

#### **Lt. Col. Walter H. Jenifer**

The Confederate brigade under Col. Nathan Evans included some 300 cavalrymen under Lt. Col. Walter H. Jenifer of Maryland who, like Evans, formerly had served in the 2nd U.S. Cavalry. About 70 of Jenifer's men were involved in some way in this battle. Approximately 1/3 of them fought on foot though most remained mounted and served as scouts well to the north of this location. Only those who were dismounted were heavily involved in the fighting. Jenifer later briefly commanded the 8th Virginia Cavalry (not to be confused with the 8th Virginia Infantry which fought here) and spent much of the war in administrative jobs in Richmond and Mobile. He also spent about a year in Egypt where, curiously, he served under the command of the man against whom he fought in this battle, Brig. Gen. Charles P. Stone. Stone was chief of staff to the Khedive of Egypt throughout the 1870s.

Continue past the sign another 200 yards and you will loop back to the Hunton Trail. Turn to the right and this will take you the short distance to the 8th Virginia sign and monument on the gravel road. The monument was privately funded and installed in the summer of 2007 to remember this local Loudoun County unit. From here it is approximately 150 yards to the parking lot.

#### **Vignette: The 8th Virginia**

The 8th Virginia was largely a Loudoun county unit with six of its companies from Loudoun and the other four from neighboring counties. It was quite literally "the home team" as some of its members no doubt had hunted in these woods and fished in the river. Its commanding officer, Col. Eppa Hunton, was a lawyer and a teacher before the war and went on to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate after the war. Following Ball's Bluff, the 8th became part of George Pickett's division of the Army of Northern Virginia and participated in the famous charge known generally by his name at Gettysburg.

NOVA Parks thanks you for visiting the Ball's Bluff Battlefield Regional Park and hopes that you enjoyed this self-guided tour. Note that guided tours are available on weekends during the April-November season. Trained battlefield guides conduct these tours and can explain the battle and the overall situation in more detail. See the sign near the kiosk for tour times.



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## A Walking Tour of



## Ball's Bluff Battlefield Regional Park

*Learn more about Ball's Bluff Battlefield Regional Park online at [www.novaparks.com/parks/balls-bluff-battlefield-regional-park](http://www.novaparks.com/parks/balls-bluff-battlefield-regional-park)*

Begin your walking tour at the parking lot and information kiosk area. Note, however, that the early morning phases of the battle took place outside of current battlefield park boundaries in and near the housing development through which you traveled to get here.

#### **The Parking Lot**

The battle of Ball's Bluff was fought on October 21, 1861, only six months after the firing on Fort Sumter. The core area of the battlefield extended roughly from here at the parking lot down to the bluff which overlooks the river. This area was a 10-12 acre open meadow in 1861 and relatively flat compared with the surrounding terrain. It is bounded on each side by the very rough terrain which you will see two-to-three hundred yards to the left and right of the cemetery road. It was in and around this meadow that most of the fighting took place and that the Union forces found themselves trapped with little room to maneuver.

#### **In Those Skirmish Fields**

In the early morning skirmish fields, 300 men of Col. Charles Devens' 15th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry deployed in the area around the home of the widowed Mrs. Margaret Jackson, just north of today's subdivision. They had come to raid a Confederate camp mistakenly thought to be there. Company H of the Union regiment then encountered and briefly engaged Company K of the 17th Mississippi around 8:00 a.m. in the opening round of the Battle of Ball's Bluff.

Around 2:00, following two more skirmishes, the 15th Massachusetts withdrew through the parking lot area where you now are and linked up with other Union forces at the bluff. The Confederates followed and deployed on the high ground here. Remember that much of the area between the parking lot and the bluff was a 10-12 acre meadow. Troops positioned where you are now could see all the way to the bluff and the area where the cemetery currently is located.

When looking past the visitor kiosk and historical markers, you are facing more or less northward. The Federal troops came from the bluff toward your present location. The Confederates advanced from behind and to your left, through the current subdivision, ultimately driving the Union troops back toward the bluff.

