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**"NEGLECTED HONOR," THE LIFE OF GENERAL A. S. WILLIAMS OF
MICHIGAN (1810-1878)**

Michigan State University

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"NEGLECTED HONOR,"
THE LIFE OF GENERAL A.S. WILLIAMS
OF MICHIGAN (1810-1878)

By
Jeffrey Gordon Charnley

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
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ABSTRACT

"NEGLECTED HONOR," THE LIFE OF GENERAL A.S. WILLIAMS OF MICHIGAN (1810-1878)

By

Jeffrey Gordon Charnley

Alpheus Starkey Williams of Michigan (1810-1878) led an eventful life as a lawyer, businessman, newspaper editor, civil servant, diplomat, politician, and citizen soldier. He should be remembered best as a prominent Union general in the American Civil War. This study is a biography of Williams which emphasizes his career in the War of the Rebellion.

Williams was a keen observer, an excellent writer, and, most important, a participant as a division or corps commander in many of the greatest battles of the war. He was primarily responsible for preparing Michigan's first soldiers for the conflict and was that state's first general. His date of rank, 17 May 1861, made him one of the senior generals as a brigadier in 1865.

In the field and in battle, few Union generals exceeded the scope of his service. As a division and corps chief, he developed a record of exemplary service and constant improvement as a fighting leader, a soldier's general. In the Army of the Potomac from 1861 to 1863 he fought in the Shenandoah Valley and at Cedar Mountain, Antietam, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg. In the Army of the Cumberland

Jeffrey Gordon Charnley

in 1864 and 1865 Williams participated in the Atlanta Campaign, the "March-to-the-Sea," and the Campaign in the Carolinas.

Unfortunately for the Michigan general, most of his commanders either failed to notice his efforts or did not act to get him promoted. Historians, too, have largely overlooked his role as a military leader who contributed significantly to the Northern war effort. Long service with few rewards became the epitaph of Michigan's foremost citizen soldier in the Civil War. In sum, his life was one of neglected honor.

Dedicated to Krista Marie

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Several people have contributed immeasurably to this work. Professor Frederick D. Williams lectured on the Civil War with inspiration and stimulated my interest in the subject. His probing questions, thoughtful guidance, and considerable editorial skills were of great assistance in improving the manuscript. Professor Gordon Stewart added objectivity and perspective and gave an important psychological boost at a time when my interest lagged. Alice Dalligan and the staff of the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library provided able assistance which led to many important discoveries in the manuscript materials of the Alpheus Williams Papers. Their service does credit to the truly great archive they maintain. My relatives, Maryhelen and Bruce Feighner, provided many nights of gracious hospitality during my research in Detroit. My friends from the Netherlands, Rob and Hermien de Feber, opened their Virginia home to my family during weeks of research in Washington. To these, especially, I owe my thanks.

J.G.C.

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INTRODUCTION

A ceremonial sword of carved granite tops his modest gravestone in Detroit's Elmwood Cemetery. There is a large statue of the man on his war horse, but few, except the summer vacationers on Belle Isle, know where it is. Even fewer know anything about the man who should be remembered best as a prominent Union general in the Civil War. Alpheus Starkey Williams of Michigan led an eventful life as a lawyer, businessman, newspaper editor, civil servant, diplomat, politician, and citizen soldier. This study is a biography of Williams which emphasizes his career in the Civil War.

To date, historians have written only short biographical sketches of him. Milo M. Quaife revived interest in the man in 1959 when he edited From the Cannon's Mouth: The Civil War Letters of General Alpheus S. Williams. These letters, part of the Williams Papers in the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library, are an important addition to the already vast source material of the Civil War. Williams was a keen observer, an excellent writer, and, most important, a participant as a division or corps commander in many of the greatest battles of the war.

Unfortunately, few historians have noted Williams' efforts in the War of the Rebellion. Historians of Michigan have failed to cite his role in preparing the state for the conflict. He was Michigan's first general in the war. In the Army of the Potomac he fought in the Shenandoah Valley and at Cedar Mountain, Antietam, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg. In the Army of the Cumberland Williams participated in the Atlanta Campaign, the "March-to-the-Sea," and the Carolina Campaign. Few Union generals exceeded the scope of his service in the field during the war. And yet, his role as a military leader who contributed significantly to the Northern war effort has been largely overlooked.

CHAPTER I Youth and Years of Travel 1810-1835

The people of Essex and Saybrook, Connecticut had little time to prepare for the attack. The British forces had achieved almost complete surprise in the early morning of 8 April 1814. They struck swiftly and devastatingly. The smoke from the flames of over twenty ships smudged the sky over Pautapoag Point and the conflagration could be seen for miles.¹ This was little Alpheus Starkey Williams' first exposure to war. He was only three and a half years old. The fighting during the War of 1812 did not affect a significant number of Americans directly and this was the case of the Ezra and Hepsibah Williams family of Deep River. The main loss was the ships; no one died in the pre-dawn raid but the flames symbolically scarred one branch of the Williams family tree. Alpheus Williams would see the flames of war many times again.

The ancestors of Alpheus Williams were among the earliest white settlers in Connecticut. The patriarchs of his family included William Pratt, John Starkey, and Charles Williams, all of whom had settled in the town of Saybrook during the mid-1600's. These men and their descendents became community leaders and the families prospered. All three of these families stayed in the area of Deep River during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²

One merger of the Pratt and Williams families was the marriage of Samuel Williams (1751-1822) to Irene Pratt

(1752-1839). They married in February 1770 and subsequently had eleven children. Ezra, their fifth child, was born during the Revolution on May 6th, 1779. Samuel Williams was an active supporter of the new government after the War for American Independence and busied himself in local and state politics. He served as the representative from Saybrook in the Connecticut General Court and Assembly almost continuously from 1796 to 1815. An ardent Federalist, he must have bridled at the material loss of almost \$160,000 to his constituents as a result of "Mr. Madison's War."³ The Federalist notions and his interest in politics were two of his unwritten bequests to his many children and grandchildren.

Information about Alpheus Williams' parents is limited. Ezra Williams married Hepsibah Starkey, the daughter of Timothy and Hepsibah Starkey, and they had five children. Frederick William, the oldest, was born 9 February 1804. Their second son, Charles, died in infancy on 29 March 1807. Their next child, Ezra S., was born on 7 March 1808 and he was followed by Alpheus Starkey Williams on 20 September 1810. The youngest child, Irene E. Williams, never saw her father, whose unexpected death in 1818 occurred a few months before Irene's birth on 22 March 1819.

The death of Ezra Williams did not cast the family into economic hardship. From his interests in trade and in the manufacturing of ivory products, he had accumulated a substantial estate.⁴ Hepsibah, with her three sons and infant daughter, went to live with Samuel and Irene Williams after

Ezra died. Samuel and Irene helped Hepsibah raise the new generation of the Williams clan. Their influence on their grandchildren's development was great and long lasting. In addition to the Federalist political views of Grandfather Williams and sharing the old New England Puritan heritage, Irene Williams exerted an important moral and religious influence on her grandchildren. Writing many years later, Alpheus recalled that his Grandmother Irene "was as near perfection as mortal can be and she has ever lived in my remembrance as the most perfect and consistently Christian woman I ever knew. I lived with her a great deal, especially after my father's death and never a day passed that she did not, in her gentle way, give me lessons of religious instruction and duty."⁵

Alpheus spent his early boyhood in Deep River among the green undulating hills and woodlots overlooking the broad estuary of the Connecticut River. He began his education outside his family under the tutelage of the local Congregational minister. This arrangement continued until about the time his Grandfather Williams died in 1822. As in the case of other well-to-do families in the United States in the early nineteenth century, Alpheus was sent to a private boarding school. The choice for Alpheus was the newly opened Lee's Academy in nearby Madison, Connecticut. This school was started by Captain Frederick Lee, a native of Madison, who was a veteran sailor. The academy provided Alpheus with the preparation necessary for a university education.⁶

As a youth, Alpheus Williams was robust and energetic. He had a strong drive to learn and become "educated," but he enjoyed the outdoors more than his studies. Some people in Madison remembered him as a prankster who devoted some of his practical jokes to an old man notorious only for being the area's sole Democrat.⁷

The same year he finished at the academy, (1827), his mother died. Hepsibah Williams' death strengthened the close family ties Alpheus had with his siblings and his Grandmother Irene. By the time of his mother's death, his formative years were complete. His heritage and family training had been clearly that of a Connecticut Yankee. It was then that his personal horizons broadened and another important aspect of his education began--he set out to become a gentleman. Acutely conscious of his social status, he aspired to move in the "best" circles of society.

A university education was the first step. The youth, now commonly called "Alph," learned enough for admission to Yale College. Williams followed many of his predecessors of Connecticut's leading families who attended college in the "City of the Elms." Yale had long been the mold of Connecticut's founders and their children. Williams began his studies in New Haven when he was seventeen. His preparation in the classics was sound background for the Latin, Greek and other studies of Yale's classical curriculum.

His college years were important to his social development. With a genial nature and as a good conversationalist,

young Williams made many friends among his classmates. Some of these friendships continued throughout his life. He took a realistic attitude toward his studies and he was not accused of being a bookworm. At Yale, he liked weekend excursions and often he was the instigator of the jaunts which his friends fondly remembered and for which they later thanked him. He and his companions would, on occasion, take off for Niagara Falls, New York, or the city of Boston. Most commonly, they would picnic in the surrounding countryside or take a brief sail in a rented sailboat.⁸

While at college, Williams joined the Linonian Society, a literary society which had been founded in the eighteenth century. Members considered its library to be an excellent supplement to the University library and it was available at all times to Linonians. The librarian of the society was Henry Barnard, who became a close friend of Williams.⁹

Williams' journal entries and letters to his friends and family illustrate that he learned a great deal; he was erudite and extremely literate. Like other inveterate letter writers of the nineteenth century, he wrote frequently, extensively, and very well. Over the years he used to great advantage his excellent training at Yale and developed a remarkable ability for description and analysis.

During Williams' second year at Yale the students rebelled. This was the so-called "Bread and Butter Rebellion." The students had repeatedly complained about the bad food and rancid butter. When the administration did nothing

to correct the situation, the students threw their food out the windows to rot in the hot July sun. The University officials expelled four students identified as instigators of the turmoil. Williams thought the expulsion of his friend, Howard White, was not justified.¹⁰ Williams' Yale autograph album of 1828 indicates that he, too, was one of the leaders. Williams, himself, escaped expulsion and he, along with most of the freshman class, declared a strike and went home for the rest of the summer. This was strong action and the Yale administration averted further trouble by agreeing to watch the food quality more closely. But the expelled students did not return to Yale and the challenge to the college authorities ultimately failed.¹¹

Classmate comments in his autograph album indicate that Williams had earned the respect and friendship of his peers for his resolution, leadership, and honesty in the difficult time. A classmate from Kentucky wrote to Williams saying, "You have proved yourself a man of firmness and decision in this late struggle."¹² Williams did not, however, participate in any other acts of rebellion at Yale.

Another participant in the clash was Williams' friend, Henry Wikoff. Fortunately for Williams, he did not have all the carousing habits of Wikoff who ultimately was dismissed from Yale for missing chapel services and being caught with an unescorted female acquaintance. Wikoff left Yale and finished at Union College the same year that Williams finished at Yale in 1831. Williams' friendship with the amiable

Philadelphian continued and for several years after college they were frequent traveling companions.¹³

Williams' graduation year was an important one in his life. He reached his majority in that year and the inheritance of \$75,000 as his share of his father's estate was finally his.¹⁴ On the surface, the future indeed must have seemed bright for the Yale graduate. At the age of twenty-one, Alpheus had not only cultivated his mind but he also was meticulous about his appearance. The dapper young man dressed in a manner which he believed fit his social station. He was five feet seven and a half inches tall, solidly built, and had a friendly appearance. His oval face projected amiability--a broad, high forehead with a small nose and a clean shaven rounded chin. His mouth was small and he smiled frequently and easily. His blueish-gray eyes sparkled when he talked. His hair caused him some concern when, even at this early age, his chestnut colored hair began to recede. An early portrait shows it thin on top but luxuriant on the sides of his head.¹⁵

The months following commencement were less enjoyable than he had hoped. Upon returning to Deep River he found that his brothers and uncles planned to carry on the family manufacturing business. After contemplating his future, he decided on a career in law, moved to New York City in the fall of 1831 and began reading law with Mr. Wyliss Hall, the same legal mentor Henry Barnard had. As Blackstone's weighty legal volumes were not his favorite reading,

Williams became a reluctant law student, easily distracted from his legal studies. Much more interesting was the social life around him.

On 1 November 1831 Williams began keeping a journal. This was not his first attempt at a written record of his daily life. Beginning at age twelve, he kept a journal for several years. Then he lost it and during college fell out of the habit of keeping a journal. Now he resolved to be more conscientious, explaining that his purpose was to fix more firmly in his mind "everything worthy of remembrance" and to produce "a subject of pleasant perusal at some future period."¹⁶ His early entries were quite regular and reveal much about his life.

Early in November 1831, Williams was left to study on his own when Hall went away for a time. When he found that he could not understand the legal treatise he was reading, he went to the theater. While his mentor was out of town he could not bring himself to study. Then his brother, Frederick, enroute to Matamoros, Mexico, visited him briefly. Williams feared for his brother's safe return and, upon his departure, became depressed and melancholy, ever more aware of a burning loneliness. "I part from him," he wrote when Fred left, "with more bitter feelings as I am in this detested city without friends or relatives."¹⁷

To snap out of his melancholia Williams occupied himself with other things. Under the tutelage of an elderly black fighter he took up boxing.¹⁸ He started to read more and undertook the study of French. He also began making

regular appearances in theaters and concert halls. He considered himself to be something of a critic of the arts and, in his journal, he frequently evaluated the performances he saw. Commenting on a portrayal of Hamlet, he wrote that the actor's "action was admirable. His voice has some faults which if he remedies will leave him one of the stars of the day."¹⁹ Another critical comment was his assessment of Handel's "Messiah." Williams seemed to have a personal musical ideal by which he could measure a performance's quality. For example, he wrote:

The piece was upon the whole well performed. The solos admirably. A number of choruses I had heard before. They had a powerful band both of vocal & instrumental performances. I think too much so for the perfect execution of the music. So many fiddlers and blowers. . . distract and confound every thing [for] both hearer and actor. Destroy time and harmony. One might as well go in to a thundershower for music. . . .²⁰

When the theater and concerts failed to cheer him, Williams turned introspective. Seeking solace in his religion, he began extensive reading in the Bible. But his depression continued. Failure to keep the Sabbath, as sometimes happened, left him with feelings of guilt. In a comment on his irresoluteness, he wrote: "I passed the day reflecting upon my own sin and backsliding--resolved to live better--but resolutions in themselves are weak."²¹

The Thanksgiving season helped to cheer him up. So did a welcome respite from New York when he visited Deep River to attend his brother's wedding. Renewing his family ties and visiting his college friends improved his mood, and

he returned to New York with a resolve to do better in his legal studies. But his bouyancy did not last long. By early December he was again bored with his work. He purposely wrote an illegible answer to one of Mr. Hall's assignments, hoping never to get another like it.²² As the year ended, Williams, still lonely and restless, speculated upon the prospects for the new year and hoped that 1832 would be more rewarding than 1831 had been.²³

By chance, he found a solution to his problem: travel. During the next four years he took a series of trips which broadened his interests, increased his circle of friends, revived his interest in politics, law, and the military, renewed his self-confidence, and contributed significantly to his education. From 1832 to 1836 Williams was, as Henry Wikoff characterized him, "an indefatigable traveler."²⁴

His first trip began in early January, 1832 when he went to Philadelphia to visit college friends. While there Williams decided to visit Washington, D.C. in the company of Wikoff. It was Williams' first trip to the national capital. They left on 17 January 1832 and arrived in Washington two days later. Williams was excited and chose to sit on the outside seat of the stagecoach so that he might get a better view. One of the first things he saw was the Capitol, which he described as "truly a magnificent building, fit to be the Capitol of this mighty Republic."²⁵ But in Washington architecture was not his sole concern.

He was keenly interested in politics, even at this early age, and he especially thrilled at seeing the political

greats of the nation in person. Not surprisingly, Williams' political heroes were Whigs. With his New England heritage and wealthy Federalist ancestors, it was only natural that he revere the likes of Henry Clay and Daniel Webster. His account of the trip speaks in reverent tones about the two men.

Williams' youthful and patriotic idealism was particularly evident when he visited Mount Vernon and saw George Washington's final resting place. In an eloquent passage Williams told his journal of one important reason for Washington's greatness:

Let every one who visits enjoy the stillness of the place to pour forth his love in thought & feel what it is to be a true patriot. Let him behold in the humble tomb before him the character of the person beneath when upon the earth. Let him feel that there is true greatness with humility. Let him see and feel deeply that a man can possess power, unlimited power & when his country needs no more his services he can resign all & seek the shades of quiet life & finally lay his body in as humble a vault as that of Washington. I plucked a bough from a cedar limb & left the consecrated spot with emotions indescribable.²⁶

To be sure, his revering of Washington reflected the political and intellectual climate of the 1830's. Nevertheless, he was completely serious about "true greatness with humility" which he came to regard as a standard by which to judge himself and others.

Williams' Whig political views were apparent in his descriptions of Henry Clay, Daniel Webster and John C. Calhoun whom he saw on a visit to the Senate. He described Clay and Webster with terms of approbation. Surprisingly, even

John C. Calhoun received some favorable comment. "Independence beams from every feature," Williams wrote of him.

"His voice is quick and powerful. He drives the business of the Senate. A worthy & efficient president of the Senate."²⁷

Williams also had some interesting observations about President Andrew Jackson, whom he met at a reception on 26 January 1832. He described the scene in his diary and in a letter to his friend, Henry Barnard. The group was in a receiving room and Alpheus was nervous. As he described it, "I began to draw in long breaths, pull at my collar, stick out the side locks, and settle my visage into a duelling fierceness! I was determined to look big and make an impression!!" While waiting in this attitude of "duelling fierceness" and being clumsy with excitement, he tripped, knocked over some chairs, and crashed to the ground in a heap just as Jackson approached. Recovering quickly, though embarrassed, he shook the President's hand and noted to himself that the President appeared more like a Connecticut farmer than a general. He noted that although Jackson seemed to be personally honest, he had been deceived by his advisers. Because of this, Williams regarded him as unfit for the presidency, as a "dotard" who could not accept any kind of political opposition.²⁸

In mid-February, after visiting the executive departments and seeing the sights, he returned to New York much refreshed by his travels. Once again he attempted to read his Blackstone but, as before, he found many sidetracks.

Reading for pleasure was one habit which Williams almost made a vice. Military history was one of his favorites. His critical comments on Cyril Thornton's Campaigns of the Peninsula War indicate that he was no war monger. He recognized that the book was written by a British officer and even after taking that into account, Williams excoriated Napoleon and his troops for their excesses.²⁹

His readings in the law with Mr. Hall again got short shrift and he began to think about his future. After his first trip with Wikoff and the entreaties of two other Yale classmates, Alpheus Coxe and Edward Waln, all of Philadelphia, Williams thought about leaving New York for good and staying in Philadelphia for several years.³⁰ But when his brother, Fred, returned from Mexico, Alpheus accompanied him on a visit home to Connecticut and then decided to go with him on a voyage to Mexico. Williams jumped at the chance to leave New York which he variously called a "detested mud hole," and a "den of all evils."³¹ It was his first opportunity to leave the country. In his diary, he penned his farewells to his hometown and to his legal studies and departed with the notation, "Alph's occupation is gone!"³²

His decision to go to Mexico was a hasty one. He did not have even very much time to pack his belongings. He did not really know what he was going for except for the adventure and the opportunity to leave New York. He and his brother set sail on the brig Texas on 24 April 1832.

In spite of the fact that Alpheus had sailed before on smaller ships, he became dreadfully seasick. He described his malady as the "double distilled quintessence of all illness."³³ The sea was incredibly rough and their progress was slow. They were blown off course a number of times and encountered several storms before the twenty-three day voyage ended when they anchored off Brassos St. Iago.

His first impressions of Matamoros, Mexico were unfavorable. Fifty rude shacks squatting in sand hills did not meet Alpheus Williams' standards of civilization. His prejudgments were evident when he described Mexican customs officers as "greasy."³⁴ He found the natives "much blacker" than he had expected "some two or three shades blacker than the North American Indians." The Mexican soldiers, he surmised, were all convicts and ranged from thieves to murderers.³⁵ During the course of his stay, he did modify his views somewhat.

On this two month trip to Mexico, Williams saw only the Matamoros area, never venturing more than a short ride from the port. His detailed descriptions of the place and the people reveal more about the provincial New Englander than about the Mexicans. In particular, his comments reflect his strict moral code, virulent anti-Catholic prejudice, hostility to military as opposed to republican government, and values which new experiences and personal observation were slow to change. At times, he was perceptive to the point of being prophetic.

Writing like many New England Protestants of the 1830's Williams easily made the link between the Roman Catholic religion and what he perceived to be moral turpitude. For instance, he wrote:

Every hut has its virgin Image placed before the bed and the Female who has just transgressed all laws of religion and morality will most devoutly cross herself at the shrine of virginity. Such are the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Religion. They are taught to live virtuously by the priests until married and then to indulge in every excess of sensuality. I have upon the whole formed this opinion of the Mexicans. There is not an honest man nor virtuous woman in the whole country. This is a sweeping³⁶ conclusion but all men of observation say the same.

Williams also expressed moral outrage at the sight of women smoking. They puff smoke, he wrote indignantly, "through their delicate noses with as much pleasure as the oldest male smoker of a dutch town. I have seen girls of 6 & 7 years old smoking."³⁷

Williams did not apply his moral standards consistently, nor did he recognize the duplicity of his own conduct. He noted on several occasions that he had a most gratifying time watching the young Mexican girls as they bathed nude in the Rio Del Norte.³⁸

Williams became more and more impressed with the Mexican women and especially the beauty of the Indians. The ideas of a "noble savage" were evident as he described the native Mexican Indians and assessed their level of culture. He decried what he considered to be the contaminating influence of the "hell-hounds of Spain."³⁹

That foreign and European influence led Williams to speculate on the existing Mexican political state. He thought that the Mexican republic was most despotic and compared the despotism to that of Turkey. "The people," he wrote, "are completely subjected to military rule."⁴⁰ Foreign influence, he feared, was a plague on the Mexican people. And that, combined with corrupt political officials, destined Mexico for war and social upheaval.⁴¹

Not all of Alpheus Williams' impressions about Mexico were negative. He had come to admire the beauty of the women and the industriousness of the Indians. He was equally impressed by Mexican horsemanship which he categorized as unequalled in the world.⁴² Williams also developed an affinity for the Spanish language and he began to learn it. Late in June 1832, he expressed regret at having to leave Mexico.

The trip back to New York was not an easy one. They encountered a terrible storm off Cape Hatteras and almost wrecked. After thirty days at sea, the Texas sailed into New York harbor on 21 July 1832. But upon his arrival, Williams discovered that New York was in the midst of a great cholera epidemic, so he sought refuge with family and friends in Deep River, Connecticut.

Enroute home Williams ran into his legal mentor in New Haven. Hall, who was also avoiding New York until the epidemic had run its course, asked Williams how his studies had progressed. Williams replied that he had read a great

deal on his trip but confessed that it was not in Blackstone. He resolved to renew his studies in the winter.⁴³ Actually, however, he spent the next eight months living on his inheritance, calling on college friends, and visiting his family.

Williams once again grew restless. He renewed his friendship with Henry Wikoff and they planned another travel adventure, this time to the southern United States. Leaving New York in April 1833, they arrived eight days later in Charleston, South Carolina.

Wikoff was happy to be once again traveling with his old college chum. He described Williams as "amiable, intelligent, and free from all vice."⁴⁴ Although both men had similar Northern educations and came from well-to-do families, they reached entirely different conclusions about the South in general and about Southerners in particular. Wikoff expressed a natural affinity for the planter class of the South and was ambivalent toward the South's "peculiar institution."⁴⁵ Williams, on the other hand, began with an anti-Southern prejudice and this first extensive tour of the Southern states served to heighten his ill-feeling toward the section.

Since Williams arrived in Charleston shortly after the Nullification Crisis, one might expect the young Connecticut Whig to have strong feelings against the state. And indeed he did! He found the city to be "somber and gloomy," a sharp contrast from the fresh and bright appearance of

Northern towns.⁴⁶ When he toured an arsenal which he thought at first was a federal one and which later proved to be a state armory, Williams fulminated:

Nothing can be more ridiculous at the same time censurable than this display of arms and troops in opposition to the general government within sight of the U.S. fortifications. . . . If this is not levying and equipping troops which according to the statute falls within Treason--I know not what is.⁴⁷

Even the Southern belles did not escape criticism. With evident Yankee bias Williams wrote that "the Ladies as a general thing were inferior in point of beauty to northern ones."⁴⁸

Journal entries reveal anti-slavery proclivities which stopped short of abolitionism. The sight of a slave auction on a street in Charleston offended his Northern sensibilities. Slave mongering, he commented, "smacks too much of beast-selling." Since the slaves he saw appeared cheerful and happy, he denounced any incitement of a servile insurrection. In his opinion, an ill fated uprising would be the greatest disservice to the slaves.⁴⁹

In May Williams and Wikoff left Charleston, following the inland water route to Savannah, Georgia. On their steamer was General James Hamilton, who had taken a prominent part in the Nullification movement. In conversation with Hamilton, Williams learned that one of his cows was nicknamed "Nully." Turning to Hamilton's six year old son, he asked if they owned nullification cows. "'Yes,'" the lad replied, "'We would not have a Union cow on our plantation.'" On another occasion Williams overheard Hamilton ask one of his young

sons if he preferred English or Yankee cheese and the son quickly exclaimed, "English, of course." That the opinions of these young South Carolinians disturbed Williams is evidenced by this almost prophetic statement: "I am well assured that there is growing up in this state a generation which will despise our government from earliest childhood and finally effect its ruin without once knowing or entering into its benefits or its blessings."⁵⁰

Both Williams and Wikoff were impressed by Savannah, which struck them as very different from Charleston. The City Hotel where they stayed compared favorably with Northern hotels.⁵¹ From Savannah they headed upriver to Augusta, Georgia, and from there to Macon on a road that Williams regarded as "most unchristian."⁵²

The rest of their travels on this Southern adventure can, at best, be described as laborious. Both Williams' journal and Wikoff's reminiscences are filled with a plethora of muddy roads, bad hotels, delays, and bad food. Traveling to New Orleans in late May, they arrived only to find the city plagued with the ubiquitous cholera. Williams summed up his stay in the city as time not very well spent.⁵³ Their original plan was to head up the Mississippi River but when the discouraged pair heard that cholera was also ravaging St. Louis, they boarded a ship to New York.⁵⁴ Arriving in mid-June 1833, Williams had had his fill of Southernism and he resolved, once again, to study law.

Deciding against an independent course of study, Williams returned to Yale and attended classes at the School of Law. He was comfortable in the familiar New Haven surroundings, and passed the winter very agreeably. Then, in the spring of 1834, the Devil Incarnate (as far as Williams' legal studies were concerned) appeared in New Haven in the form of Henry Wikoff. Once again, the two planned another trip, this time through the western states.

In the middle of May Wikoff and Williams began their tour by traveling through Pennsylvania. It was Williams' first visit in the Mid-West. Traveling on the newly opened railroad between Philadelphia and Columbia, Pennsylvania, the two friends made their way to Harrisburg. Williams was favorably impressed with the city and, with Wikoff's letters of introduction, the pair spent an afternoon talking with the governor of Pennsylvania. Calling on the governor and talking Whig politics over a glass of wine indicate that Wikoff and Williams were not just common tourists. The principal subjects of their conversation were the Bank of the United States and internal improvements.⁵⁵

Delighted with their stay in Harrisburg, Williams and Wikoff headed for Pittsburgh. As they approached the city which Williams called "Vulcan's Shop," the two first were struck by the smell of the fires. After a few days, he came to see the beauty of the area. He toured a military arsenal

and climbed a hill overlooking the city and, except for the omnipresent bituminous coal smoke, he thought Pittsburgh was a beautiful place.⁵⁶

The beauty of the Ohio River made the greatest impression on young Williams. They traveled down the great river to the Mississippi which they followed to St. Louis, their western destination. After a brief stay in mid-June 1834, Williams and Wikoff headed back north up the Ohio River.⁵⁷ The natural beauty inspired Williams' literary artistry:

While upon the Ohio we had some magnificent sunsets and one grand hail storm--which sent down stones of the size of hens eggs--throwing at the water like a rain of beach stones. The crew collected a large number of these frozen rocks. I had never before seen any thing of the size in hail. During the storm a most splendid bow rested one foot of its arch upon the river while the other gradually faded away in the distant heavens. It was a most beautiful sight, heightened not a little by the distant roaring of the river & rattling of the hail stones among the woods. . . . The sunsets on this river are not less beautiful or interesting. The abrupt bluffs or gradual sloping banks terminating in high hills throw their deep shades on the smooth and glassy surface of the river--contrasting sharply & beautifully with the reflected heavens and its fleecy and variegated clouds as they are lighted by twilight. The stars one by one make their appearance and are reflected back from the unruffled stream and shapeless clouds of all colors, sizes, forms & features, I have never seen anything more beautiful or picturesque than some of these sunsets on the Ohio.⁵⁸

While on the Ohio river steamboat, Alpheus noted some social tendencies which clashed with his patrician decorum. Specifically, he objected to the boat hands and cooks playing cards in the public cabin. On board ship, he thought, "there is rather too much republican equality."⁵⁹ He attributed it to the democratic tendencies of wilderness life.

The remainder of this brief western tour was uneventful. They returned to the east coast by traveling overland from Louisville through eastern Kentucky and western Virginia. Wikoff returned to Philadelphia and Williams reached New Haven in July 1834. For Williams, renewing family and friendship ties took precedence over continuing his legal studies.

During that summer, Henry Wikoff made more progress in the law than Williams.⁶⁰ For Williams, his chosen profession remained a specter. In the late summer, Wikoff went to New York City to attend a farewell dinner for his friend and fellow Philadelphian, Edwin Forrest.⁶¹ Forrest, a prominent American actor, was leaving for an extended tour of Europe. This dinner marked the genesis of another travel scheme. Immediately, Wikoff sought a travel companion and contacted his friend in Connecticut. Williams did not ponder Wikoff's proposal very long. Instantly, they set out planning and preparing for their version of the "Grand Tour."

The pair spent September 1834 in preparation. Williams obtained his passport and Wikoff took charge of securing letters of introduction. Taking advantage of family social status and political connections, Wikoff got a series of letters including one from Vice-President Martin Van Buren.⁶² They began their new adventure as they boarded the packet, Silvie De Grasse, in New York on 16 October 1834.⁶³ Their destination was Paris.

Paris served as the home base for Williams on his European trip. Wikoff and Forrest were his main travel

companions in the early months; but later, Henry Barnard joined Williams and the two Connecticut friends completed their tour of the Continent. Williams stayed in and around Paris from his arrival on 11 November 1834 until mid-February 1835. Then, Williams, Wikoff, and Forrest began a ten week tour of Italy during which they visited Rome and most of the major cities of the north and went as far south as Naples. In May 1835, Williams and Wikoff went to England and Ireland and Barnard joined them in London. Williams and Barnard returned to the Continent alone and began a lengthy tour of Belgium, the Germanies, northern Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, the northern German principalities, and finally, the Netherlands.⁶⁴

The Grand Tour was the culmination of his educational and social aspirations. He learned a great deal in the travels and, as in the case of his other journeys, his letters and journal entries reveal much about his character and interests in life.

Williams often expressed his interests in economic matters. Coming from a family of merchants and manufacturers, he frequently suggested tours of manufacturing establishments along the route. In Lyon, France, for example, Williams was impressed with the products of the silk industry but he was appalled by the working conditions and the low wages of the silk workers.⁶⁵ When he toured England, Williams was very interested in seeing the booming manufacturing cities of Birmingham and Sheffield. A tour of the coal

mining district at Newcastle was also on his list of places he found to be very interesting.⁶⁶

Socially, Williams and his companions moved in the circles of the wealthy class. They stayed in many of the best hotels and often dined sumptuously. Williams reached a high point early in his travels when he was introduced to King Louis Phillipe and the French royal family at a reception in the Tuileries. Wikoff engineered the introduction by approaching Edward Livingston, the United States Minister to France, with his letters of introduction. The contrast between the regal and ostentatious dress of many of those present and the severe appearance of the Americans in black coats and white ties struck Williams as being novel. After a brief conversation with the "King of the French," Williams looked around the room and mentally noted his impressions. The Connecticut Whig made a comparison to the court of "King Andrew" when he wrote, "This Republican King is like our own, not altogether an enemy of the show of power." Williams confided in his journal, "Retired at 12 o'clock and dreamed of thrones & potentates & power."⁶⁷

In addition to social concerns, Williams gloried in cultural pursuits available in Europe. In Paris, he renewed his study of the French language and, for a brief time, wrote his journal in French. He took dancing lessons and regularly attended gala balls. Wherever there was an opera, Williams and his friends usually attended. His letters and journals abound with descriptions of beautiful paintings

and sculpture in the museums of the Continent. For the sixteen months of his European trip, Williams reveled in the artistic collections of the National Gallery, the Pitti Palace, and the Louvre.⁶⁸

Besides the many museums, Williams toured numerous cathedrals and his Protestant inspired comments are revealing. As before in Mexico, his strong anti-Catholic prejudice was evident. Williams approached St. Peters in Rome, in his words, "prepared for disappointment."⁶⁹ But as he got closer and went inside, he was amazed at the size and beauty of the place. The art and architecture overwhelmed the young Protestant but the glories of St. Peters did not convert Williams to Catholicism. Williams was most critical when he witnessed Catholic religious ceremonies and acts of faith. For instance, in one entry in his journal Williams wrote, "Went to the Ceremony of Ash Wednesday to see the Pope throw ashes on the Cardinals. Good deal of Flummery. Pope [is] a clever looking fellow."⁷⁰ A few days earlier Williams had gone to the church of St. John Lateran and on viewing the holy stairs he wrote in an anti-Catholic vein, "All good Catholics entering the chapel are compelled to mount this stair case on knees, some 40 steps. I saw well dressed persons performing this humiliating & foolish penance."⁷¹

Williams had abandoned, at least while he was in Europe, his formerly intense religious feelings. No longer did he brood about missing church services or mention his daily

Bible readings. His Sunday activities in Europe were more determined by what was going on around him than a strict Sabbatarianism. On one Sunday, as an example, Williams went with Wikoff and their former Yale classmate, Edward Waln, to a "Combat Des Animaux" outside of Paris. There in an arena fighting dogs savagely attacked a bear, a wolf, a bull, and a jackass.⁷² Such Sabbath desecration would not have been accepted in Deep River, Connecticut. Also, during his European sojourn, the only churches Williams mentioned visiting were the ones he admired for their art and architecture and not for their religious services.

Two other aspects of Williams' European travels reflect his emerging life interests. One was a continuing affinity for politics and the other involved his military interests. Each time he was in London he made a point to visit the House of Commons to hear Daniel O'Connell and Robert Peel whose debates inspired him.⁷³ Williams also avidly kept up on American politics by frequently visiting a reading room which subscribed to U.S. newspapers.⁷⁴

Williams' journal entries reflect a familiarity with European military history and a particular interest in the French military experience. He toured various battlefields, visited arsenals and military museums, and proved to have a considerable knowledge of weaponry. He thought he could distinguish between good and bad soldiers on sight and he placed great stock in appearances and military bearing. He was most impressed by the Austrian and French forces. On

the other hand, he criticized the appearance of soldiers in an Italian town who "looked dirty in old gray uniforms trimmed with green with a common chapeau turned up at sides--fit for Falstaff's ragged Regiment."⁷⁵

Throughout his trip to Europe Williams revealed, in letters and journal entries, a keen sense of history. His diary and letter writing indicates a personal attempt at keeping historical materials. In an early letter to Barnard, Williams instructed his correspondent to keep all the letters for him so that he might have them on his return.⁷⁶ In those documents are descriptions of various churches, cities, and antiquities which reflect his classical education and reading in European history.⁷⁷

Alpheus Williams returned to the United States on 25 April 1836. He had seen the glories of European civilization and took advantage of all that travel on the Continent had to offer. He had met a king and had been introduced to princes. He had seen the museums and great cathedrals of Europe. With all this behind him, Williams contemplated his future. What did he do? The Connecticut Yankee went to Detroit!

CHAPTER II Early Detroit Years 1836-1840

Exactly why Williams went to Detroit in the summer of 1836 is difficult to determine. There is nothing in his extant letters and papers explaining why he chose the city on the narrows for a place to settle permanently. None of his close Yale friends was there before him, nor did he have relatives in the city. Most likely, Williams was caught up in the urge to move west, and, like many other New Englanders, decided to settle in Michigan.

Although Williams had never visited the Michigan Territory, he knew something about the region. On one of his trips to the South during 1833 he ran into John T. Mason who was a friend of Andrew Jackson and who had been appointed Secretary of the Michigan Territory for the year 1830-1831. At the time of their meeting, Mason's son, Stevens T. Mason, was the acting governor of the Michigan Territory.

Another possible reason why Williams settled in Detroit deals with his attitude toward finally finishing his legal studies. He returned from Europe determined to study law again. Practicing law on the frontier probably appealed more to Williams than staying in the East. Also, it is likely that he finally realized that he had to have some way to make a living as his inheritance must have been greatly depleted from the travels of five years.

Michigan in 1836 was an exciting place for a sensitive young man interested in politics and military affairs. Michigan's capital at that time was Detroit and the territory

was emerging from a long and hotly debated fight to obtain statehood. Indicative of the rapid growth, the Michigan Territory population in 1834 was 87,278 and just three years later when Michigan achieved statehood, the population had exploded to 174,619.

Detroit's population in 1836 at the time of Williams' arrival was about 8,000. It was a booming, growing commercial city: hundreds arrived daily and thousands of acres of land were sold at Detroit land offices as the new Michiganians moved inland and began to settle the territory.

Detroit had very little industry then and it was most important as a port and entrepôt center. Commercial activity naturally gravitated to the area close to the river and businesses and homes sprang up along the intersecting streets of Woodward and Jefferson Avenues. The streets were, for the most part, unpaved and the new settlers often complained of the mud. The population of Detroit was a *mélange*. Historian George N. Fuller characterized early 19th century Detroit as possessing the cosmopolitan air of a much larger city.¹ New arrivals often heard French and German spoken in the streets. The city buzzed with optimism.² Detroit in 1836 was precisely the kind of place that attracted New Englanders who had aspirations of greatness!

Not long after Williams arrived in Detroit he joined the local militia company--the Brady Guards. The Brady Guards were named after General Hugh Brady who had served with distinction during the War of 1812 and was a local resident and the commander of the army's Third District.

Williams joined the Brady Guards in November 1836 and this was the beginning of a citizen soldier career which was to last thirty years. Private Williams learned the basics of army drill in the company of his Detroit friends.

Most of the time the Brady Guards served as ceremonial soldiers. Dressed nattily in their blue coats and white pants, they prided themselves upon their appearance. They served regularly as the honor guard when dignitaries visited the city. They had an annual encampment and often associated with the members of the U.S. army garrison at Detroit's Fort Wayne. On holidays and anniversaries of various battles, the Brady Guards exchanged visits with militia companies from other cities like Buffalo and Cleveland. Their band was reported to be one of the best of any militia company in the nation. But having a good band was not the real test of the quality of a fighting unit. Unexpectedly, the Brady Guards, including Private Williams, played a role in the Patriot War of 1838-1839.

The abortive Canadian Rebellion of 1837 had many supporters in the Great Lakes state. Some Michiganians were in a fighting mood, especially since the "defeat" at the hands of their southern neighbors in Ohio during the so-called Toledo War. The lake and border cities like Cleveland, Buffalo, and Detroit served as places of refuge for the Canadian "Patriots," many of whom were followers of that diminutive firebrand, William Lyon Mackenzie. The American border city Democratic newspapers sometimes portrayed Mackenzie and his followers as leading a democratic

revolt against the close-knit group of Upper Canada's aristocratic leaders who had acquired the sobriquet of the "Family Compact." In Jacksonian America the cause of Democracy versus Aristocracy was bound to gain support of some Americans, especially those along the Great Lakes who wanted to annex Upper Canada as a new state. There was also in Michigan strong anti-British sentiment, a hold-over from the War of 1812.³ Detroit's Democrats were particularly vulnerable and inclined to support the Patriot cause. However, both President Van Buren and Governor Stevens T. Mason issued harsh warnings against American citizens who gave material and physical support for the Canadian rebels. This pledge of neutrality to Canada made the movement an illegal one and its American supporters became more cautious, at least, so it appeared. In reality, the movement had gone underground and a plan of action was discussed in the secret "Hunter's Lodges."⁴

A distinguished Michigan historian, Willis Dunbar, described the Patriot War of 1838 and 1839 in terms of its futility. It was an unfortunate affair for almost all concerned. The armed violence began on 3 January 1838 when a large cache of weapons was stolen from the jail in Detroit. Williams noted in his journal the "great excitement in the streets on Canadian matters."⁵

This armed conflict affected Williams in other ways. Most importantly, General Brady recommended that the Brady Guards be mustered in as U.S. troops to deal with the situation. Accordingly, on 5 January 1838, Private Williams

of the Brady Guards in Captain Isaac Rowland's Company took an oath pledging loyal service to the government for three months.⁶ At last, Williams was a soldier!

Williams' duty, like that of most common soldiers during any war, was not glamorous. He shivered through his first night on guard duty as a sentinel protecting a powder magazine in the city. About half of Captain Rowland's company travelled to Dearborn to stand guard at the arsenal there. Williams stayed in Detroit for a few days and as a citizen soldier in his own hometown, he was able to sleep at his home and spend evenings socializing.⁷

In the first real action of the war, when the main effort of the Patriots and their American supporters headed south, Williams headed north. A group of men seized a ship in Detroit and sailed down the river toward Canada. Williams estimated the force at 300 but it turned out to be less than half that number. Their efforts to attack Canada were thwarted when the ship ran aground after British gunners destroyed its mast. Shortly after this Canadian forces captured the rebels involved in this raid.⁸

While this was going on Sergeant Andrew T. McReynolds led a mission to secure arms for the Detroit defenders from Fort Gratiot at Port Huron. The real enemy on this expedition was the bitter Michigan winter. Their ship, the Macomb, ran aground in Lake St. Clair, delaying their arrival at Fort Gratiot until late the next day. With the weather, in Williams' words, "cold as Greenland,"⁹ they

left Gratiot on the 11th but got stuck in the ice. When the prospects of continuing on the lake became impossible, the group returned to shore and proceeded to haul their cargo of two cannon and some munitions overland. The laborious effort took two days. They reached Detroit on 13 January.¹⁰

With the first action over and the added arms from Fort Gratiot, the Brady Guards spent most of their time on guard duty waiting to be relieved by regular army troops. Late in January Williams served as a guard at the Dearborn arsenal. On 27 January, three army companies arrived in Detroit from Buffalo and relieved the Michigan militia from their military duties. The entire unit was mustered out of service on 4 February, bringing Williams' citizen-soldier career to an abrupt halt.¹¹

The additional federal troops solved security problems along the Michigan-Canadian frontier for only about three weeks. During February the Patriots planned their next attack. Late in the month, on the 24th, the Bradys again served in the action. Williams estimated that the Patriots had about two hundred in their band this time as he headed south to Ecorse. The Patriots had concentrated their forces on Fighting Island in the middle of the Detroit River. The next day the British attacked in force and the Patriots suffered about 25 percent casualties. With such high numbers of killed and wounded, the irregular band broke ranks, took to the ice, and ran for the safety of the American shore.

But the Brady Guards and the federal troops were waiting and they disarmed and arrested the self-proclaimed Patriots.¹²

The next day, Major General Winfield Scott made a triumphal entry at Detroit. Amid great fanfare, the commanding general praised the Brady Guards, indicated that the unit had done its duty efficiently, and declared that it deserved "the thanks. . . of the country."¹³ Brigadier General Brady also commended the Guards for their discipline and efficient service.¹⁴ Williams noted Scott's arrival and was among the contingent of the Brady Guards which called on the general later in the week.¹⁵

The short service during the Patriot War was an appropriate and representative introduction to military life for Detroit's aspiring citizen soldiers. Williams endured the physical hardships of standing guard in winter weather and hauling heavy cannons overland. Part-time soldiering did have its attractions; one of which was, unquestionably, the excitement of the thing. The Michigan militia and the U.S. Army troops were, after all, merely a peace keeping force whose mission was to insure American neutrality.

In spite of these limitations, Williams certainly benefitted from his service. He learned things about drill and army life. He, for the first time, worked as a volunteer in conjunction with regular U.S. troops. He made the acquaintance of the leading U.S. military thinker of his

day--Winfield Scott. And also, he was involved in an event which to him seemed significant in national affairs at that time. Williams was disappointed only by the short service.¹⁶

Williams had been in Detroit almost two years before he acquired some visible means of economic support. All along he had studied law, as his journal indicates, but his inheritance had provided financial security. In 1838 he became a lawyer, but by a somewhat inscrutable process. He was first admitted to the bar in Washtenaw County and then transferred to the Wayne County bar which recognized the Washtenaw admission on 27 December 1838.¹⁷ Nothing in Williams' papers indicates that he ever lived in Washtenaw County.

Williams began his legal practice in partnership with two fellow Detroiters, Lewis Allen and John G. Atterbury, interesting men who became his close friends. Atterbury, one year younger than Williams, was a Yale graduate, but Williams had not known him in New Haven. Atterbury was also a member of the Brady Guards. Of the three, Allen was the best lawyer and the only one to continue in the law throughout his life. The firm focused largely on real estate, probate, and business law. There is no evidence that Williams ever handled a criminal case. Williams was very good at writing legal jurisprudence. His attentiveness to details enhanced his writing abilities.

Williams was more interested in politics than in law. Like many others, he used his legal profession as a means

to get elected. Williams was very active in Whig politics in Detroit. In his analysis of the early history of political parties in Michigan, Floyd B. Streeter divided the Whig party into two factions--conservatives and radicals. He described the conservative Whigs, led by William Woodbridge, as the wealthiest people in the party. Most came from New England and were adamantly opposed to alien influence in America. The radical Whigs, Streeter asserted, were "ambitious young lawyers," usually from upstate New York, and were strongly anti-slavery.¹⁸ Williams' Whig political views do not fall neatly into one or the other of Streeter's categories. They were more complex. His Federalist heritage and aristocratic social outlook placed him among the elite of Detroit. His opposition to the Democratic party was deep and long standing. Williams was a moderate who maintained his party loyalty while the radicals and conservatives broke ranks over their special interests.

