LEW WALLACE AT SHILOH: GOAT OR SCAPEGOAT

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to Gordon and Gladys Gray, whose sacrifices made this possible.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. Robert Young for his guidance and insight throughout the thesis process. I also appreciate the patience shown by my wife Sarah and my children Gordon, Oliver, Calvin, David Jr. and Helen which permitted me to complete this work.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS
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Major General Lew Wallace was one of the rising stars of the Federal officer corps prior to the battle of Shiloh in 1862, having played a critical role in the victory at Fort Donelson. His career as an active commander was severely limited following the battle of Shiloh when some felt he failed to arrive at the field of battle when expected. This study argues that the reasons given for his being placed on the shelf (accepted by most prominent historians) are in error. An examination of the timeline of day one of Shiloh with a particular focus on Wallace’s division is critical to understanding what happened. The execution of the march is examined in some detail along with placing its impact in context. Explaining how the accepted narrative developed and assessing its accuracy is the final portion of the study. An injustice was done to a Federal officer of quality, and thereafter the Union was denied his services during a critical period of the war. This cannot be undone. However the memory of Lew Wallace can now be more properly understood and valued.
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Introduction

The Battle of Shiloh is significant for many reasons. It was the first massive bloodletting of the American Civil War. It saw the death of the senior Confederate commander, Albert Sidney Johnston, as well as the death of the Confederates’ hopes to undue the critical failures at Forts Henry and Donelson. Perhaps most importantly, it was the closest the Confederacy would come to crushing Ulysses S. Grant. An overt defeat might well have spelled either the end of his military career or at least the termination of his access to a significant command. The marginal victory he obtained, in tandem with Don Carlos Buell, still resulted in a firestorm of controversy which threatened to sideline him. An aid to Grant’s rehabilitation was the rise of the perception that Lew Wallace had failed in his duty. Wallace failed to arrive in time to participate in the first day’s fighting, and, as a consequence, it must be Wallace’s fault.

Ultimately this perception resulted in the dissolution of Wallace’s division. Wallace was kept from the active Federal war effort until relatively late in the war. The narrative in which Wallace was alternatively lost, slow, confused or some combination of the lot became the accepted historical narrative. A good example is Bruce Catton’s description in *This Hallowed Ground: The Story of the Union Side of the Civil War*: “Lew Wallace could have saved the day, but somehow he had got lost or been directed wrongly, and he had not been able to get up from Crump's Landing in time to help.”\(^1\) Over time scholars have developed a greater appreciation for the complexities involved in understanding what happened to Wallace and his command on the first day of the Battle of Shiloh, but the establishment view was merely softened a bit as is seen

\(^1\) Bruce Catton, *This Hallowed Ground: The Story of the Union Side of the Civil War* (New York: Doubleday, 1956), 118.
in James McPherson’s *Battle Cry of Freedom*: “Grant sent a courier to summon Lew Wallace’s division to the battlefield. Wallace took the wrong road and had to countermarch, arriving too late…”

The established historical narrative does not hold up well under careful examination. A major influence on how Wallace’s actions were understood was the immensely successful *Personal Memoirs* written by Grant. Grant’s narrative in his memoirs is the familiar one in which Wallace made a “mistake” and did not follow Grant’s orders. This stands in stark contrast to Grant’s initial report made shortly after the Battle of Shiloh. Grant reports that Wallace’s division “did not arrive in time to take part in Sunday's action” due “to its being led by a circuitous route.” This statement is devoid of accusation and passes on the opportunity to assign Wallace responsibility for his late arrival. After Grant offered particular praise of William Sherman he noted: “In making this mention of a gallant officer no disparagement is intended to the other division commanders, Maj. Gens. John A. McClernand and Lewis Wallace, and Brig. Gens. S. A. Hurlbut, B. M. Prentiss, and W. H. L. Wallace, all of whom maintained their places with credit to themselves and the cause.” This is just reported two days after the battle when any major failure by a division commander, at least of the nature alleged against Wallace, should be very clear in the commander’s mind. He knew then when Wallace had arrived. Yet Wallace

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5 Ibid.
did “credit” to himself. Twenty-three years later the story is radically different. The question is how and why did the narrative change between April 9, 1862 and the publication of Grant’s memoirs in 1885?

A frequent allegation against Wallace is that he was slow in terms of his march. A classic example is Steven Wordworth’s essay “Intolerably Slow” when he states that what was key in Wallace’s performance was the “lack of drive to reach the battlefield after he knew the army was being driven back toward the river and disaster.” Yet a comparison to other movements by similar bodies of troops during the war will show that Wallace did well in terms of his rate of march. It is also often alleged that Wallace not only failed to follow Grant’s orders, but that he did not use common sense in attending to his operational environment when executing his march towards the Shiloh battlefield. This is also in error. If the information in Wallace’s possession at the time the decisions were made is examined then his decision-making is easily defended. His judgment was sound, and the principles were soundly applied.

When answering the question of how the narrative of Wallace’s failure began, given Grant’s favorable report following the battle, one might assume that Grant and Wallace were the primary actors. While Grant and Wallace were certainly significant (particularly Grant), outside the spotlight Grant’s staff played a critical role, perhaps the critical role in establishing the Wallace narrative. Grant’s staff had been key players in the actions of that day regarding Wallace. A member of Grant’s staff actually wrote the order for Wallace to move to the Shiloh battlefield. A member of Grant’s staff delivered the order to Wallace. Members of Grant’s staff checked on Wallace’s progress riding out to Wallace’s division during the march. Long after the battle ended the statements made by three members of Grant’s staff were critical in shaping the

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understanding of events. They were not merely observers or reporters of events, they were participants with a personal stake in the matter.

There were many factors that contributed to Wallace’s division arriving after fighting had already ended on the battle’s first day. These include Grant’s decision to maintain his headquarters at Savannah, ten miles by river from his army at Pittsburg Landing. When Grant heard the sounds of battle he proceeded from his headquarters to Pittsburg Landing. En route, he stopped to confer with Wallace but did not direct him to proceed to the battle, which had been audible at Savannah. This was a major element in Wallace arriving after the battle. The conditions of the road and area to be crossed while moving to the battle also were an issue. Ultimately these many influences resulted in Wallace arriving late in the day. If there is blame to be doled out for his arriving late in the day there are many in line before Wallace who deserve their share.

The various allegations against Wallace do not bear up well under examination. The alleged failure to follow orders, the alleged failure to move promptly, the alleged failure to exercise sound judgment, and the idea that he should have had a major impact at Shiloh save for all these failings are unsound conclusions. To understand better, we need more light and more detail.

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8 Grant, Personal Memoir, 180.
Chapter I
Shiloh in Time and Space, Day One

There are two vital aspects to the Battle of Shiloh to consider in understanding what happened to Wallace and his division on 6 April 1862: time and space. The timeline is critical in comprehending both the order of events and when they occurred resulting in Wallace arriving too late for combat on day one of the Battle of Shiloh. The space involved also has substantial implications as much of the story revolves around movement and neither Grant, commander of the Army of the Tennessee, nor Wallace were located at the Shiloh battlefield.

For purposes of grasping the nature of the Wallace saga there are four key locations to take in: the actual battlefield where the fighting took place by Pittsburg Landing, Crump’s Landing, Stoney Lonesome where Wallace’s division was stationed, and Savannah where Grant had made his headquarters further up the Tennessee River from both Pittsburg Landing and Crump’s Landing. The separation of the relevant parties was a great contributing factor to the confusion and controversy as to what actually happened with Wallace’s division.

There are many different

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sources of information for timing: the Official Records, memoirs, and articles for popular media. These sources produce a good deal of contradiction; even the same individual markedly contradicts earlier statements made on the topic. It is interesting to note that in the reporting Grant did from Shiloh he does not give any specific times prior to the time he asserts that Wallace received orders at 11 AM (an event at which he was not present, unlike many preceding events). Kevin Getchell, author of the recent book, *Scapegoat of Shiloh*, provides convincing evidence that Grant was bereft of a pocket watch at the time of the Battle of Shiloh and was awaiting one to arrive from home.10 While an interesting footnote, it is hard to see where this would explain Grant’s failure to provide timing on the early portions of the battle as there is no evidence that his staff were devoid of timepieces. Conversely, it is worth bearing in mind that without a watch, Grant’s sense of timing would be controlled by or derived from his staff.

The first time of consequence is when Grant became aware of the battle and departed the Cherry Mansion where his headquarters was located for Pittsburg Landing. Grant would be unable to immediately have an impact after the Confederate surprise attack because he had chosen to keep his headquarters separate from both the bulk of his army and from Wallace’s division. His official reports do not give the sense that he was not present for the early portions of the battle.11 His memoirs do not discuss his time of departure, but he makes reference to his breakfast being interrupted by “heavy firing.”12 John Rawlins, the key member of Grant’s staff, records that breakfast came at 6 AM.13 The US Navy shows that sunrise occurred at Savannah


on April 6, 1862 at 5:33 AM. Rawlins also states that he left bed at daylight and performed several tasks before breakfast. This does not tell us that breakfast began at 6 AM, but it does tell us Rawlins could have risen at daylight and performed multiple tasks by 6 AM. Getchell contradicts this theory. The time he provides as sunrise for April 6 does not seem to take into account that in 1862 there was no daylight savings time.

Rawlins writes that breakfast was interrupted with a report of artillery fire coming from the direction of Pittsburg Landing. Grant, himself a former artillery officer and a veteran of the Mexican War, presumably concurred. This testimony was given roughly a year after the fact. If breakfast was served at 6 AM, it must have been a leisurely breakfast. Getchell points out that the initiation of Confederate artillery fire can be placed fairly closely to a specific time, between 7:00 AM and 7:15 AM, and provides multiple sources testifying to this. General P.G.T. Beauregard’s aide-de-camp “reported hearing the first cannon shot of the day at 7:09 a.m.” They may not have reacted to the first shot, but it was surely not long until the second was fired. Additionally, the chaplain of one of Wallace’s regiments wrote “that a tremendous cannonade was heard about 7 a.m.” As one of Grant’s chief defenders, it is safe to say that Rawlins was


15 Rawlins, April 1, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 184.

16 Getchell, Scapegoat, 113.

17 Rawlins, April 1, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 184.

18 Getchell, Scapegoat, 114.


not reporting this to harm Grant’s interests. Assuming Rawlins was right, breakfast could not have been interrupted prior to 7:09 AM, and it was likely at least a bit later by the time artillery fire impinged on peaceful Savannah. This is one of the more solid points in the Shiloh timeline as the Confederate testimony is disinterested and has multiple sources. This time point will have a ripple effect on other parts of Rawlins’ narrative in due course.

Rawlins does not give a time for departure of the Tigress, Grant’s steamer. Rawlins states that prior to departure Grant issued orders to William Nelson’s division, of Buell’s army, and the staff’s horses had to be loaded on board the steamer. Douglas Putnam was Grant’s volunteer aide. He states that the Tigress did not depart until it was able to get its steam up.21 Woodworth estimates this would have entailed at least a half hour’s delay before leaving.22 Rawlins states that Grant always kept steam up on the Tigress.23 This is in conflict with Putnam’s statement. We can’t know for certain which is correct, but Putnam had no stake in the issue and (as Getchell points out) Grant, on April 3, sent a message “We are entirely out of coal here. Please send some at once.”24 This would tend to indicate that headquarters was not flush with coal and perpetually keeping the steam up on the Tigress Rawlins states. Rawlins estimates that it was ten miles from Savannah to Pittsburg Landing and four and a half miles from

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22 Woodworth, “Intolerably Slow,” 81.

23 Rawlins, April 1, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 184.

Savannah to Crump’s Landing, where Wallace’s division was located. He then states that the
*Tigress* arrived at Crump’s Landing “not far from 7 or 7:30 o’clock am.”

The fact is that Grant and his staff left Savannah in response to hearing artillery fire
which was not initiated until after 7 AM. At 7 AM Grant and his staff were still eating breakfast,
not arriving at Crump’s Landing. Even if Grant responded quickly to the report of artillery fire,
which was brought in by a third party, it is very hard to see them leaving breakfast before 7:15
AM. The party then had to move down to the steamer, Grant had to issue orders to Nelson and
several horses had to be loaded on board the steamer, which could be done concurrently.

Getchell correctly observes that even if the *Tigress* had been fired up “a boiler has certain
requirements, and a river pilot has certain procedures for disembarking.”

This would also have
been taking place concurrently, but what this does make clear is the *Tigress* would not be
immediately departing after Grant had arrived from the Cherry Mansion. It is impossible for the
*Tigress* to have left at 7:30 AM if it did not have steam up. A 7:45 AM departure would be
about as early as Grant could have departed Savannah. We can be certain that Grant was not at
Crump’s Landing at 7:30 AM.

