Lt. Col. William T. Poague:

Citizen-Soldier, Lawyer-Legislator, VMI Treasurer-Presbyterian Elder

By Richard Lynn[1]

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The world runs because of—at any one time--about 12 unknown, but indispensable people. In the law school world, it's usually a secretary with institutional knowledge and a maintenance man who make the place work, not the high-priced help. During his life, Col. Poague was one of those people

Robert Poage (the "u" was added later or was one of several spelling variants, sometimes in the same document) was born about 1715 in Ireland, came to America with his family and his brother, John, and settled 3 miles north of Staunton in 1738.[2] Robert Poage, first appeared in records of the Orange County Court on May 22, 1740 to "prove his importation" with the view of taking up public lands. The record notes that Robert and his wife, Elizabeth and nine named children came from Ireland to Philadelphia and "thence to this colony."

One of Robert's American-born children, Thomas, born in 1739, married Mary McClanahan, the daughter of the sheriff of Augusta County. Thomas inherited the homestead north of Staunton. Their son, John, born in 1772, married a widow, Rachel Barclay Crawford, in 1792. John moved to a 588 ½-acre farm in Rockbridge County that Thomas gave him, having traded land in Kentucky for it. John and Rachel had seven children, including John Barclay Poague, born in 1805, who married Elizabeth Stuart Paxton.

John and Elizabeth also had seven children. Their oldest son, William Thomas Poague, was born on Dec. 20, 1835. Two sons died young, one only a month old and one when he was almost fifteen. Two daughters, aged two and three, died within the same week in 1843. Two other sons

[1] I want to express my gratitude to Colonel Keith Gibson, Executive Director of the VMI Museum System, for his insights, and to the incredibly helpful staffs of the VMI Archives and the Special Collections of Washing & Lee's Leyburn Library. This presentation would not have been possible, or interesting, without the assistance and encouragement of my wife, Ann Adams, a relentless researcher. I have not included citations for each fact or quotation, but have listed the sources at the end of the paper.

[2] John was twelve years younger than Robert and had two children before 1740. John Poague settled in what would become Rockbridge County in the 1750s and built a log house on Poague Run, south of what would become Lexington, near the site of the present Margaret E. Poague House, built in 1847 and now on the National Register of Historic Places. He died in 1802. A number of Poague descendants of both Robert and John moved to Kentucky where they owned thousands and thousands of acres. Ashland, Kentucky, was originally known as Poague Settlement.

lived to adulthood: James (Oct. 11, 1837-Dec. 17, 1884), a Confederate soldier who became a physician after the war and died in Louisiana, and Frank B. Poague, born August 21, 1856.[3]

The homestead was near the Falling Springs Presbyterian church, above Poague' Run.[4] The Poague family owned several slaves.[5] In 1856, Poague's father, John, and his uncle, William F. Poague, gave five acres about a half-mile from the church for the construction of a parsonage. The pastor at the time was Rev. William Junkin, son of George F. Junkin, the president of Washington College before General Lee. In 1857, Poague's father was awarded the contract to build the present church building, slightly further up the hill from the cemetery where the old one stood.

Poague was educated at the Presbyterian school in Brownsburg and entered Washington College, graduating with eight classmates in1857. During the academic year 1858-59, he taught at a school near Atlanta, Georgia, and returned to Lexington to study law in Judge Brockenbrough's law school.[6] He completed his legal studies in 1860, passed his Virginia bar examination before a panel of three judges, and moved to St. Joseph, Missouri, that June to practice law. His Missouri law license is dated June 21, 1860. St. Joseph was the largest gateway to the west and a

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[3] Many of Poague's relatives are buried in the cemetery at Falling Spring Presbyterian Church in Rockbridge County, including his grandparents, John (1772- 1853) and Rachel (June, 1776-May 22, 1855), his parents, John Barclay (Nov. 10, 1805-Dec. 9, 1864) and Elizabeth Paxton (Sept. 25, 1818-March 6, 1899), and his two brothers who died young. The two sisters were Rachel (July 13, 1840-Sept. 21, 1843) and Cornelia (July 26, 1842-Sept. 26, 1843).

[4] Poague rebuilt the house in 1867, using some timbers and material from the old house and named it "Roundview." It is still standing and beautiful, and still has a round view of farms and mountains in all directions.

[5] One slave, John Franklin, accompanied Poague during most of the war. In an August 23, 1864, letter to his mother, referring to the fact that he sent John home, Poague writes, "I have a servant in his place. I think John had better stay home till winter. Think it would be good for him to take a little exercise on the farm, at least enough to cure him of the 'Spring Fever" which disease I fear had taken deep root in his system. He was not much to blame however, for life in the army is a very lazy one, and very few are proof against its effects." On February 21, 1865, Poague wrote his mother regarding conscription of blacks into the Confederate army: "If the bill should pass, probably one at least of our people will be taken. Horace or Jack or John. If the bill only called for volunteers I think they ought to be encouraged to enlist."

He then said, "In view of the uncertainty of affairs in our country, and the fact that the Yankees *may* occupy the valley someday and be your neighbor for a while, it would be well to attach the servants to you as far as practicable by kind treatment, and make them feel that it is their interest to stay with you. On this account I am glad you concluded to stay at the old place with them. I think our servants can be depended on with more confidence than the great majority of negroes, because they have always been well governed and well treated, and if they only knew the condition of the poor creatures who have go to the Yankees they would never leave you."

[6] One of his law school classmates was H. Kyd Douglas, later the youngest member of Jackson's staff and author of *I Rode With Stonewall*.

major port on the Missouri River.[7] In 1860, its population of 9,000 was more than Kansas City, Omaha, and Council Bluffs, combined. The railroad reached St. Joseph in 1859. In 1860, the Pony Express began its eighteen-month life, carrying mail 2,000 miles from St. Joseph to Sacramento in 240 hours. A wealthy boom town on the frontier must have seemed to be the perfect place to begin a legal career. He formed a law firm—Poague & Thompson.

In Poague's memoir of his war experiences, *Gunner with Stonewall*, written in 1903, but only for his family and not published until 1957,[8] he wrote, "St. Joe was a stirring border town …, a majority [of the people] being of Southern sympathies. Many excellent families and single gentlemen, some indifferent ones, many adventurers and a lot of 'toughs' made up the population. It was the starting point of the Pony Express for Frisco, and the outfitting place for Western emigrants and miners—especially those aiming for Pike's Peak." He returned home to Rockbridge County in December, 1860, for two reasons: the threatened war and the nature of the legal profession in that frontier town. Poague wrote, "To not a few it was evident there would be strife between the North and South. A number of young men, myself among them, determined to return to our native states and there be ready for the impending struggle."

The second reason for his departure was more common then than now, believe it or not: "Without regard to the impending war, I had made up my mind to leave St. Joe but had not settled on a location except Southward on account of climate. The competition in that city was of such a character that I could not hope to succeed without adopting the methods of the great majority of the lawyers. Only a few men of preeminent abilities could afford to ignore the tricks, shortcuts and unprofessional methods of the majority. A man of ordinary attainments had to adopt them or starve. Hence, I determined to seek more favorable conditions."

Poague returned home that December, but found that most in Rockbridge County were against secession.[9] Poague began practicing law with Lexington lawyer, James W. Massie. Poague's

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[7] The year before Poague moved to St. Joseph, two abolitionists were convicted of grand larceny after they were caught taking 14 runaway slaves to Nebraska in two covered wagons. While in jail in St. Joseph, a group of Kansans, led by John Brown, overpowered the jailer and released them.

