition in Missouri with General John C. Fremont, but a high school friend on General Ulysses Grant’s staff got him permission to travel with Grant’s troops in 1862. He depicted federal victories at Fort Donelson and Fort Henry, as well as other engagements. His most famous illustration is a sketch of Union and Confederate gunboats at the battle of Memphis. Simplot was the only artist to cover this battle, and his sketch was widely reproduced. Between 1861 and 1863, Harper’s Weekly published more than 60 of his sketches, and his oil painting “The Great Naval Battle Opposite the City of Memphis” is in the Chicago History Museum collections.

Edward M. Stanton
Union College awarded an honorary degree to Secretary of War Stanton in 1865.

John Converse Starkweather, 1850
John Starkweather was commissioned as colonel in the 1st Wisconsin Volunteers in 1861. He fought in several key battles, including Chattanooga, Chickamauga and Perryville (KY), where Starkweather’s regiment held and stabilized the left flank of the Union line against a strong Confederate attack, thereby preventing collapse of the Federal defenses. The historian James McPherson calls Perryville a key battle of the war because the Rebel retreat after the battle ensured that Kentucky stayed in the Union. Moreover, it was one of several Union victories that prevented European recognition of the Confederacy. Starkweather rose to the rank of major general by the time he left the army in 1865.

William James Stillman, 1842
Well known for his photography and painting, William James Stillman also served as the Union’s consul to Rome under President Lincoln. While Stillman’s diplomatic relation with Rome was not as significant as John Bigelow’s work in Paris, he was successful in preventing the government of Rome from allowing Confederate citizens to obtain renewed passports without first pledging the oath of allegiance to the United States government. Stillman’s artistic renown grew following the war, as did his reputation as an art critic and newspaper correspondent. In 1901, his The Autobiography of a Journalist was published posthumously. An article on the remarkable life of Stillman appeared in the Fall 2014 issue of the Union College Magazine, which is available online (see references).

George Crockett Strong, 1855
George Crockett Strong left Union for West Point and entered military service as a 2nd lieutenant in 1857. By 1863, he had risen to the rank of major general. On July 18, 1863, Colonel Robert Shaw led the 54th Massachusetts, a black regiment, in an assault on a strongly defended Fort Wagner in South Carolina. The man who chose the 54th to lead the assault was General
Strong who implored the regiment "Is there a man here who thinks himself unable to sleep in that fort tonight?" Shaw accepted the “honor” of leading the attack, which ultimately failed but proved that African-American troops would fight with patriotism and bravery. Shaw was killed, and Strong was mortally wounded during the assault on the fort. The attack was dramatized in the 1989 movie *Glory*, featuring Matthew Broderick as Shaw and Jay O. Sanders as Strong.

Ira C. Terry, 1861

Ira C. Terry served as major of the 5th United States Colored Troops (USCT), a regiment recruited and organized in Ohio, until his promotion to Lieutenant Colonel of the 22nd USCT in October 1864. During his war service, Terry engaged in Wild’s expedition in North Carolina, Wistar’s expedition to Richmond, Butler’s operations on the south side of the James River, the siege of Petersburg and Richmond, and the battles of Fair Oaks, Chaffin’s Farm and New Market. Most white officers of USCT units began their careers in all-white volunteer units, but Terry, Abraham Bockee, Jr., John Wilder and Sylvanus Husted all entered service in USCT units.

Simeon Thorp, 1859

Simeon Thorp became a civilian casualty of the war during the bloody battles between pro and anti-slavery partisan groups in Kansas. A Kansas state senator with pro-Union leanings, Thorp, and three other men from his boarding house, surrendered to several raiders from the pro-slavery guerrilla group led by the notorious William Quantrill during an infamous raid on Lawrence, Kansas in 1863. Under an order of protection from the guerrillas, Thorp and the other men gave themselves up to save their families. Shortly after surrendering, all four men were cruelly shot down and killed. The Quantrill raid on Lawrence, which included future members of the Jesse James gang, was described as “atrocious savagery, bloodthirsty brutality, .... fiendish, diabolical.” Thorp was one of 183 men and boys taken from their homes and murdered by Quantrill’s men, who then torched the city.