It is a sign of how muddled the matter of time would become that in 1863 Major General
James McPherson (who was not with Grant but was at Pittsburg Landing the morning of April 6)
was told Grant arrived at Pittsburg Landing at 7:30 AM.

Yet at 7:30 AM Grant was almost
certainly still at Savannah. William Rowley, the third Grant staff member to provide testimony a

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27 Report of Major General Jas B. McPherson, March 26, 1863, *The War of the
Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series
year after the battle, states that Grant was at Crump’s Landing between 7 AM and 8 AM.\footnote{Report of Major W.R. Rowley, April 4, 1863, \em The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series 1 CD-ROM (Zionsville, IN: Guild Press of Indiana, 2000), Volume 10, Part 1, 178.} An arrival at Crump’s Landing in the neighborhood of 8 AM is unlikely. Wallace, in his autobiography of 1906, reports that Grant arrived at 8:30 AM.\footnote{Lew Wallace, \em An Autobiography (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1906), 461.} In Wallace’s letter to Henry Halleck in March of 1863 he stated that Grant arrived at 9 AM.\footnote{Report of Major General Lew Wallace, March 14, 1863, \em The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series 1 CD-ROM (Zionsville, IN: Guild Press of Indiana, 2000), Volume 10, Part 1, 175.} Wallace’s original report from the battle does not address the issue.\footnote{Report of Major General Lew Wallace, April 12, 1862, \em The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series 1 CD-ROM (Zionsville, IN: Guild Press of Indiana, 2000), Volume 10, Part 1, 169-174.} It seems difficult to credit a 9 AM arrival in light of the information above but a reasonable conclusion is that Grant arrived at Crump’s Landing probably between 8:15 AM and 8:30 AM.

There is a relative consensus on what happened next even if the timing of the events is disputed. Grant described his stop at Crump’s Landing in his memoirs:

\begin{quote}
On the way up the river I directed the dispatch-boat to run in close to Crump’s landing, so that I could communicate with General Lew Wallace. I found him waiting on a boat apparently expecting to see me, and I directed him to get his troops in line ready to execute any orders he might receive. He replied that his troops were already under arms and prepared to move.\footnote{Grant, \em Personal Memoirs, 180.}
\end{quote}

The primary elements of the discussion seem to be agreed to by all parties that address the content of the conference. Wallace was waiting for Grant, Grant told Wallace to be prepared to
move upon receipt of orders and Wallace informed Grant he had already begun to ready the troops.

From all accounts it seems clear that Grant spent only minimal time conferring with Wallace. It also seems clear that Grant was not yet convinced that there was a general engagement, or else he would have ordered Wallace to proceed to join the rest of the Army of the Tennessee. Wallace gives a detailed account of his meeting with Grant in his autobiography:

…”when all was silent, he spoke to me on the hurricane-deck. The conversation is given almost word for word. He asked, "Have you heard the firing?" And I answered, "Yes, sir, since daybreak." "What do you think of it?" "It's undoubtedly a general engagement." This was the moment for the order. I leaned forward to catch it, and had instead: "Well, hold yourself in readiness to march upon orders received." I was disappointed, and returned: "But, general, I ordered a concentration about six o'clock. The division must be at Stoney Lonesome. I am ready now." He hesitated, evidently turning an uncertainty over in his mind, and then said: "Very well. Hold the division ready to march in any direction."

This represented a lost opportunity for Grant and the Army of the Tennessee. Wallace may or may not have expressed the judgment that a general engagement was underway but there was certainly evidence to suggest that it was underway. At least 45 minutes to an hour and a quarter had gone by since Grant and his staff were first informed of artillery fire. There would have been no misunderstanding of intent for orders given in person, and Wallace would have been able to move much earlier than would be the case when waiting for a messenger to return. It is odd that this failure receives so little comment in most histories dealing with these events.

Grant now proceeded on to Pittsburg Landing to take command of his army and ascertain what had produced the sustained volume of fire he had heard. We may discount Rowley’s testimony as to the time of Grant’s arrival as he has him arriving prior to 8 AM while also saying

33 Wallace, Autobiography, 461.
Grant arrives at Crump’s Landing between 7 AM and 8 AM. McPherson was not present with Grant or at his arrival and his hearsay testimony gives a time of arrival of 7:30 AM which is not credible. Rawlins at least does not contradict himself so openly as does Rowley. Rawlins places Grant at Pittsburg Landing at 8 AM. Yet as we’ve seen, based on Rawlins’ statements about what initially caused Grant to react and move to Pittsburg Landing 8:15 AM is the earliest reasonable time that Grant could have arrived at Crump’s Landing. While his meeting with Wallace was brief the earliest reasonable time to place Grant at Pittsburg Landing is in the neighborhood of 8:45 AM. It could well have been 9 AM or later. Woodworth estimates Grant would have arrived between 9 AM and 9:30 AM.

At this point we consistently see the estimates of Grant’s staff running at least an hour earlier than what physical reality would permit. Woodworth refers to the two time sequences as “Grant-time” and “Wallace-time” and of the two, Wallace-time correlates fairly closely to what other evidence would indicate to be reasonable. We cannot read minds but it is very reasonable to recognize that one of the embarrassments for Grant on this day would be his own late arrival on the battlefield due to his distant headquarters. It is very understandable for his staff to want to mitigate that problem and as noted above Grant was likely dependent on others for his sense of time on this day. In all likelihood, the battle had been raging for near two hours before Grant arrived on the scene at Pittsburg Landing.

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34 Rowley, April 4, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 178.
35 McPherson, March 26, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 181.
36 Rawlins, April 1, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 185.
37 Woodworth, “Intolerably Slow,” 82.
38 Ibid., 86.
The next question is when did Grant send orders to Wallace directing him to move to the scene of battle. Here again all McPherson’s testimony is hearsay as by the time he meets Grant the orders to Wallace have already been dispatched.\(^{39}\) Rowley states that orders were dispatched by 8 AM.\(^{40}\) Even by Rowley’s own timeline, that is impossible. Rawlins reports that the orders to Wallace were dispatched by 9 AM.\(^{41}\) This is less absurd, but again it is not possible as Grant was only arriving at 9 AM at best. Both Rowley and Rawlins report that after landing Grant rode forward to ascertain what was taking place. Rowley merely says that Grant conferred with some officers.\(^{42}\) Rawlins more specifically states that Grant rode up and conferred with General W.H.L. Wallace prior to issuing orders to Lew Wallace.\(^{43}\)

Where Rawlins does seem to be more credible is in the amount of time he estimates it took for Grant to size up the situation, issue the order and have the messenger underway. With Rawlins estimating a 8 AM arrival for Grant at Pittsburg Landing and a 9 AM departure for the messenger with orders we have the whole process taking roughly an hour. Since that we can reasonably conclude an arrival for Grant between 9 AM and 9:30 AM, that gives us a departure time for the orders between 10 AM and 10:30 AM, probably closer to 10 AM. The messenger selected was Captain Algernon S. Baxter, Grant’s quartermaster. Baxter was directed to take the \textit{Tigress} back to Crump’s Landing and from there he would ride by horse to Stoney Lonesome


\(^{40}\) Rowley, April 4, 1863, \textit{OR}, Volume 10, Part I, 179.

\(^{41}\) Rawlins, April 1, 1863, \textit{OR}, Volume 10, Part I, 185.


\(^{43}\) Rawlins, April 1, 1863, \textit{OR}, Volume 10, Part I, 185.
where Wallace held his division in anticipation of orders. Given how Wallace had positioned his three brigades, in compliance with Grant’s orders, Stoney Lonesome was a central location to bring his division together and well placed for access to the road net. Wallace had left a horse for any messenger at Crump’s Landing:

Setting out for the rendezvous at Stoney Lonesome, my last act was to have a horse tied to an elm tree. An orderly in charge had orders to allow no one to mount the horse unless he bore an order for me from General Grant; then the orderly was to guide the messenger to Stoney Lonesome.

Wallace in his initial report from Shiloh states that Baxter arrived with the orders at 11:30 AM. He writes the same in his autobiography. Grant, in his comment on Wallace’s report replies “Certainly not later than 11 a.m. the order reached General Wallace to march by a flank movement to Pittsburg Landing.” Grant could not have known this with certainty and he does not identify any source of information for his claim. A third party source is Manning Force, at that time a colonel in command of the 20th Ohio regiment, part of Wallace’s division. In his memoirs Force states, “Captain Baxter, of General Grant's staff, brought to Lewis Wallace at

44 Ibid.
45 Wallace, Autobiography, 462.
46 Wallace, April 12, 1862, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 170.
47 Wallace, Autobiography, 463.
49 Wallace, April 12, 1862, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 169.
eleven or half-past eleven, a verbal order to move his division.”\textsuperscript{50} It is very reasonable to conclude that Baxter arrived between 11 AM and 11:30 AM, probably the latter.

Of Grant’s three staff officers who provided statements in 1863, none addresses this topic directly. Both McPherson and Rawlins address the topic tangentially. McPherson only reports Baxter’s return stating “Shortly after this Captain Baxter returned, certainly not later than 10.30, and said that he had delivered the order.”\textsuperscript{51} Given that Baxter could not have departed earlier than 10 AM the idea that he could return by 10:30 AM doesn’t warrant serious consideration. Rawlins reports that Baxter returned before noon.\textsuperscript{52} Thus far most of Rawlins times have run roughly an hour early or more. Interpreting that he could be returning before 1 PM is well within reason and corresponds reasonably well with Wallace’s report of Baxter’s arrival at 11:30 AM (which will be shown to have issues). Baxter states that he was only with Wallace for three minutes so nearly all of his time should have been travel time. Baxter did not give an arrival time.\textsuperscript{53}

The time of departure from Stoney Lonesome for Wallace’s division is an odd point of dispute in that Wallace contradicts himself. Wallace’s initial report submitted after the battle gives his departure this way; “Selecting a road that led directly to the right of the lines as they were established around Pittsburg Landing on Sunday morning, my column started

\footnote{\textsuperscript{50} Manning Ferguson Force, \textit{From Fort Henry to Corinth} (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1883/2008), 71.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 181.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 185.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{53} “The March of Lew Wallace’s Division to Shiloh,” in \textit{Battles and Leaders of the Civil War: Opening Battles} (Secaucus, NJ: Castle, 1883/1990), 607.}
immediately…” 54 This account would have the division on the road shortly after 11:30 AM.

The odd thing is when Wallace wrote his autobiography he gives a different story:

Saturday morning I had ordered three days’ cooked rations; now I gave till twelve o'clock for dinner, cautioning commandants that they must be on the road at noon. And at noon exactly the march began… 55

While this is in contradiction to his initial report, it does, however, match what Wallace wrote in his later appeal, to Halleck in 1863: “Half an hour was given the men to eat dinner. Then I started the column at exactly 12 o’clock to execute General Grant's order.” 56 The odd thing is when Wallace wrote his initial report he was not aware of the controversy that would develop over time. Once Wallace became aware he then talked about feeding his men before departure. If nothing else this is a testimony to Wallace’s honesty as he is certainly not fudging his narrative to protect himself in this instance. What is even more interesting is that Force states that once Baxter delivered his orders the division was “at once put in motion,” agreeing with Wallace’s initial report. 57 It is a curiosity, but nearly all the testimony of the commanders under Wallace indicates a departure time of noon, including the commander of his 2nd Brigade, John Thayer. 58 A departure time of noon seems the only reasonable conclusion.

54 Wallace, April 12, 1862, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 170.


56 Wallace, March 14, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 175.

57 Force, From Fort Henry, 71.

The next contact Wallace would have along the way was when Grant dispatched a Lieutenant Frank Bennett to hurry Wallace along.\(^\text{59}\) Bennett rode to Wallace’s division and did not use the river. In his autobiography Wallace places his arrival at 1:30 PM.\(^\text{60}\) Bennett is not mentioned in either Wallace’s official report nor his letter to Halleck. Rowley states that Grant dispatched Bennett at 11 AM and that he returned shortly after noon. This would place Bennett finding Wallace at roughly the same time as Baxter. Rowley also reports that Bennett stated that “General Wallace had positively refused to come up unless he should receive written orders.”\(^\text{61}\) This conflicts with Baxter’s story and the obvious evidence that Wallace was on the march less than half an hour after Baxter’s departure. Samuel Fletcher, a member of the company which accompanied Bennett, states they arrived at noon with Wallace prepared to depart. Bennett’s company witnessed Wallace’s immediate departure.\(^\text{62}\) This would confirm a noon departure for Wallace’s division. Fletcher says the company stayed with Wallace but is silent about Bennett.\(^\text{63}\) However from Rawlins’ and Rowley’s testimony, it appears Bennett returned to Grant. The variance between accounts is enormous. Rowley has the officer returning nearly one and a half hours before Wallace has him arriving. Rawlins places Bennett’s return between noon and 1 PM.\(^\text{64}\) McPherson does not mention the dispatch of Bennett. Both accounts are written after the fact, Wallace’s decades after the fact. Both Rowley and Rawlins have Bennett returning just


\(^{61}\) Rowley, April 4, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 179.

