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Gettysburg Magazine, Number 52, January 2015, pp. 2-24 (Article)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/get.2015.0008>

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A Most Desperate Hour:

6:45 p.m.–7:45 p.m. July 2, 1863

The Federal Counterattack along the Emmitsburg Road

JOHN MICHAEL PRIEST

Anyone who goes to Gettysburg knows the story of the First Minnesota and its fatal charge against Barksdale's brigade late in the day on July 2, 1863. Celebrated in a terrific painting by the renowned Don Troiani and perpetually commemorated by a magnificent monument along southern Hancock Avenue, the story recalls the raw courage and selfless devotion to duty of a small western regiment as it charged to its demise against a much larger Confederate force. The First Minnesota rightfully deserves its accolades and as such has become part of the mythology of the most studied battle in history.

The regiment, however, did not act alone on that fateful day. It participated in a much larger counterattack, which stretched from the Trostle farm north to the Codori farm and the infamous Copse of Trees. Again the First Minnesota deserves its place in history, but so do the other regiments in the Army of the Potomac that fought that day. This is their story.

Situation between 6:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

By 6:30 p.m. Maj. Gen. Daniel E. Sickles had been taken from the field seriously wounded. The Wheatfield, the Peach Orchard, and the Emmitsburg Road fell to the Confederates. The Third Corps, in disarray, had fallen back toward Cemetery Ridge and the Trostle farmhouse. While the Twenty-First Mississippi closed in on the Ninth Massachusetts Artillery at Trostle's, the rest of Brig. Gen. William Barksdale's and Cadmus Wilcox's mixed brigades attempted to regroup on the east side of the Emmitsburg Road to the Rodgers' house. Col. David Lang's Florida Brigade continued the attack farther to the north and Brig. Gen. Ambrose

Wright's Georgians finished the formation farther to the north.

A tenuous Federal line, stretching from the George Weikert orchard to the Copse of Trees, prepared for the onslaught. Maj. Freeman McGilvery formed an artillery line on the ridge immediately north of George Weikert's orchard, its left flank anchored on the woods west of the house. The badly mauled Battery B, First New Jersey, had the left, with the Sixth Maine and the battered Battery E, Fifth Massachusetts, continuing it to the right. The 262-man First Minnesota was lying down to the right of the Fifth Massachusetts with Battery C, Fourth U.S., on its right. A large gap of about three hundred yards separated the battery's right from the Nineteenth Maine. Another 350 yards separated the New Englanders from the left of Col. Norman J. Hall's brigade near the Copse of Trees. The Sixty-Ninth Pennsylvania (Brig. Gen. Alexander Webb's brigade) finished the infantry's front. Batteries A from the Fourth U.S. and the First Rhode Island secured the right of the Second Corps line. Battery B, First Rhode Island Artillery, was deployed in the field about one hundred yards to the front of the Sixty-Ninth Pennsylvania when Wright's brigade overran the Codori buildings.

The narrative begins from here.

On the Slope East of the Brien Orchard

Hancock, now commanding the Third Corps by Maj. Gen. George G. Meade's authority, clattered onto northern Seminary Ridge, desperately looking for regiments to shore up the disintegrating Third Corps position to the south. He locked his eyes on Brig. Gen. Alexander Hays and Col. George L. Wil-

The Klinge farm to the Codori farm. The Confederates overrun the Emmitsburg Road, 6:30 p.m.–7:00 p.m., July 2, 1863. Reproduced from *Stand to It and Give Them Hell: Gettysburg as the Soldiers Experienced it from Cemetery Ridge to Little Round Top, July 2, 1863* (Savas Beatie, 2014) by permission of the publisher.

Col. Norman Hall commanding the Third Brigade, Second Division, Second Corps. Courtesy of the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center.

lard, both mounted behind Willard's regiments, and without any hesitation dispatched his adjutant general, Lt. Col. Orson H. Hart, with specific orders to commit them to action. Colonel Hart breathlessly interrupted the two officers. Speaking directly to Hays, he blurted, "General Hancock sends you his compliments and," pointing south, "wishes you to send one of your best brigades over there." Abruptly turning toward Willard, Hays snapped, "Take your brigade over there and knock the Hell out of the Rebs."¹

Willard spurred over to his regiments and yelled them to their feet. "Fix Bayonets!" Steel clinked coldly on steel. "Shoulder arms! Left face; forward march." Swinging into columns of division, the regiments marched steadily south on two company

¹ David L. Ladd and Audrey J. Ladd, eds., *The Bachelder Papers: Gettysburg in Their Own Words* (Dayton OH: Morningside, 1995), 3:1984; George W. Sweet to Charles A. Richardson, September 4, 1894, quoted in Eric Campbell, "Remember Harper's Ferry," *Gettysburg Magazine*, no. 7 (June 1, 1992): 64n69.

Lt. Col. Orson H. Hart, adjutant general, Willard's brigade. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

fronts at the common time. The 125th New York took the right with the Thirty-Ninth to its left. The 126th New York covered the 125th, and the 111th fell in behind the Garibaldi Guards (the Thirty-Ninth New York).²

Galloping south, Hancock ran into Lt. Gulian Weir's Battery C, Fifth U.S. Artillery, and blustered at him to wheel his guns into the low ground southeast of the Codori buildings. Weir, suffering from a chronically ulcerated throat, reluctantly rasped at his men to wheel right over the crest of Cemetery Ridge.

Before he could effectively execute the command, the volatile Hancock had ridden to the top of the ridge, about 375 yards due east of the Codori barn, where he found the Nineteenth Maine from Brig. Gen. William Harrow's brigade prone in the tall grass.

Hancock leaped from his horse and charged down on the front rank of Company F on the left of the line. Grabbing Pvt. George Durgin from the end file, he yanked the short, stocky man to his feet and pushed him to the wooded knoll about one hundred yards to the front left of the regiment. Posting the enlisted man exactly where he wanted him, Hancock bellowed, "Will you stay here?" Staring into Hancock's face, Durgin shot back, "I'll stay here, General, until hell freezes over."³ With a grin, Hancock trotted back to the startled Col. Francis E. Heath and emphatically told him to dress the rest of the regiment on Durgin.

2 J. W. Hardee, *Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lipincott, 1861), 29; Arabella M. Willson, *Disaster, Struggle, Triumph: The Adventures of 1000 "Boys in Blue," from August, 1862, to June 1865* (Albany: Argus, 1870), 168. The regimental history of the 126th said the brigade formed in four columns but did not specify the front. In light of subsequent testimony, I believe the men advanced in a column four companies wide and ten companies deep.

3 John Day Smith, *History of the Nineteenth Regiment of Maine Volunteer Infantry 1862-1865* (Gaithersburg, 1988), 70-71.

Col. George L. Willard commanding a brigade in the Third Division, Third Corps. Courtesy of the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center.