#### **Vignette: Colonel Edward Dickinson Baker**

Senator and Colonel Edward Dickinson Baker of Oregon commanded all Union troops here at Ball's Bluff. He had some limited military experience as commander of the 4th Illinois Infantry during the Mexican War. He received command of the troops here before he knew that any fighting had taken place and initially believed that he was to command only a large reconnaissance mission. On hearing of the fighting, Baker began ordering troops across the river but did not come over himself for about four hours, instead occupying his time in a search for more boats. He has been criticized by historians for not turning that job over to a subordinate and immediately coming over to Ball's Bluff to be with his men. Baker also failed to put anyone in overall command until his arrival and he sent no orders to the troops who were here. In addition, he fought a purely defensive battle against the advice of several officers who urged him to advance away from the bluff and into the fields where the subdivision now is located. Baker is the only U.S. Senator ever to be killed in battle. He is buried along with his wife at the Presidio in San Francisco, California.

#### **A Note on Ball's Bluff's Historical Markers ...**

A sign near the kiosk provides the color code for the various hiking trails. The interpretive trails which you will be following on this walking tour are all marked in white.

Begin your tour by walking down the gravel road a few steps to the Burt trail that forks to the right just past the sign titled "The Battle at Ball's Bluff." Proceed along this trail about 35 yards to the Featherston Trail and turn to the right. About 70 yards along, you will see the 17th Mississippi sign. As you look at the sign, the parking lot will be behind you just over the crest of the hill.

You are now standing near the top of the slope, the far end of which is near the bluff and marked the Union left front. The overgrown area ahead of you was clear in 1861 to approximately the small ravine that bisects the battlefield, crossed today by a wooden footbridge over which you soon will walk. On this slope, Capt. John Markoe's two companies of the California regiment fought a heavy skirmish with a portion of the 8th Virginia around 3:00 p.m. Captain Markoe was wounded and captured and Lt. J. Owens Berry of the 8th Virginia was captured. This spot also was the staging area for the later advances of the 17th and 18th Mississippi.

#### **Vignette: The 17th Mississippi**

The 17th Mississippi regiment was composed of companies from all over northern Mississippi and was organized at Corinth in early June, 1861. Its commanding officer was Colonel Winfield Scott Featherston of Holly Springs, a former two-term Congressman who had served in the House of Representatives with Abraham Lincoln, and with Colonel and Senator Edward D. Baker, the Union field commander here. The 17th was the last Confederate unit to arrive on this battlefield. It formed the core of the final and climactic assault of the day which finally broke the Union line and drove the Federals into the river.

#### **The 18th Mississippi sign**

Proceed down the slope along the Markoe Trail for about 75 yards to the 18th Mississippi sign. The 18th deployed at the top of the hill behind

you around 3:30 and advanced across the field in the direction you are walking, though bearing to the left and eventually marching into a deadly Union crossfire. The regiment then retreated to the top of the hill and split into two battalions which moved left and right respectively and attempted to outflank the Federals on both sides.

#### **Vignette: The 18th Mississippi**

The 18th Mississippi was organized in June, 1861 and recruited from the four counties immediately around Jackson, the state capital. Commanded by Col. Erasmus Burt, the state auditor, the unit was peripherally involved at First Manassas before it became part of Col. Nathan Evans' Confederate brigade at Leesburg. In leading the regiment into a deadly crossfire at about 3:30 p.m. here at Ball's Bluff, Col. Burt committed the only serious tactical error made by the Confederate forces during this battle. Burt was shot through the stomach and mortally wounded at that time. He was taken to Leesburg to a home on North King Street known today as the Glenfidditch House where he died five days later.

#### **The Footbridge**

From this sign, continue 110 yards, passing the Griffin Trail intersection, and cross the footbridge. The ravine which it crosses feeds eventually into the larger ravine used as cover by the rightward battalion of the 18th Mississippi as it moved against the Federal left. Continue another 75 yards to the 42nd New York sign. A portion of that unit, known as the "Tammany Regiment," fought in this area during the day, though it and the other Federal units frequently shifted around as needed.

There was considerable fighting here over the course of the afternoon as the men of the 18th Mississippi launched several assaults from the wooded ravines and were engaged at close quarters by Union troops from various units.

