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## John B. Bachelder's Artistic Vision for the Gettysburg Battlefield

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### Abstract

John Bachelder was an important artist and historian to Gettysburg, shaping the early interpretation of the battle during the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association period (1863-1895). While he is mainly discussed as the first park historian, it is important to look at his career as an artist and how it influenced his career at Gettysburg. Looking at Bachelder's entire career, one can see how Bachelder's vision for the battlefield changed over time. Bachelder wanted to create a grand history painting of the battle, which ultimately became his Isometric Map of Gettysburg. He corresponded with veterans to get their accounts, leading Bachelder to learn more about the battlefield and to create his own interpretation of the battle. His early works, like the Isometric Map, the James Walker Repulse of Longstreet's Assault, and guidebook (Gettysburg: What to See and How to See it) brought Gettysburg to the homes of Americans. This allowed Bachelder to become a more well-known name among veterans. Furthermore, these early works allowed Bachelder to begin his interpretation of Gettysburg. Ultimately, Bachelder saw Gettysburg as the most important battle of the Civil War, which culminated into the High-Water Mark of the Rebellion for the Confederate troops. This influences his later works, such as his history of the battle and his for the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association as Superintendent of Monuments and Tablets. These later works focus on making Gettysburg a memorial landscape, and a battlefield park which visitors can understand by just looking at the field. Bachelder's work is vital to understand the early interpretation of Gettysburg.

### Keywords

John Bachelder; Battle of Gettysburg memory; Battle of Gettysburg Memorialization; Battle of Gettysburg; Battle of Gettysburg Map

### Disciplines

Art and Design | Interdisciplinary Arts and Media | Military History | United States History

### Comments

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## John B. Bachelder's Artistic Vision for the Gettysburg Battlefield

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December 4, 2020

### Abstract

John Bachelder was an important artist and historian to Gettysburg, shaping the early interpretation of the battle during the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association period (1863-1895). While he is mainly discussed as the first park historian, it is important to look at his career as an artist and how it influenced his career at Gettysburg. Looking at Bachelder's entire career, one can see how Bachelder's vision for the battlefield changed over time. Bachelder wanted to create a grand history painting of the battle, which ultimately became his Isometric Map of Gettysburg. He corresponded with veterans to get their accounts, leading Bachelder to learn more about the battlefield and to create his own interpretation of the battle. His early works, like the Isometric Map, the James Walker *Repulse of Longstreet's Assault*, and guidebook (*Gettysburg: What to See and How to See it*) brought Gettysburg to the homes of Americans. This allowed Bachelder to become a more well-known name among veterans. Furthermore, these early works allowed Bachelder to begin his interpretation of Gettysburg. Ultimately, Bachelder saw Gettysburg as the most important battle of the Civil War, which culminated into the High-Water Mark of the Rebellion for the Confederate troops. This influences his later works, such as his history of the battle and his for the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association as Superintendent of Monuments and Tablets. These later works focus on making Gettysburg a memorial landscape, and a battlefield park which visitors can understand by just looking at the field. Bachelder's work is vital to understand the early interpretation of Gettysburg.

## Introduction

In the mid-1880s to 1890s, John Bachelder wanted to mark the battle lines of the Confederates who fought at Gettysburg. Until that point, the park had only had Union lines marked with monuments and roadways. Bachelder was a student of military history, and believed it was important to understand the positions and movements of troops. While the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association (GBMA) focused on buying land which showed the Union perspective of the battle, Bachelder wanted the GBMA to buy land to give an overall understanding of the battle for future visitors. He stated that the Confederate battle lines needed to be marked as “it is impossible for the tourists or student of history to acquire a correct understanding of the positions and movements of troops unless both sides are marked... Shall this knowledge be preserved to history, or shall it be allowed to be lost forever...?”<sup>1</sup> Bachelder wanted Gettysburg to be remembered as the greatest battle of American history. Marking the Confederate battle lines on the field was only one aspect in which Bachelder influenced how Americans would remember the battle for generations.

Bachelder clarified the history of the battle of Gettysburg during the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association period (1863-1895). His work was vital to the early interpretation of the battle. He wanted to understand the history of the battle soon after it occurred, since he felt it was the most important battle of the Civil War. Writing to many soldiers, Bachelder asked for their personal accounts of the battle, which led him to create an isometric map of the battle. Eventually, Bachelder authored a guidebook, a full-length study of the battle, and other maps, all centered around his early interpretation of the battle. Surprisingly,

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<sup>1</sup> Harlan D. Unrau, "Administrative History: Gettysburg National Military Park and National Cemetery: Pennsylvania," United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, July 1991, 61-62.  
[https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/gett/adhi.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/gett/adhi.pdf)

Bachelder's background does not suggest that he would become such a prolific writer, since he was principal and commercial artist before the war. However, Bachelder's love of military history led him to create his own vision of Gettysburg, first as a map, but then eventually as a memorial landscape.

Bachelder's initial efforts to preserve and interpret Gettysburg was driven by the market and his original desire to make a history painting. Bachelder originally focused on things for home consumption. His earliest Isometric Map (1864) allowed Bachelder to focus on understanding the landscape and the movement of troops on the battlefield. After this, Bachelder begins to interpret the battle through his other works for home consumption—the Walker painting (1870) and subsequent lithographs, Bachelder's guidebook (1873), and his other works. Each of these allowed Bachelder to play into the market of maps and histories during this period. More importantly, these formats allowed Bachelder's work to be brought into the homes and offices of people, making Bachelder more well known, especially among veterans.

After 1880, Bachelder changed his focus on the battlefield from documentation to memorialization, as he began work on creating a memorial landscape, allowing the battle to be understood through the park itself. He highlighted what he believed were the most important parts of the battlefield, such as the Angle and Pickett's Charge, and made the case that both Union and Confederate battle lines needed to be marked so future visitors could understand the battle while in the field. Although Bachelder was not part of the original Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association, he was still highly influential in creating a memorial park, which can be seen as early as 1873, with the publication of his guidebook, *Gettysburg: What to See and How to See it*. Bachelder wanted all visitors—not only veterans, but future generations of Americans and military history enthusiasts—to understand the importance of Gettysburg, as Bachelder saw

it as the most important part of the Civil War and the High-Water Mark of the Rebellion. Most of his work after 1869 focuses heavily on the third days battle, especially his High-Water Mark monument at the Copse of Trees.

Bachelder had a vision for Gettysburg, even before the battle had happened, which led to his copious work. There were some who disagreed with Bachelder's work, but overall, many of the veterans were pleased with what Bachelder did for the memory of Gettysburg. This too, must be explored to understand why Bachelder was able to continue his work on the battle after his initial Isometric Map.

Bachelder's 1864 Isometric Map is striking compared to other maps of Gettysburg. This map scans Gettysburg from the east and above in a perspective that Bachelder described as a view only obtainable from a hot air balloon (fig. 1). Later Bachelder described how he had to sketch the battlefield looking in this direction from several points each day, taking the time to mark the terrain.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, due to the vast terrain, details on the map are miniscule, and one needs to look closely to see all the features. Comparatively, other maps of the era would only view town from the more traditional aerial perspective. Yet this bird's eye perspective allowed Bachelder to show the landscape's topography in a way which other mapmakers could not achieve. The town itself is shown at the center right of the landscape. Bachelder decided to label the houses on the battlefield with the residence who lived there during the battle. He also labels many of the features of the landscape—Culp's Hill, Round Top and Little Round Top, and the Wheatfield, and he does not list anything about the Angle or the Copse of Trees. Like other mapmakers, Bachelder shows the positions of troops in different colors, depending on the day of

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<sup>2</sup> David L. Ladd and Audrey J. Ladd, ed., *The Bachelder Papers: Gettysburg in Their Own Words* (Dayton, OH: Morningside House, 1994), 736.

the battle—red for the Union and white for the Confederates on the first day, white for the Union and black for the Confederates for the second day, and black and white and yellow for the final day respectively. To give further information about the battle on this map, Bachelder notes the different officers and generals who were killed on the battlefield, like General Reynolds during the first day in Herbst Woods.

Other historians have explored his map for its accuracy in showing the troops on the battlefield and its topographical features, and overall, the position of troops were more accurate than the topography. Furthermore, the isometric nature of the map makes specific areas distorted, such as Devil’s Den being visible, but it should not be observable from this perspective.<sup>3</sup> A final detail to note is the inclusion of the small map of the Soldiers National Cemetery in the center bottom of the composition, with a key of the different sections.