Heath immediately snapped the command as Hancock swung into the saddle and began to ride away. The thundering and clanging of Weir's approach from behind attracted Heath's attention. Realizing that the battery was going to collide with his right company, he promptly yelled for the files on the end to break to the rear to allow the guns to pass. Hancock, misunderstanding what was going on, stormed to Lt. Weir and his officers, swearing up a blue streak. "If I commanded this regiment, I'd be God Damned if I

would not charge bayonets on you." While Hancock headed south, the shamed artillerymen reluctantly rolled down the slope into the hollow and went into battery with their left flank on the northern terminus of the ravine running from Trostle's. The Nineteenth Maine advanced over the wooded crest into the low ground behind the demolished rail fence at its base. Heath ordered the line prone to protect them from the incoming rounds, which materialized from the smoke obscuring Emmitsburg Road.⁴

Heath anxiously paced the front of his prone regiment. Its right flank started on the ridge just north of the wooded knoll southeast of the Codori house, and its left flank rested at the head of the overgrown ravine, which ran almost parallel with the creek bottom. Peering through the smoke, he spied Brig. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys and his staff emerge from the sulfuric mantle some 150 yards ahead of the remnants of the general's shattered division. Passing through Weir's silent battery, the gaggle of officers trotted up to Heath, and the general demanded that the colonel call the regiment to its feet

4 Ladd and Ladd, *Bachelder Papers*, 3:1651; Smith, *History of the Nineteenth Regiment of Maine*, 70-71.

Cemetery Ridge. Willard's brigade supports McGilvery's artillery, 7:00 p.m.–7:30 p.m., July 2, 1863. Reproduced from *Stand to It and Give Them Hell: Gettysburg as the Soldiers Experienced it from Cemetery Ridge to Little Round Top, July 2, 1863* (Savas Beatie, 2014) by permission of the publisher.

with fixed bayonets and stop the rout of his men. The colonel defiantly refused to comply, retorting that Humphreys's mob would carry away his line.

Noticing that Humphreys's "boys" had about caught up with the general, Heath yelled, "I was placed here by an officer of higher rank for a purpose and I do not intend to go to the rear. Let your troops form in the rear and we will take care of the enemy in front."⁵ Humphreys fired an angry salvo of oaths at Heath, which the hot-tempered colonel returned in kind.

Unable to curse Heath into compliance, Humphreys and his staff flanked the Nineteenth Maine and tried getting the New Englanders to their feet. Heath stayed right at his heels, defiantly countermanding the general. All the while, Humphreys's shattered regiments trampled over the prone New Englanders. Skulkers and walking wounded preceded the disorganized horde. Sgt. Silas Adams (Company F), on the left of the regiment, later wrote,

⁵ Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg* (Portland ME: Lakeside Press, 1898), 292.

Col. Francis E. Heath, Nineteenth Maine. Courtesy of the Gettysburg National Military Park.

Maj. Freeman McGilvery, First Volunteer Brigade, Artillery Reserve. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel for his bravery on July 2, 1863. Courtesy of the Gettysburg National Military Park.

"They were all of them in a hurry. These men were not particular where they stepped in walking over us, they only seemed intent upon getting to the rear and out of the reach of their relentless pursuers."⁶ From Company A, 1st Lt. David E. Parsons counted thirteen flags passing over the regiment.⁷

The George Weikert Orchard

Maj. Freeman McGilvery desperately organized a reserve line on the level ground running north from the George Weikert house. Capt. Adoniram J. Clark's Battery B, First New Jersey Light, rolled into position and planted his left section on the western side of Weikert's orchard. McGilvery's poor horse recoiled under the impact of four simultaneous hits—three in his withers and front shoulder and a fourth through his forelegs—while the major posted Lt. Edwin P. Dow's Sixth Maine Battery to Clark's right. Moments later, a spent solid shot bounced McGilvery, temporarily disabling him.

⁶ Smith, *History of the Nineteenth Regiment of Maine*, 71.

⁷ Ladd and Ladd, *Bachelder Papers*, 3:1651–52.

The badly cut-up Seventh New Jersey briefly appeared on Dow's right then continued its retreat to the safety of the woods behind the batteries. Capt. Charles A. Phillips (Battery E, Fifth Massachusetts Artillery) immediately ordered his four guns into battery on Dow's right. From there, they continued to shell the Confederates.⁸

Ridge Northwest of George Weikert's House

Colonel Willard, under Hancock's personal supervision, led his brigade, with the Third Division's adjutant general, Capt. George P. Corts, by his side, into position on the eastern slope of Cemetery Ridge along the front of the woods behind the rallied batteries on the top of the ridge. The regiments fronted amid a horde of Third Corps refugees, wounded and unhurt, who swarmed around their flanks and pushed through their formations. Hancock, despite his prolific swearing, could not get them to stand firm. At one point, a stretcher party passed through Lieutenant Thompson's Company F, carrying an officer with a mangled leg, whom Thompson mistakenly recalled was Sickles.

Willard, a professional from the Regular Army, sent markers forward as the brigade approached its position to align his regiments in parade-ground formation. The Thirty-Ninth New York deployed facing southwest to cover the flank overlooking the Trostle farmhouse. Two hundred fifty yards to the right front of the Thirty-Ninth New York, the 125th New York, with the 126th to its right, wheeled into line facing west. The 111th New York, which went prone some two hundred yards farther east, supported the 126th.⁹

Cpl. Harrison Clark (Company E, 125th New York), to the left of Color Sgt. Lewis Smith (Company C), recalled, "We were halted amid a heavy cloud of smoke in front of a swale and a new growth of trees."¹⁰ The regiments stood their ground in the face of raining rifle and artillery fire. Without orders, the men in the two lead regiments returned

Col. Eliakim Sherrill, 126th New York. Courtesy of the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center.

fire at the muzzle flashes from the swale to their front. Just as quickly, someone screamed, "Firing on your own men!"¹¹

"Cease firing!" Willard yelled above the din. The company officers responded immediately. Running along the front of their commands, they shouted the rattled soldiers into silence. The Confederates quickly loosed a volley at the confused Yankees. A soldier on the left of the 125th New York pitched forward, dead. Color Sgt. Smith collapsed, also killed in his place. Cpl. Clark snatched up the flag before it touched the ground. Another bullet mortally wounded Sgt. John E. Lawrence (Company H, 111th New York), who lay near Pvt. Norman Eldred. Instantly, one of the shells brutally struck Willard in the face before he could issue any commands. A second round killed Corts's horse.¹²

Col. Eliakim Sherrill (126th New York) assumed command of the brigade and urged the line forward. The 125th New York, with the 126th New York to its

⁸ Regimental Committee, *History of the 5th Massachusetts Battery* (Boston: L. E. Cowles, 1909), 625, 627–28, 636, 638; Ladd and Ladd, *Bachelder Papers*, 1:168; Edwin B. Dow to the Adjutant General, U.S.A., August 3, 1895, supplemental report, Reports and Papers, pp. 424, 496, National Archives, Washington DC.

⁹ Benjamin F. Thompson, "This Hell of Destruction," *Civil War Times Illustrated* 12:18; R. L. Murray, *Redemption of the "Harper's Ferry Cowards"* (Wolcott NY: Benedum Books, 1994), 74. The ambulance had already removed Sickles; therefore, Thompson could not have seen him on the stretcher.

¹⁰ Ezra D. Simons, *The One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth New York State Volunteers* (New York: E. D. Simons, 1888), 111–12.

¹¹ Simons, *One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth New York*, 111–12.

¹² Thompson, "This Hell of Destruction"; Ladd and Ladd, *Bachelder Papers*, 2:1134, 3:1357; N. Eldred, "Only a Boy: A First-hand Account of the Civil War," 26, drawer 6, file NY111b, Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg PA; Simons, *One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth New York*, 111–12; New York Monuments Commission for the Battlefields of Gettysburg and Chattanooga, *New York at Gettysburg* (Albany, 1900), 2:886–87; Walter F. Beyer and Oscar F. Keydel, eds., *Deeds of Valor* (Detroit: Perrien-Keydel, 1901), 1:225.

right, began crossing the small level plain into the rock-strewn valley north of Trostle's. As they moved out, the colonel spurred to the 111th New York and got it to its feet. Firing erupted from the two center regiments, the men loading and shooting while they advanced, much like a well-drilled skirmish line. Just as they reached the first gentle decline toward the creek bottom, Sherrill ordered the 125th and the 126th New York to charge. Someone within the ranks cried aloud, "Remember Harper's Ferry!" The shout carried along the front like a lightning bolt as man after man picked up the cry.¹³

North of the Trostle House

The Yankees caught Barksdale's three left regiments in the open and helpless. Their rounds knocked down Mississippians by the handfuls. The general's prolific swearing attracted the attention of the two New York regiments. Being the apex of an imaginary triangle centered between the New Yorkers, he naturally drew fire. Without warning, a minie ball ploughed through the general's back. Exiting through his left breast, the impact jerked him from the saddle. He thudded unconscious to the ground, his faithful bay standing by his body. Pvt. Jack Boyd (Company I, Thirteenth Mississippi) and two enlisted men sprang to his aid. The general regained consciousness when the three men tried to lift his 240 pounds of dead weight from the ground. Weakened and in a great deal of pain, he pleaded with them to leave him lie. They did.

