

THE ANTIETAM JOURNAL

Vol. IX
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A Publication of the Antietam Institute



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Kevin R. Pawlak
Editor

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The Antietam Journal is a biannual publication of the latest research, interpretation, and stories of the Maryland Campaign of September 1862 that highlights the participants involved—soldier and civilian—and the lasting impact of the campaign on American history.

The Antietam Institute was established in 2021 as a member-based, educational, and philanthropic 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Institute educates the public on the central role of the Maryland Campaign of 1862 and Battle of Antietam as a major turning point of the Civil War that directly resulted in the issuance of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Antietam Institute-sponsored conferences, symposiums, publications, and leadership forums facilitate collaborative learning and knowledge exchange, create unique opportunities for discovery and inspire further historical research.

Manuscript Submissions

Send manuscript submissions to the editor at editor2@antietaminstitute.org. Feature articles should be approximately 10,000 words in length (including footnotes).

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The Editor's Column

by Kevin R. Pawlak

Antietam's story continues to grow. This past spring, on the same weekend and 200 miles apart, two conferences were held simultaneously. Their subject: Antietam and the Maryland Campaign. The Antietam Institute hosted its spring symposium in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Meanwhile, in Carnegie, Pennsylvania, the Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall, home to an excellently preserved Grand Army of the Republic post, hosted their annual Civil War Symposium.

With modern vehicles and interstate highways, 200 miles might seem close enough to worry that these two events might compete with one another. Instead, both sold out!

Antietam and the Maryland Campaign are seeing a resurgence of interest and research. New interpretations based on original research as well as looking at the same old facts through different perspectives have fueled an intense relook at the campaign. I hope this latest volume of *The Antietam Journal*, our publications, and previous volumes of the journal have contributed to this in some way. Just like those pesky infomercials, there's more on the way. Some of that new research is right in your hands. Volume IX of *The Antietam Journal* brings to light more new-found sources and challenges long-held perceptions about the Battle of Antietam.

To kick things off, Steven R. Stotelmyer returns to the journal with a behemoth piece examining the movements of Major General George B. McClellan during the operations along Antietam Creek. This is not your grandfather's story of McClellan at Antietam.

Historians Olin D. Zimmet and Dr. Allen C. Guelzo unearthed an excellent set of letters from James Silliman in the 28th Pennsylvania Infantry. Silliman not only wrote down what he experienced at Antietam, but he mapped it out, too. Both Silliman's words and map of the Antietam battlefield are published here for the first time.

Returning author John Schildt provides an overview of the many Presidents who have visited the Antietam battlefield between 1862 and more modern times. Before you flip to the article, can you guess who the last President was that visited Antietam?

For the size of the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, you would think the organizers of those indispensable sources for Civil War students published everything. Anyone who has researched in an archive

knows how much more is out there beyond what is printed on those pages. Darin Wipperman gives us the Antietam report of Brigadier General Truman Seymour, which cannot be found in the *ORs*.

Antietam is a big topic. We will never know all the stories of each individual who experienced the battle. Joseph Stahl and Matthew Borders have resurrected the story of one Maryland soldier from dusty compiled service records in our Antietam Artifacts section.

Next, lace up your boots and walk South Mountain in the footsteps of Major General Daniel Harvey Hill on the morning of September 14, 1862. Michael Hill pieces together Hill's account of that frantic morning and tells you how to get where Hill went in this journal's In Antietam's Footsteps article.

Laura Marfut sat down with the Antietam Institute's first president and executive director, Chris Vincent. Chris had familial connections to Antietam long before the Antietam Institute was ever thought of. Find out more about both in our Institute Interview.

Lastly, Chris caps off this edition with a Then and Now comparison of a familiar view of the Antietam battlefield. It has been (and it is not over) a long and hard fight to preserve the serenity of the Antietam battlefield. These Then and Now photos show the successes of battlefield preservation at Antietam thanks to many individuals and groups.

Enjoy this latest volume of *The Antietam Journal*. Remember, the story of Antietam is never complete. Go out and find a new story or a new take on an old story. Maybe you will see your name in the Table of Contents of a future *Antietam Journal*.

See you on the battlefield!

Kevin R. Pawlak

Antietam Institute Announcements

Antietam Institute Historical Research Center

We live in a digital age with thousands of sources at our fingertips. Unfortunately, there is rarely one place to go to find everything we are looking for. The Antietam Institute's website is now home to the Historic Research Center, a repository to collect and share digital copies of historical and contemporary material about the Battle of Antietam and the related Maryland Campaign.

The Historical Research Center has sources grouped into three categories: unit histories, images, and documents. This is a living resource that will continue to have sources added to it, so continue to visit the page to find more resources. Visit the Historical Research Center at <https://antietaminstitute.org/hrc/s/HRC/page/welcome> to find these valuable resources or to submit some of your own items for inclusion in this exciting digital resource.

2025 Fall Conference, October 3-5, 2025: "Beyond the Battle: Civilians, Casualties, and Remembering the Bloodiest Day in American History"

On September 17, 1862, two large armies, over 100,000 men, clashed in the fields and farmland around Sharpsburg in the bloodiest one-day battle in American history. The result was over 23,000 casualties; killed, wounded or missing. Homes, churches, and barns became hospitals, some in operation for months. The Federal army occupied the area for six weeks, living off the land and using up what little resources had remained. Years later veterans returned to remember their experiences and visit where it occurred.

Join us for our three-day conference as we focus on the aftermath of the battle from the civilians' and veterans' perspective. We'll visit the farmsteads, hospital sites, the headquarters locations, and the communities of Sharpsburg and Shepherdstown to understand the crucial role the civilians played and the veteran's commemoration of the battle.

Registration is now open.

2026 Spring Symposium, April 10-11, 2026: "A Comparison of the Antietam and Gettysburg Campaigns"

The 2026 Spring Symposium, "A Comparison of the Antietam and Gettysburg Campaigns," is set for April 10-11, 2026.

Speakers will include Doug Douds, D. Scott Hartwig, Dr. James Broomall, George Franks, Dr. Jennifer Murray, and Dr. Carol Reardon. The event will take place at the Storer Ballroom at Shepherd University on that Saturday, with an optional excursion on Friday afternoon before, exploring the Battle of Falling Waters and the retreat from Gettysburg.

The final agenda and further details coming in August.

Registration will open during the 2025 Fall Conference in October and will close when all the spots are full.

Keep your eyes peeled for the Antietam Institute's next publication, *Armies of Antietam*.

Finishing touches are being done on *Armies of Antietam*, Antietam Institute's next member publication.

Armies of Antietam: The Union and Confederate Order of Battle at the Battle of Antietam is a comprehensive look at the organization of both armies during the Maryland Campaign of September 1862. This work focuses on each regiment of the Federal and Confederate armies as well as biographical information on the regimental commanders. Each regimental entry includes information on service before, during and after the Maryland Campaign. The work also provides for each regiment where its companies were organized, how it was armed, and the casualties it suffered during the Maryland Campaign.

This book is the product of years of study by longtime Civil War historian Robert Gottschalk, with editorial assistance from Antietam Battlefield Guide Jim Smith. It is the fourth in a series of books focused on different aspects of the campaign, including *Brigades of Antietam* (edited by Bradley Gottfried), *Artillery of Antietam* (by James A. Rosebrock), and *Commanders of Antietam* (edited by Kevin Pawlak and Bradley Gottfried), all published by the Antietam Institute.

Little Mac at the Front

by Steven R. Stotelmyer

Whatever may have been his real military ability and capacity, General McClellan's re-appearance at the head of the army had a most beneficial effect upon it. Its morale immediately underwent an astonishing change for the better. His name had a magical effect upon the men, and every time he reviewed, or even showed himself among them, they cheered him wildly.¹

The Historical Consensus

The popular image of Major General George B. McClellan ("Little Mac") at the Battle of Antietam was established 20 years after the battle by Francis W. Palfrey in the first serious historical study of the conflict. Palfrey, a veteran of the battle, laid the foundation for the historical consensus regarding McClellan's whereabouts on September 17: "He passed the whole day, till toward the middle of the afternoon, when all the fighting was over, on the high ground near Fry's house," wrote Palfrey (misspelling the last name of Philip Pry), "where he had some glasses strapped to the fence, so that he could look in different directions."² In what some consider the first true biography of McClellan, former army engineer and Civil War veteran Peter S. Michie, agreed with Palfrey. The only time Michie made mention of the general moving from his headquarters on September 17 was "About the middle of the afternoon McClellan went to the right to confer with his commanders on that part of the field and determine upon a course of action."³

This was echoed shortly before the centennial of Antietam by the popular historian Bruce Catton:

Back by the Pry house sat McClellan, getting the messages of triumph and disaster from the wigwagging signal flags, studying the far-off slopes through his telescope, sending his aides here and there, watching the battle that he had

1 Jasper N. Searles and Mathew F. Taylor, *History of the First Regiment Minnesota Volunteer Infantry 1861-1864* (Easton & Masterman Printers, 1916), 183.

2 Francis W. Palfrey, *The Antietam and Fredericksburg* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1882), 119.

3 Peter S. Michie, *General McClellan* (D. Appleton and Company, 1915), 424.

planned, but not laying his own hand upon it...McClellan, quiet, composed, thoughtful, almost detached, listening with an inner ear for the still voice of caution, and doubt, letting the battle go on without him...McClellan had stayed at the Pry house all day except for one brief excursion to the right to talk with Sumner.⁴

Another author writing shortly before the centennial, retired military officer and publishing house founder Edward J. Stackpole, made his contribution to the historical consensus in 1959:

One wonders at the lack of imagination and ingenuity displayed by General McClellan, as he watched the battle through binoculars from the garden of the Pry House on the far side of Antietam Creek...It was a perfectly safe spot, but it was much too distant from the battlefield for the Union commander to be able to react instantaneously and effectively, as Lee was wont to do, when it was minutes, not hours, that counted.⁵

Stackpole was followed a quarter-century later by popular author Stephen W. Sears. "General McClellan had established his headquarters tents on the lawns of Philip Pry," wrote Sears, "A little redan of fence rails had been erected for protection and easy chairs were brought from Mr. Pry's parlor for the comfort of the high command." Unlike Lee, who gave his army "the leadership their courage deserved," Little Mac, "shrank from his paramount responsibility ... playing the idle spectator rather than the general commanding."⁶

The comparison and contrast between Lee and McClellan, accepted as fact in the historical consensus, reached its zenith in 1995 with the publication of *Death in September: The Antietam Campaign*. In it, historian Perry D. Jamieson, claimed:

4 Bruce Catton, *The Army of the Potomac: Mr. Lincoln's Army* (Doubleday & Company Inc., 1951), 291-92, 313.

5 Edward J. Stackpole, *From Cedar Mountain To Antietam* (The Stackpole Company, 1959), 389, 404.

6 Stephen W. Sears, *Landscape Turned Red, The Battle of Antietam* (Ticknor & Fields, 1983), 195, 309-10. No documentation for easy chairs being brought from Pry's parlor is found in the sources cited by Sears.



*Sketch of the Pry House from a photograph taken in 1886.
(Battles and Leaders of the Civil War)*

Lee's staff pitched their headquarters tents in a woodlot at the western edge of Sharpsburg, but they rarely found their leader there on Wednesday, September 17, 1862 ... The commander of the Army of Northern Virginia spent most of the hours of combat at the front with his officers and men ... In contrast to Lee, The Union commander made his headquarters in the substantial two-story red-brick residence of the prosperous Philip Pry, more than half a mile east of the Antietam, and rarely ventured from it during the battle ... it is extremely doubtful that McClellan saw much of the battle, other than distant troop formations and their flags.⁷

Confusion still exists in the popular literature of Antietam as to what role the Pry House played in McClellan's conduct of the battle. In the latest comprehensive history of Antietam, historian D. Scott Hartwig departed somewhat from the popular image established by Palfrey.

⁷ Perry D. Jamieson, *Death in September: The Antietam Campaign* (Ryan Place Publishers, 1995), 46.

While acknowledging recent scholarship that places the army's administrative headquarters in Keedysville, Hartwig, like those before him, makes mention of the Pry house as McClellan's, "battle headquarters," "forward headquarters," "Pry farm headquarters," or "Pry house command post."⁸

The accepted historical consensus portrays a sedentary McClellan at Antietam. The notion persists that, unlike his counterpart, General Robert E. Lee, who visited several locations at the front during the battle, the supposedly timid and cowardly McClellan remained at his headquarters on the knoll at the Pry house. Some authors, such as Pulitzer Prize winner James M. McPherson, would have their readers believe that McClellan "too seldom led" his troops on the battlefield.⁹ Popular author Stephen W. Sears declared, "It was not his [McClellan's] habit to lead or observe from up front ... Indeed, he had never been on the field when his army went into a major action."¹⁰ Perry D. Jamieson asserted that McClellan purposely decided, "to direct the combat from long distance, spending his time at the Pry house rather than with his corps commanders and their subordinates."¹¹ In the accepted historical consensus of Antietam, the hapless McClellan can only follow the progress of the battle through the limited perspective provided from the Pry house.¹²

September 15, 1862

A historical consensus is an agreed upon opinion and is not necessarily supported by the historical record. To dispute the accepted consensus of the sedentary McClellan, the general who never led from the front, we begin with events on September 15, the day after the Battle of South Mountain. During the late afternoon McClellan rode along the Boonsboro-Sharpsburg Turnpike to the eastern bluffs above Antietam

8 Thomas G. Clemens, "In Search of McClellan's Headquarters," *Civil War Times*, vol. 55, June 2016, 26-33; D. Scott Hartwig, *I Dread the Thought of the Place: The Battle of Antietam and the End of the Maryland Campaign* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2023), 208, 392, 405, 456.

9 James M. McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom, Antietam: The Battle That Changed the Course of the Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 116.

10 Sears, *Landscape Turned Red*, 157.

11 Jamieson, *Death in September*, 57.

12 Donald E. Bailey and the Editors of Time-Life Books, *The Bloodiest Day, The Battle of Antietam* (Time-Life Books, 1984), 86; Hartwig, *I Dread the Thought of the Place*, 211.

Creek. In front of McClellan were long columns of troops, either marching in the roadway or resting by the roadside. At the approach of the general and his staff, the weary men gave way for him, and at the same moment the troops by the roadside sprang to their feet to cheer him on, throwing their caps in the air, cheering and yelling until their throats were sore.

It was the kind of event that became more embellished with the passage of time. Therefore, we draw upon three contemporary accounts written by soldiers in the ranks in 1862. These descriptions range from the eloquent to the inarticulate depending upon the grammatical skills of the writer.

Private Charles McClenthen of the 26th New York Infantry recalled:

While we lay here, the road was almost constantly filled with troops passing towards Sharpsburg, and during the time McClellan with his staff and a large cavalry escort came up. His approach was announced to us long before he appeared in sight, by cheer after cheer given by the various regiments, as he passed them. As he neared us, and our regiment took up the shout of welcome that preceded him, it seemed to me as if I never saw a man whose open smile, and sparkling eye, more clearly denoted the inward satisfaction he must have felt, at this heartfelt expression of unbounded confidence in and admiration for him, entertained by the whole army.¹³

Private Mathew Hurlenger with the 56th Pennsylvania Infantry was also by the roadside and witnessed the event. “[M]cclan past [passed] as I was writing this & there was much cheering along the road by every regt,” Hurlenger jotted in his diary, and then added, “The army have good courage since he is commander.” Those marching in the road were just as deeply moved as well. “General McClellan came on behind us, and such a cheering as that as greeted him, I never heard before,” wrote Captain Dennis McGee of the 13th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry. He added, “This greatly buoyed up the spirits of our boys, as we have been

13 Charles S. McClenthen, *A Sketch of the Campaign in Virginia and Maryland, from Cedar Mountain to Antietam by a Soldier of the 26th N.Y.V.* (Masters & Lee Printers, 1862), 34-35.

marching with artillery most of the day, and were almost smothered with the dust they made.”¹⁴

When he arrived near Sharpsburg on September 15, McClellan occupied such an advanced position on a hilltop that it caused him to come under enemy artillery fire. While positioned on “a height in front of Keedysville,” McClellan, together with generals Fitz John Porter, Joseph Hooker, Edwin V. Sumner, Ambrose E. Burnside, Jacob D. Cox, and staff soon found themselves the target of Confederate guns on the other side of Antietam Creek. “No sooner had we shown ourselves on the hill than the enemy opened on us with rifled guns,” wrote McClellan, “and ... his firing was very good.”¹⁵ Brigadier General Cox, who became one of McClellan’s most ardent post war critics, not only confirmed the event, but uncharacteristically praised the general in his post war writing by noting, “with satisfaction the cool and business-like air with which McClellan made his examinations under fire.”¹⁶

Contemporary witnesses likewise testified to McClellan’s coolness under fire. The journal of McClellan’s aide Lieutenant Colonel David H. Strother tells the tale:

The Commander remained on the hill, and continued his observations for half an hour or more under an incessant fire, the enemy’s shells skimming the crest to the right and left of him in nervous proximity.” Many officers seemed annoyed that he should thus needlessly expose himself, but I commend it, for an intelligent soldiery sees and remarks a general’s unruffled demeanor under fire. The firing continued as long as the chief stood there.¹⁷

An anecdote about McClellan from *New York Tribune* correspondent Albert D. Richardson provides further evidence of the general on the battlefield. The *Tribune* was a Republican newspaper, and

14 Mathew H. Hurlenger Diary, September 15, 1862, Regimental Files, Antietam National Battlefield Library, hereafter ANBL; Dennis McGee to Gazette, September 21, 1862, *Mauch Chunk Gazette*, October 9, 1862.

15 George B. McClellan, *McClellan’s Own Story* (Charles L. Webster & Company, 1887), 586.

16 Jacob D. Cox, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 2 vols. (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1900), vol. 1, 300.

