

BAZIL HALL OF HALL'S HILL

By

DONALD A. WISE

Bazil Hall of Hall's Hill was a prominent landowner in Arlington County, Virginia, from 1850 until his death in 1888. He was born in the District of Columbia in the early 1800's; however, there is some question of the exact year of his birth since no official birth records have been located for Hall. His official death certificate indicates that he was seventy-three years old when he died¹ which would indicate that he may have been born circa 1815. His tombstone has his age at death engraved as eighty-two years old² which would indicate that he was born circa 1806. The Federal Census Records also use different birth dates; for example, the 1850 Census Records indicate that he was thirty-seven years old (born circa 1813), the 1860 Census Records gave his age as forty-eight years (born circa 1812), and both the 1870 and 1880 Census Records indicate his birth year at circa 1809. Perhaps we can presume that he was born sometime between 1806 and 1815.

We are not certain who his parents were, but the Virginia 1880 Census Records gives his father's place of birth as Maryland and his mother's place of birth as Virginia. The 1790 Census Records for Maryland indicate that a Basil Hall lived in St. Mary's County, had three white males under the age of sixteen, two white males sixteen years or older, four white females, and had no slaves. Montgomery County lists two Hall families and Prince George's County lists six Hall families. In the 1800 Census Records for the District of Columbia, there are two Hall families listed: a Philip and a Richard. The 1810 Census Records were destroyed and the 1820 Census Records lists an "Iantius" (Ignatious?) Hall (1790-1832) as living in Washington County. In the 1800's only the urban site was called the City of Washington and the remainder of the area north of the Potomac River within the District of Columbia was called Washington County. The area south of the Potomac River in the District of Columbia was called Alexandria County. Since Bazil Hall later had a son and named him Ignatious, there is a good possibility that the "Iantius" Hall who lived in Washington County might have been Bazil Hall's father or a relative. Bazil Hall had a number of brothers and sisters; among them were a John P. Hall, a Frances Hall, a Mary Ann Hall, a Levinia E. Hall, an Elizabeth Hall, and a William J. Hall.

We know very little about Bazil Hall's youth, but it is a matter of record

that in a sworn statement made before the Southern Claims Commission,³ he stated that he was born in the city of Washington, in his early life he was a whaler out of Massachusetts, and spent some time in South America and California. In 1850, Bazil Hall purchased a 327 acre farm in Alexandria (Arlington) County, Virginia, and called his place the Hall Homestead Tract. This farm had previously been owned by John Peter Van Ness, a former Mayor of Washington City. Bazil Hall purchased the farm on December 13, 1850 for \$3,500 from Richard Smith who was handling the Van Ness Estate.⁴ The 1850 Census Records for Alexandria County, Virginia, indicated that Bazil Hall's occupation was "Trimer of Wood" on September 27, 1850. He was married to an Elizabeth who was twenty years old and had been born in New York. They had two sons: Ignatious, a two year old born in California, and Bazil, two months old who had been born in Virginia. So we can surmise that the Bazil Hall family had lived in California and probably came to Virginia in either 1849 or early 1850. The Arlington County Register of Births indicates that during July, 1855, Elizabeth and Bazil Hall, a farmer, had a daughter born and they named her Celena. During September, 1855, Genny and Alfred Fair, slaves of Bazil Hall, had a son born and named him John W. Fair.⁵ Bazil Hall had several other slaves working on his farm prior to 1860 and his family was noted as being hard on servants. Gaillard Hunt wrote the following description about Bazil Hall: "Old Hall, as he is familiarly called in the county, was a character well remembered because of his violent temper and bad habits. He had a few slaves, and presumably treated them badly as he is represented to have treated all others badly. Dr. Gott told me that he shot one Negro simply in bravado. He swore lustily and could be heard at a distance abusing his hands. His memory is held in great respect by the Negroes. I think they liked him better because of his coarse wickedness."⁶ Bazil Hall is quoted by Union soldiers as saying "I go in for the Union, but I ain't no abolitionist, and any man of common sense will say that slavery is the very best thing for the South."⁷ Bazil Hall's wife, Elizabeth, was brutally murdered by one of their slaves on December 14, 1857. *The Evening Star* published in Washington, DC, reported: "A Most Shocking Murder — Yesterday afternoon about 4 p.m., a most shocking murder was committed upon the body of the wife of Basil Hall, residing in Alexandria County, Va., about five miles from this city. According to her deposition, her husband was walking over his farm, and the rest of the whites of the family were at church, when a slave woman named Jenny, the property of Hall, put an armful of dry plank on the fire, which Mrs. Hall ordered her to take off. She did so, but quickly put it on again. Mrs. Hall again ordered her to take it off. The negress then seized her, and forcing her head down between her (the assailant's) legs, backed her into the fire. Three times, according to Mrs. Hall's deposition, she managed to break loose from the

