

## **ABSTRACT**

**“July 4, 1863”**

**Kimball Payne**

**SPHEX Club Presentation**

**January 3, 2012**

The Battle of Gettysburg, the bloodiest engagement of the Civil War, had a profound impact on the community where it was fought, both Adams County and the village itself. This paper utilizes eyewitness accounts and commentaries of historians, supplemented by historic and contemporary photographs, to provide a description of the impact and aftermath of the battle. Rather than exploring the battle itself the paper focuses on the village and surrounding landscape as of July 4, 1863 and through the following weeks. It addresses the terrible destruction wrought on the community and how the casualties were handled. Eyewitness accounts from residents, soldiers, and visitors are provided on the damage to private property, the appearance of the battlefield after the fighting stopped and how prisoners of war, the wounded and the dead were treated. A subsidiary theme is the experience of Private James Maurice Moore, a member of the Lynchburg Home Guard, Company G of the 11<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry Regiment, who was wounded and captured at the high water mark of Pickett's charge.

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What is the significance of July 4, 1863? Well, it's the day that Vicksburg, Mississippi fell to Major General Ulysses S. Grant, giving the North control of the Mississippi River for the remainder of the Civil War. But, that's not what this paper is about. The locale for my topic is a small town about a thousand miles from Vicksburg, in Pennsylvania. Things were relatively quiet there on July 4, 1863, at least compared to the previous three days.

Last May, I had the opportunity to attend a three day leadership training seminar in Gettysburg. Sponsored by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and the Gettysburg Foundation, the purpose of the seminar was to study the battle and take away important lessons in leadership that are applicable to today's challenges. About thirty local government managers from across the United States watched the movie *“Gettysburg,”* toured the town and battlefield with outstanding guides, explored the museum, and discussed the attributes and shortcomings of the well-known and lesser-known leaders on both sides in the conflict. It was quite an experience, especially for someone who had grown up in Lexington as an admirer of Robert E. Lee, and then lived in Spotsylvania County for many years and learned about the four battles that took place there. I must admit that my opinion of General Lee was strongly challenged over those three days.

We could say that July 4, 1863 is the day that the second guessing started. The events of Battle of Gettysburg have fueled debates that have lasted one hundred and fifty years with no sign of slacking off.

- Why did Confederate General Henry Heth engage Union General John Buford on July 1<sup>st</sup> without explicit orders from General Lee?
- Why didn't General Richard Ewell seize Cemetery Hill after routing the Union XI Corps and driving them from the town later that day?
- What was General Daniel Sickles thinking on July 2<sup>nd</sup> when he advanced into the Peach Orchard, significantly weakening the Union line on Cemetery Ridge?
- Why was General “Pete” Longstreet so reticent to attack on July 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>?
- Why did General Lee insist on attacking General George Meade's strong defensive position on Cemetery Ridge?
- Where was General George Pickett during “Pickett's Charge” and where was the support after the brave Virginians penetrated the Union line?

- And, speaking of lost generals, where in the world was Jeb Stuart and his cavalry?
- Finally, why didn't General Meade counterattack on the evening of July 3<sup>rd</sup> or on July 4<sup>th</sup>?

These are all fascinating questions, any one of which would have made for an interesting presentation, however, I knew better than to go there with this group.

My focus for this paper is on the aftermath of the battle, from July 4<sup>th</sup> on. Part of our leadership seminar was spent touring the Town of Gettysburg and learning about its experiences before and after the battle. More than once our guides likened the situation to a "FEMA" event. We have all become familiar with so called "FEMA" events. These are typically natural disasters, hurricanes, tornados, derechos, floods, earthquakes, etc., that result in a response from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA for short. Of course, there was no FEMA in 1863; so how did the community respond to the mess that it had on its hands on July 4, 1863?

To provide some perspective; the September 8, 1900 hurricane that struck Galveston, Texas is recognized as the deadliest natural disaster in United States history. The most cited number of deaths is 8,000, although estimates go as high as 12,000. The death toll at Gettysburg was similar, around 8,000 individuals. In addition, however, there were over 27,000 wounded, and about 11,000 captured or missing. Depending on who is counting, that's between 46,000 and 51,000 casualties between the two armies, nearly one third of those engaged.

We tend to romanticize and sanitize the Civil War, as I guess we may do for any war as memories fade and the horrors are overshadowed by recollections of the many acts of valor and humanity. When we visit a former battlefield today, we typically experience beautiful, serene landscapes that belie the noise, confusion and destruction that was once manifest there. **[Slides #1, 2, & 3]** Local resident John Howard Wert, who wrote extensively of his experiences touring the battlefield in the days after the fighting ended, wrote:

*The saddest, most pathetic sight in all the universe is a field of battle when the thunder of the cannon has ceased....When the splendor, the pomp and the circumstance of battle's magnificently stern array have gone, then the horrible and the ghastly only remain and remain in their most terrible forms. (Dreese)*

This paper is decidedly not on the splendor, pomp and circumstance of the Battle of Gettysburg.

I have seen the movie "Gettysburg" twice now; it is well done, mostly accurate, and can also provide some good lessons in leadership. The first time I watched it I was struck by the battlefield scenes of Hood's Texans and Alabamans attacking Joshua Chamberlain's 20<sup>th</sup> Maine on Little Round Top. Something just didn't seem right. And

then, I realized what it was; the action was taking place on a heavily wooded slope and repeated volleys of small arms hadn't disturbed a single leaf. In fairness, there was one scene where a Minnie ball struck a tree just near a soldier's head. Nevertheless, this recognition of the lack of damage did take something away from the movie for me.

My point is that it is hard for the many of us who have never experienced combat to formulate in our minds a good picture of a fresh battlefield. This is particularly true for the wars that took place before the advent of photography. For the Civil War, however, we do have a fairly extensive record from the early days of photography. The first photographers arrived on the Gettysburg battlefield on July 5<sup>th</sup> and I will share some of their images with you. With those photographs and through descriptions from historians and eyewitnesses, I hope to give you a better understanding of the effects and aftermath of the most deadly battle of the Civil War.

I also have a personal angle in this story. The 11<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry Regiment was part of General George E. Pickett's Division in Longstreet's Corps. The regiment was commanded by Major Kirkwood Otey and was a part of General James L. Kemper's Brigade. Kemper's Brigade was on the right flank of Pickett's Division on July 3<sup>rd</sup> and the men of the 11<sup>th</sup> Virginia were part of what is often referred to as "the high water mark of the Confederacy" at the stone wall on Cemetery Ridge. The 11<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry Regiment lost about forty percent of the 359 men who were engaged at Gettysburg.

Company G of the 11<sup>th</sup> Virginia was the Lynchburg Home Guard which had been organized on November 8, 1859 in Campbell County and mustered into service on April 24, 1861 in Richmond. At Gettysburg, the Lynchburg Home Guard was under the leadership of Captain John Holmes Smith. He led 32 men in Pickett's Charge. Eighteen men of the company were lost (53.6%); four were killed, eight were wounded and six were captured. Five of the six captured were also wounded. One of those wounded and captured was Private James Maurice Moore, my great, great uncle, who suffered a fractured thigh. On July 4<sup>th</sup>, James was either in route to or in the Union Second Corps field hospital to the east of the battlefield.

In 1863 the town of Gettysburg had about 450 buildings and was inhabited by 2,400 residents. **[Slides #4 & 5]** It was the county seat of Adams County, Pennsylvania and served the region as far as into north-western Maryland. Adams County consisted of 618 square miles with a population of 28,000 whites and 474 African Americans. (Sheldon, p. 24) Consistent with a county seat, Gettysburg was a focus of commercial activity, hosting a thriving cart-, carriage-, and wagon-making industry. There were numerous tanneries in the area and twenty-two residents listed their occupation as shoemaker or cobbler in the 1860 census. There was not, however, any established shoe-manufacturing industry in the area. Gettysburg was also a center of knowledge and higher education. It had three newspapers, seven churches, and was the home of a Lutheran seminary and Pennsylvania College (now Gettysburg College). The town was connected to the outside world by telegraph and was the western terminus of a rail spur from Hanover. George Sheldon reports, "There was a fairly even

number of Democrats and Republicans in Adams County. In the 1860 presidential election, Abraham Lincoln barely carried the county despite the fact that the residents were overwhelmingly against slavery.” (Sheldon, p. 25)

Gettysburg had been briefly occupied on June 26<sup>th</sup> as Confederate forces passed through on their way north to Harrisburg. What they found then, and when they returned on July 1<sup>st</sup>, was a village inhabited mostly by women, children and old men. Town leaders and merchants along with their goods had fled the town to avoid capture. When the Confederates left on July 4<sup>th</sup> a twenty-five square mile area that included the town and its surroundings had been transformed into what eyewitnesses called “a vast charnel house” with over 7,000 dead and 21,000 wounded soldiers along with 3,000 to 5,000 dead horses and mules and the remains of countless livestock that had either been killed during the battle or consumed by the armies. (Coco, p. 82)

It started raining about 4:00 a.m. on July 4<sup>th</sup> and that would continue off and on, often heavily, for several days. It is interesting to note that many observers mention that heavy rains often followed intense cannonades and Gettysburg followed that pattern. General Lee took advantage of the rain to begin the withdrawal of his army. He evacuated the wounded first. The task of supporting what became a seventeen mile long wagon train carrying between 8,000 and 8,500 wounded men fell to Brigadier General John Imboden’s cavalry. A second train organized later that day carried “plunder” collected by General Ewell during what Stephen Sears calls “his excursion across Pennsylvania” (Sears, p. 472).