\(^{62}\) Fletcher, *Company A.*, 50.

\(^{63}\) Ibid.

\(^{64}\) Rawlins, April 1, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 186.
a short time after Wallace had departed Stoney Lonesome, likely at noon. Rawlins’ story is conceivable. Wallace’s only account of Bennett was written long after the fact and his time appears to be unreliable.

The next officer dispatched to check on Wallace was Rowley. Rowley puts his own departure from Grant at 12:30 PM. McPherson places it at around noon. Rawlins says that Rowley departed not later than 1 PM. Both Rowley and Rawlins state that Grant’s dispatch of Rowley was in reaction to the report made by Bennett discussed above. Consequently Rowley’s dispatch had to be after that officer’s return. Rawlins’ time estimate can be roughly squared with Bennett’s if you go with a Rowley departure of 1 PM. Rowley makes no mention of the time when he arrived with Wallace’s division and his only remaining reference to time is that Wallace arrived at the battlefield just as it was “getting dark.”

Wallace places Rowley’s arrival at his division a few minutes after 2 PM. This puts him in conflict with his own statement regarding Bennett who was supposed to arrive at 1:30 PM. This is another reason to conclude Wallace’s 1:30 PM estimate for Bennett’s arrival is in error. Rowley and Rawlins both testify that Rowley was dispatched in reaction to the return of that officer to Grant. Rowley states that he rode all the way to Wallace’s camp and then doubled back to find Wallace’s division. It is impossible for that officer to have left Wallace shortly

65 Rowley, April 4, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 179.


67 Rawlins, April 1, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 186.

68 Ibid., 188.

69 Wallace, Autobiography, 466.

70 Rowley, April 4, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 179.
after 1:30 PM, ride back to Grant, confer, and then for Rowley to ride to Wallace’s camp and then double back all in the space of a half hour.

Rawlins and McPherson were next to be dispatched by Grant. McPherson places their departure at 2:30 PM. McPherson’s only remaining reference to time is stating that Wallace arrived at the battlefield after dark. Rawlins does not say when he and McPherson were sent but does report arriving at Wallace’s division at 3:30 PM. Rawlins reported it was dark when they reached the battlefield. Wallace makes no reference to time regarding Rawlins and McPherson but in both his report and his autobiography says they reached the battlefield as darkness was falling. Force also states they arrived “just after sunset.”

The Naval Observatory reports sunset on April 6, 1862 as being 6:18 PM at Savannah. The reports of Wallace’s arrival either place it as darkness is falling or shortly after darkness has fallen. Sunset is likely very close to the mark.

Some of the times in the timeline are more important than others, such as the time Grant departed Savannah, conferred with Wallace, arrived at Pittsburg Landing, when Baxter arrived at Wallace’s camp, when Wallace marched for the battlefield and when he arrived. Reports of times are easier to confirm or discredit where there is external data, where there is relative agreement, or where reason can derive relative certainty from such data. We find a pattern among Grant’s staff (and in Grant who likely derived the data for his memoirs from his staff’s

71 McPherson, March 26, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 181-182.
72 Rawlins, April 1, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 187-188.
73 Wallace, April 12, 1862, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 176.
74 Wallace, Autobiography, 472.
75 Force, From Fort Henry, 72.
Wallace’s reports of times most often correlate relatively well with those which can be confirmed.

Below is a summary of the conclusions regarding reasonable times for those events on which a reasonably sure conclusion can be drawn. This covers the most important events of the timeline. Below that is the map provided earlier with the events of the timeline laid out based on where they occurred.

### SUMMARY OF TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0709</td>
<td>First Confederate shot/Heard at Savannah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0745-0800</td>
<td>Grant departs Savannah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0815-0830</td>
<td>Grant confers with Wallace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0845-0915</td>
<td>Grant arrives at Pittsburg Landing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000-1015</td>
<td>Grant sends orders via Capt Baxter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1115-1130</td>
<td>Baxter arrives at Wallace’s camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200</td>
<td>Wallace marches for the Shiloh battlefield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815-1830</td>
<td>Wallace arrives at Shiloh battlefield</td>
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Chapter II
The Execution of the March

Days prior to the Battle of Shiloh the Tennessee River had flooded and the flooding extended up into the ground and swamp lying between Crump’s Landing and Pittsburg Landing. According to McPherson the bridge across Snake Creek had to be reconstructed because of the flooding and this had been completed three days before to the battle, April 3. 

April 4 would see more heavy rain. 

When the Federal troops had originally arrived at Pittsburg Landing, Snake Creek had been impassible from the flooding. 

Ironically, the bridge over Snake Creek was named Wallace Bridge.

Stephens makes a useful observation:

76 McPherson, March 26, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 181.
77 Stephens, Shadow, 78.
78 McPherson, March 26, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 181.
79 Stephens, Shadow, 73.
One of the sources of confusion in writing about Lew Wallace and Shiloh has always been the many Wallaces involved in Lew Wallace’s march. The bridge over Snake Creek on the River Road was locally known as Wallace’s bridge because it was on the property of a man named Wallace. W.H.L. Wallace’s men reconstructed the bridge. Lew’s division marched over the bridge on April 6. All of this confused Grant. Criticizing Wallace for his late arrival on April 6, Grant noted that Wallace certainly knew about the River Road because “a bridge had been built across Snake Creek by our troops, at which Wallace’s command had assisted.” The men who rebuilt the bridge were only from W.H.L. Wallace’s command.80

At the beginning of April 6 Wallace’s division was deployed by brigade covering five miles.81 Charles Whittlesey’s brigade (3rd Brigade) was deployed near Adamsville, far from Crump’s Landing. Thayer’s brigade (2nd Brigade) was at Stoney Lonesome while M.L. Smith’s brigade (1st Brigade) was near Crump’s Landing, as was Wallace’s headquarters.82 In his autobiography Wallace records deploying the division for action a few days prior to Shiloh when Whittlesey’s brigade reported encountering Confederate skirmishers. Wallace was pleased with the speed of the deployment, but the Confederates faded away before any serious engagement took place.83 The brigades returned to their respective camps and were in those camps when the first sounds of battle were heard on the morning of April 6.

Like Grant, Wallace had the first sounds of battle reported to him. Wallace’s initial report does not provide any time as to when this occurred. In his autobiography, Wallace states this occurred shortly before 6 AM. This would cause an apparent conflict with the multiple Confederate reports of initiating artillery fire after 7 AM. We do not know where Wallace gets this estimate. It is interesting to note that one of the sources he used in reconstructing the Battle

80 Ibid. 75.
81 Wallace, March 14, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 175.
82 Stephens, Shadow, 75.
83 Wallace, Autobiography, 454.
of Shiloh was Grant’s *Personal Memoirs*. He also used Badeau’s *Military History of U.S. Grant* as well as the Official Records. Badeau was a close associate of Grant having served on his staff during and after the war. Given the fact that Wallace was writing decades later, he may have used the estimates out of the Official Records from Rawlins’ report. It would not appear to have touched on the conflict over the march later that day. At any rate, the time given appears to be unreliable.

There is no controversy, though, about Wallace’s reaction to the sounds of battle. Thayer, acting commander of the 2nd Brigade, states in his report, “Early on Sunday morning, the 6 instant, hearing at my camp at Stoney Lonesome heavy cannonading in the direction of Pittsburg, I immediately caused my command to be put in state of preparation to march at a moment’s notice, and anxiously awaited orders. Soon Major-General Wallace and staff rode up and he gave me the desired command…” According to Wallace in his report, “The First and Third Brigades were also ordered to concentrate at the camp of the Second, from which proceeded the nearest and most practicable road to the scene of battle.” This was put in place well before Grant’s arrival at Crump’s Landing between 8:15 AM and 8:30 AM.

Grant confirms Wallace’s readiness in his *Personal Memoirs*. When Grant approached Crump’s Landing, this was how he discovered Wallace: “I found him waiting on a boat apparently expecting to see me, and I directed him to get his troops in line ready to execute any orders he might receive. He replied that his troops were already under arms and prepared to

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move.”88 As noted above, Grant chose not to capitalize on Wallace’s proactive approach and order to him to the field of battle (sounds of which had been audible for forty-five minutes to an hour). Instead, Wallace was given instructions to remain in place and await possible future orders.

Later, after Wallace had sent his protest to Halleck, Grant would respond with this bizarre statement:

Had General Wallace been relieved from duty in the morning, and the same orders communicated to Brig. Gen. Morgan L. Smith (who would have been his successor), I do not doubt but the division would have been on the field of battle and in the engagement before 10 o’clock of that eventful 6th of April. There is no estimating the difference this might have made in our casualties.89

By Grant’s own report after the battle, the order to move was not delivered to Wallace until 11 AM.90 The only possible way that Wallace could have reached the field of battle by 10 AM would be if Grant had ordered Wallace to move when the two of them met at Crump’s Landing. Undoubtedly, Grant did not mean he had issued such orders but as an attempt to impugn Wallace it is remarkably ham-handed.

It is worth noting that one source differs with the excerpt from the *Official Records* quoted in the previous paragraph. The edition of Grant’s papers edited by John Simon replaces 10 o’clock with “one o’clock” when quoting the same document.91 Simon is outside the


consensus on this however even if Simon is correct it simply moves Grant’s assertion from impossible to highly unlikely.

Wallace would now have to wait for further orders. In his autobiography Wallace claims that Grant also told him “Very well. Hold the division ready to march in any direction.”

Wallace and his staff prepared to move to Stoney Lonesome where his division was forming. Before leaving, Wallace states these preparations were put in place:

Setting out for the rendezvous at Stoney Lonesome, my last act was to have a horse tied to an elm tree. An orderly in charge had orders to allow no one to mount the horse unless he bore an order for me from General Grant; then the orderly was to guide the messenger to Stoney Lonesome.

It is worth noting that at each step of the way thus far Wallace is leaning as far forward as he can within the context of his orders. He is proactive in readying his division. He is proactive in awaiting Grant at Crump’s Landing. He has prepared for a rapid approach by Grant’s messenger once he arrives at Crump’s Landing. All this is done with no knowledge of how the battle is faring save that it is being fought.

Woodworth is critical of Wallace at this point for reasons which are hard to truly comprehend:

Here the fault is Wallace’s. He had last met with Grant at Crump’s during that time and had given his commander no notice of his intent to move to Stony Lonesome. Allowing that Stony Lonesome was the best place to hold the division in readiness to march and that Wallace needed to be with his troops, he ought to have left a staff officer at the landing to direct a messenger of Grant’s. The saddled horse was a nice touch, but it could not tell Baxter where Wallace had gone.

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93 Ibid., 462.

Yet Wallace says that he specifically left an orderly to guide the messenger in his autobiography. Woodworth cites Wallace’s military autobiography, *Smoke, Sound and Fury*, which is adapted from his full autobiography. He also cites O. Edward Cunningham and Wiley Sword. Cunningham says nothing about it and oddly has Wallace meeting Baxter at Crump’s Landing. Sword has Baxter arriving and finding both horse and escort and provides Wallace’s autobiogaphy as his source. None of the sources describe a horse being left without a guide. This is provided as a reason why Wallace was late.

Now Wallace would wait until Baxter’s arrival at Stoney Lonesome, roughly until three hours after Wallace had conferred with Grant, and over four hours since the battle had commenced. Bear in mind that Grant later told Halleck that Wallace should have been at the battlefield by 10 AM).

One of the greatest of controversies arising out of Wallace’s march this day would center on determining what Wallace’s orders actually said. Even the origins of the order are confused. Rowley, who was with Grant, reported that Grant gave the orders directly to Baxter in Rowley’s presence. This testimony is echoed by Douglas Putnam, Grant’s volunteer aide. McPherson wasn’t present when Grant gave the orders for Wallace. Rawlins states that Grant gave the orders to himself and directed him to use Baxter, who was not present when the orders were given, as a messenger. Rawlins tells an extended tale of going down to the river and finding Baxter. According to Rawlins, Baxter wanted a written order, not just a verbal order, so Rawlins

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95 Cunningham, *Shiloh*, 169.