[8] I may quote Poague's memoir excessively, but I find it so well-written that it would be a shame to paraphrase it. Based on his writing style alone, I wish I could have known him. Monroe F. Cockrell, a Chicago banker and amateur historian, edited and published Poague's memoir. He had access to more of Poague's papers than are available at either VMI or W&L, describing them in two "Supplements" held at W & L. Cockrell graduated from VMI in 1907 where he admired Poague and probably knew all three of Poague's sons. In1957, he met and corresponded with Henry's widow, who gave him a dozen bundles of Poague's papers. He returned some to Poague's family (Henry's widow and daughter, Ann, and Thomas's daughter, Virginia), but kept others., Cockrell, a Chicago banker and amateur historian, has papers at four different universities, but none of them seem to contain the missing Poague papers.

[9] Poague voted for John Bell, the Constitutional Union candidate for President. The party's platform was a simple resolution "to recognize no political principle other than the Constitution of the country, the Union of the states, and the Enforcement of the Laws." Bell carried every precinct in Rockbridge County, with twice as many votes as Stephen A. Douglas, the runner-up. In December, 1860, VMI's Thomas Jonathan Jackson wrote his sister, "I am strong for the Union at present, and if this becomes no worse I hope to continue so. I think that the majority in this country are for the Union …"

younger brother, James, left UVA's medical school to join the Rockbridge Dragoons. (He later became a courier for Jeb Stuart.) Poague wanted to join the Dragoons, but Mr. Massie, who believed he had a duty to serve first, asked Poague to stay to take care of their clients, expecting that the whole controversy would be settled soon.

However, within a few days of Virginia's secession on April 17, 1861, Pogue joined the seventy-man Rockbridge Artillery and, over his objection, was elected Second Lieutenant. John A. McCausland, a VMI mathematics professor, was the first captain. When McCausland was sent to train troops in Charles Town, Virginia, a West Point graduate and the local Episcopal rector, William N. Pendleton, was elected captain. Jefferson Davis, Joseph E. Johnston, and Robert E. Lee were among Pendleton's classmates at West Point. He quickly became the chief of artillery for the Army of Northern Virginia.

Poague wrote, "I did not want an office in the company because I was not qualified for it. Afterwards I keenly felt my deficiencies. With a military training, I would have been more useful in the service. In the ranks of such a company as ours came to be, I am sure I would have had a better time than as an officer. The very best young men in the state flocked to the company. They were attracted, I think, by the fact that a West Point graduate, the Reverend William N. Pendleton, was our captain in the early days of the war. Those brought by his influence afterwards induced others of the same character to join us. We thus had the very best material for a battery—men who knew how to manage and take care of the horses and educated, high spirited men for the guns."[10] According to historian Jason Barrett, "The battery may have been the most religious in the Confederate service, boasting 25 theology students on its original muster roll and led by an Episcopal rector, Captain William Nelson Pendleton, who had christened the battery's four guns Matthew, Mark, Luke and John." The unit was promptly sent to support Jackson's forces at Harper's Ferry. The first shot fired in the Shenandoah Valley a few weeks later near Hainesville came from by the Rockbridge Artillery.

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[10] One of the volunteers was Robert E. Lee, Jr., who later wrote, "I think it worthy of note that the son of the commanding general enlisting as a private in his army was not thought to be anything remarkable or unusual. Neither my mother, my family, my friends nor myself expected any other course, and I do not supposed it ever occurred to my father to think of giving me an office, which he could easily have done."

During the Seven Days campaign, Poague said, "Here General Lee, followed by well mounted and well dressed staff, rode up to the battery and asked for Private Robert Lee. He could not be found for sometime. At last some one found him asleep under a caisson. As he came up to the general, blinking and rubbing his eyes and as dirty as well he could be, the general broke into a broad smile, saying, 'Why Robert, I scarcely knew you, you've changed so much in appearance.' The staff all grinned and tittered and all of us greatly enjoyed the interview between the splendid looking , handsomely mounted general and his son. If you had looked the company over, you could not have found a more unkempt and 'onery' looking Reb than Bob Lee, Junior. But he was as good a soldier and as fine a fellow as any in that splendid company." Robert E. Lee, Jr., later wrote, "I remember well how curiously those with him gazed at me, and I am sure that it must have struck them as very odd that such a dirty, ragged, unkempt youth could have been the son of this grand-looking victorious commander."

Their first major battle was First Manassas. Poague described the thrill of the battle, in part: "The smoke of the battle rises above the tree tops, and with it all comes a wild and joyous exhilaration. Oh what an experience! Nothing ever equaled it afterwards. At last we proceed at a walk up an incline through scattering pines, horses blown and tired; and with shells exploding and minnies whistling all about us, we reach the field. Our guns are placed in line with some others already at work and we take up our part in the awful drama." A few hours later, he saw President Davis "on horseback, with a stove pipe hat on." He wrote, "That morning I could hardly manage my high spirited young mare and with difficulty kept her from running away with me. After the battle I could scarcely get her out of a walk; her ears were flapping about like a mule's, utterly collapsed."

In the memoir for his family, he wrote, "You may want to know how I felt in this my first battle. I was at no time frightened, nor was I excited after we reached the battle line. I was conscious of being in danger, but right there I felt was the place where I ought to be. The thought repeatedly came to me that I was in the hands of a kind heavenly Father, and that His merciful care and protection were over me. With all this was a most novel sensation, hard to describe, a sort of warm, pleasing glow enveloping the chest and head with an effect something like entrancing music in a dream. My observing, thinking and reasoning faculties were normal."

Of course, First Manassas was where Thomas Jackson acquired his nickname, "Stonewall." While serving with the Rockbridge Artillery, as part of the Stonewall Brigade, Poague saw Jackson in battle numerous times. In one fierce engagement while trying to destroy Dam Number 5 on the C & O Canal in December, 1861, "we found every man and officer behind a big tree and all dodging first to one side and then to the other … Jackson did not take to a tree, but occasionally bowed to those infernal shells." He wrote, "I saw Jackson afterwards in every one of his fights, big and little, but never detected the quiver of a muscle."[11]

In April, 1862, the Rockbridge Artillery was reorganized into three batteries. Poague was elected captain of the 1st Rockbridge Artillery. Again, reluctant to be in command, but determined to do his duty, Poague took control. He wrote, "In less than six months many of them were dissatisfied because they thought me too strict. When I took command the discipline was poor. … I had to see that there was no ground for the charge of partiality by the plain uneducated men. I had to require better attention to the horses. I had to haul up many delinquents in petty matters. …All this seemed very hard to our men who had a pretty easy time as to discipline. Consequently I was much disliked by some and hated by a few. The majority approved of my administration, and I had many warm friends. They recognized the difficulties

[11] Poague recounts a time when three prominent citizens wanted to learn Jackson's intended route in May, 1862, so they deputized a judge to ask him. (It appears to be Judge Brockenbrough, but Poague is discreet.) "To his query Jackson replied: 'Judge B--------, can you keep a secret?' 'Most certainly,' said the Judge. 'So can I,' replied old Jack."

of my position and made allowances for my failures and defects. All the men knew I would not shirk danger, and that I would not needlessly sacrifice them."

