

GETT-129 - VI

"A COMMON PRIDE AND FAME"

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The Attack and Repulse of Pickett's

Division July 3, 1863

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PART I

Kathleen P. Georg
Research Historian GNMP

1/81

"A COMMON PRIDE AND FAME"

The Attack and Repulse Of

Pickett's Division

at

Gettysburg

July 3, 1863

Kathleen R. Georg
Research Historian
Gettysburg National Military Park

They faltered not who stood that day
And held this post of dread;
Nor cowards they who wore the gray
Until the gray was red

For every wreath the victor wears
The vanquished half may claim;
And every monument declares
A common pride and fame.

--James J. Roche
(Gettysburg Compiler, June 4, 1901)

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Foreword and Acknowledgments

Because of the nature of the interpreter and the historian, subtle meanings, emotions, and sentiments which originally occur in an historic document or manuscript are often lost in paraphrase and circumspect interpretation by the historian. Many of us would scarce recognize the source of many well-intentioned statements of "fact" because they have been so bastardized over the years by multitudinous secondary sources. In addition, the historian has not yet been invented who can tell us better about the events of a battle than the participants themselves. The historian can interpret the sentences through hindsight and maps, but he can never capture the immediacy, poignancy, or intimacy of those reminiscences penned by the Civil War veteran in letters and memoirs. Because this historian believes this to be true, there will be utmost restraint in paraphrasing the documentation for this paper. To be sure, it will not be a book like that put out by Alan Collingsworth and James Cox (which was little more than a compilation of a select few primary accounts of the Battle of Gettysburg). We will try to tie together the primary narratives with any needed explanation, maps, and transition. Yet, still, it is the primary recollections which will carry this paper, and we beg the reader's indulgence for the many direct quotations which we believe are the heart of any understanding of the battle or empathy for the soldiers who fought in it.

This study arose because of a request by an individual, Seward Osborne, Jr., for a marker to be placed on the battlefield honoring the Third Day services of the 20th N.Y.S.M. Therefore, in a circuitous way, we are

grateful to Mr. Osborne for providing the stimulus to undertake such a much-needed study of this small area and time. We thank all those institutions which provided copies of resources at their disposal, and plead for an "open-door policy" for researchers, so that the almost insurmountable obstacles now in the way of copying such documents for use in other institutions for all people be set aside. The U.S. copyright law and restrictions imposed by various universities and historical societies are elements of the Dark Ages, impeding serious research and the dissemination of truth to the interested public. We hope someday that these selfish restrictions are lifted for the benefit of those seeking that truth, or at least facts.

Individually, we specifically thank Richard Sauers and Bill Matter, both of whom were forever ferreting manuscript materials for the author from faraway places. John Busey, working independently on a statistical study of the campaign, provided invaluable statistics for Pickett's Division. The late Dr. Frederick Tilberg left a treasure heap of manuscript copies and articles he had acquired over the years, which provided information and many leads. Finally, the "chief" of this division, Thomas Harrison, was the one person who "kept the faith" over the long progress of this study. His encouragement made it possible to take trips to libraries for research, and to provide some time to write and type the manuscript when other projects seemed more vital to other managers. Still in all, serious historical work can never be accomplished with ease under the auspices of the National Park Service. Monetary and manpower restrictions aside, the philosophy of the Service (geared to Operations) is a hindrance to any lengthy scholarly undertaking, due to the day-to-day pressures exerted on the resource as well as the historian. Without a sympathetic management, the historian must do any serious work outside his office and on

his own time. Fortunately, this historian has a "manager" who is aware of the value of accurate and detailed history in interpreting and preserving the scene of this foremost American battle. So I give thanks to all of the above.

A special thank-you is extended to the spirits of those who fought this battle. Without appearing lachrymose, we respectfully dedicate this study to the likes of Benjamin Wright and Rawley Martin--soldiers on opposite sides who indeed shared a "common pride and fame".

Preface

Gettysburg has always attracted more than its share of "scholarly" study, and probably will continue to magnetize the growing throngs of buffs and serious students, while other Civil War campaigns and subjects remain virtually ignored. Unfortunately, it has only been in recent years that any kind of comprehensive study of the 1863 battle has been undertaken, and none of these have satisfied the needs of those individuals who must rely on site-relation, troop positions and movement, and chronology of action for interpretive and preservation needs of the historic resource. Only Edwin Coddington approached the kind of study which is desperately needed by those concerned by the above requirements and the military scholar; but Coddington's one-volume The Gettysburg Campaign cannot carry the heavy and diverse load due to its brevity (821 pp. is brief?!). At best, his book can give us only an overview of the events. Still, Coddington was the only historian of the battle who attempted to survey and use long-ignored primary and manuscript sources.

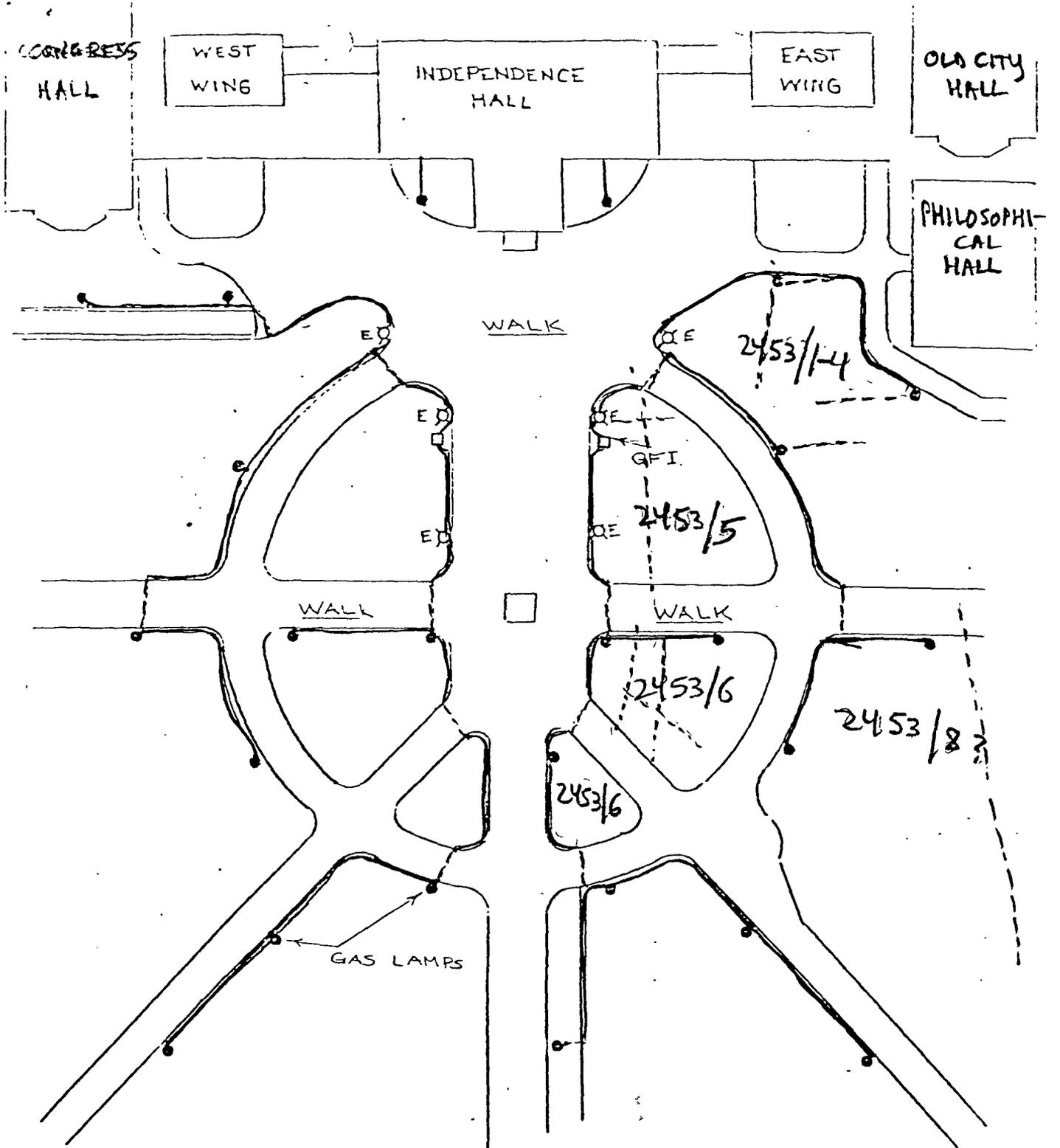
Each history of the battle up to this time, however, has based its whole concept and narrative on the same old, oft-repeated stories, handed down in so many secondary works of the past generations. There has been no concerted attempt to critically question certain basic facts or to deliberate upon and develop other incidents in relation to coincidental events. Too many authors sneer at or ignore the accounts of soldiers who did the fighting, but never would think to criticize a secondary author or an officer (or his wife) with motives other than truthfulness for writing.

When a question arises about a specific phase of the action, or about the appearance and topography of that action area, there is virtually no published history which will satisfy. Indeed, even a so-called "microhistory" of the great Confederate assault of the third day of the battle is wholly inadequate. When questions arise as to troop position, wartime site appearance and significance, &c. Since latter-day authors must rely on the written word of past historians and soldiers, any history of the battle can only be an interpretation by one student of only those records he has seen. None of us has the advantage of being part of the historic event, so we must rely on those who did witness the action to relay facts accurately. The possibility of repeating errors increases every time a writer uses secondary works or "hand-me-down" recollections by relatives or descendants. In other words, our history becomes not only "agreed upon lies", but, even worse, akin to those mutants produced by excessive in-breeding. The end product hardly resembles the original after this excessive overuse and repetition of the same sources; the original source become emasculated, shortened, misquoted, and very often given too much importance through this long series of retellings--much like the old children's game of "gossip".

An example of this kind of mutation and generalization of a very significant military moment in our history is our perception of "Pickett's Charge". The very name of the assault has been perverted because of the successive line of historians who repeat the heady accounts of the same Virginia elite who elevate Robert E. Lee to his god-like status.¹ By giving the name of Pickett to this memorable assault,

¹This opinion of the commanding general was not shared by the more perceptive, realistic, and educated members of Lee's army. South Carolinian Major John Cheves Haskell blamed Lee and his Virginia cadre for much of the demoralization in the army, even including the Gettysburg Campaign:

He had an apparent antipathy to anything partaking of pomposity and the vanity of war, but he had an utterly undue regard for the value of the elementary teaching of West Point and for the experience



SCALE 1" = 60'-0"

SITE PLAN



we have robbed the brave Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida soldiers from eight brigades of recognition, while elevating three brigades to exclusive fame. Men from those eight brigades knew the die was cast when the assault was misnomered "Pickett's Charge" in their own lifetimes. Their hundreds of pages of indignant ink never overtook the writings of the Virginia elite, however, and many of their publications are now looked upon as curious and rare collector's items, instead of as historical evidence. The unkindest cut of all came, fortunately, after they were all dead and buried. The "microhistory" of the July 3, 1863 attack repeated all the same stories coined by the Virginians and their allies. But, even after conceding that at least some of the eight non-Pickett brigades may have had some contribution in the assault, George Stewart (the author) thrust the dagger into their backs. Confronted with the fact that these eight brigades were an integral part of the assault, Stewart nevertheless chose to avoid righting a century-old wrong and entitled his book "Pickett's Charge."

gained by the very small police duty of our miniature regular army. He failed to realize that while a military school is excellent for the training of drill masters, who are most necessary, it teaches little of military science in comparison with the hard experience of a single campaign. When an army is confined for military leaders to a handful of lieutenants, who have never seen more than a regiment, probably not more than a company, in action, and have never had to deal with a harder problem. . . than how to get a wagon train from the nearest railroad station, it is apt to be hurt by the restriction. And it was often difficult to get past the incompetents, who went in as drill masters and were then pushed up by the ability of their men, who were of a class few armies have ever seen, to become commanders of large operations.

Such a leader as Napoleon could and did see the greatest cavalry leader of the age in the stable boy, Murat. . . . But General Lee never went outside, and was apparently resolute against doing so, the regular grades to find officers, who might have been very Samsons to help him multiply his scant resources. He never discovered or encouraged a Forrest, and many a man went to his death, trying to win against the incompetency of leaders who should have been brushed out of the way. . . .

Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, eds., The Haskell Memoirs: John Cheves Haskell (New York, 1960), pp. 55-56.

This "microhistory" has been recognized by many as the standard reference on the subject of the major third day activities. However, it is far from being the last answer on that subject. The book is essentially ineffective in answering those basic needs of the resource-minded; this deficiency was first apparent when trying to trace the movements and participation of a particular regiment during the assault. When Pickett's Charge was released in 1959-60, it was hailed as definitive:

So thoroughly has the author combed the primary sources and secondary studies, Union and Confederate alike, and so carefully has he reconstructed the story of the great onslaught, that it appears unlikely that there will be need for another such volume within the next generation.²

So inadequate was the book for the purposes stated, that additional research was necessary. In the course of this research it was apparent that the Stewart book barely scratched the surface of primary material available, and was typical of the pre-Coddington histories in repetition of the "hand-me-down" accounts.

The study undertaken here deals primarily with the engagement of Gibbon's and Doubleday's Divisions against the three Virginia brigades of Pickett's Division. Although time limitations and immediate inaccessability of manuscript sources hampered the definitiveness of the study, it still gives evidence that neither George Stewart nor Edwin Coddington are last words on the subject of Gettysburg.

It is also a plea for more critical and comprehensive historical research by the plethora of writers attracted to the Gettysburg theme. Instead of following the initiative of The Gettysburg Campaign, most recent writers are continuing to rely on the "hand-me-down" approach, and continuing to super-saturate the reading public with the same time-worn theories, accounts, and "stories". It is really a shame that serious scholars and buffs alike think that the Gettysburg story has

²Warren W. Hassler, Jr., Review of Pickett's Charge: A Microhistory of the Final Attack at Gettysburg, July 3, 1863, by George R. Stewart, Civil War History, VI (June 1960), p. 217.

been told. It is only one story, retold so many times it has lost its vigor.

There are so many stories of the Gettysburg Campaign that have been overlooked by students, that the reading public would be surprised, even shocked, that they have not become part of the Gettysburg legend.

The history of the battle is only one phase of the Gettysburg story. The campaign itself has been glossed over to such an extent in secondary works, including Coddington's, that only the most fanatical or serious student knows the significance and cost of Aldie, Falling Waters, Hunterstown, Hanover, Beverly Ford or Upperville. The logistics of the campaign for both armies has never been acknowledged as a subject worth of study, even though both armies were so very dependent on supply and communications for survival. Other ignored aspects of the campaign include the battle's effect on the civilian population (only the most banal stories are repeated and repeated); the soldier's experiences (only novelized); the post-battle hospitalization; the burials and reinterments to home states and cemeteries; the post-war reunions and efforts to memorialize; the literature, art, and music inspired by the Gettysburg experience; the changing attitude of Americans to the battlefield and its participants; and aspects of the battle itself--South Cavalry Field, East Cavalry Field, Farnsworth's Charge, Culp's Hill, the Wheatfield and Little Round Top. Even the over-worked "Pickett's Charge" has never yet been explored as it ought to, and an accurate statistical study by regiment and company has still not been compiled. The dearth of accurate facts relayed in secondary works indicates that no one has seriously studied the role of various brigades and specific units in major phases of the battle. For example, the very notable contribution of the 55th and 73rd Ohio and 136th New York regiments has been disregarded, even though their firepower may have been a primary cause for the failure of Confederate attacks on July 2 and 3. Whole phases of the Battle of Gettysburg are misinterpreted and misunderstood because

of "hand-me-down" studies and lack of critical evaluation of the historical and topographical resources.

To do the Battle of Gettysburg justice would be an undertaking to fill any mortal's life. Any serious study of particular areas of the action is a full-time job, and critical research of the aspects of the campaign already mentioned would be pioneer efforts. Too many "coffee-table" editions have been published, and the history of the battle has suffered because of it. This battlefield is probably the closest piece of Americana to be interpreted through "folk history" since the Alamo: It is past time that those hoping to make a fast buck be allowed to profit from the Gettysburg mystique. The dabblers, amateurs, acceptors, and self-appointed historians have dominated the Gettysburg history landscape for so long that any serious student has to confront the apathy and complacency of those who hold the purse strings. The definitive history of this most significant battle has yet to be written, and there should be such a cry of gratitude by the historic community when a true history is written that no one will again dare to pass off a "hand-me-down" to the reader.

Chapter 1: The Morning -- Union

"The men who fought there
were the tired fighters, the hammered, the weather-beaten,
The very hard-dying men."¹

The morning of July 3, 1863 dawned without beauty. Cannon firing and musketry penetrated the still of the early morning hours, as the Union generals set in motion their plan to retake the trenches on Culp's Hill at first sign of light. The smoke of the black powder must have hung below the crests of Powers' Hill, McAllister's Hill, and Culp's Hill like the fog which lays in these areas on such summer mornings. As the fighting and firing intensified, Union soldiers along Cemetery Ridge stirred and wondered. Occasional shots came bounding into the line from the Confederate positions on Seminary Ridge and up the Emmitsburg Road, and some appeared to be overshoot from Benner's Hill itself, as they struck the rear of First Corps regiments.

It was already 73°, and the sky completely cloudy and gray,² promising to be a typically humid Gettysburg summer day. Most Union soldiers lay on their arms and tried to keep sleeping, knowing that they would not have a breakfast to fill their empty stomachs. Only the most fortunate regiments managed to get rations from their trains, primarily due to the loyalty and resourcefulness of the individual teamsters. For those regiments who would not participate in the climactic battle of this day, the most vivid memory (aside from the cannonade which became part of the history of that day) was of hunger or sharing a meal with a stranger from a luckier outfit.

¹Stephen Vincent Benet, John Brown's Body. (New York, 1954), p. 292.

²Rev. Dr. [Henry] Jacobs, "Meteorology of the Battle," Gettysburg Newspaper Clippings #6--Relating to the Battle, p. 35.

PARTICIPANTS IN ATTACK ON GIBBON'S LINE

Army of Northern Virginia

First Corps

Pickett's Division

Garnett's Brigade

8TH VIRGINIA
Col. Eppa Hunton
Lt. Col. Norbonne Berkeley
18TH VIRGINIA
Lt. Col. H. A. Carrington
19TH VIRGINIA
Col. Henry Gantt
Lt. Col. John T. Ellis
28TH VIRGINIA
Col. R. C. Allen
Lt. Col. William Watts
56TH VIRGINIA
Col. W. D. Stuart

Kemper's Brigade

1ST VIRGINIA
Col. Lewis B. Williams
Lt. Col. F. G. Skinner
3RD VIRGINIA
Col. Joseph Mayo, jr.
Lt. Col. A. D. Callcote
7TH VIRGINIA
Col. W. Tazewell Patton
Lt. Col. C. C. Flowerree
11TH VIRGINIA
Maj. Kirkwood Otey
24TH VIRGINIA
Col. William R. Terry

Armistead's Brigade

9TH VIRGINIA
Maj. John C. Owens
14TH VIRGINIA
Col. James G. Hodges
Lt. Col. William White
38TH VIRGINIA
Col. E. C. Edmonds
Lt. Col. P. B. Whittle
53RD VIRGINIA
Col. W. R. Aylett
Lt. Col. Rawley W. Martin
57TH VIRGINIA
Col. John B. Magruder
Capt. William H. Ramsay

THE REPULSE OF PICKETT'S DIVISION

Army of the Potomac

First Corps

Doubleday's Division

Biddle's Brigade

80TH NEW YORK (20TH N.Y.S.M.)

Col. Theodore B. Gates

121ST PENNSYLVANIA

Maj. Alexander Biddle

142ND PENNSYLVANIA

Lieut. Col. A. B. McCalmont

151ST PENNSYLVANIA

Capt. Walter L. Owens

Stone's Brigade

143RD PENNSYLVANIA

Lieut. Col. John D. Musser

149TH PENNSYLVANIA

Capt. James Glenn

150TH PENNSYLVANIA

Capt. George W. Jones

Stannard's Brigade

13TH VERMONT

Col. Francis V. Randall

14TH VERMONT

Col. William T. Nichols

16TH VERMONT

Col. Wheelock Veazey

THE REPULSE OF PICKETT'S DIVISION

Army of the Potomac

Second Corps

Gibbon's Division

Harrow's Brigade

19TH MAINE
Col. Francis E. Heath
Lt. Col. Henry W. Cunningham
15TH MASSACHUSETTS
Lt. Col. George C. Joslin
1ST MINNESOTA
Capt. Nathan S. Messick
Capt. Henry C. Coates
82ND NEW YORK
Capt. John Darrow

Hall's Brigade

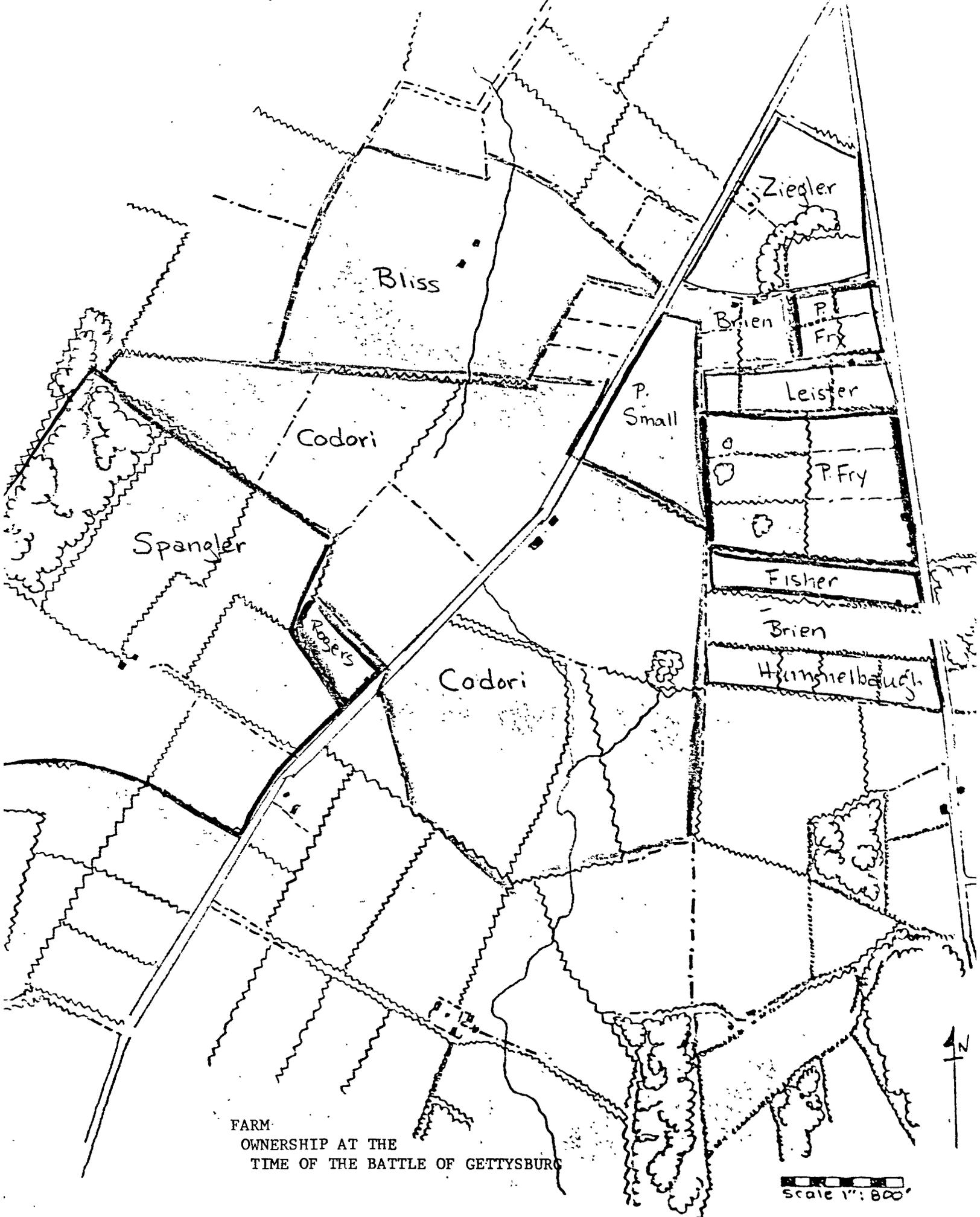
19TH MASSACHUSETTS
Col. Arthur Devereux
20TH MASSACHUSETTS
Lt. Col. George N. Macy
Capt. Henry L. Abbott
7TH MICHIGAN
Lt. Col. Amos E. Steele, Jr.
Maj. Sylvanus W. Curtis
42ND NEW YORK
Col. James E. Mallon
59TH NEW YORK
Capt. William McFadden

Webb's Brigade

69TH PENNSYLVANIA
Col. Dennis O'Kane
Capt. William Davis
71ST PENNSYLVANIA
Col. Richard Penn Smith
72ND PENNSYLVANIA
Lt. Col. Theodore Hesser
106TH PENNSYLVANIA
Lt. Col. William L. Curry

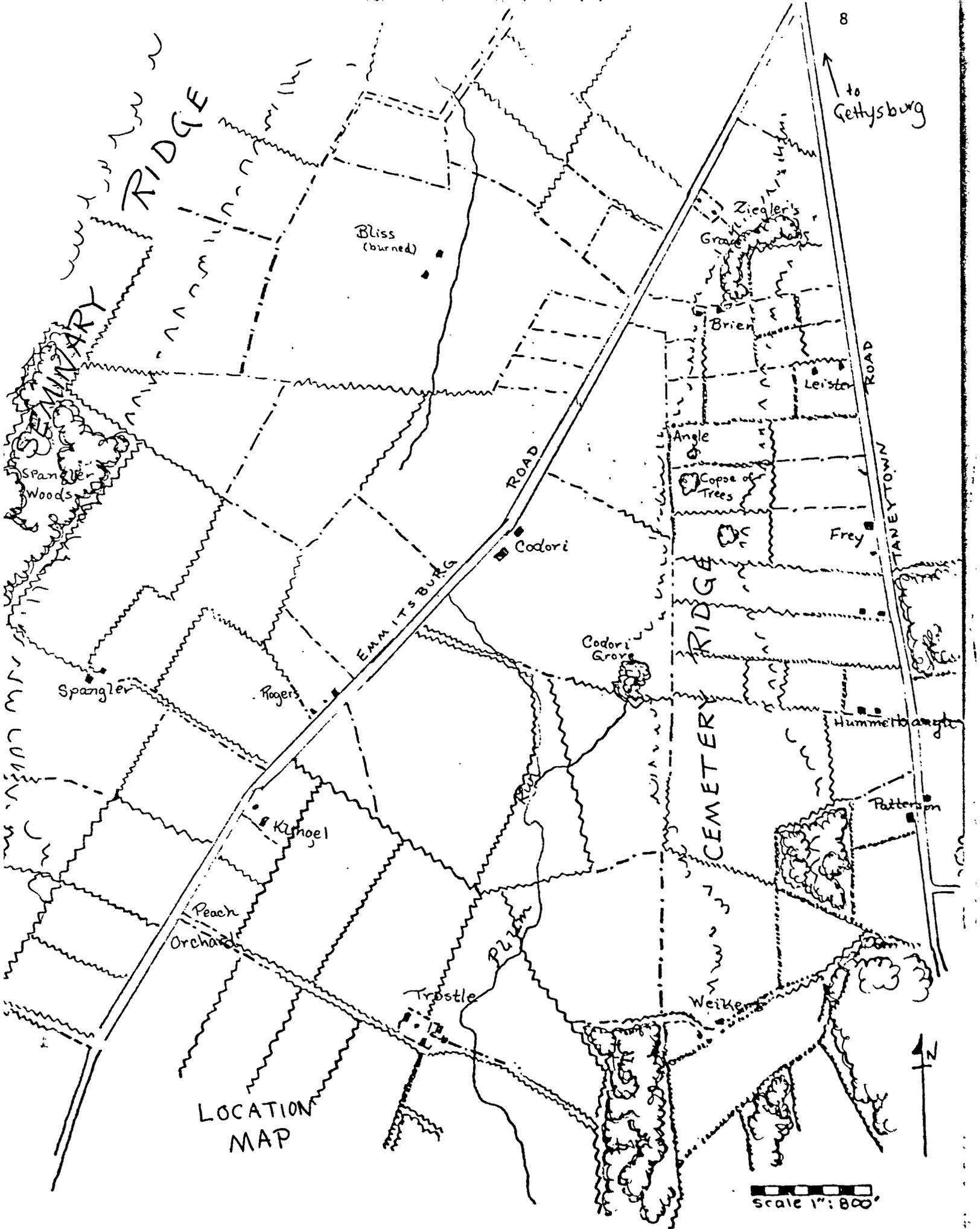
Artillery

BATTERY A, 4TH U.S.
Lt. Alonzo Cushing
Sgt. Frederick Fuger
BATTERY B, 1ST N.Y. L. A.
Capt. James McK. Rorty
Lieut. Robert E. Rogers
1ST N. Y. INDEPENDENT BATTERY
Capt. Andrew Cowan



FARM
 OWNERSHIP AT THE
 TIME OF THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

Scale 1" = 800'



8

to
Gettysburg

SPANGLER
WOODS
RIDGE

Bliss
(burned)

Ziegler's
Grave

Brien

Leister

TANEYTOWN
ROAD

Angle

Copse of
Trees

Frey

ROAD

Cody's

EMMITSBURG
ROAD

Cody's
Grave

CEMETERY
RIDGE

Hummelbaugh

Patterson

Spangler

Rogers

Kishoel

Peach
Orchard

Trostle

Weiker

LOCATION
MAP

Scale 1" = 800'

N

Most of the Union troops in position on the central part of Cemetery Ridge, soldiers of the First and Second Corps, were battle-hardened veterans of the disappointing campaigns under McClellan, Pope, Burnside, and Hooker. Many had been engaged in one of the two previous days of this battle. The First Corps infantry of Doubleday's Division had sorely missed the Vermont Brigade of George J. Stannard on July 1, when they suffered their heaviest casualties of the year trying to hold back the overpowering divisions of A. P. Hill's Confederate Third Corps. The Bucktail Brigade of Roy Stone and Chapman Biddle's Pennsylvania Brigade were part of those troops who held their defensive line longer than any other body of Yankee soldiers that day, but they paid the price in lives for every moment saved. Those who were fortunate enough to avoid serious wounding, capture, or death retreated through Gattysburg to the hill south of town known as Cemetery Hill.

Since these First Corps brigades were pretty much used up, they yielded their place in line at the north end of Cemetery Ridge to Hancock's Second Corps when that body of fresh troops arrived on the morning of July 2. Doubleday's Division was in reserve throughout the July 2d battle, while Gibbon's Division in their front had some rough handling at dusk when Wright's Georgia Brigade momentarily pierced their line. The defeat of Third Corps troops along the Emmitsburg Road, in the Peach Orchard, and the Wheatfield caused First Corps troops to leave reserve positions and head for the battle action. This evening action altered the composition of the Union lines along Cemetery Ridge due to the comings and goings of these rescue units.

Among those First Corps regiments that found themselves an extension of Gibbon's line on this morning of July 3 were two regiments of Biddle's

Brigade--the 20th New York State Militia and the 151st Pennsylvania Volunteers. At about five o'clock p.m., as the Union Third Corps line sagged and crumpled on the second day, the two regiments were moved at the double-quick to the support of these threatened regiments of Sickles' corps. From their original position at the base of Cemetery Hill, Biddle's Brigade moved down and across the Taneytown Road in the direction of Round Top. As the 20th New York and the 151st Pennsylvania marched parallel to the road, they became separated from the rest of the brigade when troops moving in a diagonal direction moved across their path. Their position in the brigade was not regained "amidst the confusion consequent", and the commanders of the two regiments (Colonel Theodore B. Gates, 20th New York State Militia and Captain Walter Owen, 151st Pennsylvania Volunteers) decided to move up to the front line by a right file, to the left of the Second Corps, and act as an independent command.³ At first confused as to what to do, the two regiments started to go back, but were commanded by some officer--probably Gibbon himself--to stop and take position in the front line. After retaking the position, a detail from this "demi-brigade" was sent out to assist in bringing in the wounded lying in their front, which occupied that part of the line until about midnight.⁴ The cannonading in their rear at 4:00 a.m. probably was not welcomed by these weary and isolated regiments of the demi-brigade.

³Samuel P. Bates, History of Pennsylvania Volunteers 1861-5, IV (Harrisburg, 1870), p. 680.

⁴Captain Walter Owen, August 6, 1886, letter to John B. Bachelder, Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society, microfilm reel 1.

Other First Corps troops joining this separated demi-brigade of Biddle's command near the center of the Union line included the Vermonters of Stannard's Brigade and the Pennsylvania Bucktails of Stone's Brigade--all from Double-day's Division. Second Corps troops in this central position belonged to the three brigades of Gibbon's Division--those of Brig. Gen. William Harrow, Brig. Gen. Alexander S. Webb, and Brig. Gen. Norman J. Hall. The Comte de Paris described this line succinctly:--Gibbon's Division covered four hundred and fifty yards southward from the Angle wall. This division, posted since the morning of the 2nd, had strengthened their positions where possible by throwing earth over the existing stone wall. In places this wall was surmounted by "a common post-and-rail fence".⁵ In the Angle itself was the brigade of Webb, although most of one regiment (106th Pennsylvania Volunteers) was on detached and skirmisher duty and one regiment (72nd Pennsylvania Volunteers) lay in reserve behind the crest of Cemetery Ridge.

There was enough room in the angle of this farm wall to accomodate the two remaining regiments of Webb's Brigade, but this proved impossible due to the presence of Lt. Alonzo Cushing's Battery A, 4th United States Artillery in this same angle and just in front of the crest of the ridge. Since the field of fire of Cushing's battery was right over this stone wall in front, Webb was compelled to leave an interval in his brigade line, and ordered most of his right wing--the 71st Pennsylvania Volunteers--out of the Angle to the stone wall to the right, near the crest of the ridge but behind his front line. This left merely one infantry regiment--the 69th Pennsylvania Volunteers--to hold the brigade line in this pronounced salient angle in the Union line.

⁵Comte de Paris, History of the Civil War in America, III (Philadelphia, 1883), p. 663.

The 69th Pennsylvania found itself behind a very weak breastwork of stones, unimproved by trenching or earthen bulwarks. A member of the regiment described this section of Gibbon's line by starting with the Angle in the farm boundary wall itself, stating that they faced the enemy with

. . . our right resting within about 15 or 20 paces of an angle of the wall that receded a short distance to the rear, left resting at an opening, or gateway through the wall,* to the rear of the left of the right, was a cluster, or rather several small clusters of trees, these . . . described. . . as being the cluster now famous as the objective point in Pickett's advance upon our lines, while in rear of the right centre, midway between our line of battle and the crest of the ridge was also a clump of trees with underbrush. . . .⁶

*See map of morning positions, p. 29.

South of Webb's Brigade in the Angle itself were the brigades of Hall and Harrow, behind defenses described by an enemy participant as "breastworks of rails covered with earth and with rifle pits and shallow trenches in their front".⁷ The regiment on Hall's right flank, which joined Webb's left (69th Pennsylvania) was the abbreviated 59th New York Volunteers, with only four consolidated companies present for duty. This battalion guarded the weakest part of Gibbon's line, in that it lay not only on the enemy's face of the ridge, but it was charged with covering the opening or gateway heretofore mentioned. With no substantial defense works in it front, it was constantly on the alert since July 2. Skirmishers from this part of the line used the gateway to go out to and come in from their forward positions,

⁶Anthony McDermott, June 2, 1886, letter to John B. Bachelder, Gettysburg Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society, microfilm reel 2.

⁷Captain S. A. Ashe, "The Pettigrew-Pickett Charge. Gettysburg, 3 July, 1863," in Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-65, ed. Walter Clark (Goldsboro, N. Ca., 1901), VI, 142.

as did advanced regiments. And the battle of Thursday, July 2, swirled around this critical point near the close of the day's action when Brown's Battery B, 1st Rhode Island was forced to abandon its position in front of the line (midway between the gateway and the Emmitsburg Road) under pressure from Wright's Brigade. The artillery pieces, in trying to jam through the narrow gateway more than one at a time, created a monumental and unnerving traffic tangle while shells and balls screamed around the straining horses and fleeing gunners. Indeed, a brief breach in the line had been secured by the Confederates just to the left of this gateway, when the neighboring regiment--the 7th Michigan Infantry--was outflanked on its own left. To strengthen this position the six Napoleons of Brown's Battery lay at the crest of the ridge to protect the front of the 59th New York and the 7th Michigan. The Napoleons, like howitzers, were better close-range pieces than rifled cannon, and Brown's Battery was there to resist any renewed Confederate attacks at the point already once pierced. The small scrub growth on the rise in the immediate front of the 7th Michigan was cleared to present a field of fire for these Napoleons, as well as for the infantry.

Although the 20th Massachusetts Infantry strengthened the 7th Michigan additionally on the left, the remainder of Hall's Brigade lay in reserve just behind the crest of the ridge as a support to Brown's guns and the rifled cannon of Rorty's Battery B, New York Light Artillery, and in a line with Webb's reserve 72nd Pennsylvania. These two reserve, or second-line, regiments of Hall's Brigade were the 42nd New York and the 19th Massachusetts:

The Nineteenth regiment lay to the left and a little to the rear of the grove* on the westerly side of the ridge,

*The copse of trees.

which was very low at that point. The Forty-second New York was in line with it, the Twentieth Massachusetts was directly in front in the first line, lying behind a slight breastwork made by throwing some earth up against a low stone fence, topped with rails. On the crest of the ridge, in front of the spot where the Nineteenth Massachusetts and the Forty-second New York regiments were in line was Rorty's battery.⁸

These two regiments had performed admirably on the previous day, advancing in the direction of Plum Run and the Emmitsburg Road to cover the retreat of Humphreys' Division of the U.S. 3rd Corps, but their forward position at that time had created the crisis on the left of the 59th New York and the 7th Michigan by leaving a void in the Union line which was almost exploited by Wright's Georgians.

Such an eventuality was prevented on this Friday morning of July 3 due to the presence of Harrow's Brigade. On the 2nd the brigade saw heavy but disjointed actions, as each regiment was deployed separately and not in brigade line. The 15th Massachusetts and the 82nd New York had been in line along the Emmitsburg Road just north of the Codori Farm buildings when they were overrun by Wright's Brigade. The 1st Minnesota had been most fearfully cut up during its suicidal counterattack through Codori Thicket in the late afternoon of July 2, while the 19th Maine served as a last line and rallying point for the shattered remains of Humphreys' Division. This brigade, due to its exposed positions and pugnacious fighting on the previous day, was just a shadow of its former self.

It was probably because of the decimation of Harrow's regiments that the demi-brigade of the 20th New York State Militia and the 151st Pennsylvania were put in the front line, in order to cover and fill up the former brigade

⁸Ernest Linden Waite, History of the Nineteenth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry 1861-1865 (Salem, 1906), p. 234.

line once occupied by Harrow's infantry before their losses of July 2. The 20th New York was on the right, joining the left of Harrow, and the 151st Pennsylvania continued the line southward. All of these Union troops (with the exception of the gate-guarding 59th New York) lay along the breastworks converted from the stone with rail and the rail farm fencing.

The remainder of Biddle's Brigade and Stone's Bucktail Brigade formed the second line, to the rear and left rear of Gibbon's left flank. The 121st Pennsylvania, Biddle's Brigade, was posted

in rear of the batteries* and about 100 yards from the front line of battle, on what is now known as the Himmelbach Farm;** although at the time it was impossible to distinguish one farm from another, as all the fences were down and the rails taken for breastworks or fuel. A ravine*** extending in an oblique direction from our left and rear, and passing about 100 yards to the right of the regiment, terminating at about the position of Cushing's battery, was used by the artillery in moving to and from the front, and in this ravine a number of artillery horses were killed and wounded.⁹

*Rorty and Brown.

**Jacob Hummelbaugh Farm.

***Same "ravine" still there and described by A. R. Wright in his report of the attack on July 2, 1863.

In front of the 121st Pennsylvania Stone's Brigade was deployed in battle line, just behind the crest of the ridge, and a little behind or east of a line with the reserve regiments in Gibbon's Division (72nd Pennsylvania, 42nd New York, and 19th Massachusetts). These regiments likewise suffered some discomfort on the morning of July 3 from the Confederate artillery. At first light the enemy opened on the position of the 150th Pennsylvania with two pieces, while the other brigades received their fair portion of iron. This shelling continued to 8:00 a.m., when the brigade moved up to

⁹Survivors' Association, History of the 121st Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, rev. ed. (Philadelphia, 1906), p. 59.

the ridge line and occupied that space vacated by Stannard's Vermont Brigade, also of their division,¹⁰ putting them just to the rear of the main line of battle. This close support line was strengthened by elements of the 2nd United States Sharpshooters (U.S.S.S.), which were "scattered along the line".¹¹ Only a company of these sharpshooters appears to have been on this part of the line,¹² the remainder supporting Stannard's Brigade and the Michigan Battery of Captain Jabez Daniels farther to the left.¹³

The battle-tried 1st Minnesota, one of the regiments in Harrow's Brigade, was much impressed with the appearance of this brigade of Vermonters under Brig. Gen. George J. Stannard:

Soon after sunrise we were moved to our place in our brigade in the front line, passing Stannard's new brigade of Vermont troops as it was taking position to the left of our division under a sharp artillery fire from the enemy, which was turned on us also. The Vermont Brigade consisted of full regiments in new uniforms, and was therefore noticeable in contrast with the thinned regiments, in dusty garments, of the Second Corps.¹⁴

Stannard's Brigade of new nine-month volunteers was in its first battle, but missed the First Day of the Battle of Gettysburg. As part of Doubleday's

¹⁰ Sergt. William R. Ramsey (Co. F, 150th Pa. Vols.), April 16, 1883, letter to John B. Bachelder, Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society.

¹¹ John W. Nesbit, General History of Company D, 149th Pennsylvania Volunteers and Personal Sketches of the Members (Oakdale, Pa., 1908), p. 18.

¹² Company D, from Maine. Charles Hamlin, et al., ed., Maine at Gettysburg--Report of Maine Commissioners prepared by the Executive Committee (Portland, 1898), pp. 351-352.

¹³ Homer Stoughton, December 29, 1831, letter to John B. Bachelder, Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society, microfilm reel 4.

¹⁴ C. C. Andrews, ed., Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars 1861-1865, 2nd ed. (St. Paul, 1891), p. 36.

Division it should have shared the fighting with Biddle's and Stone's Brigades, but had been left behind in Emmitsburg with Sickles' 3rd Corps. The Vermont Brigade did not reach Gettysburg until the close of the battle on July 1, and was stationed behind Buford's Cavalry near the copse of trees in the evening. On the morning of July 2 it was moved and massed south of Cemetery Hill (probably supporting the artillery in Hunt's long line covering Culp's Hill). At sunset, the collapse of Sickles' advanced line initiated Union counter-movements all along the ridge and Stannard's Brigade was one of the many units to be called to the rescue. After rushing southward on the Taneytown Road for a short distance, the brigade faced

to the right, advanced to meet Wright's Georgia Brigade, which had captured Turnbull's and Weir's batteries and had broken the Union line. Stannard restored the line and five companies of his right regiment, the Thirteenth, under Colonel [Francis V.] Randall, charged and recaptured the lost guns. Then the brigade moved a little farther to the left and took position for the night. . . .¹⁵

On July 3, this brigade, with only three regiments in line,¹⁶ still outnumbered any other of Webb's, Harrow's or Hall's Brigades.¹⁷ The position first occupied by Stannard's regiments on the evening of July 2 to the morning of July 3 was a prolongation of Gibbon's line along the fence separating the

¹⁵Ralph Orson Sturtevant, Pictorial History Thirteenth Regiment Vermont Volunteers War of 1861-65 (n.p., 1910), p. 764.

¹⁶The 12th and 15th Vermont Volunteers of the brigade were detailed to guard supply trains.

¹⁷After the 12th and 15th Regiments were detached, the remaining three regiments numbered "1800 men or a little over". Brig. Gen. George J. Stannard, "Diary Extracts", in Bachelor Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society, microfilm reel 1, p. 268.

Codori farm from the fields of the Patterson, Hummelbaugh, Brien, and Fisher farms. The brigade line was originally established along that line denoted by the present Vermont and regimental monuments east of Hancock Avenue. Behind Stannard, "on a low ridge", were or would be the Union batteries of Smith (4th New York) and Cowan (1st New York). The field in his front had been part of the battlefield of the day before, and was littered with dead. (The wounded had been brought in the night of July 2-3 by details of the 150th and 149th Pennsylvania Volunteers.) Stannard, "always regardful of the health and comfort of his troops" had those dead in the vicinity buried by details from his own brigade.¹⁸ In addition, he ordered the 16th Vermont Regiment to picket duty, and the colonel of that regiment--Colonel Wheelock Veazey--was assigned general officer of the day commencing shortly after dark on July 2.

Veazey detailed additional troops from another brigade on Stannard's right (Gates' demi-brigade?) to supplement this picket line. With these infantrymen Veazey covered the front of the 1st Corps and a portion of the 2nd Corps, his line extending from just north/right of the Codori farmhouse on the Emmitsburg Road, along the road a piece, and then in a southeasterly direction

along the bottom of the ravine or slope out towards Round Top and connecting on the left with the line of the 5th Corps. . . . At quarter before four on this morning of the 3d the enemy sent down a line of skirmishers against my picket line and skirmishing continued more or less all forenoon. My line was reinforced by a dozen sharpshooters.¹⁹ The enemy also opened with artillery at four o'clock in the morning with considerable effect, and blew up a caisson in my rear, belonging to a battery

¹⁸Sturtevant, p. 764.

¹⁹These dozen sharpshooters were probably the squad from Company D (Maine), 2nd U.S.S.S which volunteered to go out and try to "silence one of the enemy's guns, which was accomplished". Hamlin, p. 352.

supported by the 14th Regt. The 14th then moved forward in line of battle to within about six rods of my reserves. The 13th took position about the same distance to the right and rear of the 14th.²⁰

Stannard recorded in his diary that he ordered the 14th Vermont farther to the front because of this early morning artillery: "There were some artillery firing on the left and centre in forenoon, at the time the 14th regiment which lay next the battery met with some casualties though small, and they were placed farther to the front to protect them."²¹ The historian of the 14th Vermont (and for all Vermont troops at Gettysburg) recorded that the regiment originally was close to a battery in its rear, and remembered the explosion of the caisson which injured some men of the 14th. The 14th was then "moved to the front perhaps ten rods, to lower ground, where some trees and bushes afforded a better cover."²² He reinforces the notion that the regiment was moved forward from the main line, not by some tactical insight, but because the brigade commander had an overriding concern for the safety and comfort of his troops. Stannard supposedly also noticed that the ground "about fifteen rods in front" of the 13th Vermont (his right regiment) dropped a few feet in elevation toward the shallow valley in the Codori field.²³ However, although he received credit for the ensuing strengthening of the position, it appears that a lowly lieutenant first recognized the worth of the advance position.

While waiting and soon after the noise of battle ceased on our extreme right, Lieutenant Albert Clark in command of Company G saw that a nearby rail fence might be readily converted into a low breastwork and placed considerably in advance of the stone wall that then protected

²⁰Col. Wheelock G. Veazey, no date, letter to John B. Bachelder, Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society, Microfilm reel 1, p. 66.

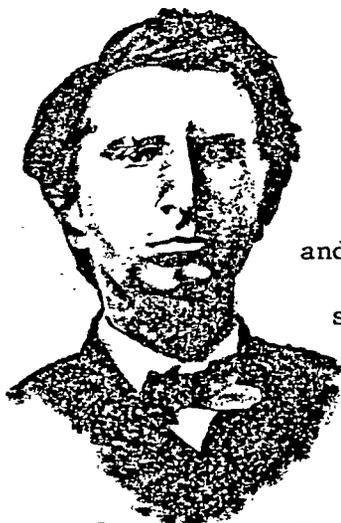
²¹Stannard, "Diary extracts" . . . pp. 268-9-

²²G. G. Benedict, March 16, 1864, letter to John B. Bachelder, Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society, Microfilm reel 3.

²³Sturtevant, p. 764.

us, and be of great advantage in repelling any charge against us and called Colonel Randall's attention to it, and obtaining his consent called for volunteers to go out and do the work of building a breastwork with the fence rails.

Sergeant George H. Scott was first to volunteer and then others followed until some twenty or more of our regiment largely of Company G as I recall, led by Sergeant Scott charged the rail fence, carried the rails about one hundred yards in advance and further down the slope and laid up a temporary bulwark of rails perhaps two feet high parallel to the battle line then occupied by the 13th regiment. Sergeant Scott and his assistants were cast in a like mold and of similar clay . . . as Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys, or they would not have so promptly sallied out into the open field midst the leaden rain of rifle bullets that hissed through the air from house and treetops across the valley among them.²⁴



Sergt George H. Scott
Co. G, 13th Vt.



Lieut. Albert Clark
Co. G, 15th Vt.

This breastwork of rails appeared on E. B. Cope's "horseback" survey map of the battlefield in October 1863, and reappeared in the more accomplished survey map undertaken by a team commanded by

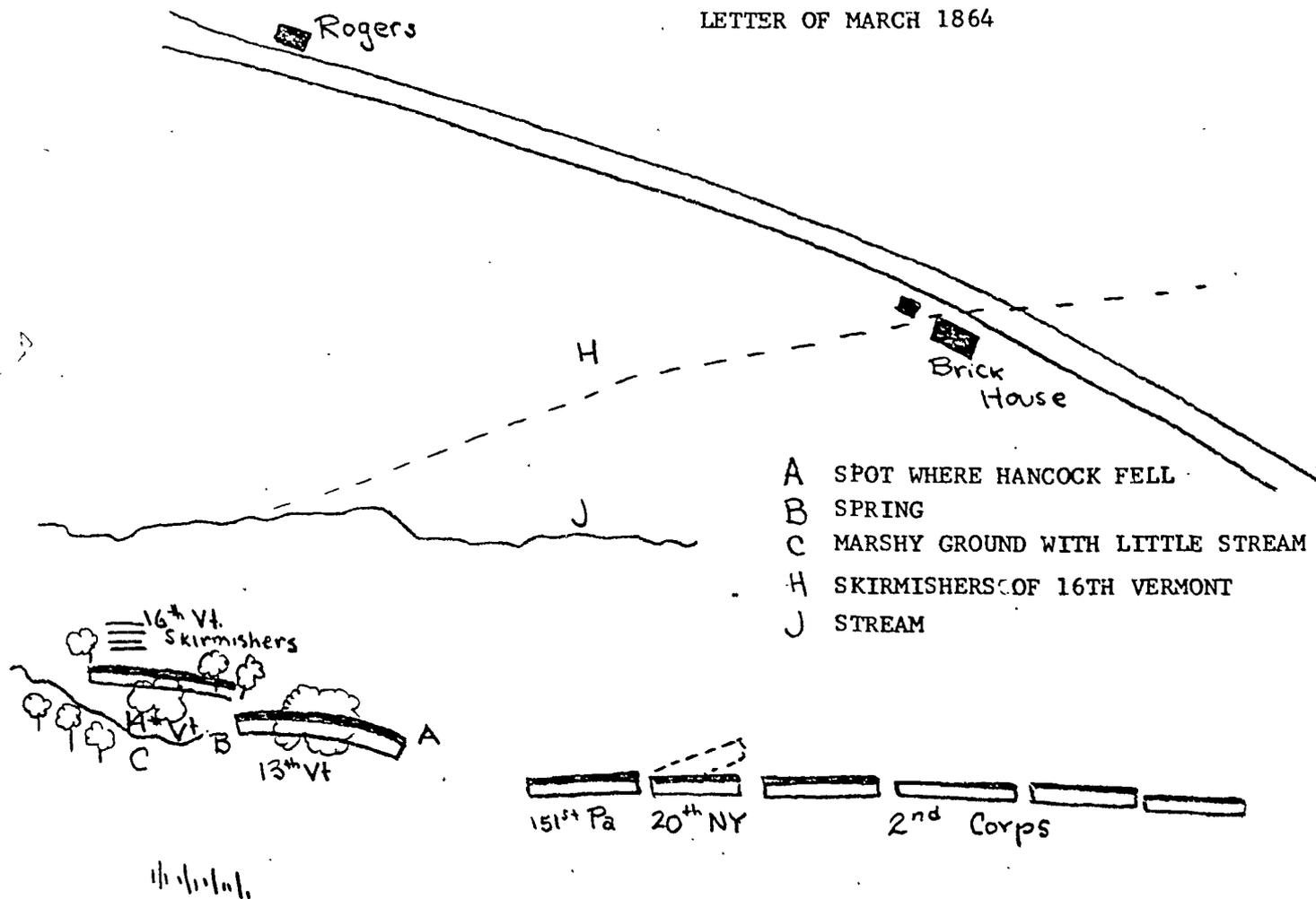
G. K. Warren in 1868-69. This line of works was located by the Warren map as extending northward from the Virginia worm fence running east and west on a continuation of the line of present Pleasonton

Avenue. The position was described by various participants and observers of that day's events, and all agree that the breastworks were on the small rise of ground where Hancock Avenue now meets Pleasonton Avenue. Vermonter G. G. Benedict described it less than a year later:

²⁴Ibid., p. 289.

