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The Hancock-Walker Correspondence on Gettysburg

ALLEN C. GUELZO AND BRIANNA KIRK

Francis Amasa Walker was born in Boston in 1840 to a secure place among Boston's Brahmin elite. He graduated from Amherst College in 1860 with "two prizes for ex tempore speaking" and was ready to begin reading law. But in August 1861 he enlisted in the 15th Massachusetts, serving as regimental sergeant major, and fought through most of the major campaigns of the Army of the Potomac. He was soon promoted to captain, then major, and then lieutenant colonel. He sustained a serious wound from a shell splinter at Chancellorsville and did not return to service until August 1863. The following year, he was captured at Reams's Station and was an occupant of Libby Prison until his exchange in October 1864. He left the army in January 1865, but not before Winfield Scott Hancock had recommended him for promotion to brevet brigadier general of Volunteers (which was confirmed in 1866). Walker went on to carve out a many-sided career as a journalist,

Francis Amasa Walker as president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. From James Phinney Munroe, *A Life of Francis Amasa Walker* (New York: Henry Holt, 1923).

and a mathematics professor and statistician, and president of the American Statistical Association and the American Economic Association. In 1881 he became the third president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and from 1947 to 1977 the American Economic Association awarded a Francis A. Walker Medal "to the living American economist who in the judgement of the awarding body has during his career made the greatest contribution to economics."¹

Most of Walker's Civil War service was as a staff officer—first under Darius Couch in the Second Corps of

the Army of the Potomac and then under Couch's successor, Hancock. In 1882 as a commission by the Society of the Second Corps, Walker began work on a comprehensive history of the Second Corps; and for much of his research, he turned to the surviv-

¹ Carroll D. Wright, "Francis Amasa Walker," *Quarterly Publications of the American Statistical Association* 5 (June 1897): 248–49. On Walker as an economist, see Vernon Louis Parrington, *The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927), 111–17.

Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock. Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

ing commanders of the Second Corps, including Hancock, “that great captain whose name all veterans of the Potomac Army delight to utter.” Walker was an excellent choice for the job: he had served as Hancock’s adjutant, and Hancock esteemed him as “the best Adjutant-General I ever had.” Hancock was then the senior major general of the U.S. Army; and after his defeat for the U.S. presidency by James Garfield in 1880, he continued in his post-war responsibility as commander of the Division of the Atlantic, headquartered at Governors Island, in

New York Harbor. But Hancock’s presidential ambitions were far from extinct, and he was eager to assist Walker in creating the history as a billboard for another run at the presidency.²

However, Hancock died on February 9, 1886, three weeks after his last letter to Walker and just before Walker’s *History of the Second Army Corps in the Army of the Potomac* appeared. Walker went on

² Francis Amasa Walker, *History of the Second Army Corps in the Army of the Potomac*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1891), x; Lawrence A. Kreiser, *Defeating Lee: A History of the Second Corps of the Army of the Potomac* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 234–35.

to write a brief biography of Hancock, in a series of Civil War biographies published by Charles Scribner's Sons, in 1891, the same year that he published a revised, corrected edition of the *History of the Second Army Corps*. Although the bulk of Walker's papers are at MIT, the correspondence he exchanged with Hancock, along with incidental correspondence with John Gibbon and John R. Brooke (also of the Second Corps), in the preparation of the *History of the Second Army Corps* came into the care of the old Civil War Library and Museum, probably through Walker's membership and activities in the Military Order of the Loyal Legion. Those papers now form part of the collections of the Sir John Templeton Heritage Center at the Union League of Philadelphia. Those letters between Hancock, Gibbon, Brooke, and Walker with particular reference to the Battle of Gettysburg nevertheless shed interesting new light on the battle and particularly on questions concerning the battle's second day.

- What regiment or regiments were dispatched to the aid of the Third Corps to protect the exposed flank of Andrew A. Humphreys's division? It was evidently unclear in both Walker's and Hancock's minds at what point the 15th Massachusetts and 82nd New York (Harrow's brigade) and the 42nd New York and 19th Massachusetts (Hall's brigade) were committed to this task.
- What regiment was responsible for the support of Gulian Weir's Battery C, 5th U.S. Artillery, and the recovery of Weir's abandoned guns?
- Where and when did the attacks of George Willard's brigade (the "Harper's Ferry Cowards") and the 1st Minnesota occur?
- How far did Ambrose Wright's Georgia brigade penetrate the Union line on Cemetery Ridge?
- What, to Hancock's eye, had changed in the appearance of Cemetery Ridge by 1885?
- Did John W. Geary disobey orders and endanger the Union left flank by withdrawing from the position Hancock had assigned him on the evening of July 1?

1. W. S. Hancock to F. A. Walker, April 16, 1884

My dear General,

I was on the line of battle with [George J.] Stannard's Brigade at Gettysburg.³ I was shot there, and remained until the close of the action. My official report shows about what the Vermont people did. [Lt. George G.] Benedict's book was the first public presentation, I believe, of what was claimed for the Vermont Brigade.⁴ [Maj. William G.] Mitchell was on the line of battle at the same time.⁵ He used to express the opinion that the Vermont people claimed more than they were justly entitled to: that it was only necessary for them to be given credit for what they did do, to establish a reputation amply sufficient to satisfy anybody of troops of their numbers. I have observed that later publications than the one referred to have enhanced their claims to consideration, but my impression is to-day, that my report draws the balance of service there, as well as I have seen it elsewhere, and I was a close witness to the whole of that operation.

I think there would be no difficulty in establishing what troops of the Vermont Brigade were on the line of the effective point, (there were about 2 or 3 regiments) although all were no doubt within call of General Stannard, who ably commanded that Brigade.⁶ Any attempt at this date to enhance the services of the Vermont Brigade (at the expense of the other troops) over that accorded to them in the past histories, would not in my opinion be entitled to consideration. I am satisfied that my report does substantial justice to the relative importance of the services of the troops on that occasion, and gives the Vermont Brigade all the credit they ought to claim. I have a statement somewhere concerning the number of Regiments of that Brigade at the point in question, but I do not find it at present. I have no doubt however it is all laid down, substantially, in one or the other of

3 George J. Stannard (1820–86) commanded the Second Vermont Brigade, the Third Brigade of Abner Doubleday's division in the First Corps. The brigade comprised the 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th Vermont regiments. The brigade was mustered in for nine months' service in the fall of 1862.

4 George G. Benedict, *The Battle of Gettysburgh, and the Part Taken Therein by Vermont Troops* (Burlington, VT: Free Press, 1867).

5 William Galbraith Mitchell (1836–83) was one of Hancock's aides-de-camp and his closest confidante. He had served on Hancock's staff since the Peninsula Campaign. See *United States Army and Navy Journal and Gazette* 20 (June 2, 1883).

6 The 12th and 15th Vermont had been detailed to guard the Army of the Potomac's supply depot at Westminster, Maryland, leaving Stannard with three regiments at Gettysburg.

Federal reinforcements rush to support the Third Corp on July 2, 1863. Courtesy of Phil Laino.

the books of Benedict, [Andrew A.] Humphreys, [Theodore A.] Dodge, or other works, and on the map of [John B.] Batchelder 3rd Day (which I can find for you if you have it not) I will have these books examined and let you know.⁷

I have written to [Cadmus] Wilcox concerning the details of Reams Station, and will write further to [Harry] Heth and let you know more accurately.⁸ I do not know why I do not hear from [Samuel W.] Crawford, I presume he is waiting to examine his papers, and have no doubt I shall hear from him soon, for I have recently addressed him a duplicate letter. I notice what you say about [James H.] Wilson and the Artillery. When do you find that those guns were placed in front of the Railroad embankment? Did they or part of them go out with [John] Gibbon and were they not or some of them placed there suddenly on his returning to the lines when it was too late to make a better position for them? I expect shortly when I hear from all, to whom I have written, to answer your queries of March 4/84 as far as I have not answered them, and mark down on a map my recollection as to the positions. In looking over Wilson's map I was struck with the utterly decimated condition of those two Divisions, and by the inconsiderable rank of the Commanders of the Brigades. As you desire and call upon me for different battles, I can furnish you probably with a good many papers that you have not.

