

COMPANY FRONT

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH NORTH CAROLINA

ISSUE 1, 2008

"With My Face to The Enemy."

NORTH CAROLINA
AT
GETTYSBURG

WWW.26NC.ORG



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26TH
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R E G I M E N T.

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Front Cover

Death Message of Colonel Issac E. Avery to his Father
North Carolina Museum of History

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CONTENTS

4 “THA KILL SO MENY OF US”
THE TWENTY-SIXTH NORTH CAROLINA AT GETTYSBURG

20 “...THE IMBECILE IVERSON”
COMMAND FAILURE AT GETTYSBURG

28 “...I DIED WITH MY FACE TO THE ENEMY”
COLONEL ISSAC E. AVERY AT GETTYSBURG

38 THE REGIMENT MADE A FINE APPERANCE
THE UNIFORMS OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH NORTH CAROLINA
TROOPS AT GETTYSBURG

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Killed at Gettysburg PA
July 1, 1863



"The Kill So Many Of Us"

THE TWENTY-SIXTH NORTH CAROLINA AT GETTYSBURG

Greg Mast

Reprinted from *Military Images Magazine* July-August, 1988 Vol 10, No. 1

North Carolina's gift of blood to the Confederacy was unequaled by that of any other state. From the skirmish at Big Bethel to the charge of Cox's Brigade at Appomattox, every battlefield of the Army of Northern Virginia was littered with the 40,000 Tar Heel dead. At no battle was the contribution of the Old North State more marked than at Gettysburg. Of the Confederate troops engaged, 20.4% were from North Carolina, second to Virginia's 27.5%, and slightly more than Georgia's 18.9%. About 1400 North Carolinians died at Gettysburg. This was 31.4% of all Confederate dead, and exceeded by about 500 the number killed from any other state, North or South.

All of the forty-two regiments, battalions and batteries from North Carolina present at Gettysburg paid their share of this butcher's bill, but one unit, the 26th Regiment North Carolina Troops, suffered losses unsurpassed by those of any other regiment during any battle during the entire war. The 26th NC, 839 strong, was the largest regiment at the battle of Gettysburg. Its loss in killed and wounded and captured (743) was the largest of any unit, while its percentage loss of 89% was exceeded only by the 8th Virginia and the 23rd North Carolina, units whose strength was only a fraction of the 26th NC. The 174 dead of the 26th North Carolina comprised 12.4% of all Tar Heel dead at Gettysburg, and 3.9% of all Confederate dead.

Formation of the Regiment

The men of the 26th North Carolina were all volunteers, enlisting in the summer of 1861 for twelve months service. Four of the companies were from the northwest mountain counties of Ashe, Caldwell and Wilkes; four from the central Piedmont counties of Chatham, Moore and Wake; and one each from the south central border counties of Anson and Union. The regiment was organized in Raleigh on August 27, 1861, and Zebulon Baird Vance of Buncombe County, a former US Congressman, was elected Colonel.

The regiment spent the first winter of the war in the vicinity of the coastal town of Morehead City. Here Colonel Vance, whose political skills far exceeded his soldierly ones, was content to let the 26th be trained by its 19 year old Lieutenant Colonel, Henry King Burgwyn, Jr. Burgwyn, a recent graduate of Virginia Military Institute, was perceived by the men as something of a martinet who drilled the regiment incessantly. By the advent of

THE BATTLEFIELD OF
GETTYSBURG
SHOWING THE MOVEMENTS OF THE
12th Corps
CONFEDERATE FORCES
DIVISION OF MAPS
JUN 28 1929
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Brig. Gen. James Johnston
Pettigrew



spring the 26th had achieved a high reputation for drill and discipline.

The regiment saw its first action at the battle of New Bern on March 14, 1862 where it anchored the Confederate right. The 26th performed credibly, suffering the death of its Major, Abner Carmichael, but its position was rendered untenable when a militia unit on its left flank routed. The men were forced to retreat across the unfordable Bryce's Creek by

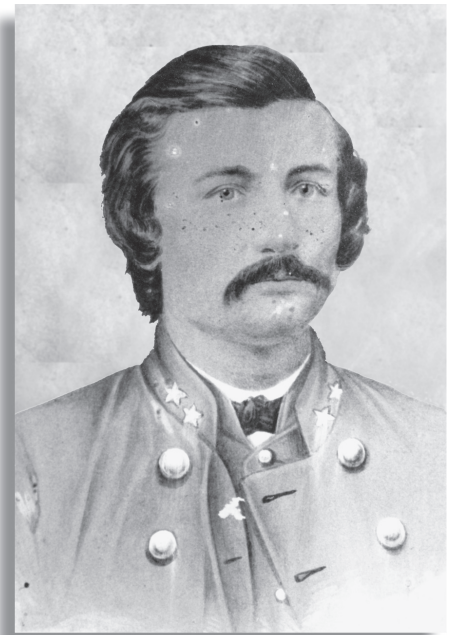
means of three small rowboats, with the Federals not far behind. Lt. Col. Burgwyn supervised the crossing and was the last man to enter the boats. This heroic performance much endeared him to the rank and file of the regiment.

The 26th North Carolina was reorganized "for the war" on April 21, and was assigned to the brigade of Gen. Robert Ransom. Ransom's Brigade was ordered to Petersburg, Virginia in late June, where it was

assigned to the division of Major Gen. Benjamin Huger. The regiment was lightly engaged at the battle of King's School House on June 25, and participated in the last of Lee's pointless and uncoordinated assaults on McClellan's army at Malvern Hill. The 26th NC suffered some 70 casualties during the Seven Days campaign.

On August 7, 1862, Zeb Vance was elected Governor of North Carolina, and he resigned his commission on August 12. Normally there would have been no impediment to the 20 year old Burgwyn's promotion to Colonel, but there was much resistance by General Ransom, who stated that he "wanted no boy Colonels in his brigade." The 26th NC was equally adamant in insisting on Burgwyn's promotion. The problem was resolved on August 26 by the transfer of the regiment to the newly formed brigade of J. Johnston Pettigrew. Captain John Randolph Lane of Company G was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, and Captain John Thomas Jones of Company I was promoted to Major. In addition to the 26th NC, Pettigrew's Brigade consisted of the 44th, 47th, and 52nd North Carolina Regiments. The 11th NC was added later.

For the remainder of 1862 the 26th was on duty at various places in eastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia. On November 2, at Rahl's Mills in Martin County, North Carolina, six companies of the 26th North Carolina opposed a column of 5000 Federals under Gen. John Foster, successfully delaying them for over an hour before escaping with small loss. The regiment was lightly engaged in D.H. Hill's attempt to



The Field officers of the Regiment upon Col. Vance's election to Governor. They are Col. H.K. Burgwyn (above), Major J. T. Jones of Caldwell County (above right) and Lt. Colonel John R. Lane (right) of Chatham County. These were the men who would lead the Regiment to its greatest trial by fire.

capture New Bern in March, 1863.

Army of Northern Virginia

In early May of 1863 Pettigrew's Brigade was moved to Richmond, and in early June the brigade, less the 44th NC, was

assigned to Henry Heth's Division of A.P. Hill's Third Corp, Army of Northern Virginia for Lee's second campaign in the North. The 26th North Carolina marched north by way of Culpeper, Front Royal, and Charlestown. First Sergeant J.A. Bush of Company I remembered bivouacking one evening near

a rattlesnake den: "...six were killed...One was killed on the spot where Col. Burgwyn's tent was put that had sixteen rattles. There was not much traveling around that night. Everybody got him a place and lay down and kept quiet."

The Tar Heels crossed the Potomac on June 25 at



Lt. General A.P. Hill

Gettysburg

June 30th saw the first contact with the enemy. Heth ordered Pettigrew to take his brigade on a reconnaissance-in-force to Gettysburg, “for army supplies (shoes especially).” Pettigrew was instructed that he would find no opposition except local home guard units, but should any portion of the Army of the Potomac be present he was given peremptory orders not to precipitate an engagement. So Pettigrew’s Brigade, accompanied by the Donaldsonville (Louisiana) Artillery, moved down the pike. They were soon informed by “Longstreet’s spy” and by a local member of the Knights of the Golden Circle (a Copperhead organization) that Gen. John Buford’s cavalry division was present in Gettysburg. Pettigrew advanced as far as Seminary Ridge, where he formed a line of battle and sent his skirmishers to the edge of town. Some fighting evidently occurred there, and prisoners were taken. In obedience to orders, Pettigrew retreated toward Cashtown, followed at an interval of several hundred yards by mounted videttes from Buford’s command. The Confederates halted about halfway to Cashtown and threw out pickets for the night.

Pettigrew’s superiors, Heth and A.P. Hill, were thus informed of the presence of elements of the Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg, but they evidently did not believe Pettigrew’s intelligence. General Lee had given specific orders that a general engagement was not to occur until his army was sufficiently concentrated. Nonetheless, Hill permitted Heth’s Division to advance on Gettysburg the next

Shepherdstown, after removing “shoes, socks, pants, and drawers.” Two days later they camped, presumably fully dressed, at Fayetteville, Pennsylvania. Sunday, June 28, was a day of rest for the regiment, and religious services were conducted. Julius Leinbach noted in his diary:

...our chaplain, Rev. Mr. Wells provided a very forceful and appropriate sermon on the text “The harvest is passed, the summer

is ended and we are not saved.” Jer. 8-20...in speaking about this sermon afterward in our tent some one remarked, “Did you notice Col. Burgwyn during the preaching? He seemed deeply impressed. I believe we are going to lose him on this trip.”

Sadly prophetic words they were. On June 29, Heth’s Division moved to Cashtown, six miles from Gettysburg.



Maj. General Henry Heth

the woods.

Unfortunately for the Confederates, Union reinforcements were already at hand. Brig. Gen James Wadsworth's First Division of the First Corp reached McPherson's Ridge just as Archer was beginning to best the Yankee troopers. This division's First Brigade was the famous "Iron Brigade:" 2nd, 6th and 7th Wisconsin, 19th Indiana and 24th Michigan, under the command of the North Carolina born brigadier, Solomon Meredith.

The Iron Brigade charged over McPherson's Ridge and down into the Willoughby Run ravine, yelling and shooting. Archer's Brigade was stunned by this collision, losing hundreds captured, including General Archer. The Alabamians and Tennesseans assaulted frontally and from the flank, were forced back across Willoughby Run with great loss. The Federals pursued to the crest of Herr Ridge, then withdrew to the east bank of the Run.

Davis' Brigade, which had attacked on Archer's left, had been repulsed also, and the whipped Confederates had no choice but to retire. This was about 11:00 to 11:30.

morning, July 1st.

July 1, 1863

Archer's Brigade led off at 5 a.m., followed by the brigades of Davis, Pettigrew and Brockenbrough. Skirmishing began as early as 5:30, but the Confederates did not press vigorously. About 8 a.m. Heth's Division reached Herr Ridge, about a mile west of town. Buford's two cavalry brigades were in line on the

opposing McPherson's Ridge and behind Willoughby Run, the small stream between the two ridges. Heth ordered the brigades of Archer and Davis to attack the blue cavalry.

Archer attacked on the right, or south, side of the pike, Davis went in on the north. Archer was successful in driving the cavalry from the Run and into McPherson's Woods, but not without substantial loss. By 10 a.m., Archer's Brigade had crossed Willoughby Run and was threatening the Federal line in

Harry up and Wait

Heth had chosen to attack with only half of his division. Pettigrew's North Carolinians and Brockenbrough's Virginians were deployed behind Confederate artillery on Herr Ridge. J.A Bush remembered that a portion of the 26th was,

...lined up in a Dutchman's horse lot. A two year old colt was playing around the line and the old man

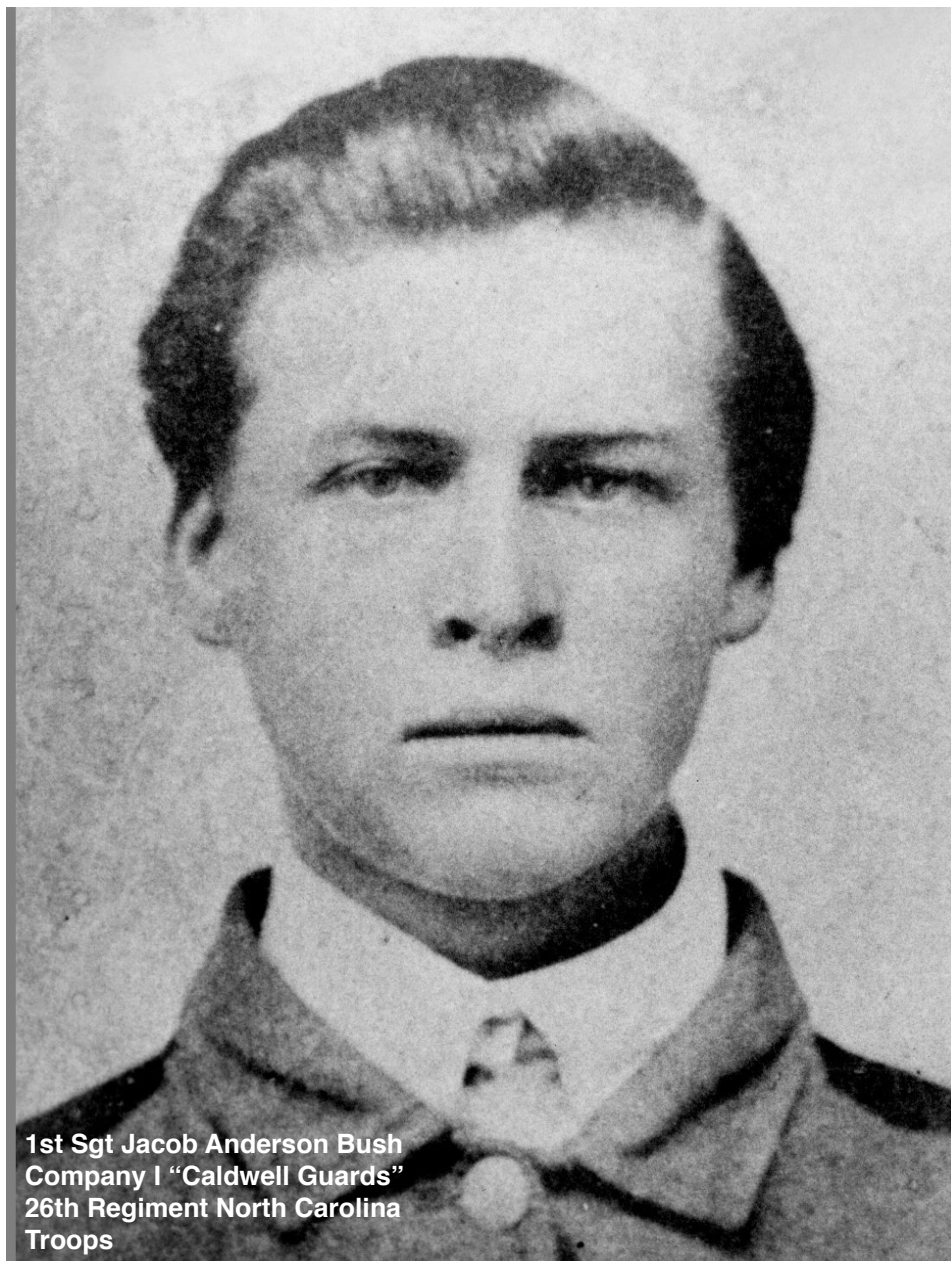
came along wearing a blue hunting shirt...Lieut. J.V. Grier asked him what he would take for the colt. He said "I have no time to trade horses now. I is getting to de woots."

We don't know what happened to the old man and his horse, but the Lieutenant from Company I would be mortally wounded on July 3.

