STONEWALL JACKSON'S WINTER OPERATIONS

The Raids Against the C&O Canal and the Bath-Romney Campaign, December 1861 to February 1862

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Unedited Excerpt

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Prologue

DESPITE a late start, Maj. Gen. Thomas J. Jackson still intended to capture the resort town of Bath, Virginia, on January 3, 1862. The sudden onset of frigid weather, the failure of supply wagons to reach their units, and an encounter with a Union scouting party threatened to undermine the general's timeline. Although darkness had begun to descend, Jackson ordered the advance to resume that evening. Soon thereafter, Brig. Gen. William W. Loring rode up, countermanded Jackson's directive, and ordered his three brigades to go into bivouac along the road.

Before long Jackson arrived and demanded to know who had ordered the column to halt. Loring admitted it was him and the two men exchanged heated words. Loring was irritated that Jackson had refused to divulge to him, as second-in-command, any details about the expedition or its purpose. Jackson was angered that Loring had derailed his plans to capture Bath that day. After the kerfuffle, Jackson allowed his army to make field encampments along the road.

The next day, January 4, the army again made slow progress. Overnight snow and sleet had fallen. The lead units trampled the accumulated mix into ice, which slowed the movement of those that followed. At about 9:30 a.m., the skirmishers ahead encountered Union pickets whose fire stopped the advance. In addition, Union forces repulsed a militia force that Jackson had sent along the west side of West Spring Ridge, news of which just arrived to the general. Jackson ordered a halt until his officers could bring up additional units over the icy roads.

At about 2:00 p.m. on January 4, the Confederate advance toward Bath resumed. It moved slowly so that a detachment had time to ascend Warm Springs Ridge and get into position to force the Union soldiers from the heights. The blue and gray lines, within earshot of each other, hurled insults and threats, not lead, at

each other. On Warm Springs Ridge, Col. William G. Murray, who commanded the Union forces on Virginia soil, realized that the Confederates vastly outnumbered his small command and would soon overwhelm it. He called in his pickets at 3:00 p.m. and an hour later ordered a full retreat toward the Potomac River ford in his rear at Sir Johns Run and opposite Hancock, Maryland.

As the Union force retreated, Jackson rode up on horseback, accompanied by a few staff officers and couriers, and ordered Col. William Gilham's brigade to advance into Bath at the double quick. Jackson, frustrated by unanticipated delays and impatient to secure the town before nightfall, spurred his horse and raced ahead of the leading elements. He and his staff officers arrived in town about 100 yards ahead of Gilham's brigade. A soldier in the expedition wrote, "This was a grand sight. The second brigade marching by the flank and running down the road, the Yankees in sight on the ridge to our left, running too, our column on the ridge following them as fast as they could run! In this way our column entered Bath."[1]

Despite the obstacles encountered on the march, with the capture of Bath Jackson accomplished his first major objective of the campaign.

1 John Worsham, *One of Jackson's Foot Cavalry; His Experiences and What he Saw during the War 1861–1865; Including a History of "F Company," Richmond, Va., 21st Regiment Virginia Infantry, Second Brigade, Jackson's Division, Second Corp., A. N. Va.* (New York, 1912), 58.

Chapter 1

Young Tom Jackson

The man who would grow up to become "Stonewall" Jackson came from humble beginnings. From childhood through young adulthood, his life was marred by personal loss. That he emerged from such a background and accomplished much in his foreshortened life is remarkable.

On January 21, 1824, Judith (Julia) Neale Jackson gave birth to a son, Thomas Jonathan Jackson, in Clarksburg, Virginia (present-day West Virginia), in the north-western part of the state, only about 45 miles south of the Pennsylvania border. He was the third of four children born to Julia and Jonathan Jackson, an attorney. A little over two years later the couple's eldest child, Elizabeth, died of typhoid fever, and three weeks later Thomas's father died of the same affliction.