2. W. S. Hancock to F. A. Walker, August 15, 1884

My dear General,

Dwight Morris, was I think the Colonel of the 14th Conn. Vols and Col [Charles J.] Powers of the 108th NY vols.⁹ I believe they are both dead. Dwight Morris did live in Bridgeport Conn. Some officer of

prominence who was in that regiment could easily be found there who could tell about 14th Conn. and the 108th NY for they were together.¹⁰ Now, I would tell you to write to Col Henry Allen at Bridgeport Conn, who belonged either to the 17th or 14th Conn.¹¹ (I think the latter). He could give you the name of some officer of that regiment who could tell you all about the movements of those two regiments on that field, that you desire to know and have not determined. General J. R. Brooke could tell those points no doubt, as well as any body now.¹² His station is Fort Shaw, M.T.¹³ But he is on leave now and a letter addressed to him in care of the Adjt Genl USA Washington DC would reach him. I cannot tell you whether the numbers of the 108th NY and 14th Conn helped to make up the 2100 men. I think it is very likely they did, for they there were in my line. I am not certain however. I enclose you the statements of [Josiah M.] Favill and [William D.] Miller.¹⁴ They both read my memoranda sent you and they hath pronounced it substantially correct according to their recollection. I presume there are not many of your queries of July 8 undisposed of by my memo or by the memo's of Favill and Miller. If there are any points remaining unanswered let me know and I will try to answer them in the future. The statement from Miller and Favill came to me in the form I send them to you in. In reply to your query concerning the meaning in my report of the words "sending a detachment of the 108th NY to the extreme left," I should understand from reading it that it was the extreme left of the 1st division and that is my recollection (or the left of Caldwell's Brigade).¹⁵ I will let you know when I learn that Wilson is here and find when he will be at home.

7 Andrew A. Humphreys, *From Gettysburg to the Rapidan: The Army of the Potomac, July 1863 to April 1864* (New York: Charles Scribners, 1883); Theodore A. Dodge, *A Birds-Eye View of Our Civil War* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1883). John Badger Batchelder (1825–94) was responsible for mapping out the Gettysburg battlefield by studying the terrain; through interviewing soldiers who fought at the battle, he was able to place every fighting unit on the battlefield.

8 On August 25, 1864, two divisions of the Second Corps were decisively defeated at Reams Station in a battle that effectively ended Hancock's active career as a field commander. The principal Confederate commanders at Reams Station were Cadmus Wilcox and Harry Heth. Hancock's humiliation helped widen the breach between himself and John Gibbon, who afterward sought transfer out of the Second Corps.

9 Morris did not reach Gettysburg until July 5th; during the battle, the 14th Connecticut was under the command of Maj. Theodore Ellis.

10 The 108th New York and the 14th Connecticut were components of Thomas A. Smyth's brigade, in Alexander Hays's division of the Second Corps.

11 Henry Allen was a captain in the 17th Connecticut at the time of the battle and was wounded in the fighting on Barlow's Knoll. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel on May 20, 1865.

12 John Rutter Brooke (1838–1926) commanded the Fourth Brigade in Caldwell's division of the Second Corps.

13 Fort Shaw was a U.S. Army post on the Sun River in Montana from 1867 until 1891.

14 Lieutenant Favill was the adjutant of the 57th New York; his *Diary of a Young Officer Serving with the Armies of the United States during the War of the Rebellion* was published in 1909. Hancock's aide, Capt. William D. Miller, was wounded as Hancock sent the 1st Minnesota into combat against Cadmus Wilcox's Alabama brigade.

15 John C. Caldwell, who commanded the First Division of the Second Corps, was ordered by Hancock to reinforce the Third Corps under Sickles in the Wheatfield on July 2.

3. W. S. Hancock to F. A. Walker, November 3, 1885

My dear General,

I have received your two letters and will answer them shortly. I have been away several times recently and am going again tomorrow morning, for two or three days. A short time after my return I shall go to Gettysburgh with a few gentlemen, and if you will accompany us, I will point out to you all the positions, and explain all the details of the question which I understand you refer to.¹⁶

I do not know the name of the Brigade in point but it can be easily ascertained as one of their colors was captured by our troops. I had posted a battery, which I think was [Gulian V.] Weirs (4th Artillery) and a protecting regiment, which I think was the 19th Maine.¹⁷ I believe that you seem to think differently. My official report will show the sequence of the surrounding events, and the matter can be easily and shortly determined after my return. I rode over the general points, both ways, in a very brief period on that afternoon while these events were transpiring, and I know of them generally probably better than anyone else on our side.

My staff officers are dead, except Major W. D. W. Miller who was shot down by my side, when we were returning from [George L.] Willards Brigade and as we passed in front of the Regiment, whose colors were captured by the 1st Minnesota directly afterwards, by my personal directions.¹⁸ This occurred, not on the left of [Alexander S.] Webb, but to the left of Gibbons Division of which Webb was a part.¹⁹

The last few days, I have dictated more detail about this subject, but I cannot lay my hand on your first letter this evening and I therefore defer the full details until my return. On this account there may be some repetitions. Gen. Gibbon ought to know all about this matter, as it occurred during my brief absence and he was then in close com-

mand. He may have sent the 1st Minnesota down in that direction in consequence of the trouble in that quarter, as well as the new Regiments of Vermont Troops under Stannard, which I put in some—what to the right of the 1st Minnesota to bring in the guns of the battery which I before referred to and which had been abandoned. Stannard is an officer of the House of Representatives, or in one of the Departments in Washington.²⁰ Colonel [Wheelock] Veazy is a man of repute in Vermont, who was present as a Colonel in that Brigade. I do not recall the name of the Colonel whom I used in the matter in question (Reynolds I think). Col [William J.] Colville of the 1st Maine [Minnesota], the Lieut Col (whose name I cannot recall at this moment) or Major [Martin] McGinness of the 1st Minnesota, lately a Delegate in Congress from Montana, can settle the matter.²¹ The only thing is to get time to correct the idiosyncrasies of those people who are now writing with a view of improving their previous records. Col. J. B. Bachelder, who made the map of Gettysburgh, could probably tell you all about the position of [Ambrose R.] Wrights Brigade.²² I believe he is in Boston. I will give you more details when I return.

P.S. I was wounded the next evening and was then absent say five months. So I did not pay much attention to the names of the commanders of the Brigade in question, and did not know that it was Wrights.

4. W. S. Hancock, Memoranda for Gen. Francis A. Walker, November 5, 1885

I presume it was a part of the brigade of the enemy, to which you refer, that met the 1st Minnesota, on the 2d day of Gettysburgh, P.M. and drove away the cannoneers and horses of the battery, as well as the protecting regiment which I had posted to the left of General Gibbon, just before I went down to the point where I put in Willards Brigade, and to the

¹⁶ Hancock visited the Gettysburg battlefield in November 1885 with a party that included Walker and J. B. Bachelder.

¹⁷ Weir commanded Battery C, 5th U.S. Artillery, part of the reserve artillery's First Regular Artillery Battalion. Evan Thomas commanded Battery C, 4th U.S. Artillery.

¹⁸ Col. George Lamb Willard (1828–63) commanded a brigade in Hays's division known as the "Harper's Ferry Cowards." On July 2 their counterattack repulsed William Barksdale's Mississippi brigade east of the Trostle farm.

¹⁹ Brig. Gen. Alexander Stewart Webb (1835–1911) commanded the Second Brigade of Gibbon's division in the Second Corps. The regiments of the brigade—the 69th, 71st, 72nd, and 106th Pennsylvania—had all been recruited from Philadelphia, and the brigade was known as the "Philadelphia Brigade."

²⁰ Stannard was the doorkeeper of the House of Representatives from 1881–86.

²¹ Hancock is referring here to Lt. Col. Charles Powell Adams (1831–93) and to Martin Maginnis (1841–1919), who was still a lieutenant in Company H, 1st Minnesota, at the time of the battle.

²² Ambrose Ransom Wright (1826–72) commanded a Georgia brigade in R. H. Anderson's division during the action on July 2. Wright claimed to have reached the crest of Cemetery Ridge but fell back for want of supports.

right of the position referred to in connection with the 1st Minnesota.²³

We had no infantry on the line, beyond this protecting regiment, when I rode down to the left on that plateau, to Willards Brigade or beyond for quite a distance. Caldwell's Division of the 1st Corps which had occupied that place had gone to the left to the Wheat Field, to the left of Gen. [David Bell] Birney, by Gen Meade's orders, and had not returned, and the 3d Corps which, until its advance upon the Peach Orchard, had occupied the ground to the left of it, had gone to the front earlier in the day and had not yet returned.²⁴

My narrative, in my official report, represents what I found on going back. I met with the head of the enemy's column impinging on my line of battle and my aide, Miller, was shot by my side. At that moment I saw a regiment coming down from the right, which proved to be the 1st Minnesota, sent to me by somebody, Gibbon perhaps, on account of the difficulty on his left, concerning the matter of the battery and regiment which I have spoken of. I ordered that regiment to take the colors of the enemy which I pointed out in the brush-wood close by, and they took them. Someone will know whose colors they were. The 1st Minnesota can tell. I immediately proceeded a little further and to my surprise, found that the battery and the regiment which I had placed there to protect it, had gone—except the

guns—and the enemy's straggling shots were falling over the place.