The brigade remained in this position about half an hour, suffering a dozen casualties from the random fire of the Federal artillery. It was then moved back onto the pike, and after crossing the crest of Herr Ridge, each regiment was moved by files off the pike about one hundred yards. General Pettigrew, mounted on a beautiful dappled gray, commanded,

"...echelon by battalion, the Twenty-sixth Regiment by the left flank." Colonel Burgwyn gave his Regiment the command, March! Then, as each regiment of the brigade marching to the right, uncovered the regiment in its front, its commander gave the order, "By the left flank, March," and thus in a few moments, and by the quickest tactical movement, the brigade was in line of battle, marching to the front in the following order from left to right: 26th NC, 11th NC, 47th NC, 52nd NC.

Advancing in line of battle, the brigade was halted to await orders in a belt of woods on the eastern side of Herr Ridge, south of the Chambersburg Pike. The ridge sloped down through open fields some two hundred yards to Willoughby Run. This was a slight stream, but difficult to cross because of briars, reeds and other



**1st Sgt Jacob Anderson Bush
Company I "Caldwell Guards"
26th Regiment North Carolina
Troops**

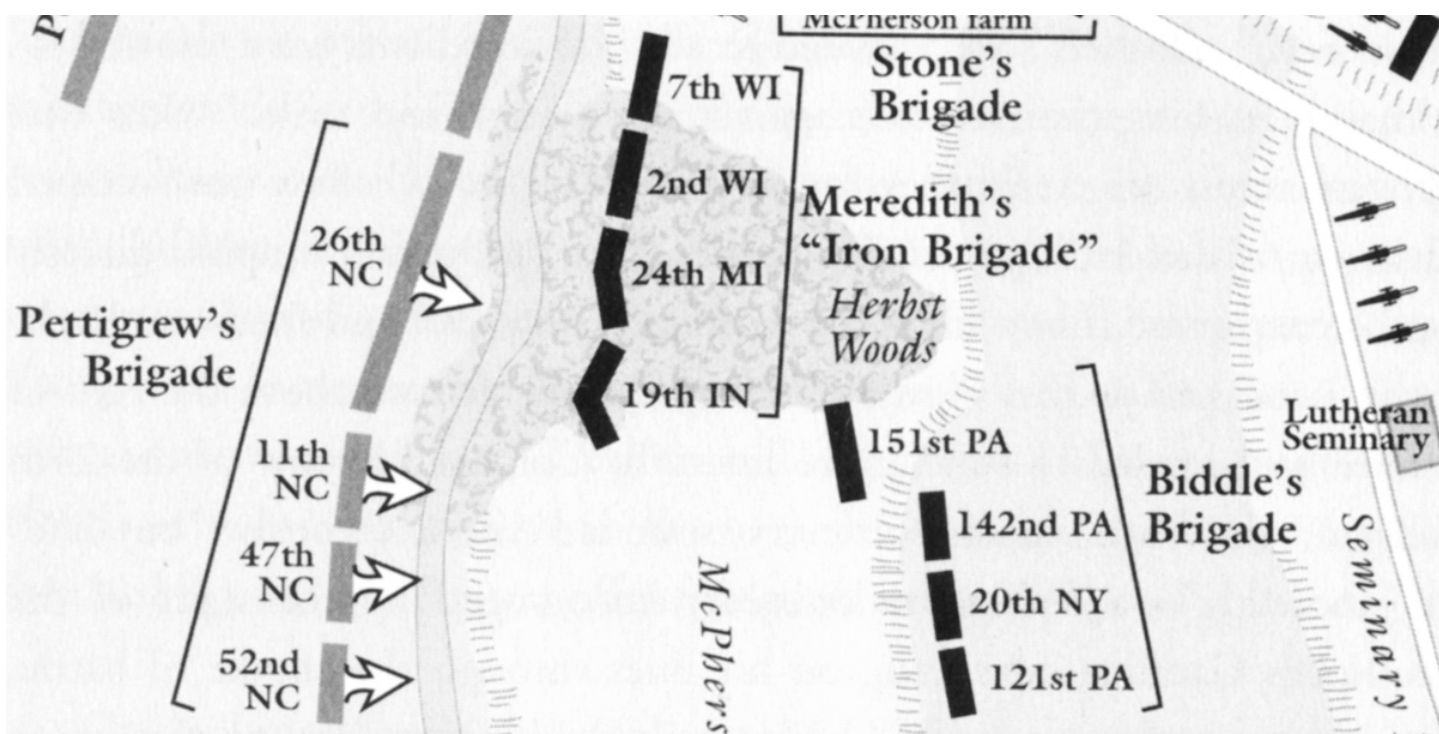
undergrowth. The ground then sloped back up another two or three hundred yards to the crest of McPherson's Ridge, which was wooded at the top. General Abner Doubleday, now commanding the Federal 1st Corp following the death of John Reynolds some hours earlier, described McPherson's Ridge as possessing "all the advantages of a redoubt."

Brockenbrough's Brigade also moved south of the pike and formed line of battle to the left of the

26th North Carolina. The remnants of Archer's Brigade were to the right of the 52nd North Carolina. These lines evidently were formed around noon or a little after.

Yankees up Ahead

One the ridge opposite them, some five or six hundred yards away, were three veteran brigades of the Union First Corp. The Iron Brigade under Meredith was deployed on or near the bank of Willoughby Run, Colonel Roy Stone's Bucktails-2nd



Map of the Pettigrew Assault, July 1, 1863.

Brigade, 3rd Division—was to the right of the Iron Brigade, in something of an inverted “L” formation. Colonel Chapman Biddle’s 1st Brigade of the 3rd Division was on the left and rear of Meredith, alongside Battery B, 1st Pennsylvania Artillery. Although possessing certain natural advantages, this position was not ideal for the Federals. There were no troops to Biddle’s left other than a brigade of cavalry, which would be largely neutralized by Archer’s men. Pettigrew’s right flank regiments, the 47th and 52nd NC, would have little trouble flanking the 19th Indiana, the left most regiment of the Iron Brigade. The Yankees also were exposed to Confederate artillery fire from the batteries on Herr Ridge. On the other hand, the cannon in Biddle’s line were in a perfect position to rake the Confederate lines as they advanced, and the men in gray would be subject to intense musketry when they emerged from the woods.

The Confederates did not attack at once, but they were forced to wait for over an hour while General Hill positioned Gen. Dorsey Pender’s division in the rear of Pettigrew and Brockenbrough. Skirmishers were thrown out, details were sent to the rear for water, and as the men were under fire from Yankee skirmishers, they were forced to lie down. The Federal sharpshooters were stationed in a farm house to the right of the 26th NC, and were uncomfortably annoying. Colonel Burgwyn asked for a volunteer to stop the snipers. 1st Lt. John A. Lowe of Company G stepped forward, and “Creeping along a fence until he got a position from which he could see the men behind a chimney who were doing this shooting he soon silenced them.”

The long wait infuriated Colonel Burgwyn, who was seething to advance. From their position the Tar Heels had a fine view of the attack of Rode’s Division far off to

their left, moving down Oak Ridge, and they could see that they too would soon be sent forward. The regimental chaplain was not present, and some men expressed regret that services could not be held. Others indulged in ribaldry of the “gallows humor” variety. Finally, about 2:00 p.m., the command “Attention” came, and,

With the greatest quickness...all the men were up at once and ready, every officer at his post, Col. Burgwyn in the center, Lieut. Col Lane on the right, Major Jones on the left. Our gallant standard bearer, J.B. Mansfield, at once stepped to his position—four paces to the front, and the eight color guards to their proper places. At the command “Forward March” all to a man stepped off apparently as willingly and as proudly as if they were on review.



Willoughby Run as it appeared in 1863 (above) and as it appears today (below).

The 26th Goes In

The spectacle of this well drilled 800 man regiment advancing in line of battle down the slope of Herr Ridge was vivid in the minds of every survivor. They “made as perfect a line as a regiment ever made, every man endeavoring to keep dressed on the colors.” Somewhere down this slope the 26th halted and fired on the enemy, then resumed the march.

The regiment soon comes under fire from the musketry of the 24th Michigan and the 19th Indiana to their front, and from Battery B, 1st Pa. Lt. Artillery on the ridge above. 1st Lieutenant John Emerson of Company E (the color company) observes two of his men fall, one of them dead. Color Sergeant Jefferson Mansfield falls to his knees, shot in the right foot, the colors hit the ground. Sergeant Hiram Johnson of Company G takes them up, but as the line approaches Willoughby Run

he is shot, and Private John Stamper of Company A has them. The colors are a natural target for enemy fire, and the color guards are almost certain to suffer heavy casualties in any assault.

The rest of the line reaches

the west bank of Willoughby Run with small loss, most enemy fire being high. The briars and other underbrush along the stream are particularly thick where the center of the line crosses and some crowding and delays occur as squads bunch through the gaps. The enemy artillery now has an enfilade fire on the regiment, and scores of men fall while crossing this stream. Private Stamper is wounded just as he enters the underbrush. Private George Washington Kelly of Company D seizes the flag but he is shot in the ankle as he leaps the stream. His comrade in the color guard, Private Larkin Thomas of Company F, calls out, “Get up, George, and come on.” “Can’t, I’m hit. I believe my leg is broken.” “What hit you?” “Piece of shell. There it lies. Give it to me; please I’m going to take it home for a souvenir. Take the flag.” And so Private Thomas is now the color bearer.





Battle flag of the 26th NCT that was carried by the Regiment during the Battle of Gettysburg.

Yelling Like Demons

Across the Run more time is spent dressing the line; once again the loss is frightful. The regiment now moves up the hill. At this closer range their smoothbore muskets begin to tell against the enemy. The tempo quickens, and now the rebel yell is raised. Colonel Morrow of the 24th Michigan observes that, "They came on yelling like demons."

Larkin Thomas is now shot in the left arm, and Private John Vinson of Company G takes the colors. Lt. Col Lane notes that "The bullets seem to be as thick as hailstones in a storm." Vinson is shot down, and Private John Marley seizes them. He is shot dead immediately, and the final member of the color guard, William Ingram, takes them up.

The first line of Yankees breaks. They flee into the woods. But this is the Iron Brigade, and a second line is soon formed. As the 26th closes on this line, the Brigade Assistant Inspector General, Captain W. W. McCreery, arrives with a message to Burgwyn from Pettigrew: "Tell him his regiment has covered itself with glory today." Pvt. Ingram is now wounded. Captain McCreery takes the flag from him, and, waiving it aloft, advances but a few steps when he is shot through the heart. His blood gushes over the colors. Seeing McCreery fall, 2nd Lieutenant George Wilcox of Company H rushes forward and pulls the banner from beneath McCreery's body. He takes a few steps and falls wounded.

Company E is the color company of the 26th North Carolina,

which places it in the center of the line, fifth company from the right. To the left of Company E is Company F, and to the left of F is Company B. Halfway up McPherson's Ridge, 1st Lieutenant Thomas Cureton of Company B is made aware of the heavy casualties in the center of the line.

...Capt. Lewis G. Young of Pettigrew's Staff (who was riding coolly along in rear of my company) advising me to close my company to the right to the Colors-and when I looked to the right where Company F should have been there was only two or three men all the rest were killed or wounded-I saw Col. H.K. Burgwyn advancing toward me with the Colors in his hands-Col. Burgwyn asked me quickly if Company B could not furnish a man to carry the Colors-I ordered Private Frank Hunneycut...to him-Col. Burgwyn gave Hunneycut the Colors and told him to advance-but the poor fellow only advanced a few steps till he was shot down...

The 26th now hesitates; the possibility of defeat looms. The colors lay on the ground a few seconds when Colonel Burgwyn picks them up. He is "...a few steps in advance of the regiment, his sword in his right & the flag in his left hand cheering on his men. He had turned to see how they were acting which threw his right side to the enemy. The ball passed through both lungs & he fell in such a position that he bled internally."

As he falls, Burgwyn twists in such a manner that he is wrapped in the folds of the flag. He is caught by a private in Company B and laid gently on the ground. Lt. Col. Lane

Lt. Colonel John R. Lane
26th Regiment North Carolina Troops



knels briefly by his side, and then rushes the length of the regimental line instructing each officer to close his men on the colors. "I am going to give them the bayonet." During this episode the regiment is engaged in a fierce fire fight with the Yankees. "The captains have been coolly giving orders, 'shoot low men,' and the men have been busy, but they have suffered dreadfully."

At this point in the charge the 26th and 11th Regiments have been the most heavily engaged, going head to head with the 24th Michigan and 19th Indiana. The 47th and 52nd NC suffered some from shell and musketry, but their losses are slight in comparison. The Yankees do not perceive the 52nd Regiment, which flanks the 19th Indiana with a "raking and destructive fire." This pressure from the flank, combined with the determined charge of the 26th NC, proves to be more than the Iron Brigade can take.

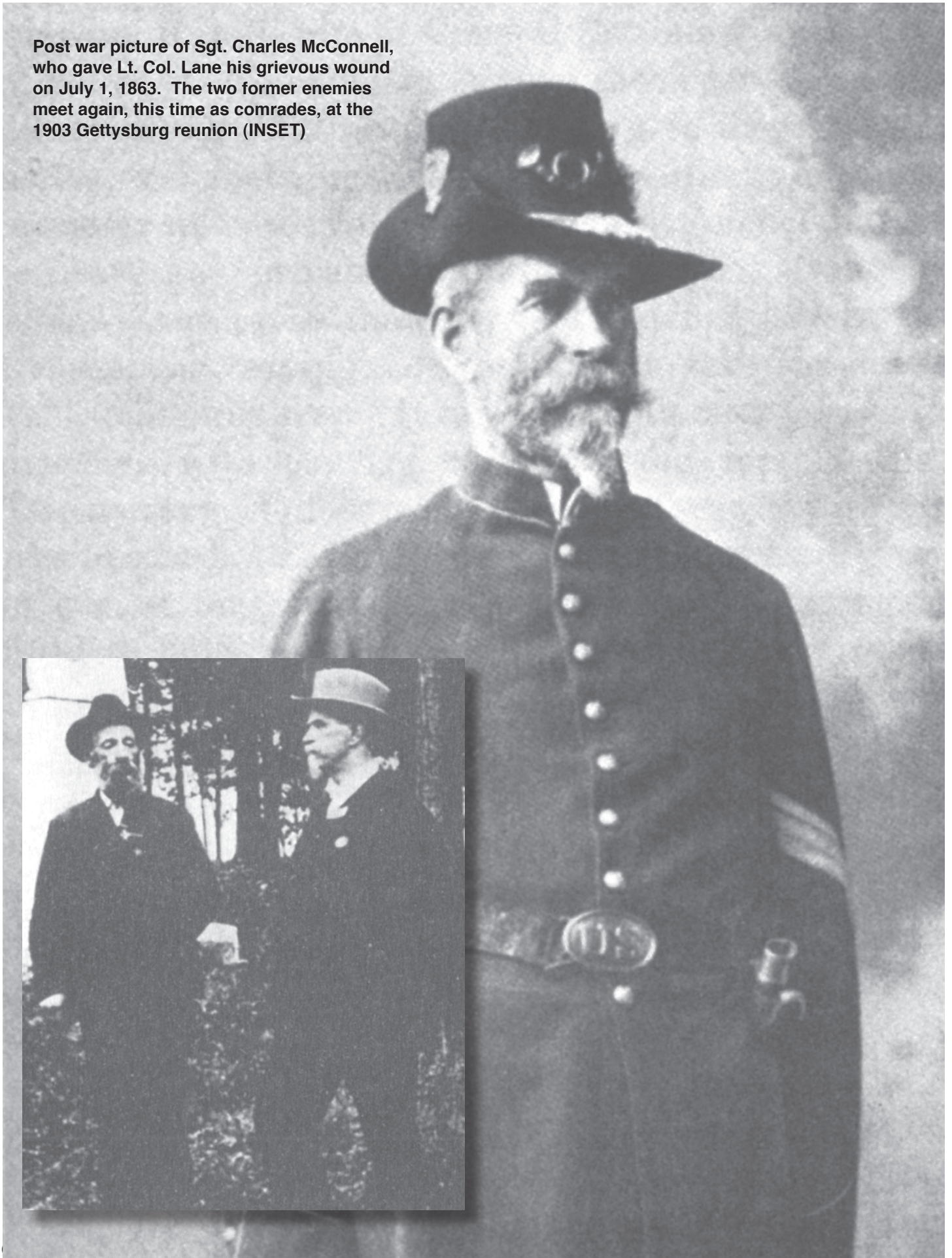
Returning to the center of the line, Lt. Col. Lane finds the colors still down. Lt. Cureton and 1st Lt. Milton Blair of Company I both move to pick them up,

...but Blair got them first, and started to advance with them, when I heard the voice of Lieut. Col Lane say Blair give me them Colors-Blair handed them to him-as he did so, Blair remarks you will get tired of them.