FROM MAP DRAWN BY G. G. BENEDICT AND ACCOMPANYING

LETTER OF MARCH 1864



The line of the 2d Corps was to the right and wholly to the rear of our brigade.* On this point we are all certain.

The 151st Pennsylvania and 20th New York we believe to have been in the front line, to our right and rear, in a prolongation of the line of the 2d Corps. Lt. Col. [William D.] Munson of the 13th in whose judgment and recollection I have great confidence, thinks their line bent out on our right (as I have indicated by dotted lines, on the diagram) as you go up the hill. I cannot recollect positively as to that; but am confident.

*after the 14th and 13th Vermont advanced to their new positions.

that the left of no regiment near us on our right, extended out beyond the right of the regiment next it to the south. . . .

I think, supposing the 151st Pennsylvania to have been the nearest us, that its left was about five or six rods to the rear and as many to the right of the 13th's right. It may not have been quite as much to the rear as that.

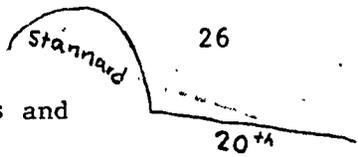
[The right of the 14th Vermont] was right in front of a spring,** and a little Stream ran through the grass in its rear. The 13th lay through a small knoll, covered with small trees, its line extending each side of it. . . .

The 16th Vermont was half of it on the skirmish line, its skirmishers extending from about where I have put the letter A down to connect with those of the 5th Corps. The other half of the regiment lay by division just in front of the left of the 14th as reserve for the skirmishers. . . .

There were two lines of battle in the rear of our brigade Friday [July 3]. Our regiments were pretty full ones, having about 700 men apiece, on the field. . . .

I think in my diagram I have not got the left of the 14th out far enough. It was quite a distance in front of anything behind it.²⁵

**Codori Spring

From the position of the 20th Massachusetts, the breastworks looked curvilinear in appearance and was sketched by a member of that regiment as appearing "about like" the lines here:  Although few identified the 13th Vermont breastworks and consequent position as on the small knoll, the grove of trees thereon were a landmark on this part of the ridge line. The Comte de Paris described the line as a "salient angle formed by the wood,"²⁷ and another historian noted that the

²⁵Benedict to Bachelder, March 16, 1864.

²⁶Colonel G. W. Macy, May 10 or 18, 1866, letter to John B. Bachelder, Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society, microfilm reel 3.

²⁷Comte de Paris, p. 663.

position "concealed Stannard's Vermont brigade in these woods."²⁸ Because this "little grove" was "several rods in advance of the whole line"²⁹ Stannard would be effectually isolated (especially on his left) from the remainder of the army if he was attacked on that flank, which was "in the air".

Major General Winfield S. Hancock, commander of the U.S. 2d Corps, but in overall command of the forces along Cemetery Ridge, apparently had no objection to the forward positions already taken by the 14th Vermont or contemplated by the 13th Vermont. Since the wooded knoll was obviously a better position to command the ground westward to the Emmitsburg Road, and had been strengthened by the fence rail breastwork, the general may have even welcomed the move. But it is odd that he allowed, and made no later comment upon, the move by the 14th Vermont into the low, marshy ground between Codori Spring and the head of Plum Run. The 14th Vermont was over 100 yards in advance of any other Federal forces and in any area, neither easily fortified or defended. When the regiment advanced to this swampy place in the early morning hours of July 3, it was not accompanied by the 13th Vermont or any other 1st or 2d Corps regiments, but was on its own and divorced from Hancock's line. As large as Stannard's regiments were, it would have been hard for Hancock to miss the 14th Vermont. Perhaps the trees along the stream or "rivulet" effectively screened the regiment from the Confederate artillery along the Emmitsburg Road ridge; and, perhaps McGilvery's



²⁸Francis Marshal [Pierce], The Battle of Gettysburg: The Crest-Wave of the American Civil War (New York, 1914), p. 211.

²⁹Samuel P. Bates, The Battle of Gettysburg (Philadelphia, 1875), p. 157.

own artillery line behind the 14th Vermont offered sufficient support and protection to allay Hancock's worries. In any event, the advance by Stannard's left apparently was not challenged on record.

Hancock, indeed, was quite familiar with the ground occupied by Stannard in the morning and later in the afternoon. On a visit to the field in 1885 he went over the same positions but had a hard time reconciling his memories with the current lay of the land. In a letter to John B. Bachelder, "government historian" of the battle, map maker, and influential mover of the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association, Hancock put in writing these contradictions:

I am quite anxious to procure a pencil sketch of the ground following the rivulet, through the field of recent construction at Gettysburg, along which I passed with you, a few days ago, substantially re-establishing the conditions of timber, etc., as they existed when I rode over the same path returning from Willard's Brigade,* say from the entrance of the rivulet into the cultivated tract to the head of the existing timber;** to the rear and right rear of the Vermont position on the third day. On the occasion of our visit, we easily stepped over this rivulet by means of a small boulder which had been placed there for convenience in crossing, and although not far from its source, it was already a gently running current. . . . The rivulet proceeds from springs or springy soil in the vicinity of the avenue, and to the right or right front of the Vermont position.*** The swale which is naturally formed about its head, passes by the rear and right of the Vermont position,**** with fringe of timber and some isolated trees, either way.

Some of these trees have evidently been cut down, however, since the date of the battle and since my former visit there nineteen years ago,

*On the evening of July 2, to the east of the Plum Run swale.

**Codori "thicket".

***In brigade line in the morning.

****Advanced position of 14th Vermont. See Benedict map, p. 21.

notably one which Stannard and others pointed out as near the place where Gibbon was shot, some time before I was struck. The 'avenue' has evidently cut off some of the fringe of timber and undergrowth in that direction* and the railroad cutting has done the same on the opposite side. If you examine the boulders in the center of the field there, on the other side of the railroad, you will see that there are signs of undergrowth, only recently cut down. As you know, trees always grow about such boulders when permitted. My impression is that the ground has been denuded of considerable timber and undergrowth since the day of the battle. . . . On the day of the battle, however, there was no rivulet in the cultivated field such as I now mention, and which, being ditched in, is evidently a part of the general plan of cultivation since the battle. I recollect that there was a grassy, green, swale from Willard's position of the 2d to the Vermont position of the 3d and that the soil was moist, but there was no rivulet like that which exists in the cultivated field of today.

. . . . The recent construction of the railroad and the 'avenue', on the right and left of the Vermont position, before referred to, have materially changed the topography in this respect. . . .

If the fringe of timber were re-established along the rivulet** and the wood at the Vermont position*** were extended to the right and left, those conditions and the existence of moisture on its right, would sufficiently establish [the historic nature of the grounds].³⁰

* northward.

** As shown in Benedict's sketch map, p. 21.

*** On the knoll.

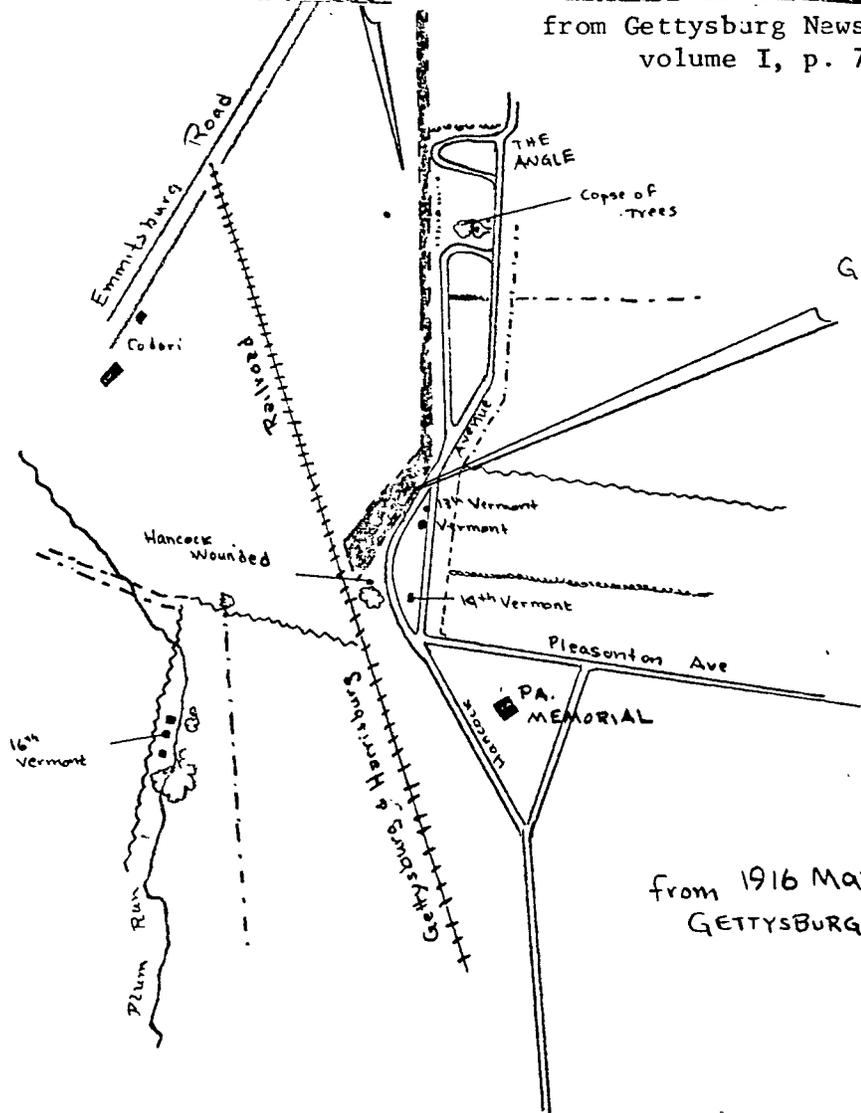
It would appear from Hancock's description of the ground, complementing accounts of the 14th and 13th Vermont regiments, and early maps that the railroad and avenue construction not only destroyed the historic vegetation on the knoll and along the "rivulet", but changed the nature of the rivulet itself. Early maps and sketches of the battlefield establish that the source of this rivulet was adjacent to the east-west fence line at the end of the Vermont breastworks. However, the current (and early 20th-century) source of

³⁰W. S. Hancock, December 17, 1885, letter to John B. Bachelder, Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society.

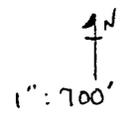


The trolley cut through the ground over which Pleasants' Division charged as seen in the Bloody Angle. In the middle ground appears the historic stone wall, built by Webb's Philadelphia Brigade. The ditch at this point is dug through some of the most heavily contested ground in the entire field. It will now have to be filled in and reseeded by the terms of the trolley cut.

from Gettysburg Newspaper Clippings,
volume I, p. 7



from 1916 Map of
GETTYSBURG NATIONAL PARK COMMISSION



this rivulet or marshy ground is the granite-enclosed Codori Spring, some distance south of the fence line. The railroad excavation, avenue construction, and drainage ditching appears to have eliminated the historic source of the spring and perhaps diverted it to its present sluggish source in front of the Pennsylvania Memorial. Due to its relative inactivity, accompanied by the years of intensive cultivation of corn and wheat in that field during the War Department administration, the historic swale and the trees lining it have long disappeared.

Another officer interested in this part of the Union line was not as lofty as a general, but was destined to play as important a role in the day's events as that general officer in command of the forces in the Angle--A. S. Webb. That officer was Captain Andrew Cowan, commanding the 1st New York Independent Battery of the Sixth Corps. While other Sixth Corps batteries remained in reserve throughout the active part of the battle, Cowan's 1st New York Battery sought the battle front after it was no longer needed to guard the Baltimore Pike. Cowan ordered the battery limbered and headed westward along the Granite Schoolhouse Lane, adjacent to the Union artillery park.

Arriving at the junction with the Taneytown road, I halted the column and rode forward to the headquarters flag of the First Corps, which I recognized at the easterly edge of a grove of trees, a short distance west of the road.* I found that General Newton was out on the line, but General Doubleday greeted me, saying that he was acting in the absence of General Newton. He began by telling me that he could not use my battery at the moment.³¹

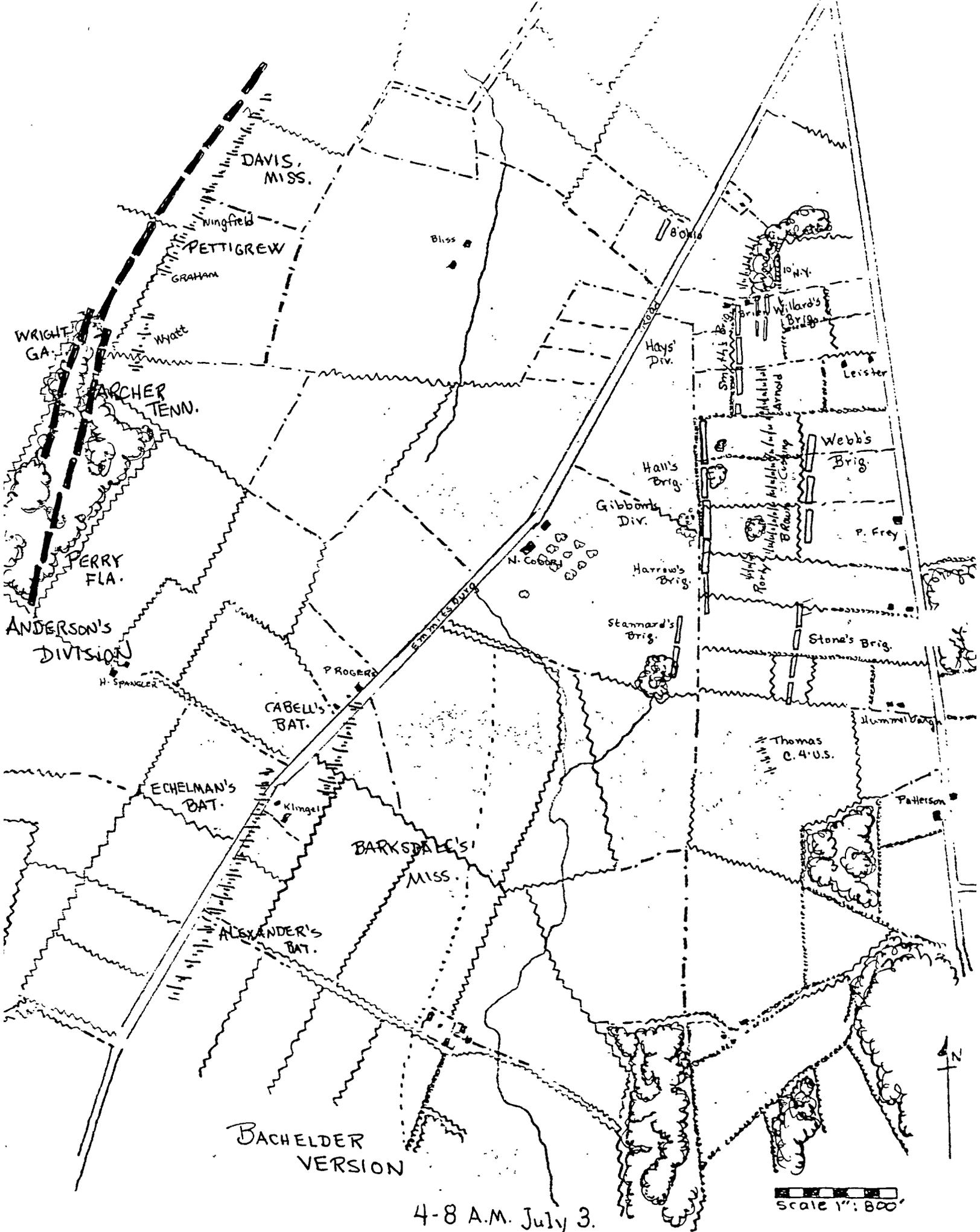
*Description matches position of William Patterson woods, although it is unclear why 1st Corps headquarters would be this far removed from 1st Corps troops (unless Newton, former 6th Corps division commander, wanted to keep an eye on the doings of both the 6th & 1st Corps).

³¹Andrew Cowan, "When Cowan's Battery Withstood Pickett's Splendid Charge," New York Herald (July 2, 1911), typed transcript GNMP files.

Doubleday then took Cowan through the grove to its west side, where he could see the Union line entrenched to his right and left. Beyond this line, and near the Emmitsburg Road, Cowan could see "a battery of brass guns on which the sun was glistening." Doubleday pointed out that if Cowan deployed his guns at that time, it would draw the fire of all the Confederate guns along the road ridge³² and injure the men. "without doing any good." Instead, Cowan was directed to put his battery in park and feed his men breakfast, but to let Doubleday know where the battery was parked so he could send for it if needed. Before leaving, Cowan rode a short distance along the line to look over the ground, estimate ranges of the Confederate cannon out by the road, and otherwise familiarize himself with the ridgeline in the event he would be called in an emergency situation. Upon returning to the battery, still halted in the lane, Cowan directed it into park between the Patterson farmhouse and Granite Schoolhouse Lane.³³

³²Already in position to execute their duties of the afternoon.

³³Ibid.



BACHOLDER
VERSION

4-8 A.M. July 3.

Scale 1" = 800'

Chapter 2: The Morning--Confederate

"So I remember you, ripe country of broad-backed horses,
Valley of cold, sweet springs and dairies with limestone floors;
And so they found you that year, when they scared your cows with their cannon,
And the strange South moved against you, lean marchers lost in the corn." ³⁴

Across the valley from Cemetery Ridge, the Army of Northern Virginia-- those invincible "lean marchers" who gave General Lee his victories--were meeting the first serious test of their second invasion of the North. July 1 had been a series of bungling errors, but produced a heady victory. Thursday's battle had produced more errors, more intense and widespread fighting, and less of a victory. This Friday, July 3, could ensure a Southern victory but only with harder fighting and fewer errors.

When Meade's generals adopted the advice of General H. W. Slocum to "stay and fight it out," Lee had already formulated his plans for July 3--to exploit the successes of July 2 while simultaneously developing a new front. Initially it appears that Lee's strategy was to have the divisions of Hood and McLaws renew the pressure on their front; that is, to at least "demonstrate" against the Union left at the Round Tops by advancing from their positions near Houck's Ridge, the Wheatfield, and Devil's Kitchen. His Second Corps commander General R. S. Ewell would concurrently continue to supplement his occupation of the lower part of Culp's Hill, and force the withdrawal of the remainder of Union troops from the trenches. Meanwhile, Lee planned to direct a strong frontal assault against Meade's center, spearheaded by the unused, all-Virginian division of George E. Pickett.

³⁴Benét, pp. 273-274.

However, the misunderstandings and uncoordination of the past two days should have been a warning to Lee as to the folly of the "best-laid plans". It appears that the blame for the inadequacies of the first two days falls heavily on Lee's subordinate corps and division commanders. Lack of communication and coordination were apparent causes of the Confederate errors, but a



Lt. Gen' James Longstreet

curious reason slips in persistently in later reports and letters about Gettysburg--the surprisingly selfish motive that each brigade held that it had done enough for the cause in the past two days (and even the past two battles) and that now it was somebody else's turn to bear the burden of glory and death.

This was epitomized at Gettysburg in the much-maligned conduct of Longstreet (notwithstanding his opposition to Lee's tactics at Gettysburg), who invariably gets blamed for dragging his feet on July 2 and 3. By July 3, Longstreet believed his own corps had punished and been punished enough for that battle, and that that Friday's "glory" should belong to those who had a day's rest. The kind of self-sacrifice (or selfless sacrifice) apparent in the last stands of Bigelow's Massachusetts Battery and the 1st Minnesota Infantry were not evident in the conduct of any Confederate troops on July 1 and 2, 1863. Perhaps this is because the Army of the Potomac was fighting a defensive and very desperate home-soil battle, but it is hard to recall any particular examples of a Confederate unit going into a combat situation knowing that success or failure hinged on their individual sacrifice.

Pointing to losses in Burgwyn's 26th North Carolina are not particularly relevant, in that the regiment's participation was part of a brigade effort and their losses were spread over three days of fighting--July 1, 3, and 14. The pathetic charge of Avery's North Carolinians and Hays' Louisianans at nightfall of July 2 was not so much selfless bravery as it was gross hopelessness, caused after their advance began by the selfishness for safety of other brigade commanders and by the disgustingly abundant powers of discretion accorded to field commanders by senior officers.

In the case of Bigelow and Colvill's Minnesota regiment a directing superior officer took charge during a critical situation and allowed these brave men to make the kind of contribution that has lasted throughout the history of the battle as signal examples of courage and effectiveness. Yet where was the McGilvery and the Hancock on the Confederate side during the Battle of Gettysburg? None stand out. No Confederate corps commander took any chances or went beyond the letter of an order, while those division commanders who were not wounded out of action during the battle are a tribute to their own mediocrity in that they never achieved high command or the kind of respect that their superiors reserved for the likes of Pender, Pettigrew or Hood. Furthermore, the lower echelon of field commanders were taught early that politics and social rank counted more than ability on the field or initiative for promotion. One Confederate field officer believed that the Army of Northern Virginia, immortalized by poets and lionized by the over-confidence of Lee, was not only less than invincible at Gettysburg but was measurably demoralized by this officer system:

"I think we were weighted by first, a demoralized army, and for this I hold General Lee largely responsible. He had an apparent antipathy to anything partaking of pomposity and the vanity of war, but he had an utterly undue regard for the value of the elementary teaching of West Point and for the experience gained by the very small police duty of our miniature regular army. He failed to realize that while a military school is excellent for the training of drill

masters, who are most necessary, it teaches little of military science in comparison with the hard experience of a single campaign. When an army is confined for military leaders to a handful of lieutenants, who have never seen more than a regiment, probably not more than company, in action, and have never had to deal with a harder problem in the maintenance of their men than how to get a wagon train from the nearest railroad station, it is apt to be hurt by the restriction. And it was often difficult to get past the incompetents, who went in as drill masters and were then pushed up by the ability of their men, who were of a class few armies have ever seen, to become commanders of large operations.

Such a leader as Napoleon could and did see the greatest cavalry leader of the age in the stable boy, Murat, and found such great lieutenants as Ney, Junot, Lannes, Bessieres, Massena, and a host of others among those whose only learning came to them in the experience of the campaign and the lessons of numerous battles. But General Lee never went outside, and was apparently resolute against doing so, the regular grades to find officers, who might have been very Samsons to help him multiply his scant resources. He never discovered or encouraged a Forrest, and many a man went to his death, trying to win against the incompetency of leaders who should have been brushed out of the way when they failed.

When the fall of the year came, and General Lee sent his list to fill vacancies, they came out in alphabetical order. The dodger, who lived while another died, trying to do his own and another's duty, got rank, and the hero got an unmarked grave. . . .³⁵

Yet, for Lee there was no immediate solution to a problem he himself did not honestly recognize, and he played his hand of "jacks" against an opponent who had been dealt veritable "kings". It must have disappointed him to find the strength of this hand diminished when Longstreet reported he would not allow McLaws or Hood to attack on July 3 because of their "used up" condition, pointing instead to the "rested" forces of A. P. Hill's Third Corps to bear the burden of the third day's frontal attack. The sound of Meade's cannon and musketry aimed at Ewell's left as early as 4:00 A. M. was disconcerting also.

³⁵Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, The Haskell Memoirs, John Cheves Haskell (New York, 1960), pp. 55-56.

As it increased in volume and continued into the morning hours (seven hours in all) Lee must have realized that the demonstrations on Meade's left and right were no longer viable. After the Hood-McLaws action was scratched, the idea of the final all-out assault on Meade's center as Lee planned it was already lost. No matter when the frontal attack began, during or after Ewell's Culp's Hill engagement, Meade would still be free to reinforce his line from his now-strengthened left. The threat of an attack all along the line would have kept Union troops and artillery on the flanks, and deprived them from other parts of the field--particularly the vulnerably thin center. But Longstreet was so good to his word that Hood and McLaws would definitely not participate in the day's activities that Yankee forces on the left were never threatened by anything stronger than sporadic sharpshooting.

Lee's orders for the attack have not come down to us except in different versions through his protective staff, his admirers, and his chief critic. We do not really know who was to support whom, what artillery, if any, was to accompany this column making the frontal assault, or even what the object or focal point of the attack was to have been.³⁶ We do not read about the immediate reactions of the generals or the men in the ranks to the order, except for the very vocal post-war lamentations of Longstreet and Pickett. In the case of the men in the ranks, they apparently heard no careful explanation or reasons behind the attack or of the alternatives expressed by Longstreet. That is why the truly honest accounts by line officers and infantrymen do not mention any kind of order other than to follow the colors.

³⁶See Appendix B for a discussion of the objective of the advancing column.

The most trustworthy accounts are not those sermons about tactics or complicated movements written by generals, or those histories of the entire battle written by a sergeant on the front line. The detailed, minute descriptions of an attack column would not have been eyewitnessed unless the observer was in a vantage point and not a participant. A participant is seldom an all-seeing observer. Those reliant descriptions could be prefaced like the Virginia soldier did who wrote

Comparatively a short portion of our line--perhaps as far as the front of my brigade on the right and 200 or 300 yards to my left, was under my eyes at one time. I shall, therefore, limit what I write to what I heard and saw at the time.³⁷

Other participants, observers, or students, blessed with the perspective of hindsight, analyze with that additional insight and edit their recollections accordingly. Yet it is often impossible to rely solely on the objective and naive recollection of a participant without considering those whose viewpoint is enhanced by this very passage of time, in that they are afforded the opportunity to compare and question, collate and organize. In that view, it is relevant to sample the post-war reactions of Lee's own soldiers concerning the planned attack of July 3, 1863.

Some of these veterans give us their own interpretation of Lee's purpose that July 3, whether due to confidential information from the commanding general himself or because of their own insight is not revealed. Armistead Long, who served on the staff of General Lee, seems to recount the above battle plan of

³⁷G. W. Finley, "Bloody Angle," Buffalo Evening News (May 29, 1894) in Gettysburg Newspaper Clippings, vol. 4, p. 42.

striking the weak center of the Union army while simultaneous demonstrations against the flanks preoccupied troops in those quarters:

By extending his left wing west of the Emmitsburg road General Meade weakened his position by presenting a weak centre, which being penetrated, his wings would be isolated and paralyzed so far as regarded supporting each other. . . . [H]ad Pickett's Division been promptly supported when it burst through Meade's centre a more positive proof would have been given, for his right wing would have been overwhelmed before the left could have disengaged itself from the woods and mountains and come to its relief.³⁸

Another participant offered a variation on this theme:

Gen. Lee's plans for the third day's operations were based on the supposition that the enemy, in anticipation of the old Jacksonian flank movement, would gather the bulk of his troops upon one or both wings, leaving the centre as his weakest point.³⁹

³⁸Armistead Long, "Lee in Pennsylvania," The Philadelphia Weekly Times (November 1, 1884) in Gettysburg Newspaper Clippings #6, Relating to the Battle, p. 38.

This interpretation of the proposed assault indicates that the right and left wings of Meade's army were as important to the frontal assault as the Union center. That they be kept occupied to keep them from supporting the center seems as much a part of Long's interpretation as it was in Lee's original plan. Perhaps the oft-quoted lament of Lee that Pickett's Division could have won the day "if they had been supported as they were to have been", has been misinterpreted altogether. Wilcox's movement on the right and Pettigrew's concurrent attack on Pickett's left have always carried the unjust burden of being this slipshod support, this cause of the Confederate demise. But, if we examine the logic of Lee's original plan and the commentary by Armistead Long, it should call for a reappraisal of the causes of failure as explained to us these many years. Lee and Long both rightfully called for a total commitment all along the line, to keep Meade from extricating troops from threatened areas. However, we saw that Ewell became committed much too early and was unable to break off the action on the Union right until he lost all he had gained in that area. Longstreet never even attempted to hold the attention of the Union left. In fact, it was somnolent along Longstreet's right that Federal cavalry thought it had a chance to outflank and override the offensive line of their enemy in that sector. It is quite obvious that Lee received no support from his left or right wings at a time when it was critically needed.

Moreover, in light of the fact that both Pettigrew's men and Wilcox's troops later protested that they were not "support" troops but part of the assault column, it should provoke us to reconsider upon whose shoulders the improper-support blame should rest--the dead, wounded, and prisoners of Pettigrew's and Wilcox's commands, or Longstreet and Ewell. The former general had lapsed into the "done enough" mood while the latter allowed the enemy to take the initiative and control the tempo on his front.

³⁹Randolph A. Shotwell, "Virginia and North Carolina in the Battle of Gettysburg", Our Living and Our Dead, IV, no. 1 (January 1876), 87.

This was indeed true. Meade, concerned about his left, had strengthened Big Round Top with fresh Sixth Corps troops, and had placed artillery and infantry behind the Round Tops to contest any Confederate flanking force encircling the left to get at his rear. With the U. S. Cavalry south of Round Top along the Emmitsburg Road, Meade would have sufficient warning of a flanking movement to bolster his precautionary defenses on the left. The right had recovered its strong intrenched positions on Culp's Hill, and was also covered by another mass of Union cavalry extending from the neighboring Wolf Hill eastward out the Hanover (or Bonaughtown) Road to what would become East Cavalry Field. The cavalry was posted perfectly to inform Meade of any Jacksonian flanking threats. If there had been any simultaneous flanking movements it could be certain that Meade would do as expected and weaken the center to meet the imminent danger first, before worrying about a frontal assault. As another possibility, Meade may have found the threats so dangerous as to make his position untenable and force his abandonment of the field.

A North Carolina soldier did not interpret the attack on the Union center as Napoleonic or Jacksonian, nether did he look beyond the frontal assault for underlying proposed tactical plans gone astray. For the soldier who would have to make this attack across the open expanse of farm fields, against rifled and smoothbore artillery and musketry, he could merely express "surprise that Gen. Lee should have had so supreme a contempt for the Federal army as to have thought that by any sort of possibility the attack could be successful."⁴⁰

Nevertheless, Lee, believing his men "were invincible", determined to go ahead with the attack. Perhaps the column could effect a breach in the center,

⁴⁰W. R. Bond, Pickett or Pettigrew? An Historical Essay, 2nd ed. (Scotland Neck, N. Ca., 1888), p. 63.

as Wright's Georgia Brigade had done the evening before. If one brigade had been able to pierce the enemy line, there was every opportunity for an overwhelming victory with an attack by eleven brigades.⁴¹ The three brigades of Pickett's Division, as yet uninitiated in this battle, would comprise the strongest bloc of the column--numbering well over 5,000 soldiers and officers, if stragglers were held to a minimum.⁴² This division had encamped the night previously along Marsh Creek south of the Hagerstown Road and near both the Black Horse Tavern and Bream's Mill. In anticipation of the fighting to come the division field hospitals were established in this vicinity, and regimental commanders were informed of this so everyone would know where to send their wounded.

Many authors who are over-defensive of Longstreet's and Pickett's performance on this third day of the battle, claim that Pickett was not on the battlefield on the evening of July 2. They give the impression that he was so far away that he could not get in position early enough to coordinate an attack with Ewell on the morning of July 3. Indeed, Clifford Dowdey took the government to task for the inscriptions of the division's markers on Confederate Avenue. He was disturbed that the markers recognized Pickett's arrival on the battlefield in the evening of July 2, and not on the morning of July 3. Yet, the Bream's Mill area is as close to the Confederate lines as any of the Union corps hospitals to their lines--within two miles of their ultimate destination in line of battle. The division was not only within easy

⁴¹This would include the three brigades of Kemper, Garnett, and Armistead from Pickett's Division; the two brigades of Wilcox and Lang from Anderson's Division; the four brigades of Marshall, Fry, Mayo, and Davis from Pettigrew's Division; and the two brigades of Lane and Scales from Pender's Division.

⁴²See Appendix C for a discussion of statistics.

reach of the corps line on July 2, but was literally camping on the ground of the battlefield of July 1. Mr. Dowdey should have recognized that there was more to the battlefield than the field of the charge of the third day.

Pickett's men decamped before dawn on July 3 and began the march to join the rest of the corps along Seminary Ridge.

The regular order of march on that day hapened to be: Kemper's Brigade first; Garnett's second; and Armistead's last. . . .^[A] halt was made, and the usual inspection of arms and loading for action perfected. The number of muskets was four thousand four hundred and eighty-one; and the aggregate effective strength, about forty-seven hundred, rank and file. Our line of battle was then formed, immediately facing the enemy. Coming into line from column, right in front, Kemper's Brigade held the right, Garnett's on his left, and Armistead's, for which there was not room in extended line of battle, was formed immediately in rear of the others. Fences and other obstructions in front of the line were cleared away, and the command only waited the orders of the commander-in-chief to move forward. This formation was entirely effected by about seven o'clock in the morning and screened from the observation of the enemy by the intervening high ground. . . .⁴³

Although the two brigades (Kemper and Garnett) should have been quite out of sight in the swale behind the rolling ridge, which ran up to the Emmitsburg Road, they may not have completely escaped the observation of the enemy when they advanced over Seminary Ridge and down the slope to the swale. Unless the early morning fogs (which sometimes lie in this area of the Spangler farm) covered their advance, they could have been visible in their advance from the woods line to the swale by those forces on the Round Tops. However, respective memoirs mention neither fog nor seeing the enemy's initial advance, so conjecture is all we are left with.⁴⁴

⁴³Walter Harrison, Pickett's Men: A Fragment of War History (New York, 1870), pp. 90-91.

⁴⁴A reconnaissance of the Spanglerwoods and fields reveals, however, that the advance of Pickett's Division would have been concealed from the whole length of the Union line on Cemetery Ridge by the ridgeline on which the Confederate artillery was established. (See accompanying photos, Appendix H .)

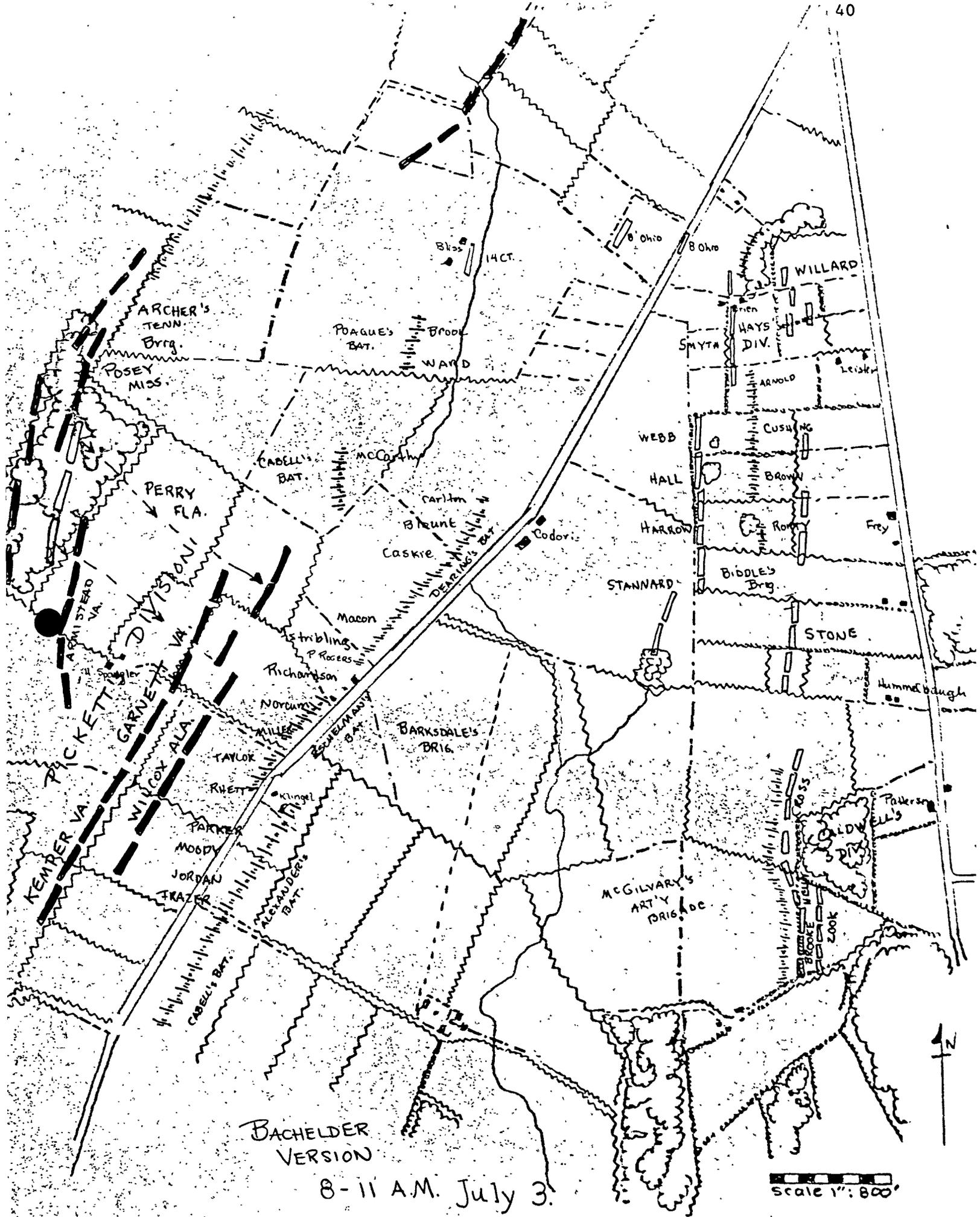
Much debate has also centered on the position the division took after it left Bream's Mill. Many historians have been firmly convinced that the early Bachelder maps are all wrong,⁴⁵ and thus by implication the above testimony of Walter Harrison. These historians write that Pickett's Division remained in Spangler's Woods up to the very moment it began its attack on the Union center. Clifford Dowdey went to great lengths to prove his point in his postscript to Death of a Nation. However, many of the "eyewitness?" accounts he quoted were books by Michael Jacobs (in town) and Mrs. Pickett (not here), as well as articles we have also used, including that of Walter Harrison. In addition, he faulted Bachelder for not questioning Pickett's three brigade commanders (pretty hard when two were dead). It would be fairly simple to attack Dowdey point by point, but suffice it to say he first of all did not consult or read all of the accounts thoroughly and misinterpreted many of them. Secondly, and most importantly, he had a gross unfamiliarity with the grounds in question.⁴⁶

⁴⁵See map of Bachelder Version, 8 - 11 A. M. July 3. p. 40.

⁴⁶In 1953, the legendary Confederate historian Douglas Southall Freeman made a plea for just such a critical evaluation of the grounds in a speech before students and historians of the Civil War. Dr. Freeman asked future historians for a careful critique of the

"nature of the terrain of action. How often we are deceived. How many times it happens that we think we know the ground, and we do not. It is exceedingly difficult, even when you are following as careful a man as Warren, for example, who was an engineer, and always interpreted his movements in engineering terms, and in terms of terrain. It is exceedingly difficult, I say, to get the precise picture of a particular area at a given time. Unless you know that, many of the most important phases of action are concealed from you. It is essential, therefore, that you study your terrain and study it carefully."

Douglas Southall Freeman, "An Address," Civil War History, I (March 1955), p. 11.



BACHELDER
VERSION
8-11 A.M. July 3.

Scale 1" = 800'

One of Dowley's main objections to the swale position is that it was too close to artillery supports and would be subjected to the enemy's over-fire. According to Dowley, no spearhead would be placed in such a position that it could be subjected to such rough handling before it even started its advance. But as we shall see, this was exactly the case. As a matter of fact, subsequent chapters will show that Garnett's Brigade was in a more protected position supporting artillery in the swale than it would have been in Spangler's Woods.

Other participant accounts describe their areas of the line, so that we can get a pretty good indication of the configuration and placement of Pickett's Division before the advance scheduled for it. Generally, the position of the individual brigades was like the diagram below:⁴⁷

GARNETT KEMPER (↑ to Union lines)
ARMISTEAD

Kemper himself wrote an enigmatic description of his position to the Virginia artillerist E. P. Alexander:

"Early in the morning of Friday the 3rd we moved up to the position, which you are familiar with and which we continued to occupy on the right and immediately behind your guns. . . ." ⁴⁸

Alexander's guns at this time were deploying for the planned intensive cannonade of the Union line. The position of these guns extended westward

⁴⁷Account of R. A. Bright, captain on Pickett's staff, in J. H. Stine, History of the Army of the Potomac, 2nd ed. (Washington, 1893), p. 533.

⁴⁸Letter of James L. Kemper to E. P. Alexander, September 20, 1862, from the Dearborn Collection of Confederate Civil War Papers at Houghton Library, Harvard University.

and northward from Wheatfield Road at the Peach Orchard, across the Emmitsburg Road near the Klingel Farmhouse, thence across the Spangler farm lane, behind the Rogers Farmhouse, and obliquely to the Point of Woods (the northeast corner of Spangler's Woods).

Others wrote in more specific terms, but none really could relate their position to any permanent landmark, since most laid in the swale that traversed the Codori, Spangler, and Sherfy farm fields. Most staff officers and general-types wrote very generally, and (while quoted freely by others because of their official status) give us little insight as to the three brigade positions:

"Garnett's and Kemper's brigades were formed in front; Armistead with his brigade slightly in rear and left of same."

"When we started Garnett and Kemper's brigades were a first line, and Armistead's brigade was in rear, forming a second line."

". . . Kemper's and Garnett's brigades constituted the first line, Kemper's being on the right of Garnett's; Armistead's brigade followed in the rear of Garnett's." ⁴⁹

Trimble wrote that he knew and saw Pickett's line formed about "one hundred yards from and west of the Emmitsburg road, at that point occupied by Southern troops the day previous."⁵⁰

Others, generally of line or field officer grade, remembered their own positions with more detail, being more attuned to this kind of detail than an aide or adjutant, who always tried to impress the reader with the tactical

⁴⁹Accounts of Major Charles Pickett, Captain W. Stuart Symington, and J. F. Crocker, in Stine, pp. 539-540.

⁵⁰I. R. Trimble, "North Carolinians at Gettysburg," Our Living and Our Dead, vol. IV, no. 1 (January 1876), p. 55.

and strategic insight they gained by four years of war, or to impart to us some words of wisdom confided to them by a general during a critical moment. Garnett's Brigade, on the left behind Alexander's cannon line, had a number of veterans who later recalled the situation of their pre-charge position. Randolph Shotwell wrote that Garnett's Brigade was in back of the artillery line, formed along the slope behind these guns and out of view of the Federal forces.⁵¹ R. Fergus, of Company G, 18th Virginia Infantry, remembered that his unit moved into position on that morning of July 3 "under the eye of Gen. Lee himself, and were placed in support of Dearing's Battalion of Artillery."⁵² A survivor of the 56th Virginia Infantry wrote over 30 years later that

"About 12 o'clock we were moved up to the edge of the woods* and just behind our artillery. In my immediate front we were so close to the guns that I had to 'break to the rear' my little company to give the men at the limber chest room to handle the ammunition. The Caisson with its horses and drivers was just in my rear.

"The order of battle for the division was Kemper and Garnett in the front line and Armistead in the rear or second line. Kemper on the right and Garnett on the left. Garnett's five regiments took their usual order from right to left as follows: 8th, 18th, 19th, 28th, and 56th. This, you see, threw my regiment on the left of the first line, and my company (K) was second or third from the extreme left of the division. After we got into position we were ordered to lie down and wait for the order to advance after our guns had bombarded the position we were to assault."⁵³

*eastern fringe of Spangler's Woods.

⁵¹Shotwell, p. 88.

⁵²Richard Irby, Historical Sketch of the Nottoway Grays, afterwards Company G, Eighteenth Virginia Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia (Richmond, 1878), p. 27. Dearing's line was staked out by survivors in the 1890s; it ran diagonally southeast to northwest from the Emmitsburg Road opposite the Klingel buildings to some 200 yards west of the Rogers farmhouse.

⁵³G. W. Finley, "Bloody Angle," p. 43.

One of the all-time best of published accounts from Garnett's Brigade, detailed not only this morning position, but the march from Black Horse Tavern as well.

"We marched possibly three miles and gradually approached the enemy. A shady quiet march was this, protected from the enemy's view by wood and Cemetery Hill. We halted for a short time in the woods, but moved forward pretty soon into a field, near a branch. Here we filled our canteens and took things easy for twenty minutes, or possible longer. Up to this time our march had been in column, but our next move was in line of battle to the front--halting immediately after crossing a road and getting over the fence on either side of the road. Remaining in this position but a few minutes, we moved forward again, and this time as we halted we dressed upon the colors, forming a line of battle. The other regiments of our brigade dressed upon us--ours being the centre regiment. We were ordered to lie down. Our position was, at this time, on the south side of Cemetery Hill and near its eastern end, and more than a hundred yards from the top in our front. For how many hours we sweltered on the side of this hill that hot third day of July, 1863, I know not, but my own opinion is about five hours.

"The field officers rode about us and held frequent short consultations. Leaving my command I walked up to the top of the hill and took a birds-eye view of the situation, just as Colonel Dearing rode up to see about locating his artillery. I heard him say 'that hill must fall' as he rode off to the right. I walked back to the regiment with 'that hill must fall' still ringing in my ears. Artillery came, it seemed to me, from every direction, and quickly prepared, on or near the hill top, for action. I never before saw such a display of artillery and felt, 'that hill must fall.'

"An hour or more passed in silence. The sun was making the hillside very uncomfortable."⁵⁴

The brigade report for Kemper's regiments, submitted by Colonel Joseph Mayo, Jr. of the 3rd Virginia, did not detail a description of the terrain, but did leave us a description of the disposition of Kemper's brigade line:

⁵⁴Lt. William Nathaniel Wood, Reminiscences of Big I, ed. Bell I. Wiley (Jackson, Tenn., 1956), pp. 43-44.

"The 24th Va. Regt. (Col. Wm. R. Terry Comdg) occupied the right of the line; the 3d Va. (Col. Jos. Mayo Jr. Comdg) the left; the centre was occupied by the 1st Va. (Col. Lewis B. Williams, jr. Comdg) the right centre by the 11th Va. (Major Kirkwood Otey Comdg) and the left centre by the 7th Va. (Col. W. T. Patton Comdg)." ⁵⁵

Apparently, Armistead's Brigade was the only unit of Pickett's Division to have forces in Spangler's Woods. George Griggs of the 38th Virginia wrote that ". . . the troops remained under partial shelter by a small strip of woods until the order of advance. . . . The Fifty-seventh Virginia regiment of the brigade was immediately to left of the regiment. . . ." ⁵⁶

Walter Harrison, acting on the division staff of General Pickett, revealed that his duties allowed him to see the development of this disposition in the forenoon of July 3, and allowed him to later interpret that deployment and subsequent movements in light of the planned attack:

"The disposition of troops being thus made, the order of attack was to have been thus carried out. Pickett's three brigades were to advance right into the very teeth of the enemy. . . and the other two divisions were to move simultaneously in support, charging in second and third lines of battle.

"Wilcox's Brigade, which had been engaged with the enemy the evening before, and was then lying about two hundred yards in front of our line, was to join in with Heth's Division as it passed. . . .

"The left of Garnett's Brigade overlapped a little the right of Pettigrew's in the line of battle front, thus preventing Armistead's Brigade from coming up in the continuation of the first line. While forming this line, Gen. Armistead asked me to inquire of Gen. Pickett

⁵⁵Report of Colonel Joseph Mayo, Jr. for Kemper's Brigade, to Major Charles Pickett, July 25, 1863. George E. Pickett Papers, Duke University Library.

⁵⁶Colonel George K. Griggs, "Memoranda of Thirty-eighth Virginia Infantry," Southern Historical Society Papers, vol. XIV (1886), p. 253.

whether he wished him to push out, and form line in front of Heth's Division, or to hold his position in rear for the present."⁵⁷ [Longstreet told Harrison to]"tell Gen. Armistead to remain where he is for the present, and he can make up his distance when the advance is made." ⁵⁸

Cadmus Wilcox, commanding the Alabama brigade which had won glories along the Emmitsburg Road and in the fields surrounding the Codori farm buildings on July 2, submitted an unpublished report of his activities of this day which further clarifies the brigades' dispositions:

"Before sun up the morning of the 3rd, the brigade was ordered forward to support a number of batteries placed on the Emmetsburg road, on ground won from the enemy by the brigade the evening before; the men had had nothing to eat since the previous morning.

"Batteries had been placed in position further to the right, and on ground also won from the enemy the day before; in all we must have had on this part of the line more than 100 pieces in position. About 10⁰⁰ A.M. three brigades of Pickett's division, Garnett, Armistead and Kemper, took position immediately in rear of mine; these brigades, were part of the attacking force on that day." ⁵⁹

After fourteen years of study and correspondence, the battlefield historian John B. Bachelder interpreted the pre-assault troop dispositions in his usual succinct manner, beginning with the ridgeline from the Peach Orchard to the Point of Woods:

"This commanding position was seized by General Alexander the same night, and occupied by his artillery on the 3d; while Pickett's Division, supported by Wilcox's and Perry's brigades, was brought up under its cover to within nine hundred yards of the point to be assailed, where it lay

⁵⁷Lee and Longstreet were on the ridgeline in front with the artillery, making a reconnaissance at that time.

⁵⁸Harrison, pp. 91-92.

⁵⁹Report of Brigadier General Cadmus M. Wilcox to Major Thomas S. Mills, July (21?) 1863. Virginia Historical Society.

during the cannonade. The ridge falls off as it runs toward the north, until, failing to give shelter to the troops, Armistead's Brigade was placed in the second line." 60

Thus it appears that Pickett's Division was in position in battle line, between the Emmitsburg Road and Seminary Ridge, at least by 11:00 A.M. In the two hours remaining before the introductory cannonade the troops were under orders to lie down, and many of the later accounts (like the Union memoirs) vividly recalled the scorching sun beating down on their motionless ranks. It appears that only officers were permitted to move about, and there must have been quite a number of these types roaming about the lines. Some went forward to see what was on the other side of the crest of the artillery ridgeline, while many more went up and down behind the lines visiting friends and relatives in other units--exchanging good wishes and silent farewells. One such jaunt was made by William Chamberlaine, a volunteer artillery aide:

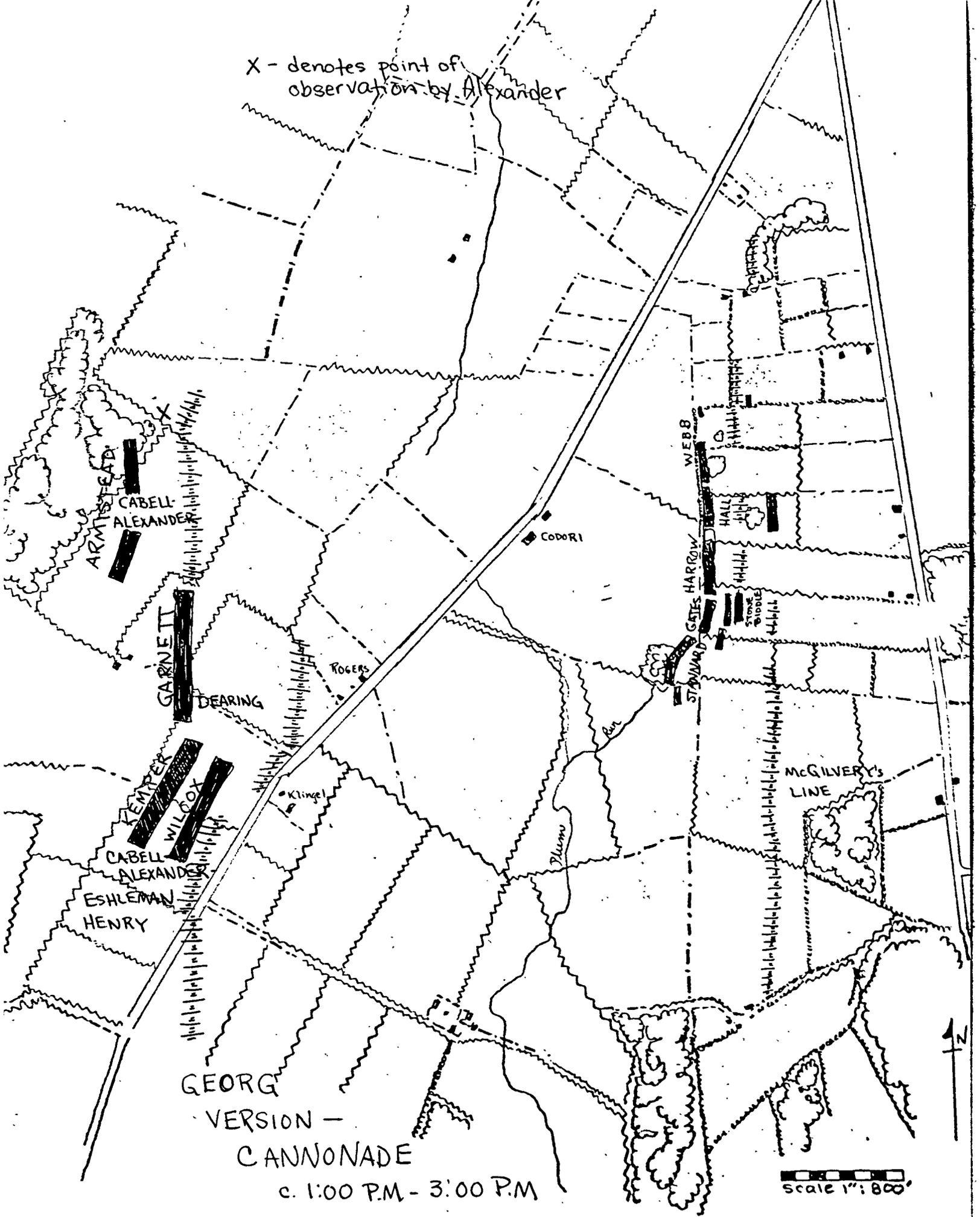
"... I saw Heth's Division lying under the crest of the hill. An old friend, John O. Richardson, Major of a North Carolina Regiment,* spoke to me and said, 'I understand that we are to charge that hill,' pointing to Cemetery Hill. I looked over at the hill and the position looked so formidable that I replied I did not think the rumor was true. . . . I passed on down the line and soon came to Pickett's Division also lying under the crest of the hill. General R. B. Garnett was in front of the line, with his aide-de-camp, Lieut. John S. Jones, a relative of mine. I stopped to speak to them; they were mounted. They said nothing about the charge to be made." 61

*52nd North Carolina Infantry

⁶⁰John B. Bachelder, "The Third Day's Battle," The Philadelphia Weekly Times, December 15, 1877, in Gettysburg Newspaper Clippings, vol. 1, pp. 35-36.

