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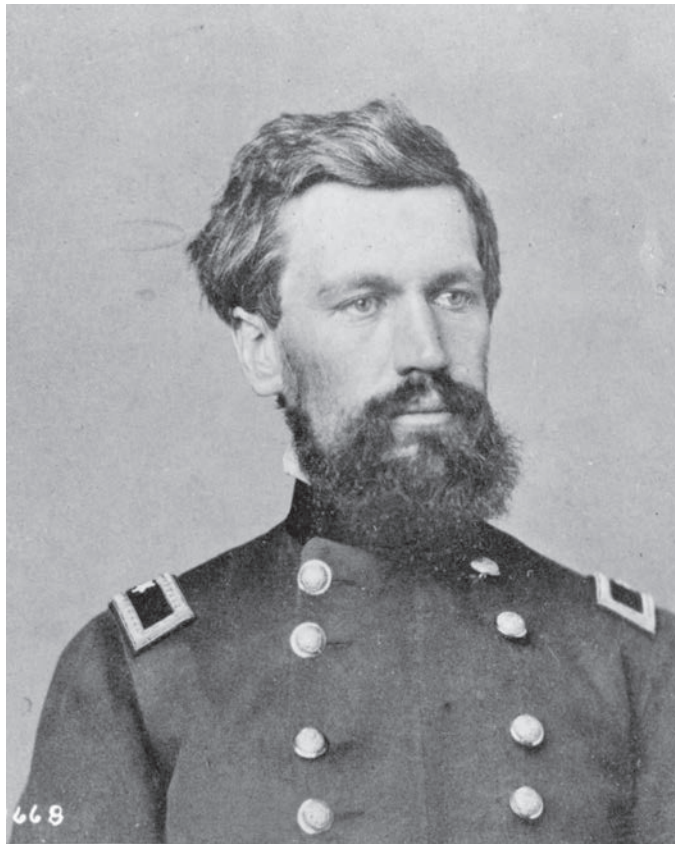
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The Hancock-Howard Controversy

PAUL E. BRETZGER

At Gettysburg, on the afternoon of July 1, 1863, Union forces were streaming through town in full retreat. They were in various states of organization or lack thereof. But the narrow streets and dense town grid made it difficult, even for the least-panicked regiments, to avoid becoming entangled with other units. The numerous wagons of all types, artillery pieces, limbers, caissons, and horses contributed in no small order to the disarray. The number of fleeing soldiers was several times the population of the town, which was said to be about 2,400. When they reached the southern edge of town, their flight took them up Cemetery Hill, either by the road to Baltimore or the one to Taneytown. On that hill was the commander of all troops present, Maj. Gen. Oliver Otis Howard, who worked to rally and organize the fleeing men. But that was a tall order as their defeat north and west of town was quite thorough and the victorious Confederates were on their heels.¹



Maj. Gen. Oliver Otis Howard. National Archives and Records Administration.

Ascending the southern side of Cemetery Hill, as the fugitive soldiers climbed the north side, was Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock arriving from Taneytown, Maryland. He had orders from Army of the Potomac commander, Maj. Gen. George Meade, to relieve Howard and take command of the field, even though Howard outranked him. Shortly after cresting Cemetery Hill Hancock found Howard.² There are several conflicting descriptions of what transpired between the two corps commanders on Cemetery Hill. But later that evening,

Howard, referring to the orders by which Hancock, a junior in rank, replaced him in command of the field, wrote to Gen. Meade: "The above has mortified and will disgrace me. Please inform me frankly if you disapprove of my conduct to-day, that I may

¹ /history-of-gettysburg.asp; www.gettysburg.com/bog/bogstora/before.htm.

² United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of Union and Confederate Armies* Series 1, Vol. 27, Part 3 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1889), 461; Winfield Scott Hancock, "Gettysburg: Reply to General Howard," *The Galaxy*. Vol. XXII (June 1876 to January, 1877), 822.

¹ Carl Schurz, *The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz* (New York: McClure, 1906), III, 12–13; Destination Gettysburg Pennsylvania, www.destinationgettysburg.com

know what to do.”³ Thus began the Hancock-Howard controversy. The two men argued for decades over what exactly transpired between them on Cemetery Hill that afternoon. Who held command after Hancock arrived was a matter of great prestige since the re-trenchment of Union troops that afternoon led to one of the most important victories of the war. No one will ever know exactly what they said to each other as there are multiple contradictory accounts. But before wading into the tangle of differing stories, some background is in order.

On February 14, 1824, Elizabeth Hancock, wife of Benjamin Franklin Hancock, gave birth to identical twin boys. The place was Montgomery Square, Pennsylvania, some twenty miles outside Philadelphia. The couple named one Hilary Baker and the other Winfield Scott after the renowned general. Mr. Hancock read law and gained admission to the bar in 1828. He then moved his family to the Montgomery County seat of Norristown, Pennsylvania. A third son, John, arrived when the twins were six.⁴

The twins attended school regularly through high school. While they seemed inseparable, Winfield began to develop more as a leader. The town chose him, at age fifteen, to read aloud the Declaration of Independence for Norristown’s Independence Day celebration. In the following February, 1840, Benjamin Franklin Hancock submitted a request for his son to receive an appointment to West Point. Winfield officially began his military career when he entered the military academy as a cadet on July



Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock. National Archives and Records Administration.

1, 1840, exactly twenty-three years before he rode onto the field at Gettysburg as a major general.⁵

He was sixteen years old, five-feet-five inches tall, and separated from his family (most notably his twin brother) for the first time. His academic accomplishments were mediocre as he graduated eighteenth out of a class of twenty-five on June 30, 1844. But by then he had become a six-foot-plus model of a man and very popular among his classmates. He joined the 6th United States Infantry, becoming a brevet second lieutenant. He became a full second

lieutenant in 1846. His initial posts were in the west and were quiet while he was there.⁶

With the outbreak of the Mexican War in the spring of 1846 he began a year-long campaign to join the action. It was not until May 31, 1847, that the army ordered Hancock to lead a group of recruits to Mexico, where he was to rejoin the 6th Infantry. That summer he took part in several engagements where he seemed to have a natural aptitude for combat, receiving a brevet promotion to first lieutenant for distinguished conduct. Hancock appeared to have found his calling. He also became regimental quartermaster and in that capacity performed very well and learned a great deal about the logistics of moving and supplying large bodies of soldiers.⁷

5 Glenn Tucker, *Hancock the Superb* (Dayton, OH: Morningside Bookshop, 1980), 26; David M. Jordan, *Winfield Scott Hancock, A Soldier's Life* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 6–7; C. W. Denison and G. B. Herbert, *Hancock "The Superb." The Early Life and Public Career of Winfield S. Hancock, Major-General U.S.A.* (Cincinnati: Forshee & McMakin, 1880), 34, 54.

6 Tucker, *Hancock*, 26; Jordan, *Soldier's Life*, 8, 11–13; Denison and Herbert, "The Superb," 63.

7 Jordan, *Soldier's Life*, 14–16, 18; Francis A. Walker, "Hancock in the War of the Rebellion," a paper read at a meeting of the New York Commandery, February 4, 1891, 2.

3 OR, 27:1:697.

4 Frederick E. Goodrich, *The Life and Public Services of Winfield Scott Hancock, Major-General, U.S.A.* (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1880), 26.