Barksdale, with extraordinary effort, managed to gain his feet. Pvt. David G. Maggard (Company K, Thirteenth Mississippi) saw him weakly leaning against the side of his horse, his weight on his right foot, literally bleeding to death. "Boys, I am a dead man," the general rasped, "but charge 'em, darn 'em, charge 'em, and don't fall back."¹⁴ Col. Thomas M. Griffin (Eighteenth Mississippi) immediately took over the brigade. Shortly thereafter, a ball hit him in the leg, and he ordered his regiment out of the fight.

Plum Run North of Trostle's

Col. William B. Holder (Seventeenth Mississippi), being the only uninjured field-grade officer among

Gen. William Barksdale commanding a brigade in McLaws Division, First Corps (Longstreet). Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

the three left regiments, went to the right to transfer the brigade command to Col. Benjamin G. Humphreys (Twenty-First Mississippi). On the way, Holder spied what appeared to be a Yankee battery (Battery I, Fifth U.S. Artillery) rolling into position several hundred yards to the east, onto a small shelf of land north of the farm lane before it entered Weikert's woods. Finding Humphreys, who had also seen the threat, he shouted, "If you will give me Company A of the Seventeenth, I will take that battery before it can fire a gun."¹⁵

Humphreys consented and detailed Company A, Twenty-First Mississippi, to go in with Holder's men. The two companies, well below strength, formed ranks, wheeled into line, and charged into a

¹³ Murray, *Redemption of the "Harper's Ferry Cowards,"* 77; Campbell, "Remember Harper's Ferry," 67.

¹⁴ "One of the Veterans of Gettysburg," newspaper article, n.d., Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg PA.

¹⁵ George J. Leftwich, *The Aberdeen (Mississippi) Examiner*, August 22, 1913, 1, Robert L. Brake Collection, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle PA. It is evident from the witnesses that both Holder and Humphreys participated in the assault.

Cemetery Ridge. Willard stops Barksdale's and Wilcox's brigades, 7:00 p.m.–7:30 p.m., July 2, 1863. Reproduced from *Stand to It and Give Them Hell: Gettysburg as the Soldiers Experienced it from Cemetery Ridge to Little Round Top, July 2, 1863* (Savas Beatie, 2014) by permission of the publisher.

maelstrom of small-arms fire. With Holder leading the assault, Humphreys rashly ordered the rest of the Twenty-First Mississippi into the attack.

Second Lieutenant MacConnell (Battery I, Fifth U.S.) immediately yelled for his men to grab the implements to the four three-inch rifles and make off for safer ground. One of the section commanders, 2nd Lt. Samuel Peeples raced east heading for George Weikert's, when he ran into two general officers, whom he did not know, and begged them to help him to save his guns. With their hands full trying to preserve what was left of the Third Corps, they said they could do nothing.

Capt. John B. Fassett, Birney's senior aide-de-camp, having just established a rallying point for the Third Corps on Cemetery Ridge behind McGilvery's small-artillery line, found Peeples standing on top of a boulder anxiously watching the Confederates closing in on his battery. Why was the lieutenant not with his battery? Fassett asked. "Because it has just been captured," Peeples called back. Pointing toward the farm lane, he continued, "And if those Confederates are able to serve my guns, those troops you have just been forming on the ridge, won't stay there a minute."¹⁶

Fassett wheeled about and headed back to the first regiment he could find. Coming upon Maj. Hildebrandt and the Thirty-Ninth New York, he told him to retake the battery. "By whose orders?" Hildebrandt countered. "By order of General Birney," Fassett yelled back. "I am in General Hancock's Corps," the major insisted. "Then I order you to take those guns, by order of General Hancock."¹⁷

Hildebrandt commanded his regiment to stand up, faced it about, and moved them north. Crossing George Weikert's farm lane, he swung his regiment into line facing west and ordered it to charge. Lieutenant Peeples picked up a discarded rifle and went into the attack with the New Yorkers. Under a tremendous fusillade, the Rebels swarmed all over the battery. Willard's New Yorkers literally tore the guts out of the attack. A bullet ripped through Colonel Holder's abdomen. Clutching his entrails with one hand to keep them from spilling out, he guided his horse from the field with the other one. Within

minutes, Company A lost twenty-two of the forty-one officers and men it took into the fray.¹⁸

Unable to hold the ground in the face of Willard's attack, the Confederates retreated. Colonel Humphreys and his survivors, rather than getting slaughtered, made tracks back toward the Trostle farmhouse. A couple of the Mississippians stayed behind. One of them grabbed the reins of Fassett's horse as the second one went to shoot the captain at point-blank range. Fassett struck the forestock of the rifle with his saber, forcing the muzzle skyward as it discharged. The ball passed through the captain's cap visor. Simultaneously, one of the New Yorkers bayoneted the rifleman in the chest while Fassett killed the fellow holding the reins with a single pistol shot.¹⁹

The Yankees spilled down into Plum Run and, passing over the tangle of casualties there, kept herding the Rebels west. A few minutes later, their line pulled back to the eastern side of the creek. One of them stumbled across Pvt. Joseph C. Lloyd (Company C, Thirteenth Mississippi), who had crawled into the cover of the brush to keep his shattered left arm from further injury. The Yank hastily fashioned a sling for Lloyd and left him there with a genuine, "Wish you well."

Lloyd decided to get away while he could. Weakly standing up, he staggered west. Suddenly, he realized he was the only upright Rebel in the field. Someone weakly called to him. Turning to the right, he spied Barksdale lying on the ground. Kneeling down, he gave the general a swig from his canteen, only to watch the water roll out through a hole in the general's cheek. Barksdale gasped a final message for the brigade, and Lloyd left him there with the assurance he would send a stretcher for him.²⁰

Swale North of the Trostle House

Willard's two center regiments, the 125th New York and the 126th New York, firing as they advanced, pushed into the rock-strewn, marshy creek bottom, losing their unit cohesion in the process. Color Sgt. Erasmus E. Bassett (Company B, 126th New York),

¹⁶ Beyer and Keydel, *Deeds of Valor*, 1:240–41.

¹⁷ Beyer and Keydel, *Deeds of Valor*, 1:240–41.

¹⁸ Ladd and Ladd, *Bachelder Papers*, 3:1869; Beyer and Keydel, *Deeds of Valor*, 1:240–41; George J. Leftwich, *The Aberdeen (Mississippi) Examiner*, August 22, 1913.

¹⁹ Beyer and Keydel, *Deeds of Valor*, 1:241–42.

²⁰ J. S. McNeily, *Barksdale's Mississippi Brigade at Gettysburg* (Gaithersburg MD: Olde Soldier Books, 1987), 239.

