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NOTES ON THE PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS of CRIB#402134
GENERAL JOHN GIBBON. 326/131311

By: H. M. Holt and T. B. Jackson,
WPA Guides

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BY: H. M. HOLT and T. B. JACKSON,
W. P. A. Guides.

John Gibbon was born in Holmesburg, Pennsylvania, but was reared in and appointed to West Point from North Carolina. After leaving West Point he commanded a battery at Camp Floyd, Utah. In 1861, Gibbon was ordered to Washington, D. C., and placed, as chief of artillery, in Mc Dowell's division. He moved with the Army of the Potomac, March 10, 1862, into Virginia, near Centerville.

On May 2th, 1862, Gibbon was assigned to a brigade in the First Corps and participated in the second Manassas campaign. On November 5, 1862, General Gibbon was assigned to a division in Reynolds' Corps. On December 13, Gibbon was wounded in the wrist in action around Fredericksburg. After the Battle of Fredericksburg, Gibbon went to Washington, D. C., to be treated for his wound and was visited by the President. In March 1863, he returned to the army still occupying the lines around Fredericksburg, the army now being under the command of General Hooker.

On April 1, 1863, General Gibbon was assigned to the 2nd Division of the 2nd Corps, and was in command of the 2nd Corps on July 1, and part of the 2nd at Gettysburg, while Hancock was on the front with Reynolds' Corps, Reynolds having been killed. The 2nd Corps received Pickett's charge on July 3, Gibbon's division being in the center. General Gibbon being wounded and carried from the field. He returned to the army

in March 1864, near Culpepper Court House and marched with the Army of the Potomac in its spring Campaign.

The Second Division took part in the Battle of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House, after which General Gibbon was promoted to the rank of Major General. Gibbon's Second division also took part in the Battle of Cold Harbor. On June 14, 1864, Gibbon's division crossed the James with the 2nd Corps and at noon of the 15th started for Petersburg. Late on the afternoon the Corps reached the position occupied by General Smith's 18th Corps. Later taking the place of this Corps. The 2nd Corps attacked at 6 P. M., on the 16th. On the 17th General Hancock was replaced by General Birney due to an old wound. On the 18th, the 2nd Corps made two not very vigorous assaults but with heavy loss.

On June 20th, the 2nd Corps was taken from the line and placed in reserve and the next day was moved to the left of the Jerusalem Plank Road, where it was attacked at about 3 P. M., two divisions under Mott and Barlow being thrown back, and General Gibbon says the first information he had was when his left brigade received a fire from the rear. This brigade gave way in confusion, abandoning Mc Knight's battery of four guns. On its right the enemy continued to advance and part of the next brigade was captured, only the right of the division being able to hold their ground. The next day a feeble attempt was made to recapture the part of the line but it was unsuccessful. General Gib-

bon states the loss in his division to be over 1,700. On July 25th, the 2nd Corps was ordered to the north of the James, where it made an attack on the 26th taking the first line and some guns near Deep Bottom. On July 29th, the 2nd Corps returned to Petersburg to assist in an attack in conjunction with a mine on General Burnside's front. They were placed in position to await the explosion. After some delay the mine was exploded at 4:45 A. M., on July 30th, and from the position of the 2nd Corps, cannon and musketry could be heard for several hours. For several hours the 2nd Corps was kept alert to see that no troops left their front, but no movement was seen and the truth came out that the assault at the mine had been a failure.

On August 21st, the 2nd Corps moved to the left to support General Warren's 5th Corps which was operating against the Weldon Railroad, and on the 23rd, marched to Reams' Station. On the 25th, the pickets became engaged and the Corps was ordered to get into position behind a line that had been constructed by the 6th Corps while there in June. These lines were laid out so as to expose the rear of the troops to the enemy. The men having to shift sides to meet the enemy, by this time the enemy had gotten in the lines along the railroad. In face of a heavy fire the 2nd Corps was forced to retreat which they did in great confusion. General Gibbon states that his entire division seemed to go to pieces and it was with great difficulty that he stopped them in the woods in the rear.

As the men dropped back in confusion they became a tangled mass, and General Gibbon said he had never before on a battlefield seen such a sight. It was a terrible battle and a mortifying one for the 2nd Corps. Two divisions lost over 600 killed and wounded and over 1700 missing. General Hancock harshly criticized Gibbon's command of the troops. General Gibbon states that shortly after the Battle of Reams' Station he and Hancock had an earnest talk about the condition of the 2nd Corps, and that he (Gibbon) urged that something be done to reorganize the Corps, as it was in no condition to do effective service.

