

# *A Civil War Christmas: Digital Dramaturgy*

By **Paula Vogel**  
Directed by **Rebecca Taichman**  
Choreographed by **Liz Lerman**  
**Nov 19–Dec 22, 2013**

Source: Dramaturg Drew Barker, Program Notes  
Place: Washington, D.C., and along the Potomac River  
Time: Christmastime, near the end of the Civil War

## **1. Washington DC in 1864**



Viewing the skyline of the nation's capital in late 1864 one would still be able to recognize the grand symbols of the city. The Capitol dome was finished the previous December, and the Smithsonian Castle completed since 1855. The Patent Office Building (which would eventually house the National Portrait Gallery and American Art Museum) towered over its neighbors and the White House stood as we see it today sans West and East Wings. After the war began the population which could be seen on the streets of the capital boomed from 63,000 to at times as many as 200,000 while soldiers, bureaucrats, laborers, merchants, prostitutes, doctors, and

contraband slaves flooded into the city. The majority of the roads, however, were dirt or mud depending upon the weather. *The Evening Star* reported on December 24, 1864 that “the Potomac River is still covered with ice and the channels are frozen over.” The District’s newspaper went on to describe how a mail boat was caught in the ice and the passengers had to walk ashore, after which an attempt by tugboat to dislodge the vessel proved unsuccessful.

## 2. Lincoln’s White House

**Source: *Mr. Lincoln’s White House Historical Database***

<http://mrlincolnwhitehouse.org/>

In Springfield, where the Lincolns had lived for the previous two decades, the Lincoln family had trouble keeping a single servant girl to help Mary Todd Lincoln. In the White House, there was an extensive staff to tend to the gardens and the family's well-being. The Lincoln boys not only gained their own bedrooms, they acquired a set of nooks, crannies, stables and attics to fit their childhood fantasies. In reality, however, only seven of the house's 31 rooms were actually "theirs" — the parents' bedrooms, those of their sons, a sitting room on the second floor and a private dining room.

Still, the White House was not Springfield. Congressman Isaac Arnold was a strong Lincoln loyalist and abolitionist. After the Civil War, he served as the longtime president of the Chicago Historical Society and compiled a biography of Lincoln in which he wrote about his friend: "It will interest those who did not see him at the White House, and who have come on the stage since his death, to know something of his life and habits while he lived in the Executive Mansion. At Springfield, his home was a small, modest, comfortable, wooden cottage, such as is found everywhere in the villages of our country. Here he lived in a quiet unostentatious manner, without any pretension, and dispensed to his personal friends and members of the bar and judges, a cordial but very simply hospitality. At the White House, he was compelled by custom and usage to have large receptions, to give dinners, and to adopt a life of conventional form and ceremony, to which it was not easy for him to conform, and which was far less agreeable than the simple and easy life he had led before."<sup>1</sup>

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Ward Hill Lamon, wrote of his friend and sometime legal associate: "Mr. Lincoln was always simple in his habits and tastes. He was economical in everything, and his wants were few. He was a good liver; and his family, though not extravagant, were much given to entertainments, and saw and enjoyed many ways of spending money not observable by him." Lamon recalled an earlier incident with Mrs. Lincoln: "A few months after meeting Mr. Lincoln, I attended an entertainment given at his residence in Springfield. After introducing me to Mrs. Lincoln, he left us in conversation. I remarked to her that her husband was a great favorite in the eastern part of the State, where I had been stopping. 'Yes,' she replied, 'he is a great favorite everywhere. He is to be President of the United States some day; if I had not thought so I never would have married him, for you can see he is not pretty. But look at him! Doesn't he look as if he would make a magnificent President?'"<sup>2</sup>



For Mary Lincoln, the White House was a political goal, a social challenge—and a private hell. Here, funerals for both her beloved son Willie and her revered husband were held. Indeed, the first major Union casualty of the war, Elmer Ellsworth, was a close family friend. His funeral too was held here in May 1861. Another important family friend, Colonel and Senator Edward D. Baker, visited the White House before he died in an early Union defeat in October 1861. Willie here penned a precocious poetic remembrance of the family friend. And here his father penned hundreds of pardons and directives of military compassion. The Emancipation Proclamation was conceived here and the 13th Amendment that ended slavery was signed here - the first time a constitutional amendment was signed by a President.

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Although the White House address is now 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, it was not until a decade after President Lincoln took office that the number was added to the address. President Lincoln himself spoke of his tenure at the presidential mansion in a speech to One Hundred Sixty-sixth Ohio Regiment on August 22, 1864: "I suppose you are going home to see your families and friends. For the service you have done in this great struggle in which we are engaged I present you sincere thanks for myself and the country. I almost always feel inclined, when I happen to say anything to soldiers, to impress upon them in a few brief remarks the importance of success in this contest. It is not merely for today, but for all time to come that we should perpetuate for our children's children this great and free government, which we have enjoyed all our lives. I beg you to remember this, not merely for my sake, but for yours. I happen temporarily to occupy this big White House. I am a living witness that any one of your children may look to come here as my father's child has. It is in order that each of you may have through this free government which we have enjoyed, an open field and a fair chance for your industry, enterprise and intelligence; that you may all have equal privileges in the race of life, with all its desirable human aspirations. It is for this the struggle should be maintained, that we may not lose our

birthright--not only for one, but for two or three years. The nation is worth fighting for, to secure such an inestimable jewel."<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Lincoln at Washington

