

# **Major Henry Elijah Alvord: Soldier, Farmer, Teacher**

**By Elizabeth M. Crawford and Elizabeth L. Morgan**



**Major, Second Regiment of the  
Massachusetts Cavalry Volunteers**

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Cover photograph of Henry Elijah Alvord, taken upon his 1862 enlistment as a second lieutenant in the Second Massachusetts Calvary, courtesy of the Michael K. Sorenson Collection.

## Acknowledgements

This individual biography developed from a larger, ongoing research project into our family's abolitionist heritage.

We thank Tom Evans for suggesting a biography of Major Henry Elijah Alvord of the Second Regiment of the Massachusetts Cavalry Volunteers, and for his encouraging guidance in the preparation of the draft of this article. We are also very grateful to Tom for providing the indispensable lead about Major Alvord's role in the execution of Pony Ormsby.

Based on an acquaintance established at the 150<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the surrender at Appomattox in April 2015, Patrick Schroeder, Historian at Appomattox Courthouse Historical Park, invited us to include Major Alvord in the "Wall of Honor" exhibition in the Tavern at Appomattox, along with Henry's eyewitness account of the events leading up to and including the surrender.

We are grateful to Shannon Moeck, Historian at Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park, Virginia, who enthusiastically embraced Elizabeth L. Morgan's (ELM's) search for the site of Colonel Charles Russell Lowell's last and fatal charge. As the exact location of Colonel Lowell's death is located on private property; Shannon arranged with the owners, Robert and Tracey Clark, for ELM to visit and photograph the scene with Carol Bundy, a descendant of Colonel Lowell.

William Lanford, who is a fellow Alvord descendant, generously shared useful images of family portraits, letters, and artifacts. His contributions provided the primary resources that launched a larger project, concerning Henry's abolitionist heritage, of which this is a part.

Mike Sorenson kindly shared information about his collection of artifacts belonging to the Second Massachusetts Cavalry, including Major Alvord. Mike furnished the wartime photograph of Major Alvord in uniform, as well as photographs of gear and clothing similar to what Henry would have used. We are most grateful to Mike for his significant contributions to improving the illustrations in this work.

Don Hakenson kindly assisted ELM in locating one of the hideouts of Colonel John S. Mosby, which was discovered by Major Alvord; and was most gracious in sharing information on Mosby and Unionists living within the Confederacy.

In his 2012 book *Chasing Jeb Stuart and John Mosby: The Union Cavalry in Northern Virginia from Second Manassas to Gettysburg*, Robert O'Neill provided a thorough account of the resources deployed to capture Mosby.<sup>1</sup> Bob personally assisted our project by casting a critical eye at our description of the military portion of Henry's career, for which we are most grateful.

We are especially appreciative of the expertise provided by archivists in identifying and providing access to useful archival materials, and also in offering useful suggestions for further research: Sarah Coates, Archives, Edmon Low Library, Oklahoma State University; Lauren Leeman, Librarian, Research Center—Columbia, The State Historical Society of Missouri; Anne Moore, Special Collections Librarian for the W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst; Anne Turkos, University Archivist

emerita for the University of Maryland Archives; and Gail Wiese, assistant archivist for the Norwich University Archives and Special Collections.

We particularly thank Carol Bundy, author of *The Nature of Sacrifice: A Biography of Charles Russell Lowell, Jr., 1835–1864*. From the moment ELM met Carol at her lecture on Colonel Lowell in July 2014 at Mount Zion Church, Aldie, Virginia, and in subsequent visits and communications, she has been most kind and generous in her suggestions for tracking resources for researching Major Alvord and his experiences within the Second Regiment of the Massachusetts Cavalry Volunteers.

I (ELM) feel a special connectedness with Carol, in that we are both great-great-nieces of these Civil War heroes. Colonel Lowell was idolized by our Henry Elijah Alvord, who was devastated by his death, led the detail that conveyed his body back to Boston, and remained engaged with his family for the remainder his life. As a leader, Colonel Lowell was unquestionably the greatest single source of inspiration to Alvord throughout his military career.

I (ELM) happened to meet Lee Lawrence while we were both researching Major Alvord's wife, Martha "Mat" Swink. Lee has become a special friend and coach to me in my research and writing. She has also helped me through many discussions and communications, and by providing useful leads to important information, in particular concerning the intriguing Mat Swink. Lee's research, based on the diaries of other Confederate women, suggested that Mat was active in supplying the Confederacy with intelligence information. Equally intriguing, though, was her assistance to Unionists and longtime family friends living as her neighbors. Lee was an essential reader before this article was completed.

Elizabeth M. Crawford adapted and expanded the information presented here from her manuscript about our abolitionist ancestors, notably Major Alvord's sister, Caroline Matilda Clapp Alvord. ELM performed the historical research, obtained illustrative material, and prepared the article manuscript. Katherine Troyer edited and formatted the final manuscript.

## **MAJOR HENRY ELIJAH ALVORD SOLDIER, FARMER, TEACHER**

By Elizabeth M. Crawford and Elizabeth L. Morgan

It would be hard to envision a better example of a nineteenth-century man than Major Henry Elijah Alvord—socialized with the highest expectations of traditional morality and achieving excellence in war and in peace—yet forward thinking and innovative in his approach to education, technology, and society. He chose his epitaph “Soldier-Farmer-Teacher,” a modest tribute to his superbly energetic, productive life.

Henry Elijah Alvord was born on March 11, 1844 in Greenfield, Massachusetts, into a long line of distinguished public servants. His mother died giving birth to his sister Caroline two years later. Fortunately, his father, Daniel Wells Alvord, had an older spinster sister, Mary Upham Alvord, available to take care of the two surviving children. They were raised in genteel society with relatives, friends and mentors who were WASPs—White Anglo-Saxon Protestants—with several generations of residence in the United States—who shared a classic education; a strong work ethic; prospects for economic security; traditions of public service in the ministry, in education, and/or in government; and an opposition to slavery. They were at least second-generation abolitionists, as their father was active in the movement.

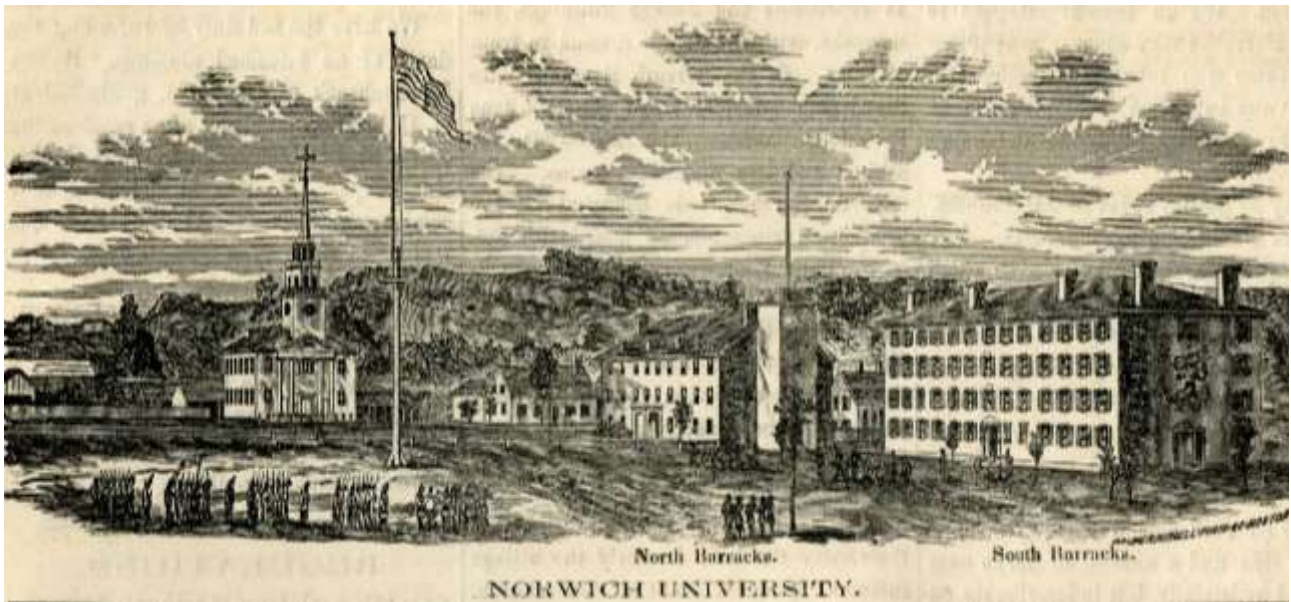
Henry’s father Daniel did not remarry until June 7, 1859, at age forty-three, thirteen years after his first wife’s death. His second wife, Caroline Betts Dewey, came from an illustrious family, including several judges and a Governor of New York. Daniel and Caroline Dewey provided Henry with five half-siblings.