When stationed near St. Louis he met a woman named Almira Russell whom he married on January 24, 1850. The lieutenant was twenty-five; she was eighteen. On October 29, 1850, Allie gave birth to a son who the couple named "Russell" in honor of the young mother's lineage. In November of that year Hancock became a captain in the Quartermaster Department. Almira gave birth to daughter Ada, on February 24, 1857, while the Hancocks were stationed at Fort Myers, Florida.⁸

As quartermaster, Hancock kept the base well supplied despite its isolation. Because of this, Gen. William Harney, Hancock's commander, procured Hancock's services for his new assignment at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. From there, Hancock joined an expedition of 1,500 men in May 1858 to help settle the Mormon crisis in Utah. By mid-November he found himself in Benicia, California. There, he quickly obtained leave to meet his family back on the east coast and bring them to his new post which turned out to be Los Angeles.⁹

Many of Hancock's military friends were with him at Los Angeles, and many of them were southerners, including George Pickett, Richard Garnett, and Lewis Armistead. Lincoln's electoral victory in 1860 and the firing on Fort Sumter in 1861 prompted the resignation of these friends and a tearful farewell party at the Hancock household. Hancock was a Democrat, but also a steadfast Unionist. In the spring of 1861 he was critical in holding together the Federal garrison and maintaining California's loyalty to the Union, which was in serious question.¹⁰

Hancock was committed to excellence in his profession. When the war arrived he had prepared himself well for the coming fury. One of his eventual staff and biographers, Francis Amasa Walker, later wrote that the young quartermaster had made the most of the relative peace time between the Mexican and Civil Wars: "I am disposed to believe that this period of Hancock's life was passed to even better advantage than if it had comprised active operations, on the large scale, against a powerful enemy."¹¹ Walker also recalled that Hancock's "stirring ambition, his intense interest in his profession, and his high standard of duty rendered these fourteen

⁸ Jordan, *Soldier's Life*, 22–24.

⁹ Jordan, *Soldier's Life*, 25–27.

¹⁰ Jordan, *Soldier's Life*, 32–33.

¹¹ Walker, "Hancock," 2.

years one long term of military education. I doubt if there was an officer in the United States Army who, during that period while political, social, and industrial forces were preparing the war of secession, learned so much that was to become of use when that great occasion came."¹² Another future Hancock staff member, Henry Bingham, agreed: "His years since the Mexican War were full of observation, thoughtful reflection and training; all in the direction of his profession and developing his mental powers in a marked degree."¹³

His commanding physical appearance was no small factor in his success. Whether by nature, nurture, or simple imitation, he inherited the dignified decorum of his father. "I never knew a man whom I respected as much as my father. . . . It was due to his character, his appearance, and the method of his life."¹⁴

He received orders to proceed to Washington, DC, on August 3, 1861. On September 23 he became a brigadier general of volunteers. Assigned command of the Third Brigade of Gen. William Farrar "Baldy" Smith's Third Division in what would become the Fourth Corps, he camped just south of Washington where he spent the ensuing fall and winter training for the battles that would surely come in the spring.¹⁵

The battle of Williamsburg, on May 5, 1862, was a seminal moment in Hancock's career. He was to advance against the Confederate left as Union Gen. Joseph Hooker moved against Fort Magruder. But Hancock found little to no resistance on his expedition. Using his *coup d'oeil* ("stroke of the eye," or ability to discern at a glance the properties of terrain) he quickly realized he had flanked the fort and the whole Confederate army. Maj. Gen. Edwin Sumner, unaware of the opportunity Hancock had found, ordered him to withdraw. Hancock was torn. He did not want to be insubordinate; but he did not want to waste a grand opportunity for the army. He refused to move and sent several dispatches to his superiors pleading his case in vain. Then, Confederate Brig. Gen. Jubal Early's brigade attacked Hancock's. Hancock had to win the fight or his pre-

¹² Walker, "Hancock," 1.

¹³ Henry W. Bingham, *Oration at the Unveiling of the Equestrian Statue of Major General Winfield Scott Hancock on the Battlefield of Gettysburg, June 5, 1896* (Philadelphia, 1899), 5.

¹⁴ Winfield Scott Hancock, letter to Virgie Wentz, cited in Jordan, *Soldier's Life*, 6.

¹⁵ Jordan, *Soldier's Life*, 36–38.

ceding obstinacy might have ruined his career. He executed a false withdrawal that fooled the enemy, then led a beautifully timed counterattack that sent Early's men fleeing. Not long afterward McClellan wired his wife that "Hancock was superb yesterday." The press seized on this and thus was born the title "Hancock the Superb."¹⁶

At Antietam, September 17, 1862, the commander of the First Division, Second Corps, Israel Richardson, fell mortally wounded. McClellan personally placed Hancock in command of Richardson's division. He seemed to take naturally to his new and expanded responsibility. He became a major general of volunteers on November 29. At Fredericksburg, Hancock protested against the planned attack to Maj. Gen. Burnside himself. His protest was as futile as the assault itself, though not as valiant. In the months preceding the 1863 spring campaign, Hancock went to work restoring the material and spirit of his beleaguered division. The last major engagement before the Gettysburg campaign was the battle of Chancellorsville. There, on May 3, 1863, the First Division executed a superb rear guard action. Despite having to split his division to fight in opposite directions simultaneously, Hancock held until the army was safe and he was able to extricate the division. On June 10, 1863, he became commander of the Second Corps.¹⁷

Shortly after Chancellorsville, Gen. Robert E. Lee decided to take advantage of his startling string of victories by invading the north. On June 28, as the opposing armies maneuvered for position in Maryland and Pennsylvania, Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade received an order from President Abraham Lincoln placing him in command of the Army of the Potomac. By very early on July 1, mainly through good cavalry work, Meade had developed an approximate idea of where most pieces of the two armies were. He worked out a plan to line his army up behind Big Pipe Creek in Maryland, and invite Lee's attack. He issued tentative orders dated July 1, 1863, commonly known as the Pipe Creek Circular. The proposed line was behind, or south of, where most of his army was. Meade himself was at Taneytown, Maryland. Hancock reached that point

¹⁶ Jordan, *Soldier's Life*, 43–44; Tucker, *Hancock*, 86–88.

¹⁷ Jordan, *Soldier's Life*, 53–54, 60–61, 66, 72; Tucker, *Hancock*, 100.

with his corps at 11:00 a.m., visited Meade, and became acquainted with the Pipe Creek plan.¹⁸

Shortly after their initial meeting ended, Meade appeared at Hancock's headquarters with dire news. The "left wing" of the army (the First, Third, and Eleventh Corps) was heavily engaged at Gettysburg and its commander, Gen. John Reynolds, had been either killed or mortally wounded. He ordered Hancock, who barely had three weeks experience leading a corps, to proceed to the front and take command of the field. He also ordered Hancock to report whether or not, at Gettysburg, "the ground and position there" was "a better one to fight a battle."¹⁹

There were irregularities in Meade's written orders. Gen. Howard of the Eleventh Corps succeeded Reynolds to left wing command and he outranked Hancock. Furthermore, the orders instructed Hancock to put Brig. Gen. John Gibbon in command of the Second Corps, while Hancock went ahead, superseding Brig. Gen. John Caldwell, Gibbon's senior. When Hancock pointed out these unorthodoxies, Meade told him of orders from Secretary of War Stanton vesting Meade with the authority to place in command or remove from command whoever he saw fit.²⁰ Hancock was thirty-nine. He had over two decades of military training and experience from West Point to Mexico and from Florida to California. Now he returned to his native state as a major general and corps commander for what became the greatest battle of the American Civil War. An eyewitness to Hancock's mission was his inspector general and chief of staff Lt. Col. Charles H. Morgan. Morgan rode with the general to Gettysburg and provided some of the best information about the trip. He wrote that Hancock was "accompanied by his personal staff, and two or three other officers on duty at his headquarters."²¹ In a report to historian John Bachelder, Morgan wrote: "General Hancock left Taneytown within ten min-

¹⁸ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984), 209, 238–39; Charles H. Morgan, "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"; and Almira R. Hancock, *Reminiscences of Winfield Scott Hancock* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1887), 185.