**Source: *Mr. Lincoln's White House Historical Database***

<http://mrlincolnwhitehouse.org/>

Artist Francis B. Carpenter said that Abraham Lincoln referred to his office in the White House as the "shop."<sup>1</sup> Illinois attorney Henry Clay Whitney observed that for President "Lincoln the stately mansion was a mere workshop for the performance of dreary, routine labor."<sup>2</sup> Whitney wrote that Lincoln, who had once run and owned a country store, "eschewed all diplomatic or stately terms; could not be induced to speak of his house as the Executive Mansion, but termed it 'this place,' or of his room at the Capitol as the 'President's' room; he disliked exceedingly to be called 'Mr. President,' and he requested persons with whom he was quite familiar and saw often to call him plain 'Lincoln;' he always spoke of the war as 'this great trouble.'"<sup>3</sup>

The commander-in-chief presided over his 31-room establishment without pretense. Cordelia Harvey, a soldier advocate from Wisconsin, described her first meeting with Mr. Lincoln at the White House: "He was alone, in a medium sized office-like room, no elegance about him, no elegance in him. He was plainly clad in a suit of black that illly fitted him. No fault of his tailor, however; such a figure could not be fitted. He was tall and lean, and as he sat in a folded up sort of way in a deep arm chair, one would almost have thought him deformed. At his side stood a high writing desk and table combined; plain straw matting covered the floor; a few stuffed chairs and sofa covered with green worsted completed the furniture of the presence chamber of the president of the great republic. When I first saw him his head was bent forward, chin resting on his breast, and in his hand a letter which I had just sent to him."<sup>4</sup>

Ornithologist A. M. Ross recalled bringing President Lincoln a packet of "rebel" letters near midnight. The President reviewed the contents of the mail, which Ross had gathered as an undercover agent in Canada. "Having finished reading the letters, I rose to go, saying that I would go to Willard's [Hotel], and have a rest. 'No, no,' said the President, 'it is now three o'clock, you shall stay with me while you are in town; I'll find you a bed;' and leading the way, he took me into a bedroom, saying: 'Take a good sleep; you shall not be disturbed.' Bidding me 'goodnight,' he left the room to go back and pore over the rebel letters until daylight, as he afterwards told me. I did not awake from my sleep until eleven o'clock in the forenoon, soon after which Mr. Lincoln came into my room, and laughingly said: 'When you are ready, I'll pilot you down to breakfast,' which he did..."<sup>5</sup> Studying such papers, cables and correspondence occupied much of President Lincoln's time. But his intelligence-gathering took many other forms, according to witnesses.

Wisconsin Republican Carl Schurz, who served as both a diplomat and general during the Civil

War, wrote in his memoirs: “Those who visited the White House – and the White House appeared to be open to whosoever wished to enter – saw there a man of unconventional manners, who, without the slightest effort to put on dignity, treated all men alike, much like old neighbors; whose speech had not seldom a rustic flavor about it; who always seemed to have time for a homely talk and never to be in a hurry to press business, and who occasionally spoke about important affairs of State with the same nonchalance – I might almost say, irreverence – with which he might have discussed an every-day law case in his office at Springfield, Illinois. People were puzzled. Some interesting stories circulated about Lincoln’s wit, his quaint sayings, and also about his kindness of heart and the sympathetic loveliness of his character; but, as to his qualities as a statesman, serious people who did not intimately know him were inclined to reserve their judgment.”<sup>6</sup>

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Mr. Lincoln was serious about his country but showed little concern for the state of his residence. Lincoln aide John Hay recalled the final meeting at the U.S. Capitol between outgoing President James Buchanan and incoming President Abraham Lincoln. It took place just before Mr. Lincoln’s First Inauguration in March 1861: “The courteous old gentleman took the new President aside for some parting words into the corner where I was standing. I waited with boyish wonder and credulity to see what momentous counsels were to come from that gray and weatherbeaten head. Every word must have its value at such an instant. The [soon-to-be] ex-President said: “I think you will find the water of the right-hand well at the White-House better than that at the left,” and went on with many intimate details of the kitchen and pantry. Lincoln listened with that weary, introverted look of his, not answering, and the next day, when I recalled the conversation, admitted he had not heard a word of it.”<sup>7</sup>

The presidential office on the second floor of the White House was not fancy or well-furnished, but Mr. Lincoln fully understood its importance to the nation. Lincoln biographer Carl Sandburg wrote: “After one Cabinet meeting in March [1865] young Fred Seward heard Postmaster General [William] Dennison say of the little old leather-covered chair at Lincoln’s desk, ‘I should think the Presidential chair of the United States might be a better piece of furniture than that.’ Lincoln turned, let his eyes scan the worn, torn, battered leather, and [said:] ‘You think that’s not a good chair, Governor,’ and with a half-quizzical, half-meditative look at it: ‘There are a great many people that want to sit in it, though, I’m sure I’ve often wished some of them had it instead of me!’”<sup>8</sup>

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Twice a week, President Lincoln met with the Cabinet in his office. They were an ambitious, competitive group whose jealousies of each other and the President were often evident. Attorney General Edward “Bates’s Diary is full of entries which show how closely the cabinet members were watching each other,” wrote Helen Nicolay, daughter of presidential assistant John G.

Nicolay. Bates “recorded a rumor, brought him by a great lover of gossip, that the Secretary of the Interior was in danger of being indicted for bribery. ‘One charge is that he took \$400 from a person appointed to a 2d. class clerkship – salary \$1400 per an[um]: I cannot believe this of Mr. Smith...’ At times he took a very dim view of the morals of the whole administration. On one such occasion he wrote:

Each one, statesman or General, is secretly working, either to advance his ambition, or to secure something to retire upon... There is now no mutual confidence among the members of the Govt. – and really no such thing as a C.[abinet] C.[ouncil]. The more ambitious members, who seek to control – Seward – Chase – Stanton – never start their projects in C.[abinet] C.[ouncil] but try first to commit the Prest., and then, if possible, secure the apparent consent of the members. Often, the doubtful measure is put into operation before the majority of us know that is proposed.”<sup>9</sup>