fiend, who as often seized her and placed her back on the fire. On the last occasion, her screams brought other of the family negroes and her husband to her rescue. Mrs. Hall died last night at midnight. Drs. Wunder and Locke did all they could to alleviate her sufferings, but in vain. The murderess, before committing her dreadful crime, took the precaution to send a small negro girl, who was in the room, to the spring for water. The negress, who has, of course, been committed to jail, denies the crime, alleging that her mistress fell into the fire. It is most fortunate for the ends of justice that Mrs. Hall survived sufficiently long to make an anti-mortem deposition. Hall tried to shoot the woman ere she was conveyed to prison, but was prevented from accomplishing his object. He and his wife were considered by respectable persons in the neighborhood as being hard on servants; and not very long since he had a portion of his farm buildings burned by some of his own servants."⁸ Elizabeth Hall was buried in the Hall family private cemetery on December 14, 1857, at Hall's Hill.

The 1860 Census of Virginia shows Basil Hall's farm valued at \$10,000 and having personal effects valued at \$15,000. Basil Hall had married Frances Ann Harrison, daughter of Robert and Columbia Harrison, who owned a farm nearby. By 1860, Basil and Frances Hall had three children living with them: Ignatious, a twelve year old son; Elvira, a seven year old daughter; and Lavinia, a two year old daughter. Thomas Merchant, a sixty-five year old male laborer, was also living with the Hall family. The Southern Claims Commission Records in the National Archives contain some specific facts about Basil Hall and his farm. He had approximately 125 acres under cultivation and the rest was in timber consisting of oak, pine, chestnut, and hickory. Hall had about 30 acres in corn, some in oats, rye, potatoes, and in clover pasture in 1861. He had fenced his cultivated areas in 1852 with a worm fence nine rails high of chestnut rails supported by cedar and locust posts. Hall had an orchard of about 500 apple, pear, and other fruit trees. He had a number of mules and horses, seventeen head of cattle, and forty to fifty hogs. Hall had built a house worth about \$3,000 on a 400 foot high hill which he called "Hall's Hill."⁹ His house is described as being "a large and well-furnished mansion at the beginning of hostilities."¹⁰

The Civil War brought a number of hardships to the Basil Hall family. Hall was one of the few persons in Alexandria County who had voted against the succession of Virginia from the Union. Witnesses verify that Basil Hall was a loyal Union man who supported and treated all Union troops well. He was described in a sworn statement as being a member of the old Whig Party.¹¹ After the second Battle of Bull Run, the only major skirmish which took place in Arlington County occurred on August 31, 1861. Basil Hall's place was shelled by southern troops from Upton's Hill. His house and barn were burned by Confederate troops who claimed it