Williams rejoiced at the "revolution" which the Michigan Whigs effected when they elected the new governor, William Woodbridge, in 1839.¹⁹ The economic problems following the Panic of 1837 hit Michigan very hard and the Whigs capitalized on it by soundly defeating the Democrats in both state and local elections. The real excitement for the Whigs came in 1840. Williams often attended sessions of the state legislature and the Whig caucus. He also called on Governor Woodbridge on several occasions.²⁰ He

participated in Whig party organizational meetings in the early part of the presidential year. April and May 1840 witnessed log-cabin rallies in Detroit and Williams became an ardent supporter of William Henry Harrison for president. Following a Whig rally for Harrison in Toledo, he praised Harrison's demeanor on the platform. "He spoke fluently, gracefully, & impressively," Williams wrote, "leaving upon all minds a fine impression of his abilities as a speaker."²¹

As the election drew near, Williams went to Democratic party activities where the main speaker was Vice President Richard M. Johnson. Unimpressed, Williams summed up Johnson's three hour oration as "balderdash--twaddle all. Self, self, self, in bad English." The only thing Williams got out of the rally was a pair of broken spectacles when someone knocked him down in a fight.²²

Michigan Whigs held their greatest log cabin rally several days after the Democratic fete. Williams, caught up in the enthusiasm of the moment, estimated the crowd at between ten and twenty thousand. Williams benefitted from this activity in a very personal way. His fellow Whigs nominated him as the candidate for a four-year term as Judge of Probate in Wayne County. In late October, 1840, he campaigned on horseback all over the county. As the election approached, he was optimistic about beating his opponent, Cornelius O'Flynn.²³ His excitement grew as early returns indicated that he had a majority of 108 votes. But a problem developed in Hamtramck, where election

inspectors got drunk and lost a ballot box in the darkness as they stumbled back to Detroit. With a majority of only fourteen votes, Williams won his first election to public office.²⁴

Work was not the only thing which occupied Williams' time in Detroit. Williams' early years in Michigan were quite a social change in some respects. However, Williams still associated with the leading families of the Michigan capital. His growing circle of friends included those of the Brady Guards and the officers of Fort Wayne, those people in leadership positions in both political parties, and the ministerial and lay leaders of Detroit's churches. Williams' entries in his journal during this early period in Detroit reflect a renewed interest in religion. He frequently read the Bible and tried to maintain a regimen of a chapter a day as part of his reading routine.²⁵ He attended church much more frequently than he did during his traveling years and joined Detroit's Protestant Episcopal congregation. Williams' new religious life in Detroit reflected an ecumenism which was not present before and illustrates a growing sense of toleration in the man. He frequently attended the religious services of other denominations. The Catholic Church was extremely influential in the early history of Detroit and it was a growing presence when Williams arrived. Williams had acquired many more Catholic friends and associates and his formerly virulent anti-Catholic attitudes were out of place. He modified his views though and even attended mass on occasion.²⁶

In spite of Detroit's frontier atmosphere, Williams was able to cultivate his mind with intellectual and cultural pursuits. He was a voracious reader. To keep abreast of political affairs he read several newspapers each day. Detroiters often saw Williams on the street with his pockets stuffed with the papers.²⁷ Indicative of the quantity and breadth of Williams' reading, besides newspapers, Williams read during a four month period:

(1) Plutarch's Lives, (2) Everett's Orations, (3) Thiers' French Revolution, (4) Irving's Life of Washington, (5) one volume of the Works of Thomas Jefferson, and (6) four volumes of Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.²⁸

Williams also engaged in other cultural activities. He attended concerts.²⁹ He tried to maintain his proficiency in French by conversing in the language with some of Detroit's many French residents. He wrote his journal in French for an entire year.³⁰ Williams also attended the meetings of the Debating Society and the Young Men's Society. These groups sometimes discussed military topics and Williams always had something definitive to say about the debates. In one instance at the Debating Society, the question was, "Is it politic in Republics to reward military men with civil offices?" Williams agreed with the affirmative consensus.³¹ Commenting on another occasion when some members of the Young Men's Society tried to compare favorably Wellington's greatness with that of Napoleon, Williams wrote, "One might as well compare the glow of a firefly to the glory of the sun."³²

Throughout his early years in Detroit he took pains to enrich his social life by increasing his pool of female acquaintances. Not long after he arrived in Detroit, Williams met a young widow named Jane (Jeanie) Larned Pierson, a daughter of Charles Larned, one of the leading citizens of territorial Michigan.³³ Her first husband had died shortly after their marriage. Attractive and vivacious, she had dark brown hair and warm brown eyes that contrasted beautifully with her smooth, pale white skin. Her oval face was somewhat plump. Like Williams, she enjoyed good conversation.³⁴

Despite a rigorous courtship, their love developed slowly. While Williams squired Jane, each of his law partners was also courting a Larned daughter. Atterbury directed his attention toward Catherine and Allen pursued Julia. Catherine and Julia were Jane's younger sisters. Eventually, all three couples married. Williams and Jane became engaged the day after New Years in 1838. And one year later, on 16 January 1839, they were married.³⁵

Their first year of marriage was a happy one. They lived at the large home of the bride's mother amid the bustle of an extended family. They spent evenings visiting friends and reading by the fireside. Williams busied himself daily with his legal work and with the Brady Guards. In August 1839, he spent two months on the East Coast. They visited Connecticut relations and engaged in much

"cousining" as they traveled the places of Williams' youth.³⁶ During the trip Jeanie became pregnant.

The first few years Williams lived in Detroit were meaningful ones. He arrived in the western city without friends and without a profession. And yet, by 1840, Williams had found both. He had every reason to be optimistic. Still, amid public success came personal tragedy and heartbreak. In late February 1840, his wife became ill and delivered a baby girl eight weeks prematurely. The little girl died shortly after birth.³⁷ Tragedy amid success became a recurring theme in Williams' eventful life.

CHAPTER III A Crucial Decade of Change 1841-1849

The decade of the 1840's was one of crucial change for Williams. In his thirties, he raised a family, won and lost political office, bought and sold a large newspaper, lost a fortune, served a second time as a citizen soldier, and ended the decade a widower with not much left except his honor. At the outset, Williams expressed his hope that the period would be a "ten year dance," but in reality, this dance ended with another dirge.¹

Williams and his wife recovered relatively quickly from the loss of their first child, and within a few months Jane was again pregnant. This time all went well and after a sleigh ride on a beautiful moonlight night in mid-January 1841, she delivered a fat, strapping baby boy. Williams noted the new arrival in the first journal entry he had made for several months.² Jane's father had died in 1834 before Williams had come to Detroit but his reputation and memories of him were alive in the hearts of many Detroiters. With the birth of his first son, Williams gave Charles Larned a namesake. Williams expressed hope that the infant would "inherit a portion of the talents that are associated with the name."³

During the next seven years four more children joined the Williams family. The second child, Irene, born in 1843 was named after Williams' sister and his beloved paternal grandmother. Frederick, named after Alpheus' brother, arrived in 1844, and Mary and Julia in 1846 and 1848 respectively.

Williams was a kind and loving father. He thrilled at close family ties and was extremely proud of his children. His journal and personal letters of the 1840's are full of detailed descriptions of family events and get-togethers. The most common activity was for the extended Larned family to spend evenings together reading and enjoying each other's company. While the Williams, Atterbury & Allen legal partnership ended in the 1840's, their family ties strengthened. Atterbury left his legal study and became a Presbyterian minister. Allen, after a brief sojourn in the Wisconsin Territory at Green Bay, returned to Detroit and continued practicing law. All three brothers-in-law were very close friends. As Williams deepened and extended his roots in Detroit, his links with family and friends in Connecticut diminished. By the end of the decade, 1840-1850, Williams had come to regard himself as a Michigan man.⁴

This was also a time of religious devoutness in his life. He read the Bible, attended church regularly, and was a founding member of the vestry of the city's second Protestant Episcopal congregation. He and his family were among the first communicants of Christ Church, whose doors opened in 1845.⁵ Occasionally, Williams and his wife attended church services of other denominations, and were especially fond of Reverend George Duffield's Sunday evening services at Detroit's 1st Presbyterian Church. Once in a while, Williams attended Catholic mass, perhaps to be with the enlarging numbers of his friends of that faith.⁶

Family concerns seemed to take precedence over his social life in the 1840's. Williams usually took advantage of cultural activities when he travelled to the east coast, as he did on several occasions. He continued his sailing and was a founder and president of the Detroit Boat Club, to which many of Detroit's social elite belonged.⁷

Williams also demonstrated leadership in his public life in the 1840's. He remained active in local Whig politics throughout the decade and during that time he experienced both victory and defeat at the polls. Williams began his political career at "the grass roots." With the office of Probate Judge already to his credit, he was again rewarded by his Whig friends on the Detroit city council. The Whig majority chose Williams as the city alderman for the fifth ward in April 1843 to serve the remainder of the term of a councilman who had resigned.⁸ Williams took his responsibilities as city alderman very seriously and seldom missed the council meetings. Above all else, Williams insisted on honesty in public officials. Late in his term in office when there were some questionable financial dealings by city officials, Williams demanded a complete and honest accounting and a thorough investigation.⁹

Williams might have had an additional motive in asking for the investigation of the possible embezzlement. He was the Whig nominee for Detroit's mayor in March 1844. The Democratic candidate, John R. Williams, successfully linked the corrupt city clerk with the incumbent Whig administration. As one result, John R. Williams won the election over A.S.

Williams with a vote of 835 to 697. Out of Detroit's six wards, the latter won only the ward in which he lived.

John R.'s 9 % victory margin can also be partly attributed to his fine reputation among Detroiters and the fact that he had been a lifelong resident and active city leader for twenty years. This was Alpheus Williams' first defeat in a popular election.¹⁰

John R. Williams' popularity was not sufficient to capture the city council and the Whigs still maintained a majority. The council recognized A.S. Williams' veracity and, as his probate judgeship had expired, appointed him Detroit's city judge, called "The Recorder."¹¹ When the editor of the Constitutional Democrat objected to the appointment and indicated that it was a "lucrative position," Williams responded publicly. "It will be news to most of our citizens," he declared, "that the office of Recorder is lucrative, in any other sense than occupying much of the time of the incumbent, in the Council and otherwise; for all which he receives [is] a small amount of fees when presiding in the Mayor's Court."¹²

Not long after Williams became the Recorder, he began to have financial difficulties. The root of the problem was the Bank of St. Clair, an institution with which he became associated in his first years in Detroit. The Bank of St. Clair, like many Michigan banks, got off to a feeble start. First, there was a dispute in 1836 as to whether the bank should be located in St. Clair or Port Huron. Second, between 1837 and 1839 its paid in capital increased

only from \$40,000 to \$50,000 while the banknotes it circulated jumped from \$60,000 to \$115,000. Third, in 1838 during the Patriot War the bank at St. Clair was too close to the border to suit the cashier of the bank, Wesley Truesdail, and he worried that the large gold reserves might attract a Patriot attack. Therefore, he persuaded the Brady Guard detachment which had gone to Fort Gratiot for arms to bring the gold to Detroit. Both Williams and George C. Bates (later a director of the bank) were on that expedition and, likewise, both were Truesdail's friends.¹³ In 1841, the directors of the Bank of St. Clair voted to move the bank and its operations to Detroit, and shortly afterward, in July, elected Alpheus Williams as president.¹⁴ He served in that capacity for three years. However, Williams' extant papers do not indicate that he spent a great deal of his time involved in bank affairs.

The turmoil of Michigan's financial problems in the 1840's affected Williams and the bank in very direct ways. The history of banking in the first decade of Michigan's statehood is extremely complex.¹⁵ William G. Shade, in a recent article on Michigan banks and politics from 1835 to 1845 refuted the facile explanation which Floyd Streeter offered in his book on Michigan political parties to explain the state's financial woes. It was not a simple case of Democratic opposition to banks and Whig support for them. In Michigan, and especially in Detroit, the bank issue was not one which was as ideologically divisive as in other

states. There were approximately equal numbers of Whigs and Democrats who favored government support for banks.¹⁶

However, Michigan's Governor John Barry was not one of them. Barry was particularly ardent in his opposition to unregulated banking. He proposed and signed legislation which tightened the previously lax controls of the state's free banking law and cracked down on banks which were not honoring their banknotes. Also, the state withdrew the charter of the State Bank. After his reelection in 1843, Barry continued his strict bank regulation policies.¹⁷

This, combined with the loss of confidence of large East Coast bankers who failed to honor most Michigan banknotes, spelled disaster. Many banks collapsed in 1845 including the Bank of St. Clair. The failure of it and many others that year left only three banks doing business in Michigan.¹⁸

Even though Williams had come from a wealthy family and had cultivated the gentlemanly appearance of being well-to-do, his association with the Bank of St. Clair marked the beginning of serious financial problems for him and his family. Williams tied his fortunes to the precarious nature of Michigan's economy in the mid-1840's and the capriciousness of free banking laws. In the end, he had lost out in his gamble. Publicly, he denied the accusations of the Free Press editor who criticized Williams' management of the bank and supported Governor Barry's bank policies.¹⁹ Williams wrote indignantly in May 1845, "We never had more than a nominal interest in the Bank, and do not own a dollar

of stock in any bank in the Union. So much for the fabrications of these measureless liars."²⁰ But privately, his actions spoke differently. In the next three years he mortgaged his house and borrowed heavily from both family and friends.²¹

Williams had the ideal forum to defend against the public attacks from the Free Press. At that time, he was the publisher and editor of the most influential Whig newspaper in Michigan, the Detroit Daily Advertiser. Williams wrote letters for publication in various Michigan newspapers after he arrived in Detroit and began negotiations to buy the Daily Advertiser as early as 1839.²² When Morgan Bates decided to sell, Williams bought it on the first of November 1843.²³ He published the paper until 1848.

The Detroit Daily Advertiser commanded a wide readership in the state and was the organ of the Whig party. Many historians cite the paper's editorials as documentation supporting their interpretations but very few, if any, give Williams the personal credit he deserves as the editor.²⁴ As a nineteenth century newspaper man, Williams was a natural. He was well educated, well read, and well travelled. He was an ardent political partisan in an era when the newspapers were overtly partisan. And probably most important, he was an excellent and persuasive writer.

The Detroit Daily Advertiser under Williams' tenure reflected much about his character and personality. One

factor in both was his loyalty to his friends and to his alma mater. The columns of the Advertiser contained a great deal more than comment on the political issues of the day. When any of his Yale classmates died, Williams was sure to include an obituary.²⁵ The editor of the Advertiser also included items regularly on Yale College and the careers of Edwin Forrest and Henry Barnard, two men whose main connection with Detroit was only Alpheus Williams.²⁶

The Advertiser columns also show the degree to which Williams was affected by military thinking. His writings in the editorial columns are full of martial imagery and military terms. This was particularly true in his political writings. He viewed politics as an ideological war and he promulgated political strategy like a general leading troops in battle. When reflecting on the Whig national convention in 1844 Williams wrote that "the Wolverine war-cry will be heard neither last nor least in the opening charge of the great Whig army."²⁷ And in an editorial entitled, "The Contest," Williams concluded a prescribed plan of attack for a Whig victory in the 1844 elections as follows:

Let us first rally the Old Whig Guard, that never surrenders and is not dead, and form its scarred veterans into Clay Clubs, in every village and township of the State. Let us devote the winter and spring to recruiting our numbers and disciplining our forces, in readiness for the summer and fall campaign. And finally at our Marshall [Michigan] mass meeting on the fourth of July next, let us pour forth the bugle blast, charge along the whole line, and neither give nor ask quarter, till the field is lost or won, forever!²⁸

The Advertiser's editorials reveal Williams' position on important issues of the mid-1840's. Recognizing that his paper was to set the standard for the majority of Whigs in the state, he seldom took a radical position. In the 1840's he personified the Whig side of the ideological conflict with the Democrats. Ronald Formisano, who analyzed that contest within the context of what he called "the authoritarian-laissez faire spectrum,"²⁹ summarized the conflict between the two parties:

The Whigs leaned toward an authoritarianism demanding compliance with certain community norms--just as they favored a paternalist national government acting to promote economic development. The Democrats preferred fewer restraints on individual and presumably enlightened self interest and tended to reject the Whigs' integrative approach whether in morals, religion, culture, or national political economy.³⁰

Like most Whigs, Williams did want government to take an active role in encouraging economic growth. As an ardent admirer of Henry Clay, he favored government funding of internal improvements and a high protective tariff.³¹ Williams' editorials reflected the political partisanship of the newspapers of that time. He blamed Governor Barry for Michigan's financial problems and attributed the bankruptcy of most of state government's departments to failures of the Democratic legislature and Governor Barry. In a closing doleful assertion, he wrote that "the Penitentiary appears to be the only flourishing department in the State."³²

State funded internal improvements like railroads and interior canals were a divisive issue in Michigan politics in the 1840's. But when the federal government could be tapped to finance the project, the Michigan Whigs and Democrats became surprisingly cooperative. River and harbor improvements and a canal around the St. Mary's Falls at Sault Ste. Marie were two types of projects that produced inter-party agreement on federal funding and drew strong support from the editors of the Detroit Free Press and the Daily Advertiser.

Williams was among the first to sponsor bipartisan public meetings urging Congress to appropriate money for building the canal and dredging the St. Clair Flats. Douglas Houghton, the state geologist and a friend of Williams, and Democrat Lewis Cass were leading supporters of those undertakings.³³ However, congressional and presidential support were slow in coming. Even Williams' political idol, Henry Clay, had expressed the view that the projects were too far reaching. Williams gave no publicity to Clay's critical comment that a canal at the Sault represented "a work quite beyond the remotest settlement of the United States if not in the moon."³⁴ One of Michigan's U.S. Senators at the time criticized Clay's statement and commented that he "ought to have known the country better."³⁵ The projects did not receive funding until the early 1850's and were not completed until later in the decade. Williams' early support for these important internal improvements shows his interest in promoting the economic growth of the state and nation.

By and large, his economic ideas were sectional in nature. His anti-Southernism was particularly evident when he addressed the tariff issue. His New England mercantile and manufacturing family background predisposed his support for a high tariff. He liked the moderately high Whig tariff enacted during the Tyler administration and credited it with bringing on a general prosperity in much of the country but not in Michigan. When the Congress debated the Democratic Walker Tariff, the editor of the Advertiser clearly demonstrated his disapproval of the lower tariff measure and the degree of his distaste for the South. He wrote in part:

The probable passage of a new (so-called) 'revenue tariff' is another startling proof of the entire control of southern politicians in Congress. The principle of the measure is directed pointedly against free labor. It is intended to break down the prosperity of the North for the benefit of slave interests. . . . The secret of all this truckling is that Southern politicians make the Presidents.-- Southern men stand up for what they conceive their sectional interests and Northern doughfaces yield like kicked curs and lick the hand that proffers them the 'crumbs of office.'³⁷

Williams' sectional ideas were also evident in his commentary on political and foreign affairs issues during the 1840's. The basis for most of Williams' attitudes on these issues was his view of slavery. Some of Williams' ideas about where slavery was leading the nation were perceptive and, like his views on nullification, even prophetic. Alpheus Williams was ardently opposed to the institution of slavery and a strong advocate of free labor.³⁸ But, at the same time, he was neither an abolitionist nor

an egalitarian. He harbored the same prejudices against Blacks that the vast majority of white Americans had in the middle of the 19th century. Williams' prejudice against Blacks which he expressed in the Daily Advertiser was much more subtle and moderate than the overt and virulent race hatred R.O. Harmon spouted in his columns of the Free Press. In addition to his anti-slavery position, Williams was very nationalistic. His positions on the specific issues in the 1840's often resulted from one of these two, anti-slavery or unionism, taking precedence over the other.

As an anti-slavery man, Williams can best be described as a gradualist. He favored the position which Cassius M. Clay supported--gradual emancipation based on constitutional change. Williams recognized that the task would be difficult and in an 1844 editorial he expressed his position, as usual, with a martial metaphor. "The real battle after all," he wrote, "is to be fought. . . not in the free North but in the slaveholding South."⁴⁰

What made the issue timely for the Whig editor was the fact that it was an election year and the Whig national convention was to be held in Baltimore the next month. Williams attended that convention not as a delegate but as a partisan observer. He wrote frequent letters back to Detroit to his wife and to the Daily Advertiser in which he described the important personalities and events of the convention.⁴¹

In his writings on the election of 1844, Williams made his views clear on the issues of American expansionism. In the era of "Manifest Destiny" the central issue of the election was expansion as represented by the Oregon question and the annexation of Texas.⁴² On the Texas issue Williams emphasized his Unionist, anti-slavery, and anti-Southern positions. And concerning Oregon, he cautiously asserted his nationalistic ideas in the form of a mild case of Anglophobia coupled with the complication of military chauvinism.

Henry Clay vacillated on the issue of immediate Texas annexation but Williams did not. Williams urged his fellow Michiganians to oppose the annexation because he believed it "to be in the highest degree dangerous to their rights, interests, and free institutions."⁴³ He had a low opinion of most people who had migrated to Texas and he abhorred their institution of slavery. Texas, he wrote for his Northern audience, "is filled with all the criminals, rogues, and vagabonds of the Union, and the system of Slavery has been fastened upon the country."⁴⁴ Williams feared that annexation would perpetuate slavery in the nation and strengthen the South's political hold on the federal government. He polarized the issue even more when he concluded, "It is now, in effect, a question between free and servile institutions."⁴⁵ Williams did not stress the fact that the annexation would likely result in a war with Mexico.

Williams was more equivocal on the Oregon issue. In one instance, he thought the Indians had the best claim to the territory; but because powerful nations like Great Britain and the United States had an interest in the land, might would prevail over right.⁴⁶ Because many Americans were settling Oregon, Williams thought it was inevitable that the territory would eventually become part of the United States. But he did not see the need for moving all the way west when so much good land, already within the U.S. boundaries and in particular, within Michigan, was unsettled. "We need more settlers ourselves," he wrote, "and we offer them as lovely and as desireable [sic] a country as was ever warmed and fertilized by the sun and dew of Heaven. Let us do nothing to send them beyond us to the distant and dreary regions of Oregon, to become half civilized companions of hunters, savages, and outlaws."⁴⁷ Canada had much more to offer the United States than Oregon, and the Detroit newspaperman speculated that it was "more likely" and preferable that Canada would be annexed.⁴⁸

Williams could not stomach the position of his fellow Detroiter, Lewis Cass, who was an ardent Democratic expansionist. Cass strongly supported the acquisition of Oregon. With a clearer understanding of what war with England would entail, Williams criticized the Democratic efforts to reduce the size of the regular army at a time when the government's actions concerning Oregon called for war with one of the most powerful nations in the world.⁴⁹

As the presidential election approached, it became apparent to many that it would be a close race. The Whigs under their perennial champion, Henry Clay, twitted the Democratic nominee by asking repeatedly: "Who is James K. Polk?"⁵⁰ The Whigs were overtly confident at a time when they should have been more introspective. One of their unforeseen difficulties in 1844 was the rise of the Liberty Party under the leadership of James G. Birney.⁵¹ Birney was a resident of Michigan, living in the area around Bay City, during Williams' tenure at the Daily Advertiser. Williams recognized early that Birney's Liberty Party could affect the outcome of the election in both Michigan and the nation. Shortly after Williams took over the Advertiser he wrote, "The formation of the 'Liberty Party' so called, is doing more at this moment than all other things combined, to perpetuate a slaveholding policy, or else break up the Union. . . ."⁵²

Williams greatly feared both the perpetuation of slavery and the disruption of the Union. His analysis of the role that political abolitionists ultimately played in the election of 1844 was astute. The Liberty Party, he stated, "unites the South in one solid mass of stern Hostility, while it throws the entire political power of the North into the hands of their Locofoco allies and their servants."⁵³ The outcome of the election in Michigan and in the nation verified his analysis. Michigan's five electoral votes went to James K. Polk. Polk polled 49.7% of the popular vote, Birney 6.5%, and Henry Clay 43.8%.

Polk's election, an anathema to Williams, prompted the Detroit editor to new heights of anti-Southernism and anti-Democratic rhetoric. Reflecting on Polk's first inaugural address, Williams wrote, "His administration is to be completely Southern. . . . If we do not greatly mistake the man and the shadows of coming events, the policy of Polk's administration will be distinguished for nepotism, Southernism, and most ultra Locofocoism."⁵⁴ When Polk declared that the Northern Democrats were "the natural and faithful allies of the South and of Southern interests," Williams denounced the speech as "a most foul and incendiary appeal to the selfish and sectional feelings of the South."⁵⁵

Williams' view of Polk as a selfish Southerner who was leading the nation to ruin was further reinforced by Polk's veto in 1846 of the river and harbor improvement bill. This issue of internal improvements, as indicated earlier, was one which Williams strongly supported. Williams cited Polk's veto as an example of sectional prejudice and economic discrimination against the North.⁵⁶

President Polk's actions in settling the Oregon dispute surprised the Whig newspaperman. In January 1846, Williams wrote to Michigan's Whig Senator, William Woodbridge, expressing doubts that the issue could be settled amicably.⁵⁷ Williams thought that the expansionist Democratic cry for "All Oregon" would mean war with Great Britain. Six months later Polk agreed to accept the terms of the proposed treaty, surprising Williams, in spite of the controversial 49th parallel as a boundary. Williams was pleased that Polk

backed down and that expansionists like Lewis Cass were, at least temporarily, defeated. A costly war with Great Britain had been averted.⁵⁸ But at the time Williams was writing, U.S. soldiers were fighting and dying in a war with Mexico which soon affected profoundly the life of Alpheus Williams.

President Polk had ordered General Taylor to occupy the territory between the Nueces River and the Rio Del Norte. Coupled with the annexation of Texas in 1845 and the unwillingness of the Mexican authorities to negotiate, this act resulted in military action. General Taylor's troops fought off the first Mexican attack along the Rio Del Norte in late April 1846.⁵⁹

When the war started, the Whigs, as the opposition party, found themselves in a difficult predicament. They could remember well what had happened to the Federalist Party after the War of 1812. Following that conflict, the Federalists, whose patriotism was seriously questioned in an era of emerging nationalism, ceased to be an effective national political party. Their opposition to "Mr. Madison's War" spelled their doom. The Whigs determined that this would not be the case in "Mr. Polk's War."

Almost all Whigs, including Williams, objected to the circumstances which surrounded the outbreak of the fighting, and they blamed President Polk personally for starting the war. Yet patriotism and political expediency induced many Whig Congressmen and Senators to vote for the war bill in

May 1846, even though they objected to its preamble which placed blame for the war solely on Mexico. Indeed, they continued to vote for appropriations to support the war effort. Congressman Abraham Lincoln of Illinois was one of the disaffected Whigs who opposed the war but voted for funds to carry it out.

At the outbreak of hostilities Williams and Senator Woodbridge, one of Michigan's senior statesmen, took similar positions on the war. Woodbridge illustrates the Whig dilemma well. Both he and Williams opposed slavery and viewed the war with Mexico as an effort to acquire additional slave territory. Yet Woodbridge voted for the declaration of war and appropriations to prosecute it. In letters to his son, Woodbridge tried to justify his actions. He questioned the U.S. claim to the Rio Grande as the Texas boundary and doubted that war existed, as Polk alleged, "by act of Mexico." He indicated, however, that he "did not feel at liberty to withhold. . .[his] vote for supplies," and that most Whigs in Congress felt the same way. "The whole matter," he observed, "is most unhappy & every way to be regretted--but we could not help it."⁶¹

In Michigan, as in New England, there was strong opposition to the Mexican War.⁶² The Michigan Whig press almost without exception opposed the war in degrees varying from mild objection to outright pacifism. The singular and striking exception was the Detroit Daily Advertiser. The

opposition press duly noted the Advertiser's position on the war and considered it a betrayal.⁶³ As the war progressed, the only real opposition in the Advertiser columns evident was occasional letters to the editor from a Detroit "Pacificus" or "Amicus Pacis."

A reader of the Advertiser was treated to glowing accounts of the military operations of Generals Zachary Taylor, "Old Rough and Ready," and of Winfield Scott, "Old Fuss and Feathers." After the U.S. victories at Buena Vista in February 1847 and at Cerro Gordo in April of the same year, the accounts became longer and more numerous.⁶⁴

Supporting the war did not preclude Williams from favoring the adoption of the Wilmot Proviso. "We want no more Southern territory," he asserted editorially, "and no further increase of its political power. We are the mere colony now of Mississippi bankrupts--made so by Northern cringing doughfaces," one of whom Williams considered Lewis Cass.⁶⁵

Williams best summarized his position on the Mexican War in an editorial on 3 March 1847, which reflected the concern of many moderate Whigs at the time:

We are in this war, and we do most ardently desire to see it conducted with that unrelaxing energy and determination that shall prove to the world that we are, at least, not a nation of imbeciles. We hope, therefore to hear soon of the advance of our troops and the consequent concentration of the enemy to defend the political and military centre of his power. The Administration rushed blindly into this war. It is high time it woke up to its successful prosecution.⁶⁶

Williams had a difficult time maintaining objectivity in covering the war. Probably the best explanation for this is his driving and continuing special interest in military affairs. As a citizen soldier with a vivid imagination and a thorough knowledge of military history, he chafed at the possibility that he might miss the opportunity the war presented to him personally. Williams wanted to fight.

Throughout the decade of the 1840's, Williams had maintained his connections with the militia. He had risen in the ranks of Detroit's Brady Guards and since 1843 he had been the unit's captain and leader.⁶⁷ He also took an active role in the Michigan State Militia. In 1844, Williams was a captain in the state militia and the secretary of its state convention.⁶⁸ Promoted to major during 1846, he assumed responsibility for the light infantry branch of the state's military arm. Having done an excellent job of training and drilling the state light infantry, Williams gained a colonelcy later in the year. As 1847 began, Colonel Williams aspired to command one of the regiments being raised to fight in Mexico.

The Michigan legislature caught the fever of "Mr. Polk's War" in January 1847, voted to raise a regiment of Michigan volunteers, and appropriated \$10,000 to outfit it.⁶⁹ On the same day that the Michigan House approved the war resolutions, seventy-five of the eighty-eight legislators (85%) signed a petition urging President Polk to appoint Williams its commander.⁷⁰ Such a recommendation, of course,

carried no guarantee, and Williams learned for the first time that commitment and dedication cannot compete in measuring military competence with the powerful nostrum of a West Point education. The command of the First Michigan Infantry Regiment went to a Flint man and West Pointer, Thomas B.W. Stockton. Williams accepted the number two position as lieutenant colonel.⁷¹

Most of Detroit's Brady Guards followed their captain and enlisted in the war against Mexico. Many of the regiment's officers were from the Bradys. Walter Clowes, an historian of Detroit's militia companies, cited the service of the 1st Michigan Regiment in the Mexican War as follows:

This regiment was mustered into service in October 1847, and accompanied the United States Volunteer Army into Mexico at Vera Cruz, and from there nine companies advanced as far as Cordova,⁷² which they garrisoned for several months. . . .

The wording of this statement is very precise. If not read carefully, one could easily conclude that the Michigan contingent, including Alpheus Williams, was with General Scott from the assault on Vera Cruz to the capture of Mexico City. The Michigan Mexican War veterans liked to give the impression that they had fought with Scott's troops. But this clearly was not the case. By the time Williams and the 1st Michigan took the oath entering federal military service on 17 October 1847, the fighting in Mexico, for all practical purposes, was already over.

Williams gained no battlefield experience in the war with Mexico. Time and circumstance dictated that Williams'

assignment would be garrison duty. Besides the slowness in the unit's organization, personnel and logistical problems forced the regiment to leave in two groups. Williams, as second in command, stayed behind in Detroit with two battalions as Colonel Stockton and the others left in late December 1847. Williams and his troupe of citizen soldiers did not leave Detroit for Mexico until 8 February 1848.⁷³ This was six days after Nicholas Trist, without authority, had signed the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The terms, however, were not yet public and neither Mexico nor the U.S. had approved the treaty. Williams continued on his way to Mexico.

While enroute and during his garrison duty there, Williams wrote his wife a series of lengthy letters which reveal a great deal about his feelings for his family and the military.⁷⁴ On the personal side, the letters reflect a warm and loving father who was greatly vexed by homesickness.⁷⁵ His comments on the military show his attitudes concerning (1) garrison duty and subordinate relationships and (2) his experiences as a military commander.

Williams and his detachment of two hundred men headed south through Ohio in cold February weather. When they reached Cincinnati, they boarded a river steamer and headed down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Williams remembered the beauty of the same trip he had taken earlier and contrasted it with what he now saw:

I think the banks of the Ohio have not improved much in the last 14 years. When I last saw them it was in mid-summer & everything was fresh and green and beautiful. Even the dirty, numerable log cabins were curtained by the thick foliage of the luxuriant soil. Now everything is bare and desolate & the very clouds are in keeping with the nakedness of this regrettable world. I can hardly fancy this to be the same Ohio I admired so much in my boyish days. Perhaps my own feelings give a dark line to the picture.⁷⁶

This melancholia illustrates a change in Williams. As a youth, he looked upon travel as an adventure. This time it was a duty and he was leaving behind a wife and family, heading off to an unpopular war. That he had some second thoughts about going off to fight in Mexico, and was no war lover, his letters make abundantly clear.

Williams and his men arrived in New Orleans on the last day of February. From the barracks there, Williams wrote his wife that he thought peace was imminent and that he would be home in about three months.⁷⁷ He disliked the heat and bureaucratic delay at New Orleans and was anxious to get off to Mexico to rejoin the rest of the regiment. While in the Crescent City, Williams learned that his regiment was "at Orizaba about 60 miles from Vera Cruz--a healthy place at the foot of the great Orizaba mountain & far enough from Vera Cruz to suit me unless we could go directly to the capital."⁷⁸

The first stop for the Michigan soldiers after leaving New Orleans was Vera Cruz. They arrived there on 11 March 1848 and received their marching orders to proceed to Cordova. Two days later, with Williams in command, a group of five

infantry companies and two troops of dragoons began the hot, dusty march west into the Mexican sand hills. Williams did not tell his wife about the possible danger in the movement to Cordova. Mexican guerrillas lined the route and not long before had savagely attacked U.S. troops in a similar wagon train. The Americans suffered high casualties. Although he intended to be reassuring, Williams probably created great anxiety at home when Jane received the letter which stated, "I shall remind you that it is better to die honorably than to live to entail upon my children a dishonorable name."⁷⁹ After he had arrived safely in Cordova without major incident, Williams revealed that the supply train he had been ordered to escort was also carrying a large cache of gold bullion--an ideal target for the guerrillas.⁸⁰ With a parade-ground soldier's concern for military ceremony, Williams neatly formed his command and, to the beat of the drum, marched into the city square. There he turned his troops over to Colonel Stockton and began his garrison duty in the Mexican town.⁸¹

The natural beauty of the area around Cordova amazed Williams. His glowing accounts contrast sharply to the poor impressions of Mexico left by his first visit. His experience was similar to that of another American in Mexico, Lieutenant Thomas Jonathan Jackson. Both were attracted to the natural beauty and Spanish culture and both endeavored to learn the language.⁸² Cordova, a settlement of about 3,000 inhabitants, was pleasantly situated at the base of

Mt. Orizaba in what Williams at first believed to be an extremely healthy climate.⁸³ He and the regiment stayed at Cordova until mid-June. The time they spent there was both pleasant and troubling. Williams quickly adjusted to the routines of military life and described them in detail for the benefit of his wife. Mornings had two drill periods and the late afternoon had one. Williams rose early, spent most evenings in his quarters, and retired about nine o'clock.⁸⁴ His evening hours were a time for quiet, introspection, and letter writing. In a letter to his wife he penned a remarkable description of some changes in his appearance. Before going to Mexico, Williams had gained some weight. Now, he wrote, his somewhat pudgy cheeks and nose supported his ever-present gold-rimmed spectacles.

Continuing, Williams wrote:

Behold a venerable bald headed gentleman sitting at a long table in a room in Cordova, table covered with papers. His face has not known a razor for six weeks & consequently a very ferocious beard has grown thereupon. The upper lip especially is decorated with a very bristly, whitish, greyish, redish beard or mustache. The neither [sic] lip. . . is nearly concealed. The said venerable gentleman is clad in a check shirt, a pair of military pants & a new morning gown--made just prior to quitting Detroit. He has no vest--such things being superfluous here. His room & furnishings have heretofore been described & they have not been changed save by the addition of a pair of very coarse linen (cheaper than cotton) sheets as a partial prevention of the myriad of flees [sic] that have possession of all Mexican tenements (I feel twenty on me now.)⁸⁵

While in Mexico, Williams developed a penchant for cigars and was frequently seen with an unlighted stub clenched between his teeth.⁸⁶

Throughout his tour of duty in Mexico Williams' health was generally excellent. His letters indicate only one week of stomach problems and he overcame the malady with a cure-all he described as "hot water & copious doses of morphine."⁸⁷ The rest of the Michigan volunteers were not so lucky. Disease ravaged the ranks worse than grapeshot at fifty yards. Of the regiment's 1,103 men who left the Wolverine state, over 200 died of disease in Mexico.⁸⁸ Colonel Williams felt heart broken at the dreadful loss of life among his soldiers.⁸⁹

As a commander, Williams was a stickler for discipline and drill. But he tempered his authoritarianism with a fatherly concern for his troops. He was pleased with the results and wrote home, "We have got on exceedingly well in drill and discipline so that I think there are few Regiments in service so short a time that excel the Michigans. They are exceedingly well behaved & treat the people here kindly."⁹⁰ Of course, part of this can be explained by the fact that the Michigan regiment arrived after the armistice.

As soon as they reached Cordova, the troops heard rumors of an impending peace treaty. Williams first learned that the treaty had been approved on 29 May 1848, and he prepared immediately for the march to Vera Cruz. Two weeks later, Williams penned his last letter home, beginning with the greeting, "Homeward Bound, Dearest Jeanie, Homeward Bound!"⁹¹

On the trek back to Vera Cruz a minor event occurred along the trail which reveals much about Williams as a sensitive leader who cared for his troops. He described the incident with his usual vivid imagery:

I was riding ahead to halt the command when I came suddenly upon a file of soldiers belonging to the advance burying a dead companion. The body was lying in a soiled uniform beneath the deep damp shade of the thickly matted trees. Five of his own company were digging his shallow resting place. I dismounted, took off the blanket which covered the face of the corpse & recognized the shrunken features of a very worthy young fellow named Stevens. Poor fellow! He came out full of spirits & hope & he has died just as his face is turned homeward, leaving behind him a young wife & one child. Familiar as I have been of late with the 'dead march,' I know not that my feelings have ever been more sadly impressed than by this unceremonious burial. The column of march did not even halt. Wagon after wagon rolled by--company after company marched past without scarcely one look of sympathy or feeling from a single soldier. Even his own immediate companions hurried him into his last resting place as though each moment was a waste of time. Filled with feelings and impulses not easily dismissed nor explained I uncovered my head as they lifted the poor fellow into his last resting place & as the few sods that came from his grave were thrown back, I felt as if I could say a severe & final prayer for the repose of his soul. I was unintentionally the only mourner at this soldier's burial.⁹²

The end of the Mexican War meant more change for Williams. Toward the end of July 1848, Williams reached home and was present at the muster out ceremonies on the 29th.⁹³ Williams was once again a civilian. But his prospects were different than after the Patriot War a decade earlier.

Initially, financial problems were his greatest concern. He had sold the Advertiser on 1 January 1848 but did not make enough even to pay his debts.⁹⁴ While he was

in Mexico, Williams worried about the future. "My great desire," he wrote, "is to get out of debt and begin again square with the world and with resolution and moral courage to begin on a small scale."⁹⁶ With no newspaper, no army commission, no job, and but little money, the financial future for the Williams family appeared rather bleak.

Finances were not the only problem; a cruel tragedy changed the family forever. In the decade of the 1840's, the city of Detroit had more than doubled in population.⁹⁷ Reflecting one aspect of this increase, the leading "gentlemen" of the city organized a new cemetery and called it "Elmwood." It was to be the final, socially appropriate, resting place for the elite of Detroit. The leading Protestant families bought their plots as soon as they were surveyed. Lewis Cass bought one, as did the wealthy bankers, John R. Williams, C.C. Trowbridge, and Wesley Truesdail. A prosperous drygoods merchant, Zachariah Chandler, purchased a lot near that of Williams' friend, Jacob M. Howard. In November 1847, Alpheus Williams purchased a lot at "Elmwood" close to Howard's on a hillock overlooking the entrance to the cemetery. On December 8th, 1848, Williams' life was shattered by the unexpected death of his wife, who was buried in the recently purchased plot in "Elmwood."⁹⁹

CHAPTER IV The Uncertain 1850's 1850-1859

The decade of the 1850's was a time of tumult in the United States. Old national political parties disappeared or changed into radical sectional ones. Amid an apparent economic boom associated with industrial modernization and westward expansion, another devastating depression in 1857 disrupted the lives of many Americans. The nation became ideologically fragmented to a dangerous degree and by the end of the period, people were speaking, like William H. Seward, of "higher law" politics and an "irrepressible conflict."

While one might expect to see A.S. Williams as one of the leaders in this era of ferment, in fact, the opposite was true. The best single word to describe his life during this period is "retreat." He withdrew within himself and his family circle and became more of a worried observer than a participant in the significant events of the age. Personal and family concerns became more important to him than public office and political leadership. With the financial base for his position in society gone, Williams cultivated his last hold on "polite" social standing--the military. His status as "an officer and a gentleman" in the militia preserved his self-respect and, in the end, put him back on the road to leadership at the local, state, and national levels.

As a widower with a family of five children under ten years of age, Williams searched for a way to provide for

his family. He had supported Zachary Taylor for President in 1848 and worked within the Whig Party to defeat Michigan's favorite son, Lewis Cass.¹ He secured from William Woodbridge a letter of introduction to General Scott and President Taylor and went off to the capital.² Taking advantage of his Whig politics and his Mexican War service, Williams got a job. On 6 April 1849, President Taylor appointed him the postmaster of Detroit.

Williams adjusted quickly to his new assignment. He had a mind for office work, was attentive to detail, and he was impeccably honest. Most importantly, the job offered a means of support for his family, at least until the Democrats got back to national power.

Williams knew the tenuousness of his position and recognized the politically partisan nature of the appointment. He thought that both of Michigan's Democratic Senators, Lewis Cass and Alpheus Felch, had unjustifiably and bitterly opposed his appointment. Williams openly confronted Cass on the matter and wrote him an insulting letter. Cass responded defensively, protested the accusations, and assured Williams that both he and Felch had supported his appointment and were not working for his dismissal.³ But Williams was not convinced and in early 1851, he again wrote to Cass. Once again, Cass tried to reassure the Detroit postmaster of his support and that he would not be removed. "Go on your way," Cass wrote, "with your sound

protests, and sound judgments, as a true National Whig, and you are sure to be supported by the administration."⁴

While Williams was postmaster, he had another run in with a prominent Michiganiaan. William Woodbridge had retired from public life to his farm in Springwells, outside Detroit. On several occasions Woodbridge wrote some very nasty letters to Williams accusing him of disrespect and uncooperative discharge of his duties. The main complaint centered around the postage due on Woodbridge's newspapers. Frequently, the newspapers were not delivered because Woodbridge did not pay the postage due. Williams explained that he was merely following the rules of the Postmaster General and that his clerks in Detroit were just following his directions. Williams indicated in his frank response that he thought Woodbridge was jumping to hasty conclusions and finding fault too readily. Then he softened his message with this:

Towards yourself personally, I have never entertained any but feelings of the deepest respect. Your years, your acknowledged talents, your long public service, your leading position in the party with which I have always been connected, all that I have known of you in public or private life have combined with a natural reverence I have for superior intellect & venerable years, to impress me with the greatest respect for you.

If any act of mine has given you a different impression you have misconstrued my conduct or I have been unfortunate in saying or doing what I did not mean.⁵

He resolved the issue to Woodbridge's satisfaction when he agreed to sent the papers without the postage paid and to forward a quarterly statement. Williams showed here a

flexibility which some bureaucrats did not possess. At the same time, he was protecting his subordinates and, indeed, his own actions and reputation.

While Williams was an office holder in the early 1850's, he had some personal difficulties with the federal bureaucracy. They involved the veteran's pension office and his bounty land claim. In a time when the Williams family had little money, the prospect of obtaining some free government land which could be sold for income was important. As a veteran of both the Patriot War and the Mexican War, Williams was entitled under a law of 1850 to 80 acres of bounty land for each conflict. In 1852 Williams sought help from Senator Felch, who managed to get him only 80 acres. After a great deal of wrangling and repeated correspondence with the Commissioner of Pensions, Williams finally got an additional 80 acres of land a year later.⁷ It came at a propitious time.

Earlier in 1853, following the inauguration of the new Democratic president, Franklin Pierce, Williams lost his job as Detroit postmaster. Williams attributed his dismissal to partisan politics and he fired off another letter to Senator Cass. In his reply, Cass disavowed any knowledge of Williams' dismissal.⁸ But the fact remained that Williams' political affiliation was a momentary detriment to his career.

Having lost the postmastership, Williams used capital from the sale of his bounty land and started a business.

He opened the Michigan Oil Store at 46 Jefferson Avenue in 1853. He sold lighting materials, like candles and lamps, and had the exclusive distribution rights in the state for a popular brand of whale oil.⁹ The store prospered until the Panic of 1857.

For Williams, the panic was financial disaster. "The times are hard," he wrote to Irene, "money never so scarce and I have never felt quite as poor amid the general din of hard times. We must all therefore study money saving"¹⁰ Shortly after forwarding this admonition, Williams suffered another personal setback when his business failed. Fortunately, in 1858, Lew Allen and his father helped Williams by forming a partnership with him and reorganizing the business as the Michigan Oil Company. The store front and location were still unchanged. Mainly the name was altered and Williams was guaranteed by the agreement to receive five hundred dollars per year as a minimum for rent of the store. This agreement remained in effect until 1861.¹¹ Williams did not get rich from his association with the Michigan Oil Company but it did provide his family with a modest income and a means of subsistence.

Just as Williams' financial affairs changed drastically during the 1850's, so did his politics. One might expect an anti-slavery Whig who had supported the Wilmot Proviso to be a prime candidate for joining the newly formed fusion party, the Republicans. Many anti-slavery Whigs made the

jump to the Republican Party which had its founding roots in Michigan and had strong support among the people there.

But Williams did not join the Republicans, probably because of his Unionist sentiment. At an early age, he feared the breakup of the Union as evidenced by his statement about South Carolinians and the Nullification Crisis. His Unionism was also evident when he castigated Birney and the Liberty Party for their radicalism on slavery and his concern that the political abolitionists would harden Southern resolve and make them even more defensive. He also thought that Northern Democrats, like Lewis Cass, who cooperated with the slaveholding Southerners, were scurrilous Doughfaces.

The intense debates over the Wilmot Proviso, the Mexican War, and the Compromise of 1850 caused people to become more polarized over the issue of slavery and its extension into the territories. Early in the 1850's, Williams expressed to Lewis Cass his opposition to "higher law" politicians, like William Seward, and to political abolitionists whose actions, he feared, might lead to a disruption of the Union. Accordingly, he was a strong supporter of the National Whigs under Daniel Webster. In the 1852 presidential election, Williams supported the old military hero, Winfield Scott, who favored federally funded river and harbor improvements and the acceptance of the Compromise of 1850.¹²

With the virtual disappearance of the Whig party by 1856, Williams appeared as a man without a political home.

It was as if he could not change with the times. But in late August 1856 a large group of influential members of Detroit's old Whig party met to discuss the dilemma they faced in the upcoming election. Concerned by the threat to the Union which they saw in the Republican party, "The Notorious Sixty-Nine," as Republican newspapers called them, produced a document entitled "Appeal of Whigs of Detroit to the Whigs of Michigan" in which they urged Whigs to support James Buchanan instead of John C. Fremont. The Democratic Free Press, overjoyed at this unexpected support, printed the document in its columns and circulated it as a campaign pamphlet.¹³ Williams' name was second in the list of the "Notorious 69." The prose of the document, unmistakably that of Williams, considers politics as a field of battle and is as full of martial imagery as Williams' Advertiser editorials of the 1840's.