Sears reports:

*Otherwise, the Confederates spent this rainy, depressing Independence Day caring for the wounded and burying the dead. “Every house, shed, barn and hut was filled with wounded, dying and dead men, both Yanks and Confederates,” wrote diarist Henry Berkeley. “Blood everywhere. Dead and dying men everywhere. Can there be anything in this world more sad and gloomy than a battlefield. I think not.” (Sears, p. 472)*

To make matters worse for some, Confederate pickets had pushed forward to cover the retreat and they prevented recovery of the wounded between the armies. (Maust, p. 274) Many would spend two days on the field before they were rescued.

On the Union side, Sears writes:

*The 4<sup>th</sup> of July was passed by the Army of the Potomac in the mundane and frequently grim tasks of restoring its military health—aiding the wounded, burying the dead, bringing up rations and ammunition, and, when possible, resting from the strains of the past few days. There were no sanctioned salutes to Independence Day, although some bands were heard to play patriotic airs. The rain was a damper on enthusiasms.*

In the town of Gettysburg several inhabitants reported more enthusiasm. Resident Daniel Skelly reported:

*About 4 A.M., there was another commotion in the street, this time on Baltimore.... It seemed to be a noisy demonstration. Going hurriedly to the window I looked out. Ye gods! What a welcome sight for the imprisoned people of Gettysburg! The Boys in Blue marching down the street, fife and drum corps playing, the glorious Stars & Stripes fluttering at the head of the lines. (Gudmestad, p. 57; the earlier commotion was the Confederates pulling out of the town.)*

Tillie Pierce, a young woman who experienced the battle wrote:

*On the summits, in the valleys, everywhere we heard the soldiers hurrahing for the victory that had been won.... Most befitting was it, that on the fourth of July, an overruling and all-wise Providence should again declare this people, free and independent of the tyranny upheld by an enemy.... We were all glad that the storm had passed, and that victory was perched on our banners.... But, oh! The horror and desolation that remained. (ibid.)*

Amazingly enough, despite the running battle that had occurred in its streets on July 1<sup>st</sup>, the physical infrastructure of Gettysburg was pretty much intact. Although occupied by the Confederates for three days, the town had never been heavily shelled and there was little serious structural damage to buildings. Some of the buildings on the southern end of town, closer to Cemetery Hill, had been used as sniper nests by Confederate sharpshooters and those buildings were subject to greater damage. **[Slide # 6]** In a letter to his wife on July 12<sup>th</sup>, Hospital Steward Charles Merrick of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ohio wrote, "Gettysburg is a pretty little city. It is not much hurt by cannon, but bullet marks are visible on almost every house and store." (Maust, p. 485) John Y. Foster, a volunteer from Philadelphia, who toured the battlefield on July 10<sup>th</sup>, offered this description, "The houses presented marks of the conflict. One, which was occupied as a hospital, revealed a gaping wound in the second story, where a cannon-ball had gone straight through.... Other buildings were riddled in a hundred places..." (Maust, p. 475) One can still see bullet scars, and the occasional imbedded cannonball, on buildings in Gettysburg.

The town was hardly unscathed, however. Resident Fannie J. Buehler described it this way:

*All around us were evidences of a great battle. The wounded, the dead and dying, all heaped together; horses that had fallen beneath their riders, with limbs shattered and torn – dead, wounded and bleeding – broken down artillery wagons, guns, knapsacks, cartridge boxes, capes, coats and shoes; indeed all the belongings of a soldier, and the soldier himself,*

*all lying in the streets, so far as we could see either up or down. Such was the awful scene spread out before us as we ventured to the front of our house on the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1863. (Gudmestad, p. 58)*

Bruce Catton in Glory Road, wrote, "The town of Gettysburg looked as if some universal moving day had been interrupted by catastrophe." (Catton, Bruce, Glory Road, Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1952, p. 325, cited in Wikipedia.) Along Baltimore Street leading up to Cemetery Hill, Confederates soldiers had erected a barricade to provide cover for sharpshooters. "The barricade was constructed of any readily available materials such as furniture, sofas, mattresses, benches, crates, tables, barrels, etc." (Gudmestad, p. 67) Furthermore, the occupiers had made themselves at home in abandoned residences, resting on the furniture and freely consuming any food that they could find.

Contrary to a standing order of General Lee, many of the buildings, both businesses and residences, and particularly those that were uninhabited, had been looted and in some cases vandalized by Confederate occupiers. Town resident Albertus McCreary recorded this experience:

*There were some sorry-looking homes in our neighborhood. The Confederate soldiers had entered them during their occupation of the town and tried to see how much damage they could do...almost everything had been cut to pieces or destroyed in some way. Pieces of furniture were burned and broken, a desk had been destroyed, bookcases knocked down, and the books torn and shattered. To add more to the disorder and destruction, the soldiers had taken a half-barrel of flour, mixed it with water to make a thin paste, put into this the feathers from feather-beds and thrown it over everything – walls, furniture, and down the stairways. (Gudmestad, p. 67)*

Another resident lamented, "Oh, what a home-coming! Everything we owned was gone – not a bed to lie on, and not a change of clothing. Many things had been destroyed, and the rest had been converted to hospital purposes." (ibid.) On July 4<sup>th</sup>, many of the buildings in Gettysburg contained casualties from both sides. Their blood soaked the floors and their wounds were bound with whatever cloth that could be found. The town was clearly a mess.

In the aftermath of the battle town residents faced considerable challenges. In both the village and the surrounding area the impact of 163,000 men and over 90,000 horses and mules was immense. Food was scarce and the water supply had been severely stressed. (Coco, p. 3) Springs had dried up, water levels in wells had fallen, and any remaining water supply was threatened by contamination from waste and blood. Fortunately, within a couple of days food supplies were provided by both the Sanitary and Christian Commissions, rail service to the town was restored by the middle of the following week making it easier to deliver needed supplies, and the heavy rains ultimately provided cleansing and restored water supplies. The community's greatest

challenge, however, was in dealing with the casualties of the battle. A county historian, writing in 1886, described the effects of the battle on citizens of the community:

*To all this was the great tax upon the people of providing and caring for the wounded from the bloody battle-field of Gettysburg.... People threw open their private houses; the churches, the schoolhouses, the public halls, and even the barns and stables, rang with the groans and agony of the shot, maimed and mutilated, that filled apparently every place, and still the field of death and agony could furnish more victims. The churches looked much as though they had been converted into butchers' stalls. The entire community became hospital nurses, cooks, waiters or grave-diggers. In this wide expanse of Christian charity, rebel and Union sufferers were cared for without material distinction. (Coco, p. 168)*

I now want to leave the town and its residents and give you a sense of what the rest of the battlefield was like on and following July 4<sup>th</sup>. John Wert, who we have already heard from, visited the battlefield on July 6<sup>th</sup> and wrote this: "No pen can paint the awful picture of desolation, devastation, and death that was presented here to the shuddering beholders who traversed these localities.... Death in its ghastliest and most abhorrent forms everywhere. Festering corpses at every step.... It was a hideous and revolting sight." (Coco, p. 6)

Lt. Frank Aretas Haskell, staff aide to General Gibbon of the Second Division of Hancock's corps, described the landscape after the fighting on July 2<sup>nd</sup>:

*And how look those fields? ... They were beautiful this morning. They are desolate now,--trampled by countless feet of the combattants [sic],--plowed and scarred by shot and shell, the orchards splintered, the fences prostrate, the harvests trodden in the mud. ... And more dreadful than the sight of all this, thickly strewn over all their length and breadth, are the habiliments of the soldier,--the knapsacks, cast aside in the stress of the fight, or after the fatal lead had struck; --haversacks, yawning with the rations, the owner will never call for; canteens of cedar of the Rebel men of Jackson and cloth-covered tin of the men of the Union; --blankets and trowsers [sic], and coats, and caps; and some are blue and some are gray; --muskets, and ramrods, and bayonets, and swords, and scabbards, and belts, come bent and cut by the shot, or shell; --broken wheels, exploded caissons, and limber-boxes, and dismantled guns; --and all these are sprinkled with blood; --horses, some dead, a mangled heap of carnage, some alive, with a leg shot clear off, or other frightful wound, appealing to you with almost more than brute gaze as you pass; --and last, but not least numerous, many thousands of men,--and there was no rebellion here now,--the men of South Carolina were quiet by the side of those of Massachusetts,--some composed with upturned faces, sleeping the last sleep, some mutilated and frightful, some wretched, fallen, bathed*

*in blood, survivors still and unwilling witness to the rage of Gettysburg.*  
(Maust, p. 111)

A few days later, Sgt. T. P. Meyer of the Union Second Corps on burial detail along the front of Pickett's Charge observed,

*...The field was thickly strewn with knapsacks containing the sundries of a soldier's outfit. Haversacks filled with biscuits and sweet cakes, the proceeds of forages among the people of Pennsylvania; blankets, tents, hats, coats, caps, belts, swords, letters, portfolios, books, bibles, testaments, playing cards, etc., etc., scattered everywhere.* (Maust, p. 277)

Tillie Pierce summed it up, "...everything belonging to army equipment was there in one confused and indescribable mass." (Maust, p. 314) **[Slides # 7, 8, 9, & 10]**

One of the tasks following the battle was to recover usable equipment, especially small arms, which had been abandoned on the field. Captain Benjamin W. Thompson, of the 11<sup>th</sup> New York, wrote that on July 5<sup>th</sup>, "The battlefield was put under guard, for, beside a number captured cannon, there were from twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand stand of small arms and an immense amount of other property." (Maust, p. 337) In front of the position of Hancock's Second Corps, the target of Pickett's Charge, 3,900 muskets were collected and about 1,000 were left on the field. This total just about equaled the number of prisoners taken at that location. (Hess, p. 354) Many of the muskets recovered from the battlefield were loaded and for safety purposes they were placed upright with bayonets in the ground "as thick as trees in a nursery." (Maust, p. 279)

The battlefield was put under guard because soon after the fighting ceased sightseers and souvenir hunters arrived on the scene by the hundreds. Many came out of morbid curiosity and couldn't resist picking up a remembrance of their visits. Gregory Coco relates this remembrance:

*A Southern officer, Colonel R.M. Powell of the 5<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry who had been shot on July 2 in front of Little Round Top, was, two days later, lying in a field hospital behind that eminence. He sarcastically reported: "The big show was gone, but [the sight-seers] seemed content to look over the ground where it had been. A torn and bloody garment would attract a crowd, which would disperse only to concentrate again to look at a hat perforated by bullets.... The habiliments of the men and variegated plumage of the women made an interesting scene. The typical farmer, the German costumed in clothes of the last century, the village belle and the country housewife, all moving in pursuit of the same object and animated only by idle curiosity, seeming without thought or care for the hundreds of suffering men lying so near them...."* (Coco, p. 26)

Other visitors to the battlefield, however, came to loot the dead and wounded. There were many reports of the dead, especially the Confederate dead who lay on the battlefield for days, having their trouser pockets cut open and pilfered. Although orders were issued prohibiting the removal of government and personal property from the battlefield, the problem persisted. One of the consequences for some who were caught was time with a burial detail, a particularly gruesome punishment.

And, what about the trees that I was so concerned about during the film “Gettysburg”? **[Slides # 12, 13, & 14]** John Foster reported after his tour of July 10<sup>th</sup>, “Every tree was scarred and torn, a chilly blight resting upon its summer crown of beauty.” (Maust, p. 475) Charles Merrick added that, “The trees are terribly cut by the storm of shells and solid shot.” (Maust, p. 485) Touring in the vicinity of Culp’s Hill on the Union far right where fierce fighting took place on July 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, John Wert said that almost an entire forest of full grown trees had been destroyed by the discharges of musketry. He wrote:

*All who visited this spot...were impressed with the wonderful appearance here presented. None who saw it can ever forget how the trunks of all the trees...were riddled from the ground up, for twenty feet, so that scarcely a vestige of the original bark or its color can be seen.... No pen can describe the appearance of these woods. Those who did not see the wonderful sight can never realize it. The life was shot from every pore of these trees as effectually as from the men in gray who were piled beneath them.... Neither man nor tree, that stood before the... [rifle] fire that swept that valley of death, could live. (Coco, p. 18)*

Lt. Frank Haskell toured Culp’ Hill on July 6<sup>th</sup> and wrote:

*[T]he trees were almost literally peeled, from the ground up some fifteen or twenty feet, so thick upon them were the scars the bullets had made. Upon a single tree, not over a foot and a half in diameter, I actually counted as many as two hundred and fifty bullet marks. The ground was covered by the little twigs that had been cut off by the hailstorm of lead. (Coco, p. 20)*

Now that I have made my point about the trees I will turn my attention to the casualties of the battle, the captured, the wounded and the dead.

One of the logistic challenges facing General Lee as he began his retreat from Gettysburg was what to do with about 5,100 Union prisoners. To avoid the inconvenience of transporting prisoners under guard into Virginia, on the morning of July 4<sup>th</sup> General Lee proposed a prisoner exchange. General Meade declined. Despite that, Lee paroled 1,500 prisoners and left the wounded Federals behind. (Coco, p. 189) On July 4<sup>th</sup> the remnants of Pickett’s Division were assigned to act as Provost Guard and escort some 3,400 Union prisoners to Virginia. General Pickett protested this “apparent indignity,” however, General Lee, although apologetic and supportive, did not

revoke the assignment. Pickett's Division was relieved of this responsibility on July 9<sup>th</sup> after General Imboden's cavalry had delivered the Confederate wounded to Winchester. (Harrison & Busey, p. 123) Many prisoners escaped during the trip with those remaining ultimately arriving in Richmond where they were either housed or shipped to other prison camps further south.

Coincidentally, the Federal forces had also captured about 5,100 Confederates. **[Slides # 15 & 16]** These prisoners, who had no or only slight wounds, were taken shortly after midnight on the morning of July 4<sup>th</sup> under guard to Westminster, Maryland where they boarded trains for Baltimore and Fort McHenry. By July 6<sup>th</sup> many ended up in Fort Delaware. (Harrison & Busey, p. 123) In addition to those immediately captured, Confederate stragglers and deserters would be rounded up for weeks after the battle by both Federal forces and civilians. Many Confederate captives, to avoid the hell of prison camp, swore allegiance to the Union; some even joined the army and were typically assigned to the frontier.

General Lee's retreat from Gettysburg left behind many wounded Confederates. Some had been captured but most were simply too injured to endure the wagon ride back to Virginia. Edwin Coddington, in his seminal book The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command, reports, "As the army departed from the battlefield, 6,802 Confederates still lay in scores of houses barns, churches, schools, and other public buildings in Gettysburg and the surrounding countryside. A few of their own surgeons and orderlies remained with them, but for the most part they had to depend upon their enemies for care." (Coddington, p. 537) **[Slide #17]** In addition to the Confederate wounded, there were over 14,000 wounded Federal soldiers in and around Gettysburg.

The July 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the "*Lutheran and Missionary*" newspaper reported:

*Gettysburg is now a vast hospital, and there is scarcely a house to be found that does not contain one or more wounded men. All the public buildings are given up to their use; churches, courthouse, college, theological seminary, are filled with the wounded, whilst all around the town for miles in every direction, hospital camps have been improvised, and barns, stables, and dwellings have been deprived of their legitimate tenants and devoted to the use of the wounded and their tenants.*

(Dreese)

There were upwards of 60 hospital locations in and around Gettysburg. (Maust, p. 643) The Confederates left behind 24 field hospitals, mostly south and west of the town. It took days to collect the wounded from the battlefield and medical supplies, tents, food and water were in short supply. General Meade had kept his medical supplies and ambulances away from the front either for their protection or to provide an easier path for withdrawal of his army, if necessary. (Coco, p. 145) When the Union army finally departed in pursuit of Lee there were only about thirty-five operating surgeons left to deal with 20,000 wounded. (Maust, p. 314) There were also about

seventy other “dressing surgeons” but this still left a ratio of doctors to patients of about 1 to 150 and, initially, the army declined assistance from civilians. (Dreese)

A dissertation on medical practices during the Civil War is beyond the scope of this presentation. Suffice it to say that it was a pretty gruesome experience. Approximately 70% of the wounds suffered at Gettysburg were to extremities and amputation was the common treatment. **[Slides # 18, 19, 20, & 21]** Descriptions of the field hospitals speak of surgeons performing amputations around the clock with little regard for hygiene. Many of the wounded who died succumbed to secondary conditions such as dysentery. Amazingly, despite deplorable conditions there was a survival rate of approximately 75% among the wounded. That, however, means that about 5,000 died of their wounds or associated illness.