A new Brigade (Vermont troops) from the 1st Corps, lately arrived, was marching down in that direction for a like general purpose, no doubt, to that of the 1st Minnesota. I directed a portion of a regiment of that brigade to withdraw the abandoned guns back through a fence towards our line of battle, which was done.²⁵ On proceeding a little further to the right, I ordered [Samuel S.] Carrolls brigade over to [Oliver Otis] Howard and some parts of the Philadelphia brigade over to [Henry Warner] Slocum (Penn Smith's and another regiment), where outbursts of firing indicated new dangers, to my right though not on my line.²⁶ I will send for the Artillery Commander whom I believe I know, and who is at present stationed close by, and will probably learn the cause of the abandonment of his guns and the absence of the protecting regiment.²⁷

I was shot down the next day and did not have an opportunity to make an early enquiry as to these facts. (I understand your supposition as to the designations of the regiment and battery do not accord with my belief.) My official report gives all the facts and were I on the field I could point out every place of detail mentioned, if the salient features of the ground have not been defaced. It was not on the left of Webb's brigade, it was close to the extreme left

23 Hancock is referring to the overrunning of Gulian V. Weir's Battery C, 5th U.S. Artillery, by Lang's Florida brigade. Weir describes this in his official report: "I was ordered by General Gibbon to open fire to the left with solid shot at 4 degrees elevation. In a short time the enemy showed themselves in front, and, in their advance toward the battery, met with no opposition whatever from our infantry, who were posted on my right and front. I opened with solid shot and spherical case, and as they continued to advance, I opened with canister. Soon it was reported to me that we were out of canister. The enemy being within a few rods of us, I immediately limbered up, and was about to retire when a regiment of infantry took position on my left and rear, and opened fire. I immediately came into battery again, hoping that our infantry would drive the enemy back, as their force seemed to be small and much scattered. The enemy were too close. I endeavored to get my guns off the field; succeeded in getting off but three, as some of the drivers and horses were disabled while in the act of limbering up. My horse was shot at this time, and, as I was rising from the ground I was struck with a spent ball, and everything seemed to be very much confused. I hastened off with the remaining guns. After the enemy had been driven back by the infantry, the other guns were brought off." U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), ser. 1, vol. 27, part 1, 880 (hereafter cited as OR and followed by the volume, part, and page numbers, with all subsequent citations referencing series 1). The protecting regiment to the left of Gibbon was the 19th Maine. The regimental history of the 19th Maine states, "The Nineteenth Maine was placed beside a battery, to support it, and to hold its portion of the line, as the Third Corps had been driven back across the field, and was retiring in haste." John Day Smith, *The History of the Nineteenth Regiment of Maine Volunteer Infantry, 1862–1865* (Minneapolis, MN: Great Western, 1909), 98.

24 Birney commanded the First Division of Daniel Sickles's Third Corps.

25 This was Francis Randall's 13th Vermont. Randall wrote in his official report, "I met General Hancock, who was encouraging and rallying his men to hold on to the position. He told me the rebels had captured a battery he had there, and pointed out to me the way they had gone with it, and asked me if I could retake it. I told him I thought I could, and that I was willing to try. He said it would be a hazardous job, and he would not order it, but, if I thought I could do it, I might try. By this time my regiment had come up, and I moved them to the front far enough so that when I deployed them in line of battle they would leave Hancock's men in their rear. They were now in column by division, and I gave the order to deploy in line, instructing each captain as to what we were to do as they came on to the line, and, taking my position to lead them, gave the order to advance. At this time my horse was killed, and I fell to the ground with him. While on the ground, I discovered a rebel line debouching from the woods on our left, and forming substantially across our track about 40 rods on our front. We received one volley from them, which did us very little injury, when my men sprang forward with the bayonet with so much precipitancy that they appeared to be taken wholly by surprise, and threw themselves in the grass, surrendering, and we passed over them. General Hancock followed up the movement, and told me to press on for the guns and he would take care of the prisoners, which he did, and we continued our pursuit of the guns, which we overtook about half way to the Emmitsburg road, and recaptured them, with some prisoners. These guns, as I am told, belong to the Fifth US Regulars, Lieutenant Weir. There were four of them." OR, 27:1:351.

26 Col. Richard Penn Smith (1837–87) commanded the 71st Pennsylvania; his regiment and several companies from the 106th Pennsylvania were ordered to Culp's Hill and East Cemetery Hill on July 2 to repel that evening's Confederate attacks.

27 Weir was then stationed at Fort Hamilton, on the Narrows of New York Harbor.

of Gibbons division, where this battery was posted, but not very far from Webbs brigade. I understand that [Brig. Gen. William] Harrow's Brigade was on the left of Webbs. I might mention that I met Humphreys' command returning to the line of battle, while I was riding back from the left. The line of battle referred to was that occupied by our troops on the morning of the second day, and re-established on the evening of the same day. In the afternoon there was an advanced line of battle over a part of it, occupied by Sickles Corps and a small portion of the second corps connecting the left of that corps, with Sickles right, (Humphreys) as a defense of the latter.

5. W. S. Hancock, Memoranda for Gen. Francis A. Walker, November 7, 1885

The furthest advanced point at which any of the enemy appeared on the second day was the point at which the 1st Minnesota struck the advancing Confederates. Whether the troops you speak of as having appeared in front of Gibbons left in any form were a part of Wrights Brigade, I do not know, but I doubt whether there was much of an attack in front of the "69th Pennsylvania, 7th Michigan, 59th New York and other regiments" on the evening of the Second, and what did occur was during my absence to the left.²⁸ What was done there, involved the battery and regiment which I have previously spoken of, and the 1st Minnesota. It may have been that the troops pressed in Humphreys right and followed him towards our line, were the same that involved the regiment and battery before referred to and the 1st Minn. (It was not far to the right from where I found Humphreys on riding back, that this incident of the 1st Minnesota occurred). The two advanced regiments that I refer to, in my Report, as protecting Humphreys right, and which suffered serious losses, including their Colonels, may have encountered a part of these same troops, and this may have been the first point of impingement upon General Gibbons front.²⁹

²⁸ The 69th Pennsylvania belonged to Alexander Webb's brigade; the 7th Michigan and 59th New York were part of Norman Hall's brigade. And both brigades were under the command of John Gibbon.

²⁹ The two advanced regiments Hancock is referring to are the 15th Massachusetts and 82nd New York. Hancock wrote in his official report, "The right of the Third Corps rested near the brick house, near the Emmitsburg road, a considerable distance in front of Gibbons's division, the general direction of the line being parallel to that road. To strengthen the point between the right of the Third Corps and his left, General Gibbon sent two regiments of

The enemy's troops may have been directed from the two regiments in an oblique line along the front and to the left, passing by the battery and regiment to the point where they encountered the 1st Minnesota, and may have been met by a fire of some kind, especially to protect the two retiring regiments. I presume this would settle any question as to how they came in contact with any other troops of the Second Corps than those I have mentioned. I have just written a lengthy note to Batchelder asking him some questions. I will send you a copy, but everything is practically embraced in what I have already sent you. I have also written to Major Weir to come and see me, and have written to Colonel Colville of the 1st Minnesota: I will send you copies of the correspondence as it progresses. When we go down to Gettysburg (of which you will have due notice) I think you had better join us. You can then settle all these questions in a better way than by any other method of examination.

