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“Awful beyond description”: The Ordeal of the Hudson Valley Regiments in the Army of the Potomac in 1863

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I

While writing to his parents on May 9, 1863, Private Lewis Coe Bevier, a cook in the Third Corps Hospital, observed that “Their is an awful lot of wounded in the hospital now from that last battle in fredericksburg.”¹ Indeed, the Battle of Chancellorsville, to which Bevier actually refers, had been a trying time for the regiments of Sickles’ Third Corps, including the 124th and Bevier’s own 120th. The campaign started off well enough. The troops were full of promise on April 28, when they broke camp along the banks of the Rappahannock River and began marching eastward while the Fifth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Corps trudged to the west along the northern bank of the river in an attempt to encircle Lee’s army. The Third Corps, along with the First and Sixth, were part of Hooker’s initial grand deception of Lee, pinning his Army of Northern Virginia in place while three of Hooker’s corps slipped around and behind the Confederate entrenchments at Fredericksburg. Years later, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Weygant recalled this time when, as a captain in command of Company A of the 124th New York, his heavily laden men moved through a dense fog, carrying “in addition to...food, blankets, gun, and accoutrements; eighty rounds of ammunition, and a change of clothing.” He further commented that, “Just where we were going, or what was to be accomplished or attempted, were matters about which we could but speculate.”² The following day, the First and Third Corps countermarched in the opposite direction, following the rest of the army. It was at this time that the soldiers of the 120th, having just been paid, were in fine fettle as they moved westward, arriving at United States’ Ford around midnight,³ unaware of the nature of the hard fight to follow.

In his monograph on Chancellorsville, Stephen W. Sears describes “the Wilderness,” which the Third Corps was about to encounter:

Since colonial times the Wilderness had been the site of a nascent iron industry, but all that remained of it now was Catharine Furnace....Abandoned in the 1840s, the furnace had recently been reactivated to produce iron for the Confederate war machine. It was this iron industry that gave the Wilderness its distinctive character. Most of the first-growth timber had been cut to make charcoal to feed the furnaces and foundries, to be replaced by a second-growth tangle of dwarf pine and cedar and hickory and a scrub oak known locally as blackjack. Undergrowth in this warped and pinched forest grew dense and brambly.⁴

In addition, much of the ground was uneven, occasionally swampy, and cut by unexpected ravines. It was within this “dark, eerie, impenetrable maze” that the 120th and 124th New York would forever lose the descriptive term “green.”

When it crossed into the Wilderness on May 1, the 124th was not at full strength. Since its initial recruitment in September 1862, and without yet losing a man in combat, the regiment had already been depleted by a third: thirty to typhoid, 100 to various illnesses and disabilities, fifteen to desertion, 100 more on sick leave, and thirty-five or so on detached duty elsewhere, including the ambulance corps.⁵ Such statistics typify this war, where more died of disease than bullets, and where discipline was not what it might have been in a professional army.⁶

On the late afternoon and early evening of the first, the 124th and 120th stacked arms in the vicinity of the Chancellor House, where both of the divisions they belonged to—Whipple’s and Berry’s—were to be held in reserve.⁷ Hooker, however, “had now abandoned the offensive,” as Weygant phrased it, and the position of the reserve would soon become the front line. At noon on the following day, Sickles’ Corps detected the rear echelons of “Stonewall” Jackson’s famous flank attack moving in a southerly direction past the Third Corps picket line. Thinking that Lee was retreating, Sickles received permission from Hooker to advance. The 124th became part of this forward movement⁸ and soon was embroiled in its first firefight. “The next moment,” Weygant reported, “the sound of heavy musketry firing came from the woods in front and [Augustus Van Horne] Ellis [the 124th’s Colonel] hurried us forward up the hill.... Under such circumstances, Ellis was not the kind of man to wait for orders. Hurriedly forming a line of battle and placing himself in front of the colors, he ordered a charge.”⁹ Sergeant Reeves remembered the moment: “We were hurried on at double quick and the



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Farm road and fence at Gettysburg National Military Park

balls began to whistle over our heads.... The rebs had planted themselves in the edge of the woods, and we had to cross an open field to get to them, besides a big ditch.... The rebs fired a volley into them [the 122nd Pennsylvania] and they broke and ran and put us all in confusion...”¹⁰

This precipitous advance began a seesaw battle for the 124th, falling back one moment, charging and retaking lost ground the next. However, they had to fall back permanently after Jackson’s Corps annihilated the Army of the Potomac’s XI Corps far off to the right and rear of the 124th’s position. That evening, the regiment, facing westward confronting Jackson’s Corps, became engaged in a rare night action. Weygant postulated that the 124th may have been responsible for the wounding and subsequent death of Jackson during this battle.¹¹ The following day, a Private from Company E, 124th New York, observed in his diary: “Out of 540 men that went in 160 came out with the colors.”¹²

As Howard’s panicked XI Corps fled east through the Chancellor House clearing, carrying men, pack mules, wagons, and materiel before it, Berry’s division—and with it the 120th New York—had the task of stabilizing the deteriorating Union position with dusk and Jackson’s Corps coming on fast. Their colonel proudly proclaimed that the division, “with the cooperation of troops and artillery,

brought up by Pleasanton, just at this critical juncture, saved the Fifth Corps, lying in their [the Confederates'] front, from being flanked, and with it, probably, the routing of Hooker's army at Chancellorsville."¹³ The following morning, Jackson's divisions—now under the command of J.E.B. Stuart—"made frequent and desperate attacks...upon the Union positions" and forced the eventual withdrawal of Hooker's army closer to the river. During this retreat on May 3, General Berry—the 120th's division commander—was killed.¹⁴ As a result of this struggle, the 120th lost nine killed, forty-five wounded, and eighteen missing.¹⁵

As might be expected, May 3 was no less difficult for the tired men of the 124th. While attempting to defend the clearing at Fairview, the regiment initially endured a severe shelling from Confederate batteries placed at Hazel Grove, the very part of the field Sickles had been forced to evacuate the day before and one of the few clear spots of high ground suitable for the deployment of artillery in the Wilderness. To alleviate the pressure on his line, Sickles once again called upon Ellis's 124th. Weygant picks up the narrative:

Advancing through the woods directly towards us, was the 23rd North Carolina supported by another North Carolina regiment.... Thus far these Carolinians had swept away everything in front of them, but the terrific opening fire of the 124th, which was poured into their ranks when they were less than fifty yards off, not only brought the men of the 23rd to a halt but cause them to fall with their faces to the ground to escape its withering effect; and the principle part of the immediately answering bullets came from their supporting line.... In less than ten minutes this second line was brought to the ground, and the men of the first line sprang to their feet again, and poured into our ranks a most wicked volley...—and so the fight went on.¹⁶

Running low on ammunition and now facing Confederate reinforcements, the 124th again retired. Its color guard had been decimated, five out of nine being killed or wounded.¹⁷ In his official report, Colonel Ellis praised his men, saying they "fought like tigers" even in retreat.¹⁸ The regiment had been in continuous action from the early morning until it finally reached the Army of the Potomac's newly reconstituted main line at four in the afternoon.¹⁹

For Weygant and his fellow Orange Blossoms, the Battle of Chancellorsville had basically come to a close, but one more drama remained. After having lost one division commander (General Berry) the previous day, the Third Corps lost another—the 124th's own General Amiel W. Whipple—on the fourth. Weygant witnessed the death:

About two o'clock I met General Whipple who...congratulated me on my fortunate escape from the picket line on Sunday morning [where Weygant had been wounded]. He then walked on a few yards and entered into conversation with a lieutenant of the 86th New York...[when] [p]resently I heard another thud, and hastily turning round to learn if any of the 124th had been struck, saw the general, who was not more than five rods away, reel and fall.²⁰

The Union's own famous marksmen, Berdan's Sharpshooters, then hunted their Confederate counterparts down, killing at least three who had been stationed in the trees above.²¹ This was deadly, nerve-wracking warfare, another indication of how quickly this war was changing. Modern warfare had become a reality. So emblematic was this baptism of fire at Chancellorsville for the men of the 124th that Stephen Crane was inspired by their example when he wrote *The Red Badge of Courage*.²²

II

A month passed before an event occurred that brought together in one place all four of the regiments under discussion here. The event was Lee's second invasion of the North. The place was Gettysburg.