Although he and Caroline were deprived of a mother at an early age, Henry remembered a happy Greenfield childhood.<sup>2</sup> In 1860, he enrolled in Norwich University, Northfield, Vermont. This groundbreaking university was founded in 1819 as the American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy; it is the oldest private military college in the U.S., and the first private college to offer an engineering program. Henry’s father launched him with high expectations:<sup>3</sup> “My future worldly hopes rest on you....If you should miscarry in any way I should hardly wish to live....You are a second self to me....”



Henry Elijah Alvord, 1862, while a student at Norwich University.  
Photograph courtesy of the Michael K. Sorenson Collection.

Henry's choice of Norwich, a military-scientific-literary institution, rather than Yale, Harvard, or Dartmouth, suggests that, at an early age, he subscribed to the innovative idea that schools must teach science, engineering, and military sciences, instead of only the classics.<sup>4</sup> This choice also was influenced by Henry's maternal grandfather, Henry Wells Clapp, who had connections with Norwich's president.<sup>5</sup> This decision caused him some unease with his elite colleagues in the military but was invaluable in his civilian future. Henry's intention was to pursue a career in civil engineering and architecture. Even with the distraction of the Civil War and the interruption of his studies, he matriculated in civil engineering on schedule with his class.<sup>6</sup> (He received the C.E. in 1870, an M.A. in 1875, and an honorary L.L.D. in 1890.)



Norwich University, 1862. Norwich University Archives, Northfield, Vermont.

But the Civil War interrupted Henry Alvord's education and changed the course of his future career. With his father's permission, he joined the students' company of cavalry at the close of his junior year at Norwich University and enlisted in Company B, Seventh Squadron, Rhode Island Cavalry, the "College Cavaliers," on June 24, 1862, for a three-month assignment. Before he was mustered out on October 2, 1862, he was promoted to first sergeant. He completed the requirements for a bachelor of science, which was awarded in 1863. Though only eighteen, Henry re-entered the army on November 21, 1862, as second lieutenant in the Second Regiment of the Massachusetts Cavalry Volunteers, again with his father's approval. He became first lieutenant on January 25, 1864, and captain on December 11, 1864. He served throughout the war and achieved the rank of major on June 24, 1865, and was honorably mustered out on August 1, 1865.<sup>7</sup>

Fortunately, there is a most valuable source for Henry's Civil War service: the letters he wrote to his family, published in *The New England Quarterly*; a few passages are reproduced below.<sup>8</sup> The authors were listed as Caroline B. Sherman, a niece, and Henry E. Alvord.

Henry Alvord's reactions to the Civil War were similar to those of many other soldiers. He began bursting with enthusiasm, impatient to join the fight. On April 22, 1861, he wrote quite dramatically: "Rumors today say Washington is lost. If that is so, we must have a bloody war and I must have my share of it before it is over." But by October 11, 1863, as he passed the two battlefields of Bull Run, he was beginning to doubt the worth of what he was doing.

...too frequently you see the parts of skeletons of both men and horses lying along the road. I counted six skulls. At intervals too, human hands and feet are seen protruding from insignificant mounds—soldiers' graves. Man as a soldier...theoretically...in an exalted...position, is practically of less account than the lowest animals.

In his first letters home, Alvord wrote that he was "waiting for action." But placed in the top of his trunk was a document "to be forwarded to my relatives at home in case of my death."

Camp of Detachment Second Mass Cav. Gloucester Point April 29, 1863

...I have not paid much attention to religion as I ought to have done but I have satisfied myself that if one lives an upright honorable life, being careful to do nothing which his conscience tells him is at all wrong, or if so doing, seeking earnestly forgiveness of his Creator and asking for strength against future temptation, he may call himself a Christian and without professing religion of any distinct form, he may be sure as mortal can be of eternal life....If I am not allowed to see the dear ones at home again in this life, I am sure I shall in the life to come, God grant that I not be disappointed in these strong hopes!



Henry's riding boots, similar to these, would have been privately purchased.  
Photograph courtesy of the Michael K. Sorenson Collection.



Lid to Army-issued field glasses case, property of Henry Elijah Alvord. Photograph October 2014 by Elizabeth L. Morgan.

I fully realize my present position. I am one of a vast number engaged in a war in which many must fall, and I know that any day may be my last. My motives in voluntarily placing myself in this position were many...a great taste for military life...my duty to the land of my birth...zeal from the belief that the victory...would necessarily bring about the abolition of slavery in the country, freeing the land from its greatest crime, an oppressed race from bondage, and thereby establishing more permanent peace by removing the subject of controversy....I do what I can to abolish an institution which I have been taught from earliest childhood to abhor. I know that of the families of both my father and mother I was the only one who could represent them in arms....I am quite willing to acknowledge my ambition, my desire to stand well in the estimation of my fellow man in after life....Such are the most prominent motives which caused me to enter the service. I do not profess to be fighting for either of them alone, but for a combination of all.



Embellishments on the guard, a rayskin grip, and brass mountings on the scabbard identify this as a cavalry officer's saber. Henry Alvord would have carried a saber such as this.

Photograph courtesy of the Michael K. Sorenson Collection.

At age nineteen, Second Lieutenant Alvord's perception of Christianity as obedience to a moral code rather than a belief system may reflect "Victorian morality." Altogether the document is a tribute to his seriousness, intellect, abolitionism, and love of family.



Henry Elijah Alvord wore a kepi like this one with or without a protective oilcloth rain cover (as seen in the 1862 full portrait). These McDowell caps were worn by both officers and enlisted men.

Photograph courtesy of the Michael K. Sorenson Collection.

In 1863 the young Alvord expressed his dedication to abolition when he offered his services in "colored troop recruitment" to Major George Luther Stearns (1809–1867), an abolitionist from Massachusetts: "I should like exceedingly too to be connected in the great work in which you are engaged. As to the interest I naturally take in the subject, I need only say I am my father's son. You know the political school in which I have grown up."<sup>9</sup> This contact was important as Stearns, a successful



merchant, engaged in certain controversial abolitionist activities. He established the Medford station for the Underground Railway. As one of the “Secret Six,” Stearns gave financial support to John Brown. The pikes and 200 Sharps rifles brought by Brown and his followers to Harper’s Ferry belonged to Stearns. After Brown’s arrest, Stearns fled to Canada but later returned to his home in Medford. Stearns recruited over 13,000 African Americans to serve in the armed forces.<sup>10</sup>

Another letter from Gloucester, Virginia dated May 3, 1863 included some remarkable observations. Henry Alvord’s instant love affair with Virginia may have been realized when he moved to his wife’s family home, Spring Hill, Fairfax County, Virginia, after the war. He attributed agricultural devastation to the institution of slavery. Notice also his sense of intellectual inferiority and his surprise at the resistance to emancipation that he observed among his fellow officers.

...the approach of summer makes it [Virginia] a rival of New England. If instead of the deserted farms, the apparently barren plantations, once fertile in the extreme but devastated by slavery with a finishing touch of war, were in the high state of cultivation which peace and free labor would soon bring them to, I should, I fear, become too attached to this lovely place....All [our officers] are gentlemen. Four were educated abroad (two being Rugby boys) and are fine linguists—modern particularly. Greek, Latin, French, German, and Portuguese books abound in camp....It would be very pleasant were it not for a sort of feeling which I necessarily have that to be considered quite the equal of the majority I should be a graduate of Oxford, Cambridge, or Harvard.

I am quite surprised at one thing. It so happens that with one exception, all the officers of the most carefully officered battalion of the regiment are determined enemies of...Lincoln and Company, and especially anti-proclamationists. Consequently (?) all great friends of McClellan....<sup>11</sup>

Regimental records show that Alvord’s K Company of the Second Massachusetts Cavalry was stationed at Gloucester Point performing outpost duty and scouting from February 19, 1863, until it was sent to West Point, Virginia.<sup>12</sup> On May 15, the company joined Dix’s peninsula campaign from June 24 to July 7. However, there is no letter between May 24, from West Point, and Lewinsville, Virginia until August 23, 1863, when Alvord described a series of futile chases to capture the notorious Confederate renegade



Cavalry officers in the Second Massachusetts Cavalry were known to carry pistols such as this Remington revolver, or in some cases, Colt revolvers. Their belt rings were held in place by a cast brass belt plate with profuse detail around the winged eagle motif.

Photograph courtesy of the Michael K. Sorenson Collection.

Colonel John Singleton Mosby. These operations left the men exhausted, sleepless, and thoroughly frustrated. Legend has it that during his search for Mosby, Alvord stopped at Spring Hill, a Fairfax County, Virginia plantation, and an alleged Mosby hideout on at least one occasion.<sup>13</sup> There he apparently met a daughter of the slaveholding owners William and Margaret Swink. This daughter, Martha "Mat" Scott Swink, would later become his wife.



Officers were required to supply their own uniforms; Henry's frock coat, similar to the one illustrated, would have been tailored at home and sent to him.  
Photograph courtesy of the Michael K. Sorenson Collection.