6. W. S. Hancock to F. A. Walker, November 13, 1885

My dear general,

In the later letters I have written you, Batchelder and others, Weir's battery "C" 4th Artillery should be Weir's battery "C" 5th Artillery. Please make that correction wherever you come across it. November 18th (next Wednesday) is fixed upon as the time of departure from Philadelphia, at 11.50 a.m. That will cause us to leave the New York side of the Hudson River at 9 a.m., and go by the fast train to Philadelphia. It leaves Jersey City at 9.16 a.m. I hope you will be able to go along; Batchelder says he expects to go. I send you a communication from them

General Harrow's brigade (the Fifteenth Massachusetts, Col. G. H. Ward, and the Eighty-second New York Volunteers, Colonel Huston) to occupy a crest on the right of the brick house." *OR*, 27.1:371. Col. George H. Ward of the 15th Massachusetts and Lt. Col. James Huston of the 82nd New York were both mortally wounded. Curiously, Hancock makes no mention here of the insertion of the 42nd New York and the 19th Massachusetts, from Norman Hall's brigade, Gibbons's division. The 19th Massachusetts' regimental historian claimed that Hancock ordered them, rather than the 15th Massachusetts and 82nd New York, to support Humphreys's right flank near the Codori house. In his official report, Hancock mentions that "the two regiments sent from the Second Division to General Humphreys' assistance (Nineteenth Massachusetts, Colonel Devereux, and Forty-second New York, Colonel Mallon, both under command of Colonel Mallon) . . . observing that General Humphreys' command was rapidly retiring . . . formed line of battle, delivered a few volleys at the advancing enemy, and themselves retired in good order to their position in line in the Second Corps, having suffered a heavy loss." *OR*, 27.1:370. James E. Mallon (1836–63) was killed some months later at Bristoe Station. Arthur F. Devereaux (1838–1906) wrote "Some Account of Picket's Charge at Gettysburg" for the *Magazine of American History* in July 1887.

The Confederate assault comes close to breaking the Federal line on Cemetery Ridge on July 2, 1863. Courtesy of Phil Laino.

about his Battery "C" 5th Arty., at Gettysburg, and from Judge Flandreau at St. Paul, in reference to Col. Colville of the 1st Minnesota, stating that he (Colville) lives at Red Wing, Minn.³⁰

**7. W. S. Hancock to F. A. Walker,
November 13, 1885**

My dear General,

Weir says that he drew off some of his guns and I suppose that is so. I saw some abandoned, but only took a cursory view and did not count them. I am anxious now to know the designation of the Regiment that I placed as a protection to him, its strength and losses are given my official reports. Also the 106th PA as to what Brigade, Division and C. it was in, and its official losses in killed and wounded.³¹ I shall take along with me to Gettysburg, the official maps of the three days battle. Batchelders map of the Second day, shows the position of this battery (Weirs) to be about where I placed it, and unless the underbrush of woods has been impaired or destroyed, we can easily see it. I have asked my aide, Col. W. D. W. Miller of 32 South St. N.Y. City, who was shot at my side, to go with me; and I have invited a few others interviewed with Capt. Weir and have asked him to bring with him an officer of his Regiment who, as a sergeant, commanded a section of his battery on that occasion. I enclose a copy of my letter to the Adjutant General of this State (Gen Farnsworth) on the subject of the "Corn Exchange" Regiment of New York and will forward you copies of Weir's *complete report*, and other papers as they are received.³²

**8. J. B. Bachelder to W. S. Hancock,
November 13, 1885**

My dear Sir,

In answer to the various questions embodied in your letter of the 9th instant, I have the honor to report the following reply. The movements of the

several brigades which engaged that part of you line in question were all governed by the general order directing each to advance when the brigade next in order on its right became engaged. The execution of this order brought the plan of the attacking force in echelon formation. You reached a point on your left in time to meet the attack of their right brigade by putting in Willards brigade; and, moving toward the right of your line you met the second brigade when it came forward and the 1st Minnesota was ordered to attack by you. Continuing still farther you came upon the abandoned guns of Weir's battery; which brought you opportunely, in contact with the enemy at the culminating moment of his advance along this entire line; which is made plain by tracing the following order of events.

The brigade immediately in front of that part of your command directly engaged were commencing, at their right, as the engagement did, [William] Barksdale's Mississippi which broke through Birneys line at the Peach Orchard, attacked Humphreys left, and compelled him to charge front to the rear; and continuing down the slope, was met and repulsed by Willards brigade. Willard was killed and Barksdale was mortally wounded. Next on Barksdales left was Wilcox's Alabama brigade, and [Edward] Perry's Florida brigade, the two acting together engaged Humphreys on front and right, forcing him back into the ravine.³³ Those commands were checked in their advance by the additional fire of [Evan] Thomas's battery "C" 4th US on their right, and Weir's "C" 5th US on their left, while the final repulse was effected by the gallant charge of the 1st Minnesota, which struck the right of Wilcox's brigade, and the opportune arrival of [George J.] Stannards Vermont troops, which threatened his left.³⁴ The gunners of Weirs battery left their guns however, and the regiment placed in support abandoned it. The guns being drawn back by a detachment of the 13th Vermont, Colonel [Francis V.] Randall, by your orders, and subsequently according to the official report were taken from the field by the 19th Maine, which had been

³⁰ Charles Eugene Flandreau (1828–1903) was a judge in the territory (and later state) of Minnesota. He was instrumental in defending New Ulm, Minnesota, during the Sioux uprising of 1862.

³¹ The 106th Pennsylvania was one of four regiments known as the Philadelphia Brigade; they formed a brigade in John Gibbon's division of the Second Corps. The brigade is famous for defending the Angle against Pickett's charge on July 3.

³² Hancock is referring here to Adj. Gen. John G. Farnsworth of New York (1832–95). The "Corn Exchange Regiment" was actually the 118th Pennsylvania; its sponsoring agency was the Corn Exchange Association, which was organized in Philadelphia in 1854 and dealt in agricultural commodities.

³³ Edward Perry had contracted typhoid fever after Chancellorsville; his brigade was actually commanded by Col. David Lang at Gettysburg.

³⁴ Thomas's battery had been drawn from the artillery reserve and diverted by Hancock to a position near the Hummelbaugh farm.

in support of [Thomas F.] Brown's battery "B", 1st Rhode Island.³⁵

Next on the left of the Florida brigade was Wright's Georgia brigade, which attacked the 82nd New York and 15th Massachusetts, stationed by your order on the Emmitsburg road to cover the right of the 3d Corps.³⁶ The 106th Pennsylvania was also sent out, but all were forced to retire. Browns battery which had been pushed out to the front was run over, and the Georgians were only repulsed when they reached the position of Webbs brigade, the 69th Pennsylvania being conspicuous in its defence of this position; and the opportune arrival of the Vermont troops contributed to the same result. Hence you will perceive that Wrights brigade was first, engaged with the two regiments on the Emmitsburg road, and last with the 69th Penna. It at no time reached as far South as the position of the 1st Minnesota.

Lockwood's regiments that you allude to came upon the field at dusk, passing over the position occupied by McGilvery's brigade of artillery the next day, and to the left of Willards position, continued nearly up to the Peach Orchard.³⁷ [John Cleveland] Robinson's and [Abner] Doubleday's divisions of the 1st Corps remained throughout the day in rear of Cemetery Hill. Stannards Vermont brigade had reported to General Doubleday on the night of the 1st. It consisted of the 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th [Vermont] regiments, but the 12th and 15th were detached to guard the corps trains. On the evening of the 2d when the call was made for the troops to fill the gaps in the line of battle, Doubleday's and Robinson's divisions responded. Robinson continued along the ridge to the left to the position of Willard's brigade, but the enemy had been repulsed

and his service were not needed. Doubleday's division moved out in detachments, and because only partially engaged.

When Stannards brigade moved, the 14th regiment under Colonel [William] Nichols (not Randall) led, followed by the 16th Colonel Veazy, the enemy falling back as they advanced. Both these requirements, however, claim to have come upon unsupported batteries, which they stood by until dark. Five companies of the 13th Vermont, under Liet. Colon. [William] Munson had been detached to guard a battery. The right wing of the regiment under Colonel Randall were the troops which you saw, and which at your request drew back the guns of Weirs battery. The Vermont brigade lay on this ground for the night, forming the front line of Doubleday's division, with two regiments of [Col. Chapman] Biddle's brigade (20th N.Y.M. and 151st PA) on its right connection on [Brig. Gen. William] Harrow's left.³⁸ On the morning of the 3d, during the brief cannonade, Colonel Nichols obtained permission to advance his regiment (14th Vermont) across the slight depression to the fringe of timber for the better protection of his men; and Colonel Randall soon after moved his regiment (13th) forward to the slight crest, on which he piled up rails for a protection. About one half of the 16th regiment was on the Picket line with the balance lying in rear of the 13th and 14th as a reserve.