17 David Hunter Strother, “Personal Recollections of the War by a Virginian, Tenth Paper,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, February 1868, vol. 36, 280.

correspondent Richardson was no friend to Democrat George McClellan. However, his paper's politics didn't stop him from relating an unusual incident that spoke highly of McClellan's character. With McClellan's staff at the army headquarters in Keedysville late on the night of September 15, Richardson noted that Brigadier General Randolph B. Marcy, McClellan's father-in-law and chief of staff, had secured lodging at the home of a "Union resident" for McClellan. However, McClellan chose not to use the lodging secured by Marcy. As Richardson observed, "But an hour after a message was received that the general thought it better to sleep upon the ground, near the bivouac-fires, as an example for the troops."¹⁸

Richardson's reporting is corroborated by 2nd Lieutenant Robert S. Robertson of the 93rd New York Infantry (McClellan's headquarters guard). "Gen. McClellan," wrote Robinson, "did not occupy his tent that night, but slept with some of his aides on the line of battle." It would seem, Little Mac, as his troops endearingly called him, was on the field on the eve of one of the greatest battles in our nation's history.¹⁹

September 16, 1862

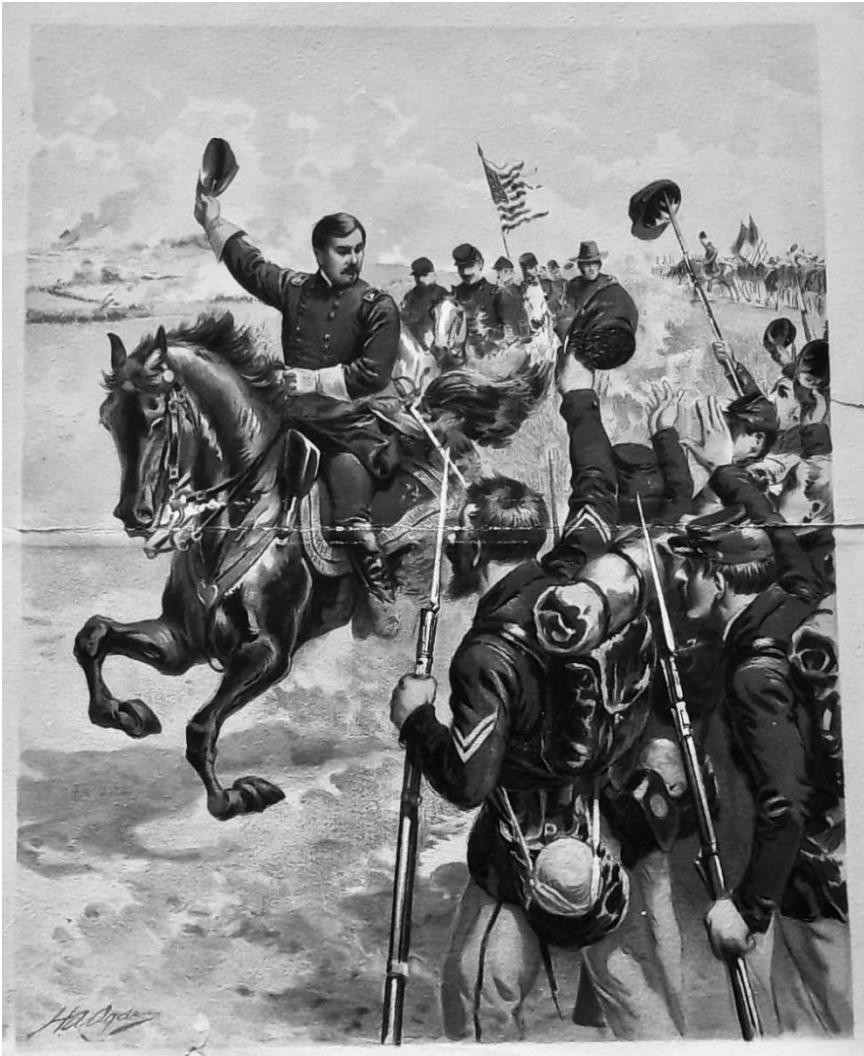
During the morning of September 16, while inspecting 9th Corps locations on Antietam Creek in the vicinity of the Lower Bridge, McClellan again came under enemy artillery fire. "I rode to the left of the line to satisfy myself that the troops were properly posted," stated McClellan. He was accompanied by his Chief of Artillery, Brigadier General Henry J. Hunt, Chief of Engineers, Captain James C. Duane, Assistant Adjutant General, Lieutenant Colonel Albert V. Colburn, "and a couple of orderlies." In postwar writing McClellan claimed, "I rode along the whole front, generally in front of our pickets ... Our small party drew the enemy's fire frequently, and developed the position of most of his batteries."²⁰

Although McClellan claimed he "went considerably beyond our actual and eventual left," because of the presence of Confederate pickets on September 16, it is uncertain how much of the creek may have been

18 Albert D. Richardson, *The Secret Service, The Field, The Dungeon, And The Escape* (American Publishing Company, 1865), 278-79.

19 Robert Stoddard Robertson, *Personal Recollections of the War, A Record of Service with the Ninety-Third New York Vol. Infantry* (Swain & Tate Co., 1895), 38.

20 McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, 588; *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 volumes (Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), hereafter *OR*, vol. 19 pt. 1, 54.



"McClellan at Antietam," by Henry A. Ogden. (Knight & Brown, 1897)

scouted. Nonetheless, if the veracity of Henry J. Hunt can be trusted, some of it was explored. As Hunt remembered "we forded the river to test the actual conditions," and, in the area tested, "nowhere did the water reach our saddle girths." As the average height to the lower girth of a horse's saddle is around 36 inches, or three feet, Hunt's observation regarding the depth of the water met at least one of the military textbook requirements for the usefulness of a ford. There is no way of knowing

exactly which ford McClellan and staff were testing, but one thing is certain: they were testing conditions somewhere in Antietam Creek.²¹

Several individuals in the 9th Corps documented Little Mac's scouting and the resultant Confederate artillery. Private George A. Hitchcock of the 21st Massachusetts Infantry recorded in his diary, "General McClellan, followed by a long staff of officers in brilliant uniforms and escort of cavalry, rides rapidly past us." Another 9th Corps Soldier, Captain James Wren of the 48th Pennsylvania Infantry, attested to the enemy artillery in his diary, "[T]hey opened fire on our regiment & shelled us out of our camp." Private Charles F. Johnston, with the 9th New York Zouaves, noted on September 16, "The rebels tried to shell us out this morning and our ambulances and baggage had to go to the rear. General McClellan just passed our camp, returning from the front ... He was seated on a brown horse and was surrounded by several officers."²²

Sometime around mid-morning, while overseeing the positioning of long-range artillery, McClellan again came under Confederate artillery fire. On the eastern side of Antietam Creek, a ridge ran parallel with the stream on both the northern and southern sides of the Middle Bridge. These bluffs afforded expansive views of the entire battlefield that naturally lent themselves for use by Union artillery. During the morning of September 16, long range artillery batteries were being placed on the ridge north and south of the Boonsboro-Sharpsburg Turnpike. Because these batteries were stationary throughout the battle, the artillery located on these bluffs came to be known in the lexicon of the battle as "The Guns of Position."²³

First Lieutenant Samuels N. Benjamin's Battery E, 2nd United States Artillery, was placed on the high bluff south of the turnpike near the Middle Bridge. As Benjamin reported on September 20, "On the 16th ... the battery was placed in position ... firing a few shots at bodies of the enemy." The *New York Tribune's* Special Correspondent, also reported

21 McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, 588; Henry J. Hunt to George B. McClellan, January 12, 1876, McClellan Papers, Library of Congress.

22 George A. Hitchcock, *From Ashby To Andersonville, The Civil War Diary and Reminiscences of George A. Hitchcock*, Ronald G. Watson, ed. (Savas Publishing Co., 1997), 21; James Wren, *Captain James Wren's Diary, From New Bern To Fredericksburg*, John Michael Priest, ed. (White Mane Publishing Company Inc., 1990), 70; Charles F. Johnson, *The Long Roll: By Charles F. Johnson One of The Hawkins Zouaves, 1861-1863* (The Roycrofters, 1911), 188.

23 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 206.

on September 20, “McClellan was on the hill where Benjamin’s battery was stationed and found himself suddenly under a rather heavy fire.” Benjamin did not mention McClellan, but he did confirm the enemy cannonade, “At about 10:30 a.m. the enemy opened fire on us ... We returned fire.”²⁴

Sergeant Thomas F. Galway with the 8th Ohio Infantry may have witnessed this artillery exchange involving McClellan. As part of Sumner’s 2nd Corps, Galway’s regiment was positioned on the north side of the turnpike near the northern Guns of Position. Galway described the location of the 2nd Corps being “along the reverse slope of a low ridge which ran parallel to Antietam Creek.” Upon the ridge Sergeant Galway observed the Union artillery “firing at the enemy position.” As Galway noted in his journal: “Once during a very heavy cannonade ... General McClellan passed along the face of the ridge. His gallant bearing compelled our admiration. We gave him a rousing cheer.” The immediate effect of the soldier’s cheering was Confederate artillery fire. “Everybody lay down close to the ground,” noted Galway, “It was our cheering which had announced to the enemy that the man on horseback was our General-in-Chief.” It is assumed that McClellan then passed from the northern ridge to the southern bluff to observe Benjamin’s Battery. If Galway’s observation was not the incident with Benjamin’s Battery, we can only assume he was describing another visit by Little Mac to the Guns of Position and yet another instance of McClellan under enemy artillery fire on September 16.²⁵

According to McClellan’s chief of artillery, Brigadier General Hunt, the commanding general’s next stop was Major General Burnside’s

24 Ezra A. Carman, *The Maryland Campaign of September 1862*, 3 vols., Thomas Clemens, ed. (Savas Beatie, 2012), vol. 2, 22; *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 436; “The Contest in Maryland,” *New York Tribune*, September 20, 1862. This reporting in the *Tribune* is credited to “Our Special Correspondent,” and is commonly attributed in the popular literature of the battle to George W. Smalley who filed the report in person. However, Smalley combined the reporting of fellow *Tribune* correspondents John Evans, Charles A. Page, and Albert D. Richardson (who went uncredited) into the writing while traveling to New York to file the piece. Therefore, it is impossible to identify which of the four correspondents actually observed McClellan with Benjamin’s battery. See Steven R. Stotelmyer, *Too Useful To Sacrifice, Reconsidering George B. McClellan’s Generalship in the Maryland Campaign from South Mountain to Antietam* (Savas Beatie, 2019), 178-79.

25 Thomas Francis Galway, *The Valient Hours*, Colonel W.S. Nye, ed. (The Stackpole Company, 1961), 37-38.

headquarters at Jacob F. Miller's farm 3/4 miles east of the Lower Bridge. In a post war letter to McClellan, Hunt wrote:

In the mean time will say as to Burnside at Antietam. We (you & I) rode together on the 16th and passing headquarters, dismounted and went in. You told him then that you wanted him to move up his command to the area near the bridge. After we left you asked me to note the time. I did so and entered it in my notebook. It was either noon or 1 p.m. I am not sure which. I think noon.²⁶

By 4:00 p.m. on September 16, Major General Joseph Hooker's 1st Corps was across the Antietam near the northern end of the battlefield. After he crossed the Upper Bridge, Hooker led two of his three divisions northwesterly along the Williamsport-Keedysville Road. "We had not proceeded over half a mile before the commanding general with his staff joined me," wrote Hooker, "apparently to see how we were progressing."²⁷

"I went to hurry them in person" was McClellan's explanation, and he accompanied Hooker's movement, "at the head of the column." Upon reaching a ridge about a mile from the Upper Bridge, McClellan halted the movement, and "indicated the new direction to be taken"—southwest directly across the John Hoffman Farm. This took Hooker's column toward the local Smoketown Road, which ran roughly due south almost 2.5 miles, passing through the East Woods before intersecting the Sharpsburg-Hagerstown Road near the Dunkard Church.²⁸

During the late afternoon, elements of Brigadier General George G. Meade's division moved in the lead southward along the Smoketown Road toward the East Woods, and westerly cross country toward the Joseph Poffenberger Farm. While the advance regiments of Meade's division became actively engaged against Confederates in the East Woods, Sergeant John W. Burnett of the 4th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry, near the Poffenberger Farm, remembered, "I heard clattering of horses hooves and sabers to our rear." The sound came from "a General and a few attendants crossing our column from the left rear." Burnett identified the general as "George B. [McClellan] whose face and

26 Hunt to McClellan, January 12, 1876, McClellan Papers, Library of Congress.

27 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 217.

28 McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, 590-91.

form was familiar to me.” Questioned later, Burnett emphatically stated, “I believed then that the General Officer was General McClellan and unless someone can convince me otherwise by stating who it was, I shall continue to so believe.”²⁹

As the old soldier was writing 30 years after the fact, any critic could summarily dismiss Burnett’s recollection alone as faulty. However, another eyewitness in Meade’s division also observed McClellan in the same general area. Corporal Abram L. Crist of the 5th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry remembered, “General McClellan and staff were coming on the field a short distance to our right and rear” as his regiment advanced to support the embattled troops in the East Woods. “The men saw him and commenced cheering,” which, as we have seen, was a common occurrence. But this time, Crist recalled, “[T]he General rose in his stirrups and waved his hand in such a manner as was understood and the cheering ceased at once.” Crist just caught a fleeting glimpse of the army commander because almost simultaneously the 5th Pennsylvania came under enemy artillery fire. “We received the contents of the Reb batteries, between Sam Poffenberger’s woods and the East Woods.”³⁰

Closely following behind General Meade were the other two divisions of the 1st Corps, those of generals James B. Ricketts and Abner Doubleday. Lieutenant George Breck, a member of Captain John A. Reynold’s Battery L, 1st New York Light Artillery, was moving with Doubleday. After crossing the Antietam at Pry’s Ford and “moving forward about two miles,” the battery came upon the Smoketown Road. The “heavy cannonading” and “infantry firing” of Meade’s engagement in the East Woods “was going on at intervals.” In a letter two days later, Breck observed:

While marching up the road, Gen. McClellan, with staff, rode by us, and what do you suppose ‘little Mac’ did? Why he saluted every driver individually, and every cannoneer, if marching singly, in the same way. And he did it with that pleasant smile of his, which has been so

29 John W. Burnett to John M. Gould, October 5, 1894, John M. Gould Papers, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH.

30 Abram L. Crist to John M. Gould, January 13, 1894, John M. Gould Papers, Dartmouth College. The Samuel Poffenberger Farm was located roughly 400 yards east of the Smoketown Road. The Joseph Poffenberger Farm was located slightly northwest of Samuel’s farmstead and roughly 750 yards west of the Smoketown Road.

often remarked about. And this was done by Major General George B. McClellan ... Which of our other great generals ever did this, while passing a company or artillery, roughly dressed and roughly looking from the effects of long marches, severe fighting and hardships of many kinds? Soldiers have written, and are writing constantly about the enthusiasm manifested at the sight of McClellan. It is all true, every word of it.³¹

In 1865 Archibald F. Hill, a former sergeant with the 8th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry, published a book about his wartime service. On September 16 his regiment also moved toward Joseph Poffenberger's Farm. "When our column turned," wrote Hill, "I observed that a general who did not belong to our division was directing the movements." According to Hill, as the unknown general rode close enough to be recognized "I discovered to my gratification that it was McCLELLAN." Perhaps Archibald Hill knew he would be questioned and so felt the need to capitalize McClellan's name. Little Mac's presence on the field led Hill to believe their current movement important, and it inspired the regiment, "with a ready desire to meet the enemy; for when McCLELLAN was with us we knew that all would be well."

As Hill remembered, several Union artillery batteries simultaneously deployed near the Joseph Poffenberger Farm. "A battery took position in the corn-field on our right," recalled Hill, "another on our left, and a third, well supported, went forward and took position in the wood." Sergeant Hill's description of the ground is 100 percent accurate. At the time of the battle there were several cornfields dotting the landscape. The Cornfield, one of the most famous landmarks of the battlefield, was located approximately 700 yards south of the Poffenberger Farm. However, there was another cornfield directly southwest just across the Poffenberger Farm Lane. To an observer at the farm this smaller cornfield would be on their right. Directly in front of the farm was another feature that became a famous Antietam landmark: the North Woods.

As Sergeant Hill recalled:

They [Union artillery] opened vigorously upon the rebels, when several additional rebel batteries joined in. Evening

31 George Breck to *Union*, September 18, 1862, *Union and Advertiser*, Rochester, NY, September 26, 1862.

was now approaching. We advanced to the margin of the wood and formed line of battle. A rebel battery far to the right opened a flank fire. The battle was terrible. Amid the storms of iron hail GENERAL McCLELLAN rode up to the battery in the cornfield on our right, and directed it to change its position in order that it might play upon the rebel battery on our flank to greater advantage.

Here, an eyewitness not only placed McClellan on the battlefield during Meade's "terrible" evening action on September 16, 1862, but also observed his active engagement positioning artillery and directing counter battery fire.³²

As the late afternoon of September 16 turned into evening, thousands of Union soldiers took up positions in the vicinity of the Poffenberger Farm. Since the farmstead was located on a high knoll of ground it naturally lent itself for use as an artillery position. General Hooker made his headquarters in the Poffenberger Barn. As we have seen, multiple primary sources place General McClellan not only in the vicinity of the Poffenberger Farm on September 16, but at several other battlefield locations as well. Even Francis Palfrey, who set the standard for the sedentary McClellan on September 17, paints a different picture on September 16. According to Palfrey, after ordering Hooker to cross the Antietam early in the afternoon, "He [McClellan] seems to have devoted the rest of the day to examinations of the ground, finding fords, clearing approaches, and hastening the arrival of the ammunition and supply trains."³³

32 Archibald F. Hill, *Our Boys, The Personal Experiences of a Soldier in the Army of the Potomac* (John E. Potter, 1865), 400-01. Battlefield landmarks and distance were taken from the official War Department Maps of the Battle of Antietam prepared for the Antietam Battlefield Board. These maps are also known as the "Carman-Cope Maps." Ezra A. Carman was the member of the Antietam Battlefield Board given the responsibility of mapping and marking the positions of the various units on the battlefield. Emmor B. Cope, Chief Engineer of Gettysburg National Park, and his staff completed the survey and base map of the battlefield. The fruits of their labor produced 14 maps showing the positions of both armies at the regimental level during various times of day. These War Department maps, henceforth cited as the Carman-Cope Maps, may be found at:

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3842am.gcw0248000/?st=gallery>.

33 Kevin M. Walker, *Antietam Farmsteads, A Guide to the Battlefield Landscape* (Western Maryland Interpretive Association, 2010), 24; Palfrey, *The Antietam and Fredericksburg*, 61.

It appears that McClellan intended to stay the night of September 16-17 on the field as he had the night before. His headquarters' baggage train was observed leading a column of wagons on the Boonsboro-Sharpsburg Turnpike. As the headquarters' wagon neared the slope behind the northern Guns of Position it came within view of 2nd Corps brigade commander Brigadier General Oliver O. Howard. A few "bursting shells" of Confederate artillery landed in the vicinity of the wagons and the officer in charge and, according to Howard, the officer "much disturbed, quickly countermanded his train and hurried it far off out of range to the rear."³⁴ Consequently, rather than return to army headquarters in Keedysville, it seems McClellan once again opted not to leave the front, sought shelter elsewhere, and chose the Pry House.

September 17, 1862: Field Headquarters

As we have seen, the historical consensus recounting of the Battle of Antietam usually portrays McClellan staying at the Pry House passively observing the battle during most of September 17. After the war, a story grew among McClellan's critics that the general was asleep in the Pry House during the first hours of the battle. At first light on the morning of September 17, a tremendous cannonade erupted between the combatants. Somehow McClellan, as the story goes, managed to sleep throughout the cacophony of the nearby artillery emanating from the Guns of Position. Allegedly, the slumbering McClellan kept an impatient General Sumner pacing about the outside of the house awaiting orders as late as 7:20 a.m.³⁵ Despite the assertions by some modern authors that "The story is plausible enough"³⁶ and "we shall never know whether McClellan was asleep,"³⁷ it is easily disproved.

General Sumner was not by himself. Captain Samuel Sumner, the general's son and aide, accompanied him along with "several others, perhaps the entire staff." After the war Sam recalled, "we sat on the front steps at the Fry [sic] house or stood about in the yard." Captain Sumner

34 Oliver O. Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard* (The Baker & Taylor Company, 1907), 291.

35 Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 171.