⁶¹Captain William W. Chamberlaine, Memoirs of the Civil War (Washington, 1912), p. 72.

X - denotes point of observation by Alexander



GEORG
VERSION -
CANNONADE
c. 1:00 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Scale 1" = 800'

Strangely, however, (as in the foregoing account) no one seems to have been giving or receiving orders for the upcoming assault; at least no personal histories or manuscripts used herein noted such orders. Surprisingly, the lack of such orders from generals on down to captains seems to have been the rule for this all-out frontal assault. This seems to confirm the fact that Lee's army had definite staff and command problems at Gettysburg, and satirically highlights all those old contentions that the Army of Northern Virginia was not made up of component soldiers, but of individualistic, uniformed civilians.

Chapter 3: "Death Was in Every Foot of Space"--Cannonade

The one man who did receive orders was a battalion commander in Longstreet's artillery reserve--E. Porter Alexander. Then just 28 years old, Alexander was given the enormous responsibility by Longstreet of deciding when the proposed attack should commence, by judging the effectiveness of his artillery fire in "softening" the Union positions on Cemetery Ridge.

His commanding general, Lee, was confident that those preparations being made by his officers would be complete and sufficient to parry any defenses hastily thrown together by his opponent. It was the commander's belief that "with proper concert of action, and with the increased support that the position gained on the right would enable the artillery to render the assaulting columns, we should ultimately succeed, and it was accordingly determined to continue the attack."⁶² Reconnaissance of the ground won by Longstreet the day earlier persuaded Lee that artillery, properly placed, could silence the batteries of the Union line. If the guns opened simultaneously and then covered the movement of the assaulting column, they could materially assist in the attack. The latter was feasible since the batteries were supposed to be "pushed forward as the infantry progressed, protect their flanks, and support their attacks closely."⁶³

General William N. Pendleton, in an effort to carry out Lee's wishes, was up early on the morning of July 3 "visiting the lines" to arrange the batteries for this "concentrated and destructive fire". He was saved from this chore on

⁶²Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVII, part 2, p. 320.

⁶³Ibid.

Longstreet's end of the line because Alexander was already carrying it out under orders from his corps commander. Alexander was subordinate to the reserve artillery chief, Colonel J. B. Walton, but found himself in the unenviable position of directing operations for the whole of Longstreet's artillery on July 3 because he was regarded by Longstreet as "an officer of unusual promptness, sagacity and intelligence." In addition, since Alexander was "more familiar with the ground to be occupied by the Artillery, [he] was directed to see that the batteries were posted to best advantage."⁶⁴ In compliance with these orders he placed the guns of the battalions in a curving line from Sherfy's orchards towards the Point of Woods on the Spangler farm by mid-morning. A description of the activities and decisions made by Alexander, in his own words, was written within two weeks of the battle:

"I . . . put seventy-five pieces in position bearing on the enemy's Batteries and the point of attack, and nine others in reserve. The attack was ordered by Gen. Lee though Gen. Longstreet was opposed to it as the enemy's position was so powerful--entirely sweeping the 1200 yards over which we had to advance, that it was of doubtful success. . . . I was ordered to take a position to observe the effect of our artillery fire, & at the proper moment to give Pickett & Pettigrew the order to charge, when my 9 reserve guns & all that could of the 75 in line were to advance also. Accordingly when all was ready I took my position & gave the signal & immediately my Batteries all opened aided too by about fifty or sixty guns of A. P. Hill's corps on our left."⁶⁵

Therefore, sometime between 12:30 and 1:00 PM the greatest cannonade of the war to that point was initiated by a 28-year-old junior officer, who also observed that the "enemy replied with a line of Batteries a mile long

⁶⁴James A. Longstreet, November 6, 1877 letter to Col. J. B. Walton, in Historic New Orleans Collection, Tulane University.

⁶⁵E. P. Alexander, July 17, 1863 letter to father, in Alexander-Hillhouse Papers, University of North Carolina.

and the fight which followed was, as you may suppose something to be remembered. Smoke soon hid almost everything. The firing was as rapid as musketry and shot and shell flew in flocks."⁶⁶

Confederates along the assault line were as impressed by the firing of Alexander's artillery, and the subsequent Union artillery return fire, as Colonel Alexander himself was. A member of Pickett's staff wrote

"The atmosphere was broken by the rushing solid shot, and shrieking shell; the sky, just now so bright, was at the same moment lurid with flame and murky with smoke. The sun in his noontide ray was obscured by clouds of sulphurous mist, eclipsing his light, and shadowing the earth as with a funeral pall; while through this sable panoply, ever descending and wrapping this field of blood in the darkness of death, shot the fiery fuses, like wild meteors of a heavenly wrath; hurtled the discordantly screaming shell, bearing mangled death and mutilation in its most horrible form.

"The enemy had the exact range of our line of battle, and just overshooting the artillery opposed to them, as usual, their shot and shell told with effect upon the infantry, exposed as they were without cover of any sort. . . . Many of the men, and several valuable officers were killed or disabled long before a movement was ordered: but the line remained steadily fixed. . . ." ⁶⁷

Cadmus Wilcox, whose brigade of Alabamans lay in front of Kemper's Brigade supporting Alexander's artillery line just east of the Emmitsburg Road, also remembered this fierce artillery duel:

"About 1 P. M. our artillery commenced firing, this was promptly responded to by the enemy, and for an hour or more near 300 pieces of artillery were firing with the utmost vivacity, these and the bursting shells filling the atmosphere with smoke to such an extent as to render it difficult to distinguish objects on certain parts of the field; my brigade suffered but little under this terrible fire, being shielded by a gentle crest in front, the brigade (Kemper's) on my right lost severely." ⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Harrison, pp. 96-97.

⁶⁸ Wilcox, "Report".

Pickett's Division was initiated into the Battle of Gettysburg with the grand artillery cannonade of this July 3 afternoon. Armistead's Brigade, which lay partly in Spangler Woods and partly in the field east of it, was in the rear line of the division position. As Alexander already described, the Union shells passed over the crest of the ridge along the Emmitsburg Road (the position of the Confederate artillery) and caused havoc among the lines of Virginia infantry beyond. A soldier in the 9th Virginia of Armistead's Brigade penned his memories of the cannonade some thirty years after the battle, yet remembered many details of that third day's battle:

"We moved slowly forward, and about 10 o'clock we took position on the line of battle, facing Meade's left center and on the right of Hill's division and slightly in advance. It soon became known that our (Pickett's) division was to attack during the day. It had been slightly hazy, with fleeting clouds, but the sun had come out in all its brightness, and it was extremely hot and oppressive on the men; many of them in the open field.⁶⁹ As the day progressed it became a certainty that we were on the eve of something desperate, and finally each regiment was informed what it had to do and what was expected of it.

"Up to this time, near 1 o'clock, all had been quiet; artillery had been moving into line and taking position; but there was not even an occasional shot to disturb the quiet. About 1 o'clock the sound of two Whitworth guns* broke the stillness, and immediately 125 guns, all along the line joined in The smoke soon darkened the sun, and the scene produced was similar to a gigantic thunder-storm, the screeching of shot and shell producing the sound of the whistling blast of winds. Man seldom sees or hears the like of this but once in a lifetime; and those that saw and heard this infernal crash and witnessed the havoc made by the shrieking, howling missiles

*not Whitworths, but Napoleons of Miller's Battery.

⁶⁹During the cannonade the temperature in town (at 2:00 PM) was 87° Fahrenheit. The sky was 40% covered with cumulus or the "massive thunderclouds" of summer. Jacobs, "Meteorology", p. 35.

of death as they plowed the earth and tore the trees will never forget it. It seemed that death was in every foot of space, and safety was only in flight; but none of the men did that. To know the tension of mind under a fire like that, it must be experienced. . . . For two long hours this pandemonium was kept up, and then, as suddenly as it commenced, it ceased." ⁷⁰

Another member of the 9th Virginia Infantry, an orderly sergeant in Company K, wrote of the experiences of the division and his particular outfit during the artillery duel. From his description it is obvious that at least Company K, 9th Virginia was in Spangler Woods:

"General Lee had massed in front of the division about 120 pieces of artillery, and they were to open on Cemetery Heights and endeavor, if possible to dislodge the enemy. This cannonading commenced about noon, and as our pieces opened, the enemy replied by a fire from about one hundred pieces. . . .

"Under all of this terrific cannonading, Pickett's Division was lying awaiting it to cease. Round shot whistled through the trees cutting limbs from them which fell upon us. . . . Our artillery, which was about one hundred yards in front, were firing almost with the rapidity of musketry, and the enemy, who seemed to have a most deadly aim, threw shells amongst us, apparently at every shot, blowing up caissons, and killing horses and men. . . ." ⁷¹

Wyatt Whitehead, of the 53rd Virginia Infantry, recounted for us one of the casualties of this duel, clarifying when the commanding officer of his regiment was wounded.

"About one o'clock our artillery opened fire which was immediately answered by the enemy's guns. For about 1½ hours the Yankees shelled us with all the power they had, but the shells passed over us doing us but little damage. This is when Col. Aylett was wounded and Lieut.-Col. Rawley W. Martin was called to command the 53rd Regiment, Armistead's Brigade." ⁷²

⁷⁰John H. Lewis, Recollections from 1860 to 1865 (Portsmouth, 1893).

⁷¹James H. Walker, "The Charge of Pickett's Division," The Blue and the Gray, vol. I, pp. 221-223.

⁷²Maude Carter Clement, ed., The History of Pittsylvania County, Va. (Lynchburg, 1929), p. 248.

In front, and a little to the right, of Armistead's Brigade lay the five Virginia regiments of Garnett's Brigade--the 8th, 18th, 19th, 28th, and 56th Infantry Regiments. The 18th Virginia was posted toward the right of the brigade, supporting Dearing's Battalion, and likewise suffered under the effects of the artillery fire and the weather:

"For more than two hours we lay in the hot, broiling sun, in the midst of the unceasing roar and whirl and whiz of shot and shell. Some of the men were torn into pieces, others were overcome by the heat."⁷³

Lieutenant William N. Wood of the 19th Virginia, to the left of the 18th and in the center of Garnett's Brigade, had finished his inspection of the crest of the Emmitsburg Road ridge over an hour before the cannonade commenced. He returned to his place in line where he noted the passage of time by its uncharacteristic silence:

"The sun was making the hillside very uncomfortable. Activity among the artillery men was observed, the word 'fire' was heard, more than one hundred guns opened the fight. The enemy replied at once. The earth seemed to leap from its foundation; the atmosphere seemed to quiver, the smoke rose in balloon-shape and gently drifted to the left.⁷⁴ The sun's heat was forgotten and mother-earth embraced with a soldier's ardour. The shells, bursting over and behind us, sent missiles upon any one who might be lurking in the rear. Again the enemy was overshooting the mark and doing but little damage to the infantry. From Roundtop, two miles to our right came those miserable enfilading solid shots which frequently struck the ground on our right, ricocheting along the line to the death and injury of many. Lieutenant-Colonel John T. Ellis was lying in a small wash on the hillside, as one of those balls came bounding from the right. Some one hollowed--'look out' and he raised his head just in time to receive the ball in his face. Kind friends bore him to the shade, where death

⁷³Account of R. Fergus, Co. G, 18th Virginia in Irby, p. 27.

⁷⁴Professor Michael Jacobs noted that day that the very gentle winds in the Gettysburg area were out of the south-southwest, which would indeed have caused the smoke Lieut. Wood saw to drift to the northeast--his left. Jacobs, "Meteorology", p. 35.

eased him of all pain.⁷⁵ In Colonel Ellis we lost a good officer, a good man as well as a polished gentleman."⁷⁶

The 56th Virginia was on the extreme left of Garnett's line, and could probably see the end of Alexander's curving artillery line to their front and right, near the Point of Woods. Like the remainder of the brigade, they could not see the Union lines on Cemetery Ridge, since the rising ground to their front obscured that topographic feature. Knowing that they had to attack the unseen enemy was another element adding anxiety to these Confederate soldiers as they lay under the artillery fire:

"The day was intensely hot, and lying in the sun we suffered greatly from the heat.

"About 1 o'clock P. M. our batteries opened and the Federals promptly replied. For more than an hour the most terrific cannonade any of us had ever experienced was kept up and it seemed as if neither man nor horse could possibly live under it. Our gunners stood to their pieces and handled them with such splendid courage as to wake the admiration of the infantry crouching on the ground behind them. We could see nothing whatever of the opposing line, but knew from the firing that they must have a strong position and many guns.

"Our loss was considerable under this storm of shot and shell, still there was no demoralization of our men in line. They waited almost impatiently for the order of advance, as almost anything would be a relief from the strain upon them."⁷⁷

On the other end of the line, where the 8th Virginia held the right of Garnett's Brigade, the loss was probably not as severe. Indeed the regi-

⁷⁵Ellis, then 36 years old, lingered in unconsciousness for several hours before he died. His body was carried back with the retreating army after the battle and was interred in Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond. .Charles D. Walker, Memorial, Virginia Military Institute. Biographical Sketches of the Graduates and Elevés of the Virginia Military Institute who Fell During the War Between the States (Philadelphia, 1875), p. 192.

⁷⁶Wood, p. 44.

⁷⁷Finley, "Bloody Angle", p. 43.

mental commander noted that only five men were killed during this artillery duel and none wounded,⁷⁸ and another member admitted that the first ten minutes of the firing were the worst. After that, "the Federal gunners began to aim higher, supposing the woods in our rear* to be full of troops, and sending most of their missiles screaming beyond us."⁷⁹ While the men of the center regiment were hugging mother earth for dear life, the infantrymen of the 8th Virginia were eventually freed by the overfiring to attend to other matters:

"We were lying down behind a slight elevation with our artillery in front, and when the artillery duel commenced, the enemy soon got our range and one of his shells struck one of the sergeants behind whom I was lying, tearing his head into fragments, and plastering his brains over my hat.

"While lying down during the artillery duel, it occurred to me that I would almost certainly be killed in the charge, that I would not like for any one to get the old pack of cards that I had in my pocket with which Garnett, Colonel Hunton and I had played hundreds of games by the light of camp fires. I took them from my pocket and wrapping a song that one of my officers had copied for me around them, I turned over a stone near me and dug a little grave in which I placed them. . . ."80

Kemper's Brigade, on the right of Garnett's, suffered the severest casualties of the three brigades during this cannonade, undoubtedly due to their proximity to the Emmitsburg Road and the Union batteries of McGilvery's line in their immediate front. Both Garnett and Armistead were farther from these batteries due to the oblique nature of the crests and their subsequent

*Spangler Woods

⁷⁸Eppa Hunton, Autobiography of Eppa Hunton (Richmond, 1933), p. 99.

⁷⁹Shotwell, pp. 88, 90.

⁸⁰Lt. Col. Norbonne Berkeley, unpublished typescript memoir (1914), n.p.

line, while Kemper was not only closer but exposed to the greater concentration of Union artillery from the Cemetery Ridge line.

Kemper himself described this "tremendous battle of artillery" and how it affected his regiments in a letter written before the decade of the 1860s had closed:

". . . . During the firing of the artillery, (which yet reminds me of Milton's description of artillery between the contending host of Heaven) I made my men lie flat down on the ground, a precaution which poorly protected them for the enemy's hail of shot pelted them and ploughed through them, and sometimes the fragments of a dozen mangled men were thrown in and about the trench left by a single missile. While this was going on, Longstreet rode slowly and alone immediately in front of our entire line. He sat his large charger with a magnificent grace and composure I never before beheld.--This bearing was to me the grandest moral spectacle of the war. I expected to see him fall every instant. Still he moved on, slowly and majestically, with an inspiring confidence, composure, self-possession and repressed power, in every movement and look, that fascinated me. As he neared me, I walked up to him, intending to remind him of his peril of which he seemed really unconscious, and said. 'General, this is a terrible place.' Said he, 'What! is your command suffering?' 'Yes', I answered, 'a man is cut to pieces, here every second while we are talking; sometimes a dozen are killed at one shot.'-- 'Is it possible?', said he with a distressed air, 'can't you find any safer position for your men?' 'No, we are exactly behind the line of this crest--the very safest place about here.' Then he said with his most winning way, 'I am greatly distressed at this--greatly distressed at this; but let us hold our ground a while longer; we



James Kemper

are hurting the enemy badly, and will charge him presently,' saying which he moved on his stately course--seeming to me, in that solemn moment as grand as Arthur to Guinivere. . . ."81

The left of Kemper's Brigade was composed of the 3rd Infantry and the left center was represented by the 7th Infantry. Where these two regiments joined there was at least one large apple tree, part of the orchard on the Henry Spangler farm. From here another eyewitness to the cannonade experienced similar but very different personal emotions:

"As Sergeant-Major my position was on the left of the regiment, which threw me in the shade of an apple tree which stood in the field on the left of our regiment and on the right of the 3rd regiment. When the signal guns were fired Col. Patton of our regiment and Col. Jo Mayo of the 3rd regiment lay down under the apple tree, and I lay down rather between two soldiers of the 3rd regiment and Lieutenant James Brown of our regiment, with my head at the feet of Cols. Patton and Mayo, my head a little higher or further up the hill than the two soldiers referred to, and about on a parallel with Lieut. Brown's. As the batteries began to withdraw and the enemy's fire slackened, we found that one of these batteries far to our left (sic?) was the one that had been doing us considerable damage--in fact, almost enfilading our line. I began to breathe a little more freely and raised my head off the ground and looked around, whereupon Lieut. Brown said to me, 'you had better put your head down or you may get it knocked off.' I replied, 'well, Lieut., a man had as about as well die that way as to suffocate for want of air.' I had barely spoken these words when a terrific explosion occurred, which for a moment deprived me of my breath and of sensibility, but it was momentary, for in a moment or so I found myself lying off from my former position and gasping for breath. Around me were brains, blood and skull bones; my first thought was that my Colonel's head had been blown off, but this was dispelled the next moment by his asking me

⁸¹Kemper to Alexander, September 20, 1869.

if I was badly hurt, to which I replied I thought I was. . . . By this time I had turned about and discovered that the heads of the two men who lay on my left side had been blown off just over the ears, and that the shell had exploded almost directly over me, a little below my left shoulder blade, breaking several of my ribs loose from by backbone, bruising severely by left lung and cutting my grey jacket almost into shreds and filling it with grains of powder. Lieut. Brown was severely wounded by the same shot--making two killed and two wounded. . . ."82

Things were just as hot, if not hotter, in the center regiment--the 1st Virginia, where John Dooley absorbed all the details of that day and of that artillery fire:

" . . . we take temporary position in the hollow of a field. Before us is a rising slope which hides the Yankee position from view. To the right of our front some quarter of a mile is a brick house near which one of our batteries now and then opens on the enemy who are generally ready to respond to the harsh greeting. Around us are some trees with very small green apples; and while we are resting here we amuse ourselves by pelting each other with green apples. So frivolous men can be even in the hour of death.

". . . . Soon we are ordered to ascend the rising slope and pull down a fence in our front, and this begins to look like work."

"Again, orders come for us to lie down in line of battle; that all the cannon on our side will open at a given signal, will continue for an hour and upon their ceasing we are to charge straight ahead over the open field and sweep from our path any thing in the shape of a Yankee that attempts to oppose our progress."

"We are immediately in rear of Genl. Dearing's batteries and receive nearly all the missiles intended for his gallant troops. In one of our Regts. alone the killed and wounded, even before going into the charge, amounted to 88 men; and men lay bleeding and gasping the agonies of death all around, and we unable to help them in the least. Ever and anon some companion would raise his head disfigured and

82 David E. Johnston, Four Years a Soldier (Princeton, W. Va.), pp. 271-272.

unrecognizable, streaming with blood, or would stretch his full length, his limbs quivering in the pangs of death. . . .

"The sun poured down his fiercest beams and added to our discomfort. Genl. Dearing was out in front with his flag waving defiance at the Yankees and now and then rushing forward to take the place of some unfortunate gunner stricken down at his post. The ammunition wagons fly back and forth bringing up fresh supplies of ammunition, and still the air is shaking from earth to sky with every missile of death fired from the cannon's mouth. . . ." 83

At the right center of Kemper's line was the 11th Virginia, where John T. James was a 1st lieutenant in Company D. Lieutenant James has left us an account written within one week after the cannonade:

"I have heard and witnessed heavy cannonading, but never in my life had I seen or heard anything to equal this. Some enthusiasts back in the Commissary Department may speak of it as grand and sublime, but unless grandeur and sublimity consist in whatever is terrible and horrible, it was wanting in both of these qualities. Whilst this artillery duel was in progress we were lying in a field with a very heavy growth of grass, so thick, in fact, it was impossible for any wind to get through it, with the intense heat of the sun, produced several cases of sunstroke among our men." 84

And on the extreme right we have another instance of an artillery casualty during this cannonade, when Major Joseph A. Hambrick of the 24th Virginia was wounded by "splinters torn from a small apple tree by a shell, the same shot passing through his horse, by whose side he was standing at the time, bridle in hand." 85

Unfortunately, few of the regimental or brigade accounts break down their casualties on this third day of battle in enough detail to reveal which were cannonade and which were assault casualties. Nevertheless, the above

⁸³Joseph T. Durkin, ed., John Dooley; Confederate Soldier--His War Journal (South Bend, Ind., 1963), pp. 102-104.

⁸⁴Account of John T. James, July 9, 1863 in Thomas D. Huston, "Storming Cemetery Hill," The (Philadelphia) Times, October 21, ? , in Gettysburg Newspaper Clippings, Relating to the Battle, p. 22.

⁸⁵Walker, p. 262.

reminiscences and accounts give an indication of the numbers of wounded and killed at each part of the line, as well as an understanding of the kinds of wounds inflicted on the prostrate troops of Pickett's Division, even before they began their advance on the Union lines. Yet, the Southron soldier was not alone in his sufferings in those early afternoon hours when the cannonade dominated the battle. The Union line, at whom the initial shelling was aimed, suffered as severely as their opponents, and perhaps even more severely due to the concentrated nature of the Confederate fire.

Gibbon's Division, which held the left center of the Union line, covered the area on Cemetery Ridge from just south of Ziegler's Grove to a point just opposite the Codori farm buildings. During the morning lull, Major General John Gibbon and his staff invited Meade over to their headquarters for a bit of brunch--coffee and stewed rooster. Meade, understandably, could not indulge himself for long, and left Gibbon and his officers "seated on the ground chatting over the battle and the probable events of the day." Gibbon continued his recollections:

"How long we sat there it is impossible to say but after a long silence along the line a single gun was heard off in my front and everyone's attention was attracted. Almost instantly afterwards the whole air above and around us was filled with bursting and screaming projectiles, and the continuous thunder of the guns, telling us that something serious was at hand. All jumped to their feet and loud calls were made for horses I started on a run, up a little swale leading directly up to the center* Some features of that hurried trip are indelibly impressed upon my memory. The thunder of the guns was incessant, for all of ours had now opened fire and the whole air seemed filled with rushing, screaming and bursting shells. The larger round shells could be seen plainly as in their nearly completed course they curved in their fall .

*This would have put the picnic headquarters between the Peter Frey house and Cemetery Ridge. (KG)

towards the Taneytown road, but the long rifled shells came with a rush and a scream and could only be seen in their rapid flight when they 'upset' and went tumbling through the air, creating the uncomfortable impression that, no matter whether you were in front of the gun from which they came or not, you were liable to be hit. Every moment or so one would burst, throwing its fragments about in a most disagreeably promiscuous manner, or, first striking the ground, plough a great furrow in the earth and rocks, throwing these last about in a way quite as dangerous as the pieces of the exploding shell. At last I reached the brow of the hill to find myself in the most infernal pandemonium it has ever been my fortune to look upon. Very few troops were in sight and those that were, were hugging the ground closely, some behind the stone wall, some not, but the artillerymen were all busily at work at their guns, thundering out defiance to the enemy whose shells were bursting in and around them at a fearful rate, striking now a horse, now a limber box and now a man. Over all hung a heavy pall of smoke underneath which could be seen the rapidly moving legs of the men as they rushed to and fro between the pieces and the line of limbers, carrying forward the ammunition. One thing which forcibly occurred to me was the perfect quiet with which the horses stood in their places. Even when a shell, striking in the midst of a team, would knock over one or two of them or hurl one struggling in his death agonies to the ground, the rest would make no effort to struggle or escape but would stand stolidly by as if saying to themselves, 'It is fate, It is useless to try to avoid it.' Looking thus at Cushing's Battery, my eyes happened to rest upon one of the gunners standing in rear of the nearest limber, the lid open showing the charges. Suddenly, with a shriek, came a shell right under the limber box, and the poor gunner went hopping to the rear on one leg, the shreds of the other dangling about as he went.

"As I reached the line just to the left of Cushing's Battery, I found Gen. Webb seated on the ground as coolly as though he had no interest in the scene and somehow it seemed to me that in such a place men appear to take things a good deal as I had remarked the horses took them. Of course, it would be absurd to say we were not scared. How is it possible for a sentient being to be in such a place and not experience a sense of alarm? None but fools, I think, can deny that they are afraid in battle.*

*N. B. This subject will come up later in these pages, wherein we will examine the role and observations of the 20th N.Y. S. M. in the battle.



John Gibbon

"What does this mean?" I asked. Webb shook his head. In fact it was a question about which we all felt anxious, but no one could answer it yet. It might mean preparation for retreat; it might signify the prelude to an assault.

"How long did this pandemonium last? Measured by our feelings it might have been an age. In point of fact it may have been an hour or three or five. The measurement of time under such circumstances, regular as it is by the watch, is exceedingly uncertain by the watchers. Getting tired of seeing men and horses torn to pieces and observing that although some of the shells struck and burst among us, most of them went high and burst behind us, the idea occurred to me that a position farther

to the front would be safer and rising to my feet, I walked forward. . . . I had made but a few steps when three of Cushing's limber boxes blew up at once, sending the contents in a vast column of dense smoke high in the air, and above the din could be heard the triumphant yells of the enemy as he recognized this result of his fire. Passing the clump of trees. . . , we walked forward to the fence, where the men were lying close behind it and motioning them to make room for me, I stepped over the wall, went to a little clump of bushes standing just in front of the line and looked out there to see if I could detect any movement in that direction. Nothing could be seen but the smoke constantly issuing from the long line of batteries and nothing heard but the continuous roar of hundreds of guns, the screaming of countless projectiles, as they rushed through the air in all directions and the bursting of shells. These all went over our heads and generally burst behind us. Whilst standing here and wondering how all this din would terminate, Mitchell, an aide of Gen. Hancock,* joined me with a message from Hancock to know what I thought the meaning of this terrific fire. I replied I thought it was the prelude either to a retreat or an assault. After standing here for some time and finding the enemy did not lessen the elevation of his pieces we walked down to the

*Major William Galbraith Mitchell, AAG and senior ADC to Hancock.

left still outside of the line of battle, the men peering at us curiously from behind the stone wall as we passed along. As we approached the left of my division the line made a slight inclination to the front, beyond which was the spring alluded to in the description of the ground." 86

The only battery mentioned specifically in Gibbon's narrative was that of Lieutenant Alonzo Cushing--Battery A, 4th United States Regular Artillery. Cushing's Battery held the ground just behind the Angle, supported by troops of Webb's Brigade.

"At this time we were about 150 feet back of the stone wall, and our limbers were just over the crest of the hill, where they were more protected from the shot of the enemy. The firing became something terrible. Down in the valley between us and the opposite ridge was a wheat field.'

"I remember how beautiful it looked a few minutes before the awful cannonading opened, but within 15 minutes after it began the whole landscape was enveloped in such a cloud of smoke that nothing could be seen.'

"After the firing had been going on about 15 minutes a shot struck No. 3 gun--I remember it well--and tore away one wheel. In the terrible excitement the gunners of No. 3 got panic-stricken and started to run just as soon as they saw their gun was dismounted. There is always an extra wheel with the caisson, but the men in their fright had forgotten this. Lieut. Cushing had not. Seeing the men run, he drew his revolver and called out: "Sergt. Watson, come back to your post. The first man who leaves his gun again I'll blow his brains out!" In two minutes No. 3 was thundering away again as hot as ever.'

"At about this time, probably about 2 o'clock, the smoke became so dense that we could see nothing on the other side of the valley. It was a bright day, but the sun through the smoke looked like a great red ball. . . . All around was the great cloud of smoke. Below us we could occasionally get a glimpse of the green wheatfield, and the very fury of the cannonading seemed to send waves across it like gusts of wind. . . .'

"It was no longer of any use attempting to train our guns on any particular spot, so we gave them all the proper elevation and kept on loading and firing as rapidly as possible. A little later on four of our guns had been struck by solid shot and dismounted so that we had only two left. . . ." 87

⁸⁶ John Gibbon, Personal Recollections of the Civil War (Dayton, 1978 reprint), pp. 146-150.

⁸⁷ Christopher Smith, "Bloody Angle," in Gettysburg Newspaper Clippings, vol. 4, pp. 41-42.

Next to Cushing's Battery, on the left, was Brown's Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery. Brown's Battery had suffered heavily on the previous day when it fought in a forward position in the wheatfield valley described by Christopher Smith. On this third day the Rhode Island battery was commanded by First Lieutenant William S. Perrin due to the wounding of T. Fred Brown on July 2. This battery was destined to a fame of curious sorts because of an incident that took place during this cannonade of July 3:

"During this fierce cannonade one of the guns of Battery B was struck by a rebel shell, which exploded killing two cannoneers who were in the act of loading. No. 1, William Jones, had stepped to his place in front, between the muzzle of the piece and wheel on the right side, and, having swabbed the gun, stood with sponge staff reversed (which is also the rammer) waiting for the charge to be inserted by No. 2. Alfred G. Gardner, No. 2, had stepped to his place, between the muzzle of the piece and wheel on the left side, and, taking the ammunition from No. 5, was in the act of inserting the charge when a shell struck the face of the muzzle, left side of the bore, and exploded. No. 1 was killed instantly by a fragment of the shell, which cut the top of the left side of his head completely off. He fell with his head toward the enemy, while the sponge staff was thrown two or three yards beyond him.

"Alfred G. Gardner was struck in the left shoulder, almost tearing his arm off. He lived a few minutes. . . .

"Sergt. Albert Straight, and the remaining cannoneers, tried to load the piece, but, in placing a charge in the muzzle of the gun, they found it impossible to ram it home. Again and again, with rammer and an axe, they endeavored to drive in the shot, but their efforts were futile, as the depression of the muzzle was too great, and the attempt had to be abandoned. As the piece cooled off the shot became firmly fixed in the bore of the gun.

"This piece was the so called 'Gettysburg Gun' of Battery B, First Regiment Rhode Island Light Artillery."⁸⁸

Another account of this same famous incident was written by Corporal J. M. Dye, a detached volunteer from the 140th Pennsylvania serving with the

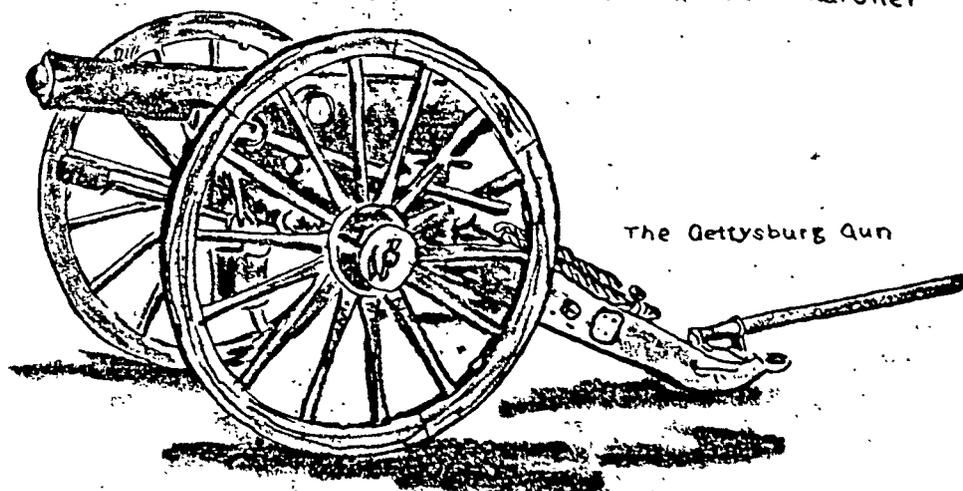
⁸⁸ John H. Rhodes, The History of Battery B, First Regiment Rhode Island Light Artillery (Providence, 1894), pp. 209-210.



SERG'T ALBERT STRAIGHT



Alfred G. Gardner



The Gettysburg Gun

battery, who wrote this account on the day of battle:

"Billy Jones and old Mr. Gardner were killed, and my No. 3 wounded, and went to the rear; my No. 4 was played out and lay on the ground, I tried to get him up to thumb vent, while the sergeant and myself tried to load the gun. But he wouldn't budge, so I got a stone and tearing off a piece of my shirt laid it on the vent. I then went and held the shot in place, which the sergeant had placed in the gun, while he swung on the rammer. I had to hold the shot in on account of a dent in the muzzle, made by the rebs' shell which killed Jones and Gardner, and we could not get it in. Some one came with an axe, and as they were going to make a strike with it, a rebel shell

struck the cheek and exploded knocking out a spoke; this raised the gun up on one wheel, but did not dismount it, but it settled back. This put a stop in trying to load it; the gun, in cooling, had clamped on to the shot, so that we could not get it out again, and the gun went to the rear with the shot in the muzzle.'" ⁸⁹

About 2:30 P.M. the Rhode Island battery's fire slackened due to lack of ammunition and men, and General Alexander S. Webb was desperate for someone to replace the guns. Webb's position was not the best, but was enhanced by the fire-power of a battery on his left near the copse of trees, to supplement the fire of Cushing's Battery in his center. When Brown's guns began to lose their effectiveness, Webb was understandably concerned about replacing them with fresh pieces and men. The battery which eventually took Battery B, 1st Rhode Island's place was Captain Andrew Cowan's 1st New York Battery, originally posted on the Patterson Farm.

When the cannonade started, Cowan and his men were trying to relax under the trees near the farmhouse on the east side of Taneytown Road, near its junction with Granite Schoolhouse Lane. Cowan had just returned from the front lines, where he had been examining positions and estimating distances, when the shelling began. The air was soon full of shot and shell around his battery men, but the Confederate aim was too high--so high, in fact, that it even overshot the Taneytown Road and caused its most damage to the upper limbs of the trees under which Cowan's men lounged.

"Many of my men, however, scattered like partridges at the first burst and the deluge of limbs falling from the tree tops

"We moved out in to the road again and halted in column at the junction with the Taneytown road. There

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 210 n.

we were found soon after by Lieutenant Colonel Warner,^{*} of the artillery, with orders to put us in position on the front line near the extreme right of General Hays' division.

"Before passing through the grove beyond First Corps headquarters,^{**} I ordered the caissons to remain there in the pasture field, where they would be within easy call and less exposed to shells, which might explode some of their chests full of ammunition. When clear of the trees we turned to the right, at a brisk trot, until Colonel Warner pointed out a position for our guns. . . .

"We opened fire at once, directing our aim to the left oblique, where I had previously thought we might get in the best work.^{***} We fired very slowly, but there was a tremendous waste of ammunition going on. . . .

"On our right was Battery B, First New York regiment of artillery. . . . The cannonade continued for I do not know how long. . . . We had expended the forty-five rounds of shell and shrapnel ammunition carried in each of the six gun limbers, and the caisson limbers were coming up with full chests to take their place, when a staff officer, riding at furious speed from our right, shouted to me as his horse flew through the batter, 'Cease firing. Hold your fire for the infantry.'

"I gave the order 'Cease firing', but wondered what was meant by 'Hold your fire for the infantry'. . . . We were enveloped in smoke and could not get a view of anything in front of us.

"The smoke was clearing away when another officer, riding in the same headlong way, shouted to me as he swept toward the left, 'Report to General Webb on your right.' I hesitated a moment, as General Webb belonged to the Second Corps, while we were serving with the First Corps, under General Doubleday. . . . But, looking toward our right, I saw an officer standing near the clump of trees, waving his hat at me,^{****} and I saw that a battery at the left of the trees was withdrawing."⁹⁰

*Lieut. Col. E. R. Warner, Hunt's inspector of artillery.

**Patterson Woods.

***firing in the direction of Kemper's line.

****General Webb.

⁹⁰Cowan, "When Cowan's Battery Withstood Pickett's Splendid Charge".

Before Cowan's move toward the clump of trees near the close of the cannonade, he was to the rear and left of Rorty's Battery B, 1st New York Light Artillery.⁹¹ Rorty himself would have been on a line with Cowan's Battery, but had moved forward from an earlier position in the morning. At this earlier position, Rorty's guns pointed

"almost directly toward the Coduri (sic) House. Soon there were a few shots from the ridge behind the Coduri House.*

"We were ordered to answer these shots. Almost the first shell we fired was defective, and it exploded at the muzzle of the gun. A piece of the shell wounded one of the men lying by a wall in front, who were supporting the battery. We then moved our battery farther forward, taking a position about 250 feet to the left of the clump of trees, called the Highwater Mark, and next on the left of Brown's Battery,"

*probably from Hill's artillery, which engaged in "needless" firing at the Bliss farm and Ziegler's Grove in the early morning of July 3.

The position as then held put Rorty's Battery "50 feet farther to the right and 50 feet farther to the front" than their current monument and flank markers indicate on present-day Hancock Avenue.⁹²

After the move by Rorty's Battery, one of its members volunteered to go out across the fields to the Codori farmhouse to fill his comrades' canteens with water. There he found an "open well with a windlass and rope to draw the water,"⁹³ and went about his chore unmolested by fire. The Codori buildings at that time were just behind the Union skirmish line along the Emmitsburg Road, but most other soldiers in Gibbon's and Doubleday's divisions

⁹¹Andrew Cowan, December 5, 1913 letter to John P. Nicholson, in Gettysburg Newspaper Clippings #6, Relating to the Battle, p. 207.

⁹²Elbert Corbin, "Pettit's Battery at Gettysburg," The National Tribune (February 3, 1910).

⁹³Ibid.

did not chance going to such an advanced position for water; they frequented the Codori spring (just west of the present Pennsylvania Memorial), the Patterson spring, and the wells at the Frey and Hummelbaugh farmhouses.

It was not until after the return of the water-bearer that Rorty's Battery again became seriously engaged in artillery dueling, and that was during the cannonade:

"We soon were covered with smoke from exploding shells and from our own guns. We could see very little beyond our position. . . . After almost an hour of constant firing we almost stopped. Several were killed and others wounded. . . . During this period a shell took the top out of the wheel next to me, and with a comrade I went back to the caisson for a reserve wheel. The shell that smashed the wheel, killed the two wheel horses on the limber and also their driver.

"We soon had on the new wheel. About this time two of the ammunition chests on the batteries to our right exploded. This was at the clump of trees to our right."* 94

*These should be the same chests which Gibbon also remembered exploding in Cushing's Battery.

The Nineteenth Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, which lay in rear of Rorty's second and final position, observed the fire of Rorty's Battery and the effects of the cannonade on the New Yorkers:

"Rorty's battery was in a position in front of the regiment. Five horses and the drivers of the leading gun fell among the prostrate infantry men. Soon the third gun rolled helpless from its wheels. With but two guns left, heroic Rorty continued to fire. Then a caisson burst. Immediately his left piece was struck and shattered, and with one gun he continued. In half an hour, of sixty men, he had but four remaining and still the hero plied that single gun. Another shot, and casting off sword and coat the officer grasped the rammer." 95

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Waitt, p. 235.

One of the regiments in support of Rorty's Battery was the 19th Maine Infantry, part of Harrow's Brigade. Captain Charles E. Nash, commanding Company C of that regiment, wrote a description of the cannonade his unit endured in a letter dated July 29, 1863 from Warrenton Junction:

"Early in the afternoon, two pieces of Rebel artillery gave the signal. Almost instantly, shot and shell from two hundred pieces of artillery went screaming over our heads. Our own batteries immediately replied, and for two hours were hurled those masses of destruction and death. All passed over our heads, as we were in a place of comparative security, and only the premature explosion of a shell from either side was the source of much danger, save now and then a recochet shot from the enemy would plow along the ground, scattering the earth upon us. Only a few were hurt. By and by came relief. It requires less nerve to face the enemy man to man, in open field, than to lie down supinely while he hurls his missiles. There may be less danger in the latter process, but the testimony of all gives preference to the former. The enemy was advancing, and I assure you it was a relief at that particular time, as ten hours prostration on the ground, side by side with hundreds of the enemy's dead, in the scorching sun, cannot be termed an agreeable situation, to say nothing about the suspense which accompanies a battle of long duration." ⁹⁶

Various soldiers in the 1st Minnesota Infantry wrote their recollections of this period before the assault. Being in the same brigade as the 19th Maine, they suffered just about the same kind of fire. Sergeant John Plummer particularly remembered the opening of the cannonade, and the first shots:

"'About half past twelve o'clock, as we had gathered around one of our Lieuts. to hear the yesterday's Baltimore Clipper read, bang! comes one of their shells over us, striking about twenty yards from us!" ⁹⁷

After the cannonading got pretty well under way, the men of the 1st Minnesota in the brigade line conformed with the actions of those of their neighboring

⁹⁶John Day Smith, The History of the Nineteenth Regiment of Maine Volunteer Infantry 1862-1865 (Minneapolis, 1909), p. 99.

⁹⁷Anna A. Hage, "The Battle of Gettysburg As Seen by Minnesota Soldiers," Minnesota History, vol. 38 (June, 1963), p. 255.

regiments, and prostrated themselves for protection: This regiment, on the left of the division, was protected by a slight breastwork which it had constructed shortly after arriving at its place in line earlier that morning. It was described as a "slight barricade of stones, fence rails and knapsacks filled with dirt a little over knee-high."⁹⁸ Sergeant Alfred P. Carpenter described what happened to those men lying behind this protective barrier:

"All at once the guns opened and from morn till middle of afternoon it raged with terrific violence. Flat upon the ground we lay, while the vertical rays of the July sun rendered the heat almost intolerable

"The Rebels could not injure us much except by bursting shells in the air in front of us, and as their object was to silence our batteries they did us little damage, though shot and shell flew over us in such rapid succession that it was impossible to count them, and very near to our bodies at times, one shell actually tearing the knapsack from a man's back as he lay face downward. . . ."⁹⁹



"The Fate of the
Rail Fence"

Sergeant James A. Wright, also of the 1st Minnesota Regiment, found himself agreeing with General Gibbon concerning the "frightful" aspect of the cannonade. His description is also vivid as well, giving the non-participant an idea of what the cannonade looked like from the Union lines:

"The enemy's line of artillery was soon marked by banks of white vapor, from beneath which tongues of fire were incessantly darting; and the position of the Union line. . . was wreathed in flame and smoke; with the latter drifting over us in whirling clouds. . . . There was an incessant, discordant

⁹⁸ Andrews, p. 36.

⁹⁹ Hage, p. 255.

flight of shells, seemingly in and from all directions; howling, shrieking, exploding, tearing, smashing and destroying. . . .

The ground was torn up, fences and trees knocked to splinters, rocks and small stones were flying in the air, ammunition boxes and caissons were exploded. . . guns were dismantled and men and horses were torn in pieces. . . . We had been badly scared many times before this but never quite so badly as then." 100



A Bomb-Shell in an Artillery Camp-fire

In Hall's Brigade, the 19th Massachusetts occupied the second line of the brigade on the crest of Cemetery Ridge. From there Captain John P. Reynolds could see Lee's artillery massing in front before the cannonade. It was, therefore, an anxious time while the regiment awaited the expected bombardment:

"An inauspicious silence hung over all with a common natural dread of anticipation. The Division lay resting on its arms, with scarcely a movement to disturb the universal hush. On the crest of the ridge lay the Nineteenth Massachusetts and Forty-Second New York, and in front to the left, was Rorty's Battery.

"The day was extremely hot, and many improvised shelters were made by sticking the muskets into the ground up to the shank of the bayonets, which were of course fixed, fastening the corners of a blanket between the two, the width of a blanket apart, and affixing the opposite corners of the blanket to the two ramrods also stuck in the ground."

"Just at one o'clock, the sharp report of a shotted gun from the enemy, broke the oppressive silence, and a round shot came bounding over the ridge like a rubber ball, followed by a second from the same direction. At the sound of the first gun, which was plainly a signal, Lieut. Sherman S. Robinson of Co. 'A' jumped to his feet just in time to be hit in the left side by the second one, which disemboweled him. . . . A third shot struck the shelters and gun-stacks of the Nineteenth Massachusetts, followed by every Confederate

gun on Seminary Ridge, in one grand salvo concentrated upon Gibbon's Division. For one hour and thirty minutes the roaring of cannon, and bursting of shells, was so incessant that the ear could not distinguish the individual explosions. It was one grand raging clashing of sound, described as the most terrific cannonading of the war. The woods in front were lined with flame and smoke, which together moves one writer to say 'pandemonium broke loose, was zephyr to a cyclone in comparison.'

"The men lay prostrate for protection. Just in front of the Nineteenth, the summit swelled perhaps two feet above their backs. . . . Five horses and two drivers of Rorty's Battery fell among the prostrate infantry men. Two guns had already been disabled. A third rolled helpless from its carriage. With the two remaining guns, heroic Rorty continued his work. Then a caisson burst. Immediately his left-piece was struck and shattered. And still with one gun Rorty continued his firing. In half an hour, of sixty men, he had but four remaining, and casting off coat and sabre, the officer grasped the rammer. The heated gun would scarce receive the charge, and he called for water to cool the piece."¹⁰¹

Colonel Arthur Devereux, commanding the 19th Massachusetts Regiment, also noted the performances of the New York battery in his front during this cannonade, and reported to his state's adjutant general:

"For two hours the cannonade was incessant, and we knew, of course, that it was to be followed by an infantry assault. All the infantry were lying down and suffered comparatively little from the enemy's fire, but our batteries suffered severely. Rorty's battery, behind which I lay, lost all of its officers and many men, and for the last hour of the cannonade I manned the battery with men from my own regiment, bringing ammunition from the caissons and furnishing all the help possible from the infantry troops."¹⁰²

The regimental history of the Nineteenth Massachusetts Infantry compares favorably with those unpublished memoirs of Captain Reynolds in regards to the cannonade, particularly concerning the objects of the first few shells:

¹⁰¹[Captain John Reynolds]; "The Nineteenth Massachusetts at Gettysburg, July 2-3-4" (typescript copy, GNMP library), p. 6.

¹⁰²Waite, p. 253.

"The report from the second gun had not died away before another shot came over the ridge, striking among the gun stacks of the Nineteenth Massachusetts, and then every rebel gun on Seminary Ridge opened in one grand salvo, with concentric fire on Gibbon's Division. . . .

"The air was full of grass and dirt cast from the soil by the jagged rebel iron. . . . The rain of shot and shell was continuous. Fragments of bursting shell were flying everywhere. There seemed to be no place where they did not strike and no spot from whence they did not come. Officers and men alike, keeping their alignment, crawled to places of apparent cover. Some got behind the few large boulders, others took advantage of depressions in the ground.

"So thick did the missiles fly that in a few moments nearly all of the inverted muskets were knocked down or shot off; pieces of shell were plainly visible as they hissed by; limber boxes and caissons were hit and blew up with stunning reports; the battery horses were nearly all shot down." 103

The 20th Massachusetts Regiment, in the front line beneath the crest of Cemetery Ridge near the slashing, agreed that the cannonade at Gettysburg was probably the worst of the war, and certainly the worst that unit had been under since the beginning of their own service:

"When an army is in position ready and waiting for an attack, the general feeling is that the sooner it commences the better. All nervousness and unrest at once disappear, as soon as the action is begun, for other thoughts crowd out doubt and fear and nerve the men up to meet the occasion. . . . For two hours we lay behind our slight defenses with the air roaring and growling in our ears as if enraged with pain by the ragged iron that lashed and tore it in its flight. It was thought that at Malvern Hill, Antietam, and Fredericksburg we had heard war at its loudest note, but now we learned that it had been playing only on one of its minor keys up to this time; and perhaps never since have so many guns been concentrated on so narrow a space." 104

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 235-237 passim.

¹⁰⁴ George A. Bruce, The Twentieth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 1861-1865 (Boston, 1906), pp. 290-291.

On the left of Harrow's Brigade were the demi-brigade of Colonel Gates and Stannard's Brigade of Vermonters. Forming the second line behind these brigades was the remainder of Stone's and Biddle's Brigades, lying behind the crest of Cemetery Ridge. These troops, however, were affected as much by the cannonade (if not more so) than the soldiers on the front line. Recollections written by John Musser of the 143rd Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment, some two months after the battle, give some indication of the kind of problems encountered by these second line troops during the artillery fire:

" Not a shot was fired at us until about 3 o'clock. We had left our mounted guns stuck in the ground, the boys were prospecting around, some lay lazily on the ground, some sleeping, boiling coffee. 2 solitary guns were fired in quick succession. It was the signal for the attack, there was one grand rush among officers and men for their positions.

"For 3 hours the earth shook, the very air was alive with iron hail. Such a storm of shell and solid shot was never heard before. No place was safe. They passed through the regt. killing and wounding, bursting over us, ploughing through the earth under us. It was our duty to remain where we were. There was no more lounging and not without casualties. We had 4 killed and 21 wounded out of less than 200. We remained quietly and firmly awaited orders." 105

The position of Stone's Brigade, while described by many as behind the crest of Cemetery Ridge (some 200-300 feet east of the Union front line), may have been between that crest and the front lines. John Nesbit, member of Company D, 149th Pennsylvania Regiment, described the position of his regiment in such a way that it is inferred that the regiment at least was in this latter position:

"At about 11 o'clock we were moved to Gen. Meade's headquarters, and to the left up to the ridge; our batteries were being stationed along the line, and

¹⁰⁵ John D. Musser, September 15, 1863 letter to ?, in John D. Musser Papers, Ronald Boyer Collection, Military History Institute.

soon we were formed in front of one of them to the left and rear of the clump of trees which was that day made famous in the records of the battlefield, and ordered to rest in place.

"At 1:15 p. m. the signal guns were fixed (sic), and the ball opened. Their artillery commenced firing along their entire front, and was promptly answered by our batteries.

"The cannonading was incessant and terrific. We had no protection whatever, but lay in the hot sun, under the fire of both armies, flattened out and hugging the ground, awaiting further developments.

"The battery in our rear was about 20 feet back; their line of fire was not more than three feet above us, and the pressure and concussion was so great that the grass between and in front of our men flattened to the ground at every discharge.

