

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

### I

After having languished in camp at Falmouth for four months during the winter and early spring of 1863, Captain Charles H. Weygant, company “A” 124<sup>th</sup> New York State Volunteers, was anxious: the Army of the Potomac was once more on the move, this time under the command of “Fighting Joe” Hooker.<sup>1</sup> Since the late summer of 1862, when he had helped recruit his company in and around the towns of Newburgh and Cornwall, New York, his company had seen little action.<sup>2</sup> True, Weygant’s brigade had served at the debacle that was Fredericksburg in December of the previous year, but his regiment had been spared its horrors. However, Weygant had witnessed first hand, from the safety of Stafford Heights across the Rappahannock from Fredericksburg, the bloody amphibious crossing and the destructive bombardment of the town that had made the crossing possible.<sup>3</sup> It was here too that the green 124<sup>th</sup> experienced an artillery bombardment for the first time in the war when it unsuccessfully attempted to cross the very bridges Weygant had watched being constructed from the heights above.<sup>4</sup> As Weygant phrased it, “Our time was not yet. Other fields were to test our valor and drink our blood; but this time other troops were to do and die while we lay looking on.”<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, this was combat on a grand scale, a clash of 200,000 men, and as the remains of Burnside’s Army of the Potomac retreated past the 124<sup>th</sup>’s position and back over the river, Weygant lamented the “vast procession of wounded, bleeding, dying men—in ambulances, on litters, in the arms of comrades, and some staggering along, alone on foot, all hurrying away from the field.”<sup>6</sup> A few days after the battle, Weygant witnessed a funeral that poignantly expressed his thoughts on what

he had so recently witnessed. An anonymous sergeant gave the following eulogy, “while big tears trickled down his cheeks . . . ‘Great God of Battles—as we bury poor Tom’s mangled body, let his soul enter Heaven—Amen!’”<sup>7</sup>

Kingston’s One Hundred and Twentieth Regiment New York State Volunteers, a member of the famous “Excelsior” Brigade, had had a similar “baptism of Fire” that previous December at Fredericksburg. As chaplain C. Van Santvoord so succinctly put it, “Its [the 120<sup>th</sup>’s] position in this battle [Fredericksburg], was such, as not to render it exposed to the hottest fire of the enemy.”<sup>8</sup> Like Weygant’s 124<sup>th</sup>, the 120<sup>th</sup> crossed the river after having watched some of the awful spectacle of Burnside’s repeatedly futile assaults on Marye’s Heights. Unlike the 124<sup>th</sup>, however, it saw, first-hand, “the horrors of a battlefield”, as some of its members drew picket duty during the night on the field of battle among the dead, the dying, and the wounded. Come spring, it too was on the move.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, the 150<sup>th</sup> New York (or “Dutchess County Regiment” from Poughkeepsie) had gained no such combat experience, minimal as it had been for its sister fledgling regiments from the Valley. The Chancellorsville campaign was about to begin, but it would begin without them, for they would be assigned to Camp Belger in Baltimore from October of 1862 until late June of 1863 when they would finally be attached to the Army of the Potomac, by then under the command of George Gordon Meade.<sup>10</sup> Corporal Richard T. Van Wyck, one of the 150<sup>th</sup> who languished at Camp Belger all those months while the war seemed to be passing him by, would carefully follow the momentous events swirling elsewhere. He had, we learn, little else to do but drill. The men in his regiment, he would observe, were “much displeased at the removal of Gn. McClellan from command”<sup>11</sup> in November of 1862 and were equally concerned—he being a staunch believer in volunteerism—that the upcoming draft would “create some uneasiness in

Hopewell.”<sup>12</sup> Most significantly, Van Wyck, in a letter to his friend Robert Johnston, shrewdly explored the issue of race, a topic on many soldiers’ minds at this time due to Lincoln’s

Emancipation Proclamation:

Then comes the Negro question and the Proclamation with almost the whole soldiery opposed, including some of the officers. This however is merely a pretext for the homesick, though they are willing to fight for the Constitution, but not for the Negro now (as they term it). I should say if you could see them handle a negro, you would suspect that was their mission here in arms—to forever extinct [*sic*] the race and settle the question politically.<sup>13</sup>

Many others, as he suggests, had far less compassionate views, for this war was not yet, in many a soldier’s mind, a war to make others free. Note, for example, Lieutenant Colonel Weygant’s recollection of an incident about his own personal “contraband” servant. This incident occurred around the same time as the date of Van Wyck’s letter. He uses, for instance, many of the clichés of the time to describe his servant Jack Smith’s behavior, describing Jack as “a little, black, shining, faced fellow” and a “little scamp”<sup>14</sup> who is a notorious braggart, coward, drunk<sup>15</sup> and general mischief-maker. He renders Jack’s speech in a clichéd manner as well, peppering it with “no, sah’s” and “massa’s” and “afeerd’s” to create, one suspects, a humorous effect.<sup>16</sup> In addition, George C. Rable notes in *Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!* (U of North Carolina P, 2002) that, at the Battle of Fredericksburg, “When some black servants joined the 20<sup>th</sup> New York [Militia] behind an embankment, white officers and men drove them away with bayonets. ‘Let the damned nigger[s] be killed—how dare they come here among white men,’ one fellow shouted.”<sup>17</sup> The Hudson Valley soldiers’ attitudes towards race were, evidently, complex at best and typical at its worst.

The Hudson Valley supplied veteran regiments to the Army of the Potomac as well during that most momentous summer of 1863, including the 80<sup>th</sup> (or 20<sup>th</sup> New York State Militia, from Kingston).<sup>18</sup> The 80<sup>th</sup> had seen its share of service in 1862 while the green regiments discussed above were either being recruited or trained. During the Second Manassas campaign, for example, while fighting with the Army of Virginia commanded by the bombastic General John Pope, the 80<sup>th</sup> suffered greatly from incompetent leadership and inexperience.<sup>19</sup> After hardly firing a shot at Brawner's farm on August 28, 1862 during the opening hours of the Second Battle of Manassas, the 80<sup>th</sup> would get a true taste of Civil War combat the following two days.<sup>20</sup> When two brigades from its division (Hatch's and Doubleday's) were roughly handled by Longstreet's advancing corps the following day, Irvin McDowell, their Corps commander, ordered the 80<sup>th</sup>'s brigade (led by Marsena Patrick) to cover Hatch's and Doubleday's retreat, a tough task for inexperienced soldiers.<sup>21</sup> This twilight clash, so badly mismanaged and misinterpreted by the Union high command, would help seal the fate of the 80<sup>th</sup> on the following day. On the morning of the 30<sup>th</sup>, for example, Marsena Patrick erroneously reported to Pope that the rebels on his front were retreating. They were not.<sup>22</sup> This misinformation contributed to Pope's burgeoning delusion that Lee's army was retreating. Pope therefore chose to "pursue" the Confederates around noon, unwittingly leading half his army into a trap while exposing his left flank and rear to Longstreet's entire corps. The 80<sup>th</sup> was caught in the maelstrom that followed. The ensuing confusion was so intense, the lead regiments of Patrick's green brigade at one point were fired into from behind by his own men.<sup>23</sup> Patrick's line, as one might easily imagine, collapsed in confusion and melted into what John J. Hennessy calls, "a blue mob."<sup>24</sup> Patrick then "called up the 20<sup>th</sup> New York State Militia [AKA the 80<sup>th</sup> New York Volunteer Regiment] . . . to deal with the problem" of his rapidly collapsing flank. Hennessy quotes

Lieutenant John Leslie: “with a crash, like the sharpest thunder, the enemy’s fire burst upon our ranks.”<sup>25</sup> The 20<sup>th</sup>, however, did not waver but continued to advance, although too far to the right to achieve the effect Patrick desired.<sup>26</sup> Hennessy concludes his narrative of the 80<sup>th</sup>’s horrific experience at Second Manassas with the following:

The 20<sup>th</sup> Militia closed to within twenty-five yards of the embankment,<sup>27</sup> but with losses so severe that one man claimed that the regiment, which had numbered 450 only a few minutes before, now looked like nothing more than a large company. . . . Casualties carpeted the forest floor. “The woods was a sickening sight,” Lieutenant Leslie wrote, “strewn with the killed and wounded. In some places they lay in heaps. For perhaps fifteen minutes the Ulster Guard held its position in the woods. “But,” remembered Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Gates<sup>28</sup>, “the fire was too heavy and my men too few to give hope of success.” Finally Gates . . . ordered the 20<sup>th</sup> to retreat, which it did in considerable disorder.<sup>29</sup>

The regiment and Patrick’s entire brigade would fare better in September of 1862 at both the Battles of South Mountain, where its casualties were minimal, and at that bloodiest day of the war, Antietam.<sup>30</sup> Like the “Dutchess County” regiment, the 80<sup>th</sup> New York would mercifully miss the debacle of Chancellorsville.