The Rockbridge Artillery played a key role in the 1862 Valley Campaign and the Battle of Kernstown. Poague commanded his battery in other major battles that year, including the Battles of McDowell, the Seven Days, Cedar Mountain, Second Manassas, Groveton, Harpers Ferry and Sharpsburg and Fredericksburg. After the First Battle of Cold Harbor (Gaines' Mill), the battery camped among fallen Union soldiers. When a soldier failed to get up at 3:00 a.m. reveille, Edward Moore, one of the soldiers in the battery, recalled: "I remember seeing Captain Poague go to a prostrate form that did not respond to the summons, and call out, 'Wake up, wake up!' But, seeing no sign of stirring, he used his foot to give it a shake, when he discovered he was trying to rouse a dead Yankee!"[12]

At Malvern Hill, Poague and Captain Carpenter of the Allegheny Roughs were ordered to report to Jackson, who was waiting with General D.H. Hill. Poague wrote, "Jackson stated that General Hill wanted a couple of batteries that he could depend on, and remarked to General Hill: 'These two officers command batteries that you can depend on.'" Hill was glad to see Poague; as a Professor of Mathematics at Washington College before the War, Poague had been one of his students.[13]

Poague's instincts were wrong on at least one occasion. At Port Republic on June 8, 1862, Jackson noticed a single artillery piece near the bridge across the South River at the edge of the village, manned by soldiers in blue. Jackson ordered Poague to fire on that gun. Poague's men said, "General, those are our men!" Jackson repeated the order and Poague said, "General, I know those are our men." He had just seen a new Confederate artillery unit—Carrington's--not yet fully equipped, but wearing blue uniforms, a common practice at that point in the war.[14] Jackson hesitated, just long enough for the single cannon to move, aiming at Jackson and

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[12] Edward A. Moore's, *The Story of a Cannoneer Under Stonewall Jackson* (1907), illustrates the differences of memory about events more than 50 years earlier. Moore joined about the time that Poague was elected captain, Moore remembers an event during First Winchester when John Agnor was killed because Poague ordered him to cut down a gatepost blocking their path while under heavy fire ("Do your duty, John." Moore, p. 57). Recalling the same incident, Poague says that two corporals bravely chopped down the gatepost under heavy fire, while Jonathan Agnor was squatting in the grass 100 yards in the rear. "My attention being called to him, I rode down and ordered him to one of the guns. Before he reached the piece, he was killed. After the war his old father complained bitterly of my having caused his son's death as he regarded it, but the facts were just as I stated." (Moore's "Appendix," listing everyone who served in the unit, contains both a John and a Jonathan Agner, not Agnor.)

[13] According to Poague, Hill was "brave, a stubborn fighter, extremely sarcastic, disposed to make light of the other arms of service—cavalry and artillery—and bitter towards "Yankees" as he usually termed them. On an application from a member of a band for a furlough he endorsed: 'Respectfully forwarded, disapproved—shooters before tooters.'"

[14] In fact, on that very day, Jackson was wearing his blue officer's uniform which is now on display in VMI's Museum.

Poague's battery on the height above the river. Douglas Southall Freemen describes what happened next: "Jackson did not mistake that movement. He knew it was hostile. "Let 'em have it,' said he—and the Parrott sent its charge toward the bluecoats, though the piece could not be depressed enough for a good shot. The answering projectile of the Federal Rifle went over the Confederate battery, but struck in the Thirty-seventh Virginia Infantry, Taliaerro's Brigade, which was now coming up. Jackson rode to the head of the infantry column, ordered it to keep to the right of the road, to descend to the bridge, to give a volley and then to rush the crossing with the bayonet." The canoneers quickly fled and the village was cleared. Jackson's report did not mention the confusion about which side manned the cannon.

While camped near Richmond afterwards, Poague wrote, "My father along with some of our old neighbors made a visit to our camp, bringing good things to eat, etc., which, of course, were greatly enjoyed after our strenuous campaign in the Valley and about Richmond. He was greatly gratified to find me a captain and commanding such a remarkably fine company. My first handsome Confederate uniform was a present from him at this time. These were the halcyon days of Jackson's troops. Well earned rest, good rations, abundant supplies from their valley homes, proximity to the capital with its varied attractions, the praises and admiration of its people for Stonewall and his followers all combined to make it most pleasantly remembered."

Poague recalled the march toward what would be Second Manassas: "That march through the beautiful Piedmont section—who can ever forget, that was along? The fine weather, magnificent country, the mysterious march, through fields and byways, the unknown destination, the possible collision at any moment with the enemy, the sight of the Bull Run mountains and then the stealthy approach upon Manassas—all served to keep us intensely interested and all the time on the qui vive. The whole situation intensified with the consciousness of tremendous risk to be followed by tremendous possible results." After the battle, his men were dividing the spoils from a deserted sutler's wagon: "To my lot fell the most useful thing I could have desired—a little mattress made of the best quality rubber cloth and cork shavings, the very best thing for sleeping on the wet ground. It had on it the name of Major Buck, New Jersey Volunteers."

Poague's battery fought hard at Groveton where his horse was killed while he was riding it. Edward Moore wrote, "One shell I noticed particularly as it burst, and waited a moment to observe its effect as the fragments tore by. One of them struck Captain Poague's horse near the middle of the hip, tearing an ugly hole, from which there spurted a stream of blood the size of a man's wrist. To dismount before his horse fell required quick work, but the captain was equal to the occasion."[15]

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[15] The next sentence is: "Another shell robbed Henry Boteler of the seat of his trousers, but caused the shedding of no blood, and his narrow escape the shedding of no tears, although the loss was a serious one."

Reading accounts in later years that credited Longstreet's artillery with smashing Federal lines and protecting Jackson's troops, Poague said mildly, "I have an impression at least that the Rockbridge Battery and several others of Jackson's batteries had a hand in that business. … After the second day our battery turned loose on a brigade of the enemy that had secured a position threatening Jackson's right and drove it off when 'Old Jack' rode up and said, "good morning Captain, that was handsomely done.'" As Freeman wrote, "This, for him, was almost a speech …"

After the battle, Poague "found the enemy's dead so thickly strewn that I could not ride among the silent ranks. Near the edge of the cut, a Federal soldier by a convulsive movement got nearly to his feet, not uttering a word or a cry—a part of his head actually torn away—and then fell prone upon that ground. I instantly found myself seized with an almost uncontrollable impulse to end his apparent agony with my pistol. Here, as on other fields, I experienced most divers and conflicting emotions—sincere sympathy for individual suffering and wishing I could give relief, and an inner rejoicing and intense satisfaction at the sight of hundreds of my country's foes deliberately put to death."

On the movement into Maryland, leading up to the Battle of Sharpsburg, the stern disciplinarian was disciplined. Jackson forbade soldiers to ride on gun carriages or caissons, but the artillery chief, Major Shoemaker, authorized men to do so while fording streams to stay dry. While fording the Potomac, Poague allowed his men to ride across on the carriages and caissons. Major Frank Paxton said he would have to report Poague. "'All right,' I said with a show of indifference about the matter. Next day came an order from the general placing me under arrest and quite a number of other commanders were in arrest for the same thing." From the viewpoint of Private Edward Moore, "Orders had been issued forbidding the cannoneers riding on the caissons and limbers; but, in crossing the Potomac that day, as the horses were in better shape and the ford smooth, Captain Poague gave us permission to mount and ride over dry-shod. For which breach of discipline he was put under arrest and for several days rode—solemn and downcast—in the rear of the battery, with the firm resolve, no doubt, that it was the last act of charity of which he would be guilty during the war." Jackson later released the commanders from arrest. Poague supposed that Jackson learned about Shoemaker's exception to the prohibition when fording streams.

Poague believed that Sharpsburg, the bloodiest single day in American military history, was "the most terrific and most trying" of all of Lee's battles. The Poague battery fought from four different positions during the day, beginning in front of the Dunkard Church woods. Edward Moore wrote, "At most of the positions we occupied on this move it was the exception when splinters and pieces of broken rails were not flying from the fences which stood in our front, hurled by shot and shell." (Moore himself was seriously wounded by a one-inch iron ball from a bursting shell.) The third position was the least tenable, within 500 yards of 30 Union artillery pieces. Poague and the other artillery captains protested to Major Pelham the plan to attack

"such an overwhelming force. Pelham replied with a laugh, 'Oh, we must stir them up a little and then slip away.' And so we did stir them up, with a vengeance they soon stirred us out." As a result, three of his four guns were disabled. In the late morning, General Lee rode up to the battery and spoke to Poague about the condition of the battery and told him to take the serviceable gun to the front, while sending the rest of the unit to the rear.[16] Poague's September 22, 1862, report on the battle concluded, "All of the men and officers acquitted themselves most admirably. I cannot avoid entertaining a feeling of pride in having the command of such men."[17]

After dark, Jackson ordered Poague to recover a cannon left on the field by a Georgia battery. A small infantry forces was assigned to him, but the infantry refused to go farther than the picket line. Poague and his men crept silently onto the battlefield, retrieved the gun as quietly as possible, and returned safely, where the infantry was happy to haul the piece behind the Confederate lines. Poague wrote, "While it was a compliment from 'Old Jack' to be selected for such a delicate and risky task, we could not help feeling somewhat indignant that those who lost the gun were not required to recover it."