### Historiography

Bachelder and his work went unnoticed for several decades after his death in 1894. Many of his papers ended up in the New Hampshire Historical Society. In the late 1950s, Edward Coddington rediscovered the Bachelder Manuscript Collection. These papers were considered historically significant and were transcribed and published as *The Bachelder Papers* by David L. and Audrey J. Ladd in 1994. Several historians in the 1990s and since have discussed Bachelder as the “First Park Historian,” illustrating his various contributions to the memory of the battle. Three main areas of Civil War Era history were focused on to discuss Bachelder and his work—those focusing on Bachelder, Civil War memory during this thirty-year period, and commercial

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<sup>3</sup> William A. Frassanito, *Early Photography at Gettysburg* (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 1995), 15.

maps and mapmaking after the Civil War. There are three major lines of the historiography which take place since the 1990s, relating to Bachelder and the memorial landscape of Gettysburg. Some historians since have written about the maps and mapmakers which help understand the interplay between these maps. Others have focused on early visitors to the battlefield, and how they understood the landscape through cultural norms of tourist culture during the late nineteenth century. Other historians have looked at Bachelder's work specifically and how his work has influenced Gettysburg.

Some historians in the 1990s discussed Civil War era maps and mapmakers within the same book, showing some of the interplay between maps. Frassanito does this in *Early Photography at Gettysburg* (1995). His section on Gettysburg maps between 1858 to 1895 illustrate some of the earliest maps of the battlefield, highlighting how they influenced one another, especially the earliest Adams County Wall Map, as it was the only map in 1863 which depicted Gettysburg. Since Frassanito focuses on early Gettysburg photographs, he does not go into too great detail about the maps. However, he is one of the few historians who has pulled together the early maps of Gettysburg to discuss them. He also discusses the accuracy of these maps, illustrating that none of them are completely accurate.

Other historians focused on making narratives about what was happening in Gettysburg right after the battle was over. While Gregory Coco does not discuss the maps made after the battle in *A Strange and Blighted Land* (1995), the book does illustrate early visitors to the battlefield and what the town faced in the months after the battle. While most of the book focuses on burials, field hospitals, and the citizens of Gettysburg, the last chapter focuses on early visitors, and how they looked for relics to bring home with them. He illustrates that they took off of the field guns and other objects from the battle. He also notes the shift to natural relics, like



wood or leaves from the surrounding area, once man-made objects were already taken. While he does not go into great detail about why people wanted to take relics from the battlefield, other historians will focus more on this norm a decade after Coco.

After the war, many veterans had their own specific memory of Gettysburg, which was their own truth of the battle. Carol Reardon in *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory* (1997) explores why Pickett's Charge becomes the "High-Water Mark of the Rebellion," and how the differing views of July third has made the history of the battle not so straight forward. Myths have intertwined with realities of what occurred to create a skewed truth, which is not the reality of Pickett's Charge.<sup>4</sup> Reardon argues there will never be a correct reality of Pickett's Charge, as with any other aspect of history. Reardon decides to use Bachelder's interpretation of the High-Water Mark as one way in which veterans were influenced to view the battlefield a certain way. She notes that veterans were cautious of Bachelder's work because they worried different parts of the battle would be misremembered, whether it be Southerners believing Bachelder would focus on the Union efforts during the battle or simply veterans believing Bachelder would be told exaggerated versions of what happened. While Bachelder's interpretation of the battle was just one way in which the history of the battle could be told, Reardon shows the importance veterans placed on narratives of the battle and what they wanted to be remembered.

A few years after Frassanito's *Early Photography*, the most extensive book on Civil War mapping came out—Earl McElfresh's *Maps and Mapmakers of the Civil War* (1999). McElfresh gave an important understanding to how inaccessible maps were at this time, as much of the United States had not been mapped, and the need for quick mapmaking techniques during the

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<sup>4</sup> Carol Reardon, *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 10.

war. He also highlights the various mapmakers during the period, especially for the Union. However, most of the book is about maps created during the Civil War, and the only map of Gettysburg that was extensively discussed was the Warren map.

While Coco's book did not go extensively into early visitorship on the battlefield, *Gettysburg: Memory, Market, and an American Shrine* by Jim Weeks (2003) goes in depth on the creation of the Gettysburg memory throughout the years and how visitors have made sense of the battlefield. In the first three chapters of his book, he discusses the early period of the park. Weeks illustrates how American gentile culture influenced the battlefield's landscape. Victorian Americans focused on nature during the mid to late nineteenth century, because they believed it could restore the mind and could lead to encounters with the sublimity of God or could be a moralizing lesson.<sup>5</sup> Oftentimes, this was found in cemeteries and parks. The battlefield was a perfect location for these two beliefs about nature to come together into a tourist destination. Weeks argues that Gettysburg was considered highly sacred by veterans because of the battle and the dedication of the National Cemetery. Overtime, Gettysburg turned into a place of leisure and a national shrine, with early tourist industries like the Springs Hotel and the creation of the Gettysburg park.<sup>6</sup> Weeks also discusses other materials which fueled the tourist industry in Gettysburg during this period, such as guidebooks, panoramas, and the need for monumentation on the battlefield. Weeks understanding of early helps establish why Gettysburg would be such a place of interest to 1860s Americans, allowing for the creation of Gettysburg landscape and its memory.

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<sup>5</sup> Jim Weeks, *Gettysburg: Memory, Market, and an American Shrine* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 15-16

<sup>6</sup> Weeks, *Memory, Market, and American Shrine*, 34.

Similarly influential as Week's book on understanding the early memory of Gettysburg, but focusing more on how Bachelder influenced the battle, was Thomas Desjardin's book *These Honored Dead: How the Story of Gettysburg Shaped American Memory* (2003). Desjardin would be one of the first historians to extensively discuss Bachelder, spending an entire chapter of his book on Bachelder's vision as the park historian. Desjardin argues that Bachelder, by not painting a grand history painting and not writing the definitive history of the battle like he was paid by Congress to write, was unable to complete his grand vision. Bachelder only had so much time working on Gettysburg, which he had too many ideas to do all of them. Thus, many of his later ideas suffered because he wanted to do all his ideas for Gettysburg. Desjardin argues that Bachelder's vision would ultimately be found in how the War Department handles Gettysburg park, rather than anything which happened during the GBMA period. Desjardin paints Bachelder as an informal historian and cartographer with many ideas. However, he does show some of Bachelder's accomplishments, such as his interpretation of the High-Water Mark and creating a rich database of accounts of the battle, which no one else was able to do for Gettysburg or any other Civil War battle. He was the first to discuss Bachelder extensively, but he only focused on some of what Bachelder did for the battlefield and especially Bachelder's latter work.

While Reardon focused on how veterans made sense of Pickett's Charge long after it occurred, Caroline Janney took a similar approach in how veterans remembered the Civil War in general. In *Remembering the Civil War Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (2013), Janney (2013) illustrates how reconciliation was not the main narrative of the Civil War during Reconstruction. She looks at how monuments, parades, cemeteries, and other ways the Civil War was remembered by both the northern and southern veterans, and how northern and southern veterans viewed the memory of the Civil War of the other side. She also shows how many

northern veterans questioned the reconciliationist approach, and the counters they took against it, such as the regimental histories that were written. While she does not specifically explore Gettysburg, her narrative is important in understanding how veterans understood different ways the Civil War was remembered throughout the decades and how their opinions changed overtime. She illustrates how celebration and mourning were important aspects in after the war, and this fueled how Gettysburg was created and understood by veterans.

The most recent discussion of Bachelder specifically was Scott Hartwig's lecture at the 2016 Civil War Institute Conference, entitled "Historian John Bachelder and Gettysburg." Hartwig went deeper into Bachelder's influence on the battle's memory and gave a more wholistic approach to Bachelder's copious works. He gave an extensive biography of Bachelder's work as the first park historian, and he discussed why was Bachelder important to the memory of Gettysburg. Hartwig ends by saying Bachelder's vision is what the park has become today—he wanted a memorial landscape, which would be understood through monumentation and marking the battle lines at Gettysburg. Hartwig focuses mainly on Bachelder's work while working for the GBMA and how he influenced the landscape, quickly mentioning his previous works leading up to his work as the Superintendent of Monuments and Tablets for the GBMA.