## II

Third Corps Hospital cook Private Lewis Coe Bevier, while writing to his parents on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, 1863, observed that, “Their [*sic*] is an awful lot of wounded in the hospital now from that last battle in fredericksburg [*sic*].”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the Battle of Chancellorsville to which Bevier actually refers, had been a trying time for the regiments of Sickles Third Corps, including the 124<sup>th</sup> and Bevier’s own 120<sup>th</sup>. The campaign had started off well enough as the troops had been

full of promise that April 28<sup>th</sup> 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, would be 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 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 124<sup>th</sup> 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."<sup>32</sup> The following day the First and Third Corps would countermarch in the opposite direction, following the rest of the army. It was at this time that the soldiers of the 120<sup>th</sup>, having just been paid, were in fine fettle as they moved westward, arriving at United States' Ford around midnight,<sup>33</sup> unaware of the nature of the hard fight about to follow.

In the opening paragraphs of Chapter 8 of 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.<sup>34</sup>

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 120<sup>th</sup> and 124<sup>th</sup> New York, as regiments of Sickles’ Third Corps, would forever lose the descriptive term “green”.

The 124<sup>th</sup>, when it crossed into the Wilderness on the first of May, was not at full strength. Since its initial recruitment in September of 1862, and without having as yet lost a man in combat, the regiment had already been depleted by a third: 30 to typhoid, 100 to various and sundry illnesses and disabilities, 15 to desertion, 100 more on sick leave, and 35 or so on detached duty elsewhere, including the ambulance corps.<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup>

On the late afternoon and early evening of the 1<sup>st</sup>, the 124<sup>th</sup> and the 120<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> Hooker, however, “had now abandoned the offensive,” as Weygant phrased it, and what was the position of the reserve would soon become the front line. At noon on the following day, Sickles Corps detected the rear echelons of Jackson’s 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 124<sup>th</sup> became part of this forward movement<sup>38</sup> and shortly would be embroiled in its first firefight. “The next moment,” Weygant reports, “the sound of heavy musketry firing came from the woods in front and [Augustus Van Horne] Ellis [the 124<sup>th</sup>’s Colonel] hurried us forward up the hill. . . . Under

such circumstances, Ellis was not the man to wait for orders. Hurriedly forming line of battle and placing himself in front of the colors, he ordered a charge”.<sup>39</sup> Sergeant Reeves remembered the moment this way: “We were hurried on at double quick and the 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 122<sup>nd</sup> Pennsylvania] and they broke and ran and put us all in confusion . . .”<sup>40</sup>

This precipitous advance would begin a “see-saw” battle for the 124<sup>th</sup>, falling back one moment, charging and retaking lost ground the next. They would, however, have to permanently fall back when Jackson’s Corps shortly thereafter annihilated the Army of the Potomac’s XI Corps far off to the right and rear of the 124<sup>th</sup>’s position. That evening, the regiment, now facing westward confronting Jackson’s Corps, became engaged in a rare night action. Weygant postulates that the 124<sup>th</sup> may have been responsible for the wounding and subsequent death of Stonewall Jackson during this nighttime battle.<sup>41</sup> The following day, a Private from Company E, 124<sup>th</sup> New York would observe in his diary: “Out of 540 men that went in 160 came out with the colors”.<sup>42</sup>

As Howard’s panicked XI Corps fled east through the Chancellor House clearing, carrying men, pack mules, wagons and material before it, Berry’s division and with it the 120<sup>th</sup> New York had the task of stabilizing the deteriorating Union position with dusk—and Jackson’s Corps—coming on fast. Their Colonel would proudly proclaim 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.”<sup>43</sup> 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 Hooker’s army eventually to withdrawal closer to the river. During this retreat on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, General Berry—the 120<sup>th</sup>’s division commander—was killed.<sup>44</sup> As a result of this struggle, the 120<sup>th</sup> lost 9 killed, 45 wounded and 18 missing.<sup>45</sup>

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

Advancing through the woods directly towards us, was the 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 124<sup>th</sup>, which was poured into their ranks when they were less than fifty yards off, not only brought the men of the 23<sup>rd</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup>

Running low on ammunition and now facing Confederate reinforcements, the 124<sup>th</sup> was again forced to retire. The 124<sup>th</sup>’s color guard had been decimated, five out of nine being killed and wounded.<sup>47</sup> Colonel Ellis, in his official report, praised his men, saying they “fought like tigers”

even in retreat.<sup>48</sup> 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 4:00 PM.<sup>49</sup> 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 already—General Berry—on the previous day, the Third Corps would lose another—the 124<sup>th</sup>'s own General Amiel W. Whipple—on the 4<sup>th</sup>. Weygant himself would witness 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 86<sup>th</sup> New York . . . [when] [p]resently I heard another thud, and hastily turning round to learn if any of the 124<sup>th</sup> had been struck, saw the general, who was not more than five rods away, reel and fall.<sup>50</sup>

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.<sup>51</sup> This deadly, nerve-wracking warfare indicates the quickly changing nature of the war. There was nothing chivalrous in Whipple's assassination. Modern warfare had become a reality. It was simply murder, whether each side was willing to acknowledge that fact or not.<sup>52</sup>

### III

A month had passed and an event was about to occur that would bring together in one place all four of the regiments under discussion here: that event was Lee's second invasion of the North, and that place would be Gettysburg.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, while writing to his mother, the ever-bored Richard T. Van Wyck of the 150<sup>th</sup> New York laments that

the 150<sup>th</sup> 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?”<sup>53</sup>

Less than two weeks later, one senses the excitement in his tone when Van Wyck, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June, tells 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.”<sup>54</sup> And again, a few days later, now in a letter to his mother, he excitedly proclaims, “we are likely to have something to do with the Rebels before long.”<sup>55</sup> Even so, his regiment would stay in Baltimore a while yet, as Van Wyck reports to his cousin on June 24<sup>th</sup>: “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 . . . .”<sup>56</sup> It would be the last letter, but one, that he would address from Baltimore. Three days later, the regiment would be 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.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, a depressed Captain Weygant, while recovering from his wounds at Chancellorsville, mourned the loss of so many of his comrades in the 124<sup>th</sup> New York.<sup>58</sup> He would quickly be distracted from such melancholy, though, as his regiment, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, would be chosen to accompany Pleasanton's Cavalry Corps on a secretive mission to Beverly Ford on the Rappahannock River which resulted in the largest cavalry battle of the war, the June 9, 1863 Battle of Brandy Station. Here Weygant gained valuable command experience as, with a detachment of two companies numbering about 60 men, he was required to hold off an entire regiment of 300 dismounted cavalry, which he did successfully but not without suffering substantial casualties for such a small force.<sup>59</sup>