After Sharpsburg, an army reorganization detached the Rockbridge Artillery from the Stonewall Brigade and assigned it to Brown's Battalion. Poague heard that he was being considered for promotion--not that he desired it--but that his Washington College classmate and friend, Sandy Pendleton, was no longer a friend, but used his influence to delay the promotion. "I could not

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[16] For the second time during the war, Robert E. Lee, Jr., one of Poague's soldiers, spoke with his father. The son later wrote, "The General, listening patiently, looked at us—his eyes passing over me without any sign of recognition—and then ordered Captain Poague to take the most serviceable horses and men, man the uninjured gun, send the disabled part of this command back to refit, and report to the front for duty. As Poague turned to go, I went up to speak to my father. When he found out who I was, he congratulated me on being well and unhurt. I then said: "General, are you going to send us in again?" "Yes, my son" he replied , with a smile; "you all must do what you can to help drive these people back" Poague adds, "After a few pleasant words with his son, General Lee rode away as quietly and composedly as if nothing special was going on. His equanimity and self possession under the awful stress of that fearful day were marvelous."

Poague's high opinion of Robert E. Lee, Jr. (*supra*, n.10) was quite different from his opinion of another of Lee's sons, General W.H.F. "Rooney" Lee. A pleasant social occasion in winter quarters was spoiled "… when in steps General "Rooney" Lee and a couple of his staff. At once it seemed as if an iceberg had floated into the room. Such frigid dignity I never encountered and so is was not long before Colonel Brown, Pelham and myself took our leave, having been completely frozen out."

[17] Poague's first written report came after the Battle of Winchester. His memoir says, "At this place I wrote my first report on my knee, and a very meager lifeless thing it was. I supposed after the brigade commander saw and read it, the fire would receive it. But lo and behold, I find several of my very imperfect reports published in the Rebellion Record, as the U.S. Government calls the volumes. I ought to have embraced in them many things that were a part of the history of the battery and that would have reflected credit on the men. I find that so many reports were written, and if you make a comparative estimate of the services of our battery along with some others as based on upon the reports of the commanding officer, ours would suffer by comparison." Perhaps, if Poague had prior military training, he would have known of the reputation-enhancing possibilities of after-action reports.

exactly understand his attitude to me, unless it was because some of his friends in the battery had been disciplined."

At the Battle of Fredericksburg in mid-December, 1862, Poague's battery took its position from which, he said, "[N]ever before had we seen as much infantry and artillery of the enemy at one time." Jackson rode up to Poague's battery and ordered him to open fire on a much larger Union battery, apparently as a way of gauging the enemy's strength. Poague wrote, "He knew what would happen when we opened, about five minutes after he left. Such a tempest of shot and shell I never have witnessed any where during the war. It was if 'Old Jack' had said to the Yankee Devil, 'seest thou my faithful old Stonewall battery! Do your worst and see if thou canst terrify it.' I don't know how many were the batteries in all that wide stretch of bottom that were turned loose on our devoted section." When Colonel Coleman ordered him to cease fire, Poague replied, "Very well, Colonel. Those Yankees down there will pretty soon compel us to quit, anyway." Soon, "a piece of shell cut through my hat brim within an inch of my head, producing a sensation of much heat about my eyes and forehead." His horse was also wounded. Poague concluded, "The fight on Dead Horse Hill weighed heavily on me for sometime. I could not understand Jackson's order and our sacrifice seemed useless. … But Jackson ordered it and I tried to think it was alright, but never ceased to mourn the loss of those splendid officers and men." Major Pelham, commander of J.E.B. Stuart's horse artillery, watching Poague's battery that day, said, "Well, you men stand killing better than any I ever saw."

In *The Long Arm of Lee,* Jennings Cropper Wise stated, "The distinguished reputation which the artillery branch of the Confederate service had acquired, rested not upon its comparative efficiency with the same branch of the Federal Army, for all recognized the superiority of the latter, in organization, drill, discipline, material, and equipment. It was but the direct result of the personal character of its officers and men … In other branches of the Confederate service there were few names among the subordinate officers as well known … [G]entle Tom Carter, bold Preston Chew, stern Poague, youthful Willie Pegram, and dashing John Pelham had become by-words in every Southern household. Few armies have ever boasted such a brilliant gallery of gunners, combining as they did the unflinching resolve of mature manhood with the bravery of youth, as was to be found towards the close of 1862 in Lee's field artillery."[18]

Poague received his promotion to Major on March 2, 1863, based largely on a personal recommendation by General Lee.[19] Poague moved from commanding the 1st Rockbridge Artillery to be executive officer, second in command, of the McIntosh Battalion, under Major D.

[18] Jennings Cropper Wise, a1902 VMI graduate, would have known Col. Poague and his oldest son, Barclay, if not the whole family. He also briefly taught at VMI after Poague's death, but while Barclay was on the faculty

[19] General Pendleton, the Chief of Artillery, as part of his February 11, 1863, proposal to reorganize the artillery, said, "Captain Poague, now commanding a battery in [Brown's] Battalion, is a superior officer, whose services have been scarcely surpassed. He has been recommended for a promotion, and should justly receive it."

G. McIntosh. (The 2nd Rockbridge Artillery was assigned to McIntosh's Battalion.) His new unit was mostly held in reserve during Chancellorsville, although Poague's memoir mourns the deaths of Jackson and several other Rockbridge residents, including the Stonewall brigade's General Frank Paxton. Shortly before Chancellorsville, Poague visited General Paxton, who said, "Ah, Poague, if the rest of us poor sinners had 'Old Jack's' religion and assurance of faith, with what little thought of personal safety we would go into battle."

Poague was then given command of a new battalion in General A.P. Hill's 3rd Corps based, he assumed, on his ability to handle his horses properly. "So you see my training on the farm where I had learned about the care and handling of horses, stood me in good stead. This kind of knowledge was of great importance to artillery officers. There came a time afterwards when some batteries and even battalions became sadly inefficient because of poor teams. On the terrible retreat from Petersburg, [General Lee chose] two battalions of artillery [to protect his remaining forces from the pursuing Federals] and these select battalions were Colonels McIntosh's and Poague's. This I have always esteemed the highest honor ever bestowed on my command. This distinction was due in large measure to the superior condition of our teams."[20]

His battalion contained the Albermarle Battery, the Charlotte (N.C.) Battery, the Madison (Miss.) Battery, and the Warrenton Battery. Poague's disciplined treatment of his men continued in this command. After the war, a Mississippian wrote him: "Colonel you know you used to fight us *mighty* hard. I have heard it whispered in camp, that you wanted to get the starch out of our shirts. I think you succeeded particularly on the last campaign. But not withstanding your *fondness* for ordering the Madison Artillery to the front, there was not a man in the whole company who did not respect you as a patriot and a gentleman."

