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“[We] burnt the station, destroyed the railroad,
and had a good time generally”:

CHARLES MINOR’S CASHBOOK AND
THE DIARY OF E.P. HARMON, A MAINE
SOLDIER IN THE OVERLAND
CAMPAIGN, SPRING 1864

BY AARON D. PURCELL

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and the editor of The Journal of East Tennessee History.*

ON MAY 25, 1864, the soldiers of Company E, Fifth Maine Volunteers, destroyed the railroad tracks and property of the Virginia Central Railroad near the small depot in Hewlett’s Station, Virginia, just north of Richmond. Raids such as this one were designed to destroy the Confederacy from within, by severing transportation and communication lines. At the same time, Union soldiers took the opportunity during raids to acquire goods for their own purposes.¹

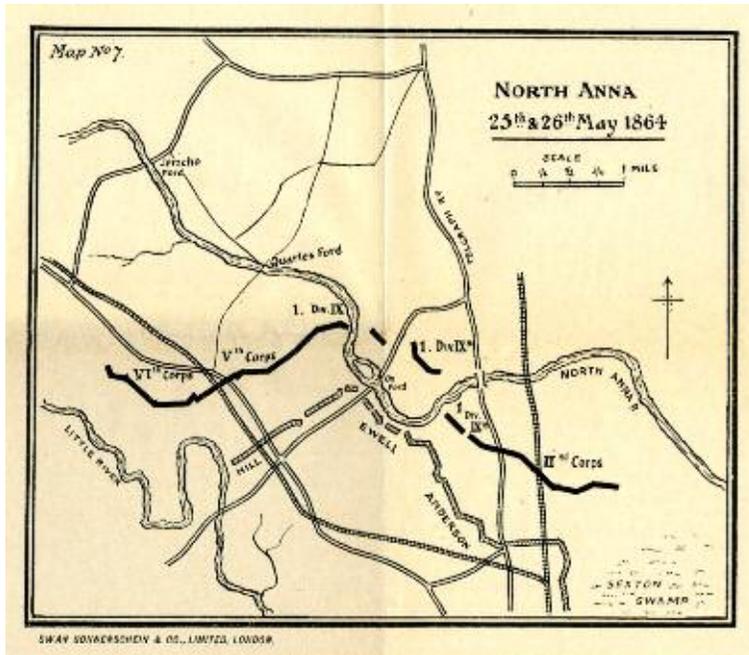
During this raid Union soldiers had access to train cars full of mail and other belongings. In particular, Union soldiers procured a travel trunk that belonged to Confederate Captain Charles L.C. Minor. The trunk was destined for Minor’s home in Negro Foot, located in Hanover County, Virginia. It contained items such as clothes, personal belongings, and a cashbook of financial records. The cashbook (a pocket-sized ledger book measuring 5.5 x 7.5 inches) included details of Minor’s financial transactions from 1860 to 1863. The cashbook listed the costs of mundane services such as buying stamps, tithing to his church, purchasing candy, paying servants, shoeing his horse, contributing to the Confederate war effort, and having his scabbard cleaned. At the end of the

cashbook, Minor included the details of his bank account with the exchange bank of Richmond, a list of silver wedding gifts received by his wife Fannie Ansley Cazenove when they married in 1860, and an inventory of his stocks and bonds. The cashbook documented the official and personal expenses of a Confederate officer during the first years of the Civil War.²

A member of a wealthy Virginia family, Charles Landon Carter Minor was born on December 3, 1835. He attended a private school in Lynchburg and then enrolled at the University of Virginia in 1854, from which he graduated with a master's degree in 1858. After completing his studies, he taught school in Albemarle County and at the Virginia Female Institute in Staunton. Following the outbreak of war, Minor enlisted as a private in the Confederate army on November 16, 1861. He joined the First Rockbridge Artillery, Company A, First Engineers Regiment. In early 1862, he transferred to General Thomas Taylor Munford's Second Virginia Cavalry Regiment, Company K. Minor saw action during Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's Valley campaign in spring 1862, was involved in battles outside of Richmond in late June 1862, and was with his regiment at the Second Battle of Manassas in late August 1862.³

In late 1862, Minor was appointed lieutenant and ordnance officer for General Samuel Jones, who was responsible for Confederate operations in southwestern Virginia. Based in Dublin, Virginia, General Jones worked to protect Confederate salt works and southern transportation routes, especially the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, from Union forces. As ordnance officer, Minor acquired supplies, horses, and ammunition for Confederate regiments in the area. He also coordinated mundane military affairs such as ordering stationary and reimbursing officers for personal expenses. In July 1863, Minor received orders to "procure horses enough to mount himself and half a dozen men" and join up with other Confederate forces to help defend the town of Wytheville from a Union raid. The next month, while still near Wytheville, Minor's horse was shot from under him by Union troops.⁴

In early 1864, Minor was appointed aide-de-camp for General Albert Gallatin Jenkins. He assisted Jenkins throughout the spring. In early May 1864, Union troops led by General George Crook advanced on Dublin with the intention of capturing Confederate supplies and destroying the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad. On May 9, General Jenkins led nearly 3,000 Confederate soldiers into battle against Union forces on Cloyd's Mountain just outside of Dublin. The Union army overwhelmed the Confederates and forced their retreat. During the battle, Jenkins re-



Map of the Battle of North Anna River in Virginia in 1864. Hewlett's Station is not noted on this map, but it was located at the crossroads of the railroad and a road, to the lower right of the location of Hill's forces. From Henry Vaughan-Sawyer, *Grant's Campaign in Virginia, 1864* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1908).

ceived a wound in the arm; he did not recover and died on May 21. Minor then requested to be reassigned to ordnance duties, again under the command of General Samuel Jones. In late May, he received confirmation of that appointment, which was based in Charleston, South Carolina.⁵