In 1830 Julia Jackson remarried a widower named Blake Woodson, another attorney who was 15 years older than Julia. He had eight children from his previous marriage, all of whom lived with relatives. The couple soon experienced financial hardship and Julia's health began to fail. As a result, in 1831 the struggling couple parceled out her three children to relatives as well. They sent Thomas and his younger sister Laura to live with one of his father's brothers at Jackson's Mill, located near Weston, Virginia, about 15 miles southwest of Clarksburg. Julia was very close to her youngest son, however, and only with great reluctance sent him and Laura away. The future general later recalled his departure from his mother with warm feelings. His second wife, Mary Anna Jackson, wrote of the incident: "That parting he never forgot; nor could he speak of it in future years but with the utmost tenderness."[1]

Jackson's Mill was a 1,500-acre estate that featured a sawmill, a grist mill, and a sizable farm. Cummins Jackson, the leader of the extended Jackson family who lived

1 Mary Anna Jackson, *Memoirs of Stonewall Jackson by his Widow* (Louisville, KY, 1895), 16.

on the property, welcomed his two young relatives and took seven-year-old Tom under his wing, showed him the operations of the estate and assigned him chores.

Jackson's mother had become pregnant, meanwhile, but she suffered from tuberculosis and other ailments. Her health failed badly following a difficult childbirth. As she realized that her final days were drawing near, she requested that her children come to see her one last time. Thomas and Laura left Jackson's Mill in November 1831 and were at her bedside when she died on December 4, 1831, at the age of 33. Young Thomas was only seven years old.

After the death of his mother, Jackson and his sister returned to Jackson's Mill where they lived for the next four years. In 1835, after the matron of the clan passed away, Cummins sent both Laura and Thomas away to live with other relatives. Thomas disliked the new arrangement and promptly ran back to Jackson's Mill where Uncle Cummins and the rest of his extended family welcomed him back. Life at Jackson's Mill provided the boy with opportunities for adventure with few strict rules. He helped out with chores and other responsibilities but had the freedom to indulge his curiosity. At one point Thomas and his older brother, Warren, who had arrived for a visit, rafted down the Ohio River to the Mississippi on a venture to cut and sell wood. They returned months later, worn and weary, but with little to show for their effort.

As he got older, Cummins gave Thomas more responsibilities. As a result, his education was erratic and seldom lasted more than a few months during the winter. This educational deficit would temporarily set him back when he later embarked on a military career. At the age of 17, young Jackson got his first paying job away from Jackson's Mill, first as an assistant to the commissioner in charge of letting contracts on the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike, then as constable in Lewis County. His jobs still gave him enough time to help out at the mill.

A year later, Jackson applied for a vacancy at the United States Military Academy at West Point in New York. United States Representative Samuel Lewis Hays had the responsibility to recommend candidates to the academy from his district. Before he did so, he conducted tests of four prospective cadets. Since West Point emphasized engineering, mathematics skills were important. Jackson was clearly at a disadvantage. Hays recommended another applicant who had scored higher in the mathematics tests. Only a few days after the new plebe arrived at West Point, however, he determined that military life was not for him and subsequently deserted the academy without informing officials. When Jackson found out, he set out for Hays's Congressional office in Washington, D.C., letters of recommendation in hand.

He traveled about 100 miles to the Green Spring Depot on the B&O Railroad, located in Virginia across the Potomac River from Oldtown, Maryland. While on

the rails of the B&O, he would have passed through Harpers Ferry, Virginia, the town that would become intertwined with Jackson's subsequent military career. The railroad crossed into Maryland and then ran along the Potomac eastward to Point of Rocks, Maryland. This is likely where Jackson got his first glimpse of the C&O Canal, since this was where the rival transportation lines paralleled one another for 12 miles before the railroad turned north toward Frederick, Maryland, as it wound its way to Relay House for a junction with the Washington Branch that led to the capital.

On June 17, 1842, Jackson arrived in Washington and proceeded to Representative Hays's office. As a result of his obvious desire for a slot at West Point, and his impressive letters of recommendation, Hays forwarded Jackson's name to the academy, which subsequently granted him a conditional appointment. His mission accomplished, Jackson took the next train for West Point. He arrived on June 19 and three days later took the admission exam. Perspiring heavily, Jackson struggled to solve a mathematical problem at the blackboard. He eventually succeeded, however, and the next day Jackson's name was the last one recorded on the list of cadets. This signified that the examining board considered him the poorest qualified cadet. Officials set July 1 as enrollment day at the academy.