By the 14<sup>th</sup> of June, the 124<sup>th</sup> would see 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.<sup>60</sup> He would lead them well in the difficult days ahead. Immediately after this reorganization, the 124<sup>th</sup> began with the rest of the Third Corps the fateful trip northward in pursuit of Lee. By the 16<sup>th</sup> the regiment had reached the old Manassas battlefield; by the 19<sup>th</sup>, it reached, through a pouring rain, the vicinity of Leesburg; by the 21<sup>st</sup>, it could hear musketry in the direction of Winchester; by the 25<sup>th</sup>, the Corps crossed the Potomac

River on pontoon boats at Edward's Ferry after a grueling 30 mile march; by the 28<sup>th</sup>, the regiment had passed through Frederick, greeted in much the same way as the 120<sup>th</sup> would be (see below); after another hard march of 25 miles they reached Taneytown, and on the 30<sup>th</sup> "pushed on to Emmetsburg [*sic*]." <sup>61</sup> In his diary, Captain Weygant recorded the following:

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. <sup>62</sup>

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

While the 124<sup>th</sup> had seen a good deal of combat since Fredericksburg, Colonel Theodore Gates and his beloved 20<sup>th</sup> Regiment New York State Militia, which he insisted upon calling the 80<sup>th</sup> New York State Volunteers, had seen little combat activity since then as they had been given the much softer assignment of guarding the Richmond and Potomac Railroad while being stationed at Aquia Creek and elsewhere. <sup>63</sup> They had deserved the rest, especially considering the experiences they had had 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 Richard T. Van Wyck of their far less experienced sister regiment, the Dutchess County or 150<sup>th</sup> New York Volunteer Regiment. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, the 80<sup>th</sup> was ordered to rejoin the First Corps, commanded by the highly regarded John Reynolds of Pennsylvania. The 80<sup>th</sup> would meet up with Reynolds' Corps just short of the Pennsylvania border. <sup>64</sup>

That June, Lewis Coe Bevier, also stationed at Aquia Creek—but not going anywhere—had no idea where his own regiment, the 120<sup>th</sup> New York, still attached to Sickles' Third Corps, had gotten off to. In a letter to his parents he speculates, "I suppose they are some where around harpers ferry [*sic*] after old Lee."<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, as someone who had not experienced combat would phrase it, Bevier exclaims, "I think old Hooker will give him [illegible] before he gets out of pennsylvania [*sic*] and I hope he will take every one of them prisoner or else Kill them."<sup>66</sup> Still, Bevier was not so wrong about what his unit was up to, for his 120<sup>th</sup> New York would soon experience some hard marching to catch up with Lee's rapidly moving army, along with the 124<sup>th</sup>. Yet, some of this forced march—which began on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June—would actually be fondly remembered. The 120<sup>th</sup>'s Corporal Egbert Lewis of "T" Company recounted the reception his regiment received upon entering Maryland:

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.<sup>67</sup>

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

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

#### IV

As part of the Army of the Potomac's First Corps, the 80<sup>th</sup> New York would be the first Hudson Valley regiment discussed here to reach the field at Gettysburg. The battle had begun around 5:30, the morning of July 1<sup>st</sup> when Heth's Confederate Division of A. P. Hill's recently constituted Thirds Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia clashed with John Buford's dismounted brigades of cavalry west of town.<sup>68</sup> By 10:00, 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 had come just at the right moment and in the right place; but, within the hour Reynolds was dead,<sup>69</sup> 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, including Rowley's Third Division of the late Reynolds' First Corps, which included the 80<sup>th</sup> New York—28 officers and 259 men strong—who were placed to the left of the Iron Brigade near McPherson's Woods where Reynolds had so recently fallen.<sup>70</sup>

The 80<sup>th</sup> New York had been marching quickly towards the sounds of battle since 8:00, and when they arrived west of town, the regiment immediately formed a line of battle in the Hagerstown Road facing north.<sup>71</sup> Then, forming by the right flank the regiment marched directly towards 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 they emerged onto the field of battle, they quickly suffered their 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 battle itself.”<sup>72</sup> The regiment now faced directly west,<sup>73</sup> proceeding over McPherson’s Ridge and into the ravine formed by the meandering Run. “The field beyond it,” Gates explained in 1879, “was covered with grain, affording excellent shelter for the enemy’s sharpshooters, and the field was alive with them.”<sup>74</sup> The position, therefore, was untenable, and they were soon ordered back atop the ridge, the rest of the brigade forming a line of battle behind them on the downward slope. Here they stood exposed for twenty minutes.

Clearly visible somewhat over 200 yards beyond the Run was the farm of one E. Harmon,<sup>75</sup> which, if not occupied quickly, would become a haven for Confederate skirmishers.<sup>76</sup> Gates, ordered by General Wadsworth to occupy Harmon’s property before the Confederates did, sent Captain Ambrose N. Baldwin’s K Company to perform the hazardous assignment.<sup>77</sup> Amelia Harmon would remember the moment her house was invaded: “[I]n poured a stream of maddened, powder-blackened blue coats, who ordered us to the cellar, while they dispersed to the various west windows throughout the house.”<sup>78</sup> Company K immediately became the target of Confederate attentions. An hour later, Baldwin was in desperate need of help so Gates sent him another company from the 80<sup>th</sup>, Captain William Cunningham’s Company G. The two isolated companies would hold the Harmon homestead for two additional hours before, being surrounded on three sides, they would withdraw after having set several of the outer buildings on fire.<sup>79</sup> Miraculously, several harrowing hours later, the two companies would make it back to the Union lines on Cemetery Hill, with the assistance of Union cavalry. It was now 1:00, and the beleaguered First Corps and the cavalry it had come to support three hours earlier would be soon outnumbered by as much as 2-1 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.<sup>80</sup>



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.<sup>81</sup> This caused the 80<sup>th</sup>'s brigade to change its position once more, this time the right half facing to the north while Gates and the 151<sup>st</sup> 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 80<sup>th</sup>'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."<sup>82</sup> Not long after, both of Biddle's brigade's flanks were being threatened, so Cooper's battery made good its escape. The 80<sup>th</sup>, with the rest of its brigade, found itself alone and retreat became the only option.<sup>83</sup> The retreat would be an agonizingly slow and deliberate one and would also be a terribly costly one for both sides.<sup>84</sup> "The fighting," as Gates put it, "for some time was now most desperate."<sup>85</sup> The brigade escaped by retreating directly down the railroad—a scene of heavy fighting earlier in the day—and into and through Gettysburg, finally resting on Cemetery Hill just outside town.<sup>86</sup> It had been a long, arduous day for the 80<sup>th</sup>, but their experience at Gettysburg had, in a sense, only just begun.

## V

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

the 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.<sup>87</sup>

Richard T. Van Wyck's large but inexperienced 150<sup>th</sup> New York, trailing the rest of its division due to its inexperience with such marches, did not settle in until 8:00 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July.<sup>88</sup> 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.<sup>89</sup>

The Third Corps too, with the 120<sup>th</sup> and 124<sup>th</sup> New York, had reached the field as well, starting to arrive around 2:00 on the morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The 124<sup>th</sup> seemed to have suffered very much on the march to Emmitsburg the day before, as Weygant notes that only 264 men met muster that morning, for some 98 additional men from the Orange Blossoms had fallen out due to sun-stroke, disease and physical exhaustion.<sup>90</sup> Despite their exhaustion, the men seemed confident of success in what lay ahead. It was not until 2:00 on the afternoon of the first, when

the battle had already been raging for several hours that the Third Corps began to move. They could, by then, 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.<sup>91</sup>