Robert Toombs, 1828

Robert Toombs, a slave-holding planter from Georgia, spent much of his adult life trying to preserve the Union only to become an ardent secessionist by the start of the Civil War. Using a combination of legal skills honed at the University of Virginia and a genial character, Toombs rose through the ranks of Georgia politics to win a seat in the U.S. House in 1844 and then to serve in the U.S. Senate from 1853 to 1861. Up to the election of Lincoln in 1860, Toombs fought to reconcile federal and sectional interests to preserve the Union. Following Georgia’s secession from the Union, Toombs resigned his senate seat and became committed to the Confederate cause. He aspired to become the president of the Confederacy, but this dream was dashed by the selection of Jefferson Davis for the position. Davis chose Toombs to be secretary of state of the new government, but Toombs became increasingly critical of Davis and the government and resigned from the cabinet within months. Toombs was especially unhappy with Davis’s decision to begin the Civil War with the firing on Fort Sumter in 1861, and scolded Davis with words that turned out to be prophetic: “The firing on Fort Sumter will inaugurate a
civil war greater than any the world has yet seen...you will wantonly strike a hornet’s nest which extends from mountains to ocean. Legions now quiet will swarm out and sting us to death. It is unnecessary. It is fatal. It puts us in the wrong.” Following his cabinet resignation, Toombs accepted a commission as a brigadier general in a Georgia brigade and saw action in several battles, including Antietam, where he was wounded. Disgruntled over a lack of promotion, he resigned his military commission in 1864 and returned to Georgia. Toombs lived abroad in Cuba and Paris to escape arrest after the war ended, but returned to Georgia in 1867. He refused to request a pardon from Congress, thereby losing his American citizenship. Nonetheless, he did regain his legal and political influence in Georgia, including dominance of a state constitutional convention in 1877.

While Toombs and William Seward both held the position of secretary of state in their respective governments at the war’s start, they also shared another connection in the person of Garland White, a house slave owned by Toombs. White moved with Toombs to Washington in 1860 and became friendly with Seward who lived nearby. A literate man, White became a licensed minister and eventually a fugitive who made it to Canada. During the Civil War, White contacted Seward, who was then secretary of state, and expressed a desire to serve his country. He returned to the U.S. and raised most of the men for the 28th United States Colored Troops (USCT) from visits to several states. He asked Seward for help in getting the chaplaincy of the regiment, but emphasized his willingness to serve as a private in the regiment if his commission was denied. On October 25, 1864, by order of the secretary of war, Garland White was appointed chaplain of the 28th USCT.

White was in Richmond shortly after the city was abandoned by Confederate troops in April 1865. A freedwoman asked to speak with White and, after asking him a series of questions, revealed to White that she was his mother, Nancy. She had learned of White’s exploits from Robert Toombs when Toombs was in Richmond earlier in the war. Garland White published a letter in the Christian Recorder on April 22, 1865 in which he described his reunion with his mother and pointed out that similar reunions were occurring for other African Americans during this period.

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Edgar Beach Van Winkle, 1860

For over two years, Edgar B. Van Winkle served as 1st lieutenant in the 103rd New York Volunteers which was also known as the Seward Infantry, named for William Seward. A letter concerning operations and reconnaissance of the unit in 1864 mentions Van Winkle as being “untiring in the performance of his duties and ambitious of distinction on the field.” Initially part of the Department of North Carolina, the 103rd New York later participated in McClellan’s Maryland campaign, Antietam, Fredericksburg, the siege of Fort Wagner, and the siege of Petersburg. Van Winkle spent only a few months in 1865 as captain of the 103rd United States Colored Troops (USCT), which was attached to the Department of the South and aided in the defenses of Savannah.

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John Wilder, 1856

John Wilder began his service with a United States Colored Troop (USCT) regiment. Initially 2nd lieutenant of the 54th Massachusetts Colored Regiment in 1863, Wilder became
captain of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} USCT by late June of 1863 and then lieutenant colonel in July 1864. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} USCT operated mainly out of Florida in the district of Key West, working within the Department of the Gulf to conduct raids and defense of Union operations. Wilder served with the 2\textsuperscript{nd} until they were mustered out in January 1866. After the war, Wilder practiced law and then moved to Kansas City to become editor of the Kansas City \textit{Journal of Commerce}. He was assassinated at the court house in 1870 at the age of 34. Most white officers of USCT units began their careers in all-white volunteer units, but Wilder, Ira C. Terry, Sylvanus Huested and Abraham Bockee, Jr, all entered service in USCT units.