Historians have mentioned that Bachelder was an artist before the war, but they do not interpret his artistic careers and how this shaped his image of what the battlefield could be. Often historians focus on Bachelder as the first park historian. This is an important focus, as much of his career Bachelder can be considered a historian, especially after 1880. Historians often move quickly through his early career to discuss his later influences on the battle. However, his career as an artist directly influences how he portrays Gettysburg in his Isometric Map. A more

wholistic understanding of Bachelder is required to understand how he changes from an artist to a historian and his changing vision for Gettysburg. It is imperative to understand this artistic vision to understand his later thoughts about the memorial landscape of Gettysburg.

### Bachelder the Artist

Bachelder was born in 1825 in New Hampshire and went to the Partridge's Military School in Pembroke.<sup>7</sup> When Bachelder was twenty-four, he moved to Reading, PA in 1849 to work as a teacher at the Pennsylvania Military School.<sup>8</sup> He was a teacher of military tactics until the following year, when he became the principal. Bachelder worked there for several years until 1853, when he moved back to New Hampshire, married his wife, Elizabeth, and began his career as an artist.<sup>9</sup> Bachelder did photography and painted panoramas, several of which became lithographs.

For those who have looked at Bachelder's Isometric Map, his prior landscape scenes have a familiar look to the map of Gettysburg. The lithograph of his panorama *View of Dover N.H. from Garrison Hill* (1855), is one such example (fig. 2). The viewer looks from Garrison Hill, which looks over the town from the north. While not a bird's-eye view of the city like the Isometric Map, it is from a perspective which is looking down at the town from the top of a hill. Nature surrounds the town, with the topography hinted at through the hills surrounding the city. While panoramas do not give the same information as maps, such as not naming all the places, this panorama gives as much information visually as Bachelder's Isometric Map. There are no

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<sup>7</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> "Manuscripts," *Historical New Hampshire* 18, no. 1 (April 1963): 35, EBSCO, America: History & Life.

<sup>9</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, T 9.

details about Bachelder's process in creating this scene, yet it is reminiscent of how he created the composition of the Isometric Map.

These similarities within both of his views makes sense in terms of what he originally wanted to do with Gettysburg. Bachelder always had an interest in military history and art. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Bachelder physically could not serve in the military.<sup>10</sup> With his interest in the military, he wanted to create a painting or a history of the major battle of the war. There have been few history paintings of American history, as it is more so a European tradition of art. In the European painting canon, history paintings were considered the most important genre of painting for several centuries. The most notable exception of American history paintings is Emanuel Leutze's 1851 painting of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. History paintings were either an event from history or a moralizing lesson from well-known literature. Bachelder hoped to make a grand painting which could become the most famous history painting of America. He originally hoped to do a history painting of Bunker Hill, but it was not well documented, so Bachelder stopped working on this project.<sup>11</sup> After this, Bachelder he followed the Army of the Potomac to quickly learn about the battle and study the topography soon after it was over.<sup>12</sup> He became sick while following the army, and so he went back to New Hampshire. Before he left, he told his those he became acquainted with in the military to write to him if they believed a major battle was going to happen or if it transpired.<sup>13</sup> Bachelder came down to Gettysburg within a few days of the battle and quickly went to work sketching the battlefield and

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<sup>10</sup> Scott Hartwig, "Historian John Bachelder and Gettysburg" (lecture, Civil War Institute Conference, Gettysburg, PA, June 19, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Hartwig, "Historian John Bachelder," 2016.

<sup>12</sup> "Manuscripts," *Historical New Hampshire*, 35.

<sup>13</sup> Hartwig, "Historian John Bachelder," 2016.

planning his history painting.<sup>14</sup> He stated he did not need anyone to show him to where the battle took place because he just looked for the dead soldiers and horses who still littered the ground.<sup>15</sup> During the two months of preparatory drawing, Bachelder also talked to wounded soldiers of both the Union and Confederacy who were left behind in Gettysburg.<sup>16</sup>

He soon decided he wanted to make an “isometric drawing” of the battlefield, rather than a history painting. Perhaps he realized it would be easier to get the positions of the troops rather than painting a specific scene from the battle for a history painting. Bachelder does describe how there was no one point to show the whole battlefield, which could have contributed to him deciding to create a map instead.<sup>17</sup> The Isometric Map could better serve as a way to show his careful research to the public. It allowed him to make the troops and carefully list the regiments and engagements, rather than simply showing one part of the battle in a history painting. Everything on the battlefield could be carefully studied and explained by Bachelder, rather than a specific section of the battlefield. In turn, Bachelder would become a more common name among all of the veterans, rather than the few in the engagement in a history painting. Furthermore, Bachelder would be able to leave a deeper interpretation of the entire battle for generations to come. He may have also realized the lack of maps of Gettysburg and the profit from maps during this period. The one map Gettysburg was shown on was the 1858 Adams County Wall Map. Since it is a map of all of Adams County, it only shows the roads, the names of some of the residences around the town, and little else.<sup>18</sup> Maps were often profitable, which

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas A. Desjardin, "Chapter 5: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy of John Badger Bachelder," in *These Honored Dead: How the Story of Gettysburg Shaped American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books Group, 2003), 85.

<sup>15</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 735.

<sup>16</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 736.

<sup>17</sup> Described in Bachelder's pamphlet about Walker's painting, *Gettysburg: Repulse of Longstreet's Assault*. Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 736.

<sup>18</sup> There was also an obscure plan of Gettysburg made in 1850, but it was widely unknown compared to the Adams County Map. Frassanito, *Early Photography at Gettysburg*, 7.

led to many private companies making maps during the 1860s.<sup>19</sup> Within a month of the attack on Fort Sumter, the first commercial map was made of the “Theater of War.”<sup>20</sup> Companies stated that their maps were reliable, based off eye witness and soldiers accounts.<sup>21</sup> They also turned to using a bird’s eye view or a view from a balloon to show the battlefield, just like Bachelder eventually does with the Isometric Map. Furthermore, Bachelder might have realized that the government needed commercial maps as the Engineers Corps could not produce enough maps. This led the government to turn to a lot of commercial mapmakers in order to have the maps they required.<sup>22</sup> While maps of Gettysburg were not needed for generals to understand the terrain, perhaps Bachelder thought he could eventually work with the government as a cartographer or artist if his Isometric Map did well. Nevertheless, Bachelder decided to shift his work from a history painting to the Isometric Map.

Bachelder wanted his map to become the definitive map of the battlefield the starting point for anyone studying the battle. By August of 1863, Bachelder’s map was already being advertised in one of the local newspapers, *the Adams Sentinel*. *The Sentinel* discussed how Bachelder’s preliminary sketch showed everything on the battlefield—from the positions of troops to the fences lines to the names of each residence.<sup>23</sup> Bachelder does manage to show all of these details on his map. By the time of the Dedication of the Soldiers National Cemetery, Bachelder had a preliminary design for the map. He discussed his design with Edward Everett,

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<sup>19</sup> Frassanito, *Early Photography at Gettysburg*, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Library of Congress, "Commercial Mapping," Civil War Maps Collection, accessed May 29, 2020. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-war-maps/articles-and-essays/history-of-mapping-the-civil-war/commercial-mapping/>

<sup>21</sup> Library of Congress, "Commercial Mapping."

<sup>22</sup> Library of Congress, "Union Mapping," Civil War Maps Collection, accessed May 28, 2020. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-war-maps/articles-and-essays/history-of-mapping-the-civil-war/union-mapping/>

<sup>23</sup> Frassanito, *Early Photography at Gettysburg*, 15.



the keynote speaker of the dedication, and even helped Everett with some of the details of his speech.<sup>24</sup> At this point Bachelder had only used wounded soldiers to decide the positions of the troops, and he decided that was not enough to properly make the map. So, he went to the Army of the Potomac's 1863-64 winter quarters to interview as many soldiers as he could.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, Bachelder decided to start writing to various officers, sending them a small map of the battlefield, to ask them to mark the position of their troops.<sup>26</sup> It seems Bachelder did not receive most of these requests back before finally publishing the map in 1864. However, Bachelder felt like he had enough information to mark the "movements of every regiment and battery from the commencement to the close of the engagement, and [I] have located on the drawing its most important positions for each of the three days."<sup>27</sup> While this was a commercial map, Bachelder received endorsement by Meade and other general in the battle.<sup>28</sup> This endorsement can be found on the bottom left corner of the map, stating, "The positions of the troops of our respective commands represented upon this picture have been arranged under our immediate direction and may be relied upon as substantially correct."<sup>29</sup>

Many generals and soldiers wrote to Bachelder, endorsing his map, while also giving them their accounts of the Gettysburg. Bachelder had sent out advanced copies for different generals to check before it was finally published. Bachelder received word back from many of the generals, praising his map for its accuracy and artistic merit, with a few giving Bachelder ideas for other projects they hoped Bachelder would consider for the future. In December 1863, Winfield Scott Hancock wrote to Bachelder, "The view of the battle of Gettysburg, proposed by

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<sup>24</sup> Frassanito, *Early Photography at Gettysburg*, 15.