The remainder of the regiment would straggle in throughout the rest of the day and into the late morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Weygant's experience was similar to that of the men of the 120<sup>th</sup>. Their placement in the line, however was farther to the right, nearer to Hancock's Second Corps than the 124<sup>th</sup>, 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, part of Houck's Ridge, between which lay the Rose farmstead and the now equally famous Wheatfield. Watching this unexpected movement from Cemetery Ridge, Captain Samuel C. Armstrong of Company D of the 125<sup>th</sup> New York, called the advance "magnificent" just as he called its bloody repulse a few hours later "terrible".<sup>92</sup> 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 124<sup>th</sup> New York would feel 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,<sup>93</sup> something both sides would do as a matter of course during the Overland Campaign in Virginia the following year.<sup>94</sup> Then, around 3:00 PM, Lee's artillery opened up upon Sickles' advanced line and, an hour later, "long solid lines of infantry appeared advancing directly against" Ward's brigade's position.<sup>95</sup> Once again, as on the first day of the battle, Lee would muster overwhelming numbers at the point of attack.<sup>96</sup> By the time five o'clock arrived, Captain Weygant would find himself to be the 124<sup>th</sup>'s new regimental commander. The small 124<sup>th</sup><sup>97</sup> 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 one hundred yard gap between the 124<sup>th</sup>'s right and the 86<sup>th</sup> New York's left. To the 124<sup>th</sup>'s left, at least its left as the battle opened, were placed four cannons from James E. Smith's 4<sup>th</sup> New York Battery, composed of 10-lb Parrotts.<sup>98</sup>

As the First Texas regiment slowly pressed its attack up the steep slope leading to the 124<sup>th</sup>'s position, Major Cromwell pleaded with his regimental commander, Colonel Ellis, to charge. This Ellis initially refused to do, but, the officer's horses being brought up, Ellis purportedly, while mounting his horse declared, "The men must see us today," before agreeing to Cromwell's request.<sup>99</sup> Weygant describes 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.<sup>100</sup>

The First Texas, according to Weygant, “broke and fled.” Cromwell was jubilant but then 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 124<sup>th</sup>’s men.<sup>101</sup> Moments later, Cromwell fell from his horse, shot through the chest. Even so, the 124<sup>th</sup> turned back this second line before yet a third appeared behind it forcing the thinning ranks of the regiment back up the slope.<sup>102</sup> At this moment, Lieutenant Colonel Cummins seeing that the 124<sup>th</sup> would no longer be able to protect Smith’s guns tried to have them moved but was badly wounded by a shell which hit the gun carriage he stood near.<sup>103</sup> Of the senior officers of the regiment, only Ellis remained. However, making such a prominent target high up on his white horse he had but moments to live as well, as “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.<sup>104</sup> 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 124<sup>th</sup> from the ridge, which Weygant skillfully did.<sup>105</sup>

In addition to the three senior officers of the regiment, the 124<sup>th</sup> lost Captain Isaac Nicoll of Company G, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Milner Brown of Company I, some 34 killed in all, and 57 wounded.<sup>106</sup> As Longstreet’s attack continued to push both east and north, it would also smash into Brewster’s “Excelsior” brigade anxiously awaiting its fury in the Peach Orchard, just north of the 124<sup>th</sup> position. Kingston’s 120<sup>th</sup> 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 [*sic*] of that terable [*sic*] battle.”<sup>107</sup>

While the majority of the Excelsior Brigade found themselves on the front line facing west along the southern edge of Emmitsburg Road, the 120<sup>th</sup>, along with the 73<sup>rd</sup> 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 120<sup>th</sup>'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 Wheatfield and "Stony Hill" just across the road from the Peach Orchard,<sup>108</sup> 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 would be threatened in its front by the remaining brigades of McLaws' Division, Wofford's Georgians and Barksdale's Mississippians in particular.<sup>109</sup> In addition, the Peach Orchard had been enfiladed by artillery fire from Longstreet's well-placed batteries since 3:00 PM.<sup>110</sup>

About half an hour into the bombardment preparatory to the Confederate assault, the Third Corps requested help from the Artillery Reserve. Lieutenant Colonel Freeman McGilvrey, commander of the First Volunteer Brigade, Artillery Reserve, sent, among other batteries, Captain John Bigelow's 9<sup>th</sup> 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, facing on the Wheatfield Road.<sup>111</sup> McGilvrey's batteries would devastate Kershaw's ranks before they would become prey to Barksdale's charge.<sup>112</sup> They would later play a role in the dramatic entrance onto the field of Poughkeepsie's 150<sup>th</sup> New York regiment later in the day.<sup>113</sup>

Corporal Egbert Lewis of I Company, 120<sup>th</sup> New York, could see from his position in the reserve, sometime after 4 o'clock, "Long line[s] of infantry . . . advancing towards us under a rapid fire from our batteries" posted along the Emmitsburg and Wheatfield Roads.<sup>114</sup> Lewis further states 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.”<sup>115</sup> Waiting for his turn to enter the fray, Private Wilber would declare, “We watched the moves of the battle with anxious hearts.”<sup>116</sup> As the remnants of Graham’s regiments fled through their lines, Graham himself having been wounded and subsequently captured, the 120<sup>th</sup>’s moment came: “The whole line rose as a man and poured into their ranks [probably the 18<sup>th</sup> 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.”<sup>117</sup> Private Wilber remembered it this way:

[M]uttering [*sic*] a silent prayr [*sic*] for the preservasion [*sic*] of my life I entered that battle field: with one wild yell we advanced on the enemy but they were comeing [*sic*] to [*sic*] strong[.] [W]e no more then [*sic*] advanced before we were oblieged [*sic*] to fall back[.] [A]t this time they had a cross fire on us and they were poreing [*sic*] in from three different ways [ . . . ] My Comrads [*sic*] were falling on evry [*sic*] side of me and I expected evry [*sic*] minut [*sic*] 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[.]<sup>118</sup>

Colonel Westbrook, the 120<sup>th</sup>’s commander wrote about his experiences at Gettysburg but once, in a September 20, 1900 article to the *National Tribune*.<sup>119</sup> In that article, entitled, “On the Firing Line: The 120<sup>th</sup> N.Y.’s Firm Stand on the Second Day at Gettysburg,” Westbrook insists that his regiment went into action around 6:30 and that Graham’s brigade was “broken up” about half an hour earlier.<sup>120</sup> He rightly notes that as Barksdale was surprised while rolling up Humphrey’s flank along the Emmitsburg Road 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 towards Cemetery Ridge and right into the teeth of Anderson's attack,<sup>121</sup> McGilvrey's batteries along the Wheatfield Road became extremely vulnerable. Bigelow's battery, in a heroic delaying action, retreated 400 yards by prolonge, firing as they went, back to the Trostle farm before having to abandon four of its six Napoleons to the relentless 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi which had veered off Barksdale's main attack to capture these guns.<sup>122</sup>

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 125<sup>th</sup> and 126<sup>th</sup> New York regiments of Willard's Brigade.<sup>123</sup>

As darkness started to fall, the 150<sup>th</sup> New York would have 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.<sup>124</sup> Brigadier General Alpheus S. Williams, who had commanded the Twelfth Corps at Gettysburg, in an April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1864 letter to John Bachelder, explained the role of Lockwood's Brigade at this crucial moment:

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 150<sup>th</sup> N.Y.<sup>125</sup>

As they went into battle, quick-marching in columns of four down the Granite Schoolhouse Lane and towards the Trostle farm, the men of the 150<sup>th</sup> were greeted by several wounded New Yorkers “with shouts of ‘Go in, Dutchess County! Give it to them, boys! Give it to them!’”<sup>126</sup> They had advanced, sometime around 8:00 PM, a good half mile in front of the Union main lines with little opposition.<sup>127</sup> 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.