The first major battle for Poague's Battalion was Gettysburg. On the first day, his unit was held in reserve in Cashtown and only came to Gettysburg when that day's fighting was almost over. On the morning of the second day, he was reconnoitering southwest of Big Round Top when General Lee, riding with two couriers, asked, "Have you seen General Longstreet or any of his troops anywhere in this neighborhood?" Poague said that he had not. He wrote, "Then showing disappointment and impatience by his manner and tone he said, 'I wonder where General Longstreet can be.' … This incident tends to confirm the belief—well nigh universal among

[20] The average life of an artillery horse was eight months due to exhaustion, disease, and battle injuries. General Lee's Order 115, October 1, 1862, included: "II. The general commanding desires to impress upon all officers in charge of horses of the army the urgent necessity of energetic and unwearied care of their animals, and of preventing their neglect and abuse. … III. Artillery horses especially must be kept in good condition. … IV. Division commanders are reminded of their responsibility for the condition of their artillery, and especially of its horses. On the march, they will see that the halting places are selected for their batteries where water and food can be obtained. … VI. Battery horses will in no instance be ridden, except while in use by the usually mounted non-commissioned officers of the company, and by them only on duty. Their use, except with the battery, and then in battery service, is strictly prohibited, and Chiefs of Artillery will arrest and bring to trial all violating this order."

Confederates—that Longstreet was responsible for the loss of the battle." Later that day, he was chastised by Lee personally for making a vague report of troop movements that did not furnish Lee any specific information. Poague recounts the embarrassment: "All this was intended as a reproof. Although I felt conscious of no failure of duty under the circumstances, still at the time, I was mortified. Indeed, I felt something like I did when as a boy of twelve or fourteen, I used to flunk on the Shorter Catechism under the questioning of good old parson Ewing—somewhat sheepish and in a bad humor." The second day of the battle passed without his battalion seeing any action.

The third day was different. Five of his guns (two Napoleons and three 3-inch rifles) were in the woods on the left of Anderson's division and five Napoleons were 400 yards in front, about 1,400 yards from the Federal batteries. His guns participated in the long barrage preparing for Pickett's charge and when the infantry began to stream across the field, he ordered his men to "limber to the front"—prepare to advance to support the infantry. Six12-pound howitzers were kept in the rear in case of a Federal counter-attack; their short range meant they were not useful for the barrage, but might be used for defensive purposes. Poague's official report after the battle states, "Upon the repulse of our troops, anticipating an advance of the enemy, I ordered up the howitzers. The enemy, however, failed to follow up his advantage, and I got no service out of those useless guns."

General Pickett, by himself, rode up behind Poague's Battalion. "Though not acquainted with him, I knew who he was, and at once rode to him and said after saluting, 'General, my orders are that as soon as our troops get the hill I am to move as rapidly as possible to their support. But I don't like the look of things up there.' He made no reply and didn't even turn his head to see who I was, but continued to gaze with an expression on his face of sadness and pain. … I then said, 'What do you think I ought to do under the circumstances? Our men are leaving the hill.' 'I think you had better save your guns,' was his answer, and at once rode off."[21] After the battle on the march south, Poague's Battalion was the last artillery across the pontoon bridge on the Potomac as Lee's army returned to Virginia.

Poague's new battalion, he wrote, "acquitted itself most creditably and won my admiration by their cool and deliberate behavior under the hot fire. My little sorrel mare was horribly mutilated by a shell almost severing her hindquarters, having curved over her head cutting in twain and scattering my saddle and overcoat tied behind. Fortunately I had just dismounted to see after one of the guns. … My overcoat was one that had been made in Lexington for General Jackson, but

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[21] Captain A. B. Williams, of the North Carolina battery in Poague's Battalion wrote in 1900: "The writer recollects that after this engagement (on July 3) the batteries had less than twelve rounds of ammunition to the gun, and twenty minutes more of firing would have completely exhausted our supply of ammunition, which being reported to Captain Graham, he ordered us to cease firing as there was no more ammunition to be had nearer than Richmond. But luckily for us the engagement was not renewed, both armies remaining inactive during the night of the 3d. and all day of the 4th."

being rather small for him, I bought it. It was of the best material and the best one I owned during the war."[22] A monument to Poague's Artillery Battalion on the Gettysburg battlefield includes these statistics: "Killed 2 Wounded 24 Missing 6 Total 32 Ammunition expended 657 rounds Horses killed or disabled 17" Markers on the battlefield, to the north and just behind the present Lee memorial, identify Poague's four batteries and the location of his howitzers.[23]

After the fighting at Bristoe Station, Poague's men "got to chasing and catching rabbits of which there were great numbers all about us. Burying comrades and running rabbits at the same time! Such is war!" Winter quarters at the end of 1863 were near Gordonsville where Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Baptist ministers held regular services. Poague was chosen to be president of the court martial for the 3rd Corps artillery. He wrote, "Most of the cases were for minor offense, but a number were tried for desertion, and some were condemned to die. The day for the execution of one of these arrived and the stake or post to which he was to be bound was set, when a pardon from Richmond saved him. For a brief space there was rejoicing among the members of the court, but this was soon hushed by the dismal grind of that awful mill—military necessity—and when the distressing business was finally ended by an order for the discharge of the court it was as the lifting of a great burden from our hearts." On February 27, 1864, Poague was promoted to Lt. Colonel.

Winter quarters were broken at the end of April and the army headed for the Wilderness, where Poague's Battalion furnished the main resistance to the advancing Federals until Longstreet's troops—tardy again—finally arrived. The confusion and disorganization of the first day of battle, May 5, caused one of Poague's artillery units, Mississippi's Madison Light Artillery to abandon a Napoleon in a thicket. Before dawn on the 6th, Poague led eight volunteers from that unit to recover the gun, a key weapon in the defensive stand a few hours later at the edge of the 30-acre "Widow Trapp's field." Poague's guns, loaded and double loaded with canister, kept the Federals from advancing on the Plank Road, the only way through the woods for them to

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[22] When he attended a reunion of Confederate and Union soldiers at Gettysburg in 1889 with Edward A. Moore, one former soldier told him that he was sure that both Poague and his horse had been destroyed by that shell and had told the story a hundred times, but was very glad to see that he had been wrong. The host Philadelphia Brigade had set a number of beer casks on ice on the top of the ridge that Pickett's men tried to take. "While I and a friend were sipping our beer (it was a very hot day) an old Confederate, after draining his tin cup remarked to the Federals, "If you all had had this up here that hot day in July, 1863, we would have stayed here."

[23] In July, 1911, Poague took his sons to visit the Gettysburg battlefield. A photo of this visit was recently discovered in the Lee Chapel museum and given to W & L's Special Collections. It hasn't been published anywhere yet, but I understand that Bob Driver is about to use it in a new book. The photo is in the accompanying PowerPoint presentation. From left to right, standing: Col. Poague, John L. Campbell, Jr., Henry G. Poague, John L Campbell, Sr.; sitting: William T. Poague, Jr., R. Barclay Poague. The cannon they surround has been moved, but the concrete pads for its wheels remain to the south of the marker in the photo.

attack.[24] Most of the cannons were on a ridge, but one was down on the road. Jennings Cropper Wise wrote, "But never once was the road occupied in force by the enemy, for Poague's single piece, with the gallant battalion commander himself beside it, swept the approach and completely dominated it from first to last."

Douglas Southall Freeman was even more effusive: "Open, then, Colonel Pogue, with your valiant old batteries—give them grape! Poague's guns were already loaded; the command rang out; twelve belching pieces filled the woods with fire. Another round, and then another, Colonel Poague, if there's time; the enemy is still 200 yards away." By then Longstreet's Texans arrived and charged the Federal positions.

During the Spottsylvania Courthouse campaign, Poague's guns repulsed a charge by Burnside's troops. Poague believed that "… but for our artillery it is probable that they would have overwhelmed our line as his troops were massed under cover of the pines within a very short distance of Early's line." During a bombardment while General Lee inspecting the front line, one of Poague's men, "a great strapping fellow of ours actually almost dragged General Lee down into a gunpit, so anxious was he for the safety of our beloved commander."