<sup>25</sup> Hartwig, "Historian John Bachelder," 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 737.

<sup>27</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 737.

<sup>28</sup> Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 85.

<sup>29</sup> Bachelder, *Isometric Map of Gettysburg*, 1864.

Mr. Bachelder, has been carefully examined by me. I find it as accurate as such a map can well be made; and it is accurate so far as my knowledge extends.”<sup>30</sup> Most officers writing to Bachelder noted the map was accurate as much as they could remember. Some, like Jubal Early, even went as far as saying to Bachelder, “You know it is difficult to imitate accurately the configuration of the ground in topography...I could much more readily recognize the positions of my troops from an examination of the ground itself than from an examination of the map.”<sup>31</sup> The veterans knew the terrain, they knew the maps less so, especially a place like Gettysburg, which did not have any reliable maps of it as most locations during the war were not properly mapped. Depending on how a map was created, it could lead to confusion about the topography. This also translated, as Early illustrates, into how generals and soldiers understood the history. They were on the terrain, often not using actual maps during battles. Bachelder had to work with the fact that most soldiers could understand the landscape more so by looking at it rather than looking at a map. Soldiers often wrote they could not see anything clearly during battles with all the smoke and the terrain of the field. Perhaps this is part of the reason Bachelder wanted to get as many veterans’ accounts in the years after it took place, in order to work with the flawed memories of the generals and soldiers who took part. Thus, Bachelder could synthesize them to get closer to the truth of what took place on the entire battlefield.

Some veterans began to worry that Bachelder would be unable to create a comprehensive narrative of the battle due to all the contradictory accounts. Some Union veterans believed that others would exaggerate details, which could lead to Bachelder getting aspects of the battle wrong.<sup>32</sup> This wariness about Bachelder’s Isometric Map also came from the Confederate

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<sup>30</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 71.

<sup>31</sup> Early said this to Bachelder a decade after the war. Earl B. McElfresh, *Maps and Mapmakers of the Civil War* (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated, 1999), 28.

<sup>32</sup> Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 89.

soldiers. Bachelder had only discussed with wounded Confederate soldiers in Gettysburg about the positions of the Confederates. This led some Confederates to believe Bachelder's map should not be trusted and very few helped him in understanding the Confederate battle lines for a decade after the war.<sup>33</sup> In a letter to one of his former professors, Brig. General James L. Kemper of Pickett's Division stated he declined to tell Bachelder his story as

it is obvious from his [Bachelder's] own showing that ninety nine hundredths of his material is drawn from northern sources; that the great body of facts on the Confederate side must if necessity be excluded because unknown and inaccessible to him that any exceptions previously given in said history to my particular command would not be fair to the balance of my command in many of whom no just notice would be taken and that any such prominence of my command in a northern version of the battle of Gettysburg would bear too much resemblance to the exhibition of the captive behind the triumphal car of the Roman Imperitor to suit either my taste or my principles.<sup>34</sup>

To Kemper and perhaps to other Confederate veterans, it seemed Bachelder would try to use the Confederate narrative to praise the military success of the Union, which would go against the southern honor Kemper felt. It is unknown how many Confederates Bachelder reached out to during the war years asking for their help beyond the wounded soldiers he talked to in Gettysburg. Yet, it seemed like Bachelder was trying to give more perspective on the Confederate narrative after the war. In 1867, Bachelder wrote to the Secretary of War, Grant, asking to have access to the reports of Confederate generals.<sup>35</sup> While this is after the Isometric Map was published, it seemed Bachelder wanted to understand the Confederate narrative as well

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<sup>33</sup> Reardon, *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory*, 179.

<sup>34</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 224.

<sup>35</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 317.

as the Union narrative. Nevertheless, in the decade after, there were some Confederates who felt Bachelder's work was skewed towards the Union narrative and they did not want to share their stories.

Most veterans who corresponded with Bachelder were responsive, appreciative, and in agreement with his work. Kemper and other Confederates were in the minority with their incessant complaining and criticisms. On March 12, 1864, Winfield Scott wrote to Bachelder, stating, "I have examined your Isometric drawing of the Gettysburg Battlefield with great interest. It presents at a glance not only the prominent features of the field, as "Round Top," Cemetery and Culps Hill, but gives the minuter details such as exactness and information that cannot be obtained in an ordinary plan of the field...An examination of your drawing can hardly fail to give one a faithful conception of that memorable field."<sup>36</sup> Bachelder received copious letters praising him for his artistic vision and the work he had put in to create the Isometric Map. Many wanted to tell Bachelder how they believed he accurately portrayed Gettysburg. Others praised it for how it clearly showed the battle for those who were not there. George McClellan wrote to Bachelder stating how the Isometric Map had given him a clearer understanding of the battle as he was not there.<sup>37</sup> Winfield Hancock similarly praised Bachelder for this clarity that came with his map.<sup>38</sup> Even years after the publication of the map, people would occasionally write to Bachelder, stating they still had his map hanging up in their offices. One veteran wrote in 1878 how he had bought the map the year it came out. Since then, he had it framed and hanging in his office. The veteran believed Bachelder had depicted Gettysburg with careful detail.<sup>39</sup> Still,

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<sup>36</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 93-94.

<sup>37</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 43.

<sup>38</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 94.

<sup>39</sup> A letter to Bachelder from William S. Stryker from May 8, 1878. Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 553.

others praised it by stating historically it would be important to the understanding of the battle and that others could not produce a map as accurate as Bachelder had accomplished.<sup>40</sup>

Between the praises for the map, some veterans wanted Bachelder to do more with Civil War history, giving him ideas for new projects. Some Union veterans believed Bachelder would become the great historian of Gettysburg, after collecting the accounts of soldiers and the publication of Bachelder's first map. In 1866, Henry A. Morrow, who fought for the 24<sup>th</sup> Michigan Volunteers, wrote to Bachelder asking, "Are you preparing or do you intend to prepare a detailed account of the battle of Gettysburg for publication?"<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, George McClellan believed Bachelder should illustrate maps of the other battlefields in a similar manner to his Isometric Map.<sup>42</sup> Many veterans were anxiously waiting to see what Bachelder would do next, hoping he would continue doing work on either different Civil War battlefields or more about Gettysburg itself. Veterans would not need to wait long to see what Bachelder would do next about Gettysburg.

### Bachelder and the High-Water Mark of the Rebellion

Bachelder's vision shifted throughout his time working with Gettysburg. He originally wanted to create a history painting of Bunker Hill, which there was not enough information to make a painting of. Perhaps because there was not enough information or perhaps because he wanted to quickly make a painting soon after the battle occurred, Bachelder decided to move onto a different battle of the Civil War to make a history painting of. Gettysburg turned into this

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<sup>40</sup> In a letter from Alpheus Williams. Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 93.

<sup>41</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 234.

<sup>42</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 43.

major battle Bachelder hoped to depict. Upon creating some of his original sketches in July 1863, he decided to shift from a history painting to an isometric map, which fit his artistic style of vast landscape paintings more than a history painting. He may have also decided to shift since he was a landscape painter and perhaps he did not feel like he could make figures and horses in a history painting. Bachelder continues with his artistic approach to Gettysburg, commissioning James Walker to make a painting of *The Battle of Gettysburg: the Repulse of Longstreet's Assault* (1870), which later becomes more commonly known as Pickett's Charge (fig. 3). While Bachelder did not paint the piece he had originally hoped to create when he came to Gettysburg, he had James Walker make the painting, with close direction from Bachelder.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps this was once again due to Bachelder being a landscape painter, so painting horses and soldiers would have been hard for him to depict, or perhaps it was because Bachelder was busy making engravings of generals, gathering veterans' accounts and selling his work.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, Bachelder decided it would be best for Walker to make the painting. James Walker had quite good technical skills as an artist, so Bachelder must have felt comfortable giving him the task of his great history painting.<sup>45</sup>

The Walker painting shows a nearly 180-degree view of Pickett's Charge. Little Round Top sits on the far left of the painting, situating the viewer in the painting. Looking south to north in the painting, or left to right, the cemetery can be barely seen on the horizon, at the far right of the painting. A mess of horses and men make up half of the painting. Walker used dark colors for the composition, so it is hard to easily distinguish the troops—the few regimental flags show which troops are fighting. There are some men, horses, and objects littering the ground, but

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<sup>43</sup> Reardon, *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory*, 70.