In a letter to his mother on June 3, Richard T. Van Wyck, of the 150th New York, lamented:

The 150th is destined to spend the pleasant summer months in, and in the vicinity of, this great metropolis [Baltimore]; whose band discoursed its melodious strains to throngs of visitors in the Park amid the plaudits of the enthusiastic Baltimoreans, while the echo comes to us in ten thousand different ways and shapes, that our Regiment is a good "institution," a "Big Thing," a "fortunate location by our Col.," "out of harm's way" also of the Rebs, and finally ending in the query, "who wouldn't go for a soldier?"²³

Less than two weeks later, on June 13, one senses the excitement in Van Wyck's tone when he wrote his cousin Sarah, "We were greeted this morning with the news of another raid of the Rebs in Maryland.... A little variety just at present would be a fine thing, perhaps not so fine after we get out there and [are] deprived of our special privileges here. But I am willing to see some rough life now after such a season of apathy and indolence."²⁴ A few days later, in another letter to his mother, he excitedly proclaimed, "we are likely to have something to do with the Rebels before long."²⁵ Even so, his regiment stayed in Baltimore a while longer, as Van Wyck reported to his cousin on June 24: "You can faintly

imagine the excitement this raid of the Rebs has given the people of Baltimore. By this morning's paper we learn of the possible collision of two armies upon the old battleground of Maryland. The result no one knows...."²⁶ It would be his penultimate letter from Baltimore. Three days later, the men of the regiment were awestruck when they first beheld the Army of the Potomac spread out below their bivouac near Monocacy Bridge. Major Henry A. Gildersleeve vividly remembered the moment:

What a spectacle for a recruit to look upon. We were amazed at the length of the wagon trains and batteries of artillery as they filed into the valley below us and went into park for the night. Thousands of camp fires lighted up the region around, and we stood spell-bound at the sight of the vast enginery of war that was before us. It was in this camp, inspired by this spectacle, we first imbibed the true spirit of war, and nerved ourselves for the trying scenes we knew we must encounter, and desperate deeds which were before us.²⁷

Meanwhile, a depressed Captain Weygant, recovering from his wounds received at Chancellorsville, mourned the loss of so many of his comrades in the 124th New York.²⁸ He was quickly distracted from such melancholy thought as his regiment, on June 6, was chosen to accompany Pleasanton's Cavalry Corps on a secret mission to Beverly Ford (on the Rappahannock River), which resulted in the largest cavalry battle of the war, the Battle of Brandy Station on June 9. Here Weygant gained valuable command experience. With a detachment of two companies numbering about sixty men, he was required to hold off an entire regiment of 300 dismounted cavalry, which he did successfully, but not without suffering substantial casualties.²⁹

By June 14, the 124th saw some important changes, as its old brigade and division, so cut up at Chancellorsville, was disbanded. It now became part of Brigadier General Hobart Ward's brigade of Major General David Birney's division; Ward was a tough, intimidating veteran with experience in the Mexican War as well as with outstanding service during the Peninsula Campaign the year before.³⁰ He would lead them well in the difficult days ahead. Immediately after this reorganization, the 124th (and the rest of the Third Corps) began the fateful trip northward in pursuit of Lee. By the 16th, the regiment had reached the old Manassas battlefield; by the 19th, in a pouring rain, it approached Leesburg; by the 21st, it heard musketry in the direction of Winchester; by the 25th, the Corps crossed the Potomac River on pontoon boats at Edward's Ferry after a grueling thirty-mile march; by the 28th, the regiment had passed through Frederick, greeted in much the same way as the 120th would be (see below); after another

hard march of 25 miles, it reached Taneytown; and on the 30th it “pushed on to Emmetsburg.”³¹ In his diary, Captain Weygant recorded:

The men of our regiment are in tolerably good spirits but have lost considerable flesh during the last week, and complain bitterly whenever we start on a march, on the pain in their swollen, blistered feet. The country through which we have for several days been moving, is fertile and well cultivated. The villages contain many fine cottages, and the people generally appear to be strongly Union in sentiment.³²

Ten miles away, just across the Mason-Dixon line, lay the quiet crossroads town of Gettysburg.

While the 124th had been engaged in a good deal of combat since Fredericksburg, Colonel Theodore Gates and his 20th Regiment New York State Militia (known also as the 80th New York State Volunteers) had seen little action since they had been given the soft assignment of guarding the Richmond and Potomac Railroad while being stationed at Aquia Creek and elsewhere.³³ They deserved the rest, considering their experiences at both Second Manassas and Antietam the year before. They were veterans now and no doubt looked a bit more soberly at the possibility of renewed combat than did Van Wyck and his fellow soldiers in the 150th New York Volunteers. On June 27, the 80th was ordered to rejoin the First Corps, commanded by the highly regarded John Reynolds of Pennsylvania. It met up with Reynolds’ Corps just short of the Pennsylvania border.³⁴

Lewis Coe Bevier, stationed at Aquia Creek, Virginia, had no idea where his own regiment, the 120th New York (still attached to Sickles’ Third Corps), had gone. In a letter to his parents, he speculated, “I suppose they are some where around harpers ferry after old Lee.”³⁵ As someone with no combat experience would phrase it, Bevier exclaimed, “I think old Hooker will give him [illegible] before he gets out of pennsylvania and I hope he will take every one of them prisoner or else Kill them.”³⁶ Still, Bevier was not so wrong about what his unit was up to, for his 120th New York, along with the 124th, soon experienced some hard marching to catch up with Lee’s rapidly moving army. Yet, some of this forced march—which began on June 24—was actually pleasant. The 120th’s Corporal Egbert Lewis of “I” Company remembered:

It was pleasant to look upon the comfortable homes, the fine orchards loaded with fruit, and the large fields of waving grain. The people with whom we conversed, were outspoken in their loyalty to the Union, and we felt that we were among friends. The ladies in many cities and villages through which

we passed, were wild with joy at the sight of the Union army, and welcomed us with patriotic songs and waving flags. Our men who visited houses along the line of march, found plenty of bread, pies, cakes, biscuits, milk, fruit, and vegetables, which were given to them or purchased at very low prices. Some of these loyal people did not keep enough for themselves to eat. In some of the towns and villages, ladies, with their servants, stood in front of their houses eagerly passing pure cold water to our thirsty soldiers.³⁷

One cannot help but contrast this bucolic vision with what was about to occur.

A few days later, Lincoln replaced Hooker with Major General George Gordon Meade, until then the commander of Hooker's Fifth Corps. In the parlance of the day, the ball was about to begin.

III

As part of the Army of the Potomac's First Corps, the 20th New York Militia would be the first Hudson Valley regiment discussed in this study to reach the field at Gettysburg. The battle had begun around 5:30 on the morning of July 1, when Heth's Confederate Division of A. P. Hill's recently constituted Third Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia clashed with John Buford's dismounted brigades of cavalry west of town.³⁸ By 10 a.m., John Reynolds, commander of the Union army's First Corps, had come to the rescue of Buford's hard-pressed troopers by throwing into the fray Brigadier General James S. Wadsworth's First Division (including the vaunted Iron Brigade). They came just at the right moment and in the right place, but within the hour Reynolds was dead,³⁹ his command temporarily falling into the hands of Abner Doubleday, the putative inventor of baseball. Then a lull settled on the battlefield as each side quickly brought up reinforcements. Among these was Rowley's Third Division of the late Reynolds' First Corps, which included the 20th New York—28 officers and 259 men—who were placed to the left of the Iron Brigade near McPherson's Woods (where Reynolds had fallen).⁴⁰

The 20th had been marching quickly toward the sounds of battle since 8 a.m.; when it arrived west of town, the regiment immediately formed a line of battle in the Hagerstown Road facing north.⁴¹ Then it marched directly toward the town of Gettysburg, creating a swath through the ripe fields, crossed Willoughby Run, and entered the battle in support of Buford's skirmishers on McPherson's Ridge. As it emerged onto the field of battle around 11 a.m., the regiment quickly suffered its first casualty. Captain Cook said the initial shock of this "incident thrilled every one with a sense of danger as great perhaps as that felt during the



Casualties on McPherson's Ridge, Gettysburg

of the Union cavalry—the two companies made it back to the Union lines on Cemetery Hill. It was 1 p.m. The beleaguered First Corps and the cavalry it had come to support three hours earlier were now outnumbered as much as two to one by the divisions of A.P. Hill's Third Corps to the west and Rodes' recently arrived Division of Ewell's Second Corps to the north.⁵⁰

Soon after Rodes' arrival, the entire Union line was on the verge of being flanked as plunging artillery fire from the heights of Oak Ridge began crashing down the length of the Union line, reaching Gates' regiment approximately a mile away.⁵¹ This caused the 20th's brigade to change its position once more, this time the right half facing to the north while Gates and the 151st Pennsylvania regiment (which he now also took command of), along with Cooper's battery of artillery, continued to face the increasingly dangerous threat from the west. The 20th's Captain Cook saw Pettigrew's North Carolinians coming. "In poetry and romance," he remembered in 1903, "the Confederate uniform is gray. In actual service it was a butternut brown, and...was...as dirty, disreputable and unromantic as can well be imagined." Yet, he also admits that, despite their ragged appearance, "They could shoot all right and...gave us no time to criticize their appearance. Our men sprang to their feet, returned their fire, and the battle was

on.”⁵² Not long after, both of the flanks of Biddle’s brigade were being threatened, so Cooper’s battery made good its escape. The 20th, with the rest of its brigade, found itself alone and retreat became the only option.⁵³ The fallback was agonizingly slow and deliberate, including a last ditch defense on Seminary Ridge, and proved terribly costly for both sides.⁵⁴ “The fighting,” as Gates put it, “for some time was now most desperate.”⁵⁵ The brigade escaped by retreating directly down the railroad (a scene of heavy fighting earlier in the day), then into and through Gettysburg, finally resting on Cemetery Hill just outside town.⁵⁶ It had already been a long, arduous day for the 20th, but their experience at Gettysburg had only just begun.