Gen. Cadmus Wilcox commanding a brigade in Anderson's division, Third Corps (Hill). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

with a revolver in one hand and the regimental colors in the other, advanced sixteen feet ahead of the center of the line, waving his flag and urging the men forward. As he stepped into the creek bottom, a bullet struck him in the leg. His older brother, Lt. Richard A. Bassett (Company B), in the front rank on the far right of the company, noticed the flag dip and then move forward through the thick veil of smoke in the hollow. A few feet farther on, the colors went down. Sgt. Byron W. Scott (Company E) immediately brought his weapon to his shoulder and snapped a round off at the Reb whom he thought had killed Bassett. Sgt. Ambrose Bedell (Company E), despite a bullet wound through his hand, pulled the staff from Sergeant Bassett's death grasp and raised the flag again, leaving the former school teacher where he lay with a bullet through his heart.²¹

Farther to the right, the 111th New York ran into a snag. Rather than losing their formation by plow-

²¹ Wayne Mahood, *Written in Blood: A History of the 126th New York Infantry in the Civil War* (Highstown NJ: Longstreet House, 1997), 131; Murray, *Redemption of the "Harper's Ferry Cowards,"* 78.

ing into the creek, Col. Clinton MacDougall maneuvered the regiment from line into column of fours so the men could cross the narrow corduroy bridge, which spanned the ditch across their front. The New Yorkers skipped across the bridge under a murderous fire of canister and case shot. They lost many men in the process. Color Sgt. Judson Hicks (Company A) died instantly with two bullets through his body and one through his skull. Cpl. Payson Derby (Company G) instantly raised the flag again and continued forward. Colonel MacDougall lost his second horse and suffered a minor wound. Lt. Augustus Proseus (Company E) shouted at his men, "Stand firm. Don't yield an inch!" A minié ball killed him as the last word left his mouth. Passing to the other side, the men deployed into line again only to catch flank fire from Barksdale's and Wilcox's line on their unprotected right. MacDougall ordered the regiment into the ditch behind them, where they hunkered down to return fire.²²

Southeast of the Codori Farmhouse

Screaming demonically as they pushed through the sulfuric veil, which engulfed their advance, Lang's

²² Eldred, "Only a Boy," 26; Murray, *Redemption of the "Harper's Ferry Cowards,"* 79-80.

Col. Clinton D. MacDougall, 111th New York. Courtesy of the Gettysburg National Military Park.

Floridians bore down on Lieutenant Weir's Regular battery. The frightened twenty-five-year-old had barely unlimbered when Humphreys' disorganized Federal troops stampeded through and around his guns. Shouting the command to limber up and leave the field, Weir proceeded to lead the retreat, when a bullet cut down his horse and sent him sprawling onto the ground. As he tried to gain his feet, a spent ball dazed him. Simultaneously, a round whipped through the left section, cutting down Lt. Homer H. Baldwin's mount. "Everything seemed to be very much confused,"²³ Weir truthfully wrote in his largely fictitious after-action report.

With Baldwin down, 1st Sgt. Paul Roemer mounted a horse and managed to get one of Baldwin's guns with its limber and five of the battery's caissons to the safety of Cemetery Ridge.

Two of the guns had just about left the field when the crew panicked, cut the traces off the horses, and abandoned the guns to the Rebs. Looking back over his shoulder as he made tracks to safety, Weir knew for sure that three of his pieces were probably going south. The sight of the Second Florida swarming around them sickened him. They abandoned the other two. Luckily, all his men escaped capture. Colonel Heath (Nineteenth Maine), having witnessed the less than stellar affair, later recalled, "The battery on my right at this time was deserted, the guns not firing a shot."²⁴

On the ridge to the battery's left rear, Colonel

Col. David Lang commanding the Florida Brigade. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida.

Heath, defiant to the end, called his veteran Nineteenth Maine to its feet. With the Rebels less than fifty yards from the line, the color bearer of the Eighth Florida feverishly semaphored his flag from left to right and caught Heath's attention by bolting several yards ahead of his own regiment. The colonel, standing in front of the Mainers and next to the colors, called over his shoulder to the nearest private in Company C, "Drop him." The fellow instantly brought his weapon to bear and squeezed off a round. The color bearer col-

lapsed. Heath commanded the regiment to fire by battalions. The volleys brought the Florida regiments to a halt, and they immediately returned fire.

By then, all six of Lt. Evan Thomas's twelve-pounders (Battery C, Fourth U.S.) had gone into battery on the level ground to the left of Company F. The artillery thundered and roared, shaking the ground violently. The gunners, in the intense heat, stripped off their shell jackets and rolled up their sleeves as they charged their pieces with canister.²⁵

Cemetery Ridge, Southeast of the Codori Buildings

The stalled Floridians slugged it out, round for round. Men in both lines dropped by the handfuls. A minute or two into the volleying, Capt. Isaac Starbird (Company F) dashed to Colonel Heath with news that the Rebs had gotten terribly close to his company. Heath followed the captain back

²³ U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), ser. 1, vol. 27, part 1, 881, hereafter cited as OR and followed by the part and page number.

²⁴ OR 1:881; Ladd and Ladd, *Bachelder Papers*, 2:1152, 3:1652; Edmund J. Raus, *A Generation on the March: The Union Army at Gettysburg* (Lynchburg VA: H. E. Howard, 1987), 167.

²⁵ Smith, *History of the Nineteenth Regiment of Maine*, 72; Ladd and Ladd, *Bachelder Papers*, 3:1652; Copy of Colonel Heath's account as to the Nineteenth Maine at Gettysburg, 2, Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg PA.

to his line. Peering through the smoke, he spotted at about twenty-five yards what appeared to be a Confederate regiment in double column preparing to maneuver into battle line. Realizing that if they deployed, the Rebels would overlap the Nineteenth Maine's left wing, he ordered Starbird to refuse his company at right angles to the rest of the regiment to enfilade them.

With the colonel returning to his post behind the colors at the center of the regiment, Starbird yelled at his men to cease fire. The veterans instinctively shouldered arms. The company about-faced at the captain's command, marched thirty-five yards to the rear, about-faced again, and commenced firing. The maneuver temporarily uncovered the right flank of Thomas's Battery C, Fourth U.S. Artillery. The lieutenant quickly silenced his pieces, rolled them back to conform to Company F's new line, and opened fire again.²⁶

On Cemetery Ridge, 350 Yards Southeast of the Nineteenth Maine

Hancock, riding north with his staff from the George Weikert Farm, noticed the same regiment that had attracted Starbird's attention. At first, he wanted to dismiss them as a Federal unit. An unexpected burst of small-arms fire from that direction, however, abruptly changed his mind. Capt. William D. W. Miller on his staff jerked under the impact of two hits.

Twisting about in the saddle, Hancock saw the First Minnesota drawn up in column of fours. Latching his eyes on an officer mounted on a splendid black horse, he galloped to Lt. Col. Charles P. Adams. "Colonel," he blurted, "do you see that flag?" Adams followed the general's pointing finger toward the overgrown low ground in the distance. "I want you to take it." "Yes, sir," Adams replied.²⁷

Adams called the regiment into formation and was about to lead it forward, when Col. William Colvill Jr. unexpectedly rode up to him. Having been under arrest since June 29, for crossing a river

on logs rather than fording as ordered, Colvill explained that he had been released from arrest and was assuming command.²⁸

"Boys, will you go along with them?" the colonel shouted. A resounding "Yes" from the ranks answered him. The colonel, the lieutenant colonel, and the major positioned their mounts behind the line: Colonel Colvill thirty paces behind the colors, Lieutenant Colonel Adams twelve paces behind the center of the right wing, and Maj. Mark Downie twelve paces behind the center of the left wing. "Forward, double-quick!" the colonel bellowed.²⁹

The veterans automatically stepped off, smartly bringing their weapons to "right shoulder shift" in "one time and two motions corresponding to the steps of the advance,"³⁰ Colvill later recollected. The glint of the musket barrels moving in unison awed the colonel. Thirty yards across the field, they walked into a sheet of lead from the Confederate skirmishers hidden in the dried-up creek about 170 yards west of the regiment. Men dropped, but the companies surged onward toward the shallow "ravine" about one hundred yards south of the Nineteenth Maine.