98 Putnam, *Reminiscences*.
dictated the contents of the letter to Baxter who wrote it down and then departed.\footnote{Rawlins, April 1, 1863, \textit{OR}, Volume 10, Part I, 185.} Years later (in 1886) Baxter gave a similar story to that of Rawlins stating that he wrote down the order at Rawlins’ direction and then Rawlins signed it.\footnote{\textit{Battles and Leaders}, 607.} Wallace confirms that ultimately he received a written order from Baxter but he claims the order was unsigned.\footnote{Wallace, March 14, 1863, \textit{OR}, Volume 10, Part I, 175.} The order was lost by Wallace’s adjutant during the course of battle. Apparently, no copy was kept by Grant’s staff for the records. When considering Rawlins’ role in writing and signing (or not signing) the order for Wallace the later statement of Charles Dana, who was the assistant secretary of war, should be kept in mind. He said that Rawlins “was too slow and can’t write the English language correctly without a great deal of careful consideration.”\footnote{Brooks D. Simpson, \textit{Ulysses S. Grant: Triumph Over Adversity} (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 278.} Rawlins is a key player in these events and an incapacity for written English is worth noting.

What did the order say? The original order was a verbal order given by Grant, probably to Rawlins. The written order is presented differently by different people. Wallace does not attempt to reconstruct the order in either his battle report or his letter to Halleck. However the contents of those communications are entirely in line with his reconstruction of the order contained in his autobiography:

Here it is, almost, if not quite, verbatim: "You will leave a sufficient force at Crump's Landing to guard the public property there; with the rest of the division march and form junction with the right of the army. Form line of battle at right angle with the river, and be governed by circumstances."\footnote{Wallace, \textit{Autobiography}, 463.}
Rawlins has a fairly specific memory of it as well. He includes his version in his report to Grant after Halleck’s query;

Major-General WALLACE:

You will move forward your division from Crump's Landing, leaving a sufficient force to protect the public property at that place, to Pittsburg Landing, on the road nearest to and parallel with the river, and form in line at right angles with the river, immediately in rear of the camp of Maj. Gen. C. F. Smith's division on our right, and there await further orders.\textsuperscript{104}

Rowley never claimed to see a written letter. He does claim to remember Grant’s verbal order and says it went like this:

"Captain, you will proceed to Crump's Landing and say to General Wallace that it is my orders that he bring his division up at once, coming up by the River road, crossing Snake Creek on the bridge (which General Sherman would protect), and form his division on the extreme right, when he would receive further orders; and say to him that it is important that he should make haste."\textsuperscript{105}

Baxter, in his newspaper interview from 1886, says the order directed Wallace to “march his command at once by the River Road to Pittsburg Landing, and join the army on the right.”\textsuperscript{106}

The last member of Grant’s staff to comment was Putnam who states that Grant told Baxter to tell Wallace “to come up.”\textsuperscript{107} James Ross, of Wallace’s staff stated “I very distinctly remember that this order directed [Wallace] to move forward and join General Sherman’s right on the Purdy Road, and form your line of battle at right angles with the river and then act as circumstances would dictate.”\textsuperscript{108} Wallace’s adjutant Frederick Knefler stated “It was a written

\textsuperscript{104} Rawlins, April 1, 1863, \textit{OR}, Volume 10, Part I, 185.

\textsuperscript{105} Rowley, April 4, 1863, \textit{OR}, Volume 10, Part I, 179.

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Battles and Leaders}, 607.

\textsuperscript{107} Putnam, \textit{Reminiscences}.

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Battles and Leaders}, 607.
order to march and form a junction with the right of the army.”  

Addison Ware remembers that the order was “to move your division up and join General Sherman’s right on the road leading from Pittsburg Landing to Purdy.”  

Force remembers that Baxter “gave [Wallace] an order to march to the Purdy road, form there on Sherman's right, and then act as circumstances should require.”  

If Rawlins’ story is correct, then the only people to have seen or heard the written order were Rawlins, Baxter, Wallace and Wallace’s staff. In an operational sense it did not matter what Grant said, it mattered what was written on that piece of paper.

For what it is worth Grant states in his memoirs that Baxter was directed to “order General Wallace to march immediately to Pittsburg by the road nearest the river.”  

He later adds “I never could see and do not now see why any order was necessary further than to direct him to come to Pittsburg Landing, without specifying by what route.”  

Grant’s myopia on the matter shows in this final quote:

Wallace has since claimed that the order delivered to him by Captain Baxter was simply to join the right of the army, and that the road over which he marched would have taken him to the road from Pittsburg to Purdy where it crosses Owl Creek on the right of Sherman; but this is not where I had ordered him nor where I wanted him to go.

Grant’s wants were not really the issue. The issue is what was on the paper and did it accurately reflect Grant’s verbal orders. We can never know definitively what was on the paper. The only description of the order near the time of battle was Wallace’s, on April 12th, and it is

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.


113 Ibid., 181.

114 Ibid.
the only one written before controversy had erupted over Union conduct of the battle. Grant makes a brief statement on April 25 when he failed to endorse Wallace’s report. Grant stated “the order reached General Wallace to march by a flank movement to Pittsburg Landing.”¹¹⁵ That is an odd statement. Later, as we’ve seen, Grant would say that Wallace was directed to Pittsburg Landing by the River Road. It is hard to see how the River Road can be described as a “flank movement.” Going to Pittsburg Landing via the River Road would have to be considered a fairly direct movement with no element of flanking involved. At the time Grant gave the order, it could not really be considered moving to the Federal flank but to the Federal rear. The front line would eventually get much closer to the River Road but at that point in the morning it was not.

Rawlins, Rowley and Baxter all state that Grant directed that Wallace use the River Road, either explicitly or implicitly. All of them stated this well after the battle, Rawlins and Rowley in 1863 and Baxter decades later. Grant himself, on April 25, 1862 does not argue that he ordered Wallace to take the River Road. Neither Wallace nor any of his staff who made statements recall any mention of the River Road. Two actually mention a different road, the road that Wallace took but Wallace himself does not do that. Both the Grant party and the Wallace party have members that assert that Wallace was instructed to form his division at a right angle to the river. In that sense Grant’s staff are including an instruction in the order that Wallace included and Grant did not.

¹¹⁵ Grant, April 25, 1862, OR, Volume 10, Part 1, 174.
116 Stephens, Shadow, 81.
An interesting addition to consider is the story of Jacob Bieler and the Morton Battery of the 6th Indian Light Artillery:

According to Jacob Bieler, who served with the battery, after the battle opened on the morning of April 6, Captain John H. Hammond, chief of Sherman’s staff, rode up and ordered Behr to send two guns to the bridge over Owl Creek, with “strict instruction to hold the bridge at all hazards, as General Lew Wallace was expected to come over that bridge on the Purdy road” (underlining in the original) … Lieutenant Louis Kern of the Morton Battery confirmed it.\textsuperscript{117}

Decades later, when Grant was writing his memoirs, W.H.L. Wallace’s widow sent him a letter written by Lew Wallace to her husband the day before the Battle of Shiloh. It read:

"HEADQUARTERS THIRD DIVISION, ADAMSVILLE, April 5th, 1862. GENERAL W. H. L. WALLACE, commanding Second Division. SIR: Yours received. Glad to hear from you. My cavalry from this point has been to and from your post frequently. As my Third Brigade is here, five miles from Crump's Landing, my Second two and a half miles from it, I thought it would be better to open communication with you from Adamsville. I will to-morrow order Major Hayes, of the 5th Ohio Cavalry, to report to you at your quarters; and, if you are so disposed, probably you had better send a company to return with him, that they may familiarize themselves with the road, to act in case of emergency as guides to and from our camps.—I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
LEWIS WALLACE, General Third Division."\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 75.

\textsuperscript{118} Battles and Leaders, 609.

\textsuperscript{119} Isabel Wallace, Life & Letters of W.H.L. Wallace (Chicago: R.R. Donnelley & Sons, 1909), 188.
The combination of these two pieces of evidence show that the Shunpike route was not an odd or unanticipated route for Wallace to choose. This route would have brought him up on the right of the Federal army as it was camped on the morning of April 6. The map on page 26 shows that it would have brought him to Sherman’s right flank. Grant was unaware of the first piece of evidence, or at least never acknowledged it. A search of Grant’s papers finds no mention of Bieler. Just the existence of the second piece of evidence “modifies very materially” what had been said by Grant about Wallace and the march.120

Even more interesting is this quote from Grant to Sherman after Grant arrived at Pittsburg Landing: “Things don’t look so well on our left. I have left orders at Crump’s Landing for Wallace’s division to come up on your right. Look out for him.”121 According to Garland this statement was made shortly after Grant came ashore. This might also explain why Sherman’s chief of staff was expecting Wallace on the Purdy road. This older book does not provide a citation for that quote. Another source of uncertain veracity, Adam Badeau’s biography of Grant says “Lewis Wallace was considered to be within supporting distance, at Crump’s Landing, on the same side of the river as the bulk of the command, and he was left therefore to guard the Purdy Road.” Badeau does not provide a citation but Badeau did serve later on Grant’s staff.122 It would certainly appear there was a great deal of awareness of the Purdy road before Wallace took it and Wallace seems to have been associated with that road.

120 Grant, Memoirs, 188.

121 Hamlin Garland, Ulysses S. Grant; His Life and Character (New York: Macmillan, 1898/1920), 203.

It is worth bearing in mind that when Grant gave Wallace instructions at Crump’s Landing he told him to be prepared to march in any direction, not just the River Road. If Grant was only aware of one possible road between Wallace’s division and the rest of Grant’s army, the River Road, it is a bit odd that he did not simply tell Wallace to be ready to proceed on the River Road. The fact is there were two reasonable routes between Wallace and the remainder of the army. One was the River Road and one was the Shunpike, which led up to Sherman’s division on the right of the main army. Which route taken would depend on how the battle was faring. If Federal forces were in substantial retreat, then the River Road would be the logical way to proceed. If Federal forces were holding their own, or better, then the Shunpike would be the preferred choice. Grant’s own testimony bore witness to the fact that the Shunpike route would be “somewhat shorter” than the River Road route.\(^{123}\) Wallace states that when Grant visited him in March one of the things he told Grant about regarded “the opening of the Shunpike.”\(^{124}\) If so, then Grant absolutely had to be personally aware of the Shunpike route.

A question that must be asked is if Rawlins and Baxter are right and the orders explicitly directed Wallace to take the River Road, then why wouldn’t he do so? The idea that Wallace was lost was always weak at best, and nobody tries to sell that theory now. Lew Wallace’s letter to W.H.L. Wallace makes clear that Lew Wallace knew of the road that he would initially take on April 6 and the testimony of Bieler makes it clear that the main army encampment knew he was aware of the road and that there was an expectation he would use it. There can be no question of Wallace being lost and not knowing which road he was on.

\(^{123}\) Ibid., 189.

It might be argued that Wallace willfully ignored the order to use the River Road. The only motive in such a scenario would be the hope of glory by coming out on to the field on the Confederate flank and saving the day for the Federal cause. Grant himself makes a veiled allusion to this.\(^{125}\) There are at least two good reasons to discount that suggestion.

The first is indicated by his conduct during the fight at Fort Donelson. When the Confederates attacked at Fort Donelson Grant was miles away from the battlefield, in a similar fashion to Shiloh. Wallace commanded one of three divisions facing the Confederates. His division was not attacked, while McClernand’s division was attacked. Wallace was under orders not to bring on an engagement.\(^{126}\) Wallace received a request from McClernand to give him aid:

Mindful of his orders to remain in place, Wallace sent an officer to Grant’s headquarters to ask permission to help the embattled McClernand. The officer shortly returned, confirming that Grant was on board the St. Louis conferring with Foote and nobody at headquarters felt authorized to act. Wallace then declined to aid McClernand at this time.\(^{127}\)

It was not until McClernand’s division began to buckle that Wallace decided to disregard his orders and intervene with his division. He did violate Grant’s orders but he did not do so lightly or hastily. More to the point, he had the evidence of his eyes to tell him that such action was essential. Only then did he violate orders. In so doing, he saved the Federal position.\(^{128}\) Without Wallace’s violation of Grant’s orders, we would not have the “Unconditional Surrender” Grant of Fort Donelson.

\(^{125}\) Grant, *Memoirs*, 181.


\(^{127}\) Ibid., 199.

\(^{128}\) Ibid., 211-217.
The second reason is that Wallace did not have a great deal of information about what was taking place at the field of battle. In fact, he only had one data point when he decided which road to take to rejoin the army. That data point was provided by Baxter:

To which I returned: “Very well captain, I accept the order, and you may so report to General Grant. Now, how is the battle going?