36 Stephen W. Sears, *George B. McClellan, The Young Napoleon* (Ticknor & Fields, 1988), 305.

37 Hartwig, *I Dred the Thought of The Place*, 210.

frankly admitted, “I don’t know if General McClellan was asleep or engaged inside.”³⁸

The historical record shows that McClellan was engaged inside the Pry House, and not asleep. McClellan stated in his report that, “Early on the morning of the 17th, I ordered General Burnside to form his troops and hold them in readiness to assault the bridge in his front.” Burnside, in his report confirmed his receipt of the order, “from the general commanding to make my dispositions to carry the stone bridge over the Antietam.” Brigadier General Jacob D. Cox, titular commander of the 9th Corps, reported, “About 7 o’clock orders were received from General Burnside to move forward the corps ... and hold it in readiness, to cross the stream, carrying the bridge,” If we follow the chain of command from Cox to Burnside to McClellan it becomes apparent that McClellan was awake and issuing orders when Sumner was anxiously pacing about the Pry House.³⁹

Further insight into conditions early on the morning of September 17 at the Pry House comes to us from Captain George F. Noyes of the 76th New York Infantry. Noyes, separated from his unit and unaware the 1st Corps had already crossed the Antietam, was attempting to find his regiment. As Noyes recalled:

A house upon a commanding elevation was pointed out to me as the head-quarters of General McClellan, and thither I at once proceeded, as the last resort for the information I sought. Here was the immense cavalry escort waiting in the rear, staff horses picketed by dozens around the house, while the piazza was crowded with officers seeking to read with their field glasses the history of the battle at the right.⁴⁰

A few points of Noyes’ observation warrant explanation. Because the Pry House sat on a commanding knoll of high ground it naturally lent itself as a location for observing parts of the battlefield, especially the Cornfield/Poffenberger Farm area on the northern part of the battlefield

38 Samuel S. Sumner to George B. Davis, April 4, 1897, typescript copy, Special Collections, Mugar Memorial Library, Boston University, Boston, MA.

39 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 63, 419, 424; Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 171-72, note 5.

40 George F. Noyes, *The Bivouac And The Battlefield; Or Campaign Sketches In Virginia And Maryland* (Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1864), 195-96.

to an observer's right. Therefore, it is not surprising that signal stations were established on both the high ground behind the Pry House, and the Poffenberger Farm. The Pry House signal station also had direct communication with signal stations on Elk Ridge and South Mountain. As Major Albert J. Myer, chief signal officer of the Army of the Potomac reported, all signal stations communicated with the one established at the Pry House, "at what was known as the Headquarters station, near General McClellan."⁴¹

Noyes' use of the term "piazza," a nineteenth century description of a veranda or porch, proves he was observing a house. If the crowd of officers observed by Noyes were intently observing the battle on the right early in the morning, they were watching General Hooker's attack in the vicinity of the Cornfield. That would place the time somewhere around 6:30 to 7:00 a.m. (perhaps earlier). Lastly, the Pry House was a crowded and busy place early on the morning of the battle which would be expected with the "general commanding" awake and issuing orders.⁴²

Another early morning visitor, Colonel Edward E. Cross, commanding the 5th New Hampshire Infantry, was introduced to McClellan. As the regimental historian, Surgeon William Child, noted:

The general was in good spirits, though thin and careworn. A messenger came from the signal station with dispatches from General Hooker to General McClellan. He read them, turned to the group of officers and said, 'All goes well; Hooker is driving them.' Cross now left and went to the top of a hill nearby, the writer being with his party. Here we could see the enemy retreating with Hooker's men in rapid pursuit.

Surgeon Child, writing in 1893, gave the time as "8 a.m." but that could not be possible if there is any veracity to his story. If indeed Child and Cross were watching Hooker driving the Confederates in rapid pursuit, it was sometime around 6:30 to 7:00 a.m. as previously noted. By 8:00 a.m. Confederate General John B. Hood's famous counterattack had driven Hooker's men back through the Cornfield and three brigades

41 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 122.

42 "U.S. Army signal stations at Antietam," Antietam on the Web, <https://behind.aotw.org/2022/12/06/us-army-signal-stations-at-antietam/> accessed January 6, 2025; Carman-Cope Maps 2, 3.

of Daniel Harvey Hill's Division were threatening another counterattack in the same area. Therefore, at 8:00 a.m. the two men could not be watching retreating Confederates. By 8:30 a.m. one of those Confederate brigades was in the Cornfield engaging what was left of Hooker's 1st Corps and the newly arrived troops of Major General Joseph K. F. Mansfield's 12th Corps. It was about this time, 8:30 - 9:00 a.m., that Hooker was wounded and taken from the field. Also, by 8:00 a.m., as will be shown, McClellan was not at the Pry House. Therefore, given the fact that Civil War timekeeping was not an exact science, and memory 31 years after the fact can be foggy, we will challenge Child's recollection of the time, accept his observation of retreating Confederates, and offer his anecdote regarding the meeting between Cross and McClellan as further proof that the commanding general was not asleep. Just how it came to pass that Sumner and Noyes did not meet or notice McClellan shall remain one of the unsolved mysteries of the battle, but it certainly was not due to McClellan being asleep.⁴³

Concurrent with Captain Noyes and Surgeon Child, Lieutenant Colonel Strother on McClellan's staff arrived at the Pry House and found McClellan "surrounded by a number of subordinates, planning and receiving orders." Strother noted the noise of the artillery and the "chattering of the musketry." He then stated it was "About half past seven o'clock" when "the noise swelled to an ominous roar," and the crowd of officers with McClellan "hurried to a bluff just behind the house, whence they had a splendid view of Hooker's advance driving the enemy before them." As with Surgeon Child, we should question Strother's timeframe. If the group on the bluff behind the Pry House was watching Hooker assault the Confederates, it would have been sometime before 7:30 a.m. [half past seven].⁴⁴ Then, according to Strother:

Horses were forthwith ordered, and we rode rapidly across to a commanding knoll on the eastern side of the Sharpsburg turnpike, about the centre of our line of battle, nearly opposite the town of Sharpsburg ... This was the same point from which the General reconnoitered the enemy on Monday [September 15] afternoon, and

43 William Child, M.D., *A History Of The Fifth Regiment New Hampshire Volunteers* (R. W. Muskgrove, 1893), 120; Carman-Cope Maps 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

44 Carman-Cope Maps, 3, 4, 5.



Detail of sketch by newspaper artist Frank H. Schell. The Pry House appears on the upper right. "McClellan's Post of Observation" is shown across the Boonsboro-Sharpsburg Turnpike on the hilltop opposite the Pry House farm lane (present day Rt. 34). (McClure's Magazine, February 1904)

afforded the most comprehensive view of the field that could be had from any single point.⁴⁵

Although it appears, in the crowded hustle and bustle around the Pry House, Captain Noyes had missed General McClellan, Noyes did observe Strother's gathering on the other side of the Boonsboro-Sharpsburg Turnpike. "On an elevation a couple of hundred yards in front," wrote Noyes, "commanding a still better view, groups of officers, newspaper correspondents and citizens were assembled."⁴⁶

One of the correspondents observed by Noyes was newspaper artist Frank H. Schell, who observed:

I saw near McClellan's headquarters at Pry's farm, on a bare hill beyond it, a group of dismounted officers. I

45 David Hunter Strother, "Personal Recollections," 281. In his writing for *Harper's Magazine*, Strother mistakenly refers to the Pry House as "Newcomer's house." Strother gave the time of his arrival as "Half past seven o'clock [7:30 a.m.]" but given the vagaries of Civil War timekeeping that is not necessarily precise, and it could have been earlier (especially in light of watching Hooker's attack). It is interesting to note that Sears, in his biography *George B. McClellan, The Young Napoleon*, 307, makes no mention of dragging chairs out of Pry's Parlor and placing them on the lawn. Sears totally accepts Strother's narrative about McClellan crossing the turnpike to the same location of September 15.

46 Noyes, *The Bivouac And Battlefield*, 196.

climbed to the hilltop, and the group resolved itself into Generals McClellan, Fitz John Porter, and other officers to me unknown. Aids and couriers were coming and going with fidgety hurry, bringing reports and taking orders...I joined the group about the commanding general, who was anxiously scanning through his field glass the situation to the right, across the Antietam ... McClellan suddenly lowered his glass, and, with a few animated words and expressive gestures, called Porter's attention to something that caused an immediate ferment of buzzing excitement throughout the group.⁴⁷

There is a very strong possibility that this location, the same location where McClellan and Porter had come under Confederate artillery fire on September 15, was also used by Porter as his headquarters. Strother provides us with a detailed description of both McClellan and Porter on the hilltop:

In the midst was a small redan built of fence-rails, behind which sat General Fitz John Porter, who, with a telescope resting on the top rail, studied the field with unremitting attention, scarcely leaving his post during the whole day. His observations he communicated to the commander by nods, signs, or in words so low-toned and brief that the nearest by-standers had but little benefit from them. When not engaged with Porter, McClellan stood in a soldierly attitude intently watching the battle and smoking with the utmost apparent calmness; conversing with surrounding officers and giving his orders in the most quiet under-tones. General Marcey, his Chief of Staff, was always near him, and through him orders were usually given to the aides-de-camp to be transmitted to distant points of the field. Several foreign officers of the French, Prussian, and Sardinian service were present.⁴⁸

47 Frank H. Schell, "Sketching Under Fire at Antietam," *McClure's Magazine* (S. S. McClure Co., February 1904), 418-19.

48 Strother, "Personal Recollections," 282.

A “redan” was an antiquated feature of fortification. It was a work, or parapet, forming a V-shaped salient angle. It could be made from earthwork or other material such as fence-rails. It was usually angled toward the direction of an expected attack. Due to its simplicity of construction, it was often used to provide cover for a detachment or camp. General Porter was experienced in the construction of defensive field works and so it seems reasonable, having come under enemy fire previously on the hilltop, some type of defensive fortification was constructed to protect the position, especially if used as his headquarters. One thing remains absolutely certain: a “redan” is not a “piazza” as the terms define two entirely different structures. No contemporary primary source has ever placed a redan at the Pry House, nor has any contemporary primary source ever placed a piazza on the hilltop.⁴⁹

Further evidence this location was used as both Porter’s and McClellan’s headquarters comes from a member of Porter’s staff, Lieutenant Stephen M. Weld. In a letter to his father a few days after the battle, Weld described the conflict and his duties during the day with the aid of a map he marked up for his father. “Except when carrying messages,” wrote Weld, “I was on the hill marked ‘Gen. McClellan’s Headquarters,’ and had a fine view of the whole affair.” What is germane is Weld’s failure of mentioning a house, but rather a hilltop that afforded a comprehensive view of the battle.⁵⁰

This position was also noted by newspaper artist Schell and described by him as “McClellan’s post of observation.” As with Strother, Schell was referencing the high knob of ground immediately opposite the Boonsboro-Sharpsburg Turnpike and east of the Pry House. This was the location described by McClellan as the “height in front of Keedysville.” Unlike the Pry House, which only provided observation of the northern part of the battlefield, the hilltop was a logical choice for a forward observation post during the morning of September 17 because it allowed a view of most of the battlefield.⁵¹

49 J. H. Stocqueler. *The Military Encyclopedia* (WM. H. Allen & Co., 1853), 228-29; Henry L. Scott, *Military Dictionary: Comprising Technical Definitions* (D. Van Nostrand, 1861), 497.

50 Stephen Minot Weld, *War Diary and Letters of Stephen Minot Weld 1861-1865* (Massachusetts Historical Society, 1979), 140. Weld’s letter is dated September 23, 1862.

51 Strother, “Personal Recollections,” 282; Schell, “Sketching Under Fire at Antietam,” 418.

The 93rd New York Infantry troops of McClellan's headquarters guard dubbed this forward location as the general's "field headquarters" and commented:

From this advanced position we could see many of the movements and became such interested and absorbed spectators of the inspiring scenes, the brilliant charges, the incessant volleys, and the heroic scenes the great battlefield presented, that we were unmindful of the scattering shots and occasional shells that saluted our ears.⁵²

"Official" headquarters of the Army of the Potomac was in Keedysville. This was the administrative headquarters where all the different bureaus and department heads (quartermaster-general, adjutant-general, etc.) ran the army.⁵³ Although the Pry House remained the location where McClellan's staff received information from the signal stations or battlefield couriers and issued the directives of the "general commanding," it was not his personal headquarters. The Pry House is better thought of as the "Staff" headquarters. This location offered a limited view of the northern end of the field. As we have seen, early in the morning orders were issued by the general commanding from this location and a crowd of military personnel were anxiously watching from the piazza of the house the progress of General Hooker on the northern part of the field.⁵⁴

Sometime shortly after 7:30 a.m., the crowd of personnel, with McClellan, moved to the high ground behind the Pry House where the signal station was established. No doubt they moved there to get a better view. Little Mac then moved to another location on a hilltop that offered a better view. As noted by Strother, this location offered "the most comprehensive view of the field that could be had from any single point."⁵⁵ This hilltop, located on a high knob of ground immediately opposite the Boonsboro-Sharpsburg Turnpike and several hundred yards east of the Pry House was described by McClellan as "a height in

⁵² Robertson, *Personal Recollections of the War*, 38.

⁵³ Clemens, "In Search of McClellan's Headquarters," *Civil War Times*, vol. 55, June 2016, 26-33.

⁵⁴ Noyes, *The Bivouac And The Battlefield*, 195-96.

⁵⁵ Strother, "Personal Recollections," 281.

front of Keedysville,” newspaper artist Schell as “McClellan’s post of observation,” and the general’s bodyguard as the “Field Headquarters.”⁵⁶

It will be remembered that Captain Noyes with the 76th New York observed “citizens” among those gathered at the Field Headquarters. Most likely, one of them was Mr. George C. Roher, who lived in Keedysville. According to a family story passed on by his son Millard, the local inhabitant was brought to McClellan’s headquarters to provide intelligence on enemy artillery:

A horse with saddle and bridle was sent to Mr. Roher’s home and he accompanied the rider to Gen. McClellan’s quarters, in a tent at that time. A large map was shown Mr. Roher and whenever they would see puffs of smoke Mr. Roher would locate them on the map for the General.

Millard Roher’s use of “quarters” in a tent most likely meant headquarters. Likewise, the use of “tent” does not denote a piazza or house. Although McClellan’s staff may have pitched tents around the Pry House, the Field Headquarters on the hilltop doubled as General Porter’s headquarters, and Millard’s observation of a tent used by McClellan is quite understandable in that context. Lastly, there is the simple question of which viewpoint offered a better panorama of the battlefield for identifying enemy artillery positions: the Pry House or the Field Headquarters?⁵⁷

Major General William F. “Baldy” Smith, a 6th Corps division commander, visited the Field Headquarters in advance of his troops. As part of the 6th Corps, Smith started his day at Crampton’s Gap, some seven miles directly southeast of Sharpsburg, and marched his division to a location near Keedysville. As Smith recalled:

I arrived near the hill on which General McClellan was posted about 9:00 o’clock a.m. on the 17th, and was met by a staff officer from General McClellan directing me to mass my troops nearby and report in person to the General. I found him on top of a round hill, having a good

⁵⁶ McClellan, *McClellan’s Own Story*, 586; Schell, “Sketching Under Fire at Antietam,” 418; Robertson, *Personal Recollections of the War*, 38. Hereafter, this location will be referred to as McClellan’s Field Headquarters or simply Field Headquarters.

⁵⁷ Oliver T. Reilly, *The Battlefield of Antietam* (R. C. Miller, 1906), 26.

outlook over the field, and in most excellent spirits. He pointed up to the right saying Sumner was doing well there, that he was expecting to hear Burnside's guns open every minute and that I was to remain with my command to be transferred to the right or left as circumstances might require.

Although Smith doesn't specifically name the Field Headquarters, there is no mention of the Pry House and Smith's observation of the "hill" is certainly consistent with others. Since, according to Smith, this seems to be a time before Sedgwick's division of Sumner's 2nd Corps was disastrously repulsed in the West Woods, we can also consider this to be an accurate appraisal of McClellan's mood at the time. Smith formed his division not far from army headquarters at Keedysville at about 10:00 a.m. to await further orders.⁵⁸

Further evidence for the Field Headquarters comes to us from another contemporary source, albeit an unusual one. It is Valdemar Rudolf Raasloff, the Danish minister to the United States. On October 5, 1862, at the home of Judge Charles Patrick Daly, Raasloff related the account of two Swedish officers who claimed to have been with McClellan during the battle. "They said McClellan took a stand where he could see everything and where he could be found." According to Raasloff, the general commanding was "calm, collected, took nothing but a little whiskey and water [and] smoked a cigar." As with General Smith and others, there is language about a location with a good field of view and no mention of the Pry House. The reference of the Swedish officers is also plausible given Strother's previous observation of "foreign officers" on the hilltop. More importantly, Raasloff provides evidence that Little Mac lead from the front and was on the battlefield when his army was involved in a major action: "When Hooker was wounded," declared Raasloff, "McClellan's presence was needed to rally the troops, he went to the front, rode through the ranks, encouraged and rallied the troops successfully, and then returned to his place."⁵⁹

58 William F. Smith, *Autobiography of Major General William F. Smith 1861-1864* (Morningside House Inc., 1990), 53; Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 304.

59 Maria Lydig Daly, *Diary Of A Union Lady 1861-1865*, Harold Earl Hammond ed. (Funk & Wagnalls Company, Inc., 1962), 183; Strother, "Personal Recollections," 282. The diary entry is by the judge's wife, Maria Lydig Daly. The "Swedish officers" are not named. In addition to Strother's journal, plausibility to the story is provided by the fact that at various periods in the war McClellan used officers on his staff from several

September 17, 1862: McClellan's First Ride to the North

Minister Raasloff's statement regarding McClellan's visit to the battlefield upon the wounding of General Hooker was echoed by the correspondent for the *New York Tribune*: "When Gen. Hooker fell, Gen. McClellan immediately proceeded to the right, where he was enthusiastically received, and by his presence added much to our success in recovering the ground lost." The *Tribune*, in turn, was corroborated by the correspondent of the *New York Herald*, "When the intrepid General Hooker was wounded, during the morning, Gen. McClellan rode over to the right of the line, and inspired the troops with confidence, by his presence."⁶⁰

The location of Hooker's wounding was in the area of the Cornfield on the Union right. The Union right may similarly be described as the northern portion of the Antietam Battlefield and includes such other landmarks as the West Woods, East Woods, North Woods, and the Poffenberger Farm. There are several primary sources that attest to the enthusiastic reception given to Little Mac when he visited the troops in this area during the morning of September 17.

One contemporary account comes to us from a sketch of the battle in a wartime letter by Private William Olcott of the 10th Pennsylvania Reserves. This unit, part of Meade's division, was located in the Cornfield and vicinity on the morning of the battle. As Olcott noted, "[W]e deployed and took position in front of a cornfield which was in front of us ... as we moved up we saw them and gave a volley of musketry and we advanced on them through the cornfield." The 10th Pennsylvania was then sent to the right of the Cornfield, westerly across the Hagerstown Turnpike about 500 yards, while the other regiments of Meade's division engaged the enemy in the Cornfield. "Immediately upon our arrival at the point indicated we commenced firing ... about this time, Genl. McClellan and staff visited some portion of the field, and cheer after cheer rent the air as he made his appearance." While Olcott did not actually see McClellan on the field, he heard the unmistakable cheers of men who did, which had to be loud enough to compete with the noise of combat.⁶¹

European nations including not only the Swiss, but French and Prussian as well. See *McClellan's Own Story*, 123, 143-44.

