



On Vignettes

The human element has been at the core of *MI* since our first issue. It is most evident in the portraits and stories of soldiers, sailors and others during the Civil War period. Founder Harry Roach recently noted that William Frassanito's 1978 book, *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day*, included what was then an engaging, new element—vignettes of soldiers who participated in the battle. These vignettes contributed to Roach's sense that it was time for a periodical dedicated to soldier images.

It should come as no surprise that Roach included mini-biographies early on in the life of the magazine. He called them, appropriately, *Vignettes*. The format ranged from straightforward accounts of military service to poignant, nonlinear narratives. All of them bring the subjects to life in our imagination, if only for a few fleeting moments.

I must confess that those early nonlinear narratives inspired me. They still do. I was especially impressed with the work of Scott Valentine, who remains an active contributor. Scott's writings, and those of many more that have graced the pages of *MI*, remind us that the war was fought mostly by citizen soldiers and sailors.

Roach and Frassanito might find a kindred spirit in 19th century Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle. In his 1830 essay, *On History*, the great Carlyle stated, "History is the essence of innumerable biographies."

You'll find them here in John Gibson's accounts of Vermonters in the Wilderness; Rick Leisenring's descriptions of amputees who sold *cartes de visite* to make extra money; Will Gorenfield's narrative of Charles Ogle's self-destruction by alcohol; and Mike Medhurst's origin story of the Father of the American Cavalry.

The vignettes of Billy Yank and Johnny Reb included here are a sampling of the innumerable biographies to which Carlyle referred. Or, put another way, "The history of the Civil War is the stories of its soldiers and sailors."



Carte de visite by John G. Murdoch of London, England. Ronald S. Coddington Collection.

Thomas Carlyle.



Editor & Publisher



This issue is dedicated to Bella, who passed on February 26. She was 15. She became part of my family 14 years ago, and was by my side when I took ownership of *MI* in 2013. A constant, joyful companion, I'll miss the snores and grunts that only a pug can make as she lay in her bed next to my desk.

FUTURE ISSUE CALL TO ACTION: Have images related to these topics? Let us know.



Gettysburg casualties.



Battle of Monocacy participants.



Pipe smokers.



Showcase.
Interpret.
Preserve.

Editorial

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Military Images (ISSN 1040-4961) is published quarterly (4 times per year) by Military Images, LLC (P.O. Box 50171, Arlington, Va. 22205). Periodicals postage paid at Hanover, Pa., and additional mailing offices. Subscriptions: \$24.95 for one year (4 issues) in the U.S. and \$50.95 elsewhere (all U.S. funds). Single issues: \$7.95. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Military Images*, P.O. Box 50171, Arlington, Va., 22205.

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