“We are repulsing the enemy,” he said. 129

That discounts the idea that Wallace might disobey orders and take the Shunpike in hopes of winning great glory. If the Federal forces were “repulsing the enemy” then the Shunpike route would still bring Wallace to the battlefield within the Federal lines. There would be no striking of the Confederate flank. Either route would take within the Federal lines so why would you disobey orders? Baxter’s statement also discounts the Fort Donelson motive for disobeying an order. Wallace had disobeyed Grant’s order at Fort Donelson because of the extreme peril of the Federal forces. If the Confederates were being repulsed there was no reason to disobey orders based on extreme need.

In light of this analysis there is no reasonable argument for why Wallace would willfully ignore an order from his commander to take the River Road. Yet Wallace did not take the River Road. Logically then, it should be reasoned that just as Wallace and all of his staff testified, there was no order to take the River Road. There is every reason to believe Wallace’s recollection of the order in question. Additionally, most of Wallace’s staff provided their evidence three years after the war. Wallace was in no position to reward loyal followers and Grant was in a very powerful position to punish enemies and was on approach to enter the White House. It is hard to see what dishonorable motive might have given Wallace’s staff a reason to lie.

We cannot know in an absolute sense what the contents of that order were, on that piece of paper. But reason gives us powerful grounds to conclude that Wallace’s recollection of the order was honest and correct.

If the order did not contain directions for Wallace to take the River Road, why did it not? That question simply cannot be answered. Grant may or may not have directed that Wallace use the River Road when dispatching orders with Baxter. If Baxter was not present Rawlins may have forgotten to relay that portion of the order. Perhaps Baxter failed to write it down. For the purposes of enquiry into Wallace’s conduct that question does not need to be answered. If an answer could be determined, it would not be of consequence.

It is at noon that Lieutenant Bennett arrives with his company of cavalry. Fletcher records Grant’s instructions to Bennett thusly:

“Lieutenant Bennett, you will take your Company A and go with as much dispatch as possible to Crump’s Landing. Present my compliments to General Lew Wallace and tell him to come immediately, you being the escort.”

It is worth noting that nothing in Grant’s instructions to Bennett specifies the River Road or Pittsburg Landing as a destination.

As referenced previously Wallace in his battle report makes no mention of feeding his soldiers prior to departure, but in his later report he does as does his autobiography. It cannot have been much of a meal as the division is on the march roughly 25 minutes after Baxter’s began his return journey to Grant. There is a broad consensus that Wallace had the division on the march at noon. There is no debate regarding his initial choice of route using the Shunpike.

If there were no specifications set in the order regarding the route to be taken, then Wallace was free to take a route of his choice. All he knows of the battle is what Baxter has told

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130 Fletcher, Company A, 50.
him, that the Federals were “repulsing the enemy.” Given what Wallace knew, the Shunpike is the correct choice on purely operational grounds. By Grant’s own previous testimony, the Shunpike route is the shorter route to the right of the Federal army given what Wallace knows. If the Confederates are being repulsed, then it makes complete sense to join the Federal forces closer to the front and more quickly. This interpretation is reinforced by the actions of Sherman’s Chief of Staff who went out of his way to keep that road open with the anticipation that Wallace would be using it. It also makes sense to take the route with which you have greater familiarity. Given the correspondence with W.H.L. Wallace, there is every reason to think that Wallace and his division are more familiar with the Shunpike route. In a world where the Confederates are being repulsed, Wallace would actually be open to criticism if he had chosen the River Road.

Wallace’s men proceeded down the Shunpike with a destination of the bridge over Owl Creek, near where Sherman’s division had its camp. Rowley seems likely to have caught up with Wallace shortly after 2 PM. Rowley’s account from 1863 and Wallace’s from his autobiography vary in their particulars and to a degree in the primary matter. Rowley barely acknowledges, in his report, the desperate state of Grant’s army but does tell Wallace “that I thought it would be impossible for him to get in upon that road, as the enemy now had possession of those camps, and that our line of battle was to the rear of them.” Wallace describes it this way:

At the edge of the road, out of hearing, the captain broke out: “Great God! Don’t you know Sherman has been driven back? Why, the whole army is within half a mile of the river, and it's a question if we are not all going to be driven into it.”

131 Rowley, April 4, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 180.

That version has the ring of truth but in either case it is made clear that after Wallace and Rowley confer Wallace changes course to go back to the River Road while seeking a cross road to cut distance off the remaining journey.\textsuperscript{133} A cross road would be found, shortening the length of the march by not requiring a return to the junction of the Shunpike and River Road.\textsuperscript{134} Rowley is also critical of the rate of march of Wallace’s division:

Of the character of the march after I overtook General Wallace I can only say that to me it appeared intolerably slow, resembling more a reconnaissance in the face of an enemy than a forced march to relieve a hard-pressed army. So strongly did this impression take hold of my mind, that I took the liberty of repeating to General Wallace that part of General Grant's order enjoining haste.\textsuperscript{135}

Wallace would in future days be criticized for bringing his lead brigade from the front of the column to lead the march towards Pittsburg Landing instead of reversing in place. It is notable that none of Grant’s men who made reports on Wallace’s march in 1863 were critical of that element of the march. Wallace himself would later describe that decision as a mistake.\textsuperscript{136} His explanation of the decision was that his “… object, however, was to get certain regiments whose fighting qualities commanded my confidence to the front …”\textsuperscript{137} This was an entirely reasonable explanation. Wallace had commanded many of these troops in combat at Fort Donelson, and it is entirely sensible that he might well esteem the fighting abilities of his regiments unevenly. Consider that he is now marching into a disastrous situation and does not

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 468.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 469.
\textsuperscript{135} Rowley, April 4, 1863, \textit{OR}, Volume 10, Part I, 180.
\textsuperscript{136} Stephens, \textit{Shadow}, 89.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
know what he will find when he gets there. Ensuring the cutting edge of the division was in the
tore was a wise decision.

   It was characteristic of Wallace to be eager to patch things over with Grant. Wallace
would later withdraw his request of a court of inquiry:

   You will please suspend action in the matter of my request for a court of inquiry until I
communicate with you again on the subject. It is possible that I may satisfy General
Grant upon the points involved and thus save further trouble. 138

He did it on the advice of Sherman with Sherman promising to appeal to Grant in private and
advising Wallace to be quiet and not aggravate Grant further. 139 Later in the war, after the Battle
of Monocacy, Wallace had dinner with Grant. “Writing about it a few days later, Wallace barely
could suppress his exuberance: ‘He was unusually kind—even demonstrative to me.’” 140 This
inclination towards wanting to placate Grant can explain Wallace backing away from a militarily
defensible decision.

   As Wallace’s division began to file onto River Road from the shortcut, he then met
Rawlins and McPherson. McPherson, in his report, has relatively little to say beyond stating that
he told Wallace he needed to hurry and that he thought Wallace’s rate of march “not as rapid as
the urgency of the case required.” 141 McPherson is fair-minded and adds this “Perhaps this arose
in a great measure from my impatience and anxiety to get this force on the field before dark, as I

138 Report of Major General Lew Wallace, September 16, 1863, The War of the
Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series

139 William M. Ferraro, “A Struggle for Respect Lew Wallace's Relationships with
Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman After Shiloh,” Indiana Magazine of History,

140 Ibid.

knew very well unless we arrived before sunset we could be of no use in that day’s battle and would not be able to retrieve the fortunes of the day.”¹⁴² That is a very reasonable possibility.

Rawlins’ account, as in most regards, is much more detailed. Rawlins alleges that Wallace told him “his guide had misled him.” Statements like this do great damage to Rawlins’ credibility. Laid out above is an in-depth explanation of Wallace’s familiarity with the Shunpike and the untenability of the argument that Wallace was lost. Nor was there any reason for Wallace to blame any “guide” after Rowley’s arrival. Rowley’s statement makes plain that the counter-march proceeded and the short-cut was taken on to the River Road. There was simply no reason for Wallace to make such a statement. Rawlins then elaborates:

After halting the head of his column for a considerable length of time, to enable it to close up and rest, he gave the order to march, and continued coolly and leisurely forward until we reached the main Pittsburg Landing road. Here Colonel McPherson suggested that to disencumber and facilitate the march, the artillery, which was immediately in the rear of the advance brigade, fall to the rear of the column, which suggestion was concurred in by General Wallace, and the artillery moved out of the road while the column filed by. This was an excuse for considerable delay—I should say for full half an hour-during which time he was dismounted and sitting down. From thence he continued his march until we reached the low bottom-lands through which runs Snake Creek…¹⁴³

Rawlins seems to suggest a problem with having the column “close up and rest.” Letting a column stretch out tended to exacerbated problems with stragglers and keeping the column compact helped ensure it would be more prepared for action if it encountered the enemy. Given the state of the Federal forces when Rawlins and McPherson departed to find Wallace this might well need to be done. McPherson himself recognized this when he said they might need to “fight our way through.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Ibid., 182.

¹⁴³ Rawlins, April 1, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 187

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 187-188.
Clearly Rawlins also had a problem with Wallace’s rate of march, although he is more sarcastic in his description using words like “leisurely.” Apparently another of Wallace’s mistakes was to take McPherson’s advice to put the artillery in the rear of the column. Terming that action as an “excuse for considerable delay” seems an odd choice of words. The truly odd thing is that Wallace attributes the suggestion regarding the artillery to Rawlins, not McPherson. The likely nadir of Rawlins’ report is his concern that Wallace dismounted and sat down for a time. Wallace’s physical location is not germane to the rate of march of his division.

Rawlins is then critical that Wallace “manifested the utmost coolness and indifference” as they were nearing the battlefield. It is particularly interesting because that is one of the characteristics of Grant in a battle and one that is admired. Given that his division would likely encounter men fleeing the field in a panic, behaving with coolness and indifference seems like a wise choice.

Rawlins ends with this description of the context in which Wallace was exercising command:

… the roads were in fine condition; he was marching light; his men were in buoyant spirits, within hearing of the musketry, and eager to get forward…

A more objective party differed on the state of the roads following the hard rains of April 4. Fletcher of the 2nd Illinois Cavalry which accompanied Wallace’s division on the march had this to say:

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146 Rawlins, April 1, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 189.

147 Ibid., 188.
The condition of Wallace's men upon reaching the front was pitiable especially that of the infantry. They floundered and wallowed in the mud and water in which they frequently sank to their hips; but, with all this, nothing but eagerness was shown by officers and men to get to the front.\footnote{Fletcher, \textit{Company A}, 51.}

The man who Rawlins worked for, Grant, had this to say about the roads that were being used by General A. M. McCook in the same time frame that Wallace was marching in:

From the heavy rains of a few days previous and the passage of trains and artillery, the roads were necessarily deep in mud, which made marching slow.\footnote{Grant, \textit{Memoirs}, 191.}

Wallace’s roads may not have been as heavily travelled as McCook’s roads but the heavy rain and mud were still applicable. Wallace’s observations on the roads were in line with Fletcher’s and Grant’s observations:

All went well marching on the high ground of the cross road but when we descended into the places softened by the receding backwater from Snake Creek it was out of one hole into another…

The great strain came, however, when at last we passed into the lowlands of the creek; there an extended opening through the woods signified a roadway out of sight under a sheet of yellow liquid broken occasionally by tussocks of black mud. At the edge of the bog I took a look, and would have stopped for soundings, only the guns of the fight in progress on the other side resounded high and clear, and there was awful appeal in their near roar.\footnote{Wallace, \textit{Autobiography}, 470-471.}

Again it does not do Rawlin’s credibility any particular good when he says “the roads were in fine condition.” It simply isn’t a credible assertion. It is clear that at least portions of the march were under markedly adverse conditions. Interestingly both Rowley and Wallace describe the march as “intolerably slow.”\footnote{Ibid., 469.} The difference is Rowley seems to suggest that it is the
responsibility of Wallace and Wallace seems to suggest that it is the condition in which the march occurred. The evidence certainly indicates that Wallace was right.

Regarding the general rate of march by Wallace’s division and whether it was slow as suggested by Rowley and Rawlins (and by McPherson to a lesser extent) Stacy Allen, Chief Historian at the Shiloh National Military Park, argues that Wallace’s rate of march was not slow:

The Third Division marched and countermarched, for a total of seven hours. Part of the march was through inundated creek bottoms, a fact that Rowley, Rawlins and McPherson ignored in their statements. From Stoney Lonesome the mud-covered division … marched roughly fifteen miles.\textsuperscript{152}

This is a speed of roughly 2.14 miles per hour. In 2005 Stephens, with a group of historians from Shiloh National Military Park, walked Wallace’s route of march. They used the Global Positioning System to measure distance. The conclusion of this group was that Wallace had actually covered 16.75 miles during his march (with dry roads the historians wound up fifteen minutes slower than Wallace’s march).\textsuperscript{153} This gives Wallace a rate of march of roughly 2.39 miles per hour.