<sup>44</sup> Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 92.

<sup>45</sup> The Johnson Collection Gallery, "Walker, James (1819-1889)," Artists, accessed November 1, 2020. <https://thejohnsoncollection.org/james-walker/>

it is reminiscent of other Civil War battle art meant for the public, in that there is no gore or blood shown in the entire piece. The painting on its own does not seem to heroize a specific side—it just shows the thick of battle, an uncertainty and tension of who will win. The Confederates rush in from the left, while the Union is on the right. There are only a few feet between the troops, in the center to the left, which suggests the moment right before the troops were going to clash.

Bachelder seemed to have wanted a moment in time before the High-Water Mark was created. Here, the viewer sees the edge of Lee's campaign north. Furthermore, it shows the final day of battle, the outcome of which was still unknown at the start of that day. Most history paintings of battles clearly show the most important people by having them in prominent positions, but here there is none of that. In the Walker painting, the narrative is not as straightforward. Perhaps Bachelder still did not have a clear picture of what he wanted from Gettysburg for a history painting—and it became harder as he received more and more correspondences. Perhaps this was because Bachelder wrote a companion key to the painting, which was sold alongside lithographs of the painting. Thus, it did not need to be so clear to what was happening in the painting itself.<sup>46</sup> Bachelder also gave lectures on the painting. Having the painting be on the third day allowed Bachelder to explain the events of the first two days, which could lead up to the main event the public came for—Walker's painting of Pickett's Charge. Nevertheless, Bachelder has Walker depict what he believed was the most important part of the battle—Pickett's Charge.

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<sup>46</sup> The key to the painting had 174 specific regiments and generals, with 26 terrain reference points.

This painting focuses on the Copse of Trees and the High-Water Mark, something which at this point was new to the interpretation of Gettysburg. In 1869, Bachelder held a gathering with some generals from the battle, wanting to discuss some of the battle lines while on the field. Over 120 veterans came, but only three were Confederate veterans. Walter Harrison, one of Pickett's staff officers, had gone to Bachelder's gathering, in which Harrison told Bachelder about a clump of trees which was the center of direction for July 3<sup>rd</sup>.<sup>47</sup> Bachelder asked Harrison, "Why, Colonel, as the battle of Gettysburg was the crowning event of this campaign, this copse of trees must have been the High Water Mark of the Rebellion."<sup>48</sup> Harrison agreed with Bachelder, and this sparked a new direction in Bachelder's work. Bachelder had already seen Gettysburg as the most important battle of the Civil War. But now Bachelder had one specific point of focus for Gettysburg, which gave a clear narrative. The battle of Gettysburg culminated into what Bachelder called the "Assault of Longstreet." While Bachelder did not get his phrasing for the name of Pickett's Charge, he did get the "Copse of Trees" to be remembered. While copse was not a commonly used word in the 1860s or 70s, Bachelder had decided on a word which could act as a flavorful name for what he hoped would be remembered throughout history.<sup>49</sup>

Some veterans, mainly those who fought largely during the second day, did not approve of Bachelder's version of the battle. Bachelder's interpretation shifted nearly all the focus from the first and second day to the July 3<sup>rd</sup>. While most veterans who fought on the third day were fine with Bachelder's version, other veterans felt they should not focus so much on the third day,

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<sup>47</sup> Hartwig, "Historian John Bachelder," 2016.

<sup>48</sup> Jennifer M. Murray, "John Bachelder's Dream," in "Union Veterans had no Doubt about Gettysburg's Significance as a Turning Point in the Conflict," *Civil War Times*, April 2019: 45.

<sup>49</sup> Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 96.



as there was so much that happened on the first and second day.<sup>50</sup> Prior to this, the second day was the focus of many visitors and veterans to the field. During the 1870s and 1880s, the focus shifted to Pickett's Charge. This was only solidified in American memory by other works, such as Paul Phillippoteaux's Gettysburg Cycloramas (first version, 1883). Now fighting on the first and second day were relegated as setting the stage for Pickett's Charge, instead of creating a wholistic narrative. Places like Culp's Hill, Little Round Top, and Devil's Den had less interest surrounding them in the later part of the nineteenth century. Some historians after Bachelder did not consider Pickett's Charge and the entire battle as this great turning point in the Civil War, since it was not a turning point while the war was still going on.<sup>51</sup> It was just another battle in the middle of the war, which did not seem like some great victory at the time. Some veterans felt like Gettysburg was not a turning point, while others felt strongly about this, calling the battle the "Waterloo of the Confederacy."<sup>52</sup> While it is debated whether Gettysburg should be considered a turning point, this post-war interpretation still clings on in American popular memory.

Bachelder put forward his interpretation of the third day of battle in many of his works. Bachelder's 1876 guidebook, *Gettysburg: What to See and How to See it*, highlighted what tourists should see while they are in Gettysburg. The guidebook was sold with a black and white pull out of Bachelder's isometric map, as Gouverneur K. Warren's Map of Gettysburg had been published in 1873, which lessened the sales of Bachelder's map.<sup>53</sup> This allowed tourists to have a map alongside the guidebook, further enhancing their visit to the battlefield. Bachelder told the readers in the introduction that this guidebook was not supposed to be a great history of the

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<sup>50</sup> Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 94.

<sup>51</sup> Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 102.

<sup>52</sup> Glenn W. LaFantasie, "The Many Meanings of Gettysburg," in *Gettysburg Heroes: Perfect Soldiers, Hallowed Ground* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 208. Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 94.

<sup>53</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 10.

battle, but rather as a key in touring the battlefield.<sup>54</sup> This guidebook shows the major stops visitors need to see, and where they should go if they have more time, to see other parts of town and the surrounding area, such as the Springs Hotel. In doing this, Bachelder focuses on the natural elements surrounding the battlefield, such as streams and grottoes.<sup>55</sup> Throughout the book, there are woodcut prints of trees and streams, instead of specific scenes of battle. This was an attempt to make a guidebook for the upper-middle classes of American society, as guidebooks at this time usually focused on spots of nature.<sup>56</sup> Bachelder also decides to not go into great detail about some locations, instead focusing on the natural elements which makes the area charming from a tourist point of view. When having visitors go to Marsh Creek, Bachelder states that Buford's men were in this area fighting the Confederate advance, but Bachelder does not want to recall the battle scene too much as to not "mar the interest in a pleasant drive."<sup>57</sup> Perhaps Bachelder left out some of the more explicit details of the battle because he knew he wanted to write a proper history. But it seems that Bachelder simply wanted to make something more along the lines of what other guidebooks did to appeal to upper-class tastes.

Throughout most of the book, Bachelder goes over a general view of the battle, going to places such as the Seminary's Cupola and Oak Hill of the first day's battle, and then bringing the visitor over to East Cemetery Hill to discuss the second day's fighting, and finally the views from Cemetery Hill to understand the actions of the third day. Bachelder then leads visitors to various other locations which he does not go into great detail about, such as Devil's Den, Marsh

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<sup>54</sup> John B. Bachelder, *Gettysburg What to See, and How to See it: Embodying Full Information for Visiting the Field, Beautifully Embellished with Wood-Cuts, with Complete Index; Illustrated by Drawing Isometrical Drawing of the Gettysburg Battle-field Showing the Position of Every Regiment and Battery of Both Armies*, 1873. (Reprint, London: Forgotten Books, 2015), v.

<sup>55</sup> Weeks, *Memory, Market, and American Shrine*, 24.

<sup>56</sup> Weeks, *Memory, Market, and American Shrine*, 24.

<sup>57</sup> Bachelder, *Gettysburg: What to See and How to See it*, 64.

Creek, and Hospital Hill, and then goes into greater detail once again about Little Round Top and Culp's Hill.