#### **Vignette: The 42nd New York**

The "Tammany Regiment," so named because it was organized by New York's Tammany Hall Democratic political machine, was a largely Irish regiment. It was mustered into U.S. service in late June, 1861 at Great Neck, L.I. Only five Tammany companies participated in the battle of Ball's Bluff, two of which were the last Union units to arrive on the field. Those two arrived late in the day after the Federal rout had already begun. They managed very briefly to stem the Confederate tide but were themselves quickly overwhelmed. The unit was commanded by Col. Milton Cogswell, West Point Class of 1849.

#### **1st California Marker**

Continue another 40 yards to a path intersection then bear left and walk a few steps to the historical marker for the 1st California Regiment. You are now standing on the slope down which panic-stricken Union soldiers fled toward the river around dark on October 21, 1861. They had fought doggedly all day, repulsing several Confederate assaults but, in the end, were overwhelmed.

#### **Vignette: First California Regiment**

The 1st California, like its sister regiments in Colonel Baker's brigade, the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th California, in fact was made up mostly of Pennsylvania men and had been organized in Philadelphia beginning shortly after the firing on Fort Sumter. After this battle, Gov. Andrew Curtin of Pennsylvania had the four regiments renamed the 71st, 69th, 72nd, and 106th Pennsylvania respectively. Thus, did the California Brigade become the Philadelphia Brigade, a unit which achieved great renown at Antietam, Gettysburg, and elsewhere. At Ball's Bluff, however, only about half of the 1st California was involved in the fighting. The other half, along with the other three regiments, never got across the **Vignette:**

river. The 1st California continued to call itself the “California Regiment” throughout the war despite its official re-designation as the 71st Pennsylvania.

#### A Diverging Path

Twenty yards past the 1st California sign is a four-way intersection. You have three possibilities from here. Turn right to get to the river, left to get to the Ball’s Bluff National Cemetery, or continue straight ahead to the Bluff Overlook.

#### 1. To the river:

The path to the river is steep and rocky so exercise appropriate caution should you decide to go that way. Once at the river you may return the way you came or continue along the river north some 600 yards to another deep ravine. There you will find another path that leads up the bluff. You may follow that path along the top of the bluff back in the direction you came until you arrive at the chain link fence that marks the Ball’s Bluff Overlook. The walk along the floodplain of the river is best done in the spring or fall when the foliage is not too thick and the view to the top of the bluff is relatively clear.

#### 2. To the cemetery:

Should you go up to the cemetery, you will find yourself in the area that was a 10-12 acre open meadow at the time of the battle. Just at the top of the slope is the memorial stone to Colonel Edward Baker on your left. Long thought actually to have marked the spot of Baker’s death, this stone most likely marks where his body was initially placed when it was retrieved from the field. Baker probably was killed some 75-100 yards farther inland from the bluff.

The national cemetery is at the approximate center of the Union line. About a hundred feet beyond it on the left as you face the cemetery gate is a black granite memorial marker to Sgt. Clinton Hatcher of the 8th Virginia. A historical sign there explains its significance.

From here you may proceed directly back to the parking lot on the gravel road. The area ahead of you was part of the main clearing around which the afternoon battle was fought. You should have a good view of the slope on your left down which you walked on the Markoe Trail. It is not hard to imagine the double line of Captain Markoe’s troops as they advanced on your left up the slope. Likewise, imagine the Confederates of the 17th and 18th Mississippi as they marched toward you across the open field at different times later in the day.

#### Vignette: Sgt. Clinton Hatcher

Sgt. Clinton Hatcher was the regimental color bearer of the 8th Virginia. An exceptionally tall man, Hatcher had a full red beard. Combined with his job as color bearer, these features made him an obvious target and he was killed on the battlefield, though no one knows exactly where or when. The carved stone is “black Quincy granite,” a type found only in quarries near Quincy, Massachusetts. Local lore, supported by the identification of the type of stone, suggests that it might have been carved in his honor and sent here as a gesture of sectional reconciliation by veterans of the 15th Massachusetts following a visit to this battlefield in the fall of 1900. Hatcher is buried in the Ketocin Baptist Church cemetery near Purcellville, Virginia.