¹⁹ Hancock, *Reminiscences*, 186. The written version of Meade's orders were dated 1:10 p.m.

²⁰ Hancock, *Galaxy*, 822.

²¹ Morgan, "Narrative," 188.



Lt. Col. Charles H. Morgan, Hancock's Chief of Staff and Inspector General. U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center.

utes of one o'clock. I rode with him the first three or four miles in the ambulance examining the maps and his orders, but the ambulance though driven very rapidly could not keep pace with the General's anxiety, so we took our horses and made as rapid progress as the intense heat of the day would permit. The nature of the ground on either side of the road was continually scanned by the General with a view to the retreat on Pipe Creek, should he deem it advisable."²²

Morgan recalled what one might consider Hancock's first orders of the battle of Gettysburg: "Near Gettysburg the road began to be blocked up with trains, which on inquiry proved to belong to the Eleventh Corps. . . . They were ordered peremptorily to the rear by General Hancock."²³ Morgan derisively noted that the Eleventh Corps' "trains and pack animals had contributed no little to the stampede at Chancellorsville."²⁴ By issuing orders to elements of the Eleventh Corps, Hancock illustrat-

²² David L. Ladd and Audrey J. Ladd, eds., *The Bachelder Papers; Gettysburg in Their Own Words* (Dayton, OH: Morningside House Inc., 1994), III, 1350.

²³ Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 1350.

²⁴ Ladd, *The Bachelder Papers*, 1350.

ed he considered himself, at that moment, the general in command of the field, not the Second Corps. Hancock soon ascended Cemetery Hill. There he began forty-eight hours of combat leadership that highlighted his stellar career.

"As soon as I arrived on the field," wrote Hancock, "at about 3:30 p.m., I rode directly to the top of the hill where General Howard stood."²⁵ Hancock and Howard had several similarities. They were both major generals with corps commands in the Army of the Potomac and they were both West Pointers. But Howard had taken a markedly different path to their meeting near the Cemetery gatehouse that afternoon. Born on November 8, 1830, his parents were a Leeds, Maine, farming couple. Rowland Bailey Howard and Eliza Otis Howard lived on the farm of Oliver's grandfather, Seth Howard. His mother bore two more boys: Rowland in 1834 (probably), and Charles in 1838. Oliver began formal education at age four. At age fifteen he passed the entrance examinations and gained admittance to Bowdoin College. As he was preparing for graduation at Bowdoin, his uncle, the Honorable John Otis, petitioned West Point to appoint his nephew to the Military Academy. West Point made the appointment and Howard began his military career by entering the academy on September 1, 1850.²⁶

He had an impressive formal education even before he entered West Point, but he determined that there was more to his education than the formal aspect. "The larger schooling came from the outside, from the three-score of boys and girls with whom I associated."²⁷ He claims the boys' play was rough and that he enjoyed it that way. He recalled relishing the role as a leader and that he organized playful attacks on older, bigger boys.²⁸

But an unpleasant lifelong pattern showed itself in his childhood. That was Howard's tendency toirk various factions. And he typically struggled to earn people's acceptance. This was not necessarily any fault of his own. In fact, as shown below, he became very intent on treating people kindly and fairly.

²⁵ Hancock, *The Galaxy*, 822.

²⁶ John A. Carpenter, *Sword and Olive Branch: Oliver Otis Howard* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 1; Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard; Major General United States Army* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1907), I, 9, 11, 13, 29, 40-41, 45.

²⁷ Howard, *Autobiography*, 10.

²⁸ Howard, *Autobiography*, 10-11.

There are many aspects of his professional persona that came from his childhood. For instance, he eventually became an abolitionist. He credits his father for contributing to this. “Before I was six years old,” said Howard, “my father, for some benevolent reason . . . befriended a little negro lad and brought him to our house.” The boy was a part of the Howard household for four years. “[I]t relieved me from that feeling of prejudice,” he recalled, “which would have hindered me . . . years afterward.”²⁹

He also became deeply religious, an aspect he did not share with his father. “There was no sign of religiousness in my first home” he wrote. “We did not even have family prayer.” His mother, however, admonished him “Do the best you can, Otis, with your studies, and try hard to do right, ever seeking God’s help.” He also said she expressed “piety and a simple trust in God.”³⁰

His maternal grandfather, Oliver Otis, left some wisdom with his namesake before passing. “Otis,” his grandfather said, “always be kind to your employees.” Regarding this advice, Howard remembered: “There has been with me a steady purpose to be kind to any and all of those who looked to me for direction.”³¹ His uncle, the Honorable John Otis, submitted a successful request for Howard to gain admission to West Point and Howard entered the cadet class in September 1850. There, a faction of fellow cadets developed a disapproval of Howard and ostracized him. Commandant of Cadets Alden took Howard aside and gave him some secret advice. “If I were in your place I would knock some man down,” said Captain Alden. “Indeed I did, and it wasn’t long before I had nine-tenths of the class in sympathy with me and my defenders,” Howard proudly proclaimed.³² But it was another episode in Howard’s unfortunate need to struggle for acceptance.

He graduated fourth in his class of forty-six. Like many graduates, Howard served in several locations during the early years of his military career. The brevet second lieutenant married Elizabeth Ann Waite on February 14, 1855 (coincidentally, it was also Winfield Scott Hancock’s

thirty-first birthday). The following December 16, Elizabeth bore a son, Guy.³³

While stationed at the Tampa depot Howard took his already deep religious devotion to a new level and more public profile. Col. L. L. Loomis, a Presbyterian, “showed great interest in whatever concerned me,” wrote Howard. “As often as he could he would converse with me and give me books, booklets, and tracts.” And Howard noted, “I absorbed all these books with great avidity.” “Some of the officers said I had disgraced the uniform,” he wrote. “Others that I was half crazy; but a few sympathized with me and were my friends then, and, in fact, ever after.”³⁴ Once again, he was a polarizing figure.