was being used by Union troops to spy upon Rebel lines. “Unfortunately for Hall, as the Union army advanced into Virginia, he found himself between two fires and during one of the frequent skirmishes, he was driven from his house. During his absence, soldiers from the Union army stripped the house of its furniture. Next the rebels advanced, and burned the building. Hall recovered some of his furniture . . .”¹² Soon after this, Union troops did occupy Hall’s Hill and begun to cut down all the timber to get a better field of fire toward Upton’s Hall and Falls Church. A military historian gave the following description: “Hall’s Hill was well adapted for a camp. It was a round top, sloping in all directions from the flagstaff which was planted in front of the centre of the line. The camp faced the west, the ‘line’ running north and south, with three Sibley tents on each side of the company streets for the men, with two wall-tents for the company officers, facing down the company streets, a line of cook-houses behind the officers’ tents, and the staff and other tents disposed in proper position at the rear. An ample parade-ground for company and battalion drills was afforded inside the regimental guardline. A fine stream of water ran along the base of the hill, affording water for cooking and bathing. The supply was reinforced by wells, dug by soldiers, and carefully guarded to secure purity. Part of Hall’s farm consisted of woodland, which furnished fuel for the camp during the winter of 1861-62.”¹³ The stream was probably Lubber Run which was called “Cow Run” on the Civil War maps.

During this time, Basil Hall moved into the summer residence of his sister, Mary Hall, a well-known Washington character. This house was well built, and situated on the Chain Bridge Road (North Glebe Road), and being unoccupied at the time referred to, made the proprietor of Hall’s Hill, a very good home. Of his numerous slaves, he saved but two, Jim and Bill, nine and twelve years old. While the troops were encamped there, a picket was established at Mary Hall’s and Basil, with the aid of the colored boys, managed to pick up a good living by selling meals to the guard and occasional visitors.”¹⁴ Basil Hall’s farm was devastated by the large encampment of Union troops on and around Hall’s Hill. The records in the Southern Claims Commission indicate how Basil Hall’s timber, fence, crops, and farm animals were confiscated for use by the Union troops. In some cases vouchers were given, but in other cases no receipts were given to Basil Hall for taking his personal possessions. Basil Hall was employed by the Union army to cut wood along the Arlington Heights. After the war, Hall filed a claim against the U.S. Government through the Southern Claims Commission. In these records, his sworn testimony along with some vouchers and several witnesses enabled Hall to claim \$42,450.30 for damages and materials confiscated. The Commission finally awarded Basil Hall \$10,729.68 on June 15, 1872.

The 1870 Census of Virginia shows Basil Hall as a farmer and his

property valued at only \$6,400 and personal effects at \$30. He was now reported to be sixty-four years old and besides his wife, Frances, there were four children living with them. These were Louisa or Laviania, an eleven year old daughter; Walter, an eight year old son; Frances, a five year old daughter; and Bazil, a one year old son. A forty-four year old laborer, John Peterson, from Denmark, is also listed as living with the Hall family. During the 1870's, Bazil Hall served as a Justice of the Peace in the Washington District of Alexandria (Arlington) County.¹⁵

Starting in 1866, the land deed records in the Arlington County Court House begin to show a number of lots being sold from the Hall's Homestead Tract. The following table shows the respective transfers of land from Bazil Hall to the individuals as listed:

Date & No. of Acres	To Whom	Price of Sale	Arlington County Deed Book References:
Jan. 9, 1866 Lots 1 & 2 (2 acres)	James Washington	\$ 60.00	XZ 9, 309
Oct. 11, 1870 1½ acres	Archibald Upshier	90.00	A, No. 4, 333/335
April 9, 1875 1 acre	James Washington	55.00	C, No. 4, 1
Sept. 15, 1879 81 acres, 3 roods, & 30 perches	Thomas H. Harrison (relative)	5.00	D, No. 4, 16
Oct. 22, 1879 20 acres	Abner W. Law	500.00	E, No. 4, 49
Dec. 30, 1879 3 acres	John W. Shreeve	275.00	E, No. 4, 107
April 7, 1880 20 acres	Louise Payne (daughter)	1.00	E, No. 4, 169
April 7, 1880 20 acres	Alvira Hall (daughter)	1.00	E, No. 4, 202
April 7, 1880 20 acres	Walter Hall (son)	1.00	E, No. 4, 259
April 12, 1880 5 acres	Abner W. Law	175.00	E, No. 4, 360
Nov. 9, 1882 1 acre	Thornton Hyson	108.50	E, No. 4, 592
June 9, 1883 2½ acres	Jennie Williams	151.00	E, No. 4, 280/297
Aug. 28, 1882 1 acre	Hopewell Lodge, Oddfellows Trustees: Moses Jackson, George H. Hyson, Shirley Snowden, Joseph Balden, Horace Shelton	80.00	E, No. 4, 377
June 27, 1883 ½ acre	Robert Ferguson	20.00	E, No. 4, 284