Getting the field hospitals staffed, supplied and ultimately closed down as wounded were evacuated was a monumental task. As late as July 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> Surgeon Henry Janes, who had been assigned the responsibility of overseeing the field hospitals at Gettysburg, reported on the condition of the wounded after a battlefield tour:

*There were some in churches, some in barns, some in tents among the fruit trees, some in tents in the fields, some under such shelter as a farmer would be ashamed to show for his cows. Some were under blankets hung over cross-sticks, and some without even so much shelter as that. There were some scattered groups of men outside the hospitals. It sometimes appeared as if an experiment had been made to see how many wounded could be crowded into a given space in a house. (Maust, p. 441)*

Conditions in Confederate field hospitals were even worse. It would be weeks until all of the wounded could be treated, evacuated when possible, or collected together in one location where they could be properly sheltered and cared for. Ultimately, on July 22<sup>nd</sup> a general hospital was established about a mile east of the town adjacent to the rail line. It was named Camp Letterman in honor of Dr. Jonathan Letterman, medical director of the Army of the Potomac, and before it closed on November 20<sup>th</sup> it housed over 4,000 wounded, many of whom were Confederates. (Coco, p. 227) **[Slides # 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, & 27]**

Fortunately for the residents of Gettysburg and the wounded, shortly after the battle, as early as July 5<sup>th</sup>, help started arriving. Louis Duncan, in a history of the Medical Department of the United States Army in the Civil War, recorded, “Benevolent societies, Sanitary and Christian Commissions, express companies, fire organizations, bands of generous people of all denominations and individuals from great distances all came forward with their offerings, sympathy, and personal services. (Dreese) Despite its initial reticence at accepting help, the Union army soon was aided by many civilians providing needed supplies and serving as nurses or in other capacities. A number of the volunteers, such as nurse Cornelia Hancock from New Jersey, provided written records of their experiences. You have already heard from some and will hear from others in the following.

Prominent among the volunteers who came to assist after the battle were the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. After learning of the battle from retreating Confederates on July 5<sup>th</sup> at their home in Emmitsburg, MD about ten miles south of Gettysburg, twenty-six sisters left to provide physical and spiritual aid. Ministers and lay volunteers from many other churches and denominations also attended the wounded at Gettysburg.

Two groups that were of critical importance to relief efforts at Gettysburg were the Sanitary Commission and the Christian Commission. The United States Sanitary Commission had been formed in June of 1861 to provide help and comfort to sick and wounded soldiers. It was a high powered and well-funded organization that had been founded by a group of highly influential Northern business professionals. Its Executive Committee was chaired by Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of Central Park. (Maust, p. 387) The Sanitary Commission hired a number of workers who served as field inspectors, nurses, cooks, and teamsters who were, "involved in nursing, general hospital work, direct battlefield aid, the deployment of relief lodges near railway stations, and the donation of medicines, food, clothing, and personal items." (Coco, p. 241) The Sanitary Commission had arrived with supplies as early as July 2<sup>nd</sup> but was most effective starting on July 5<sup>th</sup>. It is credited with providing much needed sustenance to town residents and with providing critical support to both Confederate and Union field hospitals. The Sanitary Commission was also an important presence at Camp Letterman. **[Slides # 28, 29, & 30]**

The Christian Commission, on the other hand, "had sprung from the Young Mens' Christian Association, with the goal of attending to the spiritual good of the soldiers in the army, and incidentally, their intellectual improvement and social and physical comfort." (Maust, p. 386) Delegates of the Christian Commission passed out bibles, tracts, and reading and writing materials along with relief supplies. The organization was guided by a committee of pastors, missionaries and Christian workers. (ibid.) It should come as no surprise that the Christian Commission competed with the Sanitary Commission for support and recognition. **[Slide # 31]**

I want to take you now to the site of one of the Union Field hospitals, that of the Second Corps. The Second Corps, under the command of Major General Winfield Scott Hancock, had been heavily engaged throughout the battle and most especially on July 3<sup>rd</sup> as it defended the aim of Lee's last great assault. Most of Pickett's captured wounded, including Private James Maurice Moore of the Lynchburg Home Guard, were taken to the Second Corps field hospital. An excellent history of the hospital, entitled Grappling With Death: The Union Second Corps Hospital at Gettysburg, has been written by Roland R. Maust.

Competition was strong for hospital sites with adequate shelter and water, behind Union lines and beyond the range of Confederate shells. Responsibility for finding a site for the Second Corps field hospital fell on Capt. Thomas Livermore of the 5<sup>th</sup> New Hampshire Volunteers, who had been assigned as the Chief of the ambulance corps. After initially missing out on suitable locations to other units, he located a site that

appeared to be ideal on the banks of Rock Creek southeast of Gettysburg off the Baltimore Turnpike. The site was both open and wooded, was accessible by road from the battlefield, and had several sources of drinking water. **[Slide # 32]**

The 4,000 wounded who were eventually deposited at the Second Corps hospital had much to deal with in the first few days of their stay: a lack of food, tainted water, heavy rain, summer heat, poor or no shelter and a shortage of surgeons, nurses and medical supplies all contributed to what Gregory Coco calls “a hell on earth.” (Coco, p. 162) In keeping with the religious metaphor, even as conditions started to improve at the hospital there was a plague of “green-bottle” flies. Maust reports:

*The proximity of the hospitals to the Jacob Schwartz Farm, with its barnyard litter and manure pile, brought insects in biblical swarms to the medical facility. Fence posts, tent poles, canvas, prostrate bodies—any surface, especially where blood had splashed or splattered—were literally black with the buzzing hordes. Many of the injured now appearing at the tables had wounds crawling white and alive with maggot infestation.*  
(Maust, p. 397)

Despite the slight therapeutic benefit of maggots consuming the decaying flesh around wounds, their appearance on the wounded and the dead brought a universal reaction of revulsion and disgust.

Contrary to the equal treatment of Union and Confederate wounded proclaimed in the 1886 history mentioned above, there was a distinction at the field hospitals. It was quite common during the Civil War that an army took care of its own first and then, when able, addressed the needs of its captured enemy. There was no malice in this practice, it was just a practical necessity given limited resources. Accordingly, the Confederate wounded at the Second Corps hospital were placed on the low ground, in the open, and without shelter to protect them from either the frequent and heavy thunderstorms or the sun and heat when it wasn't raining. The wounds of these men were addressed only after the medical staff had taken care of the Federal wounded; they had a wait of over five days for treatment and did not start getting under the shelter of hospital tents until July 9<sup>th</sup>. In the meantime the rains that started on July 4<sup>th</sup> and continued off and on for nearly a week caused Rock Creek to flood and it is fairly conclusive that an indefinite number of Confederate wounded were drowned and carried away by the high water on July 6<sup>th</sup>.