Back north, Elizabeth bore a daughter, Grace Ellen, on June 22, 1857. More good news arrived that summer when Howard received orders to report to West Point as a math teacher in September.³⁵ “I think I never in my life had a pleasanter duty than this school work,” he said.³⁶ In the winter of 1858 he became a first lieutenant. Despite all the success and comfort, he yearned to apply his religious fervor in a professional capacity: “I had it in mind then that I should soon leave the army and enter the Christian ministry.”³⁷ He developed a concept of “paternal” military leadership as opposed to that of the martinet, which he published in a New York monthly article titled “Discipline in the Army.”³⁸

The election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860 triggered widespread resignations of officers in the ensuing months. Howard made his move in late spring, and the 3rd Maine elected him to its colonelcy. His brother, Charles Henry Howard, took leave of his theological studies at Bangor to enlist in the regiment. The army gave Howard a brigade. For Howard and his brigade, the experience at the First Battle of Bull Run on July 16 ended as it did for many Union units—in a panicked retreat.³⁹ His assessment of the Bull Run debacle was partly rational and partly religious. On one hand he reasoned: “We were then taught many lessons—the indispensable need of organization, of proper commanders, drill,

29 Howard, *Autobiography*, 12–13.

30 Howard, *Autobiography*, 13–14, 22.

31 Howard, *Autobiography*, 20.

32 Howard, *Autobiography*, 52.

33 Howard, *Autobiography*, 60, 66, 69.

34 Howard, *Autobiography*, quotes from 81–83.

35 Howard, *Autobiography*, 86–88.

36 Howard, *Autobiography*, 91.

37 Carpenter, *Sword and Olive Branch*, 19; Howard, *Autobiography*, 91.

38 Howard, *Autobiography*, 94.

39 Howard, *Autobiography*, 112–13, 143, 159–61.

and discipline.”⁴⁰ On the other hand, he opined, “One thing which affected us much was the saying so often heard that day: ‘It is Sunday! The attacking party on the Sabbath is sure of defeat!’”⁴¹

Lincoln called on Gen. George McClellan to command the army after Bull Run.⁴² Howard suffered condemnation by one of McClellan’s inspectors for letting the condition of his old regiment deteriorate. Yet, in McClellan’s reorganization, Howard became a brigadier general and took command of a new brigade in Israel Richardson’s division, which became part of the Second Corps under the command of Gen. Edwin Sumner.⁴³

On June 1, 1862, the second day of what became known as the Battle of Fair Oaks or the Battle of Seven Pines, two musket balls shattered Howard’s right arm. There Howard said the brigade surgeon, Dr. Palmer, “with serious face, kindly told me that my arm had better come off.” “All right, go ahead,” said Howard. “Happy to lose only my arm.”⁴⁴ His account of the amputation is remarkably nonchalant: “A mixture of chloroform and gas was administered and I slept quietly. Dr. Palmer amputated the arm above the elbow. When I awoke I was surprised to find the heavy burden was gone, but was content and thankful.”⁴⁵

Howard returned to the field toward the end of the Second Bull Run campaign. Instead of returning to his old brigade, Sumner put him in command of the “California Brigade,” its previous commander having been wounded. At Antietam, Howard’s brigade participated in a failed advance, along with the rest of his division. “Sedgwick and Dana, badly wounded, left the field,” said Howard. “The Second Division Second Corps then fell to me.”⁴⁶ At Fredericksburg, his division’s assault against Marye’s Heights on December 13, 1862, was just as brave and tragically futile as those of the other Union divisions.⁴⁷

He took command of the Eleventh Corps in April, 1863. “The corps was then, in round numbers, 13,000 strong,” Howard said. “It had about

5,000 Germans and 8,000 Americans. . . . I had the command drilled and reviewed,” he said, “as much as could be done in a few weeks.”⁴⁸ But he also described a failing on the part of his corps as the Chancellorsville campaign began. The new army commander, Maj. Gen. Hooker, had ordered, for the purpose of making a swift movement, the use of a minimum number of wagons. He discovered that Howard had allowed his subordinate commanders to proceed with more than a minimum of vehicles, and dealt Howard a strong rebuke.⁴⁹

But that was just a precursor to the Eleventh Corps’ most glaring failure at Chancellorsville. It was a failure that consolidated the animosity of factions which, like many previous groups, held the “Christian General” in low esteem. On May 2, Stonewall Jackson’s men made their legendary flanking march across the front of Hooker’s army, landing them undiscovered on Howard’s right flank: The result was a twilight rout of the Eleventh Corps—pure confusion and defeat. It was in the wake of this embarrassment that Howard and his corps entered the Gettysburg Campaign.

As the armies maneuvered across the Potomac River and into Maryland and Pennsylvania, the Eleventh Corps became part of the “left wing” of the Army of the Potomac. It was a temporary group consisting of the First, Third, and Eleventh Corps. Maj. Gen. John Reynolds of the First Corps commanded it. On the evening of June 30, Howard and Reynolds met at a house on the road between Emmitsburg, Maryland, and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. They discussed the communications of the day and various maps. No one knew the battle would begin the next day, but Howard recalled thinking that the intelligence gathered “forced the conclusion on us, that Lee’s infantry and artillery in great force were in our neighborhood.”⁵⁰ Howard left to return to headquarters at Emmitsburg around eleven o’clock. He was not asleep for long before a messenger awoke him with the army’s marching orders. The Eleventh Corps was to march to “supporting distance” of the First Corps, which was to march to Gettysburg.⁵¹

⁴⁰ Howard, *Autobiography*, 166.

⁴¹ Howard, *Autobiography*, 166.

⁴² Howard, *Autobiography*, 166.

⁴³ Howard, *Autobiography*, 169, 208, 246–47.

⁴⁴ Howard, *Autobiography*, 249.

⁴⁵ Howard, *Autobiography*, 250.

⁴⁶ Howard, *Autobiography*, 255, 267, 297.

⁴⁷ Howard, *Autobiography*, 342–43.

⁴⁸ Howard, *Autobiography*, 348–49.

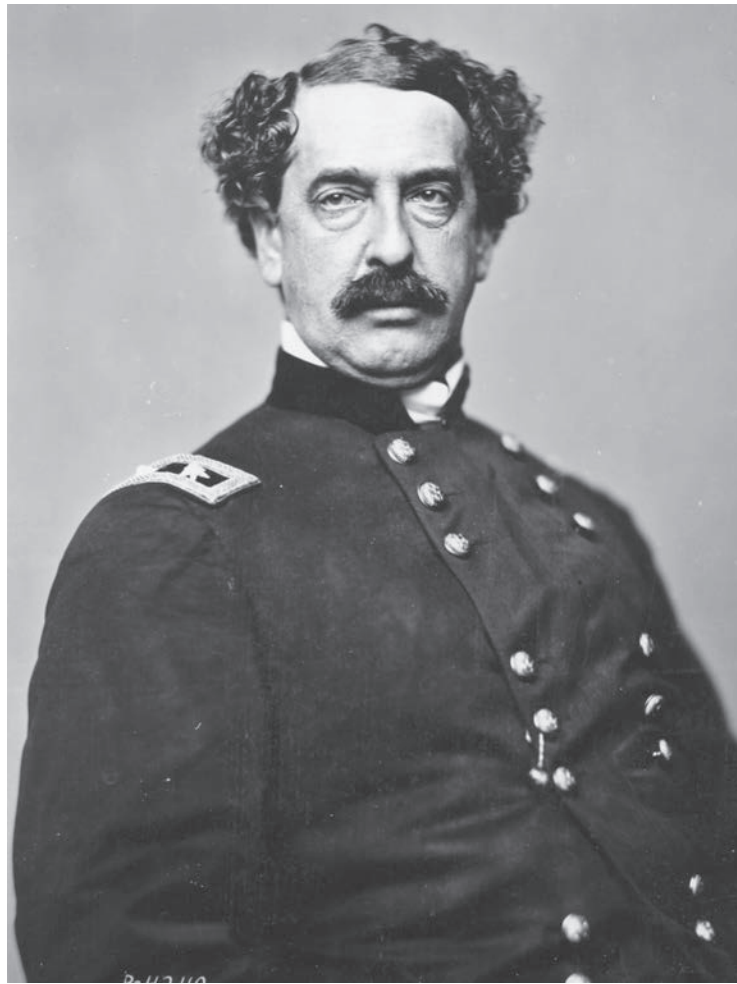
⁴⁹ Howard, *Autobiography*, 348–49.