On the morning of June 3, 1864, during the Battle of Cold Harbor, General Heth summoned Poague and told him where he should put his guns. Poague protested that it would be too difficult to get the guns in place during daylight because it was in full view of the enemy, but that he could find a position nearby that would be just as effective. (Poague learned later that other battalions had been put in place under cover of darkness.) Heth insisted, but Poague was proven right. "The two batteries came into position in handsome style, and just as the guns were unlimbered the enemy's infantry opened on us, not a scattering fire of skirmishers, but with a perfect hail of bullets from their line of battle, just as I had feared. In less time than I can write it, both batteries were disabled. Not an officer escaped. Two were mortally struck and the rest more or less badly wounded."[25] Under that withering fire, Poague and his adjutant pulled two of

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[24] Captain A.B. Williams of Poague's North Carolina battery remembered: "The undergrowth was so dense that you could not distinguish a man fifty yards from the front. … We succeeded in holding the enemy in check, the battery using double charges of canister, equal to twenty-four pounds to the charge to the gun. Our position was a critical one; so much so that General A.P. Hill took charge of one of my guns during the engagement. The battery did terrible execution, the enemy's dead and wounded being found within fifty yards of our guns, their lines of battle reaching the caissons of the battery."

[25] Jennings Cropper Wise wrote, "Heth, however, reiterated his orders [over Poague's protest], and nothing was left the gallant Poague but to obey them. As the batteries galloped forward, the heavy line of skirmishers, with artillery in support, simply riddled the teams and shot down many of the canoneers. After firing but a few rounds, the two batteries were so badly crippled that they were no longer to remain in action. Poague was struck by a fragment of a shell, narrowly escaping death. Capt. Wyatt and Lieut. Rive were killed, many men and horses were killed, and nothing but the most heroic efforts of the survivors saved the guns from capture. Thus did an infantry commander usurp the function of his artillery leader, and by disregarding the advice and experience of one of the most competent and daring artillery men in the Army, uselessly sacrifice two superb batteries, which might have rendered valuable service

the guns by hand to a safer position behind an embankment fifty yards away. Poague was hit in two places: one where a shell fragment hit his shoulder broadside, but did not penetrate--the bruise was so great that his arm turned almost black down to the wrist and was sore for three weeks; the more serious wound was caused by a shell fragment piercing his right lung, causing hemorrhage and then pneumonia. He said, "But for this wound, I would have had no thought of leaving the field."

He was given a 30-day furlough and reached his Rockbridge home in time to hear Hunter's guns at Lexington. He "loaded two wagons with flour, bacon and other supplies and, in company with our younger negroes and some neighbors, we kept ahead of Hunter." They went to Buchanan, then to Big Lick, known today as Roanoke, and across the Roanoke River to Franklin County. Poague's parents, who remained at the homestead, were told that Hunter's cavalry heard that Poague was at his home and would try to capture him. "Their coming, with the purpose as reported, excited my mother, who was almost an invalid, and she at once burned all my letters written from the army. This was something of a loss to me, as I had always written pretty fully about our campaigns and battles and expected to keep them for reference."

When Poague's furlough was over, he went to Petersburg to resume his command. His battalion was posted at Dutch Gap from August 24, 1864, until April 2, 1865.[26] Union General Butler planned to cut a 200 yard-long canal where a loop in the James River meant that the canal would allow Union gunboats to bypass several Confederate batteries, including Battery Dantzler, before arriving at Richmond. Until January 1, 1865, when the Union effort to build a canal failed, the battalion steadily fired mortars and other guns on the laborers below.[27] Poague wrote: "The

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under the direction of their proper leader. … It was a fatal mistake to turn Poague over to Heth's mercies, but the error had its good effects, as it simply emphasized the impracticability of the repetition of such a practice for Col. Walker's protest was prompt and forceful." Walker was Chief of Artillery for the 3rd Corps. After the war, Heth wrote Poague several times with different questions about the location of his batteries at Sharpsburg, for the purpose of marking the battlefield. .

[26] "During the entire operation, from August 1864 to January 1, 1865, the Confederates nearly continuously shelled the canal operation. However, the deep sides of the canal made the project nearly impervious to traditional artillery fire. The Confederates instead resorted to mortar fire which could drop into the canal in a nearly vertical direction. Though it was extremely difficult to put a round into the canal, the Confederates were able to do so from time to time, and they did inflict casualties. When the canal had been completely dug out except for a bulkhead on the northern end, Butler arranged to blow this final seal with explosives, and set the date for January 1, 1865. On that day, at 4 p.m., the bulkhead was blown. Earth thrown up from the bulkhead fell back down into the channel. Although water flowed through the channel, the canal was not navigable for the Union ironclads. Butler was sacked as commander of the Army of the James only days later, and his pet project was abandoned." http://www.beyondthecrater.com/news-and-notes/siege-of-petersburg-sesquicentennial/150-years-ago-today/150-18650101-explosion-dutch-gap-canal/

[27] A report from General Pickett to Lee's staff on September 26, 1864, described one hindrance: "I have the honor to report that Colonel Poague fired ninety-four times on Friday and only forty shots yesterday. He says that the flag-of-truce boat came down to Cox's Wharf and remained many hours; that it would have to cross the line of enemy's fire; and he did not wish to draw the fire upon the boat loaded with our

amount of ammunition expended at Dutch Gap, if known would be amazing. Even from our little mortars, the amount as reported from time to time by my ordnance officer surprised me. From notes kept at the time I estimate the number of pounds of metal hurled into Dutch Gap as up in the hundreds of thousands. Ten times as much at least was hurled at us. In all these five months of incessant firing we suffered only two casualties, one killed and one wounded."[28]

Poague wrote his mother, "In fact the Yankees at his point are not as bloody a foe as another we have to contend with, the mosquitos. … No mosquito yarn will ever be too absurd or extravagant for my credibility hereafter, and no tale of horrors with which mosquitos are connected will ever be beyond my belief nor fail to secure my sympathy. … If it be the will of Providence that I shall pass through this war, and if it shall be my privilege as I hope it will to become an old man, and take my grandchildren on my knee and recount to them the trials, suffering and horror of the Great Revolution, perhaps no chapter in my narrative will so horror-up their little souls, and cause their flaxen locks to stand on end as the account of the doings of the mosquitos at Dutch Gap in the summer of 1864."[29] Despite first the mosquitos and then the cold damp, Poague's seven months at Dutch Gap were "more pleasant and comfortable than any previous seven months of army life" with everyone living in comfortable huts.

In January, 1865, Lt. Col. Poague was recommended for promotion to Colonel, but, along with numerous other recommended promotions, no action was taken during the frantic final months of the war. Poague's Battalion began the last campaign of the war by helping slow down the Union advance on Petersburg until Longstreet could arrive. General Pendleton ordered him to hold his position at the Turnball house which had been Lee's headquarters, but was then being evacuated, "sacrificing the guns if necessary but saving the men and horses if possible. Guns were plentiful,

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returned prisoners. In the meantime, Yankee-like, the enemy pushed forward their work on the gap. I have already reported this twice. I now again respectfully call the attention of the commanding general to the facts; something should be done, some understanding come to; either another point of exchange, should be agreed upon, or they should be compelled to stop working whilst the flag is pending, as the flag visits so frequently, and remains so long, it interferes materially with our mortar practice. … The firing of the mortars, Poague's and Huger's VIII-inch, has kept the working parties of the enemy very busy dodging, and their dredging machine has come to a standstill."

[28] As an example of the extensive correspondence Poague received, like many Civil War veterans, was a letter from R.A. Bright, "late of General Pickett's staff," dated June 29, 1865: "You will confer a favor upon me if you will let me know (as near as you can come at it) how many shells were thrown from the mortars under your charge while in position in front of Dutch Gap Canal." As of December 28, 1864, Poague's Battalion contained the Albermarle Battery with one Napoleon and two 10-pounder Parrotts, the Madison (Miss.) Battery with four Napoleons, the Pittslvania Battery with two 10-pounder Parrotts and two 3-inch rifles, the Warrenton Battery with four Napoleons, and Graham's N.C. Battery with two Napoleons and one 3-inch rifle. The battalion manned four mortars during the shelling of Dutch Gap.