June 19, 1883			
1 acre	Cordelia Brown	1.00	E, No. 4, 427
Oct. 4, 1883			
20 acres	Frances Hall (daughter)	1.00	E, No. 4, 429
June 23, 1884			
1 acre	Eliza Butcher	100.00	E, No. 4, 454
Dec. 18, 1882			
70 sq. yards	Horace Shelton	80.00	F, No. 4, 454
May 19, 1884			
1 acre	Henry Wilson	80.00	F, No. 4, 572
April 1, 1885			
6 acres	W. G. Wilson	45.83 1/3	G, No. 4, 70
Aug. 10, 1885			
2 rood, 6 poles	Washington School District	75.00	G, No. 4, 97
March 4, 1885	No. 3		
1 acre	Henry R. Fish	80.00	G, No. 4, 308
June 16, 1886			
1 acre	Elias Miles	80.00	G, No. 4, 426
July 14, 1886			
29 acres	Benson Talbott	2,093.43	H, No. 4, 118
Sept. 15, 1887			
4 acres	Walter Hall (son)	3.00	H, No. 4, 197
Aug. 19, 1886			
1/2 acre	Henry L. Wilson	100.00	H, No. 4, 266
April 1, 1885			
6 acres	Walter G. Wilson	300.00	H, No. 4, 297
Jan. 3, 1888			
81 acres	Walter Hall (son)	5.00	H, No. 4, 425

When Frances Ann Hall's father, Robert Harrison, died in 1873, there was a settlement of his estate among his children. His 12 acre farm near Browns Bend in Arlington County, was divided among the surviving heirs. Alice and Alfred B. Clark received Lot 1 which contained 1 3/4 acres; Frances Ann and Bazil Hall received Lot 2 which was a 2 acre plot; Virginia and Henry B. Osborn received Lot 3 which was a 2 acre plot; Thomas H. Harrison received Lot 4, a 2 acre plot; Robert E. Harrison received Lot 5, a 2 acre plot; and Ophelia and John F. Hager received Lot 6, a 3 acre plot which included a burial ground.¹⁶

Mary Ann Hall, a sister of Bazil Hall, purchased the 72 acre Joseph Birch estate in Arlington County, Virginia, for \$2,400 on October 20, 1853.¹⁷ In the 1850 Census Records for the District of Columbia, a Mary A. Hall, thirty years old with a birthplace in the District, is listed as running a boarding house with thirteen women residents in the 4th Ward of the city of Washington. Her summer residence in Arlington County is shown on the Civil War maps under her name, Mary Hall. It was located where Marymount College is situated today and it consisted of a large house, tenant house, and barn. Mary Hall later acquired an additional 12 acres for \$1,250 on

October 14, 1869, west of her 72 acre estate.¹⁸ The 1870 Census of Virginia lists Mary "H" Hall as being forty-eight years old and having property valued at \$12,000 and personal effects at \$500. Alfred Clarke, a twenty-one year old laborer is also listed as being in her household. He was a nephew of Bazil Hall and had served in the 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry as a bugler for three years and five months during the Civil War. He had joined the Union Army when only thirteen years old and had served in Captain William J. Geary's Company. When Mary Ann Hall died in 1886, her property was sold by two of her sisters, Elizabeth and Levinia Hall, who lived in the city of Washington. Bazil and Frances Ann Hall, and his brother, John P. Hall and wife, Lucilla B. Hall, filed a joint suit in 1887 against their two sisters for Mary Ann Hall's real estate in Arlington County, Virginia.¹⁹ This land later became part of the Presley H. Rixey estate and now is part of the Washington Golf and Country Club premises.