"The fire of the enemy seemed to be above our batteries at this part of the line, and went over the ridge, though an occasional ball or shell would knock a hole in the ground or burst above us. Under this fire we were moved up to a broken-down stone fence, * the brigade being closed up to the left of the bunch of trees." 106

*The location of this "stone fence" is unknown. No stone walls are indicated on the Warren or Cope maps in that area except for worm or stone and rider fencing enclosing the Hummelbaugh farm fields. However, the Warren map indicates that the closest of these fences would have been 400-500 feet from the Union first line, and some distance behind (or east) of the crest of Cemetery Ridge. (See Location Map, p. 8)

In an earlier account, Nesbit had written that the "artillery corps was stationed" in rear of the regiment, and that the regiment was in the front line.¹⁰⁷ The Bachelder maps, as well as the Official Records, contradict this implication and place the 149th Pennsylvania with the rest of Stone's Brigade in the second line:

¹⁰⁶J. W. Nesbit, "Recollections of Pickett's Charge," The National Tribune (November 16, 1916), in Gettysburg Newspaper Clippings, vol. 6, p. 184.

¹⁰⁷"The line of fire from our guns must have been very close above us. It was terrible, though we were really safer from rebel shells in the front line than were those in the rear. . . ." Nesbit, General History of Company D, p. 18.

Members of the 150th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment presumably told their regimental historian the details of their experiences during the cannonade, since the author of that history was not present during the July 3rd battle:

"The cannonade which preceded Pickett's charge, in the afternoon, is remembered by all who were exposed to it as something frightful and altogether unexampled. While it was in progress the 150th lay back of the brow of the hill, not far from the clump of trees which served as a guide to the rebel advance, and hugging the ground closely, it met with comparatively few casualties. When the enemy's movement was developed, the regiment occupied a position along the east side of what is now Hancock Avenue, a little southeast of the point known as 'High Water Mark', forming a part of the second line of defence." 108

The other half of Biddle's Brigade (that not in the front line with Gates) was also in this second line of battle, and apparently on the right of Stone's Brigade. Alexander Biddle, acting commander of the 121st Pennsylvania Regiment, described the position and experiences of his regiment during the cannonade:

"On the morning of the third day it took up a position in rear of the centre in front of General Doubleday's headquarters, and was engaged in clearing the fields of obstructions. A small house to the left and rear was in use as a field hospital.

". . . . Near the position of the 121st a man's arm was shattered by a shell; a horse was killed by another; a spent round bullet struck a man lying down, in the middle of the cap, he picked it up and the men laughed; some spent round shot ricocheted like cricket balls. A piece of shell exploding overhead fell on General Doubleday's back and shoulder.* A battery of artillery moved up and took the position of the 121st, which moved further to the left. Three regiments also passed to the front before the final assault." ** 109

*Doubleday was wounded AFTER the cannonade. . .

**maybe Stannard's Vermont Brigade.

108 Thomas Chamberlin, History of the One Hundred and Fiftieth Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, Second Regiment, Bucktail Brigade, rev. ed. (Philadelphia, 1905), pp. 150-151.

109 Survivors' Association, pp. 131-132.

The regimental history itself continued the narrative which had described its position on the morning of July 3, and gave more details of the period of the bombardment:

"Shortly after getting into position the great artillery duel commenced, and for two hours fairly made the earth tremble; but, singularly enough, although the solid shot flew over and around the men, and the shell burst over them continually, filling the air with constant roar and making a pandemonium for the time being, but three men in the regiment were wounded. . . . A caisson, filled with ammunition, driving rapidly to its position, exploded directly in rear of the regiment, no vestige of the driver being seen afterward.

"The ground was plowed up by cannon balls and the clay thrown over the men, but they knew how to keep close to Mother Earth in times like this, and all except the three above mentioned escaped injury." 110

Chapman Biddle, colonel of the 121st Pennsylvania Regiment, and temporarily commanding the brigade, wrote his report of these events on the day following the battle:

"On the morning of the 3^d, the regiment was moved to the left, to a field nearly opposite to our left center, where it remained during the morning, exposed somewhat to the enemy's fire. Toward 1 p. m. a violent cannonading from a very large number of pieces of artillery was concentrated on our position, which continued for upward of two hours and a half without intermission, destroying much of the breastwork sheltering the men, and wounding 3 of them. During the hottest part of this fire the regiment was moved in good order to an adjoining field to the left, and placed behind a breastwork of rails near the crest of the hill, where it remained" 111

The troops in front of Biddle's and Stone's Brigades would have consisted of Gates' demi-brigade of the 151st Pennsylvania Regiment and the 20th New York State Militia, and Stannard's large (but incomplete) Vermont Brigade.

¹¹⁰Ibid., pp. 59-60.

¹¹¹Official Records, vol. 27, part 1, p. 316.

As already discussed in the first chapter, Gates' two regiments were on a line with Harrow's and Hall's Brigades, while various portions of the Vermont Brigade were located both a little to the rear and a little to the front of the left of the 151st Pennsylvania Infantry. In its later publication, the 151st Regiment stated that they "were the only regiment of their brigade detailed to hold a position on the left of Hancock's line." The reason they did not mention the 20th N. Y. S. M. was probably due to the fact that the former provost guard regiment had joined them just previous to the battle and they left again when it was over, and the men of the 151st never felt that the New York outfit was part of its brigade. The publication continued, however, to recognize that the "right of the 151st rested on the left of the 20th N. Y., and about 200 feet east of Stannard's Vermont Brigade,"112

Captain Walter Owen has left us an early account of the 151st Pennsylvania Infantry's participation in this afternoon's cannonade:

"On the morning of the 3d the terrific artillery duel opened and the shells flew thick and fast over and around us, though doing us no harm except that of slightly wounding Lts. Blodget of Co. 'F.' and Lt. Oliver of Co. 'D.' both lying close to me, one on either side. Nothing was done by the infantry except picketing until some time in the afternoon, I think about three or four o'clock. . . ." 113

The 20th New York State Militia, forming the right of the "demi-brigade", was in an awkward situation, having only joined the rest of Biddle's Brigade on the afternoon of June 30 (the day before the battle). Because Colonel Gates outranked Captain Owens he was placed in command of the two regiments while they were on this "detached" duty in the Union first line. The reactions

112 "Record of a Nine-Month Regiment at the Battle of Gettysburg--The 151st Regiment, Penna. Volunteers" (Hamburg, Pa., 188_).

113 Owen, August 6, 1866 letter to Bachelder, p. 10.

of the men of the 20th New York were apparently different from all other regiments and batteries on this section of the ridge during the cannonade, if we can believe the few accounts left to us by their historians and officers. While the remainder of the Second and First Corps was hugging the ground and finding every means to find relief from the heat and shelling, the 20th New York was comparatively nonchalant:

"We took position in the front line, and never changed it until the attack by the enemy on the third day. . . . We remained in precisely the position we took up in the afternoon of the 2d, with, I think, a Pennsylvania regiment on our left.* Some time before the attack on the 3d, a brigade of troops moved up to our rear, and remained there during the cannonading. I understood they were nine months men and were Vermont troops--Stannard's brigade. I recollect them lying in our rear during the cannonading; more especially from two circumstances; 1st, one man was killed directly behind me, it was supposed by a cannon ball. He was thrown over and never moved a muscle--was stone dead. 2d, I remarked the difference between them (new men) and ours (old soldiers); ours during the cannonading were smoking and joking, while the others lay there hugging the ground, and big drops of perspiration stood out on their foreheads and faces."¹¹⁴

*This would be the 151st Pennsylvania Infantry. His "I think" is ironic in that the 20th N. Y. S. M. was complaining in later years that it did not get sufficient recognition for its contribution in battle because the other brigades and regiments did not know who they were and made no apparent effort to find out!

This account by one of the officers of the 20th N. Y. S. M. is interesting because of its uniqueness in recalling the attitude of the activated provost guards in relationship to "green" troops. When one considers the very candid comments by a division commander such as John Gibbon (who commanded the Iron Brigade in those days when it got its nickname for fearlessness), the above account of "smoking and joking" soldiers seems not only pompous,

¹¹⁴Lt. Col. J. B. Hardenburgh, October 9, 1878 letter to Theodore B. Gates, in Theodore B. Gates, The "Ulster Guard" and the War of the Rebellion (New York, 1879), p. 470.

but perhaps untrue as well. As for referring to the Vermonters as "new men", and by implication frightened of gunfire, Hardenburgh's statement is also misleading. If the Vermonters were so cowardly on July 3, why were they so brave on July 2 (when they were even "greener"), when they charged Confederate troops and batteries, while veteran soldiers ran away and could not be stopped?

But how did the Vermonters record their own actions during this cannonade? Surprisingly, this nine-month unit left us one of the most honest regimental histories:

" . . . some when we first heard the roar of cannon were suddenly stricken with symptoms of cannon fever, and could not march any further in the direction of the battlefield, and some even after arriving at Gettysburg when looking for water wandered too far away and lost themselves behind trees, fences and walls and the banks of the brooks and forgot to find themselves and return until after the fighting was all over."¹¹⁵

This account was followed by specific examples of cowardice during the battle and cannonade, even to the extent of naming the skulking soldiers individually.

These Vermonters probably longed for the cool Green Mountains on the afternoon of July 3, since they, like their neighbors and their enemy, suffered from the heat of the sun:

"We still lay in the front line expecting every moment to go into the fray. The day was terribly hot and as we lay in the open field without shelter the fierce rays of that July sun beat down upon us with such force that it was almost unbearable. Our captain A. J. Davis, was struck down by this heat. . . ."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵Sturtevant, p. 327.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 797.

Previous to this cannonade the 13th Vermont was to the left and rear of the demi-brigade of Gates, but the regiment moved forward during the afternoon.

"Our location in the afternoon was about one-third of a mile south of Cemetery Hill between Taneytown and Emmetsburg Roads, almost at the foot of the west slope of Cemetery Ridge some two hundred yards from its crest, just at the left and in advance of the place now called the High Water Mark of the Rebellion, On our immediate right and in the same front line were Generals Alexander S. Webb, Norman J. Hall's brigades of General John Gibbon's division Hancock's corps and Colonel Thomas A. Smith's brigade of General Alexander Hays's division, Hancock's corps, and in rear supporting were Graham, Ward and De Trobriand's brigades of the Third Corps, and at the immediate left and front of our brigade was an open field for considerable distance. Our nearest supports on the left was McGilvery's reserve artillery which was well up the slope to our left and rear, advantageously situated to send death and destruction into the ranks of any charging columns that might cross the open field before them from any direction with a raking fire. . . .

"The left flank of General Stannard's brigade was well down on the low flat ground of Plum Run behind a thick copse that lined its banks and mostly out of sight of the enemy, and therefore suffered but little from Longstreet's artillery. . . .

"The two long hours of cannonading was so appalling and fraught with constant apprehension, that the passing of each minute seemed a life time. We of the 13th now realized the value of the low breastwork of rails that protected us during the deadly storm and were grateful to Lieutenant Albert Clark and Sergeant George H. Scott and their associates for their foresight and timely efforts." 117

After about two hours of this "fiercest possible" shelling both sides slackened their fire. Colonel Alexander, on the Confederate side, was still performing his duties as officer in command of the artillery line:

¹¹⁷Ibid., pp. 297-299.



Colonel E. P. Alexander

"I stood behind a tree with my glass and watched the Yankee line of fire carefully for forty minutes, when there being no material diminution of it, and our ammunition, I knew, burning low, I sent word to Pickett (and Pettigrew also) that he must advance then if at all, before our ammunition burnt out. Five minutes afterwards the most formidable Yankee batteries limbered up and travelled. I waited five minutes more to see if others were going to replace them but none came and there was a gap of four hundred yards at least in their line. I then sent two other messengers to Pickett to hurry up as our fire was already slackening materially, but it was still at least five, and I believe ten minutes before his lines went thru my guns and then our ammunition was reduced to from five to fifteen rounds per gun. I had sent for my reserved nine guns, but some General* . . . had sent them to some other position and they could not be found." 118

*The general was afterwards ascertained to have been Pendleton.

On the other side of the battlefield, Captain Reynolds of the 19th Massachusetts described the first moments after Alexander's guns quit firing:

"After an hour and forty minutes the firing ceased as suddenly as it had begun and the living stood up and 'shook themselves'. Dense lines of smoke obscured the field in front, settled and rolled along; fresh guns were hurried to the crest. . . ." 119

"From Longstreet's line the cannon roared,
The sod by iron hail was torn,
When o'er all the space'
From Ridge to Hill,
'Came the calm before the storm. . . ."
John H. Fow

118 Alexander, July 17, 1863 letter to father

119 Reynolds, "The Nineteenth Massachusetts at Gettysburg," p. 8.

Chapter 4: The Advance--

"They are Virginia's ornament and pride"¹²⁰

"And from the wood
Where Reynolds died
To angled wall by blood baptized
Came Southland's chivalry and pride."¹²¹

As the last shots of Alexander's guns bounded along and beyond the Union line on Cemetery Ridge, the messages of Alexander would have reached Pickett and Pettigrew. Pickett rode over to his commanding officer, General Longstreet (who may have been, or at least should have been somewhere in the Spangler Woods area), and there received the much-publicized tearful nod to proceed with the attack. As the command was passed down the line, Pickett's Division rose to its feet, and prepared for its advance across the open fields to the Union line. Kemper's Brigade, on the extreme right of Pickett's line, would have to advance over 1500 yards to reach its ultimate objective. Armistead and Garnett would have had to advance about 1200 yards (the approximate distance between the eastern fringe of Spangler Woods and Gibbon's line).

The ground over which they were to advance was described later by various of Pickett's staff officer. Walter Harrison wrote about both the enemy's line and the terrain which they would have to cross over:

"A loose stone-fence or wall, common in the country, ran along the side of this ridge, offering cover and protection to his infantry, while a common rail-fence running

¹²⁰James Barron Hope, "Memorial Poem," in Walker, p. 576.

¹²¹Fow, "Gettysburg".

through the bottom lands presented an obstacle to the advance of our men. From the crest of the hill, where our men first became exposed to the direct fire, down the descent, and up to the enemy's front must have been, I should think, half a mile, at least, of entirely open and exposed ground."¹²²

In the brigades of the division, however, the memories were often not as cold or detached as that of Harrison. Captain R. A. Bright rode from Pickett to give the order to General James Kemper to begin the charge, and to direct his advance towards a "red barn" (sic).¹²³ Kemper remembered the incident and the events that followed:

"When the artillery ceased firing, a staff officer of Pickett's brought the order to advance, but delivering it first to Garnett and Pickett [Armistead], who were on my left, they got the start of me. They moved off in diverging lines, creating between their brigades a gap into which I quickly marched--thus throwing the whole division into a single line of battle. (Garnett, Armistead and myself managed our respective brigades, during this advance, without orders from anyone; I never saw Pickett who I understood remained with Longstreet). The alignment of the entire division, when thus formed, was beautifully preserved. . . . My impression is that the distance between the Federals and ourselves, when our advance began, was about 1,200 yards, and that my command marched down a tolerably clear slope, across a sort of valley and up a rise before reaching the enemy. During most of this advance the enemy's infantry were distinctly visible, and my recollection is that there were three lines of infantry in front of me--all more or less protected by breastworks and rifle-pits--the front line behind what appeared to be a very strong line of rock-work. The infantry fire upon us was terrible for a long time before we used a gun. My five regiments were quickly cut down to companies: but the men as quickly closed up and in good order restored the alignment from time to time. I never saw the behavior of men in battle equal to that shown by my command in this advance. The danger to be met was plainly visible. It was as well calculated to terrify as any mortal eye ever saw. . . . At the most critical moment, our line was a dress-

¹²²Harrison, p. 93.

¹²³Stine, p. 539.

parade line and the marching was beautifully exact. We moved at quick time--even if necessary we could not have moved faster, for the men were greatly exhausted by the sweltering heat and the terrible artillery fire to which they had been so long exposed."¹²⁴

This account was written in 1869, but even by that time Kemper seemed to have some parts of this story confused. Kemper's recollections are the only ones this writer came across that put the brigades in the order of advance as indicated by his narrative:  ARMISTEAD KEMPER GARNETT 

No other participant in any of the brigades placed Armistead in any position other than that of behind and to the left of Garnett; and no one ever put Garnett's Brigade on the extreme right. However, Kemper reinforced this earlier account with a similar version of the advance in a letter to Bachelder some sixteen years later than the previous memoir:

"Very soon after the fire of the artillery ceased, a young officer of Pickett's staff galloped to my position and said 'Gen. Pickett orders you to advance your brigade immediately.'

"That was the only order I received during the battle, and on receiving it I looked up and saw Garnett and Armistead were already in line and apparently ready to advance, and it was evident they had received the order to advance before it was communicated to me. Quickly forming my brigade and moving it to the front, I observed there was a considerable interval between Garnett and Armistead and the interval was apparently increasing as it seemed to me those two brigades were advancing in somewhat divergent lines.

"At once I moved my brigade into the interval and thus made the line of battle of the division a connected and continuous line; and at once I communicated with both Garnett and Armistead who, seeing what I had done and promptly cooperating with me, rectified their alignment by mine, and all during the subsequent advance the right and left brigades 'dressed' on the centre brigade. During the whole of the advance Garnett was immediately on my right and Armistead was immediately on my left. From first to last I saw nothing of Archer, or of Pettigrew, or of Davis, or of Heth's division, or of Pender's command. . . ."¹²⁵

¹²⁴Kemper, September 20, 1869 letter to E. P. Alexander.

¹²⁵Kemper, February 4, 1886 letter to John B. Bachelder, in Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society. Reel 1, pp. 285-286.

This version is basically the same as the preceding, earlier account and is interesting also in that Kemper repeats the charge that he basically went into the attack without orders. It is well to keep this in mind in light of later developments in the advance, and in remembering that many people later asked questions concerning the leadership of both Pickett and Longstreet during this charge.

Captain R. A. Bright himself wrote his version of the attack, including his message to Kemper:

"When I reached General Kemper, he stood up, removing a handkerchief from under his hat, with which he had covered his face to keep the gravel knocked up by the fierce artillery fire from his eyes. . . . Then Col. Louis Williams, of the 1st Virginia Regiment, came to me and said, 'Captain Bright, I wish to ride my mare up,' and I answered: 'Colonel Williams, you cannot do it. Have you not just heard me give the order to your general to go up on foot?' He said: 'But you will let me ride. I am sick to-day, and, besides that, remember Williamsburg,'* . . . I answered: 'Mount your mare, and I will make an excuse for you.' General Garnett, who had been injured by a kick while passing through the wagon train at night, had been allowed to ride; Colonel Hunton, of the same brigade, also rode, being unable to walk. . . .

"Colonel Williams fell earlier in the fight. His mare went riderless almost to the stone wall and was caught when walking back by Capt. William C. Marshall, of Dearing's Battalion. His own horse, Lee, having been killed, he rode Colonel Williams' mare away after the fight. . . .

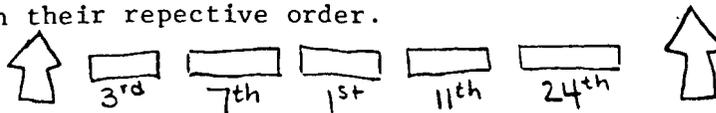
"During the advance General Pickett and staff were about twenty yards in rear of the column.

"When we had gone about four hundred yards, the General said to me: 'Captain, you have lost your spurs to-day instead of gaining them.' Riding on his right side, I looked at once at my left boot, and saw that the shank of my spur had been mashed around, and the rowel was looking toward the front, the work of a piece of shell, I suppose, but that was the first I knew of it."¹²⁶

*Williams had been wounded at Williamsburg in 1862.

¹²⁶R. A. Bright, "Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg," Confederate Veteran Magazine, vol. 37 (July 1930), 264.

In Kemper's Brigade the order of battle from right to left was as shown below, and the accounts of the participants in the advance will be recounted in their respective order.



The report of the 24th Virginia Infantry, never formally submitted and incorporated into the Official Records, described the activities of that regiment before and during the advance:

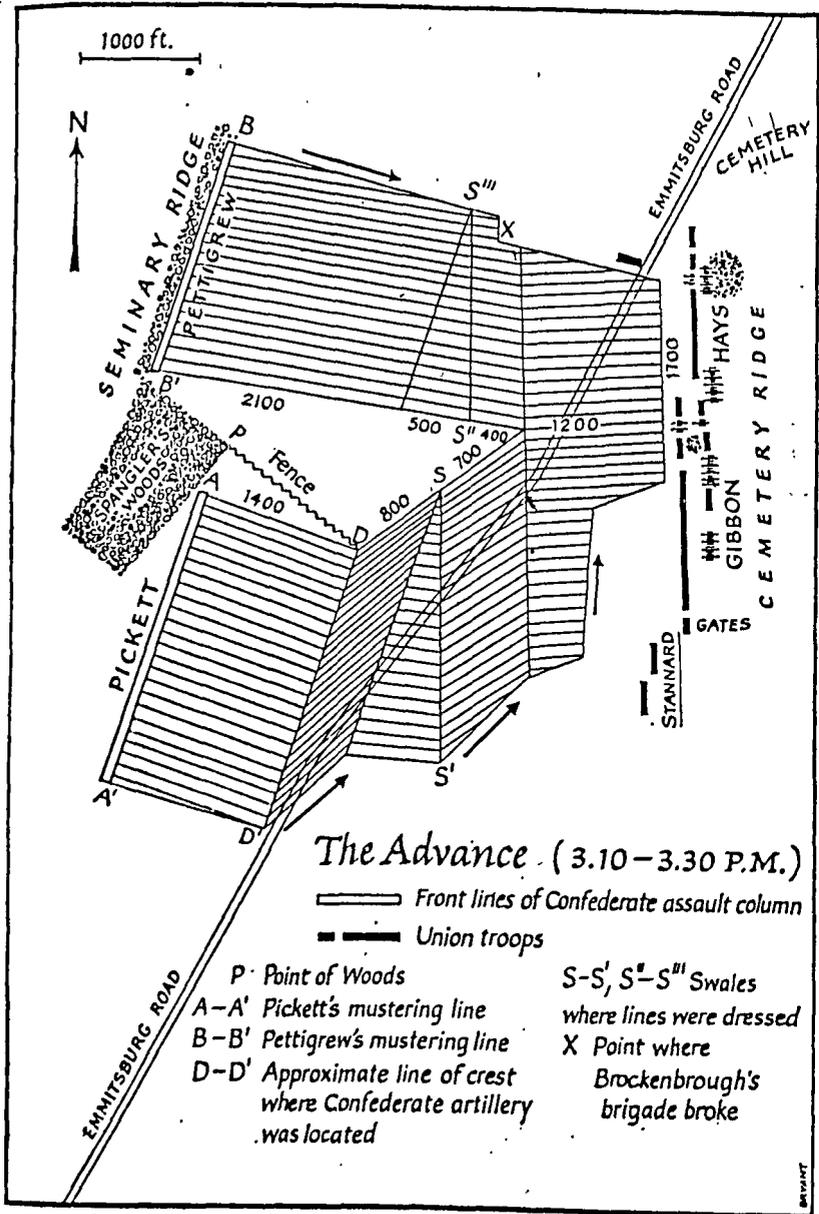
" . . . on the morning of the 3rd inst. this Regiment occupying the right of Kemper's Brigade moved to the front & was drawn up in line of battle just in rear of a line of artillery

"About noon our batteries opened upon the enemy & then commenced a terrific cannonade which lasted near two hours. The men & officers who were lying upon the ground in an open field enduring the heat of a broiling sun suffered considerably from the iron hail of the enemy's batteries. When our artillery ceased firing Col. William R. Terry gave the order to prepare to advance which was promptly obeyed. The first movement was by the left flank to the depth of a regt. & then by the front. The Regt. advanced deliberately in good order at common time, receiving as we cleared the top of the hill upon which our artillery was posted the musketry fire of the enemy which was not returned by the men until we had gotten nearer. We moved alternately by the front & by the left flank under a most deadly fire of infantry & artillery." 127

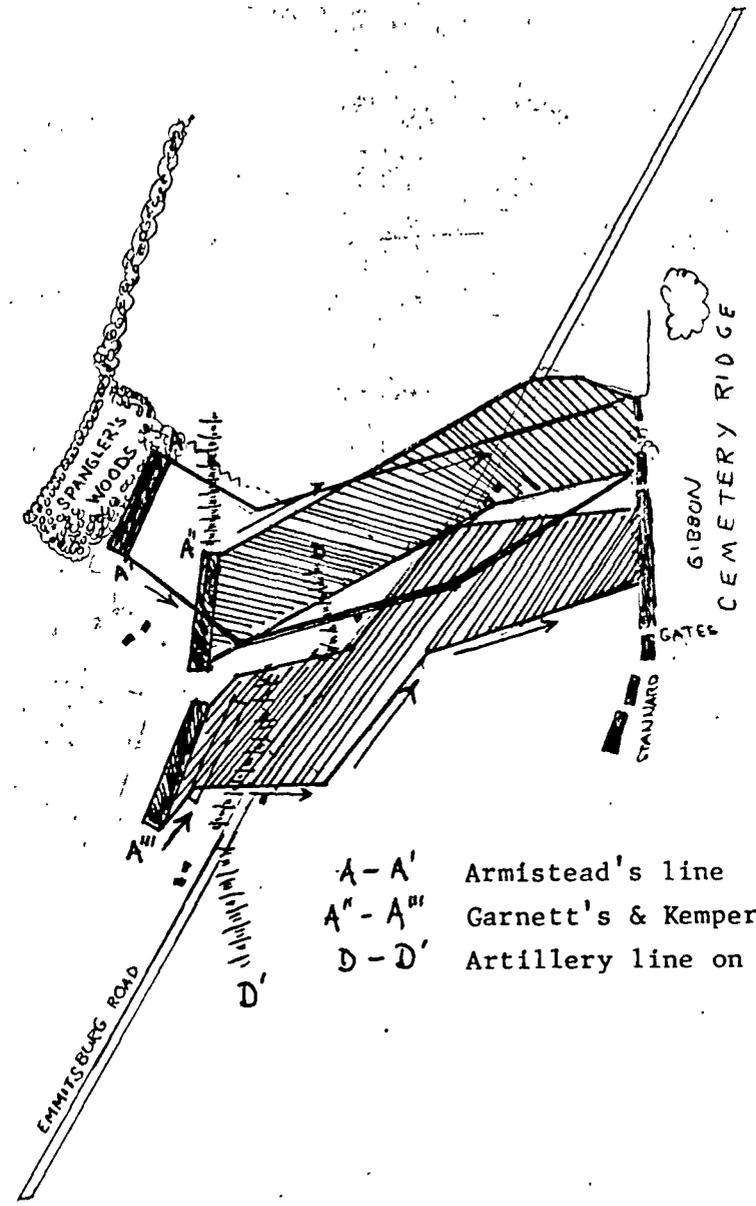
The advance as described by this officer would be slightly different from that as depicted by Stewart in his Pickett's Charge and shown in the illustration on the following page. Stewart's initial positions for the division are erroneous to begin with.

The 11th Virginia Regiment, on the left of the 24th, unfortunately has an account left by the regimental skirmishers and not by a company in the regimental or brigade line. First Lieutenant John T. James commanded

¹²⁷Report of _____ for 24th Virginia Infantry, July 9, 1863. George Pickett Papers, Duke University Library.



STEWART VERSION



GEORG VERSION

Company D and the skirmish line sent out by that regiment to clear the way for the advance by removing the pesky Federal sharpshooters and skirmishers near the eastern side of the Emmitsburg Road.

"After about an hour's work the artillery ceased firing and allowed the infantry to pass them. Slowly but steadily we marched forward, the line of battle suffering terribly; but we skirmishers being in front and extended across the field they shot over us, seeming to prefer the larger mass. I may remark here that this thing saved our company from the fearful loss that befell those in the regular line. By some mischance the line of battle, instead of following us, obliqued to the left, and by the time they came on a line with us we were on their right instead of being immediately in front, but as soon as I noticed this I tried to get my men to go with me to the brigade; but the noise was so great and the line of skirmishers so long I could not get them to hear me. . . . As the brigade reached nearer the enemy's position the death rate increased." 128

The oblique movement was made by Kemper's Brigade along the Emmitsburg Road, and will be mentioned later in both Confederate and Union accounts.

While the 1st Virginia does not have a good available account of its advance, we can at least present a narrative indicating the attitudes and environs of the regiment as it prepared for the advance:

". . . when you rise to your feet as we did today, I tell you the enthusiasm of ardent breasts in many cases ain't there, and instead of burning to avenge the insults of our country, families and altars and firesides, the thought is most frequently, Oh, if I could just come out of this charge safely how thankful would I be!

"We rise to our feet, but not all. There is a line of men still on the ground with their faces turned, men affected in 4 different ways. There are the gallant dead who will never charge again; the helpless wounded, many of whom desire to share the fortunes of this charge; the men who have charged on many a battlefield but who are now helpless from the heat of the sun; and the men in whom there is not sufficient courage to enable them to rise. . . .

". . . Some are actually fainting from the heat and dread. They have fallen to the ground overpowered by the suffocating heat and the terrors of that hour." 129

128Huston, "Storming Cemetery Hill," p. 22.

129Durkin, pp. 104-105.

The position of the 7th Virginia prior to the advance was described by Sergeant Major David Johnston, who was wounded in that cannonade:

" . . . as we formed into battle line /Kemper/ held the right, Garnett's brigade on the left, Armistead's a little to the left and rear. The line was formed as early as 7 o'clock A. M. Inspection of arms was had and everything put in readiness for the engagement then imminent. We moved out of a skirt of woods, went forward a short distance into a field, on which was standing a crop of rye not yet harvested. Our position was now on Seminary Ridge, four hundred yards or so back from the top under the crest; the line formed somewhat obliquely to the Emmitsburg road in front of us, with the Confederate batteries on the crest four hundred yards or more in front of us. . . .

"In the formation thus made, arms were stacked and we, with the understanding that when two signal guns were fired, to take arms and lie flat on the ground." 130

Johnston, however, was wounded and unable to make the advance with his regiment. Propped up under the shade of the tree in Spangler's field, near which he was injured by shell fragments, he watched the men as they marched over the crest of the Emmitsburg Road.

"In less than ten minutes the wounded men came pouring back over the hill, among them a Lieut. of the brigade whose face was familiar, but his name I could not call; he picked up a limb which had been cut from the tree under which I lay and threw it over the headless bodies of the two men at my feet" 131

Johnston figured that the officer was hoping to spare the sergeant any uneasiness, since he was helpless to move himself or the bodies from his view. Johnston, however, was more interested or concerned in the rapidity with which the column was disintegrating from wounded and "malingerers" flowing to the rear towards him.

¹³⁰David Johnston, The Story of a Confederate Boy (Portland, Oregon, 1914), pp. 203-204.

¹³¹Johnston, Four Years a Soldier, p. 273.

The amount of fire pouring in upon the column soon after it cleared the crest of the Emmitsburg Road ridge (this would be solely upon Kemper's Brigade, almost due west from Stannard's Vermont Brigade) should not be underestimated. Not only did Sergeant Johnston comment about the suddenness of the casualties in the brigade, but others had other remarks to describe the musketry and artillery sweeping their column:

"Mayo observed Captain Lewis, of Company C, looking as lazy and lackadaisical, and, if possible, more tired and bored than usual, carrying his sword point foremost over his shoulder, and addressing his company in that invariable plaintive tone, half command, half entreaty, 'Don't crowd, boys; don't crowd.' 'Pretty hot, Captain,' I said in passing. 'It's redicklous, Colonel; perfectly redicklous'--which, in his vocabulary, meant as bad as bad could be"132

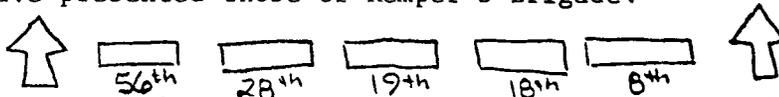
This incident in the ranks of the 3rd Virginia Regiment could be quoted to exemplify not only the way the soldiers reacted to this kind of battle advance, but to illustrate the mood of Lee's army. Was it indeed "lazy and lackadaisical" as this portrait of Captain Lewis portrays, and therefore subject to quite a surprise when it met stiff Union resistance? Always in the background there is this Lee quotation lurking, that he thought his army was invincible. Perhaps he was not the only soldier on the field who felt the Army of Northern Virginia was indestructible.

Garnett's Brigade underwent a different set of circumstances during its advance because of its original position before the advance, to the left of Kemper's Brigade and supporting Dearing's Battalion. Garnett's regiments were not required to execute the kinds of costly military maneuvers on the field of battle that those in Kemper's Brigade did. Kemper's column was

¹³²Colonel Joseph C. Mayo, "Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg," Southern Historical Society Papers, vol. XXXIV (1906), p. 332.

exposed to the musketry of Doubleday's and Gibbon's lines long before that of Garnett (and an enfilading fire, too), mainly because of the differences in mustering positions before the advance. Kemper's Brigade had to advance by the left flank for a considerable distance parallel to the Emmitsburg Road, in order to reach their objective (the Codori farmhouse). While so advancing, that brigade felt the full power of musketry from the Vermonters and the demi-brigade of Gates, as well as from the other units along the center of Cemetery Ridge. Garnett, on the other hand, never had to make so sharp an oblique movement; but this did not exclude him from being subjected to fire long before he reached the Emmitsburg Road. Garnett crossed the ridge where it obliqued northwestward from the road, and then had to march across open fields for several hundred yards before reaching the sunken roadway. During this time he was fired on from the infantry, but more especially by the artillery of the Union army in the cemetery, along Hancock's line, and from Little Round Top.

Garnett's Brigade advanced in line of battle in the order shown below, and the accounts of that brigade will follow this order from right to left just as we have presented those of Kemper's Brigade.



The 8th Virginia Infantry, has by far the most published accounts of any of Garnett's regiments. Colonel Eppa Hunton, who was one of the many commanding officers who went into the battle on horseback,¹³³ commanded the regiment. He was one of the members of the 8th Virginia to write later:

¹³³The fallacy that there were no mounted officers in the assault is easily rebuffed by the many accounts of soldiers and officers themselves who were mounted. Besides Colonel Hunton, we know that Pettigrew, Trimble, Garnett, Kemper, Williams and all of Pickett's staff were mounted. See Appendix A .

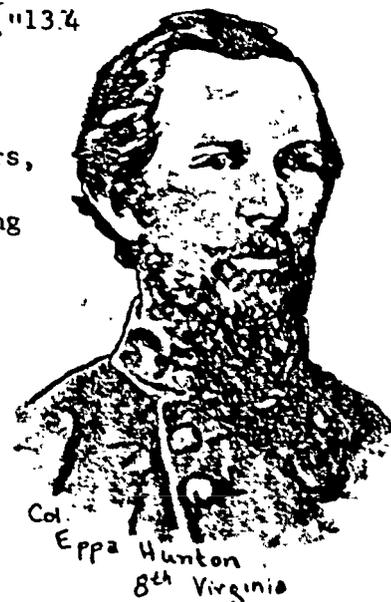
"It laid down under fire during the artillery duel 205 strong. Five of these were killed in the artillery duel, and 200 responded promptly and bravely to the order to charge. . . .

"I have frequently been invited to go over the battlefield of Gettysburg, but I never could summon the courage to do so. If I were to go over the line of our charge I would say, 'Here fell Captain Green'; 'Here fell Captain Bissell'; 'Here fell Captain Grayson'; 'Here fell Captain Ayres'--and a host of others. It would nearly kill me to see where so many brave men fell--all of them among the best friends I ever had.

"While we were charging down towards Cemetery Ridge we passed Will Adams, a gallant soldier of my regiment, who was wounded. He looked into my face and said, 'Colonel, I'm hit'. I shall never forget his appealing look, and the confidence in me which it seemed to evidence. It seemed to say to me that I would see that he was properly cared for and his wound dressed. If he had died, that look would have haunted me as long as I lived. I called to a soldier and told him to take Adams from the field. I thank God he lived. . . ."134

As the advance commenced Colonel Hunton ordered the company of Randolph Shotwell to deploy and act as skirmishers, to drive in the Union sharpshooters, to pull down obstructing fences, and await instructions. Shotwell wrote later

"Measuring by the eye, from the crest of the ridge to the Federal works on the opposite slope, one would estimate a little over a mile, descending swiftly over the Emmettsburg road near the eastern side of the valley; then ascending somewhat steeply towards the summit of Cemetery Ridge with its crown of earthworks, surmounted by scores of flags, telling of the masses gathered under them. Just beyond the sunken road is an unfinished brick house, with one or two outhouses, which are the only obstructions of the view or the range between the lines."135



134Hunton, pp. 99-100.

135Shotwell, p. 91.

Shotwell's company advanced from their protective cover behind the ridgeline to perform their duties, as commanded. They were not yet to the Emmitsburg Road themselves before they witnessed the advance of their brigade:

"Presently behind the hill a stentorian voice is heard giving the command--'FORWARD!--Guide-on-the-Right--MARCH!' Gen. Pickett appears on the crest among the artillery and sends his brother, Charlie, to bid us keep about 120 yards in advance of the division. Now we hear the murmur and jingle of a large corps in motion. Colonels on horseback ride slowly over the brow of the ridge; followed by a glittering forest of bright bayonets. The whole column is now within sight, coming down the slope with steady step and superb alignment. The rustle of thousands of feet amid the stubble stirs a cloud of dust, like the dash of spray at the prow of a vessel. The flags flutter and snap--the sunlight flashes from the officer's swords--low words of command are heard--and thus in perfect order, this gallant array of gallant men marches straight down into the valley of Death! Two armies, for a moment, look on, apparently spell-bound; then the spell is broken by the crash of one hundred guns trained upon the advancing troops. Shot, shell, spherical case, shrapnel and canister--thousands of deadly missiles racing through the air to thin our ranks! . . . Lee, standing with Longstreet, and a group of staff officers, on Seminary Ridge, watching this last attempt to break the enemy's line, must have felt a throb of the heart at each peal of the ravaging artillery."¹³⁶

The lieutenant colonel of the 8th Virginia, Norbonne Berkeley, was with the brigade as it advanced and describes the circumstances of that movement from its inception:

"A circumstance occurred in connection with the charge that I have never seen alluded to by any writer. The order of dress had been, dress to the right on Kemper, and just as we were starting a horseman galloped up to Gen. Garnett and said, 'The order is to dress to the left of Pettigrew,' then wheeled his horse and galloped away. Col. Hunton's orderly, George H. Hummer, said to Col. Hunton, 'that order had not

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 91-92.

gone to Gen. Kemper. Had not I better let him know it?'
 "Col. Hunton, said 'yes, go.' General Kemper said,
 'I have not received it, but I will obey it, although I
 have received it unofficially.' . . .

"When the cannonading slackened, we rose and formed
 our line, and when the word was given, we advanced and
 were soon under fire. A ball struck Col. Hunton in the
 leg and pierced the horse he was riding which lived long
 enough to get his rider off the field.

"Our objective point was a conspicuous red building
 just opposite the centre of our line and several hundred
 yards from the stone wall. We were soon under an enfilad-
 ing artillery fire from Little Roundtop that did us great
 damage. Before reaching the red house, a shell passed
 over my head, striking the regiment on my left, and threw
 three men up in the air killing them all. I suppose just
 before we arrived at the red house Gen. Garnett received a
 ball in his brain, killing him instantly and his magnificent
 horse was killed about the same time." 137

Colonel Berkeley's version of the death of Garnett is unique, in that not only does he "kill off" Garnett long before any other participant/writer, but he also describes Garnett's bay thoroughbred as a victim. This memoir, however, is important because it designates the red brick Codori farmhouse as the objective point of the regiment. This reinforces other accounts, including that of Pickett's staff officer, Captain R. A. Bright. (A fuller discussion of this subject will be found in the appendix.)

As a companion piece to Colonel Berkeley's account is the version composed by his brother, Edmund Berkeley, then major of the 8th Virginia. Major Berkeley also reveals to us the intimate relationship between the Berkeleys and their brigade commander, Richard Garnett; in this letter written in November 1915:

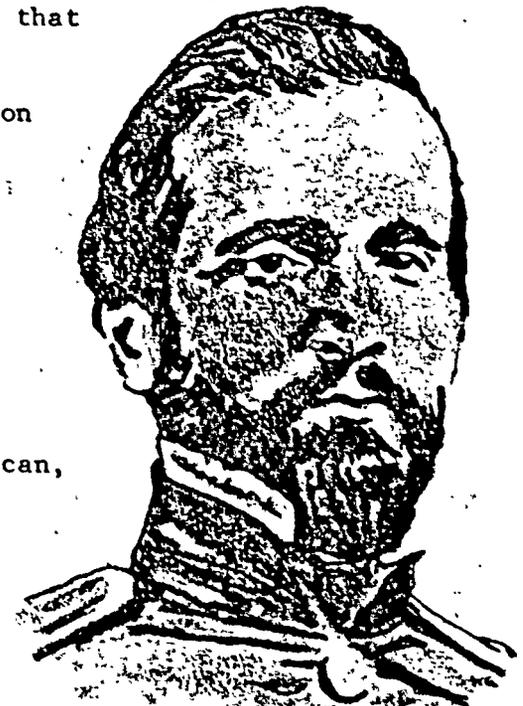
" . . . the magnanimous Gen. Richard Garnett, the only
 general on either side who rest in an unidentified grave. . .
 My brothers and myself were perhaps on more perfect terms

137 Berkeley, unpublished memoir.

of intimacy with General Garnett than any other officers in the army, and my youngest brother served for a time on his staff. I buried on the Gettysburg battlefield, before going into the charge, an old deck of cards that the General, Colonel Hunton, and my brothers and myself had played probably more than a hundred games with while we were near Fredericksburg. General Garnett's staff gave a supper to which none were invited except General Garnett, Colonel Hunton, my brothers and myself, and, believing General Lee had gone up town, we were very hilarious, and General Garnett being called on for a story and a song, gave a song called "The Fog and the Dew", and a story called "Mary Ann." I, being called on for a song, gave "Rum tum ta, touchie fol la." General Garnett seemed perfectly enthused and beat time to it with his knife on the table, and at its conclusion said to me: "Major, my dear fellow, don't you know, that's the first time I have heard that song since I left West Point." . . .

"The morning after our supper at Fredericksburg, General Lee said to Peyton and Baldwin, "You had a very lively crowd in your tent last night," and when I heard of his hearing us, I was awfully afraid he might have heard some of the words of my song.

"My brothers were near General Garnett when Pickett came up and spoke to him before we went into the charge. He said: "Dick, old fellow, I have no orders to give you, but I advise you to get across those fields as quick as you can, for in my opinion you are going to catch hell." . . . "138



Brig-Gen' Richard B. Garnett

Besides the revealing passages pertaining to the personal side of Garnett, this account by Major Berkeley reinforces the idea that Pickett's brigades went into the assault with little or no orders. However, there is the remote possibility that Pickett meant he had no "additional" orders to give Garnett, but to hurry across the open fields and escape the enemy's fire as quickly as possible.

The advance of the 18th Virginia was described by R. Fergus of that regiment:

¹³⁸Edmund Berkeley, "Rode with Pickett," Confederate Veteran Magazine, vol. 38 (May 1930), p. 175

"For more than two hours we lay in the hot, broiling sun, in the midst of the unceasing roar and whirl and whiz of shot and shell. Some of the men were torn into pieces, others were overcome by the heat.

"But at the command, they moved forward steadily and promptly. Company G was deployed as skirmishers, and at the proper time assembled and took place in line. I remember well, it manoeuvred handsomely." 139

Captain H. T. Owen, of the same regiment, described the advance as seen from the regimental line, and not the forward skirmishers' position:

"A long line of skirmishers, prostrate in the tall grass, firing at the column since it came within view, rose up within fifty yards, fired a volley into its front, then trotted on before it, turning and firing back as fast as they could reload. The column moved on at a quick step with shouldered arms, and the fire of the skirmish line was not returned. . . . Half way over the field an order ran down the line, 'left oblique', . . . and the direction is changed forty-five degrees from the front to the left. . . .

"The column was approaching the Emmitsburg road, where a line of infantry, stationed behind a stone fence,* was pouring in a heavy fire of musketry. A scattering fire was opened along the front of the division upon this line, when Garnett galloped along the line and called out: "Cease firing," and his command was promptly obeyed, showing the wonderful discipline of the men, who reloaded their guns, shouldered arms and kept on without slackening their pace, which was still a "quickstep."

"The stone fence was carried without a struggle, the infantry and the skirmish line swept away before the division like trash before the broom. Two thirds of the distance was behind, and the one hundred cannon in the rear were dumb and did not reply to the hotly worked guns in our front. . . ." 140

*There was no known stone fence along the Emmitsburg Road. There is the possibility that the stones were piled beneath the upper - most rails to the height of two feet or so, as was not uncommon on this part of the battlefield, to further strengthen the post and rail fence which paralleled the road. It is possible that the posts and rails had been destroyed in the previous day's fight, and only the stone wall and loose rails remained.

139 Irby, p. 27.

140 Captain H. T. Owen, in Jacob Hoke, The Great Invasion (New York, 1959), pp. 385-386.

The forward movement of the 19th Virginia Infantry (on the left of the 18th) is nicely detailed for us by Lieutenant William N. Wood:

"'Attention!' was heard along the infantry line and every man sprang to his feet, and then was observed a singular excitement. All along the line men were falling from seeming sunstroke with dreadful contortions of the body, foaming at the mouth, and almost lifeless. Some were possibly shamming but much, real, downright suffering from the sun's hot rays was experienced. But why this effect just as they rose and felt the breeze? They were taken to the shade and order restored in the ranks. 'Forward, guide centre, march!' and we moved forward to the top of the hill, just in front of our artillery, and halted. Here we formed a beautiful line of battle and were in full view of the enemy. Glancing my eyes over the field I felt, 'That hill must fall' still applied to the future Forward again! and, look yonder! Kemper's brigade in splendid array, moving steadily forward. To the left and rear is Armistead's brigade seemingly more hurried as they come into line. What a line of battle! How they keep together! 'That hill must fall.' Onward we move in common marching time. No excitement. No loud commands. 'Steady, boys,' 'Don't fire,' 'Close up,' 'Never mind the skirmish line,' as that of the enemy hastened to shelter. Over the plain we marched. Surely the hill has fallen. No, look! They are bringing fresh artillery to bear upon us. Again the shrieking shot and bursting shell, and now the blazing musketry. Forward, still forward. How thin the ranks are getting. Down the gradual descent we hurry. Over the fence we scramble. We bound diagonally across the Emmetsburg Pike and feel that the hill has fallen."¹⁴¹

It is interesting to note that Lieutenant Wood commented upon the fresh artillery coming up to fire upon their advance. These may have been the same guns Colonel Alexander was disheartened to see, replacing the "eighteen guns" in the Cemetery.

One of the more touching incidents of the battle occurred within the ranks of the 28th Virginia Infantry Regiment as it began the advance across the open fields toward the Emmitsburg Road. Major Charles Peyton of the 19th Virginia

¹⁴¹Wood, pp. 44-46.

was so impressed with the incident, that he included it in the report he would make for Garnett's Brigade after the battle. Peyton wrote, "The conduct of Captain (Michael P.) Spessard, of the Twenty-eighth Virginia, was particularly conspicuous. His son fell, mortally wounded, at his side; he stopped but for a moment to look on his dying son, gave him his canteen of water, and pressed on, with his company. . . ."142 Colonel Eppa Hunton, of the 8th Virginia, also remembered the incident and his son repeated the story in his father's autobiography. As his father, Colonel Hunton;

"was going into the battle he saw Major Spessard of the 28th Regiment sitting on the ground holding a youth's head in his lap. As Father approached, Major Spessard looked up and said, 'Look at my poor boy, Colonel.' He must have been dead then, for in a short time Father saw him kissing him tenderly and gently lay his head on the ground. Then the Major rose to his feet, put his sword to his shoulder, and ordered 'Forward, boys!' and continued in the charge. Could there be greater heroism, or a more pathetic and touching scene?" 143

"Father, I have done my duty in the camp and 'mid the strife;
 Soon I'll seal my deep devotion to my country with my life.
 But it soothes my dying moments when I know that you are by,
 Put your loving arms around me; kiss me father, ere I die." 144
 -T. R. Walker

Major Nathaniel Claiborne Wilson, aged 24, was acting lieutenant colonel of the 28th Virginia (explaining why Captain Spessard was referred

¹⁴²Official Records, part 2, p. 387.

¹⁴³Hunton, p. 100n.

¹⁴⁴Willard A. and Porter W. Heaps, The Singing Sixties. The Spirit of Civil War Days Drawn from the Music of the Times (Norman, Oklahoma, 1960), p. 191.

to as a major by Hunton). When the advance began, Major Wilson took a place in the front of the left wing of his regiment and called to his men, "Now, boys, put your trust in God, and follow me!" Wilson kept in advance of the regiment, leading the advance until he fell, about one-third of the distance across the field of the attack. According to records, he was pierced by a grape shot and was taken immediately from the field to the division hospital (at Bream's Mill). Unfortunately, he died within fifteen or twenty minutes of his arrival there, his last words being, "Tell my mother I died a true soldier, and I hope a true Christian." The chaplain of his regiment, Reverend P. Tinsley, received these last words and was responsible for burying the remains of his friend. Reverend Tinsley wrote that Major Wilson "died calmly. His features were not distorted, but as placid and natural as if quietly sleeping in bivouac, with his comrades around him." Unable to procure a coffin, the reverend was compelled to bury the officer "in his military overcoat, with his army blanket for his coffin and his shroud."

Thus died the "true soldier" and "true Christian", expressing the thoughts uppermost on his mind in his closing moments. Like many of the soldiers in both armies, Major Wilson reflected the sentiments of those times in his thoughts and words--thoughts of family and home, his military reputation, and his faith. The last entry in his diary, found on his person after his death, is a poignant summary of all those sentiments:

"July 3. In line of battle, expecting to move forward every minute. With our trust in God, we fear not an earthly enemy. God be with us!" 145

¹⁴⁵Walker, pp. 538-539.

G. W. Finley, of Company K, has left probably the best impression of the advance and charge itself as it affected the 56th Virginia Regiment--Garnett's extreme right unit. His reminiscence begins with the ending of the cannonade:

"When the fire slackened and had almost ceased I saw Gen. Longstreet, attended by a single officer, whom I took to be his adjutant general, Col. Sorrell, riding slowly from our right in front of our line and in full view of the enemy's skirmishers. . . . In a few moments Gen. Pickett dashed out from the woods where Longstreet had entered them and called his division to 'attention'. In a few brief words, which I failed to hear, he told us, as I subsequently learned, what was expected of us and then ordered us forward. He rode to the right of the division and I never saw him afterward.

"The orders to us were to advance slowly, with arms 'at will,' no cheering, no firing, no breaking from 'common' to 'quick,' or 'changing' step and 'to dress on the center.'

"A few steps and we had cleared our guns and the fatal field was before us. Where I marched through a wheat field that sloped gently toward the Emmetsburg Road, the position of the Federals flashed into view. Skirmishers lined the fences along the road and back of them along a low stone wall or fence gleamed the muskets of the first line. In rear of this artillery, thickly planted, frowned upon us. As we came in sight there seemed to be a restlessness and excitement along the enemy's lines which encouraged some of us to hope they would not make a stubborn resistance. Their skirmishers began to run in and the artillery opened upon us all along our front. I soon noticed that shells were also coming from our right and striking just in front or in rear of our moving line--sometimes between the line and the file closers. . . . This fire soon became strictly enfilading as we changed the point of direction, from the center to the left while on the march, and whenever it struck our ranks was fearfully destructive--one company a little to my right, numbering 35 or 40 men, was almost swept, 'to a man,' from the line by a single shell. We had not advanced far beyond our guns when our gallant Colonel W. D. Stuart fell mortally wounded. (He was taken back to Virginia and died a few days after.)

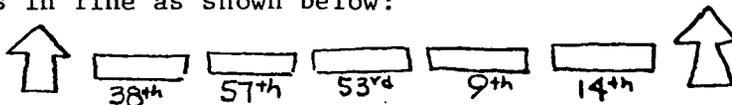
"We had no other field officer present and the command devolved upon the senior captain."

"Still on, steadily on, the fire growing more and more furious and deadly--our men advanced. The change of direction threw Kemper's brigade closer to the Federal line (which was oblique to ours) than Garnett. So he was hotly engaged before our left was in musket range. I could hear and see a

part of his fighting before my attention was absorbed by my own front. As we neared the Emmettsburg road the Federals behind the stone fence on the hill opened a rapid fire upon us with muskets. But as they were stooping behind that fence, I think they overshot us." 146

Thus we see so far that the advances of both Kemper's and Garnett's Brigades were comparable in that they advanced over open country and were subjected to both musketry and artillery fire almost immediately after passing the crest of the ridge upon which Alexander's cannonade line was established. The only difference in severity would have to be because of the left flank movement made by Kemper, which exposed his right flank to a murderous fire from Stannard's Vermont Brigade and the demi-brigade of Colonel Gates.