January 24, 1864, found Alvord still chasing Mosby from the Vienna, Virginia Camp. Ordered to arrest a civilian, he took the man from his eighty-five-year-old mother. At the arrestee's request, they returned later to find the woman crouched over a few ashes with nothing to burn and no food. "I hesitated a moment between humanity and obedience." Alvord got the man's pledge to show up at his office the next morning, and to his surprise, he did. "It seems to me that if a man is kept long enough in this part of Virginia at such a time he will forget what it is to feel at all."<sup>14</sup>

And those feelings were gravely tested when, also on January 24, 1864, Private William "Pony"

Ormsby, a California member of Alvord's regiment, deserted.<sup>15</sup> Two weeks later, on February 5, he and eight of Mosby's rangers attacked the rear guard of a scouting party from his own regiment. Ormsby was captured, given a drumhead court martial the next evening, and shot at 12:04 p.m. on February 7. At his trial his defense attorney, Chaplain Humphreys, disclosed in exoneration that Ormsby had fallen in love with a southern woman. Did Alvord relate? Colonel Charles Russell Lowell, his beloved superior officer, ordered Alvord, as Provost Marshal, to issue the execution call: "Ready, aim, fire!" to the ten-man firing squad, one of whose rifles had an empty cartridge.

Several of Ormsby's comrades recorded the event. Will Forbes, who served on the panel of the court martial, said Ormsby's execution was "the most sickening experience of [my] army life," which included five months in the notorious Confederate prison at Andersonville.<sup>16</sup>

Either Alvord did not write his father about the execution, or Caroline B. Sherman chose not to include it with his published letters. He must have been profoundly affected. Although the case was clearly desertion and treason, Ormsby was well liked and admirable in his courageous acceptance of the sentence.



Site of one of Colonel John S. Mosby's hideouts, discovered by Henry Elijah Alvord in May 1863, in the home of Rangers Harry and Daniel Hatcher, Highway 50, Middleburg, VA. Photograph July 2014 by Elizabeth L. Morgan.

In May 1864 Henry Alvord was still searching for Mosby. He had some success, for which he received credit and mention in Washington and Springfield, Massachusetts newspapers.

[Discovery of a Mosby hideout] was made in a house at Hatcher's Mills, between Middleburg and Upperville, the residence of the father of one of Mosby's Lieutenants.

Lieutenant Alvord discovered that a certain wardrobe in a recess near the chimney has a false bottom, through which he lowered himself into a subterranean apartment about eight feet square which contained small arms and several suits of under clothes and Confederate uniforms. A satchel hanging upon the wall contained Mosby's papers.<sup>17</sup>

In July 1864, General Jubal Early, together with other Confederate components, came within five miles of Washington City, reaching Silver Spring, Maryland, before retiring in the face of superior forces. Meanwhile, Colonel Charles Russell Lowell with additional cavalry held the skirmish line outside the forts south of the Potomac for three days. Major Alvord read a detailed description of "Early's Attack on Washington, July, 1864" at the April 7, 1897 meeting of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, in which he observed that the attack was really no attack at all, but it did frighten the citizens of Baltimore and Washington.<sup>18</sup>

Between August and the end of September, First Lieutenant Alvord was separated from his unit, being stationed at Fort Ethan Allen in Arlington, Virginia. He had participated in a number of skirmishes before,

but he was about to enter the field of all-out battle, as described in excerpts from his letters of October 14 and October 16. There are no letters actually describing the battle of Cedar Creek on October 18–19.<sup>19</sup> However, he provided some details in an interview he gave to a Boston paper (see below).

Near Strasburg, Virginia, October 14, 1864:

...The campaign of General Sheridan has been very successful. The battle of Winchester (or Berryville) and Fisher's Hill completely used up the army of Early. Throwing away their arms his men scattered among the mountains...

Early on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> we moved to meet the enemy...we completely scattered the entire body of the whole rebel cavalry under Rosser, and chased them over thirty miles. It is not boasting to say that my Brigade did much more than its share in the victory of that day...I was busy as Aide throughout the fight and escaped all injury...

In the Valley, October 16, 1864:

...We discovered the enemy in force and had a brisk skirmish. The three officers in charge of the skirmish line being wounded early in the fight, I was ordered by Colonel Lowell to take command of the line in the immediate front of the enemy, and remained there gradually driving them until darkness closed the engagement. Bullets struck all around me thickly—one glancing on a rock in front of my horse bounded up so I caught it in my hand. We lost that night one killed and seven wounded, all from 2<sup>nd</sup> Massachusetts. [There follow fuller details of the engagement described in the letter above.]

...Colonel Lowell lost his *twelfth* horse since the opening of the campaign and a bullet striking the pommel of his saddle glanced through his coat. One of General Merritt's aides standing between the Colonel and myself was wounded...I should not be surprised if this victory ended Sheridan's campaign but it depends on Grant. We may go up in the Valley again.

My work on the field of battle as aide requires in my horses, endurance, speed, agility, and courage. *Bill* has plenty of pluck and endurance but no speed and cannot jump at all—he stumbles too on rough ground. I shall dispose of him if I can well replace him. My mare does *very* well—the Colonel wants her but cannot get her...<sup>20</sup>

The lowest point in Alvord's military career was when his beloved commanding officer, Colonel Charles Russell Lowell, Jr., died at the battle of Cedar Creek on October 19, 1864. Of course, Lowell's death must have raised Alvord's sense of his own mortality. Perhaps he even wished he had let the Colonel have his mare—would that have saved his life?

Alvord was detailed to take Colonel Lowell's body home to Massachusetts; he also served as a pallbearer. In an interview published in the *Boston Herald*, Alvord recalled his experiences in the battle.



Colonel Charles Russell Lowell, Jr., circa 1863. *The Historic Genealogy of the Lowells of America from 1639 to 1899*, The Tuttle Company, 1899 by Delmar R. Lowell.

Lieut. Henry E. Alvord...states that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mass. Cavalry went into the battle of Cedar Creek with something like 400 men, and at night could count only some 200. As he left the next day, he could not say how many of the missing subsequently reported. The regiment made four different charges during the day, one at 12, one at 1, another at 3, and another at 3:30 or 4 o'clock. The first charge was ordered by Col. Lowell, upon a battery in front of his brigade, for the purpose of obtaining information.

They captured the pieces [weapons] and fifty prisoners, but found themselves the center of so tremendous a fire that they had to fall back, bringing only five prisoners. They were sufficient, however, to furnish the desired information, a portion of which was that the whole of Longstreet's corps [Alvord is in error here; the command was Jubal Early's] was behind the battery....Col. Lowell, after receiving the contusion in his breast from the spent ball, which went through his sleeve, lay for an hour and

a half with his head in Lieut. Alvord's lap, unable to speak for a part of the time, but recovered enough to take part in the last, and for him, fatal charge....

The force of the rebels he estimated at 30,000....The 6th Corps, 10,000 strong, bore the brunt of the morning's fight, and it was after 12 when Sheridan had succeeded in collecting the 8<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Corps and brought them to the field. But before they could be fully posted, the enemy, hearing what was going on, made at 1 o'clock a fierce charge, in hopes of preventing re-organization, and met a severe repulse.

When our army made the decisive charge after 3 o'clock, Merritt's cavalry division was the extreme left, the 8<sup>th</sup> Corps the left wing, the 6<sup>th</sup> the center, the 19<sup>th</sup> the right wing, and Custer's cavalry the extreme right wing. The cavalry first virtually turned the enemy's flanks, and the infantry then plunged with wild enthusiasm on the center.<sup>21</sup>

The following letter was written on Alvord's way back to the army.

Everett House, Martinsburg, Virginia, November 10, 1864.

...I must confess that for the first time in my soldier life I do not *want* to rejoin the command. In spite of my endeavors to keep cheerful I am "blue" all the time. Leaving a happy home to enter the service, I led an easy life therein and finally with Colonel Lowell I found a true and very dear friend and almost a second home—an *army home* where I was

as contented as I could possibly be. But now *he* is gone I feel alone again—like a stranger in a strange land. I have lost my dearest friend and my “army home” is broken up.

I loved, I honored, and admired—I *almost* worshiped him, and now he is no longer at Head Quarters with the command. I feel there is no longer any interest there for me....<sup>22</sup>

But he summons up his resolve to continue.

The *Cause* should be all the more dear to me and so it shall be! I shall not let personal feelings influence me, but try to overcome my dislike to return, and go back to duty in earnest and let my duties absorb my time and attention. It will be lonely indeed without the Colonel but life as a soldier is not to continue very much longer.