Raised in rural western Virginia, Jackson was at a social and academic disadvantage compared to most of his classmates, especially those from wealthy families who sent their sons to the finest academic institutions and finishing schools. In his first few months, academy officials ranked Jackson near the bottom of his class. He recognized his deficits, however, and set out to improve his class position through long study hours. He toiled late into the night and sought the assistance of other cadets. At the end of his first year, his scores had improved enough to bring him close to the middle of his class in several subjects, although in others his instructors continued to rank him in the bottom third. Additionally, Jackson lacked social skills and was physically awkward. As a result, he had few friends and some classmates teased him.

At the end of Jackson's second year, instructors ranked him in the upper half of his class in general merit and mathematics but in the lower half in other subjects. As he strove to improve himself academically, Jackson also worked hard to learn the social graces of a gentleman. He made progress in this endeavor as well. In 1844, his family and friends remarked at the changes in the young cadet after he returned home on a furlough. At the end of his third year, the academy ranked Jackson in the upper half of his class in three subjects, in the lower half in only one subject. In each of his three years at West Point, Jackson improved his class position. At the time of his graduation in 1846, Jackson's West Point rank had risen to the upper third of his class. He finished 17th out of 59 cadets. One of

Jackson's instructors later quipped that had the academic program lasted four years longer, Jackson would have risen to first in his class.

Gallantry South of the Rio Grande

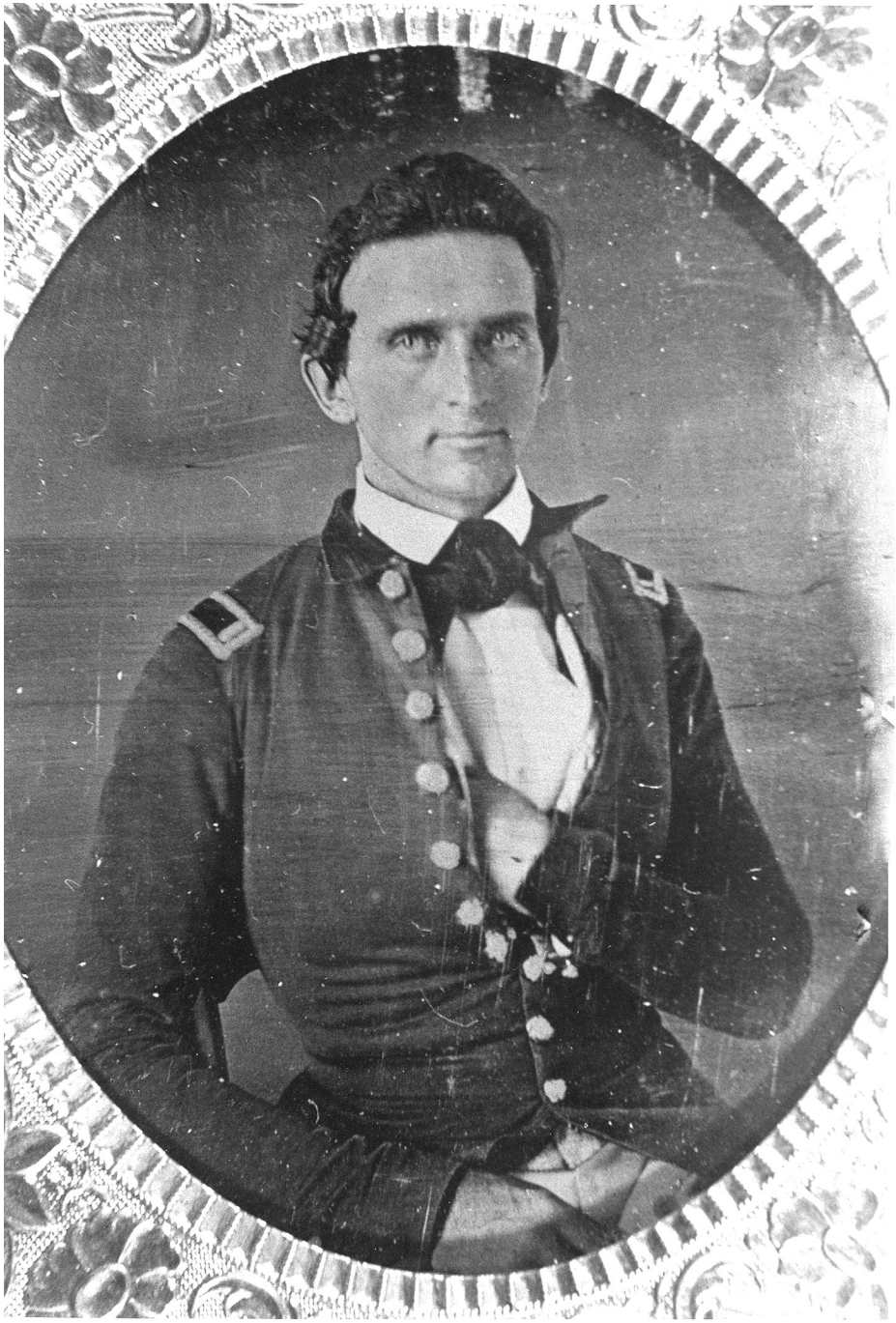
Upon graduation, military officials assigned brevet Second Lieutenant Jackson to the artillery. While he awaited orders, he returned home to visit family and friends, which included his now-married sister and young nephew, the latter named Thomas Jackson Arnold. The child's name reflected the close bonds between Jackson and his sister. That relationship would not survive the national rupture of the Civil War.