As Minor prepared for the new assignment, Union forces led a raid on Hewlett's Station a few counties away. During that raid, Union soldier Edward P. Harmon acquired Minor's cashbook from the captured travel trunk. A private from New Gloucester, Maine, Harmon belonged to Company E of the Fifth Maine.⁶ He took the cashbook as his own, not for the information it contained and not as a souvenir, but instead as a notebook and container for his handwritten notes from the battlefield. Unlike pocket diaries of the time, Minor's cashbook had very sturdy boards, but it was compact enough to be carried in a coat pocket. In early May 1864, Harmon started a journal of his wartime experiences in



Charles Minor was born into a wealthy Virginia family in 1835. After completing college, Minor began a career as a teacher at the Virginia Female Institute. Once the Civil War broke out, Minor joined the Confederate army and rose to the rank of captain. Courtesy of Cowan's Auction.

central Virginia. To better protect his words, Harmon incorporated his handwritten pages into the middle of Minor's cashbook. Harmon wrote of his daily experiences in the newly repurposed cashbook for about a month.⁷

Harmon's wartime experiences in Virginia during the spring of 1864 were significant. In early May, Union General U.S. Grant crossed the Rapidan River, and the series of battles that followed were part of the Overland campaign. During the next four weeks, Union armies pushed deeper into Virginia and closer to Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. Some of the most important battles fought in Virginia occurred during this period, including the Battle of the Wilderness (May 5-7), the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House (May 8-21), the Battle of North Anna River (May 23-26), and the Battle of Cold Harbor (May 31-June 12). The Overland campaign concluded with Grant crossing the James River in mid-June. Grant then led Union forces into the final Virginia campaign of the war, the siege of Petersburg, which began in June 1864 and lasted until March 1865. The following month the Civil War ended with Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House, Virginia.⁸

The Fifth Maine was one of the many Union regiments involved in the Overland campaign. Most of the men in the regiment hailed from

rural parts of the state but the Fifth was organized in Portland on June 24, 1861. It was one of the first regiments to form after President Abraham Lincoln's call for volunteers. The regiment began the war in northern Virginia stationed near Alexandria. It participated in the Battle of Bull Run in July 1861 and provided protection for Washington, D.C., until the spring of 1862. In March, the Fifth joined forces under the command of Major General Irving McDowell and, until that fall, was part of the Peninsula campaign, participating in the siege of Yorktown and many of the engagements of the Seven Days' battles just outside of Richmond. In September, the Fifth joined the Maryland campaign which included action at the Battle of Antietam on September 16-17. In December, the regiment fought at the Battle of Fredericksburg. The regiment participated in the Chancellorsville campaign in late April and early May 1863.⁹

On July 1, 1863, while camped near Manchester, Maryland, the Fifth Maine Volunteers received orders to march to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. They fought on Little Round Top (where veterans later dedicated a monument to their service) and were part of the Union line that repelled Pickett's charge on July 3, 1863. After their victory at Gettysburg, the Union army, including the Fifth Maine, pursued Confederate forces back into Virginia. In late November 1863, the Fifth was involved in the Battle of Mine Run in Orange County, Virginia. The regiment spent the winter camped on the property of Dr. Robert Wellford near a crossing on the Hazel River in Culpepper County. On May 3, 1864, the regiment broke camp and during the next six weeks was part of the Overland campaign. The men fought in the battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna River, and Cold Harbor. On June 27, 1864, the three-year enlistments expired and the original members of the regiment were mustered out during a ceremony in Portland. Throughout their notable service in some of the bloodiest campaigns of the war, the Fifth Maine Regiment lost 184 members—eight officers and ninety-nine enlisted men killed or mortally wounded, and one officer and seventy-six men killed by disease. Following the mustering out of the regiment, some veterans and new recruits were assigned to the Sixth and Seventh Maine regiments, which in September merged with other regiments to form the First Maine Veterans Infantry Regiment.¹⁰

Edward P. Harmon served as a private with the Fifth Maine until the regiment dissolved in June 1864. Born in December 1843, he hailed from New Glouchester, in Cumberland County, Maine. On April 28, 1861, at the young age of seventeen, he enlisted in the army. His older brother

George also enlisted to lead the regiment's musicians. In late June 1861, Harmon and the regiment left from Portland to join Union forces in northern Virginia. The Fifth made its first camp at Meridian Hill, just outside of Washington, D.C. During the journey, Harmon became ill, complaining of chills, back pains, and severe diarrhea, and was admitted to the camp hospital. His symptoms indicated that he had contracted malaria. He rejoined the regiment after a few days and with his regiment crossed into Virginia on July 8, 1861. The extreme heat and conditions took their toll on the already weak Harmon, who likely suffered from sunstroke during this period. Harmon was sent to a hospital in Washington, D.C., and began corresponding with family back in Maine. One of his sisters shared the letters with a friend, Emma Francis Tobey, who started corresponding with Harmon. His health worsened and doctors did not expect him to survive. In September, they transferred Harmon to a hospital in Annapolis, Maryland, where he began to improve.¹¹

On October 14, 1861, Harmon had recovered and returned to service with the Fifth Maine at Camp Franklin, in Southampton County, Virginia. Because of his sickness and inability to perform many of the regular duties of a soldier, Harmon was detailed as a musician playing the bass drum for the Fifth under the charge of his brother, George Harmon. However, poor health continued to plague Harmon, who suffered from chronic diarrhea, severe headaches, fevers, and chills. Despite his poor health, Harmon served in the drum corps alongside his comrades, who fought at Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Gettysburg. On December 28, 1863, Harmon re-enlisted for a three-year term and transferred from the drum corps to become an assistant to officers in the regiment. He continued to correspond with Emma Francis Tobey and, in early 1864, while on military furlough, he visited her for the first time in Gardiner.¹²