The "69 Whigs" gave three main reasons for supporting Buchanan. First, they asserted that the Republicans were a sectional party whose political goals threatened the Union. Second, it was too late to reorganize and revitalize the National Whigs for the 1856 election. And third, upon reviewing their differences with the Democrats, the group found that merely "an honorable rivalry" existed for control of the federal government and that there was no substantive differences on the issues between the Whigs and the Democrats. They made no mention of specific issues, including slavery.¹⁴

Their appeal certainly failed as evidenced by the great Republican victory in Michigan in 1856. Fremont won the state by a vote of 71,762 to Buchanan's 52,139, a victory that marked the beginning of Republican ascendancy in Michigan that lasted almost without exception until 1932. The sentiment of most Michiganians and even the old Whig party was to vote Republican. The voter turnout, the highest in Michigan history, was over 85 percent.¹⁵ It signalled a benchmark shift toward the Republican party as the party of the future. Unfortunately for Williams, he retreated to the past.

The only political office Williams sought during the 1850's was city alderman. He had been a member of the Detroit Board of Education in 1858 but this was not a partisan seat. In mid-October 1859 the Free Press announced Williams had been nominated as the "Democratic" candidate for city alderman in Detroit's Third Ward.¹⁶ His candidacy ended a self-imposed exile from running for political office.

Although the editor of the Free Press was confident of a Democratic sweep at the local polls, it did not happen.¹⁷ When the election results were tallied, the "Black Republicans" captured eight seats out of ten on the city council. Williams lost to John J. Bagley by a vote of 256 to 322.¹⁸

In the 1850's Williams devoted much of his time to family concerns. Ann McIntosh, his faithful housekeeper,

served as a sort of surrogate mother in raising the children and tending to daily household matters.¹⁹ Family affairs went smoothly until 1853, when Williams lost his youngest child, Julia Allen. Her death on Christmas eve shattered the family again and left memories that dampened their Yuletide spirit for many years.²⁰

Williams' relationship as a father to his children was most interesting. Toward Charles Larned and Mary he appears as critical and somewhat overbearing. But to little Frederick and his eldest daughter, Irene, he was warm, loving, and overindulgent. By the fall of 1854, Williams was earning enough money from his store to send Charles and Irene to private schools in the east. Charles attended school briefly in Cornell, New York, and Irene attended a private school in Norwich, Connecticut. In letters to Irene during her time at school, Williams clearly stated many of his ideas about life. He "bared his soul" to his young confidante. Among the topics he discussed were his attitudes on education, philosophy of life, religion, economic matters, and health. Each one of these deserves to be covered in more detail.

To Irene, who was in her early teens when she left for school, Williams wrote almost weekly, giving her abundant fatherly advice in almost every letter. Williams thought a good education was essential in life and he strove to instill a love of learning in his children. One indication of this is that he tried to send them to the best private

schools he could afford, even when he did not have much money. But Williams recognized the importance of individual initiative in the education process and constantly stressed that a well-rounded education involved more than just class attendance. "There is much to be learned outside of your books," he advised Irene. "The heart, manners and mind all need education and cultivation, and your eyes and ears should be kept wide open on all proper occasions to improve every opportunity to learn."²¹ Earlier, he had urged her to be ambitious about becoming "a well educated woman. Read, think, reflect; strive to wake up your own energies."²²

For Williams, reading was the key to a good education. His friend, Henry Barnard, by then among the pioneers of American educational thinkers, also acknowledged the importance of the discipline of developing good reading habits.²³ Williams urged his daughter to develop her reading skills and to read carefully with thoughtfulness in order to achieve understanding.²⁴

Williams also urged his children to become good writers. He suggested that they keep a journal and write letters regularly to relatives and friends. He told Irene that he had begun his journal at age twelve and had kept it faithfully until he was thirty. "There is a pleasure," he assured her, "(not unmixed with sadness to be sure) in these vivid recollections which you cannot now understand; for at your years the world has little or no past. It is all in the future."²⁵

Williams examined the letters from his children carefully and duly noted their improvement or errors in writing style and grammar. "Strive to write with care and correctness," he advised Irene, "for as you get the habit now, so it will be apt to stay with you, as well in letter-writing as in almost everything pertaining to manners, morals, and mind."²⁶

In his letters to Irene, Williams also discussed life and religion. Amiability, he thought, was an important life goal. "I hope you strive to win the love of all about you," he wrote.²⁷ He tried to make kindness a habit and hoped that his children would do likewise.²⁸

Williams rejoiced when Irene wrote him about a moving religious experience she had at a revival meeting. Williams' own deep religiosity is evident in his reply to her letter:

I trust sincerely that after the excitement of the occasion passes away, the impressions you have received will remain like good seed and produce good fruit. Remember that religion is not the matter of a single day or of one season of unusual fervor. It is the duty and business of a whole life. Do not fall into the error of supposing that your heart in a single moment undergoes such a radical change that sin can never again find a place in it. The testimony of the best christians proves that the whole life of the purest minded is but a continual warfare against the temptations and enticements of sin. The 'change of heart' that is found in revivals too often proves a delusion that in its reaction leaves the subject of it worse than before. Yet thousands have found in these revivals the commencement of a new life, with new hopes and resolutions and have followed the new path to a happy death. Nothing could give me more happiness than to be assured that you had truly and perseveringly chosen the better part.²⁹

Economy and thrift were additional traits which Williams tried to encourage in his children. Hard times and personal financial reverses brought home to him the disadvantages of being a spendthrift, as he had been in his younger days. At Christmas he would apologize for the meager presents he felt he could afford, but he always indicated something to the effect that "as a token of one's love or esteem small presents are often highly prized."³⁰ To Irene he once wrote:

I should like to have you acquire a habit of judicious economy; not penuriousness nor meanness nor stinginess; but that habitual study of the best and cheapest way of procuring what is necessary for your comfort. It is the opposite of that wasteful and reckless way in which many people squander large sums without system or sense, and often without half the comforts or luxuries that others enjoy with small means.³¹

In matters of health, Williams had strong feelings. Personally, he was robust and loved the outdoor life. He liked physical exercise and practiced a regimen of calisthenics early every morning. He was seldom ill himself but health problems in his family caused him great anxiety. Some of the problems related to diet. He was constantly imploring his children to be careful about what they ate. Both Charles and Irene had weight problems as youngsters and their father regularly reminded them not to eat sweets.³²

The same year Julia died (1853), Williams' youngest son, Frederick, developed problems with his legs. It was clear to the doting father that "little Fred," as Williams called him, was his favorite. Fred's lengthy and gradually

debilitating illness devastated the family once again. The child developed abscesses on his legs and the doctors could not cure him. Time after time, the little boy seemed to improve but then another infection set in and his condition worsened. Williams spent most of his non-working hours reading to his son and keeping him company.³³ "I feel very, very heartsick," he confided to Irene, "when I think of his long sufferings, and the constant anxiety and restlessness quite unfits me for business. I feel an incessant desire to do something to relieve him and yet can do nothing."³⁴ "My anxieties about little Fred," he wrote on another occasion, "have quite unfitted me for the social world."³⁵ Williams reflected reverent admiration for the little boy's inner strength and courage to withstand his suffering.³⁶ The child endured for four long years before he died in August of 1857.³⁷

Williams kept Charles, Irene, and Mary with him in Detroit after the funeral. As his store failed that same year, he could not afford to send them to private schools in the east. It seems difficult to imagine that anyone as beset with personal and financial problems as Alpheus Williams was during the 1850's could maintain a genial nature. Yet, one friend, William D. Wilkins, reflecting back on Williams at the time, called him "the best natured man in the world."³⁸ Wilkins was associated with Williams in about the only bright spot in his affairs of

the 1850's--the local militia company. Gradually, Williams came to realize that the military, except for his family, was his raison d'être.

Following the Mexican War, many Americans became disillusioned with the military and with militia service. This, in part, accounts for the decline of the Brady Guard. As Walter Clowes indicated, "There was a general dying out of militarism such as always comes as the aftermath of a period of active service, which holds the interest of the men only as long as it is a conspicuous and exciting service" ³⁹ Williams did not share in this decline of military spirit. He maintained his connections with the local militia companies. By the end of the 1850's he was the commander of the state militia and his interest in military affairs had never been greater.

Immediately following the Mexican War, an incident occurred which shows Williams' loyalty to his troops, concern for history, and attention to detail. The Michigan Adjutant General issued a report for the year 1848 in which he listed the members of the First Michigan Regiment, their rank, and what had happened to them. Williams found many errors and wrote to the editor of the Advertiser who had published the report. Many soldiers were erroneously listed as deserters and Williams knew it. Some had died at Cordova and were buried there; others, like Private Stevens, died enroute to Vera Cruz and were buried unceremoniously along the trail; and a few were even honorably discharged in

Detroit when the regiment was mustered out of service. Outraged at the carelessness of the report, Williams wanted to set the record straight and give proper credit to those who had served and died in Mexico.⁴⁰

The Brady Guards ended operations with the death of General Hugh Brady in 1851. The funeral services were the final duties of the group. Besides the Bradys, the U.S. troops stationed at Fort Wayne assisted in providing an escort. Among Colonel Whistler's 4th Infantry troop was Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant. Williams was the last commander of the Brady Guards as they ended their service to the city and the nation.⁴¹

Many of the Brady Guards formed a new militia company in Detroit called the Grayson Guards. Their duties were, like the Bradys, largely ceremonial soldiering. The main value of these militia companies was as a means for educating a few of the citizens in the ways of the military. Colonel John B. Grayson (U.S. Army) did not provide the leadership needed for continued interest in the group and ultimately it disbanded.⁴² In 1855 a larger group of men met at the Grayson Armory to establish a new volunteer infantry company in Detroit. The original petition of organization was signed by 103 Detroiters, and leading the list was the bold signature of "A.S. Williams."⁴³ Later in the year, the "Detroit Light Guard" held an organizational meeting and those present elected Williams "captain" and commander of the unit.⁴⁴

In its early history, the Detroit Light Guard, like its two predecessors, remained a ceremonial group of citizen soldiers. Their usual activities revolved around monthly training sessions and an annual encampment. Sometimes they trained in cooperation with the U.S. infantry stationed at Fort Wayne. This enabled them, or at least the officers, to keep up on current military training and doctrine.

Their participation in parades continued throughout the decade. Each summer they exchanged visits with another Great Lakes city militia. In 1856 on the fourth of July, the Detroit Light Guard went to Chicago and in September 1857, they went to Ohio to celebrate Perry's victory at Put-in-Bay with a Cleveland militia unit. In 1858 the Light Guard exchanged visits with the Milwaukee unit. The editor of the Milwaukee Sentinel praised the Guard as "one of the very best in the Union," and its commander as "an accomplished gentleman and a thorough soldier."⁴⁵

The last year of the decade of the 1850's was an important one for Williams' military career. Interest in the Detroit Light Guard and in military affairs in general was greatly increased by the growing difficulties between North and South. So many had joined the Light Guards that they created a new battalion form of organization, with Major Williams as its commander.⁴⁶ Williams had other important military duties. The state of Michigan, like New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, had recognized the need for a state militia and improvements in military preparedness.

In early March 1859, the state legislature established a State Military Board and Governor Moses Wisner appointed Williams to it as Major General of the Michigan Militia.⁴⁷ At the first meeting of the Board, the members selected Williams as President.⁴⁸ In order to meet its assigned mission of improving the military effectiveness of the militia, the Board identified some specific objectives and distributed a small amount of money to volunteer companies around the state which met its standards. One goal of the Board was to make an assessment of the condition, training, and equipment of the militia companies in Michigan to see where improvements were needed. A second goal was to standardize training and drill according to accepted U.S. Army procedures. A third aim was to inspect the units in an annual encampment to insure that they complied with the Board's procedures.⁴⁹

By late October 1859, Major General Williams and the State Military Board had completed their first review of the soldiers in the state. Twenty-eight units qualified for state funding with three classes assigned: \$150 for 1st class, \$75 for 2nd class, and \$50 for 3rd class. Special units like artillery companies received \$75. The total number present at the first review was 1,241.⁵⁰ Units like the Detroit Light Guard under Williams, the Flint Union Greys under Captain T.B.W. Stockton and the Manchester Union Guard under Captain L.L. Comstock appeared impressive as they marched in close order drill on the Campus Martius

in Detroit. With its citizen soldiers, Michigan seemed well defended and ready for anything, or so the leaders thought.

Marcus Cunliffe, in his recent study of the martial spirit during this period in American history, assessed the strength and weaknesses of the volunteer militia companies.⁵¹ On balance, Cunliffe concluded their strengths were more significant. Most importantly, they provided military training for some civilians and many of the members of the militia companies later served as commanders in the Union army. Cunliffe repeatedly referred to Williams as an example of a citizen soldier who typified the "Enthusiastic Volunteers" of the 1850's.⁵²

CHAPTER V A Citizen Soldier Prepares for War
1860-September 1861

For the United States 1860 was a fateful year. As it dawned the nation was torn apart by sectional hatred, hatred that had all but destroyed the spirit of compromise that had served the nation well in three pervious crises. The birth and impressive progress of the Republican party frightened the South, causing Southern extremists to insist that secession was their best hope for the future. Republicans, on the other hand, stood firmly opposed to the extension of slavery in the territories and were preparing to offer Northern voters a platform that would appeal to their economic and antislavery interests. Like many Northern Democrats, Williams worried about the free soil posture of the Republicans and what it might portend for the security of the Union. Talk of civil war spurred him to take steps that would prepare Michigan as well as possible for any such eventuality.

Militia affairs kept Williams busy during 1860. Early in the year, he corresponded with the administration of the University of Michigan in an attempt to include courses in military engineering in the curriculum. Collegiate instruction in the military arts would certainly benefit well-educated men who might be called upon as leaders in the army.¹ At the meeting of the military board in May 1860, the members decided to conduct area encampments around the state for the annual inspection of the troops. They ordered

that these be conducted during August and September. General Williams and the other members of the board inspected the volunteer companies of the Michigan militia at Grand Rapids, East Saginaw (now Bay City), and Jackson. They ranked the units according to proficiency in military drill and evaluated their equipment and arms.² The Detroit Light Guard still appeared as the best volunteer company in the state.³

A lack of funds hindered Williams and the State Military Board in their efforts to improve Michigan's militia and create a uniform military force. For their first two years of operations their total budget was only \$3,000 each year.⁴ So inadequate was the funding that most units were left to their own resources to find arms, equipment, and uniforms. Training was the only cheap commodity and the Board spent most of its financial resources on it. Most units had little equipment. Only a few were well armed with modern rifled muskets.⁵ Williams urged reforms to be carried out immediately in order to be prepared in case of an emergency. The times seemed to warrant military preparedness, especially after the election of Abraham Lincoln as president and the secession of the seven states of the deep South.

Williams' Unionist sentiment allied him with the Republican administration. His position as a Democrat was somewhat unusual in light of the fact that the Michigan Republicans had achieved almost a complete sweep in the

1860 election: 57.1% voted for Lincoln; 72 of 83 seats in the Michigan House went to Republicans; and in the state Senate, the Republicans captured 30 of 32 seats. Michigan Republicans spoke in terms of "treason" and "rebellion," and urged that all measures, including military force, be used to stop the secession movement. Republican Governor Moses Wisner implored the legislature to appropriate more funds for the military department. "It is upon the 'Citizen Soldier,' " he declared, "that we must rely for our protection should a resort to arms ever become necessary. . . ." Wisner argued forcefully in his summation that "when the cry of treason and rebellion is ringing in our ears. . . Michigan cannot recognize the right of a State to secede from this Union."⁶

To most Michiganians, including Williams, secession was a vile act. Michigan's U.S. Senator, Zachariah Chandler, and the new governor, Austin Blair, were among the most vocal Republican opponents of secession. In his inaugural address Blair called for increased military funding because of the threat to the government, "not by enemies from without, but by traitors from within."⁷ His peroration was powerful:

Secession is revolution and revolution in the overt act is treason, and must be treated as such. It is a question of war that the seceding States have to look in the face. They who think that this powerful government can be disrupted peacefully, have read history to no purpose. . . . On the heads of the traitors who provoke it, must rest the responsibility.⁸

It was in this milieu of political rhetoric that Williams sought to improve Michigan's militia and prepare for war.

One of the militia reforms which Williams advocated in January 1861 was to create a more effective office of "Adjutant General" to assist the governor in military affairs. Williams did not want the position for himself but favored the appointment of his friend, Orlando B. Willcox. Partisan politics, however, worked against him and Willcox was not appointed. The Republicans favored John Robertson, a Detroit businessman who had served with distinction in the Mexican War. Robertson had the strong and unequivocal support of none other than Jacob M. Howard, a personal friend but political foe of Williams. Howard thought that political affiliations of the adjutant general were even more important than military ones. In a secretive tone which betrayed the confidence of his friend Williams, Howard wrote to former Governor Wisner:

Pardon me for making the suggestion that it should be filled with a true Republican. The people will have little confidence in any other. . . . Genl. A.S. Williams is I understand getting up a printed memorial in favor of Orlando B. Willcox of this city, who is a graduate of West Point but who some years ago left the army and studied law. He as well as Williams are intense pro-slavery democrats; & whatever may be the military merits of Mr. W. [Willcox] I do not think his appointment would be acceptable. Give us a Republican and not an old Whig turned ⁹ democrat, such as both Williams and Willcox are.

Howard was correct in pointing out that both Williams and Willcox were Whigs who became Democrats but there is no evidence which supports his assertion that Williams was pro-slavery. Robertson did get the appointment as the Republicans prevailed.¹⁰

In late January 1861, Williams met with the state legislature in Lansing to promote the passage of a new militia law. But the legislators in the capital delayed action. Even though Southern states were withdrawing from the Union, they saw no real emergency and did not pass the new law until 16 March 1861. The measure authorized the governor to form two regiments of infantry from the existing volunteer militia units, but it did not appropriate any additional money to support the units.¹¹

Anticipating armed conflict, Williams wrote to President Lincoln on 12 March 1861 and recommended that Henry Chipman be appointed to the regular army as a captain "in the event of an increase of the regular military forces of the Union."¹² Chipman, at the time, was the commander of the Detroit Light Guard, having superceded Williams when the latter took over as Major General of the Michigan Militia and President of the State Military Board. Governor Blair and many members of the Michigan legislature concurred with Williams' evaluation of Chipman and forwarded to Washington a petition urging the President to act on Williams' advice.¹³

Reports of events in South Carolina during the Sumter Crisis made the "emergency" appear imminent. Upset by the failure of the legislature to appropriate funds for raising Michigan's regiments, Governor Blair, on 2 April 1861, called a special session of the legislature to convene in

early May. A few days later news came of the firing on Fort Sumter. Blair acted immediately to rally Michigan to the Union cause. Fortunately, the efforts of Williams in the previous two years to improve Michigan's militia enabled the state to respond quickly to President Lincoln's call for 75,000 troops, issued on 15 April 1861, the day after the surrender of Sumter.

Lincoln charged Blair with providing one fully equipped infantry regiment for immediate service. Blair rushed to Detroit on 16 April and there met with his main military advisers, including Williams, John Robertson, and the other members of the State Military Board. They had to decide on the best and quickest way to raise the regiment. The main difficulty was a lack of money. The treasury simply did not have the \$100,000 Williams estimated that it would cost to ready the first troops. The temporary solution was to get public pledges and after hundreds responded within a few weeks, they had raised \$81,020.¹⁴

Governor Blair called for one regiment consisting of ten companies. The volunteer response was overwhelming. Within days, ten companies enrolled in the 1st Michigan Infantry Regiment for three months of service. The militia units retained their integrity, at least to begin with, by enlisting as companies. The Detroit Light Guard, the Jackson Greys, the Burr Oak Guard, the Michigan Hussars and others lost their quaint distinctiveness as they began to practise

what they had learned on the parade ground under commanders like A.S. Williams, O.B. Willcox, and Henry Chipman.

Williams began organizing the Michigan war efforts immediately. Governor Blair appointed him "Brigadier General, Commanding the 1st Brigade, Michigan Infantry." Williams set up his headquarters on 28 April in a small corner office of Detroit's Post Office, a building where he had served the federal government already. He was a militia general without any troops--at least until the 1st Michigan Regiment was organized. From his hole-in-the-wall headquarters, Williams issued General Orders #1 and #2 and proudly sent copies to Washington on 3 May 1861 showing that Michigan was doing its part to suppress the rebellion.¹⁵

The early weeks of May were chaotic as Michigan prepared for war. The 1st Regiment was mustered into U.S. service on May 1st and, following their colonel, O.B. Willcox, they entrained for Washington on May 12th. When the legislature met, they backed Governor Blair's view of the need for quick action to suppress the rebellion, authorized ten regiments to be raised, and provided for a loan of one million dollars as financial support.¹⁶

Williams was under no delusion that the war would be a short or easy one. He urged preparations for a long and difficult struggle and when the State Military Board met on 14 May 1861, they recommended to Governor Blair and the legislature that six additional 3 year regiments be raised

in addition to the ten already authorized.¹⁷ Michigan volunteers poured in and General Williams could finally put his excellent organizing abilities to good use. Training was his main concern and in June, he set up the Camp of Instruction at Detroit's Fort Wayne.¹⁸ Williams ordered a tough daily regimen of drill and training in tactics. One difficulty, which was common in the early stages of the war, was the inadequate supply of weapons. Williams could not train his troops in the manual of arms until they had weapons. Eventually these supply problems were resolved and the training continued apace.¹⁹

Williams wanted to do more than merely train Michigan troops. He, like so many others, wanted a command in the Union army. Friends wrote letters of recommendation for Williams' appointment as a brigadier general of volunteers. Detrouiter C.A. Trowbridge, a West Point graduate and Mexican War veteran, wrote Secretary of War Simon Cameron that Williams was uniquely qualified by his long militia service of twenty-five years, his military knowledge, and Mexican War service. Trowbridge attested to Williams' loyalty to the Union and to his competence as a commander.²⁰ A Connecticut friend also wrote Cameron about Williams: "He is a man of courage and brains and served in the Mexican War."²¹ The soldiers of the new regiments at the Camp of Instruction also had confidence in General Williams and, in July 1861, they petitioned the Secretary of War in his behalf. They urged President Lincoln to appoint Williams

as a brigadier general and hoped that the Michigan regiments could be kept together under Williams' command.²²

Williams did more than just wait for action on these letters; in July he went to Washington to lobby for a command. There, after meeting both the Secretary of War and President Lincoln, he left the capital city assured of an appointment.²³ Shortly after he returned to Detroit, Williams received word of the Union debacle at Bull Run. His fears of a long and bloody civil war were reinforced as he scanned newspaper accounts of the battle. He learned that the Michigan troops he had trained had fought well. Confederate musket and artillery fire had ripped the ranks of the 1st Michigan as they attacked toward the Henry House, and several officers, including his friend, Colonel Willcox, were captured in the fight.²⁴ Those that survived returned to Detroit and were mustered out of service on the 7th of August. Two days later, Williams received his commission as a Brigadier General of U.S. Volunteers. His date of rank, however, was retroactive to 17 May 1861, probably owing to his active role as the commander of the Camp of Instruction in readying Michigan's first regiments for service.²⁵ Upon receiving this commission Williams became Michigan's first general in the Civil War.

Williams was largely responsible for training the first eight of Michigan's three year regiments at the Camp of Instruction. In a letter to the Secretary of War, Governor Blair told the War Department that the last of these eight

regiments would be ready by September 1st. Blair indicated that Williams wanted to stay with the Michigan regiments and registered his hope that they could be consolidated as a brigade under Williams' command in the field.²⁶ This request illustrates the sectional and regional nature of recruiting and the governors' attitudes toward commands in the early stages of the war. Politicians wanted their state regiments to be commanded by state generals. Initially, this worked for Williams, but only for a short time. General Winfield Scott ordered Williams to stay on duty with the Michigan regiments in Detroit.²⁷ But in mid-September 1861, Williams was ordered to report to General George B. McClellan for duty.²⁸ It was somewhat ironic that Michigan's first general, whom Governor Blair hoped would command a brigade of Michiganians, almost never had Wolverine soldiers under his command during the entire war.

Williams spent September settling his affairs in Detroit and getting ready to go off to war. Upon Williams' resignation from the State Military Board on 6 September 1861, the group of officers unanimously passed resolutions praising their chief. They commended him for the many long and successful hours he worked to further the interests of the Michigan militia and improve its effectiveness. They praised his organizing abilities and, in a final resolution, declared: "We feel assured that [to] our patriotic soldiers under General Williams the honor of our State and the welfare of our country may be safely entrusted when both are to be

maintained in crushing out the wicked rebellion which calls them to arms."²⁹ During his tenure as president of the State Military Board, Williams had done an excellent job of improving Michigan's military preparedness and serving the Republican administrations of Wisner and Blair.

Before leaving for Washington, Williams had to make provisions for his children. He decided to have Charles, a young man of twenty, accompany him as his unofficial aide and secretary. The young man did not join the army. Irene went off to live with some of the relatives in Philadelphia, where she also attended school. Mary, who celebrated her fifteenth birthday the month before her father left, stayed in Detroit with her aunts and uncles.

One of the final things Williams did before leaving Detroit was to sign over to Lew Allen his interest in the Michigan Oil Company to hold for him in trust. There was, of course, the possibility that Williams might never see Detroit again.³⁰ Along with the last of the Michigan regiments he had trained, Williams left his adopted city and state on the final day of September 1861.³¹

CHAPTER VI General Williams and "the Elephant"
October 1861-May 1862

Williams spent several days in Washington waiting for a command. The new division under the Massachusetts "Bobbin Boy," Nathaniel P. Banks, needed a commander for its third brigade, and McClellan ordered Williams to that post on 8 October 1861.¹ The same day, Williams reported for duty and began his Civil War career in the field near Darnestown, Maryland.² Still a citizen soldier, Williams had never been in a battle.

Organization and drill were the dual watchwords for the Union army in the fall of 1861, as George B. McClellan prepared to end the rebellion with the grand army he was slowly assembling. Williams spent the month of October organizing and training his brigade, which he inspected as if he was at one of his Michigan encampments. At first, Williams regretted not having any Michigan regiments in his command, but he changed his attitude when he realized that those he had were good ones.³ They were Yankee regiments from the areas of his forebears and relatives. The 5th Connecticut, the 2nd Massachusetts, the 28th and 19th New York, and the 46th Pennsylvania comprised approximately 5,000 men who had enlisted to crush the Southern rebellion and preserve the Union. But few of the men of the 3rd Brigade of Banks' Division, including Williams, had any battlefield experience. Most of the officers were citizen soldiers

whose main contact with army life was their connection with a local militia company.

Williams' early letters to his daughters disclose his somewhat romantic view of the conflict. His accounts of camp life and inspections abound with glowing descriptions of the beauty of the surroundings and the thrills of being in command. They also reflect a thoughtful, sensitive man who had not yet experienced the horror of combat. He vividly described his campsite in western Maryland:

Within hearing of my camp are probably eight or ten regiments, all with excellent bands, besides several camps of artillery, cavalry, and independent zouave companies with bugles and trumpets. In consequence, we have a profusion of music at all hours, but especially during the moonlight evenings. The hillsides and projecting knobs which lie around our circular-formed valley are covered with tents and at night when the lights are lit and the camp fires blazing and the bands playing the scene is very striking and beautiful. I should like to transport you here for an evening if I could safely send you back to Aunt Kate's for a lodging. I am sure you would enjoy the sight and the music, to say nothing of my society.⁴

Williams professed to his daughters that he did not like military formalities, but his descriptions of daily inspections and his rounds as officer of the day clearly suggest the opposite.⁵ He relished his command in Mr. Lincoln's Army.

That training and parading were very different from actual combat, was a fact that the Ball's Bluff affair taught Williams in one savage lesson. Killed in that conflict was President Lincoln's friend, Colonel Edward D. Baker, whose corpse lay in a house on the north side of the

Potomac River. The night Baker died, 21 October, Williams moved his brigade on a forced march to Edwards Ferry. It arrived too late to assist Baker's ill-fated expedition, so Williams posted his men along the river and waited, while Generals Banks and Charles Stone stared into a campfire trying to decide what to do next.⁶

Williams was perceptive in his analysis of the affair. He considered the failure to be Colonel Baker's own responsibility. "Baker was burning for a fight," Williams wrote his brother-in-law. Supporting troops like those under Banks or General McCall were not aware of Baker's move across the Potomac. Higher commands knew nothing of the attack until after it had failed. Williams concluded, "It was . . . plainly an unpremeditated and unprepared effort, and failed, as nine out of ten such hasty affairs will."⁷

The Potomac River was the Rubicon for Williams. Secession and the war had made the broad river both a symbolic and real boundary between North and South. Crossing it meant battle. Of that Williams was keenly aware, as were the Confederates who crossed it later in the war. Williams prepared the 3rd Brigade to cross the Potomac and he expressed the fears of all soldiers on the eve of first battle.⁸ But the crossing never eventuated, for the commanders decided that it could accomplish no useful purpose. Banks now withdrew his division and set up a winter camp in Maryland, close to the river.

Williams spent three of the winter months of 1861 and 1862 in camps in Maryland. His main concerns, in order of priority, were keeping his troops properly supplied and training them for combat. Williams liked the progress his troops made in drill, but he was almost despondent over the suffering they had to endure.⁹ "Their exposure in this weather," he wrote, "is bad enough with the best clothing, but without overcoats and blankets it is barbarous and will cost the government in pensions and hospitals ten times the value of good warm clothing."¹⁰ Williams was disappointed with Banks' inability to keep the troops of his division adequately provisioned and equipped.¹¹

The relationship between Williams and his first commander was sometimes cordial and sometimes strained. Williams appreciated Banks' political influence and was always respectful in his formal dealings with him. Privately, however, he had doubts about Banks' military abilities. He considered Banks to be aloof and uncommunicative, even to his brigade commanders. Williams thought that part of the problems Banks' division faced in Maryland was due to the fact that "old army" officers, like McClellan, viewed political generals with contempt. It was as if they were posting Banks out of sight and out of mind. Summing up his concerns, Williams wrote his daughter that he regarded "the whole state of things as unfortunate for Gen. Banks and, perhaps en consequence, unfortunate for us who have the honor to command his brigades."¹²

Williams surmised that what he regarded as shabby treatment of Banks was but another example of the haughtiness commonly displayed by graduates of West Point towards citizen soldiers in the officer corps. "I have seen much of these. . . [West Pointers]," he confided to Irene, "and I confess to a most ineffable disgust with the whole thing." He suspected that they learned "superciliousness, arrogance, and insolence" at the Academy. In fairness, he conceded that some graduates were "noble exceptions, men of military taste and ambition," but he rejected the proposition that a graduate of West Point was "ipso facto a good officer," any more than "every graduate of Harvard or Yale" was "a man of learning." As the latter forget the subjects they were taught, he continued, "West Pointers forget their tactics, their strategy, their logistics, or exchange what little they know for skill in whist, euchre, monte, and billiards."¹³ The aloofness of West Pointers was a rankling sore to many Civil War officers, who, like Williams, were not graduates of the institution on the banks of the Hudson, and who were repeatedly overlooked and neglected, regardless of their contributions.

Williams ended the year of 1861 in a mood of depression. Besides the uncertainties of the war and the fact that many of his soldiers were suffering from exposure, an additional onerous duty of discipline bothered him. A private in the 46th Pennsylvania had murdered a major in the regiment. Two days before Christmas, Williams marched the 3rd Brigade

into a hollow square around a scaffold. They all watched as the soldier dropped and hung lifeless in the cold December snowstorm.¹⁴ The December holiday season held little joy for Williams as he reflected back on the family members he had lost and as he contemplated the future. The next six months proved to be eventful ones for Williams, and what happened did not improve his state of mind.

Early in 1862 numerous difficulties beset Union forces in the area where Williams was serving. The lines of command were jumbled; communications and intelligence were poor; supply problems flourished; the weather was bad; and to make matters worse, Union commanders like Generals John C. Fremont, James Shields, and Nathaniel Banks displayed varying degrees of inexperience, incompetence, timidity, and unwarranted braggadocio.

Banks' division formed the right segment of the great arc McClellan and the War Department had developed to protect the city of Washington. Duty on the Maryland-Virginia border had difficulties other than just supply problems and the weather. The hostility of the local people challenged the wits of Union commanders. Bushwackers and irregular bands of guerrillas were active in the area. On the 6th of January 1862, Williams moved his brigade to Hancock, Maryland, to protect the Union right flank from Confederate advances northward down the western reach of the Shenandoah Valley. Specifically, he was to protect the Baltimore and Ohio rail line which led from Harpers Ferry through Hancock

to points west.¹⁵ Williams and his brigade stayed at Hancock for two months and during that time the peril of warfare in the border states became apparent.

The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was an important communication and supply line and, accordingly, an attractive target for the Rebels. The mountainous terrain afforded easy concealment of operations. To disrupt this railroad the Confederates sent northward a force under the command of General Thomas Jonathan Jackson. General Frederick Lander and his division had successfully repulsed an assault on Hancock, then left the town when Williams' troops arrived. Lander went westward along the railroad with orders to act as a support for Banks' division. The Confederates encamped at Romney where the two armies were face to face, each waiting for the other to make a move.

Both forces caused problems for civilians in the area. Many of the new recruits damaged property and took provisions from the locals without authority or without compensating them. Williams was especially sympathetic toward the people and fumed that some of his soldiers had behaved badly.¹⁶ At the end of January, Williams thought he had the situation well enough in hand. He then went to Washington for a short visit with his daughter, Irene, who had gone there from Philadelphia. This was to be one of the few times that Williams was absent from his command during the entire war. Upon returning to Hancock he found that some of the soldiers in his new regiments had gone on a minor rampage

following a drunken spree. Angered to a fury, he dealt swiftly with the perpetrators. He was determined that his soldiers would be renowned for their discipline and not notorious for misconduct off the field of battle.¹⁷ He set the precedent early and kept to it.

General Lander proposed to attack the Confederates at Romney without delay. Since Williams' troops were ill equipped for a winter campaign, he thought it would be a "quixotic expedition."¹⁸ Banks, with his eye always on the strategic defensive, also disapproved of a direct attack on the Confederate stronghold. A combined assault by the forces of Lander and Banks never happened and Williams set about restoring the rail line, portions of which had been destroyed by Jackson's men.

At this point, relations between Williams and Banks became testy over the lack of shoes in the 3rd Brigade. To his brother-in-law back in Detroit, Williams confessed his frustration. "I have written, telegraphed, cursed and swore, and pleaded and begged," he declared, "and in return have had promises that they should be sent forthwith. But they came not. Just fancy in this age soldiers left without shoes in this war for the Union and that in mid-winter and in a campaign!"¹⁹ Baffled by what he believed to be insensitivity, Williams wrote that his superior "seems to take it easy and make abundant promises."²⁰

Accurate military intelligence was one area in the early stages of the war where the Confederates were greatly

superior to the Union armies. There is no better place to illustrate that point than in the operations in and around the Shenandoah Valley in 1862. While Banks received confusing and contradictory reports on the size and location of the enemy, the Confederates knew almost exactly what was going on in the Union camps. Jackson reported through channels so that as early as 23 February 1862, President Jefferson Davis knew that the Union forces had restored the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and were using it to advance.²¹

With supply problems corrected and the weather improving, the Union army had indeed begun to move. Williams informed his daughter that he was marching his brigade to Williamsport "and then for 'Dixie,'" as General Banks prepared for his first "invasion" of the South.²² What loomed ahead, across the river, was that inviting invasion corridor, the verdant Shenandoah Valley. But entering that valley meant confronting "Stonewall" Jackson, who became the nemesis of Williams.

In March 1862, Banks ordered Williams to cross the Potomac and move up the Shenandoah Valley toward Martinsburg. General McClellan had orchestrated the operation against Jackson, and he ordered Williams to take his command of 5,000 men to Bunker Hill, Virginia, and be prepared to advance on Winchester.²³ Because of high water and few boats, it took Williams a long time to get his regiments across the river.²⁴ He reported the delay to Banks, along

with his concerns about attacking an enemy with a broad river to one's rear.²⁵ He also reported that Jackson, Loring, and E. Kirby Smith were all near Winchester, but was unable to give a precise accounting of their numbers. In a statement which probably did not encourage his commander, Williams wrote that a "man recently in Winchester reports Jackson as saying that he left Winchester once to whip us at Manassas, and now he is going to do the same for us. . . . I trust he will prove to be a false prophet."²⁶

Williams moved his troops south from Martinsburg almost without opposition. Heading for Winchester, his forces skirmished with the Confederate cavalry under Colonel Turner Ashby at Bunker Hill on 7 March 1862. There were only three Union casualties in this engagement which seemed to have more significance to the enemy commanders because it was one of their first encounters. In his report to Banks, Williams expressed respect for the boldness and daring of Ashby's raiders and indicated that the effect of the attack "has been to stir up the blood of the men and put them in good spirits for any work ahead."²⁷ Colonel Ashby was also encouraged by his cavalry's performance at Bunker Hill. In his report to Jackson, Ashby was optimistic about the future. The troops, he wrote, "gave evidence of much hope of success to our cause when the struggle for the valley comes."²⁸ Jackson was encouraged by such a report but a discouraging note was the rapid increase in the numbers of Federals under Banks concentrating on Winchester.

When President Lincoln reorganized the Army of the Potomac in March 1862, Banks became the commander of the Fifth Army Corps and command of the 1st Division went to Williams. These were paper changes, involving no increase in the numbers of soldiers. Banks had only two divisions (the 2nd was under General Shields).²⁹ Williams' division had only two brigades, the 1st and the 3rd. The 2nd Brigade having been detached had never returned.³⁰

On 20 March 1862, the day General Williams became a division commander, he moved east from Winchester toward Centerville and Manassas.³¹ The intention was for Williams to join McDowell at Fredericksburg, in position to advance and support General McClellan in the campaign for Richmond up the Peninsula. This dividing of Banks' Corps provided Stonewall Jackson with one of the many opportunities on which he capitalized in his Valley Campaign. With his eye on retaking Winchester, Jackson stuck Shields at Kernstown on 23 March. Tactically, Kernstown was one of Jackson's few defeats. Shields' troops fought well and withstood the Confederate attack. But the battle at Kernstown was of the utmost importance in the successful strategy of Jackson's Army of the Valley.³² As explained in Jackson's report, he accomplished his main objective, which was to prevent "a junction of Banks' command with other forces." He acknowledged that the enemy held the field, but he felt justified in saying that he had won "the most essential fruits of the battle."³³ Jackson's

attack prevented Banks from sending Williams' division to General McDowell. As soon as word of the battle reached Williams, he went back toward Winchester and linked up with General Shields' troops.³⁴

Williams lamented the fact that he missed the Battle of Kernstown. When he considered that Banks was absent in Washington and that Shields had been incapacitated by a bursting artillery shell early in the fight, Williams speculated as to what he could have done had he been on the scene and assumed command. "I think I could have captured all Jackson's guns," he immodestly confessed to his daughter, "and been a major general." He admitted that the thought was "rather selfish," but he believed it to be shared by those around him.³⁵ Williams was itching for a fight and a promotion. He certainly was too optimistic about his abilities with only one brigade to assist him to capture all of Jackson's artillery. He would have his own chances later to fight Stonewall Jackson.

A message from Jackson to Joseph E. Johnston several days after Kernstown showed that Jackson's military intelligence about the Federals was excellent. He knew the strength and disposition of Banks' command and that the Army of the Valley posed a serious threat to the Union plans of uniting Banks' forces with McClellan's.³⁶ In a great understatement, Jackson reported, "The enemy is ignorant of my strength."³⁷ Jackson had withdrawn his troops up the valley in one of his well planned advances to the rear,

leading Banks to follow cautiously. As Shields was injured, Banks turned Williams' division into the vanguard of his "assault" on Dixie. He kept Shields' division in reserve and in early April began his own march south from Winchester.

In the overall strategy of the North, activities in the Shenandoah Valley were secondary to those on the Peninsula. Yet President Lincoln and the War Department had to be concerned about protecting Washington from Rebel attack. Accordingly, Lincoln detained General McDowell's Corps from joining with McClellan.³⁸ One of the main reasons for this was that Lincoln did not consider Banks' Corps to be in a position to defend the capital, whereas, McClellan did.³⁹ The events of the months of April and May 1862 proved Lincoln to be correct. But at the same time, what happened in the Shenandoah Valley during those two months also had a great impact on the result of McClellan's campaign.

Most authorities have overestimated the number of troops Banks had in the Valley in April and May. The number usually cited, 15,000,⁴⁰ incorrectly includes the 2nd Brigade of Williams' division under the command of General J.J. Abercrombie. Abercrombie went on to Manassas, joined with McDowell's Corps, and ended up with McClellan, never to rejoin Williams' division.⁴¹ On 4 April 1862, Banks reported that with the detachment of Abercrombie's brigade, his corps had 12,000 effectives with 6,000 in Shields' division and 5,000 in Williams', the rest as cavalry and staff.⁴² However, Banks still had a force double that of

the Valley Army of Jackson who could count only 6,000 effectives in early April, when Banks began to move up the Valley.

Because of the preponderance of Federal troops, Jackson's best strategy was to avoid a pitched battle until he could gain reinforcements, and that is precisely what he did. His rear guard action in April 1862 was so masterfully accomplished that Union commanders became overconfident. With the victory at Kernstown and the slow but steady advance south from Winchester, Williams felt optimistic. His thoughts turned to the beauty of the Shenandoah Valley and he referred to the "poetry" of the large army on the move under his command.⁴³ But the realities of war, seeing his troops marching without shoes and a soldier's head blasted by a shell, were vivid reminders of campaigning against the South.⁴⁴

The war seemed to be going well for Banks and the men of Williams' 1st Division. By 23 April Jackson had withdrawn up the Valley, crossed the Massanutten Mountains for the protection of his flank, and had moved into Swift Run Gap. There, General Richard Ewell had reinforced Jackson with his division and Jackson's effective force had swelled to 15,000. Williams advanced his division through Strasburg and New Market and on 26 April his troops occupied Harrisonburg.⁴⁵ While he was there eventful decisions were made which produced a great Confederate victory in the Shenandoah Valley.

The Union occupation of Harrisonburg posed a real dilemma for Jackson. It was the ideal location from which Banks could join forces with the troops under Fremont to the west of the Valley. If Banks and Fremont joined their forces, the Confederates faced certain disaster. The Union could then leave the Valley and assume a position in the rear of Richmond, while McClellan was attacking eastward up the Peninsula. To prevent that from happening Stonewall Jackson laid his plans carefully. If Banks stayed in Harrisonburg, Jackson had problems. Williams recognized the importance of holding Harrisonburg and urged Banks to support the 1st Division there with artillery and forces from Shields' division at New Market.⁴⁶

Jackson outlined his plan in a message to Robert E. Lee, stating that his immediate objective was to get in Banks' rear or attack his flank, which he would do if Banks continued his move south toward Staunton. Realizing the tactical advantage of Williams' division at Harrisonburg, Jackson was reluctant to move back across the South Fork of the Shenandoah. He did not think that Banks would advance on Swift Run Gap, but decided to try to smash him if he did.⁴⁷

Banks was reluctant to continue his forward movement. His natural distaste for bold action was reinforced by instructions from Edwin M. Stanton. Stanton cautioned Banks:

In the present state of things it is not the desire of the President that you should prosecute a farther advance toward the south. You are requested to consider whether you are not already making too wide a separation between the body of troops under your immediate command and your supporting force. It is possible that events may make it necessary to transfer the command of Gen. Shields to the Dept. of the Rappahannock, and you are desired to act accordingly.⁴⁸

Banks began to think about retreating.

With several available options, Jackson decided on a bold plan to defeat piecemeal the Union armies arrayed against him. He proposed to Lee that he first attack Fremont in the West, and if successful, turn on Banks.⁴⁹ Jackson began his plan with a deceptive move east across the Blue Ridge. The movement fooled some, but not Williams. On 29 April Williams had again asked Banks to reinforce the Harrisonburg position. But Banks, seeing no urgency for securing Harrisonburg, favored a withdrawal to Strasburg. Faced with losing Shields' entire division, Banks urged the War Department to order a withdrawal. "If we leave a force of 4,000 or 5,000 in the upper valley," he informed Stanton, "it will invite attack, as at Winchester, and be insufficient for defense. If no force is in the valley except at Strasburg, the enemy will not return. . . ."⁵⁰ Banks' reports were both misleading and wrong.

He reported to Stanton on 30 April 1862 that he had consulted "all leading officers" and concluded that nothing further could be done in the valley.⁵¹ Banks certainly had not conferred with Williams who informed Banks on 2 May

where Jackson was and that his own troops at Harrisonburg could hold out "against a very superior force."⁵² As late as 3 May 1862, Williams was urging Banks to move Shields' division toward Port Republic.⁵³ But by then it was too late. Lincoln had already ordered Banks to fall back to Strasburg.⁵⁴ Banks did not relay the intelligence from Williams to the War Department. Instead, he ordered Williams to abandon Harrisonburg and withdraw to Strasburg.

Williams received no word of the retreat until 5 May, and he was beside himself with anger. Not knowing of Banks' misleading reports, Williams blamed the War Department. "We regard it as a most unfortunate policy and altogether inexplicable," he wrote to Mary, "especially as we had the game all in our hands. . . ."⁵⁵ Even Stonewall Jackson exhibited surprise at the Union withdrawal from Harrisonburg.⁵⁶ Banks' retreat to Strasburg while Jackson moved against Fremont had the effect of protecting Jackson's flank and rear, enabling him to attack west without worrying about Banks.⁵⁷ Committing twice the Union force of 3,000 men at McDowell, Virginia, Jackson defeated General Milroy on 8 May 1862.⁵⁸ He then turned his attention back to Banks.

Banks, meanwhile, tried to excuse himself from blame by using the old soldier's defense of "just following orders." In a letter to one of Shields' brigade commanders, he argued with half-truths and wishful thinking. In closing he gave a self-fulfilling prophecy. Banks wrote in part, "Results

are not for us to consider and orders are received to be obeyed. . . . It is impossible to anticipate what work lies before us, and I feel the imperative necessity of making preparations for the worst."⁵⁹

Considering Banks' overly optimistic reports about the situation in the Shenandoah Valley and McClellan's snail-like progress up the Peninsula, Lincoln ordered General Shields' division eastward to join McDowell's Corps. This left only the troops of Williams' division in the Valley, behind the defenses at Strasburg. At this point, Banks ordered one of Williams' regiments, the 1st Maryland Infantry, to Front Royal at the northern end of the Luray Valley to protect the Manassas Gap Railroad. That rail link was crucial for Union supplies and communications and the Front Royal position protected Banks' eastern flank. Williams disliked the whole arrangement. "The worst part," he explained to Mary, "is that we have put ourselves in a most critical position and exposed the whole of this important valley to be retaken and its immense property of railroads and stores to be destroyed."⁶⁰ Williams was discouraged by the lack of progress and the failure of the commands of Fremont, Banks, and McDowell to cooperate.⁶¹

What happened in the week after Williams wrote to his daughter is now studied in minute detail in military schools as one of the greatest examples of Stonewall Jackson at his Napoleonic best. Jackson, a master of the offensive, never

used it better than in his move against Williams' division. Bouyed by the victory against Milroy and having knowledge that Shields had left the Valley, Jackson headed his soldiers northward on a forced march. It was this part of the campaign that earned his troops the sobriquet, "the foot cavalry." Jackson's men surprised themselves as well as the enemy with their speed. Ewell's division reinforced Jackson as he crossed the Massanutten Mountains at New Market and entered the Luray Valley. Jackson was now determined to get behind Banks, cut him off from a northern retreat, and destroy him.