The United States declared war on Mexico on May 13, 1846, and Jackson hoped that the army would order him to join the forces heading south. He soon got his wish. On July 22, 1846, the army ordered him to report to Capt. Francis Taylor who commanded Company K, 1st U.S. Artillery, at Fort Columbus on Governor's Island, New York. When Jackson reported, Taylor's battery had already received orders that would send it to Mexico to join Gen. Zachary Taylor's army. The battery proceeded to Pittsburgh, then took a steamship down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans. The battery landed at Point Isabel, Texas, on September 24, 1846, the same day that the Mexican forces surrendered to Taylor at Monterrey.

During an armistice, Jackson served as company commissary officer at Point Isabel as he awaited orders. In mid-October, military officials ordered Battery K to ascend the Rio Grande and advance toward Saltillo, located southwest of Monterrey. Before Jackson and his unit arrived, however, on November 16, U.S. forces took possession of the town without a fight. Another lull took place as additional military forces augmented Taylor's command and as military leaders determined the army's next move.

Ultimately, the War Department decided that Gen. Winfield Scott would make an amphibious landing at Veracruz and then advance on Mexico City. Officers ordered Jackson's battery to return to Point Isabel so that it could join Scott's army, with a subsequent move to an island near Tampico. On March 9, 1847, Scott's 13,000-man army landed below Veracruz without opposition. The army advanced to Veracruz, held by 3,500 Mexican troops, and prepared to place the town under siege. Jackson took part in the brief investment of Veracruz and came under fire for the first time. He was exhilarated at the experience. The small Mexican army, with no hope of relief, surrendered on March 28.

Scott, meanwhile, reorganized his army into two divisions; Brig. Gen. David E. Twiggs commanded one of them. The general assigned two batteries to Twiggs, one of which was Jackson's Battery K. On April 8, Scott ordered Twiggs to lead his



Earliest known image of Jackson as a 22-year-old artillery officer in the Mexican-American War. *VMI Archives Photographs Collection*

advance on Mexico City. Four days later the army encountered 12,000 Mexicans at Cerro Gordo, commanded by Gen. Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. Scott came up with reinforcements and eventually sent Twiggs through rugged terrain in an attempt to turn Santa Anna's left flank. The maneuver succeeded and helped bring the engagement to a close. In his report, Captain Taylor commended Jackson's extraordinary efforts to bring forward the battery's caissons.

On April 19, the lead elements of the army reached Jalapa. Military officials transferred Jackson from Battery K to Battery G, however, and his new battery was ordered to garrison Jalapa rather than advance with the remainder of the army. Although he was disappointed that orders had left his unit behind, Jackson found Jalapa delightful. He began to learn Spanish and enjoyed the majestic scenery, the abundant fresh fruit, and the pretty senoritas. In late April, Jackson learned that the army had granted him a promotion to full second lieutenant, which dated from March 3.