60 "The Recent Battles," *New York Tribune*, September 19, 1862; "General McClellan At The Battle," *The New York Herald*, September 21, 1862.

61 William Olcott, "A Sketch of the battle of South Mountain and Antietam, Maryland," no date provided, 14-15, Regimental File, ANBL. Typescript letter donated

Another primary source is Rufus B. Dawes, a major with the 6th Wisconsin Infantry at the time of the battle. In correspondence after the war with Antietam Battlefield Board member Ezra A. Carman, Dawes related the movements of the regiment sometime between 8:30 and 8:40 a.m. “Our next movement to the rear was to the point where the artillery was in position near Poffenberger’s barn,” wrote Dawes, “We took our position in the line of battle which was supporting the artillery. While we were in this position General McClellan, accompanied by his staff, rode along the lines in our rear and was received with great enthusiasm.” It is not entirely clear if Dawes, positioned in the North Woods, actually observed McClellan, or as with Olcott, just heard the enthusiastic cheering.⁶²

The official War Department maps of Antietam provide the timeframe of 8:30 - 8:40 a.m. for McClellan’s ride to the Cornfield/North Woods area. Map 7 shows the 10th Pennsylvania in the position west of the Cornfield described by Private Olcott. It also has Gibbon’s Brigade (6th Wisconsin) in line in the North Woods near the artillery and Poffenberger Farm as described by Major Dawes. It is the only map in the series showing these two positions as described by the participants. Map 6 (8:00 a.m.) has the 6th Wisconsin still in the Hagerstown Turnpike and Map 8 (9:00 to 9:30 a.m.) has the 10th Pennsylvania with Gibbon in the North Woods.⁶³

Most histories of Antietam place Hooker’s wounding around or about 9:00 a.m. On the surface then, it seems both Olcott and Dawes described a visit by McClellan before Hooker was wounded. As noted, Civil War timekeeping, involving pocket watches, or the sun’s position in the sky, was not an exact process, hence the descriptors “around” or “about.” No exact time is given by Raasloff or the newspaper correspondents for McClellan’s visit, only that he visited the field when

to the Antietam National Battlefield in 1978 by great grandson J. Donald Geyer. Although a private at the time of the Maryland campaign, Olcott achieved the rank of sergeant and by December 1863, transferred to the 191st Pennsylvania. Prisoner of war records show him captured near Petersburg, Virginia, August 19, 1864. Eventually confined to the prison at Salisbury, North Carolina, he was admitted to the hospital and perished on January 8, 1865. His place of burial is unknown; he is probably interred amongst the unknown at the Salisbury National Cemetery.

62 Rufus B. Dawes to Ezra A. Carman, January 16, 1899, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, Antietam Studies, Box 2.

63 Carman-Cope Maps 6, 7, 8; Bradley M. Gottfried, *The Maps of Antietam* (Savas Beatie LLC, 2012), 163, 165, 167.

Hooker was wounded. Most often, the source cited by historians for the 9:00 a.m. timeframe is General Hooker's March 11, 1863 testimony before the congressional Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War.⁶⁴

There is testimony before that same committee which contradicts Hooker's timeframe. It comes to us from Major General Edwin V. Sumner, commanding the 2nd Corps. Sumner launched an assault from the East Woods with Major General John Sedgwick's division after the wounded Hooker left the field. As Sumner testified, February 18, 1863: "I passed him [Hooker] some distance in the rear, where he had been carried wounded." The time accepted by Antietam chronicler Ezra A. Carman for Sedgwick forming his line of battle for the advance out of the East Woods was 9:00 a.m. Therefore, according to Carman (who based his timeframe on the September 29, 1862, report of another general officer on the field at the time), Sumner met the wounded Hooker being carried from the battlefield well before 9:00 a.m. Clearly, Hooker was mistaken about the time of his wounding when he testified to the Committee.⁶⁵

The War Department's Antietam Map 7 also shows the 124th Pennsylvania Infantry at the northwest corner of the Cornfield with an arrow indicating they are about to move into the Cornfield. The regimental historian for the 124th Pennsylvania, Robert M. Green, served as a private in Company H of the regiment in September 1862. Green wrote that most of the unit (seven companies) "advanced through the cornfield," and added, "It was about this time that General McClellan came to that part of the battlefield." In Green's chronology of events this is before "a brigade of Union troops charged into the West Woods and were repulsed." That description is a clear reference to Sedgwick's movement. Sedgwick's lead brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Willis A. Gorman, was separated from the other two brigades of the division. When Gorman's Brigade crossed the Hagerstown Turnpike

64 *Report of The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, 3 vols. (Government Printing Office, 1863), vol. 1, 581.

65 Ibid., vol. 1, 368; Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 172. Clemens, Carman's editor, states the arrival time for Sedgwick is found in the report of Brigadier General Alpheus S. Williams; *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 476.



"McClellan to the Rescue." (Harper's Weekly, October 4, 1862)

into the West Woods, Sedgwick's next brigade was just stepping out of the East Woods 400 yards behind them.⁶⁶

On the northern end of the battlefield, the vicinity surrounding the Joseph Poffenberger Farm, where a large portion of Federal artillery was located, was a crowded place between 8:30 to 9:00 a.m. on the morning of September 17. The 5th Pennsylvania Reserves was positioned at the southern end of a woodlot located about 600 yards east of the Poffenberger Farm. This piece of woods, known as the "Poffenberger Woods," straddled the Smoketown Road. It will be remembered that Corporal Abram L. Crist with the 5th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry, had observed McClellan the evening before on Smoketown Road. As part of Seymour's Brigade, the 5th Pennsylvania Reserves were involved in the East Woods combat on the evening of September 16. "[W]e were not engaged after our all night experience of the 16th and the morning of the 17th," wrote Crist, "we lay in reserve." From 7:00 a.m. onward, Corporal Crist was in the Poffenberger Woods. "A lane ran parallel with line of battle in front of us," observed Crist, "Genl. McClellan and staff went through this lane about that time." A portion of the Poffenberger Farm Lane was located on the north side of the North Woods and ran parallel

66 Robert M. Green, *History of the One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers in the War of the Rebellion 1862-1863* (Wade Bros. Company, 1907), 31; *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 320; Carman-Cope Map 7; Gottfried, *Maps of Antietam*, 171.

to the lines of battle in the Cornfield. The exact time Crist saw McClellan remains uncertain, but he saw Little Mac in the Poffenberger Farm Lane during the morning of September 17.⁶⁷

The Poffenberger Farm also became an area of refuge for many of the 1st Corps units involved in the early morning fighting in and around the D. R. Miller Cornfield. One unit of Brigadier General Abner Doubleday's division seeking shelter in the Poffenberger Farm area was the 2nd United States Sharpshooters (USSS). At an early hour their brigade, commanded by Colonel Walter Phelps, Jr., was part of a desperate firefight at the Hagerstown Turnpike near the southwest corner of the Cornfield. The Sharpshooters, behind the eastern turnpike fence, were pitted against the Confederates behind the western turnpike fence. In the close-quarter melee that ensued a Confederate color bearer was killed at the turnpike fence and his flag was seen to drop over the fence into the road. Many of the Sharpshooters crossed the fence into the turnpike to retrieve the enemy colors. The "rebel flag" was captured and carried with the 2nd United States Sharpshooters when they retired to the vicinity of the Poffenberger Farm. By 8:30 - 8:40 a.m., along with Gibbon's Brigade, Phelps Brigade "retired to the fields north of D. R. Miller's and thence beyond the Poffenberger Lane." As Corporal David P. Craig recalled after the war, "One of the flags was captured by a Company A man who was complimented by Gen. McClellan riding by as the Sharpshooters were coming out of the fight."⁶⁸

In correspondence after the war with Antietam Battlefield Board member Ezra A. Carman, Former Private Joshua D. Hicks of the 125th Pennsylvania Infantry attempted to provide Carman with information on the placement of a Federal artillery battery. The 125th Pennsylvania went into action in the immediate area of the Dunker Church. Hicks thought the time was "about eight to 9 o'clock." Former Private Hicks was a little uncertain regarding his estimate of the time and cautioned Carman, "It may have gone to the rear a little while, before Sedgwick's charge, and before McClellan rode our line, but I think not." The inference is clear, the battery went into position after Sedgwick's movement into the West Woods and before McClellan rode the line of battle. As we know,

67 Abram L. Crist to John M. Gould, January 13, 1894, John M. Gould Papers, Dartmouth College; Carman-Cope Maps 3-7.

68 Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 70-80; Antietam National Battlefield Historic Tablet No. 32 (North Side Cornfield Avenue) hereafter ANBHT; Carman-Cope Maps 3-7; David P. Craig to John M. Gould, January 15, 1893, John M. Gould Papers, Dartmouth College.

Sedgwick began his advance towards the West Woods at 9:00 a.m., and McClellan rode to the northern end of the field before that. Therefore, Hicks' statement to Carman is consistent with McClellan's morning ride to the Poffenberger Farm.⁶⁹

The Poffenberger Farm is situated upon a high knoll of terrain that was occupied throughout the day by Federal artillery (mostly batteries of Doubleday's division). As shown on the official War Department Maps, from 8:30 a.m. onward the northern side of the high knoll was occupied by the remainder of Brigadier General James B. Ricketts' division of the 1st Corps. Suffering 38 percent casualties that morning, the unit was no longer combat effective. Consequently, it sought refuge and fell back to the northernmost part of the battlefield. The remnants of the division took up a position on the northern side of the knoll behind the Poffenberger Farm and near the Hagerstown Turnpike. As reported by Ricketts, "[W]ith the exception of a brisk fire from the enemy's artillery, under which they stood, [the division] was not employed again during the day only to hold that position."⁷⁰

In a contemporary sketch of the battle, "written in camp between the hours of duty," Private Charles S. McClenthen, with the 26th New York Infantry in Ricketts' division, described the regiment's movement to the northern end of the field after its early morning action. "[W]e reached a high knoll," wrote McClenthen, "here were more infantry, several batteries, and two or three Gens. with their staffs." While crossing over the knoll, McClenthen recalled, "About this time, Gen. McClellan and staff visited this portion of the field, and cheer after cheer rent the air as he made his appearance." According to McClenthen, upon McClellan's departure, Confederate artillery began firing upon that portion of the field, resulting in a loud artillery contest as the Federal artillery responded.⁷¹

After the war, while walking the field with Antietam Board member Ezra A. Carman, another veteran of Ricketts' division noted his regiment's location on the northern part of the field. Former Corporal

69 Joshua D. Hicks to Ezra A. Carman, December 5, 1899, NARA, Antietam Studies, Box 2; Carman-Cope Map 8.

70 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 259; ANBHT No. 7 (East Side Mansfield Avenue); ANBHT No. 81 (North Side Cornfield Avenue); Carman-Cope Map 7. Ricketts reported he took 3,158 troops into action. A detailed tabulation of casualties (*OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 190) gives the aggregate number of total casualties for the division at 1,204 killed, wounded, and missing. $1,204/3,158=0.38$ or 38percent

71 McClenthen, *A Sketch of the Campaign in Virginia and Maryland*, 40-41.

Albert Booz with the 88th Pennsylvania Infantry, noted the regiment was “in front [of] a rebel battery in the wood,” and that the Confederate guns “opened fire as McClellan and his staff rode on the hill behind the 88th where Doubleday’s artillery was in position.”⁷² Private McClenthen and Corporal Booz bring us back full circle to Private Olcott of the 10th Pennsylvania Reserves who, after describing the enthusiastic cheering associated with McClellan’s appearance, also remembered, “he had just taken his departure, when in reply to the enemys batteries, who were throwing shell at this portion of our batteries on the knoll, opened fire, first one, then another, until it was swelled to the most deafening cannonading to which I yet listened.”⁷³

General McClellan’s early morning visit was documented by several observers. In addition to two newspaper correspondents providing contemporary reporting, eight veterans of the battle: Private Olcott, Major Dawes, Private Green, Corporal Crist, Corporal Craig, Private Hicks, Private McClenthen, and Corporal Booz give first hand testimony of a morning visit to the northern end of the battlefield by General McClellan. They provide a picture of an early ride to the front by Little Mac that somehow has gone unnoticed by all the histories of the Battle of Antietam published to date. Numerous sources provide evidence that Little Mac was on the battlefield when his army went into a major action. Two or three of the veterans might be accused of faulty memory or mistaken identity, but not all eight. Furthermore, if the veracity of Olcott, McClenthen, and Booz is trustworthy, the possibility strongly exists that McClellan and staff came under enemy artillery fire during, or upon departure in the vicinity of the Poffenberger Farm.

Devil Dan

The follow-up question regarding General McClellan’s morning ride to the northern end of the battlefield should address the subject of logistics. Was it possible for Little Mac to be riding around the Poffenberger Farm around 8:30–8:40 a.m. and still be back at his Field Headquarters by 9:00 a.m. upon the arrival of “Baldy” Smith? The answer to our question depends on two unknown factors, speed and distance. At the battle of Antietam, speed and distance were totally

72 Carman, *Battlefield Notes*, undated, Box2, Antietam Studies, NARA.

73 Olcott, “A Sketch of the battle of South Mountain and Antietam, Maryland,” no date provided, 15.

dependent upon the route taken and how fast a mounted rider could travel on horseback.

Distance can be estimated with a fair degree of certainty. There were at least three routes available for McClellan to travel from his Field Headquarters to the Poffenberger Farm. First, he could have retraced the path of General Hooker on September 16. That route led from the Upper Bridge to the Smoketown Road and thence to the Poffenberger Farm. Second, McClellan could have simply turned due west at the Upper Bridge and ridden directly to the East Woods and thence northerly to the Poffenberger Farm. There was a third route that did not entail recrossing the Antietam at the Upper Bridge. It was another farm lane off the Boonsboro-Sharpsburg Turnpike that led to the creek, and it was located on property adjacent to the southwest side of the Pry House.⁷⁴

This farm lane led to the ridge where the northern Guns of Position were situated. It then turned northwesterly to the bluff directly above the creek where the home of Alfred N. Cost was located. It appears that just below the Cost House at the creek was a rough farm ford that allowed passage. On September 15, Hooker's chief engineer, Major David C. Houston scouted the creek north of the Middle Bridge. "A bridge was found," reported Hooker, "and also two fords, which with little labor on the banks were rendered practicable of infantry and artillery." The bridge came to be known in the lexicon of Antietam history as the Upper Bridge and the ford closest to it as Pry's Ford. As late as the evening of September 16, work details from Gorman's Brigade of the 2nd Corps were put to work at both Pry's Ford and the unnamed ford. As a soldier in the 1st Minnesota Infantry recalled, they "graded down the banks of the creek in several places, making suitable approaches to crossing places."⁷⁵

Most of the Army of the Potomac that fought on the northern end of the field used the Upper Bridge and Pry's Ford to cross the Antietam; however, some did not. Brigadier General Winfield S. Hancock reported

74 Jedidiah Hotchkiss, Map: "Battle of Sharpsburg, Maryland, Sept. 17, 1862," Approved September 27, 1862, Confederate States Army Engineer Bureau, Richmond, VA; Antietam Battlefield Board, "Map of the Battlefield of Antietam, No. 1" (Government Printing Office, 1893); Steven Cowie, *When Hell Came To Sharpsburg, The Battle of Antietam and Its Impact on the Civilians Who Called It Home* (Savas Beatie, 2022); Map; Sharpsburg 1862, Selected Landowners, Northeast Area, xxvi.

75 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 217; Searles and Taylor, *History Of The First Regiment Minnesota Volunteer Infantry*, 198.

that on September 17 Richardson's division of Sumner's 2nd Corps "crossed the Antietam at the ford constructed by our engineers." There is evidence that elements of Franklin's 6th Corps crossed the Antietam on the same day by a ford "down the hill to the right of the Pry House." The regimental historians of the 1st Minnesota wrote about "a little fording place half a mile west of Philip Pry's house ... and the farm and house on the west bank of the creek belonging to Harmon F. Neikirk." On the other side of the creek, the lane continued northwesterly across Neikirk's Farm, past Neikirk's house, and thence westerly to the East Woods. A popular postwar nineteenth century map refers to this location as "Sumner's Crossing." The preceding shows there was a ford, or crossing place, that was improved by the engineers on September 16 and used by troops on September 17. It was located to the right or west of the Pry House. This route, which appears on several postwar maps, shall be referred to as Neikirk's Crossing. This ford had the advantage of being close to both McClellan's Staff and Field Headquarters. At 4.5 to 5 miles in length, the route used by Hooker was the longest path to the Poffenberger Farm. On the other hand, the Neikirk Crossing, at a little over 2 miles, was the shortest.⁷⁶

The speed at which McClellan was able to travel these distances was entirely dependent on the condition and athletic ability of his horse. McClellan's mount, "Dan Webster," as McClellan named him, was also known as "Devil Dan" by his staff. Dan earned the staff's moniker because he "was one of those horses that could trot all day long at a very rapid gait which kept all other horses at a gallop."⁷⁷ Also known as "Handsome Dan," he was described by one newspaper as a "beautifully-dappled mahogany-bay ... with three white feet and a star, very heavy flowing black mane and tall." At 17 hands in height and over 1,200 lbs. he was an impressive animal. Another newspaper depicted him as "well bred, with good action and never showing sign of fatigue, no matter how long the course."⁷⁸

76 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, :277; Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 305; "The Battlefield of Antietam," *Battles and Leaders*, 636; Searles and Taylor, *History Of The First Regiment Minnesota Volunteer Infantry*, 198.

77 McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, 327.

78 "Gen. McClellan's War Horse 'Handsome Dan,'" *Civilian & Telegraph*, Cumberland, MD, November 14, 1861; "Our Animal Friends," *The Philadelphia Times*, January 10, 1897. A horse's height is measured from its withers where the neck meets the body (not the top of its head) to the ground.

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General McClellan and "Dan Webster." Also known as "Handsome Dan," and "Devil Dan." (Harper's Weekly Magazine)

Just as with people, no two horses are alike, and speed varies from animal to animal. However, some generalities may certainly be assumed for a mount of Dan's ability. The "trot" is roughly 8 miles per hour and

a full “gallop” at least 30 miles per hour. At that rate of speed, Devil Dan could do 2 miles in 15 minutes at a trot, and the same distance in four minutes at a gallop. It is also reasonable to assume McClellan would opt to take the shortest route from his Field Headquarters, the Neikirk Crossing, rather than backtracking to the Upper Bridge. Therefore, by pushing his mount at a full gallop, it is reasonable to assume McClellan was able to travel from the Field Headquarters to the Poffenberger Farm in at least five minutes, maybe less.⁷⁹

As stated, the farm lane to the Neikirk Crossing passed close to the northern Guns of Position. During the day of September 17 this high ground was occupied by six batteries of artillery comprising 28 guns, mostly long-range rifled pieces. After Richardson’s division crossed the Antietam around 9:00 a.m., Major General George W. Morell’s division of Porter’s 5th Corps took up position on the reverse slope of the northern ridge and provided infantry support for the artillery. However, sometime during the day, McClellan detached two of Morell’s three brigades to support Gen. Sumner on the Union right. For a time, this left the lone brigade of Colonel James Barnes as infantry support for the artillery. If McClellan used the Neikirk Crossing to travel to the northern end of the battlefield, then we should expect that someone in Barne’s Brigade observed him. As we shall see, several members of the brigade did see him during the day.⁸⁰

September 17, 1862: McClellan’s Second Ride to the North

Charles Carleton Coffin, a *Boston Journal* correspondent who was on the battlefield at the time, provides another primary account that represents a separate late morning visit to the Cornfield area by Little Mac. Coffin started his morning in Hagerstown and arrived on the field shortly before Sedgwick’s advance into the West Woods. Passing into the East Woods, Coffin came upon Brigadier General Howard who wrote the correspondent a pass that allowed him to move freely throughout the Federal lines. Correspondent Coffin was on hand to witness Sedgwick’s disastrous repulse in the West Woods and afterward observed McClellan’s arrival in the East Woods. “A little before noon ... McClellan

79 “Horses Speed in MPH - Walk, Trot, Canter, Gallop speeds,” <http://www.ultimatehorsesite.com/info/horsespeedmph.htm>, accessed September 9, 2009.