In the spring of 1864, Harmon recorded his wartime experiences on paper. During the Overland campaign, Harmon noted fascinating details about camp life and combat. He provided details about troop movements and engagements at the battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania Court House, North Anna River, and Cold Harbor. Harmon often described orders that suddenly changed, never materialized, or resulted in significant backtracking. Life in camp for the Fifth Maine was full of extremes. Harmon described violent artillery fire and fighting with rebel sharpshooters, alternating with long periods of quiet and waiting for new orders. He mentioned the presence of African American soldiers, the low morale of his comrades, and Confederate prisoners of war. What follows, with slight editorial changes and corrections, are the recollec-



Edward P. Harmon served in Company E of the Fifth Maine Regiment. During a raid on Hewlett's Station, Virginia, Harmon acquired Charles Minor's cashbook, and used the cashbook to write notes and journal entries during the Overland campaign in the spring of 1864. Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections.

tions of E.P. Harmon. He wrote these words in the spring of 1864 and added the handwritten pages into Charles Minor's cashbook.¹³

* * * * *

Taken from the trunk of a Rebel Captain at Hewlett's Station on the Virginia Central Railroad, May 25th, 1864

**Diary of E. P. Harmon Company E, 5th Maine of 2nd Brigade
From May 2nd 1864**

May 2nd Moved camp across Hazel River and went into camp.

May 3rd In Camp expecting orders any minute.

4:00 PM Received order to move at 4:00 AM tomorrow.

May 4th Started on the march at 4:00 AM, crossed the Rapidan [River]. Marched 13 or 14 miles and camped for the night.

[Battle of the Wilderness, May 5-7]

May 5th Started at 6:00 AM, marched a few miles, formed a line of battle, at 9:00 AM firing commenced and was kept up all day without cessation, it was the most terrific firing I ever heard.

May 6th Firing awful, our regiment laying in 2nd line of battle, not been engaged yet, fighting going on the whole length of the line.

8:00 AM Got shelled very badly today it was enough to make a person shake with fear for the cast iron humming birds, no cessation in the Infantry firing now.

9:00 AM Nothing but picket firing now.

10 AM Our artillery has just got to firing the first time since the fighting commenced could get no position before.

10:15 Infantry firing again, artillery closed.

11:00 AM Heavy firing on our extreme left it is reported that [General Ambrose] Burnside is at Chancellorsville with Niggers and Indians.

4:00 PM It has been very quiet in front of our lines for several hours but firing is kept up on the left of us.

6:00 PM Fighting again in our front at dark our right was turned and flanked so we had quite a skedaddle, the troops were somewhat demoralized. I went back about 1 1/2 miles, our lines were charged to the left and rear. Lay down to sleep at 2:00 at night, all our teams went to Chancellorsville in the night.

May 7th The troops are all in position again in different places. I hardly know what to think of things now. I saw some Nigger troops this morning also, some Confederate prisoners which were captured last night, there has been but little firing this morn[ing] a few shots from artillery our Regiment not damaged much yet.

8:00 AM Everything quiet.

11:00 AM Firing again on our left—both—artillery and infantry.

11:30 AM Firing ceased again on the left.

12:30 Pretty quiet now some firing on the extreme right in the direction of Germania fork on the Rapidan.

“Sunset” A pretty sharp skirmish going on the left, our Brigade never had a better position than now, they are anxious for the Johns to attack them, now the Johnnies are cheering and yelling like time. We are ordered to move at 8:30 tonight.

8:00 order changed moved at 9:30.

[Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, May 8-21]

May 8th

8:15 Just eaten my breakfast by the roadside marched all night in the direction of Spotsylvania Court House, have got to move again in 15 minutes only allowed 3/4 an hour to eat and rest.

11:00 AM Moved 9 miles since eating breakfast, the 5th Corps is fighting now in front near Spotsylvania C[ourt] H[ouse]. It is awful hot today, the woods got on fire and a great many of our wounded men have been burned to death. I have been putting the fire out—this is an awful time for the poor soldiers.

12:30 PM Have been under fire of artillery today, our regiment is going to the front. Firing in the rear probably Burnside's troops are fighting.

7 PM Our troops are all massed for a charge, they are fighting hard it will be a hard fight. 3 men only of the 5th wounded yet.

8 PM Our division did not charge.

May 9th Our troops lay in their hid position, the left of our army charged last night, it was successful, we were turned out in the night, last night on account of an attack on the pickets.

8 AM Moved farther to the left about 1 1/2 miles, it is pretty quiet now, this is the fifth day of the fight. Our Brigade Commander done a very rash thing this morning, he marched our Brigade across an open field and lost several men when he might just as well went in the woods and then the sharpshooters could not have seen us, we are now protecting the flank of our left wing there is many queer and blind moves today.

3:30 Pickett firing very briskly troops all in rifle pits. Expect an attack. Every moment we are ready to give them a warm reception. General [Horatio] Wright has got command of the Corps. General [David] Russell the Division on account of the death of General [John] Sedgwick.

6:30 PM All quiet in front of our Division. Some skirmishing on the right of us.

7:00 Firing quite brisk now.

7:20 Our Batteries are firing quite smart now.

7:30 Firing in our front now. I am with the Regiment, expect an attack every minute now.

May 10th Did not have any engagement in front of us yesterday, quite a little skirmish in the front in the night last night.

6:15 The Batteries have ceased firing they have kept up an incessant fire since 5:20.

May 11th I feel bad this morning, our boys made the charge last night at dark they took the Rifle Pits but could not hold them, our Brigade took 1000 to 2000 prisoners, there was 109 killed, wounded and missing in our Regt. Lieut Joseph Paridis Co E, 5th Maine took 1 stand of colors, Co. E lost 14 out of 22 men, oh it was awful slaughter the boys fought bravely. 5 Capts out of 6 were wounded. Our Capt. was the only one saved.