Attacking at Front Royal was the first step. On 23 May, Jackson, with about 16,000 men, caught the Maryland regiment by surprise and captured almost the entire unit. Of the 592 Union casualties at Front Royal, 535 were taken prisoner.⁶² Williams and Banks did not receive word of the Front Royal disaster until midnight. Immediately, they evacuated Strasburg and headed north for Winchester twenty-two miles away.⁶³ After marching all day on 24 May, Williams deployed his two brigades in front of Winchester, facing Jackson to the south. Winchester was not easily defended, and the position of the line Williams chose after dark was not a good one. The flanks had high ground on both sides.⁶⁴ However, considering Jackson's four to one numerical superiority, it probably mattered little.

Jackson's attack at first light on the 25th introduced Williams to his first battle. When the firing began,

Williams at first felt exhilarated by the excitement of the Confederate assault. They were attacking to his right against the Third Brigade and he had confidence in the soldiers he had trained and commanded. Williams rode into the thick of the fight and found that the 27th Indiana, on the extreme right, was in the line of the main Confederate attack. The Hoosiers held momentarily, then gave way. Williams tried to rally them, but the Confederate pursuit was relentless. As the Confederates closed in, Williams spurred his war horse, "Plug Ugly," into a leap over a stone fence. He narrowly missed being captured.⁶⁵ The Second Battle of Winchester had become a rout.

Williams found Banks, informed him of the situation, and received orders from his superior to withdraw toward Martinsburg.⁶⁶ Banks was now thinking of the safety afforded by the north bank of the Potomac. Fortunately for Banks, Jackson's "foot cavalry" was too exhausted to pursue. Jackson regretted the absence of Ashby's cavalry, believing it could cut off Banks' retreat and destroy his force. With no troopers available, Jackson was unable to pursue Banks north of Martinsburg.⁶⁷

From Martinsburg, the bulk of Banks' command headed for Williamsport, on the Potomac River. The thirty-five mile retreat was easier than crossing the river which was high and not easily fordable. Before long, Williams' men were jammed together, anxious to set foot on the north bank of

the Potomac. At first there was much confusion, but when no Confederate cavalry appeared, Williams was able to restore order and got the troops and most of Banks' trains across to safety.⁶⁸

In his report of the events in the Shenandoah Valley against Jackson, Banks praised General Williams and other subordinates as if they had won some great victory.⁶⁹ But the camouflage of praises from a defeated man did not cover up the realities of what had happened in the Valley. This was not a very good way for Williams to start a military career if he expected to get promoted. President Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton were closely watching the operations in the Valley and the Confederate victory there proved to be a great disappointment. It jeopardized the plan of massing the Union forces to operate under McClellan against Richmond. Jackson in the northern end of the Valley proved to be enticing bait for the Commander-in-Chief who set about to trap Stonewall before he could escape.

A few days after the retreat across the Potomac, Williams reflected on the causes of the defeat. Initially, he blamed the War Department for depriving Banks of troops and sending them to McDowell. Here he demonstrated that he was unaware of what was going on east of Richmond and that he was only interested in his immediate front. Williams recognized the strategic importance of the Shenandoah Valley but he did not see the overall strategic picture as Lincoln

did.⁷⁰ Williams also did not know the role that Banks' confused reports played in the decision to send Shields to McDowell.

Williams' first major campaign was a failure but it was not a total defeat. The potential was there for an even worse debacle. Jackson came close to capturing all of the forces under Williams but he did not succeed. He humiliated Banks but he did not destroy him. Williams' division suffered many losses. His total casualties were 1,541 with 1,289 of that number being missing or captured.⁷¹ Williams thought back on his first campaign and admitted that he liked command. However, his responsibilities were great and the horrors of the battle appalling. Assessing his own feelings during the fighting, Williams wrote, "I felt as cool and collected as on a common march. . . . I just begin to realize under what a tremendous pressure of feeling and rapid thought I was all the while acting. I had no time to think of myself, because I was so filled with the great danger that surrounded the thousands who looked to me for direction."⁷² Williams had finally seen "the elephant" and was just beginning to come into his own as a field commander.



Figure 1. Map of Williams' Troop Movements in Virginia⁷³

CHAPTER VII Fighting Stonewall Again: Cedar Mountain and
Antietam June 1862-September 1862

President Lincoln thought he could destroy Jackson's Valley Army. Because of this, he moved to concentrate the forces under Banks, Fremont, and McDowell and catch Jackson in the northern end of the Shenandoah Valley. This salient decision involved keeping McDowell's Corps from going to aid McClellan on the Peninsula. He sent parts of it to the Shenandoah. But with the marked inability of the Union generals to get moving, Jackson was able to escape the trap. Banks was slow to reorganize his troops in Williamsport and even slower to move on Lincoln's orders to work in concert with Fremont and McDowell. Williams urged a move southward into the Valley again and a concentration of Union forces which, he argued, "could and should have been made two months ago."¹ Williams would be fighting Stonewall again.

Williams did not get orders from Banks to move back into the Valley until 4 June 1862. By then Jackson had moved much farther south trying to elude the converging columns of Fremont and McDowell. "If these officers have made a junction," Williams wrote, "Jackson can never get out of the valley. If they have kept separate, as I fear, he will be apt to beat them seriatim."² This was precisely what happened as Jackson was able to defeat the Federals at Cross Keys on 8 June and Port Republic the next day. Fremont and Shields did not coordinate their attacks and Jackson withdrew to the safety of the Blue Ridge, where

he waited for an attack that never came. His campaign had succeeded beyond all his hopes.

Williams' division remained in the Valley under Banks' command throughout the rest of the month. Jackson had moved east to aid the fighting in front of Richmond, giving Williams time to take stock of the last few months of campaigning. He was, he wrote, "wearied, annoyed, tired, and distressed to death, and yet my tough constitution stands it all as if made of iron."³ On 22 June Williams wrote Irene a prophetic statement on the strategic importance of the Shenandoah Valley. "If Maryland is ever invaded, it will be through this Valley--mark my prediction."⁴ Williams was correct and he did not have long to wait.

But first, the North had another crack at invading the South under a new commander, General John Pope. If nothing else, the failures in the Shenandoah Valley reflected a disunity of command. President Lincoln set about correcting this by bringing in Pope from the West and establishing the Army of Virginia. Banks' Corps became the 2nd Corps, Army of Virginia, and Williams was still the commander of the 1st Division. Banks' Corps was finally given a reconstituted 2nd Division under the leadership of General Christopher Columbus Augur. Pope's famous "Backs of the Enemy" message given when he assumed command disturbed the division commanders like Williams. Pope's boastfulness did not sit well with men who had already done some hard fighting and whose retreat was forced by greatly superior enemy

numbers. Williams indicated, "We all laughed and thought he would do better to stay where we were then till he got men enough to do half what he threatened."⁵ Pope tried to give the impression that all that was needed was a strong offensive and the Rebel forces would collapse. In mid-July 1862, he announced, "Let us study the probable lines of retreat of our opponents, and leave our own to take care of themselves. Let us look before us, and not behind. Success and glory are in the advance, disaster and shame lurk in the rear."⁶

Williams had crossed the Blue Ridge eastward at the time of the reorganization. With McClellan's failure to capture Richmond in the Peninsula Campaign, Pope began to plan his own great offensive for his army of 40,000 men. Banks' 2nd Corps was to be Pope's vanguard, and the move threatened to catch Lee's forces between those of Pope and McClellan. Lee sent Jackson, his most able lieutenant, with a corps strength of two divisions to attack Pope. Banks concentrated his divisions at Culpepper, Virginia when he heard that Jackson had moved in strength toward Gordonsville. On 6 August 1862, Pope ordered Banks to move south with Williams' division leading and Augur's division in reserve.⁷ Two days later, Pope telegraphed General Henry Halleck in Washington that he had massed his army at Culpepper and would "push the enemy behind the

Rapidan, and take up a strong position. . . ."8 Banks' Corps with Williams' division leading was to be the cutting edge of the sweep.

Contrary to the figures Pope reported on 31 July 1862 of 16,000 for Banks' Corps, the Massachusetts major general had only about 12,000; Abercrombie's brigade was still being cited on paper as part of Williams' division. Williams had only 3,435 infantry in his two brigades under Generals Samuel Crawford and George H. Gordon in the first week of August 1862.⁹ Jackson had about 24,000 soldiers under his command, and he moved quickly northward from Gordonsville to try to attack Pope's vanguard before the Union general could mass his entire force. The two enemy armies converged within sight of an eminence, prophetically and coincidentally named "Slaughter's Mountain," near a little creek called Cedar Run. The Union commanders called the mountain "Cedar Mountain" in their reports, and the battle which followed on 9 August 1862 usually goes by that name.¹⁰

The intense controversy over whether or not Pope had actually ordered Banks to attack at Cedar Mountain is almost a moot point. Stonewall Jackson was going to attack Banks anyway. The problem lay in who first took the offensive and where the fight took place. August 9th was clear and blisteringly hot. The men of Crawford's and Gordon's brigades were exhausted by noon as the choking dust and withering heat sapped their strength on the march from Culpepper.¹¹ Williams put his division in a solidly

defensive position with Gordon's 3rd Brigade on his farthest right and then Crawford's 1st Brigade to the left with both units under cover of a woodlot. Arrayed in front of Williams' division was an open wheatfield and about three hundred yards from his own lines was a dense wood with high ground in the rear. The heights of Cedar Mountain lay behind the woods and Jackson's artillery set up on high ground and began shelling Williams' positions. Williams informed Banks that it was not a good place to attack.¹² Earlier that day, Banks had seen General Pope's chief of cavalry who told him, "There must be no backing out this day."¹³ The biting comment was an obvious reference to Banks' retreat in the Shenandoah Valley, and Banks interpreted it as an added incentive to attack Jackson first. Banks was not going to be surprised at Cedar Mountain nor did he intend to retreat. At 2:25 PM, Banks telegraphed Pope that Williams' troops were in position and Augur's division supported them. Banks then reported, "A visit to the front does not impress [me] that the enemy intends immediate attack; he seems, however, to be taking positions."¹⁴ Banks ordered an assault before the enemy could secure those positions on Cedar Mountain. Jackson was, in fact, preparing to attack Banks himself even before he had amassed Charles Winder's and A.P. Hill's divisions in proper battle order.¹⁵ Pope had no knowledge of Banks' intentions and, as a result, the rest of Pope's army was

arrayed on a routine march south from Culpepper. Banks was outnumbered by at least two to one.

Gunners began the battle about 3:00PM with a relatively ineffective duel over a long distance. General Winder was just deploying the Stonewall Brigade in the woods when about 4:00PM a Union shell exploded and he fell mortally wounded. Banks was on the scene of battle, and he ordered Williams to attack across his front.¹⁶ With the open wheatfield before his division, Williams dreaded the move. He reluctantly ordered Crawford to make the first assault. With bayonets fixed, Crawford's men charged into the wheatfield and headed for the woods. The Confederate musket fire was withering, and many of Williams' troops took only a few steps into the fresh cut straw and dropped dead. A large group did make it to the woods, and with their bayonets and club muskets they fell into the Rebel ranks with a fury that surprised the Stonewall Brigade. Yanks were not supposed to fight like that, and especially those in Banks' Corps! But Williams' well trained men did fight hard, and it appeared momentarily that they would carry the battle.

Williams had kept Gordon's brigade in reserve on Banks' orders. When Williams thought Crawford's attack had slowed, he ordered Gordon to move to Crawford's aid. This action on Williams' right had the effect of outflanking Jackson's line.¹⁷ Jackson saw the problem and at a critical moment he personally rallied his forces, and with A.P. Hill's men

he counterattacked and drove the Union troops back. Again, the wheatfield offered a free fire zone for the Rebel muskets and artillery. Hundreds dropped as they recrossed the field. Crawford called the slaughter "fearful"¹⁸ and Gordon indicated, "I carried into action less than 1,500 men. I lost in about thirty minutes about 466 killed, wounded and missing."¹⁹

The battle raged for two hours, and both sides fell back exhausted as darkness came on. The large reserves of Pope's army arrived only after dark and served no purpose in the battle. Banks forced a fight on Jackson without reinforcements, and Williams' division suffered the worst from the decision. The total corps casualties for Banks were 2,216 of which the 1st Division had 1,212. Williams lost fully one-third of his command in this battle with most killed and wounded.²⁰ Just before the battle, Williams had lunched with the field officers of Crawford's three regiments. They joked and talked of the events of the war they had gone through to that point. And then, Williams recalled, "Sorrow and misfortune seemed far away, and yet of all the field officers of these three regiments. . . not one, five yours afterwards, was unhurt. Everyone was either killed or wounded."²¹

The battle of Cedar Mountain is one of those fights in the Civil War which some later observers deemed unimportant. Bruce Catton in his book, Terrible Swift Sword, indicated, "The battle meant nothing in particular, except it raised Confederate morale and further depressed the Yankees. . . ."²²

But to the principals who fought there, it was of signal importance. This was true for Stonewall Jackson and also for Alpheus Williams.

Frank Vandiver in his excellent biography of the Confederate general considered Cedar Mountain to be Jackson's "most important battle" because it gave him renewed self-confidence.²³ Jackson had made some serious blunders in the battle. He moved against Banks before he had organized his troops well in battle line, and he allowed Williams to outflank him on his left. But Jackson overcame these difficulties by showing that he was an ideal battlefield commander when he personally rallied the counterattack which drove the Federals back with heavy losses. The Confederates also suffered quite a few casualties, losing 1,276.²⁴ General Lee praised Jackson for his triumph, and Jackson announced that a memorial service would be conducted to thank God for the victory at Cedar Run.²⁵

What made Cedar Mountain even more of a Southern victory was that Pope did not pursue Jackson any farther south. Williams saw Pope and McDowell early in the morning on the day after the battle, and both men told him that the fight would be continued the same day. "I wish he had kept his promise," Williams recalled, "for I feel confident we should have punished them badly."²⁶ Pope did not attack then and began his own retreat of sorts which ended in the Union disaster at Second Bull Run later in the month.

Cedar Mountain was very important in Williams' career also. He was bitter about the high casualties in his division and the fact that their sacrifice seemed almost a waste when Pope had reinforcing troops not far from the battle and did not commit them or continue the attack the next day.²⁷ An unexpected result of the battle was that Williams became the commander of the 2nd Corps when, by accident, Banks hurt his leg when a horse bumped into him during the "skedaddle" after the fight.²⁸ When Banks returned to Washington to recuperate, Williams effectively ended his ill-starred association with the political general. Most importantly, Williams learned the dreadful meaning of "civil war" at the battle of Cedar Mountain. The soldiers of his division stained Cedar Run red and soaked the stubble of the cut-over wheatfield with their blood. But the survivors emerged as battle hardened veterans with a growing respect for their general with the gold-rimmed spectacles, scraggly beard and black slouch hat. "Pap Williams," as they called him, watched over his troops, father-like, and was, like Stonewall Jackson, always urging them onward at the point of battle.

Williams did not have an easy time in his transition to corps command.²⁹ Banks had taken his adjutant with him to Washington and Williams' own adjutant, his old Detroit friend, Captain William Wilkins, had been captured at Cedar Mountain. Without many aides, Williams had to do most of the paperwork himself. This problem was compounded by the

fact that General Augur of the 2nd Division was severely wounded in the battle and Williams' own 1st Division had lost many field and staff officers.³⁰

Pope's mad cap operations in Virginia made Williams' task even more difficult. Williams commanded the troops of the 2nd Corps at Culpepper until 18 August. Then the corps began a series of marches and countermarches back toward Washington which exhausted the troops and frustrated the leading generals.³¹ Williams had not changed his clothes in the ten days before writing his daughter on 26 August 1862, "After hard labor and great loss of life we are back where we were when General Pope published his famous order that we must look to no lines of retreat and that in his western campaigns he never saw the backs of his enemies."³² Williams' corps served as Pope's rear guard and because of its great losses at Cedar Mountain, it was the smallest corps with only about 8,500 effectives.³³ During the battle of Second Bull Run, Pope kept the 2nd Corps in reserve at Bristoe Station.³⁴ Williams and his soldiers escaped the fighting in that humiliating Northern defeat.

Pope's short but surprisingly inept campaign against Jackson and Lee strengthened Southern morale as much as it depressed the North. Williams demonstrated his own depression and his critical view of Pope when he wrote to Irene saying:

A splendid army almost demoralized, millions of public property given up or destroyed, thousands of lives of our best men sacrificed for no purpose. I dare not trust myself to speak of this commander as I feel and believe. Suffice it to say (for your eyes only) that more insolence, superciliousness, ignorance, and pretentiousness were never combined in one man. It can with truth be said of him that he had not a friend in his command from the smallest drummer boy to the highest general officer. All hated him.³⁵

In the same letter of 8 September, Williams also expressed his growing disillusionment with the Union's war effort.

Lee had begun his first invasion of the North and in a significant passage where he reflected on the events of the past year, Williams concluded:

We are now within a few miles of where I began my service with the old brigade a year ago. What a contrast. The three regiments of that brigade (one has been transferred) are here yet in name but instead of 3,000 men they number altogether less than 400 men present! Not a field officer nor adjutant is here! All killed or wounded! Instead of hopeful and confident feelings we are all depressed with losses and disasters. Instead of an offensive position the enemy is now actually in Maryland and we are on the defensive. What a change! After such vast preparations and such vast sacrifices. This has been called a 'brainless war'. I can't tell you of the future. We are accumulating troops this way and shall doubtless have some severe conflicts. If we fail now the North has no hope, no safety that I can see. We have thrown away our power and prestige. We may³⁶ become the supplicant instead of the avenger. . . .

Indeed, Williams had reason to be alarmed, as did the people in Washington. Lee was on the move northward, so during the first week in September President Lincoln restored General McClellan to his command and reorganized the Army of the Potomac. Pope's Army of Virginia merged with McClellan's army, and Banks' 2nd Corps became the Twelfth Corps of Mr. Lincoln's Army. Banks remained in Washington in

charge of the defenses there, and Williams continued commanding the corps.³⁷

Williams liked McClellan and welcomed the prospect of a commander with greater abilities than Banks and Pope. The XII Corps commander was also encouraged by getting five new regiments (about 3,000 men) even though they were raw recruits with inexperienced officers.³⁸ Williams' corps was still the smallest after the reorganization, but the new regiments brought his effective strength to just over 10,000.³⁹ General Crawford temporarily commanded Williams' division which still had only two brigades. General George Sears Greene, an old West Point graduate in the class of 1823, took over the 2nd Division with its full complement of three brigades. Captain Clermont L. Best was the corps artillery chief.⁴⁰ With many of his corps staff officers gone and the confusion of almost constant movement to keep the Army of the Potomac between Lee and Washington, Williams was becoming exhausted with the work load.⁴¹ But events of the next week gave Williams no rest.

What happened on the morning of 13 September when his corps was just outside Frederick, Maryland, was only the initial spark of a major campaign which exploded in bloody battle on the rolling hills near Sharpsburg. The seemingly minor incident more than made up for the 27th Indiana's breaking up in the Shenandoah Valley at Winchester. Two

of Colonel Silas Colgrove's soldiers found some cigars that morning wrapped in a paper with General Lee's plans for his campaign. The story of Lee's "Lost Dispatch" has been covered in detail by many historians. For Williams, it was significant in that he had the good sense to dispatch the order to McClellan quickly and the good fortune to have as his able staff officer, Lieutenant Samuel E. Pittman of Detroit. Luck also played a part in that the order was signed by "R.H. Chilton," Lee's Assistant Adjutant-General. Both Williams and Pittman knew Chilton when he was stationed in Detroit at Fort Wayne during the 1850's. Pittman could positively identify Chilton's signature because he had worked as a teller in the Detroit bank where Chilton had his account.⁴²

The fact that McClellan knew where Lee's troops were spurred McClellan into a movement to cut off Lee. The prospects for a decisive victory never appeared better. But McClellan's "speed," or lack of it as his critics charge, did not prevent Lee from holding strategic mountain passes and concentrating his forces at Sharpsburg.⁴³ And so, McClellan lost his first great advantage which the message wrapped around the cigars presented to him.

Even the day before his troops found the message, General Williams anticipated a major fight. Williams showed uncharacteristic optimism when he wrote to his daughter:

There will be a great battle or a great skedaddle on the part of the Rebels. I have great confidence that we shall smash them terribly if they stand, more confidence than I have ever had in any moment of the war. We move slowly but each corps understands the others, and when we do strike I think it will be a heavy blow.⁴⁴

Williams moved his troops north and west from Frederick, and on the evening of 14 September 1862, he met with McClellan. The brigadier was in an awkward position concerning the chain of command. He was the only corps commander who was not a major general. As part of the preparations of the move to attack Lee, McClellan had artificially grouped his command into three wings. Williams' corps was part of the center wing under General Edwin Sumner and consisted of Sumner's II Corps and the XII Corps. McClellan held Sumner's forces in reserve at the battles of South Mountain and Crampton's Gap. The fighting in those important preliminary fights was done by the two corps of General Ambrose E. Burnside's left wing, his own and that of General William B. Franklin. The hard fought Union victories cleared the way for a move against Lee's main force.

When Williams met with McClellan that night he probably learned that he was being replaced as a corps commander. Apparently the reason was his rank as a brigadier general rather than any battlefield errors. Williams, at first, did not consider the demotion to be a personal affront, and, in fact, was somewhat relieved. "I went back to my division," he recalled, "rather pleased

that I had got rid of an onerous responsibility."⁴⁶ But the events of the next few days would put Williams back in command of the XII Corps at a critical stage of the battle.

The new XII Corps commander rode out from Washington on 15 September.⁴⁷ Major General Joseph K.F. Mansfield had been in the army forever. Like Williams, Mansfield was born in Connecticut. But unlike Williams, Mansfield was a West Pointer who graduated in 1822. He had fought bravely in the Mexican War and during the 1850's he was an inspector general and engineer in the army. Mansfield had masterminded the elaborate Washington defenses and had served in various administrative commands after the war started.⁴⁸ He made a great first impression on all who saw him, and Williams remembered Mansfield as "a most veteran looking officer, with head as white as snow. . . ."⁴⁹ He inspired the men of the corps with his bright new uniform and his air of enthusiasm.⁵⁰ Williams was critical of Mansfield in some respects and considered him to be "very fussy" and without battlefield experience in commanding a large number of troops in a battle.⁵¹ The most important difference between the two men at that time was the sense of urgency which Mansfield exhibited. Williams was clearly fatigued from the constant field duty and especially the campaign since early August 1862.⁵² Mansfield's urge to get things going was something McClellan himself should have emulated.

McClellan delayed attacking on the 15th, and on September 16th he ordered his army forward toward Sharpsburg. The plan, McClellan wrote in his report of the campaign, "was to make the main attack upon the enemy's left--at least to create a diversion in favor of the main attack, with the hope of something more by assailing the enemy's right--and, as soon as one or both of the flank movements were fully successful, to attack their center with any reserves I might then have on hand."⁵³ It was a good plan but even as he stated it, it reveals a fatal flaw which was so characteristic of McClellan's actions in battle. He was too cautious. To wait until one or the other of the flank attacks was "fully successful" meant losing the initiative and the advantages which his superior numbers offered.

It was in the first of these flank attacks, on the Confederate left, that Mansfield's XII Corps and Williams fought during the battle of Antietam. Facing them were the same troops and the same Rebel leader they had fought before: Stonewall Jackson and his soldiers.

One of the biggest problems at the battle of Antietam was McClellan's failure to provide a unity of command. His reordering of the corps groupings on the 16th confused the situation more than anything else. McClellan ordered General Joseph Hooker and his I Corps at 2PM on 16 September to cross Antietam Creek and probe the left to check for the best point of attack on the next day.⁵⁴ McClellan gave no

orders directly to General Mansfield. Instead, he ordered Sumner to "cross the corps of General Mansfield [over the Antietam] during the night and hold his own (the Second) Corps ready to cross early the next morning."⁵⁵ This unnecessary delay affected Mansfield and his corps in important ways and certainly did not improve their chances of success in the battle. Mansfield did not receive word of the move until late at night, and he had to rouse his tired men and march them across fields and through woodlots in the middle of the night. They marched until 2AM before they settled in bivouac on a farm about one mile in the rear of General Hooker's corps.⁵⁶ Mansfield directed the move himself and did not communicate the plans for the next day to his two division commanders--Williams and Greene.

Williams and many others on the eve of the great battle felt an eerie sense of anticipation. He expressed his thoughts and in turn demonstrated his fatigue that night on the Poffenberger farm in a dreamlike description which he wrote to his daughters:

I shall not, however soon forget that night; so dark, so obscure, so mysterious, so uncertain; with the occasional rapid volleys of pickets and outposts, the low solemn sound of the command as troops came into position and withal so sleepy that there was a half-dreamy sensation about it all; but with a certain impression that the morrow was to be great with the future fate of our country. So much responsibility, so much intense, future anxiety; and yet I slept as soundly as though nothing was before me.⁵⁷

What lay ahead was to be the bloodiest single day of the Civil War, and Williams was to be in the thick of it.

"Fighting Joe" Hooker commenced the fight at dawn. With supreme confidence in his own abilities and those of his 1st Corps veterans, Hooker began the attack on the Confederate left with Mansfield's corps some distance to his rear. The opportunity of seizing Lee's flank and rolling it up (with all the attendant glory) proved to be heady motivation for Hooker, the aggressive corps commander. What need was there to wait for Mansfield's corps? Hooker found the answer in a 40 acre cornfield along the Hagerstown pike and in a woodlot just to the west of the same road.

For two hours, until about 7:00 AM, Hooker's men attacked Jackson's troops alone.⁵⁸ The fighting in the cornfield and south of the Miller farm was savage. Suicidal charges from both sides into deadly volleys of musket fire and canister littered the area with dead and wounded men. Hooker had made some progress in moving along the Hagerstown pike, and when he saw that his assault was lagging, he sent for Mansfield's corps to push his offensive onward.⁵⁹

Williams thought the progress of the XII Corps was too slow, and he blamed Mansfield for it.⁶⁰ The veterans of XII Corps had begun to get ready for battle when they heard the firing at first light. As their advance got under way, Mansfield repeatedly ordered halts as he sent regiments to the right or left to occupy a position only to bring them

back into line of march.⁶¹ The five new regiments amounting to 1/3 of the entire corps undoubtedly caused delays. Mansfield was particularly worried that they would bolt for the rear as soon as they came under fire and so he put the new regiments in close order of companies in front. This too slowed the movement to aid Hooker. Williams pleaded with Mansfield to put the corps into a battle line instead of keeping them in company formations. As it was, they were too vulnerable to Confederate artillery, let alone well aimed musket fire. But Mansfield did not relent until the advance of the 1st Brigade of Williams' division came within range of the Rebel infantry in the vicinity of the woods east of the cornfield.⁶² Old General Mansfield was literally at the head of his corps. As he tried to get two of the new regiments on line, he rode out of the protection of the East Woods. He thought Hooker's men were in the cornfield, but the soldiers there were Rebels. The white haired general in his bright new uniform was a perfect target, and the Rebels in the cornfield fired a volley which mortally wounded the XII Corps commander. Troops of the 125th Pennsylvania Infantry carried him to the rear, a casualty before his corps had even begun to fight.⁶³

Williams immediately resumed command of the XII Corps. He had been out of the job less than 48 hours, and the changes of command created considerable confusion. General Crawford took over the 1st Division, and Colonel Joseph Knipe became the 1st Brigade commander. General Gordon still

had the 3rd Brigade. Only the 2nd Division under the able veteran Greene had any continuity of command.

Williams sought out Hooker to get directions from him before he deployed XII Corps for its attack.⁶⁴ Williams did not send in his corps without considering the I Corps' position on the field. This is contrary to some later accounts of the battle which characterize the Union efforts as totally uncoordinated. Williams ordered his corps to follow approximately the same line of attack as Hooker (along the Hagerstown pike and through the cornfield) but with two important exceptions. He ordered General Greene and two brigades of the 2nd Division to attack along a ridge leading toward a small whitewashed building, the Dunker Church.⁶⁵ Williams saw Greene's position and objective as the key to the battlefield in his sector. Accordingly, he ordered the XII Corps artillery under Captain Best to move in front of the infantry to hold strategic positions near the East Wood where they could support the attacks of Greene and Crawford.⁶⁶ With his line of attack determined and his troops deployed, (Greene on the left, Gordon in the center and Knipe on the right) Williams ordered XII Corps forward. He held no troops in reserve and committed his entire corps of 10,000 men.⁶⁷ "The necessities of the case were so great," Williams wrote, "that I was obliged to put my whole corps into action at once."⁶⁸ Before the attack, however, at the insistence of two of Hooker's generals, Williams had

detached one of Greene's brigades to go to the aid of Generals Doubleday and Gibbon whose batteries on Hooker's right flank were threatened.⁶⁹ This act protected the Union right by strengthening the batteries there but it left Greene with only about 1,700 men.⁷⁰

Williams' soldiers fought brilliantly that morning, even the new regiments. Williams ordered Crawford and Gordon to supervise personally the new regiments, and he himself helped get one into battle line for the charge against the Rebel positions. Facing the XII Corps attack, Jackson had the combined forces of "Baldy Dick" Ewell, J.R. Jones, A.P. Hill and D.H. Hill.⁷¹ Hooker's corps had caused great damage to Jackson's troops and their weakened condition made Williams' task a little easier. The Confederates successfully contained the advance of most of Crawford's troops. In the battle in front of Greene, the XII Corps made its greatest progress. One of the new regiments of General Crawford, the 125th Pennsylvania, had become separated and did not get the word to pull back. The Pennsylvanians fixed bayonets and charged past the Dunker Church into the West Wood where they held out despite repeated attempts to dislodge them. This advance, the farthest of McClellan on that day, was an important breach of Jackson's line.⁷² The Union troops held on tenaciously. If they could hold out in the West Wood, Lee's flank would be turned. Jackson knew he had to beat back Williams' troops

from the West Wood to save his position and he urgently dispatched a messenger to Lee requesting reinforcements.⁷³

It was then only about 9:00 AM and the advance division of Sumner's corps was arriving on the scene. Many of Williams' soldiers thought that Sumner's advance meant victory on the Union right and they cheered as General Sedgwick's division pushed onward.⁷⁴ Williams sent a staff officer to Sumner to inform him of the situation in his front.⁷⁵ Then, there was an ominous lull in the firing on the battlefield. The reason was simple: Williams' men were almost out of ammunition and the Confederates were being strongly reinforced. Lee had been able to send Jackson more men and they arrived just as Sumner was preparing to attack. Williams, thinking the situation was well in hand, ordered Crawford to withdraw both Gordon's and Knipe's brigades to the safety of the East Wood in order to replenish their ammunition and give the men a rest.⁷⁶ Greene and his 2nd Division were still in the advance. Williams looked toward the West Wood and thought, "The woods in front were as quiet as any sylvan shade could be."⁷⁷ Things were not always as they seemed, especially at the battle of Antietam.

Unaware that Jackson had so many new troops, Sumner ordered Sedgwick to attack toward the West Wood before Williams could regroup. Later Williams was privately critical of the way Sumner advanced, saying that his men in three ranks were too close together, "We lost a good

deal of our fire without any corresponding benefit or advantage."⁷⁸ Probably more important was that Sedgwick's division became a salient into which the Rebels were able to pour lead from three sides, and they did so with devastating fire causing great damage. In just a few short minutes, Sedgwick lost over two thousand casualties. Sumner's 1st Division fell back in disarray and it left only Greene's Division in possession of the Dunker Church and a portion of the West Wood. He held out there for several hours before being forced to retire to the safety of the East Wood.⁸⁰

After his own frontal assault had failed, General Sumner ordered Williams to advance again and, reluctantly, Williams got the two remaining brigades of his old division back in battle formation. They charged back across the cornfield once again toward the West Wood. Most of the casualties of the 1st Division XII Corps, occurred during this assault which Sumner ordered. The Rebels drove Williams' troops back behind the XII Corps artillery.⁸¹

Jackson's men poured out of the West Wood in a screaming counterattack which threatened to put the Yankees back in New England where they belonged. But they too had to cross the deadly cornfield and they charged straight at Best's artillery.

Williams had posted the batteries of Knap, Cothran, and Hampton very well and he was standing next to one of them when he saw the Rebel battle flags appear out of the

woods. He told the gunners to load their pieces with canister and watched as they discharged the guns at close range into the screaming Confederate soldiers. It reminded him of a dust cloud and when it cleared, he could see the "tornado of canister" blew the attacking regiment away like dust.⁸²

Jackson's counterattack failed and the troops of XII Corps, exhausted beyond endurance, held their positions until Franklin's corps came up to relieve them in the afternoon.⁸³ Their part in the battle of Antietam was over. The losses of the XII Corps were severe, 1,746, with most killed and wounded.⁸⁴ They had also lost their new corps commander when Mansfield died from his wounds. The 17% casualties for the corps equalled those of Hooker's I Corps and Burnside's IX Corps. All three of those corps had casualties much less than Sumner's II Corps which suffered a 27% casualty figure.⁸⁵

The statistics do not tell the whole story in assessing the importance of the fight at Antietam. Williams considered many of the Union losses a senseless waste, particularly those of Sumner. "Hundreds of lives were foolishly sacrificed by generals I see most praised," Williams fumed, "generals who would come up with their commands and pitch in at the first point without consultation with those who knew the ground or without reconnoitering or looking for the effective points of attack."⁸⁶ Williams had coordinated his attack with

Hooker and tried to do the same with Sumner. The troops of the Twelfth Corps had done everything their generals asked that day but McClellan had let them down. They had carried their portion of the field and held until they had exhausted themselves and their ammunition. The commanding general chose not to renew the fight on his right flank and as he waited to decide what to do next, Lee was able to slip away and avoid a total defeat.

Most of those who fought at Antietam that day saw the significance of the battle in the faces of the dead they buried and on the thousands of wounded who suffered the pain of amputation or the slow death brought on by ubiquitous infections. Survival, after all, was what was paramount to the common soldiers in the war. They had no time to think of the diplomatic impact of their fighting or of grand strategy and how it affected the course of the war. The battle did cause Great Britain and France to have second thoughts about continuing to aid the Confederacy and full recognition was, then, out of the question. Antietam also provided President Lincoln with the opportunity he wanted to issue his preliminary emancipation proclamation. McClellan had stopped Lee's first invasion of the North and that fact was significant. But Williams, as he surveyed his wrecked corps, thought of the battle only in terms of lost opportunities.

In the week after the battle, Williams had time to assess the fighting and he poured out his thoughts in letters

to his relatives. He mistakenly thought the Confederates outnumbered McClellan's forces that day.⁸⁷ McClellan's piecemeal attacks had the effect of reducing the advantage he had of greatly superior numbers. "We threw away our power," Williams argued, "by impulsive and hasty attacks on wrong points."⁸⁸ When his corps was attacking alone on the battlefield for two hours and as the 125th Pennsylvania and General Greene's division clung to their toehold in the West Wood, they were outnumbered by Jackson's troops and his reinforcements.⁸⁹

That war had not claimed his literary artistry is evident in his description of the sound of battle at Antietam:

The roar of the infantry was beyond anything conceivable to the uninitiated. Imagine from 8,000 to 10,000 men on one side, with probably a larger number on the other, all at once discharging their muskets. If all the stone and brick houses of Broadway should tumble at once the roar and rattle could hardly be greater and amidst this, hundreds of artillery, right and left were thundering as a sort of bass to the infernal music.⁹⁰

Williams appeared to be at a breaking point after Antietam. He was physically exhausted and in many respects had become more disillusioned with the war. He brooded over the men he lost in battle, and now a new annoyance added to his depression. In the aftermath of the battle, Williams decried those glory seeking generals who tried to claim fame even though they were hardly on the field of battle. In a letter to his daughter Williams wrote things which suggest that he was writing for a larger audience or, at least, in the hope that his own efforts would be recognized by historians:

The major generals with big staffs will gobble up all the glory, judging from newspaper reports. But there is an unwritten history of these battles that somebody will be obliged to set right some day. Generals are amazingly puffed who are not ten minutes on the field. Corps are praised for services done by others. Commands that were hours behind the line, when the battle raged fiercest, are carrying off the reputation (in the newspapers) of saving other corps from defeat.⁹¹

Indeed, General Williams never received the recognition he deserved for commanding the XII Corps at the battle of Antietam. His superiors either glossed over his actions or neglected to mention them at all. Mansfield was dead; Hooker never completed his report of the battle; Sumner indicated that he had no personal knowledge of what happened on the right flank before he arrived and would make no comment; and McClellan attributed the efforts of the XII Corps to the subordinate commanders, Crawford, Gordon, and Greene, and barely mentioned Williams in his report.⁹² This was a real and continuing problem for him. It certainly worked against gaining promotion for whenever he did well and fought hard, his superiors were either dismissed, killed, or had fallen into disfavor at the War Department. Praise from a man whose star had fallen meant little in the intensely political atmosphere of the major general ranks. This is what happened after Cedar Mountain with Banks and after Antietam with Mansfield and McClellan. It would occur time and time again.

CHAPTER VIII The Transition to Total War
October 1862-May 1863

General Williams and the XII Corps needed a rest after Antietam. McClellan's decision not to pursue Lee made that possible. It also resulted in McClellan's dismissal. Williams' corps was one of the first to get its marching orders after the battle and, in the afternoon of 18 September 1862, he moved his corps southward toward the Potomac and Lee's retreating garrisons. Williams reached Maryland Heights near Harpers Ferry on the morning of 20 September and there he waited for further orders. That night, McClellan telegraphed General-in-Chief Henry Halleck that Williams and XII Corps had reached the heights above the river.¹ As Williams stared back across the Potomac, he worried about what was going to happen, thinking, "What is to be done next I know not. It will be my fate, I fear, to go a third time up the valley. Heaven forbid! The valley has been an unfortunate land for me."² Fighting up the valley again was not to be his fate this time because McClellan had lost his nerve after Antietam. An immediate offensive without elaborate preparations and large numbers of reinforcements was, for McClellan, unthinkable. And so, Williams and his corps posted themselves on the banks of the Potomac where they had been the year before and waited.

One man in Washington who had grown impatient with McClellan's inaction was the Commander-in-Chief. President Lincoln visited his Army of the Potomac during the first

week in October. He tried to find out whether McClellan was going to begin a new offensive.³ During the several days Lincoln spent visiting the army in the field, he ran into Williams. The two men sat down on a pile of logs and had what Williams described as "a long talk." The scene was certainly characteristic of the old Illinois rail splitter and Williams found Lincoln to be "the most unaffected, simple-minded, honest, and frank man I ever met. I wish he had a little more firmness, though I suppose the main difficulty with him is to make up his mind as to the best policy amongst the multitude of advisers and advice"4

As a result of his October visit to the Army of the Potomac Lincoln made two decisions: he concluded (1) to get rid of McClellan, and (2) to send large reinforcements to the Army of the Potomac. In the long run, Williams benefitted greatly from both of these decisions. He had personally liked McClellan and found him to be a good organizer who improved the army's esprit de corps, but McClellan was not good at winning battles and destroying the Rebel armies, things which would significantly shorten the war.⁵ The new recruits which Williams received were a much more tangible indicator of change. They gave him some cause for optimism. His corps was still the smallest on 30 September 1862 with only 8,400 effectives present for duty. By 10 October, however, with fifteen new regiments added, Williams' XII Corps had swelled to 17,646.⁶ This gave him

even more troops than the IX Corps of General Burnside, who was about to become the new commander of the Army of the Potomac.

Williams had another reason to be encouraged by the events after Antietam. He thought that his prospects for promotion to major general were excellent. He felt flattered that both Hooker and Sumner were pleased with his performance at Antietam. They had both told him they were. The Detroit general also thought that his superiors, including Banks, had recommended him for promotion.⁷ It is most likely, however, that those recommendations were merely verbal ones and were given to the wrong people.⁸

Williams did take a realistic attitude at that time toward promotion and he recognized some things worked against him. "My friends think I shall get a major generalship," he wrote, "I should if I was of the regular army; but not being such nor a graduated fool [A West Pointer!] I suppose I shall remain a brigadier."⁹ He also pointed out that none of Banks' subordinates had yet been promoted. Banks did not recommend advancement without being personally asked to do so.¹⁰ Williams actually wrote to Banks twice requesting him to send a letter of recommendation to the War Department. In the second letter, the Michigan general wrote, "I make this request because I know that without your approval I have no chance but to remain stationary while all my juniors are promoted."¹¹ Williams chafed at the boasts of

McClellan and Burnside that their division commanders in the early days had all made major general.¹²

The fact that there were so many major generals around made his position as the XII Corps commander even more tenuous. Corps command was normally held by a major general, and as a brigadier he had been in the slot with only brief interruption since August 10th. Williams liked the job and indicated his good fortune at being in command of the corps for as long as he was.¹³ His hopes for promotion were dashed when he received word that on 15 October 1862 President Lincoln had appointed Henry W. Slocum to the XII Corps.¹⁴

Slocum and Williams had some things in common. Their ancestors were among the earliest settlers in New England; both were lawyers and had some experience in local politics; and both had served in the state militia before the war. But there were striking differences. Slocum was seventeen years younger than Williams and was one of the youngest of all the Union major generals. He was only thirty-four when he received the rank to date from 4 July 1862. Slocum was a West Pointer (Class of 1852) and had served with McClellan on the Peninsula. Slocum's brigadier rank came after he took a Confederate musket ball in the thigh at 1st Bull Run. Getting shot often meant a promotion if you recovered. Williams was never wounded. At Antietam, Slocum had command of a division of General Franklin's VI Corps and, as such, he saw little action there. His rank was the main stepping stone toward taking over XII Corps.¹⁵ Slocum arrived at the

XII Corps camp near Sandy Hook, Maryland on 20 October 1862. Williams then returned to the 1st Division.¹⁶ At first, he expressed privately some bitterness toward Slocum, but later their relationship developed into one of mutual respect and friendship.¹⁷

As the fall of 1862 came to a close and the Army of the Potomac waited for orders from the indecisive McClellan, Slocum reorganized XII Corps. Williams began training his new regiments. For the first time since the spring, he had three brigades in his division. The constant campaigning since August--with the battle losses of Cedar Mountain and Antietam, along with disease in epidemic proportions--had demoralized the 2nd Division. Slocum's reforms were swift. He brought in General John Geary to command the 2nd Division and took some of Williams' veteran regiments to provide a cadre of experience to aid the new regiments of Geary's division.¹⁸

In early November Lincoln replaced McClellan with Ambrose E. Burnside. Williams thought Burnside was a fine man and a "good officer" but he did not think Burnside could measure up to McClellan.¹⁹ Lincoln did not want just an organizer; he wanted a fighter who would take the offensive and fight hard. The North could not hope to end the rebellion if it did not invade and conquer the South.

Williams also thought of strategy, although he usually neglected what was going on in the theater of the war where he was not fighting at the time. In a letter to Lew Allen

in mid-November 1862, he demonstrated his clear understanding of dangers associated with extending lines of supply and communication, offensive and defensive aspects of war and an appreciation of the importance of military history. In his assessment of Lee's "offensive-defensive" strategy, Williams wrote:

They have done and are still doing what I anticipated, falling back on their supplies and reserves, and thus extending our lines and weakening our force as we move towards the interior. Somewhere on the railroad where important communications are threatened they will fight, if attacked. Their policy has always been this except that unfortunate (to them) invasion of Maryland.²⁰

Williams, the military strategist, showed through in his statement on the importance of the strategic defensive, commenting, "The history of war proves that an united people can in the end overwhelm any superior invading force if acting purely on the defensive."²¹

Of course, George Washington's idea of waging war with the emphasis on the strategic defensive worked well in limited war. The Civil War was limited in very few aspects. In 1862, Williams was still fighting with that 18th Century concept of limited war in mind. His battlefield experiences of 1863, however, served as an important transition period in his thinking and, ultimately, he headed one of the invading columns of that master of total war, William Tecumseh Sherman. It was a time of change for Williams.

Burnside marched the Army of the Potomac to disaster at Fredericksburg on 13 December 1862. To their good fortune,

XII Corps had been kept in reserve and did not fight that day. Williams escaped the fight but not the "Mud March" and the disillusionment which followed. "The disaster at Fredericksburg affects us all deeply," he recalled despondently. "From our standpoint it seems a most unaccountable sacrifice of life with no results. I am glad I was not there. I am discouraged and blue as one well can be, as I see in these operations much that astonishes and confounds me and much that must discourage our troops and the people."²²

Bad weather compounded the misery. Williams' 1st Division marched and countermarched over bad roads, impassable streams and through impossible torrents of rain. "Oceans of Mud" was the overused metaphor of many who endured the "Mud March." It served to discourage the Union soldiers even more. Williams feared that the senseless movements of Burnside's floundering army would produce more casualties than a pair of great battles.²³ In a letter to his daughter he discussed the horrors of the march. In a passage describing pack mules drowning in mud holes in the middle of the road, he wrote that "a few bubbles of air, a stirring of the watery mud, indicated the last expiring efforts of many a poor long-ears."²⁴ Williams summed up his thoughts about the area around Stafford Court House, Virginia, saying, "It is neither a decent country to fight in or to fight for."²⁵ He did not like the area around his winter quarters at Stafford Court House, but he found it greatly preferable to aimless marching.

Toward the end of January 1863, Williams admitted that he had lost confidence in Burnside and that the whole army thought the same. He also doubted that the Army of the Potomac could any time soon take up the offensive.²⁶

Indeed, Burnside had lost confidence in himself. When Burnside went to Washington to complain about insubordinate generals, Lincoln sensed his demoralization and reluctantly replaced him with Joseph Hooker.²⁷

The issue of promotion came up again about the same time that a list of new major generals appeared. Williams was not among them and he was sorely disappointed. "How long I shall be able to hold out under this oversloughing is very doubtful," he informed his daughter, Mary. "Every promotion over me, as Carl Schurz and the twenty others in the last list, is an insult. Of course it greatly dispirits and discourages me."²⁸ Besides being perturbed by the fact that he was not promoted, Williams resented the fact that some who were promoted had little battlefield experience. President Lincoln himself earlier had ordered that promotions in the general ranks would be based on field duty.²⁹

The officers of the 1st Division were outraged that their commander was once again overlooked for promotion. As a testimonial to their leader, they did two things. Those who remained from Williams' "old Third Brigade" gave him a beautiful ceremonial sword and all of the officers of the 1st Division sent a petition to President Lincoln recommending Williams' promotion in the strongest possible terms.

In a salient passage, the officers demonstrated their respect for their leader, writing:

On the march, in camp, or bivouac and on the battlefield, we have learned to know, admire and respect him. . . . General Williams has not sought his promotion at Washington, through the columns of the press, or by political influence. For sixteen months, continually without one week's intermission, he has served with us in the Field! We have tested his merits in the crucible of War; and we ask his promotion from your Excellency as an act of Justice; believing it will be highly advantageous to the interests of the service in that portion of the ³⁰army in which we have the honor to bear arms.