Soon after the Battle of Reams' Station, Gibbon was given command of the 18th Corps, due to the illness of General Ord, and did not return to the 2nd Corps until September, 24th.

During the month of October, the 2nd Corps made several moves to the left and right, but accomplished little except to establish their lines nearer the enemy's. On January 16, 1865, General Gibbon was put in command of the 24th Corps which besides getting him away from Hancock whom he disliked, it placed him second in command in the Army of the James under General Ord. President Lincoln visited the Army of the James on March 26, 1865, and General Gibbon said he looked very haggard, and showed anxiety about the coming campaign.

On March 27, Gibbon's troops crossed the James River and the next afternoon took position in rear of the 2nd Corps, the day following, they took possession of the lines held by that Corps, ex-

tending from Hatcher's Run northward. On March 29, and all the next day, it rained heavily, the movement to the west by Sheridan, Warren, and Humphrey's however continued and on the 31st, the sound of guns could be heard in that direction, notifying Gibbon that the conflict had begun.

Sheridan's advance had been checked on the 31st and he was forced back to Dinwiddie Court House. In the meantime, the infantry had forced its way across the Boydton Plank Road, and reinforced Sheridan, who moved forward again on April 1, and defeated Pickett at Five Forks turning Lee's right and gaining control of the South Side Railroad. On April 2 Wright's 6th Corps assaulted in front of Fort Fisher and Fort Welsh and broke the enemy's lines near the Jones House.

General Gibbon's 24th Corps pushing in to the right after the 6th Corps. Gibbon notified General Wright that everything to Hatcher's Run was gone and they turned and pushed toward Petersburg, where they confronted Forts Gregg and Whitworth. About this time the guns were heard in the direction of Fort Sedgwick where the 9th Corps had gained the enemy's lines. Forts Gregg and Whitworth were held with both infantry and artillery. The troops swept forward and over the parapet and finished the work with the bayonet, thus Fort Gregg was captured with two guns, about 300 prisoners, and 55 dead. General Gibbon said it was one of the most desperate struggles ever witnessed and the Federals lost around 500 killed and wounded. The Federals now faced the last line before

Petersburg and moved in ready to attack on the third of April but found the lines empty and moved into Petersburg.

General Gibbon said his troops marched from Petersburg the next morning along the Cox Road to the west stopping at Sutherland where he learned from General Grant that General Weitzel had marched into Richmond that morning at 8:30. General Sheridan and the 2nd, 5th, and 6th Corps were advancing on Amelia Court House, and General Gibbon on the morning of the 5th was at Burkeville Junction where the South Side crosses the Richmond and Danville Railroad. On the 7th, the 24th Corps contacted the enemy at Rice's Station and General Gibbon was much surprised to learn that quite an action had taken place at Sailor's Creek the day before.

Late in the evening of the 7th, General Gibbon received a dispatch from Sheridan stating that he had captured four trains, 30 pieces of artillery, and a large number of wagons and prisoners. General Gibbon's columns were doing everything possible to cut off Lee's line of march to Lynchburg, while the Army of the Potomac was pushing Lee's rear from Farmville. General Grant on the 7th having written Lee a note suggesting surrender, received a reply in the afternoon of the 8th in which Lee failed to agree with Grant's views, giving no indication that he considered his army in a desperate strait. There were several of these notes exchanged between Grant and Lee. Grant calling for Lee to surrender, and Lee playing for time. Finally, on the morning of April 9th, 1865, Grant wrote Lee, stating on what terms he would receive the

surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia. General Lee accepted the terms, notifying Grant that he would designate the proper officers to carry the stipulations into effect.

These officers were, Lieutenant General Longstreet, Major General J. B. Gordon, and Brigadier General W. N. Pendleton.

Officers on the Federal side were as follows:

Major-General John Gibbon, Major-General Charles Griffin and Major Wesley Merritt.

General Gibbon states that on the morning of the 10th, no one can realize the relief experienced by everyone knowing that the war was over. After the war, General Gibbon was in charge of the District of Nottoway, with headquarters in Petersburg, and on June 15, 1866, was mustered out of the service as a Major-General of Volunteers and reverted to the rank of Captain of the 4th artillery.

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