Colonel Heath had no sooner returned to the colors from Company F on the left flank when Lt. Col. Henry W. Cunningham, who, like Colonel Randall (Thirteenth Vermont), also had seen the Confederates flanking to the left, informed him that the Rebels had gotten around the regiment's right flank. Unable to see anything in the smoke, Heath decided to march in retreat. He gave the command: "Face to the rear! Battalion about-FACE! Battalion, forward MARCH!" The New Englanders ceased fire, shouldered their arms, right about-faced, and walked away from the firing line at the common time.³¹

The First Minnesota scattered the Rebel skirmishers from Wilcox's and Barksdale's mixed bri-

²⁶ Silas Adams, "The Nineteenth Maine at Gettysburg," *War Papers, Read before the Commandery of the State of Maine, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States*, 4 vols., (Portland ME: Thurston Press, 1915), 4:254; Ladd and Ladd, *Bachelder Papers*, 3:1652; Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg*, 293.

²⁷ Ladd and Ladd, *Bachelder Papers*, 3:1358; W. K. Adams to the editor of the *Journal*, n.d., Charles Powell Adams Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul MN. Hereinafter cited as MHS.

²⁸ G. Sydney Smith to C. Powell Adams, November 25, 1887; Charles Powell Adams Papers, MHS; Richard Moe, *The Last Full Measure* (St. Paul MN: Henry Holt, 1993), 262.

²⁹ William Colvill, "The Old First Minnesota at Gettysburg," 7, Goodhue County Historical Society, Red Wing MN.

³⁰ William Colvill, "The Old First Minnesota at Gettysburg," 7, Goodhue County Historical Society, Red Wing MN; W. K. Adams to the editor of the *Journal*, n.d., Charles Powell Adams Papers, MHS; Charles Muller, *History*, n.d., n.p., Robert L. Brake Collection, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle PA. Colvill's postwar account is a little suspect. He describes the fighting in detail, but he never would have seen it because he received a wound two minutes before the regiment returned fire.

³¹ W. K. Adams to the editor of the *Journal*, n.d., Charles Powell Adams Papers, MHS.

Cemetery Ridge. The First Minnesota is sacrificed, 7:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., July 2, 1863. Reproduced from *Stand to It and Give Them Hell: Gettysburg as the Soldiers Experienced it from Cemetery Ridge to Little Round Top, July 2, 1863* (Savas Beatie, 2014) by permission of the publisher.

Cpl. Patrick Taylor and Pvt. Isaac Taylor, Company E, First Minnesota. Isaac was killed on July 2, 1863.
Courtesy of the Gettysburg National Military Park.

Pvt. Alonzo C. Haden, Company D, First Minnesota, killed July 2, 1863. Courtesy of the Gettysburg National Military Park.

gades, driving them out of the dried creek bed to its front. A few feet from the ravine, Colvill recoiled in the saddle under the impact of something, which he assumed was a shell fragment, striking him between the shoulder blades. For a moment, he saw stars.

“Colonel, you are badly hurt.” Still dazed, he numbly reacted to Capt. Henry C. Coates (Company A): “I don’t know; take care of the men.” Reining his horse in, Colvill tried to dismount, when a bullet tore through his right foot. Collapsing, he felt himself rolling downhill into the creek bottom, where he lay, helpless, listening to the miniés fly over his head.³²

The First Minnesota had already spilled into the depression. Lieutenant Colonel Adams halted the regiment there and commanded the men to open fire. Their volley caught the fleeing Confederates in their backs at a distance under fifteen feet. The Reb-

³² Colvill, “The Old First Minnesota at Gettysburg,” 7; W. K. Adams to the editor of the *Journal*, n.d., Charles Powell Adams Papers, MHS.

els retreated about fifty yards and melted into the main line of their brigade.

Before the First Minnesota had time to reload, Wilcox’s and Barksdale’s veterans returned the volley. Minnesotans went down by squads. The men held their ground and closed ranks. “Why don’t they let us charge?” someone cried out. “Why do they stop us here to be murdered?”³³ A couple of stalwarts broke out of the ditch and dashed toward the Rebs, futilely waving at their comrades to follow them. None of them returned.

The Rebels stood their ground, exchanging volleys with telling effect. Lieutenant Colonel Adams absorbed five hits in rapid succession but did not fall until the sixth one hammered into his chest. Moments later, bullets through his right arm and his foot brought Major Downie to the ground. The halt cost the regiment dearly. In the encroaching darkness, some Confederates managed to get

³³ Sgt. John W. Plummer to his brother, n.d., Robert L. Brake Collection, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle PA.

Pvt. Francis W. Rhoades, Company I, Nineteenth Maine, killed July 2, 1863. Courtesy of the Gettysburg National Military Park.

around the right flank and poured a devastating enfilade into the westerners.

At that, word came to the First Minnesota to pull back. In the confusion, the right wing had retired halfway back through the open field east of the ditch before the left wing found out about the withdrawal. Sgt. John W. Plummer (Company D) did not expect to make it back uninjured, much less alive. "It was then I had the first feeling of fear during the fight," he informed his brother a short time later.³⁴ Stumbling across their own dead and wounded, he finally found the colors. Only twenty-five men remained to rally around them. The rest were dead, dying, wounded, or temporarily detached to bring in those whom they could save.

Thirty-five feet behind its former position, the Nineteenth Maine emerged from the small-arms smoke only to discover that the Rebs had not flanked it. Colonel Heath immediately ordered the regiment to about-face and fire. The men shot at will into the shadows below. In short order, Company F rejoined the regiment on the left. After the line loosed several rounds, Heath commanded, "Fix bayonets," followed instantly by "Charge bayonets." He ran to the front of the colors. "Come on, boys!" he yelled and led them in a wild race down into the low ground.³⁵

West of the Copse of Trees

Farther north Wright's Georgians overran the Eighty-Second New York and the Fifteenth Massachusetts heading directly for Battery B, First Rhode Island Artillery. Lt. T. Frederic Brown's gunners loosed case shot with one-second fuses then rapidly loaded with canister. The first artillery blast from the rear cut down Yankees and Confederates by the squads.³⁶ The Rebels directed their riflery on Brown's exposed Rhode Islanders. Brown screamed the order, "Limber to the rear." The crews of guns one through six, except gun number four, quickly got their guns pintled and started for the low spot in the northwestern corner of the stone wall at the Angle.

³⁴ Sgt. John W. Plummer to his brother, n.d., Robert L. Brake Collection, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle PA; Muller, *History*, n.p.; J. W. Sonderman to the editor of the *Spirit*, February 24, 1901, First Minnesota, 4, Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg PA.

³⁵ Adams, "The Nineteenth Maine at Gettysburg," 4:255–56; Smith, *History of the Nineteenth Regiment of Maine*, 72; Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg*, 293–94; account of John Lancaster, n.d., Robert L. Brake Collection, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle PA.

³⁶ OR 1:423, 426; Raus, *Generation on the March*, 35, 72.

Sgt. Albert A. Straight, commanding gun number four, whose piece had already been loaded, held his crew back. With the Confederates on top of him, he gave the command to fire, followed immediately by "Limber to the rear." The words had hardly left his mouth when the Georgians shot down his team's two lead horses in their harnesses. Screaming, "Every man for himself," his artillerymen tried to escape. Before they could clear the ground, his remaining four horses went down along with the dying Pvt. David B. King. Meanwhile, two of the guns had managed to escape to the Federal side of the ridge. In the hurry to get away, two others jammed together trying to get through the gap in the wall, which left gun six stranded in the open ground between the two battle lines. The Georgians killed one of the horses and wounded another on the limber. The three drivers abandoned the piece and skedaddled for safer ground. In the melee, a musket ball plowed into First Lieutenant Brown's neck. Bleeding severely, he turned the battery over to 2nd Lt. William S. Perrin.³⁷

The Sixty-Ninth Pennsylvania, with the Fifty-Ninth New York and the Seventh Michigan to its left, waited behind the stone wall a little over one hundred yards to the east for the guns to clear its line of fire. As the Georgians swarmed over the number four gun, the three regiments brought the charge to a halt with rifle fire. Nevertheless, one of the Rebel officers foolishly dashed to the gun and straddled the muzzle. Cpt. Michael Duffy (Company I, Sixty-Ninth Pennsylvania) hollered at his men: "Knock that damned officer off the gun."³⁸ A second volley swept him away. The Pennsylvanians bolted over the wall, intent on finishing the Rebels off; but Harrow and Webb shouted them back to their cover.