Lane replied, "It is my time to take them now. Twenty-sixth, follow me." The survivors respond with a Rebel yell and surge forward. The enemy line gives way. The 26th has triumphed.

One of the last of the 24th Michigan to flee, Sgt. Charles

Post war picture of Sgt. Charles McConnell, who gave Lt. Col. Lane his grievous wound on July 1, 1863. The two former enemies meet again, this time as comrades, at the 1903 Gettysburg reunion (INSET)



McConnell, rests his musket against a tree and waits to fire a last shot. Through the smoke he sees Lane approaching with the colors. At about thirty paces he fires. Lt. Cureton observes that Lane:

...looked back (like Lot's wife) and fell as limber as a rag-I though killed dead-but not so-badly wounded-in the back of the head coming out his mouth...we charge to the top of the hill where we found another line which we charged and they gave way and ran into the town...and we returned to the sad duty of relieving our wounded and lamenting over our dead...

As the Federals were driven from their final position, the 26th North Carolina captured a stand of colors, "but, owing to some carelessness, they were left behind..." (Whose colors these were is something of a mystery. There is no record of the 24th Michigan losing any colors at Gettysburg, but there is a fragment of a National flag in Raleigh said to have been captured by the 26th at Gettysburg.)

After Pettigrew's brigade occupied the ridge line, General Pender's Division passed through

them to continue the drive. About thirty minutes has elapsed since Colonel Burgwyn gave the command "Forward march" on the slopes of Herr Ridge.

the "dead marked his line of battle with the accuracy of a line at dress parade." The range did not exceed twenty yards. Captain Young of Pettigrew's staff, who survived the firestorm despite the fact that he was

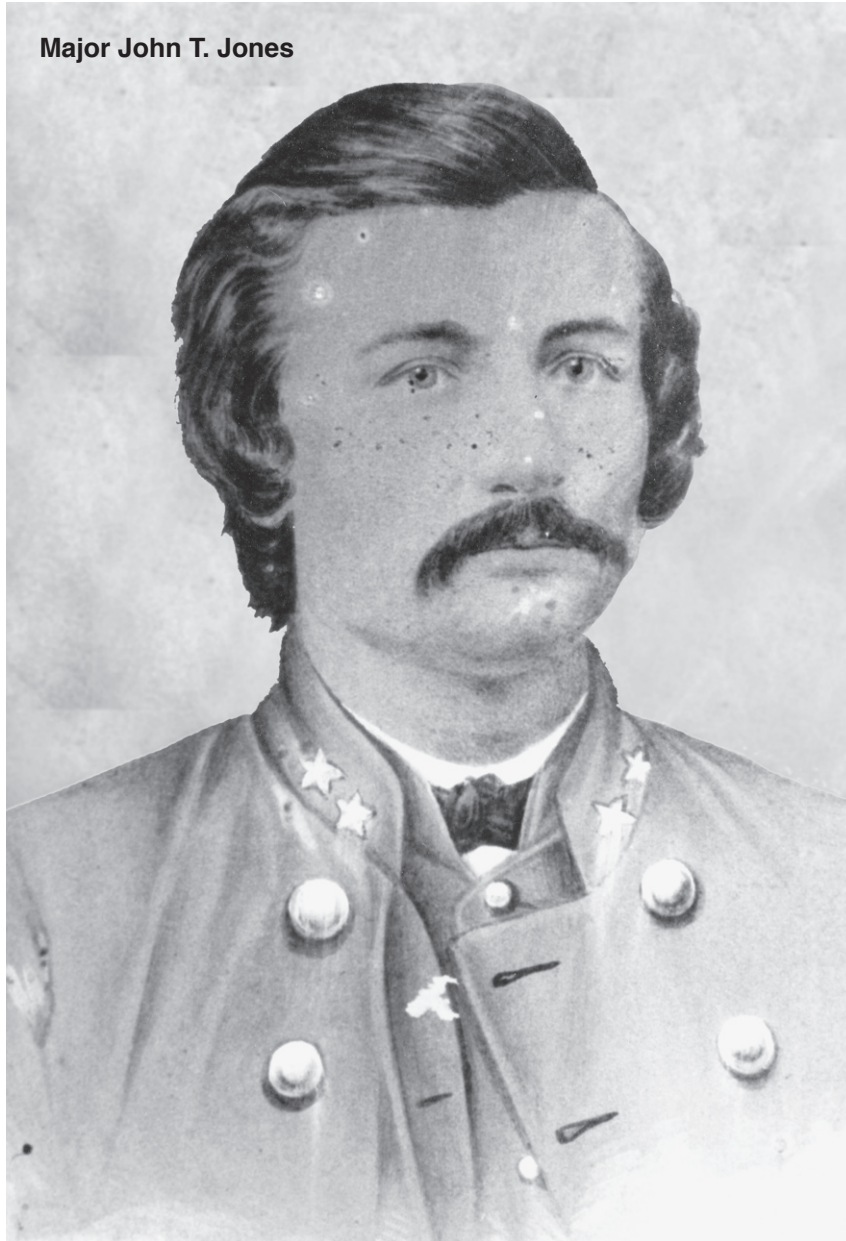
mounted on a horse, noticed a peculiar phenomenon:

My attention was attracted by the dreadful-not moans but-howls of some of the wounded. It was so distressing that I approached several with the purpose of calming them if possible and to my surprise I found them foaming at the mouth as if mad, and evidently unconscious of the sound of their voices. This is the only occurrence of the kind which came under my observation during the war, and I attribute it to the effect upon the nerves of the quick, frightful conflict following several hours of suspense.

The losses in the 26th North Carolina were truly

stunning for so short a fight. At least 95 men had been killed outright; with many more mortally wounded, including Colonel Burgwyn and the regimental Sgt. Major, Montford McRae. Lt. Col. Lane survived his dreadful wound to lead the regiment

Major John T. Jones



Aftermath

After the battle General Heth saw the bodies of Burgwyn's men who fell at this time; he observed that

at Bristoe Station. Major Jones was struck by a shell fragment, but remained on duty and commanded the 26th for the remainder of the battle. Over half the captains and lieutenants had been killed or wounded. Fourteen color bearers had been shot down.

Hardest hit were the two center companies, E and F. Of the 91 members of Company F who went into the battle on July 1, only one reported for duty after the fight, and he had been stunned by a shell. This company had three sets of identical twins; five of the six lay dead on the battlefield. Company E had but two survivors out of 90. Company A lost 77 out of 92. Counting walking wounded, the regiment was able to muster only 216 men on the evening of July 1, 1863.

The famous regimental band of the 26th North Carolina, as noncombatants, had been assigned to the Brigade hospitals. They watched the battle from the rear, and assisted the surgeons throughout the night in the care of the wounded. One of the bandsmen, Samuel Mickey, walked over the battleground early on the morning of July 2:

Pettigrew's brigade had charged thru two fields and a narrow strip of woods, down grade all the way, to a small branch, there they were in thirty steps of the enemy, who were said to have three lines of men

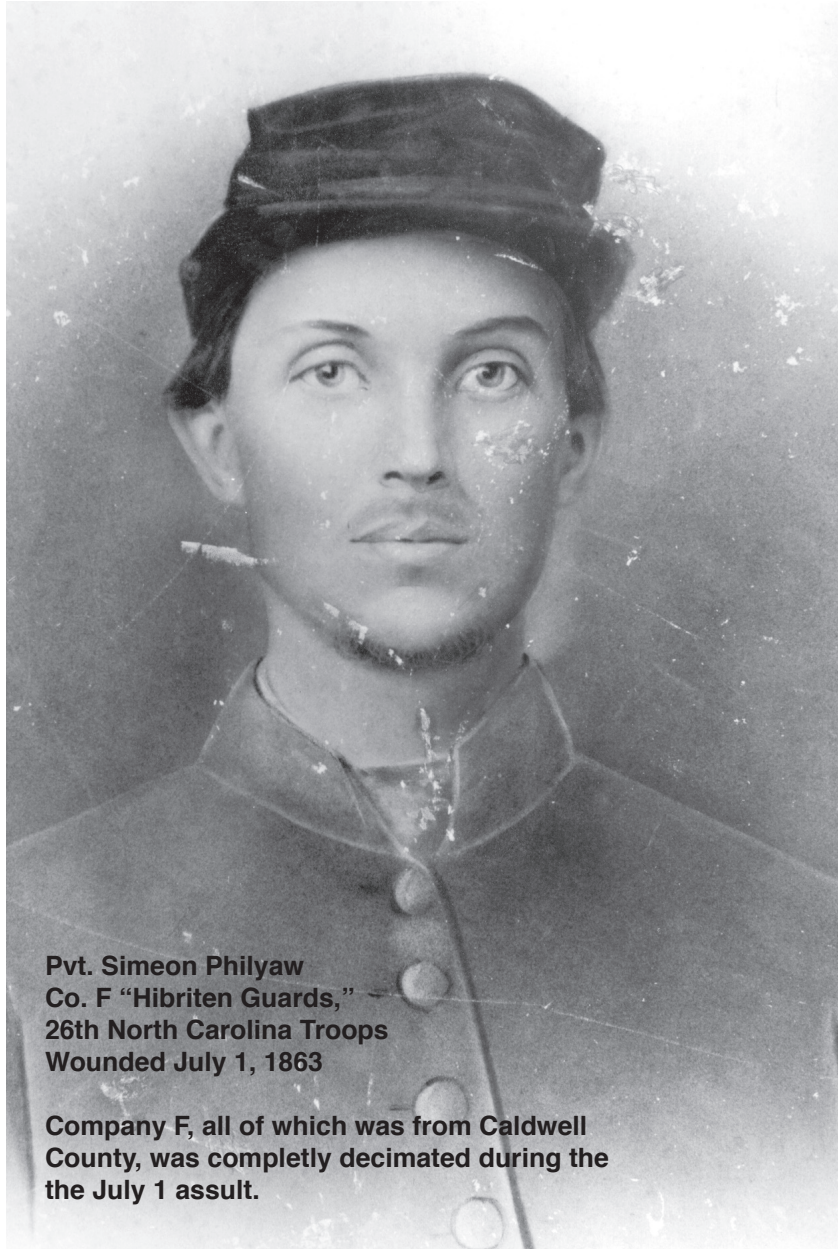
near a stone house.

The 26th was not to be given much time to recover from its losses. On the morning of July 2, General Pettigrew ordered a resumption of military duties. Pettigrew now commanded Heth's Division, as the latter had been wounded. Colonel Charles Marshall of the 52nd NC commanded the brigade. Roll calls were made, reports written, and the men assigned to burial details. Pettigrew made every effort to build the ranks of his depleted regiments. The hospitals were searched for those wounded still able to bear arms, and cooks were issued muskets. The survivors of the 26th North Carolina were suffering a severe depression, so their regimental band was:

Ordered to get their horns and play-and it was never done more faithfully all day long-and with more effect and the writer till this day has never

firing into our ranks...While there I saw many wounded Yankees, and about five hundred dead on the hill, and wondered how any of the men escaped. On returning to the hospital, I found Col. Burgwyn's grave under a tree, in a large field

heard music that cheered him so-a gloom had settled over the entire regiment at the loss of the comrades and friends...but it was soon entirely dispelled by the music and by 12 o'clock noon the command could raise a cheer.



**Pvt. Simeon Philyaw
Co. F "Hibriten Guards,"
26th North Carolina Troops
Wounded July 1, 1863**

Company F, all of which was from Caldwell County, was completely decimated during the the July 1 assault.

To the High Water Mark

On the evening of July 2 the brigade was marched from its bivouac on Herr Ridge to a "Hollow in rear of the position where to make the ever memorable charge on 3rd July 1863." This was on the western slope of Seminary Ridge, probably near the present site of the North Carolina monument. On the morning of July 3, Lt. Curteon and Captain Samuel Wagg of Company A:

...walked forward to view the positions occupied by the enemy. We saw a ridge about a mile to a mile and half from us a high and elevated position with a beautiful valley covered with grass-a lane fence reach through rather diagonally across-no trees or anything not even a hill to protect a charging line from artillery-only the fence- the ridge we occupied was splendid for defense.

Wagg was shot in the face with grapeshot later in the day and killed instantly.

Much ink has been spilt about the reasoning of Lee, Hill, and Longstreet in structuring their troops for the assault of July 3. Pickett's Division was an obvious choice, as it had not yet been engaged during the battle, and would form the right wing of the attacking column. Heth's Division, now led by Pettigrew, would go in on Pickett's left. Why this division, which had suffered far more casualties than any other in the army, was chosen remains a mystery. It has been suggested that the Army command was unaware of the condition of these troops and the extent to which they had been reduced. Nevertheless,

although the brigades of Davis and Brockenbrough (now commanded by Col. Robert Mayo) would falter during the assault, Archer's Brigade (now led by Col. Birkett Fry) and Pettigrew's Brigade (commanded by Col. James Marshall of the 52nd NC) would go as far or farther in the ensuing charge than Pickett's gallant Virginians.

Two North Carolina brigades from Pender's division were assigned to Maj. Gen. Isaac Trimble and ordered to support Pettigrew. Lang's Florida Brigade and Wilcox's Alabama Brigade were designated supports for Pickett.

The men of the brigade were deployed, lying down, behind the Confederate guns on Seminary Ridge, which at 1 pm unleashed a barrage on the Yankee lines for two hours. One witness remembers that, "the very ground trembled under it as if an earthquake." When the artillery ceased, General Pettigrew rode up to his old brigade and ordered, "Now Colonel, for the Honor of the Good Old North State forward."

Pettigrew's Division went forward in line of battle as follows: Fry's Brigade on the right, next Marshall's (with the 26th NC on the right of the brigade), then Davis and Mayo. Some 150 yards behind came the brigades of Lane and Scales from Pender's Division. As the advance reached mid-field, Lt. Cureton later wrote:

...to the right and left as far as the eye could see on either side that splendid sight of perfect lines of battle -but the enemies artillery opened on us with grape canister etc but our lines crossed in the lane in splendid order-when about two

hundred yards from their works the musketry opened on us but nothing daunted our brave men press on quickly forward and we had reached within about forty yards of the works or regiment had be reduced to a skirmish line by the constant falling of the men at every step-but they still kept closing to the colors we sere still pressing quickly forward when a cry came from the left and I look and saw the right regiment of Davis Mississippi Brigade...driven from the field as chaff before a "Whirlwind" the entire left of the line was gone we were then exposed to a front and enfilade fire...

Mayo's Virginia Brigade, much weakened on July 1, was delayed in starting the advance, and had never obtained its proper alignment with the rest of the division. It was soon enfiladed by a salvo from 31 Federal guns, and by the 8th Ohio Regiment, which had deployed at right angles to the Federal line. The Virginians crumbled. This exposed the left flank of Davis's Brigade, whose regiments faltered and fled one by one. Then it was the turn of Marshall's Brigade to receive the full fury of the Federal fire. Trimble's North Carolina Brigades closed up to fill the gap left by the two routed brigades. As these Tar Heels approached Marshall's men, someone shouted "Three cheers for the Old North State," and the men responded with a shout.