Occasionally, the jealousy among Lincoln’s subordinates boiled over into a crisis – as it did in December 1862. Complaints to members of Congress by Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase led to several tense visits from a Senate delegation seeking changes in the Cabinet. Shrewdly, he President obtained the resignations of both Chase and Secretary of State William H. Seward, but rejected both and maintained control of Cabinet. Chase, however, continued to be a thorn on his side and submitted multiple resignations. Finally in late June 1864, President Lincoln accepted Chase’s letter of resignation and decided to appoint Maine Senator William Pitt Fessenden as his replacement. The pressure from political and commercial interests on the reluctant Fessenden to accept the Cabinet post became overwhelming. On July 3, “Secretary” Fessenden wrote to a cousin about how President Lincoln manipulated the situation:

#### **4. Christmas During the Civil War**

**Source:** <http://www.civilwar.org/>

It can be difficult to relate to the men and women of the Civil War era. Despite the extraordinarily different circumstances in which they found themselves, however, we can connect with our forebears in traditions such as the celebration of Christmas. By the mid-19th century, most of today's familiar Christmas trappings -- Christmas carols, gift giving and tree decoration -- were already in place. Charles Dickens had published “A Christmas Carol” in 1843 and indeed, the Civil War saw the first introductions to the modern image of a jolly and portly Santa Claus through the drawings of Thomas Nast, a German-speaking immigrant.

Civil War soldiers in camp and their families at home drew comfort from the same sorts of traditions that characterize Christmas today. Alfred Bellard of the 5th New Jersey noted, “In order to make it look much like Christmas as possible, a small tree was stuck up in front of our tent, decked off with hard tack and pork, in lieu of cakes and oranges, etc.” John Haley, of the 17th Maine, wrote in his diary on Christmas Eve that, “It is rumored that there are sundry boxes and mysterious parcels over at Stoneman’s Station directed to us. We retire to sleep with feelings

akin to those of children expecting Santa Claus.”

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In one amusing anecdote, a Confederate prisoner relates how the realities of war intruded on his Christmas celebrations: “A friend had sent me in a package a bottle of old brandy. On Christmas morning I quietly called several comrades up to my bunk to taste the precious fluid of...DISAPPOINTMENT! The bottle had been opened outside, the brandy taken and replaced with water...and sent in. I hope the Yankee who played that practical joke lived to repent it and was shot before the war ended.”

For many, the holiday was a reminder of the profound melancholy that had settled over the entire nation. Southern parents warned their children that Santa might not make it through the blockade, and soldiers in bleak winter quarters were reminded, more acutely than ever, of the domestic bliss they had left behind. Robert Gould Shaw, who would later earn glory as the commander of the 54th Massachusetts, recorded in his diary, “It is Christmas morning and I hope a happy and merry one for you all, though it looks so stormy for our poor country, one can hardly be in merry humor.” On the Confederate home front, Sallie Brock Putnam of Richmond echoed Shaw’s sentiment: “Never before had so sad a Christmas dawned upon us...We had neither the heart nor inclination to make the week merry with joyousness when such a sad calamity hovered over us.” For the people of Fredericksburg, Virginia, which had been battered only a matter of days before Christmas, or Savannah, Georgia, which General Sherman had presented to President Lincoln as a gift, the holiday season brought the war to their very doorsteps.

Christmas during the Civil War served both as an escape from and a reminder of the awful conflict rending the country in two. Soldiers looked forward to a day of rest and relative relaxation, but had their moods tempered by the thought of separation from their loved ones. At home, families did their best to celebrate the holiday, but wondered when the vacant chair would again be filled.

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## 5. History of Christmas Trees: How It All Got Started

Source: <http://www.history.com/>

Long before the advent of Christianity, plants and trees that remained green all year had a special meaning for people in the winter. Just as people today decorate their homes during the festive season with pine, spruce, and fir trees, ancient peoples hung evergreen boughs over their doors and windows. In many countries it was believed that evergreens would keep away witches, ghosts, evil spirits, and illness.

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In the Northern hemisphere, the shortest day and longest night of the year falls on December 21 or December 22 and is called the winter solstice. Many ancient people believed that the sun was a god and that winter came every year because the sun god had become sick and weak. They celebrated the solstice because it meant that at last the sun god would begin to get well. Evergreen boughs reminded them of all the green plants that would grow again when the sun god was strong and summer would return.

The ancient Egyptians worshipped a god called Ra, who had the head of a hawk and wore the sun as a blazing disk in his crown. At the solstice, when Ra began to recover from the illness, the Egyptians filled their homes with green palm rushes which symbolized for them the triumph of life over death. Early Romans marked the solstice with a feast called the Saturnalia in honor of Saturn, the god of agriculture. The Romans knew that the solstice meant that soon farms and orchards would be green and fruitful. To mark the occasion, they decorated their homes and temples with evergreen boughs. In Northern Europe the mysterious Druids, the priests of the ancient Celts, also decorated their temples with evergreen boughs as a symbol of everlasting life. The fierce Vikings in Scandinavia thought that evergreens were the special plant of the sun god, Balder.

Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition as we now know it in the 16th century when devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. Some built Christmas pyramids of wood and decorated them with evergreens and candles if wood was scarce. It is a widely held belief that Martin Luther, the 16th-century Protestant reformer, first added lighted candles to a tree. Walking toward his home one winter evening, composing a sermon, he was awed by the brilliance of stars twinkling amidst evergreens. To recapture the scene for his family, he erected a tree in the main room and wired its branches with lighted candles. Lincoln turned, let his eyes scan the worn, torn, battered leather, and [said:]

Most 19th-century Americans found Christmas trees an oddity. The first record of one being on display was in the 1830s by the German settlers of Pennsylvania, although trees had been a tradition in many German homes much earlier. The Pennsylvania German settlements had community trees as early as 1747. But, as late as the 1840s Christmas trees were seen as pagan symbols and not accepted by most Americans.