When Lavinia A. Hall, a sister of Bazil Hall, died in 1903, she had the following restriction placed in her will stating "nor any children or descendants of my brother, Basil Hall, have any part of her estate with one exception, Elvira Hall, daughter of Basil and Elizabeth Hall."

The 1880 Census of Virginia lists a Bazil Hall as a seventy-one year old farmer; his wife, Frances, as a forty year old housekeeper; and as having six children living with them. Elvira, a twenty-five year old daughter is a clerk in the Treasury Department; Lavinia, a twenty year old daughter; Walter, an eighteen year old son; Frances, a sixteen year old daughter; Edward, a seven year old son; and Mattie, a three year old daughter. According to the Arlington County Register of Births, Mattie Hall, daughter of Bazil and Frances Hall, was born on September 5, 1877, at Hall's Hill.

Bazil Hall died on May 15, 1888, in Arlington County, Virginia, at the age of seventy-three years.²⁰ *The Evening Star* published in Washington, DC, had this obituary on him. "Hall. At his residence in Alexandria County, Va. Monday morning, May 14, 1888, at 12:15 a.m., Bazil Hall, after a lingering illness in the eighty-third year of his age. 'Dearest father, thou hast left us, Here in earth to meet no more, But again to meet thee, On that bright celestial shore.' Funeral Wednesday, May 16th at 2 p.m. Friends and relatives respectfully invited to attend."²¹

Bazil Hall's will dated January 7, 1888, was probated on May 28, 1888. He left to his wife, Frances Ann Hall, the "Hall Homestead Tract" consisting of 70 acres; \$300 was left to each of his older children: Elvira Hall, Louisa Payne, Frances Birch, and Walter Hall. He left \$10 each to his two minor children: Madie Adele Hall and Edward Carroll Hall.²² Bazil Hall was buried in the Hall family private cemetery at Hall's Hill.

Frances Ann Hall died on December 10, 1888, and was buried in the Hall private cemetery. The *Alexandria Gazette* printed this notice under "Local Brevities": "Mrs. Frances M. Hall, widow of the late Basil Hall, of this

county, died on Monday of Pneumonia, aged 50 years."²³ The *Washington Post* had this obituary: "Hall — On Monday, December 10, 1888, at 10 o'clock p.m. of pneumonia, Frances M., widow of the late Basil Hall, of Alexandria County, Va., aged fifty years. She was a devoted mother and her death will be mourned by her many friends. Funeral Thursday, December 13, at 2 o'clock p.m. Relatives and friends invited to attend."²⁴

In 1939, the many graves in the Hall family private cemetery were moved to the Oakwood Cemetery in Falls Church, Virginia. There Basil Hall is buried with his two wives, Elizabeth (1829-1857) and Frances (1835-1888), on either side. Hall's surname is shown on his tombstone as Basil, while most legal documents including his official death certificate uses Basil as his given name. Basil Hall's official death certificate indicates he died on May 15, 1888; while his tombstone and obituaries in the local newspapers gives his date of death as on May 14, 1888. Also in the Hall burial plot in Oakwood Cemetery are Basil Hall's ten children, five grandchildren, one nephew, and two servants.²⁵

One of Basil Hall's sons, Walter Hall, apparently died unmarried. His will is dated December 7, 1914, and it was probated on March 23, 1915.²⁶ His address was given as in the city of Washington, DC. He gave his brother, Edward C. Hall, \$500; devised the rest of his estate to be divided in four equal parts to his sisters: Louisa A. Payne and Madie A. Putnam; brother-in-law, Ernest C. Putnam, and nephew Leslie E. Putnam. Later a codicil gives \$1,000 to his friend, Claude E. Campbell of Washington, DC for caring during his illness.