## VI

As the 150<sup>th</sup> New York returned to their original position within some breastworks around Culp’s Hill, they were met with a nasty surprise. In their absence, their brigade commander recalled years later, enemy pickets had taken the opportunity to occupy their position. After resting on their arms that night, the brigade, early in the morning on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July, was asked to retake the ground the Corps had lost the night before.<sup>128</sup> Sometime after midnight, Alpheus Williams, in temporary command of the Twelfth Corps, was ordered by General Slocum to “drive them out at daylight.”<sup>129</sup> Williams felt the task would be a difficult one indeed, but, having a decided advantage in artillery he began the attack with a fifteen or twenty minute bombardment followed up by an assault which Lockwood’s brigade supported. Williams observed that, “The whole line of woods were ablaze with continuous volleys,

especially on Geary's front [where the 150<sup>th</sup> had been posted], against which they hurled their columns with a most persistent determination." The Confederates tried Geary's lines until nearly 11:00 in the morning, "when their whole line suddenly retreated." An amazed Williams proclaimed, "This was over six hours of almost continuous firing!"<sup>130</sup>

The 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 this universe of battle. In a letter to his father he confesses:

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.<sup>131</sup>

The 150<sup>th</sup>'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.<sup>132</sup>

The 80<sup>th</sup> New York [20<sup>th</sup> 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. It was now around 11:00 and as the battle for Culp's Hill quieted down behind them, the men of the 80<sup>th</sup> complained of the heat. Soldiers speculated about what would happen next. They would not have long to wait.

Lieutenant Colonel Jacob Broadhead Hardenburgh of the 20<sup>th</sup> New York State Militia 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, it being 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 for them from General Doubleday but was told nothing could be done for them. An attack, he was told, was expected soon, and indeed an hour later, the famous cannonade preceding Pickett's Charge commenced. The men of the 80<sup>th</sup>, 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."<sup>133</sup> They all would have to endure this barrage for upwards of two, terrifying hours. Colonel Gates would call this bombardment "a tempest of shot and shell."<sup>134</sup> Even so, some members of the regiment's color guard displayed some 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 towards the clump of trees, the 20<sup>th</sup> and 151<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania—Colonel Theodore Gates' demi-brigade—swung their lines to the right as Stannard's Vermonters also did, and, posting themselves atop a hill in front of the copse of trees, poured volley after volley into the exposed flank of the oncoming but rapidly thinning Confederate lines.<sup>135</sup>

A Union soldier serving in the 8<sup>th</sup> Ohio posted on the opposite flank of the Union line from the 80<sup>th</sup> 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 80<sup>th</sup> 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."<sup>136</sup> And as they came yet nearer, the 80<sup>th</sup>'s Major Walter A. Van Rensselaer, who had slept fitfully on the night

of the 2<sup>nd</sup> in front of his regiment “with a stone for a pillow,” closed with the enemy in his immediate front. He recalled, while writing in his diary that evening, the regiment:

followed up along the fence pouring in a tremendous fire . . . when near a slash of timber,<sup>137</sup> 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 came [*sic*] 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.<sup>138</sup>

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.”<sup>139</sup> He would be justifiably proud the rest of his life of the praise heaped upon him by his divisional commander, Abner Doubleday concerning the conduct of the demi-brigade during the battle.<sup>140</sup>

## VII

“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!*"<sup>141</sup> 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 would be a sight that would haunt many a participant years after the war. Captain Benjamin W. Thompson, Company F, 111<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>142</sup>

What remained now was caring for the wounded and burying the often terribly bloated and distorted bodies of the dead. It is no wonder that Henry Howell of the 124<sup>th</sup> 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 after having sat for two days under a broiling July sun.<sup>143</sup> 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."<sup>144</sup>

The wounded would suffer terribly over the next several days ahead. 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” such sights and sounds, especially the eerie melancholy rhythm of saw on bone. He fled with a profound sense of shame.<sup>145</sup>

A few days after the battle, an inexperienced volunteer nurse named Cornelia Hancock arrived at Gettysburg and appalled by what she saw there, shattered whatever high flown rhetoric others may have 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.”<sup>146</sup>

While his 120<sup>th</sup> New York was sustaining upwards of 45% casualties at Gettysburg, hospital cook Lewis Coe Bevier had managed to wrangle a pass to Washington, D.C., where he visited the Smithsonian, the Capital, 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 124<sup>th</sup> 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 120<sup>th</sup>, Charles DuBois, had been counted among the missing. Many more he knew had been killed or wounded. As he so succinctly puts it, “I suppose their [*sic*] isent [*sic*] many left in our regiment.”<sup>147</sup>

But what had happened to Charley DuBois? His story represents the fate of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of others. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, an assistant surgeon of the 120<sup>th</sup> New York, Dr. John N. Miller, 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.<sup>148</sup>

Unbeknownst to Dr. Miller, Charley DuBois’ body had been found by a comrade, one Ezekiel H. Winter, and, with the help of some others had been buried by him on the field of Gettysburg

months before Miller's letter had even been written,<sup>149</sup> a fact not publicly known until a regimental chaplain published a history of the regiment in the 1890s.<sup>150</sup>

Note: 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 for their assistance in locating numerous sources.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> George B. McClellan had been the army's original commander until his failure to annihilate Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at Antietam in September of 1862, followed by Ambrose Burnside, whose disaster at Fredericksburg a few months later led to his replacement by Hooker on January 25, 1863.

<sup>2</sup> The 124<sup>th</sup> New York, like other volunteer regiments of the time, consisted of ten companies. Company "F" was organized at Port Jervis, Company "D" at Warwick, Company "I" at Newburgh, Company "C" at Cornwall (and elsewhere), Company "H" at Montgomery, Company "E" in various places, including Mount Hope and Walkkill, Company "K" at Newburgh, Goshen and Middletown, Company "G" at Blooming Grove and Newburgh, and Company "B" from Goshen (Weygant 19-28).

<sup>3</sup> Weygant 62-63. Those interested in the details of this campaign might wish to consult George C. Rable's recent *Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!* (U of North Carolina P, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Weygant 64-65.

<sup>5</sup> Weygant 67.

<sup>6</sup> Weygant 68.



<sup>7</sup> Weygant 77. Rable's cautiously cites Livermore's casualty figures for the battle: "1,284 dead, 9,600 wounded, 1,769 captured or missing, for a total of 12,653 Union casualties." (Rables 288). Civil War casualty figures are, at best, elusive, especially considering the incompleteness of Confederate records and the not uncommon exaggeration in both directions, of each side's calculations. Thomas L. Livermore's figures come from his 1900 text *Numbers and Losses in the Civil War in America: 1861-65* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1957). Reviewer David J. Eicher, in his valuable *The Civil War in Books: An Analytical Bibliography* (Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1997), suggests Livermore might have "occasionally questionable" conclusions (p. 298); however, they may be the best we have available.

<sup>8</sup> Van Santvoord 33.

<sup>9</sup> Van Santvoord 35.

<sup>10</sup> See the first section of Virginia Hughes Kaminsky's edition of Dutchess County volunteer Richard T. Van Wyck's Civil War letters home, entitled, *A War to Petrify the Heart: The Civil War Letters of a Dutchess County, N.Y. Volunteer* (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome P, 1997), pp. 22-102.

<sup>11</sup> Van Wyck 35.

<sup>12</sup> Van Wyck 37. Numerous comments by other soldiers from the valley suggest staunch support for a draft, however, the rationale being that everyone should share the sacrifices involved in preserving the Union. The soldiers with such opinions tended to identify anti-draft sentiment with "copperheadism," although much of the anti-draft opinions may well have been racially motivated. Corporal Silas Auchmoedy of Company E, 120<sup>th</sup> New York's comments are typical (See Huguenot Historical Society Collection; transcribed copy in the 120<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry Vertical File, Gettysburg National Military Park Library).

<sup>13</sup> Van Wyck 76.

<sup>14</sup> Weygant 66.

<sup>15</sup> Weygant 82-3.