It is not surprising that, like many other festive Christmas customs, the tree was adopted so late in America. To the New England Puritans, Christmas was sacred. The pilgrims's second governor, William Bradford, wrote that he tried hard to stamp out "pagan mockery" of the observance, penalizing any frivolity. The influential Oliver Cromwell preached against "the heathen traditions" of Christmas carols, decorated trees, and any joyful expression that desecrated "that sacred event." In 1659, the General Court of Massachusetts enacted a law making any observance of December 25 (other than a church service) a penal offense; people were fined for hanging decorations. That stern solemnity continued until the 19th century, when the influx of German and Irish immigrants undermined the Puritan legacy.

In 1846, the popular royals, Queen Victoria and her German Prince, Albert, were sketched in the Illustrated London News standing with their children around a Christmas tree. Unlike the previous royal family, Victoria was very popular with her subjects, and what was done at court

immediately became fashionable—not only in Britain, but with fashion-conscious East Coast American Society. The Christmas tree had arrived.

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By the 1890s Christmas ornaments were arriving from Germany and Christmas tree popularity was on the rise around the U.S. It was noted that Europeans used small trees about four feet in height, while Americans liked their Christmas trees to reach from floor to ceiling.

The early 20th century saw Americans decorating their trees mainly with homemade ornaments, while the German-American sect continued to use apples, nuts, and marzipan cookies. Popcorn joined in after being dyed bright colors and interlaced with berries and nuts. Electricity brought about Christmas lights, making it possible for Christmas trees to glow for days on end. With this, Christmas trees began to appear in town squares across the country and having a Christmas tree in the home became an American tradition.

## 6. Music of the Civil War

<http://gardenandgun.com/article/first-listen-divided-united>

## 7. Glossary

**Source:** <http://www.history.com/>

**Aide-de-camp:** (French for field assistant) also known as a Chief of Staff is a personal assistant or secretary, to a person of high rank, usually a senior military officer or a head of state. This is not to be confused with an adjutant, who is the senior administrator of a military unit. The first aide-de-camp is typically the foremost personal aide.

**Armory Square Hospital:** One of the largest Civil War hospitals in the area was located on the National Mall, where Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum stands today. Constructed in 1862, the medical facility was named after the Armory of the District of Columbia, erected in 1856. This 1,000-bed hospital complex, with twelve pavilions and overflow tents, spread across the Mall and included quarters for officers, service facilities, and a chapel. The wounded from the battlefields of Virginia were brought to the nearby wharves in southwest Washington and taken to the Armory Square Hospital. After the war, the Armory Building was used as storage facility, and later housed the offices of the United States Fish Commission (after 1903, Bureau of Fisheries). It was demolished in January 1964.

**Clara Barton:** a pioneer American teacher, patent clerk, nurse, and humanitarian. At a time when relatively few women worked outside the home, Barton built a career helping others. Her

father convinced her that it was her duty as a Christian to help the soldiers. In the April following his death, Barton returned to Washington to gather medical supplies. Ladies' Aid societies helped in sending bandages, food, and clothing that would later be distributed during the Civil War. In the August of 1862, Barton finally gained permission from Quartermaster Daniel Rucker to work on the front lines. One of her greatest accomplishments was founding the American Red Cross. This organization helps victims of war and disasters. She was never married, but had a relationship with John J. Elwell.

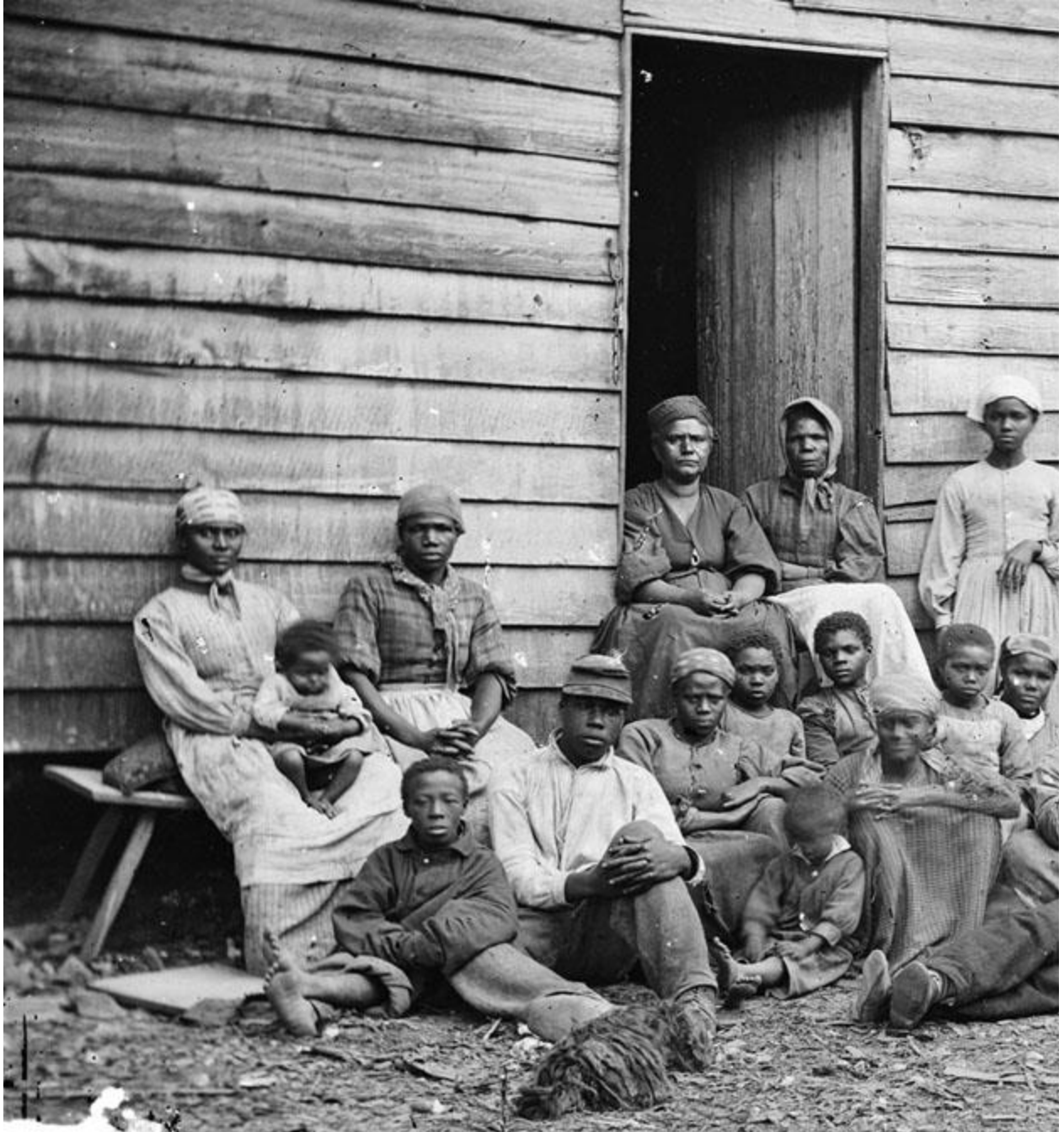
**“beat swords into ploughshares”:** King James Bible, Isaiah 2:4 “And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