Jane Boswell Moore, who with her mother cared for the Confederate wounded at the Second Corps Hospital, described the situation shortly after the flooding of Rock Creek:

*The site of the hospital, which had been hurriedly chosen, was in a grove of trees on a piece of rising ground, surrounded nearly on all sides by a ravine, along which ran a creek near whose banks lay hundreds of wounded and dying Rebels, most of whom were exposed to the pitiless*

*pelting of the storm. Such a thing as a cot, a bed, or a stretcher, was scarcely to be seen. (Maust, p. 446)*

Within a few days the Second Corps field hospital was relocated to the other side of Rock Creek on the Widow Schwartz Farm. This location was on higher ground, had two wells for drinking water and a two story brick house and a brick bank barn which served as primary hospital and recovery wards. (Harrison & Busey, p. 156) Although out of the danger of drowning in Rock Creek, conditions for the Confederate wounded were not significantly better. Harrison and Busey in their book on Pickett's Charge include the following **[Slide # 33]**:

*A description of the conditions at the Schwartz Farm was given by a member of the Christian Commission, who was serving as the chief nurse in the Schwartz barn:*

*"The old farmhouse was only one of half a dozen occupied by the men of Hancock's corps, but it was a type of them all. Its every room was a chamber of death and the boards of the shambling porch that girdled it were stained with the blood of the men for whom there was no room inside. The shade of a vine-clad trellis gave these poor fellows partial shelter from the scorching heat. West of the farmhouse, and only a stone's throw from the vine-clad porch with its freight of human misery, stood the old barn. This was devoted exclusively to the wounded of the Confederate army, and while the soldiers of the North were dying for lack of care it was not strange that these poor strangers were left in even worse condition...."*

*The smaller of the barn doors had been unhinged to serve as surgeon's tables, and there on the threshing-floor and haylofts of peaceful husbandry war had garnered its awful harvest of death and agony....Every available inch of space was occupied. The men lay close to each other, side by side in long rows, as compactly as when a few days before ... they marched shoulder to shoulder across Emmitsburg Road, ... as compactly as we laid their mangled bodies a few days later, shoulder to shoulder in the long trenches of the stubblefield. The cattle pens, too, still reeking with the litter of the barnyard, were as densely packed with victims as the threshing floor above, and I noticed with horror, as I assisted the dressing of a bleeding wound, that the blood of the patient filtered through the cracks and knotholes of the floor and dripped upon the sufferers below.*

*As night came on darkness threw a kindly mantle over such repulsive sights, but the horror of the situation was hardly less acute. The only illumination of the place came from the sickly yellow glow of an army lantern. A square box-like contrivance hung from a joist, with an oil lamp in the middle and four cracked panes of glass, so soiled that the dull yellow rays barely struggled through them. The men—restless, suffering,*

*and unable to sleep—tossed and moaned and raved in wild delirium. The weather-beaten barn resounded with a horrid chorus of curses, imprecations and groans that sounded doubly awful at dead of night, and the old army lantern's glimmering light wrought weird, fantastic shadows among the cobwebbed rafters of the roof.”* (Harrison & Busey, p. 140)

I assume that my great, great uncle was one of the men in the barn but I cannot prove it. What the records do show, however, is that Private James Maurice Moore died on July 19<sup>th</sup> and was buried behind the Schwartz barn, probably in an unmarked grave or a grave that later lost its marker. There were 33 other unidentified Confederate graves on the Schwartz property along with 150 identified graves behind the barn, in a cornfield, and in a field west of the buildings near Rock Creek (known as Yard B). (Harrison & Busey, p. 140) **[Slide # 34]**

And now, we must turn to the dead. Roland Maust offers this description of July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1863:

*Files of corpses were lined up beside each field hospital, awaiting burial. Desperately wounded men had crawled off to find a spring or creek, or to find shade or medical help, and had died on the way. Dead men in the bushes; dead men in farm buildings; dead men in the rocks; dead men under fences; sitting up; laying down; some whole and some disintegrated. Many still lay where they had fallen, in the deadly no-man's-land between the two armies. About 7,000 were dead in and around Gettysburg, and few of the nearly 4,000 Confederated fatalities had yet been buried.* (Maust, p. 232)

In addition, between 3,000 and 5,000 dead horses and mules littered the fields. These would be burned in the following days but not before the inevitable decay and the flies set in. Interestingly, there are no reports of vultures, buzzards or crows in the eyewitness accounts. Some even comment on a lack of birds in general after the battle. The assumption is that they were scared off by the noise of the fighting.

Eyewitness accounts from the days following the battle contain lurid descriptions of the dead. In addition to the horrible destruction wrought by shot and shell, the rain and summer heat hastened the decay of bodies that lay in the field for days. Howard Wert wrote, “Hideous is the sorrowful appearance of the bloated, distorted and blackened dead, so lately noble...” (Dreese) One of the most pronounced manifestations of the battlefield was the smell. Cornelia Hancock, the volunteer nurse from New Jersey, described her arrival on July 7<sup>th</sup>:

*As we drew near our destination we began to realize that war has other horrors than the sufferings of the wounded or the desolation of the bereft. A sickening, overpowering, awful, stench announced the presence of the unburied dead, on which the July sun was mercilessly shining, and at*

*every step the air grew heavier and fouler, until it seemed to possess a palpable horrible density that could be seen and felt and cut with a knife. Not the presence of the dead bodies themselves, swollen and disfigured as they were, and lying in heaps on every side, was as awful to the spectator as that deadly, nauseating atmosphere which robbed the battlefield of its glory, the survivors of their victory, and the wounded of what little chance of life was left to them. (Maust, p. 376)*

The odor was so pervasive that visitors could smell Gettysburg before they could see the village. In an effort to mask the odor residents carried bottles of strong-scented oils such as penny-royal or peppermint and rubbed the oil under their noses. (Gudmestad, p. 64)

Burial of the Federal dead happened fairly quickly; most were buried by July 5<sup>th</sup>. This was also when the first photographers, a team of three led by Alexander Gardner, arrived on the scene and explains why few photographs of dead Union soldiers exist. Gardner spent his first day making images on the George Rose farm, one of the last areas of the battlefield to be cleared of the dead. On the next day he photographed at Devil's Den and Little Round Top. (Sheldon, p. 169) The photographs are compelling accompaniments to the descriptions of eyewitnesses. **[Slides # 35-55]**

In the 1860's there were rather strong cultural conventions regarding the treatment and burial of the dead. By necessity, they were mostly ignored at Gettysburg. The burial of the dead was quick, often haphazard, and with next to no documentation. Some individual graves were marked with wooden boards with the names inscribed in pencil that soon became weather-faded. The more typical form of burial was this on July 4<sup>th</sup>, as described by Sears:

*The burial parties dug long trenches and, after separating Rebel from Yankee, without ceremony piled the bodies several layers deep and threw dirt over them. Charles Morgan of the Second Corps staff reported that all the Confederate corpses he saw had been plundered. The orders were to keep counts, but this was not always done, particularly for the enemy. Sometimes little markers were put up designating at least the units of the Federal dead, but for the most part these mass burials were classified as unknowns. (Sears, p. 473)*

Hess provides the dimensions of the trenches as, "8 feet wide by 3 feet deep; often as many as 80 in a trench; the dead rarely were dragged more than 25 feet; often the trenches were as little as 18 inches deep." (Hess, p. 345) **[Slide # 56]**

Once rail service was restored to the town of Gettysburg, many visitors, families and friends arrived to seek loved ones. In some cases they found them in the field hospitals; in other instances they wandered the battlefield in search of a grave with only the sketchiest information regarding its location. The desire to recover the bodies and

provide them with a proper burial, often in a family plot back home, was very strong. Many northern states sent representatives and some provided funds to assist in the recovery of their native sons. Due to the lack of information, however, this proved to be an immense task and only about 700 Union bodies and a couple of dozen Confederates were transported home by 1864. (Coco, p. 128) This was aided by a number of undertakers who showed up after the battle and provided coffins, ice, and rudimentary embalming so that the bodies could be shipped home. **[Slides # 57 & 58]** Ultimately, the remains of as many as 1,500 Federal soldiers may have been removed from the battlefield and shipped home. (Coco, p. 110)

There never was a complete record of the burials on the Gettysburg battlefield; conditions made that impossible. Nevertheless, around mid-July an effort was made to document the graves. Gettysburg attorney, David Wills, an agent for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania authorized to collect Union dead from the battlefield and have them shipped home if a family requested it, commissioned a detailed map. (Coco, p. 96) The map was drawn up by S.G. Elliott of Philadelphia and, although of questionable accuracy, provides a compelling overview of the battlefield burials. The section of the map that includes "The Angle" where Pickett's Charge culminated illustrates the graves of the 1,242 Confederates that Sheldon says were buried in trenches just west of the Union lines. (Sheldon, p. 163) **[Slide # 59]**

On July 25<sup>th</sup>, Jane Boswell Moore toured the battlefield along the Second Corps lines, in the area just mentioned above. She recorded this description of Federal and Confederate graves:

*...the hillock of graves—the little forest of head boards scattered everywhere, and there over that field, the piles of empty haversacks, the caps and blue coats everywhere, and the guns used by hands now cold in death,.... Two immense trenches filled with rebel dead, and surrounded with grey caps, attest the cost to them. The earth is scarcely thrown over them, and skulls with ghastly grinning teeth appear, now that the few spadefuls of earth are washed away. In these trenches one may plainly see the rise and swell of human bodies... (Maust, p. 673)*