80 Keith Snyder, Pamphlet: *Artillery at Antietam* (Western Maryland Interpretive Association, no date given); Stotelmeyer, *Too Useful To Sacrifice*, 183.

and staff crossed the Antietam and rode up to the woods from which Sedgwick had advanced.” The reference is unmistakably clear, the only woods from which Sedgwick advanced was the well-known Antietam landmark: the East Woods. According to Coffin, “He looked over the field toward the Dunker Church, examined with his glass the Confederate position a few moments, rode along the lines a short distance and returned to his headquarters.”⁸¹

At the time in question, a little before noon, Battery E of the Pennsylvania Light Artillery, commanded by Captain Joseph M. Knap, occupied the southeast corner of the Cornfield at the edge of the East Woods. After the war, a member of Knap’s Battery, former Corporal James P. Stewart, corresponded with Ezra A. Carman about the battery’s action at Antietam and added an interesting occurrence. “Gen. McClellan & staff road [sic] through our battery,” wrote Stewart, “awhile before the Rebs charged and while we were in the cornfield, he was going toward Hagerstown.” Stewart remembered that the battery came off the field “about 12 m.” In the syntax used at the time “m” stood for *meridian*, or noon. Most likely, Stewart’s reference to the charge by the Confederates was related to a later action, described by Carman occurring as a “little after half past eleven” where a portion of the battery was forced to retire from the vicinity of the Dunker Church.⁸²

About 12 m [noon], after half past 11 [11:30 a.m.], and a little before noon represents fairly good agreement for Civil War time keeping. Corporal Stewart’s account dovetails nicely with both Carman and correspondent Coffin. Furthermore, both Coffin and Stewart make mention of McClellan riding farther to the north. Coffin stated that Little Mac “rode along the lines a short distance,” and Stewart noted him “going” in the direction of “Hagerstown.” As we know, Hagerstown is located north of the battlefield. As we also know, the northern part of the battlefield around the Poffenberger Farm became an area of refuge for elements of the 1st Corps. By midday, in addition to Rickett’s division, this also included the division of Brigadier General George G. Meade’s Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry.

81 Charles Carleton Coffin, *Stories of Our Soldiers* (The Journal Newspaper Company, 1893), 33.

82 Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 303, 310; James P. Stewart to Ezra A. Carman, letter undated, Carman Papers, Box 12, Folder 5, New York Public Library; Carman-Cope Maps 9, 10.

In his report, Meade stated that it was sometime “Between 11:00 and 12 a.m.” when he was directed to assume command of the 1st Corps after the loss of General Hooker. “I directed the various divisions to be withdrawn as soon as they were relieved,” wrote Meade, “and to be assembled and reorganized on the ridge in our rear.” The high ground Meade referenced was the area of the Poffenberger Farm, and in addition to 1st Corps infantry, it was also occupied by numerous artillery batteries. Most of the artillery belonged to Doubleday’s division and they were greatly diminished by the morning’s combat. By the time referenced by Meade the fighting, in effect, was over for them. During the remainder of the day, on the knoll of high ground at the Poffenberger Farm, 30 guns were placed in position. In some circles this artillery has come to be known as “Doubleday’s Super Battery.”⁸³

Lieutenant George Breck with Reynold’s Battery L, 1st New York Light Artillery, was among the guns of the Super Battery. The next day, September 18, Breck penned a letter corroborating both Coffin and Stewart. As stated by Breck:

McClellan has the hearts of the whole army, every one of them. What a cheering there was yesterday noon ... as he rode along the lines of the different brigades and divisions. The soldiers were perfectly wild with ecstatic delight. Caps, blankets and coats went up in the air, and the men shouted and yelled, and some of them actually cried with joy at the sight of their general.⁸⁴

Battery A of the 1st Pennsylvania Light Artillery, commanded by 1st Lieutenant John G. Simpson, and Battery B, commanded by Captain James H. Cooper were also among the Super Battery. The commander of the 9th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry, Captain Samuel B. Dick, was directed by Meade around this time “to form my regiment along a line of fence to the rear of Cooper’s and Simpson’s batteries.” The official War Department Maps of Antietam disagree somewhat with Meade regarding the time his division arrived in the Poffenberger Farm area. They do

83 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 270; James A. Rosebrock, *Artillery of Antietam: The Union and Confederate Batteries at the Battle of Antietam* (The Press of the Antietam Institute, 2022), 65.

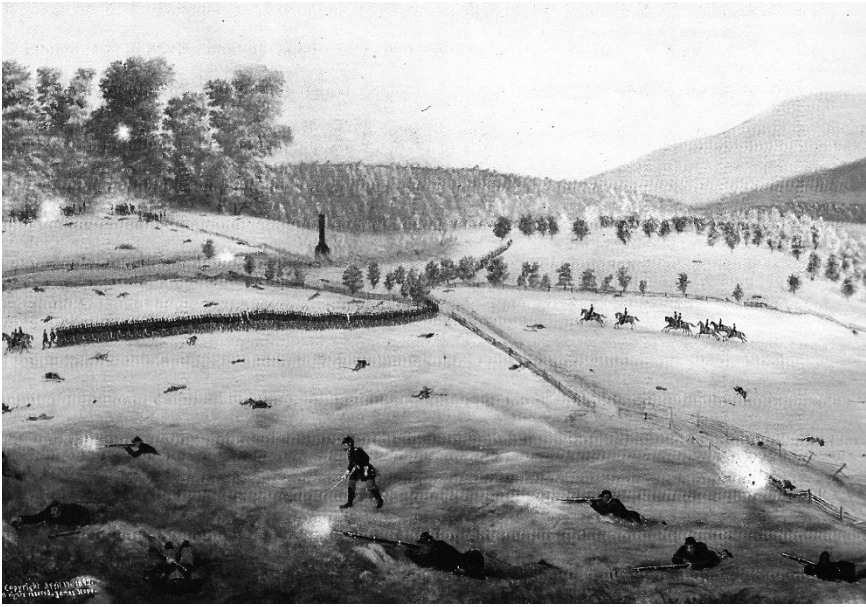
84 Breck to *Union*, September 18, 1862, *Union and Advertiser*, Rochester, NY, September 26, 1862.

however agree to some extent with Captain Dick with regard to position. From 9:30 a.m. onward, Meade's division is shown beyond the Poffenberger Farm on the extreme northernmost part of the battlefield parallel with the lane leading to the Middlekauf Farm. The Middlekauf Farm Lane is situated a little over 200 yards due north of Cooper's battery. What is curious about the official maps is that the line representing Meade's division increases in length from map to map until 1:00 p.m. when it encompasses the entire length of the farm lane. This indicates the relocation of the division was a gradual process. Given how some of Meade's individual regiments were scattered over the field, it should not be surprising it would take a couple of hours to reform. This agrees with Meade's report in which he says it wasn't until 2:00 p.m. that the division was resupplied with ammunition and ready for action. Also noteworthy on the official maps is a stone wall shown bordering a portion of the Middlekauf Farm Lane that could account for the fence mentioned by Captain Dick.⁸⁵

Sometime during the reorganization, Private Alexander Murdoch with the 9th Pennsylvania Reserves, was "lying" about, "when McClellan and his staff ... rode along our lines." Murdoch also noted that Little Mac's appearance "drew the fire of the Rebel artillery," and this "caused a stampede among the citizens who were mingling freely among us." The mention of civilians most likely places Murdoch in the vicinity of the Middlekauf Farm Lane, where Captain Dick placed the regiment. During McClellan's first morning visit to the Poffenberger Farm area the 9th Pennsylvania was in the vicinity of the Cornfield and there definitely were no civilians at that location "mingling" about. One would expect the curious civilians to be stopped by pickets at the Hagerstown Turnpike area of the northern most location of the battlefield, the Middlekauf Farm Lane. While not conclusive that Murdoch's observation coincided with McClellan's late morning appearance in the East Woods, and not the earlier visit to the northern part of the field, it is more likely than not. If McClellan was riding the lines toward Hagerstown as Coffin, Stewart, and Breck maintain, he would have been in the vicinity of both the Poffenberger and Middlekauf Farms. What is also interesting is that once again, according to Murdock, we have Little Mac drawing enemy artillery fire.⁸⁶

85 *OR*, vol. 51, pt. 1, 151; Carman-Cope Maps 8-14.

86 Alexander Murdock to John M. Gould, December 30, 1892, John M. Gould Papers, Dartmouth College.



*Detail of painting "A Fateful Turn," by James Hope. McClellan and staff approaching the burning Mumma house and barn.
(NPS/Antietam National Battlefield)*

In further support of Coffin, Stewart, Breck, and Murdock regarding the late morning/noon visit to the northern end of the battlefield, we have an article in the *New York Tribune* on September 20 from their Special Correspondent, who reported, "McClellan had been over on the field after Sumner's [Sedgwick's division] repulse, but had speedily returned to his headquarters." Late morning and noon were certainly after Sedgwick's disaster in the West Woods.⁸⁷

Why would McClellan want to visit the northern part of the battlefield during the late morning? It is known that General Sumner sent several dispatches via the Poffenberger Farm signal station to McClellan's Staff Headquarters regarding "the wavering of the line and the need of reinforcements." There was also at least one dispatch questioning the position of Slocum's division. According to Antietam historian Ezra A. Carman, the 6th Corps divisions of "Baldy" Smith and Henry Slocum arrived on the field between 11:30 a.m. and noon, the same time as McClellan's late morning visit. It is certainly reasonable to assume that given Sumner's apprehension, and the arrival of Franklin's

⁸⁷ "The Recent Battles," "The Contest In Maryland," *New York Tribune*, September 20, 1862.

reinforcements, McClellan sought to survey the situation in real time. Therefore, we have motive and eyewitness testimony. From the preceding we may conclude a late morning visit to the East Woods/Poffenberger Farm area by McClellan and staff that remains largely unrecognized in the popular literature of the battle.⁸⁸

The evidence indicates McClellan returned to the Staff Headquarters at the Pry House via the Neikirk Crossing. Near noon, Little Mac was observed by the 118th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment of Barnes' brigade in Porter's 5th Corps. It will be remembered that the Neikirk Crossing farm lane passed close to the northern Guns of Position and that troops belonging to Morell's division of the 5th Corps provided infantry support for that artillery. In the ranks of the 118th Pennsylvania, Sergeant Wilfred McDonald simply noted in his diary that he "Saw Gen. McClellan."⁸⁹ However, the regimental historian of the unit added more detail:

At noon the combat raged in all its fierceness. It was near this hour when General McClellan, with his large and imposing staff, rode upon the ground occupied by our division. The deep and abiding enthusiasm that habitually followed him promptly greeted him. Shouts, yells, and cheers of appreciation rent the air. This unusual noise, so loud that it was borne above the din of battle to the enemy's line, brought on a vigorous and persistent shelling. Regardless of the flying, bursting missiles, there he sat astride his splendid charger, glass in hand, calmly reviewing the mighty host ... Intent, no doubt, on securing some permanent advantage at this particular point, he turned suddenly to Colonel Webb, the engineering officer of his staff...and, after a few moments of hurried instruction, dispatched him on his mission down into the valley.⁹⁰

Once again, an eyewitness tells of seeing McClellan at a forward position under enemy artillery fire. Apparently, McClellan observed some aspect of the combat on the northern part of the field he needed to

88 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 123, 134; Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 304, 326.

89 Wilfred McDonald Diary, September 17, 1862, Regimental Files, ANBL.

90 Survivor's Association, *History of the 118th Pennsylvania Volunteers, Corn Exchange Regiment* (J. L. Smith Map Publisher, 1905), 42.

address, and he sent Colonel Webb back across the Neikirk Crossing in response. As the stream crossing was on lower ground, the regimental historian's phrasing "down into the valley" makes sense in that topographical context.

Boston Journal correspondent Coffin followed McClellan and staff to "a large farmhouse." At this juncture, early in the afternoon after returning from the second trip to the northern part of the field, Coffin observed McClellan, "sitting upon the piazza, in conversation with Fitz John Porter." Coffin also observed several officers of McClellan's staff "with the telescopes belong to headquarters." Coffin's observation of the piazza, and not the redan, places Little Mac at Staff Headquarters at the Pry House in the early afternoon.⁹¹

September 17, 1862: McClellan's Third Ride to the North

There is a well-documented third visit to the northern part of the battlefield by Little Mac. The occasion was a dispute between generals Edwin V. Sumner and William B. Franklin. After Sedgwick's repulse in the West Woods, Franklin arrived with his 6th Corps as reinforcements. About 1:00 p.m. Franklin formed two of his brigades for an attack on the Dunker Church, when Sumner arrived and countermanded the order. Major Herbert von Hammerstein, a veteran of the Austrian army and an aid on McClellan's staff, was nearby when the two generals got into an argument. Franklin wanted to attack the West Woods and Sumner did not. There appears to have been some confusion over which general, Sumner or Franklin, outranked the other. General Franklin requested that Major Hammerstein ride to headquarters and inform McClellan of the "state of affairs."⁹²

General McClellan decided the situation required his personal attention and once again rode to the northern part of the battlefield. In his report McClellan stated it was, "towards the middle of the afternoon," when he proceeded to the right.⁹³ Another 5th Corps soldier of Barnes' brigade in support of the northern Guns of Position, Private Robert G.

91 Coffin, *Stories of Our Soldiers*, 33.

92 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 377; Mark A. Snell, *From First To Last, The Life of Major General William B. Franklin* (Fordham University Press, 2002), 194; Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 326-28; William B. Franklin, "Notes On Crampton's Gap And Antietam," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 4 vols. (Castle Books, 1956) hereafter *Battles and Leaders*, vol. 2, 597. Franklin's citation regarding the "state of affairs" is from *Battles and Leaders*.

93 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 62.

Carter of the 22nd Massachusetts Infantry observed McClellan around this time. As Carter recalled:

Shortly after 2 o'clock, General McClellan rode down the road from the Pry House, with his staff, passing by our line. As we rose up and every man cheered to the echo, we were greeted with the same kindly smile, and removal of the hat, with a courteous bow, which bespoke the true gentleman and appreciative soldier.⁹⁴

Chaplain Richard Eddy with the 60th New York Infantry also provided confirmation of McClellan's 2:00 p.m. timeframe. Recently assigned to the 12th Corps, Chaplain Eddy, who started his day in Frederick, was desperately trying to find his regiment. By mid-morning Eddy had arrived in Keedysville and spent the next couple of hours in a fruitless search, first to the Union left, and then to right. Upon riding "almost to the extreme right," Chaplain Eddy came upon a member of the regiment and found out it was not far off. The regiment's brigade, commanded by Colonel William B. Goodrich, had been detached earlier from the division of Brigadier General George S. Greene and fought on the extreme right earlier that morning. The brigade covered the withdrawal of portions of Sedgwick's Division after its repulse in the West Woods. Goodrich was killed and his brigade was ordered to fall back. Chaplain Eddy continued his search to no avail. By 1:30 p.m. What was left of Greene's division was in the rear of the East Woods at the Michael Miller Farm in support of Franklin's 6th Corps.⁹⁵

Chaplain Eddy found General Greene resting under an apple tree in the Miller orchard. From Greene he learned his brigade was still absent from the division and, according to Eddy:

I concluded to wait their coming. Shortly after, it was reported that General McClellan and staff were passing down the line. I remounted and rode to the extreme right with them. While riding through a barnyard, where

94 Robert Goldthwaite Carter, *Four Brothers in Blue* (University of Texas Press, 1903), 112.

95 Richard Eddy, *History of the Sixtieth Regiment, New York State Volunteers* (Self-published, 1864), 174; *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 477, 505; Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 328 note 48; Carman-Cope Map 11.

temporary relief was being afforded to the wounded, a poor fellow whose leg, shattered by a cannon ball, had not yet been amputated, raised himself on one foot, and taking off his cap, exclaimed with energy and feeling: ‘God bless you, Mac! Go in and win!’ Passing into a piece of woods, where a large body of infantry was resting, their hearty cheers announced to the rebels that the General was near, and immediately brought their batteries to bear upon us, and, for five minutes, sent their shot and shell much nearer than was agreeable. My horse received a slight flesh wound, but no person was hurt. By this time, some eight or ten of our batteries having got the range, opened with fearful rapidity, and in less than a minute, the rebels were driven from the guns.⁹⁶

McClellan’s afternoon ride to the right apparently became more than just a quick dash to settle an argument between two subordinates. According to *The New York Herald*:

As General McClellan rode along the line he was most vociferously cheered, which attracted the attention of the rebels, when they commenced throwing shells, some of which fell into the ranks of the 128th Pennsylvania, and they began to fall back; but Gen. McClellan himself rallied them, and they soon regained their former steadiness.⁹⁷

During McClellan’s afternoon ride, the 128th Pennsylvania of Mansfield’s 12th Corps was located west and adjacent to the Smoketown Road behind a small cornfield situated between the Poffenberger Farm and the famous Cornfield. Near the southern end of the small cornfield, in that part of the East Woods which bordered the northeast corner of the Cornfield, the 96th Pennsylvania with Colonel Joseph J. Bartlett’s brigade of Franklin’s 6th Corps was in brigade line of battle in the East Woods facing the eastern edge of the Cornfield.⁹⁸

Henry Keiser with the 96th Pennsylvania recorded in his diary that the regiment arrived on the battlefield “about two this afternoon.” Keiser

96 Eddy, *History of the Sixtieth Regiment*, 174.

97 “Additional Details of the Battle,” *The New York Herald*, September 21, 1862.