**The Blue Room:** one of three state parlors on the first floor in the White House, the residence of the President of the United States. It is distinct for its oval shape. The room is used for receptions and receiving lines, and is occasionally set for small dinners. President Grover Cleveland married Frances Folsom in the room on June 2, 1886, the only wedding of a President and First Lady in the White House. The room is traditionally decorated in shades of blue. With the Yellow Oval Room above it and the Diplomatic Reception Room below it, the Blue Room is one of three oval rooms in James Hoban's original design for the White House.

**John Wilkes Booth:** a famous American stage actor who assassinated President Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theatre, in Washington, D.C., on April 14, 1865. Booth was a member of the prominent 19th century Booth theatrical family from Maryland and, by the 1860s, was a well-known actor. He was also a Confederate sympathizer, vehement in his denunciation of Lincoln, and strongly opposed the abolition of slavery in the United States.

**Decatur Bronson:** His name is a combination of two war heroes who fought bravely for the Union: James H. Bronson (1838-1884) and Decatur Dorsey (1836-1891). The real-life Dorsey and Bronson were both recipients of the U.S. military's highest decoration, the Medal of Honor, respectively for their courage and heroism in The Battle of Crater and The Battle of Chafin's Farm. They were both born into slavery, and upon obtaining their freedom, instead of relishing in it, chose instead enlist to in the Army.

**Contraband:** smuggled goods, or former slaves freed by fleeing to the Union during the Civil War



**Damascus:** On September 12, 1862, U.S. Federal troops marched through the "village" of Damascus, Maryland via what is now Route 27 on their way to the town of Sharpsburg, where they engaged Confederate troops commanded by General Robert E. Lee at the Battle of Antietam.

**Edward's Ferry:** Early in the Civil War, General Charles Stone set up a large Union encampment here, and established a commissary on the canal. Several units from Minnesota and New York were sent across here in October 1861 as a "demonstration" to draw attention from the

more serious foray at Ball's Bluff. Some of the wounded from Ball's Bluff were brought down to the hospital at "Camp Stone" after the battle. When Major-General Hooker determined that Lee was moving through Maryland to Pennsylvania after the battle at Chancellorsville, he decided to make a major crossing here (June 25-27, 1863), based on the recommendations of the Army Engineers. The day after the crossing was completed, June 28th, Major-General Meade learned that he had been appointed commander of the Army of the Potomac in place of General Hooker, and it was Meade who led the Union forces at Gettysburg a week later.

**Fort Pillow:** In what proved the ugliest racial incident of the war, Confederate forces under General Nathan B. Forrest captured Fort Pillow in Tennessee on April 12, 1864, and proceeded to kill all the black troops within; some were burned or buried alive. Though most of the Union garrison surrendered, and thus should have been taken as prisoners of war, the soldiers were killed. The Confederate refusal to treat these troops as traditional prisoners of war infuriated the North, and led to the Union's refusal to participate in prisoner exchanges. A Federal congressional investigating committee subsequently verified that more than 300 blacks had been slain after the fort surrendered. After the incident, black soldiers going into battle used the cry "Remember Fort Pillow!"

**Fort Stevens:** Fort Stevens, now partially restored, was built to defend the approaches to Washington from the 7th Street Pike (now Georgia Avenue) which was then the main thoroughfare from the north into Washington. Originally called Fort Massachusetts by the soldiers from that state who constructed the fort, it was later named after Brig. Gen. Isaac Ingalls Stevens, who was killed at the Battle of Chantilly (Fair Oaks), Virginia, September 1, 1862. The Battle of Fort Stevens was an American Civil War battle fought July 11–12, 1864, in Northwest Washington, D.C., as part of the Valley Campaigns of 1864 between forces under Confederate Lt. Gen. Jubal A. Early and Union Maj. Gen. Alexander McD. McCook. Although Early caused consternation in the Union government, reinforcements under Maj. Gen. Horatio G. Wright and the strong defenses of Fort Stevens minimized the military threat and Early withdrew after two days of skirmishing without attempting any serious assaults. The battle is noted for the personal presence of President Abraham Lincoln observing the fighting.

**Gettysburg:** The Battle of Gettysburg was fought July 1–3, 1863, in and around the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania between Union and Confederate forces during the American Civil War. The battle involved the largest number of casualties of the entire war and is often described as the war's turning point. Union Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade's Army of the Potomac defeated attacks by Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, ending Lee's invasion of the North.