Towards the end of the guidebook, Bachelder tells the reader where they should go depending on the amount of time they have at Gettysburg. If they were only in Gettysburg for a few hours, they needed to go to the National Cemetery.<sup>58</sup> If they had a half day, they needed to see Seminary Ridge, Little Round Top, and Culp's Hill as well as the cemetery. And if they had a full day on the battlefield, they needed to see all of the previously mentioned places as well as the Seminary's Cupola, Oak Hill, the suburbs of Gettysburg, and York Street.<sup>59</sup> While he does not get into too much detail about any one spot, Bachelder spends the most time describing these places, especially his description of Pickett's Charge. As Bachelder stated, "the 'Seminary' is always associated with the first day's battle," indicating many visitors and veterans would have already recognized Seminary Hill as an essential part of the first day's battle.<sup>60</sup> Visitors at this time often went to Culp's Hill, as it showed signs of battle longer than most locations on the battlefield, such as the breastworks and the damage to the trees.<sup>61</sup> Little Round Top was a point of interest because it was a place to look out over the battlefield, and East Cemetery Hill was the most visited place on the battlefield by this point, with the establishment of the Soldiers National Cemetery. Meanwhile, the western portion of Cemetery Hill was not as visited, as it was mainly fields, which did not have anything interesting for visitors to see.<sup>62</sup> Yet, Bachelder spends thirteen pages of his guidebook describing Cemetery Hill—the longest section on a particular location of the battlefield—with the longest part of this describing Pickett's Charge. Bachelder

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<sup>58</sup> Bachelder, *Gettysburg: What to See and How to See it*, 105.

<sup>59</sup> Bachelder, *Gettysburg: What to See and How to See it*, 105-106.

<sup>60</sup> Bachelder, *Gettysburg: What to See and How to See it*, 45.

<sup>61</sup> Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 94-95.

<sup>62</sup> Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 95.

states in the guidebook “By facing again to the south, the reader will perceive a peculiar, umbrella-shaped copse of trees, a few hundred yards away...forms a prominent landmark, which was selected by General *Longstreet* to guide the direction of the column in its charge.”<sup>63</sup> He later exclaims “This ‘copse of trees’ was unquestionably the ‘*high water mark of this battle and of the war!*’”<sup>64</sup> While this guidebook is short, only 123 pages long, Bachelder illustrates what he believes are the most important locations—not only the well-known ones of the time, like East Cemetery Hill and Seminary Ridge, but also what Bachelder considers the most important point of the Civil War—Pickett’s Charge and the Copse of Trees.

The Walker Painting and Bachelder’s guidebook act as ways for Bachelder to show his new interpretation. He believed the third day was the most critical for the entire Civil War. The “High Water Mark of the Rebellion” became one of Bachelder’s highlights during his career. With the guidebook specifically, Bachelder shifts away from understanding the battlefield on paper for a commercial audience, which took the form of his lithographs and guidebook. Bachelder’s career begins to head towards what he believes is important for the battlefield to make it a memorial landscape for future generations and focuses on maps and a history book which will be the official government version of the narrative.

### Bachelder the Official Historian of Gettysburg

With the guidebook completed, Bachelder shifted his focus to write a history of the battle, allowing him to give his full interpretation of Gettysburg. Bachelder did not have any plans beyond the history painting or isometric map. However, with how many people wrote to Bachelder with their accounts and the overwhelmingly positive response from the veterans with

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<sup>63</sup> Bachelder, *Gettysburg: What to See and How to See it*, 54.

<sup>64</sup> Bachelder, *Gettysburg: What to See and How to See it*, 56.

the creation of his first map, the Walker painting, and the guidebook, Bachelder decided to continue working with the battlefield. His next major project was a commission by Congress in 1874 to create an aerial map of the positions of the troops using the Gouverneur K. Warren map as the base.<sup>65</sup> The Warren map had been a careful topographical survey by the Engineer Department of the government, the first of its kind by the government of Gettysburg (fig. 4).<sup>66</sup> It was created between 1868 and 1873, and Bachelder had given Warren, the head of the project, some information for the map, like residences during the battle.<sup>67</sup> Bachelder's new maps would consist of three maps, one for each day, allowing Bachelder to show much more than he could on his previous map. Since he used Warren's map as the base, it is very messy and hard to read at times, with all the topographical details and the troops, such as Little Round Top on the second- and third-days' maps. Bachelder had altered some of the Warren Map base, but Bachelder only changed a dozen or so mistakes of the Warren Map.<sup>68</sup>

The new Aerial Map overshadowed Bachelder's Isometric Map (fig. 5).<sup>69</sup> Many people once again wrote to him stating they were pleased with the results of his map. Frederick Heiker, who commanded the 82<sup>nd</sup> Illinois at Gettysburg, wrote how it presented a clear understanding of the battle, which would be critical to future generations to understand what took place on the battlefield.<sup>70</sup> Even those who were not present at the battle praised Bachelder's new maps.

George Harlow, the Secretary of State of Illinois, wrote that it was "the universal verdict of the

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<sup>65</sup> Richard A. Sauers, Edwin Cole Bearss, Kenneth Bandy, and John Heiser, "Composite Text: A User's Guide: The John B. Bachelder Gettysburg Map Set" (Dayton, OH: Morningside House, Inc., 1995), 2.

<sup>66</sup> Sauers et al., "User's Guide: Bachelder Map Set," 2.

<sup>67</sup> Frassanito, *Early Photography at Gettysburg*, 17.

<sup>68</sup> Frassanito, *Early Photography at Gettysburg*, 18.

<sup>69</sup> It must also be noted Bachelder had worked on an aerial map of East Cavalry Field in 1880. Warren had not included East Cavalry Field for his topographical survey, so Bachelder also made a map of the field along with the positions of troops. However, this map was never published.

<sup>70</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 528.

officers and soldiers who were engaged in the battle of Gettysburg and who have seen the maps is that they are most excellent and very accurate in all details.”<sup>71</sup> Even though many people already had Bachelder’s Isometric Map, many people bought these maps, illustrating the interest surrounding Bachelder’s continued work and the battle.

The aerial survey of the battlefield allowed Bachelder to work for the government for the first time, leading to him working for Congress to write a grand history narrative to recreate the battle. In 1878, Bachelder began receiving letters of recommendation to bring to Congress, illustrating his expertise with Gettysburg’s history. Warren was one of the many to write a letter for him. Warren praised Bachelder for his Isometric and Aerial Maps, and Warren commented he still had Bachelder’s Isometric Map hanging in his office since it was given to him.<sup>72</sup> He said Bachelder’s notes were critically important to understanding the battle, which no one else had in their possession, and that he would be the best to write such a history, so these accounts would not be lost to history.<sup>73</sup> Warren believed Bachelder could write a great history of the war, even though Bachelder was not a trained historian. Bachelder took these letters to Congress in May 1880 and asked that they would pay him \$50,000 to write the book.<sup>74</sup> Bachelder also promised there would be new detailed maps with this publication. Congress approved and President Hayes signed off on Bachelder’s project.<sup>75</sup>

Bachelder worked on this history until late 1886, which he presented Congress a 2,550-page manuscript with a few dozen maps. Upon reading the manuscript, it was clear most of the book came from the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*. Published between 1880 to

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<sup>71</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 552.

<sup>72</sup> This letter was written on May 8, 1878. Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 553.

<sup>73</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 553.

<sup>74</sup> Sauers et al., "User's Guide: Bachelder Map Set," 2.

<sup>75</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 11.

1901, the *Official Records* were a series of volumes of the government's narrative of the entire war, due to the popularity of regimental histories during the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>76</sup> Ninety percent of Bachelder's manuscript came from the *Official Records*—only about 250 pages were from his own notes and accounts Bachelder had from veterans.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, over half of the maps Bachelder made for this publication were of the first day's battle, most likely due to the confusing nature of the positions of troops for the other two days.<sup>78</sup>

There are several theories concerning why Bachelder decided to mainly use the *Official Records*. Perhaps he did not have enough time to write such a history. He was working for the GBMA after 1880 and perhaps some of the matters for that took away his attention from writing his book. Perhaps he felt rushed in writing this book as people were expecting this book, since Bachelder had spent only six years writing the manuscript. Or perhaps it was too great a task to sift through all the accounts he had to create a cohesive narrative. This final theory seems like it would make the most sense. There are contradictory narratives which come out of this battle, with no one true version of what happened at Gettysburg.<sup>79</sup> While it may have been easier to decide where regiments were on a map during the battle or writing shortened accounts of the field in his guidebook, it must have been an even greater task of sorting through what happened on the ground, trying to make sense of each story he received. Bachelder may have just decided to take the easiest route when writing the book, just out of the sheer volume of material he would have had to understand and the inevitable criticisms about his book. In the end, his manuscript

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<sup>76</sup> Weeks, *Memory, Market, and American Shrine*, 59-60.