⁵⁰ Howard, *Autobiography*, 403–04; Oliver Otis Howard, *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. XXXVIII, July, 1876, 52.

⁵¹ Howard, *Atlantic Monthly*, 52.

On the morning of July 1, Howard rode ahead of his corps “With my staff and a small escort of horsemen . . . toward Gettysburg.”⁵² When he got within sight of the town he could see a battle, and a messenger from Reynolds greeted him. The messenger told Howard that instead of marching to within supporting distance, Reynolds wanted the Eleventh Corps to “Come quite up to Gettysburg.”⁵³

His official report states that “For some little time I endeavored . . . to find General Reynolds, in order to report to him in person.” While riders went out to find Reynolds, according to his report, Howard “went to the top of a high building in Gettysburg” from which he could see the battle.⁵⁴ It was the Fahnestock Building, and its high balcony, the “Fahnestock Observatory.” There, he recalled, “a report reached me that General Reynolds was wounded.” He continued, “At first I hoped his wound might be slight, and that he would continue in his command.”⁵⁵ He gave no explanation as to why he did not interrogate the messenger for more details about Reynolds’s condition or whereabouts. But after a “short time” he said, Reynolds’s “aide-de-camp . . . brought the sad tidings of his death. This was about 11.30 a.m.”⁵⁶ He seems to have failed to establish a robust command presence, es-



Maj. Gen. Abner Doubleday. National Archives and Records Administration.

pecially among the officers at the battle front. His official report says “I assumed command of the left wing, instructing General Schurz to take command of the Eleventh Corps;” but his actions seem lackluster for a man who just ascended to such a crucial command. While the battle west of town raged, Howard said, “After an examination of the general features of the country, I came to the conclusion that the only tenable position for my limited force was the ridge to the southeast of Gettysburg, now so well known as Cemetery Ridge.”⁵⁷

Howard published an article about his Gettysburg experience in the July 1876 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* titled “Campaign and Battle of Gettysburg, June and July, 1863.” It seems to have the intent of reinforcing the idea that he chose Cemetery Hill as the place to put the army. It contradicts the assertion in his report that he visited the Fahnestock Observatory *first* and then Cemetery Hill. To the contrary, the article stipulates that he went to Cemetery Hill first, and the following occurred: “I . . . ascended Cemetery Ridge. While there looking at the broad expanse of country over and beyond the little town at my feet, I distinctly remember turning to Colonel Meizenburg, the corps adjutant general, and saying ‘This seems to be a good position colonel.’ He answered briefly, ‘It is the only position, general.’”⁵⁸

52 Howard. *Autobiography*, 409.

53 Howard. *Autobiography*, 409.

54 OR, 27:1:701.

55 OR, 27:1:702.

56 OR, 27:1:702.

57 OR, 27:1:702.

58 Howard, *Atlantic Monthly*, 53.

His lack of haste is inexplicable. He contends in *The Atlantic Monthly* that after visiting the Fahnestock Building and learning of his new command, he “then rode slowly to the position Meizenburg and I had agreed upon as a good one, near the cemetery gate.”⁵⁹ Whether he reconnoitered from the building or the hill first, he established Cemetery Hill as his headquarters. While clearly a good defensive position, it is difficult to explain its use as a headquarters when the fight was on the other side of town.

The divisions under Maj. Gen. Carl Schurz and Brig. Gen. Francis Barlow arrived and Howard dispatched them to extend the right of Gen. Abner Doubleday’s First Corps line along Seminary Ridge. He had Brig. Gen. Adolph von Steinwehr’s division deploy in reserve on Cemetery Hill. Howard finally visited the front by riding with Barlow to the north side of town. From there he says, “I then rode rapidly along our line from our right to the position of General Doubleday on the left.”⁶⁰ Although Howard did, eventually, visit the front, he did not call on Gen. Buford who complained about a lack of command in a dispatch to cavalry corps commander Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton dated 3:20 p.m.: “General Reynolds was killed early this morning. In my opinion there seems to be no directing person. . . . We need help now.”⁶¹

Howard’s official report and *The Atlantic Monthly* piece were by no means his only accounts about Gettysburg. Volume I of his 1907 autobiography contains another narrative. The cynical view is that by the time he wrote his autobiography, he had heard all the criticisms of his previous descriptions and assembled a chronicle in which his behavior is much less assailable. In it, his actions upon receiving word of his ascension to command are a flurry of speedy and robust dispositions.

Despite Howard’s exertions, Confederates from the north outflanked Barlow on the right, and Confederates from the west overwhelmed Doubleday on the left. The hasty retreat through Gettysburg and up Cemetery Hill commenced. Howard and others worked to rally the fugitives on Cemetery

Hill, with mixed results. Then Hancock arrived with his orders to relieve Howard. Participants, alleged eyewitnesses, and historians produced several accounts of the initial meeting between Howard and Hancock. Although undated, Hancock’s official report was typically clear and concise. “I arrived at Gettysburg and assumed command,” he wrote. “At this time the First and Eleventh Corps were retiring through the town, closely pursued by the enemy.”⁶²

Howard’s report, dated August 31, 1863, tells a different story: “General Hancock came to me about this time, and said General Meade had sent him on hearing the state of affairs; that he had given him his instructions while under the impression that he was my senior.”⁶³ By Howard’s description, the alleged error on Meade’s part did not hinder the swift and efficient placement of the fleeing troops. Furthermore, Howard stated that Hancock merely assisted in making dispositions that Howard had already ordered. “We agreed at once that that was no time for talking, and that General Hancock should further arrange the troops, and place the batteries upon the left of the Baltimore pike, while I should take the right of the same. In a very short time we put the troops in position, as I had previously directed.”⁶⁴

Major Eminel Halstead was on the staff of the First Corps and was seeking reinforcements from Howard when he said he witnessed the meeting in question. He claimed to be the only person to have overheard the conversation. In an article dated 1887–1888, Halstead remembered: “I returned to where General Howard sat, just as General Hancock approached at a swinging gallop. When near General Howard, who was then alone, and with great animation, as if there was no time for ceremony, said General Meade had sent him forward to take command of the three Corps [the First, Eleventh, and his own, the Second]. General Howard replied that he was the senior. General Hancock said: ‘I am aware of that, General, but I have written orders in my pocket from General Meade, which I will show you if you wish to see them.’”⁶⁵ To that point, Halstead’s account seems consistent with the

⁵⁹ Howard, *Atlantic Monthly*, 54.

⁶⁰ Howard, *Atlantic Monthly*, 55–56.

⁶¹ *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War at the Second Session Thirty-Eighth Congress* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1865), LIX.