98 Carman-Cope Maps 11, 12

was aware of fighting on his left which may have been the combat at Bloody Lane. Bartlett's brigade was retained and delayed by General Sumner to strengthen his position. It was this action by Sumner that caused the argument with Franklin which resulted in McClellan's midafternoon ride. Keiser was keenly aware of the appearance of both Franklin and McClellan on the field. As Keiser noted:

[W]e were placed in line, we were not engaged but heavy fighting on our left. Gen. McClellan, Gen. Franklin with their staff rode along our front, and the rebels seeing them opened on them with a whole battery. The left of our regiment was just in range of their shells which flew around us thick as hail. Frank Treon, of our company, had his leg shot off above the knee ... Franklin Treon died at six this evening from the effects of his wound.⁹⁹

Corporal Edmond R. Brown of the 27th Indiana Infantry remembered that after Franklin's "fresh" 6th Corps arrived on the field and "formed for a final assault, near the Dunker church, our brigade was ordered by General McClellan in person to form behind it as a support."¹⁰⁰ As McClellan observed, "I found the troops a good deal shaken ... Even Sedgwick's division commenced giving way under a few shots from a battery that suddenly commenced firing from an unexpected position, I had to ride in and rally them myself."¹⁰¹

Despite the confusion in the ranks and the Confederate artillery, it appears McClellan found Franklin and then Sumner sometime between 2:30 and 3:00 p.m. in the East Woods/Cornfield area. Little Mac arrived amidst quite a group, some 20 or more officers: Generals Franklin, Sumner, their staff, and various subordinate commanders from the 1st, 2nd, 6th, and 12th Corps. Lieutenant James A. Scrymser, a staff member of 6th Corps division commander General "Baldy" Smith, not only

99 Henry Keiser, copy manuscript diary entry, September 17, 1862, Regimental Files, ANBL; Edward Colimore, "Historic Civil War diary written by an average soldier," *Baltimore News American*, Sunday, October 18, 1981; Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 326-27.

100 Edmond Randolph Brown, *The Twenty-Seventh Indiana Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Rebellion* (Self-published, 1899), 252-53. Brown mistakenly gives the time as 5:00 p.m., however the context is clear that it was shortly after Franklin's arrival.

101 McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, 606.

remembered the meeting, but also another instance of McClellan coming under enemy artillery fire. As Scrymser wrote:

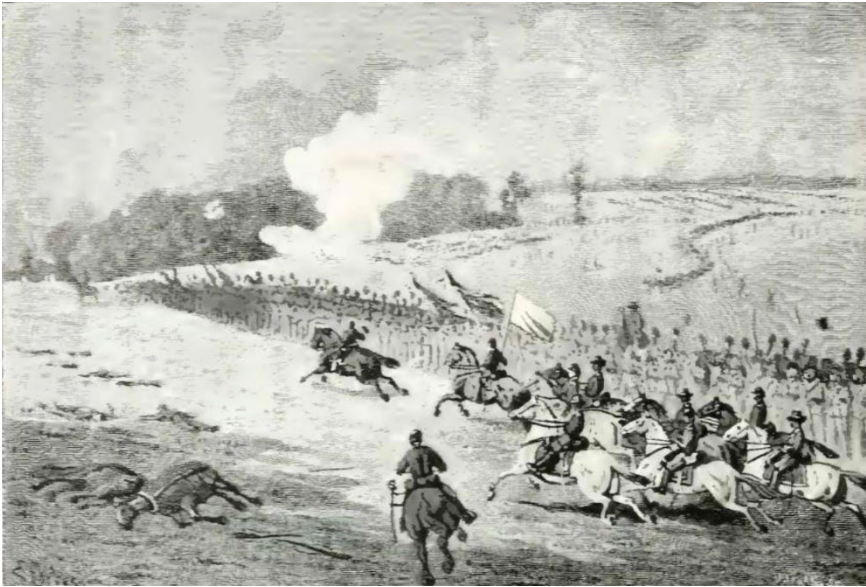
There was a hasty conference in the cornfield as to what had taken place and the advisability of continuing the attack on the enemy's lines ... While this conference was taking place, the Confederates pushed another piece of artillery, by hand, to the crest of the hill, on the Sharpsburg Road, a little south of Dunker Church. When in position, the gun was fired at the group of officers. The range was too high and the charge ... although fired within 150 yards of the group, passed harmlessly over the Union generals.¹⁰²

There are others that disagree with Scrymser about the enemy artillery passing harmlessly overhead. As reported in *The New York Herald*:

When he [McClellan] rode off to the right, attended by members of his staff and a cavalry escort, the enemy opened a battery in full range of the General and his party. Several of the shells struck among them, the horses pranced and dashed about, and a lively scene ensued. Two horses among his body guard were killed [and] some of the infantry soldiers in line nearby were wounded by the explosion of the shells, but fortunately neither the General nor any of the gentlemen on his staff were injured.¹⁰³

102 James A. Scrymser, *Personal Reminiscences of James A. Scrymser in times of Peace and War* (Self-published, 1915), 34-35. Scrymser says when McClellan and others stopped to discuss the situation it was in a "cornfield" in the vicinity of the East Woods. Since he did not capitalize "cornfield," some question arises whether he was writing about the famous Antietam landmark or the small cornfield between the Poffenberger Farm and the "Cornfield." Although Scrymser wrote more than fifty years after the fact, and his memory could well have been confused, we have seen previous evidence from James P. Stewart of Knap's Battery placing McClellan in the famous "Cornfield."

103 "General McClellan at the Battle," *The New York Herald*, September 21, 1862.



"General McClellan riding the line of battle at Antietam. From a sketch made at the time." (Battles and Leaders of the Civil War)

By the middle of the afternoon, when McClellan, Sumner, and Franklin were conferring, Brigadier General Willis A. Gorman's brigade of Sumner's 2nd Corps was deployed in the Poffenberger Farm Lane. The brigade was withdrawn to the farm lane after its disastrous repulse earlier in the West Woods. Gorman's battered regiments were situated between the North Woods and Doubleday's Super Battery on the knoll behind the farm buildings.¹⁰⁴ In the ranks of the 1st Minnesota Infantry Regiment, Sergeant Edward H. Bassett observed McClellan about this same time. As Bassett wrote to his sisters a few days later:

During the P.M. Genl McClellan came riding up to the front the boys cheered him he took off his hat and bowed smiling very pleasantly in a few moments before he was 10 rods [160 feet] past our regt. the rebels opened a battery opposite to us and the shot and shell flew around

104 Carman-Cope Maps 11-14.

the General like hail. There was several horses in his
bodyguard were killed but he was not hurt.¹⁰⁵

At the time of this afternoon appearance by “Little Mac” near the Poffenberger Farm, the brigade of Brigadier General Marsena R. Patrick was in position on the knoll with Doubleday’s division and the Super Battery. As Patrick recorded in his diary. It was shortly before 2:00 p.m. when “The Brigade was then moved back to the Hill, to which the batteries had been withdrawn & placed in support.”¹⁰⁶

One of the regiments in Patrick’s brigade was the 21st New York Infantry. Most Civil War regiments had soldiers who carried the letters of their command to and from brigade headquarters. The soldiers detailed for this duty were known as “Post Boys.” The Post Boy for the 21st New York was Jimmy McCabe. A few days after the battle, a letter from Jimmy McCabe was published in a local newspaper in which he stated:

General McClellan, with General Sumner and other officers, have just come through among the boys, who, on seeing him, rose up *en masse* and gave three rousing cheers for ‘Little Mac.’ He, in return, took off his cap and waved it, bowing also to the boys. Our boys then waved a rebel flag which they captured from a Texas regiment ... As soon as the rebel flag was raised ... the rebels opened on us again with grape, shell, and solid shot.¹⁰⁷

Between the Poffenberger Farm and the East Woods, on the high ground near the junction of the northeast corner of the Cornfield and the East Woods, the 1st New York Light Artillery was in position during this

105 Edward Henry Bassett to Sisters Ella and Anna, September 25, 1862, Regimental Files, ANBL. Typescript letter donated to the Antietam National Battlefield in 2024 by great grandson Michael Bassett.

106 Marsena Randolph Patrick, *Inside Lincoln’s Army, The Diary of Marsena Randolph Patrick*, David S. Parks ed. (Thomas Yoseloff, 1964), 150.

107 John Harrison Mills, *Chronicles of the Twenty-First Regiment New York State Volunteers* (21st Reg’t Veteran Association of Buffalo, 1887), 190, 292. The source of Jimmy’s anecdote is given as the *Buffalo Courier*, September 24. Information on “Post Boys” found in:

https://npshistory.com/series/symposia/gettysburg_seminars/10/essay1.pdf, accessed December 15, 2024.

visit by Little Mac. First Lieutenant Nelson Ames with the 1st New York provides us with another eyewitness description of McClellan under enemy artillery fire and directing counter battery fire. As Ames later recalled:

During the afternoon Generals McClellan and Sumner rode up to where we were posted and examined the lines of battle with their glasses. In the course of their visit a rebel battery on our front was throwing shells in to our line. General McClellan turned to Sergeant Barse and told him to give them a few straight shots. So successful was his effort that the fourth shot dismounted one of their guns, and we were not troubled again by them while in this position.

Ames' next sentence leaves little doubt it was a dangerous place. "It was while sighting his gun in this place that Corporal Salisbury was mortally wounded."¹⁰⁸

Sometime during this afternoon ride to the northern part of the battlefield McClellan personally ordered Brigadier General Winfield S. Hancock, a brigade commander in Franklin's 6th Corps, to take command of Major General Israel B. Richardson's division in Sumner's 2nd Corps. Richardson, in action at the sunken road known famously as Bloody Lane, was severely wounded and taken from the field. As Hancock reported, "I was directed to take command of his [Richardson's] division by Major General McClellan in person."¹⁰⁹

There is evidence that McClellan and staff passed close to Bloody Lane during the afternoon visit. It comes to us just a few days afterwards in a letter dated September 20 written by 1st Lieutenant William H.

108 Nelson Ames, *History of Battery G First New York Light Artillery* (Marshall Print Company, 1900), 41; Carman-Cope Maps 11-14. Dismounting a gun means putting it out of action, namely by knocking the barrel off the carriage or splintering the carriage so the gun cannot stand upright.

109 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 277, 407. McClellan stated it was during the "afternoon, when I was on the right" that he gave the order to Hancock. In both of his reports (one for his action in the 6th Corps and another for the 2nd Corps) Hancock stated it was "early" afternoon when he was personally ordered by McClellan to take command of Richardson's division. Given the vagaries of Civil War timekeeping, it is likely Hancock received his orders during the afternoon consultation when McClellan met with Sumner and Franklin. If not then, we are faced with yet another trip by McClellan to the East Woods just to give a direct verbal order to Hancock, which seems highly unlikely.

Merrell with the 108th New York Infantry. The regiment, with Brigadier General William H. French's division, was in the thick of the action at Bloody Lane on Richardson's right flank. According to Merrell, while escorting prisoners to the rear after the action he remembered, "During the latter part of the engagement ... we met one of Gen. McClellan's aids." More significantly, 1st Lieutenant Merrell also recalled, "Gen. McClellan told us during the fight that it was *the battle* of the war." It would follow that if McClellan and staff were in the vicinity of Bloody Lane during the midafternoon ride, or "during the fight" as Merrell phrased it, they would have known first hand of Richardson's wounding and the need to replace him, hence, McClellan's personal order to Hancock.¹¹⁰

September 17, 1862: McClellan's Fourth Ride to the North

No doubt "Little Mac" returned briefly to his Staff Headquarters to inform them of Hancock's reassignment. If he did go to the Pry House he could not have been there long because there is evidence he returned to the northern end of the battlefield a fourth time. Once again, an observer in Barnes' brigade near the northern Guns of Position witnessed McClellan on his way to the Neikirk Crossing. "About 3:30 P.M.," wrote John L. Parker, regimental historian of the 22nd Massachusetts Infantry, "McClellan with his staff rode out on the road by our position." As would be expected, "The men sprang to their feet, and gave him a rousing reception."¹¹¹

After the war, General Franklin claimed that "Later in the day," after the midafternoon visit, "General McClellan came again to my headquarters." Franklin also testified before a congressional committee that after first arriving and finding General Sumner on the field, he "remained there the rest of the day." Therefore, it is a safe assumption that Franklin's headquarters was somewhere in the vicinity of the East Woods. According to Franklin they discussed renewing the battle next morning with an assault against "a hill on the right," today known as Nicodemus Heights.¹¹²

There is strong evidence that after leaving Franklin's headquarters, McClellan encountered Brigadier General Charles Griffin and Colonel

110 William H. Merrell to Dear Express, September 20, 1862, *The Rochester Evening Express*, September 26, 1862. Italics by Merrell.

111 John L. Parker, *History of the Twenty-Second Massachusetts Infantry* (Regimental Association, 1887), 192.

112 Franklin, "Notes On Crampton's Gap And Antietam," *Battles and Leaders*, vol. 2, 597; *Report of The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, vol. 1, 627.

Thomas B. W. Stockton of Morell's division, 5th Corps. It will be remembered that sometime during the day, McClellan detached two of Morell's three brigades to support General Sumner on the Union right. In his report, General Porter, commanding the 5th Corps, stated the two brigades "were dispatched in the afternoon to the aid of General Sumner, then hard pressed." This argues for McClellan's midafternoon consultation with Sumner and Franklin as the impetus behind the order. "They were halted near their destination by the major general commanding, who had sent for them," wrote Porter. According to Porter, "They returned after dark." This was verified by Griffin in his report. After receiving an order "About 4:00 p.m." to support "General Franklin's command. The brigade moved about half a mile to the right, where it was halted, together with the Third Brigade, same division, by General McClellan." Griffin stated they returned to their morning position "just before sunset."¹¹³

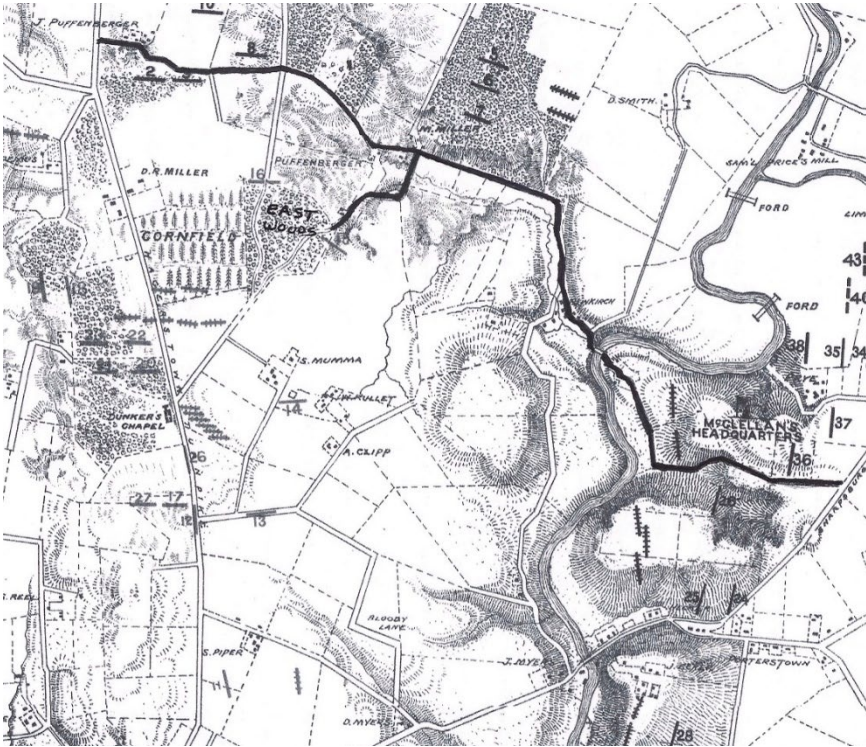
A soldier in Stockton's Third Brigade also confirms this series of events. In a letter penned to his sister on the evening of September 17, First Lieutenant John Marshall Brown with the 20th Maine Infantry wrote:

We moved once or twice during the day & late in the evening about 4 o'clock we were ordered to the front we marched through the woods about 2 miles & halted. While we were waiting Gen McLellan came up & spoke to the Col. He looked well but fatigued, among his staff I noticed Hammerstein. Pretty soon orders came to return to our old place & so here we are bivouacked for this night.¹¹⁴

Although it is unusual to think of 4:00 pm as late in the evening, the fact that McClellan was riding to the right on the northern part of the battlefield at this time was verified by another eyewitness. First Lieutenant Joseph S. Hedges with the 4th United States Cavalry, in correspondence with John M. Gould after the war, verified "Little Mac's" movement. "[O]ur squadron were detached for orderly duty," stated Hedges, "and when Genl. McClellan rode to the right of the field about 4 o'clock in the

¹¹³ *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 338, 349.

¹¹⁴ John Marshall Brown to darling Sister, September 17, 1862, Maine Historical Society, Portland, ME, (Coll. S-602, Misc. Box 23/4) MMN #25209.



The Neikirk Crossing provided a route for McClellan to make at least four visits to the East Woods/Poffenbarger Farm area of the Antietam Battlefield on September 17. With “that Devil Dan” at a full gallop he could have made the trip from the Field Headquarters or the Pry House in less than five minutes. (Detail of 1893 War Department Map with route overlayed by Stotelmyer)

afternoon we had not to exceed one quarter of our men to accompany him.”¹¹⁵

The participants may disagree somewhat with the timing of the order and the distance they marched, but they all agree on two points: 1. General McClellan met them and personally countermanded their orders, and 2. They returned to their original position by nightfall. It makes perfect sense that McClellan encountered these troops after his last visit with Franklin. No doubt he realized they were no longer needed on the northern part of the field and could be better used back at the center, hence the decision to countermand the order.

¹¹⁵ Joseph S. Hedges to John M. Gould, John M. Gould Papers, Dartmouth College.

September 17, 1862: McClellan's Ride to the Lower Bridge

After leaving Griffin and Stockton, the evidence suggests McClellan returned to his Field Headquarters. Since he was on horseback, unlike Porter's two brigades of infantry, Little Mac arrived there before nightfall. It appears that it was sometime between 4:30 and 5:00 p.m. and the attention of those gathered on the hilltop was directed to the southern part of the field, the Union left. This area contains one of the most famous landmarks of the Civil War: The Lower Bridge, more popularly known in the Antietam lexicon as Burnside Bridge. The overall commander on this part of the battlefield was Major General Ambrose E. Burnside. Much controversy, beyond the scope of this essay, swirls around the combat on this part of the battlefield. Most of the fighting from the morning into the early afternoon was spent just crossing Antietam Creek at the Lower Bridge. By midafternoon, after the 9th Corps crossed the creek, Burnside launched one of the most overlooked actions of the battle: The Final Attack. This attack, from roughly 3:00 to 5:30 p.m., represents the last organized combat on the battlefield.

The Final Attack climaxed on the high ground running along the Harpers Ferry Road south of Sharpsburg. At its height, Burnside had a line of battle almost a mile long consisting of his four divisions and elements of Porter's 5th Corps. Strength estimates for the Federals range from 8,000 to 10,000 troops. According to the Special Correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, the late afternoon combat of the Final Attack "was in plain view of McClellan's position." Around 4:00 p.m. elements of Confederate Major General Ambrose Powell Hill's division arrived from Harpers Ferry and attacked the Union left flank. Just when it seemed Burnside was on the cusp of driving the enemy off the ridge at the Harpers Ferry Road, everything was thrown into disarray with the addition of A. P. Hill's troops. As the Special Correspondent noted:

Burnside is outnumbered; flanked, compelled to yield the hill...His position is no longer one of attack ... McClellan's glass for the last half hour has seldom been turned away from the left. He sees clearly enough that Burnside is pressed ... McClellan remounts his horse, and with Porter and a dozen officers of his staff rides away to the left in Burnside's direction.¹¹⁶

116 "The Contest in Maryland," *New York Tribune*, September 20, 1862.