I really believe that the result of the election and of our military combination now in prosecution are soon to bring the enemy to terms. I think the prospect is more cheerful than ever before and such is the general impression...in the army....<sup>23</sup>



Thorndale Farm, July 2014, with a view toward Brinker’s House and the field across which Colonel Charles Russell Lowell led a mounted charge, allowing the infantry to push the enemy to the stone wall at the edge of Middletown. In his charge, Lowell received his death wound from a sharpshooter’s bullet from an upper window of the Brinker House. Photograph by Elizabeth L. Morgan.

In later letters, Alvord learned from a Washington newspaper that he had been promoted to captain. On his 21st birthday, in 1865, he was resting after marching 250 miles since leaving Winchester. On March 15th his unit was only twenty miles from Richmond with no enemy in sight. By March 28 they had crossed the James River, with Lincoln, Stanton, Grant, and “friends and ladies” observing. Next they crossed the Appomattox and were camped before Petersburg. After a series of skirmishes, Alvord was present and witnessed Lee’s surrender to Grant at Appomattox Court House, which he recalled with obvious excitement.

In a detailed letter dated April 12, 1865, Captain Alvord recounted the events leading to the final confrontation at Appomattox.

On Sunday morning April 2<sup>nd</sup> after the victory of the first instant I wrote you a long letter in pencil on the back of General Orders. That day we moved West by South, got the Southside Road, passed on, overtook the remains of the infantry which fought us the day before—pitched into them and bivouacked just in the rear of our skirmish lines, darkness having ended the contest.

Another mail came that night but no letter from home. I wrote you a short pencil letter and sent it off April 3.

While I was writing the federal troops were marching into both Petersburg and Richmond, and Lee commenced retreating with his army.

Then commenced a grand footrace: Grant versus Lee. Lee was North of Appomattox and “we all” South of it. Lee had the start and succeeded in securing the Bridges at Bevil’s and Goode’s on April 4 and crossed there to the South of Appomattox.

That night our cavalry which was in advance overtook him, attacked him, and we had quite a hard fight; night, as usual, ending the contest. We moved in the night, marched to Dinnisville. On the 5<sup>th</sup> we reached Jetersville on the Danville R.R. just before Lee’s advance got there. We held the position till the infantry came up and then when they entrenched themselves we moved out again as “feelers” and found Lee’s Army near Amelia Court House. Some of the cavalry went in and got prisoners, 200 wagons, and 8 or 9 battle flags, also six guns.

We made all our dispositions and expected a battle in that vicinity, but in the night Mr. Lee made a dash and got by our left—between Painesville and the Appomattox—and on the 6<sup>th</sup> we had to chase again. We struck him in the flank that day—charged and in conjunction with the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps we cut off General Ewell and his whole corps—got 10,000 prisoners, 80 battle flags, guns and wagons too numerous to mention.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> Lee recrossed the Appomattox at High Bridge on the Southside road, burning it behind him. There was a fight at Rice’s Station, after which we moved along Lee’s left flank trying to head him off.

April 8<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon our cavalry reached Appomattox Station near Clover Hill and found a part of Lee’s army there getting supplies from trains which had come from Lynchburg. Custer was ahead and pitched in as usual. The men were driven from the depot, five locomotives with trains captured, the R.R. held, prisoners, guns, and battle flags taken. We followed Custer closely and fought the rebel troops all night long—waiting for our infantry to come up. During the night it came and at daylight we arranged for and commenced a great battle.

But it was cut short by Lee's surrender. At noon I wrote you about it.<sup>24</sup>

In a hastily written note, Captain Alvord described, in real time, the meeting of generals in Wilmer McLean's house to negotiate the surrender of Lee's army.

Clover Hill or Appomattox Court House, Virginia. Sunday April 9, 1865—Noon.

[Written in pencil.]

I *must* write to you *right* away if only a few lines. Having followed up the rebel army closely since the fall of Richmond and Petersburg, General Sheridan last night overtook Lee at this place and this morning we opened a handsome battle. We had driven the enemy—had reached open place, Lee's whole army lay in plain sight with all their wagons and so on. The Cavalry under Sheridan was just starting upon a grand charge which was to overwhelm the Confederacy when just at 10 A.M. General *Robert E. Lee* came riding to our lines bearing a flag of truce and asked of General P. H. Sheridan a cessation of hostilities that a conference might be had as he, General Lee intended to surrender to General Sheridan the Army of Northern Virginia.

At this hour Generals U. S. Grant and R. E. Lee are conversing at a house within my sight and the contending hosts await the result.



Wilmer McLean house, site of Lee's surrender to Grant, 1865. Wikimedia Commons.

3 P.M. General Lee has just notified General U. S. Grant that his terms ("Unconditional Surrender") are accepted!<sup>25</sup>



In his letter of April 12, 1865, Captain Alvord vividly described the drama of a final, near-battle as the two armies confronted each other just prior to Lee’s timely surrender, which must have saved many lives on both sides—including, possibly, his own.

Just at the time of the surrender the scene was a grand one. Our infantry was pressing forward in long, strong lines, the cavalry on either flank was a little in advance and swinging round so that the whole line of our army formed like a new moon, the convexity toward the enemy.

We had arrived at a point where the whole of the rebel army lay before us *en masse*, batteries in position, guarding its trains. We were just exchanging fire with the advance skirmish line and the cavalry had formed preparatory to a grand charge—when the appearance of the white flag stayed all proceedings.

Five minutes later and thousands of cavalymen would have gone dashing in upon the enemy hosts. Our brigade was formed upon the extreme right and were nearest to the enemy when we halted. We did the last fighting in the campaign—so also we did the first. When Sheridan left Winchester our brigade was in advance and the first to meet the enemy—we were the first to reach White House, the first to come to the James....<sup>26</sup>

In the same letter Captain Alvord also noted the dignity and grace with which the surrender was managed; and on a very personal note, this descendant of original New England Pilgrims described plucking a “mayflower” (trailing arbutus, *Epigaea repens*; see below) to send home, as a remarkably gentle keepsake of this event.

....At sundown that day the Army of Northern Virginia was allowed to salute their “stars



“Mayflower” (trailing arbutus, *Epigaea repens*);  
 photograph by Fritz Flohr Reynolds,  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:  
 Trailing\\_arbutus\\_2006.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trailing_arbutus_2006.jpg).

and bars” before lowering it—then we raised the old “stars and stripes” ‘mid national salutes—bands playing and so on. About 22,500 men were paroled by General Patrick, Provost Marshal General—the next day. The amount of guns, wagons, and War Munitions generally that fell into our hands, is immense.

The officers were allowed to retain their side arms and personal baggage....

While the salutes were being fired I chanced to find a sprig of *real* Mayflower in bloom near the scene of Lee’s surrender. I picked it for you and will enclose it....<sup>27</sup>

And finally, Captain Alvord reflected with gratitude upon the prospect of the end to the war.

We have lost heavily—fought hard—in this brief campaign—but I am among those who are still well....

We here in this vast army *know* only what occurs in our immediate vicinity. Of all the other news we get only vague rumors and depend upon the papers for details and for all news away from this part of Virginia....

*Peace* is near at hand.<sup>28</sup>

The last letter in this series is dated May 28, 1865. It describes the triumphant march from the Capitol down the whole length of Pennsylvania Avenue to the Circle. The celebration was subdued as the streets were still decorated in mourning for the President.

Our cavalry under General Merritt (Sheridan left for Texas on Monday) led off and attracted much attention. In front of the White House we passed the reviewing officers—the President and General Grant. Our Brigade was one of the last to pass and as we did so Grant remarked, “That is the best looking of all the cavalry brigades—they are soldiers.”<sup>29</sup>

The official record of the Second Regiment of Massachusetts Cavalry Volunteers counts: “8 Officers and 82 Enlisted men killed or mortally wounded and 3 Officers and 138 Enlisted men died by disease, total 231.”<sup>30</sup> Alvord was promoted to Major in this regiment on June 24, 1865, and mustered out on August 1, 1865. He was a seasoned veteran, but really, his life had just begun.

As a known sympathizer and advocate for the education of African Americans, Alvord was asked to extend his service in working for the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (“Freedmen’s Bureau”), which he did. On July 8, 1865, the *Springfield Republican* reported that

....Henry E. Alvord of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Massachusetts cavalry, has been assigned to do duty with the freedmen’s bureau, as superintendent of a district in Virginia comprising eleven counties...and is at present on a tour of inspection through that region.<sup>31</sup>

On several occasions, Alvord’s service with the Freedmen’s Bureau was recognized in the *Greenfield Gazette and Courier*, including the July 17, 1865 issue (p. 1 column 8) that quoted him as stating that “troops are necessary in some sections of the state [Virginia] to protect Negro claims to property.” On November 6, 1865, the *Gazette* published a letter from Alvord outlining the major priorities of the Bureau: to establish healthy conditions for the freedmen; to organize hospitals for them; to provide subsistence for the needy, schools, and employment offices; and to outfit former barracks as living quarters.<sup>32</sup> Alvord was officially recognized as superintendent of the Alexandria field office from November 1865 to January 1866. One of his many accomplishments during his tenure was to recruit his sister, Caroline Matilda Clapp Alvord of Greenfield, Massachusetts, to teach at one of the first schools for freedmen in Fairfax County. She arrived in Virginia January 12, 1866 to begin teaching at Peach Grove.