There were two supporting endorsements to the petition, one from Slocum and the other from Senator Jacob M. Howard. Slocum considered Williams to be "a most capable officer" and because of his actions in the field, he deserved promotion. Howard wrote of his Michigan friend, "He is a brave man and an unconditional friend of the Union & the war to maintain it. I have known him as a neighbor for more than 25 years."³¹ Despite this support, Williams remained a brigadier general.³²

Fortunately for Williams, he found solace in the testimonials of support from his men. He was visibly moved when he received the gift of the sword, which he described as too beautiful for use in the field.³³ Of great satisfaction too was the respect and admiration the common soldiers expressed toward him. Williams watched over his troops, stayed with them in the field, suffered with them and fought with them. He was a soldier's general and was becoming more so as the war progressed. Even in the rain and after long

marches, the soldiers cheered as Williams rode by them. Their support was helpful and timely; it came when he was feeling most discouraged about the war.³⁴ The winter camp and early spring of 1863 at Stafford Court House were devoted to preparation and training for another offensive. Williams' 1st Division was now part of the army which Hooker characterized as "The finest Army on the Planet."³⁵

Hooker had made some significant improvements in the Army of the Potomac. The reinforcements helped and the army drilled extensively. One of Hooker's best improvements was in the area of camp sanitation and the health of the army in general improved as a result of it. The men were able to get a more balanced diet. They supplemented the usual rations with more fish and meat. Hooker worked arduously with the quartermaster corps to improve the quantity and quality of supplies and equipment. There were few items missing from the kit of Hooker's army. The inspection procedures stiffened. All command levels carried out frequent and unannounced checks. Out of 324 infantry regiments in the Army of the Potomac, the top eleven were designated the best in preparedness. The XII Corps had four out of the eleven and Williams' division had three of the four.³⁶ Another innovation which Hooker implemented was giving each corps a designating symbol which the men wore as a patch. This served to improve the army's esprit de corps and increased loyalty in the various fighting units. The XII Corps

became the "Star Corps" with a five-pointed star for its patch. Williams headed its "Red Star" Division.³⁷

By mid-April 1863 when President Lincoln reviewed the Army of the Potomac in the field, Williams had caught some of Hooker's infectious enthusiasm. They were well prepared for a new campaign. Williams thought, "The army never looked better and but for the small regiments in some corps would certainly impress one with its invincibility. If properly handled I feel it must carry everything before it."³⁸ Lincoln agreed in part but because of past failures, the Commander-in-Chief admonished Hooker before he left, "In your next battle put in all your men."³⁹ The XII Corps was in fighting trim with just about 14,000 men.⁴⁰ Overall, Hooker had 135,000 soldiers in the Army of the Potomac at his command at the end of April 1863. General Lee could muster only about 60,000 in the Army of Northern Virginia.⁴¹ With over 2 to 1 superiority, Hooker had the manpower to defeat Lee had he followed Lincoln's advice. All depended on how he used his men. In the first few days of May, the North did not prevail in what one historian has called "Lee's Greatest Battle."⁴² Chancellorsville was to be an important battle for Williams also as he and his troops again faced Stonewall's men in bitter combat.

Joe Hooker had his share of plans to whip the South. His first one, which Lincoln readily approved in mid-April, proposed to cross his army south of Fredericksburg

and send his reinforced cavalry in a wide circling movement to the north and west and come in behind Lee. The two arms would then crush Lee's army between the pincer movement. It was a good plan and with the numbers on the side of the North, it just might have worked except for the weather. Rain delayed all hope of a rapid movement. The cavalry troops under General George Stoneman moved with a sloth which only McClellan could have considered rapid.⁴³

Times called for change and Hooker came up with an even better plan. His new idea was a feint and an envelopment. He proposed to divide his army into two parts. One group of about two corps (approximately 40,000 men) would feint the main attack on Lee at Fredericksburg by moving across the Rappahannock River south of the city. His main striking force of three corps would move in a northwesterly direction, cross the Rappahannock and the Rapidan Rivers at fords much upstream from the city and concentrate at a crossroads called Chancellorsville. This placed his main force in Lee's rear. Secrecy and swift, aggressive movements were the key to Hooker's plan.

Initially, things started out well. The army began its moves on 27 April. Coordination was a potential problem for Hooker and he tried to solve it by giving two subordinates control over the main army groups. General Sedgwick commanded the Union troops at Fredericksburg. Because of his early date of rank as a major general, Slocum became the commander of the right wing of Hooker's army.⁴⁴ Williams once again commanded XII Corps.⁴⁵

Slocum had supervisory control over the XI Corps (Howard's), XII Corps (Williams'), and V Corps (Meade's) in the flanking movement. The first difficulty encountered was crossing the rivers but the Union army had temporarily surprised Lee by the direction and quickness of its movements. The small garrisons at the strategic fords of Ely's Ford, Germana Ford, and the U.S. Ford were quickly overcome by 29 April. On 30 April, the three corps⁴⁶ converged on Chancellorsville. Meade's V Corps arrived first about noon (having taken the shorter route across the U.S. Ford) and they took up positions along the turnpike which led east toward Lee's army. Slocum arrived with Williams and XII Corps about one hour later. The XII Corps positions were along the Old Plank Road to the right of General Meade. The XI Corps and General O.O. Howard arrived about 2PM and they took up a position in the rear of Williams' corps.⁴⁷

Williams deployed his two divisions in an arc with both flanks on the Plank Road along the crest of the high ground called "Fairview Heights." The position was just west of the Chancellorsville House which later became Hooker's headquarters. Williams recognized it as a strong position and had his men spend the rest of the day building field fortifications and abatis.⁴⁸ The line chosen was an excellent one and later proved to be the key point in Hooker's line during the battle. Thus, by the end of the day of 30 April, Slocum and his men had done their jobs

well. Slocum had concentrated Hooker's right wing forces at Chancellorsville on time and without serious incident. Hooker arrived at Chancellorsville after dark and he resumed personal command of the troops there. On the eve of the battle, Slocum reverted to corps command and Williams went back to his division once more.⁴⁹

The night before the first day of battle at Chancellorsville was a time of celebration at Hooker's headquarters at the Chancellorsville House. Never before had a Union general been in a better position to destroy the Army of Northern Virginia. Boastful pronouncements abounded but the introspective Williams who had suffered defeat before was not so sure of victory. "All was couleur de rose!," Williams recalled, "How many joyous hearts and bright cheerful faces beat and smiled happily for the last time on that delightful moonlight night at Chancellorsville!"⁵⁰ Surely, Williams must have sadly recalled at that time his leisurely lunch with his officers before the slaughter at Cedar Mountain.

The situation was critical for Lee and he knew it. He did not think the main assault would come across the river at Fredericksburg but suspected Hooker would try to turn his left flank. If Hooker succeeded, the way to Richmond would be clear and Lee had to prevent that at all costs. His two choices, therefore, were to retreat from his stronghold on the Rappahannock or to meet Hooker's army at Chancellorsville. To his credit as an offensive

master who capitalized on Union commander's weaknesses, Lee decided to split his army and attack Hooker in an attempt to drive him back across the river. Early on the 1st of May, Lee left a small force under General Jubal Early at Fredericksburg to try to hold it against Sedgwick's forces. With the bulk of his army under Stonewall Jackson and General McLaws, amounting to about 43,000 men, Lee headed west toward Chancellorsville along the Plank Road.⁵¹ Hooker still had a great opportunity for victory if he advanced with all the troops he had at his command.

Williams went to headquarters early on May 1st and got his orders from Slocum. Slocum was there along with Hooker and other corps commanders. Williams found that the boasting and optimism had continued into the morning. The 1st Division commander remembered the scene as "too much boasting and too little planning; swagger without preparation."⁵² Contrary to his views about his commanders, Williams had supreme confidence in his men. He indicated that he had never seen them in a more fighting mood.⁵³

Slocum ordered Williams to move down the Plank Road toward Fredericksburg with his division in the advance and Geary's in support. Hooker unaccountably had delayed this advance until about 11 AM. This delay allowed Lee to concentrate his troops in front of Hooker. Williams deployed his three brigades with one on each side of the road and

one in reserve. The movement was slow because of the dense woods and underbrush. They did make some progress and had advanced about two miles from Chancellorsville in just two hours. The Confederates only offered skirmishers in front of Williams' division as their main effort was north of the Plank Road. Lee aimed at stopping the divisions of Hancock and Sykes first.⁵⁴ At about 1:30 PM while the advance was proceeding well, Hooker lost his nerve and issued an order to return to the Chancellorsville positions. Hooker's corps commanders protested. Slocum and Meade were especially vehement in opposing Hooker's order to stop the advance. This single decision surrendered the initiative to Lee and began the chain of events which spelled disaster once again for the Army of the Potomac. One authority on the battle at Chancellorsville attributed Hooker's decision here to a "psychological roadblock" as his moral courage failed.⁵⁵ Hooker had been an aggressive corps commander himself but as the head of the Army of the Potomac, he lost his composure and that spelled defeat.

Hooker's return to the Chancellorsville position surprised Lee and Jackson. Williams did not understand it either, although he carried out the order swiftly. Williams immediately began improving his position on Fairview Heights as soon as his division returned.⁵⁶ The men of the three brigades of the "Red Star" Division set about securing their lines with a vengeance. Their right extended to the

Plank Road and their left met with Geary's Division. By the morning of 2 May, they felt almost invincible behind their log breastworks and hastily dug rifle pits.⁵⁷

Their position was not as secure as they thought. What Williams and his men did not know was what was happening on their immediate right in the XI Corps of O.O. Howard. Howard's corps was on Hooker's right flank and had taken poorly selected and not easily defended positions in the vicinity of the Wilderness Church. XI Corps was about two miles west of Chancellorsville. In military parlance, Hooker's flank "was in the air" and the Confederate cavalryman, J.E.B. Stuart, had informed Lee of the unprotected flank in the late afternoon. This served as the beginning of the bold plan of Lee and Jackson to surprise Hooker by smashing on his right.⁵⁸ The attack was set for May 2nd and Jackson would move his troops at dawn.

Fog in the early morning hours and the dense woods shielded Jackson's movements for a time. Williams spent the morning at Slocum's headquarters just to the rear of his lines. At first unaware of what was occurring in their front, the generals of XII Corps and many of the Union troops lazed around dozing. They were trying to catch up on rest after their night exertions in preparing field positions.⁵⁹ An artist for one of the popular illustrated weeklies caught Williams sleeping with his omnipresent cigar clamped between his teeth and scratched out the image

on his sketch book.⁶⁰ The scene was one of those which abounded in the Civil War--tranquility before the tempest of destruction.

By late morning, Jackson's move across Hooker's front was no surprise. Where he was going, however, did confuse the Union commander. General Daniel Sickles, the aggressive leader of III Corps, was convinced that Hooker should attack immediately because Jackson's movement, he thought, was merely a retreat. Hooker had held Sickles' corps in reserve and Sickles was anxious to get into the fight. He convinced Hooker that III Corps should move southward with two divisions and Hooker agreed.⁶¹ Sickles moved his troops between those of Howard and Slocum and headed for Catherine Furnace. Sickles requested support from Slocum. Since Williams' division was the closest, he was ordered to do the job.

Williams took his troops out of their fortified positions at Fairview and moved to support Sickles in his grab for glory. They moved about 1 PM and cautiously advanced through the thick underbrush in front of them. Williams was skeptical that Jackson was retreating and he was proven to be correct.⁶² The worst thing was that pulling Williams' division out of the line created a tremendous gap between XI Corps and XII Corps. This isolated Howard at a time in the late afternoon just when Jackson was massing his horde of 26,000 for the attack. Sickles' timing could not have been worse nor could Jackson's have been better.

Hell broke loose at supper time, as the Rebels came screaming out of the woods against the Union right. Jackson had completely surprised Howard's XI Corps. Most of Howard's German-American soldiers pitched their weapons and made for the rear without firing a shot. There was little, realistically, that Howard could do as he valiantly tried to stop the rout which was developing into a stampede. Williams heard the firing on the right and he ordered his brigades back toward Fairview. Galloping toward the Plank Road, Williams met Slocum who was trying to rally the fleeing XI Corps soldiers to fend off the attack. Captain Best of the XII Corps artillery again gave significant service when he trained his thirty-eight guns toward the right from their strategic position on Fairview Heights. Williams rushed back toward his advancing brigades and met General Ruger and General Knipe who were pressing their soldiers on the double quick toward the Plank Road. Williams' "Red Star" soldiers charged across the road and then moved toward the woods to stop Jackson's attack. Williams' men linked up with General Berry's division of Sickles' corps on their right flank. Berry had been left at the Chancellorsville House during the afternoon movement.⁶³

Darkness had taken charge of the battlefield when Stonewall's drive on Hooker's right stalled. Many factors besides the darkness were responsible for stopping Jackson. The terrain slowed his movement and confusion abounded in both the Rebel and Union ranks. Best's

artillery blasted the woods above the charging Confederates and certainly slowed them down. Various units, including Pleasanton's cavalry, worked to end the Rebel attack. However, few authorities have given any credit to the two brigades of Williams who formed their line in front of the artillery on Fairview Heights. Their position was perpendicular to the Plank Road at the time Jackson's attack ground to a halt.⁶⁴ Williams and the 1st Division had redeemed themselves--Front Royal, Winchester, and Cedar Mountain were all avenged that night at Chancellorsville. Fate also had a hand in affairs when, about 9 PM, jittery Confederates fired a volley which severely wounded "Mighty Stonewall."⁶⁵ The musket balls smashed Jackson's left arm as he was returning from scouting the front near the "Red Star" Division. Williams' nemesis died eight days later.

Williams was unable to occupy all of his previous line of fortifications that night. He had Colonel Ross' 2nd Brigade to take the same part of the line on his left that he had held that morning. Ross got his troops back into their position connecting on the left with Geary's 2nd Division. Ruger's brigade occupied the center. Slocum did not know that the Rebels had taken part of Williams' line on the right near the Plank Road. He mistakenly ordered Williams back into his old lines. Williams knew the area was held by the Rebels but he did not know their strength. Accordingly, he ordered General Knipe to procede

with care and keep his pickets well out in front. Unwittingly, Williams was sending almost the entire regiment of the 128th Pennsylvania Infantry to Libby Prison and Belle Isle because in the darkness they were surrounded and captured.⁶⁶ Those of Knipe's brigade who escaped reformed near Best's artillery positions. It was a trying time for Williams and he considered it later to be "the most critical hour he had seen during the civil war."⁶⁷ During that short time, Williams recalled, "I experienced a mental anguish which I never had before or afterwards during the whole war, and perhaps the reason why. . . was that never afterwards was my division so separated and scattered as it was that terrible night, and through no fault of mine."⁶⁸

To make things even worse, Sickles was about to begin a futile night attack directly in Williams' front! Sickles proposed to move two of his divisions to attack the Confederate left in front of Fairview. Williams asked that the attack be delayed until Slocum returned from headquarters. Slocum, Williams hoped, could talk Sickles out of the folly. Through confusion and overeagerness on Sickles' part, the attack began before Williams could find Slocum. Confusion reigned supreme again on Hooker's right flank. Undoubtedly, some Union soldiers were killed by friendly fire but the barrage was most notable for its effect on those who witnessed the rain of flame. When Slocum returned from meeting Hooker, he heard the firing in front of his corps and he ordered Captain Best to open up with his guns. The

cannonade which followed demonstrated to those that saw it that the days of total war had arrived.⁶⁹

Sickles' attack stopped as abruptly as it started. Another eerie quiet fell over the field of battle.⁷⁰ The night passed with little change and the men of XII Corps slept behind their log protection wondering what the next day would bring. In the morning on May 3rd, a Sunday, Hooker again had an excellent opportunity to defeat Lee. Lee's forces were widely scattered and Lee had lost his best lieutenant. Hooker's line was strong and he occupied the high ground from Hazel Grove to Fairview Heights. This proved to be the key to the battlefield. Hooker still greatly outnumbered Lee. He had two whole corps (Meade's V Corps and Reynolds' I Corps) which were fresh and had seen little fighting in the campaign. Hooker also had ordered Sedgwick to attack at Fredericksburg on the morning of May 3rd. Sedgwick's attack succeeded in carrying the Confederate position at Mary's Heights.⁷¹ Given all these advantages, it is amazing that Hooker snatched defeat from victory.

The crucial decision came early when Lee ordered an attack on Hooker's center. The main assault was first at Sickles' III Corps. J.E.B. Stuart, who had taken over after Jackson fell, began with a fight for Hazel Grove. Guns on Hazel Grove could dominate the Union line. Williams knew the importance of protecting that position. He could

not believe it when he heard that Hooker had ordered Sickles to withdraw from Hazel Grove and take up a position near the Chancellorsville House. Stuart occupied Hazel Grove as soon as Sickles withdrew. The Rebel guns placed there put XII Corps in an exposed position which the Confederates could rake with enfilading artillery fire. Both Williams and Geary were hard pressed as their men fought off attack after attack. Their log fortifications did much to reduce the effects of the Rebel muskets but against the devastating artillery barrage, they were less useful. Captain Best thundered his response to the guns on Hazel Grove but the Rebs were able to get range on some of his batteries and blew them up. During this artillery duel, Williams had one of his closest brushes with death. A shell buried itself deep in the mud and exploded directly under Plug Ugly. It blew Williams and his horse into the air. Miraculously, the general was unscathed and his horse suffered only minor injuries.⁷²

Williams and Geary held out on Fairview Heights for four hours. By then, Williams was running out of ammunition. He appealed to Hooker for ammunition and to Slocum for reinforcements. Neither was forthcoming as Hooker began to pull back. He did not commit the corps he held in reserve.⁷³ Williams and Geary retreated on Slocum's orders to the vicinity of the Chancellorsville House where they took up another defensive line in rifle pits. It was about noon when one of Hooker's staff officers ordered

Williams to hold his line at all costs. What little sense Hooker had was dashed earlier in the morning when a cannonball hit the pillar against which he was leaning. Stunned, but not senseless, Hooker had to rely greatly on his staff. When Williams told the staff officer that he was out of ammunition, he was informed, "Use the bayonet!" The battle hardened veteran saw little humor in the comment and failed to comprehend how his bayonets would be useful in protecting against the incoming artillery shells.⁷⁴ The only relief Slocum was able to provide his troops was to get them pulled back from the line late in the evening.⁷⁵

Williams then formed his men on Hooker's left protecting the U.S. Ford. He and his men spent the next two days entrenching there when they should have been attacking.⁷⁶ Lee had shifted the battle away from Hooker. The Union commander had pulled back to protect his escape route over the Rappahannock. Lee then turned on Sedgwick who was moving west from Fredericksburg. Confident that Hooker would not pursue him, Lee again divided his forces and defeated Sedgwick in the battle of Salem Church.⁷⁷ Hooker, in the style of McClellan, did not advance and instead began his plans for withdrawal. He had personally turned the opportunity for victory into defeat. The Red Star Division was one of the last to cross the river on the morning of 6 May 1863. After a long march, Williams and his soldiers arrived at Stafford Court House where they had begun this campaign.⁷⁸

Back in camp at Stafford Court House, Williams expressed the same disillusionment which swept the North after people there heard of the battle at Chancellorsville. "I am by no means cheerful," Williams wrote, "because I think this last [battle] has been the greatest of all bunglings in this war. I despair of ever accomplishing anything so long as generals are made as they have been."⁷⁹ Hooker had blown his chances and Williams lost all confidence in him. He was also very bitter about Sickles' performance. Sickles' actions cost the 1st Division many casualties. "A 'Sickles' would beat Napoleon in winning glory not earned. He is a hero without an heroic deed!"⁸⁰

The casualty figures for the XII Corps were exceeded only by those of Sickles' corps. Slocum lost 21% with 2,822 killed, wounded or missing. Williams' division had the bulk of those with 1,612 for a percentage of 30% lost from the 5,400 he took into the battle. The Confederate losses in Jackson's 2nd Corps whom XII Corps faced during most of the fighting were about the same at 25%. Most significantly, the loss of Jackson meant more to Lee and the Southern cause than was at first apparent. Taken in sum, the 30,000 casualties of both North and South were another indicator that the Civil War was no longer a limited war.⁸¹

While the battle was a major victory for Lee, it certainly did not end or even shorten the war. For Williams, Chancellorsville was another bloody defeat where he and

his soldiers had fought hard and many died because of the failures of the commanding general. Back at Stafford Court House as he thought about the battle, Williams proudly recorded that his men fought "with marked valor and firmness while in the face of the enemy."⁸² That, after all, was everything a division and corps commander could expect from his men. "Fighting Joe" had let them down.

A few days after Williams completed his report of the battle at Chancellorsville, he wrote his daughter one of his longest and most detailed letters during the war. It amounted to about 10,000 words. He wrote to her partly as a result of his indignation after reading erroneous newspaper accounts of the battle, especially the overly glorified role of Sickles and his corps. Toward the end of the letter, Williams admonished Irene to carefully preserve the materials he sent her and indicated, "I shall need them sometime."⁸³ It is likely that Williams intended to write a history of the war or at least his own role in it. In that letter, Williams left a literary legacy which transcends any factual narrative of the war he could have written at a later date. The following passage must be considered one of the greatest word pictures of combat ever written:

No man can give any idea of a battle by description nor by painting. If you can stretch your imagination so far as to hear, in fancy, the crashing roll of 30,000 muskets mingled with the thunder of over a hundred pieces of artillery; the sharp bursting of shells and the peculiar whizzing sound of its dismembered pieces, traveling with a shriek

in all directions; the crash and thug of round shot through trees and buildings and into the earth or through columns of human bodies; the 'phiz' of the Minie ball; the uproar of thousands of human voices in cheers, yells, and imprecations; and see the smoke from all the engines of war's inventions hanging sometimes like a heavy cloud and sometimes falling down like a curtain between the combatants; see the hundreds of wounded limping away or borne to the rear on litters; riderless horses rushing wildly about; now and then the blowing up of a caisson and human frames thrown lifeless into the air; the rush of columns to the front; the scattered fugitives of broken regiments and skulkers making for the rear. If you can hear and see all this in a vivid fancy, you may have some faint idea of a battle in which thousands are fiercely engaged for victory. But you must stand in the midst and feel the elevation which few can fail to feel, even amidst its horrors, before you have the faintest⁸⁴ notion of a scene so terrible and yet so grand.

After Chancellorsville, the Civil War became a total war for
A.S. Williams.

CHAPTER IX Gettysburg and the Aftermath
 June-September 1863

Williams' military background and early experiences in the Civil War helped him improve his battlefield leadership. His time in the Brady Guards taught him something of what it was like to be a common soldier. The rudiments of drill and army tactics he gradually learned in his association with the group of his Detroit friends. He developed ability as a military leader and organizer as a result of his Mexican War service and his duties of the 1850's with the Michigan militia. His combat experience in the Civil War started out poorly and he had suffered defeats. Circumstances, usually as a result of failures of his immediate commanders, often placed him and his soldiers in untenable positions. This happened at Winchester, Cedar Mountain, Antietam, and Chancellorsville. Williams' abilities as a battlefield commander improved with each battle. For the most part, his superiors overlooked his accomplishments. His soldiers, on the other hand, had come to understand the essence of the general they called "Pap." Williams' greatest test as a commander came on the rolling green fields and rocky hills of southern Pennsylvania near a sleepy village.

Probably the most important result of the battle at Chancellorsville was the fact that it emboldened Lee to a point of feeling invincible. It was in this context Lee convinced Jefferson Davis of his plan. He proposed a

second invasion of the North. There was opposition to the plan, most noticeably from General James Longstreet. The balance of victory was swinging in the western theater to the favor of Grant and Rosecrans. The Union armies were making progress at Vicksburg and Lee concluded that he could help his western compatriots most by invading enemy territory. While his specific tactical objectives were not always clear, his route of invasion certainly was. He moved his army of about 75,000 men in early June 1863. He marched through the Shenandoah Valley, the ideal invasion corridor.¹

Hooker, with great reluctance even after Lincoln insisted, moved his army northward to cover Washington by mid-June. Lincoln again perceived that when Lee was north of the Potomac he was risking total destruction. But he needed a general who would pursue the Army of Northern Virginia and defeat it, or, better yet, destroy it. Much to Lincoln's frustration, he again found that his present commander of the Army of the Potomac was not willing to be aggressive. Lincoln dismissed Hooker on June 28th. The President then selected Major General George Gordon Meade as the army's new chief.²

Williams and the XII Corps were in Frederick, Maryland, on 29 June 1863 when they heard of Meade's appointment. The Michigan general was happy that Hooker was gone. The efforts of Hooker, he believed, reflected "imbecility and weakness."³ About Meade, Williams wrote his daughters, "I don't despair.

On the contrary, now with a gentleman and a soldier in command I have renewed confidence that we shall at least do enough to preserve our honor and the safety of the Republic."⁴ Williams' comment about what the Army of the Potomac had to do was perceptive. He recognized that the army in the east could not afford to lose any more battles and particularly not one in the northern states. With Lee's army scattered in Pennsylvania, Williams again sensed the tremendous opportunity for destroying him. He had premonitions of a decisive battle. However, in light of past experience, Williams had lost his faith in Yankee major generals. He now expressed his deepest belief that God was still on the side of the Union and the Almighty would intervene now in the North's just cause to preserve the Union.⁵ The war tested Williams' devoutness. His faith prevailed and it proved to be a source of his inner strength.

Williams and his division entered Pennsylvania "Deutsch" country on 30 June. A Francophile since his younger days in Europe, he had long harbored a mild prejudice against Germans. The poor performance of the Teutonic XI Corps at Chancellorsville reinforced his ill will. Surveying the picturesque and neatly cultivated fields of the German-Americans in Pennsylvania, Williams evaluated them acidly, "Altogether they are a people of barns, not brains."⁶ Williams reached Littlestown, Pennsylvania about noon on the last day of June. He bivouacked there with his troops at Slocum's orders.⁷

It is not the purpose of this study to write a history of the battle at Gettysburg. Hundreds of books have already been written on this subject. What is important here is to reiterate the role Williams played in the battle and to analyze his performance as a leader who contributed materially to the Union victory. He did not win the battle by himself. Some studies of characters like Daniel Sickles or Winfield S. Hancock present the view that their singular efforts defeated the Confederates. Such abuse of the historical record seems out of place today. And yet, it took 105 years before an historian finally sorted out the complicated story of what Williams did during the battle. The facts are there in the regimental and corps histories; in the Official Records; and in the multitude of memoirs and recollections about the battle. After more than a century, Edwin B. Coddington in his magisterial study, The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command (1968), was the first historian to describe Williams' actions as the commander of XII Corps at the battle.⁸ Almost all authorities and cartographers have depicted XII Corps under Slocum's command.⁹ They fail to consider that General Meade made Slocum the commander of the right wing of his army on 1 July 1863. After this, until 4 July, Slocum acted as the right wing commander and Williams was the commander of XII Corps on the Union right. Williams wrote his report of the battle as the acting commander of XII Corps; he issued his orders with that title; and the acting division commanders

(Ruger and Geary) recognized Williams as the corps chief. The main confusion on this point lay in the mind of General Meade who had forgotten this at the time he wrote his initial report of the battle. Additional factors concerning why Williams has been overlooked at Gettysburg will be discussed later.

Starting with the fact that Williams was the acting XII Corps commander makes understanding his role in the battle much easier to figure out. Briefly stated, Williams was involved in two of the main events of the battle: the repulse of Longstreet's attack on the Union left on 2 July and securing the right of Meade's line on Culp's Hill on 3 July. Another way of stating this is to incorporate the commonly used analogy of comparing Meade's position to a fish-hook. Williams helped secure the "shank" and he saved the "barb!"

The XII Corps did little fighting on the first day of Gettysburg. Meade, like McClellan at Antietam, had divided his army into wings. General Reynolds was in charge of the two corps on the left and General Slocum had the two corps on the right.¹⁰ Ironically, Slocum and Reynolds were senior to Meade in rank but both generals agreed to serve under him as subordinates. With his forces widely scattered, Meade benefitted greatly from the valiant fighting of General Buford's cavalry and General Reynolds' decision to concentrate I and XI Corps at Gettysburg. The left wing of Meade's army fought off Lee's attacks during the day, fell

back to a strong position, and allowed time for Meade to send up the rest of his forces.

Slocum, meanwhile, was at Two Taverns shortly after noon when he heard that Reynolds had been killed. Slocum was authorized as the senior major general to take command but he did not do so until Meade authorized the change in a formal message to Hancock at 6 PM on the first day of the battle. This unfortunate delay did not help the efforts of the hard-pressed Union troops. It was fortunate, however, that Hancock and Howard had done a good job of selecting and holding the positions along Cemetery Ridge and Cemetery Hill. After Slocum assumed command of the troops on the scene during the evening of 1 July, Williams took direct control of XII Corps. He was worried then because he did not know where Geary and the 2nd Division were. Hancock, without Slocum's knowledge, had ordered Geary to take up a position on Cemetery Ridge just north of the Round Tops. At dusk, the two divisions of XII Corps were at opposite ends of the Union line. Slocum had ordered Williams to take up a position on the Baltimore Pike near Culp's Hill. It was not until 3:40 AM that Slocum sent word to Williams that Geary would be moving to the right. Williams was to link up with General Wadsworth's division of I Corps which occupied the crest of Culp's Hill.¹¹ Williams could move his troops into position after daylight. He was tired and so he went to sleep.¹²

As the first day of the battle closed, Lee had missed several chances for an ultimate victory. Meade, on the other hand, was blessed with farsighted subordinates who chose an excellent defensive position. Meade's line extended from Culp's Hill on the right, passed around Cemetery Hill, then followed along Cemetery Ridge toward his left flank. On the second day of battle, Lee was to test Meade's line on the flanks. Williams was to be involved in both these probes. The great question was, "Would Meade be able to hold his position?"

It was obvious that Williams was familiar with Jomini's military doctrine which emphasized the importance of interior lines. Williams surveyed the Union position early on 2 July and liked what he saw. Meade could easily move troops behind his line to the point of battle. "The Rebs. were for once at a disadvantage," Williams recalled, ". . . we could reinforce any part of our line rapidly, while the 'Secesh' had a long outer line to march over and bring aid to an overpowered point."¹³ Williams and his corps later that day proved the merits of this Union advantage of interior lines.

At daybreak on 2 July, a whole new brigade under General Henry H. Lockwood joined XII Corps. They were untried soldiers but Williams welcomed their reinforcing numbers.¹⁴ At about 8 AM, he received word from Slocum to deploy the corps on the Union right flank. Williams sent Geary's 2nd Division to the left part of his sector, connecting at the

summit of Culp's Hill with General Wadsworth. The XII Corps line extended along the front slope of the hill through rocky areas to the low ground of Spangler's Spring and then on to the Baltimore Pike. Williams put General Ruger and the 1st Division on the right side of the corps line. This deployment placed Williams' corps on the extreme right of the Union position. Looking around the forested hills of their position, the "Star Corps" veterans remembered their log fortifications at Chancellorsville. They instantly set about building another redoubt. Williams and his men had learned the merits of using field fortifications and high ground to their advantage. These were the same men who had once charged across the open wheatfield at Cedar Mountain and the cornfield at Antietam in grand 18th Century style. Now, as they hid behind rocks, chopped down trees, and dug trenches, General Williams looked on with approval.¹⁵ They spent most of the day in their fortified lines dodging bullets from Confederate snipers or an occasional artillery shell.

During the day on 2 July, Slocum and Meade discussed whether or not the Union army should begin an attack on the Confederates starting from Culp's Hill on the right. Slocum did not like the idea of moving on the offensive from such an excellent defensive position and Meade agreed. He would stay on the defensive for the moment.¹⁶ The Union line appeared to be very secure, at least until General Sickles began acting on his own. Without Meade's approval, Sickles

moved his III Corps in front of the Union line along Cemetery Ridge. Sickles advanced so far that he could not be supported easily by the Union troops on his flanks. His position was a salient and he was extremely vulnerable. Also, Meade had only a few signal men on Little Round Top, the key to the Union position. Thus, by noon on the second day of the battle, the Union had weaknesses which Lee might have been able to exploit.

After the fight on the first day, Lee was still confident of victory. He was thinking in terms of an attack on the Union position in spite of its strengths. General Longstreet vehemently opposed Lee's plan of attack. He urged his chief to stay on the defensive and wait for Meade to move first. Lee was unmoved by Longstreet's arguments. He decided after consultation with his other corps commanders to make his main attack on Meade's left. The move was to be straight at Sickles' corps. Longstreet was to lead the attack on the left and Ewell was to assault Meade's right when he heard Longstreet's guns. At Gettysburg Lee experienced some of the same problems Lincoln did with his generals. They were reluctant to accept his plans and slow to carry them out.¹⁷ This was fortunate for Meade.

It was in mid-afternoon that Meade found out about Sickles' movement. He had personally inspected the position and found that the Confederates were moving toward and concentrating on his left. Lee had ordered Longstreet to attack as early as 11 AM but Longstreet had delayed.

He did not begin the attack until 4 PM. It was then too late for Meade to pull Sickles back. When it appeared that a major assault was taking place, Meade ordered reinforcements from other parts of his line to be sent to aid Sickles. If he lost possession of Little Round Top and III Corps was defeated, his whole line was untenable.

Williams heard the guns of the battle on the Union left and not long afterwards, Ewell began his own cannonade of Culp's Hill.¹⁸ Ewell did not attack with his infantry and the experienced XII Corps artillery massed its fire and quickly knocked out a number of Confederate batteries. Little more happened on the Union right until 5:30 PM.

The fighting on the Union left at the Wheatfield, Peach Orchard, and Devil's Den was savage. The Confederates were pushing back Sickles' men. Meade needed more troops at the point of battle. Part of the reinforcements came from Williams' corps. Meade ordered Slocum to send troops toward the left. Slocum, in turn, ordered Williams to send the 1st Division and Lockwood's Brigade to Sickles' aid at 5:30 PM.¹⁹ This was the second time in the war that Williams had to leave a secure position to support a foolish move of Sickles. Slocum was acting as the commander of the right wing and issued his orders to Williams, the acting XII Corps commander. In this capacity, Williams ordered Geary to occupy the entire corps line of fortifications from the summit of Culp's Hill to the Baltimore Pike.²⁰

Williams faced a problem when he realized that General Lockwood outranked General Ruger. He did not know anything of Lockwood's abilities and he did not want to slight his friend, Ruger, in whom he had the utmost confidence. Therefore, Williams decided to lead the two units himself thus eliminating any problems in the chain of command. Slocum was still in his headquarters near Culp's Hill. Williams felt confident that things were in good hands as he began his move. He was adamant that Geary's entire division was needed to hold the XII Corps line. Williams led the troops off toward the left without guides, but on a course directly toward the firing.²¹

As they approached Cemetery Ridge, they saw the confusion of the great battle ahead. Stragglers and shirkers who had left the fight taunted the XII Corps soldiers as they marched quickly to the front. General Williams met Lieutenant Colonel McGilvery, an artillery officer who had once served in Williams' 1st Division. McGilvery informed Williams that the Rebs had captured some of his guns. Williams immediately ordered Lockwood to recapture them. His men charged into the woods without even forming a battle line and seized the guns from the Southerners. Williams posted Ruger's Division on Cemetery Ridge between the right of the retreating Sickles and the I Corps reinforcements of General Newton. They helped plug the gap in the Union line. One thing Williams did not count on was the aggressiveness of Lockwood's Brigade. Not only did they retake the guns, but

they also charged toward the Peach Orchard before Williams could gallop out to stop them. He ordered them to pull back to the line along Cemetery Ridge.²²

When Williams got his troops back to Cemetery Ridge, a courier from Slocum sent word to move back to Culp's Hill. Williams was not aware of what had happened to his corps position while he had helped stop the Confederate attack on the left. At 7 PM on 2 July, Slocum committed a serious blunder. Without Williams' knowledge or Meade's request Slocum ordered Geary and two brigades of the 2nd Division "to move by the right flank and follow the 1st Division. . . ."²³

Slocum did not tell Geary why he was moving or which route to follow. Like any "good soldier", Geary did not question the order and left the defense of the entire XII Corps line to George S. Greene and his brigade of New Yorkers. To compound Slocum's blunder, Geary got lost and headed down the Baltimore Pike away from the battlefield. Within a half hour after Geary pulled out of the XII Corps trenches, General Ewell began his assault on both Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill. Greene's valiant defense of the heights saved the Union position and the reputation of both Slocum and Meade. The Confederates of General Edward Johnson's division including the "Stonewall" Brigade were able to seize part of the XII Corps entrenchments between Spangler's Spring and the summit of Culp's Hill. Greene

fought off the Rebel attacks for three hours. Darkness aided the Union defenders and gave them the needed time for Ruger to return with the 1st Division and Lockwood's Brigade. Geary, meanwhile, had finally recognized his mistake and had moved cautiously back toward Culp's Hill. The Confederates advanced no further on the Union right that night. Ruger and Geary awaited further instructions from Williams and Slocum, both of whom had been called to Meade's headquarters.²⁴

Meade convened a council of war about 9 PM on the night of 2 July. The two wing commanders, Hancock and Slocum, and most of the corps commanders were there.²⁵ Williams was present by virtue of being the acting commander of XII Corps. After a discussion of their exhilarating experiences of the day's successful operations, they set about answering three specific questions Meade put to them:

1. Under existing circumstances, is it advisable for this army to remain in its present position, or to retire to another nearer its base of supplies?

2. It being determined to remain in present position, shall the army attack or wait the attack of the enemy?

3. If we wait, how long?²⁶

All nine generals who responded voted against retreat.

Williams was the second to reply and answered, "1. Stay, 2. Wait attack. 3. One day."²⁷ Slocum replied succinctly, "Stay and fight it out."²⁸ The consensus was clear and Williams thought Meade was pleased that the Gettysburg position would be held.²⁹ The days of retreat in the face

of the enemy were over for the Army of the Potomac. The Union generals that night thought like Williams; it was time to fight.

The meeting went on for some time. Williams returned to his corps position about midnight. As he approached Culp's Hill in the darkness and found Ruger and Geary, Williams learned to his dismay what had happened. He was astonished that Slocum had ordered Geary out of the line. Slocum himself never explained why. It was one of those things which was easy to blame on the higher command but Meade had never ordered the move. The right wing commander had fouled up.³⁰

Williams saw the gravity of the situation for the XII Corps and the entire Union army. The Confederates in the Culp's Hill defenses could use their position as the starting point for turning the Union flank and getting in the rear of Meade's army. They had to be removed. Williams had to secure the entrenchments and push back the Rebels. Thinking of his unlucky experience at Chancellorsville, he recalled, "I had had experience in trying to retake breastworks after dark, so I ordered the brigades to occupy the open field in front of the woods, put out a strong picket line, and waited daylight for further operations."³¹ Slocum concurred with Williams' decision.³²

Williams spent the early morning hours planning his attack. His plan was an excellent one which used the terrain to the best advantage. Beginning first with an artillery

barrage then a feint on the right with Ruger's 1st Division, Geary's 2nd Division would use the high ground where Greene was to begin a sweep down the entrenchments. This would pressure the Rebels between the two XII Corps divisions.³³ Williams went to sleep at 3:30 AM, apprehensive of the coming events but satisfied that his plan could work.³⁴ He did not sleep long as the early dawn brought stirrings in both army camps.

The fighting on the third day of the battle at Gettysburg was among the most momentous and savage in the history of the Republic. General Williams and XII Corps played an important role in the Union victory by securing the position at Culp's Hill. If they had not been able to push the Rebels out of their foothold on the hill and the experienced forces of Ewell had been able to advance, it is likely that Gettysburg would not be remembered with such nostalgia by so many. The Union generals still had the opportunity to make Gettysburg another defeat, but this time they did not do it.

The third day of battle began with the fighting on the Union right flank. There, Williams personally directed the preparations according to his plans. He and Lieutenant Muhlenberg established the positions for the XII Corps guns. They put twenty-six pieces about 700 yards up the hill and aimed them at the trenches the Rebels held.³⁵ Surveying the scene as his infantry moved into position in the pre-dawn light, Williams exclaimed, ". . . we will shell hell

out of them."³⁶ Little did Williams know that he would need to change his plan some. General Ewell was moving to exploit the Johnson position and their attacks began simultaneously. It was another of those ironies of the war that Williams was once again facing that morning the soldiers of Jackson's previous commands. Ewell commanded Jackson's 2nd Corps; Johnson commanded Jackson's former division; and Walker directed Stonewall's old brigade. To Lee's disappointment and Williams' good fortune, Jackson was not there at Gettysburg.³⁷

What was there on Culp's Hill was the XII Corps artillery with Williams standing next to the guns. It was Antietam and Chancellorsville all over again except this time the XII Corps had the advantage. On Williams' command about 4:30 AM the battle began when Best's artillery doubled the pre-dawn light with a tremendous blast of fire.³⁸ Some eyewitnesses remembered this barrage because of its concentration as the most devastating of the entire war.³⁹ The worst thing for the Confederates was that they were charging into the wall of iron. The artillery fire was supposed to stop after fifteen minutes but the Confederate assault changed that and the Union batteries kept up their vicious fire. Ruger moved his 1st Division in the attack from the right flank toward Spangler's Spring.⁴⁰ Geary was unable to begin his move from the left into the fortifications because Johnson's main assault was directly at Geary's men.⁴¹ The terrain and the fortified position both worked

to the XII Corps advantage and Williams and his men beat back repeated Confederate assaults. The battle for Culp's Hill raged for seven hours and one authority characterized Williams' plan and actions in the early part of the battle as a "superb defense."⁴²

After Johnson's attacks failed, Williams continued with his plan to push the Confederates out of the trenches and back off Culp's Hill. As Lee never intended Ewell's move on Meade's right to be his main effort that day, the initial advantage was not developed fully with reinforcements. Lee's greatest thrust was to be on Meade's left and center. Williams coordinated his troops extremely well in their counterattack. By mid-morning, Ruger and Geary had taken the trenches.⁴³

Williams personally directed the battle for Culp's Hill. He moved to the center of his line near where Geary's men were. Between 9 and 10 AM Slocum moved from his headquarters to the right flank of the XII Corps. He ordered General Ruger to move forward in the attack. Slocum did not issue the order through Williams as he should have. It was Slocum's third major error of the battle. He was no longer acting like an effective wing commander. Ruger did not like the order and requested that only a reconnaissance be sent out. Through confusion, Colonel Colgrove ordered two of his best regiments to attack the Confederates in the strong position they had taken. The 27th Indiana and the 2d Massachusetts, by then among the best veteran regiments of the Union army,

got on line and charged across the open ground in front of Spangler's Spring. This proved to be one of the greatest slaughters and most senseless attacks of the war. The two small regiments suffered 246 casualties in killed and wounded in the charge. Williams had no knowledge of what Slocum had ordered until after it had already failed.⁴⁴

By 11 AM, Williams and the XII Corps had won the battle for Culp's Hill. The Rebels had withdrawn and were moving toward other parts of the battlefield. The tide was turning in Meade's favor. Lee's great but futile attack on Meade's center in the early afternoon had little effect on XII Corps. They had done their fighting in the battle and stayed in their entrenchments on Culp's Hill. Their main concern was during the cannonade which began at 1 PM. The XII Corps suffered some casualties from the Confederate shells which bounded over Cemetery Ridge into the back of their lines.⁴⁵ The XII Corps did not participate in repelling Pickett's charge although Williams was prepared to send his troops again to the Union left.

At the end of the day, Lee's army was in disarray. The bloodiest battle of the Civil War was over. The armies of both North and South suffered casualties beyond imagination in 19th Century warfare. Lee had lost over 20,000 men amounting to about a 33% loss. Meade and the Army of the Potomac lost 23,049 but with larger numbers, the percentage was about a 25% casualty rate.⁴⁶ The precise numbers are not as significant as the overall effects of the

losses. Lee could not afford to lose that many men, and he also lost many able generals at Gettysburg.⁴⁷

The XII Corps fared much better. They had accomplished all of their objectives in the fight and lost only 1,082.⁴⁸ The casualties split about evenly between the 1st and 2nd Divisions.⁴⁹ The XII Corps was still the smallest in the Army of the Potomac and considering the 11,000 men who entered the Gettysburg campaign, the 10% casualty rate was low.⁵⁰ The estimates of the losses of the Confederates under Johnson's command in the attacks on Culp's Hill are about double those of the XII Corps.⁵¹ It was not that Williams and his corps were not in some severe fighting that their casualties at Gettysburg were relatively low. The fact that Williams planned carefully and made great efforts to use the fortified position on Culp's Hill helps explain the low numbers. Clearly, Williams had learned from past battles. The corps casualties would even have been less except for Slocum's mistakes. Ordering Geary out of the XII Corps line on 2 July and the Confederate seizing of the position made the battle for Culp's Hill an absolute necessity. Slocum's order to attack across Spangler's Meadow on 3 July, an unnecessary effort, also added to the corps dead and wounded. As the right wing commander, Slocum made his worst effort of the war. On the other hand, Williams had performed admirably as the temporary leader of the corps.

On the 4th of July 1863, XII Corps and the rest of the Union buried their dead and tended the wounded.⁵² Slocum resumed direct command of the corps and Williams returned to the 1st Division. In an appropriately symbolic act on that day, XII Corps forwarded a prized battle trophy to General Meade. They had captured the colors of the "Stonewall Brigade."⁵³ Williams and his men had faced that flag in every battle they had fought. At Gettysburg, the Star Corps soldiers finally won. They would not fight the "Stonewall Brigade" again as their days in the Army of the Potomac were numbered.

Meade acted like McClellan after Antietam when he allowed Lee to escape following Gettysburg. Lincoln wanted total victory in the destruction of Lee's army. Few of the Union generals had as excellent of a grasp of the strategic necessities involved in winning the war as did Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln was terribly disappointed when he heard that Meade had let Lee cross the Potomac on 14 July.⁵⁴ Williams and the 1st Division of XII Corps moved southward in Meade's half-hearted pursuit of Lee's army. Williams doubted that Lee would ever venture a third invasion of the North.⁵⁵ The "Red Star" Division commander surveyed his troops as they marched through Maryland and felt optimistic for the first time in a long while. "I think the Army of the Potomac is simmered down to the very sublimation of human strength and endurance," Williams observed.⁵⁶ Lincoln concurred and saw no reason for Meade's hesitation. With

Grant's victory at Vicksburg, Lincoln turned his attention to the western theater. He would send soldiers to the general who was most willing to fight. In the summer of 1863, the most aggressive leader seemed to be Grant, fighting in the west.⁵⁷

In the last two weeks of July, Williams and XII Corps went again up the Shenandoah Valley. There were no major engagements for them this time. In August and September, the 12th Corps encamped at Kelly's Ford, Virginia not far from the scenes of earlier battles in the Valley, at Cedar Mountain, and at Chancellorsville. Williams reported to his daughters that, in spite of all the campaigning, his health was excellent. He felt unsure about what was going to happen in the new campaign on the Rappahannock.⁵⁸

In the time after Gettysburg, the issue of Williams' promotion to major general again surfaced. Earlier, Meade himself wondered why Williams had not been promoted.⁵⁹ Meade thought that perhaps Banks had not done enough to urge Williams' promotion.⁶⁰ Williams thought there were other factors involved. After the battle of Chancellorsville, Slocum wrote an extremely laudatory letter to President Lincoln urging his promotion. Williams had not solicited the letter and was flattered by its contents. Slocum wrote the President, "I know of no officer in the service who has in my estimation so well earned promotion as General Williams."⁶¹ Slocum pointed out to Lincoln that Williams

did not follow the usual procedures of gaining laurels in the press. After Gettysburg, Senator Jacob Howard again appealed to Secretary of War Stanton to consider promoting Williams. Howard wrote that at Gettysburg the Michigan general "showed skill & heroism, and I feel that his long and valuable service entitles him to that rank. [major general]"⁶²

In early September when more major generals were appointed and Williams was not promoted, the officers of the 1st Division, XII Corps again petitioned in his behalf. They gave a detailed, six page accounting of Williams' wartime service. They cited his devotion to duty and his superior performance when under fire. They also pointed out that although Williams had been a division commander for a year and a half, he frequently had commanded the corps. Most importantly, they cited the fact that he had commanded the corps at Antietam and Gettysburg. He was overdue for a promotion which recognized his service.⁶³ At Gettysburg, Williams proved his merit as a soldier. It was his finest hour in the war.

