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Introduction

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Introduction

This issue of *Gettysburg Magazine* features the work of several researchers as well as some original documents from veterans describing their experiences or arguing about past events. Often the moments of great crisis at Gettysburg have been etched in our minds by singular events associated with the retelling of the story. One such case is the oft-told story of the self-sacrificing charge of the First Minnesota, when Barksdale's Mississippi brigade appeared on the verge of breaking the weak Union line along Cemetery Ridge on the evening of July 2. Our first article, by noted author John Michael Priest, presents a new analysis of this iconic event, providing a more complete picture of the Federal attempts to hold off Confederate attacks in the waning hours of the day.

Robert Sledge's article on the fighting around the railroad cut on July 1 likewise offers a much more detailed analysis while seeking to refute the usual conclusion that a large portion of Gen. Joseph R. Davis's brigade became prisoners during this clash. Bringing to his investigation new sources, particularly from Davis's brigade, he offers a fresh interpretation on what happened, the topography of the area, who was responsible (from both the Southern and Northern perspectives), and a complete listing of casualties taken from Confederate sources to support his conclusions.

Michael Forsyth's contribution to the ongoing debate about Southern intentions before and during the campaign seeks to explain General Lee's intentions against the background of Antoine de Jomini's writings on Napoleon's campaigns, then widely in use at the United States Military Academy and other military schools throughout both the North and the South. He then looks at Lee's decisions each day, arguing that they indicate he was "In Search of the Decisive Battle."

Readers who enjoyed William Frassanito's pio-

neering books on Civil War photography will no doubt be intrigued by Tom Danninger's analysis of a wartime photograph taken at Letterman Hospital and his mathematical calculations to determine the exact angle of the photograph and the location of the camera vis-à-vis today's topography and buildings.

This issue offers as original documents the reminiscences of Lt. Louis Fischer, an Eleventh Corps pioneer who observed the opening phases of the battle north of town on July 1, and a second piece, "Who Engaged First?" which contains a series of newspaper articles from the *National Tribune* in which Union veterans refight the First Corps arrival on July 1 to determine what unit opened the battle.

Our human-interest stories begin with Thomas Elmore's discovery of a battlefield marker that relates to the fate of two Confederate soldiers from the Second Richmond Howitzers. Students of the Civil War are quite familiar with the story of Sergeant Kirkland, who bravely crossed the stone wall at Fredericksburg to bring water to Union wounded in December 1862. J. Keith Jones's article on a lesser known instance examines the experience of a Union soldier (and Medal of Honor recipient) who credited his survival at Gettysburg to a similar act of courage by Lt. Thomas P. Oliver of the Twenty-Fourth Georgia Infantry.

This issue closes with Sonny Fulks's "If You Want to Go" column, featuring his experiences and his favorite scenes as he pursued his battlefield photography over the years, and with an original poem dedicated to Pickett's charge authored by Neal Allan Olmstead. As always, we encourage feedback, ideas, and the contribution of manuscripts from anyone engaged in research appropriate for the mission of *Gettysburg Magazine*.

—James S. Pula