8:55 All quiet this morning.

9:35 Our Batteries have opened again the troops are preparing to make a charge where they were driven back last night. They are bound to have the Rifle Pits any way.

12 N[oon] Things are very quiet now. Expect some hard fighting soon, the troops are getting into position to charge very quietly and fly by.

1 PM All quiet yet Burnside is in the Rebs rear.

2 PM Changed our position to the left and built rifle pits. We then moved back to our old position again and pitched tents for the night. It is raining very hard. The charge is postponed.

May 12th Started at daylight, went to the rear about 1 mile, we then turned about and came back to the old place again, then moved to the extreme left and relieved Gen. [Winfield S.] Hancock's troops. There is a lot more of our boys killed and wounded. Capt. [Frank L.] Lemont Co. E is killed.

5 PM Our boys still fighting they are cut-up badly this is the 9th day of the fight and the hardest one we have seen. I hardly know what to think of it.

7 PM There is not so much fighting now, our Brigade is very much broken up they are tired, heart sick and discouraged. It is reported that the 5th Corp de armie will charge tonight. I am sick, tired, and worn out, tonight. This is our 9th day of slaughter.

May 13th We moved back after dark last night and about 1 mile to the right, there is only a little picket firing this morning. Our Brigade is all broken up, it will be a day or two before it will get together again, it is not known how many men we have lost yet.

10:30 The whole number of men lost has been found out, it is 136 killed, wounded, and missing from 237.

12 PM Some skirmish fighting and artillery firing.

6:30 PM Changed our position twice this afternoon. We are now in

front as usual, we expect some more fighting tonight or early tomorrow morning. We found several of our missing men today, they were killed.

May 14th We started at 12 o'clock last night to march, we are going to the left of the army, have just halted to get breakfast. More again in ten minutes, don't know our destination. Wrote to E.F.T. [Emma Frances Tobey] last night have not sent the letter yet, don't know as I can at all.

2:15 PM All is quiet today. We are on picket this afternoon. I am with the Regiment, it is very pleasant and warm. Expect the picket line will be moved every minute.

5:00 PM Everything is as quiet as anyone could wish.

6:30 At 5:15 PM we were attacked with three times our number our boys fought as long as possible for them to, and then had to break and run, there was some tall running done and I was not far behind, we fell back across the River Ni and were reinforced and took back the position.

May 15th It was a hair's breath escape that we did not get captured last night.

3 PM Everything has been very quiet all day, there is a thunder shower coming now for a wetting.

6:15 Our skirmishers have advanced, may have a little fuss but not much, I hope not any.

May 16th The pickets were advanced last night without trouble, the Band is playing this morning the first time I have heard it for some time, all is quiet this morning.

3:30 All has been very quiet today until now, there is some artillery firing on the right.

3:45 All quiet again.

May 17th All quiet this morning but it is early yet and we may have something to do soon.

2 PM All quiet we are comfortably situated.

May 18th There is quite a change in our circumstances this morning. We broke camp last night and moved at 9:30 back to one of our old positions on the right. We have not had any chance to get any breakfast yet, we are now lying under fire from Reb Batteries.

6:15 AM Heavy artillery firing on both sides.

6:40 Quite sharp skirmish firing now but little artillery firing.

4 PM I have got my tent pitched where I had it yesterday at this time. We came back to this position this afternoon our move was to play a

game on old Lee, but it did not work. He is an old Fox to catch asleep.

May 19th Advanced our lines 1 mile this morning. I got 3 letters from E.F.T. [Emma Frances Tobey] also 3 papers, 1 towel[?], 1 letter from J.S.T. 1 from P.H.H. [P.H. Holmes] this morn[ing].

6 PM All quiet. We are in Rifle Pits prepared for an attack.

6:20 Just got orders to pack and be ready to move at a moments notice.

7 PM Orders to make ourselves as comfortable as possible until morning.

May 20th We were turned out at 12 o'clock last night to move, we went a few miles to the right to retrieve the heavy artillery Brigade and a part of the third Corps, who were fighting. The first Maine heavy artillery lost heavily.

3:50 All quiet, we expect to move tonight. We march nights and watch the Rebs daytimes.

May 21st All quiet, did not move last night, had a good night's rest, the first night for 7 nights, but we have heard firing.

12:30 PM We have marched 4 miles since morning, stopped for dinner now. Shall go on again soon.

5:30 We [are] now lying on the hill where we were driven off last Saturday, our front is exactly the opposite direction from what it was when we were here before. We shall probably march tonight, we are going to change our base to Port Royal [Caroline County, Virginia].

6 PM The Rebs have just attacked us but they have run against a snag. We are ready for them there is sharp musketry now.

May 22nd The Rebs did not press their attack last night. We started at 11 o'clock, marched all night just stopped for Breakfast. Going on again in 15 minutes.

11 AM Have just stopped to rest. It is awful hot today. I am most played out, my feet are all blistered and sore. We got an addition to our Brigade today, an artillery regiment of 1,737 men.

1:45 Just eaten my dinner, eat the last mouthful full don't know where the next will come from, it is a hard sight. Now more again in one hour.

[Battle of North Anna River, May 23-26]

May 23rd Started just before sunset last night to march. Camped at 10:30, very tired and hungry. Shall draw rations today.

7:00 PM Marched all day, drew 5 days rations, there is hard fighting ahead of us.

May 24th Marched across the North Ann[a] River this morning where the fighting was last night. It was a smart artillery duel, had a hard march last night. I am played out, but have got to keep up with the Regiment.

1:30 All quiet, awful hot today.