IV

That evening, the XII Corps finally began to arrive, occupying Culp’s Hill on the right of the Union line. Major Gildersleeve recalled that:

[T]he first unmistakable indications we discovered of a battle were the slightly wounded who were able to get back to the hospitals without assistance. Then we began to encounter ambulances loaded with those who had been seriously wounded. Field hospitals were passed; we could hear the rattle of musketry and see the smoke of the conflict near at hand, and we soon found ourselves a part and parcel of the grand Army of the North, fighting among these hills, the battle of Gettysburg. The first missiles we saw were shells from some Rebel batteries passing over our heads.⁵⁷

Van Wyck’s large but inexperienced 150th New York, trailing the rest of its division due to its inexperience with such marches, did not settle in until 8 a.m. on July 2.⁵⁸ Writing to his friend Robert Johnston a few weeks after the battle, Van Wyck explained how the grueling forced marches were changing his soldierly habits:

[We] have got quite used to it, we have diminished our clothing to a shelter tent and rubber blanket, and a few kitchen tools, consisting of tin cup and fry pan, knife and fork, besides from one to three day’s rations of uncooked food, crackers, bacon, pork, coffee and sugar, and every rest or camp we speedily make a cup of coffee.⁵⁹

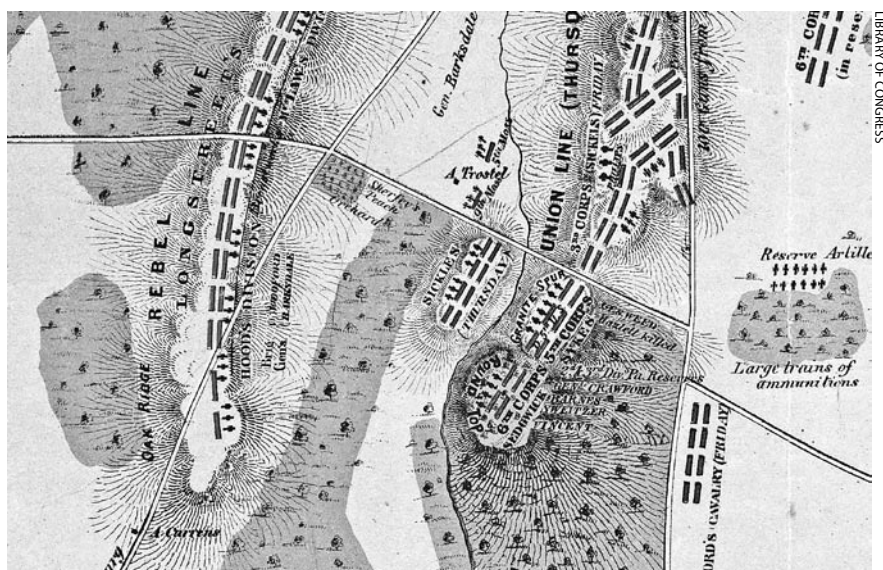
The Third Corps, with the 120th and 124th New York, had reached the field as well, starting to arrive around 2 a.m. on July 2. The 124th seemed to have suffered very much on the march to Emmitsburg the day before; Weygant noted that only 264 men met muster that morning; an additional ninety-eight men from the Orange Blossoms had fallen out due to sunstroke, disease, and physical

exhaustion.⁶⁰ Despite their fatigue, the men seemed confident of success in what lay ahead. It was not until 2 p.m. on the 1st, when the battle had already been raging for several hours, that the Third Corps began to move. By then, they could distinctly hear the rumble of artillery up ahead, a sound that spurred them on. Weygant observed that:

Every piece of woods we passed through was left almost filled with gasping prostrate men; and all along the road, with no one to care for them, lay the dying, and in not a few instances the dead, who had fallen from the column ahead of us. But forward! forward! was the cry, and on, on we pushed.... [A]nd when at length we reached the high ground just south of Gettysburg, and the order to halt for the night was received, not over a hundred men and but five or six officers appeared in our regimental line.⁶¹

The remainder of the regiment straggled in throughout the rest of the day and into the late morning of July 2. Weygant's experience was similar to that of the men of the 120th. However, their placement in the line was farther to the right, nearer to Hancock's Second Corps than the 124th, whose brigade anchored the far left of the Union position.

Sometime in the early afternoon, Sickles advanced his entire corps, their banners fluttering in the breeze, several hundred yards forward to the high ground around what forever more became known as the Peach Orchard and Devil's Den



Detail of map showing Peach Orchard, the Wheat Field, and the Round Tops

(actually part of Houck's Ridge), between which lay the Rose farmstead and the infamous Wheatfield. Watching this unexpected movement from Cemetery Ridge, Captain Samuel C. Armstrong of Company D of the 125th New York called the advance "magnificent." (A few hours later, he described its bloody repulse as "terrible."⁶²) Unfortunately for Sickles' Third Corps, both its flanks would be "in the air" and no amount of reinforcements from the Fifth or Second Corps would save it from its fate. Captain Weygant's 124th New York felt the onslaught of Longstreet's attack first.

Despite their combat experience, Weygant's men spent their leisure time "quietly awaiting the coming shock" rather than building breastworks,⁶³ something both sides would do as a matter of course during the Overland Campaign in Virginia the following year.⁶⁴ Then around 3 p.m., Lee's artillery opened up upon Sickles' advanced line; an hour later, "long solid lines of infantry appeared advancing directly against" the position of Ward's brigade.⁶⁵ As on the first day of the battle, Lee mustered overwhelming numbers at the point of attack.⁶⁶ By the time five o'clock arrived, Captain Weygant was the 124th's new regimental commander. The small 124th⁶⁷ was deployed by companies thusly: B G K E H C I D F A, with Weygant's Company A being deployed as skirmishers in the woods to the regiment's right, trying to cover a 100-yard gap between the 124th's right and the 86th New York's left. To the 124th's left (at least its left as the battle opened) were placed four cannons from James E. Smith's 4th New York Battery, composed of ten-pound Parrotts.⁶⁸

As the First Texas regiment slowly pressed its attack up the steep slope leading to the 124th's position, Major Cromwell pleaded with his regimental commander, Colonel Ellis, to charge. This Ellis initially refused to do. When the officers' horses were brought up, Ellis, while mounting his steed, purportedly declared, "The men must see us today," then agreed to Cromwell's request.⁶⁹ Weygant described this heady moment:

Cromwell waves his sword twice above his head, makes a lunge forward, shouts the charge, and putting spurs to his horse, dashes forward through the lines. Then men cease firing for a minute and with ready bayonets rush after him. Ellis sits in his saddle and looks on as if in proud admiration of both his loved Major and gallant sons of Orange.⁷⁰

The First Texas, according to Weygant, "broke and fled." Cromwell was jubilant, but a volley from a second line of Confederates coming up behind the First Texas "seemed in an instant to bring down a full quarter" of the 124th's men.⁷¹ Moments later, Cromwell fell from his horse, shot through the chest. Even so,



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Ellis Monument at Gettysburg

the 124th turned back this second line before a third appeared behind it, forcing the thinning ranks of the regiment back up the slope.⁷² At this moment, Lieutenant Colonel Cummins, seeing that the 124th could no longer protect Smith's guns, tried to have them moved but was badly wounded by a shell that hit the gun carriage he was standing near.⁷³ Of the senior officers of the regiment, only Ellis remained. However, making a prominent target high up on his grey horse, he had but moments to live: "his body with a weave pitches forward, head foremost among the rocks." He had been shot just above his visor, brain matter oozing from his wound.⁷⁴ By now, the hard-pressed Third Corps had been reinforced by the Fifth Corps and parts of the Second Corps. It was time to withdraw the 124th from the ridge, which Weygant managed skillfully.⁷⁵

In addition to the three senior officers of the regiment, the 124th lost Captain Isaac Nicoll of Company G and 2nd Lieutenant Milner Brown of Company I—in all, some thirty-four killed and fifty-seven wounded.⁷⁶ As Longstreet's attack continued to push both east and north, it also smashed into Brewster's "Excelsior" brigade anxiously awaiting its fury in the Peach Orchard, just north of the 124th's position. Kingston's 120th New York was about to have its mettle tested once again. As Private Esick G. Wilber wrote to his parents, "This will be a day long to be remembered by the survivors of that terrible battle."⁷⁷

While the majority of the Excelsior Brigade was on the front line facing west along the southern edge of Emmitsburg Road, the 120th (along with the 73rd New York) found itself placed initially in reserve some 150 yards behind the main line. As Ward's brigade struggled in and around Devil's Den to the south of the 120th's position, and as De Trobriand's brigade—with assistance from Barnes' First Division of Sykes' Fifth Corps—became embroiled in the chaotic fight for the Wheatfield⁷⁸ and "Stony Hill" (just across the road from the Peach Orchard), so Sickles' hold on the Peach Orchard itself became more and more precarious. The position was being threatened not only on its left flank from the tenuous hold the Union army had in the Wheatfield—Caldwell's Second Division of Hancock's Second Corps would soon be caught in this maelstrom as well—but was threatened

in its front by the remaining brigades of McLaws' Division, Wofford's Georgians, and Barksdale's Mississippians in particular.⁷⁹ In addition, the Peach Orchard had been enfiladed by artillery fire from Longstreet's well-placed batteries since 3 p.m.⁸⁰