<sup>77</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 11.

<sup>78</sup> Sauers et al., "User's Guide: Bachelder Map Set," 3.

<sup>79</sup> Reardon, *Pickett's Charge in History and Memory*, 10.

was never published by the government as they felt they did not need such a history, since they had the *Official Records*.<sup>80</sup>

While Bachelder had been working on projects concerning Gettysburg for the government, he also was elected onto the board of directors for the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association (GBMA) in 1880. The GBMA had been established in 1864 in order to create a memorial park using the most “striking and interesting” parts of the battlefield for this memorial, which would be “a shrine of loyalty and patriotism...to view with wonder and veneration the sacred scenes of heroic struggle.”<sup>81</sup> While it originally began as an organization consisting of local citizens, the GBMA from 1879 onward was overwhelmingly veterans who were part of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). John M. Vanderslice, a Union veteran in the GAR, came to the 1878 reunion at Gettysburg and believed the battlefield was not enough of a memorial landscape.<sup>82</sup> The first monument outside of the Soldiers National Cemetery was established, which was to Strong Vincent on Little Round Top during the 1878 reunion. While the original board of directors for the GBMA had wanted to make the battlefield a memorial landscape, they did not have the funds to buy much land, which led to the GAR buying up all the GBMA’s stocks and a turnover of the board of directors to the GAR.<sup>83</sup> Vanderslice was one of the directors, but he quickly stepped down. Bachelder became one of the directors in place of Vanderslice in 1880, because he was known by veterans for his maps and documenting the battle from their accounts and Bachelder was a trusted source of the battle’s history.

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<sup>80</sup> Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 11.

<sup>81</sup> Unrau, "Administrative History," 5, 9.

<sup>82</sup> Unrau, "Administrative History," 46.

<sup>83</sup> Unrau, "Administrative History," 47.



Being on the GBMA allowed Bachelder to further his vision of the battlefield by using his love of military history to decide what should be within the memorial landscape. Only a few years later in 1883, the GBMA decided to make Bachelder their Superintendent of Tablets and Legends.<sup>84</sup> Prior to Bachelder becoming the Superintendent, no specific rules had been put in place concerning monumentation on the battlefield. Bachelder was then able to use this position to create his narrative of the battle and other vital decisions about these monuments. Bachelder set rules for which materials could be used on the monuments, allowing them to last a long time.<sup>85</sup> These materials would continue to be used in later monuments on the battlefield. Bachelder wanted to see that these monuments would last for generations, allowing visitors to understand the battlefield through the monuments. Bachelder also had the final say on any plaques on the monuments, which gave him more control over the narrative.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, Bachelder did not want the monuments to be scattered across the field. He wanted them to have specific positions—along where the men started the day's fighting. This allowed for visitors to more easily understand how the fighting began and the movements of troops on the battlefield. Bachelder's major overarching vision of the battlefield was to let visitors understand the battle by just seeing the field itself. This position in the GBMA was one Bachelder would have through the 1890s. The GBMA had put 320 monuments on the battlefield, and Bachelder would have overseen most of the monuments go out onto the battlefield, since the bulk of the monuments went out after 1880.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Angie Atkinson, "The Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association," *From the Fields of Gettysburg: The Blog of Gettysburg National Military Park*, February 15, 2014, accessed May 28, 2020.

<https://npsgnmp.wordpress.com/2014/02/15/the-gettysburg-battlefield-memorial-association/>

<sup>85</sup> Hartwig, "Historian John Bachelder," 2016.

<sup>86</sup> Hartwig, "Historian John Bachelder," 2016.

<sup>87</sup> Weeks, *Memory, Market, and American Shrine*, 61.

While most regiments raised the money for their monuments and decided the design, some consider the High-Water Mark monument Bachelder's crowning achievement on the battlefield, which was completely Bachelder's idea to memorialize Pickett's Charge. Basil Biggs owned the land surrounding the Copse of Trees. He wanted to cut them down for firewood, which Bachelder saw him doing. Bachelder convinced Biggs to not cut down the trees because Biggs could make more money selling the lot for its historical significance to the GBMA.<sup>88</sup> Biggs eventually sells the Copse of Trees to the GBMA in 1881.<sup>89</sup>

Bachelder had a very specific grand monument to the High-Water Mark in mind, while the Board of Directors had a different idea for the Copse of Trees. The GBMA, understanding its historical significance and because there were people trying to cut some of the branches to sell as souvenirs, decided they would put a fence around the Copse of Trees and a small sign, stating what it was.<sup>90</sup> The GBMA originally decided to put up the fence in 1887, but Bachelder was insistent that there be more.<sup>91</sup> Bachelder wanted to make the High-Water Mark well known on the battlefield itself, rather than just in the history books. Thus, Bachelder wanted a grand monument to the High-Water Mark of the Rebellion. Bachelder wanted the High-Water Mark to be the crowning monument on the battlefield. He quickly proposed a monument which would cost \$5,000.<sup>92</sup> The GBMA could not afford such monument, so Bachelder had to go to various states, raising the necessary funds. They eventually acquired enough money, and the monument was dedicated in 1892. The High-Water Mark monument was one of the last ways Bachelder influenced the memory of the battle. What he believed to be the most important skirmish soon

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<sup>88</sup> Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 98.

<sup>89</sup> Murray, "John Bachelder's Dream," 45.

<sup>90</sup> Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 99.

<sup>91</sup> Murray, "John Bachelder's Dream," 45.

<sup>92</sup> Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 99.

became set into stone on the battlefield. The High-Water Mark would not be something small like the GBMA believed, but something grand and monumental—pushing Bachelder’s narrative that Gettysburg was this great turning point of the war and illustrating this narrative push within the memorial landscape itself. While most of the monuments followed regimental movements on the battlefield, Bachelder wanted the High-Water Mark monument to stand out from the rest of the monuments, completing his grand narrative of the battle.

Bachelder wanted visitors to understand the entire battle easily by looking at the landscape itself, and in the late 1880s, the park lacked clear Confederate battle lines. Marking these lines was Bachelder’s final contribution to the memory of the battle before his death in 1893. Once again, Bachelder’s vision surpassed the realities of what the GBMA could do. The GBMA could only condemn or buy land which saw Union activity during the battle—they could not purchase land which was part of the Confederate battle line.<sup>93</sup> Bachelder felt like the Confederate battle lines should be marked, so people could understand the entire battle as a whole just by being on the field itself.<sup>94</sup> He worried that understanding of the battle would be lost to time if the lines were not properly marked.<sup>95</sup> Just like how Bachelder wanted Confederates to tell their stories to create his Isometric Map, Bachelder knew it was important to mark the positions of troops, even if they were the Confederates. In the early years of the park, many northern veterans believed it should be a sacred place for northerners only.<sup>96</sup> This can be seen by looking at the Soldiers National Cemetery, which was only for Union burials. Many northern veterans still felt Gettysburg should be a sacred place for the Union. Others believed in a more

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<sup>93</sup> Hartwig, "Historian John Bachelder," 2016.

<sup>94</sup> Unrau, "Administrative History," 61.

<sup>95</sup> Unrau, "Administrative History," 62.

<sup>96</sup> Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 77.

reconciliationist approach, which becomes more common in the 1890s.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, more Confederate veterans were willing to see something to their efforts at Gettysburg. While some Confederates did not want monuments to the battle, they did want their positions to be remembered. Bachelder argued the Confederate battle lines should be marked, not necessarily for reconciliation, but to have a complete historical narrative by just looking at the park's landscape. Some veterans agreed, stating it was hard to point out where Pickett's men were from the Angle without any monuments or markers to the Confederate troops.<sup>98</sup> Thus, Bachelder petitioned Congress in 1889 to pay him \$50,000 to mark the Confederate battle lines.<sup>99</sup> Congress decided against this, mainly because they had already paid Bachelder to write the history book, which they were not impressed with.<sup>100</sup> Congress came up with another plan—two veterans and an engineer would mark the Confederate lines. However, with some convincing, this undertaking was done by two veterans and Bachelder. They began their work, but Bachelder died in the middle of the project in 1893. While this was not finished by Bachelder, this work would be done by the later War Department, allowing for Bachelder's vision of making a clear narrative on the landscape of what happened at Gettysburg possible.

Before Bachelder died, perhaps due to this issue of marking Confederate lines along with others, he believed the GBMA should be bought by the War Department.<sup>101</sup> Daniel Sickles eventually pushed this legislation through only two years after Bachelder died, and this exchange led to a new shift in how the park's memorial landscape was understood. Once the War Department owned the park, there are Confederate monuments put up and their battle lines were

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<sup>97</sup> Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 101.