Two Hundred Yards to the Right Rear of the Nineteenth Maine

Col. Francis V. Randall (Thirteenth Vermont) spied Hancock and rode to him. "Colonel," Hancock spat, "Where is your regiment?"³⁹

³⁷ Raus, *Generation on the March*, 147; OR 1:478; John H. Rhodes, *The Gettysburg Gun*, no. 19, in Personal Narratives of Events in the War of Rebellion, Being Papers Read before the Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society, 4th ser. (Providence RI: Snow and Farnham, 1892), 12–14, <https://archive.org/stream/gettysburggunoorhod#page/n5/mode/2up>.

³⁸ Ladd and Ladd, *Bachelor Papers*, 3:1407; Gottfried, *Stopping Pickett: The History of the Philadelphia Brigade* (Shippensburg PA: White Mane Books, 1999), 161.

³⁹ Howard Coffin, *Nine Months to Gettysburg: Stannard's Vermonters and the Repulse of Pickett's Charge* (Woodstock VT: Countryman Press, 1997), 204–5.

Col. Francis Randall, Thirteenth Vermont. Courtesy of the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center.

“Close at hand,” Randall replied.

“Good,” Hancock said, “the enemy are pressing me hard. They have captured that battery yonder [with the general pointing into the low ground southeast of Codori’s farmhouse] and are dragging it from the field. Can you retake it?”

“I can, and damn quick too, if you will let me,” Randall confidently shot back. He later reported that Hancock also warned him that it “would be a hazardous job and he would not order it, but, if I thought I could do it, I might try.”

Randall returned to his battalion, which had just arrived on the field. He commanded his five companies to maneuver from column of divisions into line. As the companies came to the front, he instructed each of his five company commanders exactly what he intended them to do. The second that Randall called the regiment to move out, a shell burst over his head. A fragment gouged his gray in

the neck and brought it down on top of him. Another slammed Pvt. Albert H. Chase (Company B) in the temple. The impact hurled him to the ground unconscious and seemingly dead.

Sixteen-year-old 2nd Lt. Charles W. Randall (Company A), the younger of the colonel’s two sons in the battalion, got Capt. John Lonergan’s permission to assist his father. Pvt. Henry Sparks and several others from Companies E and G reached him first.

“Damn them,” Colonel Randall snarled. “They did not get me that time.”⁴⁰ In trying to roll the heavy animal off Randall, Sparks felt something pop in his groin. He went down in a ball with a nasty rupture. The angry Randall shouted above the noise, “Go on boys, go on. I’ll be at your head as soon as I get out of this damned saddle.” Maj. Joseph J. Boynton ordered the battalion back into formation.

Colonel Randall painfully regained his feet. Glancing west through the smoke, he noticed Lang’s brigade extending its line to the left. He took off at a limping run, his sword unsheathed, to the front of the formation. “Come on, boys,” he shouted with a flourish. “I’m all right.”⁴¹

At the Angle

With the Forty-Eighth Georgia desperately fighting to hold on to Brown’s abandoned gun on the knoll to the front of the Sixty-Ninth Pennsylvania, Brig. Gen. Alexander Webb decided to reinforce his line. He sent Lt. Col. William L. Curry with his 106th Pennsylvania to the crest of Seminary Ridge immediately north of the Copse of Trees. He also detached the Seventy-First Pennsylvania to the north-south stone wall, which ran to the hog pen on the south side of Brien’s barn. Together, the two regiments emptied two volleys into the weakening Georgians. As the Confederates fell back from the gun, Curry yelled his regiment to its feet and commanded the men to fix bayonets. With a shout, they raced down the slope, bolted over the stone wall along their front, and chased after the Rebels. The Seventy-First Pennsylvania followed in the 106th’s wake. Sweeping past the guns, Curry’s men headed directly for the Codori orchard, leaving their twenty

⁴⁰ Coffin, *Nine Months to Gettysburg*, 205.

⁴¹ Howard Coffin, *Nine Months to Gettysburg: Stannard’s Vermonters and the Repulse of Pickett’s Charge* (Woodstock VT: Countryman Press, 1997), 204–5; OR 1:351–52.

prisoners and the twelve-pounder Napoleon in the hands of the Seventy-First.⁴²

Ridge Northeast of Trostle's House

A mounted sergeant from Turnbull's Third U.S. Artillery madly galloped to the remnants of the Excelsior Brigade. Reining his horse to a halt in the center of the line, he pleaded, "Boys! You said you'd stick to us. Is this the way the brigade is going to leave the field? There's the gun!"⁴³ He dramatically pointed toward the two abandoned sections along the Emmitsburg Road: "If you're men, come on!" Spurring his horse about, he madly galloped toward the swarming Rebels, his saber cutting the air above his head.

Pvt. Felix Brannigan (Company A, Seventy-Third New York) watched, awestruck, as the artilleryman crashed into the Rebels with his saber slashing. Instantly, individual soldiers from all the mixed-up command units cried out, "Charge!" followed by a shrill banshee, "Hi—hi—hi-i-i-i."⁴⁴ Sergeant Mears (Company A, Sixth Pennsylvania Reserves), who was scrounging through an ammunition box at the time, immediately bolted into the fray. The Seventy-Third New York's color guard raced twelve paces ahead of the line. Colonel Brewster spurred his horse to the front, dragging the rest of the brigade, some 150 men, with him.

The counterattack spread like a brush fire all along the ridge, with no one in the confusion being exactly certain as to how it started. "Charge 'em! Take our old ground!"⁴⁵ Henry Blake, a first lieutenant in Company K, Eleventh Massachusetts, heard the men around him shout. Capt. William H. Lloyd (Company F, Eleventh New Jersey) rallied the few men he found and hobbled forward with them into the fray. William H. H. Fernel, a first lieutenant in Company I, Twelfth New Hampshire, went berserk. Shaking his sword at the Rebels, Fernel brandished it above his head and screamed, "Come on." With the handful of men whom he mustered, he dashed into the smoke-blanketed field raving.

"We seemed to be borne on wings," Brannigan

(Seventy-Third New York) later wrote to his father.⁴⁶ Humphreys, whose orders were to hold the ridge, could not stop the attack. "Halt! Halt! Stop those men! Stop those men!" he screamed, but to no avail.⁴⁷ The Yankees crashed through the rock-strewn, brush-clogged creek bottom of Plum Run into the Confederate ranks before they had time to reorganize from their charge.⁴⁸ The impetus of the attack caught up the 126th New York. Climbing out of the creek bed, the New Yorkers surged forward with the rest of the soldiers, leaving the 111th New York and the 125th New York where they were.⁴⁹

Codori's Farm, South and East of the Buildings

The Nineteenth Maine, with the Thirteenth Vermont trailing behind it to the right rear, swept the Floridians back across the low ground south of the Codori farm. The Nineteenth Maine headed straight for Turnbull's four abandoned guns one hundred yards east of the Rodgers house, while the Thirteenth Vermont made due east toward Weir's guns and the Codori farmhouse.