About half an hour into the bombardment prior to the Confederate assault, the Third Corps requested help from the Artillery Reserve. Lieutenant Colonel Freeman McGilvery, commander of the First Volunteer Brigade, Artillery Reserve, sent, among other batteries, Captain John Bigelow's 9th Massachusetts Light battery of Napoleon 12-pounder smoothbores and had posted them about 400 yards in front of the Trostle Farm, approximately 500 yards behind the Peach Orchard and facing on the Wheatfield Road.⁸¹ McGilvery's batteries devastated Kershaw's ranks before they became prey to Barksdale's charge.⁸² Later that day they played a role in the dramatic entrance onto the field of Poughkeepsie's 150th New York regiment.⁸³

Sometime after four o'clock, Corporal Egbert Lewis of I Company, 120th New York, could see from his position in the reserve "Long line[s] of infantry...advancing towards us under a rapid fire from our batteries" posted along the Emmitsburg and Wheatfield Roads.⁸⁴ Lewis further stated that his regiment was "now alone in the reserve, the men...lying down with orders not to rise till they received the word of command."⁸⁵ Waiting for his turn to enter the fray, Private Wilber declared, "We watched the moves of the battle with anxious hearts."⁸⁶ As the remnants of Graham's regiments fled through their lines, Graham himself having been wounded and subsequently captured, the 120th's moment came: "The whole line rose as a man and poured into their ranks [probably the 18th Mississippi] such a terrible fire of musketry, as to bring them to a standstill within a few rods of us. Then for an hour or more, the dreadful crash of battle resounded."⁸⁷ Private Wilber remembered it this way:

[M]uttering a silent prayr for the preservasion of my life I entered that battle field: with one wild yell we advanced on the enemy but they were comeing to strong[.] [W]e no more then advanced before we were obliged to fall



MARK MOREALE

**120th New York Monument
at Gettysburg**

back[.] [A]t this time they had a cross fire on us and they were poring in from three different ways [...] My Comrads were falling on evry side of me and I expected evry minut that it would be my turn next[.] Captain Barker [of K Company] fell shot dead instantly[.] [T]he ball went through his head just back of his ears right through his brain[.]⁸⁸

Colonel Westbrook, the 120th's commander, wrote about his experiences at Gettysburg just once, in the September 20, 1900, *National Tribune*.⁸⁹ In the article, entitled "On the Firing Line: The 120th N.Y.'s Firm Stand on the Second Day at Gettysburg," Westbrook insisted that his regiment went into action around 6:30 and that Graham's brigade was "broken up" about half an hour earlier.⁹⁰ He rightly noted that as Barksdale (rolling up Humphrey's flank along the Emmitsburg Road) was surprised by his regiment as it rose up from the low stone wall it had been laying behind, three additional Confederate brigades were bearing down upon the Army of the Potomac's center on Cemetery Ridge. These were the brigades of Major General R.H. Anderson's Division from A.P. Hill's Third Corps. As Sickles' battered Corps began its fighting retreat from Sherfy's Peach Orchard and the Emmitsburg Road area back toward Cemetery Ridge and right into the teeth of Anderson's attack,⁹¹ McGilvrey's batteries along the Wheatfield Road became extremely vulnerable. In a heroic delaying action, Bigelow's battery retreated 400 yards by prolonge, firing as it went, back to the Trostle farm before having to abandon four of its six Napoleons to the relentless 21st Mississippi, which had veered off Barksdale's main attack to capture these guns.⁹²

Barksdale's regiments had swept all before them but they had reached their zenith. Within the hour, as darkness came on, his tired men, decimated to around half their original number, could do no more. Reinforcements from the Second Corps slammed into his regiments near Plum Run, and Barksdale's day—and war—was over, his sword as well as his body shattered by a vicious volley from the 125th and 126th New York regiments of Willard's Brigade.⁹³

In the falling darkness, the 150th New York had its first moment in this horrific struggle. Quickly moving from its position on the far right of the Union line near Culp's Hill, Lockwood's Brigade was sent to shore up Sickles' patchwork line and perhaps even counterattack as Willard's Brigade had done.⁹⁴ Brigadier General Alpheus S.



150th New York Monument
at Gettysburg

Williams, who commanded the Twelfth Corps at Gettysburg, explained the role of Lockwood's Brigade at this crucial moment in an April 21, 1864, letter to John Batchelder:

Hurrying to the right up this road I soon began to pass masses of disorganized portions of the 3d Corps.... I saw nothing but broken troops until entering an open space almost surrounded by woods. I found some artillery in position. Lieut. Col. (then Major I think) [Freeman] McGilvery rushed towards me reporting that he was without [infantry] support and that the rebels but a short time before had drawn off several pieces of artillery. I directed Lockwood...to deploy and attack the woods at once, which he did promptly. Three pieces of artillery were retaken by his brigade. They were drawn off by companies of the 150th N.Y.⁹⁵

As they went into battle, quick-marching in columns of four down the Granite Schoolhouse Lane toward the Trostle farm, the men of the 150th were greeted by several wounded New Yorkers "with shouts of 'Go in, Dutchess County! Give it to them, boys! Give it to them!'"⁹⁶ By 8 p.m., they had advanced a good half-mile in front of the Union main lines with little opposition.⁹⁷ They could not stay there, of course, and as they retired, dragging three of Bigelow's guns with them, their day was done, except for the return trek to the Twelfth Corps lines, which they did not return to until somewhat before midnight. They would be terribly busy in the morning.

V

As the 150th New York returned to its original position within some breastworks around Culp's Hill, it was met with a nasty surprise. In their absence, their brigade commander recalled years later, enemy pickets had taken the opportunity to occupy their position. They rested on their arms. Early in the morning of July 3, they were asked to retake the ground the Corps had lost the night before.⁹⁸ Sometime after midnight, Alpheus Williams, in temporary command of the Twelfth Corps, was ordered by General Slocum to "drive them out at daylight."⁹⁹ Williams felt this task would be difficult. Having a decided advantage in artillery, he began the attack with a fifteen- or twenty-minute bombardment followed by an assault supported by Lockwood's brigade. Williams observed that, "The whole line of woods were ablaze with continuous volleys, especially on Geary's front [where the 150th had been posted], against which they hurled their columns with a most persistent determination." This firefight continued until nearly 11 a.m., "when their whole line suddenly retreated." An amazed Williams proclaimed, "This was over six

hours of almost continuous firing!"¹⁰⁰

This event was far more memorable in Richard Van Wyck's mind than the capture of the guns on Trostle's farm had been but a few hours earlier, even though that had marked his introduction to battle. In a letter to his father he confessed:

I never was on a battlefield before and the Lord preserve me from such a sight again. Some were wounded in our company and but few killed in the Regt. This was owing to the protection of breastworks behind which we did terrible execution, literally piling the Rebs up in masses. In front of our Regt. alone in one place where the enemy was agoing to charge, at least five hundred were killed and some 1700 stocks of arms captured.... I wish I could give you my impression of the scene, which was awful beyond description.¹⁰¹



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Breastworks on Little Round Top, Gettysburg

The 150th's service at Gettysburg had come to an end with relatively few casualties, but the long third and final day of the Battle of Gettysburg was just beginning.¹⁰²

The 20th New York State Militia had, for the most part, rested on the second day of battle, aside from helping repulse Anderson's unsupported attack on the center of the line late in the day. Around 11 a.m., as the battle for Culp's Hill quieted down behind them, the men of the 20th complained of the heat. Soldiers speculated about what would happen next. They did not have long to wait.