At some point Henry Alvord had fallen in love with Martha “Mat” Swink. She would already have been considered a spinster at age twenty-nine in 1861, and by the time they were married, she was almost thirty-four. Since she had two sisters, Mary and Annie, who had married and had children, it is likely that Martha was the “designated daughter” to remain at home and care for her aging parents. She was twelve years her husband’s senior. Aside from the vast difference in age, she and her family were Confederates during the war and had been slaveholders. Martha’s brother-in-law was the Chaplain in J.E.B. Stuart’s First Virginia Cavalry. However, in Fairfax County, Virginia, where many Northerners settled between 1830 and 1850, it was not uncommon for Confederate and Unionist families to maintain loyalties to their prewar friendships. The couple was married at her father’s plantation home, Spring Hill, Fairfax County, Virginia on September 6, 1866. They apparently had a compatible marriage. While they had no children of their own, they had nieces and nephews living with them all their lives. Martha (“Mat”) was variously described as “accomplished”<sup>33</sup> and “fascinating.”<sup>34</sup> [It is with great regret that after consulting widely, with universities, government agencies, and family members, we are unable to locate any image of Mat Swink!]

Meanwhile, Henry was appointed first lieutenant of the newly organized Tenth U.S. Cavalry, one of the first African-American cavalry regiments, known as the “Buffalo Soldiers,” on July 28, 1866. He served as regimental adjutant from June 1 to July 31, 1867 and was made captain on July 31, 1867. After a year he was appointed to duty on the staff of Generals Hancock and Sheridan (both famed Union generals) out of Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.



Signature of Henry Elijah Alvord from a letter (July 29, 1868) to his brother-in-law, Captain Franklin Sherman, upon the birth of his first child, Wells Alvord Sherman. Fairfax County Park Authority Museum Collections.

Alvord’s official duties were to collect facts about the territory and the Indians. He was commended by Major General W. B. Hazen as his collection of facts “was always found to be accurate” and, we assume, was objective. He also “evinced peculiar fitness.”<sup>36</sup>



Henry Elijah Alvord’s sister, Caroline Matilda Clapp Alvord, 1866. Courtesy of Judith Sawyer.

Alvord’s niece, Caroline Baldwin Sherman, who edited his wartime letters, also wrote for the *Chronicles of Oklahoma* “A Young Army Officer’s Experiences in Indian Territory,” which documented his and Martha’s adventures on the frontier.<sup>35</sup> One letter described an elaborate meal that Martha cooked for her husband’s fellow officers under very primitive conditions.

Alvord’s official duties were to collect facts about the territory and the Indians. He was commended by Major

Alvord was required to separate the trusted, neutral, and hostile Indian tribes—a formidable task. His letters were enthusiastic over the landscape, the sweeping herds of buffalo, the magnificent wild horses, and newly married life. He obviously felt a deep interest in the Indians, from the “savage, treacherous, ever troublesome Comanche to the educated, cultivated, gentlemanly Cherokee.”



Delegation from Yankton, Santee, Upper Missouri Sioux, Sac and Fox, Ojibwe, Ottawa, Kickapoo, and Miami tribes posing with President Johnson on the steps of the White House, 1867.  
Major Alvord led a similar delegation, at the request of President Grant, in 1872.  
Alexander Gardner, photographer. Collections, National Museum of the American Indian.

Reflecting his continuing interest in providing educational opportunities for Native Americans, Alvord was deeply involved with planning the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, founded in 1879 in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. As described in the *Chronicles of Oklahoma* article, Henry also wrote East that he and Mat were learning the Comanche language.

....the buffalo ran though the camp at Fort Cobb within 300 yards of our tent...from the top of a hill on the North Red River I saw at one time upon the surrounding plains within the circle of the horizon at least one hundred thousand buffalo.

Later Alvord wrote a description of what seem to be overwhelming responsibilities for anyone, especially a twenty-four-year-old.

During the remaining days of October 1 gathered around me here about fifty of the chiefs and head men of the Comanches, Caddos, Wichitaws, Wacos, and Keechies—representing three thousand Indians, and with them I had an official “big talk,” a council, in which I personated the “big Captain,” son of the “Great Father at Washington.” Every tribe and band represented agreed to come to some point here and remain peaceable—and have done so. I have since been feeding the 3000. Since the 1st inst. I have met the representatives of 2000 Kiowas and Apaches, and am expecting delegations from the two most distant and

most powerful bands of Comanches—numbering 3000. There will probably be 8,000 “wild” Indians in this vicinity before December.

The Indians trusted Alvord and called him “White Horse Captain.” However, he was unable to stop Indian raiding; so more difficult duty lay ahead.<sup>37</sup> On November 20, 1868, at Fort Cobb, a group of tribes headed by Black Kettle, Cheyenne Chief, met with Colonel William B. Hazen. Major Alvord documented the conversation. The tribes did not want to move north of the Arkansas River where hostile tribes were waiting, and asked permission to stay near Fort Cobb. But Hazen replied that they must leave the territory and that he had no control over the great white father (General Philip Sheridan) to whom they must appeal.

Meanwhile, about 200 renegade Cheyenne attacked and killed eighteen white settlers as well as tribal enemies. Instead of just chasing the raiders, Sheridan opted for a four-pronged attack against the peaceful as well as the hostile. On November 27, 1868, Lieutenant Colonel George Custer attacked Black Kettle’s peaceful Cheyenne camp on the Washita River. After killing more women and children than braves, and after destroying everything they could not carry, the Seventh Cavalry retreated in the face of gathering tribal opposition. The press was critical, perhaps unusually so, of the attack on a peaceful village and the killing of women and children as well as warriors.

Alvord was so disturbed by the Washita River massacre that he determined to return east. In September 1869, he arrived at the Massachusetts Agricultural College, now University of Massachusetts Amherst, as the first active military officer detailed to an agricultural college. The Morrill Act of 1862 (officially titled “An Act Donating Public Lands to the several States and Territories which may provide Colleges for the Benefit of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts”) provided the impetus for establishing public agricultural colleges.

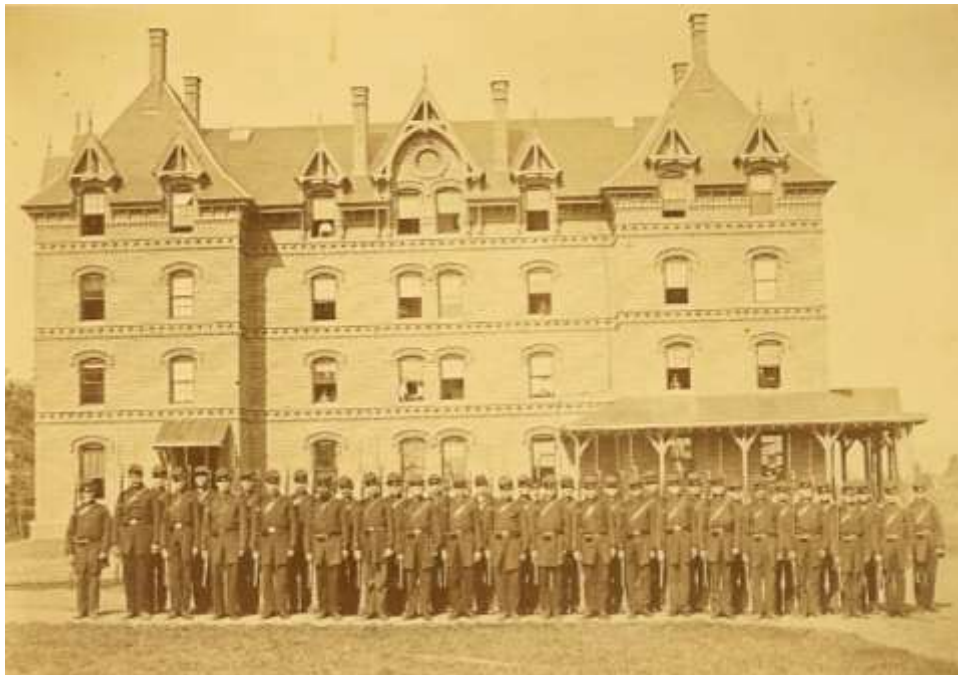


Henry Elijah Alvord, circa 1869, in U.S. Army uniform while on the faculty of the Massachusetts Agricultural College. A medal (unidentified) with his last name inscribed on the bar is pinned to his chest. Department of Special Collections and University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst.