On the way, the Mainers picked up part of the rallied Twenty-Sixth Pennsylvania, who bolted ahead of the Nineteenth Maine, eager to regain the ground they had lost. Firing point-blank into the backs of the Second Florida, they wounded the regiment's color bearer. He immediately handed the flag over to another man in the color guard, but Sgt. George Roosevelt (Company K, Twenty-Sixth Pennsylvania) got the drop on the Rebel. Capturing him and his flag, the sergeant started rearward with them, when a stray shot snapped his leg. He fell to the ground, unable to move. His prisoner dropped the flag and took off for safer ground.

Seconds later the Nineteenth Maine passed over

⁴⁶ Brannigan to his father in Ireland, n.d.

⁴⁷ Brannigan to his father in Ireland, n.d.

⁴⁸ Felix Brannigan to his father in Ireland, n.d., Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg PA; OR 1:559; Henry N. Blake, "Personal Reminiscences of Gettysburg," 22, 20 Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg PA; Thomas D. Marbaker, *History of the Eleventh New Jersey Volunteers* (Hightstown NJ: Longstreet House, 1990), 99; Henri LeFevre Brown, *History of the Third Regiment, Excelsior Brigade, 72nd New York Volunteer Infantry, 1861-1865* (Jamestown NY: Journal Printing, 1902), 105; A. W. Bartlett, *History of the Twelfth Regiment New Hampshire Volunteers in the War of the Rebellion* (Concord NH: I. C. Evans Printer, 1897), 126; Samuel P. Bates, comp., *History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers* (Harrisburg PA: B. Singler, 1871), 1:350; "A Man of Pluck. Sergeant Mears, Who Won a Medal of Honor at Gettysburg," *National Tribune*, June 24, 1897; H. L. Potter, "Seeley's Battery at Gettysburg," *National Tribune*, May 24, 1888. Potter mistook Turnbull's battery for Seeley's.

⁴⁹ Ladd and Ladd, *Bachelder Papers*, 1:340.

⁴² OR 1:432-33.

⁴³ Felix Brannigan to his father in Ireland, n.d., Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg PA.

⁴⁴ Brannigan to his father in Ireland, n.d.

⁴⁵ Henry N. Blake, "Personal Reminiscences of Gettysburg," 22, 20, Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg PA.

the wounded sergeant. Colonel Heath, on the right wing, vividly recalled tramping on top of the colors. A large number of unwounded Floridians, heading east, made their way through the regiment. On the left, the Rebels skedaddled, leaving the Eighth Florida's flag draped over one of Turnbull's field pieces. The Nineteenth Maine brushed past the guns, making for the Emmitsburg Road.⁵⁰

The Codori Farm

The Confederates to the front of the Thirteenth Vermont either hurled themselves to the ground or skedaddled. Hancock, who had followed the untied battalion onto the field, urged Randall to push his men farther and recapture four of Weir's guns. While the regiment tramped over the top of their prostrate "prisoners," Sgt. George H. Scott (Company G, Thirteenth Vermont) ran forward. The Confederates hauling the four twelve-pounders toward the Emmitsburg Road were caught in the middle of the field between the road and Cemetery Ridge. They tossed the drag ropes aside and ran toward the Codori orchard, where Maj. George W. Ross (Second Georgia Battalion) and Capt. Charles R. Redding (Company C) struggled to swing the lead team of one of Weir's limbers toward the road.

Sergeant Scott reached one of the guns seconds before Captain Lonergan and Company A arrived. Placing his hand on the bronze tube closest to him, he yelled at the Rebels to surrender. Simultaneously, small-arms fire crashed into the orchard from the north. Captain Redding died. Major Ross fell, mortally wounded. Colonel Randall (Thirteenth Vermont), with Company G, spotted the fleeing Rebels at the same time. "Halt!" he shouted, but to no avail. "God damn you, boys," he screamed, "stop that running."⁵¹ To his amazement, about fifty of them turned around and walked into the Vermonters' ranks.

The others ran into the oncoming 106th Pennsylvania. Capt. Robert H. Ford (Company I) and his men stumbled on to a large portion of Wright's

brigade sheltering behind the Codori house and barn. An officer bearing a white flag attracted Ford's attention in the fading light. The captain had an enlisted man poke an old newspaper on his bayonet. He faced the company by the flank and marched them up to the house. The Confederate with the flag of truce identified himself as Capt. Claiborne Snead (Company G, Third Georgia). Col. William Gibson (Forty-Eighth Georgia) lay nearby desperately wounded. Snead feared the colonel would die if he did not receive medical attention. Would the captain consider bringing the colonel within the Union lines to receive treatment? Ford agreed to help the colonel, provided that the men, who had gathered around him, also came in and that the officers surrender their swords. Snead protested. The men should be allowed to return to their own lines. No, insisted Ford, the colonel and the men would have to surrender. Snead reluctantly agreed. Company I rounded up the colonel, five captains, fifteen lieutenants, and about one hundred dejected Georgians, wounded and uninjured alike, and started toward the Copse of Trees.⁵²

While Captain Ford, his arms curled around a bundle of swords, headed back toward Cemetery Ridge, the rest of the regiment merged with the Thirteenth Vermont on the eastern side of the orchard. With the Vermonters' prisoners under the charge of Company C, the Thirteenth Vermont about-faced and started to the rear with Company A's boys and a number of the 106th Pennsylvania's fellows rolling the guns away.

As soon as the Vermonters turned their backs on the Codori buildings, they came under fire from behind. Within earshot of Cpl. Eli T. Marsh (Company C), Colonel Randall barked at Company A's Captain Lonergan, "That house is full of sharpshooters; take your company and capture them."⁵³ "Boys," the captain screamed, "those fellows are firing at us. We will drive those damned Rebels out of those buildings or kill them—about face charge."

50 Frederick Tilberg to Mrs. Joseph C. Moore, August 12, 1954, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg PA; Adams, "The Nineteenth Maine at Gettysburg," 4:257; Smith, *History of the Nineteenth Regiment of Maine*, 72; Ladd and Ladd, *Bachelor Papers*, 3:1653; Benjamin T. Arrington, *The Medal of Honor at Gettysburg* (Gettysburg: Thomas, 1996), 21; Richard Rollins, "The Damned Red Flags of the Rebellion," *The Confederate Battle Flag at Gettysburg* (Redondo Beach CA: Rank and File, 1997), 127; Jim Studnicki, "Perry's Brigade: The Forgotten Floridians at Gettysburg," *2nd Florida Infantry Co. I., "Hamilton Blues,"* <http://www.2ndflorida.net/perrys.htm>.

51 Coffin, *Nine Months to Gettysburg*, 206.

52 OR 2:433; Robert H. Shirkey, draft, December 5, 1888, about William Gibson, Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg PA; Joseph R. C. Ward, *History of the One Hundred and Sixth Pennsylvania Volunteers* (Philadelphia: F. McManus Jr., 1906), 161–62; Coffin, *Nine Months to Gettysburg*, 206. Snead did not belong to the Forty-Eighth Georgia. The regiment credited itself with capturing three guns and 250 Confederates, which, when including the men whom the Thirteenth Vermont bagged, would make the after-action report correct. The prisoners came from Wright's entire brigade and not just the Forty-Eighth Georgia.