Armistead's Brigade, however, was behind these two brigades at the outset, and had somewhat different experiences. The reminiscences and accounts of that brigade will be in the same order as stated previously, by regiment from right of the line to the left. As the advance began, Armistead's Brigade was in line as shown below:



Unfortunately, we do not have accounts for all of the regimental participants in the brigade, and have none for the right unit as it pertains to the advance--the 14th Virginia Infantry. The right center regiment, however, is adequately represented by memoirs, and they can perhaps be used to generalize the experiences of the right of Armistead's Brigade.

J. H. Lewis, of the 9th Virginia, was as much impressed by the presence of his brigade commander as anything else during the advance. His memories of the outset of the attack were filled with these impressions of General Armistead:

146 Finley; "Bloody Angle", p. 43.

"The command 'attention' was heard, and the men rose from the ground, where they had been lying during the fire of artillery.

"If I should live for a hundred years I shall never forget that moment or the command as given by General Louis (sic) A. Armistead on that day. He was an old army officer, and was possessed of a very loud voice, which could be heard by the whole brigade, being near my regiment. He gave the command, in words, as follows: 'Attention, second battalion! battalion of direction forward; guides center; march!' . . . He turned, placed himself about twenty paces in front of his brigade, and took the lead. His place was in the rear, properly. After moving he placed his hat on the point of his sword, and held it above his head, in front of him.

"The division moved forward at command, in common time, and as it cleared the woods its work was seen before it. . . .

"All was quiet; we had cleared the woods, and advanced about 200 yards. . . . Suddenly about fifty pieces of artillery opened on our lines. The crash of shell and solid shot, as they came howling and whistling through the lines, seemed to make no impression on the men. There was not a waiver. . . .

"We were nearing the Emmittsburg road. There were two fences at that road, but they were no impediment. The men go over them, and reform and forward again. At this point the crash of musketry was added to the roar of artillery. Men were falling in heaps. Up to this time no shot had been fired by this division.

"Within 800 yards of the Federal works Garnett's brigade gave their usual yell and strike the double-quick. . . ." 157

¹⁴⁷Lewis, pp. 79, 81-82. . . . An interesting note concerning the rebel yell was found in an account by a 7th Tennessee infantryman: "I do recollect that the 'rebel yell' was started on our right, but what was very singular to me in this charge was that previous to this occasion and afterwards we never before failed to increase our speed when the 'yell' was started. . . . I suppose the reason our speed was not increased. . . . was that the yell was started much further from the enemy than usual." J. H. Moore, "Longstreet's Assault," The Philadelphia Weekly Times (November 4, 1882), in Gettysburg Newspaper Clippings #6, Relative to the Battle, p. 30.

Orderly Sergeant James H. Walker, Company K, described the cannonade and advance as seen from the ranks of the 9th Virginia:

"General Lee had massed in front of the division about 120 pieces of artillery, and they were to open on Cemetery Heights and endeavor, if possible to dislodge the enemy. This cannonading commenced about noon, and as our pieces opened, the enemy replied by a fire from about one hundred pieces. . . .

"Under all of this terrific cannonading, Pickett's Division was lying awaiting it to cease. Round shot whistled through the trees cutting limbs from them which fell upon us. . . . Our artillery, which was about one hundred yards in front, were firing almost with the rapidity of musketry, and the enemy, who seemed to have a most deadly aim, threw shells amongst us, apparently at every shot, blowing up caissons, and killing horses and men. . . .

"The Virginians were soon made aware that the artillery had not succeeded in driving the enemy from their strong, and seemingly impregnable position, for word came down the line from the right that they were to charge. All were on their feet in a moment, and ready; not a sound was heard; not a shot was fired from any part of the field. The command 'forward' was given, and in five minutes they had left the woods which had concealed them during the artillery fight. As we emerged from cover and passed through our artillery, which was immediately on the verge of the woods, the latter raised their hats and cheered us on our way. As soon as the artillery on Cemetery Hill discovered the line advancing, they opened fire. They were, when first seen, about a mile immediately in front, with nothing between us but two fences." 148

If Sergeant Walker's account is to be believed, it is apparent that the soldier in the rank was unaware that he was to participate in the grand charge until the last moment. Walker was either told, or surmised, that the artillery was supposed to pound the enemy's position on Cemetery Ridge so thoroughly that they would leave altogether. Failing that event, the second choice would be to have Pickett's Division complete the task.

148 Walker, "The Charge of Pickett's Division".

J. F. Crocker, adjutant of the 9th Virginia, gives one of the more typical post-war accounts. Written by a Virginian, it is one of those narratives which belittles the contributions of the other states in the attack (especially those under Pettigrew on the left).

"The line of Kemper and Garnett was supported on the left by a line of North Carolina troops, which had advanced in line of Kemper's and Garnett's; but these North Carolina troops broke and left the line of Kemper and Garnett unsupported on the left.

"I was adjutant of the 9th Virginia Regiment, which was the left regiment of Armistead's brigade. I have the impression, made on me at the time, that Garnett's brigade had become so reduced, that as it advanced, it appeared to me as a skirmish line. . . ." 149

This account may not be very credible, in addition, because Crocker misplaces the position of the 9th Virginia in the brigade line by quite a distance. Far from being on the left of the brigade, the 9th Virginia was the right center regiment; it is uncertain whether men of that regiment would be seeing Pettigrew's men on their left because of the three other regiments of the brigade between them, as well as because of terrain features.

The lieutenant colonel of the 53rd Virginia, Rawley Martin, witnessed another Armistead incident before the advance. Since the 53rd Infantry was the center regiment in the brigade line, it is not unusual for Armistead to have shown such an interest in the outfit, and Martin recorded the last words of Armistead to his men before the advance:

"Armistead called attention and instantly every man was on his feet. He walked to the front of the 53rd Regiment, his battalion of direction and addressed the Color-bearer, "Sergeant, are you going to put those colors on the enemy's works over yonder?"

"Yes, General, if mortal man can do it."

"He then exhorted the men to follow their colors and to remember the brave words of their color bearer." 150

¹⁴⁹Stine, p. 540.

¹⁵⁰Clement, p. 248.

Like Colonel Martin, James T. Carter was present when Armistead addressed the 53rd Virginia Infantry Regiment, and was more than interested in what the general had to say to the color-bearer because he was himself a member of the regimental color guard: Carter remembered Armistead coming up to color-sergeant Blackwell and

"pointing to the enemy's breastworks, said: 'Sergeant, I want you and your men to plant your colors on those works. Do you think you can do it?' The sergeant replied, 'Yes, sir, if God is willing.' Then the General, taking out a small flask, told him to take some, which he did. My position that day was on Blackwell's left, with Gen. Armistead and Col. Martin in front of me.

"We advanced under a heavy fire of both artillery and small arms, and when about seventy-five yards from the stone wall, Gen. Kemper, on a handsome bay horse, rode up to Gen. Armistead (who was not over five feet from me) and said to him: 'General, I am going to storm those works, and I want you to support me.' Armistead said that he would, and calling Gen. Kemper's attention to the perfection of his line, said: 'Did you ever see anything better on parade?' Kemper saluted, and replied, 'I never did.'" 151

Thus, we have a repetition of not only the Armistead conversation with the color guard of his center, or guide, regiment, but also another eyewitness verification that Kemper decided to attack Cemetery Ridge near the Angle on the field of advance.

Wyatt Whitehead, a soldier in Company I of the 53rd Virginia Regiment, continued the narrative of the advance of that center regiment after Armistead addressed the men:

" 'The Brigade moved promptly forward and arrived at the top of the hill which until now had protected us. As we advanced toward the valley the enemy's artillery reopened fire upon us and it seemed to me the whole of Cemetery Ridge was a blaze of fire and the blaze continued until the Confederate forces had marched through this valley, which was four or five hundred yards wide, and gotten within charging distance of the stone wall.'

¹⁵¹James T. Carter, "Flag of the Fifty-third Va. Regiment," Confederate Veteran Magazine, vol. 10 (June 1902), p. 263.

"General Kemper's Brigade was in front and when we were about half through this valley Kemper rode up to Armistead who was in front and said to him, "Armistead, I am going to charge those heights and carry them and I want you to support me." Armistead replied, "I'll do it! Look at my line. It never looked better on dress parade."

"This took place under the heaviest artillery fire that in my opinion the world ever saw, and still under this fire Armistead's Brigade was marching at quick step, as if on parade. Just at this point Armistead took off his hat, put it on the point of his sword, and kept it there through the entire charge. He kept fifteen or twenty steps in front of his brigade all the way, was cheering all the time and calling his men to follow." 152

If Whitehead did hear this conversation between Armistead and Kemper, as also recounted by Carter, it adds another peculiar twist to the history of the charge. Why Kemper would have to ride over to Armistead and tell him of his intentions to charge Cemetery Ridge is a mystery. Wasn't the whole intention of the attack to "charge the heights"? If not, was the intention merely to strike the Union skirmish line along the Emmitsburg Road, which is often referred to by the Confederate attackers (especially Kemper) as the enemy's first line of battle? Perhaps the brigade commanders were left with more discretion in this attack than heretofore recognized. Kemper himself admits that he received no orders from Pickett other than to aim towards the red brick Codori farmhouse, and never saw Pickett again after the attack commenced. Perhaps (incredibly) the decision to concentrate the efforts of the division on Gibbon's front was made on the field, during the advance, by Kemper, Garnett, and Armistead. If true, planning for the attack seems to have been abysmal! Yet the incident was repeated by supposed eyewitnesses and participants, who not only leave us with a dearth of orders but give the

¹⁵²Clement, pp. 248-249.

impression that confusion reigned during the advance.

A member of the 38th Virginia Infantry recalled essentially this same incident, as narrated by Whitehead above:

"The scene which met the eyes of Armistead's men as we descended the slope was splendid. Before us, one hundred and fifty yards away, moving on like waves of the sea, marched Garnett and Kemper, their battle-flags flashing in the sunlight. The regiments of Armistead, marching in perfect order, with disciplined tread, followed where they led."

"The brigades of Garnett and Kemper were in our front, and as we drew near the advance line Kemper rode back to Armistead, who marched on foot, and said: 'Armistead, hurry up; I am going to charge those heights and carry them, and I want you to support me.'" 153

And William W. Wood gave a general feeling of the advance as seen from Armistead's brigade line:

"While making the ascent /to the crest of the ridge where the artillery was/ it was seen that the supports to our right and left flanks were not coming forward, as we had been told they would. . . . Some of our men cursed them for being cowards, but still our charge was kept up, and no man fell out."

". . . perhaps a hundred and fifty yards beyond the crest of the hill we had just passed, a post-and-rail fence was quickly mounted, and at a little distance beyond it my regiment, and I suppose the whole line of battle, was halted for the purpose of rectifying the alignment. From the time the charge began up to this moment not a shot had been fired at us nor had we been able to see, because of the density of the smoke which hung over the battlefield like a pall, that there was any enemy in front of us. But directly afterward, just as the line started forward, a shot, fired from somewhere to our left, struck the centre company of my regiment, and, enfilading its right wing as it did, killed and wounded a large number of men and officers. The smoke now lifted from our front, and there right before us, scarcely two hundred yards away, stood Cemetery Heights in awful grandeur. . . ." 154

¹⁵³Rev. James E. Poindexter, "Address on the Life and Services of Gen. Lewis A. Armistead, delivered. . . before R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Confederate Veterans" (Richmond, January 29, 1909), pp. 3, 5.

¹⁵⁴Col. William W. Wood, "Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg," Gettysburg Compiler (August 22, 1877), p. 1

We have seen to this point that soldier recollections, often specific and quite detailed, differ on certain matters, especially positions of troops, officers, and specific incidents. General histories of the battle written in the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century are even more diverse in their presentation of the "facts". In an attempt to interpret the overall charge, these writers became tacticians of hindsight-- a profession no one seemed to claim in the earlier years after Gettysburg. Indeed, little regard for tactics or overall purpose is shown in the memoirs, letters, and histories written by the soldier of the rank (and even the generals).

Of the movements on that July 3rd, one which received considerable comment from participants and later historians was the echelon advance of Pickett's and Pettigrew's Divisions, and part of Anderson's Division.

". . . originally Pettigrew was instructed to support Pickett, but subsequently the order was changed to coöperate with him; the movement to be en echelon. That is, Pickett should move first; when he was fairly started, Pettigrew start on his left; and when Pettigrew got under way, Pender start on his left. Thus, when Pickett struck the Federal works, Pettigrew would be within gunshot on the left, threatening that part of the line, so that there could be no massing of troops against any one column." 155

Major General Isaac Trimble, who commanded the two brigades of Pender's Division to participate in the assault, was critical of this echelon movement in his later extensive writings:

"It would have been more in accordance with military principles had Pettigrew and Trimble started fifteen minutes before Pickett, so as to have brought them all to the enemy's line at the same moment. The result would probably have been the same; yet ten or fifteen minutes sooner or later in the movement of a heavy column, often produces a decided difference in the result of a battle."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵Shotwell, p. 88.

¹⁵⁶Trimble, p. 56.

The reason, of course, why Trimble felt the left of the assault column should have been given a head start during the advance was because that flank of the column had a greater distance to march than the center or Pickett's Division.

Of those on the left of the attacking column, the 7th Tennessee Regiment and the 26th North Carolina Regiment were closest to the left of Pickett's line, and reminiscences by members of those two units reflect the same kind of activity endured by Pickett's left. Major John T. Jones of the 26th North Carolina Infantry described the experiences of those around him during the July 3 charge in a letter dated July 30, 1863:

"Our division was in the front line on the left of Pickett, and a prolongation of that same line. Our brigade was on the right of the division--our regiment (Twenty-sixth) on the right of the brigade--consequently immediately on the left of Pickett. . . . I could see nothing of the rest of our division, as they were too far to the left. My whole attention was directed to our own brigade and Pickett's Division, as we had been ordered to keep dressed to the right. . . ." 157

This version is interesting in that Major Jones himself could not see the rest of Pettigrew's Division, while part of it, and Virginians in Pickett's column wrote in later years that they could see Pettigrew's Division from their position much farther to the right. The above account was written within a month after the battle, and before the controversy of Virginia vs. North Carolina had become so heated, so it can be trusted as an honest account of what one soldier saw and could not see. It also is valuable in that it reveals that Pettigrew's Division was under orders to dress on Pickett's Division to their right. Therefore, Pickett's Division was the guide, and should have had a definite objective point.

¹⁵⁷John T. Jones, "Pettigrew's Brigade at Gettysburg," in Walter Clark, ed., Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-65, vol. 5 (Goldsboro, N. Ca., 1901), p. 133.

J. H. Moore, a member of the 7th Tennessee Infantry, which also claimed to be on the left of Pickett's Division, remembered the difficulties encountered during the advance. Although some of these would be comparable to the problems faced by Armistead and Garnett, one specific "hurdle" which the two latter brigades should have been spared in a great degree was the fencing along the Emmitsburg Road. This fencing had been torn down for a distance along the road north of the Codori farm buildings during the fighting on the previous day, and had been transformed into a "breast-works" of loose rails by two Union regiments in that vicinity.

"Many batteries hurled their missiles of death in our ranks from Cemetery Hill, Round Top and Little Round Top, in our front and on our right. The ridge we had left and the adjacent spurs belched forth their commingling smoke of battle that obscured the scene with a dreadful and darkened magnificence and a deepening roar that no exaggeration of language can heighten.

"As the charging column neared the Emmitsburg road volley after volley of small arms aided with dreadful effect in thinning our ranks. We reached the first plank or slab fence and the column clambered over with a speed as if in stampeded retreat. The time it took to climb to the top of the fence seemed to me an age of suspense. It was not a leaping over; it was rather an insensible tumbling to the ground in the nervous hope of escaping the thickening missiles that buried themselves in falling victims, in the ground and in the fence, against which they rattled with the distinctness of large rain drops pattering on a roof. Every man that reached the road, in my view, sank to the ground. Just for a moment, and only for a moment, and right there from our right came two mounted officers, riding at a great speed. . . . On they sped to the road at our left. I know not who they were." 158

That the fence presented quite a considerable obstruction is obvious not only from memoirs such as the above, but can be ascertained by looking at period photographs of this fence (or replacement fence) along the Emmitsburg

¹⁵⁸Moore, p. 30. The two officers were probably those sent by Pickett to "rally" the left.

Road. (See Appendix G.) Each panel consisted of five rails, standing at least as high as a man, and must have seemed even higher to those soldiers experiencing the fire from Cemetery Ridge while themselves standing in the sunken road.

"As the troops in their progress reached the fences enclosing this road, the obstruction tended greatly to break up their alignment. Many were killed and wounded there and others sought protection from the fearful fire by lying in the road. The column advancing beyond the pike was thus considerably weakened. . . . Pickett's troops, however, crossing at a point nearly a quarter of a mile distant from the enemy's works, escaped the full effect of this damaging obstacle and maintained a more perfect organization. And in like manner, the right of the Confederate column had the good fortune of not being subjected to a similar artillery fire to that which mowed down the ranks of Pettigrew's command." 159

Much said in this quotation is true, as corroborated by other accounts. One officer blamed the failure of the charge itself to this sturdy post and rail fence paralleling the Emmitsburg Road, because it had the effect of causing the impetus of the charge to slacken and encouraged the attacking troops to assume a defensive position in the sunken road. However, the quotation did not recognize the kind of enfilading artillery and musketry fire imposed upon Kemper's Brigade, nor did it consider the effect of Codori's house and barn on the line of Pickett's Division. These buildings supposedly "disturbed the compactness and continuity" of the line during the advance. 160

William R. Aylett, colonel of the 53rd Virginia Regiment and wounded during the cannonade, commented on other obstructions during the march of his infantrymen toward Cemetery Ridge:

¹⁵⁹Ashe, p. 147.

¹⁶⁰Major William M. Robbins, "Longstreet's Assault at Gettysburg. 3 July 1863," in Walter Clark, ed., vol. 5, p. 102.

"In the final charge there was much blending of the attacking columns, from the terrible losses and gaps created by the fire of the Union artillery and infantry, but no swapping of positions. In the original formation of the line of battle, before Pickett's advance, Kemper's brigade held the right, Garnett's was on his left, and Armistead's, for which there was not room in the extended line of battle, was formed immediately in rear of the others. Fences, obstructions, the fire of the enemy in front and from Round Top, and the loss of officers, caused the brigades to mix before they struck the Union line. . . . My regiment, the 53^d Virginia, was the central and directing regiment of Armistead's brigade, and he marched right in front of my colors. . . ." 161

W. H. Swallow was one of those writing within twenty years of the battle, describing general movements and tactics, without relating specific incidents. His account gives a pretty good description of the movement by Kemper's Brigade, and the subsequent countermovement by Stannard's Brigade, as well as the fire inflicted on the Virginians by the massive ranks of the Vermont Brigade, assisted by Gates' demi-brigade:

"Pickett's division, holding a somewhat advanced line, moved forward; the right of the division under General Kemper, after passing through the Washington Artillery, crossed the Emmittsburg road, and, had Kemper moved onward in a straight line, he would have struck Stannard's brigade, who was posted in a grove a little in front and on the left of Hancock's corps. But no sooner had General Kemper crossed the road than he moved on the left flank, having changed front, his brigade after passing south of Cordovie's (sic) house and out-buildings, marched eastward to Gettysburg. In this movement of Kemper's brigade his command passed between the Emmittsburg road and Cemetery Ridge in the march to the center of attack. As Kemper's right was passing Stannard's brigade on Hancock's left, and at a distance of several hundred yards, the latter officer ordered his command to move also by the left flank and closing to the left until Kemper's right assumed the direct assault in his front, when by order of Hancock . . . Stannard's command changed front, forward on the first battalion, and delivered several volleys of musketry .

161 Stine, p. 538.

into the flank and rear of Kemper's brigade, but the latter officer, under orders from Pickett, moved onward to the center of attack, not stopping to return the fire.

"General Garnett, with his brigade, held the left of the division and started with Kemper to the enemy's works at the same time. Garnett moved on Cemetery Hill by marching eastward to Gettysburg, north of Cordovie's house and outbuildings. The fences of the Emmitsburg road, near Cordovie's house, had been nearly destroyed the day before in the battle on our right.

"No sooner had Garnett and Kemper started with the right and left of Pickett's division than General Armistead, whose brigade was in the rear of both, followed closely after them. Armistead, however, started from a different position and passed over a different portion of the earth's surface to the same point of attack. . . .

"General Garnett, with the left of Pickett's division, reached the road about the same time with Pettigrew, while Armistead and Trimble were following closely after. On the extreme right General Kemper's brigade was south of the road and near the works. Archer's Tennessee brigade, holding the right of Pettigrew's division, hooked on to the left of Garnett, and thus united the whole column made a break to get over the first fence on the Emmitsburg road." 162

Thus, the advance of Pickett's Division, encompassing their march from their initial positions to the Emmitsburg Road, was fraught with artillery fire, the beginnings of Union infantry fire, and stifling heat. Kemper's Brigade was compelled to perform a march by the left flank which exposed it to an unnecessary but disastrous and costly enfilading fire. Garnett and Armistead appear to have been hurt most by artillery fire until they reached the road.

"They arose, whose name was Legion,
As an overwhelming wave,
And the battle surged its billows
Round a chosen few and brave. . . . "163

¹⁶²W. H. Swallow, "The Third Day at Gettysburg," The Southern Bivouac, vol. IV, no. 9 (February 1886), pp. 566-568.

¹⁶³George F. Root, "Lay Me Down and Save the Flag," in Heaps, p. 169.

Chapter 5: The Advance--

"The love of country guides us"¹⁶⁴

"Young soldiers marching lustily
Unto the wars,
With fifes, and flags in mottoed pageantry. . . ."165

The advance was seen by Union soldiers across the valley from a different perspective than those in the ranks of Pickett's Division. Later historians and "interpreters" were generally all Union veterans or civilians; therefore, many of the early histories of the battle were written from the Union viewpoint and for Union consumption. John B. Bachelder was one of the earliest gatherers of Union accounts, interviewing wounded officers and men within a week after the close of the battle. By 1877, he had formulated his own version of the Battle of Gettysburg, and had become such an authority on a battle in which he was not even a participant that it was almost sacrilege to question his "facts". A letter written at that time explains the Bachelder version of the attack; at the time of the Confederate advance:

"In the charge which followed, the right of Pickett's Division, after passing through the artillery, almost immediately changed direction to its left and crossed the Emmettsburg road, the fences of which, however, had been generally prostrated at this point during the previous day's engagement. . . .

"Several houses, barns, and other outbuildings lay in its line of march, while nearer the point of attack a number of small rocky knolls, covered with scrub-oak bushes, were eagerly sought as cover by the men. The left of the division moved to the north of

¹⁶⁴Motto of the 142nd Pennsylvania Infantry, Doubleday's Division. Horatio N. Warren, The Declaration of Independence and War History. Bull Run to Appomattox (Buffalo, 1894), p. 64.

¹⁶⁵Hennig Cohen, ed., The Battle-Pieces of Herman Melville (New York, 1963), pp. 45-46.

the buildings. At this time the most embarrassing circumstance occurred. The order had been given the column to 'dress on the centre' but, either the terrific fire of cannister and musketry so thinned the ranks that, or from some other cause, in order to 'close to the left' a large portion of the right of this command was compelled to move by the left flank; and this, too, within easy musketry range of the enemy's lines. Had the direct march continued the right of the column would have struck Stannard's Brigade of Vermont troops. . . . Turning to the movements of the left wing of the column . . . these troops, after passing the artillery and the fringe of timber on Seminary ridge, advanced over thirteen hundred yards without obstruction or cover, save a short distance through the valley, joining on the left of Pickett's line as they moved, and together crossed the Emmettsburg road, within an average of five hundred feet of the enemy's line. Here the fences proved a serious obstruction. They broke up the alignment, which, under the heavy fire, it was difficult to correct." 166

Bachelder's account of the advance is fairly accurate, except that he, like other Union observers, concluded that Union fire was the reason Kemper moved by the left flank. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, all Confederate accounts from Kemper's Brigade confirm that the movement was initiated before they came under fire, and in accordance with the only orders given--to march toward the Codori farmhouse, almost due north of their position. It is understandable why Union eyewitnesses and later historians came to the wrong conclusion. It is hard to believe that a brigade would willingly expose itself to an enfilading fire by such a march by the flank; therefore, it was only reasonable that the Federals thought they had intimidated Kemper by either their firepower or their depth of battle front.

The historian of the Army of the Potomac interpreted the advance in similar terms, but referred more to the Union artillerists' role:

¹⁶⁶Bachelder, "The Third Day's Battle," p. 36.

"Rittenhouse [Battery D, 5th U. S., on Little Round Top] could only use his right section on the advancing column; but with those two guns he cut great gaps in Kemper's brigade, which was on the right. When the column had advanced a little further, Garnett, in the center, suffered from McGilvery's batteries, as well as Kemper. Armistead, on the left, had not kept pace with the other two brigades. . . .

" . . . as Pickett's support on the left had been vanquished, and on his right had not been able to appear on the field, it was a forlorn hope for him to hurl his division on Gibbon, with Doubleday's division on his left to support and assist him, but on he pressed with a frenzy." 167

Talk about tactical hindsight! Stine credits Pickett with knowing not only what troops he faced, but that he was to be unsupported by "vanquished" and non-appearing columns. Although Pickett was surely concerned about his flanks, early accounts record more dismay with the lack of artillery support than infantry support. Stine, however, does credit McGilvery's artillery line with inflicting damage on not only Kemper, but Garnett as well. The role of Rittenhouse, although not specifically mentioned by name, has been well documented in the preceding chapter, wherein the soldiers in Pickett's Division attested to the horrors of the enfilading artillery fire from Round Top.

The memoirs and letters of the Union participants in Gibbon's and Doubleday's Divisions are more intimate and interesting than Stine and Bachelder's because we know that they were there; they saw the columns as they passed over the crest of the artillery line, and knew that they had to meet them. Their position and their preparations made them confident that they could do so.

"All along the front where the assault was made there was also a double line of Union infantry ready to resist the assault; and the front line of that infantry was posted behind a stone fence which served as an almost

167 Stine, pp. 525-526.

impregnable barrier against assailants. Strong details of skirmishers were out along the fences of the Emmitsburg road and also along the fence running westly from that road past the Confederate left flank." 168

From the Angle, perhaps the weakest point because its infantry supports had to leave room for the fire of Cushing's Battery, Gibbon's line was indeed almost impregnable. Hall's and Harrow's Brigades lay

"behind breastworks of rails covered with earth and with rifle pits and shallow trenches in their front. Further on were Stannard's and other brigades of Doubleday's Division. On the crest of the hill, a few yards behind the line of works, was thickly massed the artillery. Skirmishers lay out several hundred yards in front in the clover and grass, while a first line of infantry held a strong fence along the pike in front of Hays and a low stone wall further down the valley, and lay concealed in the grass in the intervening space. At the stone wall and breastworks was a second line in readiness to receive the attack, while behind the artillery, some thirty paces off, was still another, occupying higher ground and protected by the backbone of the ridge, and further on the flanks were heavy masses of infantry ready to be concentrated if occasion required." 169

Doubleday himself believed that his division alone was "formed in several lines, I think five in all." 170

Doubleday was one of those who saw the advance, and wrote of it later as well as related more officially to the Committee on the Conduct of the War:

"When the enemy finally charged, they came on in three lines, with additional lines called, in military language, wings, the object of the wings being to prevent the main force from being flanked. This charge was first directed towards my lines; but seeing that they were quite strong, five lines deep, and well strengthened with rails, stones, and behind which the men lay, the enemy changed his mind, and concluded to

168 Robbins, p. 103.

169 Ashe, "The Pickett-Pettigrew Charge", p. 142.

170 Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, at the Second Session Thirty-Eighth Congress: Army of the Potomac. Battle of Petersburg. (Washington, 1865), p. 309.

make the attack on the division of 2^d corps, on my right, where there were but two lines. He marched by his right flank, and then marched to his front. In doing this, the wing apparently did not understand the movement, but kept straight on. The consequence was, that there was a wide gap between the wing and the main charging force, which enabled my men on the right, the brigade of General Stannard, to form immediately on the flank of the charging column, while the enemy were subjected to an awful fire of artillery in front." 171

As already mentioned, Doubleday mistook the march by the left flank by Kemper's Brigade to mean that Kemper saw his deep ranks and deliberately moved to the left to avoid a confrontation with this First Corps division.

Captain Walter Owens of the 151st Pennsylvania Infantry of Doubleday's Division witnessed the attack from his position on the left of Gates' demi-brigade in the front line. Owens noted that a brigade of rebels (Kemper's) "made its appearance a little to the left of [his] position but marching in an oblique direction until it had moved to the right" of the 151st.¹⁷² On his right, Lieutenant Colonel J. B. Hardenburgh remembered that Kemper's Brigade "suddenly and rapidly obliqued to the left".¹⁷³ of his 20th New York State Militia, obviously referring to this march by the Virginians from the Klingel farm area to the Codori buildings.

On the left of the demi-brigade the three regiments of Stannard's Vermont Brigade reacted to the advance in a manner in keeping with the motto of the 142nd Pennsylvania:

"... Picket's divisions advanced from the Confederate main line, in a last desperate attempt to break the Union center. The Union army rose to attention. Just then one of General Stannard's aides rode in front of us and said, in a ringing tone, 'Men, you know what this means! We must whip them.'"

¹⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 309-310

¹⁷² Owens, August 6, 1866 letter to Bachelder, p. 10.

¹⁷³ Gates, p. 471.

"Our line advanced to the top of the ridge. Union batteries rapidly shifted position to accommodate the new order of things and take most effective positions, horses galloping with the guns to their places. We opened musket fire at long range on the advancing Confederate lines. They passed on close up to us before they replied, continually closing up the gaps we made in their columns." 174

The 13th Vermont Infantry Regiment, which had erected the breastworks of rails in their front during the forenoon, under the voluntary leadership of Sergeant George H. Scott, now saw the advantage of this forward rail defensive position:

"When Pickett's charge was well advanced, General Stannard ordered the 13th, which held the right of his brigade, forward to the slight breastwork of rails. On arriving Randall ordered them to halt, lie down and hold their fire. Soon the 13th received the welcome order to fire. The men had a short range and steady aim and as the smoke lifted it was seen that they had done awful execution."

"It was awkward work to load lying down behind those rails, and soon most of the line arose, without orders." 175

The 16th Vermont Regiment, acting primarily as skirmishers throughout the morning hours, was more advanced than any other regiment on the line, holding a position from the Codori farm buildings to the Plum Run valley ravine. Wheelock Veazey, the colonel of this regiment, was a prolific writer after the battle, with descriptive letters and memoirs recounting that July 3, 1863:

"About 4 P. M. the enemy, Pickett's Division, advanced. My pickets held the enemy skirmish line until their main line of battle came upon us when we gradually drew in on the reserve, and at the same time, the 14th was moved forward to the right of my reserve and opened by a volley on their own lines.* The 13th soon came

* not sure if this means they fired on the 16th or not?!

174 Sturtevant, p. 608.

175 Ibid., p. 600.

down to the right of the 14th. & by this time I had got my regiment together & we delivered but few volleys before the enemy moved by the flank to their left and forward towards the lines on our right which were considerably to our rear, and soon began to uncover our front when I received an order to move by flank to the right and left of the 13th." 176

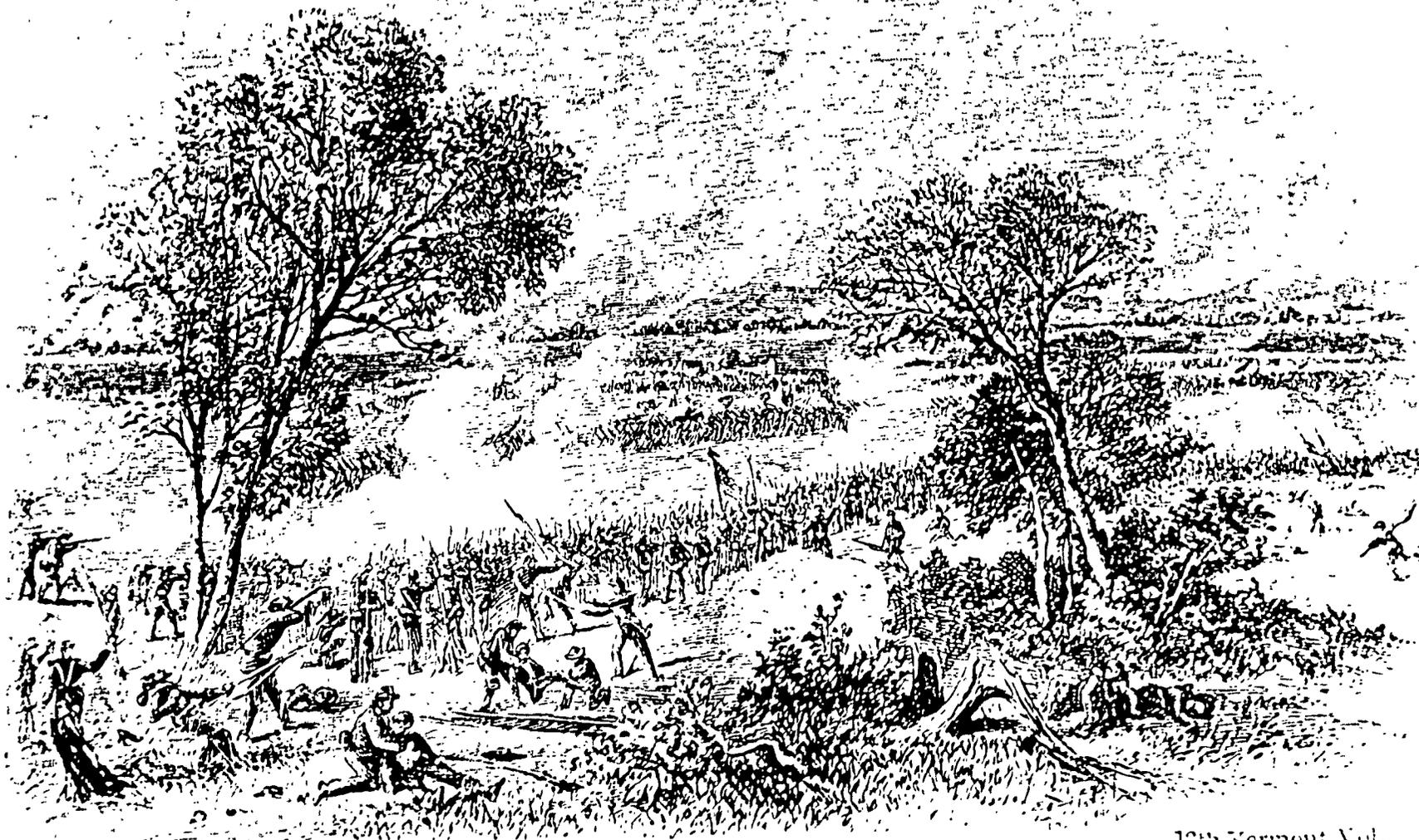
In the apparent draft for this account Colonel Veazey was more detailed about the events that occurred during the Confederate advance to and along the Emmitsburg Road:

"About four o'clock the artillery fire subsided and the rebel infantry columns soon emerged from the smoke and advanced steadily but rapidly down the slope, and with a skirmish line in advance quickly struck our own picket and skirmish line. The men held their position against the enemy's skirmishers and until their main line came upon them and then gradually fell back and gathered on the reserves which were several rods in front of our battle lines which were on the crest with our artillery. The enemy seemed to be aiming directly upon the position of our picket reserves, until they had nearly reached it, when they changed their course sufficiently to pass by our right. About this time I saw the 14th Vermont had been pushed forward to our right and a little to our rear, and were firing into the flank of the enemy. By the divergence of the enemy to their left, (our right) they exposed their right flank to a flank attack by our brigade. The 16th was still in the same position which the reserves of the skirmish line occupied. The skirmishers had all come in and joined the reserves and the regiment had begun to fire obliquely to the right into the flank of the rebels. . . ." 177

Veazey's account confirms the destructive fire initiated by the Vermont Brigade, primarily from the 14th Vermont when it moved forward between the 16th and 13th Regiments and fired obliquely into the flank of Kemper's Brigade. The engraving on the following page was executed after much correspondence between the Vermont participants and Bachelder, and accurately reflects this first movement and fire by Stannard's Brigade.

¹⁷⁶ Wheelock Veazey to G. G. Benedict, July 11, 1864. Vermont Historical Society. pp. 5-6.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 8 - 9.



16th Vermont Vol.

14TH VERMONT.

10th Vermont Vol.

STANNARD'S BRIGADE OPENING ON PICKETT'S DIVISION,

Gettysburg, July 30, 1863.

From a position in the second line, in reserve to the brigades of Gates and Stannard, were the brigades of Stone and Biddle. These brigades could watch with just a bit more detachment, knowing that they would not be the ones to bear the brunt of the attack:

"Experienced men said, they would now move upon us with the infantry. We had 5 lines of battle, . . . and a reserve. We did not feel uneasy as regarded the final result today. We raise looking anxiously for something and at last we saw it. They had been in the woods. We could see 1, 2, 3, 4, lines of infantry start across the plain. The most terrific cannonading recommenced. Our brave cannoneers aimed well and hence, great gaps were made in their lines. They would close up and move steadily forward, and when close enough, with their peculiar yell, they made the charge unfeared amid the roar of cannon and rattle of musketry." 178

In the ranks of the 149th Pennsylvania Infantry of Stone's Brigade, the old soldiers knew that the cannonade was just a prelude to an advance, and made preparations to meet whay may come:

"The cannonading continued for about one hour when both sides practically ceased firing, and it became evident that the Confederates were preparing for a charge or a bold movement of some kind.

"On our part more reinforcements were brought forward, a detachment of Berdan's Sharpshooters were scattered along our line, in our immediate rear, our line extending down the ridge toward the wheat field and Devil's Den.

"The Second Corps was formed on the right of the bunch of trees, down to the stone fence, supported by other Second Corps troops and part of the First Corps, their lines extending to the right. . . . By the time we were in position, Gen. Pickett's Division of Longstreet's Corps, which had been selected to make the charge, began to move out from the timber on Seminary Ridge. This division was composed of three brigades of Virginians. . . .

"As they came out of the woods in columns of fours, the division commanded by Gen. Pickett formed line of battle in column of brigades. . . .

178 ~~Musser letter of~~ September 15, 1863:

"Their first movement was a splendid spectacle; but their leading brigade /Kemper/ moved too much to the right, and soon in order to strike the bunch of trees, was compelled to make a left half-wheel. This movement somewhat disarranged their formation, cutting loose from Wilcox on the right, and crowding against Pettigrew on the left.

"In our lines as soon as the Confederate movement was developed reinforcements of both infantry and artillery were brought forward and placed in position. . . . Berdan's men began to use their rifles, picking off their officers. This seemed to me to be simply murder, but it was part of the game.

"As their lines came closer, our infantry opened fire with musketry, and the batteries changed to canister, both with murderous effect. . . .

"When their front reached the Codori House on the Emmitsburg Road, the smoke was so dense that we could see nothing clearly. Wilcox and his division (sic) must have moved forward in the original direction, as in our immediate front there was an opening or break in their line." 179

Further up the line, on the right of Doubleday's Division, Gibbon's men also prepared for the inevitable after the close of the cannonade. The 1st Minnesota, near the position of Gates' 20th N. Y. S. M., watched Pickett's column "moving directly for our position, with firm step and in perfect order, /and/ our artillery soon opened upon them with terrible effect, but without causing any pause, and we could not repress feelings and expressions of admiration at the steady, resolute style in which they came on, breasting that storm of shell and grape, which was plainly thinning their ranks."¹⁸⁰ And the 69th Pennsylvania Infantry, which proved to be the backbone of Webb's Brigade, waited with Cushing's Regular Battery for the onslaught:

"Cushing had already ordered two pieces from the crest down to the wall, and were placed in our line of battle, with company 'I' the right flanking company of the regiment, and of which I was a private at that time."

¹⁷⁹Nesbit, "Recollections of Pickett's Charge," p. 184.

¹⁸⁰Andrews, p. 37.

These pieces done more harm in that position to us than they did the enemy, as they only fired two or three rounds when their ammunition gave out, and one of those rounds blew the heads off two privates of the company, who were on one knee, at the time, besides these pieces drew upon us more than our share of fire from the battery that followed Pickett from the woods opposite to us, the gunners left us leaving their guns behind, hence they were useless." 181

R. Steuart Latrobe, who probably served with Webb's Brigade, remembered the sight as Pickett's men advanced eastward to meet them:

" . . . [We] could see, from where we stood, the enemy moving up in three lines from out of the woods. They would come out, marching by a flank, till they reached the desired ground, when they would face to the front. Their second line was about a hundred yards in the rear of the first, and on the edge of the woods, across the valley, was a third line. It was a splendid sight to see them. . . ." 182

Captain Cowan, commanding the 1st New York Battery, could see the Virginians advance also, from his new location replacing Brown's Rhode Island Battery near the clump of trees and directly opposite the opening in the Angle wall:

"The 1st N. Y. Battery, from its position close to the left of the clump of trees, between Cushing's Battery and Rorty's Battery, saw Pickett's men from the moment their line of skirmishers topped the Ridge beyond the Emmtsburg road until some of them crossed the wall and were swept into eternity by double canister fired from five of its guns at less than 20 yards. Pickett's three brigades came on as if marching for review, and moving toward the angle in our line at the clump of trees where Gibbon's Division of Webb's, Hall's and Harrow's Brigades lay behind a low stone wall." 183

181 McDermott letter to Bachelder, June 2, 1886; Sp. 377, 377.

182 R. Steuart Latrobe, "The Pinch of the Fight at Gettysburg, July 3, '63," Gettysburg Compiler (December 7, 1877), p. 1.

183 Andrew Cowan, "The Gettysburg Campaign," The National Tribune, in Gettysburg Newspaper Clippings, vol. VI, p. 163.

In another account by Cowan, he described getting into the new position, and what he saw and what his battery did during the Confederate movement toward the road:

"I immediately gave the order 'Limber to the right,' and we raced forward to the trees at a gallop. . . .

"When we came to our new position I saw at a glance beyond the Emmitsburg road what was meant by holding my fire for the infantry. Longstreet was coming! We could see their battle flags waving as their line moved forward.

"Rorty's New York battery, now on our left, and Cushing's regular battery, on our right, with the clump of trees between us, were firing rapidly at the enemy, and our guns joined in. Then I saw that we had only five of our six guns in position at the left of the trees. The leading gun, when coming up at a gallop, had passed to the right of the trees, and there I found it in position in charge of Corporal Peter Mulally, a good soldier, but it was crowded close upon the left gun of Cushing's battery, so that it could not be worked.

"Lieutenant Cushing was there when I rode up, and he made some pleasant reply to my hurried explanation. He then turned and shouted the order, 'By hand to the front,' meaning that his left guns would be pushed forward, making room for my gun. . . .

"Two or three companies of the Sixty-ninth regiment, the left regiment of Webb's brigade, were at the wall directly in front of Cowan's guns. To the left of the First New York was Battery B, First New York regiment, commanded by Captain Rorty. In its front were Hall's and Harrow's Brigades of Gibbon's division of the Second Corps.

"Our infantry at the wall had very slight protection, because it was very low in the angle, certainly not over two feet high. Three or four rails, stake and rider fashion, had previously made it high enough to turn cattle. There was not enough soil there to strengthen the wall and raise it higher. Back of the line held by the batteries the soil was too thin to raise any sort of defences. . . .

"I could only see from our position that a part of the enemy's line was advancing to the Emmitsburg road in our front and to our left, their left being hidden from us by the clump of trees. That proved to be Pickett's division of Virginians, numbering about five thousand.

"They came on in perfect order, closing on their left as the shot and shell ploughed gaps through their ranks, and keeping their regular formation until they had to cross fences at the Emmitsburg road. It was a wonderful sight!" 184

Although Captain Cowan may have regarded the Confederate advance as a wonderful thing to watch, we have already seen that, despite the pride of the Southerners in their own courage and steadiness, the men of Pickett's Division considered the conditions of the advance anything but wonderful. Cowan, of course, did his part in discouraging any wondrous attitude in these Confederates both during the cannonade and during the advance. A less effective battery, despite all the publicity and glory it won as a result of the Third Day's Battle, was Cushing's Battery A, Fourth U. S. Artillery. A cannoneer recalled how depleted its ranks and how ruined its battery was at the time of the Confederate advance:

"Shortly after 2 o'clock there came a lull in the cannonading and presently not a gun was heard. We wondered what it meant. All at once, as the smoke cleared away a little, we saw a solid column of rebels coming up the hill through the wheatfield. It seemed almost as though they had sprung out of the ground. . . . We knew then what the cessation in the cannonading meant. This infantry was coming on for the final charge to take the Ridge and get possession of our ammunition trains. . . .

"We had now only two guns and four rounds of ammunition. The four men who were still at the guns were Fred Fieger /Fuger/, Orderly Sergeant Pat Glasscott, Ed Hurley, and myself. We saw the Johnnies coming on steadily towards us and knew there was not time to lose. The two pieces were still about 150 feet back from the stone wall. Fieger took in the situation at a glance, and turning to the other boys said: "Let's run 'em down to the stone wall and give 'em our last shot."

"So we run the pieces down to the wall and I remember taking out a stone so that the muzzle of the gun protruded just over the top of the wall. Then we put in double loads,

184 Cowan, "When Cowan's Battery Withstood Pickett's Splendid Charge."

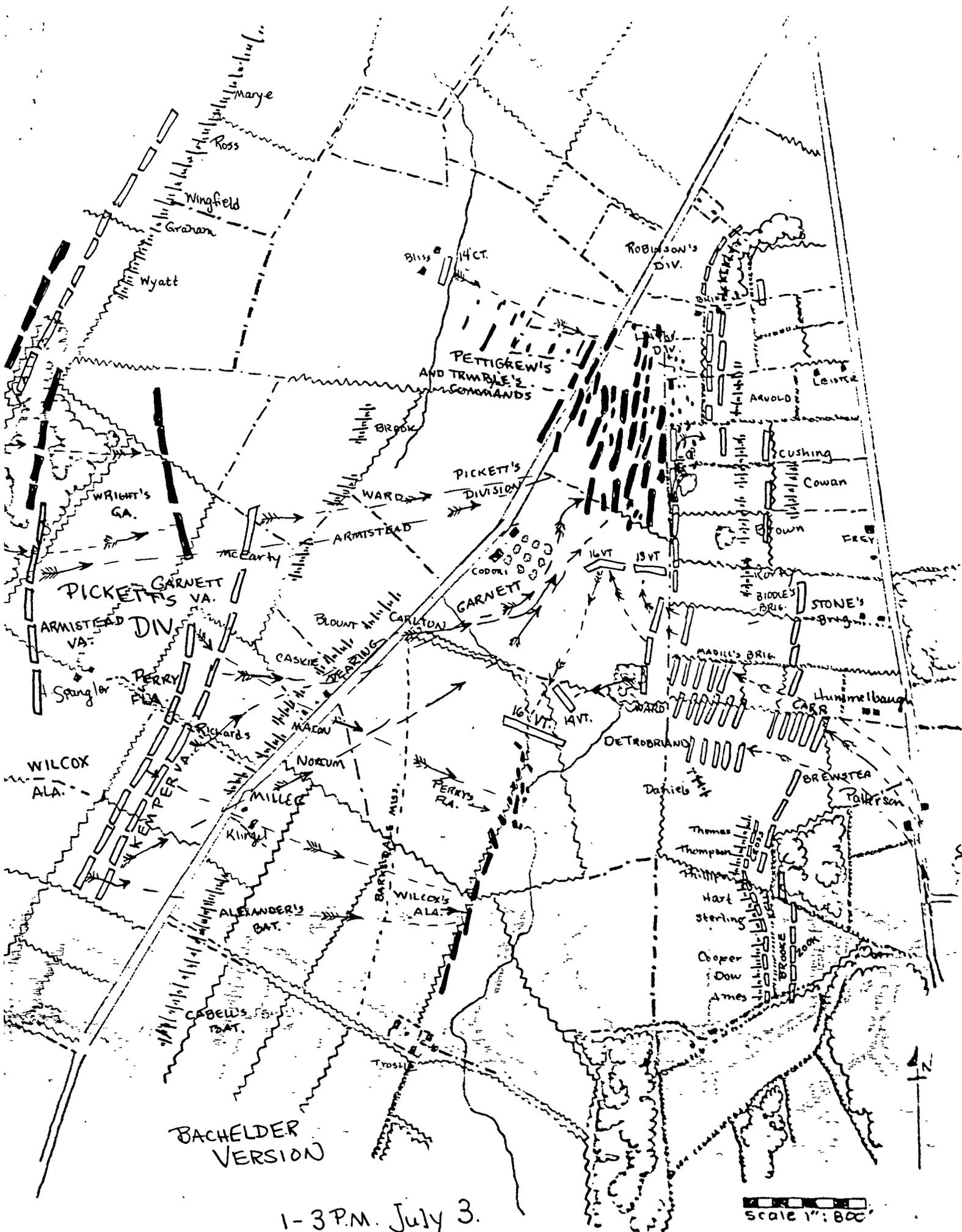
two loads of canister in each gun--it was all we had. After that Fieger and I each took a lanyard in our hand and laid down. On came the Johnnies three columns deep, marching up through the wheat field. We watched them through the crevices in the wall. . . ." 185

This account by one of the supposed four survivors at the last guns in the Angle differs from the preceding recollection by Andrew Cowan, especially since it gives all credit for moving the pieces down to the wall for the closing shots of the Regulars battery to Sergeant Fuger. Cowan remembered that Cushing was still alive and made the decision and gave the orders himself. At the time this article was written, Sergeant Fuger was apparently crusading for his Medal of Honor, which was issued to him in 1897 three years after the date of the published article. It might be well to weigh the statements of the cannoneers in light of this fact, when Fuger could only benefit from such an article, to the credit of the remainder of the battery on July 3, 1863. Indeed, it is remarkable how Fuger's statements about that day's activities became more and more self-complimentary as the years went by, and quite puzzling why no one questioned his seeming flights of fantasy, especially when it later developed to Fuger's own gain in esteem and self-importance. Cannoneer Smith may have been a willing accomplice to this aggrandizement of facts; so that the living (Fuger) instead of the dead (Cushing) could be rewarded. However, his brigade commander did make special mention of Fuger's bravery and competence in the battle in his report, and went so far as to applaud him for his modesty; so we must beware of too harsh a judgment of the sergeant.

From the above Union recollections of the Confederate advance of Pickett's Division we note that most of Gibbon's Division (with the exception of the

¹⁸⁵ Christopher Smith, "Bloody Angle," p. 42.

artillery) were not actively engaged, while the front lines of Doubleday's Division had the opportunity to strike early and with effect against the right brigade of Pickett's Division. Union casualties at this point were limited to those inflicted by the enemy's artillery, as it covered the advance.



Chapter 6: "No Coward's Blood"--The Confederate Attack

"Stricken and maimed by shot and shell,
 Men marched to death
 Through that fiery hell,
 Nor shook, nor faltered, pressing on
 As their fathers did with Marion.
 Then came the struggle breast to breast,
 No coward's blood was shed that day,
 Each man strove to do his best--
 There were no recreants in the fray." 186

We have considered that part of the assault from the first position to the Emmitsburg Road as the advance--an orderly marching at common time by the three brigades of Pickett's Division en route to their objective point at the Codori farm buildings. As the brigades massed towards those structures the character of the assault was changed. Common time yielded to quick time and double quick time, and columns lost their order. This, then, was the attack.

Captain W. Stuart Symington, aide-de-camp to General Pickett, was one who later remembered the events of that day and cast about for someone else upon whom to fix the blame. The scapegoat was the column under Pettigrew:

"After moving forward some distance the troops on our left wavered, and finally broke badly. Pickett then ordered Armistead to move up and take position on the left of our first line. This movement was made promptly, and while we were still moving to the front. Almost as soon as Armistead came on line with the other two brigades, the direction of the charge was changed somewhat to the left, and all three brigades were massed somewhere about the point where the Federal infantry struck our right flank.

"To the best of my recollection the troops directly in front (if I may so call it) did not stand, but those coming in from toward our right flank struck us both in front and flank." 187

186 Fow, "Gettysburg", p. 204.

187 Stine, p. 540.

Captain Symington's memoirs, at an early date, are contradictory to those of most other participants in the charge. His assertion that Armistead's Brigade advanced to the left of Garnett's Brigade to cover the open flank there when the "breaking" North Carolinians and Tennesseans abandoned them is not backed up by anyone other than much later writers and those on Pickett's staff. To the contrary, Armistead stayed in his relative position to the rear and left of the two leading brigades long after the "direction of the charge was changed somewhat to the left" and not before that change or at the moment of the change. Captain Symington, we must remember, was one of Pickett's own staff, and (like the rest of that crew) was busy justifying Pickett's behavior and searching for other shoulders to carry the blame after the battle. It is well to remember General Abner Doubleday's own remark that "You know, staff officers will lie for their chiefs."¹⁸⁸ Without knowing Captain Symington's war record, or his personal relationship with George Pickett, we can still almost be certain that he was rearranging facts to suit his theory of the absent supports on the left.

