

FOCUS

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George Meade Album of Union and
Confederate Officers
c. 1865
Civil War Museum of Philadelphia

At right: Mellon Fellow Jessica Keister
inpaints losses in the albumen and salted
paper print carte-de-visite portraits ›



The Meade Album holds almost 1,400 *carte-de-visite* portraits of all the officers who served in the Army of the Potomac, the major Union army famous for fighting under General George G. Meade in the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. According to Andrew Coldren, Curator at the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia, the famous General Meade did not create the album (a common misconception); it was assembled by his son, also named George, who served on the General's staff during the war.

Collecting *cartes* was a popular pastime among Civil War officers, and George probably began gathering these images during the war and then worked throughout his life to complete the album, using his father's connections to locate veterans or find information. Underneath or next to each portrait are what Andrew believes must be George's handwritten notes, which include the officer's name and rank and indicate whether he was injured or killed in battle. Toward the back of one volume, George began to add *cartes* of Confederate officers. These portraits were most likely collected after the war's end, when soldiers from both sides networked and held reunions.

George, a member of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (the organization that founded the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia in 1888), eventually gave the Meade Album to the Museum, along with other family items. When the album arrived at the Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) earlier this year to receive treatment through a Save America's Treasures grant, many of the *cartes* were faded and yellowed. Mellon Fellow Jessica Keister surface cleaned the album pages and removed old tapes. After mending breaks in the pages and consolidating several fragile photographs, she used watercolors to inpaint losses in the images. Finally, Jessica placed each page in a paper folder for storage.

To reduce future handling of the pages, CCAHA's Manager of Digital Documentation, Michelle Dauberman, photographed each one with a digital camera. In the future, the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia hopes to make the resulting digital images available to the public on its website. The Meade Album is the only source of images for many of the lesser-known officers in the Army of the Potomac, making it a valuable resource for Civil War researchers.



‹ Top left: First page of the album, with General George G. Meade's image at the top / Bottom left: George Meade, Jr. (center) in 1864