[29] Captain A.B. Williams echoed the complaint: "Of all the soldiering experienced by the writer, that of firing on Dutch Gap was the most disagreeable, we being continually under fire both day and night from land batteries and gunboat in the river. The low-bottom lands of the James produced chills and fevers and beside mosquitoes by the millions to annoy us both day and night. Our sick list averaged full sixty per cent."

men and horses scarce." They succeeded in that effort, but then barely escaped when outflanked. Poague wrote, "I made my escape to the rear by jumping an ordinary plank fence [on my horse when] a bullet whizzed near my head, fired by an officer who was stopped by the fence. I turned in my saddle and sent a shot in return and then waving him an adieu, galloped to the road and joined our retiring artillery … I had a letter years later from a Major Richards, adjutant of the brigade that charged and captured [some of our guns]. … I think he must have been the officer whose horse balked at the fence when he fired at a retreating Confederate mounted officer, whose horse made the fence which his refused. It is likely that I was the officer."

Poague was then given the order that gave him—in hindsight—such honor: to be one of the two artillery battalions assigned to the Longstreet and Gordon troops between Grant and the main body of the army moving west. During these maneuvers, Poague and his men experienced the greatest sleep deprivation of the war. When his guns had to reach the supply trains threatened by raiding Federals, he found the road blocked by a traffic jam of frightened, panicked wagon drivers. "Directing the leading battery to push through as fast as possible, I galloped around the jammed column and broke into it with a drawn pistol, forced the drivers into a single column along the left side of the road and thus at last got a clear way on the right side for our guns. When I got them to understand that the Yankees were trying to get to the trains in front I had no further trouble." Poague's Battalion then helped repel Union attacks on both sides of the Confederate route. Jennings Cropper Wise wrote, "The services which the stern and indomitable Poague here rendered fully satisfied the confidence reposed in him by Pendleton, who selected the gallant little hero of the Wilderness in preference to all others for the delicate task of opening the way for the Army."

Late at night on April 7, General Lee and aides intercepted Poague as they were moving down a road in the dark. Lee asked how he was getting along. "When I told him that one or two of the teams were much jaded, rending our progress rather slow, he said: "If any of your teams give out, don't delay your command to try to get them along; perhaps you can reinforce them by horses from a caisson, which can be abandoned.' Those were the last words addressed to me by the commanding general of the army. I had occasion to heed his instructions not long after he passed on." Pogue did not know that Lee had already begin the process of negotiating the surrender.

The movement west continued until the morning of April 9th when he went to General Gordon, seeking infantry to assist one of his batteries—Penick's--about to run out of canister to repel a Union force. "[Gordon's] face was pale and I saw that he was laboring under some overpowering emotion as pointing to the front … he said with a tremulous voice and heart broken tone, "That will stop them!" and turned his face from me. I looked and saw about three hundred yards away a horseman at topmost speed with a white flag streaming behind him and going directly towards the position of Penick's battery."

When told that Lee had surrendered, Poague remembered, "All at once my heart got to my throat and everything around me became dim and obscure. … A strange, all-pervading silence brooded everywhere. As often as my mind reverts to that particular hour, I am reminded of the expression in Revelations, 'There was silence in heaven for about the space of half an hour,' only substituting a very different word for heaven. … Such scenes as followed were never before witnessed in the old Army of Northern Virginia. Men expressed in various ways the agonizing emotions that shook their souls and broke their hearts. Some cried like children. Others sat on the ground with faces buried in hands, quietly sobbing. … But it is useless for me to try to picture the gloom and sorrow of that supreme moment. I have often wished someone could put on canvas the unparalleled scene in my battalion, with Gordon and his staff sitting on their drooping horses nearby—motionless, pale, speechless!" After parking and unhitching the guns and caissons, Poague and his men slept the rest of the day and all of the night. "Ah, the luxury of that long sleep still dwells in memory, and to think of it now is refreshing."

On Tuesday, April 11, the order to disband the Battalion was given. Poague wrote, "I had thought of saying a few things to the battalion when last drawn up in the way of expressing my appreciation of their fine soldierly qualities ever since I had the honor to command them, especially in the recent trying days. But I found myself dumb—so utterly and unexpectedly overcome that I broke down at the very start—and was able only to utter in broken tones: 'Men, Farewell.' I speak truly when I say there has never been a day since, when I could dwell on that last scene without experiencing emotions of deepest grief and sorrow."

After the surrender, the best of the undernourished Confederate horses were taken before Poague chose one. He wrote, "When I came to get one in place of the one the Confederate Government still owed me for (it having been killed in battle), the best I could get was an old fellow of not much value." Poague rode that horse home to the family house on Poague's Run. He wrote, "After the war, my health being much impaired by chills and fever which clung to me for ten or fifteen years, I gave up all idea of the legal profession and lived at the old Homestead, near Falling Spring. It fell to my lot also to care for our mother." (The chills and fever stemmed from malaria, which he contracted in 1863).

Shortly after returning to Rockbridge County, Poague began his post-war life of civic involvement. At the June 21, 1865, meeting of the Washington College Board of Trustees, he was appointed as one of four new trustees. At the next Board meeting on August 3, the new Board members appeared and took the Trustee's oath. He was excused from attending the continuation of the meeting on the next day, August 4, the day the Board approved the resolution offering the presidency of the College to General Lee. There is no indication that the Board discussed this idea on August 3, nor do we know why Poague had to miss the next day's meeting. Given his devotion to General Lee, there is every reason to believe that he would have supported the offer enthusiastically. Poague served as a Trustee for almost twenty years, resigning after he became Treasurer at VMI in 1885.

In August, 1865, Rockbridge county papers advertised the opening of the co-educational Fancy Hill Academy, later known as the Fancy Hill Classical School, directed by Colonel W. T. Poague and David Laird. Tuition for ten months of instruction in the classics was $40.00. In the July 4, 1866, issue of the Gazette and Banner, a brief article states: "There were some fifty odd scholars in attendance, and these gentlemen have proven themselves to be excellent teachers, if the opinions of the patrons of the school can be believed. Col. Poague retires and a co-principal is to be elected to supply the vacancy." Later ads show Poague as a member of a small committee seeking applicants for that position. He was involved with the school for at least six years. While also farming, he continued to look for opportunities to teach. In the July 3, 1879, issue of the Lexington Gazette, he advertised for a school for girls that he and his wife would teach in his house.[30]

Poague served as an elder of the Falling Spring Presbyterian Church for almost sixteen years, beginning in December, 1867, and ending on January 2, 1888, when he became a member of the Lexington Presbyterian Church.[31] He was chosen as an elder of Lexington Presbyterian in 1890, serving until his death in 1914; between the two churches, he served for a total of more than 40 years as a church elder.

He was elected to the House of Delegates for two terms in 1871-72 and1872-73. His brief political career was both helped and hurt by his wartime experience. When he left his command of the 1st Rockbridge Artillery and became a Major in the McIntosh Battalion, he wrote: "Some I knew, would be glad to be rid of me. It was in this camp I had to make several details of men to wash, with tobacco concoctions, horses of the battery infested with vermin. For this, two Rockbridge men, Tom Wade and Alfred Gold, never forgave me; as I learned when canvassing for the Legislature in 1871, that is was for this reason they would not vote for me."

He was on the Board of Western State Hospital in Staunton for one term, beginning in 1874. He was a member of the Lexington school board from 1895-1901.

After 43 years of bachelorhood and a three and a half-year engagement, Poague married 30-year-old Sarah Josephine Moore, daughter of Nathan G. and Nancy Jane McGuffin Moore of Fancy Hill, on December 6, 1878.[32] Their first child, Elizabeth Moore Poague was born on January 5,

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[30] A column in that issue said, "The colonel is so well known in this and adjoining counties that we have no doubt that he will be successful. His wife is a lady who has been engaged in teaching some years, and we know of no family in which we would prefer to have a daughter educated. His terms, too, are quite moderate, and with such a school at our doors we see no necessity for sending our girls from home." Board was $115 and tuition was $25-40, depending on the subject. This school would have been offered only one year, 1879-1880, because he moved to Lynchburg in 1880, as the following note states.

