

Publisher's Preface

I WAS A DEVOTED READER OF Civil War literature back when I first met Bob Younger of Morningside Books. It was November of 1988 and I was living in San Jose, California, two years out of law school, seven months married, and two weeks after reading about the upcoming West Coast Civil War Round Table Conference in San Diego. I saw the notice inside one of Bob's catalogs. It was an adventure flipping through those pages. It was so easy to get lost in them for hours—especially inside the every-so-often release of “Morningside Notes,” which were catalogs with mini-articles and other chatter and bits of information nested around books for sale. What a treasure those were, and what a loss that they are no longer issued. New readers don't know what they are missing.

Bob was the bookseller at these annual West Coast affairs hosted by Jerry Russell of Civil War Round Table Associates out of Little Rock, Arkansas. Each year Bob loaded a truck and drove out all the way from Ohio. William C. “Jack” Davis was a keynote speaker, and boy was I excited to learn that! He had been the editor of *Civil War Times, Illus.*, and I had just finished his mammoth and outstanding biography on John C. Breckinridge. Jack was the first Civil War “rock star” to sign any of my books. I especially treasure that one. Through the years Jack and I would become good friends. I was more than pleased to meet all these giants in the field. Jack was thoroughly Jack—gifted with gab, friendly, and hilarious. Jerry was also full of wry hilarity and ran a tight ship—a giant of a man with a booming voice.

And then I met Bob. What a character!

“Hello Mr. Younger, I'm a big fan of your books,” I said nervously during a break between the talks. Bob nodded, pursed his lips, mumbled something, and walked away. I later learned I had gotten away easy. Bob was gruff, loud, direct, and often plain rude. You either loved the man or despised him. There was no middle ground. There was a reason he was known as SOB (Sweet Old Bob). I am attracted to unique personalities and people who march to their own drum, so Bob and I got along just fine.

Once you got to know him, however, you discovered that inside the gruff exterior was the biggest softy you ever met. Bob was the Grinch *after* he heard the Whos of Whoville singing joyously on Christmas morning. He had a big heart and he was generous to a fault. He often hired people down on their luck, stuck a broom in their hands, cleaned them up, and taught them a skill. Some paid him back by outgrowing his shop and becoming successful in other fields. This pleased him to no end. Others robbed him. I asked him about that once. He shrugged and stared at me through thick glasses that magnified his piercing eyes for a few moments before finally replying, “Well, who the hell is going to help them if I don’t? Gotta do whatcha can.”

Bob launched Civil War independent publishing in the 1970s. As a reader, he helped guide me through the growing literature. When I began dabbling in publishing in 1990 with the journal *Civil War Regiments* he gave me some advice (which I can’t share here), and when I moved into book publishing, he taught me even more. Every couple weeks he would call me. There were no pleasantries. He would simply tell me what he was thinking (it was usually a complaint about some breaking news story; on occasion it had something to do with publishing), and then hang up. After 1993 he would end his call with, “How is that sweet little girl of yours?”—a reference to my daughter Alexandra Maria. She came along in 1991 and Bob met her the following year at one of the conferences. He got a kick out of the fact that she was born early on the evening of July 2, named after Southern artilleryman E. Porter Alexander, and that we nicknamed her “Little Round Top.”

Bob spent a few decades publishing some of the most important titles we Civil War readers could ever want. Two of them included *The Bachelder Papers* (3 vols.) in 1994, and the book you now hold in your hands, *John Bachelder’s History of Gettysburg* in 1997. These are not small books and were very expensive labors of love. Bob was an outstanding publisher, but he wasn’t a top-shelf businessman, as he admitted to me often. He knew he could not print and sell enough copies to recoup his investment. He didn’t care. They needed to see the light of day. And so they did.

He brought a set of the *The Bachelder Papers* with him to a West Coast Civil War Conference in the mid-1990s. He was selling them for \$175.00. When a guy in front of me offered him \$150.00, Bob told him the price had gone up to \$200 and to “get the hell away from my table.” The shell-shocked

fellow limped away and I scooped them up. Who knew. I devoured them within a year. Somehow I missed picking up a copy of *John Bachelder's History of Gettysburg*. It still puzzles me how that happened.

The years passed, Bob's business faded with the advent of the Internet and his refusal to go online and compete. He passed away unexpectedly after routine surgery in 2006. The Civil War community had lost another giant.

Friend and long-time customer Mark Wade has spent the last few years urging me to publish rare and out-of-print titles in general, and *The Bachelder Papers* in particular. I (foolishly) resisted until he tracked down the original editor, the wonderful and charming Audrey Ladd, and got the ball rolling. I gave in at the end of 2019. Mark was right. The Civil War reading community stepped up, all 500 sets sold quickly, and the fun and joy it brought to the community, coupled with the satisfaction it gave Mrs. Ladd, marks one of the truly satisfying accomplishments of my publishing life. We made lots of new customers, and, better still, many new friends.

Mark then began pushing me to publish Bachelder's Gettysburg history. Only about 500 had been printed in 1997 and used copies are pricey. You have to destroy a book by cutting it apart to make a high resolution scan of each page for a facsimile copy. Mark generously offered his personal copy as a sacrifice to the scanning gods. "Just give me one of the new ones and a thirty-minute head start in your library without Kenya around and we'll call it even." (Kenya is our office pit bull. She and Mark have a love-hate relationship. If you are on Facebook, you know all about that.)

More than two decades ago Bob and I were at the Gettysburg Book Show talking about out-of-print books. Someone had one across the aisle for a steep price. "I wish I had purchased that one right away," I lamented.

"Which?" he asked.

I pointed it out. "The fourth Bachelder book. The Gettysburg one."

Bob nodded and replied, "That's the unofficial fourth volume of the *Papers*. Wish I could reprint that damn thing."

In a very meaningful way, Bob, you did. Thanks for everything. Without you, little of this would have come to pass.

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