After Scott ordered the formation of additional light artillery companies, his subalterns placed Jackson in Company I, commanded by Capt. John Magruder. The battery was part of Maj. Gen. Gideon Johnson Pillow's division. Toward the end of July, Jackson and his fellow soldiers set out to join the battery. On route, guerrillas attacked the column, but the Americans successfully fought off the attackers. Jackson picked up a Mexican saber as a souvenir.

On August 7, Scott's nearly 11,000-man army advanced toward Mexico City and prepared to attack it from the south. Santa Anna's army of about 30,000 men held the city. On August 19, Scott ordered Pillow's division to advance toward the city. Magruder's battery reached the main road and officers ordered it forward to a low ridge where it came under fire from heavy Mexican guns that commanded the roads that led into the city near the town of Contreras. As the battle unfolded, the officer who commanded the two-gun section in which Jackson served was killed and Magruder assigned Jackson to the post. Magruder later commended Jackson's conduct and exertions under fire. The next day the infantry advanced and drove the Mexicans from Contreras. They fled north to fortified positions at Churubusco, but Scott's army drove them from that location on the same day.

On September 8, Scott sent a small expedition against Molina del Rey, which the Mexicans initially rebuffed. When cavalry threatened the Americans, officers ordered Magruder's battery forward. Jackson, now acting first lieutenant, directed the placement of the guns, which successfully drove off the Mexican horsemen. The American force eventually captured the location, but at a high cost.

On September 12, the American army began a bombardment of Chapultepec, a fortified castle that sat 200 feet above the terrain that surrounded it. The day-long bombardment breached the walls of the castle. The cannonade resumed early

the next day to cover the advance of the infantry. Jackson was part of a column sent north of Chapultepec to prevent Mexican reinforcements from reaching the castle and to thwart any retreat. The next day Jackson's two-gun section came under heavy fire, which killed or disabled all of his artillery horses. Most of his men sought shelter from the deadly fire. Jackson remained in an exposed position, which demonstrated to his men that there was little harm, and urged them to man the guns. With the assistance of an infantry brigade rushed to his support, Jackson's two guns helped silence Mexican artillery just as the defenses of Chapultepec began to break. Again, Magruder praised Jackson's skill and devotion to duty. Scott and other officers also commended Jackson's role in the investment of Chapultepec. For his conduct in the battles in front of Mexico City, military officials promoted Jackson to first lieutenant and brevet captain, which dated from August 20. The army brevetted him to major effective September 13. With his new rank, the army transferred Jackson back to Taylor's Battery K.

With the fall of Chapultepec, Santa Anna tried to rally what remained of his army in Mexico City, but failed. He abandoned the capital after dark on September 13. Most of Scott's army occupied Mexico City the next day, while Jackson's battery stayed outside of the city to cover the western gate.

A rather lengthy military occupation of Mexico City ensued. Santa Anna fled the country and the Mexican government collapsed. As a result, it took nearly six months for American and Mexican officials to negotiate an acceptable peace treaty. On February 2, 1848, the two countries signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war and established the boundary between Mexico and the US at the Rio Grande River, then westward to the Pacific Ocean south of San Diego. The US Senate ratified the treaty on March 10, 1848. In it, Mexico gave up over one half of its land mass to the United States, which included the present-day states of California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, and parts of six other states.

With the cessation of hostilities, Jackson found time for comfort and leisure in Mexico City. He indulged in long walks, rode his new horse, continued to learn rudimentary Spanish, practiced dancing at social functions, and admired the pretty ladies. Jackson also examined Catholicism and embraced his religious faith more deeply. By mid-June 1848, the American army evacuated Mexico City and headed back to Veracruz by ship for the journey home. On July 17, Jackson arrived at New Orleans and on August 16 he reached New York.

Life and Controversy in the Peacetime Army

Soon after his arrival in New York, the army granted Jackson a three-month leave during which time he visited his sister, friends, and relatives at Jackson's Mill.