In spite of all these commendations, Williams remained a brigadier. He had come to accept his fate with a bitterness which had turned into a slow burn.⁶⁴ His performance continued to be unrecognized and unrewarded. He began to think about resigning. The great movements of armies and the change in Lincoln's strategy in the fall of 1863 probably more than anything got his mind off his own troubles. In late September 1863, he was on a train to Tennessee.



Figure 2. Map of Williams' Troop Movements under Sherman⁶⁵

CHAPTER X A Total War General in "Uncle Billy's" Army
October 1863-May 1865

General Williams had done his share of campaigning in his two years with the Army of the Potomac. Unfortunately for him and the nation as a whole, his marches and counter-marches were repeatedly over the same territory. Indecisive bloody battles followed one after the other. To those soldiers in the eastern theater of the war, the end of the rebellion appeared no closer in 1863 than it was in 1861. When Williams and his corps went west in 1863, they became part of the Army of the Cumberland. Williams then fought under the dynamic leadership of George H. Thomas and William Tecumseh Sherman until the end of the war. He was part of that western army which lived up to Pope's earlier boast. They did not retreat and they brought the meaning of modern total warfare into the Deep South. Williams, as a division and corps commander, headed one of Sherman's invading columns in the Atlanta Campaign, on the "March to the Sea," and in the final assault through the Carolinas. He saw great merit in taking the war into the South. With "Uncle Billy," he marched with renewed purpose and resolve.¹

The Union disaster at Chickamauga on 20 September 1863 was the main reason Williams and his corps were sent to the West. The Confederates had been able to send Longstreet's Corps in time to aid Bragg against General Rosecrans. A few days after the battle, Lincoln ordered both the XI and XII Corps to move to Chattanooga, Tennessee. Lincoln brought

back Hooker to command the two corps group. This put Slocum in a difficult predicament. Slocum had been Hooker's most outspoken critic after Chancellorsville. He publicly blamed Hooker personally for the defeat there. When he got word of the pending move, Slocum went to see President Lincoln to resign. Lincoln did not accept his resignation and instead promised Slocum a separate command later to be independent of Hooker.² For the time being, the XII Corps under Slocum and the XI Corps under O.O. Howard had an important mission. They had to protect the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad, the only supply link which kept the Union army in Chattanooga from starving.³

Williams and his veteran 1st Division eventually set up headquarters at Tullahoma, Tennessee during October.⁴ Tullahoma was about half way between Nashville and Chattanooga. The small town with its decrepit buildings and broad, but unpaved, streets reminded Williams of the pretentious land speculator towns of Michigan in 1836.⁵ He found the white upland Southerners who lived in the area to be disgusting in both appearance and personal habits. He, like many others, considered the hill people to be inferior to the Blacks of the region.⁶

During this Tullahoma interlude, Williams spent seven months in garrison duty, guarding ninety miles of railroad track. He and his division saw very little hard fighting in Tennessee. The main military problems they faced were guerrilla fighters and cavalry raids which attempted to

disrupt the rail line. Most of the men spent their time building fortifications at key points (bridges, culverts, water stations, etc.) and walking guard duty.⁷ Williams had his 4,900 men organized in two brigades under his trusted friends, Knipe and Ruger.⁸ Slocum, too, established his headquarters in the isolation at Tullahoma. For a short time, they were spared the trials of combat. Their duty entailed responsibilities but, again, not much recognition.⁹

Although Hooker's forces fought with Grant at Chattanooga in late November 1863, Williams and the 1st Division did not. It is surprising that Hooker chose to use Howard's XI Corps over Slocum's in light of what happened to Howard's corps at Chancellorsville. Hooker's animosity toward Slocum probably contributed to his decision to use XI Corps and Geary's 2nd Division (of XII Corps) in the attack. Slocum preferred to keep Williams' division on railroad duty. Williams was, therefore, not a participant in the battles at Chattanooga. Grant sent XI Corps to fight on the left in Sherman's flank attack on Bragg's line along Missionary Ridge. Hooker used Geary's division and some additional troops from other commands to scale the heights and capture Lookout Mountain above the city. In the attack on Missionary Ridge on 25 November, Hooker hit Bragg's left in the afternoon as Thomas' men charged up and over the seemingly impregnable Confederate position in the center. Hooker, still the aggressive corps commander, wanted to continue the pursuit. He moved toward Ringgold,

Georgia, but was defeated there. Geary suffered heavy losses in his division. Nonetheless, Grant had won a significant victory at Chattanooga. The withdrawal of the Southern armies from the rail center there opened up the Deep South to invasion. The Anaconda Plan, as modified by Lincoln, was working. The greatest Union general then began his plans to break the Confederacy on the rack of relentless invasion. The main offensives would begin in the spring of 1864.¹⁰

After all the campaigning he had done, Williams quickly found guarding the railroad at Tullahoma to be boring. Orders from Hooker and Slocum often conflicted and Williams was caught in the middle. He could not direct the affairs of his division as he liked because it was spread out over such a long distance on the railroad. Also, his scattered infantry troops were often of little use when combatting guerrilla bands and swift cavalry raids.¹¹ One area where he felt encouraged though was that the Army of the Cumberland had many more Michigan regiments than were in his previous commands. Some of the Michigan officers who were at the 1861 Camp of Instruction in Detroit called on him frequently. They always treated him with kindness, deference, and respect.¹² He liked that and he began to think more of home.

Williams had not yet had a leave of absence and rarely was away from his troops in the field. It usually happened that when he hoped to get leave, he was temporarily

in command of the corps and could not go or the army was just ready to begin another movement. As his time lengthened in Tullahoma, Williams again tried to get a furlough. At first, he thought he would be unsuccessful. "General Thomas is one of those officers who never leaves himself and thinks nobody should," Williams wrote Mary in Detroit.¹³ He hoped to be able to get back to Michigan for Christmas. Surprisingly, the "Rock of Chickamauga" later relented. As the New Year approached, Williams boarded a train and headed north to Michigan for a well deserved rest and a 30 day reunion with his family.¹⁴

Two days before he left for Detroit, Williams began what probably was the most significant achievement of his time in Tullahoma. He wrote a letter which was the first in a series which amounted to almost a "paper war" on General Meade's official report of the battle at Gettysburg.¹⁵ Both Williams and Slocum had read Meade's report in late November. They were incredulous with anger.¹⁶ Meade had made great errors regarding XII Corps. Williams fumed, "I am not only disgusted and chagrined, but I am astonished, as I have regarded Meade as one of the most honorable and high-toned men, wholly incapable of unfairness or political bias."¹⁷

Williams aired his complaint through channels and finally got them resolved, although historians until Coddington in 1968 had largely overlooked Meade's amended report. Williams wrote to Slocum using the strongest terms possible. He wrote

a tightly reasoned analysis of where Meade's original report was in error. He had four main points of criticism. First, Meade had written that Lockwood's Brigade was part of I Corps and he made no mention of the 1st Division under Williams' direct command moving to support the attack on the Union left on 2 July 1863. Second, Meade said nothing of Greene's brilliant defense of Culp's Hill during the evening of the second day of the battle. Third, Meade erred by indicating that only Geary's division was responsible for retaking the entrenchments on Culp's Hill on the morning of 3 July. Williams planned the attack and it was an effort of the entire XII Corps. And fourth, Meade's report almost entirely contradicted Williams' report as the temporary XII Corps commander. This was probably the most regrettable one for Williams personally because Meade had neglected to give him credit for what he did in the battle. Meade had mentioned all the other temporary corps commanders. Williams could not understand how Meade could have forgotten him saying:

I was in command of the Twelfth Corps part of July 1 and all of July 2 and 3 and on the evening of the 2d (Thursday) attended a council of corps commanders on a summons conveyed to me by a staff officer of General Meade. I may be pardoned, therefore for expressing some surprise that my name alone of all those who temporarily commanded corps in this great battle is suppressed in General Meade's report. I know General Meade to be a high-toned gentleman, and I believe him to be a commander of superior merit and of honest judgment, and I confess to have read that part of his official report relating to the Twelfth Corps with a mixed feeling of astonishment and regret.¹⁸

This foul up undoubtedly damaged Williams' chances for promotion. No wonder he was bitter. It appeared to Williams as a personal betrayal. That he could not correct, but he could do something about the historical record. This was the motivation for his letter of complaint.

Slocum concurred on every point. He wrote to Meade and forwarded Williams' letter. Slocum's letter unequivocally settles the question "Was Williams the acting XII Corps Commander at Gettysburg?" Slocum answered "Yes!"¹⁹ In a letter to his brother-in-law, Slocum wrote, "Williams commanded the 12th Corps and was at all times during the battle treated as a corps commander by Meade. He was invited by him to the council with other corps commanders, and yet, no mention is made of this fact in the report nor is Williams' name or that of his division to be found in it."²⁰ Slocum urged Meade to make the appropriate corrections and send an amended report to the War Department. He did not think it was too late to correct the record. Slocum reiterated its importance indicating to Meade:

Your report is the official history of that important battle, and to this report reference will always be made by our Government, our people, and the historian, as the most reliable and accurate account of the services performed by each corps, division, and brigade of your army. . . . That errors of this nature exist in your official report is an indisputable fact.²¹

The correspondence continued on this issue until early March 1864. Meade wrote to Slocum and admitted that he had made some errors which he promised to correct. The tone

of Meade's letter was very defensive and he tried to explain how the mistakes in his report occurred. Meade regretted that he had slighted XII Corps in his original report. He had not read General Williams' report and admitted it. Meade wrote about his failure to mention Williams and his efforts, "This I very much regret, particularly on account of the good opinion I have always entertained for that officer, and the personal regard from long acquaintance which rendered him the last man in the army I would intentionally wrong."²² Meade knew Williams and his family from the days he spent in Detroit as an army engineer on the Great Lakes. The same day he wrote to Slocum, 25 February 1864, Meade sent Halleck an amended report. Meade corrected every point Williams brought up in his original letter. Secretary of War Stanton approved the amended report and it was published in early March 1864. By then, however, the damage had already been done in that Meade's original report had been widely circulated. This was another instance where Williams was praised by a man who had fallen from grace. By early 1864, the Radical Republicans had lost confidence in General Meade and the Committee on the Conduct of the War was just beginning to investigate unsupported allegations that Meade had contemplated a retreat before Gettysburg. It took only slightly more than a century for historians to write an account which fully incorporated Meade's amended report. Mistakes are still being made.²³

Williams found few changes in his duties at Tullahoma in the early months of 1864. Many of his veteran regiments had gotten furloughs like their division commander. Williams expressed his satisfaction at seeing some of his original regiments reenlist. The 27th Indiana, the 2d Massachusetts, the 46th Pennsylvania, the 5th Connecticut, the 13th New Jersey, and the 3rd Wisconsin had been under his command since the days in Banks' division in the fall of 1861.²⁴ With time on his hands, Williams caught up on his reading and his correspondence.²⁵ It was while he was at Tullahoma that he wrote his lengthy autobiographical account of his war service to that point.²⁶ After six months at Tullahoma, Williams was ready to move on to other things, but, at the same time, he was not anxious to begin another campaign. Looking southward, he anticipated "a long, sorry campaign amongst these barren and denuded mountains below us."²⁷

Williams' sojourn in Tullahoma ended in April 1864. During the first week of that month, things began to change. Sherman had begun to move. One of the first things to happen was that the Union forces in and around Chattanooga were reorganized. The XI and XII Corps were combined into one unit and reinforced. General Hooker commanded the new corps which was designated as the "Twentieth Army Corps." To alleviate any further problems between Slocum and Hooker, Lincoln sent Slocum to command at Vicksburg. The new XX Army Corps was part of the Army of the Cumberland of General Thomas.²⁸

At first, Williams was not pleased with the new organization for several reasons. He regretted to see Slocum leave. He and the soldiers of XII Corps were also reluctant to lose the corps integrity and designation they had had since Antietam. In addition, they still had little confidence in XI Corps and Hooker because of the poor showing at Chancellorsville.²⁹ There is some evidence that Hooker did not want Williams as one of his division commanders in the new corps.³⁰ This was probably due to the fact that Williams and Slocum were very close and Hooker knew of Slocum's disdain for him. Williams worried that Hooker's intimate friend, Major General Daniel Butterfield, would supercede him as the 1st Division commander. The issue was resolved when Thomas and Sherman were able to get rid of Major General Carl Schurz by a transfer. Williams remained as the 1st Division commander; Geary still had the 2nd Division; and Butterfield assumed control over the 3rd Division.³¹ Hooker was able to retain the "Star Corps" designation for XX Corps. In the next few months, Williams changed his opinion of General Hooker when he fought under him in Sherman's campaign toward Atlanta.

Williams began to collect his division along the railroad in the final days of April 1864. He moved to Chattanooga and reported to Hooker for marching orders. He left Tullahoma with anticipation and some optimism. To his brother-in-law he wrote, "I expect to live on hard-tack and pork, without tents and roughly as a trapper. But I always feel in the best spirits when so living. So God prosper

the right and let it come. . . ."32 The main regret he had as he departed for Georgia was that he still had only one star on his epaulets.³³

Grant charged Sherman with an important mission. He was to invade Georgia, attack the army of General Joseph E. Johnston and destroy it, and do as much damage as possible to the South's "war resources."³⁴ Sherman had assembled a great invasion army at Chattanooga. The veteran units under his command amounted to almost 113,000 soldiers.³⁵ Johnston, on the other hand, could only count on about 65,000 to defend against Sherman.³⁶ Sherman correctly anticipated that Johnston would defend along the rail line which led from Chattanooga to Atlanta. That, too, would be his line of advance.³⁷ Sherman divided his army into three wings: The Army of the Ohio under John M. Schofield on the left, Thomas' Army of the Cumberland in the center, and the Army of the Tennessee under Sherman's friend, James B. McPherson, to the right. Thomas had the largest numbers of troops. Williams' division was part of the 60,000 in the Army of the Cumberland.³⁸

Without doubt, both Sherman and Johnston conducted brilliant campaigns. Johnston excelled at Fabian tactics. He used his meager forces well and capitalized at every opportunity on using the rugged North Georgia terrain to his advantage. Sherman waged a war of rapid movement and maneuver in an attempt to cut off Johnston from his base at Atlanta. Both generals tried to avoid the pitched battles

which were so characteristic of Grant's head-on assault against Lee in 1864. The Confederate government found little comfort in Johnston's strategy. As Sherman's army closed in on Atlanta, President Davis dismissed Johnston and replaced him with General John B. Hood. Hood's appointment did wonders for Sherman's chances of success. Hood's impetuous offensives demonstrated over time that Johnston's ideas of strategic defense were better suited to the Civil War realities of 1864. By then, the South needed all the manpower and materiel it could muster.³⁹

Williams fought in four of the major actions during the Atlanta Campaign. At Resaca (14-15 May 1864) and New Hope Church (25 May 1864), Williams' division was on the offensive. At Kolb's Farm (22 June 1864) and Peach Tree Creek (20 July 1864), Williams fought off repeated Confederate assaults in self defense. Williams did not have to fight in the bloodiest battle in Sherman's Atlanta Campaign. At Kennesaw Mountain, Thomas held Hooker's Corps in reserve. He let IV and XIV Corps do the fighting there. When the campaign began in May 1864, none of Williams' commanders, Hooker, Thomas, or Sherman, knew a great deal about the Michigan general's abilities. By the time the campaign was over in the next four months, all three had found Williams to be an excellent leader, an able battlefield commander, and an amiable gentleman.

At the beginning of the Atlanta Campaign, Williams wrote to his daughter indicating the marching conditions

were trying but that he and his men were able to withstand the hardships well.⁴⁰ He seemed to be more optimistic on the march in Georgia than he was during the campaigns with the Army of the Potomac. Williams did a good job in executing his orders at the battles of Resaca and New Hope Church. In both instances, it appeared that the commanding generals did not have confidence in Williams and his division when he was kept in support of Geary and Butterfield. The Michigan general surprised the West Point clique when he carried out a bold attack on the Rebel fortified position in both battles. He then began to gain their confidence.

At Resaca, Williams brought up his division behind Butterfield who was unable to make any advance. Williams sent Ruger and his 3rd Brigade on a rapid flanking movement which caught an entire Rebel regiment off guard. Ruger captured the colonel and most of the 38th Alabama Infantry. From experience, Williams knew that infantry advances should be supported by artillery. He quickly got his guns in position just before the Rebels of General A.P. Stewart counterattacked. Williams' actions kept the Union line of advance intact, a fact for which O.O. Howard later thanked Williams gratefully.⁴¹

Resaca illustrated some other things about Williams. He was still a soldier's general who was always where the fighting was hottest. One of Williams' Hoosier privates in the 27th Indiana said of Resaca, it was "a splendid fight . . . Old Pap. . . was right amongst us."⁴² The men of

his command knew that Williams would not be far away if a fight broke out. These were the kind of fighters Sherman liked and the Union needed.

The three years of the war had not hardened Williams' compassion. He remained a thoughtful man who was often emotionally moved by the sufferings of his soldiers. After a tour of the Resaca battlefield, Williams expressed his war weariness to his daughter saying:

Early in the war I had a curiosity to ride over a battlefield. Now I feel nothing but sorrow and compassion, and it is with reluctance that I go over these sad fields. Especially so when I see a 'blue jacket' lying stretched in the attitude that nobody can mistake who has seen dead on a battlefield. These 'boys' have been so long with me that I feel as if a friend had fallen, though I recognize no face that I can recollect to have seen before. But I think of some sorrowful heart at home and oh, Minnie, how sadly my heart sinks with the thought.⁴³

Resaca was not a great bloody battle like Antietam. Nonetheless, Williams lost over 400 men there.⁴⁴ Even Sherman's war of maneuver which tried to avoid large battles had begun to lengthen the casualty lists.

Sherman knew that Altoona Pass could not be taken by direct assault.⁴⁵ Accordingly, he ordered his army to sweep south and westward to avoid the heavily defended area. Johnston had anticipated the move and had built some entrenchments close to Pumpkin Vine Creek at Dallas, Georgia. He got his army there ahead of Sherman's advancing troops. Outside Dallas was a Methodist meeting house named "New Hope."

By the time the fighting was over in the three day battle of May 25th to the 28th, the soldiers had rechristened it "Hell Hole."⁴⁶

Hooker's corps was the first to attack the strong position at New Hope Church. Williams' soldiers knew something serious was about to happen from a peculiar habit the Michigan general had developed. What Williams did with his omnipresent cigar was a barometer of what kind of fight was to take place. One of the veterans of the "Red Star" Division recalled that if the general lit his cigar and was puffing away wildly, it was to be a calm day. If he chomped on the unlit stub, a march was in the offing. If Williams twirled the butt between his lips, a fight was sure to come. On the first day of the New Hope Church attack, the troops saw "Pap" Williams spinning his stogie in his mouth "like a log in a peeler."⁴⁷

Sherman suspected that Johnston had all his army at Dallas but he ordered Hooker to advance anyway. Geary had not moved far in his advance so Hooker recalled Butterfield and Williams to assist. At about 5 PM, with Sherman and Hooker looking on, Williams formed his division into three battle lines. Ordering them forward on the double quick, Williams charged ahead with his troops. The 1st Division pushed back the Southerners to their entrenchments over a mile away. One division could not take a fortified position held by a whole army but Williams' men held their position in front of the entrenchments until they ran

out of ammunition. Williams' men fought bravely but their exposed position coupled with the devastating Confederate musket and artillery fire caused high casualties in the Union ranks. They held out until after dark. Hooker called the advance of Williams' division, "the most magnificent sight of the war."⁴⁸ Hooker's evaluation was certainly an overstatement, but one which had its origins in the bravery under fire he had witnessed. Sherman and other generals congratulated Williams for his efforts.⁴⁹ The high casualties of this battle were something Sherman wanted to avoid so he again tried to outflank Johnston. Merely marching around the Rebel strongpoint in June made the 750 casualties of the 1st Division appear to have been in vain. Such was the nature of the war of attrition which the Civil War had become. Williams was proving to the western generals that he and his veterans from the Army of the Potomac could fight.⁵⁰ The Confederates were also losing men in the Atlanta Campaign, and they could not afford the losses.

At the battles of Kolb's Farm and Peach Tree Creek, Williams turned the tables on John B. Hood. Kolb's Farm was near Marietta, Georgia. It was the scene of one of many of Hood's impetuous and unsuccessful attacks. Williams had the advantages of high ground and advanced warning of Hood's attack. Williams got his troops to entrench behind a rail fence along a ridge. He placed his artillery at points where it could sweep the only approaches to the ridge.

Williams began an effective artillery barrage about 4 PM before the Rebels were able to get out of the woods in front of the Union position. Not many Confederates were able to advance and their follow up attacks were feeble.

Williams lost only 120 in the four hour battle.⁵¹ Johnston was extremely critical of Hood's actions at Kolb's Farm where he lost over 1,000 men.⁵² Williams rejoiced when he found out the severity of the Confederate losses. He wrote home, "That is what I call a glorious success. So few men lost and the enemy so badly punished."⁵³

By mid-July 1864, Sherman was closing in on Atlanta. Johnston's constant withdrawals had angered many in the Southern government. On 17 July, Davis made Hood the commander of the Southern troops in Atlanta.⁵⁴ At Peach Tree Creek on 20 July, Hood struck Hooker's corps with full force. The attack surprised Hooker who had just gotten his troops across the creek. The 3rd Division of XX Corps was able to hold off Hood until Geary and Williams could get their men into a defensive line. After a long and bloody fight, Hooker's corps managed to push the Rebels back into their entrenchments. The Confederates had punished Hooker severely because many of his troops had to fight from exposed positions. Hooker lost 1,600 men and of that number Williams lost 580.⁵⁵ Sherman and Williams both calculated Hood's loss at 5,000.⁵⁶

Two days after Peach Tree Creek in another of the battles around Atlanta, the Rebels shot and killed Sherman's

favorite, General McPherson.⁵⁷ This created a difficult problem for Sherman who had to choose a new commander for the Army of the Tennessee. By seniority, Hooker should have received the position, but there was no way that Sherman would give it to Hooker who had been publicly critical of him. John A. Logan and Francis P. Blair, Jr. were major generals commanding the corps of the Army of the Tennessee. They were logical choices but they had a fatal disadvantage in Sherman's eyes. They were merely "volunteers" and Sherman did not regard them as "professional soldiers."⁵⁸ The West Pointer arrogance, which Williams continued to despise, still influenced the appointments of the major generals. Sherman put O.O. Howard in McPherson's slot.⁵⁹ Ironically, this placed Williams, another "volunteer", into the command of XX Corps on 27 July 1864 when Hooker took offense and asked to be relieved. Sherman was inwardly pleased to be rid of Hooker. He asked Halleck to bring back Slocum from Vicksburg.⁶⁰ During the seige of Atlanta, Williams served as XX Corps commander and Sherman praised him in his role, reporting that he "handled it admirably."⁶¹ Sherman also commended the Michigan general for his fighting abilities as a division commander under Hooker.⁶²

Sherman beseiged Atlanta for the month of August 1864. The defenses of the city were formidable. He did not want to repeat the Union high casualties at New Hope Church and

Kennesaw Mountain if he could avoid it. A seige seemed the logical thing to do. Grant, too, had begun his investment of Petersburg and the war was beginning to develop into a lengthy stalemate.⁶³ Williams and his corps got little rest during the seige because of the incessant artillery exchange. To his daughter, he described the scene outside Atlanta as follows:

There is scarcely a cessation night or day, and as some very large guns are in position very near my headquarters on both sides, I have a constant irritation of the tympanum kept through the twenty-four hours, to say nothing of that irritation in the shape of Rebel shells which are at times whizzing and exploding on all sides. I have twice been fairly shelled out, the rascals throwing projectiles of fifty and sixty pounds weight directly amongst my tents and wagons I don't think one will ever get so used to the shrill and sometimes roaring sound of shot and shell as to enjoy it as a serenade. It is decidedly disagreeable, and the different varieties and calibers give every possible variation of unearthly noises.⁶⁴

The XX Corps remained in position north of the city late in the month when Sherman moved the bulk of his army in another flanking movement to the south. Sherman hoped to cut off Hood's escape by capturing the railroads south of Atlanta.⁶⁵ On 27 August, Slocum arrived from Vicksburg and resumed command of the corps. Williams returned to his division.⁶⁶ It was at the head of his old 1st Division that Williams rode into Atlanta after the Confederates evacuated the city on 1 September.

The capture of Atlanta came at a propitious time for the North. The news of the event aided Lincoln's efforts

in the 1864 presidential election. For Sherman and his army, their time in Atlanta was important. Williams and XX Corps spent all of September and October and half of November in the Southern crossroads city. Sherman had captured the city but he had not destroyed Johnston's and Hood's army. Therefore, he had not succeeded in all of the tasks Grant had given him. Hood's move northward in early October threatened everything Sherman had gained in the campaign. When Sherman took the bulk of his army back north to deal with Hood, he left Slocum and XX Corps occupying Atlanta.⁶⁷

There were quite a few changes in Williams' division during the occupation of Atlanta. One of his original regiments, the 27th Indiana, was mustered out of service. General Ruger got a division command in XXIII Corps and also left the "Red Star" Division. However, Williams was most concerned that his faithful aide-de-camp, Sam Pittman, had resigned and returned to Detroit. He was deeply saddened that he had no more of his Detroit friends on his staff.⁶⁸ The campaign in North Georgia had significantly reduced the numbers in his division to a little over 4,000. The entire corps in Atlanta had only 12,000.⁶⁹

One thing which had not changed was Williams' rank. No one in XX Corps got promoted, although Sherman had been able to engineer two major generalships and eight brigadier appointments for his western army veterans.⁷⁰ During the

campaign, Williams had grown despondent almost to the point of resigning over not getting promoted. To his daughter, Williams wrote bitterly:

The whole system of promotion is by the practice of low grovelling lick-spittle subserving and pandering to the press, who can lie you into favor and notice of the war authorities. I might stay a long life in hard service, as I have done for three years, and I never could seek the polluted steps to preferment and should never reach it.⁷¹

Williams regretted the fact that some generals used the press to further their careers. He refused to do so and preferred instead to go through channels and rely on the letters of recommendation of his friends and former commanders.⁷²

During the time in Atlanta, he continued to be bitter and became even more rank conscious. His letters indicate that he vented his anger inwardly and did not complain to his superiors. In spite of this, Williams was determined to see the war ended and the Union restored.⁷³ He was both personally ambitious and patriotic.

The end of the rebellion was a key issue in the upcoming election. The election of 1864 offered a clear choice for voters in the North. Williams' daughter expressed some confusion about the important issues of the election so he wrote Mary a letter in which he revealed his views on the candidates and the parties. It was clear that Williams had lost the earlier interest he had in politics but he still had the ability to analyze critically politicians and their platforms. "I have been for years," Williams indicated, "at a distance from the political contests which

excite the passions and prejudices of men and so dethrone their reason. I think I am, and have been, in just the position to make a dispassionate judgment between the contending parties."⁷⁴

Williams could not stomach the peace plank of the Democrats. He considered McClellan to be a patriot but one who had been manipulated by treasonable elements of the Northern Democrats. He considered the Democratic position of an immediate armistice to be "absolute submission to the Rebel government" and, therefore, a disgrace. To support such a position in light of the great sacrifices of the war was unconscionable, Williams argued. He specifically stated, "I do not support the McClellan-Pendleton ticket."⁷⁵

Williams continued his analysis with a clear statement of why he would vote for the Republicans:

I have no particularly strong personal reasons for loving the existing Administration, nor do I, in everything, admire its policy or measures. Still its great aim, in the emergency which absolves small things, is right. It goes for fighting this rebellion until the Rebels cry 'Enough!' Therefore, without making pretensions to a very large amount of Roman virtue, which prefers country to self and forgets personal grievances in the thought of the general good, I do not hesitate to say that if I was at home I should vote for 'A Linkum' and his party. So much for politics.⁷⁶

Williams had some legitimate grievances against the Republican administration especially in light of not getting promoted. His unabashed love of country took precedence over his wounded pride when he continued to serve in the war. Most importantly, this statement illustrates that Williams

had not changed his reasons for ending the rebellion. He was fighting only to preserve the Union. His failure to mention slaves or slavery in this or other political statements indicates that he was out of touch with the great political realities of the war by late 1864. For many in the North, it was both a crusade to end slavery and to preserve the Union. Williams' political ambivalence on the issue of slavery during the war certainly did not improve his standing with the Radical Republicans, especially with men like fellow Detroiter, Zachariah Chandler, and Edwin M. Stanton. In some areas, Williams was politically astute, but concerning the changing role of the issue of slavery and the war, he was unexplicably naive. Williams indicated in his last letter from Atlanta that he did cast his ballot for the "Lincoln electors."⁷⁷

General Sherman was a better strategist than tactician after he left Atlanta. There is no better place to illustrate this than in his famous "March to the Sea" and in his campaign in the Carolinas. Ending the war was his most important objective. Sherman had come to recognize the importance of the indirect approach at waging total war. At the end of 1864 and in 1865, Sherman was most concerned with destroying the South's will to fight and their economic means of continuing the war.⁷⁸ Williams commanded one part of Sherman's marching torch which burned the South from Atlanta to Savannah and Columbia to Raleigh. Williams helped make the South "howl" in this, his final campaign of the war.⁷⁹

Sherman divided his army this time into two wings under the command of his able subordinates, O.O. Howard and Henry Slocum. By reason of seniority, Williams again resumed command of XX Corps of Slocum's left wing of the army on 11 November 1864.⁸⁰ He was to command the corps until April 1865, just before the war ended.

Williams wrote no letters to his children during the march through Georgia.⁸¹ He was cut off from his supply bases and was too occupied with his corps duties to write until he got to Savannah. He did keep a day book of the campaign, but it details mainly logistical matters like the route and distance marched, the weather, the amount of forage obtained, and munitions destroyed.⁸² Williams incorporated most of his diary in his official reports.⁸³

Williams left Atlanta on 15 November. The March to the Sea would take a month. The XX Corps marched across a six to seven mile front, destroying almost everything in its path. Railroads were an important target and XX Corps became proficient at twisting the rails into unusable metal pretzels. Williams was pleased to have the 1st Michigan Engineers and Mechanics in his command, and he praised their prowess at destruction. They ruined 71 miles of railroad track enroute to Savannah.⁸⁴

Cotton bales and processing equipment were another prime objective of XX Corps destruction. Williams reported burning 5,000 bales and every cotton gin they found. The number of bales they burned is more significant in light of the

the fact that they came across few large warehouses; their victims were largely farmers and small planters.⁸⁵

Williams took the greatest pride in his corps' ability to forage. At the expense of the Georgians along their route, XX Corps ate well and wasted vast quantities of corn and fodder. The amount of corn and animal feed his corps confiscated in just twenty days was almost 5 million pounds. Besides feeding his own troops, Williams supplied up to 8,000 former slaves who had joined the march. Not all of them kept up in the move on Savannah, but Williams estimated that 2,500 did.⁸⁶

Williams admitted that his soldiers committed some abuses. These were violations of general and special orders and usually occurred in isolated instances. "The nature of the march was calculated to relax discipline," Williams reported, "and yet, after all, it was comparatively but the few (ever found in large bodies of men) who were disorderly and vicious."⁸⁷

In human terms, Williams' March to the Sea helped save lives. His corps did very little fighting enroute. Confederate cavalry was the main obstacle and they did very little to stop the relentless push through Georgia. In total, Williams reported the casualties for his entire corps at only 100 killed and wounded with about 165 missing. Many of the missing, he explained, were lost along the way while they foraged too far afield and got mixed up in

another corps' line of march.⁸⁸ Williams lost more men than that in brief minutes of fighting at Cedar Mountain, Antietam, and Chancellorsville.

Most of the XX Corps casualties occurred in the siege of Savannah. On 10 December 1864, Sherman ordered Slocum to begin operations directly against the formidable defenses of the city.⁸⁹ Sherman moved with Howard's forces to capture Fort McAllister south of the city and thus establish a sea connection with the Union navy. This put Savannah in an indefensible position. Still, the Confederate commander at Savannah refused Sherman's ultimatum to surrender. This infuriated Sherman, but, at the same time, he dreaded a direct assault. The Rebels saved him the trouble when they withdrew in the early morning hours of 21 December. Williams' Star Corps soldiers were the first Union troops to enter the city.⁹⁰ Sherman took great pleasure in the symbolic act of presenting Savannah to Lincoln as a Christmas present.⁹¹

Overall, Williams was pleased with the campaign. He called the march a "promenade militaire" and expressed a decided liking for that kind of campaigning.⁹² He passed another holiday season absent from family and friends. Though it was pleasant in Savannah during the Union occupation, being there did not substitute for being with his family. His letters from Savannah reflect the depression which invariably plagued him in the Christmas season. Williams remained the kind and loving father. He cried as

he reread the letters from his children. He found them a great source of inspiration. It was the third "festive" season away from his home in Detroit. He had fought in many of the worst battles in the war and yet he had escaped unscathed. Williams began to think he had a charmed life. However, he found no encouragement in his good fortune. To Mary he wrote, "I ought, indeed, to be grateful that I have been so miraculously kept from harm. I have seen so many struck down by my side, so many who have fallen, as it seemed, in the very tracks I had left, that it seems like a miracle that I have always escaped."⁹³ These thoughts came to Williams as he recalled the recent death of a young staff officer outside Savannah. "It is not easy to believe that the boy with the curly hair and the smiling face could be so early a victim of war."⁹⁴ Even one of Sherman's war lords could be a caring father and a sensitive commander.

His sympathy did not extend to those who had disrupted his beloved Union. Savannah was to be the jump off point on his second "visit" to the hotbed of secession, South Carolina. He had not been there since his trip in 1833. The interval and the war only increased his animosity toward those who had gone from nullification to secession. It was just as Williams had predicted. This time he marked his trail through the state with burning cotton bales and smoldering ruins.

Just before Sherman began his campaign in the Carolinas, Secretary of War Stanton visited Sherman in Savannah. He carried with him letters of brevet promotion for many of Sherman's brigadier generals. The war was almost over and the administration began to hand out brevets for gallantry and long service to almost everyone who avoided a court martial. As such, some who received the brevet promotions considered them for what they were--pap to keep men fighting. Williams threatened in letters to his daughters that he would reject the brevet rank.⁹⁵ However, when the time came on 12 January 1865 and Williams had his appointment in hand as "Brevet Major General of Volunteers," he accepted it.⁹⁶ Williams was angry that even his brevet rank was delayed so long, writing, the "'promotion' placed me junior in brevet rank to four-fifths of the Brigadier Generals (my juniors) who were then serving in the Army of the Potomac around or in front of Petersburg."⁹⁷ He indicated that he decided to accept the brevet promotion because his position as XX Corps commander demanded it.⁹⁸

Historians have both praised and condemned Sherman's campaign in the Carolinas. Some point to the needless destruction and pillage. Others argue that Sherman's operations were not as important in ending the war as those of Thomas against Hood and Grant against Lee. Militarily, it was a brilliant, total war effort under most difficult weather conditions. Its greatest benefit to the Union cause was that it greatly increased war weariness in the South

and made many Rebels give up the fight. Some saw the destruction of war resources as secondary to the psychological impact of destroying the enemy heartland.⁹⁹

Williams expressed few regrets at taking war to the Carolinas. In February and early March 1865 his main complaint was the weather and the terrain. Extremely heavy rains combined with the swamps of the Tidewater to make movements appear impossible. The Southerners relied on this as an important part of their defense. Williams and his corps developed a great proficiency for corduroying roads. They could move ten miles per day even in the worst areas. Still, the obstacles were great, Williams wrote, "It was all mud, swamps, treacherous quicksand and quagmires--cursed cold, rainy weather, hard work, much swearing, great wear and tear, short commons for days, and altogether a most irksome and laborious campaign."¹⁰⁰ Their progress was slow but the Confederates could not stop it. On 12 March 1865 near Fayetteville, North Carolina, Williams wrote to his daughter about the advance of Sherman's army:

We swept through South Carolina, the fountain-head of rebellion, in a broad semi-circular belt, sixty miles wide, the arch of which was the capital of the state, Columbia. Our people, impressed with the idea that every South Carolinian was an ardent Rebel, spared nothing but the old men, women, and children. All materials, all vacant houses, factories, cotton-gins and presses, everything that makes the wealth of a people, everything edible and wearable was swept away. The soldiers quietly took the matter into their own hands. Orders to respect houses and private

property not necessary for subsistence of the army were not greatly heeded. Indeed, not heeded at all. . . . The sights at times, as seen from elevated ground were often terribly sublime and grand. . . .¹⁰¹

Facing Sherman in North Carolina was General Joseph E. Johnston again. Lee had brought back Johnston to command the remnants of the soldiers of the Army of the Tennessee which had met disaster under Hood and other eastern Rebel troops. Johnston, with only about 14,000 men, tried to muster all the resources he could to stop Sherman.¹⁰² Sherman still had the luxury of two wings in his army with four complete corps and an effective cavalry force. Johnston's only hope was to strike at Sherman's widely scattered forces and try to defeat them piecemeal as Jackson had done in the Shenandoah Valley. Johnston hit Sherman hard twice during mid-March 1865 at Averasboro and Bentonville. Both times Williams' XX Corps fought hard to fend off the Confederates. Williams' casualties were high in both these battles. They proved to be the last major fights of XX Corps.

At Averasboro on 16 March, Williams and his corps fought all day. The Confederates had taken up a position with two entrenched lines to stop Slocum's advance of the left wing. Their positions were directly in front of Williams' corps. The Union cavalry began the fight early and reported to Williams that the Confederates had taken up a very strong position. Williams deployed his soldiers and attacked the Rebel right flank. One brigade successfully turned the

Rebel flank and Williams ordered a charge all along the line. This succeeded and the Star Corps pushed the Confederates out of the second line of entrenchments. They could not pursue the Rebels because of the extremely muddy roads. The Confederates were primarily interested in fighting a delaying action at Averasboro and, as such, they succeeded in slowing one part of Sherman's army. This had the effect of separating the two wings. At Bentonville, Johnston tried to capitalize on this initial advantage. It proved to be his and Sherman's last big fight.¹⁰³

Bentonville was a pitched battle on a much larger scale than Averasboro. It was Johnston's "Battle of the Bulge." If his temporary offensive failed, there was little he could do to stop Sherman from joining Grant in front of Petersburg. Sherman was largely out of touch with the direct fighting and left the details to his corps and wing commanders. Johnston struck on 19 March with his full force at Slocum's left wing. His main blow fell on the front of the XIV Corps. Slocum brought up Williams' corps to help stop the Confederate advance. It took both of Slocum's corps to turn back the Confederates who fought bravely. Sherman did not hear of the fight until late evening. He had been moving with the right wing all day. When he heard of Johnston's attack on Slocum, Sherman wheeled his right wing around to attack Johnston. He ordered Slocum to hold until the right wing could move on Johnston. Instead of moving to the front to direct the fighting personally, Sherman, like a good army

commander, preferred to sit back and receive reports from his subordinates.¹⁰⁴ After the battle, he did not pursue Johnston who headed north and west from Bentonville. Instead, Sherman moved toward Goldsboro and consolidated his three armies there.¹⁰⁵

The battle of Bentonville was significant for Williams for several reasons. It was his last great fight in the Civil War. Slocum praised Williams for handling his corps "with great skill."¹⁰⁶ The severity of the battle is indicated by the high casualties on both sides. Sherman lost 1,527 and Johnston lost 2,606.¹⁰⁷ Williams' XX Corps lost only 258 in spite of being in much of the hardest fighting. The Michigan general attributed the low casualties to the effective use of his own artillery and the "sheltered position of most of the line" his corps occupied.¹⁰⁸ Williams had become a master at using his artillery to great advantage. Johnston's charging Rebels found this out at Bentonville just like others had at Antietam and Gettysburg. The battle also showed that Williams was still a fighting general.

The end was in sight when Sherman did something at Goldsboro, North Carolina which must be the penultimate insult that Alpheus Williams endured in the entire war. On 1 April 1865, Sherman reorganized his forces. He designated his left wing the "Army of Georgia" and appointed Slocum its commander. This made a vacancy for a full major general as the official commander of XX Corps. Williams'

rank was as brevet only. Sherman took it as an obligation to his close friend, Joseph A. Mower, to place him in command of XX Corps. General Mower relieved Williams on 4 April 1865.¹⁰⁹ Sherman's argument for putting Mower in command at that time was a weak one. In his Memoirs, Sherman wrote:

I had specially asked for General Mower to command the Twentieth Corps, because I regarded him as one of the boldest and best fighting generals in the whole army. His predecessor, General A.S. Williams, the senior division commander present, had commanded the corps well from Atlanta to Goldsboro, and it may have seemed unjust to replace him at that precise moment; but I was resolved to be prepared for a most desperate and, as then expected, a final battle should it fall on me.¹¹⁰

"Hogwash!," veterans of XX Corps answered. Sherman had pledged to recognize Mower with a promotion and a corps command as early as 7 August 1864. He rewarded Mower for his service at Vicksburg at Williams' expense.¹¹¹ Sherman had no reason to fear a "great battle" from Johnston's bedraggled army in April 1865, especially after he received word of the fall of Richmond and Petersburg.¹¹²

Williams thought briefly of resigning, but decided against it when the brigade commanders of his old 1st Division formally requested his return. Resolved to see the war to its end, Williams did not quit. Still, he was privately bitter about the demotion. "It is one of the curses," he wrote, "that I have to bear for not getting my proper rank years ago. . . . This is about the fortieth time that I have been foisted up by seniority to

be let down by rank!"¹¹³ Williams returned to command the "Red Star" Division at a time when the war seemed to be won.

As Grant closed in on Lee in the first part of April, Sherman moved his army toward Johnston's forces. Williams and his division left Goldsboro and headed down the road toward Raleigh. On 9 April 1865 the Union army in North Carolina heard of Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Sherman saw Williams on the road and charged toward him through a pack of braying mules. Almost shaking Williams' arm off in his excitement, Sherman shouted over the din, "Isn't it glorious? Johnston must come down now or break up!"¹¹⁴ Williams agreed and praised God that the war might be over at last.¹¹⁵ Johnston's surrender to Sherman a few days later on 18 April ended the war for Williams.

The peace was not an easy one. Williams, like most Northerners felt shock at hearing of Lincoln's assassination. The Michigan general thought the president's death would make the transition to peace even more difficult. Reuniting the Union would need a statesman of Lincoln's caliber. In addition, Williams greatly doubted that the Washington politicians would accept the terms Sherman had negotiated with Johnston.¹¹⁶ This proved to be an accurate assessment. Williams worried about the future. "There will be," he wrote, "a great swell of the storm for years to come."¹¹⁷ He had seen too many die and fought hard too long himself to be convinced that reconstruction would be a simple matter.

CHAPTER XI End of Military Life and Final Service
May 1865-December 1878

Williams had an active life after the Civil War. For a short time, he continued in the army and served in Arkansas. After a brief and unsuccessful encounter with "Bloody Shirt" politics in Michigan in 1866, Williams became a diplomat in Latin America. Returning to Detroit, he reestablished old family ties and made some new ones in the early 1870's. He went back to politics in 1874 and in his final years, he served in Congress. Long service with few rewards became the epitaph of Michigan's greatest citizen soldier.

Williams was uncertain about his continued service in the army after the fighting stopped. He marched proudly with Sherman's army in the Grand Review in late May 1865 at the head of his "Red Star" Division. At first, he expected to be mustered out in June with the rest of his soldiers.¹ George H. Thomas surprised Williams with an unexpected visit and asked him if he would be willing to serve in a command capacity in the South. Williams answered with an emphatic "Yes!"² In spite of his problems with promotion, he thought a continued career in the regular army was a good alternative to returning to his oil store business in Detroit. He had few other prospects at the time. Williams found Thomas' praise of his performance as a corps commander to be most flattering and highly out of character for the "Rock of Chickamauga."³

Both Slocum and Sherman offered to help Williams in any way they could.⁴ Of the two, only Sherman acted on his promise.

Williams became the commander of a division in the Provisional XIV Corps, a holding group for volunteer soldiers awaiting mustering out. He spent June and most of July 1865 with that organization in Louisville, Kentucky.⁵ During that time, Sherman was trying to organize his Military Division of the Mississippi which was responsible for the occupation of the South. He asked Grant to retain several general officers, including Williams. "They are," he explained, "valuable officers, and I beg you will assign them to me to be retained till the proper time for them to seek new commissions in the future army."⁶ Grant acceded to Sherman's request and ordered Williams to report to General J.J. Reynolds in Arkansas.⁷ Williams was still a volunteer officer. His continued service depended on Congress passing a law which increased commissions in the regular army. Before he went to Arkansas, he returned to Detroit in August for a month of leave.⁸

Williams served in Arkansas for four months, from early September 1865 to January 1866. It was a period of grave disappointment and disillusionment. His first duty was as commander of the Ouachita River District at Camden, Arkansas.⁹ His isolated post was several days ride from Little Rock and got mail only once a week. Bored and lonely, Williams described Camden to his brother-in-law with his usual

literary flair: "This place is just 110 miles from every point East, West, North or South. . . . [It is] an excellent place to wear out old clothes."¹⁰

Malaria plagued the townsfolk and the army garrison. At times, more than half of his troops were incapacitated. Because of the malaria which he contracted, Williams' health was worse in Arkansas than at any time during the entire Civil War.¹¹

To make matters worse, the region of Arkansas where Williams was stationed was still thoroughly secessionist. His soldiers became involved in so many serious fights with the civilians that he had to court martial many of them to maintain discipline.¹² As a Yankee transplant to Michigan, Williams decried Arkansas frontier justice and violence. "I don't think these people," he wrote, "ever felt to any considerable degree the restraints of civil law. Human life is held as cheap as dog's meat."¹³

The duty improved some when he moved from Camden to the Central District at Little Rock in late November, but the move did nothing for his homesickness.¹⁴ He had been reunited with his children in Detroit for such a short time that he longed to return home. Toward the end of 1865 most of the volunteer generals were being retired. Williams suspected that it was only a matter of time before he would be mustered out of service.