Another of Basil Hall's sons, Edward Carroll Hall married a Katie A. _____. They had a son born on June 27, 1889, whom they called Basil Hall. He apparently died for another son was born on April 22, 1890, whom they also called Basil Hall. This son died when only one month old during May, 1890.²⁷ Edward signed the papers for reinterment of the graves in the Hall family private cemetery to the Oakwood Cemetery on September 19, 1939. At that time, Edward C. Hall's address was at 3401 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia. He died on March 8, 1949, and is buried in the Hall plot in the Oakwood Cemetery.

At least three of Basil Hall's daughters married: Louisa A. Hall to John D. Payne; Frances Hall to Jacob E. Birch; and Madie Adele Hall to Ernest C. Putnam.

So ends the saga of the Basil Hall family of Hall's Hill. They lived during a turbulent part of our history and suffered some of the hardships of the Civil War. Hall's Hill was not only the name for the residence of the Basil Hall family, but it applied to a 400 foot hill which was a Civil War encampment. Later the name Hall's Hill was used to designate a subdivision in Arlington County, but recently this name was changed by the County Board to High View Park.²⁸ The local citizens still prefer to call the area

Hall's Hill.²⁹ The last house which Bazil Hall lived in after the Civil War and eventually died in is still standing at 1700 North George Mason Drive, across the street from the Arlington Hospital.³⁰ Only history and time can judge the contribution that the Bazil Hall family made to our local heritage.



Basil Hall Tombstone

FOOTNOTES

¹Virginia Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics. *Death Certificate for Bazil Hall*, who died on May 15, 1888.

²Hall Plot. Oakwood Cemetery. Falls Church, Virginia.

³National Archives RG 217, *Southern Claims Commission Records*, No. 2422, Bazil Hall.

⁴Arlington County Deed Book 6, p. 169.

⁵Arlington County Register of Births: 1853-1896, Look under 1855, see items 39 & 40.

⁶Letter from Mr. Ross O'Donoghue to author, September 8, 1978.

⁷Benjamin Franklin Cooling. *Symbol. Sword, and Shield*. Hamden, CT: 1975, p. 95.

⁸*The Evening Star*, Vol. X, No. 1, 529. Monday, December 14, 1857, p. 3; *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, December 14, 1857, p. 1.

⁹Southern Claims Commission Records, No. 2422, Bazil Hall.

¹⁰John Love Parker and Robert G. Carter. *Henry Wilson's Regiment. History of the Twenty-Second Massachusetts Infantry* . . . Boston: Regimental Association, 1887, p. 45.

¹¹Southern Claims Commission Records, No. 2422, Bazil Hall, p. 15.

¹²Parker, p. 45.

¹³*Ibid.* p. 46.

¹⁴*Ibid.* p. 45.

¹⁵Alexandria County Minute Book, No. 8, 1870-75.

¹⁶Arlington County Deed Book G, No. 4, p. 54.

¹⁷Arlington County Deed Book 6, p. 510.

¹⁸Arlington County Deed Book 9, p. 562.

¹⁹Arlington County Deed Book H, No. 4, p. 532.

²⁰See No. 1, Death Certificate for Bazil Hall.

²¹*The Evening Star*, Monday, May 14, 1888, p. 5.

²²Arlington County Will Book 10, p. 137.

²³*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, December 15, 1857, p. 3.

²⁴*The Washington Post*, Thursday, December 13, 1888, p. 5.

²⁵Author contacted the Trustees of Oakwood Cemetery Records, Falls Church, VA, Oct. 1978.

²⁶Arlington County Will Book 12, p. 241.

²⁷Arlington County Register of Births: 1853-1896; Arlington County Register of Deaths, 1853-1896, under 1889, see no. 17 and under 1890, see no. 12.

²⁸Arlington County Neighborhood Conservation Program: *High View Park*, December, 1965, p. 1.

²⁹*The Washington Post*, Thursday, July 5, 1979, p. 10.

³⁰Paul Covey. "Notes on Two Arlingtonians: Basil Hall." *The Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 3, October, 1963, p. 22-23.



USGS Map of Washington & Vicinity, 1:31, 680, 1951.