⁶² OR, 27:1:368.

⁶³ OR, 27:1:704.

⁶⁴ OR, 27:1:704.

⁶⁵ Eminel Halstead, “Incidents of the First Day at Gettysburg,” *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (Harrisburg, PA: The Archive Society, 1991), Vol. III, Part I, 285.

temperament of the two men. But when his account continued it drew a picture of Hancock that is not congruent with Hancock's assertive and self-reliant personality: "General Howard said: 'No; I do not doubt your word, General Hancock, but you can give no orders here while I am here.' Hancock replied: 'Very well, General Howard, I will second any order that you have to give.'"⁶⁶

Despite Halstead's assertion that he was the only person to have heard the discussion between Hancock and Howard, Gen. Doubleday wrote at least two publications that include descriptions of the conversation in question. There was a copy of one of Doubleday's publications, *Chancellorsville and Gettysburg*, in which Hancock himself scribbled his own responses to some assertions Doubleday made. For instance, one passage in Doubleday's work reads: "Howard refused to submit to Hancock's assumption of authority, and quite a scene occurred. He said, 'Why Hancock, you cannot give any orders here! I am in command, and I rank you!' Hancock replied that he was sent by order of General Meade, but Howard said he should refuse to acknowledge his authority." In the margin, Hancock wrote "This is all wrong." And, "Gen Howard made no objection whatever. No scene occurred!"⁶⁷

But the most prominent public forum in which the Hancock/Howard controversy manifested itself was two popular magazines in the year 1876. First Howard published his aforementioned article in the July 1876 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*. There Howard described his initial meeting with Hancock: "General Hancock greeted me in his usual frank and cordial manner, and used these words: 'General Meade has sent me to represent him on the field.' I replied, 'All right, Hancock. This is no time for talking. You take the left of the pike and I will arrange these troops on the right.' He said no more, and moved off in his peculiar gallant style to gather scattered brigades and put them in position."⁶⁸

Hancock published a rejoinder in the December issue of *The Galaxy* magazine titled "Gettysburg: Reply to General Howard." Probably the strongest point he makes is the conflict between Howard's

1863 official report (excerpted above) and his 1876 article about their first exchange on Cemetery Hill. Specifically, Hancock quoted from Howard's official report: "Howard says: 'General Hancock came to me about this time (4:30 p.m.) and said General Meade had sent him on learning the state of affairs; that he had given him his instructions while under the impression that he was my senior.'"⁶⁹ Hancock seized on the differences between Howard's report and Howard's article thusly: "This proves that General Howard contradicts himself. In this report he admits that when I arrived upon the field he knew General Meade had sent me to supersede him, and in his article he says it did not strike him then 'that Hancock, without troops, was doing more than directing matters as a temporary chief of staff for Meade.'" Then, he concluded, "If he stands by his report, he falls by his article; if he stands by his article, he falls by his report."⁷⁰

By pointing out that in 1863 Howard recognized Meade was replacing him with Hancock and that in 1876 Howard asserted Meade was merely sending Hancock to act as a staff member, Hancock declared there was a fatal contradiction between Howard's arguments. But Hancock passed away in 1886 while Howard lived well into the twentieth century, affording him the opportunity to revisit the matter in his two-volume autobiography. In Volume I he did just that. Howard's last publication on the matter of who commanded the field on July 1, 1863, at Gettysburg stated: "General Hancock joined me near the Baltimore pike; he said that General Meade had sent him to represent him on the field. I answered as the bullets rent air: 'All right Hancock, you take the left of the Baltimore pike and I will take the right, and we will put these troops in line.' After a few friendly words between us, Hancock did as I suggested."⁷¹

But the truth of who commanded the field after Hancock's arrival does not lie in the answer to the question of "Who said what to who?" The answer to the question of who commanded the field lies in the testimonies, not of the commanders, but of those being commanded. For instance, Major Halstead, who claimed to be the sole witness to the first dis-

66 Halstead, "First Day," 285.

67 "Extracts from General Doubleday's Monograph, with General Hancock's Autograph Notes Thereon," *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Vol. XLVIII (New York: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., 1911), 108.

68 Howard, *Atlantic Monthly*, 58.

69 Winfield Scott Hancock, "Gettysburg: Reply to General Howard," *The Galaxy*, Vol. XXII, June 1876 to January, 1877, 829.

70 Hancock, *The Galaxy*, 829.

71 Howard, *Autobiography*, 418.

cussion between Hancock and Howard, left a telling description of General Howard. “General Doubleday sent me to General Howard for reenforcements [*sic*] and orders. I found the latter in the cemetery near the gate. He looked the picture of despair.”⁷² Col. Charles Morgan of Hancock’s staff was derisive regarding Gen. Howard and his brother. “General Howard himself was apparently despondent,” said Morgan, “and his brother, Major Howard could not restrain his mortification.”⁷³

William Swinton traveled with the army as a reporter for the *New York Times*. He assessed Hancock and Howard in a book published in 1866: “In such an emergency it is the personal qualities of the commander alone that tell. If, happily, there is in him that mysterious but potent magnetism that calms, subdues, and inspires, there results one of those sudden moral transformations that are among the phenomena of battle. This quality Hancock possesses in a high degree, and his appearance soon restored order out of seemingly hopeless confusion—a confusion which Howard, an efficient officer, but of a rather negative nature, had not been able to quell.”⁷⁴

In fact, there is an endless vein of reports and recollections about Hancock’s dynamic and stout, perhaps even heroic, leadership on Cemetery Hill that afternoon. One of his staff, Henry Bingham, remembered: “His arrival upon the field of battle was most opportune. Wreck, disaster, disorder, almost the panic that precedes disorganization, defeat and retreat, were everywhere. He assumed command; soldiers retreating stopped, skulkers appeared from under their cover, lines were reformed; in the language of the writer: ‘And as the sun showing through a rift in the clouds may change a scene of gloom to one of beauty, so this prince of soldiers brings life and courage to all.’”⁷⁵

Second Lieutenant Sidney Cooke of the First Corps’ 147th New York recalled:

But if organization was lost, it needed but an organizer to restore it among these veterans.

⁷² Halstead, “First Day,” 285.

⁷³ Ladd, *The Bachelor Papers*, 1351.

⁷⁴ William Swinton, *Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac* (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1866), 335.

⁷⁵ Henry W. Bingham, Henry W. Oration at the Unveiling of the Equestrian Statue of Major General Winfield Scott Hancock on the Battlefield of Gettysburg, June 5, 1896 (Philadelphia, 1899), 11–12.



Henry W. Bingham. U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center.

Hancock was there to meet the crisis. I happened to come near enough to note his bearing in that trying moment, and to hear some of his remarks and orders. The enemy was emerging from the streets of the town below, and forming line as if to drive us from our coveted position. Every man knew how hopeless resistance would be, but Hancock sat his horse, superb and calm as on review; imperturbable, self-reliant, as if the fate of the battle and of the nation were not his to decide. It almost led us to doubt whether there had been cause for retreat at all. His dispositions were prompt. A skirmish line was at once organized and advanced down the hill in the face of the enemy. Others were quickly deployed to extend its line to the left and right. To General Doubleday, who sat on his horse by his side, he said “General, move a brigade to the hill across the road on the right.” “But general,” he replied “I have no brigade.” “Then take the first thousand men here. Never mind where they belong.” No excitement in voice or manner, only cool, concise, and positive directions, given in a steady voice and a conversational tone.