While he was in Arkansas, a family matter occupied most of his thoughts. His eldest daughter, Irene, had become

engaged and was planning her wedding in his absence. Much of his correspondence from Arkansas dealt with the event. Williams wrote Irene a series of long letters of advice reminiscent of those he sent her in the 1850's when she was in school. They reveal the depth of his parental love and show a change in Williams' social attitudes. He had come to admire life's simple pleasures and had become much less materialistic. Another factor evident in the Arkansas letters was that Williams was still having money problems. He felt badly that he could not afford to give his daughter the lavish wedding she wanted. "It is a very disagreeable thing to be poor!," Williams wrote Mary.¹⁵ His sole income was from his army salary.

After the Christmas holidays Williams was given a leave. He left Arkansas in early January 1866 and arrived in Detroit in time for Irene's wedding on the 18th. While he was home he picked up a newspaper and read that he had been mustered out of the army on 15 January. It seemed a rather ignominious fate for a man who had served well and hoped to remain in the army. To top it off, the order in the newspaper did not even mention his brevet major general rank.¹⁶

A year of transition followed his departure from the army. Senator Jacob Howard wrote Williams in February that he had met with President Andrew Johnson and was trying to get him a diplomatic post. Howard informed the President of Williams' long but unrewarded service during the war.

He also showed him the correspondence about Meade's Gettysburg report. The President, Howard wrote Williams, would correct this by giving him "the first vacancy."¹⁷ While Williams did not get the "first vacancy," he did receive a Johnson appointment later in the year.

He spent the summer of 1866 in Detroit, renewing old acquaintances and working to further the cause of Michigan's Civil War veterans. Williams actively campaigned for a soldier's lobby for veteran affairs. He was elected president of the Detroit Soldier's and Sailor's Union, organized as Williams once explained, to help find jobs for ex-soldiers, help widows and dependent children, aid the destitute Union soldiers who had fought in the war, and act as a unifying force for the soldiers and sailors of the North. Williams urged veterans to form local chapters of the group. This self-help organization was like the Grand Army of the Republic. Williams' support for such a group was characteristic of the paternalistic attitude he took toward his troops. With the peace, he continued to look after their interests.¹⁸

His activism in local veteran affairs led him back into the political arena but he returned reluctantly. Late in the summer he organized a soldiers meeting to support Andrew Johnson's policies of presidential reconstruction. It was attended largely by Democrats. Among those present were General O.B. Willcox, Lewis Allen and two soldiers from Coldwater, Michigan, who had known Williams since the

Camp of Instruction in 1861, C.O. Loomis and John G. Parkhurst. The letter they signed called for a moderate and conciliatory Southern policy.¹⁹

President Johnson probably noted the support Williams gave him in a state where many favored the Radical Republican position on reconstruction. At any rate, he kept his pledge to Senator Howard and appointed Williams to a federal commission to investigate war claims in Missouri.²⁰

Williams and two other commissioners were to investigate Missouri's wartime expenditures for providing troops for the Union army. It seems that the federal government thought Missouri's claims were greatly inflated.²¹

Williams spent four months in St. Louis working on the project at the very time that he was "running" for governor in Michigan.

"Running" should be used advisedly to describe his involvement in the gubernatorial race of 1866.²² The Democrats nominated Williams as their candidate to oppose the Republican incumbent, Henry Crapo, a Flint lumberman. As late as 12 September 1866, Williams had not accepted the nomination and was reluctant to do so.²³ Later that month, he returned to Detroit and accepted the nomination, but he did not campaign. Michigan Democrats attempted to wave the "Bloody Shirt" in this election, as Republicans did in later elections. To counter charges that they were the unpatriotic party during the war, the Democrats nominated only military men on their slate. The Free Press ran a broadside in

mid-October which proclaimed their candidates:

Governor--General A.S. Williams
 Lieutenant Governor--General John G. Parkhurst
 Secretary of State--Colonel Bradley M. Thompson.²⁴

Williams' failure to campaign did not help Democratic chances in the election. Another disadvantage was the powerful influence of Michigan Radical Republicans like Zachariah Chandler and Austin Blair. Indeed, the election revolved more around personalities than issues. On the one important issue of the campaign, reconstruction policy, the Michigan voters rejected Williams' and Johnson's position on a moderate restoration of the Southern states.²⁵

Crapo won by an 18% margin--59% to 41%. Williams captured only five counties, one of which was Wayne. The others were scattered in northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. His greatest defeat in a county occurred in the timberlands of Manistee where he lost by a margin of 279 to 1. Perhaps a loyal veteran gave the general the only vote he received in the county.²⁶ Williams expressed no regrets at his failure to win election to what he had earlier called "a very poor office."²⁷

During the fall of 1866, Williams learned that President Johnson had appointed him United States Minister to El Salvador.²⁸ Williams was still in St. Louis when he received the news. It came at a good time, just as he was completing his work on the Missouri commission. His instructions, which he received toward the end of November 1866, indicated that he was to procede to his new post as

soon as possible.²⁹ Stopping off in Detroit for a few weeks, Williams spent some time with his family before leaving on his new adventure.

Williams spent almost three years in Central America as Minister to El Salvador. He arrived in January 1867. His duties there were much easier given the foreign affairs climate in Latin America. The 1850's had been a decade of many armed uprisings and rebellions in the Central American republics; but by the mid-1860's, they had achieved a degree of stability. President Lincoln first recognized El Salvador in 1862 and sent our first minister to the new republic not long afterward. Salvador was relatively tranquil by the end of the American Civil War. The armed intervention of France and England in Mexico during the Civil War, surprisingly, made Williams' job after the war much easier. The Latin American republics then hated the Europeans more than the Yankees.³⁰

Reflecting this, Williams found the relations with President Francisco Duenas to be most cordial. The U.S. had very few economic interests in El Salvador, and, indeed, as Williams found, there were very few U.S. citizens in the country. President Duenas was a man with military interests and he and Williams were on good terms. Duenas indicated in a message to President Johnson, "General Williams has impressed me most favorably. . . . I congratulate, and thank you for this outstanding selection."³¹

Williams had many personal characteristics which were well suited to the diplomatic post. Being good with languages, he quickly became proficient in Spanish, which he had studied earlier in Mexico. His amiability also worked to his advantage as he endeared himself to El Salvador's ruling elite. At the same time, however, he developed an affinity for the life of the lower social classes. He entered service in El Salvador with a prejudicial feeling toward the peasants and the Indians of the country. But by the time he left in late 1869, he had acquired a better appreciation of their economic plight and understood their culture much better. Indeed, he expressed a fondness for their simple life, unburdened by social affectation.³²

Both William Seward and Hamilton Fish, during their tenure as U.S. Secretary of State, praised Williams for his excellent reports about life in El Salvador.³³ His diplomatic correspondence matched the quality of his letters of his earlier days. While Williams was in El Salvador, there were no serious problems he had to solve. The most distressing for him personally was dealing with the former Confederates who had left the U.S. after the war to seek their fortunes in Latin America.³⁴ While Williams was a likely candidate to treat them harshly, he could not avoid being sympathetic to their plight. He helped many with money, shelter, and travel arrangements. He did it but he did not enjoy it.³⁵

President Grant recalled Williams in late 1869 and replaced him with a "good" Republican. Williams lost his post as part of the sweep of the diplomatic corps where many of Johnson's appointments, especially in Latin America, were dismissed. Actually, Williams was pleased by the opportunity to return home.³⁶ His last letters from El Salvador reflect his homesickness.³⁷

Family matters dominated his life for some time after his return, similar to what happened after he came back from Mexico in 1848. Once again, family tragedy marred what would have been a happy homecoming. Williams returned to Detroit in early December 1869. While he was enroute home, one of his grandchildren died unexpectedly. The Williams family buried Mary's two-year-old daughter in Elmwood in the family plot.³⁸ Devastated by the loss, Williams lived with his children for three years afterwards. It was as if he tried to catch up on a whole decade of absence from his family. In time, however, he again became interested in life around him. He even began courting a widow friend, Martha Tillman, whom he married in September 1873.³⁹

With renewed interest, Williams again entered politics. In 1874, he ran for Congress as a Democrat from Michigan's 1st District. He won that year and again in 1876. In 1878, he was defeated in his final bid for reelection. His Congressional career was undistinguished except in the number of hours he spent working on committees and attending the

sessions of the House. He was seldom absent from his desk in all his years in Congress and rarely missed a vote. He rarely spoke in Congress except to introduce petitions or bills. His main interests remained in the military and he worked actively in all aspects of veteran affairs. It seems fitting that Williams was at his chair in a committee meeting in the halls of Congress when he was struck down by a fatal stroke on 16 December 1878. He regained consciousness only once before he died on 21 December at the age of sixty-eight.⁴⁰

* * *

One of the most persistent questions which remains after reviewing the character and career of Williams is, "Why was he never promoted to the rank of major general?" Undoubtedly, Williams himself was partly to blame. He was personally ambitious but he was good at keeping those feelings to himself. He did not complain directly to his superiors about it. Nor did he use the newspapers to glorify his own deeds as did so many other Civil War generals. He effectively vented his anger and disappointments inwardly in letters to his family.

His political background also worked against him. Few of the prominent major generals at the end of the war were Democrats. Leading Radical Republicans like Zachariah Chandler and Edwin M. Stanton were not among Williams' friends and it is quite likely that their efforts blocked Williams' promotion. Strong recommendations from Jacob M.

Howard and Austin Blair had to have been blunted at a very high level. Williams never stressed that he was fighting to free the slaves. This did not help his chances for promotion when, late in the war, the power of the Radical Republicans had increased. In 1865, as in 1861, Williams was still fighting mostly to preserve the Union. His loyalty to the Union was beyond question, but for obtaining a major generalship, one of the plums of military preferment, his politics were wrong.

Militarily, the most important factor which kept Williams a brigadier was that he was not a West Pointer. Again, he was able to keep to himself his contempt for the arrogance of the professionally trained soldier. The stigma of being a "volunteer" officer plagued his chances for promotion when so many of his superiors had regular army commissions.

In the field and in battle, few Union generals exceeded the scope of his service. His date of rank, 17 May 1861, made him one of the senior generals as a brigadier in 1865. As a division and corps commander in the Army of the Potomac and the Army of the Cumberland, he developed a record of exemplary service and constant improvement as a fighting leader, a soldier's general. The veterans of the "Star Corps" saw the change as Stonewall Jackson's men and those of Johnston and Hood felt its effects. Unfortunately for the Michigan general, most of his commanders either failed to take notice or did not act to get him promoted. The

fact that he did not resign says something about his devotion to duty and his persistence in working to preserve the Union.

In his personal life, Williams had to cope with many unexpected trials, especially within his family and in his financial affairs. The early deaths of many family members caused him great anxiety. His letters to his children indicate that he was a kind and loving father who cherished close family ties. In his financial affairs, the young Williams spent his large inheritance on travel and high living. He, like some other prominent Civil War generals (notably Grant and Sherman), was not a good businessman. The wealth of his youth evaporated by middle age and, in his forties and fifties, he experienced severe money problems. He did not squander his money on himself in his later years. Generous to a fault toward his family and friends, he went without so that they might have a good education and a good start in life. His financial difficulties proved to be a humbling experience for him.

Williams' political life was enigmatic. He does not fit the patterns outlined by historians of Michigan's politics. The best word to summarize his political life is "independence." This was unusual in the 19th Century when party loyalty was so important. He had been an anti-slavery Whig who supported "Mr. Polk's War" and a Democrat who headed the efforts of Michigan's Republican administration to prepare for civil war with the South.

It was in the military and in his Civil War experience, in particular, that the strength of his character was most evident. A highly principled man, Williams considered the secession of the South to be an anathema. Certainly, the war presented him with an opportunity for personal advancement. He had not been entirely successful in other aspects of his public life. But the most important factor in his decision to volunteer was to put an end to the rebellion and preserve the Union. The length of his war career and difficulties he overcame illustrate his devotion to duty. Probably the most succinct and accurate appraisal of his life came from a Southerner. The editor of the Atlanta Daily Constitution wrote of Williams in an obituary:

"He has led an active and useful life, and in all positions acquitted himself with honor."⁴¹ "Duty, Honor, Country," is a dictum which military leaders today are taught to emulate. Alpheus Starkey Williams, Michigan's foremost citizen soldier, personified those ideals in many important ways.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

¹David D. Field, A Statistical Account of the County of Middlesex in Connecticut (Middletown, CT: Clark & Lyman, 1819), pp. 93,94

²Ibid., p. 84. See also F.W. Chapman, The Pratt Family: Or the Descendents of Lieut. Williams Pratt, One of the First Settlers of Hartford and Say-Brook, with Genealogical Notes (Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Company, 1864), pp. 174, 175.

³History of Middlesex County Connecticut (New York: J.B. Beers & Co., 1884), p. 543.

⁴For information on the firm, Ezra Williams & Company, see History of Middlesex County, pp. 548 and 549 and Field, Statistical Account, pp. 92,93. The 1810 Census of Manufactures lists the value of ivory combs alone in Middlesex County, CT at \$33,000.

⁵ASW to Irene Williams Chittenden, 20 September 1869 in A. S. Williams Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library. Unless otherwise indicated, all manuscripts, documents, and newspapers hereinafter cited are in the Burton Historical Collection. (B.H.C.)

⁶Bernard C. Steiner, A History of the Plantation of Menunkatuck and of the Original Town of Guilford, Connecticut (Baltimore: The Friedenwald Co., 1897), pp. 405, 406-410, 503, and Florence Crofut, Guide to the History and Historic Sites of Connecticut (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), II, 552.

⁷Alpheus Starkey Williams, MS Diary, 7 April 1832 and 31 May 1842. Hereinafter cited as MS Diary.

⁸MS Album of Yale Classmates, 1828, in ASW Papers.

⁹Henry Barnard, also a Connecticut native, became an important American educator in the 19th Century. See the Dictionary of American Biography, I, 621-25; Vincent Lannie, ed. Henry Barnard: American Educator (New York: Teacher's College Press, 1974), pp. 3, 4; and Ralph C. Jenkins, Henry

Barnard: An Introduction (Hartford, CT: The Connecticut State Teachers Association, 1937), p. 16. On the Linonian Society see William L. Kingsley, Yale College, A Sketch of Its History (New York: H. Holt & Co., 1876), I, 307, 308.

¹⁰MS Album of Yale Classmates, 1828, notation by ASW under the entry of Howard H. White, 1 August 1828.

¹¹For a view of the "Bread and Butter Rebellion" from the position of the Yale faculty and administration see Kingsley, Yale College, I, 136, 137.

¹²MS Album of Yale Classmates, 1828, entry by Ninian E. Gray dated 2 August 1828 in ASW Papers. See also entries by William N. Baker, E. M. Case, and George E. Tabb.

¹³For additional information on Henry Wikoff see the DAB, XX, 197-198, and his autobiography, Henry Wikoff, Reminiscences of an Idler (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1880).

¹⁴Robert Budd Ross, The Early Bench and Bar of Detroit from 1805 to the End of 1850 (Detroit: R.P. Joy and C.M. Burton, 1907), p. 225.

¹⁵For these details on his physical description see the photograph of the portrait of ASW done on the occasion of his Yale graduation in 1831 and his passport dated 18 September 1834 in the ASW Papers.

¹⁶MS Diary, 1 November 1831, p. 1.

¹⁷Ibid., 12 November 1831, p. 8.

¹⁸Ibid., 15 November 1831, p. 11.

¹⁹Ibid., 8 November 1831, p. 6.

²⁰Ibid., 18 November 1831, p. 13.

²¹Ibid., 20 November 1831, p. 17.

²²Ibid., 3 December 1831, p. 21.

²³Ibid., 1 January 1832, pp. 30-32.

²⁴Wikoff, Remin. of an Idler, p. 77.

²⁵MS Diary, 20 January 1832, p. 36.

²⁶Ibid., 24 January 1832, p. 38 [Author's Italics]

²⁷Ibid., 14 February 1832, p. 46.

²⁸ASW to Henry Barnard, 18 February [1832] in ASW Papers, "Correspondence 1832-1835," and MS Diary, 27 January 1832, p. 41.

²⁹MS Diary, 17 February 1832, p. 48. Williams noted in his journal the titles of the books he read. Many of them were military history.

³⁰ASW to Henry Barnard, 18 February 1832.

³¹MS Diary, 10 February 1832, p. 44 and ASW to Henry Barnard, 18 February 1832.

³²Ibid., 22 April 1832, p. 62.

³³Ibid., 29 April 1832, p. 63.

³⁴ASW to Henry Barnard, 22 May 1832.

³⁵MS Diary, 23 May 1832, p. 82.

³⁶Ibid., 6 June 1832, p. 93.

³⁷Ibid., p. 89.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 89, 92.

³⁹Ibid., p. 91.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 93.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 91.

⁴²Ibid., 28 May 1832, p. 85.

⁴³ASW to Henry Barnard, 28 July 1832.

⁴⁴Wikoff, Remin. of an Idler, p. 44.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 41.

⁴⁶MS Diary, 27 April 1833, p. 107.

⁴⁷See entries in MS Diary for 27 April 1833, p. 108 and 29 April 1833, p. 109.

⁴⁸Ibid., 30 April 1833, p. 111.

⁴⁹Ibid., 1 May 1833, p. 113.

⁵⁰All quotations in the paragraph are from MS Diary, 6 May 1833, p. 123.

⁵¹Wikoff, Remin. of an Idler, p. 45 and MS Diary, 6 May 1833, p. 120.

⁵²MS Diary, 7 May 1833, p. 127.

⁵³Ibid., 12 November 1833, p. 140. At this date, Williams was writing from New Haven and reflecting back on his trip. He made no journal entries between 18 May and 12 November 1833.

⁵⁴Wikoff, Remin. of an Idler, p. 54.

⁵⁵MS Diary, 22 May 1834, p. 150.

⁵⁶Ibid., 26 May 1834, p. 153.

⁵⁷Ibid., 30 May 1834, p. 156; 1 June 1834, p. 159; and 10 June 1834, p. 164.

⁵⁸Ibid., 13 June 1834, p. 164.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Wikoff, Remin. of an Idler, p. 74. Wikoff was admitted to the bar in Philadelphia in the summer of 1834.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 75. For a brief biographical sketch of Edwin Forrest see the DAB, VI, 529-31. Other biographies include Montrose J. Moses, The Fabulous Forrest: The Record of an American Actor (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1929) and Richard Moody, Edwin Forrest: First Star of the American Stage (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1960).

⁶²Wikoff, Remin. of an Idler, p. 75.

⁶³Williams' passport, Number 3483 issued on 18 September 1834, contains a physical description in English and French and has visa stamps from many of the countries and cities in Europe he visited. It is useful for determining his itinerary. The passport, in a small leather case with "Alpheus S. Williams" embossed in gold letters on the outside, is in the ASW Papers in Box D-5. For his departure see ASW to Henry Barnard, 18 October 1834.

⁶⁴For Williams' European Grand Tour itinerary see ASW "Notes in Europe" MS Diary, 8 November 1834 to 25 November 1836 and an undated entry written after 1 August 1836 and before 1 December 1836 and ASW's passport. Collaborative dates are given in Wikoff, Remin. of an Idler, pp. 77-195. The DAB article on Williams incorrectly lists N.P. Willis as Williams' traveling companion in addition to Forrest. It should have indicated Henry Wikoff. Willis, a Yale graduate known by both Williams and Wikoff, was later involved in the Forrest divorce scandal.

⁶⁵MS Diary, 14 February 1835.

⁶⁶Ibid., 12 June, 15 June, and 20 June 1835.

⁶⁷Ibid., 27 December 1834.

⁶⁸Many diary entries deal with his cultural activities in Europe. See for instance, 24 November 1834, 30 November 1834, 14 December 1834, 24 December 1834, 7 January 1835, 1 February 1835, 2 February 1835, 22 February 1835, 4 March 1835, 15 March 1835, and 29 August 1835.

⁶⁹Ibid., 27 February 1835.

⁷⁰Ibid., 4 March 1835.

⁷¹Ibid., 28 February 1835.

⁷²Ibid., 25 January 1835.

⁷³Ibid., 20 May and 13 July 1835.

⁷⁴See for instance, ibid., 9 January 1835.

⁷⁵Ibid., 22 February 1835. For other comments on battlefield, arsenal and military museum visits and his military history knowledge and interests see 10 December 1834, 14 December 1834, 23 December 1834, 1 January 1835, 20 April 1835, 31 July 1835 and 2 September 1835.

⁷⁶ASW to Henry Barnard, 8 November 1834.

⁷⁷A good example of this is his description of a fountain in Sienna, Italy which Dante had described in the Inferno. See MS Diary, 25 February 1835.

CHAPTER II

¹George N. Fuller, Economic and Social Beginnings of Michigan (Lansing, MI: Michigan Historical Commission, 1916), pp. 498-99.

²For a description of Michigan and Detroit in the 1830's see F. Clever Bald, Michigan in Four Centuries (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1961), pp. 161-202; Willis F. Dunbar, Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 271-347; and C. Warren Vander Hill, Settling the Great Lakes Frontier: Immigration to Michigan, 1837-1924 (Lansing, MI: Michigan Historical Commission, 1970), pp. 1-4.

³George C. Bates, "Reminiscences of the Brady Guards," Michigan Historical Collections, XIII (1888), 530-546.

⁴See Dunbar, Michigan, pp. 344-46.

⁵MS Diary, 6 January 1838.

⁶Ibid., 5 January 1838. See also the muster rolls of Captain Rowland's Independent Co., Brady Guards, Michigan Militia, Patriot War Service Records in the National Archives and Record Service in Washington, D.C., copies in author's possession. ASW is listed as a Private although his diary for the date of 2 May 1837 indicates he had been elected corporal in the ranks of the Brady Guards.

⁷MS Diary, 5,6,7,8 January 1838.

⁸Ibid., 7 January 1838. Dunbar placed the number at 132, the number being those the Canadians captured. See Dunbar, Michigan, p. 345.

⁹Ibid., 10 January 1838.

¹⁰Ibid., 10, 11, 12, 13 January 1838.

¹¹MS Diary for 5 February 1838 indicated that ASW was mustered out on this date. However, the official unit muster out roll is dated 4 February 1838.

¹²Ibid., 24, 25 February 1838 and Dunbar, Michigan, p. 345.

¹³Scott is quoted in Walter F. Clowes, The Detroit Light Guard: A Complete Record of this Organization from Its Foundation to the Present Day (Detroit: John F. Eby & Co., 1900), p. 20. The Detroit Light Guard was the volunteer militia company founded in 1855 and was a direct descendent of the Brady Guards. Many of the Bradys served in the Detroit Light Guard and on the organizing petition, the first name is the bold signature of "Captain A.S. Williams."

¹⁴Clowes, The Detroit Light Guard, p. 20.

¹⁵MS Diary, 26 February 1838 and 28 February 1838.

¹⁶Ibid., 5 February 1838. Williams and the others who served in the Brady Guards during the Patriot War did not receive pay for their month of service in May 1839 until October 1843 as records in the National Archives indicate. During 1843 Williams mentioned that he wrote letters on behalf of the other veterans to try to get compensation. Ultimately, Williams did receive 80 acres of bounty lands during the 1850's. The pay he received during the Patriot War was \$5.54.

¹⁷Clarence M. Burton, compiler, "Court and Other Records, 1819-1872," TS copies of MS court records for Wayne County Michigan, 27 December 1838, p. 34. This entry is the only one in the early court records for Wayne County which mentioned A.S. Williams. The records for Washtenaw County bar admissions were not at either the Burton Historical Collection or the Bentley Library, Michigan Historical Collections at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI where the other early court records were housed. The Washtenaw records probably have not survived.

¹⁸Floyd B. Streeter, Political Parties in Michigan, 1837-1860 (Lansing, MI: Michigan Historical Commission, 1918), pp. 37-42.

¹⁹MS Diary, 31 December 1839.

²⁰See for instance ibid., 6 and 7 January 1840.

²¹Ibid., 11 June 1840.

²²Ibid., 28 September 1840.

²³Ibid., 10-30 October 1840.

²⁴Ibid., 2,3,7, and 11 November 1840.

²⁵Representative entries are MS Diary, 10 and 11 May 1839.

²⁶Ibid., 7 June 1840.

²⁷For this and some additional comments about Williams' newspaper reading habits see John Winder's "Memories" in Ross, Early Bench and Bar of Detroit, pp. 226-227.

²⁸For a regular accounting of his reading progress see MS Diary, 8 January 1840 to 26 April 1840.

²⁹Ibid., 30 October 1837.

³⁰See ibid., 9 January 1837 to 1 January 1838. On 9 January 1837 Williams wrote, "Resolved: à écrire mon journal en française." [sic]

³¹Ibid., 16 December 1836.

³²Ibid., 24 January 1840.

³³Williams had met Jane Larned Pierson before New Years 1837. He called on her among the others listed in his journal on 2 January 1837. This is the first mention of Jane in ASW's papers. See MS Diary, 2 January 1837.

³⁴A photograph of a pair of miniature portraits of ASW and Jane Larned is in the "Excerpts and Miscellaneous" file under ASW in the B.H.C. Presumably, the portraits were done on the occasion of their wedding.

³⁵MS Diary, 2 January 1838 and 16 January 1839. Williams usually called Jane, "Jeanie" in his letters to her and in his journal entries.

³⁶Williams described the eastern trip in entries in MS Diary, 1 August to 22 September 1839.

³⁷Williams wrote of the baby's death in his journal on 25 February 1840.

CHAPTER III

¹MS Diary, 1 January 1840.

²Ibid., 12 January 1841.

³Ibid., 22 January 1841.

⁴On the biography of Atterbury see Ross, Early Bench and Bar of Detroit, pp. 16, 17. For biographical information on Lewis Allen see the files in the B.H.C. biography collection and especially the Julia Larned Allen Papers. Julia Allen was Jane Williams' sister.

⁵See Palmer Scrapbook, Volume 23, pp. 120-21 in the scrapbook collections at B.H.C. Christ Church began its ministry on 26 May 1845 and was located between Hastings and Rivard Street on Jefferson Avenue.

⁶MS Diary, 7 June 1840.

⁷A representative entry for ASW's Detroit Boat Club activities is MS Diary, 21 May 1839.

⁸MS, "Certificate of Election as Detroit City Alderman of 5th Ward," 25 April 1843 in ASW Papers.

⁹Detroit, Daily Advertiser, 1 March 1844. Hereinafter cited as Advertiser. To assess Williams' excellent attendance record from 25 April 1843 until 12 March 1844, check either the Detroit Free Press or the Advertiser for the period under the regular heading of "Common Council News."

¹⁰For the election statistics and ASW's comment on his nomination see the Advertiser, 28 February, 12, and 15 March 1844. John R. Williams was born in Detroit 4 May 1782 and was Detroit's first mayor in 1824, an office he held off and on for twenty years. He was also active in Michigan militia affairs until he died in 1854. A.S. Williams ran for city alderman in 1847 and was defeated by 48 votes.

¹¹Advertiser, 29 March 1844. The date of his appointment was 27 March 1844.

¹²Williams defended his position in an editorial in the Advertiser, 2 April 1844.

¹³For the data on the Bank of St. Clair see William L. Jenks, St. Clair County, Michigan: Its History and Its People (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1912), I, 426-28.

¹⁴MS Diary, 8 July 1841.

¹⁵This is clearly demonstrated in the excellent article, William G. Shade, "Banks and Politics in Michigan, 1835-1845," Michigan History 57 (Spring, 1973), 28-52.

¹⁶Shade makes this conclusion from his interpretation of the study by Alexandra McCoy, "Political Affiliations of American Exonomic Elites: Wayne County, Michigan. A Test Case, 1844, 1860," (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Wayne State University, 1965), see ibid., pp. 50, 51.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 48, 49.

¹⁸Dunbar, Michigan, p. 342.

¹⁹Advertiser, 10 May 1845 and 15 May 1845.

²⁰Ibid., 13 May 1845.

²¹ASW to Jane Williams, 1 April 1848, 11 April 1848, 26 April 1848, and 8 May 1848.

²²Advertiser, 13 May 1845.

²³This date is indicated in the Advertiser, 10 November 1843. The first issue under ASW's editorial control was 11 November 1843. He owned the paper until 1 January 1848.

²⁴See for instance John F. Reynolds, "Piety and Politics: Evangelism in the Michigan Legislature, 1837-1860," Michigan History 61 (Winter, 1977), 329, 334; Ronald Formisano, The Birth of Mass Political Parties: Michigan, 1827-1861 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 203, 207, 208; and Streeter, Political Parties in Michigan, pp. 77, 82, 83.

²⁵Advertiser, 14 November 1843 and 18 December 1843.

²⁶See as examples Advertiser, 15 November 1843, 10 April 1844, 30 November 1843.

²⁷Ibid., 6 April 1844.

²⁸Ibid., 9 December 1843.

²⁹Formisano, Birth of Mass Political Parties: Michigan, p. 102.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹See especially the Williams editorial in Advertiser, 24 February 1844.

³²Advertiser, 4 January 1844.

³³Ibid., 14 November 1843, 24 November 1843, 25 November 1843, 2 December 1843, 16 December 1843 and Free Press, 27 November 1843.

³⁴Clay is quoted in Dunbar, Michigan, p. 370.

³⁵Senator John Norvell's speech in the Senate is quoted in Clark F. Norton, "Early Movement for the St. Mary's Ship Canal," Michigan History 39 (September, 1955), 272.

³⁶These comments on the tariff are in ASW's analysis of President Tyler's message to Congress in December 1843. See Advertiser, 14 December 1843.

³⁷Ibid., 31 July 1846.

³⁸One of the best editorial examples he gave of this is in Advertiser, 12 December 1843.

³⁹Ibid., 5 March 1845.

⁴⁰Ibid., 11 April 1844.

⁴¹See for instance Advertiser, 26 April 1844, 4 May 1844, 8 May 1844, and 18 May 1844. The letters to his wife are very interesting especially due to the location. Williams had gone to relax at the plantation home of Alpheus Coxe's sister. Coxe was an old friend and Yale classmate whose sister had married into the Virginia Custis family. Williams marvelled at all the heirlooms from George and Martha Washington which the family had inherited. Williams was writing from "Audley" plantation in Clarke County, Virginia in the Shenandoah Valley. His descriptions of the valley and the plantation are marvelous and are particularly interesting in light of what Williams was doing the next time he "visited" the Shenandoah Valley in 1862! See ASW to Jane Williams, 5 May 1844.

⁴²Frederick Merk's two works are most useful in analyzing the issues of American expansionism. See Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History (1963) and The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansion 1843-1849. Probably one of the best narratives on the election of 1844 and the role of expansionism is in Charles G. Sellers, James K. Polk, Continentalist 1843-1846 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

⁴³Advertiser, 6 December 1843.

⁴⁴Ibid., 16 December 1843.

⁴⁵Ibid., see also his editorial 13 April 1844.

⁴⁶Advertiser, 20 December 1843.

⁴⁷Ibid., 21 December 1843.

⁴⁸Ibid., 20 December 1843.

⁴⁹Ibid., 12 April 1844.

⁵⁰Sellers, Polk, Continentalist, p. 105.

⁵¹For an excellent biography of the western abolitionist see Betty Fladeland, James Gillespie Birney: Slaveholder to Abolitionist (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1955).

⁵²Advertiser, 12 December 1843.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., 24 March 1845.

⁵⁵Ibid., 12 May 1845. Polk's statement was in a campaign speech on 23 October which Williams quoted in the 12 May 1845 issue.

⁵⁶Ibid., 8 August 1846.

⁵⁷ASW to William Woodbridge, 16 January 1846 in William Woodbridge Papers, B.H.C.

⁵⁸Advertiser, 15 June 1846.

⁵⁹Glenn W. Price, Origins of the War with Mexico: The Polk-Stockton Intrigue (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967).

⁶⁰John H. Schroeder, Mr. Polk's War: American Opposition and Dissent 1846-1848 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), pp. 19, 153.

⁶¹William Woodbridge to Wm. Leverette Woodbridge, 10 and 13 May 1846 in William Woodbridge Papers, B.H.C.

⁶²See the author's article "'Swords into Plowshares' A Hope Unfulfilled: Michigan Opposition to the Mexican War, 1846-1848," The Old Northwest 8 (Fall, 1982), 199-222. Schroeder's study, although weak on Michigan, is the best work on war opposition in the U.S. as a whole during the Mexican War.

⁶³Hillsdale, Whig Standard, 11 January 1848; Marshall, Statesman, 4 January 1848; Ann Arbor, Signal of Liberty, 1 May 1847.

⁶⁴See the almost daily comments on the battles in the Advertiser for March, April, and May 1847.

⁶⁵Advertiser, 24 August 1846.

⁶⁶Ibid., 3 March 1847.

⁶⁷There were regular announcements about the Brady Guards in both the Detroit Advertiser and the Free Press. See for instance, Advertiser, 24 January 1844, 11 January 1844, and 12 August 1846.

⁶⁸Advertiser, 11 January 1844.

⁶⁹Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Michigan (Detroit: Bagg & Harmon, 1847), p. 84 and Journal of the Senate of the State of Michigan (Detroit: Bagg & Harmon, 1847), pp. 34, 43, 44.

⁷⁰MS Petition of Michigan Legislators, 21 January 1847 in "Applications, 1846-1848 (Military)," Office of the Secretary of War, Record Group 107, Box No. 39, National Archives and Record Service, Washington, D.C.

⁷¹MS Field and Staff Muster Roll for 1st Michigan Infantry Regiment (Mexican War), 18 October 1847 in personal military records file for A.S. Williams, National Archives. Copies are in author's possession.

⁷²Clowes, The Detroit Light Guard, p. 20.

⁷³ASW to Jane Williams, 10 February 1848.

⁷⁴The series of Mexican War letters is from 10 February 1848 to 13 June 1848 in the ASW Papers. The length of many of these letters was amazing, often exceeding 5,000 words each.

⁷⁵See especially ASW to Jane Williams, 10 February, 17 February, 22 February, 14 March, 20 March, 1 April, and 25 May 1848.

⁷⁶ASW to Jane Williams, 22 February 1848.

⁷⁷ASW to Jane Williams, 22 February 1848.

⁷⁸ASW to Jane Williams, 3 March 1848.

⁷⁹ASW to Jane Williams, 14 March 1848.

⁸⁰ASW to Jane Williams, 20 March 1848.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²ASW to Jane Williams, 1 April, 26 April, and 25 May 1848.

⁸³ASW to Jane Williams, 1 April 1848.

⁸⁴ASW to Jane Williams, 26 April 1848.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶ASW to Jane Williams, 8 May 1848.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Refer to the table "Enlistment by Region and State" in Clayton S. Ellsworth, "The American Churches and the Mexican War," American Historical Review, 45 (1940), 319.

⁸⁹ASW to Jane Williams, 8 May and 25 May 1848.

⁹⁰ASW to Jane Williams, 8 May 1848.

⁹¹ASW to Jane Williams, 13 June 1848.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³MS Field and Staff Muster Out Roll for 1st Michigan Infantry Regiment (Mexican War), 29 July 1848 in personal military records file for A.S. Williams, National Archives.

⁹⁴See ASW to Jane Williams, 1 April 1848. In this letter ASW gave instructions to his brother-in-law, Lew Allen, to sell the Williams House and to send Henry Barnard payment on interest from the loan he made to Williams in 1846. See also his letter of 11 April 1848 where Williams complained about the "insulting letter" he received from his sister Irene's husband complaining about Williams' debt to Irene.

⁹⁵ASW to Jane Williams, 26 April 1848.

⁹⁶ASW to Jane Williams, 8 May 1848.

⁹⁷The 1850 Detroit population was 21,019.

⁹⁸"Elmwood Cemetery Deed," 7 November 1847 in ASW Papers. The lot was number 94 in Section B. It is possible that Williams bought the lot with the idea in mind that he might die in Mexico. This was the month after he was mustered into U.S. service.

⁹⁹Efforts to determine the cause of Jane Williams' death have been unsuccessful. The newspapers merely mention that she died. See Detroit Free Press, 9 December 1848. There is nothing about why she died in any of the extant Williams papers in B.H.C. Court and vital records for that period frequently do not include the cause of death.

CHAPTER IV

¹ASW et. al. to William Woodbridge, 7 September 1848 in Woodbridge Papers, B.H.C.

²William Woodbridge to Winfield Scott, 24 March 1849 in Woodbridge Papers.

³Lewis Cass to ASW, 2 September 1850, ASW Papers.

⁴Lewis Cass to ASW, 8 February 1851, ASW Papers.

⁵ASW to William Woodbridge, 7 July 1852, Woodbridge Papers. See also William Woodbridge to ASW, 6 October 1851 in Woodbridge Papers.

⁶MS "Soldier's Declaration of Alpheus S. Williams," 23 April 1852 in Alpheus Felch Papers, B.H.C.

⁷This correspondence and the Bounty Land Warrant #25,018 dated 27 September 1853 are in "Bounty Land Warrants" file for A.S. Williams in the National Archives. Copies are in author's possession.

⁸Lewis Cass to ASW, 9 April 1853, ASW Papers.

⁹City Directory (Detroit: R.F. Johnstone & Co., 1855), pp. 133 and 185.

¹⁰ASW to Irene Williams, 6 June 1857.

¹¹MS "Michigan Oil Company Agreement" dated 1 March 1858 in Julia Larned Allen Papers, B.H.C. This was the original and both Williams and Lew Allen signed the agreement.

¹²See Lewis Cass' response to Williams' letter, 8 February 1851 in ASW Papers. Williams' personal papers extant for the 1850's are extremely weak on political items. They very seldom mention political matters or how he voted on issues. Therefore, any analysis of Williams' political career during this period has to be somewhat speculative. Some facts are clear, however. Most importantly, Williams changed political parties and became a Democrat! He still considered himself to be a Whig as late as the presidential election of 1856 but by 1859 he had become a Democrat. His private papers do not reveal why but some clues can be deduced from public evidence.

¹³Detroit, Free Press, 23 August 1856. Williams' extant papers of the 1850's are unfortunately silent on such important issues as the Kansas Nebraska Act, the Ostend Manifesto, and "Bleeding Kansas."

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Formisano, Birth of Mass Political Parties:
Michigan, p. 277

¹⁶Free Press, 18 October 1859.

¹⁷Ibid., 5 November 1859 and 6 November 1859.

¹⁸Ibid., 10 November 1859.

¹⁹See ASW to Irene Williams, 4 December 1854 and 25 February 1855. Ann McIntosh is buried in the Williams plot at Elmwood Cemetery.

²⁰Free Press, 25 December 1853. Julia A. Williams died on 24 December 1853 at age 5 years, 11 months. See also Williams' melancholy statements in his letter to Irene Williams, 24 December 1854. Williams' Civil War letters also reflect depression around the Christmas holiday season.

²¹ASW to Irene Williams, 4 January 1857.

²²ASW to Irene Williams, 8 October 1855.

²³Jenkins, Henry Barnard, p. 111.

²⁴See ASW to Irene Williams, 2 March 1856 and 17 December 1854.

²⁵ASW to Irene Williams, 18 November 1855. Williams noted in this letter that he had lost his earlier journals. the later ones are preserved in his papers in the B.H.C. They have the journals from 1831 to 1841.

²⁶ASW to Irene Williams, 3 February 1855. Another example of his letter writing critique is ASW to Irene Williams, 16 December 1855.

²⁷ASW to Irene Williams, 8 January 1855.

²⁸ASW to Irene Williams, 21 January 1855.

²⁹ASW to Irene Williams, 14 April 1856.

³⁰ASW to Irene Williams, 6 December 1855. See also 24 December 1854, 16 December 1855, and 4 November 1856.

³¹ASW to Irene Williams, 7 September 1855.

³²See for instance ASW to Irene Williams, 24 December 1854 and 1 October 1855.

³³The letters to Irene from October 1854 to July 1857 are full of references to Frederick's health. The constant battle with illness was most distressing to Williams.

³⁴ ASW to Irene Williams, 12 January 1855.

³⁵ ASW to Irene Williams, 25 February 1855.

³⁶ ASW to Irene Williams, 16 December 1855.

³⁷ Free Press, 18 August 1857. This issue noted Frederick Williams died on 17 August 1857. In his last letter to Irene at school on 16 July 1857, Williams noted that the child was suffering greatly and wanted to see her at home.

³⁸ This statement of Colonel William Wilkins was quoted in Frederic Isham, compiler, History of the Detroit Light Guard (Detroit: Purcell & Hogan, 1896), p. 19.

³⁹ Clowes, The Detroit Light Guard, p. 21.

⁴⁰ See clipping files of "MS Records Relating to the Mexican War, 1847-1849," State of Michigan Archives, Lansing, Michigan. The Williams letter was printed on 22 or 23 February 1849. The run of the Detroit Daily Advertiser for those dates is not extant.

⁴¹ Clowes, The Detroit Light Guard, p. 21

⁴² Isham, History of the Detroit Light Guard, p. 16.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 17.

⁴⁴ Clowes, The Detroit Light Guard, p. 26.

⁴⁵ Milwaukee, Sentinel, 11 November 1858 quoted in Isham, History of the Detroit Light Guard, p. 19.

⁴⁶ Clowes, The Detroit Light Guard, p. 27. and Isham, History of the Detroit Light Guard, p. 20.

⁴⁷ MS Minutes of State Military Board, 11 March 1859 in "Records of Military Organizations 1859-1921," (Lot 1 ME 1), State of Michigan Archives. See also John Robertson, compiler, Michigan in the War (Lansing: W.S. George & Co., 1882), p. 5

⁴⁸ MS Minutes of State Military Board, 5 April 1859.

⁴⁹ See Resolutions 1 to 6 in MS Minutes of State Military Board, 6 April 1859.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 28 October 1859.

⁵¹ Marcus Cunliffe, Soldiers & Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America 1775-1856 (Boston: Little Brown and Company, [1968]) .

⁵² Ibid., pp. 238, 239, 249, 253, 279, and 281.

CHAPTER V

- ¹MS Minutes of State Military Board, 7 May 1860.
- ²Ibid., 7 May 1860, 24 August 1860, 29 August 1860, 18 September 1860 and 10, 11, 12 October 1860.
- ³Ibid., 10, 11, 12 October 1860 and Clowes, The Detroit Light Guard, p. 28.
- ⁴Acts of the Legislature of the State of Michigan Passed at the Regular Session of 1859 (Lansing: Hosmer & Kerr, 1859), p. 468.
- ⁵William H. Withington, The First Call of the Civil War: Personal Recollections of Michigan's Response (Jackson, MI: Edward Pomeroy Post GAR, 1897), pp. 4,5.
- ⁶George N. Fuller, editor, Messages of the Governors of Michigan (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1926), II, 397, 398, 412. See also Formisano, Birth of Mass Political Parties: Michigan, p. 289 and Streeter, Political Parties In Michigan, p. 292.
- ⁷Ibid., II, p. 437. Blair's message was given on 2 January 1861.
- ⁸Ibid., II, 441, 442.
- ⁹Jacob M. Howard to Moses Wisner, 8 January 1861, MS in Lydia C. Hopkins Papers, B.H.C.
- ¹⁰Ibid.
- ¹¹Acts of the Legislature of the State of Michigan Passed at the Regular and Extra Sessions of 1861 (Lansing: John A. Kerr & Co., 1861), pp. 298-305; Withington, The First Call of the Civil War, pp. 10-12; and MS Minutes of State Military Board, 22-31 January 1861.
- ¹²MS Letter, ASW and Members of the State Military Board to the President of the United States, 12 March 1861 in Office of the Secretary of War, "Applications for Appointments 1854-1861, Michigan A. 34 'Henry Chipman'" Record Group 107 Box 15, National Archives and Record Service.
- ¹³MS Petition of Governor Blair and the Michigan Legislature, ibid. Chipman was appointed as Captain of the 11th U.S. Infantry on 14 May 1861. He was the Lieutenant Colonel of the 2nd Michigan Infantry and served gallantly in the Union army with distinction at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. He was brevetted B.G., 13 March 1865 and served in the regular army after the war as a Major in 1873 and as a LTC of the 7th Infantry in 1881. See Robertson, Michigan in the War, p. 796.

- ¹⁴Robertson, Michigan in the War, pp. 517-21.
- ¹⁵ASW to Colonel Lorenzo Thomas AG, 3 May 1861 in "Letters Received by the Adjutant General's Office 1861-1870," National Archives and Record Service, Microfilm M619 Roll 67 Sequence 401W. See also Free Press, 28 April 1861.
- ¹⁶Acts of the Michigan Legislature, 1861, pp. 595-602, 606.
- ¹⁷MS Minutes of State Military Board, 14 May 1861.
- ¹⁸Free Press, 20 June 1861.
- ¹⁹"General Orders #1, 19 June 1861" in Free Press, 20 June 1861.
- ²⁰MS letter, C.A. Trowbridge to Simon Cameron, 28 May 1861 in Office of the Secretary of War, "Applications for Appointment 1854-1861, Michigan B. No. 15 'Alpheus Williams'" in Record Group 107 Box 15, National Archives and Record Service.
- ²¹MS letter, John T. Adams to Simon Cameron, 8 July 1861, ibid.
- ²²MS Petition of the Officers of the 5th, 6th, and 7th Regiments Michigan Infantry to the Secretary of War, 26 July 1861, ibid., See also, Free Press, 27 July 1861.
- ²³ASW to Mary Williams, 13 July 1861 in Milo Quaife, editor, From the Cannon's Mouth: The Civil War Letters of General Alpheus S. Williams (Detroit: Wayne State University Press and the Detroit Historical Society, 1959), p. 16. This book is a collection of the letters of Williams during the Civil War in the Williams Papers of B.H.C. Hereinafter, this work will be cited as CM. The letters in CM have been checked with those in the Williams Papers and the rare instances where changes or discrepancies are evident will be noted.
- ²⁴See Robertson, Michigan in the War, pp. 164-173 and Frederick D. Williams, "Michigan Soldiers in the Civil War," Michigan History, 44 (March, 1960), 3-4.
- ²⁵See "Reports of Civil War Generals," Record Group 94, War Department, National Archives and Record Service. "General A.S. Williams' Report of 1864" Volume III, 461 published in Microfilm M1098, Roll 2. Williams' report submitted 29 March 1864 covers pp. 461-513 and deals with an almost daily accounting of his Civil War career from April 1861 to March 1864. Volume IX, 743-858 in M1098, Roll 5 is Williams' MS report of August 1873 which covered his military career from March 1864 until his discharge in January 1866.

These very important reports amount to a short military autobiography and fill in significant gaps of his personal papers and his reports in the official records of the war. The date of ran. of 17 May 1861 is very significant because by the end of the war Williams was one of the longest in grade of all the Union generals. Hereinafter, this report will be cited as ASW MS Report of 1864 (or 1873).

²⁶ Austin Blair to Simon Cameron, 12 August 1861 in The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series III, i, 407. Hereinafter cited as OR.

²⁷ OR, I, li, supplement, pt. 1, 455.

²⁸ OR, I, li, supplement, pt. 1, 481. See also ASW MS Report of 1864, 462.

²⁹ MS Minutes of State Military Board, 1 September 1861.

³⁰ MS "Memorandum of Agreement, Michigan Oil Company," 20 September 1861 in Julia Larned Allen Papers, B.H.C.

³¹ ASW to Irene Williams, 28 [September] 1861, CM, p. 16. See also Quaife's explanation of the date discrepancy in Note #2, p. 45.

CHAPTER VI

¹OR, LI, supplement, pt. 1, 493. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to OR will be from Series I.

²ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 462.