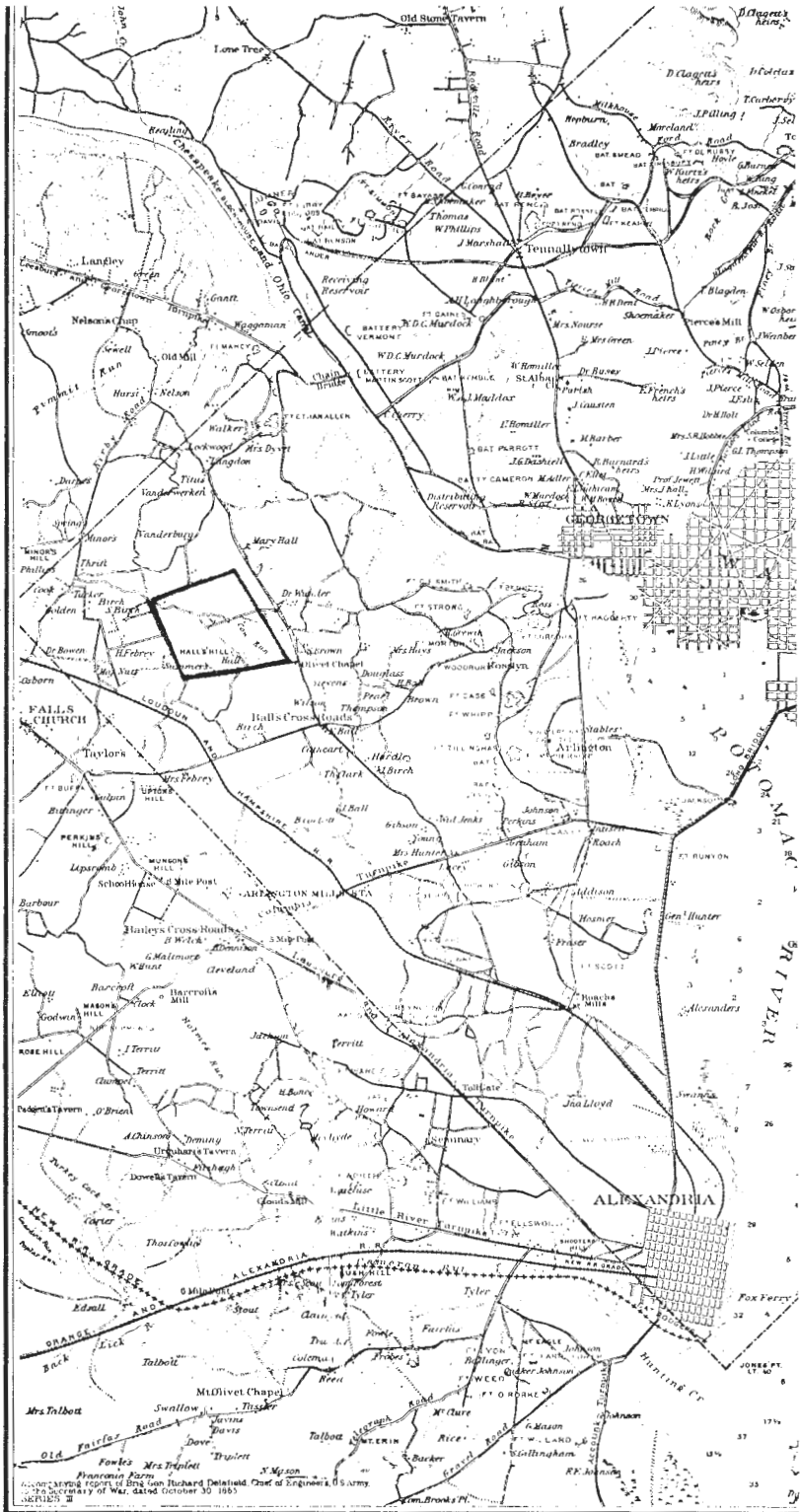


Plate LXXXIX of The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War, Wn: GPO, 1894-95.