#### 3. To the Overlook:

You may also proceed along the bluff on the Holmes Trail straight

ahead some 50 yards to the 20th Massachusetts sign. In the then-open field beyond it, near today’s cemetery, Lt. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Company A, 20th Massachusetts, and later the renowned Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, received the first of his three Civil War wounds when he was shot in the chest.

#### Vignette: The 20th Massachusetts

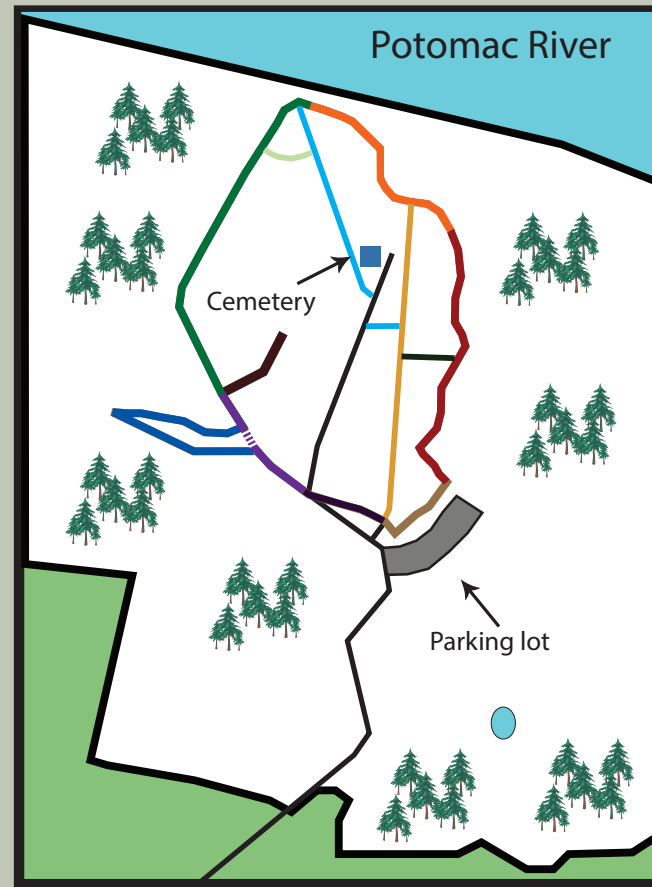
The 20th Massachusetts was known as “the Harvard Regiment” as most of its officers were Harvard graduates or students when the war began. Ball’s Bluff’s most famous survivor, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., was a lieutenant in Company A of the Harvard Regiment and suffered his first Civil War wound just up the slope from here near the location of the cemetery. Also members of this regiment were Major Paul J. Revere and the regimental surgeon, Edward Revere. Both were grandsons of Revolutionary War hero, Paul Revere.

#### At the Overlook

Proceed along this trail with caution as you are walking close to the edge of the bluff for much of the way. About 120 yards along, you will come to the Bluff Overlook. At the overlook you are just south of the halfway point between the two ravines which define the 600-yard long Ball’s Bluff. At this point, the Potomac is 100 feet directly below you. The Federal troops landed on the floodplain roughly 300 yards to the north or left of this position and advanced, left to right, to the path that leads up the bluff and comes out behind the cemetery.

#### Harrison’s Island

Depending on the foliage, you may be able to see the Virginia channel of the river. Harrison’s Island appears as a flat, open field in the middle distance ahead. Not visible from here is the Maryland channel of the



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|--|--|
| <span style="color: green;">■</span> Devens Trail                    | <span style="color: brown;">■</span> Featherston Trail   |
| <span style="color: blue;">■</span> Jenifer Trail                    | <span style="color: orange;">■</span> Holmes Trail       |
| <span style="color: purple;">■</span> Hunton Trail                   | <span style="color: red;">■</span> Markoe Trail          |
| <span style="color: orange;">■</span> Cogswell Trail                 | <span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> Howitzer Trail |
| <span style="color: lightblue;">■</span> Bartlett Trail              | <span style="color: darkpurple;">■</span> Burt Trail     |
| <span style="color: darkred;">■</span> Battlefield Restoration Trail | <span style="color: darkgreen;">■</span> Griffin Trail   |

Potomac beyond the island. The farm buildings in the far distance are in Maryland proper. Along the horizon to the right is the water tower at Poolesville, MD, where Brig. Gen. Charles Stone maintained his division headquarters from August, 1861 to February, 1862.