<sup>16</sup> Ironically, Weygant was staunchly anti-slavery. Some twenty or so pages farther on from his anecdote about Jack Smith, Weygant rants: "Virginia! Birthplace of Washington. Virginia! Home of Presidents . . . but now, alas! Sunk so low—under the crushing weight of that vile institution which has made of your sons of presidents breeders of bondsmen, dealers in human chattels, yea, traffickers not unfrequently [*sic*] of their own flesh and blood . . ." (Weygant 101).

<sup>17</sup> Rable 523fn48.

<sup>18</sup> Other regiments raised in the Hudson Valley served in the Western Theatre, including the 128<sup>th</sup> New York from Hudson and the 156<sup>th</sup> from Kingston. In addition, many young men from the valley volunteered immediately after the bombardment of Fort Sumter and before Lincoln's call for 300,000 additional troops in July of 1862. Kaminsky notes, for example, that "over a thousand men from Dutchess County [alone] had already answered President Lincoln's first call for troops in April 1861 (Van Wyck 23). One such enthusiastic volunteer was Poughkeepsie resident Stephen H. Bogardus, Jr., who served with distinction in the famous 5<sup>th</sup> New York Duryée Zouaves. His letters to the *Poughkeepsie Eagle* have recently been edited by Joel Craig in a volume entitled, *Dear Eagle: The Civil War Correspondence of Stephen H. Bogardus, Jr. to the Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle* (Scuppernon P, 2004). Finally, several individual companies were raised, such as in Putnam County, which served in a variety of regiments, including Company "G" of the 35<sup>th</sup> New York, Company "A" of the 4<sup>th</sup> Heavy Artillery, Companies "I" and "K" of the 59<sup>th</sup> Infantry, Company "K" of the 95<sup>th</sup> New York and the 6<sup>th</sup> New York Heavy Artillery. Some of these units suffered enormous casualties while serving in the Army of the Potomac, especially the heavy artillery units in 1864-65, and the 95<sup>th</sup> New York at Gettysburg and therefore deserve special mention. See Horace E. Hillery's local history contribution to Hudson Valley history entitled *Putnam County in the Civil War* (1961) for a brief treatment of each of the Putnam County units mentioned above.

<sup>19</sup> The Army of Virginia (Union) is not to be confused with the Confederacy's Army of Northern Virginia led by Robert E. Lee. While McClellan slowly transferred the Army of the Potomac northward from his unsuccessful Peninsula Campaign in the spring and early summer of 1862, the Lincoln Administration had constituted a new army, the Army of Virginia led by General John Pope—a general who had had some success in the Western Theatre—to contend with Lee's rapid northward movement. McClellan was expected to cooperate with Pope and did send him troops, notably Heintzleman's Third, Porter's Fifth, part of the Sixth Corps, and Reno's Ninth.

<sup>20</sup> Hennessy 180-81. See also Will Plank's terse but useful summary of these events in his *Banners and Bugles: A Record of Ulster County, New York and the Mid-Hudson Region in the Civil War* (Centennial P, 1972), p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Hennessy 300.

<sup>22</sup> Hennessy 310.

<sup>23</sup> Hennessy 353.

<sup>24</sup> Hennessy 354.

<sup>25</sup> Hennessy 354.

<sup>26</sup> Hennessy 355.

<sup>27</sup> Author's note: The unfinished railroad cut where Jackson's Corps lay.

<sup>28</sup> Author's note: It was just before this point that Colonel Pratt, the 20<sup>th</sup> Militia's commander, fell mortally wounded. The men of his command were unable to recover his body from the field so intense was the Confederate fire (Plank 8).

<sup>29</sup> Hennessy 355. Plank notes that the regiment in actuality lost 31 killed and 21 mortally wounded (including four officers). In addition, the *Official Records* notes that the regiment had 165 wounded—including the previously mentioned mortally wounded—as well as 82 captured (OR, Ser. 1, Vol. XII/2 {S# 16}, p. 254). In other words, the regiment had a casualty rate of approximately 60% for the entire campaign, an astounding figure, but, tragically, not uncommon for this Civil War.

<sup>30</sup> See John Michael Priest's *Before Antietam: The Battle for South Mountain* (Oxford UP, 1992), pages 254-65 for an account of the 80<sup>th</sup> experience before Antietam and Stephen W. Sears superb *Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam* (Warner Books 1983), for an account of Patrick's brigade's ordeal in and around Miller's farm and famous cornfield. Plank speaks glowingly of the 80<sup>th</sup>'s performance here, where Private Isaac Thomas of Company G captured the colors of a Confederate regiment, and where the 80<sup>th</sup> successfully defended Captain Campbell's battery. The already decimated regiment suffered an additional 35% casualties in this defense as, of the 135 men in line of battle, 11 were killed, 40 were wounded and 3 were missing (Plank 11). General Hooker, McClellan's First Corps commander at the time, was to claim after the battle that, "Every stalk of corn in the northern and greater part of the field [where the 80<sup>th</sup> was engaged] was cut as closely as could have been done with a knife . . . and the slain lay in rows . . ." (Sears 431fn5).

<sup>31</sup> Lewis Coe Bevier to his parents. May 9, 1863. Huguenot Historical Society Collection.

<sup>32</sup> Weygant 89.

<sup>33</sup> Van Santvoord 48.

<sup>34</sup> Sears, *Chancellorsville* 193.

<sup>35</sup> Weygant 92-95.

<sup>36</sup> Out of the four regiments being considered here, for example, 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 5248 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 (2141 by combat to 2919 by disease). Better living conditions for the officers no doubt can be accounted 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. Desertion became a growing problem as the war continued, especially after the implementation of the draft. For example, just in Company K of the 150<sup>th</sup> New York alone, 24 men had deserted and another 6 never showed after having been signed up! (Van Wyck 363-69). These figures are not atypical.

<sup>37</sup> Weygant 103-05.

<sup>38</sup> Weygant 106.

<sup>39</sup> Weygant 107. Colonel Ellis has been described as "a stern and profane disciplinarian" who trained his men well. The 124<sup>th</sup> was not his first regiment, however, having trained and help recruit the 56<sup>th</sup> New York before having joined the 124<sup>th</sup> and having, previous to that served as Captain in the 71<sup>st</sup> New York Militia at First Bull Run (McGinnis and Rapp 10).

<sup>40</sup> LaRocca 52.

<sup>41</sup> Weygant 111-13. Sears, in his *Chancellorsville*, carefully examines the wounding of Jackson in a chapter entitled, "The Fate of Stonewall Jackson" (Sears 282-309). The most credible evidence suggests that Jackson was inadvertently shot by his own nervous men. Colonel Westbrook of the 120<sup>th</sup> New York remained unsure at the time: "He was struck down, as he could hardly fail to be, in that seething furnace of shot and shell, lighting up the darkness on every side, but whether his own men, or the enemy, fired the fatal shots, is not certainly known" (quoted in Van Santvoord 51).

<sup>42</sup> LaRocca 42. In actuality, the 124<sup>th</sup> would lose 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, for example, 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).

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Van Santvoord 51-2.

<sup>44</sup> Van Santvoord 53, 54.

<sup>45</sup> Van Santvoord 57.

<sup>46</sup> Weygant 116-17. In a newspaper article concerning, in part, the frantic fighting on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Sergeant Charles Stewart of Company I, 124<sup>th</sup> 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. A year later, he would be captured at Talapottomy Creek, June 1, 1864 (Weygant 352).

<sup>47</sup> Color guards were essential to battlefield cohesion during this time as units needed a point of reference to dress on and rally around, when manoeuvring on a smoke-filled battlefield punctuated with the deafening sounds of artillery and small arms fire. Consisting usually of non-commissioned officers, they 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, these men were usually specifically targeted by opposing forces.

<sup>48</sup> *OR*, Ser. 1, Vol. XXV/1 [S#39], pp. 497-98.

<sup>49</sup> Weygant 120.