In the fighting ranks the recollections are often exaggerated beyond their truth to aggrandize the deeds of the writer, yet they are probably more honest than most are willing to concede. While the Captain Symingtons and generals and officers with future careers or medals to be won would twist facts to suit their needs, the gun-toting soldier generally wrote to inform or entertain solely, and approached his story with a critical, but usually affectionate eye.

¹⁸⁸Hancock and Howard, "National Tribune (November 29, 1888), p. 4.

One general who appears to have been exceptionally honest in his recollections was James L. Kemper, leading the brigade on the right which made the flank movement to the Codori buildings under such a severe infantry and artillery fire:

"From the beginning to the end of that charge, up to the time when Pickett's division found itself in the cul-de-sac of death into which it had been hurled, where it met an overpowering fire in front, and raking fires both from the right and the left, I never saw any command or any troops on the confederate side except the three brigades of Pickett's division.

". . . I think I was shot from my horse a bay about the instant at which the general rout began. I know that I was near enough to the enemy's line to observe the features and expressions of the faces of the men in front of me, and I thought I observed and could identify the soldier who shot me." 189

At another time he wrote

"I got near enough to the first line of the enemy to distinguish features in the faces of men in it, when I was shot from my horse. My staff were then all killed or mortally wounded save one who was absent at the moment. I had with me a single orderly unhurt. My wound was excruciatingly painful from the first and I have but broken and confused recollection of what followed. I could not tell what my command did afterwards except from hearsay, but I do not believe there was more than ten minutes fighting after I fell." 190

Here we have very little in the way of information, but very much in the way of a soldier's honest recollections, and an insight into the things such a man as Kemper remembered about the battle. His most vivid memory, obviously, was seeing the individual soldiers along the Cemetery Ridge line. They were no longer just figures and lines on a map, or puffs of smoke, but living, breathing individuals who were determined to kill him and stop his attack.

189 Kemper letter to Bachelder, February 4, 1886, p. 286.

190 Kemper letter to Alexander, September 20, 1869.

The belief that he saw the very man who almost did kill him must have been one of the longest moments of Kemper's life. Kemper, shot in the groin with the ball ranging upward, would have been in excruciating pain, indeed. His admission that his memories of that day were clouded because of his preoccupation with his wound are understandable, and do a lot toward helping us evaluate Kemper's other recollections of that day. Rather than try to approve of all that he wrote, since much of the facts of the movements during the advance seemed garbled, it would be best for the reader to judge Kemper's letters and memoirs as those of a human undergoing and experiencing a busy and painful day, and not as a detached observer (even if he was a general).

Colonel Joseph Mayo, who found himself in command of Kemper's Brigade after the battle because of his general's critical wound, reported within three weeks of the assault that his brigade was in the apparent lead during this rush towards the enemy's works:

"Slowly, steadily and in perfect order, over the hill and across the plain which separated us from the enemy & which was swept by the terrible fire of his numerous batteries, the Brigade moved forward to storm the heights beyond. Reserving their fire until they had approached within a hundred yards of his works, our men poured into the enemy one well-directed volley and then at the command of General Kemper rushed with a cheer upon the works, closely followed by the noble Brigades of Garnett and Armistead."¹⁹¹

If Mayo's account is true, or at least parts of it are true, one has to admire the conduct of Kemper's men. To advance by the flank under an enfilading fire and then to double-quick forward into the very teeth of the enemy's line without returning a shot must have been unnerving and frustrating.

¹⁹¹Report of Colonel Joseph Mayo, July 25, 1863, Pickett Papers.

However, the fire to which Kemper's Brigade was subjected could have been unnerving enough to encourage wholesale panic among some units and to stimulate a lot of surrendering from others. References to the large number of prisoners in Kemper's Brigade after the attack does much to affirm this assertion, as well as eyewitness accounts by Union participants in the later repulse.

In Garnett's Brigade, on Kemper's left, the ranks began to suffer the same kind of fire that Kemper's Brigade had been exposed to from the beginning. In the 8th Virginia regiment, now temporarily commanded by its lieutenant colonel (Norbonne Berkeley), the confusion was heightened because of the Codori farmhouse, which was square in the middle of that regiment's advance:

"My regiment struck the red house, the left wing under my charge passing to the left of it, the other portion of the regiment, with my three brothers, passing around the other end of it. While uniting the portions of the regiment, I saw my brother, Captain William Berkeley /Co. D/, struck by a shell, and the blood spurt in a stream from his thigh, and he hobbled around the end of the house. In a short time I also was struck in the thigh by a minie ball, and my adjutant, Benton Hutchinson, who had been knocked down by a piéce of shell, got up and assisted me around the house, where I expected to find my wounded brother, but to my surprise he was not there. General Garnett's aide, Capt. /John S./ Jones, was there and informing /me/ of the manner of Gen. Garnett's death." 192

This infantry fire which disabled Colonel Berkeley was probably coming from Stannard's Brigade, which by this time had advanced out into the field between the Codori farmhouse and the Union lines and was firing into not only Kemper but Garnett as well.

192 Norbonne Berkeley, unpublished memoir:

On the immediate left of Norbonne Berkeley's position was the infantry of the 18th Virginia. There Captain H. T. Owen was to experience the attack and repulse of his company on this July day, and offers us a vivid depiction in his later reminiscences:

"Kemper had gone down terribly mangled, but Garnett still towered unhurt, and rode up and down the front line, saying in a strong, calm voice: 'Faster, men! faster! Close up and step out faster, but don't double quick!'"

"We were now four hundred yards from the foot of Cemetery Hill, when away off to the right, nearly half a mile, there appeared in the open field a line of men at right angles with our own, a long, dark mass, dressed in blue, and coming down at a 'double quick' upon the unprotected right flank of Pickett's men, with their muskets 'upon the right shoulder shift,' their battle flags dancing and fluttering in the breeze, created by their own rapid motion and their burnished bayonets glastening above their heads like forest twigs covered with sheets of sparkling ice when shaken by a blast. * Garnett galloped along the line saying: 'Faster, men! faster!' and the front line broke forward into a double quick, when Garnett called out: 'Steady, men! steady! Don't double quick. Save your wind and your ammunition for the final charge!' and then went down among the dead, and his clarion voice was no more heard above the roar of battle. The enemy were now seen strengthening their lines where the blow was expected to strike by hurrying up reserves from the right and left, the columns from opposite directions passing each other double along our front like the fingers of a man's two fingers (sic--hands) locking together. The distance had again shortened and officers in the enemy's line could be distinguished by their uniforms from the privates. Then was heard behind that heavy thud of a muffled tread of armed men that roar and rust of trampling feet as Armistead's column from the rear closed up behind the front line and he (the last brigadier) took command, stepped out in front with

*These would have been the 13th and 16th Regiments of Stannard's Vermont Brigade, of whom more and more will be spoken in this and subsequent chapters.

his hat uplifted on the point of his sword and led the division, now four ranks deep, rapidly and grandly across the valley of death, covered with clover as soft as a Turkish carpet."

"There it was again! and again! A sound filling the air above, below, around us, like the blast through the top of a dry cedar or the whirring sound made by the sudden flight of a flock of quail. It was grape and canister, and the column broke forward into a double quick and rushed forward toward the stone wall where forty cannon were belching forth grape and canister twice and thrice a minute. A hundred yards from the stone wall the flanking party on the right, coming down on a heavy run, halted suddenly within fifty yards and poured a deadly storm of musket balls into Pickett's men, double-quicking across their front, and, under this terrible cross fire the men reeled and staggered between falling comrades and the right came pressing down upon the centre, crowding the companies in confusion. But all knew the purpose to carry the heights in front, and the mingled mass, from fifteen to thirty feet deep, rushed toward the stone wall, while a few hundred men, without orders, faced to the right and fought the flanking party there, although fifty to one, and for a time held them at bay. Muskets were seen crossed as some men fired to the right and others to the front and the fighting was terrific--far beyond all other experience even of Pickett's men, who for once raised no cheer, while the welkin rang around them with the 'Union triple huzza.' The old veterans saw the fearful odds against them and other hosts gathering darker and deeper still." 193

Captain Owen deserves our gratitude for not only one of the best reading accounts of the attack, but because he managed to remember and mingle all those countless little events that were magnified in importance that day. Images of Garnett's fretting ride back and forth to assure and steel his men; of the lushness of the grass, of the colors and flashes of the Vermonters as they swept down to send the Southerners to their doom; of men jammed together in confusion and terror as they tried to meet the enemy on two fronts at once--all of these are the riches left to us by

¹⁹³Captain H. T. Owen; "Pickett's Charge," Gettysburg Compiler (April 6, 1881); p. 1

one of Garnett's own, who was witness and participant to it all. While others attempt to impress us with grand tactical analysis or by detailing events to which they could never have been privy, Captain Owen restricted his history of the battle to what he himself saw and felt, and thus has given us one of the truer and more detailed analyses of the battle.

On the extreme left of the line of Garnett's advance was the 56th Virginia Infantry, and G. W. Finley of Company K rivals Captain Owen for remembering details which he himself witnessed:

"When my regiment struck the road the board fences were still mostly standing and there was a momentary check until our men went against and over them. Men were falling all around us, and cannon and muskets were raining death upon us. Still on and up the slope towards that stone fence our men steadily swept, without a sound or a shot, save as the men would clamor to be allowed to return the fire that was being poured into them. When we were about 75 or 100 yards from that stone wall some of the men holding it began to break for the rear, when, without orders, save from captains and lieutenants, our line poured a volley or two into them and then rushed upon the fence, breaking the line and capturing many of the men, who rushed toward us crying: 'Don't shoot!' 'We surrender!' 'Where shall we go?', &c. They were told to go to our rear, but no one went with them so far as I saw, and I suppose the most of them afterwards made their way back into their own lines."

"As to the effect of the fire from the Federal line upon ours as we advanced, I can only say that it did not seem to check it in the least. There was no pause in the slow and steady movement save the momentary one at the Emmetsburg road, caused mainly by the fence that inclosed it. There was a little 'huddling' of the men when we were ordered to dress to the left rather than to the center, as at first commanded. . . . " 194.

Finley's description here is unique in that we know pretty much what areas he is referring to when he speaks of breaking the Union line at the stone wall and capturing prisoners. This is undoubtedly a reference to the Angle wall itself, covered by Webb's Brigade until some of them abandoned it and others were captured by staying with it.

¹⁹⁴Finley, "Bloody Angle," pp. 43-44.

While Garnett's and Kemper's Brigade members have left us many accounts of the cannonading and the fighting in and around the Angle, few have written much regarding the advance or the attack except to comment on the fire to which they were subjected on the way over the "valley". Armistead's Brigade, however, has had more prolific soldiers, probably because they were not as detrimentally affected by the cannonade or the advance to the Emmitsburg Road as Kemper's and Garnett's men. This was because they still were assuming the position to the left and rear of Garnett, and had not yet uncovered their front to the enemy. After the Emmitsburg Road the story was different, since Garnett and Kemper were fragmenting at and near the wall, trying to hold their own, while Armistead was yet advancing over the plain and under fire from those Union soldiers not participating in the Angle fighting at that time.

One of Armistead's veterans remembered that his brigade did not give the rebel yell until after they crossed the road, saw the enemy's position, and broke into the double quick.¹⁹⁵ Another veteran recalled the confusion and limited field of vision during the attack to the wall:

"There was nothing in our line to the right of our regiment: the 14th Va. Inft. Armistead's right regiment. . . . I saw the colors of the 13th Va. Garnett's regiment within ten feet of the 14th at the stone wall. . . .

"My company was on the left of the 14th next to the 57th Va. The order was 'Guide Center,' and just as I was catching up the 57th Va. gave way to the right, and closed up the little space between the regiments. . . . I ran squarely into the Yankees before seeing them and brought down my bayonet before seeing they had up 'the sign of distress'. There was nothing for me to do but crowd through them, and then I struck the stone wall." ¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵Col. William Wood, "Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg," p. 1.

¹⁹⁶D. B. Easley, July 24, 1913 letter to Howard Townsend, in D. B. Easley Papers, Military History Institute, p. 1.

Easley's account lacks some credibility due to its errors in numerical assignation to regiments in his own and Garnett's Brigade. However, since Easley was writing this letter fifty years after the fact, we can expect such mental lapses in the very specific kinds of factual data. (Garnett's Brigade had no 13th Virginia Regiment in it, while the 9th Virginia was on the left of the 14th, and not the 57th Regiment.)

John Lewis, a foot soldier in the 9th Virginia Infantry, described the rush and attack after the Emmitsburg Road as it pertained to his own and the other brigades of Pickett's Division:

"Within 800 yards of the Federal works Garnett's brigade gave their usual yell and strike the double-quick. At 100 yards they deliver their fire and dash at the works with the bayonet.

"Kemper's brigade takes up the yell, fire, and dashes at them with the bayonet. Armistead, who is a little ot the left and rear, catches the enthusiasm, joins the yell, and, on the run, Armistead fell back to the rear to give his brigade a chance to fire. They fire and rush at the works and to the assistance of Garnett and Kemper." 197

Before Armistead fell to the rear of his brigade (his proper place during the advance anyway), the adjutant of the 9th Regiment watched as two brigade commanders had one last meeting. Armistead "strode along before his brigade, until within a hundred yards of the stone fence, when a person on horse-back (I have been told that it was General Garnett) engaged him in conversation for a few moments". 198

The center regiment of the brigade was the 53rd Virginia Regiment, which was to be the guide for the remainder of the brigade during the advance. Lieutenant J. J. Irving Saler commanded a platoon of Company H, and wrote of this

197 Lewis, p. 82.

198 Stine, p. 541.

most vivid memories of the attack:

"It was just beyond that fence beyond the Emmitsburg road where a solid shot from Round Top struck the right of my company's line and killed a dozen men. One of them was cut completely in two. A little further and we began to receive your grape and canister. I tried to crawl through a fence and heard the shot striking ping-ping on the rails all around me. My head got caught between two rails, and I recall the horror of the thought that I might be killed and left hanging there dead. So I jumped over the fence and came on. It was awful the way the men dropped." 199

The fence that Lieutenant Sale remembered with such visions of terror is still part of the battlefield landscape, and runs on a general east-west line from the Emmitsburg Road to the Angle wall at the slashing, and defined the northern boundary of the Codori Farm. This would have been the only fence between the road and the Union defenses that Garnett's Brigade would have crossed, and it would surely have been subjected to the fire and cross-fire of both Gibbon's and Doubleday's Divisions.

Just where and when the Confederates eventually opened a return fire will probably never be known for certain, because every account differs as to how far away the lines were before shots were exchanged or returned. Wyatt Whitehead, member of Company I of the 53rd Virginia, gave the division more endurance and self-control than any other contemporary writer:

"After getting within 40 yards of the stone fence (not a gun had been fired by the Confederates up to this time) there came an order all along the line to charge, and we did charge, and just behind the stone wall rose up the Yankee infantry and poured into our ranks such murderous fire as no human tongue can describe. Kemper's and Garnett's Brigades had almost entirely disappeared now, for forming the front line of attack they

199 "Pickett's Charge," The Philadelphia Weekly Press (July 4, 1887), p. 1.

had received the brunt of the enemy's merciless fire and were lying wounded and dead upon the valley across which we had come. After a desperate fight the Yankee's gave way and as they fell back from the stone wall our men began to climb over.'" 200

James Carter, who had been present when General Armistead asked Color-Sergeant Blackwell to plant the colors of the 53rd Virginia on the enemy's works, followed that officer across the "valley" and witnessed many of his actions. His observations of Armistead and his fellow color-guard in this last part of the advance, when they attacked behind the disintegrating brigades of Garnett and Kemper, provide a record of the last moments of most of those involved:

"Then Armistead placed his hat on the point of his sword, and waving it around gave the command: 'Forward, double quick!' The saber soon cut through the hat, which slipped down to the hilt, but he continued to wave it, and urged his men forward.

"Color-Sergeant Blackwell was now shot down, I seized the colors, but another of the guard, Scott, snatched them out of my hand, and ran about fifteen feet out in front of the brigade and waved them--all this while that terrible storm of bullets was pouring in--he was instantly shot, and Robert Tyler Jones ran forward and picked them up. I was wounded here and fell. Up to this time our Brigade had not fired a gun. When Jones took the colors he was shot in the arm, but continued to advance until he reached the stone wall, where he leaped on top and waved the flag triumphantly. But he was again shot, and fell forward severely wounded." 201

Thus it was that one of the blue flags (of Virginia) that observers on Seminary Ridge saw make it to the enemy's works was this one of the 53rd Virginia, carried by the grandson of former President John Tyler.

200Clement, p. 249.

201Carter, p. 263.

"The color-bearers facing death
 White in the whirling sulphurous wreath,
 Stand boldly out before the line;
 Right and left their glances go,
 Proud of each other, glorying in their show;
 Their battle-flags about them blow,
 And fold them as in flame divine. . . ."202

The 38th Virginia formed the extreme left of Armistead's Brigade, and acting Major George Griggs offered no more than a general account of that regiment's attack from the Emmitsburg Road. According to Griggs the 38th Virginia "charged the enemy across a wide plain--they being sheltered behind a rock fence, earthworks, &c--and though unprotected and having to climb over two high fences in the face of a concentrated fire from the masked number of the enemy's artillery, the troops moved steadily forward, driving the enemy from his strong position, capturing all his guns, but only for a moment."203

Once again we see that the survivors of the attack were preoccupied with the high fences that paralleled the Emmitsburg Road and enclosed the farm field (already mentioned by Lieutenant Salé). W. H. Swallow, of Armistead's Brigade, continued in the same vein:

"Scores of the survivors often related their anxious suspense and the length of time it seemed to climb up to the top of the fence. As soon as the top of the fence was lined with troops the whole line tumbled over, falling flat into the bed of the road, while the enemy's bullets buried themselves into the

202 Cohen, p. 132.

203 Griggs, p. 253.

bodies of the falling victims. . . . The assaulting column only remained in the road a few seconds, it could scarcely be called a halt, when it rose and pushed over the second fence, leaving many of their comrades dead and wounded behind them. Just as the column crossed the second fence, it received a most withering fire of musketry, a perfect shower of lead; it staggered for a few seconds, halted, returned the fire, and with one wild shout rushed forward to the works.

"From the road to the works the column of attack was, for a few moments, lost to view being completely enveloped by the enemy's fire." 204

Some of the general histories of the attack and those histories written by observers or participants in other aspects of the assault of July 3, 1863 dilute the personal incidences to the point of deletion in some cases, but offer an understandable and readable story of the brigades in Pickett's Division. Since many of these later histories include the attack and the advance in a sequence which would be disjointed if not combined in that fashion, we have included both aspects in their quotations which follow.

"Marching in the direction of the salient position occupied by Hancock, Pickett, after passing beyond the front of Wilcox, causes each of his brigades to make a half-wheel to the left. This movement is hardly completed before McGilvery leads off with the fire of the Federal batteries; a cloud-burst of flame. . . . A single shot of McGilvery, firing upon Pickett's flank, kills ten men."

". . . . Garnett, whose brigade is in the advance, falls dead within a hundred yards of the Union front. His men rush madly upon the parts of the line where are the 69th and 71st. This brings them under the fire of Stannard's brigade, which has occupied a small woods in advance and to the left of the point of Pickett's attack. . . . Two regiments from Armistead's right are decimated and disorganized by this movement. The remainder of this brigade throws itself in the rear of the centre of Pickett's line." 205

²⁰⁴Swallow, p. 568.

²⁰⁵William Ralton Balch, "Pickett's Charge," Gettysburg Compiler (August 11, 1887), p. 1

It is well to keep in mind Balch's statement that "two regiments from Armistead's right" were decimated and disorganized by the movement and fire of "Stannard's Brigade", or that body of troops which had position in a woods in front of the Union line.²⁰⁶ The right of Armistead's Brigade consisted of the 14th and 9th Virginia Regiments. Colonel James Hodges, who commanded the 14th Virginia Infantry, was destined to become a landmark of sorts for the Union commanders after the battle, and his name will come up again later on in accounts and controversies of those Union officers.

At the time the attack commenced from the Emmitsburg Road, the relative positions of the participating brigades and divisions were still discernible, and were described by a North Carolinian:

"At length having made two-thirds of the distance, and being only three hundred yards away, Pickett's troops with Garnett in front, Kemper on the right, but somewhat in rear, and Armistead a hundred yards behind, turned towards the point they were to assail. On Garnett's left was Archer's Brigade, under Colonel Fry, whose numbers had been largely reduced in the first day's fight--and which had moved directly forward as the brigade of direction. Close joined with it were Pettigrew's North Carolinians under Colonel Marshall, Pettigrew himself being in command of the division; and further on were Davis' Mississippians and Brockenbrough's Virginia Brigade, all well aligned, while a hundred and fifty yards behind Trimble led Lane's and Scales' Brigades. . . ."

"The first line of the enemy, which lay a hundred yards in front, was thrown back against the wall, many being captured and hurried to the rear without guard. But yet the roar and din of the conflict continued and, though the smoke of battle obscured the front, the carnage went on as the columns drew closer and closer to . . ."

²⁰⁶which should have been Stannard's Brigade, since its regiments were the only ones occupying both the so-called Hancock grove and the Codori-Trostle thicket.

the enemy's works. A front that had been originally more than a mile in length had now been compressed into less than eight hundred yards and the concentrated fire of the enemy's artillery, as well as musketry, from the flanks as well as from the front, told with fearful effect." 207

Pickett, heading for the copse of trees, saw how far to the left they were when his division reached

"the ridge on which the Turnpike ran, and he wheeled to the left and moved up towards Cordori's House. By this movement he presented his flank to the batteries posted on Little Round Top, and received a severe enfilading fire, while General Stannard, whose division (sic) was in his immediate front, threw out two Vermont regiments to contest the ground with him. But Colonel Alexander had himself hastily followed with a battery of artillery and opened on this force with spirit, in a measure dispersing it and neutralizing its power for serious work. But still it could not be entirely driven off, and when Kemper, on the extreme right, having passed to the east of Cordori's house, moved by the left flank to close up with Garrett's (sic) Brigade, the Vermonters also moved by the flank to keep pace with him, and continued to annoy him." 208

Brigadier General Cadmus Wilcox, who was in front of Kemper's Brigade during the cannonade and whose brigade (with that of David Lang's Florida Brigade) was to advance on Pickett's right to protect Kemper's flank, wrote later of the advance and attack by the Virginia division:

"... Pickett's men advanced in good order and firmly, and from my position were soon out of sight; they had not advanced over 15 or 20 minutes before I received three orders in quick succession to move to their support and on their right. The order to advance was given at once, and the men moved forward with their usual courage and alacrity; they had soon rose to the crest in front on which lay the Emmetsburg road, and

207 Ashè, pp. 144, 146.

208 Ibid., p. 142.

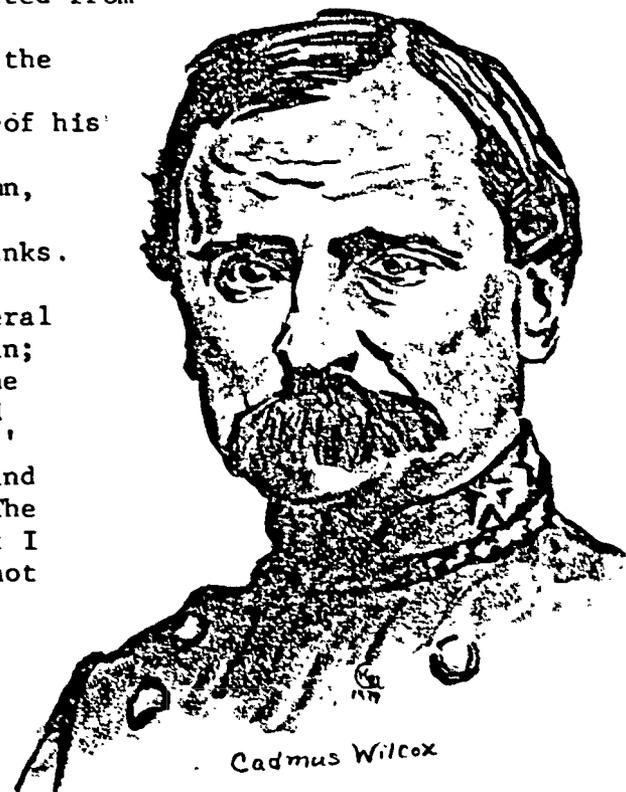
immediately all the batteries on the left, front, and right, concentrated upon them, none of Pickett's men were seen, it was supposed that they had taken the enemy's works, and had passed beyond.

"My men advanced over nearly the same ground that they did the day before, all the time exposed to shot and shell but no infantry; at length they reached the rocky and dry bed of the stream /Plum Run/, reached the day before, and were here exposed to grape and canister without injury, and halted to fire at infantry in front occupying a line of pits."²⁰⁹

The three orders received by Wilcox originated from Pickett himself, who sent his staff to bring up the Alabama brigade. Pickett, according to members of his staff, was then about 100 yards behind the column, where he watched and was concerned about his flanks.

"He at once sent Captain Baird to General Wilcox with the order for him to come in; then he sent Captain Symington with the same order, in a very few moments, and last he said, 'Captain Bright, you go,' and I was about the same distance behind Symington that he was behind Baird. The fire was so dreadful at this time that I believe that General Pickett thought not more than one out of the three would reach General Wilcox.

"When I rode up to Wilcox he was standing with both hands raised waving and saying to me: 'I know; I know.'" ²¹⁰



Cadmus Wilcox

In reference to Wilcox's own report, made the same month as the battle, it must be interpreted in light of Wilcox's own position on the field, the Union movements, as well as the smoke-obscured movements of Pickett's Division. By the time Wilcox got the orders to advance (some 15-20 minutes after Kemper marched past him); Pickett's Division should have been indeed

²⁰⁹Wilcox, "Report".

²¹⁰Bright, p.264.

out of Wilcox's sight, especially where he probably expected them to be. The march by the left flank by Kemper's Brigade toward the Codori House may have had disastrous results not only because it exposed Kemper to that deadly enfilading fire from the very beginning, but also because it may have been totally unexpected to Wilcox. If Wilcox had assumed Kemper would advance and attack somewhere on his front (which would have been logical), instead of way off to the left, he would not have been looking for Pickett's Division (or Kemper anyway) near the Angle or clump of trees. The most logical place for Kemper to have advanced would have been exactly where Doubleday, Gates, Stannard, and the rest of them thought Kemper was initially advancing--on the line occupied by the Vermonters and the very left of Gibbon's line. By the time Wilcox was summoned to advance (fifteen or twenty minutes after Pickett's Division began its advance), even Kemper's Brigade should have been at the Union works near the Angle. Marching at common time alone would have put Kemper almost at the Angle in twenty minutes, while the combination of quick time and double-quick time should easily have put him there.²¹¹ It is doubtful how much Wilcox would have been able to see in the smoke anyway, but if he was looking in the direction of Stannard, Gates, and Harrow he would have been looking at a large gap in the Union front line. Those three brigades had probably already left their positions to join the attack on Kemper and Garnett. What more logical thing for Wilcox to think than that Pickett had indeed breached the Union line there, had driven Stannard, Gates, & before them and right over the crest?

²¹¹See Appendix E re tactics.

But Wilcox was wrong. Pickett's men were engaged in the fight of their lives at the very moment Wilcox was just beginning his advance so very far away.

"Pickett's Division, a man says,
Spent the past year walking,
Chasing and stalking,
But not much fightin',
Give them another hour and they'll
Wish they still were walkin'." 212

The losses of the division became heavier during this attack from the road. Numbers and statistics cannot impress upon the mind the scene of destruction which faced the Virginians as they passed the Codori farm buildings. The attack becomes more personal, more fearsome, when humanized with names of human beings. Captain Thomas Gordon Pollock, adjutant and inspector-general of Kemper's Brigade, had been conferring with Kemper just before the advance, and was given responsibility for the right wing of the brigade (while Kemper stayed with the left wing). The last words heard by his men were "Boys, I trust you will all behave like Southern soldiers." Edward Yeager of the 7th Virginia Infantry saw Pollock fall from his horse within ten paces of himself as the captain rode along the line. Pollock's remains were not recovered, recognized, or heard from at all. "His faithful body-servant, Richard, . . . was on the field at the time, determined to see the worst of it. Anxious to follow his master into the enemy's hospital, if it might be so; determined, at any rate and at all risk, to know what his fate was. But he was ordered back by an officer. . . . Poor Dick returned out of the hailstorm of bullets, with his master's wounded horse, to a silent and

212W. J. Tancig, Requiem (South Brunswick, 1968), p. 64.

desolate headquarters (for General Kemper and his entire staff were dead or wounded on the field). He was noticed, on the return march into Virginia often in tears, riding the unwounded horse and leading the wounded one. . . .²¹³

Another whose remains would be unidentified and known not again to his friends was Lieutenant William F. Cocks, Company E, 18th Virginia. His brother, Captain Edmund R. Cocks, wrote that "'Never . . . do I remember to have seen William more calm, quiet or collected, than he was on that morning, as I had my last sight of him standing within seventy or eighty feet of the enemy's breastworks.'" Captain Cocks was himself grazed by a ball in the head and did not see his brother fall, and neither did other participants; "none could give any tidings of him."²¹⁴

Colonel Robert C. Allen of Garnett's Brigade likewise met the lieutenant's fate. Commanding the 28th Virginia at the age of 29, Colonel Allen "advanced up the slopes, through the storm of shot and shell, in front of his regiment, encouraging his men both by his words and his heroic example. When within a few yards of the cemetery wall, just as the works of the enemy were carried, he fell pierced through the brain by a musket-ball."²¹⁵ There are some who would see the glory of falling in the moment of victory.

In Armistead's Brigade, the 21-year-old first lieutenant of Company I, 9th Virginia Infantry epitomized the death of hundreds of the South's young men on that field of battle. During the attack "he was conspicuously brave.

²¹³Rev. John Lipscomb Johnson, The University Memorial Biographical Sketches of Alumni of the University of Virginia who fell in the Confederate War (Baltimore, 1871), p. 444.

²¹⁴Ibid., p. 455.

²¹⁵Walker, p. 29.

Three times his brigade halted and was aligned under a galling fire. After the last 'halt and dress,' when the regiment began to advance, Lieutenant John C. Niemeyer turned to a comrade and brother lieutenant, 'with a bright smile on his face, and said, 'John, what a beautiful line!' A few minutes after, he fell dead, pierced through the head by a bullet. His body was never recovered, but fills one of the many 'unknown' graves that furrow the hillside at Gettysburg."²¹⁶

²¹⁶Ibid., p. 407.

Chapter 7: "Keep Cool Boys"--Union Opposition to Attack

"The battle-smoked flag, with stars eclipsed,
 We followed (it never fell')--
 In silence husbanded our strength--
 Received their yell;
 Till on this slope we patient turned
 With cannon ordered well. . . ." 217

By the time Pickett's Division reached the Emmitsburg Road and began its attack, it was more than apparent that the full force of its assault would fall upon Webb's, Hall's, and Harrow's Brigades of Gibbon's Division. It was during the attack phase of the assault that vital Union counter-movements were made which insured heavy losses in Kemper's and Garnett's advanced brigades. These movements, as well as those of Pickett's columns, were recounted by the earlier historians of the battle:

"Pickett formed his division in double line of battle, with Kemper's and Garnett's brigades in front and Armistead's brigade supporting. . . . While crossing the plain, it received a severe fire of artillery, which, however, did not delay for a moment its determined advance; so that the column pressing on, came within musketry range--the troops evincing a striking disposition to withhold their fire until it could be delivered with deadly effect. The first opposition it received was from two regiments of Stannard's Vermont brigade of the First Corps, which had been posted in a small grove to the left of the Second Corps in front of and at a considerable angle with the main line. These regiments opened upon the right flank of the enemy's advancing lines, which received also an oblique fire from eight batteries under Major McGilvray. This caused the Confederate troops on that flank to double in a little towards their left, but it did not stay their onward progress." 218

217 Cohen, p. 76.

218 William Swinton, Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac. . . . (New York, 1866), pp. 358-359.

The other historian of the Army of the Potomac told basically the same story in the history he wrote almost thirty years after the foregoing. This account, however, limits its scope to the attack from the Emmitsburg Road to the wall held by Gibbon's Division:

"Garnett, in the center, who, though sick, would not turn his command over to another, was mortally wounded when only a short distance from the stone wall in front of Gibbon. When Garnett fell, his brigade hesitated for a moment, which gave Kemper time enough to come up with the center brigade. Kemper ordered his men to open fire, which was also obeyed by Garnett's brigade. Armistead, who had not marched quite so fast, was then up, when Pickett ordered a charge, as the double-shotted guns of Hazard and McGilvery with canister were causing great havoc on Pickett's men as they advanced in close range, while the infantry of Gibbon and Doubleday had both united with the artillery and were pouring in heavy volleys. The 151st Pennsylvania and the Ulster Guard of New York, under Colonel Gates, on Gibbon's immediate left, united with Gibbon's men in the conflict. Men were firing at will, while officers were unable to be heard. Gibbon had ordered a charge, but in the din of battle his voice was not heard and the men continued to fire at will."²¹⁹

Stine's account is riddled with minor factual errors which weaken the whole retelling of the story of the assault. First of all, Garnett was not sick, as we have already learned, but unable to walk because of a leg injury incurred in camp. The account of Garnett's Brigade hesitating after the general was unhorsed is not substantiated by Confederate memoirs, many of which will be quoted in the next chapter. In addition, the last statement by Stine is a conclusion on his part, since Gibbon never inferred in correspondence or recollections that the troops could not hear him. In fact, his memories indicated the complete opposite--that the soldiers heard him and ignored him!

²¹⁹Stine, pp. 526-527.

Another early history of the battle (1870) is quite general in its description of the attack, but it falls into a mistake the moment it tried to be specific or "artistic":

"Unprotected, but unflinching; Pickett's column came over the valley, slippery with the last night's rain. . . .

"The charge was first directed toward Doubleday's lines, but the fire from Round Top made the assaulting array bend toward its left, and brought the attack more on Hancock's position. Two regiments of Stannard's brigade, who were in a grove in front of Hancock's left, at an angle with the main line, gave to the charging force an appalling flanking fire, while it was subjected to the artillery in front; this caused it to bear still more to the left, and brought the weight of the attack upon Webb." 220

Contrary to the picturesque scene invoked by a column staggering across a valley "slippery with . . . rain", there is no record to indicate that it had rained on the night of July 2-3. The general description of the attack, however, is simplistic enough to help understand the very confusing events that occurred in those few hundred yards between the road and the wall.

Pickett's column was seen by the 13th Vermont in those moments when the smoke cleared away. A member of the regiment remembered how the Confederate division

". . . quickly reached the Emmitsburg Road, passed on both sides of the Cadora House and other buildings in that locality making momentary openings in their lines as they passed. They crossed the road, reached the open field before them, moved rapidly forward in solid columns the first and second divisions brigades in advance, and then the third in support in short echelon as they moved down the slope into the valley from the Emmitsburg Road." 221

²²⁰John William Draper, History of the American Civil War, vol. 3 (New York, 1870), pp. 148-149.

²²¹Sturtevant, p. 301.

After over a decade of intensive study and correspondence with officers of both sides, Colonel John Bachelder could relate his own interpretation of the attack, as well as the insights offered to him by participants:

"As they rose the acclivity and crossed the road, they met a withering fire of musketry--a perfect shower of lead. They staggered, halted and returned the fire, and with a wild 'yell' dashed on to their dreadful doom, the left of Pickett's and right of Pettigrew's divisions charging right up to the stone wall in their front!" *

" *Statement of Rev. G. W. Finley (the First Lieutenant of the Fifty-Sixth Virginia Infantry), who was captured inside the wall. The fact that the right of Pettigrew's Division touched Pickett's left is fixed in Lieutenant Finley's mind by having shaken hands with one of Pettigrew's captains, who exclaimed enthusiastically, 'We will stand together at this wall!'" 222

The Swintons, Stines, Drapers, and Bachelders could never match the intensity and excitement and confusion reflected in the writings of the Union participants. It was as if the survivors who described it later had been touched with a greater fire than artistic merit or ability, merely from the fact that they were there, and felt and saw the immediacy of that afternoon's events. John Gibbon, commanding the Second Division of Hancock's Corps, could write with a general's insight to tactics and plans, yet still retain his eye for personal details:

". . . I directed the guns of Arnold's Battery to be run forward to the wall loaded with double rounds of canister and then rode down my line and cautioned the men not to fire until the first line crossed the Emmitsburg road. . . . I noticed after all three lines were closed up, that the men on the right of their line was hesitating behind the clump of bushes where I had stood during the cannonade." 223

222 Bachelder, "The Third Day's Battle," pp. 36-37.

223 Gibbon, Personal Recollections, p. 151:

The clump of bushes referred to by Gibbon should have been the slashing area in front of Hall's Brigade, where the ground was broken by the felled trees and undergrowth, as well as the slope of the terrain to the west.

Gibbon described the attack in other articles and letters, and included his reminiscences concerning the actions of his own division:

"And their line was broken in one part as they came upon my division. I rode to the left of my division, and was trying to get some regiments to wheel outside of the little breastworks they had thrown up, and attack this assaulting line in flank. And I am satisfied that if I had been able to get these men to do what I wanted, we would have captured a great many more than we did.

"The difficulty was the want of proper discipline. Men get very much excited in battle; they are yelling, hallooing, shooting, and, unless they are very well drilled and disciplined, they do not wait for the orders of their colonels." 224

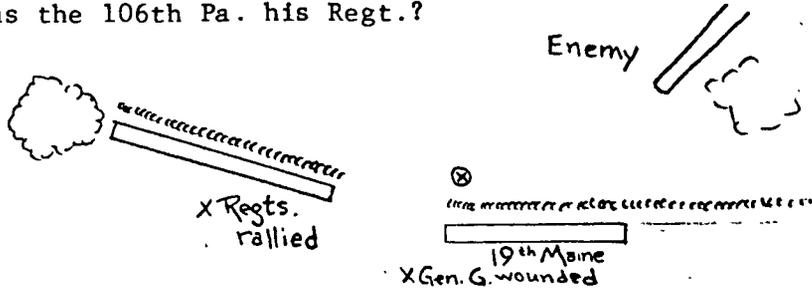
Even though Gibbon seems to excuse these regiments from advancing because of the inherent confusion and noise of the battle, there is the unmistakable hint of disappointment that he could not budge them. Gibbon attempted to find out who these stubborn and "undisciplined" soldiers were by circulating letters of inquiry to his former staff officers after the war. One such letter was addressed to a former aide, 1st Lieutenant Edward "Ned" Moale:

"I have just returned from a visit to the Battle field of Gettysburg, where I spent two days very pleasantly with Genls Hunt, Humphreys, Parke, and Morgan. . . . Gen^l Stan-
nard who commanded one of Doubleday's Brigs was also present, and when I mentioned the fact that just before I was wounded I rallied some troops on my left which were leaving their breastworks a question arose as to whose troops they were. Do you recollect the incident? "

"You will no doubt remember that when I was struck I was trying to get the 19th Maine to swing to the right and take the enemy in flank. Just previous to this I looked to the left and saw some troops leaving a line of breastworks just on the right of a little clump of trees, rode down and induced them to go back. Either you or Capt. Francis "

²²⁴ Report of the Joint Committee on The Conduct of the War, p. 443.

Wessels were with me, perhaps both, and I want if possible to find out what troops they were. If you can give me any information upon the point do so as soon as possible and if you know it send me the full name and address of Capt. Wessels J. A. of the Div. Was the 106th Pa. his Regt.?



"There was no sort of necessity for these Regts. (I think there were two) to run at the time, as the firing there was not heavy, and I had but little trouble inducing them to go back. If you recollect the incident at all give me your recollection as accurately as possible and also any information in regard to what troops they were. I have an idea they were not Stannard's, but am anxious to clear up the doubt." 225

Ned Moale responded about a week later with his answer:

". . . I have a very vivid recollection of the occurrences to which you refer. I was in company with you and in rear of the left centre of the 19th Maine. I was told by you to ask the commanding officer in charge of a regiment or more on the left and front of our division to change front on his right company and take the enemy in flank. I am positive of what I say, I was told by that officer, not knowing his name, that he was not under Genl Gibbons orders or words to that effect. The troops on our left and front (what I mean by front is that they were several paces in front, the ground being somewhat more advantageous) and near the clump of trees were Vermont troops, the Regiments I do not know. After delivering the message I was immediately sent to march some troops by the right flank and oppose the enemy on the right of our division. I had hardly returned to you when you received your wound. What I relate is now to the best of my recollection. The staff officers present with you at that time were Capt. Frank Wessels and myself. . . . and one orderly who rode a gray horse. . . .

"This matter I had quite a serious talk about once with Capt. Male and I repeated to him exactly what I have said here. Although he did not seem to like it very much but facts are facts." 226

General Gibbon forwarded copy of his letter and the answer from Lieutenant Moale to Colonel Bachelder, and attached a postscript to the back of the Moale letter:

"Genl. Mitchell says that Genl. Stannard stated to him whilst at Gettysburg some weeks ago that two companies of one of his Regts. on the right of his line broke during the battle and related in connection with the subject, the fact that the Major of the Regt. who was a very pious man swore very hard whilst rallying them, and when spoken to afterwards about it said he did not recollect swearing at all he was so much excited." 227

If all that is said in this exchange of letters between Gibbon, Moale, and Bachelder proves true, it would cast a finger of guilt over the right companies of the 13th Vermont Infantry. However, it would seem unlikely that the "break" in the 13th Vermont's line could have amounted to much or consumed much time, because it was the right companies of the regiment which were responsible for forming the "pivot" or "hinge" upon which the famous flanking movement of the brigade was turned. In addition, the story of the pious major caught swearing at his breaking troops is very much like the story related in the regimental history of the 13th Vermont. That history relates a very similar incident, but in more specific terms, which may have been the foundation for the post-war story told to Mitchell by Stannard. In that history Captain George G. Blake, Company K, was in the role of the Mitchell-based major:

226 Letter of 1st Lieutenant Edward Moale to John Gibbon, June 25, 1866, in Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society. Microfilm Reel 3.

Captain William H. Male served on Stannard's staff as an aide in the last months of the war. Since he served in the 139th New York Infantry previous to that time, it is surprising why Moale consulted Captain Male about a Gettysburg incident (especially since Male was not even here).

227 Note of General John Gibbon to John B. Bachelder, July 18, 1866, in Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society. Microfilm Reel 3.

"Was ever kind and indulgent. . . . /No/ one ever heard fall from his lips profane and vulgar language or words of unwarranted reprimand. He never spoke in anger. In fact I never saw him aroused with anger but once, and that was in the forenoon of the third day of the battle. . . when one of his boys, a Frenchman /Silas Mozier/, ran to the rear over the hill out of sight. He said with much feeling, 'The miserable coward, see him run; he ought to be shot. Oh; if one of those shells would hit him it would help him along a little faster and it would not be much loss either.'" 228

Since the 13th Vermont Regiment was on the right of Stannard's lines, and there is no other reference to any mass retreat by company-sized numbers in that regiment, it is questionable whether the troops Gibbon saw running were Stannard's. That regiment's history is especially honest in recognizing the cowards of that day's fighting, meting out distinction to the Silas Mozier types for their shameful behavior on the field of battle. There does not appear to be a company-sized number of these shirkers in the ranks of the 13th Vermont; perhaps Gibbon exaggerated the size of these breaking troops due to his own yelling and hallooing to get the 19th Maine to flank Kemper's column and because of the generally confused nature of the Union lines as they shifted to meet the attack at various points.

Gibbon, however, was adamant in his pursuit of the details of this incident and wrote to Captain Francis Wessels as soon as he got his address:

"Whilst trying to get the 19th Maine to change front and attack the right of the enemy's line in flank I saw some troops on our left falling back from a short line of breast works a part of which had been previously erected by men from my Div. but which was at that time occupied by a part of the 1st Corps. I rallied them and put them back in the works. The question has arisen what troops were they. Did you know at the time or have you ascertained since?" 229

228 Sturtevant, p. 696.

229 Letter of General John Gibbon to Captain F. Wessels, August 6, 1866, in Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society. Microfilm Reel 3.

After engaging in the correspondence above, Gibbon concluded that "there is no question of the rallying taking place where I stated it did, and the evidence altho' not positive enough, goes to show that the troops did belong to Stannard's command."²³⁰ From our position a century removed from the incidents, it is almost impossible for us to question what Gibbon saw or said he saw, or what Stannard saw and remembered. However, some of the facts stated by Gibbon seem to contradict the 13th Vermont-is-guilty story. Gibbon said that the troops that broke were in breastworks partially constructed by his own men the day previously, whereas the 13th Vermont stated that the volunteers mentioned (page 20) constructed the breastworks of the forward position on the morning of the attack. If the breastworks were entirely constructed by the Vermonters along their front, as their history seems to indicate, then the breastworks of the "breaking" companies or troops would have had to have been behind and to the right of the Vermont position. In addition, it would be unlikely that Gibbon's men had constructed defense works in a forward position as described by both the 13th Vermont and Gibbon himself. It would be more logical for the breastworks of the previous day to have been along the main line or fenceline. That position was held by part of Gates' demi-brigade and elements of Doubleday's Division during the Confederate attack on the afternoon of July 3. No matter what, however, no company or regimental commander would admit to breaking at such a critical time as "Pickett's Charge", and it would be virtually impossible to pinpoint any specific body of soldiers by unit without some cooperation from the participants themselves. Most later (and even contemporary) reminiscences remember their own bravery and forget their own cowardice; they remember the

²³⁰Letter of General John Gibbon to John B. Bachelder (?), August 25, 1866, in Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society. Microfilm Reel 3.

cowardice of other troops and forget the bravery of other units.

Gibbon, in mentioning his efforts to get the 19th Maine to change front against Kemper's Brigade, set the stage for the participation of Harrow's Brigade during the attack. Harrow reported his relative position during the attack by reference to the division and the enemy's movements:

" . . . the crest of the hill occupied by the right of Colonel Hall and the left of General Webb seemed to be the point to which their main attack was directed. As this purpose became manifest, the Third and First Brigades, of this division, inclined to the right, engaging the enemy as they moved." 231

Thus, Harrow admits a movement completely contradictory to that proposed to have been executed by General Gibbon. Gibbon wished for the 19th Maine and the rest of Harrow's Brigade to change front on their right companies and swing out into the field west of the breastworks, in order to attack the flank of Kemper's column. Instead, Harrow ordered the brigade to "incline to the right" and engage the enemy as "they moved" toward Webb's position in the Angle. This kept the brigade from firing an enfilading musketry into Kemper while it maintained an effective (but hardly crippling or decisive) frontal fire.

Captain Charles Nash of Company C, 19th Maine Infantry Regiment, recalled the attack on his front, but never mentioned the attempts of General Gibbon to get the regiment out into the field in front of the breastworks:

"On they came, heedless of the few skirmishers who stood before them, the only alternative of whom was to retire or be annihilated. Slowly and reluctantly they fell back, firing incessantly into the solid ranks of the Rebels, every shot taking effect. Soon they reached the main body and then commenced the fight in earnest. For five minutes the Second Corps discharged volley after volley, while grape and canister cut gaping swaths, mowing down the furious minions of treason. A few of the most intrepid ones advanced to within a dozen yards of the fence behind which we stood, but

²³¹OR, vol. 27, part 1, p. 420.

instantly they shriek and fall, pierced by numberless balls. Others still advance, and meet a like fate. In a few moments they were overpowered, and, eager still for life, endeavor to gain a respite from the fate of their comrades by the nimble use of their legs. A few well directed volleys bring them to a realizing sense that their game will not pay, and therefore they stop and lie down." 232

This letter, dated July 29, 1863, reinforces Gibbon's recollection of the Confederates "hesitating" behind the clump of bushes (which was in the front of the 19th Maine).

On the left of the 19th Maine, the small numbers of the 1st Minnesota Infantry contributed their part in slowing and re-directing Pickett's attack. Sergeant James A. Wright remembered that the fire of the remnants of the 1st Minnesota Regiment was directed at the feet of the advancing Confederates. According to Sergeant Wright, that "was about all we could see of them at the time, as all above their knees was covered with the smoke from their own guns." 233 Lieutenant William Lochren saw the attack from the small ranks of the 1st Minnesota, too:

"When about sixty rods distant from our line our division opened with musketry, and the slaughter was very great; but instead of hesitating, the step was changed to double-quick, and they rushed to the charge. But whether because Hancock here wheeled Stannard's Vermont Brigade to enfilade their right flank in passing, or from some other cause, their front opened at this time, and perhaps one-fourth of the force on Pickett's right here deflected further to their right, and were met and disposed of by the gallant Vermonters. The remainder of the charging force at the same time diverged or changed its direction to its left, and, passing from our front diagonally, under our fire and that of Hall's Brigade to our right, charged the position held by Webb's Second Brigade of our division, forcing back the Sixty-ninth and Seventy-first Pennsylvania regiments, and capturing Cushing's Battery, which had swept them with canister.

232 Smith, p. 99.

233 Hage, p. 256.

But as soon as Pickett's force had passed our front, our brigade (Harrow's) ran to the right for the threatened point, passing in rear of Hall's Brigade, which, as soon as uncovered, wheeled to the right to strike the enemy's flank."²³⁴

In Hall's Brigade, most of the reminiscences were penned by members of the 19th Massachusetts Infantry. The regimental history of the 19th Massachusetts described the appearance of Pickett's Division during the attack from the Emmitsburg Road:

"After Pickett's division crosses the Emmetsburg Road and comes sweeping up the slope, they still bear everything before them, as if carried forward by an all-ruling fate. Their right flank just touches the Cordora house.* The left, a hundred and fifty rods away, is slightly in advance. Three lines of battle are moving up.

"As they cross the road only 800 yards away, huge gaps begin to show in their lines as a result of the effective fire of the Union artillery, but they are quickly closed up in magnificent style, and the line still advances. At 300 yards canister takes the place of shell and their men fall like leaves in the Autumn galè, but the great mass silently, swiftly moves forward.

"They are approaching the 'little oak grove' in front of which, behind a stone-wall, lies Webb's brigade of Pennsylvanians.

"The advancing columns close in on the infantry. With a yell they rush forward. A sheet of flame welcomes them and in its warm grasp their line melts like ice. Being obliged to cross a fence oblique to their line of advance, the rebels are crowded and closed in mass in the endeavor to regain their formation."²³⁵

*It appears that the left and right as described by the history are not the Confederate right and left, but the right and left as seen from the Union lines. Garnett's Brigade, on the right, was slightly in advance of both Kemper and Armistead due to the oblique nature of the road and the Union lines.

²³⁴Andrews, vol. I, p. 37.

²³⁵Waite, p. 238.

The fence which was oblique to the Confederate line of battle and which caused them to "crowd" and "close in mass" was the post and rail and Virginia worm fence running from the Emmitsburg Road to the Union lines. It was the same fence described by Lieutenant J. Irving Sale (page 142).

Major Edmund J. Rice was one of those officers along the Union lines who remembered not only the tactical details of the battle, but could later describe more personal and specific incidents related to the Confederate attack on the main lines in front of him:

"I was just in rear of the right of the brigade, standing upon a large boulder, in front of my regiment, the 19th Massachusetts, where, from the configuration of the ground, I had an excellent view of the advancing lines, and could see the entire formation of the attacking column. Pickett's separate brigade lines lost their formation as they swept across the Emmitsburg road, carrying with them their chain of skirmishers. They pushed on toward the crest, and merged into one crowding, rushing line, many ranks deep. As they crossed the road, Webb's infantry, on the right of the trees, commenced an irregular, hesitating fire, gradually increasing to a rapid file firing, while the shrapnel and canister from the batteries tore gaps through those splendid Virginia battalions.

"The men of our brigade, with their muskets at the ready, lay in waiting. One could plainly hear the . . . officers as they commanded, 'Steady, men, steady! Don't fire!' and not a shot was fired at the advancing hostile line, now getting closer every moment. The heavy file firing on the right in Webb's brigade continued.

"By an undulation of the surface of the ground to the left of the trees, the rapid advance of the dense line of Confederates was for a moment lost to view; an instant after they seemed to rise out of the earth, and so near that the expression on their faces was distinctly seen. Now our men knew that the time had come, and could wait no longer. Aiming low, they opened a deadly concentrated discharge upon the moving mass in their front. Nothing human could stand it. Staggered by the storm of lead, the charging line hesitated, answered with some wild firing which soon increased to a crashing roll of musketry, running down the whole length of their front, and then all that portion of Pickett's division which came within the zone of this terrible close musketry fire appeared to melt and drift away in the powder-smoke

of both sides. At this juncture some one behind me gave the quick, impatient order: 'Forward, men! Forward! Now is your chance!'