³ASW to Irene, 4 October 1861, CM, p. 17 and ASW to Mary, 12 October 1861, CM, p. 20.

⁴ASW to Mary, 16 October 1861, CM, p. 22.

⁵See for instance, ibid.

⁶ASW to Lew Allen, 5 November 1861, CM, p. 24.

⁷Ibid., p. 27.

⁸ASW to Irene, 23 October 1861, CM, p. 23.

⁹ASW to Mary, 9 November 1861, CM, p. 30 and ASW to Mary, 24 November 1861, CM, p. 35.

¹⁰ASW to Mary, 24 November 1861, CM, pp. 35-36.

¹¹ASW to Lew Allen, 3 February 1862, CM, pp. 56-57.

¹²ASW to Mary, 7 December 1861, CM, p. 40.

¹³Ibid., pp. 40-41.

¹⁴ASW to Mary, 23 December 1861, CM, p. 44 and C.W. Boyce, A Brief History of the Twenty-Eighth New York State Volunteers (Buffalo, NY: [Published by the Regiment], 1896), pp. 22, 23.

¹⁵ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 462.

¹⁶ASW to Mary, 31 January 1862, CM, pp. 52, 53.

¹⁷ASW to Lew Allen, 3 February 1862, CM, p. 54.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 57.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹OR, V, 1079.

²²ASW to Mary, 26 February 1862, CM, p. 60.

²³OR, V, 733.

²⁴OR, V, 518 and ASW to Mary, 8 March 1862, CM, pp. 61-62.

²⁵OR, V, 518.

²⁶Ibid., p. 517.

²⁷Ibid., p. 521 and ASW to Mary, 8 March 1862, CM, p. 62.

²⁸OR, V, 523.

²⁹Ibid., p. 18.

³⁰ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 463; OR, V, 22; and OR XII, pt. 3, 41.

³¹OR, XII, pt. 1, 378.

³²Robert G. Tanner, Stonewall in the Valley (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1976), p. 132.

³³OR, XII, pt. 1, 383, 384.

³⁴ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 464.

³⁵ASW to Mary, 30 March 1862, CM, p. 66.

³⁶OR, XII, pt. 3, 840, 841.

³⁷Ibid., p. 841.

³⁸T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals (New York: A.A. Knopf, Inc., 1952), pp. 80-82. [Vintage Book Edition]

³⁹Ibid., p. 83.

⁴⁰See for instance, James M. McPherson, Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction (New York: A.A. Knopf, Inc., 1982), p. 239 and Vincent J. Esposito, editor, The West Point Atlas of American Wars (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1959), I, Map 50 and text opposite.

⁴¹ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 464.

⁴²OR, XII, pt. 3, 41.

⁴³ASW to Mary, 9 April 1862, CM, pp. 67-69.

⁴⁴Ibid. and ASW to Irene, 20 April 1862, CM, pp. 69-71.

⁴⁵OR, XII, pt. 3, 106.

⁴⁶ASW to Nathaniel P. Banks, 26 April 1862 in Nathaniel Banks Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. The reports and letters from Williams to Banks are extremely important as they contradict what Banks reported to the War Department. There is nothing in Harrington's biography of Banks which indicates that he used the Williams messages and letters. As the Banks Papers were gradually acquired over a twenty year period, it is most likely that the letters were made public after the book was published in 1948. It is not surprising that Banks kept the damaging material in his own possession which prevented them from being included in the Official Records.

⁴⁷OR, XII, pt. 3, 862-63.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 106, 107.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 872.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 112.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 118, 119.

⁵²ASW to Banks, 2 May 1862, in Banks Papers, L.C. The time noted on the letter was "7PM."

⁵³ASW to Banks, 3 May 1862, in Banks Papers, L.C. See also ASW to Banks, 29 April 1862, two letters dated 1 May 1862, and two letters dated 2 May 1862.

⁵⁴OR, XII, pt. 3, 122.

⁵⁵ASW to Mary, 17 May 1862, CM, p. 73.

⁵⁶OR, XII, pt. 3, 881.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Turner, Stonewall in the Valley, pp. 173-174.

⁵⁹OR, XII, pt. 3, 155.

⁶⁰ASW to Mary, 17 May 1862, CM, p. 73.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 74.

⁶²OR, XII, pt. 1, 553 and ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 465.

⁶³ASW to Irene, 27 May 1862, CM, p. 77 and OR, XII, pt. 1, 594.

⁶⁴Fred H. Harrington, Fighting Politician: Major General N.P. Banks (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1948), p. 75. Harrington was critical of Williams

for his selection of the line and he based his judgment on a book by one of Williams' brigade commanders, George H. Gordon. Gordon was equally critical of Banks at Winchester and especially after Cedar Mountain in August 1862 but Harrington did not include Gordon's critique of Banks. See George H. Gordon, Brook Farm to Cedar Mountain in the War of the Great Rebellion, 1861-1862 (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1883), pp. 338-356.

⁶⁵ASW to Irene, 27 May 1862, CM, pp. 79-83.

⁶⁶OR, XII, pt. 1, 595.

⁶⁷Turner, Stonewall in the Valley, pp. 256-258 and Frank Vandiver, Mighty Stonewall (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957), pp. 253-254.

⁶⁸ASW to Irene, 27 May 1862, CM, pp. 83-87.

⁶⁹OR, XII, pt. 1, 552.

⁷⁰ASW to Mary, 2 June 1862, CM, pp. 87, 88 and ASW to Irene, 27 May 1862, CM, p. 87.

⁷¹OR, XII, pt. 1, 553.

⁷²ASW to Irene, 27 May 1862, CM, pp. 84-85.

⁷³The source of this map is E.E. Bryant, History of the 3rd Regiment of Wisconsin Veteran Volunteer Infantry (Madison: Democrat Print. Co., 1891), endpaper.

CHAPTER VII

- ¹ASW to Mary, 2 June 1862, CM, p. 89.
- ²ASW to Mary, 3 June 1862, CM, p. 96.
- ³ASW to Mary, 16 June 1862, CM, p. 98.
- ⁴ASW to Irene, 22 June 1862, CM, p. 99.
- ⁵ASW to Irene, 26 August 1862, CM, p. 104.
- ⁶OR, XII, pt. 3, 474.
- ⁷Ibid., p. 536.
- ⁸OR, XII, pt. 2, 54.
- ⁹OR, XII, pt. 3, 523. Pope's report of strengths for 31 July 1862 shows 10,831 in ASW's division. This figure includes 3,259 of General Hatch's cavalry even though Williams had no control over the cavalry units. This gives a deceptive figure of 7,572 in the 1st Division but this includes Abercrombie's brigade. Williams indicated in his letter to his daughter on 17 August 1862 in CM, p. 101, that his strength was 3,400 infantry. In MS Report of 1864, p. 467, Williams stated his strength precisely at 3,435.
- ¹⁰William F. Fox, "Slocum and His Men: A History of the Twelfth and Twentieth Army Corps," in New York State Monuments Commission, In Memoriam: Henry Warner Slocum 1826-1894 (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1904), p. 130. Hereinafter cited as Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C."
- ¹¹Ibid.
- ¹²ASW to Mary, 17 August 1862, CM, p. 100.
- ¹³This statement of General Benjamin S. Roberts is quoted in Bryant, History of the 3rd Wisconsin, p. 76.
- ¹⁴OR, XII, pt. 2, 55.
- ¹⁵Vandiver, Mighty Stonewall, pp. 339-341.
- ¹⁶OR, XII, pt. 2, 145-149. This is Williams' report of the Battle at Cedar Mountain.
- ¹⁷Vandiver, Mighty Stonewall, pp. 341-342.
- ¹⁸OR, XII, pt. 2, 151.
- ¹⁹Ibid., p. 808.

- ²⁰Ibid., p. 139.
- ²¹ASW to Mary, 17 August 1862, CM, p. 100.
- ²²Bruce Catton, Terrible Swift Sword (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1963), p. 372 [Pocket Cardinal Edition, 1967].
- ²³Vandiver, Mighty Stonewall, p. 345.
- ²⁴Ibid., pp. 344-345.
- ²⁵OR, XII, pt. 2, 176-179, 185.
- ²⁶ASW to Mary, 17 August 1862, CM, p. 102.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 101.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 103.
- ²⁹Williams assumed corps command as of 10 August 1862 and Special Order No. 41 of 12 August 1862 indicates that Williams was the official acting corps commander. See OR, XII, pt. 3, 568 and ASW to Mary, 17 August 1862, CM, p. 103.
- ³⁰ASW to Mary, 17 August 1862, CM, p. 102. See also ASW to Banks, 12 August 1862 in Banks Papers, MS Division, L.C.
- ³¹OR, XII, pt. 2, 324.
- ³²ASW to Irene, 26 August 1862, CM, pp. 103-104.
- ³³OR, XII, pt. 3, 780.
- ³⁴OR, XII, pt. 2, 324 and ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 469.
- ³⁵ASW to Irene, 8 September 1862, CM, p. 110.
- ³⁶Ibid., p. 111.
- ³⁷ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 470 and OR, XIX, pt. 1, 25. In McClellan's report, p. 25, he erroneously listed ASW as commanding the 11th Corps. It was the 12th Corps and McClellan later in the report got it correct. The actual date when Williams' Corps was designated "XII" was 12 September 1862. See also, OR, XIX, pt. 1, 157, 158. Williams does not receive the recognition he deserves for his command of the corps. This is only the first of many instances during the war. Battle maps even of contemporary atlases and modern ones always mention "Banks' Corps" or "Mansfield's Corps" with no mention of Williams. See for instance Esposito, ed., West Point Atlas, I, Maps 65a and 65b.

³⁸ASW to Mary, 12 September 1862, CM, p. 119 and Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," p. 137. The new regiments were: 13th New Jersey, 107th New York (went to Gordon's 3rd Brigade) and 124th, 125th, and 128th Pennsylvania (went to Samuel Crawford's 1st Brigade). Fox was the Lieutenant Colonel of the 107th NY and much of his history of the 12th and 20th Corps is an interesting eyewitness narrative.

³⁹OR, XIX, pt. 1, 67.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 179.

⁴¹ASW to Mary, 12 September 1862, CM, p. 120.

⁴²Both Bruce Catton and James Murfin cover the incident and assess its impact. See Bruce Catton, Mr. Lincoln's Army (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1951), pp. 211-213 and James V. Murfin, The Gleam of Bayonets (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1965), pp. 132-133 and 328-338. Both Catton and Murfin err in calling Pittman a colonel. He was only a 1st Lieutenant at that time. See Robertson, Michigan in the War, p. 907. See also Colonel Colgrove's account in Battle and Leaders of the Civil War (New York: The Century Co., 1884, 1887, 1888), II, 603.

⁴³See for instance, T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals, p. 166.

⁴⁴ASW to Mary, 12 September 1862, CM, pp. 120-121.

⁴⁵ASW to Irene and Mary, 22 September 1862, CM, p. 122.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 123.

⁴⁷OR, XIX, pt. 1, 157.

⁴⁸Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," p. 139.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 123.

⁵⁰Catton, Mr. Lincoln's Army, pp. 276-279.

⁵¹ASW to Irene and Mary, 22 September 1862, CM, p. 123.

⁵²Almost all of Williams' private letters during August and September 1862 illustrate his fatigue. The fact that he had to command the corps without a proper staff certainly contributed to this greatly.

⁵³OR, XIX, pt. 1, 30.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 55.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷ASW to Irene and Mary, 22 September 1862, CM, p. 125.

⁵⁸The times given in the reports in the OR for Hooker's Corps are almost all wrong, especially concerning the times XII Corps arrived on the scene. This is probably due to the fact that the commanders were so caught up in the fighting that they lost track of the time. Williams and XII Corps bore the brunt of the fighting on the Union right from 7:30 AM until 9:00 AM when Sumner's Corps arrived. They later participated in the fighting on the Union right until after 1:30 PM. James Murfin's book, The Gleam of Bayonets, is totally worthless in assessing the battle of Antietam from 7:30-9:00 AM when the XII Corps was fighting. He does not support any of his absurd statements about the corps and does not cite the reports of Williams, Crawford, Greene, or Best in the OR. It is doubtful that he read them. Murfin also has the deployment of Gordon and Crawford wrong on his map.

⁵⁹OR, XIX, pt. 1, 56.

⁶⁰ASW MS Report of 1864, pp. 471-472.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²ASW to Irene and Mary, 22 September 1862, CM, p. 125.

⁶³Catton, Mr. Lincoln's Army, pp. 278-279.

⁶⁴OR, XIX, pt. 1, 475. This is part of General Williams' report of the action at Antietam. See pp. 474-477. It is an important source for several reasons. First, of all the Union corps commanders on the right flank, only Williams submitted a complete report. Hooker never finished his and Sumner referred to Williams' report for detailing the earlier action against Lee's left. Second, McClellan's report used many parts of Williams' report verbatim. As a result of this, the actions of the XII Corps subordinates--Greene, Crawford, Gordon, and Best, are recognized but the efforts of General Williams in directing the corps were not. McClellan had no contact with Williams on the day of the battle.

⁶⁵OR, XIX, pt. 1, 475 and ASW MS Report of 1864, pp. 472-473.

⁶⁶OR, XIX, pt. 1, 482. This is the report of Captain Best. See also ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 473 and OR, XIX, pt. 1, 477.

⁶⁷Williams' XII Corps was the smallest in McClellan's army. Hooker had 14,856; Sumner had 18,813; and Williams had only 10,126. See OR, XIX, pt. 1, 67 and 476.

⁶⁸ASW to Irene and Mary, 22 September 1862, CM, p. 127.

⁶⁹OR, XIX, pt. 1, 476 and ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 472.

⁷⁰OR, XIX, pt. 1, 475, 476.

⁷¹Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," p. 142.

⁷²OR, XIX, pt. 1, 476 and William Frassanito, Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), pp. 155-159.

⁷³Vandiver, Mighty Stonewall, p. 396.

⁷⁴OR, XIX, pt. 1, 476 and ASW to Irene and Mary, 22 September 1862, CM, p. 128.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶ASW to Irene and Mary, 22 September 1862, CM, p. 127.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 128.

⁷⁹Catton, Mr. Lincoln's Army, p. 288.

⁸⁰OR, XIX, pt. 1, 477.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 485.

⁸²ASW to Irene and Mary, 22 September 1862, CM, p. 129 and OR, XIX, pt. 1, 477.

⁸³OR, XIX, pt. 1, 477.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 199 and 477. Williams reported losing 1,744 but he had submitted his report before receiving all of those from his subordinates. This accounts for the minor discrepancy.

⁸⁵Based on the figures McClellan gave for unit strength, the casualty reports given in OR, Hooker had 17.4%; Burnside had 17.0%; Williams had 17.2%; and Sumner had 27%. See OR XIX, pt. 1, 67 and 200.

⁸⁶ASW to Lew Allen, 24 September 1862, CM, pp. 134, 135.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 135.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 134-135.

⁸⁹ASW to Banks, 28 September in Banks Papers, MS Division, L.C.

⁹⁰ASW to Irene and Mary, 22 September 1862, CM, p. 127. Another interesting observation of Williams after the battle was his comment concerning a dead horse on the battlefield. He described it in this same letter on p. 130 writing:

"The number of dead horses was high. They lay, like the men, in all attitudes. One beautiful mil-white animal had died in so graceful a position that I wished for its photograph. Its legs were doubled under and its arched neck gracefully turned to one side as if looking back to the ball-hole in its side. Until you got to it, it was hard to believe the horse was dead."

Amazingly, the famous photographer, Alexander Gardner, also saw this dead white horse after the battle and photographed it. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes saw the horse as he was looking for his wounded son. See Frassanito, Antietam, pp. 122-125. Williams' description, when compared to Gardner's photograph, is superb.

⁹¹ASW to Mary, 23 September 1862, CM, p. 133. See also ASW to Banks, 28 September 1862, Banks Papers, MS Division, L.C.

⁹²OR, XIX, pt. 1, 55, 94, 216-219, 275-276.

CHAPTER VIII

¹ASW to Irene and Mary, 22 September 1862, CM, p. 131 and OR, XIX, pt. 1, 68 and 468.

²ASW to Irene and Mary, 22 September 1862, CM, p. 131.

³T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals, p. 172.

⁴ASW to Mary, 5 October 1862, CM, pp. 136, 137.

⁵Ibid., p. 136.

⁶OR, XIX, pt. 2, 374, 410.

⁷ASW to Mary, 5 October 1862, CM, p. 136.

⁸There is nothing in the National Archives AGO files for ASW to indicate that Banks ever wrote a letter recommending Williams. It is most likely that he never wrote one.

⁹ASW to Irene and Mary, 22 September 1862, CM, p. 131.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹ASW to Banks, 16 November 1862 in Banks Papers, MS Division of L.C. The first letter Williams wrote was not in Banks' papers but Williams referred to this letter as the second time he had written.

¹²Ibid.

¹³ASW to Mary, 23 September 1862, CM, p. 133.

¹⁴Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," p. 150.

¹⁵For biographical information on Henry Slocum see Charles E. Slocum, The Life and Services of Major-General Henry Warner Slocum (Toledo, OH: The Slocum Publishing co., 1913), and Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Blue (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), pp. 451-453.

¹⁶ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 478.

¹⁷Williams was most bitter about promotions going only to those who had served with McClellan on the Peninsula. He included Slocum in the ranks of those who got their promotion that way. See ASW to Mary, 17 October 1862, CM, pp. 138, 139. Williams was being overly critical here as he was unfamiliar with Slocum's record which really did merit the promotions he received. Slocum's later service indicates that his promotion was a good choice and Williams benefitted from his relations with the New York general. See also ASW to Mary, 28 October 1862, CM, p. 141.

- ¹⁸OR, XIX, pt. 2, 434-436 and OR, XXI, 937, 938.
- ¹⁹ASW to Lew Allen, 16 November 1862, CM, p. 151.
- ²⁰Ibid.
- ²¹Ibid.
- ²²ASW to Irene, 19 December 1862, CM, p. 154.
- ²³ASW to Irene, 24 January 1863, CM, p. 158.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 159.
- ²⁵Ibid.
- ²⁶Ibid., pp. 159-160.
- ²⁷T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals, pp. 204-206.
- ²⁸ASW to Mary, 27 January 1863, CM, pp. 163, 164.
- ²⁹Ibid.
- ³⁰Officers of the 1st Division XII Corps to President Lincoln, 31 January 1863, MS letter in "Letters Received by the AGO, 1861-1865, Commissioned Branch Office," National Archives and Record Service, M1064, Reel 67. See also ASW to Mary, 27 January 1863, CM, pp. 160-164. This is the petition to which Williams referred in the letter.
- ³¹Ibid.
- ³²The disposition of the petition is very significant and it points to Secretary of War Stanton as the man who blocked Williams' promotion. The President referred the petition to Stanton who kept it until 15 March 1868. It did not get into Williams' personnel file in the AGO until the war had been over for three years and Williams was in Central America.
- ³³ASW to Mary, 27 January 1863, CM, p. 162.
- ³⁴Ibid., pp. 162, 163.
- ³⁵McPherson, Ordeal by Fire, p. 319.
- ³⁶Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 154-155. The three regiments in Williams' Division to be honored were: 2nd Massachusetts, 10th Maine, and the 3rd Wisconsin. See also OR, XXI, 937, 938.

³⁷Ibid., p. 156 and Slocum, Life and Services of Henry Slocum, p. 376.

³⁸ASW to Mary, 14 April 1863, CM, p. 176.

³⁹Battles and Leaders, III, 120.

⁴⁰Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," p. 156.

⁴¹These figures are from Table 1 "Summary of Strengths and Casualties during the Chancellorsville Campaign" in Edward J. Stackpole, Chancellorsville: Lee's Greatest Battle (Harrisburg, PA: The Stackpole Company, 1958), p. 373.

⁴²Ibid., title page.

⁴³T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals, pp. 234-236.

⁴⁴OR, XXV, pt. 1, 676, 677; OR, XXV, 274; and ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, p. 181.

⁴⁵Ibid. Williams indicated it was the sixth time he had been acting corps commander (in the absence of Banks, Mansfield, or Slocum).

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷See Table II, "Organization, Commanders, and Approximate Times of Arrival on Battlefield," in Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 374 and OR, XXV, pt. 1, 677.

⁴⁸OR, XXV, pt. 1, 677 and see Williams' MS Map of the Chancellorsville Battlefield in CM, opposite p. 188. Also, ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, pp. 184, 185.

⁴⁹Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 374 and OR, XXV, pt. 1, 677.

⁵⁰ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, p. 185.

⁵¹Douglas S. Freeman, Robert E. Lee: A Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934, 1936), II, 514-17.

⁵²ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, pp. 185, 186.

⁵³Ibid., p. 186.

⁵⁴OR, XXV, pt. 1, 677 and ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, p. 186.

⁵⁵Stackpole, Chancellorsville, pp. 170-72.

⁵⁶OR, XXV, pt. 1, 677, 678 and ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, p. 186.

⁵⁷Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 162-63.

⁵⁸Freeman, Robert E. Lee, II, 520.

⁵⁹ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, pp. 187, 188.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 188-89.

⁶¹Stackpole, Chancellorsville, pp. 216, 217.

⁶²OR, XXV, pt. 1, 678 and ASW to Irene, 18 March 1863, CM, pp. 189, 190.

⁶³OR, XXV, pt. 1, 678, 675, 670.

⁶⁴Stackpole does not mention it in his discussion of how Jackson's attack was stopped, nor does Bruce Catton. See Stackpole, Chancellorsville, pp. 245-254 and Catton, Glory Road, pp. 188-190. Slocum described the action of Williams' Division in his report, see OR, XXV, pt. 1, 670, 671. General Berry could not corroborate the incident because he was killed by a sniper on 3 May. General Hooker never wrote a report of the battle and so few historians ever accorded Williams credit for his actions. Fox did in "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 164, 165 but it is doubtful that very many have used this excellent but hard to find source. See also, ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, p. 192.

⁶⁵Vandiver, Mighty Stonewall, p. 478.

⁶⁶OR, XXV, pt. 1, 678. Captain Wilkins, Williams' aide, was captured at this point again after being paroled following his Cedar Mountain capture.

⁶⁷"General Williams' Recollections of Chancellorsville" are quoted in Boyce, A History of the 28th NY, p. 63.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹OR, XXV, pt. 1, 670, 675, 679 and ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, pp. 193, 194, 195.

⁷⁰Ibid., CM, p. 194.

⁷¹Esposito, ed., West Point Atlas, I, text opposite Map 88 and Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 279.

⁷²ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, p. 197.

⁷³Ibid., p. 198 and OR, XXV, pt. 1, 680, 681

⁷⁴ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, p. 199.

⁷⁵Ibid. and OR, XXV, pt. 1, p. 681.

⁷⁶ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, p. 200 and OR, XXV, pt. 1, 681.

⁷⁷Stackpole, Chancellorsville, pp. 331-344.

⁷⁸OR, XXV, pt. 1, 681 and ASW to Mary, 7 May 1863, CM, p. 178.

⁷⁹Ibid., CM, p. 178.

⁸⁰ASW to Mary, 23 May 1863, CM, p. 203.

⁸¹The sources of these statistics are OR, XXV, pt. 1, 185, 681; ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, p. 202; and Stackpole, Chancellorsville, p. 373. Sickles' Corps had 22% casualties.

⁸²OR, XXV, pt. 1, 681.

⁸³ASW to Irene, 18 May 1863, CM, p. 203.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 196, 197.

CHAPTER IX

¹McPherson, Ordeal by Fire, pp. 324-325.

²Ibid., p. 325 and T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals, pp. 258-260.

³ASW to Mary and Irene, 29 June 1863, CM, pp. 220-221.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 222 and ASW to Irene and Mary, 20 and 23 June 1863, CM, pp. 219, 220.

⁶ASW to Irene and Mary, 6 July 1863, CM, p. 224.

⁷Ibid., p. 223.

⁸Edwin R. Coddington, The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968). See especially pp. 416-492. Coddington made extensive use of Williams' personal letters as represented in Williams Papers, B.H.C. and in his unexpected finds in the John B. Bachelder Papers of the New Hampshire Historical Society. Bachelder was both the official historian of Gettysburg and the most knowledgeable 19th Century authority on the campaign and battle. Williams had written letters to Bachelder describing what the 12th Corps did during the battle and helped clear up many of the contradictions in the Official Records. Coddington was the first historian of Gettysburg to incorporate the important Bachelder and Williams materials in his study.

⁹See for instance Glenn Tucker, High Tide at Gettysburg: The Campaign in Pennsylvania (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1958), pp. 299-326. Tucker barely mentioned Williams and attributed all of the 12th Corps activities to Slocum, Geary, and Ruger. Catton does not mention Williams either at Gettysburg in Glory Road, pp. 302-308. Check also the maps in Esposito, ed., West Point Atlas, I, 97 a & b, 98 a & b and the text opposite.

¹⁰OR, XXVII, pt. 3, 458.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 461, 465, 466, 467, 484; OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 771, 772; ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 487; ASW to Irene and Mary, 6 July 1863, CM, pp. 224, 225; and Coddington, Gettysburg Campaign, pp. 310-322.

¹²ASW to Irene and Mary, 6 July 1863, CM, p. 226.

¹³Ibid., p. 227.

- ¹⁴ASW MS Report of 1864, pp. 487-488.
- ¹⁵Ibid., p. 488 and ASW to Irene and Mary, 6 July 1863, CM, p. 226.
- ¹⁶Coddington, Gettysburg Campaign, pp. 337, 338.
- ¹⁷Ibid., pp. 359-384; Freeman, Robert E. Lee, III, 87-105, 149-150; and Douglas S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944, 1946), III, 106-140.
- ¹⁸ASW to Irene and Mary, 6 July 1863, CM, p. 227.
- ¹⁹OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 773, 774 and ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 488.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 774 and ibid., p. 489.
- ²¹Ibid. and ASW to Irene and Mary, 6 July 1863, CM, p. 228.
- ²²OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 774, 767, 766, 769, 120, 121; ASW MS Report of 1864, pp. 488, 489; ASW to Irene and Mary, 6 July 1863, CM, p. 228. See also Esposito, ed., West Point Atlas, I, map 98a and Coddington, Gettysburg Campaign, Map 8 opposite p. 387.
- ²³OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 826. This is General Geary's report of the battle at Gettysburg.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 774; ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 489; ASW to Irene and Mary, 6 July 1863, CM, p. 229; Coddington, Gettysburg Campaign, pp. 427-435; Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, 128-132
- ²⁵OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 73 and Coddington, Gettysburg Campaign, pp. 449-453.
- ²⁶OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 73. These were from the minutes of the meeting General Butterfield kept for General Meade.
- ²⁷Ibid.
- ²⁸Ibid.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 139.
- ³⁰ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 489; OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 774, 775; and Coddington, Gettysburg Campaign, pp. 433-435, 453.

- ³¹ASW to Irene and Mary, 6 July 1863, CM, p. 229.
- ³²OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 775.
- ³³Ibid.
- ³⁴ASW to Irene and Mary, 6 July 1863, CM, p. 230.
- ³⁵OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 777 and Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," p. 181.
- ³⁶Williams is quoted in Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," p. 181.
- ³⁷Freeman, Lee, III, 161 and ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 490.
- ³⁸OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 777, 780.
- ³⁹See for instance Slocum's comment in OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 761.
- ⁴⁰OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 780, 781.
- ⁴¹Ibid., p. 775.
- ⁴²Coddington, Gettysburg Campaign, p. 469.
- ⁴³ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 491; and Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 182-184.
- ⁴⁴OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 775, 777-782; Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 182-184; and Coddington, Gettysburg Campaign, pp. 473-475.
- ⁴⁵Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," p. 185.
- ⁴⁶OR, XXVII, pt. 1, p. 187 and XXVII, pt. 2, 338, 346. Most authorities estimate the Confederate loss much higher than reported. Some indicate it was as high as 28,000 for the Southerners. See for instance, Coddington, Gettysburg Campaign, pp. 536, 808 and Esposito, ed., West Point Atlas, I, Text opposite map 99.
- ⁴⁷Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, 190-205.
- ⁴⁸OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 187.
- ⁴⁹ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 492.
- ⁵⁰Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 181, 182.
- ⁵¹Ibid., pp. 184, 185.

⁵²OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 776.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 763, 831.

⁵⁴T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals, pp. 266-271.

⁵⁵ASW to Mary, 16 July 1863, CM, p. 231.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals, pp. 271-278.

⁵⁸ASW to Irene and Mary, 21 July to 24 September 1863, CM, pp. 236-260. These letters are a journalizing account of Williams' movements after Gettysburg before he was sent to Tennessee.

⁵⁹ASW to Irene, 31 March 1863, CM, p. 170.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Henry W. Slocum to Abraham Lincoln, 5 June 1863 in "Letters Received by the AGO, Commissioned Branch Office," National Archives and Record Service, Microfilm Publication, M1064, Reel 64. The letter is also printed in CM, pp. 204-205.

⁶²Jacob M. Howard to Edwin M. Stanton, 9 July 1863 in "Letters Received by the AGO, Commissioned Branch Office," National Archives and Record Service, M1064, Reel 64.

⁶³Officers of the 1st Division, 12th A.C. to E.M. Stanton, 7 September 1863 in "Letters Received by the AGO, Commissioned Branch Office," National Archives and Record Service, M1064, Reel 135.

⁶⁴See for instance, ASW to Mary, 4 September 1863, CM, p. 255.

⁶⁵Source of this map is Bryant, History of the 3rd Wisconsin, endpaper.

CHAPTER X

¹"Uncle Billy" was the nickname many of Sherman's soldiers used to describe him. Both General Thomas and Williams were called "Pap" by their troops. See Lloyd Lewis, Sherman: Fighting Prophet (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1932), p. 400. Lewis wrote of the origin of Sherman's popular nickname, "Sherman's attitude of distant friendliness and unsentimentality made him seem like an uncle who watches over nephews zealously yet without paternalism." (p. 400)

²Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 195-197.

³ASW to Mary, 12 October 1863, CM, pp. 265-267.

⁴OR, XXX, pt. 4, 293; XXXI, pt. 1, 753; and ASW MS Report of 1864, pp. 493, 494.

⁵ASW to Mary, 31st [sic--30th] November 1863, CM, p. 276.

⁶Ibid.

⁷ASW to Mary, 12 October 1863, CM, pp. 265-267.

⁸OR, XXXI, pt. 1, 801, 805 and OR, XXVII, pt. 3, 803.

⁹ASW to Mary, 20 November 1863, CM, pp. 271, 272, 273.

¹⁰Fox, "History fo the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 210-221. See also McPherson, Ordeal by Fire, pp. 338-342 and Esposito, ed., West Point Atlas, I, Maps 116 a, b, c, and d and text opposite.

¹¹See for instance Williams' statements in ASW to Mary, 11 November 1863, CM, pp. 268, 270 and ASW to Mary, 31 [sic--30] November 1863, CM, p. 275.

¹²Ibid., pp. 268, 273.

¹³ASW to Mary, 11 November 1863, CM, p. 270.

¹⁴Williams' leave was from 28 December 1863 to 27 January 1864. See ASW MS Report of 1864, p. 495. Here Williams indicated that he had been absent from his command since 1861 on only two other occasions when he was in Washington for a few days. See also MS Returns of 1st Division, 12th Army Corps, December 1863 and January 1864 in Military Records file of A.S. Williams, National Archives and Record Service. This was the only leave he had during the entire war.

¹⁵ ASW to Henry Slocum, 26 December 1863 in OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 765-768. See also ASW to Major Sherman, 25 February 1864, CM, p. 288.

¹⁶ ASW to Mary, 20 November 1863, CM, pp. 271, 272.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 271.

¹⁸ OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 765-768.

¹⁹ Henry W. Slocum to George G. Meade, 30 December 1863 in OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 763-765. Quiafe included this letter in CM for 1864. See CM, p. 352. He got the date mixed up. On 30 December 1864 Slocum and Williams were in Savannah, Georgia.

²⁰ Henry W. Slocum to L.R. Morgan, 2 January 1864, CM, pp. 284-287, 298.

²¹ OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 763, 764, 765.

²² George G. Meade to Henry W. Slocum, 25 February 1864 in OR, XXVII, pt. 1, 769-770.

²³ Ibid., pp. 769-770, 120, 121. McPherson sidesteps the problem by not mentioning either Slocum or Williams. See McPherson, Ordeal by Fire, pp. 327 and 330.

²⁴ OR, XXXII, pt. 2, 398 and ASW to Major Sherman, 25 February 1864, CM, p. 288.

²⁵ ASW to Mary, 26 March 1864, CM, pp. 291-294.

²⁶ Williams referred to this report in ibid., pp. 293-294. When the author was at the National Archives in June 1981 he found that Williams' MS Report of 1864 was among those being microfilmed in a major project of the Division of Military Records. Subsequently, they have appeared as Microfilm Publication, M1098. Williams' 1864 Report is on Roll # 2 and his 1873 Report is on Roll # 5. Copies are in the author's possession.

²⁷ ASW to Mary, 26 March 1864, CM, p. 293.

²⁸ OR, XXXII, pt. 2, 282, 503 and XXXII, pt. 3, 207, 550. The numbers in Hooker's Tennessee command increased from 19,052 in January 1864 to 25,193 in April 1864. Williams' division almost doubled from 4,734 to 8,208 during the same period. See also Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 227-234.

²⁹ ASW to Mary, 15 April 1864, CM, pp. 294-295.

³⁰ See George H. Thomas to W.T. Sherman, 8 April 1864 in OR, XXXII, pt. 3, 291, 292.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 291, 292, 467.

³² ASW to Lew Allen, 28 April 1864, CM, p. 304.

³³ ASW to Mary, 26 April, CM, pp. 296, 297.

³⁴ OR, XXXII, pt. 3, 246.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 468.

³⁶ McPherson, Ordeal by Fire, p. 412.

³⁷ OR, XXXII, pt. 3, 466.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 468.

³⁹ McPherson, Ordeal by Fire, pp. 429-436.

⁴⁰ ASW to Mary, 6 May 1864, CM, p. 305.

⁴¹ OR, XXXVIII, pt. 2, 27-29; ASW MS Report of 1873, pp. 748-750; ASW to Mary, 20 May 1864, CM, pp. 307-309; and Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 240-246.

⁴² ASW to Mary, 20 May 1864, CM, p. 309.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ ASW MS Report of 1873, p. 750. Williams lost at Resaca 48 killed, 366 wounded, and 3 missing.

⁴⁵ William T. Sherman, Memoirs of Gen. W.T. Sherman (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1892 [4th edition]), II, 44.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷

Charles E. Benton, As Seen from the Ranks: A Boy in the Civil War (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1902), p. 160. Benton entered the war as a drummer boy of the 150th NY State Volunteers.

⁴⁸ ASW to Mary, 31 May 1864, CM, p. 313.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ OR, XXXVIII, pt. 1, 68; XXXVIII, pt. 2, 29-30; ASW MS Report of 1873, pp. 752-755; Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 249-254.

⁵¹OR, XXXVIII, pt. 2, 31-32; ASW MS Report of 1873, pp. 758-762; Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 256-257; and ASW to Children, 10 July 1864, CM, pp. 327-329.

⁵²Joseph E. Johnston, Narrative of Military Operations (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1959 [Civil War Centennial Series]), p. 340. Johnston's narrative first appeared in 1874.

⁵³ASW to Lew Allen, 17 July 1864, CM, p. 333.

⁵⁴OR, XXXVIII, pt. 5, 885.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 1, 71; Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 261-264; ASW MS Report of 1873, pp. 765-771; OR, XXXVIII, pt. 2, pp. 33-34.

⁵⁶OR, XXXVIII, pt. 1, 71 and ASW MS Report of 1873, p. 770.

⁵⁷OR, XXXVIII, pt. 1, 73.

⁵⁸Sherman, Memoirs, II, 86.

⁵⁹OR, XXXVIII, pt. 1, 78, 79; and Sherman, Memoirs, II, 86, 87.

⁶⁰Sherman, Memoirs, II, 86, 87; ASW MS Report of 1873, p. 773; MS Returns of the 20th Army Corps, July and August 1864 in Military Records file of A.S. Williams, National Archives and Record Service.

⁶¹OR, XXXVIII, pt. 1, 79.

⁶²OR, XXXIX, pt. 2, 203.

⁶³McPherson, Ordeal by Fire, p. 436.

⁶⁴ASW to Mary, 11 August 1864, CM, pp. 336, 337.

⁶⁵Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 270-271.

⁶⁶ASW MS Report of 1873, pp. 773, 774.

⁶⁷Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," p. 276.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 275, 276 and ASW to Irene and Mary, 3 September 1864, CM, p. 342.

⁶⁹OR, XXXIX, pt. 2, 405.

⁷⁰Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," p. 274.

⁷¹ASW to Irene and Mary, 15 July 1864, CM, p. 332.

⁷²See for instance, Joseph Hooker to Edwin Stanton, 13 October 1864, "Letters Received by the AGO, Commissioned Branch Office," file of A.S. Williams in M1064, Roll 135. The disposition of this letter further indicates it was Stanton who blocked ASW's promotion. It did not get into Williams' file until 23 July 1867.

⁷³One of the best examples of Williams' thoughts on his failure to get promoted and his personal war aims is his letter to Mary, 18 October 1864, CM, pp. 346-349.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 347.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 347-348.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 348.

⁷⁷This was part of a journal letter Williams sent to Mary. He made the entry on 8 November 1864. See CM, p. 351.

⁷⁸For an account which is extremely critical of Sherman see John B. Walters, Merchant of Terror: General Sherman and Total War (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, [1973]). Less biased but still interesting is the recent work, Burke Davis, Sherman's March (New York: Random House, 1980). A very balanced interpretation of Sherman and his means and purposes of waging total war is John G. Barrett, Sherman's March Through the Carolinas, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956).

⁷⁹Sherman used the phrase ". . . make Georgia howl," as part of his assessment of what his march to Savannah would accomplish. See OR, XXXIX, pt. 3, 162, 202, 595. See also Lewis, Sherman, p. 438.

⁸⁰Sherman, Memoirs, II, 171 and ASW MS Report of 1873, p. 776.

⁸¹ASW to Irene and Mary, 6 January 1865, CM, p. 355.

⁸²ASW MS Diary, 15 November 1864 to 20 May 1865 in ASW Papers, B.H.C. See also "Maps Showing the Campaign of the 20th Army Corps from Atlanta to Savannah" in Record Group 94, MS of 20th Army Corps, National Archives and Record Service.

⁸³See OR, XLIV, 206-216; XLVII, pt. 1, 581-596 and 603-606; and ASW MS Report of 1873, pp. 776-815.

⁸⁴OR, XLIV, 210, 212.

⁸⁵OR, XLIV, 211.

⁸⁶Ibid., and MS Report of 1873, p. 784.

⁸⁷OR, XLIV, 212.

⁸⁸ASW MS Report of 1873, p. 784. Williams' report in OR, XLIV, 213 shows the same figures without the explanation of the numbers missing.

⁸⁹Sherman, Memoirs, II, 194, 195 and Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 286-291.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 216, 217; ibid., pp. 291, 292; and ASW MS Report of 1873, p. 783, 784.

⁹¹Lewis, Sherman, pp. 469, 470.

⁹²ASW to Irene and Mary, 6 January 1865, CM, p. 355 and ASW to Samuel Pittman, 21 April 1865, CM, p. 385.

⁹³ASW to Mary, 15 January 1865, CM, p. 356.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 357.

⁹⁵ASW to Irene and Mary, 6 January 1865, CM, p. 356.

⁹⁶ASW to AGO, 14 January 1865 in "Letters Received by the AGO, Commissioned Branch Office", M1064, Roll 229 and ASW MS Report of 1873, p. 785. Surprisingly, this letter took only 10 days before it was recorded in Williams' file at the AGO.

⁹⁷ASW MS Report of 1873, p. 785.

⁹⁸ASW to Irene and Mary, 27 March 1865, CM, p. 379.

⁹⁹See for instance, Barrett, Sherman's March through the Carolinas, pp. 279-281; Davis, Sherman's March, pp. 141-249; and McPherson, Ordeal by Fire, pp. 471-475.

¹⁰⁰ASW to Samuel Pittman, 21 April 1865, CM, p. 385.

¹⁰¹ASW to Mary, 12 March 1865, CM, pp. 373-374.

¹⁰²Johnston, Narrative, p. 372.

¹⁰³OR, XLVII, pt. 1, 585-586; ASW MS Report of 1873, pp. 799-803; Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 303-305; and Barrett, Sherman's March through the Carolinas, pp. 148-158.

¹⁰⁴Barrett, Sherman's March through the Carolinas, pp. 183-184; and Lewis, Sherman, pp. 515, 516.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶OR, XLVII, pt. 1, 424.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., pp. 76, 1060.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 75 and ASW MS Report of 1873, pp. 805-808.

¹⁰⁹ASW MS Report of 1873, p. 812 and ASW to Mary, 5 April 1865, CM, pp. 379-380. Mower had been the commander of the 1st Division, 17th Corps in the March to the Sea and in the Carolina Campaign. Earlier in the war, Mower had served under Sherman in the Vicksburg Campaign.

¹¹⁰Sherman, Memoirs, II, 333.

¹¹¹Fox, "History of the 12th and 20th A.C.," pp. 311, 312; and Bryant, History of the 3rd Wisconsin, p. 328.

¹¹²Sherman, Memoirs, II, 342.

¹¹³ASW to Mary, 5 April 1865, CM, pp. 379, 380.

¹¹⁴ASW to Irene and Mary, 15 April 1865, CM, p. 381.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶ASW to Mary, 21 April 1865, CM, p. 383.

¹¹⁷Ibid. and ASW to Samuel Pittman, 21 April 1865, CM, p. 384.

CHAPTER XI

- ¹ASW to Irene and Mary, 29 May 1865, CM, pp. 389-390.
- ²ASW to Irene and Mary, 5 June 1865, CM, pp. 390-391.
- ³Ibid.
- ⁴Ibid.
- ⁵ASW MS Report of 1873, pp. 816-817.
- ⁶OR, XLVIII, pt. 2, 1049, 1050.
- ⁷Ibid., p. 1111.
- ⁸ASW MS Report of 1873, p. 818.
- ⁹"General Order No. 1, Ouachita River District, Department of Arkansas," dated 16 September 1865 in Record Group 393, pt. III, entry 593, vol. 172, 31, National Archives and Record Service. Hereinafter cited as "General Orders Ouachita River District." See also, ASW MS Report of 1873, p. 818.
- ¹⁰ASW to Lew Allen, 17 September 1865 in ASW Papers, B.H.C. Unless otherwise indicated all other letters cited are in the Williams Papers, B.H.C.
- ¹¹ASW to Irene and Mary, 10 October 1865.
- ¹²"General Orders No. 2, Ouachita River District," pp. 32-38.
- ¹³ASW to Irene and Mary, 26 November 1865. [Emphasis added.]
- ¹⁴ASW MS Report of 1873, p. 818.
- ¹⁵ASW to Mary, 4 December 1865. The best example of the amazing letters he wrote to his daughters from Arkansas is ASW to Irene, 6 November 1865.
- ¹⁶ASW MS Report of 1873, pp. 818, 819; Detroit, Free Press, 19 January 1866; and ASW to Irene and Mary, 11 December 1865.
- ¹⁷ASW to Mary, 7 February 1866.
- ¹⁸Free Press, 6 July 1866 and 18 July 1866.
- ¹⁹Ibid., 2 August 1866.
- ²⁰MS Commission, "Appointment as Commissioner of Investigation in Missouri," 12 July 1866 in Williams Papers.

²¹Ibid.

²²Quaife erroneously indicated in his biographical sketch of Williams in CM that Williams ran for governor in 1870. (See p. 10) Quaife repeated an error from an undated newspaper obituary in the Williams "Excerpts and Miscellaneous File" in B.H.C. In 1870 the candidates for governor in Michigan were Henry Baldwin (R) and C.C. Comstock (D). Williams ran in 1866. See Michigan Manual (1911), pp. 458, 460, 461.

²³ASW to Irene, 12 September 1866.

²⁴Free Press, 10 October 1866 [Emphasis added].

²⁵Harriette M. Dilla, The Politics of Michigan, 1865-1878 (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1912), pp. 54-72.

²⁶Michigan Manual (1911), p. 460. Crapo received 97,112 and Williams got 68,650 in the election.

²⁷ASW to Irene, 12 September 1866.

²⁸ASW to Mary, 26 November 1866 and William Seward to ASW, 12 October 1866, MS in "Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State, 1801-1906: Central American States, 10 January 1865-January 1879" in National Archives and Record Service, M77, Roll 29.

²⁹ASW to Mary, 30 November 1866.

³⁰Thomas L. Karnes, The Failure of Union: Central America 1824-1960 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961), pp. 126-151; Franklin Parker, The Central American Republics (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 148-150. The first U.S. Minister to El Salvador was James R. Partridge. Williams was the second U.S. Minister there. See M77, Roll 29.

³¹MS Message, Francisco Duenas to Andrew Johnson, 4 February 1867 in "Dispatches of Foreign Minister of El Salvador to U.S. Minister," Diplomatic Records Branch, National Archives and Record Service. [Translated from the Spanish text of the original by M. Ocasio].

³²ASW to Irene and Mary, 9 January 1867, 21 January 1867, 19 March 1867, 5 April 1867, 6 June 1867, 20 August 1867, 17 January 1868; ASW to Irene, 20 March 1869; and ASW to Francis Farquhar, 21 July 1868. Farquhar had married Williams' daughter, Mary, in 1866 just before Williams left for El Salvador.

³³See for instance, W.H. Seward to ASW, 18 April 1867, 9 September 1867, 17 November 1867, 27 December 1867, 13 July 1868, and Hamilton Fish to ASW, 5 April 1869 and 12 June 1869 in M77, Roll 29.

³⁴See for background, Lawrence F. Hill, "Confederate Exodus to Latin America," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, 39 (1935), 100.

³⁵ASW to Irene and Mary, 21 March 1868 and 6 May 1869.

³⁶Ibid., 20 April 1869, 20 May 1869, 20 July 1869.

³⁷Ibid., 17 January 1868, 7 August 1868, 20 April 1869, 21 June 1869 and ASW to Mary, 8 March 1869.

³⁸Laura Farquhar, aged 2 years, 3 months, 1 day, died 20 November 1869. She was the daughter of Mary Williams and Major Francis Farquhar of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. For the depth of feeling Williams had for his granddaughter see ASW to Mary Williams Farquhar, 25 September 1867, 8 March 1869, and 21 June 1869.

³⁹Williams and Mrs. Tillman were married on 18 September 1873. This information was from a copy of the marriage certificate in Williams' Pension File at the National Archives and Record Service.

⁴⁰See Memorial Addresses on the Life and Character of Alpheus S. Williams (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880). Noting Williams' rather uneventful Congressional career, see the Congressional Record, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., 1875, pp. 250, 251; 44th Cong., 1st Session, 1876, V, 484-485; 44th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1877, V, 260-261; 45th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1878, VII, 550-552; and 45th Cong., 3rd Sess., 1879, pp. 307-308. Obituary notices appeared in many national newspapers. For lengthy biographical sketches or obituaries of particular note see the Detroit Free Press, 22 December 1878; Detroit Post & Tribune, 23 and 25 December 1878; Detroit Evening News, 23 December 1878; Chicago Tribune, 22 December 1878; New York Times, 22 December 1878.

⁴¹Atlanta Daily Constitution, 22 December 1878.

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