<sup>50</sup> Weygant 121.

<sup>51</sup> 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), p. 269.

<sup>52</sup> So emblematic was this baptism of fire at Chancellorsville for the men of the 124<sup>th</sup>, years later Stephen Crane would compose that most famous of late-Nineteenth-Century American novels, *The Red Badge of Courage*, inspired by their example. See Sears' *Chancellorsville* (Houghton Mifflin 1996), pp. 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 than Sears, see Stephen Cushman's *Bloody Promenade: Reflections on a Civil War Battle* (UP of Virginia 1999), especially chapter 19, entitled, "Fictions," pp. 207-29, *passim*.

<sup>53</sup> Van Wyck 93-4.

<sup>54</sup> Van Wyck 97.

<sup>55</sup> 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 would reach Chambersburg, Pennsylvania (Van Santvoord 61). Meanwhile, Hooker's army still languished opposite Fredericksburg (Van Santvoord 63).

<sup>56</sup> Van Wyck 100.

<sup>57</sup> "Oration by Maj. Henry A. Gildersleeve," *New York at Gettysburg, Vol. III*, p. 1032.

<sup>58</sup> Weygant 133.

<sup>59</sup> 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).

<sup>60</sup> Weygant 160-61.

<sup>61</sup> Weygant summarizes these movements on pp. 162-69.

<sup>62</sup> Weygant 169.

<sup>63</sup> Plank 13.

<sup>64</sup> Plank 13.

<sup>65</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> of June (Van Santvoord 64).

<sup>66</sup> Lewis Coe Bevier to his parents. June 19, 1863. Huguenot Historical Society Collection; transcribed copy in the 120<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry Vertical File, Gettysburg National Military Park Library.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Van Santvoord 66.

<sup>68</sup> Stackpole, in his *They Met at Gettysburg* (Stackpole Books 1956), pp. 116-18, provides a convenient chart delineating the times various units approximately arrived on the field. Accurate time, though, 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).

<sup>69</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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.

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Boland, who had served in Company F of the 13<sup>th</sup> Alabama (May 20, 1915). Both articles have been republished in Richard A. Sauer, ed., *Fighting Them Over: How the Veterans Remembered Gettysburg in the Pages of the National Tribune* (Butternut and Blue 1998), 71-72, 73.

<sup>70</sup> Fox, *New York at Gettysburg*, 81. The battlefield monument inscription of the 80<sup>th</sup> New York [20<sup>th</sup> New York State Militia], however, claims the regiment went into combat with 375 men all told (640).

<sup>71</sup> 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<sup>nd</sup> and written atop Cemetery Ridge, where his brigade had retreated to the night before: OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXVII/1 [S# 43], p. 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" [20<sup>th</sup> N. Y. State Militia] and the War of the Rebellion . . .* (New York: Benjamin H. Tyrrel, 1879), 432-35, 440-50.

A note on John Bachelder (1825-1894): He 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).

<sup>72</sup> Cook 324.

<sup>73</sup> 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).

<sup>74</sup> Gates, *The "Ulster Guard"*, 433.

<sup>75</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> O.R. report. Pfanz in

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his remarkable history entitled, *Gettysburg—the First Day* (U of North Carolina P), 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.

<sup>76</sup> Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The First Day*, p. 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 1/8<sup>th</sup> of a mile beyond the Run in the July 2<sup>nd</sup> *O.R.* report but describes it as being “some thirty rods beyond the Run” in *The “Ulster Guard”* (433).

<sup>77</sup> Baldwin did not have long to celebrate his heroic efforts this day as he would be killed during Picket's Charge two days later (Gates, *The “Ulster Guard”* 433).

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The First Day*, p. 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 towards 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), pp. 143-46, for additional details about this incident.

<sup>79</sup> Gates, *The “Ulster Guard”* 433-34.

<sup>80</sup> 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).

<sup>81</sup> Gates, *The “Ulster Guard”*, 435.

<sup>82</sup> Cook 326.

<sup>83</sup> Gates, *The “Ulster Guard”*, 441-42.

<sup>84</sup> Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The First Day*, for example, suggests Pettigrew's brigade alone would lose over 1,000 men here, just as the Division he belonged to—Heth's—would lose over 2,300 men in thirty minutes (292). It is not surprising therefore for Plank to conclude that the 80<sup>th</sup> sustained their heaviest losses of the war at Gettysburg, suffering 170 casualties overall (Plank 17).



<sup>85</sup> Gates, Jan. 30, 1864 letter to John Bachelder, *Bachelder Papers* 83.

<sup>86</sup> 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). He, like the 124<sup>th</sup>'s Captain Weygant, had his own personal “colored” servant who, we learn, gave him up for dead and so had attached himself to one of the regiment’s assistant surgeons instead. Cook also laments the loss of this servant, as Cook apparently could not fend well for himself and had relied on this anonymous servant to fulfill his needs (330). It was a curious war indeed where white soldiers on both sides—whether privates, noncoms, or officers—had black servants—some slave some free—serving in a war whose ostensible purpose was to free slaves from bondage.

<sup>87</sup> “Oration by Maj. Henry A. Gildersleeve,” *New York at Gettysburg, Vol. III*, p. 1032-33.

<sup>88</sup> See the July 16, 1863 “Report of Brig. Gen. Lockwood,” *O.R.*, Ser. 1, Vol. XXVII/1, [S# 43], p. 804.

<sup>89</sup> Van Wyck 111. He was also quickly learning the fine art of foraging. Confederate soldiers, of course, report 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), pp. 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.

<sup>90</sup> 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<sup>st</sup>, 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.

<sup>91</sup> Weygant 172. Peter B. Ayers, Adjutant of the 99<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania concluded in a February 1886 article to 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).

<sup>92</sup> “Letter of Capt. Samuel C. Armstrong,” to John Bachelder, February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1884, *Bachelder Papers, Vol. II*, 1000.

<sup>93</sup> Weygant 173.

<sup>94</sup> 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), among other battles and eventually evolved into the extensive trenches of the Siege of Petersburg (lasting from June 1864 through April of the following year).

<sup>95</sup> Weygant 174. Lieutenant Colonel Cummins notes that heavy skirmishing between Berdan's 2<sup>nd</sup> Sharp Shooters and Longstreet's advancing columns began around 2:30. Steven's, in his work *Berdan's Unites States Sharpshooters in the Army of the Potomac 1861-1865* (Morningside 1984), pp. 321-23, describes the important role the small contingent of Berdan's men played in delaying Longstreet's advance towards the Round Tops situated 500 yards behind the 124<sup>th</sup>'s position on Houck's Ridge.

<sup>96</sup> The 124<sup>th</sup>'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 322).

<sup>97</sup> Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day* 185, notes that the 124<sup>th</sup> had but 18 officers and 220 enlisted men in line on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July. Lieutenant Colonel Cummins (*The Bachelder Papers, Vol. II*, p. 1023), remembers the total as 240.

<sup>98</sup> In Lieutenant Colonel Cummins February 21, 1886 letter to John Bachelder (*The Bachelder Papers, Vol. II*, p. 1023), he misidentifies Smith's guns as 20-lb Parrotts. A Parrott rifled cannon, developed by one 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 2500 yards, about twice the range of a smoothbore gun" (*Echoes of Glory: Arms and Equipment of the Union*, p. 300).

<sup>99</sup> Weygant 175-76.

<sup>100</sup> Weygant 176.

<sup>101</sup> Weygant 176.

<sup>102</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Georgia (Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day* 190).

<sup>103</sup> Weygant 176-77.

<sup>104</sup> Weygant 177. First Lieutenant H. P. Ramsdell would spend the next week accompanying Ellis' 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.

<sup>105</sup> Those interested in a Confederate version of these events might wish to consult the *Southern Historical Society Papers*, IV.4 (October 1877), pp. 161-84, which includes the reports of Brigadier Generals Robertson and Benning, among others from Hood's division.