This was corroborated by Lieutenant Colonel. Strother of McClellan's staff who set the time by noting that "the last rays of the setting sun shown upon the bayonets of the enemy crowning the hill." Since sunset on September 17 was at 6:07 p.m. we can safely estimate it was about 5:30 p.m. when Strother further noted, "At this crisis, the General, followed by his whole retinue, rode forward to a bluff nearer the scene of action." According to the Special Correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, McClellan met 5th Corps division commander Brigadier General George Sykes along the way. A brief consultation occurred between McClellan, Porter, and Sykes before the party proceeded to the forward position on the bluff.¹¹⁷

The bluff was the high ground south of the Boonsboro-Sharpsburg Turnpike where the Federal Guns of Position were located. A postwar article by Captain Thomas Anderson of the 12th United States Infantry Battalion of Porter's 5th Corps places McClellan among the batteries of the long-range artillery on the heights south of the turnpike. Anderson's unit was located behind the hill in support of the artillery. Anderson claimed that "At the time A.P. Hill began to force Burnside back," he spotted Generals Sykes, McClellan, and Porter, "about a hundred and fifty yards from us." He described McClellan and Porter as "sitting on their horses between Taft's and Weed's batteries a little to our left."¹¹⁸

The Union right, on the northern end of the battlefield, was at a standstill. At this critical juncture, the outcome of the battle seemed to depend on what Burnside could accomplish on the Union left. In the midst of the confusion swirling around the combat of the Final Attack, McClellan was given a dispatch from the "Mountain Station" on Elk Ridge which informed him: "Everything indicates a retreat of the enemy- his wagons appear disordered- Our infantry are driving enemy's right." The enemy's right was the area of the Final Attack. Apparently, at this time, Sykes had moved forward because the dispatch was sent to him with instructions in Porter's handwriting. "Genl Sykes watch carefully and let us know if this is so," wrote Porter, "Send this to Burnside. If he sees it is true Genl McClellan wishes him to push & we will push center at same time."¹¹⁹

117 Strother, "Personal Recollections," 284; "The Contest in Maryland," *New York Tribune*, September 20, 1862.

118 Thomas Anderson, "The Reserves at Antietam," *Battles and Leaders*, vol. 2, 656.

119 William S. Stryker to General McClellan, Porter to Sykes, McClellan Papers, Reel 32, Document 16610, Library of Congress. Documents undated; however, context clearly places the date as September 17, 1862. "Mountain Station" dispatch was signed

This shows that for a time late in the afternoon McClellan seriously considered forcing the center, contingent upon Burnside sustaining his assault. When Burnside's left flank began to crumble, the tactical situation took a nosedive. The threatened collapse of Burnside's Final Attack seemed to contradict this signal station dispatch and portended yet another crisis for McClellan. It should come then as no surprise that information regarding the condition of affairs on this part of the battlefield was sought after. As McClellan's aid Lieutenant Colonel Strother noted in his diary, "During these late operations ... The staff rode to reconnoiter the condition of things on the left."¹²⁰

It is interesting to note that Delos B. Sackett, who served as Inspector General on McClellan's Staff during the battle, claimed he was at the Field Headquarters during the Final Attack where he found General Porter, but not McClellan. Sackett assumed McClellan was "on a visit to the right of the battlefield," and added "It was not long after this that the check and repulse of Gen. Burnside's advance was witnessed."¹²¹

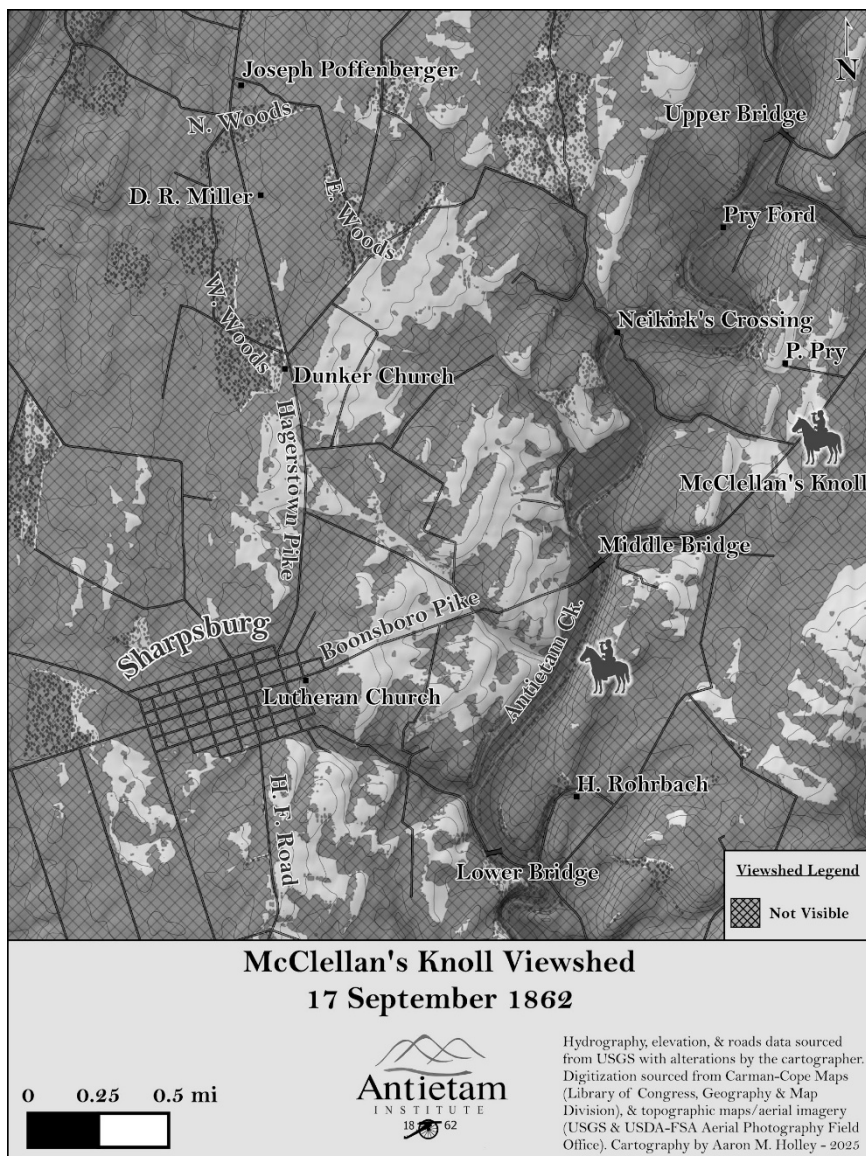
No battle history of Antietam written to date has ever placed General McClellan on the Union left, the southern portion of the battlefield, on September 17. However, it appears Sackett was mistaken regarding Little Mac's whereabouts, and contrary to the accepted historical consensus, McClellan was on the Union left near the close of the Final Attack. The evidence to date is twofold and comes to us from contemporary sources. The first is the September 21 edition of *The New York Herald*:

The gallant commander of the Union army in the field was ... at times at his headquarters, established for the day upon the commanding hill I have referred to, and at

by signal officers 2nd Lieutenant N. Henry Camp and 1st Lieutenant Joseph Gloskoski. It was forwarded by Staff Headquarters signal officer 1st Lieutenant William S. Stryker (*OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 125, 129, 137-38). In Gloskoski's report, dated November 29, 1862, this particular dispatch is not mentioned; however, as he stated, "These are all the messages I could preserve from that day [September 17], as then we had no tents on stations, no wagons, exposed for days and nights to constant rain, and consequently all papers, as everything else in our possession, must have been wet and destroyed."

120 Strother, *A Virginia Yankee in the Civil War; The Diaries of David Hunter Strother*, Cecil D. Eby, Jr. ed. (The University Of North Carolina Press, 1961), 111.

121 Delos B. Sackett to George B. McClellan, February 20, 1876, *McClellan's Own Story*, 610. Sackett gave the time of his arrival at "headquarters" as "past four o'clock," and then stated "It was not long after this" that he witnessed Burnside's repulse. Once again, given the inaccuracy of Civil War timekeeping, the context of Delos' statement would suggest a time well after 4:00 p.m.



McClellan's Knoll Viewshed. The Final Attack climaxed on the high ground running along the Harpers Ferry Road. (Aaron Holley)

others in this portion of the field or that, to the right or left, as the exigencies of the hour demanded.¹²²

¹²² "General McClellan At The Battle," *The New York Herald*, September 21, 1862.

One vague newspaper reference to McClellan on the “left” of the battlefield is not conclusive; however, an account by a participant written a few days after the event lends credibility to the newspaper citation. Private Alexander Wight of the 23rd Ohio Infantry related one of the most remarkable accounts of McClellan on the battlefield. Wight penned a contemporary letter that conclusively places Little Mac on the Union left. To understand the importance of this remarkable evidence, we need to examine the location and action of the 23rd Ohio in the afternoon’s Final Attack.

The 23rd Ohio was part of Colonel Hugh Ewing’s brigade of the 9th Corps’ Kanawha Division. The brigade also included the 12th and the 30th Ohio Infantry regiments. Along with Brigadier General Isaac P. Rodman’s division, Ewing’s brigade crossed downstream of the Lower Bridge at two different fords. Rodman and Ewing arrived in time to participate in the tail end of the third assault on the bridge; however, both Rodman’s division and Ewing’s brigade became integral parts of the Final Attack. The attack was launched about 3:00 p.m. with Rodman’s division on the left of the mile-long line of battle. Ewing’s brigade was held in reserve behind Rodman to provide support.¹²³

Shortly after A. P. Hill’s division arrived, it attacked the Union left flank. The brunt of A. P. Hill’s initial assault fell upon two of Rodman’s regiments in Colonel Edward Harland’s brigade: the 4th Rhode Island and the 16th Connecticut. This combat occurred in a cornfield that has come to be known in the lexicon of Antietam as the “40 Acre Cornfield.” Harland’s two regiments were overwhelmed by elements of Brigadier General Maxcy Gregg’s South Carolina Brigade and forced out of the 40 Acre Cornfield with great loss. As the 4th Rhode Island and the 16th Connecticut were giving way, Ewing’s brigade went into action. It was about 4:30 p.m.¹²⁴

Up until this time Ewing’s brigade was sheltered behind a ridge located about 400 yards west of the brigade’s staging area (the site of the present-day McKinley Monument). The ridge was occupied by two batteries of Federal artillery: Captain George W. Durell’s Independent Battery D, Pennsylvania Light Artillery, and Captain Joseph Clark’s Battery E, 4th United States Artillery. Just in front of the artillery was a farm lane leading from the farmstead of John Otto. In front of Durell’s

123 Kieth Snyder, *The Final Attack Trail* (Western Maryland Interpretive Association, no publication date provided); Carman-Cope Maps 11-13.

124 Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 464-68.

battery was the 40 Acre Cornfield and in front of Clark's battery was a plowed field of open ground. On the western edge of the cornfield and the plowed ground, about 400 yards on average, was a substantial stone wall fence, broken in places by rail fences. Running roughly parallel with the ridge and the stone fence about halfway through the field was a deep ravine.

The 23rd and 30th Ohio Regiments charged towards the stone wall fence across the ravine. The 12th Ohio was held in reserve at the eastern edge of the 40 Acre Cornfield. In addition to elements of Gregg's brigade on their left, in the southwestern corner of the cornfield, when the Ohioans reached the stone wall fence they immediately encountered Confederate Brigadier General James J. Archer's brigade. A fierce contest then ensued between the combatants for possession of the stone wall fence.¹²⁵

What is of interest for the subject at hand is that several combatants made note of the stone wall fence at the western edge of the fields. Major J. M. Comly, commander of the 23rd Ohio, stated in his report that the regiment, "advanced at double-quick ... up to the stone fence." Private Wayne J. Jacobs with the 30th Ohio noted the regiment moved "forward, double-quick to a stone wall ... the enemy again opened upon us, but it's only effect was to accelerate our advance to the wall." Major George H. Hildt, commander of the 30th Ohio, reported, "[W]e reached the stone wall...and our colors erected at the wall, a withering fire was directed upon us from our left flank." Regarding the 23rd Ohio, Antietam chronicler Ezra A. Carman wrote, "Its entire front was covered by the stone fence."¹²⁶

In the ranks of the 23rd Ohio served Private Alexander Wight. He was a horn player in the regimental band. Wight performed a variety of duties in addition to his noncombatant band assignments that included guard duty, scouting, medical assistant, and burial detail. During combat his medical duties included evacuating the wounded from the battlefield, both during and after the battle. On September 26, 1862, he wrote to his brothers John and George about his experience at Antietam:

125 Ethan S. Rafuse, *Antietam, South Mountain & Harpers Ferry, A Battlefield Guide* (University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 113-14; Jason Campbell, "1st Brigade: Colonel Eliakim Scammon, Colonel Hugh Ewing," *Brigades of Antietam: The Union and Confederate Brigades at the Battle of Antietam*, Bradley M. Gottfried, ed. (The Press of the Antietam Institute, 2021), 183-84.

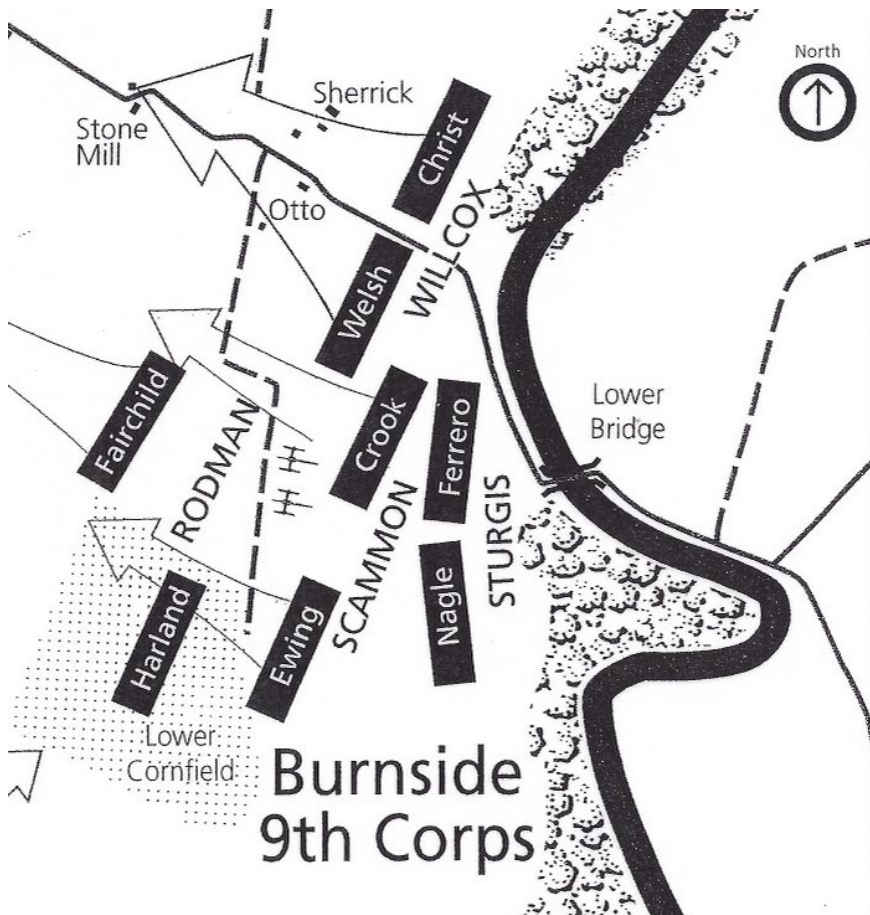
126 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 467, 470; Wayne J. Jacobs, "Memorandum of the Marches of Company of the 30th Regiment O.V.I. Commencing July 29, 1861," February 10, 1864, Regimental Files, ANBL; Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 470.

Our left was engaged and I had to be at my post. I hurried down to where the doctors were and they told us there was no use trying to get any wounded off, that we would be running a great risk in trying but that did no good. We went as far as we could, just far enough so we could hear the bullets whistle all around us and laid down behind stone piles and trees and every now and then, zip came a bullet against the tree or stone pile. Our regiment had got down behind a stone fence and the rebels were in a corn field all most at their left but the stone fence served well as a fort and but few were killed although a great many were wounded.

Private Wight traveled as far as he could, which certainly meant no farther than the ridge upon which the batteries of Durell and Clark were located. He was somewhere between the brigade's staging area and the ridge. He was close enough to be exposed to the overshot of the small arms fire of his brigade's action. There is every likelihood that in the days following; while retrieving and burying the dead he observed the stone wall fence first hand and learned from his comrades what had transpired there. It certainly is understandable that he would describe the wall as a "fort." There is another part of Wight's letter to his brothers, written nine days after the battle, that is remarkable. According to Wight:

You may think that I am crazy but I have seen something since I came here that convinces me that McClellan is doing all that he can for his and our country. He is a very plain man and speaks to any person. The day of the last fight I was helping a wounded man off the field and he rode up to me and asked if he was badly wounded and if he could ride. He jumped off his horse and helped me to put the man on, but he could not ride. Burnside also offered his services at the same time, but I thanked him and said he could not ride. If there is not humanity to you I don't know where you will find it. It makes no difference where you meet those two men they will speak to you.¹²⁷

127 Alexander Wight to Brother, September 26, 1862, Regimental Files, ANBL. Transcripts of several letters by Wight written during the campaign were donated to the Antietam National Battlefield in 1991 by his great grandson James H. Wight. The Battle



Ewing's Brigade (11th, 23rd, and 30th Ohio) at the Final Attack. 23rd Ohio staging area east of the Lower Cornfield. (NPS/Antietam National Battlefield)

By the end of the Final Attack, around 5:30 p.m., the soldiers of Ewing's brigade were once again sheltered behind the ridge from where they had earlier started. It is quite possible Private. Wight was between the ridge and the staging area helping the wounded leave the field. Were McClellan and Burnside near the staging area of Ewing's brigade when Wight ran into them, or did Wight encounter them in a relative place of safety on the eastern side of the Lower Bridge? Brigadier General Jacob D. Cox, Burnside's subordinate and titular commander of the 9th Corps,

of Antietam was the "last" significant action in which Private Alexander Wight participated. He was discharged from active service on October 24, 1862, and returned to his home in Ashland County, Ohio.

definitely placed Burnside on the west side of bridge. “Burnside ... had come over to the west bank to consult and to hurry matters,” wrote Cox after the war. According to Cox, Burnside “took his share of personal peril ... it is proper to mention this because it has been said that he did not cross the stream.”¹²⁸

After the battle any structure with a roof became a “hospital.” Most of the wounded from the morning attacks at the Lower Bridge found their way on foot or by ambulance to the Henry Rohrbach Farm about 600 yards northeast of the bridge. There is evidence that during the battle some 9th Corps wounded in the Final Attack were temporarily taken to the nearby Otto and Sherrick Farms, but those structures were not safely secured until after the battle. The Rohrbach Farm soon filled up, and consequently the remainder of the 9th Corps wounded were taken to Burnside’s headquarters at the Jacob Miller Farm. McClellan asking about the wounded soldier riding a horse would suggest an initial location still on the western side of the creek with some considerable distance to a field hospital, and this would argue for a location near the staging area of the 23rd Ohio.¹²⁹

As far as the history of the battle and the accepted historical consensus of McClellan is concerned, it really doesn’t matter exactly where Wight encountered the two generals. Not only does Wight’s remarkable letter have Little Mac away from the Pry House and on a part of the field that goes unmentioned in the published histories of Antietam, it also presents us with a picture of the man seldom seen in the popular literature of the campaign. Private Wight encountered the commanding general of the Army of the Potomac and described him as a plain man that was not too self-important to assist him in the care of a wounded soldier.