5 PM Fighting on the left, our regiment just went on the skirmish line.

May 25th 1 PM At Hewlett's Station, a squad of our Regiment, myself included came here on the railroad burnt the station destroyed the railroad and had a good time generally.

May 26th Our boys burnt the railroad yesterday for miles. We re-crossed the North Anna today.

1:30 Marched 8 miles today, don't know where we are going. We are on the same road we came.

[Battle of Cold Harbor, May 31-June 12]

May 27th Started at 8:30 last night and marched 9 hours went 18 miles or more. Stopped 1 hour for breakfast and then on again. Crossed the Pamunkey River at noon, we are now on the peninsula again. Went into camp for the rest of the day and night.

May 28th All quiet.

2:30 All packed up ready to move.

5 PM Moved 4 miles and camped for the night.

May 29th In camp all quiet don't know when we shall move but are liable to move at any time.

11:30 Moved to the front on a reconnaissance.

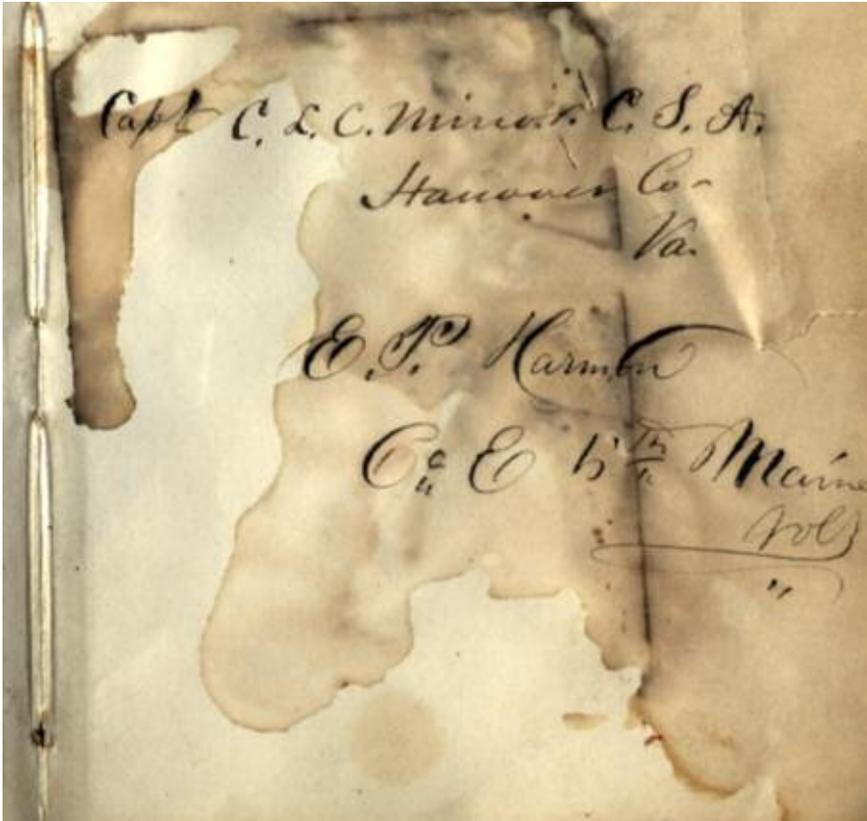
May 30th Advanced to within one mile of Hanover Court House yesterday and camped for the night. At one time yesterday we were nearly surrounded by the Rebel pickets. This morning we turned back and struck the Richmond road and are now advancing in that direction.

8 AM Halted for breakfast and drew rations we are nearly starved, some of the men have had nothing to eat for two days.

5:30 Got 1 days rations, shall get four days more too night [sic]. We have advanced a few miles this afternoon, there is some fighting in front. Our Regiment deployed as Skirmishers. We are near Mechanicsville, where we were two years ago.

May 31st

12 AM We are in front in close proximity to the Rebs, our skirmishers



The title page of the cashbook shows the signatures of the two owners: Charles L.C. Minor and Edward P. Harmon. The original owner of the book, Charles Minor, served in the Confederate army. He used the cashbook to keep records of items that he purchased. After a raid by the Union army, the cashbook switched hands from Minor to Edward P. Harmon of the Fifth Maine Regiment. Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections.

have been fighting all day. We got two days rations too day [sic] to last us 5 days. I am quite sick today am not hardly able to sit up. I got a letter and paper from E.F.T. [Emma Frances Tobey] a letter from A.H.H., California.

June 1st On the move again, marching to Cold (or Coal) Harbor. I am very slim today, had to ride a horse, was not able to walk.

7 PM There is awful heavy fighting going on now. The artillery fire makes my head ache badly, but it is all in three years. We are now 4 miles from Mechanicsville, 9 from Richmond, got reinforcement from [Benjamin F.] Butler's force.

June 2nd Some skirmishing this morning. I feel no better than I did yesterday.

6:30 AM Quite rainy, hard fighting on the right. Our corps had orders to make a forward movement at 5 PM but it was countermanded until 4 AM tomorrow morning.

June 3rd Our folks have advanced, there is awful hard fighting on the whole line, it is quite rainy this morning.