You ask, "What color was it that Colonel Colville of the 1st Minnesota captured." To which I answer, none. The regiment did not capture any color on the 2nd, but on the 3d it is reported to have captured the color of the 28th VA, of Garnett's brigade. I am satisfied that the battery you speak of was Weirs, "C" 5th US Captain [Dunbar R.] Ransom its commander was in command of a regular brigade, and was severely wounded.³⁹ I have never quite determined, however, what regiment was assigned to its support. I may be able to decide when all my data upon this part of the battle are brought together. I supposed for some time that it was the 19th Maine; but they report that this regiment was in support of Brown's battery "B" 1st R.I. I have an-

³⁵ Stannard's official report of July 4, 1863, states that "the right wing of the Thirteenth Regiment, under Colonel Randall, was in the advance, and, upon reaching the break in the line, was granted by Major-General Hancock, commanding upon the spot, the privilege of making the effort to retake the guns of Company C, regular battery, which had just been captured by the enemy. This they performed in a gallant charge, in which Colonel Randall's horse was shot under him." *OR*, 27.1:349.

³⁶ The regimental history of the 15th Massachusetts asserts that Brown's battery (Battery B, 1st Rhode Island) "was placed in the rear and to the left of" the 15th Massachusetts and 82nd New York. See Andrew Elmer Ford, *The Story of the Fifteenth Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry* (Clinton, MA: W. J. Coulter, 1898), 267.

³⁷ Henry Lockwood commanded the 150th New York and the 1st Regiment Potomac Home Brigade, Maryland Volunteers, in the Twelfth Corps. Lt. Col. Freeman McGilvery (1823-64) assembled a line of artillery batteries from the reserve artillery of the Army of the Potomac and assisted in preventing Barksdale's and Wilcox's brigades from penetrating the Union line.

³⁸ The 20th New York State Militia was also known by its volunteer designation as the 80th New York. Harrow commanded a brigade in Gibbon's division of the Second Corps.

³⁹ Dunbar Richard Ransom (1831-97) commanded the First Regular Artillery Battalion in the reserve artillery, of which Weir's battery was a part.

swered your questions from my present convictions formed from the date as they have been collected. I have not compiled them, however, for historical purpose, and it is not impossible that future investigation may change my views. It must always be borne in mind that I have no personal knowledge of events—that everything comes to me second hand; hence I must never become so fixed in an opinion that it cannot be changed when good and sufficient reasons appear to do so.

My only engagements are from the 25th to the 29th instant, and I shall be most happy to accompany your party to Gettysburg at any time not interfering with that. I can meet you at Jersey City for the regular morning train.

P.S. I have just received Colonel [John P.] Nicholsons letter saying your party will go to Gettysburg Wednesday, and I have written him I will join it.⁴⁰

9. W. S. Hancock to F. A. Walker, November 16, 1885

Weirs Battery, ("C" 5th Artillery) had six guns. On Batchelder's detailed map of the Second day of Gettysburg, this battery is called "Ransom's"; and on the detailed map of the third day, the position of the battery is not laid down. (It might not have been.) On Batchelder's general map, which he first made from the picture, the battery is put down as Weir's. Paul Romer (now First Lieutenant 5 Artillery) was a sergeant commanding a section of the battery, on the second day, and remained on the field.⁴¹ He knows a great deal about the circumstances. He says that he drew off three or four guns, in addition to his own, (six or seven guns in all), and that there was, or had been, another battery in that position. It may be well to investigate this further. It is possible that either Capt. Weir or Lieut. Romer will accompany us to Gettysburg. I enclose a copy of Capt. Weir's complete Report—which includes the third day.

10. W. S. Hancock to F. A. Walker, November 16, 1885

My dear General,

Your letter of the instant was received this morning. I am glad that you expect to accompany

⁴⁰ Lt. Col. John Page Nicholson (1842–1922) served in the 28th Pennsylvania and, after the war, took a leading role in the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States and the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association.

⁴¹ Paul Romer (d. 1908) was a first sergeant of Weir's Battery C, 5th U.S. Artillery, at the time of Gettysburg.

us.⁴² Batchelder will be along, also Miller, my Aide, and I think Weir or Roemer of the 5th Artillery Battery, so that it will be an excellent opportunity to settle some points that could never be settled so well in any other way. I received a long letter from Batchelder this morning, of which I have already sent you a copy. I refuse to send you Weirs full report, and also his statement concerning the Battle of Gettysburg before I leave, but what I do not send I will bring along.

11. W. S. Hancock to F. A. Walker, November 23, 1885

My dear General,

I send you herewith the following papers relating to the Battle of Gettysburg. 1. Copy of Captain Weir's pencil map of part of the field, showing the position of Battery 'C' 5 Artillery on the second day. 2. Copy of Captain Weir's full report of the operations of Battery 'C' 5th Artillery at Gettysburg. 3. Extracts from General Hancock's Official Report, Gettysburg. 4. Extract from General Morgan's Manuscript, Gettysburg, with note by Gen. W. G. Mitchell.⁴³ 5. Copy of Statement of Lieutenant Romer concerning Battery "C" 5th Artillery at Gettysburg (Paul Romer was 1st Sergeant of the battery at that time).

12. W. S. Hancock to F. A. Walker, December 12, 1885

My dear General,

One of the most important things to inquire about, in connection with the Battle of Gettysburg, is where [Brig. Gen. John W.] Geary remained on the first night, with his division.⁴⁴ Two of his regi-

⁴² The *Gettysburg Compiler* (November 17, 1885) announced that "Gen. Hancock, Col. Nicholson, Col. Bachelder and several other gentlemen will visit the Gettysburg battlefield this week, arriving tomorrow (Wednesday) evening. The party have engaged quarters at the Eagle Hotel." An article published in the *Compiler* a week later (November 24, 1885) listed Hancock's group as including Walker, Maj. W. W. D. Miller, John P. Nicholson, G. A. Bernard, John B. Bachelder, Maj. E. W. Coffin, Capt. J. H. Weeks, Capt. C. W. West, Col. W. P. Wilson, Capt. Gulian Weir, Capt. Paul Roemer, Maj. W. A. Lambert, and Dr. C. E. Goodman. They arrived at 6:32 p.m. in Gettysburg, to be met with a salute by the local Grand Army of the Republic post's cannon, the "General Meade." Hancock remained in Gettysburg until Friday, "highly pleased with his visit."

⁴³ Charles H. Morgan (1834–75) was Hancock's chief of staff at Gettysburg, then with the rank of lieutenant colonel. Morgan's "Narrative of the Operations of the Second Army Corps, from the time General Hancock assumed command, June 9, 1863 (relieving Major-General D. N. Couch), until the close of the battle of Gettysburg" appears as Appendix A of Almira Russell Hancock's *Reminiscences of Winfield Scott Hancock* (New York: Charles L. Webster, 1887).

⁴⁴ Geary's division of Slocum's Twelfth Corps originally occupied the lower length of Cemetery Ridge and the position filled by Sickles's Third Corps but

ments have monuments on the spur of Little Round Top and near it, and the other part of the division ought not to have been far away, under ordinary rules, considering the orders he had received from me on the afternoon of the 1st, when he came up and reported to me, stating that he could not find General Slocum.⁴⁵

In the memoir of his life, which I have, it is said that he obeyed those orders.⁴⁶ The question is, *how* he ordered them, and *when* he left that position to the one we examined on the occasion of the “bull contest” to the east of Baltimore pike. I asked Colonel Nicholson about this matter, when I was on the field the other day. He says they left there at 5 o’clock and some minutes, next morning, under orders from General Meade, to take the position last referred to (east of the Baltimore pike). Batchelder, even, said he did not know—that he was not advised as to where the rest of the division encamped that night, but that he would certain[ly] ascertain. Nicholson, who belonged to the command, may know; but he did not tell me on this occasion.

It is quite manifest that had Geary remained where I ordered him to go and where his advance, as before mentioned, did go, he would have been on hand next morning, in the right place (and near by where he must have been that night, for his troops came up on the Baltimore pike when he reported to me), when [Maj. Gen. Gouverneur K.] Warren, ascending the Little Round Top, saw at a distance, the enemy’s advancing attack from a direction leading through the wheat-field, and had to send to Meade for troops, which led to the Fifth Corps being sent there, and, in advance of their probable arrival, of Caldwell’s division of the Second Corps, with orders to report to General [George] Sykes, on arrival, for the time being, under the supposition that he (Sykes) was in advance of his command.⁴⁷ The re-

was then moved to Culp’s Hill with the rest of the Twelfth Corps.

⁴⁵ The two regiments with monuments on Little Round Top are the 147th Pennsylvania and the 5th Ohio; both were part of Col. Charles Candy’s brigade.

⁴⁶ See John W. Geary, *In Memoriam J. W. G.* (Philadelphia: W. W. Bates, 1873).