Many Union graves were not in much better shape than those of the Confederates described above. Tales circulated of feral hogs uprooting bodies and consuming the remains. **[Slide #60]** The conditions of the graves, particularly those of Union soldiers, offended Victorian sensitivities and because few states had the resources to bring the bodies home, and since so many graves were unidentified, interest grew in establishing a cemetery in which the Federal graves could be consolidated. On July 24, 1863 Attorney David Wills wrote to Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin and proposed the establishment of a soldiers' cemetery on ground adjacent to the Evergreen Cemetery on Cemetery Hill. (Sheldon, p. 232) With his support, and that of the executives of other northern states, about seventeen acres of land was purchased and "landscape gardener" William Saunders, an employee of the

U.S. Department of Agriculture, was commissioned to design what became the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg. **[Slide # 61]**

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1863 Frank W. Biesecker, with a low bid of \$1.59 per body, was awarded the contract to exhume and rebury the Union dead. Altogether, there were 3,354 reinterments to the national cemetery; of those 1,664 were unknown by name and 979 were unknown by both name and state. (Coco, p. 122) Although the cemetery was dedicated on November 19<sup>th</sup>, the work of moving the remains was not completed until April of 1864. The month before the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania had incorporated the cemetery and it was not until June 20, 1871 that it became property of the United States Government. (Coco, p. 111)

By the early 1870's a number of "Ladies' Memorial Associations" were forming across the South and interest grew in bringing home the remains of the Confederate soldiers from Gettysburg. That interest was also spurred by an 1871 story published in the south that visitors to the battlefield had been told that unless the remains were removed by the fall land owners intended "...ploughing up the land and grinding the bones for fertilizer purposes..." (Coco, p. 136) Whether true or not the story proved to be an effective fundraiser and during the spring and summer remains were exhumed and shipped to Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina. **[Slide # 62]**

In November 1871 the Hollywood Cemetery Memorial Association initiated arrangements to bring the remains of Virginians home. A delegate from the association visited the battlefield and noted that the large old burial trenches in front of "The Angle" were hard to locate. He noted that all around were, "skeletons which had been ploughed up and now lay strewn about the surface." (Coco, p. 138) Apparently the threat was real. The first shipment of remains from Gettysburg arrived in Richmond on June 15, 1872 and consisted of 279 wooden boxes containing 708 Confederate skeletons. One of those belonged to Private James Maurice Moore. He is now buried in the Gettysburg section of the Confederate portion of Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond along with about 2,000 other casualties of the Battle of Gettysburg. Altogether, 3,320 Confederate remains were removed from the battlefield. **[Slides # 62-66]**

In the town of Gettysburg, things slowly returned to normal.

*It took months for the debris of battle to be cleared. Area farmers suffered losses to their crops, livestock, and property, such as fences and buildings. Some now had cemeteries on their farmland. The residents of Gettysburg suffered economic losses, including damaged or stolen personal property, buildings marked by projectiles, and business losses. Stores had been looted or ransacked. Private homes had been entered and searched, and many items had been stolen or confiscated. Government warehouses were raided and the contents taken by the Confederate army. Yet as the days moved on, daily commerce resumed. (Sheldon, p. 221)*

A little over 800 residents filed claims with the Federal government for losses incurred due to General Lee's invasion. (Coco, p. 362) In Adams County alone, claims amounted to over \$550,000. (Sheldon, p. 246) The claims were handled very slowly and few claimants received much if any compensation. One example will illustrate: Jacob Weikert, whose farm was just east of Little Round Top, filed a claim for \$2,756 for damage to his crops and loss of other property. Eleven years later he was awarded \$36. (Gudmestad, p. 61) Today, FEMA claims just seem to take as long to process.

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# “July 4, 1863”

SPHEX Club Presentation

January 3, 2013

Kimball Payne

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NORTHERN PORTION OF GETTYSBURG,