After his leave, he reported for duty at Fort Hamilton on Long Island. While he served at Fort Hamilton and other posts in the region, Jackson began to exhibit the traits of a hypochondriac. He complained about pains in his side, foot, eyes, and stomach. He explored exotic cures and diets to combat his various ailments. He also began to draw closer to his religious faith. A priest baptized him on April 29, 1849, at St. John's Episcopal Church in New York. While stationed in New York, Jackson learned that his Uncle Cummins had died in California—likely of pneumonia or typhoid fever—where he had gone to seek his fortune in the gold rush and to avoid a certain conviction for counterfeiting.

In October 1850, the army transferred Jackson from Company K to Company E in the 1st U.S. Artillery. Captain William H. French commanded the new company. In December, orders sent the company to Fort Meade in central Florida. As a frontier post, the station had few of the amenities and luxuries to which Jackson had grown accustomed in the northeast. In fact, the company had to build its own barracks. Jackson led routine patrols of the wilderness but seldom saw a Seminole. The Second Seminole War had drawn to a conclusion in 1842 with most natives exiled or forced onto reservations in Oklahoma. Jackson began to quarrel with his company commander as a spiteful, vindictive side of his personality emerged.

In the regular army, Jackson's rank was first lieutenant, whereas French was captain and unambiguously the ranking officer. Both men, however, were brevet majors, an honorary rank for meritorious service in the line of duty. Due to this mutual brevet rank, Jackson seemed to expect a less-than-subordinate role at the post.

Initially, French assumed the role of mentor to Jackson and other junior officers at the fort. French advised Jackson about the best approach to request others to recommend his promotion to captain in a new regiment, and he wrote his own letter on behalf of his subaltern. The relationship would not survive the hardships of the isolated post, however.

Jackson's resentments began to arise when French denied him responsibility for the oversight of building projects, which Jackson thought was his right as quartermaster of the post. On March 23, 1850, he wrote a report that outlined his grievances. Jackson believed that military regulations granted him independent authority to oversee construction, even over the post commander. French forwarded his subordinate's grievance up the chain of command. Six days later, Brig. Gen. Thomas Childs, through a staff officer, sustained French's position. Of course, the post commander held ultimate responsibility for all decisions and the official activities of those under his command. Jackson's anger smoldered and the relationship between the two men continued to deteriorate. Jackson refused all social interaction with his commanding officer except that required by his official duties.

The dispute over the fort building projects was only prelude, however. In response to camp gossip, the next month Jackson interviewed other soldiers about French's relationship with his young servant girl. French soon learned about Jackson's surreptitious conduct and placed his subordinate under arrest. Jackson retaliated with charges against French, with four specifications. French then formally charged Jackson with conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, complete with eight specifications. Jackson, in confinement, would not rest. He prepared an additional 18 specifications on the original charge, then added an additional charge and four new specifications. French, outraged, filed additional charges of his own that accused Jackson of submitting the new charges out of spite.

As was his duty, French forwarded the charges and countercharges up his chain of command, ultimately to the headquarters of the Fifth Military Department in New Orleans, headed by now-Maj. Gen. David E. Twiggs. A month later Twiggs ordered Jackson released and ordered no further inquiry into the charges made against either party. French, his reputation sullied, appealed to Winfield Scott, now the U.S. Army's general-in-chief. Months later, on August 27, Scott, through a staff officer, sustained Twiggs's decision. He reprimanded Jackson's misplaced notion of duty to have privately examined soldiers about the conduct of their commanding officer when a military tribunal was the proper venue to investigate the alleged misconduct. He also pointed out that the information Jackson provided did not support the charges against French. But Scott also criticized French for a lack of poise and composure expected of an officer under such circumstances. Perhaps historian and Jackson biographer Frank Vandiver expressed it best when he wrote, "French . . . could not tolerate a subordinate who resented subordination. Jackson, at the same time, could not bear a commanding officer who so insisted on commanding." Ultimately, the army did not convene a tribunal to hear either sets of charges. At times throughout his military career, Jackson would again exhibit an independent streak that would put him at odds with his civilian and military leadership.[2]