[31] His service as an elder was interrupted by a move to Lynchburg for two years school years, 18880-1882, when he was the principal of the Lynchburg Female Academy. He resigned as elder in 1880 and, two years after his return to Falling Spring, was reinstated as an elder on November 16, 1884.

[32] The engagement was secret at least part of the three and a half-years, perhaps because of family concerns, or because it might endanger her teaching position. She wrote him on July 3, 1875, "I don't intend to tell anyone of our engagement unless, it may be, one or two members of my family. I could not

1880. A son, Robert Barclay Poague, was born December 5, 1881. Poague bought the lot that is now 509 S. Main Street on December 29, 1886, and started building the house. It began as an "I" house, a two-story brick house with two large rooms on each floor, separated on the first floor by the entry hall and stairway and separated on the second floor by the stairway and a small nursery. Additions and renovations to the house expanded it over the next few years. A large stable stood behind the house when the lot was much larger than now. Two more children arrived. William T. Poague, Jr., was born on Dec. 19, 1886, and Henry Grigsby Poague was born on May 24, 1889. The Poague's also took in Washington & Lee students as boarders.[33] One of them, later a lawyer in Kansas City, lived with the Poagues for four years.

Poague began his work as Treasurer of VMI, a position—he was careful to say--he did not seek, on January 30, 1885. He was walking into a difficult situation. A letter to him from the Lexington law firm, Lechter and Lechter, dated December 31, 1884, advised him about certain legal steps that must be taken by the Board of Visitors before accepted the job.[34] His predecessor, James Frazier, was both a Board member and the "Treasurer and Military Storekeeper," living rent-free on campus. When a new Board was appointed, he lost that position, but refused to leave his housing or turn over books or records to Poague for six months. A lawsuit resulted and a commissioner found that Frazier had been using VMI funds "for his own private and special purposes," and owed VMI more than eighteen hundred dollars. Fourteen years later, the unpaid debt was charged off.

All three of Poague's sons graduated from VMI. Barclay Poague graduated from VMI in1900 and began teaching at VMI in1904, first as an Instructor and then Associate Professor of Descriptive Geometry (Mechanics) and Drawing. For a time, he was the chairman of the faculty committee on athletics. Prof. Poague also headed the department of Mechanics and Drawing which, after his death on May 23, 1930, was merged into the department of Civil Engineering. Tom Poague graduated in 1908. In his fourth year, he was captain of VMI's football team. During WWI, following in his father's footsteps, he served as a Captain in the Field Artillery. He was later a teacher at Florida's Embry-Riddle School of Aviation before his death May 2, 1943.

Henry succeeded his brother as captain of the football team. Couper's VMI history states: "Another Poague, Henry, was this year's captain and was the last word in what is politely known as 'intestinal fortitude.' It is said of him that he would have literally killed himself in the game against Virginia trying to stem the tide if members of the Virginia team had not begged the

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forget the ring—I have been wearing it a week." When Cockrell returned much of the Poague correspondence to the family in 1957, he advised them that some of the letters were "intimate" and probably should be burned. Might those have been love letters? Many of the letters Cockrell saw between them did not have stamps on the envelopes and would have been delivered, most likely, at church.

[33] Poague's papers included licenses from the city of Lexington to engage in the business of boarding house keeping in 1890 and 1891.

[34] Poague characterized the contents of this letter, but did not quote or summarize the actual legal advice.

officials to get him out of the game." After graduation in 1909, he was assistant coach of the football team for four years and was named head coach in 1913. He was head coach for only one year, with a 7-1-2 record. Like his father and brother, he served in the artillery during WWI as a Major in the 816th Field Artillery. In later years, he was a salesman living in Dallas, where he died on November 14, 1953.[35]

Poague's first child, his daughter Elizabeth, whom the family called "Bess," was a nineteen-year old Maid of Honor, one of several representing Virginia, at the 1901 Confederate Veterans reunion in Memphis. When she was twenty-six, the saddest event of Poague's life was captured by the headline of a brief article in the Lexington Gazette, April, 1908: "Miss Bessie Poague Married and Died Within a Week." She had been ill for some time, but went to Richmond in late March, 1908, to visit the family of a Dr. Strickler. She married F. M. Durrance, a third-year W & L law student from Florida, at the Strickler home on March 31, 1908. Her condition worsened and she was taken to the Retreat for the Sick where she died on April 7th. Her body was brought to the Lexington home where the funeral was conducted. The article concluded, "The death of Mrs. Durrance under such distressing circumstances has cast a gloom of our entire community, and has called forth the deepest sympathy for the grief-stricken family."

Poague's biographical sketch in *Men of Mark in Virginia*, published in 1907, states: "He is a Democrat, and has never changed his party allegiance. He is a member of the Phi Kappa Phi college fraternity; and in place of his old amusements of hunting and shooting, he now derives recreation and exercise from fishing, and from walking to and from his office twice daily—thus going each day a distance of six and a half miles."

Colonel Poague was never entirely reconstructed. He was active in Confederate veteran groups, including United Confederate Veterans, and was the first Commander of the Lee-Jackson Camp of the Grand Camp of Confederate Veterans. He attended military reunions, including those of the Rockbridge Artillery. During the parade on July 21, 1891, when Jackson's statue in the cemetery was dedicated, he rode a horse just ahead of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the Rockbridge Artillery's original guns, now arrayed before the VMI Barracks. His memoir, written in 1903 when he was 68, said, "The biographies of Mr. Lincoln are wide of the mark in saying that the masses of the Southern people were forced into the war by secession leaders. It was the act of Mr. Lincoln and his party that precipitated the conflict which many think was inevitable. … The North was the aggressor. The South resisted her invaders. History will vindicate her course."

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[35] Henry's widow had the four notebooks in which Colonel Poague wrote his memoir and made them available to Monroe F. Cockrell who was responsible for editing and publishing it. They are now in VMI's Archives, along with other papers preserved and annotated by Cockrell. The Special Collections at Washington and Lee's Leyburn Library also contain Poague material and other papers by Cockrell.

William T. Poague died September 9, 1914, 78 years old.[36] He, his wife, and their four children are buried beside each other in the Stonewall Jackson Memorial Cemetery, a few yards southeast of Jackson's statute.

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[36] The VMI Board of Visitors adopted a resolution in tribute to Colonel Poague after his death which reads, in part: "The name of William Thomas Poague will not be forgotten while a grateful people revere the achievements of the Army of Northern Virginia. Through that great struggle for Sothern rights, Poague was the synonym for valor. No post was too difficult, nor hardship too great, no battle too bitter for himself and the renowned artillery command that bore his name. To trace his rise from the rank of lieutenant to that of colonel is to recount the most arduous campaign and the most heroic exploits of the war between the states. From no great engagement in Virginia was he absent; on no field did he fail to show the faith that was in him. When distinction came and merited recognition was awarded for his service, modesty declined praise when patriotism alone was an incentive. Yet history rightly lists him among the most valued artillery commanders of the Confederate service and points to his battery and later to his battalion as a model of effective ordinance.

As treasurer of this Institute for the thirty years from 1884 until his death, Colonel Poague was not only faithful in the discharge of his duties, but an inspiration to instructors and cadets. In his gentle modesty and perfect breeding were incarnated the best ideals of the South; his very presence was a benediction. His colleagues felt that in him were typified that high service for which the Institute stood; the cadets regarded him as a living proof that the great traditions of the Institute were fresh and virile.

Upon the death of such a man, the board feels the emptiness of formal resolutions or perfunctory tribute. That which Colonel Poague did for the Virginia Military Institute, like that which he did for the South, need not be commemorated in words. It lives."

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