**Ulysses S. Grant:** the 18th President of the United States (1869–1877) following his highly successful role as a war general in the second half of the Civil War. Under Grant, the Union Army defeated the Confederate military; the war, and secession, ended with the surrender of Robert E. Lee's army at Appomattox. As president he led the Radical Republicans in their effort to eliminate all vestiges of Confederate nationalism and slavery. Upset over uncontrolled violence in the South and wanting to protect African American citizenship, President Grant effectively destroyed the Ku Klux Klan in 1871. His reputation was marred by his repeated defense of corrupt appointees, and by America's first industrial age economic depression (called

the "Panic of 1873") that dominated his second term.

**Hack Carriage:** A hackney coach or carriage for hire. These basic coaches were generally used by the middle and upper classes. "Hackney coach" comes from the French "haquenée" meaning a horse for hire.

**John M. Hay:** An American statesman, diplomat, author, journalist, and private secretary and assistant to Abraham Lincoln. Hay's highest office was serving as United States Secretary of State under Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt.

**Kid gloves:** a fine, soft leather glove usually made from a young goat (kid)

**Elizabeth Keckley:** Born a slave in Dinwiddie County, Elizabeth Hobbs Keckley (1818–1907) purchased her freedom in 1855 and supported herself as a seamstress, first in St. Louis and then in Washington, D.C. Her skills brought her to the attention of Mary Todd Lincoln, who hired Keckley in 1861. She became Mary Lincoln's favorite dressmaker and later her personal companion, confidante, and traveling companion. It was a remarkable friendship between two very different women, but it ended with the publication of Keckley's memoir in 1868. During her White House years, Keckley organized relief and educational programs for emancipated slaves with the help of Frederick Douglass. Her only son enlisted in the U.S. Army and was killed at the battle of Wilson's Creek, Missouri.

**Ward Hill Lamon:** a personal friend and self-appointed bodyguard of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln. Lamon was actually absent the night Lincoln was assassinated at Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865, having been sent by Lincoln to Richmond, Virginia. Lamon's professional association with Lincoln started in 1852, when he became Lincoln's law partner in Danville, Illinois. Lamon and Detective Allan Pinkerton famously clashed over the President-elect's protection. Robert E. Lee: was an American career military officer who is best known for having commanded the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia in the American Civil War. When Virginia declared its secession from the Union in April 1861, Lee chose to follow his home state, despite his personal desire for the country to remain intact and despite the fact that President Abraham Lincoln had offered Lee command of a Union Army. His abilities as a tactician have been praised by many military historians. Lee's strategic foresight was more doubtful, and both of his major offensives into the North ended in defeat.

**Abraham Lincoln:** 16th President of the United States, serving from March 1861 until his assassination in April 1865. Lincoln led the United States through its greatest constitutional, military, and moral crisis—the American Civil War—preserving the Union, abolishing slavery, strengthening the national government and modernizing the economy. Contrary to expectations, Lincoln proved to be a shrewd military strategist and a savvy leader during what became the costliest conflict ever fought on American soil. His Emancipation Proclamation, issued in 1863, freed all slaves in the rebellious states and paved the way for slavery's eventual abolition, while his Gettysburg Address later that year stands as one of the most famous and influential pieces of oratory in American history.

**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:** an American poet and educator whose works include "Paul

Revere's Ride", The Song of Hiawatha, and Evangeline. During the American Civil War, Longfellow's oldest son Charles Appleton Longfellow joined the Union cause as a soldier without his father's blessing. Longfellow was informed by a letter dated March 14, 1863, after Charles had left. "I have tried hard to resist the temptation of going without your leave but I cannot any longer," he wrote. "I feel it to be my first duty to do what I can for my country and I would willingly lay down my life for it if it would be of any good." Charles soon got an appointment as a lieutenant but, in November, he was severely wounded in the Battle of New Hope Church (in Virginia) during the Mine Run Campaign. Coupled with the recent loss of his wife Frances, who died as a result of an accidental fire, Longfellow was inspired to write "Christmas Bells." He first wrote the poem on Christmas Day in 1863. "Christmas Bells" was first published in February 1865 in *Our Young Folks*, a juvenile magazine published by Ticknor and Fields. He was also the first American to translate Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy* and was one of the five Fireside Poets. Longfellow was born in Portland, Maine, which was then a part of Massachusetts. He studied at Bowdoin College. After spending time in Europe he became a professor at Bowdoin and, later, at Harvard College.

**Long Bridge:** the bridge which connected Arlington, Virginia to Washington D.C., now known as one of the 14th Street bridges, eventually leading north between the Washington Monument and the National Mall.

**Minyan:** literally "count," the quorum of ten Jewish male adults required for certain religious obligations

**John Mosby:** nicknamed the "Gray Ghost", was a Confederate cavalry battalion commander in the American Civil War. His command, the 43rd Battalion, 1st Virginia Cavalry, known as Mosby's Rangers or Mosby's Raiders, was a partisan ranger unit noted for its lightning quick raids and its ability to elude Union Army pursuers and disappear, blending in with local farmers and townsmen. The area of northern central Virginia in which Mosby operated with impunity was known during the war and ever since as Mosby's Confederacy. After the war, Mosby worked as an attorney and supported his former enemy's commander, President Ulysses S. Grant, serving as the U.S. consul to Hong Kong and in the Department of Justice.

**John G. Nicolay:** a German-born American biographer, secretary of US President Abraham Lincoln, and later United States Consul at Paris. Nicolay and John Hay, who had worked alongside Nicolay as assistant secretary to Lincoln, collaborated on the official biography of the 16th President.

