

# *“The Second Birth of Freedom in America”*

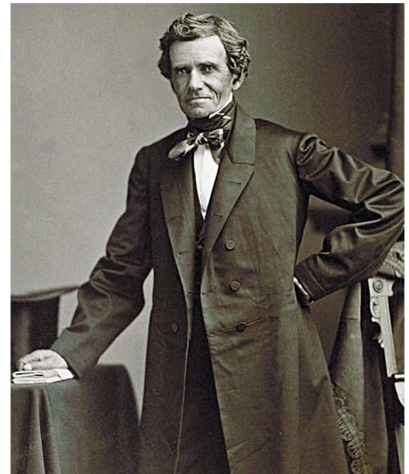


Samuel Wilkeson was a prominent war correspondent for the *New York Times* whose father's family originally came from the Carlisle area. Wilkeson's oldest son Bayard was a young artillery officer who was mortally wounded on the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg, at a place known today as Barlow's Knoll (pictured above). Left behind by army surgeons who had fled the oncoming Confederates, the nineteen-year-old lieutenant was forced to try to amputate his own shattered leg. He soon died from shock. Correspondent Wilkeson, who was with the Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg, then recovered his son's body in the battle's aftermath and wrote a famous report in the *Times*, which appeared on July 6, 1863. This moving dispatch began, ***“Who can write the history of a battle whose eyes are immovably fastened upon a central figure of***



***transcendingly absorbing interest—the dead body of an oldest born.”*** Yet the anguished father closed his dramatic account with a stirring patriotic appeal. ***“Oh, you dead, who at Gettysburgh have baptised with your blood the second birth of Freedom in America, how you are to be envied!”***

Abraham Lincoln knew the Wilkeson family well and appreciated their sacrifice and the sacrifices of thousands of other Union families.



The day after Wilkeson's report appeared on the news wires, Lincoln seemed poised to praise the brave young man in public, but hesitated, saying, *“I dislike to mention the name of one single officer lest I might do wrong to those I might forget.”* On November 19, 1863, however, he may have found a powerful way to evoke Wilkeson's memory by paraphrasing from the distraught father's words: *“We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom.”*