"I turned and saw it was General Hancock, who was passing the left of the regiment. He checked his horse and pointed toward the clump of trees to our right and front. I construed this into an order for both regiments--the 19th Massachusetts and the 42nd New York--to run for the trees, to prevent the enemy from breaking through." 236

Major Rice's account is interesting in that his memories corresponded so closely to those of Kemper, on the other side of the fence. Both remembered distinctly that they could see the expressions on the faces of the enemy as the lines closed together. But these memoirs also give us some unique insights, not mentioned elsewhere. Major Rice puts General Hancock at his position before (or at the time) the 19th Massachusetts and the 42nd New York moved toward Webb's position at the Angle. This is important in putting events in chronological order along the Union line, especially as regarding the activities and later claims of Hancock and his staff. For example, if General Hancock was the one who ordered the two regiments of Hall's Brigade to assist Webb, it is obvious that he had not yet been wounded. We also know that by the time this movement of Hall's men began, Stannard's Vermont Brigade had already initiated and were participating in an attack on the flank of Kemper's column. Since Hancock was wounded in the presence of Stannard, and when General Hancock claims he was ordering and directing the flank movement, it is apparent that there is a discrepancy in either Hancock's claim or in Rice's memory. Stannard's flanking movement had to have been well under way by the time Hancock was wounded near their position, yet Hancock claimed that he was responsible for ordering the movement. Hancock was not wounded until after he ordered Major Rice to counterattack, and the

²³⁶Edmund Rice, "Repelling Lee's Last Blow at Gettysburg," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, vol. III (New York, 1956), pp. 387-388.

Vermont movement to change front on the first company had been executed by that time. It was because of the Vermont flank movement, which preoccupied and decimated Kemper's Brigade, that regiments such as the 19th Massachusetts, 42nd New York, and those in Harrow's Brigade were free to reinforce the line at the Angle. If the flank attack had not yet been made, the troops on Hall's and Harrow's fronts would be immersed in their own frontal fire and not prone to assisting someone else.

The regimental history of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry was not as detailed as the recollections of Major Rice, but the account therein of the attack is indicative of the scene on Hall's front during the attack:

"When the first line was within two or three hundred yards of our position, the musketry fire was tremendous in volume and very effective."

"From the moment that the men of the Twentieth commenced firing, the smoke was so thick that little could be seen, but there was no trouble in making it effective, for not less than three thousand men formed a vast crowd in front. The noise and turmoil were such that commands could not be heard, and every one fought in his own way." ²³⁷

It should be noted that this last paragraph complements the comments by division commander Gibbon, who was dismayed that men in battle get excited and do not pay attention to the order of their colonels. It is also intriguing to compare the two divisions during this assault. The Confederates, up to this point in the attack, still maintained formation and adhered to the tactical manual. The Union forces are already breaking away from the orderly and sterile "schools of the battalion" and "schools of the soldier", while the desperate nature of the struggle has already encouraged each soldier to fight "in his own way".

²³⁷Bruce, pp. 293 and 294.

The troops who would be first to abandon the "school of the battalion" method of fighting were those in Webb's Brigade. Although there was an earlier mention of Webb's destructive file fire, such disciplined methods of fighting were sacrificed to the act of survival when the Confederate attack breached their line at the Angle. The close nature of the fight was evident in the closing sentence of the following extract from a letter written by General Alexander S. Webb on July 6, 1863, three days after the attack:

"I lost fifty of my men lying down and some excellent officers; was struck three or four times with stones, &c. I knew then that we were to have a fierce attack, and at three o'clock it came. Longstreet was in my front with Pickett's division and two brigades from some other division. . . . As they steadily advanced I ordered my few guns to fire and we opened great gaps in them, but steadily they advanced in four solid lines. Right on up to my works or fence and shot my men when their muskets touched their breast." 237

Testimony of participants and eyewitnesses to the fighting in the Angle revealed that both Union and Confederate alike had powder burns on their clothing in this Angle conflict.

R. Steuart Latrobe, who must have been connected with Webb's Brigade, recollected the sight of the attack as well as hearing about Stannard's flank movement during this phase of the battle:

"When they approached to within about two hundred yards, a part of our division, I think it was Hall's brigade, opened fire, and we could see men fall, and others go to the rear. Still on they

²³⁷John Reed, Sylvester Byrne, Frederick Middleton, et al., representing the survivors of the Seventy-second Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers, Plaintiffs vs. Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association, and John P. Taylor, J. P. S. Gobin, John P. Nicholson, and R. B. Ricketts, Commissioners appointed by the Governor of the State of Pennsylvania, Defendants. Testimony in the Court of Common Pleas of Adams Co. In Equity. No. 1, January Term, 1889, p. 316.

came, crowding a little in front but steady as rocks. Just then an officer rode by, and said that the Vermont regiment on the left was worrying the enemy."²³⁸

The observations of Anthony McDermott, who became the champion of the 69th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment in the years after the war, wrote of his experiences and recollections at various times:

"When about two thirds of the field, that lay between the stone-wall and the Emmitsburg pike, had been crossed the enemy changed his direction in as good order, as when marching directly to the front, when within about 20 yards of us we received the command to fire, our first round was fired with deliberation and simultaneously, and threw their front line into confusion, from which they quickly rallied and opened their fire upon us." ²³⁹

McDermott contradicts the account of another brigade member in the timing of the first volley of the 69th. While each regiment was glad to "crow" about the effectiveness of its fire, all were reluctant to claim the "honor" of being the first to fire. Each regiment was duty-bound to uphold its honor by proving their great discipline and obedience to orders in withholding any fire until the last moment. Since all of these Union regiments deny that they opened fire until Pickett's Division was within 200 yards, it seems mighty strange that Kemper, Garnett, and Armistead's Brigades all mention the murderous musketry fire of the enemy from as early as the other side of the Emmitsburg Road. Who was firing at them then?

McDermott also claims an event on his front that never could have happened: "The fighting here continued until General Kemper fell, seriously wounded near our colors. . . . With Kemper's fall the enemy here surrendered."²⁴⁰

²³⁸Latrobe, p. 1.

²³⁹Letter of Anthony McDermott to John B. Bachelder, June 2, 1886, in Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society. Microfilm Reel 2, p. 378.

²⁴⁰Ibid., p. 380.

When Kemper fell, the fighting did not stop, but raged on even more fiercely at close quarters; indeed, there was even a conflict between Yankees and Rebels to claim Kemper's "body". In addition, most authorities place the location of the wounding of General Kemper further to the left, and not on the front of the 69th Pennsylvania.

One issue with which McDermott was especially sensitive had to do with the honor of the regiment, in a different form than that already mentioned. According to McDermott, both General Webb and Colonel Dennis O'Kane gave rallying speeches of "pep talks" during the Confederate advance and after the regiment rose to its feet to receive the attack. McDermott felt that

"/these/ addresses were not necessary as I do not believe there was a soldier in the regiment, that did not feel that he had more courage to meet the enemy at Gettysburg, than upon any field of battle in which we had yet been engaged. The stimulus being the fact that we were upon the soil of our own State."²⁴¹

Within the Angle in Webb's line, Cushing's Battery A, 4th U. S. Artillery participated in the attack defense as best it could. Claims by members of the battery, however, contradict those made by infantry regiments in the same area. The infantry reminiscences recall that Cushing's Battery was pretty much used up and not very effective during the latter part of the attack, while the artillerymen see things in a different perspective:

"When the enemy was within about 400 yards Battery A opened with single charges of canister.

"When the enemy got within 200 yards double and treble charges of canister were used; those charges opened immense gaps in the Confederate lines. Lieutenant Milne, who commanded the right half battery, was killed when the enemy was within 200 yards of the battery. When the enemy came within about 100 yards from the battery Lieutenant Cushing was shot through the mouth and instantly killed."²⁴²

²⁴¹McDermott to Bachelder, June 2, 1886, p. 378.

²⁴²Lt. Col. Frederick Fuger, "Cushing's Battery at Gettysburg," Journal of the Military Service Institute of the United States, XLI (1907), p. 408.



Lieut. Joseph S. Milne



Lieut. Alonzo Cushing

Lieutenant Joseph S. Milne was on detached duty to the Regulars battery from Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Artillery. That battery had been in service on the other side of the clump of scrub oaks during the cannonade until withdrawn and replaced by Cowan's 1st New York Independent Battery.

Four years after the above account was written, Sergeant Fuger wrote another article describing the attack and the participation of Cushing's Battery in its repulse:

"After the rebel forces got up to the Codori house Pickett's command made there a left half-wheel, going straight for our battery, and there we commenced firing single charges of canister. . . . When the enemy got within 200 yards from us double and treble charges of canister were used, and those charges opened immense gaps in the confederate lines. . . and with the assistance of Webb's brigade Pickett's command collapsed, due mostly to the gallant brigade of Vermonters (Stannard's) coming in on our left flank.

"Armistead's command was pretty well broken up by the time they came to this stone wall, for our canister did break them up most frightfully. Shortly after all was over a few men of my battery came to

me and told me that they counted 600 dead Confederate soldiers lying in front of our battery a distance of 150 to 200 yards." 243

Although Fuger most surely exaggerated the paramount importance of his own battery in the collapse of the enemy's attack and in the implication that the battery was responsible for killing 600 Confederates in its front, the account still relayed an indication of the kind of fire that the Southerners were subjected to from the road--double and triple charges of canister, as well as infantry musketry. If Fuger is to be believed, at least 600 of the enemy were found dead in the area immediately in front of the Angle wall after the battle. This figure would represent a mortality rate of over 10% of Pickett's entire division just on this small front!

Christopher Smith, who claimed to be one of the only four survivors of the battery at the time of the attack, wrote a very descriptive and romantic version of the attack as seen by him with Cushing's Battery in the Angle:

"There was a slight elevation which they had to come over before reaching us and they did not see our cannon protruding through the wall until they were within about 200 feet of us. As soon as they saw the muzzles of the pieces the poor wretches knew what it meant--it meant death within the next three seconds to many of them, and they knew it. I remember distinctly that they pulled their caps down over their eyes and bowed their heads as men do in walking against a hail storm. They knew what was coming. . . .

"We pulled the lanyards, the guns bounded back from the wall, the splitting reports rang again over the hill, and a brief turmoil in which mingled groans, shrieks and curses, coming from the approaching rebel ranks, told what our shots had done. The smoke quickly rose, and we saw the great swath that had been mown through their three columns, about 50 feet wide. It is my belief that not a

243" The Gettysburg Battle, " Burlington Daily Free Press (June 2, 1911), in Gettysburg Newspaper Clippings #6, Relating to the Battle, p. 177.

living creature in the line of those shots survived.

"For an instant the columns wavered and swayed, and then with a savage yell the lines closed together over the wide gap and on they came with a frantic charge for the hill. They jumped over the wall." 244

Although Cushing's Battery was supposedly down to only two rifled cannon at this point in the attack, multiple loads of canister fired at such short range would have to have been as effective as Smith described it above. One could almost see why even he had pity on the "poor wretches" who had to face his fire.

On the left of Cushing's remaining section were the guns of Cowan's New York Battery. While Cushing had perhaps two guns able to join in the fire against the advancing division of Virginians, Cowan had a fresh six-gun battery which was being used effectively and in earnest against Pickett.

"After crossing the Emmitsburg Road their line was somewhat broken, and number of them lay down behind large rocks and bushes about 100 yards short of the Union line.* These men mostly directed their fire at Rorty's Battery B. . . which was withdrawn /?, leaving Captain Rorty and a number of the men lying dead on the field. But the majority of the Confederates, gallantly led by their officers, pushed forward to the wall, which numbers of them crossed on both the left and right of the trees. This low stone wall had been thrown down in places to let the guns through on the second day, and at these gaps and in other places rails had been used for additional shelter. That was the only breastwork or fortification that protected Webb's infantry, on the left of the trees. Cowan's guns on the left and Cushing's on the right, except the two or three that had been pushed forward to the wall, had no defence of any kind. . . . When the enemy had advanced about half the distance between the Emmitsburg Road and the Union position, the troops that were posted behind the wall and rails; about twenty yards in front of Cowan's guns, rose up suddenly

244 Smith, "Bloody Angle," p. 42.

and moved to the right of the trees with much confusion. An order of some kind was given at the right, which the officers at the left of the regiment may have misunderstood, for this movement exposed the entire front of the First New York Battery. The enemy came rushing forward, shouting 'Take the guns' while the guns were being rapidly loaded with double canister." 245

*These rocks and bushes should be the same rock knoll, covered with small brush and weeds, which was occupied by Brown's Rhode Island Battery the day before. A marker to Battery B, 1st Rhode Island still stands on that knoll.

In another article written by Captain Cowan, he added more detail to his description of the events that occurred during the attack:

"From the Emmitsburg road they advanced in masses, with little attempt to keep in line. We kept pouring shell and shrapnel into them

"General Henry J. Hunt . . . then rode into my battery . . . and I saw him begin firing at the enemy with his revolver, exclaiming:--'See 'em!' 'See 'em!' Then his horse was killed under him--shot in the head behind the ear, as we saw later. I mounted him instantly on Sergeant Van Etten's horse, and as he rode away toward the right of the trees he called back to me over his shoulder, 'Look out, or you will kill your men,' meaning the men of the Sixty-ninth Pennsylvania at the wall. That was the only semblance of an order given me after we opened fire there until the fighting ended. I had given an order to load the guns with double canister, to be ready should our front be carried." 246

In another reminiscence penned by Cowan, he was somewhat perturbed by Hunt's superfluous order of caution lest the New Yorker kill his own infantry. It would be all the more perturbing to Cowan if, as he said, he had not seen nor heard from Hunt up to that time and was operating under no defined orders from his artillery chief. So far, the only orders he received came in the guise of the frantic, hat-waving request by Webb to relieve Brown's guns and

²⁴⁵William F. Fox, New York at Gettysburg, vol. 3 (Albany, 1902), p. 1277.

²⁴⁶Cowan, "When Cowan's Battery Withstood Pickett's"

support the left of his brigade.

Cowan also revealed, like Fuger and Smith, what kind of charge he was ramming into his rifles to fire into the enemy. Cowan used shell and shrapnel while the Confederates were in and around the Emmitsburg Road, but switched to canister and double canister when the intervening ground between Pickett's Division and his guns was shortened by the attack. Rorty's New York Battery B, on Cowan's left and near the slashing, opened up on the Confederates at Codori's with "shrapnel and short-time fuse" before changing over to "double canister".²⁴⁷

Behind Rorty's Battery in a sort of "reserve support" were those units of Doubleday's Division which were not on the front line. The 150th Pennsylvania Infantry, part of Stone's Brigade, would have the opportunity to participate in the musketry after those troops of Harrow's Brigade in their front "inclined to the right" or moved off in the direction of the right to assist Webb's Brigade in the Angle. A letter written twenty years after the battle described the participation of the 150th Pennsylvania Regiment during the Confederate attack:

"When Pickett's charge was made, in the afternoon, it appeared at first as though he would strike the position held by our division, and some sharp-shooters were brought up to strengthen it; what troops they were I have forgotten, but I can never forget the gallantry of the officer who commanded them; he posted his men along the line of our Regt., which had made a slight breast-work of rails, &c., and then as he rode up and down said: 'Keep cool boys, alter your sights to suit your distance and make sure of your man before you fire.'*

* This may have been Captain Jacob McClure of Company D, 2nd U. S. Sharpshooters.

²⁴⁷Corbin, "Petit's Battery at Gettysburg".

"Pickett struck our line a little to the right of us; the sharpshooters and the right of our Regt. opened an oblique fire on the charging column as it came up the ridge, but it soon fell back again, broken and disorganized. . . ." 248

The regimental history of the 150th Pennsylvania confirms this same fire by the regiment and the sharpshooter unit:

". . . it was joined on the right by a detachment of Berdan's sharpshooters; and when the assaulting column struck the first Union line, these and the right companies of the regiment were sufficiently unmasked by the troops in front to open an effective fire and assist in the final repulse." 249

Homer Stoughton, who commanded the 2nd United States Sharpshooters at Gettysburg, wrote in later years that his companies were moved to reinforce Doubleday's position in the "afternoon". While in that area, Stoughton's men

" . . . were used as Sharp Shooters to dislodge Rebel Sharp shooters and Artillery which was posted beyond the Emmittsburg Pike and as support to 1st Michigan Battery Capt. Daniels--our loss was not severe but Corporal or Sergeant White from N. H. Co. was killed by a ball from a sperical case shell bursting in front of us. . . . This White was it is said the last of (9) nine students from Dartmouth College Class who enlisted into the service. Major E. T. Rowell, Capt. Jacob McClure of Co. D,* Capt. Wright of Co. A (Minn.), Capt. S. F. Murray of Co. G (N. H.) all showed themselves gallant officers. . . ." 250

*Captain McClure would later serve on Maine's Gettysburg Commission for locating and erecting monuments.

The New Hampshire company to which White belonged was the one in support of Jabez Daniels' Michigan Battery (just left of and behind Stannard's Brigade).

248Sergt. William R. Ramsey to Bachelder, April 16, 1883, pp. 517-518.

249Chamberlin, p. 151.

250Stoughton to Bachelder, December 29, 1881.

On the right of Stannard's Brigade, and in front of the sharpshooters attached temporarily to Doubleday's Division, was the demi-brigade of Colonel Theodore B. Gates. This demi-brigade was to act in like fashion with the troops of Harrow's and Hall's Brigades who served in the same line with them between Stannard's Vermonters at the Codori Grove and the clump of scrub oaks at the Angle. The description of the movement to the right, after Harrow and Hall had already started towards the Angle was described by members of both regiments of the demi-brigade. Since this movement, however, was an integral part of the repulse, it will be evaluated and described in that chapter.

Chapter 8: "Change Front Forward"--The Vermont Attack

"It was a terrible sight to behold two armies stubbornly standing at short range and pouring their volleys into each other's faces, pushing nearer and nearer. . . ."

--Corporal Joseph W. Hitchcock, Co. G, 13th Vt.

Stannard's Vermont Brigade began its flanking movement during the attack phase of the Confederate assault, and was responsible for not only a major part of the repulse of the Virginians which was to follow, but was the major factor in driving Pickett's Division into each other and compressing them into a confused and disorganized mass at the Union defenses between the slashing and the Angle in the wall. The sharpshooters in that area remembered the services of the Vermonters as well as their own:

"The Vermont brigade, which was stationed in a grove some distance in front of the left center, performed an important part in the repulse as the enemy came up, by obtaining flank and oblique fires on their right, sweeping them down, the enemy, however, simply breaking to the rear from that side, closing in behind without stopping in their forward movement. . . .

"One of Company E's men (Second Regiment), Eli A. Willard, of Vermont, a crack shot, failing to discover a certain rebel sharpshooter, a dangerous customer, came to Gen. Stannard, requesting the loan of his glass, saying as he took it: 'I guess now, I'll find that fellow.' He soon reported back" 'I've found him,' pointing to a tree near the Emmitsburg road. Willard then went out in front of a large boulder, took careful aim and fired--there was no further annoyance from that quarter. The first sergeant of this company, W. H. Proctor, credited Willard with having fired 100 rounds that afternoon. He also relates another incident, which is in substance as follows:

"Gen. Birney sent an aid to the Second Regiment, lying at the time behind the 14th Vermont of Stannard's

brigade, to obtain volunteers to silence a battery out near the Codori House, whereupon the whole regiment jumped up ready to go, but the aid said he would take only forty. These were at once furnished by detailing five from each of the eight companies, placing them in charge of an officer. They were deployed, starting for the battery with a rush and a yell. The battery loaded with canister expected to mow them all down, but as soon as our men came in range, they dropped from view, crawling forward to sheltered positions to put in their work. Soon every horse with the battery was either shot or run back; a few minutes later the gunners fired their canister--hit or miss--then ran away, abandoning the battery. Our men kept those guns quiet all that afternoon.

"Company B distinguished themselves assisting Daniel's battery during a critical part of the fighting. . . ." 251

The latter part of the above reminiscence would have had to have taken place either before or after the attack, but the whole is included here to give an example of the contribution of the sharpshooters along this segment of the Union line.

While information is scarce relative to the activities of the sharpshooter companies, accounts and histories of the flanking movement by the Second Vermont Brigade are abundant in general and regimental histories, as well as in manuscript material. The general histories did not delve into the specifics of the movement, but keyed it to the action on the rest of the line; because of the general and often second-hand nature of these works, errors were frequently made in recording events, damaging their credibility:

"In the original line of march, the direction was such that Pickett's centre would have struck the grove in which Stannard's men were sheltered. The doubling in towards their own left carried the attacking columns somewhat to

251C. A. Stevens, Berdan's United States Sharpshooters in the Army of the Potomac 1861-1865 (Dayton, Ohio, 1972), pp. 336-337.

the north of the grove, but only so far north as to leave their exposed right flank within easy range of Stannard's muskets. The Vermonters were in no haste to waste their ammunition. The Confederate columns were allowed to come so well forward that their right flank was fully exposed. Then, at the signal given, the Vermont men pour forth a well-directed and most destructive fire. Volley succeeds volley in rapid succession; and the now trembling lines, already torn and tattered, are under the oblique fire of eight batteries, in charge of Major McGilvray. Not a few of Pickett's men, unable to endure this terrific fire, were compelled to surrender."

"Hall and Harrow, who had now no longer an enemy in their front, were brought over with their brigades to reinforce the centre. The Nineteenth Massachusetts, Colonel Devereux and Mallon's Forty-Second New York, both of Gate's brigade, of Doubleday's division, of the First corps, /sic/ were moved in the same direction." 252

In the following history, Stannard's Brigade was not recognized by name, although the author mistakenly credits Colonel Norman J. Hall for leading the 19th Massachusetts and the 42nd New York to the critical Angle:

"A Federal brigade moving forward /Stannard/ poured a destructive fire into the right flank of Kemper's brigade on Pickett's right. Unable to change front and powerless to defend itself against the deadly flank fire, the brigade crowded in on Garnett's brigade, which formed the left of Pickett's front line. For a moment the advance faltered. Then Armistead, who had been in the second line, rushed his brigade to the front, and with one final effort Pickett's division swept forward to the stone wall, where the first line of the Federal centre was posted, and carried it. Meade's line was broken in two. . . .

" . . . /A/ desperate charge of two regiments, led by Colonel Hall, one of Hancock's brigadiers, drove the Confederates back behind the first wall." 253

George J. Stannard, commanding the Vermont Brigade, recorded the day's activities in his diary, which may give the best immediate recollection of the attack:

252 John Laird Wilson, The Pictorial History of The Great Civil War: Its Causes, Origin, Conduct and Results (Kansas City, Mo., 1881), pp. 525-527.

253 W. B. Wood and Major J. E. Edmonds, A History of the Civil War in the United States 1861-1865 (London, 1905), p. 236.

"July 3rd . . . /The enemy/ was seen marching in line of battle, immediately in our front, and Colonel Veazey, came in with his regiment.* They came within 100 yards or thereabout, when Colonel Nichols, in order to change his line, had a part of his regiment raise up. That being discovered the rebels halted, and I immediately ordered a fire from both regiments, the 13th and 14th; (Colonel Veazey being in the rear as support) the rebels immediately changed direction by their left flank and moved, passed by command /sic?/,

receiving the fire the whole distance. When past our front they changed direction again by the right flank, and marched direct to the attack of our lines. At this time I ordered Colonel Randol to change front forward and form again on the flank, which was done in good style. Also same order to Colonel Veazey, and ordered him to form on the left of the 13th thereby placing the rebels under flank fire the whole length of their lines. Closed in mass in column by regiment. I will here state that I intended at first to place my whole command in same position, but saw the rebels forming in line of battle on my left again. I ordered Colonel Nichols to remain on the original line to protect that. As soon as the 13th and 16th were in position and range correct, the rebels began to run, by scattering individually back across the field. General Hancock was wounded near me; while the 16th was getting into line. . . ." 254



*Veazey's 16th Vermont was in advance of the rest of the brigade, down near the headwaters of Plum Run, and also had out a large number of skirmishers in the direction of the Emmitsburg Road.

This diary extract by General Stannard helps to pinpoint the movements and contributions of General Hancock, and helps to explain what Hancock perceived to be troops breaking to the rear. If the 16th Vermont was forced back in from its advanced position by the weight of Kemper's charge, and then took

254 Stannard, "Diary extracts," p. 269.

up a new position to the left and behind the 14th Vermont Infantry, Hancock may have mistaken Veazey's movements for a retreat by some of Stannard's men. Stannard also assigns the time of Hancock's wounding, near his side, at the point where Veazey's men were going into position to the left of the 13th during the flanking movement. This would hardly give Hancock much credit for the movement, unless he had been around since the initiation. The 13th Vermont was already in position, its ten companies performing the "parade ground" maneuver under enemy fire. The 16th Vermont moved to the right behind the 14th Vermont and began its flanking movement from the original position of Randall's 13th Regiment.

The regimental history of the 13th Vermont summarized the movement by these two regiments, and recorded that General Hancock rode up to the brigade sometime soon after Stannard ordered the flanking movement:

" . . . Under the terrific artillery duel, which began early in the afternoon and lasted an hour and three-quarters, the infantry line lay prostrate and silent. Then Longstreet's corps of 17,000 men came into view, and when the front central line, consisting of Pickett's division, reached the Emmitsburg road and began moving to the left so as to have its objective point more immediately in front, Stannard was quick to see that the brigades of Wilcox and Perry on Pickett's right, did not follow his movement to the left and there was opened a gap in his line. Instantly Stannard advanced the Thirteenth Regiment into this gap as far as the line of rails and then the Sixteenth fell back from the skirmish line and formed on the left of the Fourteenth. The brigade opened upon Pickett, firing somewhat to the right, and shortly after Gibbon's division opened directly in their faces. The enemy returned the fire with both musketry and artillery, the air was filled with missiles, the din was such that few orders were given or heard, and through the thickening pall of smoke the most that we could see was that men were falling like autumn leaves and yet our lines held firm.

"Longstreet's supporting columns were coming up but were still beyond range of our infantry. General Hancock rode down and took position near Stannard, between the 13th and 14th regiments, but soon fell wounded. Stannard had already given an order to the Thirteenth to change front forward and strike Pickett squarely on his flank, and then he ordered the Sixteenth to hasten and form on their left. The zeal of Colonel Randall led him so near the enemy that Stannard feared that the Thirteenth might be captured, and so he sent Lieutenant Benedict of his staff to overtake and warn him, but before Benedict reached the line the Thirteenth was gathering in prisoners." 255

As already mentioned, one of the sources of controversy in the years following the battle was the question Who ordered the flank attack by the Vermont Brigade? Because of its importance in disrupting the flanks of both Pickett and Wilcox, every officer who held any kind of rank in that section of the Union line claimed credit for it. To his literal dying day, General George J. Stannard swore that the idea and the orders for the movement by the brigade were his alone, although he had plenty of company vying for the honor. In a letter to J. H. Stine, who was writing the history of the Army of the Potomac, John R. Thompson verified the authenticity of Stannard's "dying" statement (pronounced "a few days before his death" from his bed):

"He stated with vehement earnestness that their movements were made upon his own discretion, and that he received no orders from any one relative thereto. I was on General Stannard's staff while he was in command of the Second Vermont Brigade, and was with him at Gettysburg. I have visited the battlefield with him many times, and have heard him indignantly complain many times that he had been robbed of his due credit by the official report of his superior officer." 256

The deathbed statement was also included:

²⁵⁵Sturtevant, pp. 764-765.

²⁵⁶Stine, p. 527.

Stannard's Dying Statement

"I was standing almost alone when Pickett's division crossed the Emmitsburg road, coming in the direction of my front. The 16th was immediately recalled from the skirmish line in front of me, and placed in close column by division in my immediate rear. The enemy apparently veering off to my right, I directed the 13th and 14th Regiments to pour an oblique fire into their advancing columns. The 13th changed front forward on first company; the 16th, after deploying, performed the same, and formed on the left of the 13th, at right angles to the main line of our army, bringing them in line of battle upon the flank of the charging division of the enemy, and immediately opened a destructive fire at short range. Unable to return the fire, many surrendered. While I was in the act of throwing the 13th and 16th at right angles to the regular line of battle, Hancock rode up to me and wanted to know what I was going to do? When I told him, he said I would leave a gap in our line of battle for a column on the right of Pickett to force its way into and break our line of battle. I assured him I could resume my position in the regular line of battle before a support to Pickett on his right could advance, as there was none in sight. Hancock still insisted that I was making a great mistake, but I knew I could handle my regiments with agility enough to put them back on the line of battle before a body of troops could march a mile, so I declined to rescind my order. He was soon wounded near me, but he was not borne from the field until he saw that my movement was a complete success, and he afterward promised me to correct his report, in which he took the credit of giving me the order to throw my regiments on Pickett's right, but he died before he made the correction. Not only did he not give me the order, but at the time was bitterly opposed to it, for the reason that he feared that a column of the enemy would be able to wedge itself in there before I could make a counter-movement, and bring my regiment back into line. . . .

"I had no fears of the result, as I could easily maneuver my troops in face of the enemy, for I had been able to do that for two days under a severe fire." 257.

257 Ibid., pp. 527-528.

This may be the most unique and interesting account of the flank movement, since it reveals the post-war recollections of the brigade commander. All orders repeated above correspond with Stannard's diary entries cited on page 181. However, the latter account is much more vehement in defending Stannard's claim for conceiving the flank account and in attacking the presumptions of Hancock and others for "claim-jumping". Hancock is specifically condemned by Stannard for apparent hypocrisy, the former later claiming responsibility for the movement when Stannard remembered that Hancock was "bitterly opposed" to it. One thing that is hard to swallow is Stannard's assertion that Hancock promised him he would change his official report to reflect Stannard's (and not his own) ingenuity on the field of battle. Hancock was under no pressure to change his story, since the report not only enhanced Hancock's brilliant military career but did not harm his post-war political career either. It is uncertain what kind of a personal relationship Hancock and Stannard shared, but it is obvious that their post-war political careers were on opposite sides of the fence. Hancock was a Democratic candidate for President, while Stannard was a Republican appointee serving in his home state and as doorkeeper of the House of Representatives. In any event, if Hancock was as adamantly opposed to the movement as Stannard implies, it is doubtful that Hancock would admit his lack of foresight and brilliance by applying for a change to an official report.

Hancock did not limit his claim for initiating the Vermonters' attack to the Civil War era, but continued to make these kinds of statements into the post-war years. In one letter, in which he enclosed notes made at the request of the artist, Hancock described his recollections of the flank attack to Peter F. Rothermel:



Sketch of wounding of General W. S. Hancock by A. R. Waud 258

"I was riding away from the Vermont troops, followed by my color bearer, towards the 'Clump of trees', where the heavy contest was, when I was shot, I had just left Genl Stannard but fell on his line immediately after starting. I had gone to see what I could do with the troops, which proved to be General Stannards, on the enemys flank. (I did not know when I went there whose troops they were, but supposed they were some of the 2nd Corps) I had however general command of the whole line, from Cemetery Hill to Round Top on that day, consisting of the 1st, 2nd and 3d Corps, styled the Left Centre, so that it was not important.

"Before I reached Genl Stannards troops, I met a small detachment, which I thought to be a decimated battalion of the 2nd Corps, formed some distance in front of his line and perpendicular to the line of the 2nd Corps. This small detachment was formed on the enemy's flank. I do not think there were more than 15 or 20 files of it. On the supposi-

258 Glenn Tucker, "Winfield S. Hancock: A Personality Profile," Civil War Times Illustrated, VII (August 1968), p. 7.

tion that it belonged to the 2nd Corps, and believing it to be too small for its fire to have any great effect, I directed it to fall back to the troops lying down in line, along the edge of the bushes some distance to the rear and generally parallel to it (which I found to be Genl Stannards), stating to the commander of the detachment, that he was too weak to effect much, and that I would advance the whole of that line. It is possible that this small detachment was a company from one of Stannard's regiments forming forward, by orders from Genl Stannard, or one of his Regimental commanders. . . ."259

Captain H. H. Bingham, judge advocate on the staff of Hancock during the Gettysburg Campaign, wrote to Hancock on the day previous to the above reminiscence. Apparently he was asked by his former chief to provide him with his recollections of the incident, and Captain Bingham responded:

"I think I found you in about 15 minutes after I got Armistead's message and effects. When I found you, you were on the ground wounded, I rode up to you in company with General Mitchell whom I met as I was riding over the field towards the left of our line. . . . * After Mitchell and myself expressed to you our sympathy and regret for your severe wound and suffering, Mitchell went off for an ambulance and you ordered me to see that several regiments, afterwards ascertained to be the Vermont Brigade, (Stannard's I think) should change front and attack in flank a body of the enemy's troops just as they were turning to retreat from the field. This I attended to and rode along with these troops during their flank attack. . . ." 260

*Major William Galbraith Mitchell, Assistant Adjutant General and Senior aid-de-camp on Hancock's staff.

If Captain Bingham's recollection is fact, then Hancock could only have been directing him to follow up on the repulse of the last attack by Wilcox.

²⁵⁹Notes of W. S. Hancock "made at the request of" Peter F. Rothermel, January 6, 1869, in Historical notes, Peter F. Rothermel Papers. Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

²⁶⁰Letter of Captain H. H. Bingham to W. S. Hancock, January 5, 1869, in Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society, Microfilm Reel 1, p. 86.

Armistead was wounded in the closing moments of the repulse and Bingham says he joined Hancock about fifteen minutes after he had the opportunity to talk to the injured officer. By that time the movement of the 13th and 16th Vermont Regiments on the right flank of Pickett's column was over. Any directing by Hancock to Bingham could not have had to do with that flanking movement, but may have pertained to the movement by the 16th and part of the 14th Vermont upon the left flank of the Wilcox-Lang column in the ravine at Plum Run.

One of the strangest claims by an officer for responsibility for the Vermonters' flanking movement was by a first lieutenant on the staff of Colonel Norman J. Hall (whose troops were to the immediate left of the Angle):

" . . . [I] went to the nearest Gen. officer I could find who happened to be the commander of the Vermont brigade, who would not send them without an order from Gen. Newton, as I was in search of Gen. N. I met Lt. Jackson of his staff. . . .* He took me to General Newton, who ordered me to, take, I think three Regts. of this Vermont Brigade. . . . I rushed them up in the shortest cut to what I supposed was the place. We crossed the line of works, such as they were, just where Gen. Hancock was laying wounded. When the commanding officer put the troops into position, I don't remember how exactly, and opened a splendid fire on the enemy's flank. I then left and reported to you."

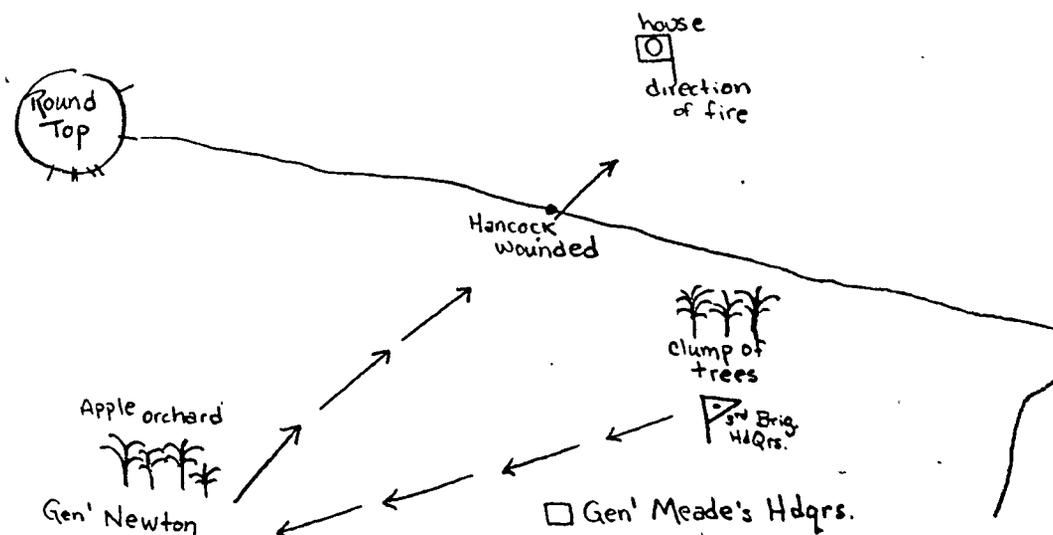
"As I said before, it was my first fight and everything seemed to me I may be wrong in detail, and I was so much excited I did not remember as I should know what I should do."²⁶¹

*Lieutenant Huntington Walcott Jackson, aid-de-camp to Newton.

This claim borders on the bizarre in its claim that Lieutenant William E. Barrows was given three regiments of infantry (numbering about 2,000 men) to

²⁶¹Letter of Lieut. W. E. Barrows to Colonel Norman J. Hall, August 12, 1866, in Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society, Microfilm Reel 1, pp: 77-78.

lead into a daring attack on the enemy's flank. It would be unlikely that Colonel Hall would have sent Lieutenant Barrows to General Newton for reinforcements, and then have wanted them to be deployed far to his left. If Hall wanted reinforcements, it is probable that he wanted them supporting him, and not Gates or Harrow. In addition, the Vermont Brigade was not in the rear of Union lines, as Barrows' letter seems to imply. Lieutenant Barrows at least gives the commanding officer of the three regiments (Stannard) credit for deploying them into position, from which they fired into the enemy's flank. A rough map sketched by Barrows indicated the route he took and landmarks on the battlefield during his "ride to the rescue", and is shown below: 262



Although it is probable that Lieutenant Barrows was sent by Hall to Newton for reinforcements, it is unlikely that he had anything to do with leading or initiating the Vermont movement. Perhaps he was more "excited" than he remembers, and got caught up in the movement himself without really "knowing what he should do".

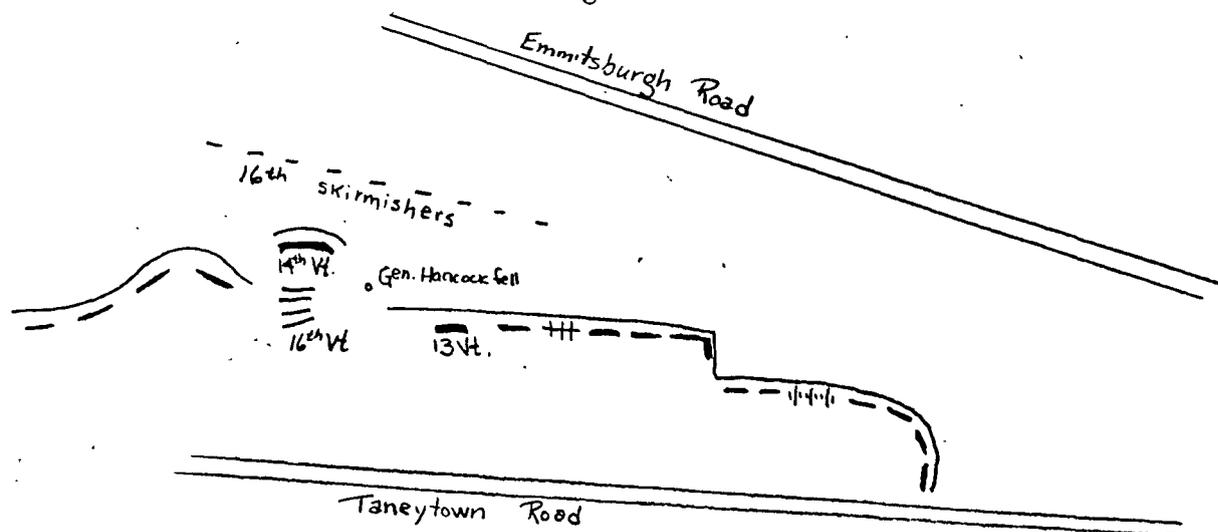
262 Ibid., p. 79.

Of those who did participate in the flanking movement and oblique fire on Pickett's columns, G. G. Benedict, a member of the 14th Vermont Infantry and serving as aid-de-camp on General Stannard's staff, wrote literally volumes of letters and published material. In a letter to the early historian Bachelder, Lieutenant Benedict described his recollections and parried some charges by Confederate accounts that the Vermonters acted less than bravely on July 3:

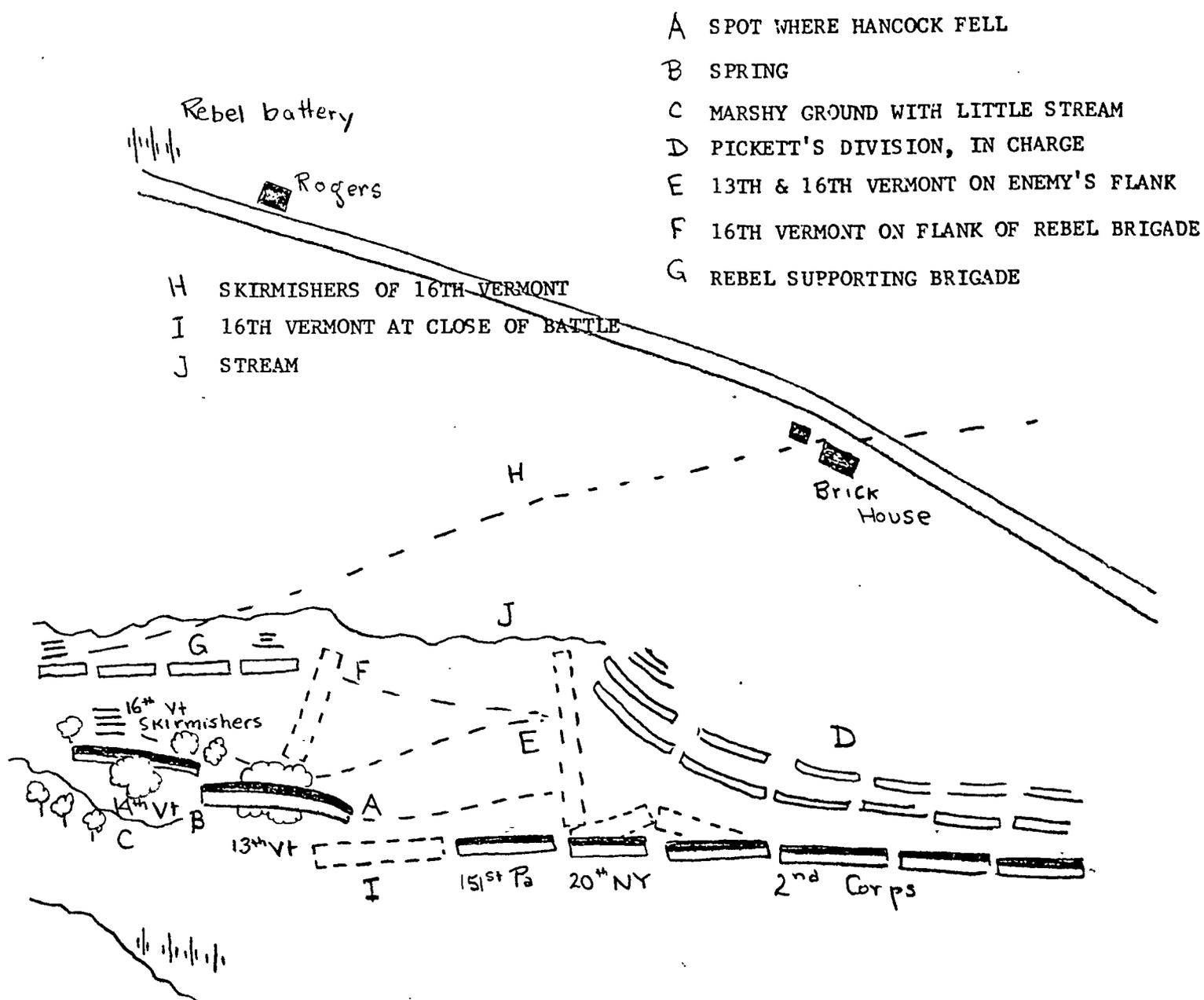
"The rebel statement that our 'flanking party' was dispersed and scattered in confusion is an utter falsehood. Their loss was wholly it is true, by the artillery fire of the rebels, and frequent gaps were made in the line, but there was no disorder or confusion in the movements of either regiment, as a whole, and they returned to their positions in the line, in perfect order.

"The statements that the rebels held any portion of our position for twenty minutes, I should also call a mis-statement. I do not think any portion of the attacking body was inside our lines on Friday afternoon, for two minutes, except as prisoners.

"I have indicated wrongly on the map. . . the position of our Vermont Regiments, before the Brigade charged. The 16th had a part out as skirmishers, and the balance lying in column by division in the rear of the 14th. After the repulse of the enemy, the 16th was placed in line on the left of the 13th which was moved a little farther to the right." 263



263 Letter of G. G. Benedict to John B. Bachelder, December 24, 1863, in Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society, Microfilm Reel 1, pp. 63-64; and Microfilm Reel 3 for drawing.



Benedict wrote again before a year had passed and enclosed with that letter to Bachelder another sketch which is reproduced in facsimile above. According to Benedict, in clarifying the sketch and adding information:

"I think in my diagram I have not got the left of the 14th out far enough. It was quite a distance in front of anything behind it." 264

264 Benedict to Bachelder, March 16, 1864; map opposite p. 64.

It is apparent from the maps and descriptions of not only Vermonters, but other eyewitnesses and participants, that the position of the Vermont Brigade was much further south and somewhat further westward than is presently indicated by the monuments to the 13th, 14th, and 16th Vermont. In referring to the second Benedict map the present Vermont monuments are located between the area he designates "I" and the area designated "20th N.Y.". Because of this wrong location of the monuments, the field of the fighting and positions of the three regiments is usually ignored by passers-by and misinterpreted (if interpreted at all) by many battle historians. The avenue construction in that area and War Department monument policies are both to blame for the errors in location and interpretation. Because the Vermont monuments are located almost a brigade front north of their true position, there is a general crowding of monuments representing Hall's and Harrow's Brigades and no room left for Gates' command or remnants of the First Corps and sharpshooter units occupying the front line on July 3. Factually, the monument of the 13th Vermont should be located in Codori Grove; the 14th Vermont monument should be south of Codori Spring and almost due west of the Pennsylvania Monument; and the 16th Vermont monument should have been left where it was originally constructed in Codori Thicket along the banks of Plum Run.

The Benedict map is not only helpful allowing us see the mistakes in monument placement, but in understanding and positioning in our minds the terrain features and regiments and movements described by the various participants. He himself published his version of the attack in his history of the 14th Vermont Regiment:

" . . . the long, gray lines came down the slope, their right directed squarely upon the position of the Four-

teenth Regiment. Colonel Nichols was ordered to hold his fire till the enemy was close upon him, then to give them a volley, and after that, the bayonet. An unexpected move of the enemy rendered the full execution of this order impracticable. As the Regiment rose, the left of the enemy's line in front suddenly changed direction and marched to the right across the front of the Vermont Brigade for some sixty rods, when again fronting they came in upon the line of the Second Corps, to the right of the Vermonters. The Fourteenth Regiment at once opened fire at about sixty rods distance, and continued it with very great effect, and a long line of Confederate dead soon marked the route of their march across the front of the Vermont Brigade. . . . The Second Corps met them in front with a destructive musketry fire, but they still swept on, reached, pressed back, and broke through the Union lines. At this juncture General Stannard ordered the famous flank attack which made him, and his Brigade, famous, and decided the fate of the great rebel charge, and the issue of the most decisive battle of the war.

"While the flank attack on Pickett's Division was made by the Thirteenth and Sixteenth Regiments, the Fourteenth maintained its place in front of the left center." 265

Although the Fourteenth Vermont Regiment did not participate in the movement by the flank, its contribution in holding the brigade line as a security measure should not be overlooked. General Doubleday wrote a personal letter to be read at the reunion of the 14th Vermont in 1887:

"When Pickett's column reached the Cadovi House [sic] he found they were getting too far south of the clump of trees in front of Webb's position upon which the center guide had directed his march.* To remedy this the main body was obliqued in that direction. Either owing to the smoke or to some misunderstanding the two Brigades under

*Doubleday did not know what Pickett or the center guide were aiming at in 1863. He assumed the clump of trees in 1887 because the copse of trees by that time had ac-quired their fame as the "aiming point". (See Appendix)

²⁶⁵George Grenville Benedict, A Short History of the 14th Vermont Regt. (Bennington, Vt., 1887), pp. 11-12.

Wilcox did not oblique with the others but kept straight to the front, becoming more and more separated from the flank it was intended they should guard. This gave Stannard the opportunity to fling two Regiments against the right of the main body and soon after to repeat the manoeuvre against the left of Wilcox who was making a feeble assault upon our front line. To aid in repelling the latter I sent forward a Regiment which had reported to me from some other Corps. The Colonel led the way waving his hat and the men followed cheering, but they found that Stannard's admirable movement had already repulsed Wilcox. It had also greatly disordered the main body of the enemy. Its effect on the latter soon became apparent. Those assailed by it were forced to move south to meet it, instead of east. This placed them in a corner where they were obliged to encounter a deadly fire from Hall's and Harrow's Brigades, of the Second Corps, in front, while Stannard was pounding the flank.

"My brother, at present residing in North Carolina, was conversing recently with one of Pickett's men who was made prisoner in the charge. He gave his experience as follows: 'I told the Captain that the Yankees were on our flank, but he said we had nothing to do with that. Those in the rear would attend to them. All we had to do was to go forward. . . . I suddenly felt the muzzle of a revolver pressed against my head and heard a Vermonter say "wall now, I guess you won't go any further in that direction"'. . . ." 266

It must be remembered from the above that Doubleday was writing over twenty years after the battle, when numerous "historians" and generals (including himself) were writing their versions of the battle. Doubleday therefore related tactical insight that he nor the Confederates presumed to know on July 3, 1863. Indeed, Doubleday claimed rationale behind movements by Pickett and Wilcox that is not revealed in the post-war writing by the Confederate participants themselves, already examined in previous chapters! The recollection of Doubleday's brother as told to him by a Confederate participant is quite interesting in the complacency with which the officer told the "worrier" that anything happening on their flank while they advanced and attacked was not their concern!

²⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 36-37.

Brigadier-General George Stannard's diary recorded the events of that day, including the flanking movement, in which he stated that he

" . . . ordered Colonel Randol to change front forward and form again on the flank, which was done in good style. Also same order to Colonel Veazey, and ordered him to form on the left of the 13th thereby placing the rebels under flank fire the whole length of their lines. Closed in mass in column by regiment. I will here state that I inteneded at first to place my whole command in same position, but saw the rebels forming in line of battle on my left again. I ordered Colonel Nichols to remain on the original line to protect that. As soon as the 13th and 16th were in position and range correct, the rebels began to run, by scattering individually back across the field. General Hancock was wounded near me, while the 16th was getting into line. . . . When the rebels retired I ordered my two regiments, the 13th and 16th, back to the original position. . . ." 267

While Stannard's diary provides sketchy reading of such an important movement, it must be remembered that the account was written as a diary entry for Stannard's own reference, and not as a stirring narrative for publication.

More detailed accounts by members of Stannard's brigade appeared in later years, most notably in the regimental history of the 13th Vermont Infantry. In that book, the author spins his narrative as well as connecting it with a multitude of participant reminiscences. The author, likewise a participant in the battle, remembered the circumstances surrounding the attack of Pickett's Division and the countermovement by his fellow soldiers:

"Down the line of the 13th regiment comes the order from company to company 'Steady boys, hold your position, don't fire until the word is given, keep cool, lie low till order is given to fire, make ready, take good aim, fire low.' Then like an electric flash came down the line the order from Colonel Randall quickly repeated by every officer in the line. 'Fire,' up rose the Green Mountain Boys; 3,000 strong as if by magic with forms erect took deliberate aim and

267 Stannard, "Diary Extracts", Bachelder Correspondence, p. 269.

with a simultaneous flash and roar fired into the compact ranks of the desperate foe and again and again in quick succession until a dozen or more volleys had been discharged with deadly effect. We saw at every volley the grey uniforms fall quick and fast and the front line hesitated, moved slowly and melted away, could not advance against such a furious and steady storm of bullets in their faces and the raking fire of McGilvery's batteries against their flank and midst this, unexpected fusillade of bullets, grape and canister they halted and quickly in good order massed in columns to our right uncovering the immediate front of Stannard's brigade and with an awful manacing yell dashed forward with the evident purpose of carrying the crest of Cemetery Ridge at our right and rear.

"Pickett's massing of columns and verging to his left. and our right opened a clear field in front of Stannard's brigade, furnishing a golden opportunity for a flank advance attack against General Pickett's advancing battle lines.

"General Stannard ordered the 13th and 16th regiments of his brigade to move forward (the 14th to remain in position in support) toward the enemy, and these two regiments the 13th and 16th, advanced about one hundred yards in quick time, the 13th on the double quick and moved first, the 16th being at the left of the brigade did not receive the order as soon by some minutes as the 13th, and this advance movement while the 13th was still in motion was quickly followed by a more important order which was given first to the 13th regiment. As General Stannard looked over the field his quick eye discovered the salient angle, and like a flash of lightning came the inspired thought that evolved the famous and now historic order (unique in maneuvering in the midst of battle) 'Change front, forward on first company.'