Already three more color bearers in the 26th Regiment had been shot down, two of them killed. As Private Daniel Thomas of Company E, wounded and carrying the colors, approached the stone wall, the Yankees called out, "Come

over to this side of the Lord,” and he and colors were taken. With only sixty men left in line, the order was given for the 26th to fall back. Lt. Cureton, one of the few remaining company officers, tried to rally the survivors at the rail fence along the Emmitsburg Road, but a line of Federals were advancing down the fence, “capturing every man they could find,” so the retreat continued. Cureton came upon General Pettigrew wounded and afoot, and assisted him from the field. The great assault was over.

That night Lt. Cureton counted 3 officers and 67 “muskets” in the ranks of the 26th North Carolina. Twenty-seven men had been killed on July 3; 52 more would die of their wounds during the next two months, these are combined with the July 1 dead for a total of 174. The precise number of wounded for both days is difficult to determine as many ambulatory wounded were not counted, but it certainly exceeded 500. The missing and captured totaled 72-some of these were taken during the July 3 battle, while others were severely wounded who had to be left at the hospitals when the army retreated.

Major Jones, as the only surviving field officer, now commanded Pettigrew’s Brigade. Lt. Cureton remembered that the regiment lay behind the artillery all that night and all day July 4, when Yankee pickets communicated the news”...that Pemberton had surrendered Vicksburg Miss that day-I have never liked 4th July since-about dark that night we commenced slowly falling back through the mountains...”

Retreat

As the Army of Northern Virginia began its withdrawal across the Potomac on July 14, the remnants of the 26th North Carolina formed part of the rear guard, protecting the pontoon bridge at Falling Waters. The Brigade was resting under stacked arms in a wheatfield when an element of the 6th Michigan Cavalry, numbering about 45 troopers, charged from the woods. A wild melee ensued, during which General Pettigrew was mortally wounded by a pistol ball. The trooper who shot Pettigrew was knocked off his horse by a soldier wielding a fence rail. Private Nevel Staton of Company B picked up a large rock and “crushed the Yankee in the breast, killing him.” All told, thirty three of the cavalry were killed, and six more and a flag were captured. General Pettigrew died three days later. Lieutenant Cureton was the last Confederate to cross the pontoons.

Twenty-three year old Private Thomas Setser of Company F, from Caldwell County, was shot in the right thigh on July 3. On July 29, from a “horsepital” in Raleigh he wrote his cousin. After insisting that “I hav nothing mutch intruste to write you at this time,” he described his experience at Gettysburg:

...we Come to Gattiesburg wher we run a gin the yankees and you may talk of this big fite and that big fite but tha hante bin no sutch fiting as was dun over thair for the firste days fite. I could all but walk over the dead and wounded. I never hav Seen the like before no herd the like. wher our Rigmte fought the Yankees was on a hill and had three

lines, and the wones was Shotiting over the forreste wones and tha was all a firing but we run them back a mile. I wonte in the fite the firste day I was in the third day we lade in twenty steps of our batters and...the yankes kill five horses rite in fronte of mee at wone Shote and I cante tell how meny Casesarns that blode up, but then we made the Charge... tha Kill so meny of us.

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The Imbecile Iverson

Command Failure at Gettysburg

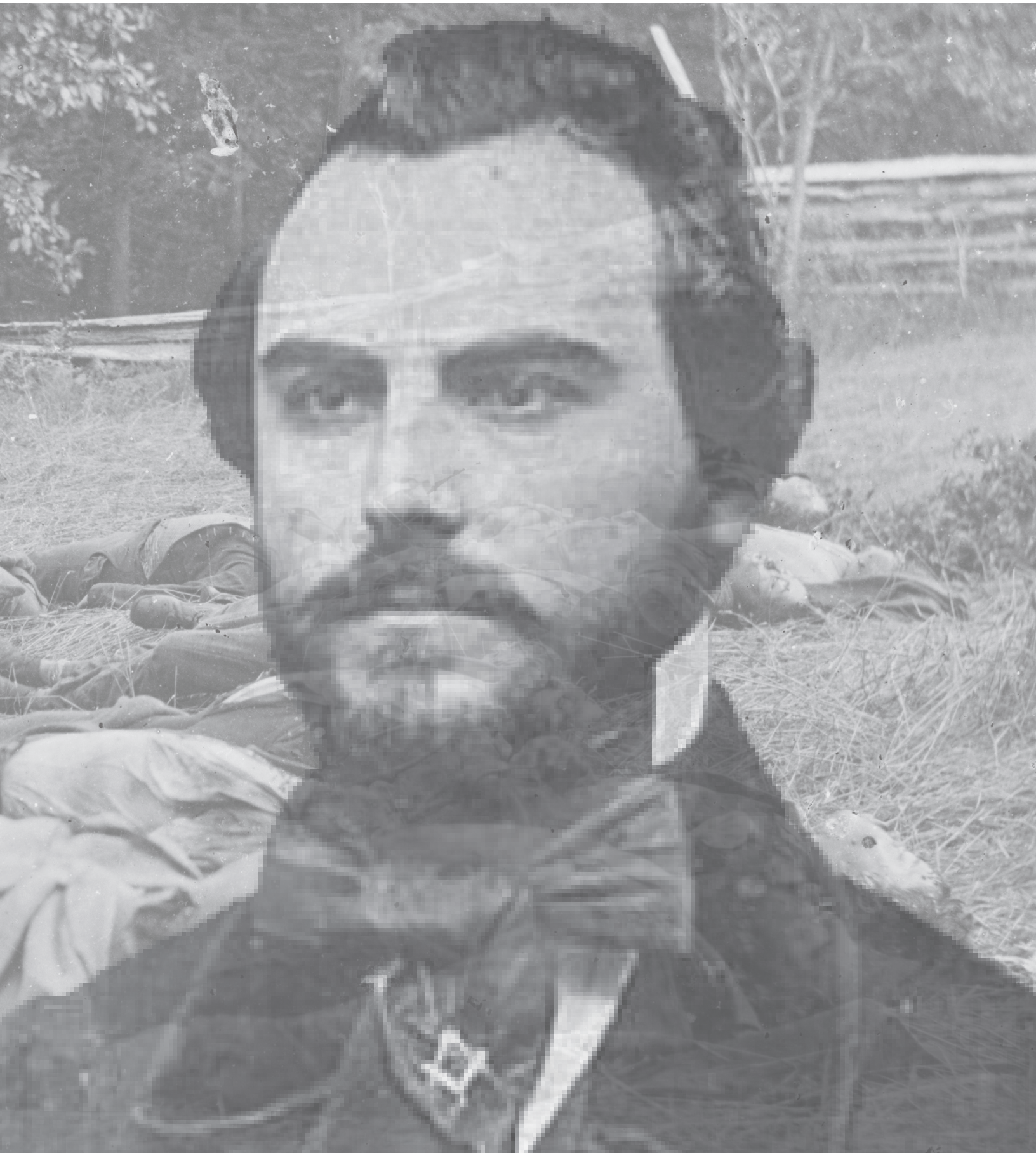
Bob Williams

At first dawn on July 2nd, 1863, cannoneers and drivers of Capt. Thomas J. Kirkpatrick's Amherst (Virginia) Artillery began to stir from their night's encampment along Oak Ridge, northwest of Gettysburg. Having arrived too late the previous evening to participate in that day's brutal engagement, the awakening soldiers found themselves numbed by a grisly panorama being slowly unveiled by the rising sun. As one young Virginian sorrowfully recalled: "This morning on getting up, I saw a sight which was perfectly sickening and heart rending in the extreme. It would have satiated the most blood-thirsty and cruel man on God's earth. There were, within a few feet of us, by actual count, seventy-nine North Carolinians laying dead in a straight line. I stood on their right and looked down their line. It was perfectly dressed. Three had fallen to the front, the rest had fallen backward; yet the feet of all these men were in a perfectly straight line . . . They had evidently been killed by one volley of musketry and they had fallen in their tracks without a single struggle . . . I turned from this sight with a sickened heart and tried to eat my breakfast, but had to return it to my haversack untouched." (1)

This memorable vista of carnage was located in a broad timothy field just south of the Mummasburg Road, on the eastern edge of the John Forney farm. There, on July 1st, the veteran North Carolina brigade of General Alfred Iverson, Jr. fell prey to a nearly perfectly executed Union ambush and received a mauling remarkable by even Civil War standards. In just a few short minutes Iverson's command lost over 900 men and suffered one of the highest percent casualty rates of any Confederate brigade at Gettysburg. Said one witness plainly: "They died as if on dress parade." A Tar Heel survivor afterward lamented: "Unwarned, unled as a brigade, we went to our doom. Deep and long must the orphan children of North Carolina rue the rashness of that hour." (2)

Retribution for that "rash hour" came swiftly. Less than a fortnight after battle's end, Alfred Iverson was reassigned from his brigade in the Army of Northern Virginia and soon relegated to a backwater of the war. He has since been castigated for employing faulty tactical dispositions that led to his command's destruction. Other commentators have bluntly branded Iverson a coward by not advancing with his men. Yet, a closer look at the

"Deep and long must the orphan children of



North Carolina see the rashness of that hour."



Alfred Iverson as he appeared before the war

Iverson initially pursued a military career and attended Tuskegee Military Institute. When only 17 he marched off to the Mexican War as second lieutenant in Seymour's Battalion of Georgia volunteers, raised by Alfred, Sr. Following the "Mexican adventure," young Iverson tried a brief stint in civilian life. Several business ventures failed to satisfy his spirited temperament. In 1855, he used his own military experience and father's clout as a now United States senator to gain a first lieutenant's commission in the newly authorized 1st U.S. Cavalry. Over the next few years, Alfred's service with his regiment proved honorable and his experiences memorable. In between diverse assignments along the frontier Lieutenant Iverson also found time, while stationed at Carlisle Barracks, PA, to marry Harriet Hutchens of Gwinnett Co., GA.

As sectional crisis loomed between North and South, the seasoned young lieutenant resigned his commission in March of 1861 and returned home. With his statesman-father at the forefront of the secession movement, there could be little doubt where Alfred, Jr.'s loyalties lay. When war began, Iverson sought to parlay his impressive military credentials into meaningful rank in Confederate service. Traveling to Montgomery, AL, he leveraged his father's relationship with newly elected Southern President Jefferson Davis to obtain a captaincy in the Confederate States' Provisional Army. Iverson's first assignment was to report to the vital port of Wilmington, NC. There he became post commander of Ft. Caswell, located at the mouth of the Cape Fear River. Drawing on his

record reveals that the brigadier's transgressions that fateful day were more about leadership capacity and fate than any want of personal courage or skill. Gettysburg, in fact, proved to be the bloody culmination of a long and acrimonious relationship between Iverson and his North Carolina soldiery.

Who was General Alfred Iverson? What manner of men did he seek to lead? More importantly, what events presaged that fatal

summer's hour near the Pennsylvania crossroads town?

Born on February 14, 1826 in Jones County Georgia, Alfred Iverson, Jr. was the son of *lawyer-cum-politician* Alfred Iverson, Sr. and Caroline Holt. In the youth's formative years, he acquired some of the elitist ideals and affectations often associated with privileged, Southern upper-crust families. Some say he was spoiled. At his father's insistence, the younger

extensive experience, the ambitious captain immediately began to recruit and train several companies of raw North Carolina volunteers for active service.

When these companies along with others were organized into the 10th North Carolina Volunteers in June 1861, Iverson was elected colonel. For a unit of primarily North Carolina yeoman farmers to elect a pampered, high-bred Georgian as their commander seems unusual in an era where state chauvinism was omnipresent. It implies, initially at least, that Iverson had earned the confidence and respect of his men. Yet, any elation Colonel Iverson might have felt at this personal accomplishment was rudely shattered when his beloved wife Harriet died unexpectedly the following month, leaving him with two young children. (3)

Devastated by his personal loss, Iverson nonetheless applied himself diligently to bringing his men up to form. Comprised of companies with such colorful monikers as the Cabarrus Black Boys, Confederate Grays, and Independent Blues, the raw regiment adjusted well to the new business of soldiering. Re-designated the 20th Regiment N. C. Troops in October 1861, the unit was described as "well drilled in both infantry and artillery tactics, though much depleted by sickness." The 20th remained in the Cape Fear district until mid-June of the following year when they were ordered to Richmond. There they were brigaded with the 5th, 12th, 13th, and 23rd North Carolina Regiments under General Samuel Garland. (4)

In his regiment's baptismal engagement at Gaines' Mill during the Seven days' Battles, Iverson was

painfully wounded while leading a bold attack on a Federal battery. The colonel's behavior was said to be "gallant." The Twentieth itself performed superbly and, despite frightful losses, was first to penetrate the strong Union position. Iverson rejoined his unit in time to participate in the Maryland Campaign. At both South Mountain and Antietam in September, Garland's brigade was roughly handled and its casualties heavy. Garland himself was killed in the former engagement. In the latter, the general's successor Colonel D. K. McRae of the 5th North Carolina proved unsuited to the mantle of command. While there is no remarkable mention in official reports of Colonel Iverson's performance in either battle, he obviously impressed his superiors. Division commander Daniel Harvey Hill recommended that the native Georgian assume the post-Antietam vacancy in brigade leadership. Never one to mince words, Hill noted: "In my opinion, [Iverson is] the best qualified by education, courage, and character of any colonel in the service for the appointment of brigadier general." (5)

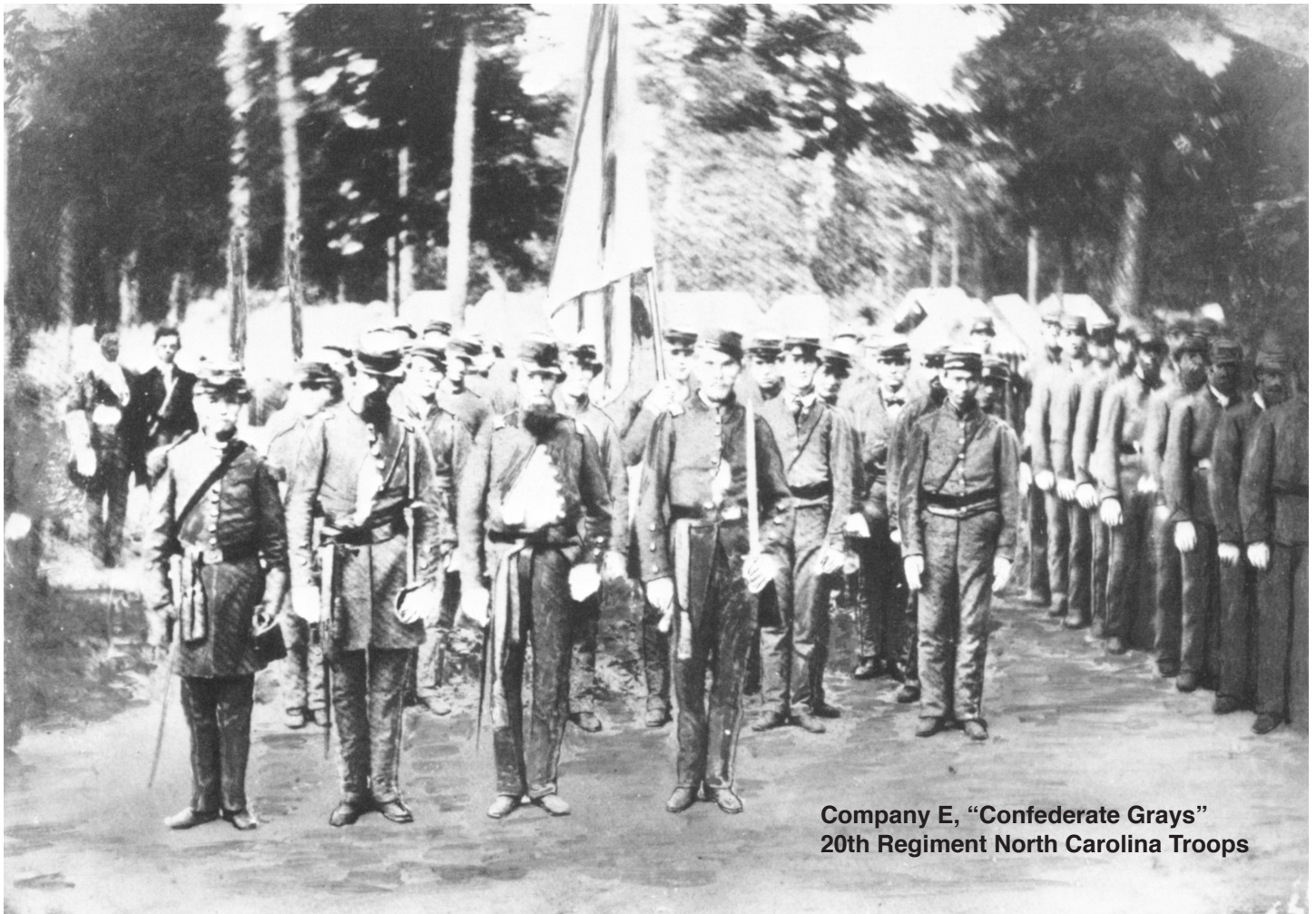
Iverson received his promotion in November of 1862. Yet his ascension to brigade command exposed a glowing ember of discontent between Iverson and his former colleagues that soon burst into open flame. At issue was who would succeed him to command of the 20th North Carolina. Iverson, apparently, was contemptuous of several of the higher-ranking field officers in the regiment and preferred not to promote from within. Instead, he sought to bring in a personal favorite from outside the unit. Indignation among the North

Carolinians was both swift and universal. Twenty-six officers from the 20th promptly drafted a letter of protest to Confederate Adjutant and Inspector General Samuel Cooper. When Iverson bluntly refused to sign and forward the document, the rebellious officers circumvented him and sent their grievance directly to Cooper.