"Faculty Meeting," a student caricature dated 1871, placing Alvord (with long beard) at the center. Department of Special Collections and University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Perhaps following the model of Norwich University, Alvord implemented a military program of cadets at the Massachusetts Agricultural College. Although appointed as a military professor, he also taught mathematics and drawing in addition to military training. The illustration above shows a student caricature of a faculty meeting during Henry's tenure, with Henry apparently posed in a gymnastics uniform.



Alvord used Norwich University as a model for training cadets during his tenure at the Massachusetts Agricultural College (presently the University of Massachusetts Amherst). Photo shows an "unmounted" drill, 1871. Department of Special Collections and University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Toward the end of his military service, Alvord was assigned to the Ninth Infantry (January 1, 1871); he resigned his military commission on December 9, 1871. Upon leaving the regular army, Alvord re-assumed his wartime title of Major, which he preferred to use both personally and professionally, for the remainder of his life.

In 1872, Major Alvord once again headed west; he accepted an appointment, together with Joseph Parish, (later replaced by his brother Edward) to investigate several restless tribes. Major Alvord's far-reaching and detailed report concluded:

Throughout this report it will be seen that your commissioner advocates neither the inhuman idea of continued military subjugation, the indiscriminate slaughter, and extermination, nor the impracticable project of government by moral suasion among the tribes that he visited, but that a middle ground is taken.<sup>38</sup>

The report received favorable coverage in the *Springfield Republican*:

His pamphlet is one of the best contributions to our knowledge of the state and prospects of our Indian tribes that has lately been made.<sup>39</sup>

In August 1872, the Indian Bureau invited delegations from the dissident tribes to come to Washington to discuss treaty obligations.<sup>40</sup> Major Henry Alvord was designated to escort the Kiowa representatives, but he encountered a major impediment: Lone Wolf stated that he could not go without consulting the tribal leaders Satanta and Big Tree, who were serving life sentences for murder in a Texas prison. After considerable negotiations, the three leaders met in a St. Louis hotel to discuss their position to present in Washington.

When the tribal representatives arrived in Washington, escorted by Major Alvord, they were treated to numerous sightseeing and cultural events. Several of the most famous had dinner at Spring Hill, where the women fondled Major Alvord's baby niece.<sup>41</sup> But the delegation received a stunning ultimatum demanding that their settlement be established within ten miles of Fort Sill. Fortunately, Major Alvord's duties did not include enforcement of the ultimatum.

Major Alvord returned to Virginia, where his father had purchased the Swink family farm, Spring Hill, and had settled in with his large second family, but had died in 1871. Alvord bought the farm from his portion of his grandfather's estate. He and Martha purchased a herd of Jersey cattle, one of the first in Virginia, and one of the best. This venture was a great success, providing dairy products to Washington, D.C. and other cities in the surrounding area, and leaving time for research and writing. In 1883, Major Alvord joined the American Jersey Cattle Club, and from 1885 to 1887, he was appointed official tester.<sup>42</sup> Despite his numerous positions in far-flung places, Major Alvord and Martha always considered Spring Hill to be their permanent home, and Martha spent her widowhood there.



Spring Hill, Fairfax County, the childhood home of Henry E. Alvord's wife Martha "Mat" Swink and the home of the couple throughout their married life, in spite of numerous career appointments elsewhere. Circa 1950, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Regional Library.

In 1874, the Massachusetts Agricultural College Amherst and the Williston Seminary in Easthampton, Massachusetts, offered a joint professorship where Major Alvord taught until 1881. In 1877, Major Alvord's seminal article, "The American Cattle Trade," appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*. Based on the success of this article, he was asked to write the American chapters in *Dairy Farming: Being the Theory, Practice, and Methods of Dairying*, published in 1880 by the Englishman John Prince Sheldon. This massive, two-volume work represented the first comprehensive study of its kind. With his recognition by Sheldon, Major Alvord became America's leading dairy expert. Furthermore, Alvord continued to put his theories into practice through his highly successful dairy operation at Spring Hill.

In 1880, Major Alvord was nominated for Congress by the Democrats of the 10<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts District, but did not win; his residence was listed as Easthampton.<sup>43</sup> Apparently he also offered to stump Vermont for the Democrats.<sup>44</sup> From 1881 to 1884, he managed the first private national agricultural research experiment station in the country, Houghton Farm, Orange County, New York.





Henry Elijah Alvord (center) with staff of the Agricultural Experiment Station, Maryland Agricultural College (now the University of Maryland), circa 1888. University of Maryland, University Libraries.

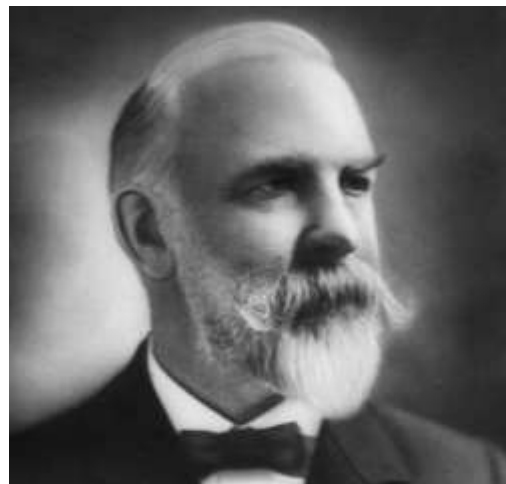
When funding dried up, Major Alvord was rehired on a temporary basis at the Massachusetts Agricultural College. Later, he was a major lobbyist for passage of the Hatch Act in 1887 and the second Morrill Act in 1890. He helped organize the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations in 1887 and was regarded as the father of the organization. He chaired the executive committee for seven years and became president in 1894.<sup>45</sup>

Major Alvord was well received as a lecturer on various topics and was the most widely known writer on dairy subjects in his time. He spoke to the National Geographic Society on “The Geography of a Battle” (Cedar Creek).<sup>46</sup> Major Alvord was a “Judge of Jersey Cattle” at the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893 and received many other awards.

From 1888 to 1893, Major Alvord served as president of the Maryland Agricultural College, a land-grant institution, now the University of Maryland, where he also was director of the new, federally funded Agricultural Experiment Station.

After four constructive months as president of the Oklahoma Agriculture and Mechanical College in Stillwater, Oklahoma Territory, and a year as professor of agriculture at the New Hampshire Agricultural College, Major Alvord joined the Department of Agriculture in 1895 as head of the newly created Dairy division of the Bureau of Animal Industry.

To understand Alvord's greatest contribution, the history of education in America needs to be addressed briefly. In the first half of the nineteenth century, classical and denominational colleges dominated higher education. Alvord was recognized by his peers as the foremost leader of the movement to establish land-grant public colleges teaching agriculture and mechanical arts. The skills he acquired in his military training provided a foundation for his acclaimed executive and organizational abilities. Three aspects were required to ensure the success of



Henry Elijah Alvord as newly appointed President of Oklahoma Agriculture and Mechanical College, Stillwater, Oklahoma Territory (now Oklahoma State University), 1894. Oklahoma State University Archives.

the land-grant institutions established by the Morrill Act: a union of the existing land-grant colleges to strengthen their case before Congress, the professionalism of the agricultural industry through organizations such as the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experimental Stations, and the advent of specialized governmental agencies such as sub-divisions of the Interior and Agriculture departments. Alvord played a role in each of these essential aspects to ensure the viability of the land-grant institutions in the second half of the nineteenth century. His colleagues, considered leaders in the movement, placed their “stocky, resonant-voiced” friend as the leader of the uppermost tier.<sup>47</sup> One such colleague, James Clinton Neal of the Smithsonian, wrote to an Oklahoma Territory legislator in 1895 saying not many men measured up to Alvord's standard “as a College President, and none in the United States his superior.”<sup>48</sup>

Thus, it was as a teacher that Alvord rose to his greatest fame. He began his first teaching assignment while in the army on assignment at Massachusetts Agricultural College, Amherst. Alvord went on to be the president of two land-grant schools and director of the accompanying agricultural stations. He taught at two other colleges and turned down presidency offers from three others. Once he completed his work at the college level, he moved into the Department of Agriculture, accepting a newly created position in his specialty—the dairy division.

Alongside Henry's academic career, he promoted professionalism in the dairy industry. As a member of state, national, and international organizations, he served as an ambassador through his leadership role in societies, as an international speaker, and as an organizer of juried competition in the dairy industry. Among the numerous expositions in which he was a significant presence was the Paris International Congress and Universal Exposition of 1900. Henry served as an American vice-president of the event, a member of the planning committee, and a member of the Jury of Awards for the Exposition.



Silver bell, souvenir of the Paris International Congress and Universal Exposition of 1900. Courtesy of Katherine Troyer.



Final image of Major Alvord (center), in a jury evaluating a sample from the cow demonstration at the St. Louis World's Fair. *The Country Gentleman*, October 13, 1904.