<sup>98</sup> Weeks, *Memory, Market, and American Shrine*, 63.

<sup>99</sup> Desjardin, "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," 103.

<sup>100</sup> Hartwig, "Historian John Bachelder," 2016.

<sup>101</sup> Hartwig, "Historian John Bachelder," 2016.

marked. Yet, Bachelder's work on marking the Confederate battle lines and working as the Superintendent of Monuments and Tablets for a decade allowed Bachelder to shape the narrative of the landscape in ways others had been unable to do. Bachelder's final years focused on creating a landscape which would be able to tell the history of the battle on its own, through the monuments, markers, and avenues put out on the landscape. While Bachelder did not get to see the park become this, he did create the foundation of this American shrine.

### Conclusion

John Badger Bachelder had a specific vision for the Gettysburg landscape, which changed throughout his career working on the battlefield. He originally wanted to create a history painting, which would be the grand history painting of the Civil War, compared to *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. Originally this painting was supposed to be of Bunker Hill, but there were not enough military records about the engagement, so Bachelder turned to one of the battles after that. He hoped to focus on a major engagement—which came in the form of Gettysburg. Having gotten countless accounts, Bachelder decided to shift his focus from a history painting to a map. This Isometric Drawing would slowly shift his career from an artist, enthusiastic about military history, to the first park historian. While Bachelder was not aware of what he wanted to do with these correspondences after the map, he decided to engage with other media in explaining the battle—the Walker painting, lithographs of the generals, and the guidebook, trying to understand the battle.

However, Bachelder began to get a clearer vision as the years went on as the High-Water Mark would be the crowning event of the Civil War to Bachelder. His interpretation was not a

wholistic approach to understanding the battle, but it allowed a straight-forward narrative, which was easily marketable through the Walker Painting and the High-Water Mark monument. This story Bachelder held onto made it hard for Bachelder to write his great history for Congress. The messy nature of the battle made the narrative of the second and third days hard to explain, especially with the endless accounts Bachelder had gathered. He fell short of becoming an official historian of the Civil War due to this book.

Bachelder did succeed in becoming the first park historian of Gettysburg, influencing the memory and landscape of Gettysburg through the GBMA and his other works. While visitors would see “streams, charming valleys, broad fields, and towering heights,” Bachelder hoped they would understand that Gettysburg was “once the theater of a great and mighty battle.”<sup>102</sup> He did not want Gettysburg and its story to be forgotten. His influence can still be felt on the landscape, with visitors still interested in Pickett’s Charge and knowing the phrase “Copse of Trees.” John Bachelder’s artistic vision for Gettysburg would long be remembered on the landscape and through his various maps, lithographs, and books about the battle, which he hoped would be remembered for generations.

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<sup>102</sup> Bachelder, *What to See and How to See it*, 19.

**Maps and Illustrations**



Figure 1—Bachelder, John Badger. *Gettysburg Battle-field. Battle fought at Gettysburg, PA., July 1st, 2d & 3d, 1863 by the Federal and Confederate Armies, Commanded Respectively by Genl. G. G. Meade and Genl. Robert E. Lee.* 1864 ed. Colored Lithograph. 53 x 92 cm. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, DC.

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3824g.cw0321000>





Figure 2— Bachelder, John Badger, artist. John Henry Bufford, lithographer. *View of Dover NH taken from Garrison Hill*. 1855. Colored Lithograph. 49 x 77 cm. The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints, and Photographs: Print Collection, New York Public Library, New York City. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-7d22-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>





Figure 3—James Walker’s *the Repulse of Longstreet’s Assault* (1870). Subsequent prints were made of the painting. A key to the painting that Bachelder wrote would have been sold alongside the print. James Walker. *The Battle of Gettysburg: Repulse of Longstreet’s Assault, July 3, 1863*. Finished 1870. Oil on canvas. 90 x 240 inches. The Johnson Collection, Spartanburg, SC. <https://thejohnsoncollection.org/james-walker-the-battle-of-gettysburg-repulse-of-longstreet-assault-july-3-1863/>

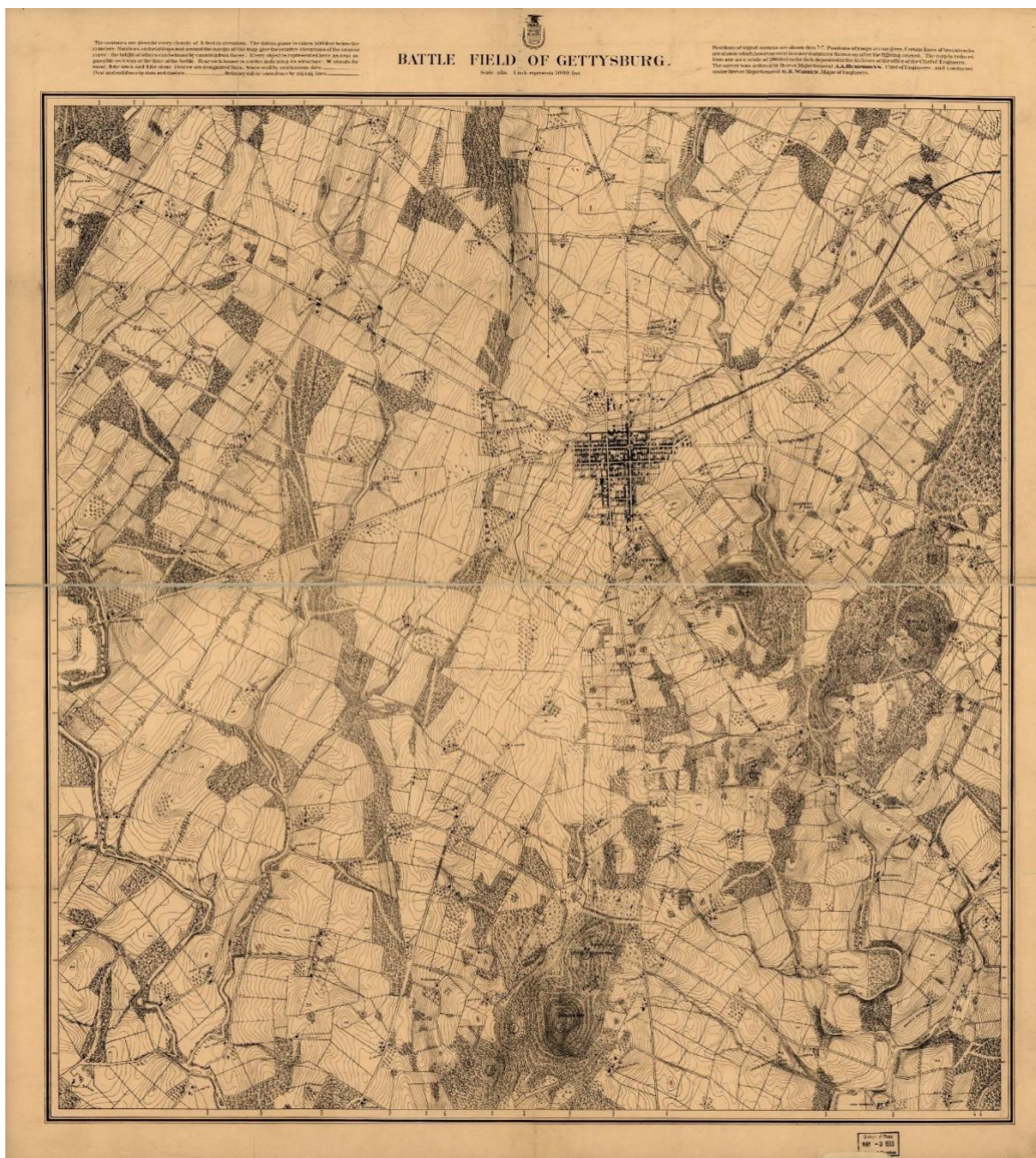


Figure 4— Warren, Gouverneur K. *Battle Field of Gettysburg*. U.S. Army Office of the Chief of Engineers, 1873 ed. 81 x 70 cm. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, DC. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc/gmd/g3824g.cw0353500>





Figure 5—Bachelder, John Badger. *Map of the Battle Field of Gettysburg. July 3rd, 1863.* New York City: Endicott & Co, 1876. Engraving. 74 x 71 cm. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, DC. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3824g.cw0325000a>

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