12:30 The fighting is not quite so terrific as it was but it is bad enough. Now several of our Regiment have been wounded. The Lieutenant I cook for is wounded badly {since died}

* * * * *

After the summer of 1864, E.P. Harmon continued to serve in the Union army and correspond with Emma Tobey in Maine. Following the mustering out of his regiment that summer, Harmon became part of the Seventh Volunteers and then in September was attached to the First Maine Veterans Infantry Regiment. During this last segment of service, he was part of the ambulance corps. Harmon kept the rank of private throughout the war. He was discharged from the military on July 4, 1865, and returned to Maine. Harmon moved to Gardiner and went into partnership with Emma's father, Thomas Tobey, who owned a successful grocery business. He lived with the Tobey family and on October 19, he married Emma. However, Harmon's health problems returned and his inability to work and pay his growing medical bills made it difficult to remain in the grocery business. In May 1866, he found employment working as a machinist for his brother-in-law P.H. Holmes. Harmon worked sporadically as a machinist for P.H. Holmes and Company in Gardiner until his poor health forced him to resign in August 1882. In March 1884, he applied for an invalid military pension on the basis that his military service ruined his health and made him unable to earn a living. Nearly four years later on July 6, 1888, with his pension application still pending, Edward P. Harmon died just a few months shy of his forty-fifth birthday.¹⁴ His recollections of the Civil War were never published and the cashbook with his diary from the spring of 1864 remained in private hands.

The original owner of the cashbook, Charles Minor, had a much more notable career after the summer of 1864. In early June 1864, he rejoined General Samuel Jones in Charleston, South Carolina. On August 1, he was promoted to captain and was appointed chief ordnance officer

for Confederate operations in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. In September, Minor was transferred to Richmond to serve as an executive officer of the Richmond Arsenal. The central location for supplies and arms for the Confederacy, the Richmond Arsenal was led by chief of ordnance General Josiah Gorgas. Minor stayed in that position until the end of the war. On April 18, 1865, Minor signed a parole of honor and rejoined his family in Hanover County.¹⁵

After the Civil War, Minor returned to teaching and educational administration. He first opened a private school at his home in Negro Foot, Virginia. In 1867, the trustees of the Maryland Agricultural College (later the University of Maryland) wanted to re-open their doors to students. They first offered the presidency to George Washington Custis Lee, the son of Robert E. Lee. After Lee declined, the trustees turned to Charles Minor who promoted an educational philosophy that combined classical and scientific training. Minor accepted the presidency and, in October 1867, the school re-opened with four faculty and eleven students. During the academic year, he abolished the preparatory school and focused on training the sons of farmers for the modern world. However, Minor expected students to learn both new scientific methods of farming and be fluent in classical subjects such as Latin, Greek, and algebra. Enrolled students struggled with the curriculum and few potential students passed the entrance exams. Unable to attract new students and advocates, Minor resigned as president in the spring of 1868.¹⁶

Minor returned to Virginia and, in the summer of 1868, opened a successful private school in Lynchburg. By late 1871, the creation of public schools in Lynchburg forced him to close his school and seek employment elsewhere. In the spring of 1872, Minor accepted the position of professor of Latin and head of the preparatory department at Sewanee, the University of the South, in Tennessee. However, after only a month in Tennessee, Minor applied for the presidency of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical Institute (later Virginia Tech) in Blacksburg. The school was located just a few miles from Dublin and Cloyd's Mountain, where Minor served as a Confederate officer ten years prior. Trustees of the new school, which had a land-grant mission of agricultural and mechanical training, appointed the thirty-six-year-old Minor as their first president. The school opened on October 1, 1872, with enrollment reaching 132 students that academic year.¹⁷

While at Virginia Tech, Minor built an impressive campus and student enrollment. His success attracted attention, and, in 1874, he re-

ceived an honorary doctorate from the College of William and Mary. Similar to other land-grant schools, Virginia Tech made military training a requirement. By the late 1870s Minor clashed with members of the faculty who wanted a stricter military discipline for students. Minor took a much more relaxed approach to student discipline and believed that military training was only one component of the collegiate experience. The issue came to a head during a faculty meeting on March 25, 1878. At this meeting, James H. Lane, the commandant of cadets, threatened and shook his fist. Minor responded by punching Lane in the face. School leaders sided with Lane on the issue of military discipline, and in early 1879, the trustees decided to replace Minor. He served as president until the end of the fall semester and officially resigned in December 1879.¹⁸ After leaving Virginia Tech, Minor continued as an educator. In 1880, he purchased the Shenandoah Valley Academy in Winchester, Virginia. In 1888, he moved to Baltimore to direct the St. Paul's School. He also served as associate principal of the Episcopal high school in Alexandria, Virginia.¹⁹

In the 1890s, Charles Minor retired from teaching and began writing essays on the Civil War. The consummate educator, Minor wanted to record his recollections of the 1860s so students could better understand that crucial decade.²⁰ Most significantly, he published several newspaper articles and other pieces that criticized the character, leadership, accomplishments, and personality of Abraham Lincoln.²¹ For the basis of his research, Minor focused on the words and actions of a number of Lincoln's associates. Minor's writings attracted the attention of Kate Mason Rowland, a charter member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the author of several historical works. She compiled Minor's articles and other parts of his research into *The Real Lincoln*, a lengthy pamphlet published in 1901. Minor believed that biographers deified Lincoln and evaluated him only through the lens of the northern perspective on the Civil War.²² Readers with "Lost Cause" sympathies embraced the publication, while others criticized Minor for only focusing on the negative aspects of Lincoln's presidency. Minor continued his research on Lincoln and planned to publish an expanded version of the pamphlet.²³

Minor also wrote on other related topics with a Lost Cause perspective. On June 14, 1903, his essay, "The Old System of Slavery: Its Compensations and Contrasts with Present Labor Conditions," appeared in the *Baltimore Sun*. Like other southern apologist writers, Minor claimed that slaves enjoyed great benefits on the plantation and their sudden emancipation unleashed great societal dangers.²⁴ In early July, Minor



After serving in the Confederate army, Charles Minor became an influential teacher, educational administrator, and southern apologist. He is pictured here as president of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical Institute (later Virginia Tech) in the 1870s. Courtesy of Virginia Tech Special Collections.