To properly judge this speed it needs to be put in context. Allen compares Wallace’s march to that of A.P. Hill at Antietam.\textsuperscript{154} This is a good choice. Hill was striving to join Lee’s army near the close of a battle. Stephen Sears states that A.P. Hill covered seventeen miles in less than eight hours. This gives Hill a rough rate of march of 2.19 which is right in the neighborhood of the rate of march Wallace made. Hill’s rate of attrition on the march was such

\textsuperscript{152} Stacy D. Allen, “If He Had Less Rank” in \textit{Grant’s Lieutenants: From Cairo to Vicksburg}, ed. Steven E. Woodworth (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 81.


\textsuperscript{154} Allen, “Less Rank,” 81.
that with a division of 3,000 he only had 2,000 left when they went into action.\textsuperscript{155} Hill’s march is described as “remarkable.”\textsuperscript{156} The road net that Hill was using was also superior to the muddy roads that Wallace travelled on.

One outstanding feat of marching was by the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Virginia regiment, in Winder’s Brigade under Stonewall Jackson during the Valley Campaign. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} Virginia covered 36 miles in 14 hours. The rest of the brigade covered a bit less ground during that march. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} Virginia’s rate of march was 2.57 miles per hour. Obviously this is even more impressive because they went on twice as long as Wallace. On the other hand their marching was conducted on proper turnpikes which were macadamized.\textsuperscript{157} This sort of marching was what helped make Stonewall Jackson a legend; it is truly the gold standard. Wallace doesn’t equal this but the rate of speed is only a modest amount behind and it was on substantially inferior roads. This does not leave Wallace with the appearance of a laggard or someone who was leisurely in his approach.

A review of the charges against Wallace’s march devastates the conventional narrative. Wallace is criticized for not leaving an officer with the horse for Grant’s messenger. We find Wallace did leave a guide and the sources cited say so. Wallace would be accused of disregarding orders and glory-seeking. A close examination shows that it would be out of character to disobey orders and based on the knowledge he had at the time his actions are incompatible with glory-seeking. Wallace is said to have taken the wrong road. Yet in light of what Wallace knew at the time he absolutely chose the correct road. It is alleged that the roads


were in good condition. Yet even Grant and uninterested observers acknowledge the problems with mud after the heavy rain. We are told that Wallace was slow and leisurely in his rate of march. When his rate of march is compared to the heroic march of A.P. Hill at Antietam we find that Wallace made comparable speed under more adverse circumstances. The irony is that if Wallace had enjoyed a commander who had been on the scene of battle and summoned him in proper time, Wallace in all likelihood would have been a hero like A.P. Hill.
Chapter III
Understanding the Narrative and Its Origins

Wallace was prepared for action before Grant ever reached Crump’s Landing. Wallace proceeded along the road he should have, given what he was told about Federal success on the battlefield. It was the route that Sherman expected him to use (technically Sherman’s chief of staff, but it is reasonable to conclude that means Sherman as well). When informed of a change in Federal fortunes he immediately counter-marched to the most appropriate location. He secured a short-cut that reduced the distance to Pittsburg Landing. His division had a rate of march that was exceptional, particularly given the poor state of portions of the road. This leaves the question how does Wallace become, for many, the scape-goat for Federal failure? How does this, for decades, become the standard historical narrative?

Yet it has been the standard narrative in times past. We saw how Catton, icon among Civil War historians, treated it in the introduction. In James McPherson’s *Battle Cry of Freedom* it is described in this fashion: “Grant sent a courier to summon Lew Wallace’s division to the battlefield. But Wallace took the wrong road and had to countermarch, arriving too late…”

Even fairly recent histories of the Battle of Shiloh have a relatively poor record in this matter. Larry J. Daniel comes down quite hard on Wallace in *Shiloh: The Battle That Changed the Civil War*. Indeed he lists the whole discussion of the subject in the index under “Wallace, Lewis, dilatoriness of.” He actually mocks Wallace with a sarcastic tone and generally takes the later

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narrative of the Grant staff nearly whole. Wiley Sword in *Shiloh: Bloody April* omits any discussion of how or when Wallace was notified to march, leans heavily on the narrative of Grant’s staff and describes Wallace’s movements as “dilatory.”\(^{160}\) O. Edward Cunningham’s classic *Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862* takes an unusual tack by blaming Wallace for obeying the directions of Grant’s later messengers on the basis that Wallace’s original route of march would have taken him into the Confederate rear.\(^{161}\)

Grant biographies, if anything, are at least as bad as more general treatments. William McFeely’s *Grant: A Biography*, is probably a more politically-focused than military-focused biography, but regardless we still have the common narrative. In fact it creates errors that do not exist even in the normal narrative:

> The Indiana general, with no more orders than those he had heard on the riverbank but with sounds of a desperate battle to summon him, was in fact on the move. The only problem was that he had taken the wrong road. He had also refused to accept spoken instructions from a captain on Grant’s staff who found him, and it took Captain William R. Rowley and Lieutenant Colonel James B. McPherson over an hour of hard riding to find Wallace again and force him to confront his error and begin the agonizingly slow business of a countermarch.\(^{162}\)

This is a veritable comedy of errors. Wallace did have more orders than what he received on the riverbank. He received them from Baxter. Wallace didn’t take the wrong road. Wallace did not refuse to accept spoken orders and nobody alleged that. There was an allegation that Wallace would not accept unsigned orders. That story was entirely hearsay, and it was not supposed to have originated with a member of Grant’s staff. It was Captain Rawlins who


\(^{161}\) Cunningham, *Shiloh*, 339.

accompanied McPherson, not Rowley who was already with Wallace. Wallace began the countermarch long before McPherson arrived.

Garland’s 19th century biography of Grant is more modest; he limits his description of the Wallace affair to “Wallace was wandering about on the road somewhere.” Simpson’s biography nearly avoids the topic, primarily saying that Wallace arrived at evening and that his men were tired. Interestingly Badeau’s biography of Grant, which is the earliest of the ones mentioned here, states that the initial order sent to Wallace was only verbal. He also says that Wallace “excused himself by stating that he had taken the wrong road.” He repeats the erroneous assertion that Lew Wallace’s troops worked on the Snake River bridge when it had been W.H.L. Wallace’s troops. He also omits the role of Rawlins as messenger. Badeau was close to Grant even after the war, until Grant undertook his memoirs and Badeau was frustrated there was no role for him.

If the historical narrative would be, to varying degrees, hostile to Wallace there was little initial evidence that this would be the case. If Wallace had badly failed Grant, it would be reasonable to expect Grant’s report on the battle to reflect that fact. Grant was not a particularly forgiving man. General James Wilson said that Grant “had a good memory for injuries, real or fancied” and Wilson liked Grant and got on well with him. This failing was not limited to Grant’s treatment of Wallace by any means. Consider Grant’s record with men like William

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163 Garland, *Grant*, 204.
Rosecrans and George Thomas. Grant wrote his primary report on Shiloh on April 9, just two days after the battle. After Grant singled out Sherman for praise he stated: “In making this mention of a gallant officer no disparagement is intended to the other division commanders, Maj. Gens. John A. McClernand and Lewis Wallace, and Brig. Gens. S. A. Hurlbut, B. M. Prentiss, and W. H. L. Wallace, all of whom maintained their places with credit to themselves and the cause.”

If Lew Wallace had failed significantly, it is hard to see where Grant would mention him by name for praise. Wilson, in his biography of John Rawlins, makes a fascinating assertion. He asserts that the Grant report of April 9 was the work of Grant alone and was not touched by any of his staff, which was not the customary practice for Grant and his staff. Consequently, we are hearing Grant’s unvarnished thoughts in this report and his thoughts alone. This is particularly interesting as most of the remaining material which Grant will generate on this subject will either involve Grant’s staff or be derived from a Grant staff product.

It is also worth noting how Grant began the second day of the Battle of Shiloh as it is an indication of where his mind was during the battle:

Early on April 7, Grant and Lew Wallace passed through a field behind the 1st Brigade, where the army commander studied the terrain for a moment. “Move out that way,” he remarked as he pointed west. Wallace acknowledged the order and asked if he was to take any special formation in the attack. “No,” said Grant, “I leave that to your discretion.” With those few words, Grant launched the attack from the Union right.

If Grant had thought Wallace had been inept the prior day, would he leave the choice of formation for Wallace’s attack to Wallace’s discretion. It seems quite unlikely. Rather it would seem an indicator of Grant’s confidence in Wallace.

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168 Grant, April 9, 1862, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 110.


170 Daniel, Shiloh, 280.
On April 23, Halleck received a message from Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War, that
gave Grant an understanding of the sort of firestorm that was headed in his direction. Getchell
identifies this as a turning point in Grant’s handling of Shiloh and that is a sound analysis. 171

The President desires to know why you have made no official report to this Department
respecting the late battle at Pittsburg Landing and whether any neglect or misconduct of
General Grant or any other officer contributed to the sad casualties that befell our forces
on Sunday. 172

The words “The President desires to know” are a guarantee that attention was paid. Only
one possibly deficient officer is named. Halleck sent a reply to Stanton on April 24 which kept
his options open but guaranteed someone would need to be blamed:

The sad casualties of Sunday, the 6th, were due in part to the bad conduct of officers who
were utterly unfit for their places, and in part to the numbers and bravery of the enemy. I
prefer to express no opinion in regard to the misconduct of individuals till I receive the
reports of commanders of divisions. 173

Wallace’s report on the battle was submitted on April 12th, five days after the battle
ended. Grant had not yet reviewed it and forwarded it. On April 25, two days after Stanton’s
message and the day after Halleck’s message requiring someone be held responsible Grant
forwarded Wallace’s report. This is the full text of Grant’s review:

I directed this division at about 8 o'clock a.m. to be held in readiness to move at a
moment's warning in any direction it might be ordered. Certainly not later than 11 a.m.
the order reached General Wallace to march by a flank movement to Pittsburg Landing.
Waiting until I thought he should be here, I sent one of my staff to hurry him, and
afterwards sent Colonel McPherson and my assistant adjutant-general.

171 Getchell, Scapegoat, 172-173.

172 Report of Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, April 23, 1862, The War of the
Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series

173 Ibid., 99.
This report in some other particulars I do not fully indorse. 174

Wallace had evolved from a “credit” to a convenient problem over the course of sixteen days. There are two things to bear in mind at this juncture. Grant was not yet the military colossus he would become with clear and sure support of the President in the face of difficulties. He was vulnerable, and the message traffic above makes it clear that it was so. Additionally on April 23, the same day that Stanton sent Halleck the query, Rawlins gave Wallace permission to publicly release his report on the battle which was published on April 26 in the *Indianapolis Journal*. 175 If Grant thought the report was inaccurate, it is hard to understand why Rawlins would approve it for public release. Of course when Rawlins approved that report, Grant and his staff did not yet realize that the President wanted to know if officers were to blame for the disaster of the first day of Shiloh.

The second thing to keep in mind is that in many respects Grant was culpable for what happened on the first day of the Battle of Shiloh. A brief summary will make clear that he had genuine grounds for fear of his future in the light of his performance and what happened on day one.

1. Grant had chosen to have his headquarters well removed from his army for no clear operational necessity which meant he was not present for the first two hours of combat.

2. Grant had not implemented orders from Halleck to fortify the army’s location. 176

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3. Grant had told Halleck on April 5; “I have scarcely the faintest idea of an attack (general one) being made upon us…” \(^{177}\)

4. Nelson’s division of Buell’s army arrived at Savannah on April 5. Nelson asked for permission to move on to Pittsburg Landing but Grant told him to stay in Savannah. \(^{178}\)

5. Grant failed to utilize the opportunity to send Lew Wallace’s division to Pittsburg Landing when they met at Crump’s Landing. Grant had been hearing the sounds of battle for roughly an hour. Instead of sending Wallace to join the army he simply told Wallace to await orders.

This brief review shows that should someone want to seriously examine what had happened on April 6 and the days prior, then Grant had real cause for concern. Men’s careers could be destroyed for far less. Often the danger to Grant is minimized because of the story about how Lincoln would not sack Grant because of his statement that “I can’t spare this man, he fights.” \(^{179}\) Simpson makes a reasonable case for calling this anecdote into question noting that the source for the quote also at the same time alleges other things with regards to Lincoln that few people accept as true. With the entire war behind us and knowing what is to come in Grant’s career the story it sounds reasonable. There is no compelling reason to think Lincoln was not serious in his query, via Stanton, and that Grant’s vulnerability was genuine.