Iverson was furious! His next move makes it evident that the young Georgian did not inherit the political savvy and personal influence skills of his senior-statesman father. Rather than seeking to negotiate or find acceptable compromise, Iverson peremptorily ordered all twenty-six of the offending officers placed under arrest. Outraged, one captain among them wrote an impassioned letter home avowing that defiance of Iverson was "every man's reasonable duty." Others threatened to resign forthwith. At least one did. Disaffection soon spread beyond regimental boundaries to permeate the entire brigade.

In the end, by making judicious use of competent counsel, the arrested officers found vindication. Iverson's attempt to import his candidate of choice was quashed. A review board upheld that the regiment had the right to select its own officers. Former Captain T. F. Toon of the Twentieth was subsequently elevated to colonel. Not to be upbraided, the petulant general sought to gain some revenge by rejecting any promotional recommendations for officers who had opposed him. (6)

Even North Carolina Governor Zebulon Vance later weighed in on the issue by pressing President Jefferson Davis as to why Iverson had been awarded brigade



**Company E, "Confederate Grays"
20th Regiment North Carolina Troops**

command versus another Tar Heel. Vance's implication, of course, was that the appointment was politically motivated, which indeed it may have been. Clearly, Alfred Iverson's first test in brigade management had gone sorely awry. By unyieldingly exerting a might-makes-right doctrine of rank, he destroyed the most essential element of true leadership: Trust. Iverson became, in essence, a commander with only grudging followership. Any dreams of glory the fledgling general had for himself were not shared by his men. (7)

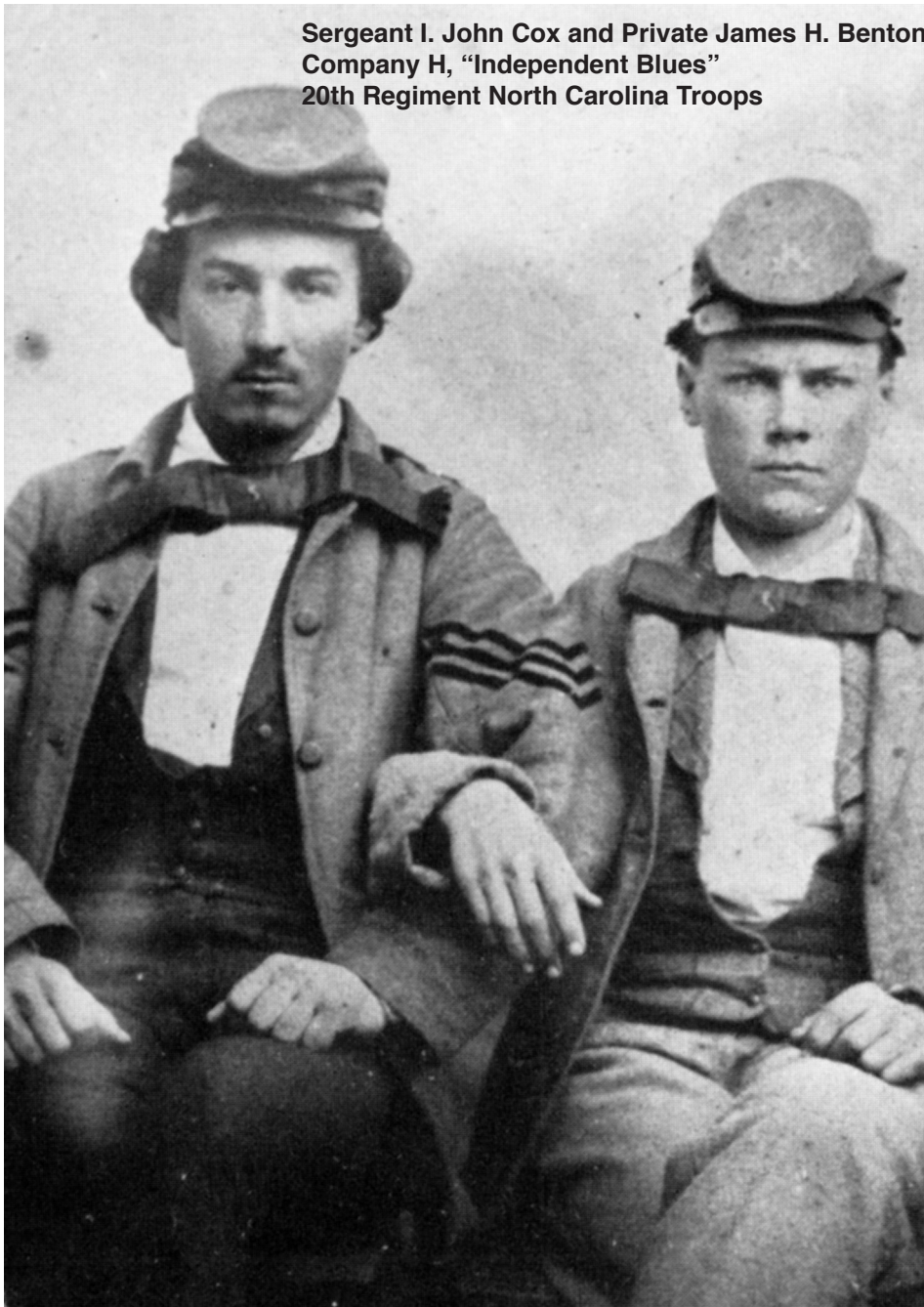
Evidence of this was not long in manifesting itself. In May 1863, as part of Major General Robert E. Rodes' infantry division, Iverson led his brigade through

the intense and confused fighting at Chancellorsville. At one point his regiments got out of hand and became badly separated by dense thickets and overlapping lines of battle. When Iverson dutifully sought reinforcements to help repel one particularly aggressive Federal flank attack, several of his men accused him of sulking in the rear. "Where he was when [General Dorsey] Pender led forward his (Iverson's) brigade has never been explained" one observer later wrote. To make matters worse, Iverson was painfully struck in the groin by a spent ball late in the action, forcing him to retire. Whatever the general's actual behavior during the battle, few of his resentful men were disposed to cut their Georgia-

born leader any slack. Iverson himself, in a classic misstatement, backwardly praised his brigade's "unexceptional conduct" throughout the engagement! (8)

During the Pennsylvania Invasion in late-June, negative rumblings about Iverson continued. Yet, the beleaguered general did find some bittersweet solace when his brigade, along with the rest of Rodes' division, occupied Carlisle Barracks. It was here that Iverson had married while in the pre-war army. The post brought back happy memories of his now-deceased wife and a chance to renew old acquaintances. Much to the delight of occupying Confederates, a search of the surrounding area also uncovered ample stocks of alcohol

**Sergeant I. John Cox and Private James H. Benton
Company H, "Independent Blues"
20th Regiment North Carolina Troops**



and lager beer. After a long campaign with extended marches, the liquid refreshment seems to have been particularly welcome. A soldier in the 23rd NC freely acknowledged “many of our jaded weary boys drank too much U. S. Govt. whiskey and a battle with a Georgia regiment likewise drowning their weariness was narrowly averted.” Division officers seem not to have been above the fray. One swore “the beer was the strongest I ever saw . . . [and]

probably mixed with whiskey.” At a flag-raising ceremony over the old barracks, even Rodes and his staff were described as “somewhat affected by liquor.” This included Iverson who was said by way of excuse to be drowning memories of his lost love. All one Carolinian could say of their three-day sojourn in Carlisle was “mint juleps in tin cans were plentiful.” (9)

When Rodes’ division marched toward Gettysburg on

June 30th its officers and enlisted men were probably not in top form. Just how much overindulgence in alcohol may have had an impact on Confederate command decisions the following day is purely a matter of conjecture. One thing is certain: Clear heads did not generally prevail among divisional leadership during the battle’s early stages.

The details surrounding the slaughter of Iverson’s brigade on July 1st have been told often and will not be recounted here. However, it is ironic that in the aftermath of Gettysburg, division commander Robert Rodes has managed to avoid heavy censure. Indeed, ample evidence exists that Rodes personally assumed field control of both Iverson’s North Carolinians and Eugene O’Neals Alabama brigade and superintended their hasty deployment. His impetuous and piecemeal commitment of these units virtually assured their destruction. The fact that neither Iverson nor O’Neal initially accompanied their brigades in the fumbled assault along Oak Ridge served to compound an already bad situation. (10)

While Iverson’s lack of presence on the front line might reasonably be explained by the fact that he was actively seeking support from sister brigades to cover his exposed flanks, the men in the ranks would have none of it. “Iverson’s part in the heroic struggle of his brigade seems to have begun and ended with the order to move forward and give them hell” declared a surviving officer in the 23rd North Carolina. Another participant was even more blunt: “Iverson’s men were uselessly sacrificed,” wrote Lt. Walter A. Montgomery of the



1st Sergeant Joseph B. Oliver
Company E, "Confederate Grays"
20th Regiment North Carolina Troops

12th N.C. "The enemy's position was not known to the troops. The alignment of the brigade was a false alignment and the men were left to die without help or guidance." Still another observer accused Iverson of hiding in the rear behind a big chestnut log. Unfortunately for the Georgian, he was close enough to the front to make a most grievous and unpardonable error.

Seeing his command surprised and nearly decimated by the first Union volley, Iverson was stunned beyond measure. Through the smoke he perceived what looked

to be white flags or handkerchiefs being waved at various points along the prostrate Confederate battle line. Iverson's addled mind conjured the worst. Were his men deserting him *en masse*? Iverson so concluded and, in effect, proceeded to pitch a tantrum. Without an afterthought the overwrought brigadier dispatched a courier to Rodes wildly postulating "that one of his regiments had raised the white flag and gone over to the enemy." It was an obscene indictment of men who were dying by the scores under withering musketry. Such

behavior further demonstrated that Iverson had completely lost the ability to exercise sound control on the battlefield. Even corps commander Richard S. Ewell afterward pointedly acknowledged that "the unfortunate mistake of General Iverson at this critical juncture . . . might have produced the most disastrous consequences." As it was, vicious rumors quickly circulated throughout the army that a North Carolina unit had deserted wholesale, causing no little wounding of state pride.

Even as Iverson's rant continued, the bloody remnants of his luckless regiments were left to reform under the firm hand of staff Captain Don P. Halsey. Rodes characterized Iverson's near-hysterical behavior as "misconduct." Others were less charitable, citing drunkenness and "the well known cowardly behavior of Iverson." Heavy alcohol use while at Carlisle and subsequent dehydration from the summer heat may, in fact, go a long way in explaining Iverson's brittle condition. Whatever the case, embittered survivors of his shattered command pondered their unfortunate circumstances. "With much feeling," the mortally wounded Colonel D. H. Christie of the 23rd North Carolina assured the remaining members of his regiment "that while he might never live to lead them into battle [again] he would see that 'The Imbecile Iverson' never should." (11)

Iverson seems to have regained some composure later in the afternoon but his efforts to be useful were more pathetic than effective. While some sources indicate that Iverson was immediately relieved of duties by Rodes, the preponderance

of evidence indicates the ill-starred brigadier retained command at least until the army's return to Virginia. He later earnestly attempted to exonerate his men from his own calumny, claiming that his North Carolinians had indeed "fought nobly and died without a man running to the rear." It was too little too late: The Tar Heels (such as were left) flatly refused to serve under Iverson any longer. Rodes was probably only too willing to exercise a permanent change in brigade leadership, thus neatly deflecting attention away from untidy battlefield errors higher up. (12)

Following Gettysburg, Iverson was viewed as damaged goods within the Army of Northern Virginia. Once again political connections providently intervened on his behalf, to the chagrin of many. One staff officer pointedly recalled that while the general "was relieved at once and sent back [to Richmond] to await trial," he eventually "got off scott free & had a brigade of reserves given him in Georgia." Indeed, Iverson was discreetly reshuffled to the Georgia State Guard and later commanded a mounted brigade in the Army of Tennessee. He afterward gained some redemption by capturing Union General George Stoneman and his raiders in 1864. Nonetheless, Iverson's fitness for high command, overall maturity, and personal courage still remained under a cloud of doubt. After the war, Iverson initially settled in Macon, Ga., before eventually relocating to Florida. There he engaged for some years in the orange agriculture business. He died in Atlanta in 1911. At no time during Iverson's post-war career did he attempt to

seek absolution for his actions at Gettysburg. (13.)

Of Iverson's performance in the pivotal battle, history has reached a general, if not altogether unbiased, consensus. His peevish temperament and emotional breakdown on the field render Iverson a rather convenient scapegoat for the destruction of his fine North Carolina brigade. Yet, there were mistakes at many levels on the Confederate side that July afternoon along Oak Ridge. As circumstances would have it, they were countered by some brilliant and opportunistic tactical moves on the part of the defending Federals. The best that might be said of the whole unfortunate affair is that Brigadier-General Alfred Iverson, Jr. was the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time.

NOTES

- (1.) Berkeley, Henry Robinson, *Four Years in the Confederate Artillery*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1961, p. 50.
- (2.) Patterson, Gerard A., "The Death of Iverson's Brigade," *The Gettysburg Magazine*, No. 5, (July 1991), pp. 13-18; Krick, Robert K., "Three Confederate Disasters on Oak Ridge," in Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *The First Day at Gettysburg: Essays on Confederate and Union Leadership*, Kent, Ohio, Kent State University Press, 1992, pp. 129-137; Casualty statistics from Greg Mast, Gettysburg Discussion Group, at: <http://www.gdg.org/Research/OOB/Confederate/July1-3/iverbgd.html>
- (3.) Evans, Clement A., *Confederate Military History Extended Edition (Georgia)*, Wilmington, NC, Broadfoot Publishing, 1987, pp. 424-426; Evans, David, *Sherman's Horsemen: Union Cavalry Operations in the Atlanta Campaign*, Indianapolis, IN, Indiana University

Press, 1996, pp. 321-323.

(4.) Clark, Walter, Comp. *Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-'65*, (Reprint) Wendell, N. C., Broadfoot's Bookmark, 1982, Vol. 2., pp. 110-114.

(5.) *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Washington: GPO, 1884, Vol. 11, Pt. 2, p. 554; Vol. 19, Pt. 1, pp. 1040-1045; Vol. 51, Pt. 2, p. 844; Comments of Greg Mast, Gettysburg Discussion Group at: <http://www.gdg.org/Research/OOB/Confederate/July1-3/aiverson.html>

(6.) Krick, "Three Confederate Disasters," pp. 129-131.