After his release from arrest in mid-April, Jackson went on leave for nine months. Perhaps he realized that the dustup with French had tarnished his reputation and diminished his career prospects in the army. At the end of his leave, he tendered his resignation. In February 1851, the superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) in Lexington, Virginia, inquired whether Jackson was interested in a position at the school, to which the young ex-officer responded affirmatively. In late March 1851, VMI offered Jackson the position of professor of

2 Frank E. Vandiver, *Mighty Stonewall* (New York, 1957), 61.

natural and experimental philosophy and instructor of artillery. He accepted the offer that April.[3]

Tom Fool Jackson

In August 1851, Jackson arrived in Lexington to assume his position with the academy. While he served at VMI, Jackson never achieved popularity as an instructor. The cadets generally mocked him for his straitlaced, formal style of instruction and lack of deftness as a professor. Students assigned him the sobriquet, "Tom Fool Jackson," among others. Jackson occasionally experienced difficulty maintaining class discipline. In response to student questions, he simply repeated what he had previously said. VMI's superintendent, Colonel Francis Henney Smith, later wrote of Jackson:

> As a Professor of Natural and Experimental Philosophy, Major Jackson was not a success. He had not the qualifications needed for so important a chair. He was no *teacher*, and he lacked the tact required in getting along with his classes. Every officer and every cadet respected him for his many sterling qualities. He was a brave man, a conscientious man, and a good man, but he was no professor.

He liked the position, the school, and the town, however, and took pride in his work.[4]

At VMI, Jackson served on the faculty with a number of instructors who would later become members of his staff or colleagues with whom he would serve during the Civil War. James Massie, for example, taught mathematics and would later serve on his staff. Raleigh E. Colston taught French and history at the Institute and in 1863 would command a division under Jackson. Daniel Truehart was a junior instructor who would later serve in the artillery. Major William Gilham was another of his VMI colleagues. Gilham, an Indiana native, graduated from West Point in 1840—six years before Jackson—and had also won distinction in the Mexican-American War. He resigned from the army late in 1846 to accept a position at VMI. Gilham taught classes in the physical sciences and was commandant of cadets. His students respected him and considered him an excellent drillmaster. Gilham would later write a drill manual published in 1861. The Institute hired Jackson to

3 Francis H. Smith, *The Virginia Military Institute: Its Building and Rebuilding* (Lynchburg, VA, 1912), 134–35.

4 Daniel Harvey Hill, "The Real Stonewall Jackson, in Peter Cozzens, ed., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (Urbana, IL, 2002), 5:135; Smith, *The Virginia Military Institute*, 138.

1851 daguerreotype of Brevet Major Thomas Jackson taken in New York.
Library of Congress

reduce Gilham's responsibilities at the institution. Jackson and Gilham also entered into a number of business relationships in Lexington during the pre-war period, which included the purchase of a tannery. Gilham would serve under Jackson in the Bath-Romney campaign, an experience that would strain their relationship and ultimately result in the former's resignation from the army. The experience would also sever the men's business associations.[5]

At times Jackson suffered difficult relationships with VMI cadets. The most serious incident involved James A. Walker, a future Confederate officer, who was only two months away from graduation. During one class, the two disagreed over the means of solving a problem. Walker argued with Jackson and, in the end, Jackson placed Walker under arrest. A court martial tried the cadet, convicted him of disrespect, and expelled him from the Institute. The matter did not stop there. Walker challenged Jackson to a duel and, if the professor refused, threatened to murder him at a specific time and place. Colonel Smith helped defuse the controversy and ultimately Walker left town and returned to his home.[6]

End of Unedited Excerpt

5 Smith, *Virginia Military Institute*, 132–33; William Gilham, *Manual of Instruction for the Volunteers and Militia of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1861).

6 "James A. Walker Court Martial," VMI Archives Digital Collections, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, VA, https://libguides.vmi.edu/archives-research-guides/Jackson; Hill, "The Real Stonewall Jackson," 5:135–37; Willie Walker Caldwell, *Stonewall Jim*: *A Biography of General James A. Walker*, *C.S.A.* (Elliston, VA, 1990), 3–4; Robertson, *Stonewall Jackson*, 140–41.