From the overlook, follow the Devens Trail about 80 yards to the Union Artillery sign. On this elevated knoll overlooking the field, the Federals placed two small but powerful 12-pounder “mountain howitzers.” A third Union artillery piece was placed near the cemetery. All three eventually were captured by the Confederates though the Virginians and Mississippians later squabbled over who actually had captured the howitzers.

#### Vignette: Union Artillery

The Confederates brought no artillery to this fight though Colonel Evans did have five pieces available had he chosen to use them. Two of the three Union guns were

small, mobile “mountain howitzers,” designed for use in rough terrain, weighing a little over 500 pounds each, and easy to handle. The other gun was a full-sized field piece weighing about a ton. It was designated as a “James rifle” but in fact was a pre-war bronze smoothbore which had been reamed out and “rifled” so as to allow for firing larger projectiles with greater accuracy.

#### Into the Crossfire

Continue along the Devens Trail another 80 yards to the 15th Massachusetts sign. In the trees to your right as you look at the sign, the 15th

Massachusetts deployed, facing inward toward the clearing, around 2:30 p.m. after withdrawing from its advanced position near the Jackson house. Thus positioned, the unit was at a right angle to the rest of the Union troops who had their backs to the bluff. Together, the two arms of this formation created what looked from the bluff like a backward “L” and which covered the road coming across the field from today’s parking lot. It was into this crossfire that the 18th Mississippi inadvertently marched around 4:00 p.m.

#### Vignette: The 15th Massachusetts

Colonel Charles Devens, commander of the 15th, was a Harvard lawyer and local politician with some pre-war militia experience. He was the only senior Union officer to get safely back across the river following the rout at the end of the day. The others all were killed, captured, or wounded. After the war, Devens became U.S. Attorney General under President Rutherford B. Hayes. Fort Devens, Massachusetts, is named for him.

#### A Visit in 1886

Twenty yards ahead and on your left a small, side path leads to the Battlefield Restoration marker on which is a photo of several former members of the 15th Massachusetts on an 1886 visit and a map drawn shortly after the battle by a member of the 20th Massachusetts. The sign is located approximately at the spot from which the photo was taken. It shows how open the battlefield was in 1886 and, therefore, in 1861. The top of the cemetery wall is visible in the center right of the photo.

#### Vignette: Battlefield Restoration

The 15th Massachusetts had a very active veterans association which organized battlefield visits and reunions quite often in the years after the war. The photo here shows five unidentified members of that unit visiting Ball’s Bluff in 1886. It was a similar visit in 1900 that resulted in the rebuilding of the badly damaged cemetery wall and prevented the closing of the cemetery and removal of the remains to other locations. The map was drawn by Capt. William Francis Bartlett, Company I, 20th Massachusetts only four days after the battle. He included it in a letter to his mother in which he described the fighting. Bartlett served through the war and achieved the rank of Brevet Major General.

#### Devens to Hunton

Return back down the side path toward the Devens Trail but note that, at the intersection with this path, the Devens Trail becomes known as the Hunton Trail. Proceed to your left along the Hunton Trail about 100 yards to the intersection of the Jenifer Trail. Turn right and walk about 150 yards to the “Jenifer’s Cavalry” sign.

This ground is part of a 141-acre parcel of land jointly acquired by NOVA Parks and the Town of Leesburg in 2000 in order to prevent its development. NOVA Parks’ share is 55 acres across which you are now walking and which have been incorporated into the battlefield park. The Town’s share is beyond the viewshed, some 86 acres being held in a “passive recreation” status.

In this area and beyond, a few companies of Mississippi infantry and Lt. Col. Walter Jenifer’s dismounted Virginia cavalry unsuccessfully attempted to get around the right flank of the Federal position.

There was considerable fighting in these woods and ravines during the afternoon as the Confederates were checked by companies of the 15th and 20th Massachusetts which had the advantage of the high ground.