In his official report, Geary insisted that on the evening of July 1, he had “reported to Major-General Hancock, commanding Second Corps, who informed me that the right could maintain itself, and the immediate need of a division on the left was imperative. By his direction, upon this threatening emergency, I took up a position on the extreme left of the line of battle. . . . This line was held by the First and Third Brigades. . . . The command rested on their arms during the night. At 5 a.m. on the 2d, having been relieved by the Third Army Corps, in obedience to orders from Major-General Slocum, the division was placed on the right of the center of the main line of battle, east of the turnpike.” *OR*, 27:1:825.

⁴⁷ Maj. Gen. George Sykes (1822–80) commanded the Fifth Corps.

spective hours of arrival of the Fifth Corps and of Caldwell’s division at that position ought to be matters of inquiry. Where Geary remained on the night of the 2nd, is not a matter of interest to the historian of the Second Corps, but one of general interest, and that seems to be in the clouds, as far as we could learn on our late visit to Gettysburg.

On the morning after your departure from Gettysburg, I rode to Little Round Top and examined the position of the extreme left of the Fifth Corps (Chamberlain).⁴⁸ I ascertained that it was within pistol shot of Taneytown road in the valley below, and about the point where our Artillery Reserve was placed during the battle. Quite a notable action occurred there, which Colonel Batchelder understands well. I came up on the Taneytown road [on July 1st] only an hour or so before Geary appeared to me near Cemetery Hill, and my orders to him were manifestly based upon what I had observed in that neighborhood, while passing over the road. I sent Geary there immediately, as a precaution, to prevent our left from being turned in that direction, as well as to hold a strong point in case the enemy should force our position, or, General Meade should determine to retire us from Cemetery Ridge.

Now, the fact is, the enemy did attempt to turn our position on the 2nd, and would have done so, but for the final, decisive action in which Chamberlain was the left. I do not think you should conclude your history of Gettysburg without accompanying Batchelder over the Little Round Top and knowing, with the advantage of personal observation of the locality, what transpired there, as well as on the Great Round Top, because the enemy’s troops which operated on the Little Round Top, came through the Great Round Top; and the action there, as related to me by Batchelder, reflected much credit upon both sides. It showed a devotion to duty, and a quality of independence of character on the part of the subordinate, detached commanders of both armies, which merits the highest praise.

The number of visitors with us was materially reduced that morning, on our recent visit there, although not as much so as would have been desirable for our purposes. We had less than half as many as the day before; but we always had some with us who did not quite understand the value of

⁴⁸ Hancock is referring here to Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain.

the special inquiry we were pursuing. Moreover, we had no photographers to take our pictures en route, and in this connection I may mention that the skillful artist who accosted us two or three times on the previous day, in sending me the result of his operations, developed the fact that I was surprised and ill pleased on each occasion, said my photograph always showed a frown.⁴⁹ To you, in the picture, justice was invariably done.

From Willard's position I proceeded on foot, with Batchelder, Nicholson, [Lt. Col. William P.] Wilson and Weir along the line of fringe of timber, to the position of the Vermont Brigade on the third day, and thence to the monument of the 15th Massachusetts, near the Emmitsburg road and near the final concentration for the impingement of Longstreets' troops on our line on the 3rd. When I got nearly to the head of the timber, along the fringe of brushwood or undergrowth, I found some difficulty in determining several points—not material as to general results or affecting my reports (because they were made from personal observation at the time), but because of the question as to whether the different monuments I had mentioned, as occurring along a fringe of timber, might be accurately picked out today. For the reasons I am about to mention, they might be thrown relatively to the right although still in sequence.

The new railway, crossing to the west of the Vermont position on the 3rd, as since declared, and the "avenue" passing now on the right of that position, have evidently caused a material change in the topography, where bushes or trees are concerned.⁵⁰ Wire fences obstruct an approach to the swale, from either road, except on foot, and the "avenue" does not conform to my line of personal movements on the 2nd; that ran in the same general direction but nearer the swale, as well as the lines of battle of infantry established at different times, between the Vermont position and Willard's position.

⁴⁹ Hancock is referring here to local Gettysburg photographer William H. Tipton. Tipton's two photographs of Hancock and his entourage are entitled "Gen. Hancock, Staff and Others—Where Hancock Was Wounded" and "Gen. Hancock and Others at Copse, Nov. 19th, 1885," in *Catalogue of Tipton's Photographic Views of the Battlefield of Gettysburg* (Gettysburg, PA: J. E. Wible, 1894).

⁵⁰ The Gettysburg and Harrisburg Railway was creating a new line from Carlisle to Gettysburg and building a new station on Washington Street to accommodate passengers and freight. A spur line was to run west of the town, cross the Emmitsburg Road, and terminate near Little Round Top; and clearing for the roadbed had already begun in 1885.

Near the head of the swale and present timber there is now an important field between that, and the railroad and "avenue"; and in that field there is, at present, a little current of water which proceed from springs arising to the right or right rear of the Vermont position.⁵¹ Although this rivulet is evidently a part of the present plan of cultivation and is ditched in, a small boulder was conveniently placed in it for us to step upon, on account of its width. Some little accretion of current may have been derived from the moisture of the previous drizzly day, which, as you know, was not of much importance, however. Inside of the field and near the head of the timber, stumps of trees show that considerable timber existed there many years ago. And it evidently extended from the head of the present timber up to the right and rear of the Vermont position, across the field through which the rivulet runs, for a distance of several hundred yards. (Batchelder tells me the 1st Minnesota dead were buried near a great tree, and I have no doubt this fact would indicate about the position of their entrance into the battle, on the evening of the 2nd.)

The whole line of the rivulet was evidently covered with a fringe of timber, of large and small growth, on the day of the battle. It has all been destroyed, and was no doubt cut down for firewood, or for purposes of cultivation, shortly after the battle, before any efforts were made for its preservation. The rivulet crosses the avenue a considerable number of yards behind the Vermont position; and the timber which grew about that position, has been cut off, to the right and left, since I saw it on a visit there in 1866. Across the railway, westward from the Vermont position, in the corner of the adjoining field, are some boulders rising above the ground, about which the indications of trees, only recently cut down, show there was formerly a continuation of the timber of the Vermont position in that direction. The "avenue" passing through the right of the Vermont position and leading up towards the position pointed out as that occupied by the 19th Mass. and 42nd New York, has evidently cut off and disposed of some timber and underbrush there, running along the eastern side of the "avenue". In 1866 and especially on the day of the

⁵¹ The "little current of water" that Hancock mentions here refers to Plum Run.

battle, there was a fringe of sparse undergrowth with occasional individual trees leading up towards the position of the 19th Mass., and heading about that point. That undergrowth and some of the trees are now missing, although some isolated trees are still standing.

The place where General Gibbon was wounded as indicated to me by Stannard and others, when I was on the ground in 1866, was near an isolated tree such as are now standing there, and probably a hundred or two hundred paces to the right (eastward) of the spot shown me where I was wounded. I was shot from my horse when leaving the Vermont position by its right, along the high ground, proceeding directly towards the clump of timber, and passing over the same general direction I had travelled on my way to the Vermont troops, a few minutes before. The place where I was shot, as at present marked, is not very accurately indicated. I saw no great boulder in the neighborhood. Lying on my back and looking through the remains of a very low, disintegrated stone wall, I could observe the operations of the enemy and give directions accordingly; and the Vermont troops, obeying my orders, proceeded close to my left, along that wall, towards the right. In lying down my head was to the south and my feet to the north. From where my horse fell I was carried a few yards to the spot upon which I lay down, by the officers of the Vermont troops, in the presence of General Stannard, Colonel Benedict and others. They know the position and it was marked out by them on my visit in 1866. I do not recognize the spot now pointed out as that where I was shot, although I was satisfied of the general accuracy of the place when indicated in 1866.

I was present on that occasion and was informed of their determination, which General Mitchell, who was with me immediately after I was shot and at the time referred to, substantially confirmed. Colonel Batchelder was likewise present. The Vermont men know where I fell; they can indicate the position, and representatives of the Vermont brigade should be invited to point out the limits of the surrounding timber as it then existed. All this enables me to form a conclusion with regard to Weir's battery, which I think is sufficiently accurate. If the timber to which I have referred as having been cut

down, were standing, it would satisfy the conditions quite well.