\(^{178}\) Daniel, Shiloh, 140.

Another reason for concern was his relationship with Halleck which had not been the best. However, Halleck’s loathing for non-West Pointers would work to Grant’s advantage. Halleck once stated “It seems but little better than murder to give important commands to such men as Banks, Butler, McClemand, Sigel and Lew Wallace.” Given that Wallace was involved in three significant engagements and performed well in all three, he is the odd man out in that set. The statement does illustrate how Halleck tended to view non-West Point commanders.

It is worth noting that if Wilson is correct this is the first post-Shiloh communication that Grant’s staff played a role in composing. The key figure on Grant’s staff during the war is John Rawlins. He is a central player and participant in the Lew Wallace march saga as well. Grant stated that Rawlins “comes the nearest to being indispensable to me of any officer in the service.” Macartney describes it this way, “So great was that influence that it is impossible to think of Grant without Rawlins.” This was not a man with a casual commitment to Ulysses S. Grant:

None can feel a greater interest in General Grant than I do; I regard his interest as my interest, all that concerns his reputation concerns me; I love him as a father; I respect him because I have studied him well, and the more I know him the more I respect and love him… (italics added)

We cannot know what deliberations took place between Grant and his staff when they became aware of Lincoln’s enquiry and in the time that followed. We do not know who

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182 Ibid.

183 Ibid., 80.
influenced whom or in what way, so any attempt to draw specific conclusions would be speculative. At this time John Rawlins was roughly the same age as Lew Wallace. Both were attorneys. Rawlins was a captain and Wallace was a major general. Getchell speculates on possible jealousy.\textsuperscript{184}

Getchell also found an official communication, a few days prior to Shiloh, which has a combative edge to it. Getchell goes into a fair amount of detail arguing for it as evidence as of simmering conflict between Wallace and Rawlins.\textsuperscript{185} It is an interesting indicator but it is not absolute proof of such a conflict. However, there was another incident between the two men at Fort Donelson which could have left hostility on Rawlins’ part.

When McClernand’s division was buckling at Fort Donelson, many men began to rout. Rawlins was with Wallace when this was happening:

A mounted colonel of an Illinois regiment, who had utterly lost his composure, was also lamenting that all was lost. Disgusted, Rawlings drew his revolver and would have shot the man had Wallace not intervened.\textsuperscript{186}

Gott’s source apparently refers to “Rawlings” instead of Rawlins. Gott also talks about how “Rawlings” was given the mission of helping keep Grant sober which was Rawlins’ mission.\textsuperscript{187}

I’ve also found another period source that refers to Rawlins as “Rawlings.” Harper’s Weekly of December 10, 1864 refers to “Brigadier-General John Rawlings, General Grant’s

\textsuperscript{184} Getchell, Scapegoat, 25.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 25-26.
\textsuperscript{186} Gott, Where the South Lost the War, 211.
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 13.
Chief of Staff” and has a recognizable drawing of John Rawlins. “Rawlings” is also a lawyer from Galena, Illinois.  

GENERAL RAWLINGS, Chief of Staff to Lieutenant-General GRANT, and whose portrait we give on this page, was at the breaking out of the war engaged in the profession of law at Galena, Illinois. He was a townsman of General GRANT, and upon the appointment of the latter as field officer, RAWLINGS, then a young man, was selected by him as a member of his staff.  

This combined with the function he was serving at Fort Donelson makes it clear that it is John Rawlins. In a sense Rawlins was done a favor by Wallace as the idea of a Captain shooting a Colonel would have been problematic. However it is very conceivable that Rawlins

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189 Ibid.
would have resented a man who in most respects was a peer exercising authority over him.
This is particularly true considering Rawlins was in an emotional state when he was intending
to shoot the colonel.

It is also true that Wallace’s key role in saving Grant might have raised hackles. Grant
was absent from the battlefield and Wallace had queried Grant’s headquarters for permission to
aid McClernand. Nobody at headquarters was willing to take that responsibility. Wallace
violated Grant’s orders and in so doing saved the position of Grant’s army. That could have
planted seeds of resentment.

There is no completely definitive evidence of personal conflict between Rawlins and
Wallace or resentment by Rawlins towards Wallace, but there are enough pieces of evidence
pointing in that direction to conclude that it is very conceivable if not likely.

Another factor for Rawlins was that however much he loved Grant his own self-interest
was tied up with Grant. If you cannot think of Grant without Rawlins we may rest assured that
without Grant nobody would think of Rawlins. Rawlins would eventually make brigadier
general without ever having held a command or excelled in combat. If Grant’s career was shot
down then so was Rawlins’. For Rawlins, self-interest was nearly entirely tied up in Grant’s
interests.

One of the reasons that political pressure was coming to bear on Grant from the White
House was the coverage by the newspapers. One of the reporters who was central to the
coverage of the battle was Whitelaw Reid whose work was published by the Cincinnati Gazette.
Reid had been with Wallace early in the morning but had joined Grant’s party on the Tigress
after it departed Crump’s Landing. Consequently Reid was well positioned to see many aspects
of the Federal disaster of April 6. Reid’s 19,000 word story was reprinted in much of the eastern press. Reid’s work touched on a couple of Grant’s most vulnerable spots, the surprise achieved by the Confederates and that Grant was not with his army until well after the attack. Most of what Reid wrote about Wallace was dealing with the second day of battle and was highly complementary. His only comment on Wallace on day one was that Wallace was ready to march but didn’t receive orders until noon. This helped touch off the firestorm that engulfed Grant, and it would not be hard to see how Rawlins might resent Wallace for receiving such praise while Grant was savaged.

In addition to Rawlins there were three other members of Grant’s staff who played key roles in the Wallace march saga. Rowley and McPherson both rode to attempt to speed Wallace to the battlefield. Rowley went first and by himself, then McPherson left in the company of Rawlins. The last member of Grant’s staff is in certain respects the most critical one, Baxter, the man who delivered the message in question. Getchell points out something very interesting that isn’t immediately obvious. In Grant’s April 9 report on Shiloh he praises Wallace, among other commanders. A later portion of the report is also intriguing:

My personal staff are all deserving of particular mention, they having been engaged during the entire two days in conveying orders to every part of the field. It consists of Col. J. D. Webster, chief of staff; Lieut. Col. J. B. McPherson, chief engineer, assisted by Lieuts. W. L. B. Jenney and William Kossak; Capt. J. A. Rawlins, assistant adjutant-general; Capts. W. S. Hillyer, W. R. Rowley, and C. B. Lagow, aides-de-camp; Col G. G.

190 Stephens, Shadow, 105.
192 Stephens, Shadow, 106.
193 Getchell, Scapegoat, 102.
Pride, volunteer aide, and Capt. J.P. Hawkins, chief commissary, who accompanied me upon the field.\textsuperscript{194}

There is a name missing from this report. Baxter’s name is not listed among all those who are to be commended. Particularly odd given that Grant says “My personal staff are all deserving.” Yet Baxter is not mentioned. Getchell thinks this is true because he believes much of Federal failure can be explained by Baxter being utilized to send a message to Wallace instead of performing his quartermaster duties. According to Getchell, Federal units consequently ran out of ammunition and Grant’s choice of Baxter as a messenger was to be covered up.\textsuperscript{195}

That is not a compelling argument. Much of the ammunition shortage can be explained by the fact that the Federal forces were caught by surprise. It is also not shocking that there might be difficulties with resupply given that this is the first battle on this scale and intensity fought by the Army of the Tennessee. It may be true that Grant would have been wiser to have chosen a different officer, but Baxter’s temporary absence simply does not suffice as a comprehensive explanation for Federal failure on April 6, 1862.

A more mundane explanation may suffice. Grant may not have been pleased with Baxter’s performance during the battle for a reason which is not likely to be revealed. One critical duty Grant lists for his staff was the delivery of orders and he implies that the men mentioned did a fine job of performing that duty. It would not be unreasonable to conclude that possibly Grant was not happy with Baxter’s performance of that duty. Baxter, unlike Rawlins and McPherson and even Rowley, would not be identified as a Grant man. Baxter would leave the army for civilian life on April 27, 1862, less than three weeks after the battle.\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{194} Grant, April 9, 1862, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 110.

\textsuperscript{195} Getchell, Scapegoat, 172.

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 198.
When Wallace later requested his court of inquiry Grant would task Rowley, McPherson and Rawlins with providing statements but refrained from providing one himself. All these statements have been discussed earlier. Grant also requested a statement from Baxter, then a civilian:

“...You will please Send me a statement at your earliest possible convenience, of the time and circumstances at and under which you delivered my order to Maj. General Lewis Wallace at Crump’s Landing, to move to the field of the battle of Pittsburg Landing on the 6th of April 1862 and the time as nearly as you can remember the time I passed Crump’s Landing on my way to Pittsburg Landing." 197

There is no record of a reply being received from Baxter. 198 Baxter did make a brief statement on the subject for a newspaper as discussed earlier. That reply was made in 1886, after Grant had died. 199 In many respects, the Baxter aspect of this affair is odd. Every other member of Grant’s staff would receive a degree of promotion, substantially in the case of McPherson and Rawlins. Baxter would be out of the service. He is omitted from Grant’s commendation after the battle. He leaves the service less than three weeks after the battle and two weeks after Grant’s initial report. A year later when asked to make a statement there is no record of a reply. Then decades later Baxter makes just such a statement a short time after Grant’s death. Trying to draw a firm conclusion about what happened with Baxter, Grant and the rest of Grant’s staff from those data points would be very speculative, but it is an exceptionally odd assortment of events.

With Grant’s message of April 25 declining to fully endorse Wallace’s report we have the beginnings of what would become the accepted Wallace narrative. Essentially what Grant was

197 Simon, Papers VIII, 62.
198 Ibid.
199 Battles and Leaders, 607.
saying is that Wallace had filed a fictitious report, as Wallace himself recognized once he became aware of Grant’s failure to endorse his report. Wallace did not become aware of Grant’s April 25 message until 1863. This in turn generated his March 14, 1863 letter to Halleck which Halleck forwarded to Grant. Grant’s only reply was to solicit statements from his staff, including Baxter as discussed previously. Grant received statements from Rowley, McPherson and Rawlins which are in the Official Records and have been discussed above.

Wallace then requested a court of inquiry to clear his name, but Stanton denied his request on the grounds that sufficient officers of necessary rank could not be assembled due to the war. Eventually Wallace withdrew his request for a court of inquiry on the advice of Sherman. Wallace did this in hopes of being able to secure a command, but it was really his last chance to thoroughly lance the boil.

The statements provided by Grant’s staff formed the basis for the common narrative and provided the material for Grant’s narrative supplied in his memoirs. Most of the elements of Wallace’s perceived failure can be found here. Grant’s memoirs would be highly successful and influential. Many modern historians lean heavily on them:

The Memoirs have often been a key source in understanding and evaluating the Union Army’s triumphs and failures. Fine historians such as J.F.C. Fuller, Steven Woodworth, and James Marshall-Cornwall, have used Grant as the principle source – sometimes the only source – for their reconstruction of the war’s most important events.

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201 Stephens, Shadow, 107.


This edifice, imposing at least in its representations regarding the events of April 6, 1862, is built on sand, not rock. As analyzed in Chapter II, each of the three reports have serious problems with their assertions. McPherson’s report is wildly off in some regards yet has the least problems because it claims the least. McPherson was not with Grant when the battle began and did not join him until the battle was well underway. Rowley has some of the same sort of problems but it is Rawlins’ account that has the biggest issues.

A failure to get times right or a sequence of events is at least somewhat understandable when the accounts are written roughly a year after the fact. It is notable that all three of them move times forward from what is credible. From the standpoint of protecting Grant this is understandable as the earlier Grant gets to the battlefield the less glaring the problem of a badly located headquarters seems. This excuse actually cuts against Rawlins’ account. Rawlins goes into remarkable detail given the elapsed time (and a very busy time it was as well). At the same time Rawlins makes statements that simply cannot be reasonably explained.