Lieutenant Colonel Jacob Broadhead Hardenburgh of the 20th surveyed the position his regiment found itself in, some 300 yards to the right of what became the most famous copse of trees in nineteenth-century America—the point at which Pickett's Charge was shortly destined to converge. Around noon, Hardenburgh, concerned that his men had not yet eaten, requested rations, but General Doubleday told him nothing could be done for them. An attack, he was told, was expected soon. Indeed, an hour later, the famous cannonade preceding Pickett's Charge commenced. The men of the 20th, Hardenburgh recalled, “were smoking and joking while they [Stannard's Vermont Brigade, situated to the regiment's left] lay there hugging the ground and big drops of perspiration stood out on their foreheads and faces.”¹⁰³ They endured this barrage for upwards of two terrifying hours. Colonel Gates called the bombardment “a tempest of shot and shell.”¹⁰⁴ Even so, some members of the regiment's color guard displayed reckless bravado by waving the regimental colors at the Confederates, taunting them to advance. As the thirteen Confederate brigades came closer and began their oblique rush toward the clump of trees, the 20th and 151st Pennsylvania—Colonel Theodore Gates' demi-brigade—swung their lines to the right (as Stannard's Vermonters also did). Posting themselves atop a hill in front of the copse of trees, they poured volley after volley into the exposed flank of the oncoming but rapidly thinning Confederate lines.¹⁰⁵

A Union soldier serving in the 8th Ohio posted on the opposite flank of the Union line from the 20th New York vividly remembered the moment when the Union infantry rose as one and opened up on the packed Confederate formations, a sight that must have equally impressed the men of the 20th on the left flank: “Arms, heads, blankets, guns and knapsacks were thrown into the air. Their track, as they advanced, was strewn with dead and wounded. A moan went up from the field, distinct to be heard amid the storm of battle, but on they went.”¹⁰⁶ And as they came yet nearer, the 20th's Major Walter A. Van Rensselaer, who had slept fitfully on the night of the second “with a stone for a pillow,” closed with the enemy in his immediate front. In his diary that evening, he noted that the

regiment:

followed up alon[g] the fence pouring in a tremendous fire...when near a slash of timber,¹⁰⁷ I discovered a Rebel flag behind the fence in the hands of an officer—I demanded its surrender—he replied, “not by a d__d sight” and fired at me with his revolver, wounding me in the small of the back. I lunged at him with my saber when he fired again, the ball striking my saber scabbard—five or six of my boys came to the rescue and he surrendered, followed by his whole regiment—they cam over the fence like a flock of sheep—think we captured at least 1500 prisoners. Soon after[,] a shell burst directly over and very near my head knocking me senseless.¹⁰⁸

Colonel Gates concluded that “I lost during the three days, three officers killed, fifteen wounded and one taken prisoner, [enlisted] men killed, thirty-two, wounded ninety-six, and twenty-three were taken prisoners.... My loss in killed and wounded was two-thirds of my officers and half of my men.”¹⁰⁹ For the rest of his life, he was justifiably proud of the praise heaped upon him by his divisional commander, Abner Doubleday, concerning the conduct of the demi-brigade during the battle.¹¹⁰

VI

“I tell you,” wrote Confederate Lieutenant John Dooley in his journal just before participating in Pickett’s Charge, “there is no romance in making one of these charges. You might think so...but when you rise to your feet...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!*”¹¹¹ Indeed, all the romance of the war had ended the moment Pickett’s Charge did, despite the claims of Lost Cause advocates after the war like Jubal Early. The aftermath of that disastrous charge was a sight that haunted many a participant years after the war. Captain Benjamin W. Thompson, Company F, 111th New York, captured the scene in all its horror:

The track of the great charge was marked by bodies of men in all possible positions, wounded, bleeding, dying and dead. Near the line where the final struggle occurred, the men lay in heaps, the wounded wriggling and groaning under the weight of the dead among whom they were entangled. In my weak and exhausted condition I could not long endure the gory, ghastly spectacle. I found my head reeling, the tears flowing, and my stomach sick at the sight.¹¹²



Pickett's Field, Gettysburg National Military Park

What remained now was caring for the wounded and burying the often bloated and distorted bodies of the dead. It is no wonder that Henry Howell of the 124th New York declared, "I hope I may never have an opportunity to do so again" after being detailed to bury his regiment's dead scattered about Devil's Den. (They had arrived at an advanced stage of putrefaction, having sat under a broiling sun for two days.¹¹³) The battlefield ghouls had no doubt been out on this part of line as they had been in front of the Union center. As Sergeant T.P. Meyer noted: "It was a rare occurrence to find one who had not been robbed by the battlefield bandit or robber of the dead.... The battlefield robbers were well known by the large amounts of money they had, and the watches, pocketbooks, pocket knives, and other valuable trinkets they had for sale after the battle. All regiments had them."¹¹⁴

The wounded suffered terribly over the next several days. As Captain Weygant observed:

The scene at the [Third Corps] hospital was one of the most horrid imaginable. During the afternoon and evening nearly three thousand wounded men had been brought there, and others were continually arriving. The ground of the entire grove, which was several acres in extent, seemed to be literally covered with them; and such noises filled the air as I had never heard before and trust may never reach my ears again.... Away down through the trees flickering lights could be seen, the reflections of which fell with ghastly effect upon the corps of surgeons who with coats off, and sleeves rolled up, were gathered at, or moving rapidly to and fro about the amputating tables."

Even this battle-hardened veteran “could endure no more” of these sights and sounds, especially the eerie melancholy rhythm of saw on bone. He fled with a profound sense of shame.¹¹⁵

A few days after the battle, an inexperienced volunteer nurse named Cornelia Hancock arrived at Gettysburg. Appalled by what she saw there, she shattered all the high-flown rhetoric imposed on what this conflict might have meant:

A sickening, overpowering, awful stench announced the presence of the unburied dead...until it seemed to possess a palpable horrible density that could be seen and felt and cut with a knife. Not the presence of the dead bodies themselves, swollen and disfigured as they were, and lying in heaps on every side, was as awful to the spectator as that deadly, nauseating atmosphere which robbed the battlefield of its glory, the survivors of their victory, and the wounded of what little chance of life was left to them.¹¹⁶

VII

While his 120th New York was sustaining upwards of forty-five percent casualties at Gettysburg, hospital cook Lewis Coe Bevier had managed to wrangle a pass to Washington, D.C., where he visited the Smithsonian, the Capitol, the White House, and other sites of interest. However, he had kept up with the momentous events occurring in Pennsylvania and had heard how the 124th New York—a sister regiment of his own—had been badly “cut up,” as well as the fact that one of his friends from the 120th, Charles DuBois, had been counted among the missing. Many more he knew had been killed or wounded. As he so succinctly put it, “I suppose their isent many left in our regiment.”¹¹⁷

But what had happened to Charley DuBois? His story represents the fate of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of others. On September 27, Dr. John N. Miller, an assistant surgeon of the 120th New York, replied to a friend:

You asked me about Charley DuBois. I can only say that I think he is safe either in some hospital or with some farmer in Pennsylvania. I have been asked about him more than a dozen times by people from the Landing [now Highland, New York]. The only possible way that he may have been killed and buried unknown, is, that he may have been forced into some other regiment during the fight, which is always done with those who get lost from their own regiment during a fight. He certainly was not killed or wounded or taken prisoner from our regiment. I advise his folks not to be too worried about it for I think he will turn up sooner or later.¹¹⁸

Unbeknownst to Dr. Miller, DuBois' body had been found by a comrade, Ezekiel H. Winter; with the help of others, he had buried him on the field of Gettysburg months before Miller's letter had been written.¹¹⁹ This fact was not publicly known until a regimental chaplain published a history of the 120th New York in the 1890s.¹²⁰

Note: For their assistance in locating numerous sources, I would especially like to thank Eric Roth, Archivist/Librarian of the Huguenot Historical Society; Lynn Lucas, Local History Librarian of the Adriance Memorial Library; and John Heiser, Historian for the Gettysburg National Military Park Library. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not also mention Seward Osborne who kept me on the straight and narrow regarding numerous details of the 20th New York's experiences at Gettysburg.

Endnotes

1. Lewis Coe Bevier Civil War Letters (1862-1922). Huguenot Historical Society. New Paltz, NY.
2. Weygant, Charles H. *History of the 124 Regiment of New York State Volunteers: The Orange Blossom Regiment*. (1877). Celina, OH: Ironclad Pub., 2002.
3. Van Santvoord, C. *One Hundred and Twentieth Regiment New York State Volunteers: A Narrative of its Services in the War for the Union*. (1894). Saugerties: Hope Farm Press, 1997.
4. Sears, Stephen W. *Chancellorsville*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996.
5. Weygant, 92-95.
6. Out of the four regiments being considered here, 478 of their men died in combat and 513 died by disease. A larger sample of regiments from the Hudson Valley yields a starker contrast. Looking at the statistics of some 25 units recruited from the area reveals the following: out of 5,248 fatalities recorded for these regiments almost 3,000 were by disease. Not surprisingly, far more officers died in combat than died by disease (144 to 44), while with the enlisted men this ratio is reversed (2,141 by combat to 2,919 by disease). Better living conditions for the officers no doubt account for this fact, just as the nature of Civil War combat dictated that officers show an inordinate amount of courage under fire, often risking their own lives in order to boost their men's morale.
7. Weygant, 103-05.
8. Weygant, 106.
9. Weygant, 107. Colonel Ellis has been described as "a stern and profane disciplinarian" who trained his men well. The 124th was not his first regiment, however, having trained and help recruit the 56th New York before joining the 124th and having, previous to that, served as Captain in the 71st New York Militia at First Bull Run (McGinnis, Amanda and Cynthia Rapp. "Our Name is Legion! Was the Proud Boast of the 56th New York Volunteers." *America's Civil War* (September 1990): 10, 62-66.)
10. LaRocca, Charles L. "Forward My Tulips!": The Daredevil Orange Blossoms at Chancellorsville." *Civil War Magazine* 48 (December 1994) 40-43, 52-57.
11. Weygant, 111-13. Sears, in his *Chancellorsville*, carefully examines the wounding of Jackson in a chapter entitled "The Fate of Stonewall Jackson" (282-309) and comes to the conclusion that Jackson was inadvertently shot by his own nervous men.
12. LaRocca, 42. In actuality, the 124th lost 57 killed, 146 wounded, and 6 missing in this struggle

(Weygant 127-29). Many of the missing in this battle shared a peculiarly horrible fate. Westbrook estimates that on top of the 3,439 killed and wounded suffered by the Third Corps, some 600 additional men, listed as missing, were “burned in the woods, where a conflagration kindled by the combat, licked up the wounded and the dead” (quoted in Van Santvoord 52).