On the last day of our recent visit to Gettysburg, Weir, in going studiously over the ground with Batchelder, finally indicated as his position, a point in front of that occupied by the Vermont troops, say one hundred yards removed to the left of the Second Corps, as it then stood, Caldwell's division being absent at the wheatfield. It is possible that that was his position, or that it was immediately to the left and rear of the Vermont position, in the same neighborhood, as you saw it. Batchelder had always placed it on the left and rear, but the conditions on the right, as indicated by Weir, would answer the purposes. Either would explain my report as to where the abandoned guns were found and removed, if the timber was all standing; but Batchelder's better, because of the moisture and swale I encountered, although I found no current, such as made by cultivation today.

If Weir's battery was placed where Weir has recently pointed it out, the supporting regiment (supposed to have been the 19th Maine) which I placed there when his battery was last planted on the 2nd, evidently occupied the same position as the Vermont troops occupied on the 3rd, or along the timber following the rivulet a short distance behind the Vermont position, in about a parallel direction. Either determination would sufficiently satisfy all the necessary conditions, except that of extreme accuracy. The two positions claimed could not have been more than, say two hundred yards apart, in any case. It may have been that on the day of the battle there was a fringe of timber in front of the fringe of timber now indicated as that of the Vermont troops, short but generally parallel to it. If such were the case it would not interfere with Weir's selection of the position of his battery, but would agree with all the circumstances and would suit my recollections better, as well meet the purposes for which I sent Weir's battery and the supporting regiment there. As Colonel Batchelder has been there constantly since that day, I presume it could not be so or he would know it.

But the distance from the position of the 19th Mass. and 42nd New York, appears somewhat greater today than I observed it to be on the day

of the battle, where I encountered Colonel Devereaux. I have asked Colonel Batchelder to inquire of the proprietors of the field as to the condition of the timber along the current of water at the time of the battle. Natural causes and effects would be more reliable than the evidence of such people, unless they are of the best and were living [at] the time. No doubt the fringe of timber has been cut down. I think you ought to visit the ground again, as I visited it, before you make your final conclusions.

P.S. The official surveys were made long after the battle—perhaps two years. The timber from Culp’s Hill towards the Little Round Top is of large growth, and the general indications remain today as in 1866, and on the day of the battle save as to the abatis. The creek covering the front of the Second Corps and from its left to the Little Round Top, may have been denuded of its undergrowth, a good deal, on account of its accessibility for firewood or farm purposes. I shall have a sketch made, showing what would be the present appearance of the ground along the left of the line of the Second Corps on the 2nd day (save during Caldwell’s absence at the wheatfield) and on the 3rd day—also the present appearance of the Vermont position—if the fringe of undergrowth and timber that has been cut down, were replaced.

General Smith who commanded a brigade or a part of a brigade on Cemetery Hill on the 1st of July, should be asked what artillery was in position across the Baltimore pike, Eastward, with the 11th Corps, when I arrived there.⁵² They now have the defences of a battery there which did not exist on the hour of my arrival, nor did I see the battery, which now claims to have been on our extreme right and perpendicular to our front, at that time. It may have come up later. The very few guns that I saw on the hill, had no defences except holes dug in the ground to lower the wheels, as I think you will find by referring to my official report or to my testimony before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, when the matter was still fresh in my mind. If you write to General Smith, ask him how many troops he had on the hill when I arrived. He stated about a thousand, he thought, when I asked him this question in Philadelphia a

⁵² Col. Orland Smith (1825–1903) commanded the Second Brigade in Adolf von Steinwehr’s division of the Eleventh Corps.

month or two ago, and that agrees with the statements I have made.

13. W. S. Hancock to F. A. Walker, December 31, 1885

My dear General,

I enclose you copies of a letter I wrote Captain Weir on the 21st inst. And his reply thereto dated December 24th. I do not know what he regrets having written, unless he refers to the passage about General [Alexander S.] Webb in his “Recollections of the 3d Day at Gettysburg,” which I sent you on the 9th instant, and by his request to Colonel Batchelder.⁵³ Weir probably did not think of it at the time, but it might appear a strange statement to persons unacquainted with the parties and circumstances. I think it had better be obliterated in your copy.

P.S. the words that I refer to are on page 5 of your copy, as follows: “Was resting in a hole in the ground.”

14. W. S. Hancock to F. A. Walker, January 2, 1886

My dear general,

I have just read over Morgan’s “narrative” concerning Gettysburg, as far as the Second Corps was in question, or my line, as you may call it. That, with my Official Report, and the testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War furnish, I think, a perfect basis for a general explanation in reference to that subject. It refers very carefully to what transpired in Caldwell’s Division, which Wilson can well supplement as he was present with it.⁵⁴ It furnishes some information concerning Willard’s Brigade which is reliable. It also furnishes a very careful expression concerning the 1st Minnesota, and the Vermont Troops which brought off the abandoned guns. It does not mention the matter of Humphreys appearance on the line after his reformation nor the approach of Stannard’s troops on the evening of the 2nd, but my Official Report refers to Humphreys and a *regiment* of Vermont troops. Through some inadvertance “Stannard’s Brigade” is not there referred to. Morgan’s Narrative explains

⁵³ *An Address Delivered at Gettysburg, August 27, 1883 by Gen. Alexander S. Webb at the Dedication of the 72d Pa. Vols. Monument* (Philadelphia, PA: Porter and Coates, 1883).

⁵⁴ William P. Wilson was an aide-de-camp to General Caldwell.

the hour, about, at which I reached the right of my line, after meeting and passing all the incidents narrated, and directed the reinforcing of Howard and Slocum successively. It was quite late in the evening, as Morgan says, and I therefore did not know accurately, except from reports, and the firing, as to what had transpired on the line save as I was a personal party to it, and especially what had transpired immediately in front of Generals Gibbon and Hays in my absence. I felt the enemy of course as I came along the swale of the timber as related. I met the abandoned guns; I knew by reports of the losses of the two bodies of regiments thrown to the front, and the Artillery in connection therewith, but not being present during the encounter of my Official Report would be the best explanation of that as it referred to specifically in it. My impression remains that the attacks of the enemy were more stringently met by the advanced bodies previously referred to, than by the main line of the right or centre of the 2nd Corps. These different bodies of the enemy which attacked those advanced troops no doubt threw their shot into the main line of the centre and right of the 2nd Corps, and received their fire, but I think my Official Report will be sufficient to cover all questions of that kind as to fact. As to matters which did not come under my personal observation, my information was obtained from reliable, and official eye-witnesses.

P.S. (Jan 14 1886.) This letter has been unavoidably delayed for the purpose of correcting some errors observed on revision.

15. W. S. Hancock to F. A. Walker, January 21, 1886

My dear General,

I send herewith a copy of my letters to Col Scott (date Jan. 16 1886) and a copy of my letters to Col. R. B. Ricketts (date Jan. 21st 1886).⁵⁵ I will send you Col. Scott's reply as soon as received. My letter to Col. Ricketts was rendered necessary by Capt. Coopers statement (copy enclosed) that I arrived at Cemetery Hill at 5.30 P.M.⁵⁶ This is clearly a mis-

⁵⁵ Lt. Col. Robert N. Scott (1838–87) was in charge of compiling and publishing the *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*; the first volume of the OR had appeared in 1880. Col. R. Bruce Ricketts (1839–1918), commanding Batteries F and G, 1st Pennsylvania Light Artillery, was stationed on East Cemetery Hill on July 2; he helped to repulse the Confederate attack on the evening of July 2.

⁵⁶ Capt. James Cooper (1849–1906) commanded Battery B, 1st Pennsylvania

take and is simply given as a matter of memory by Capt. Cooper. His official report says nothing on this subject, and that was made on July 17 1863. You have Morgan's and Mitchell's narratives, my official report and my testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, so I must say no more to you on this subject.

16. John Gibbon to F. A. Walker, March 14, 1886

My dear Genl. Walker:

I have read with great interest your lecture on Gettysburg as published in the *Boston Herald* of the 5th.⁵⁷ I find but little in it to criticize, but think you attach more importance to the part played by Stannard's Brig so far as concerns the *repulse* of Pickett's assault than the facts warrant, for I believe that assault was in fact repulsed before any movement of Stannard's Brig. took place. That movement did not take place whilst I was on the field. Before I was wounded I tried to get the troops occupying the breastwork just to the left of my Div. to swing out to the front, take the assaulting force in flank + [—] up along my front, but the troops failed to respond, + some officers who were with them told me they were Vermont troops. At that time a group of men on the *right* of Pickett's line had halted behind the bunch of brush wood in front of the left of my Div. + were firing but the main line farther to their left had reached the wall + was engaged in the hand to hand conflict with Webb's Brig. The actual conflict there was hidden from my view by the clump of trees inside my line, but I could see from where I was larger numbers of the enemy going to the rear + crossing the Emmitsburg road to our right of the Cadori house + called attention of them about me to the fact that the assault had been repulsed, altho the firing still continued [here] + the repulse was evidently not completely over. Since was very precarious therefore + I rode rapidly back to my own

Light Artillery. Hancock's actual arrival time on the battlefield was disputed for years after Gettysburg. Claiming to have arrived as early as 3:30 p.m., Hancock wanted the credit for having decided to make a stand on Cemetery Hill. Oliver Otis Howard, who commanded the Eleventh Corps and was in nominal command on Cemetery Hill, insisted that the decision to remain was his. Howard, who also argued with Hancock over seniority, marked Hancock's arrival around 4:00 p.m.