A prime example of this is Rawlins’ statement that “the roads were in fine condition,” regarding the roads on which Wallace marched.204 Yet we have testimony to the contrary from three sources. Grant addressed the issue of poor road quality regarding similar local roads and the impact of heavy rain resulting in serious mud. While not the same specific road the River Road had already been recently under water and it is difficult to envision other roads being less suited to absorb more water. Wallace goes into some detail regarding the serious problems with the roads while acknowledging that they were not uniformly bad along the entire route. We also have the disinterested testimony of a member of the 2nd Illinois Cavalry who participated in the march himself and wrote of the seriously poor condition of the roads. Yet Rawlins says the

204 Rawlins, April 1, 1863, OR, Volume 10, Part I, 188.
roads were in “fine condition.” Given that we know Rawlins was of reasonably sound mind and that the conditions were relatively extreme, it is hard to explain how he could write this without the use of the word “lie.”

It is nearly as bad as when Rawlins alleges that Wallace claimed his “guide” had misled him. Yet we have multiple sources that make clear that Wallace knew a good deal about the Shunpike route and consciously chose to take that route. We know from Rowley’s testimony that Wallace countermarched once he knew the current status of the battle and that the only question about roads was whether a short cut could be found to save time. Such a short cut was identified. The claim that Wallace tried to blame a “guide” is a sly way of trying to portray a general who was lost. There is no reason to take the claim seriously except as an indicator of bad faith.

We have anecdotes about Wallace sitting down and Wallace being indifferent. Yet, objectively, we find that Wallace’s division attained a highly respectable rate of march under exceptionally adverse road conditions. The only reason for providing such anecdotes was to try and impugn Wallace, but they wilt in the face of the objective reality of the miles covered and the hours required to cover those miles.

Rawlins’ reply to Grant’s request for a statement is primarily an attempt to indict Wallace. Secondarily, it is an attempt to protect Grant. A classic example is his statement that the steam was always kept up on the Tigress. We know that Grant’s headquarters had experienced a coal shortage. We know from a neutral party that the steam was not up on the Tigress that morning. Speeding up Grant’s arrival at Pittsburg Landing is necessary to protect Grant from hostile enquiry.

205 Ibid., 187.
As mentioned we cannot know the inner workings of Grant’s staff. There are quite a few things that are clear. Grant, after the battle, praised Wallace in his report rather than chastising Wallace. Wallace was approved to release his own report to the public. Then the enquiry from Stanton was received. Almost immediately the report which had just been approved for public release three days earlier is found to have falsities in it. We do know that Rawlins may have had reason for resenting Wallace. We certainly know that Rawlins was devoted to Grant. In Rawlins’ own words “all that concerns his reputation concerns me.” Clearly Grant’s reputation was at stake.

There must have been some recognition that if some subordinate could not be blamed for the failure on April 6 then the logical candidate would be Grant. Rawlins had a vast amount of access to Grant and he knew his man. Grant was, as noted by Wilson, a man who could nurse a grudge. Rawlins could keep slipping in remarks about what could have been done if Wallace had only arrived promptly, how Wallace was indifferent on the approach march, how Wallace tried to blame his guide for his failure, etc. This combined with the need for Grant to protect himself could easily have built up resentment towards Wallace for putting him in a politically hazardous position. Grant would not have needed to consciously lie, and Rawlins would not need to ask him to lie. This could certainly be true over time and be the case in 1863 when Wallace realized what had been done to him.

However the initial damage done to Wallace between the 23 and the 25 of April is something for which Grant cannot entirely evade responsibility. To go from a state in which Wallace’s report is approved for public release to a state where Wallace’s report cannot be endorsed is too quick a swivel for it not to have a conscious component at the time. It is hard to
see that sequence of events without concluding that Wallace was thrown to the wolves for reasons of expediency.

When Rawlins made his statement a year later he may well have lied or perhaps by then he had deceived himself. In a sense it did not matter: he was a witness providing a false testimony and it was a testimony which would embed itself in the common historical understanding, particularly through his commander’s memoirs.
Chapter IV
Conclusion

Lew Wallace participated in three substantial engagements during the Civil War: Fort Donelson, Shiloh and Monocacy. At Fort Donelson, Wallace was the center of three divisional commanders in line against the besieged Confederates. When the Confederates attacked the morning of February 15, the heavy blow fell on McClernand, positioned on the right. Grant was not present having departed for a conference and had left orders for all three commanders to remain in place. When McClernand’s division began to crumble, Wallace disobeyed orders and responded to a call for help after previously refusing. Wallace was denied any guidance from Grant’s headquarters. Wallace’s intervention was effective and the Confederate assault was halted. Gott summarizes Wallace’s performance this way:

General Lew Wallace saved the day for the entire army. Although he hesitated, his initiative in detaching Cruft’s brigade helped buttress McClernand’s defense. And his foresight in bringing additional ammunition allowed a rapid resupply of Col W.H.L. Wallace’s brigade. The deployment of Thayer’s brigade and the additional regiments that arrived on the scene made an effective stand against the Confederate attack. 206

At the Battle of Monocacy Wallace and a small motley group of units (many were very green troops) were all that stood between Jubal Early and the nation’s capital, Grant having denuded Washington D.C.’s defenses. Wallace made a stand at Monocacy Junction and delayed Early sufficiently to allow Grant to get more troops back and safeguard the capital. Grant had this to say about Wallace’s performance following Early’s retreat:

There is no telling how much this result was contributed to by General Lew Wallace’s leading what might well be considered almost a forlorn hope. If Early had been but one day earlier he might have entered the capital before the arrival of the reinforcements I had

206 Gott, Where the South Lost, 217.
sent. Whether the delay caused by the battle amounted to a day or not, General Wallace contributed on this occasion, by the defeat of the troops under him a greater benefit to the cause than often falls to the lot of a commander of an equal force to render by means of a victory.\textsuperscript{207}

At both Fort Donelson and Monocacy we see Lew Wallace performing at an exceptional level. How does Wallace’s performance at Shiloh stand in comparison? How should Wallace be judged in the execution of his duties?

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map.png}
\caption{Grant and Buell Attack 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. Cartography by Gary D. Joiner}
\end{figure}

In the great controversy over Lew Wallace and his march on April 6 it is sometimes overlooked that Wallace was in the thick of things on the second day of battle. Grant’s assessment of Wallace’s performance being a “credit” is a reasonable summation.\textsuperscript{209}

Cunningham summarizes Wallace on April 7 as follows:

\begin{quote}

\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[207] Grant, \textit{Memoirs}, 500.
\item[208] Cunningham, \textit{Shiloh}, 344.
\item[209] Grant, April 9, 1862, \textit{OR}, Volume 10, Part I, 110.
\end{footnotes}
The Indianan had won. By refusing to panic and by carefully employing his reserves, Wallace stalled Bragg’s counterthrust.210

Daniel does not concur with Cunningham and the second day’s fighting tends to be relatively neglected in Shiloh histories.211 Sherman though in his memoirs refers to Wallace’s command on the second day as “well conducted.”212 With both Grant and Sherman speaking positively of Wallace’s performance on April 7 it is reasonable to conclude that if Wallace had a lapse in performance it was on April 6.

In examining Wallace’s execution of his duties on April 6 it is worth considering what an ideal performance would have looked like. This would have to take into account Wallace’s position and the level of knowledge that Wallace possessed regarding what was happening that day. When Wallace became aware of sustained firing on the morning of April 6, what should he have done? He should have readied his troops for action and awaited orders. He did not have enough information to warrant leaving his duty station without orders. This is what Wallace did, he readied his troops and awaited Grant down at Crump’s Landing so that Grant would not be delayed en route to Pittsburg Landing.

When Grant arrived at Crump’s Landing and ordered Wallace to be prepared for orders, Wallace should have made preparations for Grant’s messenger and had his troops ready to march. Wallace did well to leave a horse and guide at Crump’s Landing for Grant’s messenger (Baxter), but by the account of Wallace and of others a good twenty five minutes elapsed between Baxter’s departure and Wallace’s division moving out. This was not optimal. In

210 Cunningham, *Shiloh*, 364.


Wallace’s defense Baxter told him that the Confederates were being repulsed but a twenty-five minute delay seems unwarranted.

Once Wallace received orders he should have chosen the optimal route to take to rejoin the army, in accordance with the orders received. There is every reason to think that Wallace was ordered to form on the right of the Federal army but very little reason to think the order specified a particular route. With Baxter’s statement regarding the relative Federal success the right of the Federal army would be by the Shunpike route and the Purdy Road which would take him up by Sherman’s division. Additionally, Wallace was familiar with the road having coordinated movements with W.H.L. Wallace. It appears that Wallace was initially expected by that route based on the behavior of Sherman’s chief of staff. The correct choice of road would be the Shunpike and that is the choice Wallace made.

When Rowley reached Wallace during the march and informed him that the Federals had been forced back near the river Wallace should have immediately countermarched while seeking a short cut to the River Road. This is precisely what Wallace did. The one point for argumentation would be his decision to not reverse in place but keep the same lead units which did delay the march. However if Wallace had reached Pittsburg Landing and found it in Confederate hands it might have seemed a wise move. It is a debatable point.

In executing this march Wallace should have strived to make as good a time as possible, within the context of the roads he was using. It seems reasonable to conclude that Wallace did indeed strive to make good time with a rate of march in the neighborhood of that of A.P. Hill at Antietam and under more adverse road conditions. It was certainly a superior performance.

There are two small points on which Wallace may be reasonably faulted in his conduct on April 6. Those two points have only a modest amount to do with why Wallace arrived as late
as he did. On the larger issues Wallace decided wisely, within the context of what he knew and had reason to believe. Wallace’s performance on the first day of the Battle of Shiloh was not dilatory or inept, rather if anything it was exceptional. There is no cause for shame on the part of Wallace and no cause for significant criticism on the part of Grant.

When Grant’s positive report on Wallace of April 9 is considered and Rawlins’ approval of Wallace’s report for public release on April 23 is taken into account, Grant’s refusal to endorse Wallace’s report on the Battle of Shiloh is devoid of acceptable explanation. It is very difficult to see it as anything but the offering up of a sacrificial lamb to meet the political desire for someone to blame in the aftermath of public reaction to the failure of the Army of the Tennessee on April 6. It would be an offering acceptable to Halleck with his hostility to non-West Point officers.

The varied testimony given by Grant’s staff in 1863 would flesh out the anti-Wallace narrative and give source material for Grant’s memoirs, but it was Grant’s report of April 25 that did the real damage. Wallace’s only realistic chance to undo the hostile narrative would be to wait for a court of enquiry. Sherman dissuaded Wallace from continuing to pursue that course of action by offering hope of a future command, thus allowing Wallace back into the war. It is worth noting that a court of inquiry would have opened up a lot of wounds dealing with Shiloh and that Sherman had a lot to lose in such a case given his problematic record up to the moment of the Confederate attack. Nothing would come of this peace offering of sorts and Wallace would never have his day in court. The testimony of Grant’s staff would stand relatively unexamined in the official record. Wallace and Grant would both tell their stories, but historians would lean much more heavily on Grant’s work than on Wallace’s.
One aspect of what was done to Wallace receives almost no attention, even by those beginning to question the standard narrative. What was the cost to the Federal cause by Wallace’s shelving? We can all see what the cost would have been had Grant been permanently sacked following Shiloh because we know Grant’s later record of success with Vicksburg and Appomattox Courthouse. Consider, though, that Wallace, in his three engagements, has a substantially better than average record. In two of the three engagements (Fort Donelson and Monocacy) he arguably saved Grant from defeat. This is not to argue he was Grant’s equal but consider who still had a command when Wallace was sidelined. Men like John McClernand, Benjamin Butler, Nathaniel Banks, John Fremont, and Franz Sigel all held commands when Wallace was placed on the shelf. It is not hard at all to see Lew Wallace as a substantial improvement on any of those men. The Federal cause was not so awash in solid performers that it could spare one for symbolic reasons. The Federal cause was materially damaged by Lew Wallace’s relegation from active duty. That is not a small matter or a small price to pay.

There is also a lesson for historians. It is true that research has been greatly aided by the Internet and by digital media which makes a publication like the Official Records much more accessible via a search engine. However, most of the material presented here has long been available. The problems with the account in Grant’s memoirs and the problems with the statements by Grant and Grant’s staff in the Official Records were not deeply buried. Grant may have been a gifted commander and a vast historical figure, but there is no reason not to try and verify what he left in his memoirs as much as any other soldier.

In the end, Lew Wallace was a talented commander and a man of good character. With the misrepresentations and the injustices he suffered it would have been easy to have given in to bitterness. Wallace was frustrated, but he also put service above self and consequently still was
able to serve his country at Monocacy and ironically rendered a valuable service to Grant as well. A fitting tribute to Wallace is a quote from Robert E. Lee: "Duty then is the sublimest word in the English language. You should do your duty in all things. You can never do more. You should never wish to do less." It suits Lew Wallace well.

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Bibliography