completed the manuscript for his expanded book on Lincoln. Nearly four times longer than the pamphlet, the manuscript provided details on how northern eulogists had bestowed excessive honor, or apotheosis, on Lincoln and his legacy. On July 13, 1903, Charles Minor died at his brother-in-law's home in Albemarle County, Virginia. During the next year, Minor's brother and sister edited the manuscript, and a revised and enlarged edition of *The Real Lincoln* was published in 1904. The book maintained an audience with two subsequent editions, the last appearing in 1928.²⁵

Despite Minor's legacy as an influential southerner, soldier, educator, and writer, he remained a secondary historical figure. The lack of original materials and his personal papers have made it difficult to reconstruct his life and legacy. There are small sets of original material on Minor at the Huntington Library, the University of Virginia, and the Library of Virginia.²⁶ Minor's tenure as president of Virginia Tech from 1872 to 1879 has been studied by scholars. However, in 1905 a fire on

campus destroyed all of the early Virginia Tech presidents' papers leaving little if anything from Minor's administration. Over one-hundred years after that catastrophic event, Virginia Tech still did not own a single original item authored by its first president.²⁷

Then in early 2008, an auction company specializing in historical materials contacted Virginia Tech Special Collections (which includes the University Archives and a large collection of Civil War manuscripts, diaries, and printed sources) about an unusual item coming up for auction. The piece was both a Civil War era cashbook owned by Charles Minor, and a battle diary written by E.P. Harmon with details of the Overland campaign in the spring of 1864. The item provided double perspectives—from the North and South, and from an officer and a private during the Civil War. The unique nature of the piece, the connection to Virginia Tech's earliest leader, and the rich battle content made it a perfect fit for Special Collections at Virginia Tech. A few weeks later, Virginia Tech won the item after several rounds of bidding (most likely with competition from archivists at the University of Maryland and Sewanee). Upon review, the cashbook proved to hold potential for multiple research purposes. It provides an important connection to the school's early history, as well as a first-hand account of the Overland campaign in central Virginia.

The acquisition of the item by Virginia Tech resulted in significant publicity. The story about Charles Minor's pilfered cashbook returning to the campus where he served as president after the Civil War became the topic of press releases, newspaper stories, radio interviews, a television news segment, and attention from other media outlets.²⁸ The cashbook was the featured item during open-house events for Special Collections and the University Libraries at Virginia Tech. The first wave of researchers, especially alumni and students, wanted to view an original item once owned by Virginia Tech's first president. But as the months passed, researchers were drawn to the words of Union Private E.P. Harmon, a nearly forgotten soldier from Maine with a less-than-glorious record of military service or postwar achievement. While the provenance of the cashbook makes it a treasured item for Virginia Tech, Harmon's words are perhaps more significant for Civil War researchers, especially those studying the contributions of the Fifth Maine Volunteers in Virginia during the Overland campaign. Harmon's own personal journey through the Civil War and his attempts to recover and prosper in the postwar period reveal how the war affected individual lives.

Notes

1. Official reports did not mention the pilfering of contraband and supplies at Hewlett's Station, but there was a report that soldiers destroyed part of the railroad at nearby Noel's Station. See United States, War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. 36, part 1, p. 670; *Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the President and Directors of the Virginia Central Railroad Company to the Stockholders, At Their Annual Meeting, November, 1864* (Richmond: H.K. Ellyson, 1864), p. 12; George W. Bicknell, *History of the Fifth Regiment Maine Volunteers* (Portland, ME: H.L. Davis, 1871), p. 326; *Maine at Gettysburg: Report of the Commissioners Prepared by the Executive Committee* (Portland, ME: Lakeside Press, 1898), p. 383.
2. Charles L.C. Minor Cashbook and Edward P. Harmon Civil War Diary Collection, Ms 2008-081, Special Collections, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia.
3. Harry D. Temple, *The Bugle's Echo* (Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Alumni, 1996), 1:22; Duncan Lyle Kinnear, *The First 100 Years: A History of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University* (Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Polytechnic Institute Educational Foundation, 1972), p. 61; Lyon Gardiner Tyler, *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1915), 3:188-89; Robert J. Driver, Jr., and H.E. Howard, *2nd Virginia Cavalry* (Lynchburg, VA: H.E. Howard, 1995), p. 249; "Historical Sketch of the Rockbridge Artillery, C.S. Army, By A Member of the Famous Battery," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 23 (January-December 1895): 149.
4. Quotation from *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 27, part 2, p. 948; Charles L.C. Minor Confederate Service Record, 1863-1865, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Generals and Staff Officers and Nonregimental Enlisted Men, Record Group 108, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, D.C., microfilm reel 179; Tyler, *Encyclopedia*, 3:63, 189; Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), p. 166; Driver and Howard, *2nd Virginia Cavalry*, p. 249; William Marvel, *The Battles for Saltville* (Lynchburg, VA: H.E. Howard, 1992), pp. 50-55.
5. *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 37, part 1, pp. 8-13; Minor Confederate Service Record, Charles Minor to Josiah Gorgas [telegram], May 14, 1864, S. Cooper to Charles Minor [telegram], May 14, 1864, all in RG 108, NARA; Driver and Howard, *2nd Virginia Cavalry*, p. 249; Warner, *Generals in Gray*, pp. 154-155; Howard Rollins McManus, *The Battle of Cloyd's Mountain: The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Raid, April 29-May 19, 1864* (Lynchburg, VA: H.E. Howard, 1989), pp. 21-41; Jack L. Dickinson, *Jenkins of Greenbottom: A Civil War Saga* (Charleston, WV: Pictorial Histories Publication Company, 1988), pp. 68-69.
6. Bicknell, *History of the Fifth Maine*, p. 391.
7. Minor Cashbook and Harmon Diary Collection, Virginia Tech.
8. The most detailed sources on the battles of the Overland campaign include: Gordon C. Rhea, *The Battle of the Wilderness, May 5-6, 1864* (Baton Rouge:

