



Ghost Cadet by Elaine Alphin

Subjects: New Market, Battle of, New Market, Va., 1864—Juvenile fiction; Ghost stories—Juvenile fiction; Grandmothers—Juvenile fiction

Book List: North America

Props: Pocket watch

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The Union Army was pounding away at General Robert E. Lee and the main Confederate Army on four different battlefields from Washington, DC to Richmond, Virginia. The Union Army had more men and supplies but the Confederates were fighting valiantly. The Union generals figured if they could attack the Confederate Army from the rear, they could break their resistance and win the war.

But in order to get to the rear of the Confederate Army, they had to cross the Virginia Mountains. The only way through the mountains was New Market Gap. Both armies called up all the men they could command to the battle of New Market, Virginia, May 14, 1864. Some of them were really boys. The Cadets at Virginia Military Institute, VMI as it's still known today, were asked to hold the center of the Confederate line. Ten were killed that day. One was Hugh McDowell, Private in Company B. That much is history.

That much Benjy discovered when he and his sister took the bus to New Market, Virginia to spend spring break with a grandmother they'd never met. Benjy could walk to the battlefield from his grandmother's house and that's where he met Hugh. Hugh had not been able to

rest since that day in May more than a hundred years before when he had been killed. When he had enrolled in the Virginia Military Institute, his grandfather had entrusted him with a family watch that had been handed down through generations. (*Bring out watch*) He didn't mean to take it to battle, but they had been called up so quickly. He had hidden the watch right before he died so that it couldn't be taken off his body by looters, people who follow after a battle taking anything they can find of value off the dead bodies. He felt he must restore the watch to his family but a ghost can't pick up a real object and anyway, he couldn't find it. (*Put down watch*)

In all the 145 years that Hugh had aimlessly wandered that battlefield, no one had ever been able to see him until Benjy came. But now Benjy and Hugh had found each other. Could the 2 boys find the watch? The land had changed in all those years. It was a National Battlefield with a museum and an Interstate that ran through it. The buildings had been rebuilt, the old foundations were covered with new cement. Could they find it without being arrested for defacing a National Battlefield? How far should Benjy go to help a ghost? (*Hold up book*) *Ghost Cadet* by Elaine Alphin.