(7.) O.R., Vol. 51, Pt. 2, p. 844; Patterson, "Iverson's Brigade," p. 14.

(8.) Clark, "*North Carolina Regiments*," Vol. 2., pp.239-240; "Civil War General of the Day: Alfred Iverson," at: <http://www.rocemabra.com/~roger/tagg/generals/general56.html>

(9.) Patterson, "Iverson's Brigade," pp. 13,14. See also comments on Gettysburg Discussion Group at: <http://www.gdg.org/Research/Authorred%20Items/dtoakrd.html>

(10.) Griffen, D. Massy, "Rodes on Oak Hill: A Study of Rodes' Division on the First day of Gettysburg," *The Gettysburg Magazine*, No. 4, (Jan. 1991), pp. 33-48; See also Cooksey, Paul C., "They Died as if on Dress Parade: The Annihilation of Iverson's Brigade at Gettysburg and the Battle of Oak Ridge," *The Gettysburg Magazine*, No. 20, pp. 89-112.

(11.) Patterson, "Iverson's Brigade," pp. 13-17; Krick, "Three Confederate Disasters," pp. 131-137; Tucker, Glenn, *High Tide at Gettysburg*, Dayton, Ohio, Morningside Bookshop, 1973, pp. 129-132.

(12.) For Iverson's report see O.R., Vol. 27, Pt. 2, pp. 578-581

(13.) Krick, "Three Confederate Disasters," p. 136; Evans, *Sherman's Horsemen*, pp. 341, 355-356; Evans, *CMH Georgia*, p. 427.

Col Isaac Erwin Avery



*"...I Died With My
Face to the Enemy"*

COLONEL ISAAC E. AVERY AT GETTYSBURG

Randal Garrison

Listed in an unnoticeable public graveyard in Williamsport, Maryland was the grave of Colonel J. E. Ayer, 6th N.C.S.T., July 3, 1863. Alongside the Colonel are three other Tar Heel soldiers from the 6th NC keeping "Colonel Ayer" company. All four of these fallen heroes and many others now rest in Washington Confederate Cemetery, part of Hagerstown's Rose Hill Cemetery. Modern research and some deduction lead us to believe that the long uncertain resting place of Colonel Isaac Erwin Avery is indeed the mislabeled grave of Colonel J. E. Ayer. The "J" can easily be seen as an "I" and the "Ayer" could certainly be a misspelling of Avery. Other facts lead us also to the conclusion that Avery of the Bloody Sixth indeed rests at Rose Hill.

The inconspicuous nature of Colonel Avery's final resting place is not indicative of his beginnings, noble deeds nor of the bravery exhibited in his death.

Isaac Erwin Avery was born December 20th, 1828, the fourth son of Isaac Thomas Avery and Harriet Erwin Avery. There were 16 children altogether, unfortunately only 10 would live into adulthood. "Swan Ponds" is the family home and Avery descendants still reside there [Bellevue Plantation, the site of the reactivated 26th NCT's Stoneman's Raid Reenactment, is the Erwin Plantation... "Swan Ponds" is just over the ridgeline from "Bellevue"].

Isaac attended Chapel Hill for one year in 1847, but left to manage a plantation for his father in Yancey County. In the mid- 1850's he formed a partnership with Charles Fisher (1st colonel of the 6th NCST) and Samuel McDowell Tate to act as contractors for the Western North Carolina Railroad.

When war came, Isaac returned to Burke County and he and his brother Alphonso recruited Company E of the 6th NCST. Isaac was elected Captain and Alphonso, Lieutenant. Isaac was a large man, over 6 feet tall and weighing over 200 pounds. He was of mild temperament but could display a strong personality when need arose. He enjoyed humor and was a fine example of how a man might be respected but need not be "cruel, tough, or mean". He fought at First Manassas, and Seven Pines and was wounded at Gaines Mill. He was out of action until the Fall of '62, but during that period he was promoted to Colonel. After the battle of Fredricksburg, the 6th NCST was brigaded under the command of Robert F. Hoke. Hoke's Brigade consisted of the the 6th, 21st, 54th, and 57th NC regiments. Hoke would be wounded at Chancellorsville in May of 1863, and Avery found himself the temporary commander of the brigade as it moved north with the rest of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in early June as the fateful Gettysburg campaign commenced.



Pvt. A. Cady
134th New York Infantry, who would face Avery's
brigade on July 1, 1863 on Cemetery Hill

June 4th saw the brigade leave its encampment near Hamilton's Crossing on the far right of the Confederate lines at Fredricksburg. They had been camped near the area where Major Pelham and his section of artillery took on Franklin's Grand Division virtually single-handedly and where Lee referred to Pelham as "Gallant". By June 13th the Confederate advance had reached Winchester.

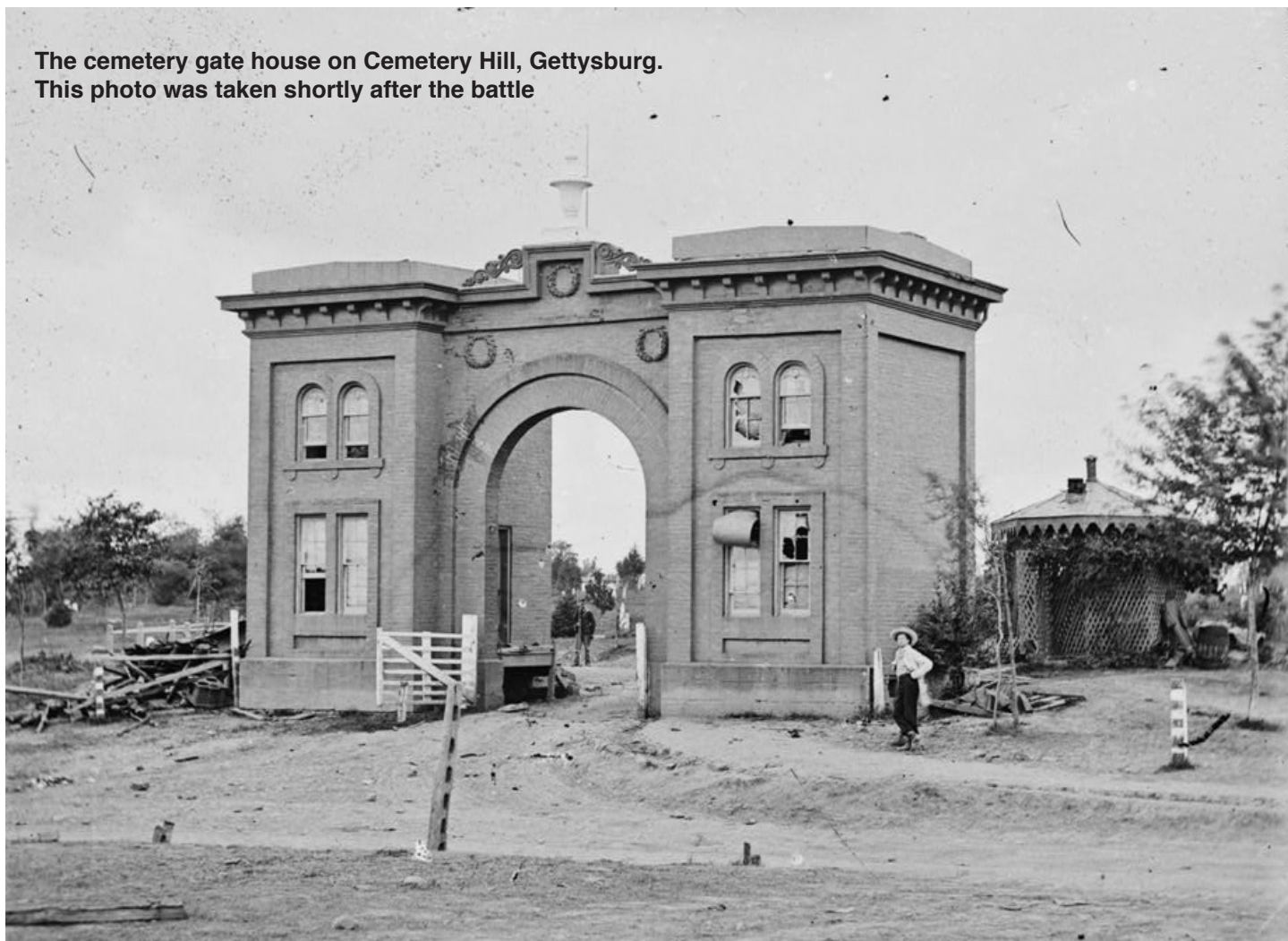
Avery's Brigade advanced to the southern outskirts of Winchester late on the 13th but then was moved via flank march on the 14th to the west of the town where on the 15th of June it supported Jones artillery battalion and Hays Brigade as the whole of Ewell's Corp assaulted entrenched Federal positions. Avery's brigade suffered several casualties due to federal artillery fire...reportedly from "the fort to

our front" which was likely Fort Anderson. By nightfall the Federals were in full retreat and the town once again changed hands and was once more the scene of Confederate occupation. From Avery's Brigade the 54th NCT was detached to escort Union prisoners back to Staunton thus reducing its fighting capacity by about a quarter.

As the next days unfolded, Early's division, including Avery's Brigade, forded the Potomac at Shepardstown on the 22nd of June and entered Pennsylvania on the 23rd. Ewell's Corp continued the advance north and east of Gettysburg and Avery's brigade arrived in York as part of that occupying force by June 28th. Owing to the rapid Federal advance, and Lee's order "to move directly on to Gettysburg or turn down to Cashtown as circumstances might dictate", Ewell ordered Early and Rodes to move toward Cashtown early on July 1. Moving mostly due west on the Heidlersburg Road, Early's Division began arriving on the outskirts of Gettysburg by late morning.

By 2pm, after abortive, disorganized, and badly led assaults by Rode's Division, Ewell was ready to send forward a coordinated attack using both Rodes and Early. Ewell's second division, under Jubal Early, moved from the Heidlersburg road and began an advance down the Harrisburg road. They then deployed in a battle line three brigades wide, almost a mile across (1,600 m) and almost half a mile (800 m) wider than the Union defensive line. Early began his portion of the assault with a large-scale artillery bombardment. John B. Gordon's Georgia Brigade was then directed into a frontal attack against Barlow's Knoll,

The cemetery gate house on Cemetery Hill, Gettysburg.
This photo was taken shortly after the battle



pinning down the defenders, while the brigades of Hays and Avery swung around the exposed Federal right flank. At the same time Georgians under Doles launched a synchronized assault with Gordon. The defenders of Barlow's Knoll targeted by Gordon were 900 men of von Gilsa's brigade. In May, two of his regiments had been the initial target of Jackson's Flank Assault at Chancellorsville. The men of the 54th and 68th New York held out as long as they could, but they were overwhelmed. Then the 153rd Pennsylvania succumbed. Barlow, attempting to rally his troops, was badly wounded and captured. Barlow's second brigade, under

Ames, came under attack by Doles and Gordon. Both Union brigades conducted a disorderly retreat to the south.

Avery's portion of this assault on "Barlow's Knoll" began with skirmishers being deployed and an attack order being given at 3 p.m. The brigade crossed Rock Creek "a sluggish stream or slough" about 200 yards in front of the Federal line. Colonel Avery gave the order to double quick and the brigade quickly left the swampy low area and advanced up the hill and took a portion of a stone fence defended by Federal troops. Two 12 lb napoleons were also captured by the 6th NCST. Likely these guns belonged to the

4th US Battery B led by the mortally wounded Bayard Wilkerson. The Federal 11th Corp was by now in full flight towards the town streets.

On the left flank of the XI Corps, the attack focused on Gen. Schimmelfennig's division. They were subjected to a deadly artillery crossfire from Rodes's and Early's batteries, and as they deployed they were attacked by Doles's infantry. Early's troops were able to employ a flanking attack and roll up the division from the right, and they fell back in confusion toward the town. A desperate counterattack by the 157th New York from von Amberg's brigade was surrounded on three sides, causing it to suffer



Map of Avery's Assault

307 casualties (75%).

Gen. Howard, witnessing the disaster, sent forward an artillery battery and an infantry brigade from von Steinwehr's reserve force, under Col. Charles Coster. Coster's men had initially been digging in on Cemetery Hill but were rushed forward to the east of the town to slow the Confederate advance.

Having received orders to support the right flank of Barlow's 1st Division engaged in the fields north of the County Poor Farm, Coster's three regiments- the 27th Pennsylvania, 154th New York, and 134th New York- raced through Gettysburg from Cemetery Hill and stumbled into the brickyard where they loaded their rifles and waited for the inevitable attack posted behind rail fencing and the kilns of the brickyard.

From this point, Colonel

Coster saw that Barlow's men were already heavily engaged and his line crumbling under the weight of the Confederate assault. The anxiety running through the ranks of the men must have been terrible to witness. Ahead of them was the spectacle of the 1st Division of their corps being pounced upon and breaking into a rout by what appeared to be thousands of Confederate troops. It was not long before the tops of Confederate battle flags rose from the ground in front of Coster's soldiers. Surrounding each flag were determined southerners who moved up the gentle slope of the knoll toward the brickyard, finally raising their "rebel yell" when they spied the Union troops. Charles McKay, a soldier of the 154th New York remembered, "I shall ever always remember how the Confederate line of battle looked as it came into full

view and started down toward us. It seemed... they had a battle flag every few rods... their formation in solid column. However our fire did good execution when we opened, and their line was stopped in front."

Positioned on the left of Coster's men, Captain Lewis Heckman's Battery K, 1st Ohio Light Artillery was just then pulling into position. "The enemy was already in range," Heckman reported as his Buckeye artillerymen went to work. "I unlimbered and commenced firing as soon as possible, as the enemy were close to me and advancing. My battery was engaged thirty minutes... (and) expended 113 rounds of ammunition, mostly canister."

Despite the artillery fire on these Southern formations, the fields around Coster's Brigade quickly filled with yelling, shooting Confederates. These were men of Hoke's Brigade, commanded at Gettysburg by the dashing Colonel Isaac Avery. "Colonel Avery now gave the order to double quick," reported Colonel Godwin of the 57th North Carolina, whose regiment was one of three to strike Coster. "The brigade gallantly dashed... up the hill to the fence, the enemy stubbornly holding their position until we had climbed over into their midst." First to be thrown back was Coster's right regiment and then the left gave way, leaving only the 154th New York Infantry stubbornly holding onto their section of fence. Racing forward, the 21st and 57th North Carolina regiments charged and leapt over the fence. Nearly surrounded, the New Yorkers began to slowly fall back before turning to run with other fleeing soldiers toward Gettysburg.

View of the Culp Farm



Heckman's Ohio Battery was now in a bad fix, exposed to a flank attack by Avery's victorious Carolinians. Seeing that his battery was about to be overrun, Heckman ordered the gunners to limber up and retreat, though it came too late for two guns and their crews who fell into the hands of the 6th North Carolina Infantry. Drivers of the four remaining cannon frantically lashed the horses and drove the caissons and limbers into the growing throng of Eleventh Corps troops crowding Carlisle Street, blood from some of the wounded horses spattering the men as they passed. The horrible sight and warm blood panicked several men who dashed ahead screaming of imagined disaster, spreading confusion and panic to others. Orderly columns deteriorated into a mob as the Eleventh Corps stormed into the streets of Gettysburg. As one survivor put it, "The few that did get away were the best runners."