"Colonel Randall repeated this order to Captain Lonergan of Company A and sent it along the line. Captain Lonergan on receiving the order halted his company which was the right of the line, placed First Sergeant James B. Scully in position and quickly swung his company around into position, and thus each company was brought into line facing the right flank of General Pickett's advancing heroes and each company as it faced into line saw in their immediate front not sixty yards away General Pickett's command, charging forward up the slope and at once opened a deadly fire on their flank which surprised and disconcerted officers and rank and file alike, some turned about and returned our fire, but knowing their objective point moved on. This was at short range and the concentrated fire of the 13th into the moving flank before them thickly covered the ground with the dead and wounded until General Pickett's command had lost most of its distinguished officers and a large percent. of its rank and file. . . . " 268

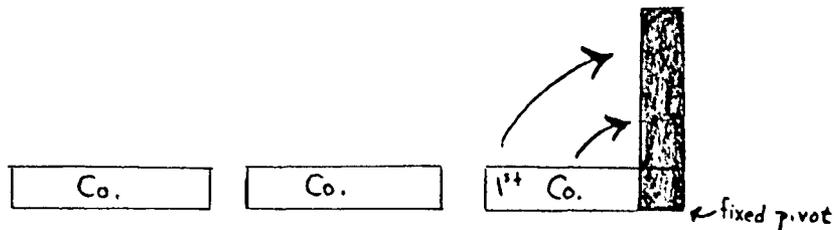
Thus we see that the quick thinking of General Stannard made the most of the Confederate mistakes during the attack. When Stannard advanced his men about one hundred yards forward to insure a better fire into the enemy (then marching down and across the Emmitsburg Road), he was surprised to see Kemper obliging him further by heading again toward the Union lines. By so doing, Kemper once again exposed his right flank to Stannard, who was quick to take advantage of this invitation to disaster. The order to change front forward on first company was a bit of parade ground maneuvering to rival those made by Pickett's Division during its advance. While it was probably drilled into all infantry soldiers in camp, it was not often used on the open battlefield while under fire. That Stannard had the confidence or audacity to attempt such a feat with "green" Green Mountain Boys is all the more incredible. But Stannard was obviously confident in the likes of First Sergeant James B. Scully, the pivot man in this huge human hinge. Scully had the unheralded honor of being the fixed point upon which the two regiments formed.²⁶⁹



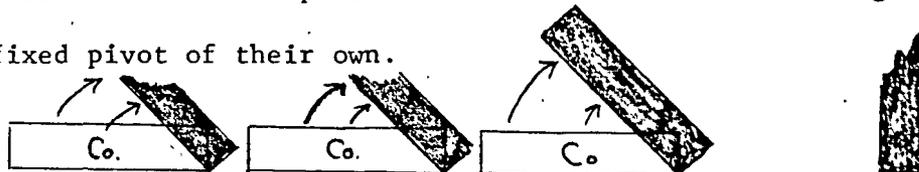
Serg^t James B. Scully, Co. A,
13th Vermont

This movement, as explained in infantry tactics manuals of the time, was necessary to form a perpendicular line at right angles to the original position. In order to do so, the first (or right) company would wheel to the right on a fixed pivot and halt. (Sergeant Scully was this "fixed pivot".) This first movement by the regiment is shown on the following page.

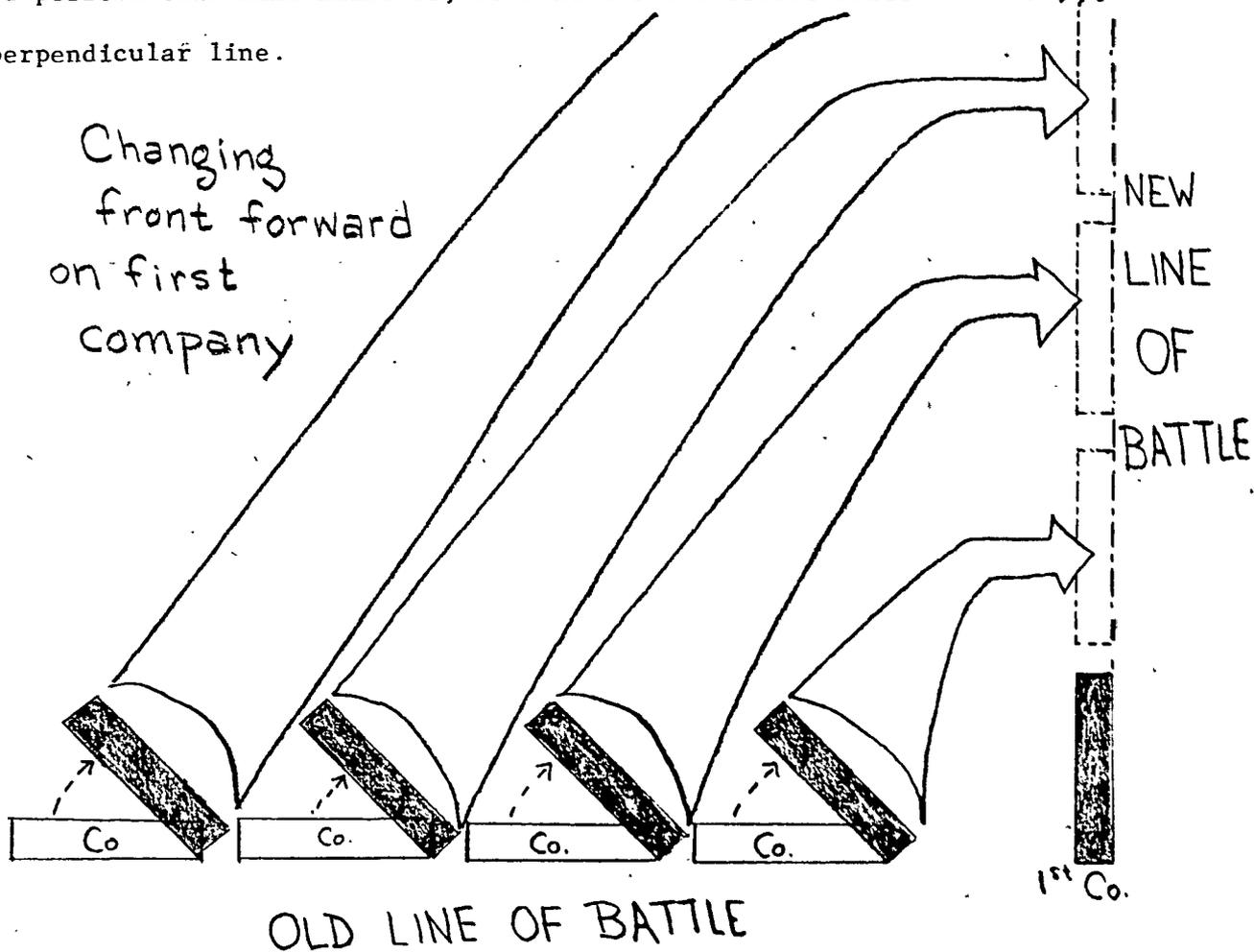
²⁶⁹To "out-micro-history" George Stewart, one could theorize that First Sergeant James Scully was the turning point in the Civil War. If, as Stewart proposed, Pickett's Charge was the turning point of the battle, and of the war, then perhaps the Vermont movement was the turning point in the charge. And the literal "turning point" of this Vermont movement was not a general or political leader, but a non-commissioned officer.



The remainder of the companies would then be ordered to "right half wheel" on a fixed pivot of their own.



The next step would be a forward and march. The right guide of each company would march straight forward until the company was to turn right and move upon the new line, and then "guide" or "dress" right. Each company in succession would perform this same maneuver, so that the end result would be a new, or perpendicular line.



This digression into the tactic of changing front forward on Company A is necessary to understand the kind of movement made by these two vast regiments of Stannard's Brigade. Not only does the movement itself, under a continuing artillery fire, demand our attention because of its intricacy and audacity with virtually untried troops, but also because of the sheer numbers involved in this movement. The 13th and 16th Vermont Regiments contained a minimum of 1,000 effectives on July 3. A double file line of these two regiments would have covered a space of approximately 2,000 feet (or about 650 yards) when fully extended. This would easily have thrown the left of the new line out to the Emmitsburg Road, and, indeed, there are accounts that Vermonters captured Confederates as far west from the Union main line on Cemetery Ridge as Codori's orchard. (This orchard was located just east of the Codori buildings, which were adjacent to the Emmitsburg Road.)

Sergeant Albert Clarke, of Company G, 13th Vermont Infantry, later described the change of front as he remembered it as a participant:

" . . . [A] gap was opened in the line in front of Stannard. Stannard promptly advanced his brigade forty-five yards toward it and opened a right oblique fire on Pickett's men in the valley, who were crowding to the left, until his front was cleared. It was at this time that Hancock reached Stannard, but he immediately fell. . . .

"Stannard, seeing that his front was cleared, ordered his right regiment to change front forward on first company, which, after a run of 200 yards, brought us into close quarters with Pickett's right flank, and there we were joined by the Sixteenth Vermont. To reach that position we had moved in front of the main line from which we had advanced, but a portion of that line soon passed to the right, after Hall's brigade had moved to the aid of Webb's, still further to the right." 270

²⁷⁰Col. Albert Clarke, "Hancock and the Vermont Brigade," Journal of the Military Service Institute of the United States, vol. XLVII (1911), p. 225.

The run of 200 yards spoken of by Sergeant Clarke would refer to the movement executed by his company after their right half-wheel, when they advanced forward to extend the line of the first company, Company A. The main line they were in advance of must have been that of Harrow's Brigade and Gates' demi-brigade, since both of those advanced toward Webb's position after Hall had done so.

The regimental history of the 13th Vermont gave another account of this movement, and was keyed to the battlefield as it existed by 1910, referring to the advance position markers of the regiment:

"After a few moments of silence the advancing columns of the Confederate infantry came into view, crossing the Emmitsburg road to the right and left of the Cadori House. Almost immediately another force appeared to the left of the house aiming apparently for our line. In all about 16,000 men. At this the regiment advanced into the field in front, the right being at the granite marker No. 2. As the charging column came into the valley they turned by their left to join the masses at the right of the house, marching directly across the front of the regiment. We had already opened fire and at this short range our bullets were deadly as was attested by the long line of dead and wounded that covered the ground after their passage. As the remnants of this division joined the main body of the enemy, they all charged on our line at a point indicated by the high water mark at our right. By order of General Stannard, Colonel Randall gave the order to change front forward on first company which the regiment did on a double quick, and immediately opened fire on the mass of men at short range. The enemy at once swung a brigade to face us and opened fire. The cannon had all opened a rapid fire and with the bullets from the musketry the air seemed alive with missiles. The regiment fired from 10 to 20 rounds when the order to charge bayonets was given, and the men went forward at a double quick receiving the fire of the enemy until within 20 feet of their line, then their line in our front broke, some ran back, some to the right, some to the left. More threw their guns and themselves on the ground. We continued the charge to a point you will see to the left and in front of the high water mark indicated by our marker No. 3; where we halted." 271

271 Sturtevant, pp. 804-805.

That account by Sergeant Henry O. Clark (Company D) referred to the movement by Kemper across the front of Stannard's Brigade, as the former made its adjustment to the left. When Stannard saw Kemper's Brigade join that of Garnett and Armistead in attempting to pierce Webb's line, he ordered the movement to change front forward in order to assist Webb and to take Pickett's Division on its right flank. Pickett, however, did not send a brigade to face about and fire into the 13th Vermont. On the contrary, according to Confederate accounts mere companies were engaged in this counteraction, since not even a regiment could be spared for such purposes (let alone a brigade). The following chapter will further confirm these Confederate actions.

Frank Kenfield, then first lieutenant of Company E, remembered the moments when his 13th Vermont Regiment entered the fray, and reinforced the above account by Sergeant Clark that, in this rare instance, the bayonet was resorted to:

"On they came in our front and we were ready to receive them. Soon the fighting became terrific and not a man in the regiment wavered, but on the contrary everyone seemed determined to check the advancing foe. The steady and rapid firing of our boys sent death and destruction into their ranks which could not last long. Our loss was heavy but nothing to theirs, and as they came nearer the bayonets were resorted to, and in some instances crossed, but soon they threw down their arms and begged for mercy. We took scores of prisoners and sent them to the rear. I captured a Confederate sword. . . ." 272

In Company G, Lieutenant Albert Clarke (who played such a vital role in having the Vermont advance breastworks erected during the forenoon) continued to write his own page in the history of the Battle of Gettysburg:

"When the regiment advanced to the rails that had been placed in line along the edge of the low table-land above the valley of Plum Run, Pickett's approaching

272 Ibid., p. 797.

line had come within short rifle range and was firing as well as advancing. As soon as our men halted and were ordered to lie down, they sought to return the fire but Lieutenant Clarke commanded us to hold our fire until we received an order. This annoyed us and we could not understand it, for, resting our rifles on the ri-als, we secured perfect aim. Soon, however, the skirmishers--our comrades of the 16th Vermont and sharpshooters fell back through our line and then came the welcome order to fire, and it was obeyed with alacrity and with such fearful execution that Pickett's column, which was already obliquing to the left, hastened its movement and soon uncovered our front. Then came General Stannard's memorable order first to Colonel Randall of the 13th Regiment and then to Colonel Nichols and Veazey of the 14th and 16th Regiments to 'change front forward on first company.' The order was not heard except by those near him, seeing which Colonel Randall ran along the line and gave a simpler order, 'By the right flank, follow me, double quick,' and this was obeyed and the regiment, four men abreast, moved 'head on' as railroad men say, towards Pickett's right, which had then got some 300 yards away from us. . . . When the regiment got within a few rods of the enemy it moved 'on the right into line,' which position was at a right angle from the main line of our army and was facing Pickett's right flank, which very soon became massed under the fire from two directions. Here we soon began to gather in prisoners and by chance many of them came in through Company G. As the air was thick with hissing shot, Lieutenant Clarke ordered the prisoners to lie down, which they were very glad to do. One of our men said to him, 'You are treating the enemy better than you treat us,' to which he replied 'that is true, but we are at work and their work is over.' The splendid array before us was rapidly falling, scattering, and disappearing and very soon Clarke received an order to conduct the prisoners to the rear." 273

This above account, written by the same Sergeant Scott who volunteered to build Lieutenant Clark's rail pile, may be one of the most indicative of those memoirs trying to relate the soldier's experience in this battle. Sergeant Scott remembered the unglamorous and more basic emotions of the conflict, and not the much-heralded grand movements and dressed columns of the parade ground. He recalled things which enliven our own vision of

273 Ibid., pp: 592-593.

this most memorable of American battles--the impatience of the defenders to fire at the enemy and destroy him before he himself was destroyed; the noise and confusion of those kinds of battles, when the commanding officer himself could not be heard or understood except by personal example (which may be why the leader principle was so very important to these pre-twentieth-century armies. Without communication, could men follow any but the "natural leader?"); the overwhelming drive for self-preservation; the jealousy with which most men eyed the captured foe--he was safe from the battle but the rest of us have to continue to risk our lives; the magnanimity and composure which still reigned over some of these "natural leaders" and their more enlightened followers. Yet, because the nature of this movement precluded any real hand-to-hand or up-close combat, it is void of the frenzy, desperateness, and downright meanness that often accompanied the battle. The latter will become more visible in accounts of the repulse in the next chapter.

There is, however, a poignancy of events that can be documented and remembered after such a participation as the movement of the 13th Vermont afforded. Many things could be remembered and noted that would have been lost in the rush of close combat. Individual soldiers could still remain individuals--friends, comrades, schoolmates, relatives, instead of killing machines. Names could be associated with each face that went into this movement, and each face which did not return. Because of the memories of these participants we can get a good sampling of personal experiences affecting them and those they saw. Many remembered seeing Sergeant Durham Marble falling wounded, and dropping the colors. They were picked up by none other than Colonel Randall, who handed the flag to Sergeant Theodore Stow. 274

274 Ibid., p. 650.



And who in Company I could forget the sight of Private Benjamin N. Wright? He was shot through the body just before the flanking movement began. As the company passed him when it changed front, and while the air was "full of shot and shell", Private Wright raised himself up on his knees and bade his comrades good-by. Many of those advancing to the attack shook his hand as they passed by.

Benjamin Wright died that night in a hospital behind the lines. ²⁷⁵

In the same company, Winslow Blanchard was wounded by a blow "struck on his cross belt and ended over without drawing blood. The shock rattled him and he screamed and ran and was not seen again until the fight was over." ²⁷⁶ Thus we have within the same company two examples of man's reaction to the battleground--one with resignation, one with abject fear. Each company had similar stories to tell, but most remembered the names of those who were casualties during this movement.

Company A lost its first lieutenant, John Sinnott, who was struck in the forehead by a shell during the flanking movement and later died. James H. Wilson of Company B was killed by a shell during this same manuever, while Charles Carpenter, Dexter Parker, and Samuel J. Dana were company mates who suffered artillery wounds. Almus Stevens, also of Company B, was saved by his rubber blanket roll, which absorbed the gunshot fired by a Virginian. The gum blanket contained 19 holes through it where the ball had passed, as counted after the battle was over. ²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 684.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 676.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 468.

But Company B had its share of attempted shirkers, also. Augustus Shontell, who had his bayonet shot off by a shell, almost found a way to avoid going into the charge. Approaching his captain, Shontell was still recuperating from the effects of the hit, which had whirled him around about two or three times. He called out to Captain Orcas Wilder, "Captain they have shot my bayonet off, so I can't charge." Wilder shouted back, "You can shoot can't you?" "Yes! I can shoot." "Well, get back into the ranks and let them have it as fast as you can."²⁷⁸

Drummer Gilman Foster was required to serve his company and any others as a "medic", as was common to all musicians at time of battle. Drums were substituted for by bandages, and litters replaced drumsticks. In dressing the wound of Lieutenant Frank Kenfield, Company E, Foster noticed the blood and brains of Sergeant Major H. H. Smith on Kenfield's coat sleeve. Smith had just been killed by a shell, which had also killed Orson Carr of Company E. Kenfield remained on the field with his men, and Foster continued with his duties along the line.

Others who suffered from the continuing artillery fire included Frederick Slater of Company F, who was left deaf in one ear as a result of a close explosion of one of the shells. Alfred Olmstead, a comrade in the same company, suffered the same fate. Albert Walston was knocked down three times in succession by the bursting of shells during the flanking movement. Corporal William Church, Company K, was killed by a shell bursting on him when the regiment was returning to its position after the flanking movement. According to accounts he was "horribly mangled", but because he died at the moment of victory his comrades could say, "His end was sad, yet glorious."²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸Ibid., p. 474.

²⁷⁹Ibid., p. 708.

A member of Company D, Lewis Barttro, recollected the moments just before the 13th Vermont began their attack on Pickett's Column:

" . . . [Just] as we were advancing to where the charge was made a grape shot hit Loomis Bentley in the wrist, the shot lodging between the bones of the lower arm. At the same time one of the shots hit Harry Tomlinson in the shoulder. About that time a piece of iron about two inches thick and ten inches long was seen coming toward us, the end striking the ground now and then. Just as I was going to call to the boys to look out, the iron struck William Crosby in the forehead. He was lying on the ground near George Fenwick, where he raised his head just in time to be hit by the iron, Fenwick at the same time saying 'Oh! My God, Willie, are you hurt?' When he saw the blood come from the wound, Fenwick took his handkerchief and put it on the wound, and saying, 'lie down Willie, lie down.'" 280

It would be interesting to know from which Confederate battery this piece of iron was fired, since it seems to indicate that the Southerners were desperate for any kind of ammunition at hand to support Pickett's column rather than withdraw.

Company G also had its share of heroes, casualties, and close calls. Among those who experienced the latter was Harrison Wells, who (like Almus Stevens) was saved by his rubber blanket roll absorbing the effects of a Confederate ball. Thomas T. Snell, one of the oldest men in the company at age 36, fell ill on the march but was determined not to fall out. When this battle occurred, Snell remained to do his duty:

"When the order came to advance to flank Pickett, he told his company commander that if any running was to be done he could not go. He was told there would probably be very little running, but a good deal of fighting, and he said he would try to keep up. At the first halt, when he was aiming, a bullet struck his forehead, above and at the left of the center, and he instantly fell." 281

²⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 529.

²⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 610-611.

Charles Ovitt won the admiration of Company G for his "unflinching courage and zeal" in this battle. Then 34 years old,



Charles F. Ovitt,
Co. G, 13th Vermont

a merchant with wife and children at home in Bakersfield, Vermont, Ovitt was an unquestionable patriot who "had no patience with those who sought to shirk duty." At Gettysburg, he inspired his company with his courageous manner:

"On the third day when Pickett began his charge we were ordered to move forward and lie down behind some rail breast-work which we had previously built and in this protected place load and fire, lying down. Charles was the first to jump to his feet and said, "Boys, we are here to whip the rebels, so let's go about it." He stood erect, loading and firing. Inspired by his example the whole company without command sprang to their feet and poured a deadly fire into the enemy's flank.'" 282

One of the youngest of the company, at age 19, was Jude Newcity.

On the march to Gettysburg he had predicted that there would be a great battle which would end the war. On the previous day, when the 13th Vermont was called upon to save some of Weir's guns, Jude had exclaimed "We shall win the day and then for home." But Jude Newcity never saw his prediction come true. He was the only man in Company G to be killed at Gettysburg.²⁸³

Another of the unsung heroes of the 13th Vermont was Sergeant Sidney Morey, Company K (who was then on duty with Company E). When General Hancock was dangerously wounded near him, Morey remembered that a man in his former company always carried a tourniquet. Sergeant Morey ran to Company K to

²⁸²Ibid., p. 612.

²⁸³Ibid., p. 644.

find Clark H. Butterfield, who gave him the tourniquet, and then returned to where Hancock was lying. Although others were given credit for staunching the flow of blood (by tying a handkerchief to a revolver to make a temporary tourniquet), it was Sergeant Morey and his borrowed tourniquet which may have saved Hancock's life.²⁸⁴

These particulars of men in the ranks of the 13th Vermont may help to personalize a battle which has faded into a surrealistic dream of glory and pageantry and glittering bayonets and smoke over the passage of years. It may help to relate a name on a cemetery gravestone with the face and actions of the individual who was remembered by his comrades-in-arms. It may help to recognize the accomplishments and feats of the anonymous ranks of men who left families, occupations, and comfortable lives by recounting the events which touched a few of the named men above.

But each individual fighting man cannot give us an overall picture of the battle--only what he himself experienced or was told. An officer sometimes had a better perspective of the battle because of his position and his foreknowledge of orders. Others, writing in later years, had the advantage of interviewing participants and reading accounts and histories of other units and companies. The regimental history of the 13th Vermont falls in this latter category, and provides us with a concise story of the events which happened during the flank movement by Stannard, and during the subsequent attack by the two brigades with Wilcox and Lang:

"The 13th regiment being on the right of the brigade General Stannard gave his order to Colonel Randall first, who promptly advanced and swung his regiment into line on the double-quick, and was on Pickett's

²⁸⁴Ibid., p. 703.

moving right flank rapidly firing into his charging columns for some minutes before the 16th regiment could execute the same order and take its position in line on the left of the 13th. Colonel Veazey had to move his regiment backward and pass around in the rear of the 14th regiment, left in position as support, and then charged down the slope into the valley passed into the rear of the 13th and then into position, on the left of the 13th, extending the line well up the slope toward the Cadora House on the Emmitsburg Road or pike, where it at once opened fire on General Pickett's demoralized and broken battle lines and on those who broke and run to escape capture. Very soon after the 16th passed in the immediate rear of the 13th into position, there appeared some four hundred yards to the rear having just crossed the Emmitsburg Road and moving rapidly down into the valley charging forward in the direction of Cemetery Ridge a large body of soldiers who we at once recognized by the uniforms they wore and the flags and banners they carried and the yell they made, as the enemy, exposing their left flank to our view in passing. At this juncture the unheard of happened, namely, those standing in the rear rank of the 13th and 16th regiments who had been firing into General Pickett's flanks as they turned half way around to load their guns discovered the passing Rebel column in the rear and without orders faced square to the rear and opened fire causing dismay and confusion and hesitancy, and thus it was while the front ranks of the 13th and 16th were sending bullets thick and fast into General Pickett's right flank causing fearful slaughter, because of good aim and short range, the rear ranks of the 13th and 16th regiments at the same time were facing in an opposite direction and with steady aim firing as rapidly into the charging left flank of the belated columns that had come in support of General Pickett's right flank with equal effect. For a time the 13th and 16th stood in line in double ranks across Plum Run valley extending from near the base of Cemetery Ridge to within a few rods of the Emmitsburg Road, the front rank facing northerly towards Gettysburg village and firing into Pickett's huddled struggling ranks and the rear rank facing southerly towards Peach Orchard. . . deliberately and steadily firing into the left flank of what proved to be General Wilcox's brigade and command. . . . / Stannard / created orders to meet an unlooked for situation; the boys in the ranks without orders fired into the ranks of the coming foe; whether in front or rear it mattered not to them if only they wore the gray. . . .

"The author from what is above said does not want it understood that Colonel Veazey of the 16th did not receive the order to "Change front forward on first company", but that he did not receive it until after it was given to Colonel Randall of the 13th and considerable time elapsed before the 16th took position in line on the left of the 13th, for after Colonel Veazey had gathered his regiment on the left of the 14th for the formal movement, General Stannard ordered him to join the 13th in its flank attack, moving around in the rear of the 14th and then by the flank to the left of the 13th which took the 16th down the slope across the valley, its extreme left near the Emmitsburg Road. This required a march after passing the right of the 14th of some fifty rods directly to the front. While Colonel Veazey was making this movement the 13th having received the order to 'change front forward on first company' had promptly executed it and was in line on Pickett's flank pouring into his crowded column volley after volley as fast as possible when Colonel Veazey and his brave boys were charging down the slope to the rear of the 13th to position which it reached some minutes after the 13th was in position. It was in season to take part in firing into the retreating ranks of General Pettigrew and Trimble and also gathered in some stragglers that had reached the Cadora House on their return that belonged to General Pickett's division. Hence, it will be noted that General Pickett's division had suffered much in dead and wounded before the 16th took position on the left of the 13th. The 13th covered General Pickett's flank, the center and right, were nearly opposite the point where Garnet and Armistead fell, and as advance was made the boys of the 13th reached the huddled lines of the gray first and then and there captured many prisoners, a majority of those taken on this charge." 285

This account is useful for an understanding of the movements made respectively by the 13th and 16th Vermont Regiments, the extent of the line, and the peculiar situation that the two regiments found themselves in after they had changed front forward on first company. When the men of the 13th and 16th discovered the enemy in their rear, it could have been a potential disaster. Wilcox could have fallen on them and destroyed them by a rear assault, or

285 Ibid., pp. 309-313.

they may have panicked and fled precipitately. But quick thinking and action by Colonel Wheelock Veazey of the 16th Vermont Infantry transformed a potential disaster into a miraculous victory, and won for him a medal of honor. Veazey himself described the activities of that afternoon on two separate occasions:

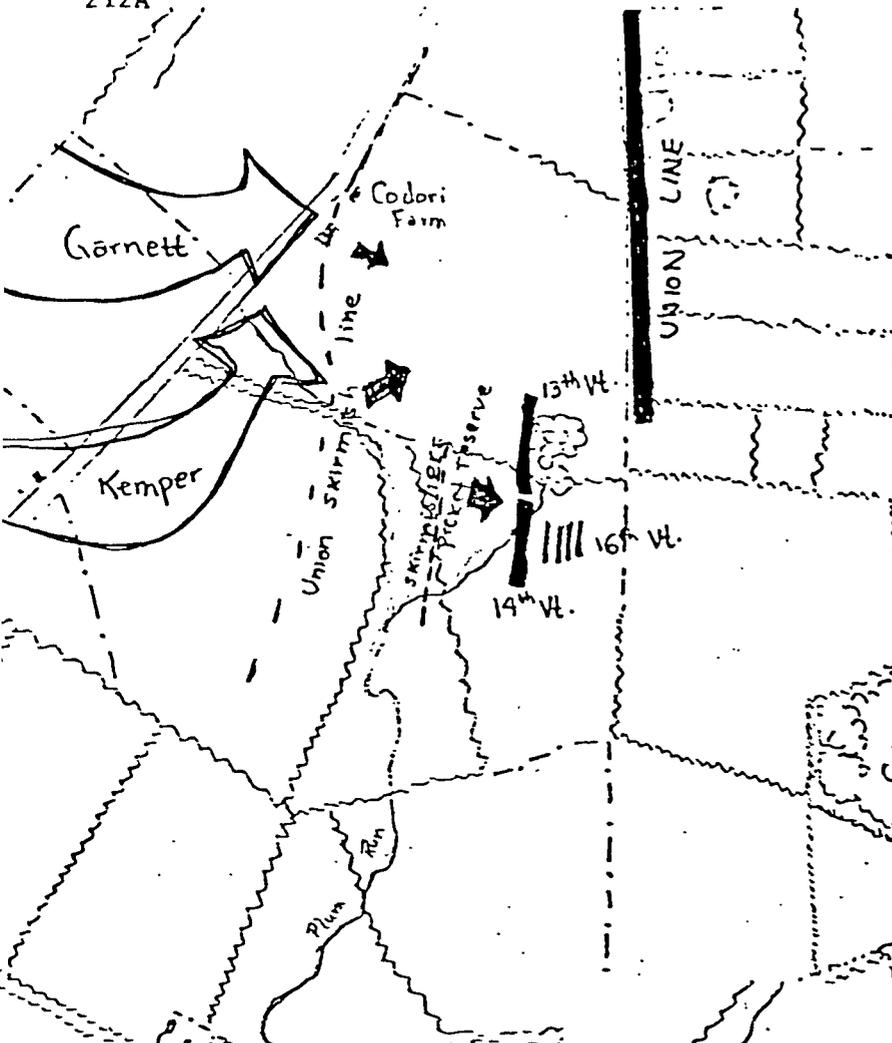


Wheelock G. Veazey

"About 2 P.M. the enemy, Pickett's Division, advanced. My pickets held the enemy skirmish line until their main line of battle came upon us when we gradually drew in on the reserve, and at the same time, the 14th was moved forward to the right of my reserve and opened by a volley on their own lines. The 13th soon came down to the right of the 14th & by this time I had got my regiment together & we delivered but few volleys before the enemy moved by the flank to their left and forward towards the lines on our right which were considerably to our rear, and soon began to uncover our front when I received an order to move by flank to the right and left of the 13th. I united with the 13th by moving to their left, exposed their right flank, & my regiment in moving upon their line, gradually changed or made an oblique change of front forward on the first company, and we charged forward on the enemy and completely destroyed their lines. Very many of the enemy were killed, but more were captured and probably still more ran away, except on their right which was particularly exposed as the left of my regiment extended across their line after our change of front & forward movement. I think we moved from where my reserve rested about fifty rods-- that was my estimate at the time & I have been over the ground since. As soon as we had destroyed their first line or lines, another brigade, Wilcox's, appeared on the charge at double quick their left being just in front of the position where my reserve had rested, therefore obliquely to my rear as we were then situated, I immediately faced my regiment to the rear & began to move back. . . ."286

As excellent as the foregoing account is, Veazey's earlier draft of his experiences and memories was much more detailed:

"About four o'clock the artillery fire subsided and the rebel infantry columns soon emerged from the smoke and advanced steadily but rapidly down the slope, and with a skirmish line in advance quickly struck our own picket and skirmish line. The men held their position and the enemy's skirmishers until their main line came upon them and then gradually fell back and gathered on the reserves which were several rods in front of our battle lines which were on the crest with our artillery. The enemy seemed to be aiming directly upon the position of our picket reserves, until they had nearly reached it, when they changed their course sufficiently to pass by our right. About this time I saw the 14th Vermont had been pushed forward to our right and a little to our rear, and were firing into the flank of the enemy. By the divergence of the enemy to their left, (our right) they exposed their right flank to a flank attack by our brigade. The 16th was still in the same position which the reserves of the skirmish line occupied. The skirmishers had all come in and joined the reserves and the regiment had begun to fire obliquely to the right into the flank of the rebels when an order was received from Gen. Stannard to move right of the 14th by passing behind them and unite on the left of the 13th and charge the flank of the enemy. This was quickly accomplished. I found the 13th to the right and a little to the rear of the line of the 14th and engaged in making an oblique change of front forward. In order to unite on the left I made a corresponding movement, and the two regiments were thus brought into line facing obliquely to the right and facing the flank of the enemy. The charge was made at about the time the enemy struck, and at one point, broke the front line of battle to our right. As we advanced in that charge the enemy were in great masses, without much order, and were rushing rapidly upon the lines to our right, and regardless of the exposure to their right flank. Our regiments fired a few volleys at (sic) they moved forward. Under the combined movement on the enemy's front and flank those great masses of men seemed to disappear in a moment. As we moved down upon them the left of my regiment extended well around their flank, and we took a large number of prisoners. The ground over which we passed after striking their flank was literally covered with dead and wounded men. While thus engaged in this flank movement

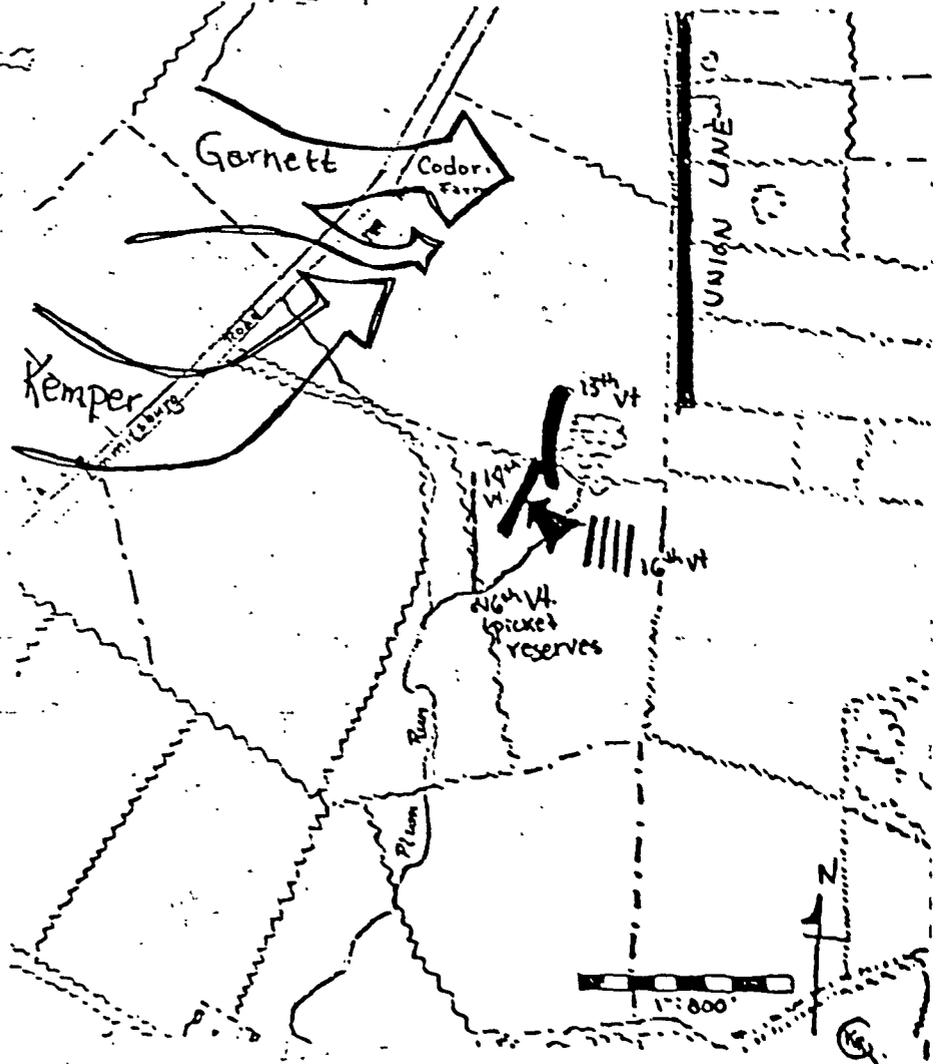


THE VEAZEY DESCRIPTION

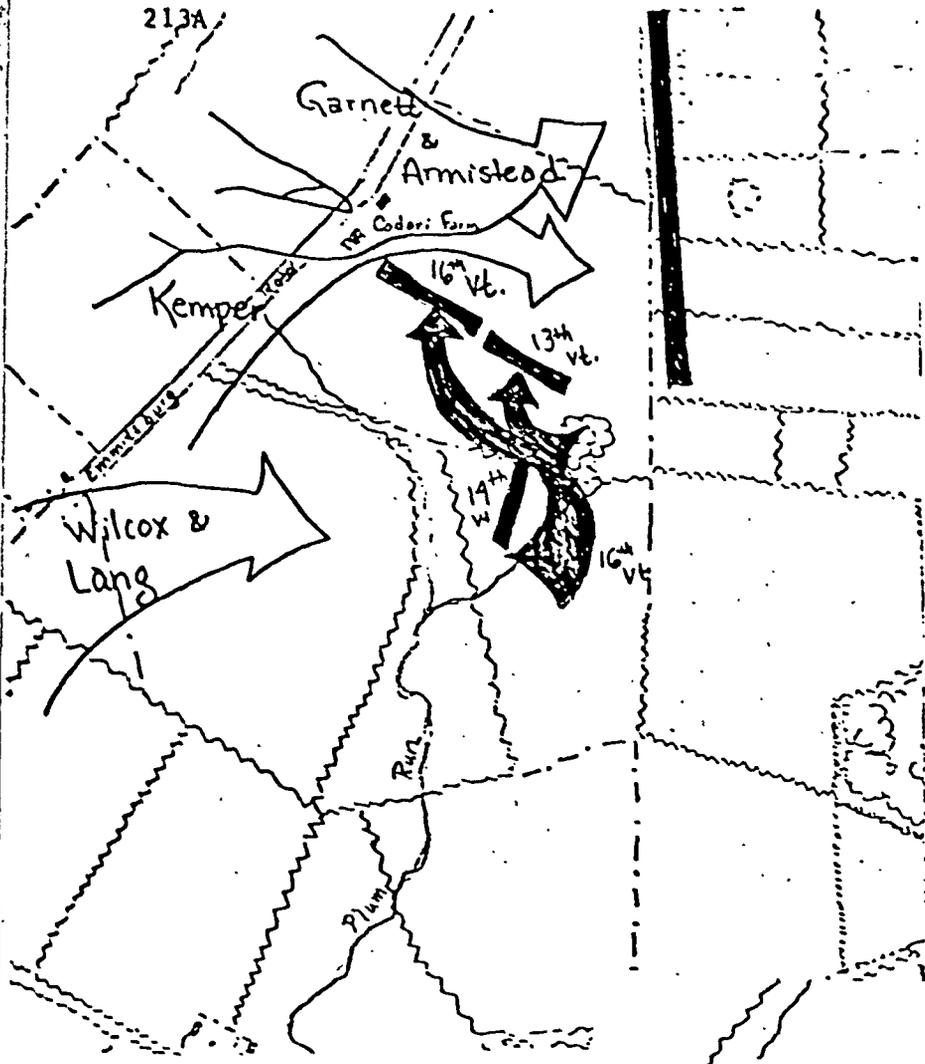
Initial positions of the three Vermont brigades.

THE VEAZEY DESCRIPTION

The movement forward by the 14th Vermont.



to the right I observed another force of the enemy charging down at double quick away to the left and rear of our then position and apparently aiming towards the position we held before making this flank attack to the right. The direction of this new line, afterwards found to consist of Perry's and Wilcox's brigades, would take them by my left and rear as we were then situated. I immediately conceived that I should change front obliquely to the left and charge the left flank of the new line when it came within striking distance, just as we had charged the right of Pickett's division. I therefore immediately called to the men to fall in, as they were then broken into squads gathering up prisoners, and we had started on the new movement when I received an order from Gen. Stannard to double quick back to our original position and get in front of this new line. This order would take me in the same direction for some rods that I contemplated going, and we kept on in that direction but in moving I had changed the front of my regiment to the left and so as to face obliquely towards the left flank of this new line; and just then [I] came upon Gen. Stannard and explained my plan of charge. He at first opposed it, on the ground that it would be rash and too much to ask of men to go alone so far to the front against so large a force; but he soon yielded and said 'go ahead.' At that moment the enemy had reached the bottom of the ravine, their left flank being not more than thirty to forty rods distant, and they were crouching behind the low bushes and rocks which afforded some shelter from our artillery and infantry fire in front. The ground from our position towards the enemy was fairly smooth and a little descending; and upon the order the men cheered and rushed forward at a run without firing a shot and quickly struck the rebel flank and followed it until the whole line had disappeared. The movement was so sudden and rapid that the enemy could not change front to oppose us. A great many prisoners were taken but I cannot tell the number as they were sent to the rear without a guard as I had no men to spare for that purpose, and none were needed as the prisoners were quite willing to get within the shelter of our lines and away from the exposure to which they were then subjected as well as from the rebel artillery which followed us with merciless vigor. As fast as they were captured they were told where to go and then went, and without standing on the order of their going. We also took two stands of regimental colors. . . . After following down his line as stated until it had substantially disappeared I moved the regiment to the left through and behind the shelter of the bushes and trees to get out of range of the rebel artillery which had gained a destructive range upon us. . . . Our forty rounds of ammunition were mostly used up but this was mainly done before our first flank movement to the

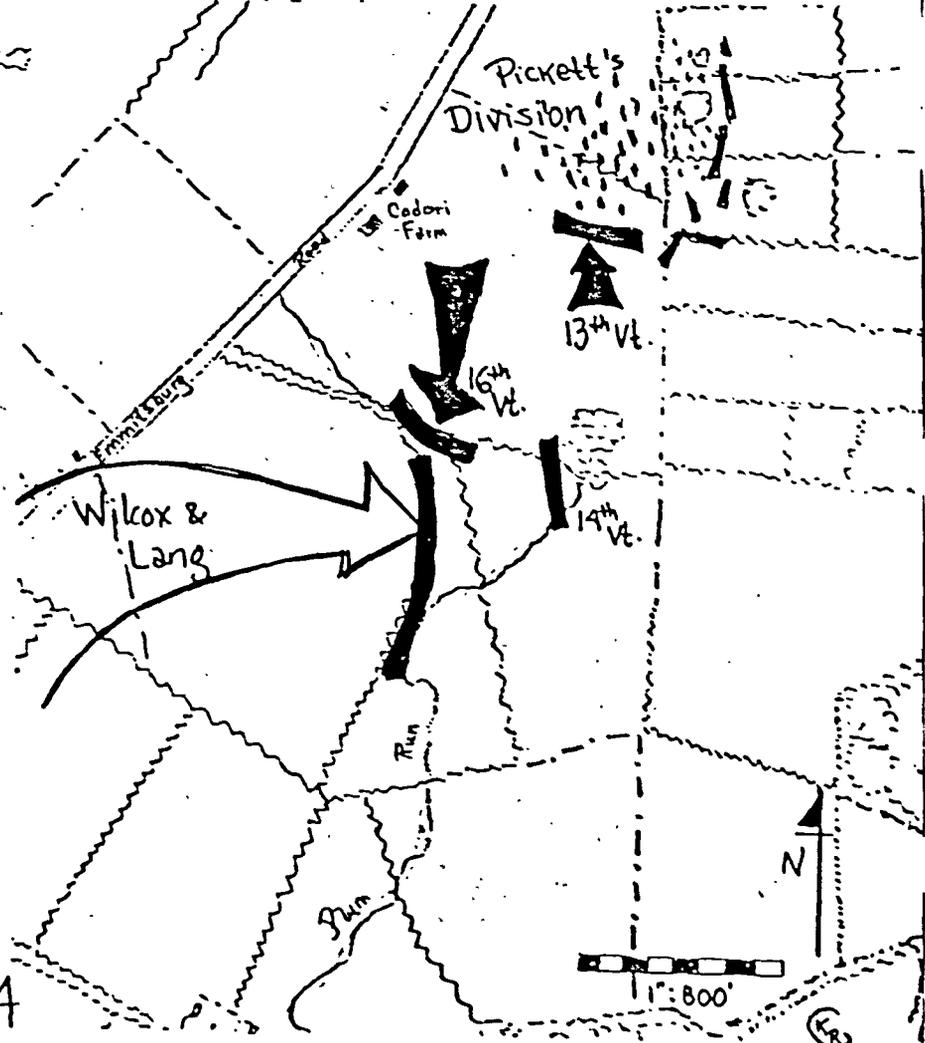


THE VEAZEY DESCRIPTION

Change front forward by the 13th and 16th Vermont Infantry Regiments

THE VEAZEY DESCRIPTION

Change of front by the 16th Vermont and attack on Wilcox and Lang in Plum Run valley.



right and while making it. In the second flank charge to the left but few shots were fired and those were after we struck the enemy. When they became fully aware we were on their flank I could see their line break ahead of us and the men rush to the rear, and thereby they escaped being captured. The fire of the 14th was very destructive on Picketts division to the right, but Col. Nichols informed me that Pery and Wilcox came down so raidily and so quickly got under cover of bushes that he produced but little effect upon them, and our charge being across his front prevented him from firing after that. Four companys of his regiment were sent down on my left after we passed under shelter of the bushes as above stated. . . . We were . . . very much enveloped in the smoke of the battle and were thus obscured from view. I failed to see a single man falter in the least throughout the battle; but every one seemed a host as the orders to charge were given. . . ." 287

Veazey supplemented these recollections in a letter of later date to the historian John Bachelder:

"As the enemy's infantry lines came down in their attack, the 14th Regt. was moved forward and to the right of my reserves, so that their new line made substantially a prolongation of the line of my reserves. . . . When the enemy got to within about fifty rods of the position of the 14th, he turned and began to move by flank to his left, our right, when the 14th opened fire on him with great effect, this was followed up by the rest of the brigade. Very soon I received an order to join on the left of the 13th and make a counter attack on the enemy's flank. I immediately moved my regiment by the right of the 14th, the 13th was just making an oblique change in front forward on its front company, which brought it facing obliquely towards the enemy's flank. Before making this change the 13th had been a few rods to the right of the 14th and to the rear of the line of the 14th so that by making this change of front its left was brought up just about to the line of the 14th but a little distance to its right, so that the 16th in passing to the right of the 14th as above described, continued to move straight along by the

287 Ibid., pp. 8-16.

right flank until its right joined on to the left of the 13th when I immediately threw my left forward on a prolongation of the line of the 13th and we charged together moving obliquely on to the enemy's right flank and completely crumpled and destroyed his line, capturing many prisoners. The 14th kept up the fire on the enemy until my Regt. the 16th got between them. Their fire was of course to the right oblique. I understand that some officers have reported or claimed that the 13th Regt. made a full change of front forward on the first company. This was not so in fact, and could not have been so 'in reason', for in the first place such a change would have been an unpardonable blunder. Before it was made the enemy was more than forty rods distant from the 13th and was moving by flank to his left, therefore if the 13th had made a full change of front as claimed, it would have faced, in its new position, no enemy but would have exposed its own flank directly to the enemy's artillery at least. In the next place what could we have done after taking such a position? We would have faced nobody. The 13th did not move a step forward before the 16th joined on the left of the 13th. Both regiments charged together, yet if we had taken such a position as claimed, the 16th would have been between the 14th and the enemy before the charge was begun and the 14th would have had to cease firing before then, and the line of the 16th would have extended far to the front of the 14th, yet this was not so, the 14th continued its fire until after the charge was begun, and from its advanced position its fire was most destructive upon the enemy.

"... . It is true the 13th and 16th were then moving and charging regiments, but while so doing the 14th stood firm as ordered and kept up their fire, and so cooperated in the movement, and contributed to the grand result as fully as the other regiments, and are entitled to equal credit." 288

Veazey's comments concerning the change of front by the 13th Vermont are confusing and contradictory to all other commentaries and memoirs of this movement. The 13th surely had plenty of opportunity to begin its change on the first company before Veazey himself got there with his own 16th

288 Colonel Wheelock G. Veazey, undated letter, to John B. Bachelder, Bachelder Correspondence, New Hampshire Historical Society, microfilm reel 1, pp. 67-69.

Vermont Regiment. There was practically no other way for the 13th and the 16th to make any kind of flanking charge without changing front on first company, and obliquing the remainder of their regiments into line by company. The whole line of 1,000 men did not form one giant line and then suddenly arc into position perpendicular to its old line. Veazey's own comment about the presence of the 14th Vermont precludes such a all-in-one sweeping movement, as Veazey seems to imply happened. Perhaps he was writing to Bachelder in hopes that the 16th would get equal credit with the 13th in any histories which Bachelder anticipated starting. He may have been trying to say that any movements made by the 13th were not made alone, and that the 16th Vermont was along from the very first. This is probably true, since the 16th went into position on Randall's left almost immediately after it was formed out in the valley of Plum Run. Any firing or charging on Kemper's flank was done as much by the 16th as by the 13th Vermont; but to deny that the 13th made any change of front in order to insure the 16th Vermont's place in history is a falsehood from all other accounts.

Veazey was more accurate in his description of his counterattack on the brigades of Wilcox and Lang, who came up behind them and entered the eroded ravine of Plum Run. The brigades did indeed disappear as the 16th Vermont charged them in flank, but not because they were all killed, wounded or captured:

"About twenty minutes after Pickett's Division started, they / Wilcox and Lang / were ordered to advance and support it on its right. But the dense cloud of smoke over the field concealed from them the left oblique course which Pickett had taken after passing them,

and so they marched straight forward, which caused a wide, wedge-shaped gap between them and Pickett's right, into which Stannard threw one of his Vermont regiments and captured the flag and about 100 men of the Eighth Florida. Colonel David Lang, who commanded the Florida Brigade, once visited Gettysburg and went with me over the ground; and he told me that when they reached the Emmitsburg road near the Rogers House, he saw through a rift in the smoke that Pickett's and Pettigrew's forces were being overwhelmed, and he would have turned back at once, but he thought it safer for his brigade to go forward at a double-quick and thus reach the bushy swale on Plum Run and escape by going down that southward to the Trostle Place and thence westward, as this route was not directly swept by the Union artillery; and both his and Wilcox's Brigades did this. . . ." 289

This account as told by Colonel Lang himself is most revealing. For one thing, he admitted that the charge by his and Wilcox's brigades was known to be useless from the time he reached the Emmitsburg Road, but that he considered it a better idea to head for the ravine of Plum Run than to try to head back to the crest of the ridge along which the Emmitsburg Road ran. The latter course would have left them exposed once again to the terrible pounding of McGilvery's batteries, as well as that on Little Round Top; in addition, the troops would once again be silhouetted against the western sky as they passed the summit of the ridge, where they would have been excellent targets for sharpshooters and the strong advanced line of the 14th Vermont. So, far from being a futile and hapless charge, the rush of the Alabamans and Floridians to the Codori Thicket had a definite purpose. Now the brigades no longer had any desire or means or need to support the doomed column of Pickett. Plum Run Valley and the eroded ravine, lined with thick undergrowth and sparse trees, was seen by their commanding officers as a refuge and an escape back to the Confederate lines.

²⁸⁹Robbins, "Longstreet's Assault at Gettysburg," pp. 108-109.

Indeed, Barksdale's Mississippi skirmishers were near the Trostle farm buildings in a place of comparative "safety", so why wouldn't Colonel Lang have selected a movement south through the ravine toward these buildings as a route of escape from their aborted attack?

To assert that Stannard's Brigade won the battle single-handedly would be far too overstated. No one regiment or even brigade could boast such a claim with accuracy. Each movement made by Stannard was accompanied by the actions of other, very integral elements, in the drama. Kemper's movement by the left flank was a contributing error to his own disastrous defeat. The Union artillery along McGilvery's lines succeeded effectively demoralizing and dissipating the Confederate right, including the brigades of Kemper, Wilcox, and Lang, while the artillery along the Second Corps front decimated the ranks of Garnett and Armistead. The frontal fire poured into Pickett's ranks by Hall's and Harrow's Brigades of Gibbon's Division, and the demi-brigade of Theodore Gates of Doubleday's Division, discouraged any kind of effective attack on their front by Garnett or Kemper, and forced them to mass into each other at Webb's weaker salient. Stannard was, however, afforded an opportunity by these other brigades and batteries to hasten the end of Pickett's Division and Wilcox-Lang's brigades, and he took marvelous advantage of it. If anything, Stannard's Brigade was that one brigade which could fit the ultimate description--it was the right brigade (especially because of its vast numbers), in the right position (due to the accidental benevolence of its officers for the comfort and safety of their men), at the right time (when Longstreet's coordination was at its slowest and lowest). The flanking movements set up the repulse of the Confederate division, since it weakened and threatened its goal to solidify any "beach-head" it might gain through piercing the Union line.