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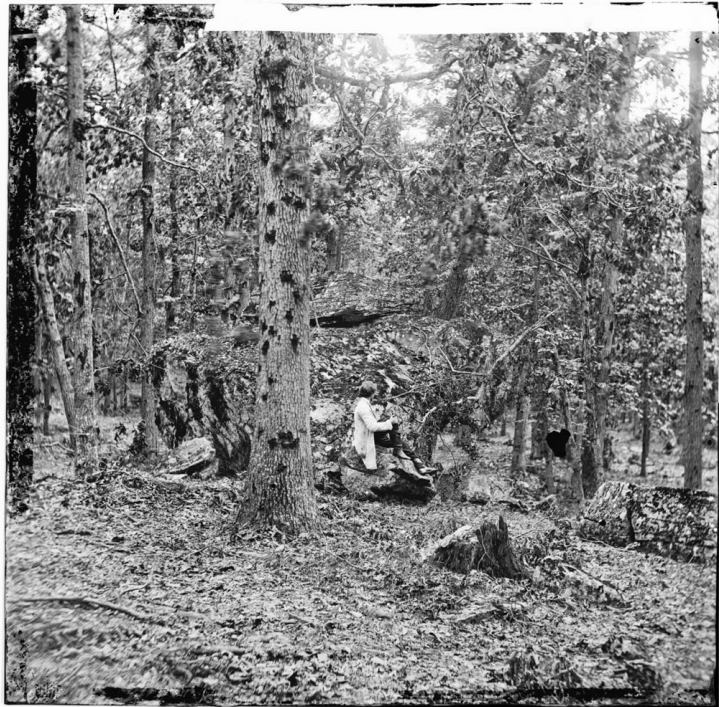
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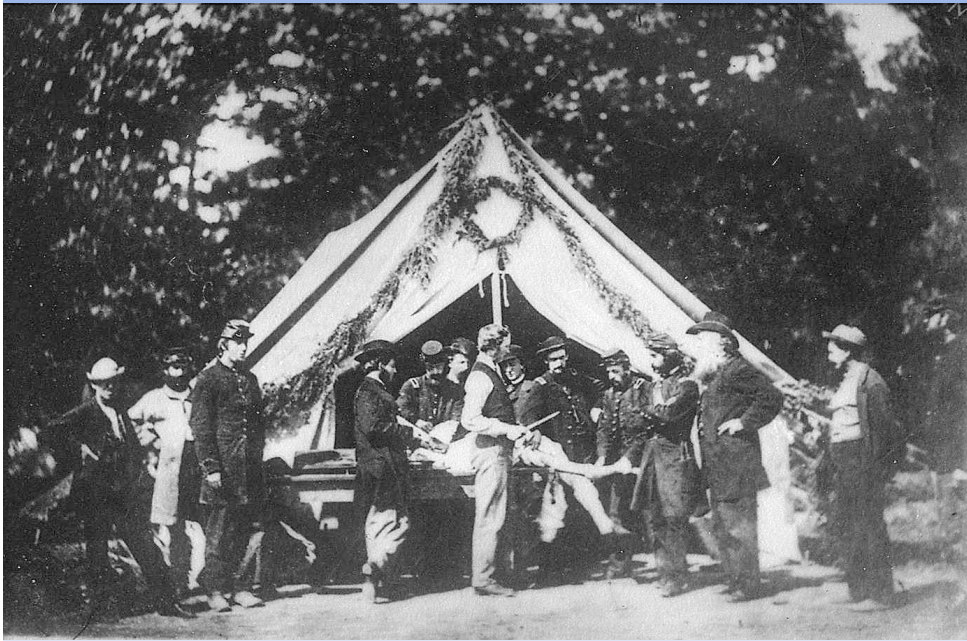
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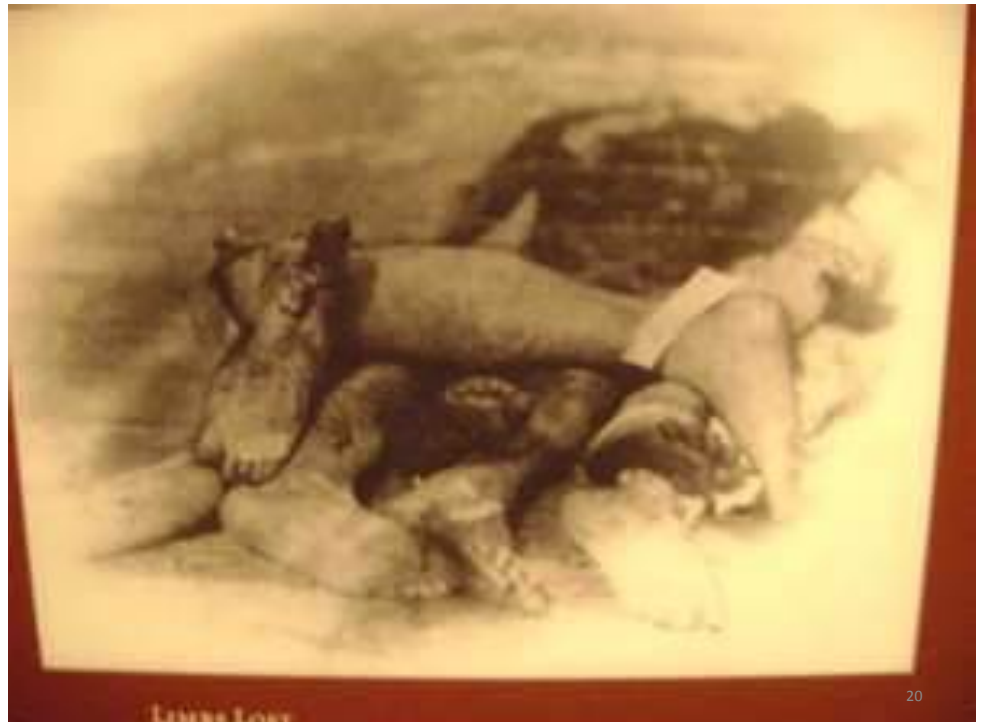
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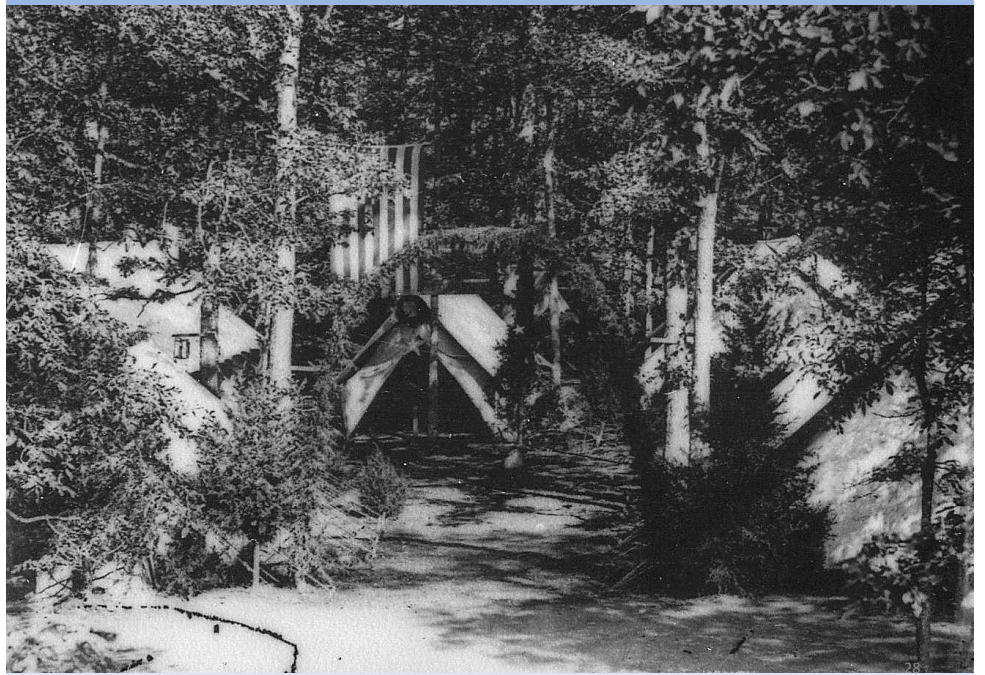
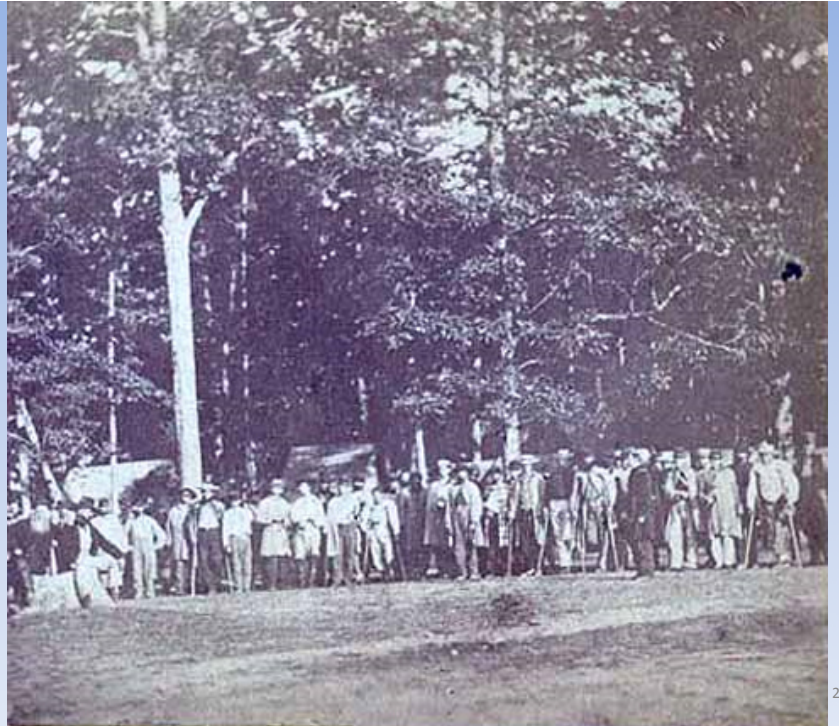