Hays' and Avery's successful flanking assault had overwhelmed

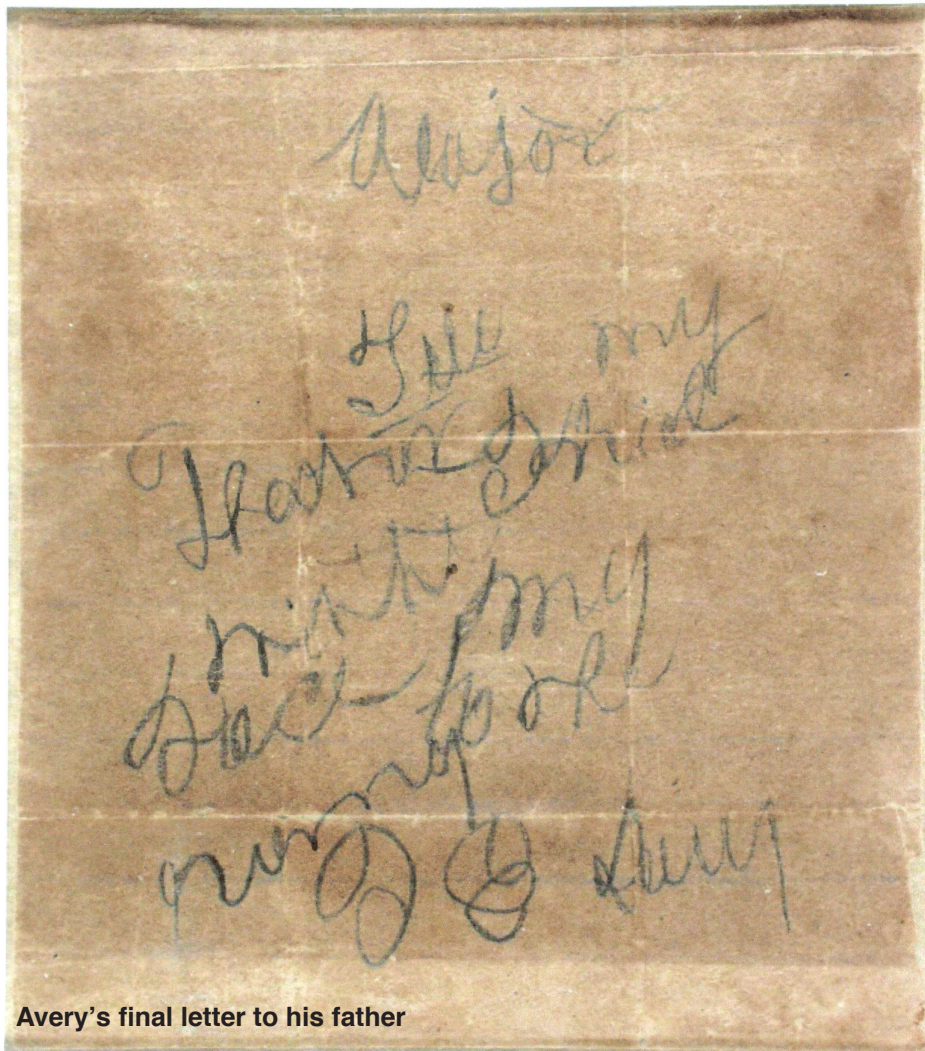
Coster. He did provide some valuable cover for the retreating Federal soldiers, but at a high price: of Coster's 800 men, 313 were captured, as were two of the four guns from the battery in support.

The collapse of the XI Corps was completed by 4:00 p.m., after a fight of less than an hour. They suffered 3,200 casualties (1,400 of them prisoners), about half the number sent forward by Howard from Cemetery Hill. The losses in Gordon's and Doles's brigades were under 750 total. Hays and Avery suffered even less, with Avery's brigade coming out virtually unscathed.

Hays' and Avery's brigades were then moved by the left flank until they were occupying a depression or ravine on the Henry Culp farm just to the east of the town limits of Gettysburg facing roughly due east. Skirmishers were thrown forward and the brigades settled down for the night. Avery and several of his officers were

camped under a large apple tree and during the evening and the balance of July 2nd remained there resting. Isaac was noted to have said that if he had to die in battle that he had the desire to die in a major conflict and not be killed by a stray shot while dozing under an apple tree. His brigade did not have perfect cover and a number of casualties were incurred by Federal artillery and skirmish line fire. This skirmish line was composed of Ames' Federal Brigade running in an arc in front of Cemetery Hill and finally connecting with Wadsworth's men in front of Culp's Hill on the right.

Lee's plan for the second day's assault called for Ewell to demonstrate along his front in support of Longstreet's assault on the southern end of the Federal line. This demonstration was to begin at 4 p.m. with an artillery bombardment and the attack of Johnson's Division toward Culp's Hill from the east. As soon as Early and Rodes heard Johnson's men strike the main Federal line, they were to send in their divisions against Cemetery Hill from the north and west. This series of "demonstrations" were to be converted to all-out assaults if the divisional commanders perceived Federal weakness or the possibility of success. From the very beginning, Ewell's intentions became unraveled. The artillery bombardment went off nearly on schedule but was smothered in bloody fashion by superior Federal fire from commanding positions on Cemetery Hill and Stevens Knoll. There was then considerable delay in sending in the Confederate infantry as Ewell was unable to hear anything of the battle to the south. Rather than sending in the



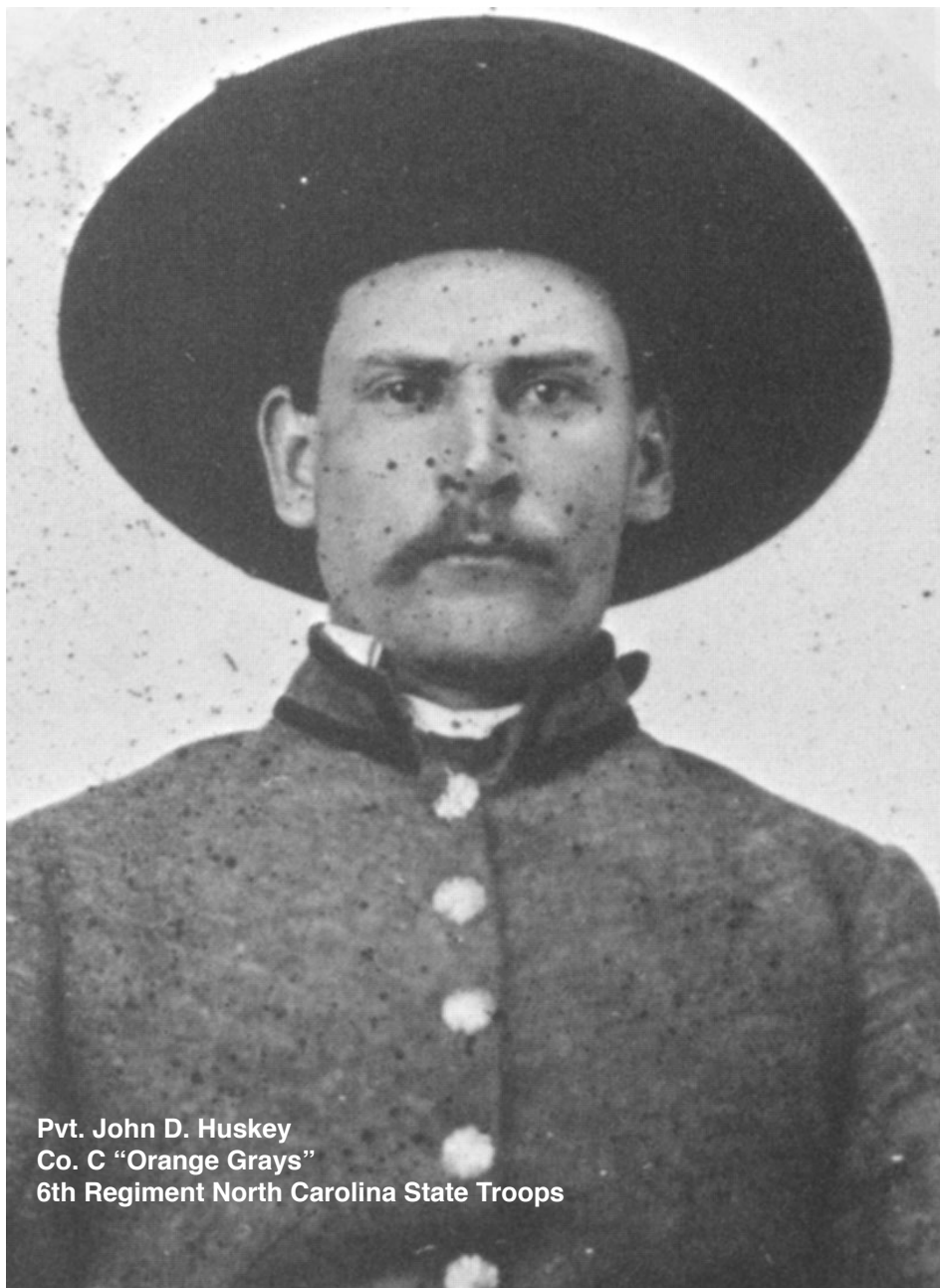
Avery's final letter to his father

infantry at 4 p.m., the assaults were delayed and essentially delivered piecemeal; negating any supporting effect each might have had on the other. Johnson was finally ordered forward in his assault on Culp's Hill at approximately 6 p.m. and even though his three brigades found limited success, darkness and the return of the balance of the 12th Corp sealed a possible breakthrough. The missing Stonewall Brigade (out doing Cavalry duty on the Confederate left flank) would have assured even greater success as their part of the assault would have struck no Federal resistance until the Baltimore Pike, the Union's

staging area for wagon trains and reserve artillery and ammunition supplies. At approximately 8 p.m., Early's Brigades of Hays and Avery moved to the attack. Early's other brigades of Smith and Gordon were also involved in doing cavalry duties...Smith being posted out the York Pike and Gordon being placed midway between the Cemetery Hill assault and Smith to march in support of either force should need arise. Obviously Early and Johnson both were forced by the absence of cavalry to attack in much reduced numbers. This would prove decisive as darkness fell rapidly over the hills of northern Gettysburg.

Dusk covered the land as Hays and Avery moved their battle lines forward. The charge started from a stream bed on the Culp farm and found both brigades moving east presenting the smallest possible target to Federal artillery. The brigades would move over a half mile perpendicular to the federals occupying Cemetery Hill and were subjected to a galling fire every step of the way. In addition to federal artillery fire, there were numerous rock and high rail fences to cross, probably no fewer than eight, and each would prove a costly delay for the attacking lines. The Federal at first thought that the Confederates were headed for Steven's Knoll and Culp's Hill but were soon dissuaded in this belief as the entire Confederate line began a ponderous right wheel.

Avery had advanced his men on Hays's left and probably was astride what is today East Confederate Avenue, the left wing moving through one of Farmer Culp's orchards. When the Carolinians had moved forward about 200 yards, they emerged into two large open fields known as Culp's Meadows. Hays men, being closer to Cemetery Hill and their portion of the objective, would have already commenced to wheel towards the Federal lines. Avery stopped his Tar Heels and dressed the lines in full view of the Federal infantry and artillery on Cemetery Hill. It was here that Avery discovered that to strike his assigned targets, the rightmost artillery batteries on Cemetery Hill; he would have to move considerably to the right of where they were now standing. Federal gunners opened fire by batteries as both Hays and Avery strove to move into position. But of all the federal batteries on



Pvt. John D. Huskey
Co. C "Orange Grays"
6th Regiment North Carolina State Troops

Cemetery hill, only four were in a position to be effective. Weidrich would have Hays' men as his target: Ricketts and Reynolds would have been firing at Avery and Stevens' battery on later-named "Steven's Knoll" would have fired into the flank of Hays and then into Avery's men as the Tar Heels moved to the assault. Even though the geography of the land prevented the Federal guns arrayed in lines on Cemetery

Hill from hitting the Confederate advance, the available pieces should have been sufficient to badly damage, if not halt entirely, the Confederate effort. A combination of firing high, darkness, and lingering smoke most likely saved numerous Southern casualties. Stevens Battery seems to have been the most effective since they were emplaced somewhat lower in elevation and occupied a position on the flank of the Confederate

assault allowing enfilade fire.

As Hays' men moved to assault the Union line at the base of Cemetery Hill, Avery moved his brigade approximately 200 yards by the right and then began his own right wheel. Steven's napoleons would have been hitting the 57th North Carolina extremely hard at this point but the balance of the brigade was in position now to strike straight for the crest of Cemetery Hill. This would have broken the assault into two separate lines and that is how most Federals remembered it. Avery's right wheel was not just a simple right wheel. It was "change front forward" a maneuver that only the most accomplished and finely drilled units could perform while under fire. The first Federals infantry to engage Avery's men would have been the skirmishers of the 41st New York and the 33rd Massachusetts likely driven back by Avery's own skirmishers. As the Confederates approached within about 200 yards of the base of the hill they moved into "dead ground" where the batteries on the hill to their front could not depress their muzzles enough to hit the Southerners. Only Steven's battery could continue to fire and hit targets. The 153rd Pennsylvania was then hit by the rightmost regiment of Avery, the 6th North Carolina. The 21st NC would engage the 65th NY and the 54th NY while the 57th NC found itself being assaulted on two sides by the reformed skirmishers of the 33rd Massachusetts and 41st NY as well as receiving almost point blank canister rounds from Steven's napoleons. All of this action occurred at the base of Cemetery Hill.

Sometime shortly after seeing his brigade perform a successful change of front and move

forward to the assault, Colonel Isaac E. Avery received what would prove to be a mortal wound. Whether it was canister or musket ball no one knows. We do know he was hit at the base of the neck on the right side. The Tar Heels were without a commander, but by the very nature of the assault, command was now in the hands of individual officers as Avery's Brigade began its attack on the base of the hill in the near-darkness.

A portion of the 57th NC, the left wing, was decimated by fire from Steven's napoleons and by the massed fire of the 33 Massachusetts and went to ground in and around a low piece of ground known as Mencey's Spring. The right of the 57th continued to advance and crossed a wall at the base of Cemetery Hill that had been held by the 41st NY. This attack went in just to the right of the 33rd Massachusetts and the Mencey Spring area. It was a bit lower than the surrounding ground and gave the attackers some advantage. The next regiments in line to the north of the 41st NY, two weak New York regiments, the 68th and 54th, were then struck by the 21st NC and 6th NC. The Tarheels attacked with ferocious violence with fixed bayonets as they came screaming out of the smoky darkness. The 68th and 54th New York had experienced similar attacks in the two previous battles. At Chancellorsville they had been hit by Jackson's Flank Assault and at Gettysburg they had tried to defend Barlow's Knoll having been among the flank regiments of Howard's Corp at both battles. Consequently they were shaky... with good reason. The Carolinians shot down three color bearers of the 54th in as many minutes and

soon the 54th and 68th NY regiments were streaming up the hill. They were probably the first units to break and were soon followed by the 41st NY. The 153rd PA was hit next by at least two assault waves, probably one from the 6th NC and one from the 21st NC. The 153rd PA fought gamely but was forced slowly back up the hill by mounting Confederate pressure as if opening a door. The 17th Connecticut and 75th Ohio held their positions but they were like an island of resistance as Hay's men fought up the hill further north. Avery's men then began to assault the artillery batteries on the hilltop. Components of the 57th NC, 6th NC, and 21st NC along with a handful of men from the 9th LA overran Rickett's and Weidrich's batteries on the crest of Cemetery Hill. Certainly Reynold's battery as well was attacked, but no evidence exists that it was taken. Rickett's position was assaulted by men from all three Carolina regiments and the right section was held for perhaps as long as 20 minutes while the melee in the darkness swirled around those men fighting blindly around the guns. Weidrich's battery was separated from Rickett's by a stone wall and was taken by a mixed force of Tarheels and Louisianans. It too was held for a brief time but owing to the confusion of the darkness only small handfuls of Confederates could be assembled for a cohesive defense of the ground gained. Units of 20-50 men were fighting all over Cemetery Hill. Major Samuel McDowell Tate, having assumed command of Avery's Brigade found himself with a handful of men from the 6th NC fighting in the maelstrom around Rickett's battery. He sent to the right and left for any

help that might be available but none came. Then out of the dark smoke-filled mist to his front he saw an approaching line of infantry. Unfortunately, this proved to be Federal reinforcements, Carroll's Brigade, who proceeded to charge through Rickett's Battery, through Reynold's battery finally halting at the base of the hill behind the stone wall that marked the positions held by the 41st NY at the beginning of the assault. Hay's men to the north would be driven back by reinforcing units from the 11th Corp bringing to a bloody conclusion Early's assault on Cemetery Hill. Hays reassembled what was left of his command as he had been told that Gordon's Brigade was coming up to help but upon personally reconnoitering he discovered Gordon's men occupying the position that Hay's men had stepped off from earlier. No help would be forthcoming and Hays bitterly ordered the retreat. Major Tate too was a bitter man and would place the blame squarely on Early's shoulders which suited the emotion of the time but not the actual facts. One more brigade on Cemetery Hill would hardly have changed the outcome. What was really needed was a major assault from Robert Rodes's division and this supporting attack did not occur. Daniels and Ramseur were indeed in position to make such an assault but they were advanced after Hays and Avery went in, and their advance was halted with good reason in Long Lane, a slightly sunken road parallel to the Federal positions on Cemetery Ridge. Had Rodes assaulted in strength, the massed batteries of the 1st and 11th Corp would likely have massacred his men. No fewer than 9 batteries faced

Rodes men along with infantry dug in behind low stone walls. Lack of true coordination on the left flank of the Confederate army, coupled with brigades that could have added their strength to the attacks being detailed to do cavalry work, conspired to undo Confederate efforts on Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill.