Louisiana State University Press, 1994); Gordon C. Rhea, *The Battles for Spotsylvania Court House and the Road to Yellow Tavern, May 7-12, 1864* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997); Gordon C. Rhea, *To the North Anna River, Grant and Lee, May 13-25, 1864* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Gordon C. Rhea, *Cold Harbor, Grant and Lee, May 26-June 3, 1864* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002); Noah Andre Trudeau, *Bloody Roads South: The Wilderness to Cold Harbor, May-June 1864* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1989); Noah Andre Trudeau, *The Last Citadel: Petersburg, Virginia, June 1864-April 1865* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1991); Mark Grimsley, *And Keep Moving On: The Virginia Campaign, May-June 1864* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

9. *Maine at Gettysburg*, pp. 365-66, 374-77; Bicknell, *History of the Fifth Maine*.

10. *Maine at Gettysburg*, pp. 377-85; Bicknell, *History of the Fifth Maine*.

11. Edward P. Harmon affidavit, May 15, 1884; Edward P. Harmon deposition, June 23, 1888; Alonzo Adley deposition, July 3, 1888; Emma F. Harmon deposition, June 25, 1888; B.F. Pope to the Adjutant General, U.S. Army, August 12, 1888, all in Edward P. Harmon Civil War Pension File, Box 36189, NARA.

12. Pope to Adjutant General, August 12, 1888; Adley deposition, July 3, 1888; Clifton Jones deposition, November 20, 1888; Judith F. Lowell deposition, June 23, 1888, all in Harmon Pension File, NARA; *Maine at Gettysburg*, p. 370; Bicknell, *History of the Fifth Maine*, p. 391.

13. Minor Cashbook and Harmon Diary Collection, Virginia Tech.

14. Emma F. Harmon deposition, June 25, 1888; Judith F. Lowell deposition, June 23, 1888; P.H. Holmes deposition, June 25, 1888; Emma F. Harmon deposition, July 11, 1888; Harmon deposition, June 23, 1888; O.D. Greene, Military Record for E.P. Harmon, August 15, 1884, all in Harmon Pension File, NARA.

15. *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. 35, part 2, p. 601; Minor Confederate Service Record, Charles Minor Parole of Honor, April 18, 1865, in RG 108, NARA; Tyler, *Encyclopedia*, 3:189; Driver and Howard, *2nd Virginia Cavalry*, p. 249. See also Frank E. Vandiver, *Ploughshares into Swords: Josiah Gorgas and Confederate Ordnance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1952).

16. Tyler, *Encyclopedia*, 3:189; George H. Callcott, *A History of the University of Maryland* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1966), pp. 176-78.

17. "C.L.C. Minor, Letters of Application for appointment as President of V.A.M.C. and letters of recommendation for him for that position," [typescript], vertical file, RG 2/1-C.L.C. Minor, 1872-1879, Special Collections, Virginia Tech; Tyler, *Encyclopedia*, 3:189; *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College, First Session, 1872-1873* (Blacksburg, VA: Clemmitt & Jones Steam Book and Job Printers, 1873), p. 11.

18. Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, pp. 91-99. See also "The Life and Times of Virginia Tech Presidents: Charles Landon Carter Minor, 1872-1879," available at <http://www.president.vt.edu/presidents/Minor.html>.

19. Tyler, *Encyclopedia*, 3:189.

20. Charles Minor to Robert Alonzo Brock, February 2, 1900; Charles Minor to Robert Alonzo Brock, September 15, 1900, Minor Family Papers, 1787-1905, in the Robert Alonzo Brock Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. These letters are available on microfilm at the Library of Virginia, Richmond.

21. See *Richmond Times*, December 31, 1898, September 3, 1899, May 11, 1900; *Baltimore Sun*, April 3, 1898, August 25, 1900, October 12, 1900, March 4, 1901; *Richmond Dispatch*, January 14, 1900, March 13, 1900; Charles Minor, "President Lincoln: His Character and Opinions Discussed," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 27 (January-December 1899): 165-70; Charles Minor, "President Lincoln Further Arraigned: His Autocratic Sway and 'Want of Principle,'" *Southern Historical Society Papers* 27 (January-December 1899): 365-71.

22. Charles Minor, *The Real Lincoln*, ed., Kate Mason Rowland (Richmond: Everett Waddey Company, 1901), pp. 7-8; Charles Minor to Robert Alonzo Brock, December 14, 1900, Minor Family Papers, Brock Collection, Huntington Library; Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), p. 30.

23. See Charles Minor, Manuscript Copy of *The Real Lincoln* for Second Edition, 1901, MS 2013-057, Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

24. *Baltimore Sun*, June 14, 1903; Charles Minor, "The Old System of Slavery: Its Compensations and Contrasts with Present Labor Conditions," *Southern Historical Society Papers* 30 (January-December 1902): 125-29.

25. Charles Minor, *The Real Lincoln: From the Testimony of His Contemporaries*, 2nd ed. (Richmond: Everett Waddey Company, 1904), pp. 5-8, 202; Charles Minor, *The Real Lincoln: From the Testimony of His Contemporaries*, 4th ed., ed., M.D. Carter (Gastonia, NC: Atkins-Rankin Company, 1928).

26. Minor Family Papers, Brock Collection, Huntington Library and the Library of Virginia; Papers of Charles Landon Carter Minor, 1879-1899, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

27. Kinnear, *The First 100 Years*, p. 169; Temple, *The Bugle's Echo*, 2: 994-96.

28. See, for example, "Diary Written by Virginia Tech's first president now part of University Libraries," September 26, 2008, press release, available at, <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2008/09/2008-566.html>; *Collegiate Times* (Virginia Tech), November 10, 2011.