**Ely Parker:** a Seneca attorney, engineer, and tribal diplomat. He was commissioned a lieutenant colonel during the American Civil War, when he served as adjutant to General Ulysses S. Grant. He wrote the final draft of the Confederate surrender terms at Appomattox. Later in his career, Parker rose to the rank of Brevet Brigadier General, one of only two Native Americans to earn a general's rank during the war (the other being Stand Watie, who fought for the Confederacy). President Grant appointed him as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the first Native American to hold that post. Lewis Payne: also known as Lewis Paine or Payne, attempted unsuccessfully to assassinate United States Secretary of State William H. Seward, and was one of four people hanged for the Lincoln assassination conspiracy, and given his home state, Alabama, was the

only assassination conspirator executed who had been from the Deep South.

**Point Lookout:** The southeastern tip of Maryland. In 1862 during the American Civil War, much of the land around Point Lookout was transformed into a bustling port, temporary city of civilians and military personnel and numerous buildings, a large army hospital, an army garrison at Fort Lincoln, and a Union prisoner of war camp to hold Confederate captives. Of the 50,000 soldiers held in the army prison camp, who were housed in tents at the Point between 1863 and 1865, according to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, nearly 4,000 died, although this death rate of 8 percent was less than half the death rate among soldiers who were in the field with their own armies.

**Potomac River:** The Potomac River is the fourth largest river along the Atlantic coast and the 21st largest in the United States. It runs over 383 miles from Fairfax Stone, West Virginia to Point Lookout, Maryland and drains 14,670 square miles of land area from four states and Washington DC. The Potomac River flows into the Chesapeake Bay and now affects more than 6 million people who live within the Potomac watershed, the land area where water drains towards the mouth of the river. George Washington envisioned the nation's capital as a commercial center as well as the seat of government. He chose to establish the "federal city" along the Potomac River because it already included two major port towns: Georgetown and Alexandria. "Potomac" was one of two Algonquin names for the river forming the northern boundary of Virginia, and it meant "great trading place" or "place where people trade." The Potomac's common spelling through the 18th century was "Patowmack." An earlier spelling was "Patawomeke." The spelling of the name was simplified over the years to "Potomac." Washington, DC began using the Potomac River as its main source of drinking water with the opening of the Washington Aqueduct in 1864.

**Quakers:** Members of the Religious Society of Friends, a faith that emerged as a new Christian denomination in England during a period of religious turmoil in the mid-1600s, and still practiced today in a variety of forms around the world. Quakers are known also for their refusal to participate in war.

**Quartermaster:** an officer who provides troops with quarters, clothing, equipment, etc.

**Phillip Reid:** A slave who worked in the foundry contracted to cast the bronze Statue of Freedom atop the Capitol. He received his freedom on April 16, 1862 when President Abraham Lincoln signed the Compensated Emancipation Act that released certain persons held to service or labor in the District of Columbia. It is not known if he witnessed the event, but Reid was a free man when the last piece of the Statue of Freedom was put into place atop the Capitol Dome on December 2, 1863. Sic Semper Tyrannis: Latin meaning "Thus Ever to Tyrants." It is the state motto of Virginia, and was allegedly said by J.W. Booth after assassinating A. Lincoln.

**Seder:** a Jewish ritual feast that marks the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover. It is conducted on the evenings of the 14th day of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar, and on the 15th by traditionally observant Jews living outside Israel. This corresponds to late March or April in the Gregorian calendar. The Seder is a ritual performed by a community or by multiple generations of a family, involving a retelling of the story of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in



ancient Egypt.

**William Tecumseh Sherman:** an American soldier, businessman, educator and author. He served as a General in the Union Army during the American Civil War (1861–65), for which he received recognition for his outstanding command of military strategy as well as criticism for the harshness of the "scorched earth" policies that he implemented in conducting total war against the Confederate States. At the end of this campaign from Atlanta to Savannah, known as Sherman's March to the Sea, his troops captured Savannah on December 21, 1864.

**John Surratt:** accused of plotting with John Wilkes Booth to kidnap U.S. president Abraham Lincoln and suspected of involvement in the Abraham Lincoln assassination. His mother Mary Surratt was convicted of conspiracy and hanged by the United States Federal Government. She owned the boarding house where Booth and fellow conspirators planned the scheme. John Harrison Surratt, Jr. avoided arrest immediately after the assassination by fleeing the country. He served briefly as a Papal Zouave before his arrest and extradition. By the time he returned to the United States the statute of limitations had expired on most of the potential charges and he was not convicted.

**Mary Surratt:** an American boarding house owner who was convicted of taking part in the conspiracy to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln. Sentenced to death, she was hanged, becoming the first woman executed by the United States federal government. She was the mother of John H. Surratt, Jr., who was later tried but was not convicted in the assassination.

**Walt Whitman:** Walt Whitman was a well-known writer by the time he arrived in Washington at the close of 1862. His *Leaves of Grass*—an unabashed love letter to America first published on its 79th birthday, July 4, 1855, then followed by second (1856) and third (1860) editions—celebrated the sacred everydayness of what Whitman called "the divine Average" American life. Butcher boys, opera divas, Manhattan firemen, Indians, God masquerading as a loving bedfellow, runaway slaves, mothers of sons and daughters, ship builders, prostitutes and preachers were just a few of the characters who inhabited Whitman's America. Loafing, sweating, gabbing, wrestling, singing, farming, fishing, healing, and copulating were some of their activities. Sexual love between a husband and wife, and passionate same-sex friendships (with or without sexual love) were the glues that bound Whitman's Americans together.

**Wilberforce College:** Founded in 1856, Wilberforce University can trace its origin to a period of history before the Civil War, when the Ohio Underground Railroad was established as a means of escape for all those blacks who sought their freedom in the North from the yoke of slavery, one of the destination points of this railroad became Wilberforce University. As the Underground Railroad provided a route from physical bondage, the University was formed to provide an intellectual Mecca and refuge from slavery's first rule: ignorance. Wilberforce University, the nation's oldest private, historically black university, was named to honor the great 18th century abolitionist, William Wilberforce.