13. Quoted in Van Santvoord, 51-2.
14. Van Santvoord, 53, 54.
15. Van Santvoord, 57.
16. Weygant, 116-17. In a newspaper article concerning, in part, the frantic fighting on the 3rd, Sergeant Charles Stewart of Company I, 124th New York, noted that, “The barrel of my gun was so hot I could scarcely touch it. I fired 22 rounds when a ball struck me on the head above the right eye. I felt the sting but thought nothing of it till I saw the blood pouring, then I made up my mind that the ball must have entered the skull, and the wound was mortal” (LaRocca, 54). Miraculously, he would live to serve at Gettysburg. As a Lieutenant, however, Stewart’s luck ran out. He was captured at Talapottomy Creek on June 1, 1864 (Weygant, 352).
17. Color guards were essential to battlefield cohesion as units needed a point of reference to dress on and rally around when maneuvering on a smoke-filled battlefield punctuated with the deafening sounds of artillery and small arms fire. Color guards often suffered inordinately high casualties, being that the colors made a rather conspicuous target, and that to take a regiment’s colors was considered a feat of valor at the time.
18. *United States War Department. The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. 70 Volumes in 128 Parts. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901. Series 1, Vol. 27, Pts. 1, 3.*
19. Weygant, 120.
20. Weygant, 121.
21. Weygant, 122. Captain C.A. Stevens also briefly mentions this incident in his history, *Berdan’s United States Sharpshooters in the Army of the Potomac 1861-1865* (Morningside reprint, 1984), 269.
22. See Sears’ *Chancellorsville*, 509-11, where he discusses some of the connections between the Orange Blossoms’ experiences and those of Crane’s protagonists Jim Conklin and Henry Fleming. For a very different perspective, see Stephen Cushman’s *Bloody Promenade: Reflections on a Civil War Battle* (University Press of Virginia 1999), especially chapter 19, entitled, “Fictions,” 207-29, *passim*.
23. Van Wyck, Richard T. *A War to Petrify the Heart: The Civil War Letters of a Dutchess County, N.Y. Volunteer*. Ed. Virginia Hughes Kaminsky. Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 1997.
24. Van Wyck, 97.
25. Van Wyck, 98. On June 13, 1863, the Confederates cleared the Shenandoah Valley of Federal troops when Ewell’s Second Corps (Ewell had replaced Jackson) defeated Milroy at Winchester. Two days later, Confederate cavalry reached Chambersburg, Pennsylvania (Van Santvoord, 61). Meanwhile, Hooker’s army still languished opposite Fredericksburg (Van Santvoord, 63).
26. Van Wyck, 100.
27. “Oration by Maj. Henry A. Gildersleeve,” *New York at Gettysburg, Vol. III*, 1032, as seen in Fox, William F., comp. and ed. *Final Report on the Battlefield of Gettysburg: New York Monuments Commission for the Battlefields of Gettysburg and Chattanooga*. 3 vols. Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1902.
28. Weygant, 133.
29. Weygant, 139, 144-53. Colonel Ellis had ordered Weygant to “make a determined stand—hold them at all hazards until reinforcements can be brought to you,” and this he did (Weygant, 146).

30. Weygant, 160-61.
31. Weygant summarizes these movements on 162-69.
32. Weygant, 169.
33. Plank, Will. *Banners and Bugles: A Record of Ulster County, New York and the Mid-Hudson Region in the Civil War*. Marlborough, NY: Centennial Press, 1972.
34. Plank, 13.
35. In actuality, Hooker's army and its Third Corps was much closer to Washington and had not yet crossed the Potomac River. They would not reach the vicinity of Harper's Ferry until the 25th of June (Van Santvoord, 64).
36. Lewis Coe Bevier to his parents. June 19, 1863. Huguenot Historical Society Collection; transcribed copy in the 120th New York Infantry Vertical File, Gettysburg National Military Park Library.
37. Quoted in Van Santvoord, 66.
38. Stackpole, Edward J. *They Met at Gettysburg*. Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1956. On 116-18, provides a convenient chart delineating the times various units approximately arrived on the field. Accurate time, like accurate casualty figures, remains illusive at this distance. As Roland R. Maust so judiciously reminds us in his recent work, *Grappling With Death: The Union Second Corps Hospital at Gettysburg* (Morningside, 2001), "timekeeping was a relative, and not an exact, science for the individual soldier, especially between the Union troops and their Southern counterparts, who set their timepieces to widely divergent chronometers" (154fn4).
39. There is apparently some controversy surrounding Reynolds' death, a controversy which continued to stir up a good deal of emotion well into the early twentieth century. See, for example, the following articles from the *National Tribune*: "Death of Gen Reynolds. It came from a Volley, and Not From a Sharpshooter" by Thomas S. Hopkins, formerly of the 16th Maine (April 14, 1910), a response to another article entitled "With Gen. Reynolds When Killed," and "Death of Gen Reynolds. An Ex-Confederate Who Was a Witness Describes the Event" by E.T. Boland, who had served in Company F of the 13th Alabama (May 20, 1915). Both articles have been republished in Richard A. Sauers, ed., *Fighting Them Over: How the Veterans Remembered Gettysburg in the Pages of the National Tribune* (Butternut and Blue, 1998), 71-72, 73.
40. Fox, William F., comp. and ed. *Final Report on the Battlefield of Gettysburg: New York Monuments Commission for the Battlefields of Gettysburg and Chattanooga*. 3 vols. Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1902. The battlefield monument inscription of the 80th New York [20th New York State Militia], however, claims the regiment went into combat with 375 men all told (640).
41. The following paragraphs summarize information from three separate but similar accounts by Colonel Theodore Gates. These accounts include his immediate field report of the battle, dated July 2 and written atop Cemetery Ridge, where his brigade had retreated the night before: OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXVII/1 [S# 43], 317; his somewhat more expansive account that he provided both General Doubleday and John Bachelder from Brandy Station, Virginia, January 30, 1864: see David L. and Audrey J. Ladd, eds., *The Bachelder Papers: Gettysburg in Their Own Words*. Vol. I, *January 5, 1863 to July 27, 1880* (Dayton, OH: New Hampshire Historical Society-Morningside, 1994), 80-86; and a more expansive and retrospective version of the same, Theodore Gates, *The "Ulster Guard" [20th N. Y. State Militia] and the War of the Rebellion...* (New York: Benjamin H. Tyrrel, 1879), 432-35, 440-50.

John Bachelder (1825-1894) was a New Hampshire artist and historian with a great interest in military affairs. He began collecting information about the battle almost as soon as it ended. As his editors write: "He visited field hospitals around the town, interviewed wounded soldiers of both armies, and gained information that enabled him to mark on his map the positions of every unit engaged during the battle." He then collected, through additional interviews and correspondence, hundreds of first-hand accounts of the battle from participants serving in The Army of the Potomac, even while the war continued to be waged, a practice he continued over the

next few decades. This collection of materials, amounting to three published volumes—which did not appear in print until 1994—plus other unpublished materials is an invaluable source of historical material about the battle (Ladd and Ladd 9-14).