The tired and discouraged men responded to the will of their master. The semblance of an organization was produced at once, and a show of strength made which might well impress the enemy, as it did, with the idea that we had at last received reinforcements. No charge was made. The position was saved.⁷⁶

Hancock had many qualities that made him such an effective commander. But amid the rout on Cemetery Hill that day, his *appearance* was an essential asset. Lt. Francis Wiggin of the 16th

Maine testified to this: "When the shattered forces of the First Corps reached the Ridge, one of the first things we saw, was the magnificent form of General Hancock, who was mounted on a noble charger. He was surrounded by his staff, and he was busy issuing orders and directing the location of troops as they arrived. . . . He had quickly grasped the situation and had gotten matters so well in hand that the Confederates would certainly have met with a very warm reception had they tried that night to take Cemetery Ridge."⁷⁷

Lt. Edward Whittier of the 5th Maine Battery of the First Corps also recalled the sight of Hancock "on horseback, unmoved by all the confusion among retreating soldiers, sat a man, born to com-



Brig. Gen. Gouverneur Kemble Warren. U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center.

mand, competent to evolve order out of chaos, the master of the first position that day found for successful resistance. I shall never forget (for I reported to him for orders) the inspiration of his commanding, controlling presence, and the fresh courage he imparted. I recall even his linen, clean and white, his collar open at the neck, and his broad wristbands rolled back from his firm, finely moulded hand. This was General Hancock.⁷⁸

Even in accounts that interpret Howard's static presence as admirably resolute, not despairing, Hancock's dynamic

aura outshines Howard. For instance, J. A. Watrous of the 6th Wisconsin later reported: "As we reached the cemetery hill, about the first general officer we saw was Howard, sitting upon his horse with about as much coolness as though he was watching a Fourth of July parade, and just beyond him, all excitement-not nervous-looking in a thousand ways every minute and giving directions as carefully and precisely as though he was preparing for a great parade, was Gen. Hancock . . . he was young and fresh and bright and constantly active, who meant what he said, and said what he wanted to say so that everybody who heard it would understand. He was saying to this man and that: 'Take your guns in that direction;' 'Collect your men;' 'Prepare for immediate action.'"⁷⁹

76 Sidney G. Cooke, "The First Day at Gettysburg," *War Talks in Kansas* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1992), 284.

77 Francis Wiggin, "Sixteenth Maine Regiment at Gettysburg," *War Papers, Read Before the Commandery of the State of Maine, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1992), IV, 161-62.

78 Whittier, Edward N. "The Left Attack (Ewell's) at Gettysburg," *Civil War Papers: Read Before the Commandery of the State of Massachusetts, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Volume I* (Boston: MOLLUS, 1900), 76.

79 J. A. Watrous, *Major General Winfield S. Hancock Memorial Meeting, March 3, 1886, War Papers Read Before The Commandery of the State of Wisconsin, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States* (Milwaukee: Burdick,

It was not only lower, lesser-known officers who took such notice of Hancock's presence. Brig. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren was the army's chief of engineers and the next day he earned the moniker "The Savior of Little Round Top." Of Hancock he said, "General Hancock made a great deal of personal effort to get our troops into position; and I think his personal appearance there did a great deal toward restoring order."⁸⁰ Maj. Gen. Carl Schurz commanded a division in the Eleventh Corps and while Howard commanded the field Schurz was the Eleventh Corps commander. Though a loyal Eleventh Corps man, he credited Hancock's appearance for the turnaround that occurred on Cemetery Hill, stating that "under these circumstances the appearance of General Hancock was a most fortunate event. It gave the troops a new inspiration. They all knew him by fame, and his stalwart figure, his proud mien, and his superb soldierly bearing seemed to verify all the things that fame had told about him. His mere presence was a reinforcement, and everyone on the field felt stronger for his being there. This new inspiration of self-reliance might have become of immediate importance, had the enemy made another attack—an eventuality for which we had to prepare."⁸¹

Behind Hancock's superb presence was his *coup d'oeil* and overall tactical ability. He noticed the need to cover his right flank by sending troops to Culp's Hill before anyone else. Morgan remembered: "A line of battle with skirmishers out was plainly seen east of the town, making its way toward Culp's Hill, and so far as I could see we had not even a skirmisher to meet it. Pointing out the line to General Hancock, he directed me to get a brigade from the 1st Corps to occupy the western slope of the Hill."⁸²

If there was a division of command between Hancock and Howard, as Howard asserts, Hancock was to "take the left of the pike" and Howard was to "arrange these troops on the right."⁸³ Hancock's order to occupy Culp's Hill thereby defied the agree-

ment. The move did not offend Howard however, who wrote: "I noticed that he sent Wadsworth's division, without consulting me, to the right of the eleventh corps, to Culp's Hill; but as it was just the thing to do, I made no objection,—probably would not have made any in any event."⁸⁴

The eastern slope of East Cemetery Hill is prohibitively steep. While this made it somewhat more difficult for an attacker to ascend, it rendered the slope impossible for artillery on the summit to cover. Capt. Greenleaf T. Stevens commanded the 5th Maine Battery of the First Corps. He co-authored an article on his battery, which refers to himself in the third person, and described Hancock's response to the position's weakness: "He [Hancock] arrived on Cemetery Hill about four o'clock, and was by the gate of the Cemetery as the Fifth Maine battery came up. He called for the captain of 'that brass battery.' Captain Stevens heard what he said and put himself in Hancock's presence, he ordered Stevens to take (his) battery to that hill, pointing to Culp's Hill, and 'stop the enemy from coming up that ravine.' 'By whose order?' was the inquiry. 'General Hancock's,' was the reply. . . . This position commanded completely the easterly slope of Cemetery Hill and the ravine at the north."⁸⁵

The location, which was to the right of, and forward of, the slope in question, became known as "Steven's Knoll." He added that "the 'dead angle' made by the abrupt slopes of Cemetery Hill had been changed, by the act of General Hancock, who placed the 5th Maine light twelves on the side of the salient created by the north face of Culp's Hill, into a most deadly angle."⁸⁶

Perhaps most prescient of Hancock's dispositions was the dispatching of Gen. John Geary's Twelfth Corps division to the base of Little Round Top. It was a great distance from the action, by some two miles. But Hancock had the vision to put a division there a full day before it became an essential prize. He said: "Brigadier-General Geary's division of the Twelfth Corps, arriving on the ground subsequently, and not being able to communicate with Major-General Slocum, I ordered the division to the high

Armitage and Allen, 1891), Vol. 1, 300.

80 Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War at the Second Session, Thirty-Eighth Congress, Army of the Potomac, General Warren . . . (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1865), as cited in Hancock, *The Galaxy*, 828.

81 Schurz, *Reminiscences*, Vol. III, 14.

82 Morgan, "Narrative," 188.

83 Howard, *Atlantic Monthly*, 58.

84 Howard, *Atlantic Monthly*, 58–59.

85 Greenleaf T. Stevens and Edward N. Whittier, "Stevens' Fifth Maine Battery at the Battle of Gettysburg," *Maine at Gettysburg; Report of Maine Commissioners* (Portland, ME: The Lakeside Press Engravers, Printers and Binders, 1898), 88–89.