53 Coffin, *Nine Months to Gettysburg*, 206–7.

Picking up their weapons, the Yankees counter-charged and surrounded the house to cover all the windows and doors to prevent anyone from escaping. Going to the front door, the captain kicked it in. Noticing an officer with a rifle standing close by, Lonergan shouted, "Surrender! Fall out here, every damned one of you!"⁵⁴ The officer handed over his sword on the way out the door, followed by eighty-two enlisted men, each of whom tossed his rifle aside as he exited the house. Greatly outnumbered, Company A escorted its catch back to the rest of the battalion. Wright's brigade had taken a horrific beating. Only 577 officers and men of the 1450 who had gone into the fight returned to Seminary Ridge unhurt. The killed and captured comprised 83 percent of the casualties. Both the Second Battalion and the Forty-Eighth Georgia left their colors on the field.⁵⁵

East of the Emmitsburg Road

Lt. Col. John Leonard with Sgt. Henri LeFevre Brown and Pvt. M. Luther Howard (both Company B, Seventy-Second New York) reached Turnbull's captured guns ahead of the rest of the Third Corps. They quickly cut the disabled horses free of one limber, wheeled the gun around without any assistance, and dragged it away, leaving the three remaining pieces on the field.

Sgt. Thomas Horan (Company E, Seventy-Second New York) snatched up the colors of the Eighth Florida. In the meantime, about one hundred yards from the Emmitsburg Road, the right companies of the Nineteenth Maine bagged thirty Floridians and their severely wounded Major Walter R. Moore (Second Florida) while they attempted to drag off one of Turnbull's pieces. As they forced the dejected Rebels to wheel the gun about to haul it back to the Federal lines, the New Englanders heard some loud cheering. In the distance, through the smoky, fading light, they saw the New Yorkers jubilantly waving about the colors from the Eighth Florida and heading back to Cemetery Ridge with

them. While the Seventy-First New York hauled away one of Turnbull's twelve-pounders, the Nineteenth Maine recovered what remained of the battery. With their prisoners dragging off one piece by ropes, the New Englanders hauled off the last two guns and the battery's four abandoned caissons.⁵⁶

The Eleventh Massachusetts, having driven the Rebels across the Emmitsburg Road, abruptly halted as apparently lifeless Federal bodies in the field around arose from the dead without injury. "This resurrection was greeted with laughter," Lieutenant Blake (Eleventh Massachusetts) recalled.⁵⁷ The Yankees scoured the field, rounding up prisoners and sorting the dead from the wounded. Blake found men too frightened to move. One wounded Floridian, a boy of about sixteen, piteously whined, "General Lee always puts the Fifth Florida in front." A little farther on he came across about thirty Confederates crammed in a little gully. Using his sword to direct them to the Federal lines, Blake commanded, "Get up, boys. Get up and go to the rear." A musket shot suddenly cracked by his head. Whirling around, he spied Cpl. William H. Brown (Company B, Eleventh Massachusetts) still holding his smoking weapon at the ready. "What on earth are you doing?" the lieutenant demanded. "That captain was aiming his revolver at you when I fired," Brown replied with a nod.

Meanwhile, Major Rafferty (Seventy-First New York), while supervising the withdrawal of the Turnbull gun, accidentally rolled it into a drainage ditch. To his surprise, he found two Confederates—a captain and an enlisted man with a rifle—cowering in the bottom of it. With his pistol at the ready, Rafferty barked at the enlisted man to drop his weapon. He threw it aside. The officer stepped into the open and asked what he should do. "Do?" Rafferty incredulously shot back, "do anything to make yourself useful."⁵⁸ To the Irishman's amaze-

⁵⁴ Beyer and Keydel, *Deeds of Valor*, 1:226

⁵⁵ OR 1:352, 2:630; Beyer and Keydel, *Deeds of Valor*, 1:226; Coffin, *Nine Months to Gettysburg*, 206–7; Rollins, "The Damned Red Flags of the Rebellion," 127. According to Sgt. George H. Scott (Company G), "Our Colonel was not the most modest man in the world," as is evident in Randall's after-action report. He would lead one to believe that the regiment got as far as the Emmitsburg Road and that a pair of guns to the south flanked them. The accounts of others in the regiment indicate that the battalion got as far as the Codori orchard and no farther. The 106th Pennsylvania claimed some of those prisoners also.

⁵⁶ Felix Brannigan to his father, n.d., Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg PA; Brown, *History of the Third Regiment*, 105; Potter, "Seeley's Battery at Gettysburg"; account of Charles E. Nash, 74–76, Robert L. Brake Collection, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle PA; Smith, *History of the Nineteenth Regiment of Maine*, 72.

⁵⁷ Blake, "Personal Reminiscences of Gettysburg," 22, 20, Vertical Files, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg PA.

⁵⁸ Thomas Rafferty, "Gettysburg," in *Personal Recollections of the War of the Rebellion, Addresses Delivered before the Commandery of the State of New York, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States* (Astor Place NY: J. J. Little and Sons, 1891), 1:28–29.

Cemetery Ridge. The Confederate assault is defeated, 7:45 p.m., July 2, 1863. Reproduced from *Stand to It and Give Them Hell: Gettysburg as the Soldiers Experienced it from Cemetery Ridge to Little Round Top, July 2, 1863* (Savas Beatie, 2014) by permission of the publisher.

ment, the two Rebels laid hold of the drag ropes and helped pull the gun free.

By then the 126th New York had reached the eastern bank of the Emmitsburg Road. Finding no one with whom to contend, Lt. Col. James Bull sent the left and right general guides to their respective posts and dressed the ranks as if they were on parade. At his command, the regiment right about-faced and started marching in step toward the creek bottom to the east. Capt. Orin J. Herendeen (Company A) and a number of his men, then being on the northern end of the line, quickly laid hands on Turnbull's gun, which the Seventy-First New York had bagged and helped roll back to the Federal lines.

Presently, a staff officer rode into the remnants of the Eleventh Massachusetts with the directive for the regiment to retire to the new line along southern Cemetery Ridge. Carr could not find his regiments, the aide said, and the regiment was to retire at once. Lt. Col. Porter D. Tripp flew in to a rage. His men, having retaken the ground, were entitled to spend the night on it. "Tell the General if he will come to the front, he will find his commands with their colors," he blustered. "And, if he was not such a damned coward, he would be here with them."⁵⁹ Nevertheless, he complied, and nothing came of his insubordination.

The day ended with the Army of the Potomac

⁵⁹ Henry N. Blake, *Three Years in the Army of the Potomac* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1864), 212, 210–12; Rafferty, "Gettysburg," 128–29; Ladd and Ladd, *Bachelder Papers*, 1:340, 342.

in control of all the ground it had occupied at the beginning of the day. The fighting along Cemetery Ridge claimed 15,738 casualties between the two armies. Of the 34,127 Union soldiers in the fight, 1,358 (4 percent) died; 6,496 (19 percent) were wounded; and 1,090 (3 percent) went missing or were captured—a loss of 26 percent of its fighting strength. The Confederates committed 18,457 men to the battle. They lost 1,172 (6 percent) dead; 3,878 (21 percent) wounded; and 1,244 (7 percent) missing in action. The fighting cost them a devastating 34 percent. This was much like Antietam, nine months prior to Gettysburg, where the Army of Northern Virginia fought a far superior force, inflicted more casualties on its opponent than it lost itself, but suffered a much higher casualty rate. Courage wasted.⁶⁰

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John Michael Priest, a well-known Civil War author, is a certified guide at Antietam National Battlefield. His latest Gettysburg contribution is "Stand to It and Give Them Hell": *Gettysburg as the Soldiers Experienced It from Cemetery Ridge to Little Round Top, July 2, 1863* (El Dorado Hills CA: Savas Beatie, 2014). Additionally, four of his previous works were released in e-book versions by Savas Beatie last summer: *Antietam: The Soldiers' Battle*; *Into the Fight: Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg*; and his two-volume set on the Wilderness, *Nowhere to Run* and *Victory without Triumph*.

⁶⁰ These numbers are from the Order of Battle in Michael John Priest, "Stand to It and Give Them Hell": *Gettysburg as the Soldiers Experienced It from Cemetery Ridge to Little Round Top, July 2, 1863* (El Dorado Hills CA: Savas Beatie, 2014).