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<sup>106</sup> 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*, the 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 124<sup>th</sup> New York Inf. Reg., Gettysburg National Military Park).

<sup>107</sup> Letter of Esick G. Wilber to his parents. July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1863. Murray J. Smith Collection (U.S. Army Military History Institute). Copied at Gettysburg National Military Park. A note appended to the letter explains that "Wilber was captured in Oct. 1863" and died 11 months later in Andersonville Prison, Georgia.

<sup>108</sup> They were confronting Kershaw's brigade of McLaw's Division from one direction and Anderson's brigade from Hood's Division from another.

<sup>109</sup> These brigades included Cobbs' and Phillips' Georgia Legions, the 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Georgia, and the 13<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi.

<sup>110</sup> For a detailed account of the events leading up to the 120<sup>th</sup>'s involvement on the second day of Gettysburg, see Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, chapters 11 (pp. 241-66) and 12 (pp. 267-302).

<sup>111</sup> Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, p. 307.

<sup>112</sup> Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, p. 321.

<sup>113</sup> Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, pp. 62-63, describes the Dutchess County regiment "as large as they were inexperienced." Pfanz continues, "Although Lockwood's men [Lockwood being the 150<sup>th</sup>'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."

<sup>114</sup> Quoted in Van Santvoord 73. These were no doubt the brigades of Wofford and Barksdale.

<sup>115</sup> Quoted in Van Santvoord 74. The other regiment of the Excelsior Brigade in reserve, the 73<sup>rd</sup> New York, according to its Company H commander—2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Frank E. Moran—was "ordered to move toward at double-quick through a shower of bullets and bursting shells." See Eric A. Campbell, "Hell in a Peach Orchard," *America's Civil War* (July 2003): 41. This movement had to be around 5 o'clock or even 5:30 because Moran could see the

smoke of battle from Devil's Den, and Graham's brigade, who the 73<sup>rd</sup> went to support, was already fully engaged by the time the 73<sup>rd</sup> advanced. Barksdale's Mississippians would quickly flank and overwhelm the 73<sup>rd</sup> in its futile attempt to stabilize Graham's line near the Sherfy barn. See also Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, p. 323, 331.

<sup>116</sup> Letter of Esick G. Wilber to his parents. July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1863. Murray J. Smith Collection (U.S. Army Military History Institute). Copied at Gettysburg National Military Park.

<sup>117</sup> 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], p. 560. It is questionable that the 120<sup>th</sup> 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.

<sup>118</sup> All bracketed commentary my own. Letter of Esick G. Wilber to his parents. July 10<sup>th</sup>, 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. 120<sup>th</sup> Reg. N.Y.S. Vols. Company K.* Transcribed copy in 120<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry Vertical File, Gettysburg National Military Park Library.

<sup>119</sup> It would be a momentous day for Westbrook, for he suffered a painful wound when shot through the pelvis, a wound that would bother him the rest of his life. He would be discharged from the service February 20, 1864. War Letters. Copied from the files of the Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park. Transcribed copy in 120<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry Vertical File, Gettysburg National Military Park Library.

<sup>120</sup> Sauers 312. Meade by this time had lost his second corps commander of the battle, this time Sickles, his right leg shattered at the knee by a solid round shot. The leg would shortly be amputated. See Pfan, *Gettysburg: The Second Day* 332-34. Westbrook's account essentially conforms to that of Major General George H. Sharpe who dedicated the 120<sup>th</sup>'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*, pp. 814-24 and also in C. Van Santvoord's *The One Hundred and Twentieth Regiment NYS Volunteers in the Civil War*, pp. 218-32.

<sup>121</sup> Westbrook puts the time of Anderson's attack at around 7:00 PM.

<sup>122</sup> See Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, pp. 338-44 for a fine narrative account about 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), pp. 308-09.

<sup>123</sup> Sauers 313.

<sup>124</sup> Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, p. 408.

<sup>125</sup> Letter of Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams. Tallahoma, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1864. *The Bachelder Papers, Vol. I*, pp. 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 would not have been able to 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.

<sup>126</sup> Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, p. 408. "Oration by Maj. Henry A. Gildersleeve," *New York at Gettysburg, Vol. III*, p. 1033. Neither Pfanz nor Gildersleeve identifies these anonymous New Yorkers but who would be able to identify the 150<sup>th</sup> and their affiliation with Dutchess County except other Hudson Valley regiments? Could these have been wounded from the 124<sup>th</sup> or 120<sup>th</sup>? I suspect so, for all the wounded they met seem to have been from the Third Corps.

<sup>127</sup> Colonel William P. Maulsby of the First Regiment, Potomac Home Guard, Maryland Volunteers, whose regiment went into action with the 150<sup>th</sup> 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*, p. 1042.

<sup>128</sup> "Address by Gen. H. H. Lockwood," *New York at Gettysburg, Vol. III*, p. 1040.

<sup>129</sup> "Letter of Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams." Camden, Ark., Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1865. *The Bachelder Papers, Vol. I*, p. 219.

<sup>130</sup> "Letter of Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams." Camden, Ark., Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1865. *The Bachelder Papers, Vol. I*, p. 220-21. By comparison, the 124<sup>th</sup> and 120<sup>th</sup> New York fought for only half that time against Longstreet's Corps.

<sup>131</sup> Van Wyck 106. Major Gildersleeve notes that the 150<sup>th</sup> 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*, p. 1034.

<sup>132</sup> Pfanz, in *Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill* (U of North Carolina P, 1993), p. 307, notes that, "The 150<sup>th</sup> 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, Pvts' John P. Wing and Levi Rust, and killed them too. Wing was standing behind Rust, and they both dropped at the same time."

<sup>133</sup> 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.

<sup>134</sup> "Letter of Col. Theodore B. Gates," Headquarters 20<sup>th</sup> N.Y.S.M., Brandy Station, Va., Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>, 1864. *The Bachelder Papers, Vol. I*, p. 84.

<sup>135</sup> Hardenburgh and Gates tell essentially the same story of the regiment's rightward movement towards and in front of the clump of trees.

<sup>136</sup> Quoted in Maust 197.

<sup>137</sup> 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.

<sup>138</sup> Union Regiment File V6-NY80 IN. Transcribed and copied at Gettysburg National Military Park.

<sup>139</sup> "Letter of Col. Theodore B. Gates," Headquarters 20<sup>th</sup> N.Y.S.M., Brandy Station, Va., Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>, 1864. *The Bachelder Papers, Vol. I*, p. 86.

<sup>140</sup> Gates, that prolific chronicler of the 20<sup>th</sup> 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], pp. 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 20<sup>th</sup> entitled, *The "Ulster Guard"* (Benjamin H. Tyrell, 1879), and in his address at the dedication of the 80<sup>th</sup> New York monument at Gettysburg, *New York at Gettysburg, Vol. II*, pp. 41-44 (October 4, 1888), and elsewhere.

<sup>141</sup> Quoted in Maust 185, Dooley's emphasis.

<sup>142</sup> Quoted in Maust 245.

<sup>143</sup> Union Regiment File V6-NY124 IN. Transcribed and copied at Gettysburg National Military Park.

<sup>144</sup> Quoted in Maust 276.

<sup>145</sup> Weygant 183-83, 183.

<sup>146</sup> Quoted in Maust 376.

<sup>147</sup> Lewis Coe Bevier to his parents. July 18, 1863. Huguenot Historical Society Collection; transcribed copy in the 120<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry Vertical File, Gettysburg National Military Park Library The 120<sup>th</sup> 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).

<sup>148</sup> Dr. John N. Miller to Friend Benjamin. September 27, 1863. Huguenot Historical Society Collection.

<sup>149</sup> Van Santvoord 292.

<sup>150</sup> 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—



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