86 Stephens and Whittier, "Maine at Gettysburg," 89.



Maj. William Mitchell. U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center.

ground to the right of and near Round Top Mountain, commanding the Gettysburg and Emmitsburg road, as well as the Gettysburg and Taneytown road to our rear.⁸⁷

Adding to the strength of the center on Cemetery Hill, Hancock had secured the right flank by placing Wadsworth's division on Culp's Hill and he covered the left flank by putting Geary's division at the northern base of Little Round Top. Upon reaching this moment of relative stability, Morgan writes: "The lines having been so established as to deter the enemy from further advance, General Hancock despatched his senior aide, Major William Mitchell, with a verbal message to General Meade that General Hancock could hold Cemetery Hill until nightfall, and that he considered Gettysburg the place to fight. Major Mitchell left Gettysburg about 4 o'clock, and arrived at Taneytown before 6 o'clock. Having delivered his message to General Meade, the latter replied, 'I will send up the troops.'⁸⁸

Shortly thereafter, Hancock found time to dictate a written message to Meade, dated 5:25 p.m.:

⁸⁷ OR, 27:1:368.

⁸⁸ Morgan, "Narrative," 191.

GENERAL: When I arrived here an hour since, I found that our troops had given up the front of Gettysburg and the town. We have now taken up a position in the cemetery, and cannot well be taken. It is a position, however, easily turned. Slocum is now coming on the ground, and is taking position on the right, which will protect the right. But we have, as yet, no troops on the left, the Third Corps not having yet reported; but I suppose that it is marching up. If so, its flank march will in a degree protect our left flank. In the meantime Gibbon had better march on so as to take position on our right or left, to our rear, as may be necessary, in some commanding position. General G. will see this dispatch. The battle is quiet now. I think we will be all right until night. I have sent all the trains back. When night comes, it can be told better what had best be done. I think we can retire; if not, we can fight here, as the ground appears not unfavorable with good troops. I will communicate in a few moments with General Slocum, and transfer the command to him.

Howard says that Doubleday's command gave way.

General Warren is here.

Your obedient servant,

WINF'D S. HANCOCK

Major-General,

Commanding Corps⁸⁹

It does not appear that Howard issued any messages to Meade between those he dispatched upon succeeding Reynolds and the one complaining about Meade's order having "mortified and will disgrace me," which he probably sent in the early evening.⁹⁰

For his part, Hancock left to see Meade in person: "Between 5 and 6 o'clock, my dispositions having been completed, Major-General Slocum arrived on the field, and, considering that my functions had ceased, I transferred the command to him. The head of the Third Corps appeared in sight shortly afterward, on the Emmitsburg road. About dark I started for the headquarters of the army, still at Taneytown, 13 miles distant, and reported in person to General Meade."⁹¹

Meanwhile, Howard stayed on Cemetery Hill and greeted Meade when he arrived at, according to Meade, 1:00 a.m. Whether or not Howard was conscious of it, Hancock had assumed command

⁸⁹ OR, 27:1:366.

⁹⁰ Howard, *Atlantic Monthly*, 59.

⁹¹ OR, 27:1:368-69.

of the field. It did not matter what they said to each other. Hancock captured the attention of the troops with his commanding presence. Before he turned command over to Gen. Slocum, upon Slocum's arrival near dusk, Hancock had performed four major tasks. One task was the transformation of the First and Eleventh Corps from a defeated and fleeing crowd into an army reorganized to deter a possible attack. Several others participated in this endeavor, including Howard, but Hancock was its spiritual and tactical leader. Another task was the widening of the army's front to protect its flanks. To accomplish this Hancock ordered units to the formidable heights that flanked Cemetery Hill: Culp's Hill to the southeast and Little Round Top to the south. Some maintain that this also helped present, to the enemy, the appearance of a larger force.⁹² This task not only helped deter any further enemy advance, but presciently set the major points of the Union line for the next two days. His third task was the placement of Stevens's battery on the knoll between Culp's and Cemetery Hills. This brought artillery to bear on the eastern slope of Cemetery Hill. Finally, Hancock made at least two dispatches to General Meade, informing him of the situation and the quality of the ground. This helped Meade decide to continue a general movement of the army to Gettysburg and offer a general engagement there. Hancock credits others, as well, for the stabilizing of Cemetery Hill: "In forming the lines, I received material assistance from Major-General Howard, Brigadier-Generals Warren and Buford, and officers of General Howard's command."⁹³

The need to occupy Culp's Hill seems obvious today, whether Confederates were already advancing toward it or not. Nevertheless, no one did it until Hancock ordered it. It was Hancock who initiated the defense of Culp's Hill, earning for himself the credit for it. It is also notable that Hancock recognized the importance of Little Round Top when only three of the army's seven corps were present and the fighting was limited to Gettysburg's immediate environs some two or three miles north of it. The anxious studies and observations he made *en route* to Gettysburg, in which he surely noticed Little Round Top, shaped the entire three-day battle,

⁹² OR, 27:1:115; statement of Abner Doubleday, *Letters and Addresses*, 20–21.

⁹³ OR, 27:1:368.

not just the first day. The sending of Geary to the base of Little Round Top was the last major tactical disposition of Hancock on July 1; and *it outlined the famed fish hook line that the Union army held for the rest of the battle*. The shaft of the hook ran from Geary's division near Little Round Top to Cemetery Hill, and became filled with troops from the Second, Third, Fifth and Sixth Corps the next day. The hook curved around Cemetery Hill with the First and Eleventh Corps and terminated at the Twelfth Corps' right on Culp's Hill.

After the embarrassment of the Chancellorsville debacle, it is only natural that Howard desired the prestige of being the one who selected Cemetery Hill as the Union position at Gettysburg. It was the largest battle of the war, and perhaps the Union's greatest victory. It is possible that his desire for positive recognition outweighed his religious views against bearing false witness. To suffer the humiliation of relinquishing command to a junior, while the disgrace of Chancellorsville was still so fresh, might have been too much for him to tolerate. He had struggled against scorn his whole life, and may have seen July 1, 1863, as just another episode in that struggle. He might have felt a need to strike out at those who disparaged him as he had as a schoolboy and later as a cadet.

But Hancock was the wrong man to go against. Hancock had seen combat fourteen years prior to Howard's initial combat at First Bull Run. He saw soldiering as his calling and his craft. Soldiering came naturally to Hancock and he had, on top of his natural aptitude, years of study and experience. Between the Mexican and Civil Wars, Hancock studied army regulations while Howard studied scripture. Howard had received reprimands for failures of discipline that would not occur under Hancock. Also, Hancock had been with Meade until after 1:00 p.m. that day and knew his intentions and the position of the army. Finally, Hancock was the son of a lawyer. And his twin brother, Hilary, had also become a lawyer. The general's *Galaxy* magazine response to Howard had a legalistic, methodical structure that dismantled Howard's arguments quite convincingly. Perhaps most importantly, Howard simply could not compete with the sheer nobility of Hancock's presence, which an abundance of witnesses attested to.

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acades as an architect, he applied his interest in history by studying the Battle of Gettysburg on his own time and writing *Observing Hancock at Gettysburg: The General's Leadership through Eyewitness Accounts* (McFarland, 2016).