**James Wormley:** Born in Washington D.C. on January 16, 1819, James Wormley was the son of free-born citizens Lynch and Mary Wormley. As a young boy, Wormley's first job was working with his family's hackney carriage business. This job would help Wormley gain skills

and an appreciation for hard work involved in business ownership which he put to good use in post-Civil War Washington. After owning a successful restaurant, Wormley decided to purchase a hotel in 1871 which he called the Wormley House. Located near the White House, at the southwest corner of 15th and H Streets Northwest, Wormley House soon became popular among the wealthy and politically prominent in the nation's capital. Wormley's experience as caterer, club steward and traveler in Europe helped him to perfect his culinary skills while his keen eye for detail ensured that his hotel guests were satisfied during their stay. The hotel was most famous for its well-managed rooms, early telephone and the dining room where Wormley served European-style dishes.



### **1864: The Longest Year of the War**

The war of attrition between the North and South reached harrowing limits during 1864 which saw victories for both sides. Now in command of the Union army, Ulysses S. Grant committed to attacking Confederate Robert E. Lee's forces wherever they went until they were destroyed. This strategy proved ultimately successful, but would result in costly casualties and long months of hard war. In the same year, Lincoln had to fight for reelection against his former general, George B. McClellan.

### **8. Timeline of 1864**

**April 12: Battle of Fort Pillow.** With approximately 2,500 men, Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest attacks this Union garrison comprised of about 600 men—half of whom are African American. Confederate policy was to give no quarter to armed blacks and their officers. Forrest massacred the majority of the soldiers who were forced to surrender that day.



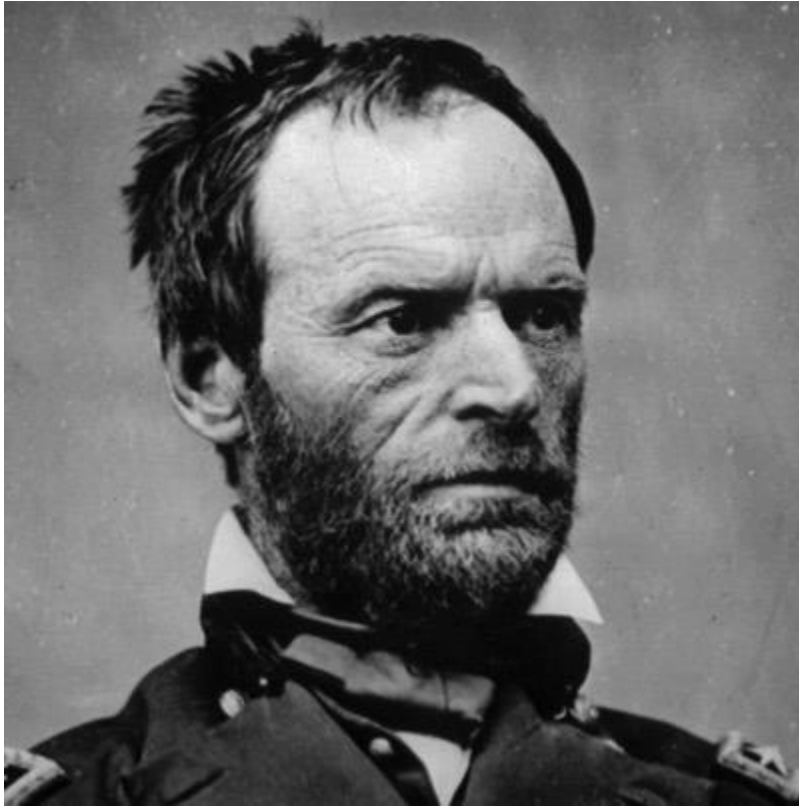
**May 5-6: Battle of the Wilderness.** The Union & Confederate armies battle inconclusively for two days in eastern Virginia. Grant's forces suffer 17,667 casualties. Lee's casualties, while uncertain, were less than this; unlike Grant, however, Lee receives no replacements for his losses.

**May 8-12: Battle of Spotsylvania.** Grant's forces continue to attack Lee's, fighting for five days at Spotsylvania Court House, Virginia. Nearly 11,000 Union casualties and an uncertain but similar number of Confederate casualties are the price of the battle.

**June 1-3: Battle of Cold Harbor.** Grant attacks Confederate positions at Cold Harbor, and his forces are savagely repelled. More than 7,000 men on both sides are killed in the worst twenty minutes of the firefight; total Union casualties are 12,000. Although it is the last clear victory for Lee during the war, his army never recovers from Grant's relentless attacks.

**June 15, 1864 to April 2, 1865: Siege of Petersburg.** Grant hopes to quickly capture Petersburg, Virginia, a vital rail center south of Richmond, then advance on the Confederate capital from the south. This attempt fails, costing him 16,569 casualties, and bogs down into a

ten-month siege in which thousands more soldiers on each side are killed or wounded.



**Atlanta Campaign, 1864:** By 1864, Sherman had become convinced that preservation of the Union was contingent not only on defeating the Southern armies in the field but, more importantly, on destroying the Confederacy's material and psychological will to wage war. To achieve that end, he launched a campaign in Georgia that was defined as “modern warfare,” and brought “total destruction...upon the civilian population in the path of the advancing columns [of his armies].” The success of the campaign ultimately helped Lincoln win reelection. After the fall of Atlanta, Sherman left the forces under Thomas and Schofield to continue to harass the Confederate Army of Tennessee under [John Bell Hood](#). Meanwhile, Sherman cut off all communications to his army and commenced his now-famous “**March to the Sea**,” leaving in his wake a 40-60 mile-wide path of destruction through the heartland of Georgia. On December 21, 1864, Sherman wired Lincoln to offer him an early Christmas present: the city of Savannah.

Read more about Sherman [here](#).