⁵⁷ Walker's lecture, "Gettysburg," was delivered at the Lowell Institute on March 4, 1886, and published the next day in the *Boston Herald*. Walker also published a tribute to "Hancock at Gettysburg" in the *National Tribune* for October 28, 1886, and delivered "The Military Character and Services of Major-General W. S. Hancock" at the Vermont Officers Reunion Society on November 3, 1886.

The Confederate assault on the Federal center, July 3, 1863. Courtesy of Phil Laino.

troops + whilst trying to get the left Regt. of my Div (19th Me) to swing out + do what I had endeavored to get the Vermont troops to do, I was wounded + shortly after left the field. The breast work occupied by the troops to the left of my Div. I had myself had constructed the day before + it was in full view as I left. No movement to the front such as you describe as causing Pickett's line to "curl in towards its centre" had then taken place. It must have taken place later, and had something to do with the determination of the failure of the assault, for that had already been practically decided by the moving up of the left of my Div. under the direction of Lt. [Frank] Haskell as he described to me afterwards, for that fact of the fight I did not personally witness.

17. John R. Brooke to F. A. Walker, March 18, 1886

My dear Walker,

The *Boston Herald* reached me a few days ago. I am very much obliged for your kindly mentions of me in your lecture. I am sorry to say you do not give [Samuel K.] Zooks Regts due credit.⁵⁸ They went forward with me to the edge of the wood next Rose farm buildings. The commanders of his, Zooks, Regts reported to me, most if not all of them, when he fell and I sent them in on my Right. I think I had mostly or quite crossed the wheat field when [Lt. Col. Charles G.] Frendenberg of the 52nd N.Y. came to me and told Zook was dead, he was the first Regtl commdr of Zooks Brigade. I saw the others or some of them came after. I am positive they all went forward on my right, the 140th P.V. was on the right of Zook and had to enforce the line at the edge of the wood next the Peach Orchard.

In coming out I saw no troops coming to my relief. I fought back the enemy on my left and right so as to open the way for retreating. The 2nd Del was on my left and I specially charged [Lt. Col. David L.] Stricker of that Regt with this duty.⁵⁹ He did it well. I cannot say, from personal knowledge, who did it on the right. I saw an aide there, I imagine It must have been the 140th P.V. as it was on the ground there. Again, Kershaws Brigade was the

⁵⁸ Samuel Kosciuszko Zook (1821–63) commanded the Third Brigade in Caldwell's division of the Second Corps. It was composed of the 52nd, 57th, and 66th New York and the 140th Pennsylvania. He was mortally wounded as his brigade went into action at the north end of the Wheatfield on July 2.

⁵⁹ The 2nd Delaware's commander, Col. William Bailey, had been wounded earlier.

"outfit" which drove me out.⁶⁰ I did not know this until 1882 when I met Col [David W.] Aiken of S.C. who was Col of the 7th S.C., I think, and he and I went on that part of the field together and from the time Kershaw attacked and the place I am satisfied it could have been no other troops than his who drove me.

My ammunition was mostly gone or I could have held the place, I had an average of 5 rounds per man, or less, when that was exhausted or nearly so, I thought it wise to get out. I did this as I have described it. There is no doubt that there was hard fighting and, at [the] time, I found it difficult to advance. At one time I saved the colors of my own Regt, which was in the center and carried them forward myself that served to settle the business for the men pushed ahead and stopped only at the edge of the wood march.⁶¹ It was near sun down when Kershaw attacked me. Of course I cannot be sure of the exact time. I know there was a short fight there, Aiken says their loss was large and there was a check in their advance for a short time when your (our) troops gave way. This was caused by the exhaustion of our ammunition and the necessity for your humble servant to *sit*. I was hit at the advanced point reached and had a lively fellow under each arm to take me off the field though I did not give up the command or the fight until entirely off the field. If you have any other story of this fact of the fight I would be glad to see it. I am very sure I am correct. I went on the ground in 1882 with [—] and I am sure I did not at that time have any trouble as to the sequence of events and my memory was as fresh and sure as when we fought there. Aiken was of the party in 1882, your lecture has made me [—] by pardon. By this time, doubtless, the matter finding in Washington has reached a conclusion. I wonder who are our Brig. Genls. There must be a hard fight as the telegraph has not yet answered the matter.

18. John R. Brooke to F. A. Walker, June 22, 1886

My dear Walker,

Yours of the 13th reached me this morning and I reply at once so that you may get it before you sail.

⁶⁰ Brooke is referring here to Brig. Gen. Joseph Kershaw, who commanded the South Carolina brigade (2nd, 3rd, 7th, 8th, 15th South Carolina and 3rd South Carolina Battalion) in Lafayette McLaws's division.

⁶¹ Brooke originally commanded the 53rd Pennsylvania.

William H. Tipton's stereograph of Hancock and his group at Gettysburg on November 19, 1885. Hancock is the figure fifth from the left. Col. John B. Bachelder is second from the left. Francis Amasa Walker is probably the figure standing behind Hancock. Courtesy of Allen C. Guelzo.

1st, The position you give me near the road should be behind the wood in the rear of the assigned position; generally parallel to "Plum Run." This was my position before I [was] sent forward. I passed [Col. Edward E.] Cross' line about where you have his 2nd position marked. Zook was on Cross' Right and when I marched about the place where you have the letter W in the word wheat. I found that Zook had been carried from the field and his Right commanders called to me for orders and I directed them to move forward on my right which they did.

You have placed [Col. Patrick] Kelly where I found the enemy who stopped Cross and Zook, and, presumably, Kelly.⁶² As I said before I do not know of my own knowledge *where* Kelly was. I *do* know that he could *not* have been where you have placed him for the reason that the enemy was there in such form when I went in, and I followed Cross

⁶² Patrick Kelly (1822–64) commanded the Second Brigade in Caldwell's division of the Second Corps.

and Zook so closely that had Kelly been there I must have seen something of his men, but I have no recollection of seeing any of them there.

2nd. Zook's 2nd position is too far towards the Peach Orchard. But a small part of the 140th P.V. was outside of the wood which was located by the fence running thru the position as you give it. Zook's brigade was, part of it, the 66th + 52nd N.Y., mixed with the 27th Conn and 145th P.V. in the position you have given those Regts, the Col and Lt. Col. of the 66th N.Y. were both wounded and a Captain of the Regt killed by my side and I was as nearly in the place you have given to the 27th Conn. as I can fix.⁶³

To conclude my criticisms I would say put my brigade on the outside of the wood in my rear as marked in blue, or purple, and then give as a final position the line I mark directly in front, on the

⁶³ Both regiments were components of Brooke's brigade. Col. Orlando H. Morris and Lt. Col. John S. Hammell of the 66th New York were wounded, and Capt. E. F. Munn was killed.

other side of the sketch, and you will have my first and last position as nearly as I can indicate it here. In the last line you must include Zooks brigade. This gives you the beginnings and the end, and the general advance was a direct line from one point to the other. I have marked 1–2 on the lines drawn. Of course “Kelly” is in a place where I cannot think he could have been, taking into account the number of the enemy I found there when I sent forward and the larger number of his, the Enemy’s, dead and wounded I passed one in my advance.

Now for the final scene. When I saw the Enemy approaching near sundown, they came from the point marked 2 in red ink on the sketch. Their line [attacked] my left and I sent the 2nd Del under Lt Col [David L.] Stricker into the ravine of the branch of Plum Run to hold him in check. My ammunition was very low, some of my officers have since told me they had but five rounds to the man, when I was attacked, and I held on as long as that lasted and then got out as gracefully as I could. While Stricker was holding the enclosing line on my left in check the 140th P.V. was doing the same on my right.

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