42. V5-Clark, John D.S.—Personal Reminiscences of Gettysburg by Captain John D.S. Cook, 20th N.Y.S.M. 80th New York Volunteer Infantry Volunteers. December 12, 1903.
43. Gates does not mention the ridge by name, calling it only “the first ridge west of it [Seminary Ridge],” in his January 1864 letter to Bachelder (81).
44. Gates, Theodore B. *The “Ulster Guard” [20th N.Y. State Militia] and the War of the Rebellion*. New York: Benjamin H. Tyrell, 1879.
45. Gates variously described the farm as a “house and out-buildings” and more formidably as “a brick house and stone barn.” The former description appears in *The “Ulster Guard,”* the latter in the July 2nd O.R. report. Pfanz in his remarkable history *Gettysburg—the First Day* (University of North Carolina Press), catalogues the Harmon property, aside from the large nine-room house itself, as having a “stone barn, a two-story brick washhouse, a smokehouse, and a corncrib” (273). Baldwin’s small force took possession of all these structures.
46. Pfanz, Harry W. *Gettysburg—The First Day*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. On 273, locates the Harmon farm as being “about 700 yards west of Gates’ position on McPherson’s Ridge, 250 yards west of Willoughby Run, and about 400 yards east of the Confederate position in Springs Hotel Woods.” Gates speculated that it was about one-eighth of a mile beyond the run in July 2 O.R. report but describes it as being “some thirty rods beyond the Run” in *The “Ulster Guard”* (433).
47. Baldwin did not have long to celebrate his heroic efforts; he was killed during Picket’s Charge two days later (Gates, *The “Ulster Guard”* 433).
48. Quoted in Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The First Day*, 273. Pfanz later explains how the women “fled from the burning house,” set afire by Heth’s Confederates who finished the job K Company had begun. Fleeing toward the Confederate lines because of the intensity of the battle raging in the other direction, the Harmon women would eventually find themselves under the protection of a *London Times* correspondent covering the war from the Confederate side, who saw their needs were cared for until the battle ended (279). See also, Richard Wheeler, *Witness to Gettysburg* (Meridian-NAL, 1987), 143-46, for additional details about this incident.
49. Gates, *The “Ulster Guard,”* 433-34.
50. Gates, *The “Ulster Guard,”* 435, estimates Union forces at less than 9,000 and the Confederates at around 18,000. Weygant, taking into consideration the numbers of the Army of the Potomac’s XI Corps, which fought to the right of Reynolds’ First Corps, and the entire weight of the Army of Northern Virginia’s II Corps under Ewell engaged against Howard’s XI Corps, estimates that the Union army’s 22,000 men were opposed on the first day at Gettysburg by as many as 50,000 Confederates (172).
51. Gates, *The “Ulster Guard,”* 435.
52. Cook, 326.
53. Gates, *The “Ulster Guard,”* 441-42.
54. Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The First Day*, for example, suggests Pettigrew’s brigade alone lost over 1,000 men here, just as the Division he belonged to—Heth’s—lost over 2,300 men in thirty minutes (292). It is not surprising therefore for Plank to conclude that the 20th sustained their heaviest losses of the war at Gettysburg, suffering 170 casualties overall (Plank, 17).
55. Gates, Jan. 30, 1864, letter to John Bachelder, Ladd, David L. and Audrey J. Ladd, eds. *The Bachelder Papers: Gettysburg in Their Own Words*. Vols. I-III. Dayton, OH: Morningside-New Hampshire Historical Society, 1994
56. Cook, after describing the chaotic retreat through Gettysburg—he having at one point to wade through the offal of a pig sty—laments the remains of his small company, which, in the fight

and subsequent retreat, was reduced from 27 men to 5 (329-30).

57. "Oration by Maj. Henry A. Gildersleeve," *New York at Gettysburg*, Vol. III, 1032-33.
58. Ladd, David L. and Audrey J. Ladd, eds. *The Bachelder Papers: Gettysburg in Their Own Words*. Vols. I-III. Dayton, OH: Morningside-New Hampshire Historical Society, 1994.
59. Van Wyck, 111. He was also quickly learning the fine art of foraging. Confederate soldiers, of course, reported similar experiences as they adapted to the soldier's life. Private Carleton McCarthy of the Richmond Howitzers, for example, in an article published in the *Southern Historical Society Papers*, II.3 (Sept. 1876), 129-35, entitled "Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia" details—with a good deal of self-deprecating humor—how he too learned to lighten his load while marching.
60. Van Santvoord, 72. Weygant, 170. In "The Ulster Guard," Gates bitterly complains that Sickles' Third Corps should have been able to come to the First Corps' aid on July 1, being but only ten miles away at Emmitsburg (448-50). He perhaps did not take into account the exhaustion of Sickles' Corps at the time.
61. Weygant, 172. Peter B. Ayers, Adjutant of the 99th Pennsylvania, concluded in a February 1886 article in the *National Tribune* that this was "one of the hardest marches it was ever our lot [Ward's brigade] to be engaged in," further noting that in 90-degree heat the brigade took but one fifteen minute "breathing spell" during the 12-mile trek. "The water in the canteens," he observed, "was almost steaming hot" (Sauers, 242).
62. "Letter of Capt. Samuel C. Armstrong," to John Bachelder, February 6, 1884, *Bachelder Papers*, Vol. II, 1000.
63. Weygant, 173.
64. Breastworks, for example, were used extensively at the Wilderness (May 5-7, 1864), Spotsylvania Court House (May 8-18, 1864), and Cold Harbor (June 1-12, 1864), and eventually evolved into the extensive trenches of the Siege of Petersburg (lasting from June 1864 through April 1865).
65. Weygant, 174. Lieutenant Colonel Cummins notes that heavy skirmishing between Berdan's 2nd Sharp Shooters and Longstreet's advancing columns began around 2:30. Stevens, C.A. *Berdan's United States Sharpshooters in the Army of the Potomac, 1861-1865*. (1892). Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1984. On 321-23, Stevens describes the important role the small contingent of Berdan's men played in delaying Longstreet's advance toward the Round Tops situated 500 yards behind the 124th's position on Houck's Ridge.
66. The 124th's brigade commander, Hobart Ward, made the following estimate of the odds facing his 1,500-man brigade: "For nearly two hours my brigade was opposed to at least 10,000 of the enemy, in line and en masse.... The total loss in my brigade was 46 officers and 712 enlisted men" (quoted in Stevens, C. A. *Berdan's United States Sharpshooters in the Army of the Potomac, 1861-1865*. (1892). Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1984.)
67. Pfanz, Harry W. *Gettysburg—The Second Day*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987, notes that the 124th had but 18 officers and 220 enlisted men in line on July 2. Lieutenant Colonel Cummins (*The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. II, 1023), remembers the total as 240.
68. In Lieutenant Colonel Cummins February 21, 1886, letter to John Bachelder (*The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. II, 1023), he misidentifies Smith's guns as 20-lb Parrotts. A Parrott rifled cannon, developed by Robert Parrott, was an accurate gun "made of cast iron rather than costly bronze" as the popular 12-pounder "Napoleon" smoothbore was. "A Parrott could hit a target at 2,500 yards, about twice the range of a smoothbore gun" (Editors of Time-Life Books. *Echoes of Glory: Arms and Equipment of the Union*. Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1991. 300.)
69. Weygant, 175-76.
70. Weygant, 176.
71. Weygant, 176.

72. These second and third lines were apparently the regiments of Brigadier Henry L. Bennings' Georgia brigade, of Major General John Bell Hood's Division, consisting of the 2nd, 15th, 17th, and 20th Georgia (Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 190).
73. Weygant, 176-77.
74. Weygant, 177. First Lieutenant H.P. Ramsdell spent the next week accompanying Ellis's and Cromwell's bodies, carefully packed in ice when arriving in Westminster, back to their distraught families in New York and Newburgh, respectively. See Ramsdell's report on these activities in Weygant, 198-200.
75. Those interested in a Confederate version of these events might wish to consult the *Southern Historical Society Papers*, IV.4 (October 1877), 161-84, which includes the reports of Brigadier Generals Robertson and Benning, among others from Hood's division.
76. Weygant, 187. Nicoll's story is particularly poignant. In an 1884 account entitled, *Reminiscences of the War; or incidents in and About Chambersburg, During the War of the Rebellion*, author J. Hoke describes how a Confederate officer, Lieutenant R.W. Wood, had found Captain Nicoll's pocket testament upon the captain's body and agreed to have the testament returned to Nicoll's family living in Blooming Grove, New York, after having read a note within it that requested such a service should Captain Nicoll be killed. John, the Captain's father, was very grateful for this memento of his slain son, who had been "pierced by three balls—one in his neck, one in his shoulder, and one in his breast" (Union Regiment Files, 6-NY124 124th New York Inf. Reg., Gettysburg National Military Park).
77. Letter of Esick G. Wilber to his parents. July 10, 1863. Murray J. Smith Collection (U.S. Army Military History Institute). Copied at Gettysburg National Military Park, Union Regiment Files. 6-NY120 120th New York Inf. Reg. A note appended to the letter explains that "Wilber was captured in Oct. 1863" and died 11 months later in Andersonville Prison, Georgia.
78. They were confronting Kershaw's brigade of McLaw's Division from one direction and Anderson's brigade from Hood's Division from another.
79. These brigades included Cobbs' and Phillips' Georgia Legions, the 16th, 18th, and 24th Georgia, and the 13th, 17th, 18th, and 21st Mississippi.
80. For a detailed account of the events leading up to the 120th's involvement on the second day of Gettysburg, see Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, chapters 11 (241-66) and 12 (267-302).
81. Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 307.
82. Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 321.
83. Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 62-63, describes the Dutchess County regiment "as large as they were inexperienced." Pfan continues, "Although Lockwood's men [Lockwood being the 150th's brigade commander] were short on campaign experience, they were well disciplined and excited about the prospects of a battle. Time would show them to be an asset to the [Twelfth] corps."
84. Quoted in Van Santvoord, 73. These were no doubt the brigades of Wofford and Barksdale.
85. Quoted in Van Santvoord, 74. The other regiment of the Excelsior Brigade in reserve, the 73rd New York, according to its Company H commander—2nd Lieutenant Frank E. Moran—was "ordered to move toward at double-quick through a shower of bullets and bursting shells." See page 41 of Campbell, Eric. "Hell in a Peach Orchard." *America's Civil War* (July 2003): 38-44. This movement had to be around 5 o'clock or even 5:30 because Moran could still see the smoke of battle from Devil's Den, and Graham's brigade was already fully engaged by the time the 73rd advanced. Barksdale's Mississippians quickly flanked and overwhelmed the 73rd in its futile attempt to stabilize Graham's line near the Sherfy barn. See also Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 323, 331.
86. Letter of Esick G. Wilber to his parents. July 10, 1863. Murray J. Smith Collection (U.S. Army Military History Institute). Copied at Gettysburg National Military Park.