Hays' and Avery's Brigades each lost in excess of 300 men each in the night assault, but what of Colonel Avery? Many stories, most of them mythology, whirl around what happened to Colonel Avery after his wounding. Likely he went down to the rear of where the 6th NC went in to the assault...today this would be near a running track at an elementary school. Major Tate likely would have been apprised of his Colonel's wound but would have no time for pity or compassion as the assault was surging towards the crest of the hill. One tale has Colonel Avery using a stick and his own blood to write a farewell note to his father and then presenting it to Major Tate, a hometown friend of the family, for delivery. This is just so much fanciful, romantic bunk. Likely Colonel Avery was evacuated to the nearby Culp barn, very close to where the assault had started. There he wrote ... either late in the evening of the 2nd or early on the Morning of the 3rd of July...with his left hand, his right side and neck being wounded, a penciled note to his father which was indeed handed to Major Tate for delivery. This famous letter of course states...

*Major,
Tell my Father I died With
my face to the enemy
I.E. Avery*

This little message, now in the possession of the North Carolina Museum of History, has been gazed upon by thousands and was the inspiration for dozens of stories and sermons. One of the most famous occurred when Theodore Roosevelt, then president of the United States, was present for the unveiling of a statue of Sir Walter Raleigh accompanied by Lord James Bryce, Minister to the United States from Britain. As the President read aloud this message, his hands began to tremble, his eyes filled with tears, and he became speechless with emotion. As if the little piece of paper was a holy thing, he passed it to the British Minister. The English Minister read the paper again silently, and then passing it back said, "President Roosevelt, we have nothing to compare with this in the British Museum". A great hush had fallen over the audience as everyone present paid tribute to courage that rises far above sectionalism and sums up all of life's battles in a few simple words...TELL MY FATEHR THAT I DIED WITH MY FACE TO THE ENEMY...May we all be able to say this as our time to leave this earth comes upon us.

Avery was then likely, according to family lore, transported by his faithful servant Elijah, who had been with him throughout the war, to Williamsport where in trying to cross the Potomac River he was accosted by Federal Cavalry Troopers who wanted to know what he was carrying. They unceremoniously dumped the body of the Colonel into the waters of the Potomac and Elijah had a great struggle to reclaim the body of his master. Then rather than face a hazardous journey home with a water soaked corpse he

buried the body at some location in Williamsport. Did Federal cavalry interrupt the Colonel's trip home... unlikely... but Colonel Avery did indeed end up in Williamsport and perhaps he was transported there by the faithful Elijah, but Colonel Avery was just one among hundreds to find interment there.

After the war, Maryland Governor Oden Bowie appropriated \$5,000.00 to find and rebury the thousands of Confederate soldiers buried in shallow graves near Sharpsburg, Williamsport, and other areas in Washington County, Maryland. The Governor bought three acres in Hagerstown's Rose Hill Cemetery for what would become known as the Washington Confederate Cemetery, conscious that many northerners objected to burying fallen Confederate soldiers at the National Cemetery at Sharpsburg. There are 2,468 fallen Confederates in Washington Cemetery; 346 are identified, and among the identified list is the notation..."Buried in the public graveyard at Williamsport...Col. J. E. Ayer, 6th N.C.S.T., died July 3, 1863."

On Sunday November 4th, 2007 a ceremony was held in the Washington Cemetery to bless the grave and place a wreath in honor of one of North Carolina's fallen heroes. The final act was the sprinkling of earth from the Avery family home in Morganton so that he may eternally lie under North Carolina soil.

THE REGIMENT MADE A FINE APPEARANCE

THE UNIFORMS OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH NORTH CAROLINA TROOPS AT GETTYSBURG

Jason Goodnite

In late June 1863, as the Twenty-Sixth Regiment North Carolina Troops moved out of their bivouac near Fredericksburg, Virginia one member remembered their appearance. “What a fine appearance the Regiment made that beautiful June morning. The men beaming in their splendid uniforms; the colors flying and the drums beating; everything seemed propitious of success.” (Underwood Pg. 39).

More than one account of the Twenty-Sixth NCT described their appearance on the way to Gettysburg as one of martial splendor. However, this was not always the case. The 26th NCT left eastern NC for Richmond on May 1, 1863 and arrived in the city on May 3, 1863. They then continued on to Hanover Junction, VA to guard the bridges over the North Anna River. During these early days of May Pettigrew’s Brigade was officially made a part of the Army of Northern Virginia. As evidence, I have a copy of the receipt from the CS Quartermaster, Richmond VA dated May 8, 1863 for five battle flags issued to Pettigrews Brigade. This receipt was signed by Capt. W. G. Bently of the CS Quartermaster Department. Capt. Bently was responsible for receiving clothing from the depot and issuing it to the army, along with the manufacturing and issuing of tents and other camp and garrison equipage. His office was located on 14th St in Richmond.

(<http://www.mdgorman.com/Written%20Accounts/1863%20Richmond%20Directory.htm>)

This receipt is an interesting piece of information due to the fact that battle flags were manufactured and distributed through the same system and depots as clothing. Therefore, we know that established requisitions were made with the central government supply system in Richmond. This only makes sense as Pettigrew’s brigade, and with it the 26th NCT, were an incorporated part of the ANV and thus an incorporated part of the ANV logistical and supply system.



Mitchell M. Plummer
Co. A "Jeff Davis Mountaineers"
26th Regiment North Carolina Troops
Killed at the Battle of Gettysburg.





Upon its second arrival in Virginia, the 26th NCT, along with the rest of General Pettigrew's brigade, was officially made a part of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. As a result, the brigade received an issue of new battle flags on May 8th, 1863. The receipt below, signed by Capt. J.J. Young, is for five battle flags for Pettigrew's brigade. The flag at left is one of those flags, belonging to the 26th Regiment North Carolina Troops. It was this flag that the Regiment carried into battle at Gettysburg.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
QUARTERMASTER'S DEPARTMENT.

Invoice of Quartermaster's Stores *this day turned over to Captain* *W. A.*
McCreary. J. J. Young & Co
5. Five Battle Flags.

Wm. G. Bentley
Capt & a/qm

Richmond, Va.
May 8th 1863.



**Mitchell M. Plummer Co. A “Jeff Davis Mountaineers”
26th Regiment North Carolina Troops**

and socks along with 300 shoes to the regiment on April 29, 1863 just two days prior to their transportation to Richmond.

However, there is another connection with the Richmond clothing bureau that is more firmly established. At the same time that the Regiment received The issued uniforms for its enlisted men it also received 358 1/8 yards of gray cloth for officer uniforms on April 14, 1863. These items were received from Maj. R. P. Waller. Major Waller was in charge of the CS clothing depot at the corner of Cary and Pearl St. in Richmond, VA. (See previously

listed website for documentation). Evidence still points to a Richmond origin for the uniforms received by the 26th NC but these are all areas that need further research.

Regardless, the look and style of the uniform issued is no mystery as it can be seen in the Mitchell Plummer photograph which was taken in May-June of 1863. Private Mitchell Plummer enlisted in Company A “Jeff Davis Mountain Rifles” at age 22 on May 17, 1861. In May of 1863, Days before he marched north with the Regiment, and days after receiving his new uniform, Pvt. Plummer had his image struck. In so doing he

left for us a valuable record of how our Regiment looked as it marched towards its destiny that fateful summer. The Plummer ambrotype, the original being in the possession of The Society for the Historical Preservation of the Twenty-Sixth Regiment North Carolina Troops, exactly illustrates Gragg’s description of the Regiment’s uniforms. Plummer is clearly wearing a kepi of gray jean or satinette, along with a pair of trousers and jacket of the same material.

As further evidence of the Regiment’s connection to the Richmond Depot, The Society for the Historical Preservation of the Twenty-Sixth Regiment North Carolina Troops also has a photograph of Jones Irvin Bradshaw, Co I, 26th NCT. Bradshaw enlisted in Co. I in August, 1861 at Camp Carolina. He was wounded and captured at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863 and was confined at Pt. Lookout, MD until he was exchanged on September 8, 1863. Bradshaw returned to the Regiment in February, 1864 and remained present and accounted for on company rolls until he was paroled at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865. Both Plummer’s and Bradshaw’s jacket are of a pattern that Les Jensen has labeled a Richmond Depot Type II (RD II). This jacket was produced by the Richmond clothing bureau from late 1862 through the end of the war. The jacket has epaulets, a nine button front, standing collar and belt loops (which are not visible in either photo). The Plummer photo is fairly easy to date. Plummer was with the Regiment during its brief stay around Petersburg in late summer 1862 when several men had their images taken. but those photos are easily identifiable through the “gabled house” backdrop used by the photographer.

This is not present in the Plummer photo. The photo can also not be post Gettysburg as Plummer died during the battle. Plummer was also not hospitalized in or around Richmond, so this jacket could not have been a single issue garment as was often done for convalescent troops. The same can not be said for the Bradshaw photo. There is a good possibility that the photo was taken prior to Gettysburg, but since Bradshaw survived the battle, it is also possible that this jacket was issued to him upon his exchange (and possible hospitalization in Richmond) in late 1863. None the less, the jacket revealed in these photos, along with the aforementioned establishment of supply lines with the Richmond Depot, heavily suggest that the 26th NCT received new uniforms from the Confederate Central Government upon its arrival and incorporation into the Army of Northern Virginia.

Jones I. Bradshaw
Co. I "Caldwell
Guards"
26th Regiment North
Carolina Troops



PICTURE CREDITS

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

“THA KILL SO MENY OF US.”

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THE IMBECILE IVERSON

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“ I DIED WITH MY FACE TO THE ENEMY.”

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<http://www.dmna.state.ny.us/historic/mil-hist.htm>

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North Carolina Museum of History, Raleigh NC

Mast Greg. State Troops and Vounteers: A Photographic Record of North Carolina's Civil War Soldiers. Vol I. NC Division of Archives and History: Raleigh NC. 1995.

THE REGIMENT MADE A FINE APPERANCE

Ben Tart
<http://www.bentart.com>

Locke W. Smith Collection, Lenoir, NC.

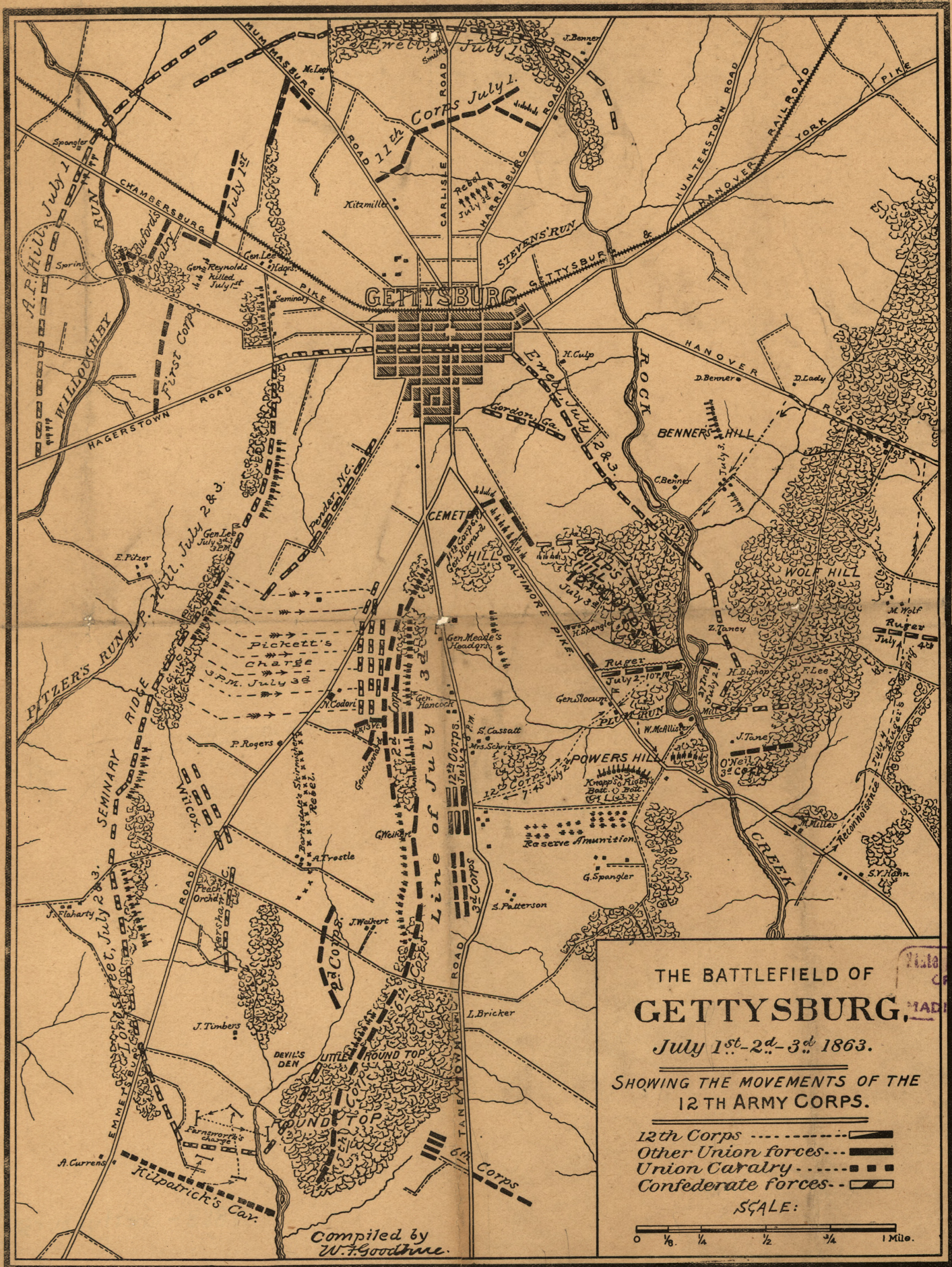
Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond VA.

North Carolina Museum of History, Raleigh NC

North Carolina Museum of History, Raleigh NC

Locke W. Smith Collection, Lenoir, NC.

Locke W. Smith Collection, Lenoir, NC.



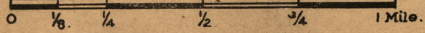
THE BATTLEFIELD OF
GETTYSBURG,

July 1st-2^d-3^d 1863.

SHOWING THE MOVEMENTS OF THE
 12TH ARMY CORPS.

- 12th Corps [Symbol]
- Other Union forces... [Symbol]
- Union Cavalry..... [Symbol]
- Confederate forces.. [Symbol]

SCALE:



Compiled by
 W.F. Goodhue.

Division of Maps
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