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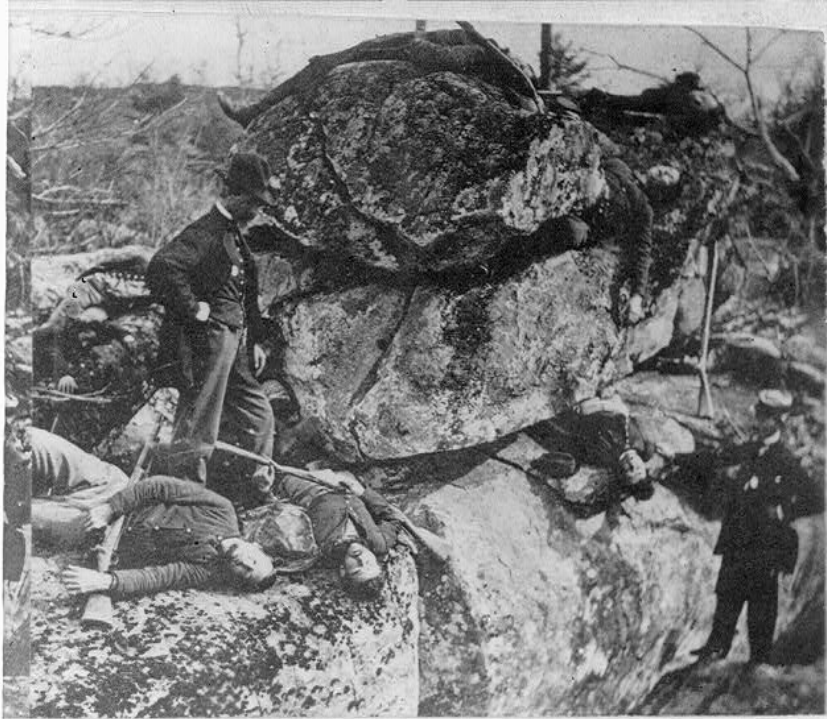
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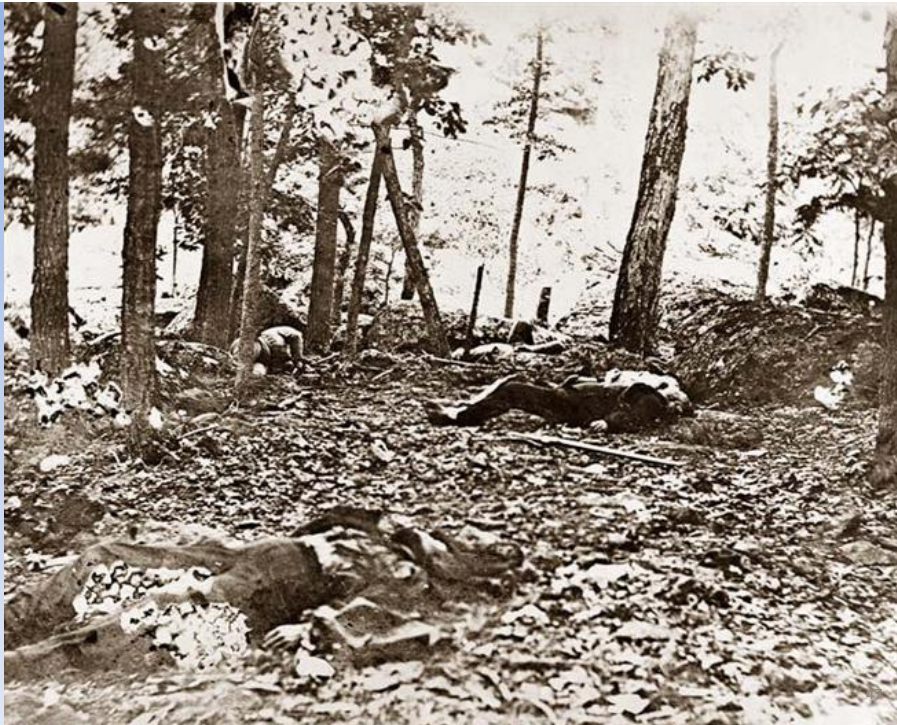
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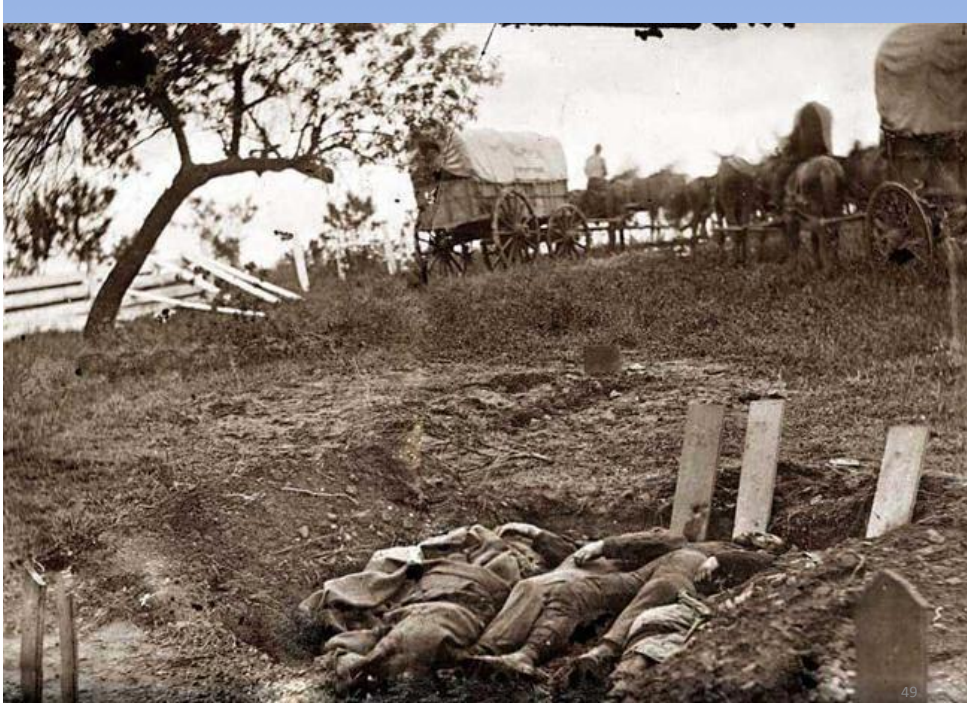


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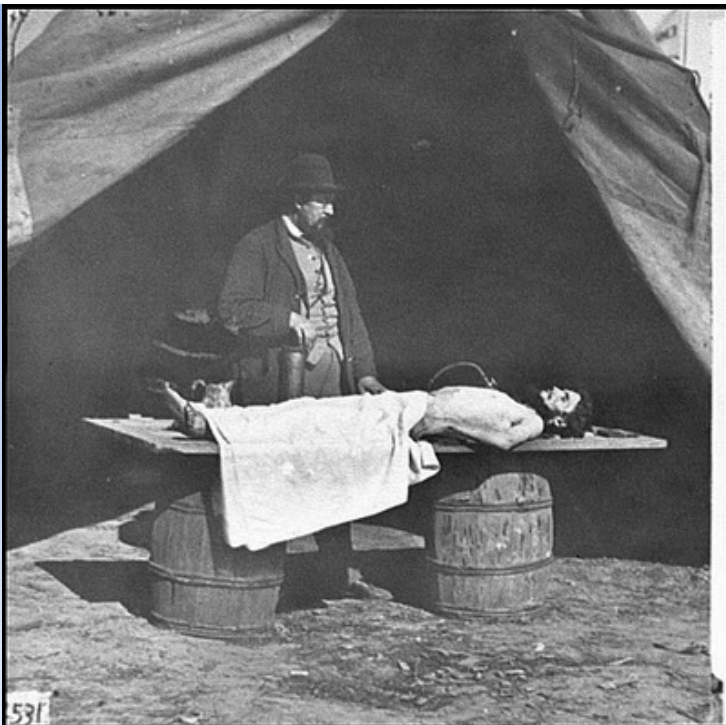




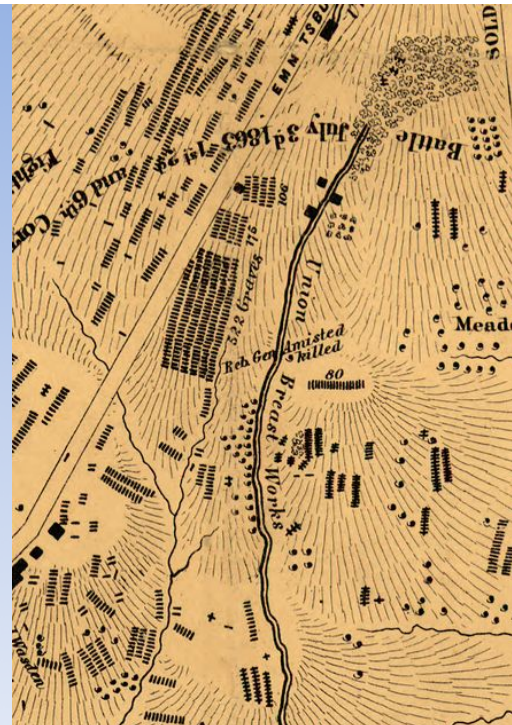
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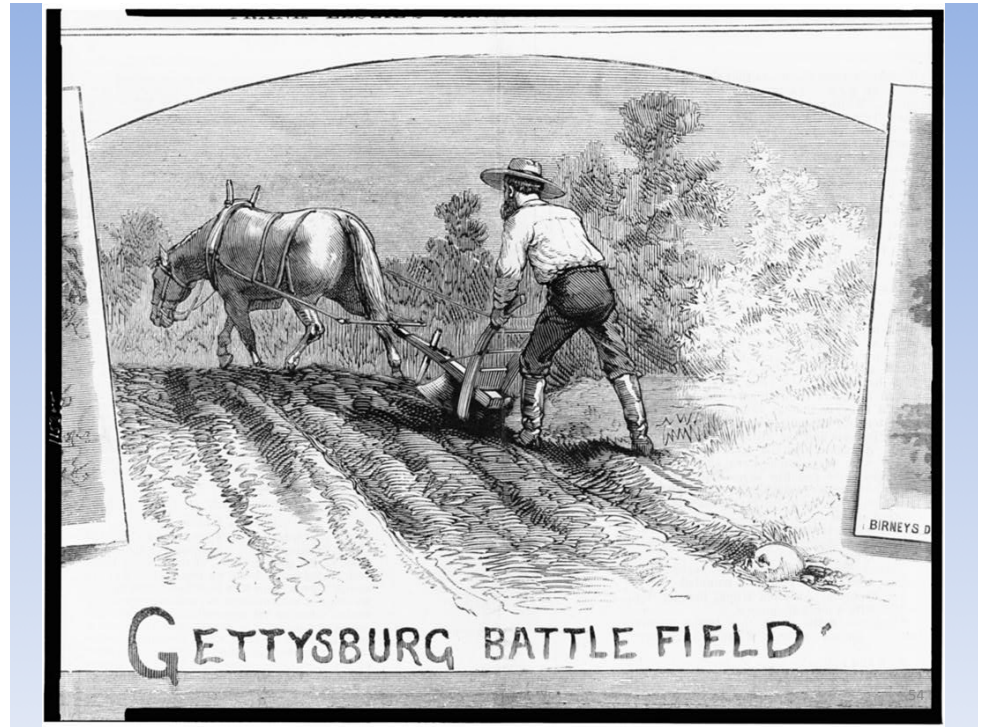
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