87. Quoted in Van Santvoord, 74. Colonel William R. Brewster, commander of the Excelsior Brigade, suggests this action occurred sometime after 5:30. See "No. 169—Report of Col. William R. Brewster," O.R., Ser. 1, Vol. XXVII/1 [S# 43], 560. It is questionable that the 120th could have held this position for as much as an hour, though. Some members of the regiment claim they were only able to get off a few rounds before retiring, which Wilber's account suggests as well.
88. All bracketed commentary my own. Letter of Esick G. Wilber to his parents. July 10, 1863. Murray J. Smith Collection (U.S. Army Military History Institute). Copied at Gettysburg National Military Park. Although worded somewhat differently, this account is essentially the same as that recorded by Wilber in his diary. See Civil War Diary Kept by Esick G. Wilber. 120th Reg. N.Y.S. Vols. Company K. Transcribed copy in 120th New York Infantry Vertical File, Gettysburg National Military Park Library.
89. Westbrook was shot through the pelvis, a painful wound that bothered him the rest of his life. He was discharged from the service on February 20, 1864. War Letters. Copied from the files of the Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park. Transcribed copy in 120th New York Infantry Vertical File, Gettysburg National Military Park Library.
90. Sauers, Richard A. and James L. McLean, Jr., eds. *Fighting Them Over: How the Veterans Remembered Gettysburg in the Pages of the National Tribune*. Butternut and Blue Press, 1998. Meade by this time had lost his Second Corps commander (Sickles), his right leg shattered at the knee by a solid round shot. The leg was eventually amputated. See Pfanz, *Gettysburg: The Second Day*, 332-34. Westbrook's account essentially conforms to that of Major General George H. Sharpe, who dedicated the 120th's monument at Gettysburg in 1889. Sharp's account might be found in one of two places: in Volume II of *New York at Gettysburg*, 814-24 and C. Van Santvoord's *The One Hundred and Twentieth Regiment NYS Volunteers in the Civil War*, 218-32.
91. Westbrook puts the time of Anderson's attack at around 7 p.m.
92. See Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 338-44 for a fine narrative account of Bigelow's ordeal. Stephen Sears clearly explains what to retire by prolonge firing meant: "Captain Bigelow realized that the Rebels would quickly overrun his guns if he stopped firing long enough to limber up. Instead, the prolonge, or towing rope, was hooked between gun trail and limber, allowing the piece to be dragged away without undue delay [after each recoil of the gun upon firing]" Sears, *Gettysburg* (Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 308-09.
93. Sauers, Richard A. and James L. McLean, Jr., eds. *Fighting Them Over: How the Veterans Remembered Gettysburg in the Pages of the National Tribune*. Butternut and Blue Press, 1998.
94. Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 408.
95. Letter of Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams. Tallahoma, April 21, 1864. *The Bachelor Papers*, Vol. I, 163-64. McGilvery had put together a new line of artillery 900 or so yards east of the Trostle farm but without infantry support it could not successfully withstand a determined Confederate attack. Luckily for McGilvery's batteries and Lockwood's brigade, the Confederates on this part of the field were in full retreat when Williams' arrived.
96. Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 408. "Oration by Maj. Henry A. Gildersleeve," *New York at Gettysburg*, Vol. III, 1033. Neither Pfanz nor Gildersleeve identifies these anonymous New Yorkers, but who would be able to identify the 150th and their affiliation with Dutchess County except other Hudson Valley regiments? Could these have been wounded from the 124th or 120th? I suspect so, for all the wounded they met seem to have been from the Third Corps.
97. Colonel William P. Maulsby of the First Regiment, Potomac Home Guard, Maryland Volunteers (whose regiment went into action with the 150th New York) states that the brigade "charged at a double-quick, past the base of Little Round Top, over the Wheatfield, to, and ending only at, the ravine beyond the Wheatfield, more than half a mile beyond the Union line." See "Address by Col. William P. Maulsby," *New York At Gettysburg*, Vol. III, 1042.
98. "Address by Gen. H. H. Lockwood," *New York at Gettysburg*, Vol. III, 1040.

99. "Letter of Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams." Camden, Ark., Nov. 10th, 1865. *The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. I, 219.
100. "Letter of Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams." Camden, Ark., Nov. 10th, 1865. *The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. I, 220-21. By comparison, the 124th and 120th New York fought for only half that time against Longstreet's Corps.
101. Van Wyck, 106. Major Gildersleeve notes that the 150th took over 200 prisoners during this morning fight and that each man expended more than 200 rounds of ammunition. See Henry A. Gildersleeve, "New York at Gettysburg," Vol. III, 1034.
102. Pfanz, in *Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill* (University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 307, notes that "The 150th had only eight fatalities in the course of its adventure on Culp's Hill. Pvt. Charles Howgate was one of the first. As he stepped back from the works for some ammunition, a ball tore through the top of his head. The same bullet struck two other men, Privates John P. Wing and Levi Rust, and killed them too. Wing was standing behind Rust, and they both dropped at the same time."
103. Stannard's Vermont Brigade were nine-months men but they would, despite their inexperience, have much to say about the outcome of Pickett's Charge that day. Union Regiment File V6-NY80 IN. Transcribed and copied at Gettysburg National Military Park.
104. "Letter of Col. Theodore B. Gates," Headquarters 20th N.Y.S.M., Brandy Station, Va., Jan. 30, 1864. *The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. I, 84.
105. Hardenburgh and Gates tell essentially the same story of the regiment's rightward movement toward and in front of the clump of trees.
106. Quoted in Maust, Richard R. *Grappling With Death: The Union Second Corps Hospital at Gettysburg*. Dayton, OH: Morningside, 2001.
107. This slash of timber had been piled here by artillery crews, apparently trying to clear trees in their front to create a better field of fire.
108. Union Regiment File V6-NY80 IN. Transcribed and copied at Gettysburg National Military Park.
109. "Letter of Col. Theodore B. Gates," Headquarters 20th N.Y.S.M., Brandy Station, Va., Jan. 30, 1864. *The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. I, 86.
110. Gates, that prolific chronicler of the 20th New York State Militia's experiences, wrote numerous times about his regiment's conduct on this third day, including his report in the *Official Records*, Ser.1, Vol. XXVII/1 [#43], 317-20 (July 4, 1863), in a letter to John Bachelder, *The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. I (Jan. 30, 1864), in a letter to Hardenburgh (December 18, 1875), in his history of the 20th entitled, *The "Ulster Guard"* (Benjamin H. Tyrell, 1879), and in his address at the dedication of the 80th New York monument at Gettysburg, *New York at Gettysburg*, Vol. II, 41-44 (October 4, 1888), and elsewhere.
111. Quoted in Maust, 185, Dooley's emphasis.
112. Quoted in Maust, 245.
113. Union Regiment File V6-NY124 IN. Transcribed and copied at Gettysburg National Military Park.
114. Quoted in Maust, 276.
115. Weygant, 183.
116. Quoted in Maust, 376.
117. Lewis Coe Bevier to his parents. July 18, 1863. Huguenot Historical Society Collection; transcribed copy in the 120th New York Infantry Vertical File, Gettysburg National Military Park Library The 120th suffered by far the highest total casualties of the other regiments in the Excelsior Brigade: 30 killed (including seven officers), and 155 wounded, in addition to 19 missing (O.R., Series I, Vol. XXVII/1).

118. Dr. John N. Miller to Friend Benjamin. September 27, 1863. Huguenot Historical Society Collection.

119. Van Santvoord, 292.

120. Van Santvoord, 292. Miller himself had his own Gettysburg story to tell. In a letter dated August 17, 1863, he readily admits his experience was more than he had bargained for:

I was at work in the rear of the fight when our men began to fall back and the rebels began to advance so that their shell and shot were falling in the lot where we were quite thick and at last we had to dodge and buck so much at whizzing shell that we were compelled to move the hospital half a mile back. Then of course our corps ambulances did not know where to bring the wounded.

The medical director after looking at the group of surgeons about him ordered me to mount his horse, go to the front and direct the ambulances. Of course I had to go, but I will admit I would have sold out my berth very cheap.

As I got to the rear of our line of battle there was a tremendous cannonading [sic] the solid shot would strike the ground, throw the dirt 10 or 15 feet high plow a long furrow and bound on 500 yards farther[;] after they struck and bounded I could almost always see them, but not before. All you know about them before, is, that you hear a tremendous, hissing and whizzing in the air like a thousand snakes. It was worse directly in the rear of our men than in the ranks, for the rebel shot and shell are always aimed too high. Well after I had done my message and was about returning, something went past me with a sound of a whirlwind. I reckon if I had straightened my arm out I would have "caught it." My horse sprang sideways against a stone wall and came near breaking my neck by falling over it. Thank providence I am all right so far—