Major Alvord died suddenly of an apparent stroke (“paralysis”) while participating in the St. Louis World’s Fair in 1904, leaving a brilliant record of achievement. His funeral was held at St. James’s Episcopal Church in Greenfield, Massachusetts. He was buried nearby in his family’s memorial plot in Green River Cemetery. One of his pallbearers was Charles Lowell, the nephew of Colonel Charles Russell Lowell, Henry Alvord’s mentor and friend.

Shortly after Major Alvord's death, the historian at Norwich University, or “old NU” as the Major called his alma mater, began corresponding with Caroline Matilda Clapp Alvord Sherman, the Major's sister. The historian, William A. Ellis, was revising the history of Norwich University and sought Mrs. Sherman's assistance in revising the biographical sketch for the Major and to finance and market the new publication. A letter dated August 31, 1910 is particularly revealing regarding a notable feature of her brother's—his exceedingly long beard. After making it clear to Mr. Ellis that she is in no position “to offer...pecuniary assistance” and further, “It would be worse than useless for you to write to Mrs. Alvord, as she cannot see to read or write at all and her mind & memory are almost gone,” she continues, “of course I want my brother's picture to appear in your new edition- so enclose check for \$2.” Here is the revelation: “Do you propose to use the same picture which is in your old History? (My brother's copy of which is now in my



Henry Elijah Alvord with “crank” beard, 1893. Photo by David Bachrach. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

possession.) Perhaps you do not know that at the age of 58, Major Alvord cut off that long beard which many of his friends thought made him look like a crank, and the Alvord genealogy, published two years ago...gives his picture with the short, pointed beard which he wore the last ten years of his life.”<sup>49</sup>

Philip Reed Rulon and Ronald Eugene Butchart, who called Major Alvord “Soldier, Scientist and Scholar” put it this way:

Though he died just as the progressive movement was gaining momentum, there was good reason to claim that Henry Elijah Alvord had been a forward-looking reformer for most of his adult life. As a military officer, he pointed out the need of Indians and Negroes for humane treatment and systematic schooling. As an engineering and agricultural investigator, he employed empirical science

in the attempt to conserve and regulate the environment. As a college president and bureaucrat, he shaped the future state university systems and united agricultural and mechanical colleges to the Federal government....Alvord brought respectability to the presidential office of Morrill institutions...when many administrators were held in low esteem, both in grange and legislative halls. These contributions are especially noteworthy in that they extended the influence of the “People’s College,” a conceptual foundation which in the last seven decades has significantly increased American human and material prosperity.<sup>50</sup>

His vision, leadership, and remarkable network of colleagues were essential to create and support the institutions necessary for the expansion of scientific investigation. His contributions were acknowledged by numerous universities and professional organizations upon his early death, at the age of sixty, while still at the height of his career. Resolutions adopted at the 1904 Annual Convention of the Association of American Agricultural Experimental Stations expressed the great esteem of his peers for his character and accomplishments, particularly his mastery of legislative lobbying:

...To his remarkable powers of initiative, his happy appreciation of opportunities, and his singular forecast of the possibilities of an organization such as this, its origin and success are largely due. His intimate relations with Members of Congress, and acquaintance with Legislative procedure in committee, and on the floor of the Senate and House, were of incalculable value in its inception and in its growth.

...To place on record its high estimate of his ability, his integrity, his knowledge of men, his great powers of organization, his singular fidelity to his cherished ideals, his intelligent directive power, his great common sense, and his uniform courage and courtesy in maintaining his views of public policy.<sup>51</sup>

The Society for the Promotion of Agricultural Science commended “His faithful and efficient performance of...duties, and...his good judgment, genial nature, and kindness and generosity of heart....”<sup>52</sup>

In a biography of his life, prepared as a memorial, the Society noted:

For more than one-third of a century the name of Henry E. Alvord has been intimately connected with the agriculture of the United States, and we pay willing tribute to the memory of one who was not only a pioneer, but a leader in the great work of agricultural education and experimentation.<sup>53</sup>

...Major Alvord was probably the most widely known American in dairy circles, and his public services and writings easily ranked him among the highest authorities on dairying in this country. In 1898 he received the degree of L.L.D. for long and meritorious services in promoting research and instruction for the benefit of American agriculture.<sup>54</sup>

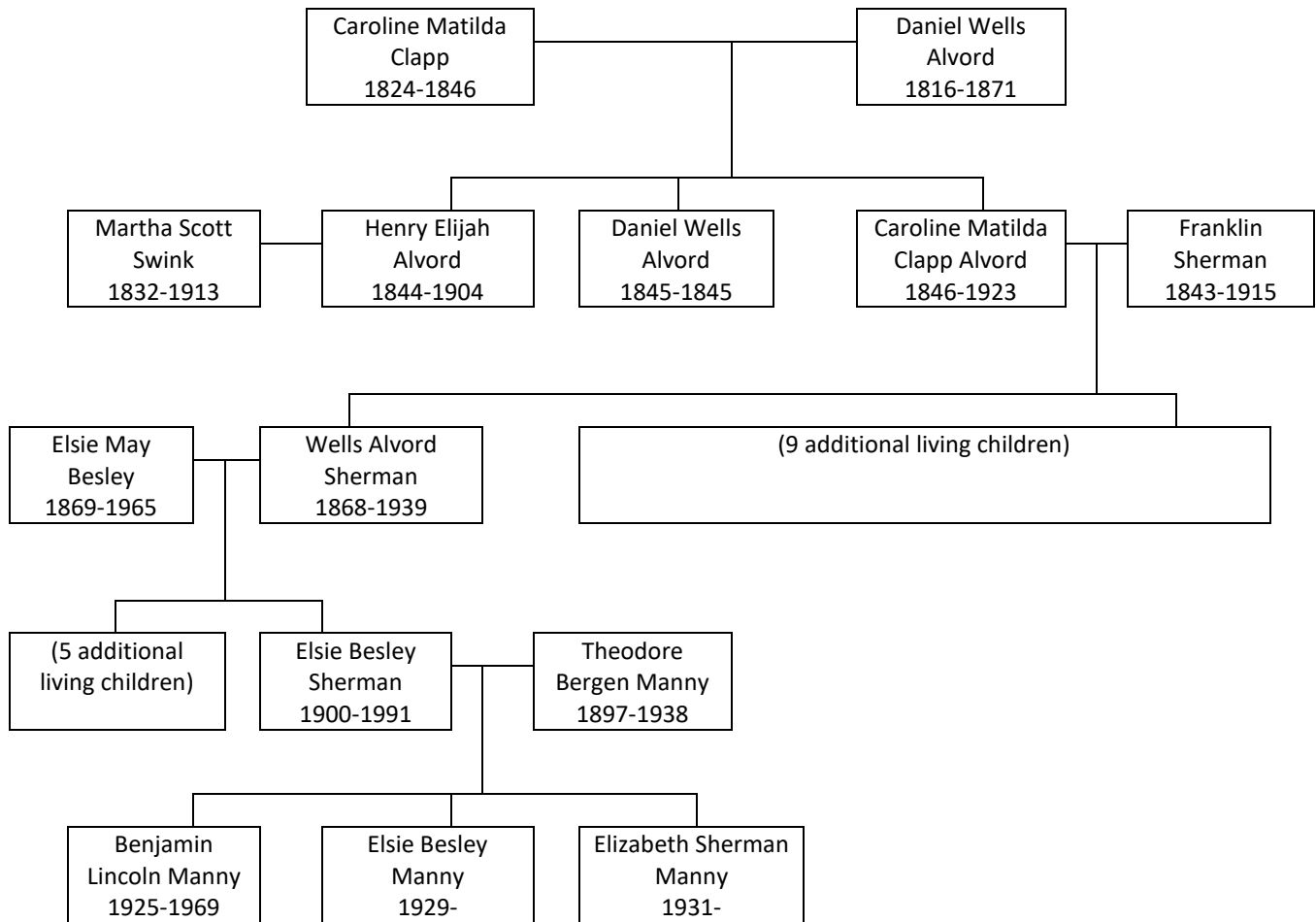
Major Alvord’s sister Caroline Matilda Clapp Alvord Sherman, together with a lifelong friend from Greenfield, Massachusetts, General Samuel Willard Saxton, contributed to this memorial:

Maj. Alvord was a man of royal parts. An enthusiast by nature, he had the wisdom of a man of affairs. His serene temper, his good judgment, his promptness in action, together with a certain dignity of manner and a genuine manliness of character won the respect and esteem of all who knew him. Trained in the military habit, his plans of work were clear and detailed, his decisions quick and firm, his manner and speech authoritative. He was born and qualified for leadership, and exercised a mighty influence in all organizations with which he was connected. As an associate, he was cordial and sympathetic, attracting all who came in contact with him....<sup>55</sup>

Unfortunately, potentially important insights into Major Alvord’s thoughts and correspondence were lost, as he requested that his yearly diaries and packages of letters stored in a trunk be burned “without being read by anyone.” Apparently his wishes were followed. A tin box with limited contents and photos was labeled to be given to Major Alvord’s nephew and namesake. He bequeathed his agricultural library and collections to Norwich University. His will also included a \$4,000 scholarship at the Massachusetts Agricultural College to support a student specializing in dairy husbandry to become an investigator, teacher, or special practitioner.<sup>56</sup> Another source states that several relatives received personal bequests.<sup>57</sup>

The young soldier who felt intellectually inferior to his fellow officers because he had chosen a practical, rather than a classical, education outshone them all in his lifetime in military service, innovative scientific agriculture, and practical education.