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Samuel Wilkeson Jr., 1837

\textbf{Samuel Wilkeson, Jr.} was a war correspondent for the \textit{New York Times} who, by some accounts, inspired portions of President Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. Wilkeson’s oldest son Bayard, an artillery officer in the Union army, was fatally wounded on the first day of the battle at Gettysburg and left behind by surgeons who fled from the Confederate army. After recovering his son’s body, Wilkeson wrote a war dispatch on July 4, 1863 that began with achingly personal sentiments: “Who can write the history of a battle whose eyes are immovably fastened upon a central figure of transcendingly absorbing interest - the dead body of an oldest son, crushed by a shell in a position where a battery should never have been sent, and abandoned to death in a building where surgeons dared not to stay?” Wilkeson’s writing about the Gettysburg campaign became so famous that it was distributed as a pamphlet titled \textit{Samuel Wilkeson’s Thrilling Word Picture of Gettysburg}. In his correspondence, Wilkeson says: “My pen is heavy. Oh, you dead, who at Gettysburg have baptized with your blood the second birth of freedom in America, how you are to be envied!” Four months later, Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address that included a similar wording: “We here resolve that these dead shall have not died in vain-that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom.” Whether Wilkeson’s correspondence inspired Lincoln or not is up to speculation, but the fact that Lincoln posthumously promoted Bayard Wilkeson to higher rank strongly suggests that the president was moved by the narrative.

Wilkeson also lost a nephew, John Wilkes Wilkeson (1857), a 1\textsuperscript{st} lieutenant in the 100\textsuperscript{th} New York, who was killed at Fair Oaks, Virginia in 1862.

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Franc Bangs Wilkie, 1857

A run away from home at 13, \textbf{Franc Wilkie’s} resume includes stints as a farmer and blacksmith before becoming a well-regarded newspaper reporter. After graduation, Wilkie spent a brief period as editor of the \textit{Schenectady Daily Star} before moving to Iowa. In the next few years, he established a newspaper in Davenport, wrote a campaign piece for Stephen A. Douglas and became city editor of the \textit{Dubuque Herald}. Wilkie emerged as a local hero and celebrity by writing a series of letters describing the trials and hardships of the First Iowa Infantry that appeared in the \textit{Herald} and resulted in his retainer by the \textit{New York Times}. In 1861 he was captured and briefly held as a Union spy when reporting on the Confederate siege of Lexington, Missouri. Wilkie’s account of this affair caused a sensation across the country. Following this, he traveled with Grant’s army, reporting on the battles of Fort Donelson and Fort Henry. Wilkie also spent time in 1862, along with fellow alum, \textbf{Alexander Simplot}, as a member of the journalist group known as the “Bohemian Brigade.” In 1863, after establishing himself as one of the nation’s finest Civil War correspondents, he accepted a job at the \textit{Chicago Times}. He went on
to establish the London bureau of the Chicago Times, to become the first president of the Chicago Press Club, and to author 14 books.

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Leander Willis, 1863

Leander Willis spent most of his Civil War service from 1862 to 1864 near Port Hudson in Louisiana, initially as 1st lieutenant in the 116th New York Volunteers and then as 1st lieutenant in the 78th United States Colored Troops (USCT). After being discharged in 1864, he died from disease contracted at Port Hudson. Willis served with fellow alum, Abraham Bockee, Jr., in the 78th USCT.

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James Wood, Jr., 1842

James Wood Jr. served as colonel in New York’s 136th Infantry from 1862 until 1865, at which point he was promoted to major general. Wood participated in the battles of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg before his regiment was sent to Tennessee, where they fought in the Chattanooga and Atlanta campaigns. In the latter he commanded the 3rd brigade of the 3rd division, led by fellow Union alum Major General Daniel Butterfield. Wood witnessed the fall of Atlanta, took part in General Sherman’s “March to the Sea” and engaged in the siege of Savannah.

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Austin Andrew Yates, 1854

Austin Andrew Yates was born on the Union College campus where his father was an instructor. Yates joined the 134th New York Volunteers in 1862 and served as a captain until he was discharged in June of 1863 due to a disability from an injury at Chancellorsville. He re-enlisted two months later in the 14th Veteran Reserve Corps. In this role, Yates helped save President Lincoln from possible harm when the president came under hostile enemy fire when he visited Fort Stevens just outside the capital. The fort was under attack by the Confederate general, Jubal Early, and, after a Union surgeon near the president went down from Confederate sniper fire, Yates helped assist Lincoln from the field. The command of Captain Yates also participated in the hanging of John Wilkes Booth’s accomplices.
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Carte de Visite: Captain George N. Bliss [1861-1865]. From Keya Morgan Collection, New York.

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Photograph: Butterfield memorial at West Point, 2014. From Thomas Werner.

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**Background Images on Exhibit Panels**