**Partial Family Tree for Alvord-to-Manny Descendants**



## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Robert F. O'Neill, *Chasing Jeb Stuart and John Mosby: The Union Cavalry in Northern Virginia from Second Manassas to Gettysburg* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2012), 203, 213, 243, 246, 252-253.
  - <sup>2</sup> Francis M. Thompson, *History of Greenfield, Shire Town of Franklin County, Massachusetts* (Greenfield: Press of T. Morey & Son, 1904), 2:1075-88.
  - <sup>3</sup> Daniel Wells Alvord to Henry Elijah Alvord, 11 May 1860, Alvord, Clarence W. and Idress Head Collection, 1759-1962 (CO970), The State Historical Society of Missouri, Manuscript Collection.
  - <sup>4</sup> Philip Reed Rulon and Ronald Eugene Butchart, "Henry Elijah Alvord 1844-1904: Soldier, Scientist, and Scholar," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 52, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 64.
  - <sup>5</sup> "Maj. Henry E. Alvord," *The Reveille* 30, 8-9 (1896): 124.
  - <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 124-5.
  - <sup>7</sup> Norwich University, Vermont, Archives, includes the official statement of promotion: Record and Pension Office, War Department, Washington, November 29, 1898: "Under provision of the Act of Congress approved February 26, 1897, this officer [Henry E. Alvord] is held and considered by the Department to have been mustered into the service of the United States in the grade of major in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Massachusetts Cavalry to take effect on June 24, 1865." A further notation states "mustered out to date of payment of his company; recharged by telegram order of the War Department dated July 8, 1865." This must have been his assignment to the Freedmen's Bureau. The state of Massachusetts, either the governor or the state adjutant general thought enough of Henry to issue him a commission as a major late in the war, but the war then ended, and the regiment was mustered out of service, before the War Department in Washington could actually muster him into service at the rank of major; thus, the War Department records show him as only having attained the rank of captain. Certainly Alvord believed himself to have obtained the rank of Major, although in subsequent assignments (e.g., the Freedmen's Bureau and the 10<sup>th</sup> U. S. Cavalry) he accepted lower ranks.
  - <sup>8</sup> Caroline B. Sherman and Henry E. Alvord, "A New England Boy in the Civil War," *The New England Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (April 1932): 310-44.
  - <sup>9</sup> Compiled Military service record of Henry E. Alvord, RG 94, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.
  - <sup>10</sup> "George Luther Stearns," *Wikipedia*, last modified September 19, 2017, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Luther\\_Stearns](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Luther_Stearns).
  - <sup>11</sup> Sherman and Alvord, "A New England Boy," 318-19.
  - <sup>12</sup> "Union Massachusetts Volunteers: 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, Massachusetts Cavalry," accessed October 31, 2017, [http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-regiments-detail.htm?regiment\\_id=UMA0002RC](http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-regiments-detail.htm?regiment_id=UMA0002RC).
  - <sup>13</sup> "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," U. S. Dept. of Interior National Park Service, Draft, Spring Hill Farm DHR File #029-0035, October 2, 2001.
  - <sup>14</sup> Sherman and Alvord, "A New England Boy," 325.
  - <sup>15</sup> Information in this section comes from Tom Evans, e-mail to the authors, June 8, 2017; James McLean, "The Execution of a Traitor," *The Second Mass and Its Fighting Californians*, accessed October 31, 2017, [www.2mass.reunioncivilwar.com/References/Ormsby.htm](http://www.2mass.reunioncivilwar.com/References/Ormsby.htm); Larry Rogers and Keith Rogers, *Their Horses Climbed Trees, A Chronicle of the California 100 and Battalion in the Civil War, from San Francisco to Appomattox* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2001), 234-36.

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- <sup>16</sup> Carol Bundy, *The Nature of Sacrifice: A Biography of Charles Russell Lowell, Jr., 1835-1864* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 368.
- <sup>17</sup> “Capture of Mosby’s Papers—Copy of His Latest Commission,” *Daily National Republican*, May 4, 1864, Second Edition, Image 2, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86053570/1864-05-04/ed-1/seq-2/>; *Springfield (MA) Union*, May 27, 1864.
- <sup>18</sup> Henry Elijah Alvord, “Early’s Attack Upon Washington, July, 1864,” in “Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States: War Papers, District of Columbia Commandery,” no. 26 (1897).
- <sup>19</sup> For an exhaustive and brilliant account of the battle, see Jeffry D. Wert, *From Winchester to Cedar Creek: The Shenandoah Campaign of 1864* (Carlisle, PA: South Mountain Press, Inc., Publishers, 1987).
- <sup>20</sup> Sherman and Alvord, “A New England Boy,” 331-2.
- <sup>21</sup> *Boston Herald*, October 27, 1864.
- <sup>22</sup> Sherman and Alvord, “A New England Boy,” 332-3.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 341-2.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.
- <sup>30</sup> “Second Regiment of Massachusetts Cavalry Volunteers,” Civil War Soldiers and Sailor System--National Park Service, accessed October 29, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-soldiers.htm>.
- <sup>31</sup> “Miscellaneous War News,” *Springfield (MA) Republican*, July 8, 1865.
- <sup>32</sup> *Greenfield (MA) Gazette and Courier*, November 6, 1865, 1.
- <sup>33</sup> William R. Lazenby, L.O. Howard, and W.J. Beal, “Memorial of Henry Elijah Alvord,” *Proceedings of the Society for the Promotion of Agricultural Science* 22 (1905), 7.
- <sup>34</sup> Sylvia G. L. Dannett to Caroline and Dorothea Sherman, 29 September 1959, Sherman Collection, Fairfax County Regional Library.
- <sup>35</sup> Caroline B. Sherman, “A Young Army Officer's Experiences in Indian Territory,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 13, no. 2 (June 1935), 146-153.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.
- <sup>37</sup> For a detailed accounting of the events contributing to the battle, see Charles J. Brill, *Conquest of the Southern Plains: Uncensored Narrative of the Battle of Washita and Custer's Southern Campaign* (Oklahoma City: Golden Saga Publishers, 1938).
- <sup>38</sup> Henry E. Alvord, “Report of Special Commissioners to Visit the Kiowas and Comanches, Arrapahoes and Cheyennes, Caddoes, Wichitas, and Affiliated Bands, in the Indian Territory,” (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), 21.
- <sup>39</sup> *Springfield (MA) Republican*, January 14, 1873.
- <sup>40</sup> The account in this paragraph is from Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970), 256-58.



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- <sup>41</sup> Caroline Matilda Clapp Alvord Sherman, "Diary," December, 1872, in the author's possession.
- <sup>42</sup> R. M. Gow, *The Jersey, An Outline of Her History During Two Centuries—1734-1935* (New York: The American Jersey Cattle Club, 1936), 287.
- <sup>43</sup> "Personal News Items," *Argus and Patriot*, (Montpelier, VT), October 13, 1880.
- <sup>44</sup> *New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette*, (Concord, NH), August 12, 1889.
- <sup>45</sup> Oklahoma Historical Society. Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture. <http://okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=AL016>.
- <sup>46</sup> "National Geographic Society," *Evening Star*, (Washington, DC), January 28, 1897.
- <sup>47</sup> Rulon and Butchart, "Henry Elijah Alvord," 62.
- <sup>48</sup> James Neal to Robert Lowry, 16 January 1895, Cunningham Collection, Archives, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma.
- <sup>49</sup> Caroline Matilda Clapp Alvord Sherman to W. A. Ellis, 31 August 1910, Norwich University Archives and Special Collections.
- <sup>50</sup> Rulon and Butchart, "Henry Elijah Alvord," 80.
- <sup>51</sup> E. B. Voorhees to Mrs. Henry E. Alvord, 8 November 1904, Norwich University Archives and Special Collections.
- <sup>52</sup> Lazenby, Howard, and Beal, "Memorial," 7.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Frontispiece.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, "Memorial," 7.
- <sup>55</sup> Alvord, Samuel Morgan. *A Genealogy of the Descendants of Alexander Alvord, an Early Settler of Windsor, Conn. and Northampton, Mass.* (Webster: A.D. Andrews, Printer, 1908), 573.
- <sup>56</sup> Henry E. Alvord, will dated March 11, 1904, probated October 20, 1904, Fairfax County Courthouse, Fairfax, VA.
- <sup>57</sup> "National Register," 11.