Private Wight related another sighting of General McClellan that sheds more light on the character of the man. Sometime after dark, Wight observed both McClellan and Burnside at a field hospital. According to Wight:

That night after the fight they visited the hospitals and spoke to the boys like a father and told them they had

128 ANBHT No. 61 (East Side Branch Avenue); Jacob D. Cox, *Military Reminiscences of the Civil War*, 2 vols. (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1900), 345.

129 Dr. Gordan Dammann and John Schildt, *Islands of Mercy, Hospitals in the Maryland Campaign September, 1862* (E. Graphics, 2019), 96-97.

done well and gained a great victory. He did not just go in and speak, but he went to the boys and shook hands with them and spoke to them like a father.¹³⁰

It is interesting to note that Wight used the plural “hospitals,” and not the singular, implying more than one visit to more than one hospital. This would be consistent with the observations of the two Swedish officers who claimed to have been with McClellan during the battle. They told Danish Minister Raasloff that “after the battle,” McClellan “rode out on the field to meet and encourage the wounded and praise those who had fought well.”¹³¹

Alexander Wight, and his brothers, did not hold General McClellan in high regards before the Maryland Campaign. This is evidenced by another statement in his September 26 letter, “I don’t know what your opinion is about George McClellan, but I have changed my opinion.”¹³²

Lieutenant Colonel Strother noted in his journal, “By eight o’clock the wailing cries of the wounded and the glare of the burning buildings alone interrupted the silence and the darkness.” This means there was an hour and thirty minutes of darkness, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. that McClellan either used to observe the battlefield from the forward position on the bluff or visit the wounded in the field hospitals. This raises the question of how much information was available in the dark? The reader will have to decide which is more plausible, watching a battle in the dark or seeking information first hand. Considering Private Wight’s eyewitness observation, the answer would seem to be the latter. Regardless, according to Strother it was after 8:00 p.m. when, “The General then led us back to the head-quarters camp, established in the rear of Keedysville.”¹³³

September 17, 1862: Army Headquarters

On March 19, 1863, Burnside testified before a congressional committee that he visited Army Headquarters in Keedysville “after my command was all in position” around “8 1/2 o’clock at night” and talked with McClellan’s chief of staff Brigadier General Marcy. He next went directly to “General McClellan’s tent” and talked with him about the

130 Alexander Wight to Brother, September 26, 1862, Regimental Files, ANBL.

131 Daly, *Diary Of A Union Lady 1861-1865*, 183.

132 Alexander Wight to Brother, September 26, 1862, Regimental Files, ANBL.

133 Strother, “Personal Recollections,” 284.

renewal of the battle the next day. After the war, in 1876, Inspector General Sackett, on McClellan's staff, placed Burnside's visit at "late in the evening." Burnside and Sackett disagreed on the content of the conversation in McClellan's headquarters tent, but Sackett definitely corroborates Burnside's nighttime visit with McClellan at Army Headquarters.¹³⁴

Given the preceding, it is plausible McClellan left the forward position near the southern Guns of Position to travel to the southern part of the battlefield and consult with Burnside. And why not? As we have seen, McClellan visited Burnside's headquarters the day before, on September 16. Furthermore, we have seen numerous primary sources that prove four visits to the northern part of the field on September 17 to seek information and consult with subordinates. A visit to the area of the Final Attack is certainly within the character of Little Mac's behavior during the day of the battle, especially considering the "Mountain Station" dispatch declaring a Confederate retreat. It is uncertain whether that dispatch ever reached Sykes or Burnside. Somehow, that same dispatch was sent back to Staff Headquarters where it was forwarded near dark at 6:15 p.m. to Burnside by chief of staff Marcy with the same instructions to determine "if there is any truth to it."¹³⁵ Was McClellan aware of this situation? Such confusion would certainly warrant a personal visit by McClellan.

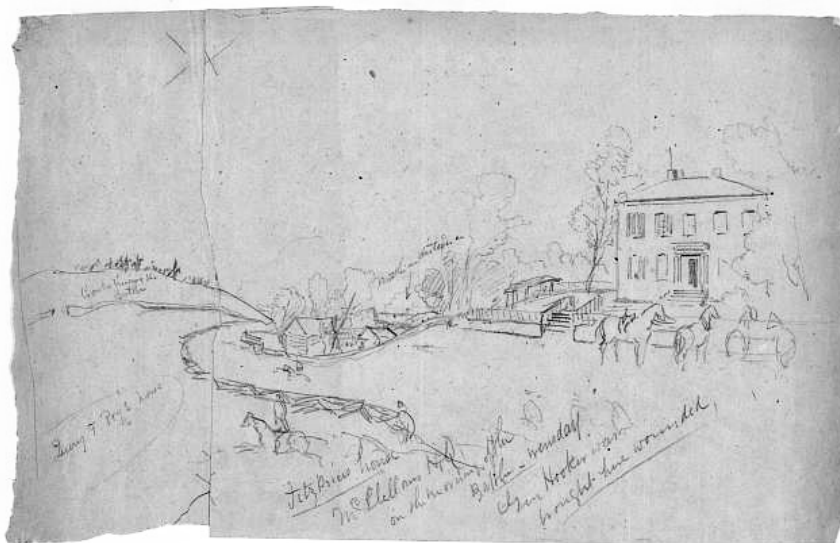
It cannot be denied that Alexander Wight is a primary source, and he saw McClellan on the southern part of the battlefield. By 6:30 p.m. it was dark, and Private Wight saw Burnside and McClellan at the hospitals that night. One can certainly imagine a scenario where McClellan suggests to Burnside that he stops by Army Headquarters after his troops were settled and positioned to discuss continuation of the battle the next day. The preceding remains speculation, but given the evidence it is reasonable conjecture.

September 18-20, 1862

Critics and advocates may disagree on the topics discussed between the two men, but the historical record clearly proves Burnside visited

134 *Report of The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, vol. 1, 542; Delos B. Sackett to George B. McClellan, March 9, 1876, *McClellan's Own Story*, 610.

135 *OR*, vol. 51, pt. 1, 844.



This undated sketch by an unknown artist is supposed to be "McClellan's HQ on the morning of the Battle." It does not look like the Pry House or the ground around it. More than likely, it represents Army Headquarters in Keedysville. (Library of Congress)

McClellan during the night of September 17. Whatever Burnside and McClellan discussed that night must have made an impression upon McClellan. "On the morning of the 18th," reported McClellan, "I visited his position early." As a result of his visit, McClellan detached Morell's division of the 5th Corps and sent it to the support of Burnside.¹³⁶

A soldier with the 20th Maine Infantry in Morell's division watched Little Mac ride by the division that morning. Sergeant Edward Simonton noted in a letter dated September 18:

General McClellan is very popular here. Just now he rode by our lines, and was very heartedly cheered, as he is wherever he goes. He raised his cap and bowed his acknowledgements. He is understandably the man; if left alone, he will I believe lead us on to final victory.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 66, 339.

¹³⁷ Edward Simonton, September 18, 1862, *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, October 1, 1862.

By 8:00 a.m. McClellan returned to Army Headquarters in Keedysville where he then sent several telegrams. He informed General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck that the army still held most of the ground gained the day before in 14 hours of battle and that, "The battle will probably be renewed today." McClellan also sent two telegrams to his wife. One simply informed her, "Your father [Gen. Marcy] and I well." The other echoed what he had told Halleck. "The general result was in our favor, that is to say we gained a great deal of ground and held it," wrote McClellan. He closed by telling his wife, "I am well nigh tired out by anxiety & want of sleep."¹³⁸

Little Mac and staff then rode to the northern part of the battlefield. Lieutenant Colonel Strother noted in his journal that they crossed by an upper ford, presumably the one near Pry's Mill in the vicinity of the Upper Bridge. Since they were traveling from Keedysville this would be the most direct route. Strother noted in his diary that, "We rode to Sumner's post on the right where the General remained for some time in consultation." Sumner's "post," was certainly his headquarters at the Poffenberger Farm. In addition to Sumner, we know that generals Meade and Patrick were also bivouacked at the Poffenberger Farm. From Meade, McClellan received the information that the "efficiency of the corps" was good enough to resist an enemy attack, "though I do not think their morale is as good for an offensive." No doubt McClellan received a similar analysis from Patrick. As Patrick confided to his diary, "if we had attempted to push the enemy, today, with the same troops, we should have been whipped."¹³⁹

General Sumner's opinion of renewing the battle can be gleaned from his testimony a few months afterward to the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the war:

It had been a very severe action- uncommonly severe. My own corps lost something over 5,000 men that day in killed and wounded, and some of the other corps lost very

138 McClellan to Henry W. Halleck, September 18, 1862, McClellan to Mary Ellen McClellan, September 18, 1862, *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan*, Stephen W. Sears ed. (Ticknor & Fields, 1989), 468-69. All three telegrams are time-stamped "8 am." The first two are date-lined "Head Quarters Army of the Potomac, Keedysville." The third, to Mary Ellen, seems to have been composed at the Field Headquarters with the date-line "Camp near Sharpsburg."

139 Strother, "Personal Recollections," 285, *A Virginia Yankee in the Civil War*, 112; *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 66; Patrick, *Inside Lincoln's Army*, 151.

nearly as much. Troops are not exactly prepared to make a rapid pursuit the next day after such a battle as that ... There is a great deal to be done after an action of that kind. It takes a day or two to look about you a little, to collect the dead and wounded, and take care of them.¹⁴⁰

There are valid tactical and operational reasons for McClellan's decision not to renew the battle on September 18 that are beyond the scope of this essay. Suffice it to simply say that while conferring with his subordinates at the Poffenberger Farm, the decision was made. McClellan then traveled to the East Woods in search of Franklin. According to Strother, "Generals Franklin, Smith, and Slocum with staff officers lay on some straw in the field behind the wood." Franklin placed the time of Little Mac's arrival "about 9 o'clock on the morning of the 18th." Another consultation ensued in which McClellan informed Franklin there would be no renewal of the battle. General Franklin's eagerness to attack Nicodemus Heights that morning may not have been as avid as he would have congressional committees, or his postwar readers believe. On September 19, Franklin wrote his wife, "Both parties too fatigued to fight yesterday." And on September 20, "Between ourselves I was not sorry that it was so, for our army is too tired & too much diminished in numbers (the old troops, I mean) to be able to do a great deal of work."¹⁴¹

Sometime during the morning of September 18, McClellan began to suffer the effects of a bad case of dysentery. In correspondence with his wife on September 20 he referred to the condition as his "old disease," and admitted "I have been under the weather since the battle." On the same day he wrote a congratulatory note to General Hooker and apologized for not being able to visit him in person. "I have been very sick the last few days," stated McClellan, "and just able to go where my presence was absolutely necessary."¹⁴²

Dysentery is a debilitating condition caused by an infection of the intestines. Its symptoms may include frequent severe bloody diarrhea, abdominal pain, cramping, fever, nausea, vomiting, and dehydration. It

140 *Report of The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War*, vol. 1, 369.

141 Strother, *A Virginia Yankee in the Civil War*, 112; Franklin, *Battles and Leaders*, 597, as quoted in Snell, *From First To Last*, 197.

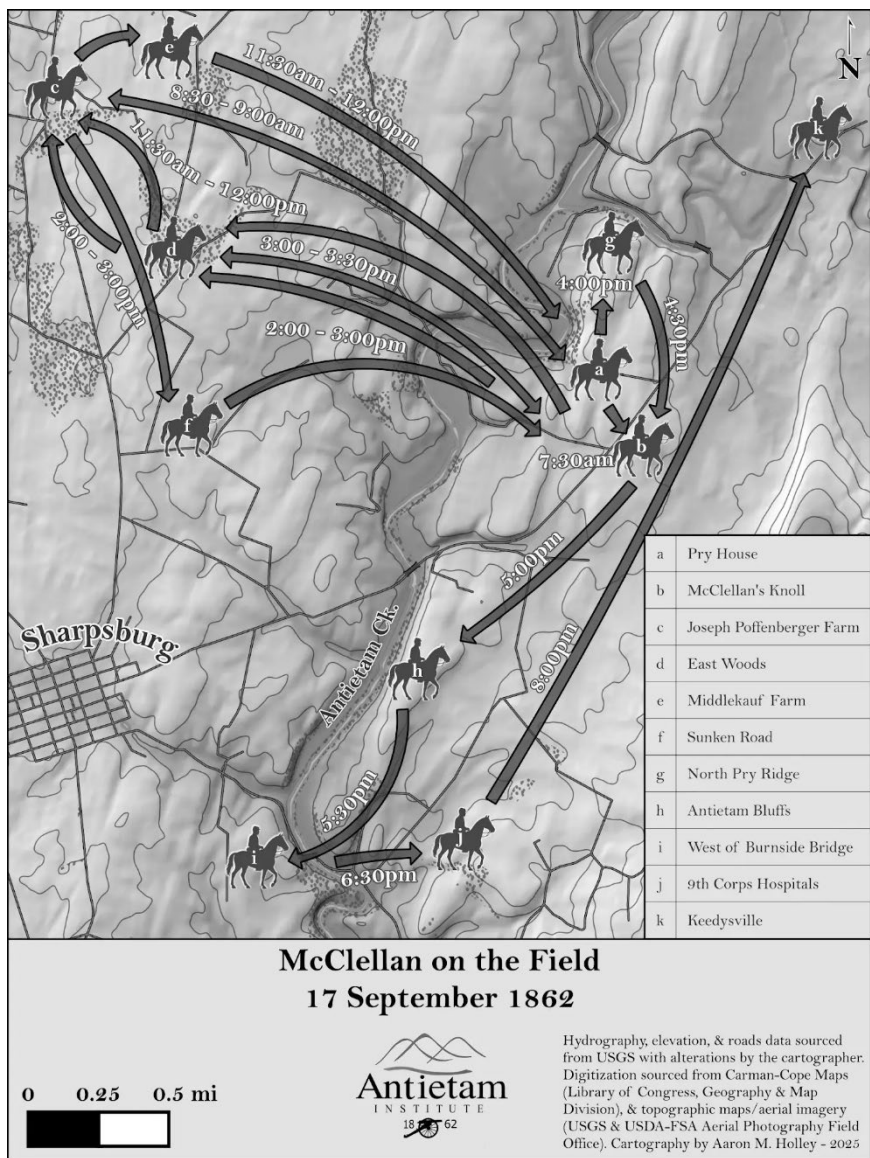
142 McClellan to Mary Ellen McClellan, McClellan to Hooker, September 20, 1862, *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan*, 473-74; Ethan S. Rafuse, *McClellan's War* (Indiana University Press, 2005), 328.

can be a bacterial infection, a parasitic infection, or a viral infection. It can be caused by unsanitary conditions, contaminated water, or contact with an infected carrier. In McClellan's case there are several possibilities. It may have been a new infection brought about by contaminated drinking water or close contact with thousands of chronic cases on duty as well as many healthy carriers. The possibility exists that it was a new disease unknown during the Civil War and misdiagnosed as dysentery. It may have been a relapse from a previous bout of dysentery McClellan suffered during the Peninsula Campaign. Whatever the cause an army commander suffering the effects of dysentery needed privacy on short notice and usually, dared not leave his headquarters.¹⁴³

McClellan's condition was severe enough to prevent him from taking to the saddle. Little Mac was forced to forgo Dan Webster for an army ambulance. The often-forgotten Battle of Shepherdstown, on the Virginia side of the Potomac River, was fought on September 19-20. As Lieutenant Colonel Strother observed on September 19. "We rode into Sharpsburg, the General riding in an ambulance drawn by four grey horses. He has been unwell since the battle." The road through Sharpsburg led to Shepherdstown. Strother also noted on September 20, "The General again went to the front in the ambulance." In his diary entry for September 20, Strother noted, "McClellan reconnoitered from the height." The heights were the Union artillery positions located along the bluffs of the Maryland side of the Potomac overlooking Shepherdstown on the other side of the river in [West] Virginia. This shows that, despite the physical discomfort and extreme limitations imposed on him by dysentery, the general who never led from the front, did just that when it was absolutely necessary from the seat of an army ambulance in the closing days of the Maryland Campaign.¹⁴⁴

143 Paul E. Steiner, *Medical-Military Portraits of Union and Confederate Generals* (Whitmore Publishing Co., 1968), 16-17; <https://www.google.com/search?q=dysentery&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=en-us&client=safari&sei=dJ-sZ6y5HKGi5NoPmtW4iAY>, accessed February 12, 2025.

144 Strother, *A Virginia Yankee in the Civil War*, 113, 114; Strother, "Personal Recollections," vol. 36, 287, 289.



"McClellan on the Field, 17 September 1862." (Aaron Holley)

The Historical Record

When not at the front during the Battle of Antietam, McClellan's "field headquarters"¹⁴⁵ was at the "post of observation"¹⁴⁶ on the "height in

¹⁴⁵ Robertson, *Personal Recollections of the War*, 38.

¹⁴⁶ Schell, "Sketching Under Fire at Antietam," 418.

front of Keedysville.”¹⁴⁷ However, as we have seen, and as veteran army surgeon Dr. Thomas T. Ellis noted in his diary:

General McClellan had his headquarters during the day at a commanding point of the field; he did not remain there all the time, but rode over the field from point to point, as the battle raged here or there, watching vigilantly its progress, and sharing the dangers of the nameless heroes who fought so bravely.¹⁴⁸

Those who wish to be selective about their facts to support the accepted historical consensus and a traditional anti-McClellan bias may certainly do so. The general’s staff did indeed establish a headquarters at the Pry House. But General McClellan certainly didn’t spend most of the day there leisurely smoking cigars and observing the battle through a telescope from the comfort of an easy chair brought out of Mr. Pry’s parlor. The historical consensus (an agreed upon opinion) of the sedentary McClellan is not supported by the historical record. Authors who insist McClellan never led from the front ignore a body of firsthand evidence to the contrary. Numerous primary sources support the historical fact that Little Mac went to several places at the front several times during the battle of Antietam: East Woods, North Woods, Poffenberger Farm, Bloody Lane, Guns of Position, and Lower Bridge to name a few. McClellan came under enemy artillery fire several times, directed counter battery fire, directed the movements of his troops, encouraged and saluted his soldiers, consulted corps commanders and subordinates, and made real-time decisions while on the battlefield. If that is not being on a battlefield when his army went into an action or leading from the front then perhaps we need to redefine those terms.

The merits of McClellan’s leadership may be argued by historians, academics, journalists, and armchair generals but another undisputable fact remains in the historical record: with the Battle of Antietam McClellan brought his campaign to a successful conclusion, his opponent did not.¹⁴⁹ Without getting into a tit for tat argument beyond the scope of

147 McClellan, *McClellan’s Own Story*, 586.

148 Thomas T. Ellis, *Leaves From The Diary of an Army Surgeon* (John Bradburn, 1863), 269.

149 Carman, *The Maryland Campaign of September 1862* vol. 3, 20-21; Joseph L. Harsh, *Taken At The Flood, Robert E. Lee & Confederate Strategy in the Maryland Campaign of 1862* (The Kent State University Press, 1999), 8; McPherson, *Crossroads*

this essay we may also lay to rest another long-held fallacy of the accepted historical consensus. General George B. McClellan was on the battlefield of Antietam as much as General Robert E. Lee, if not more so.¹⁵⁰

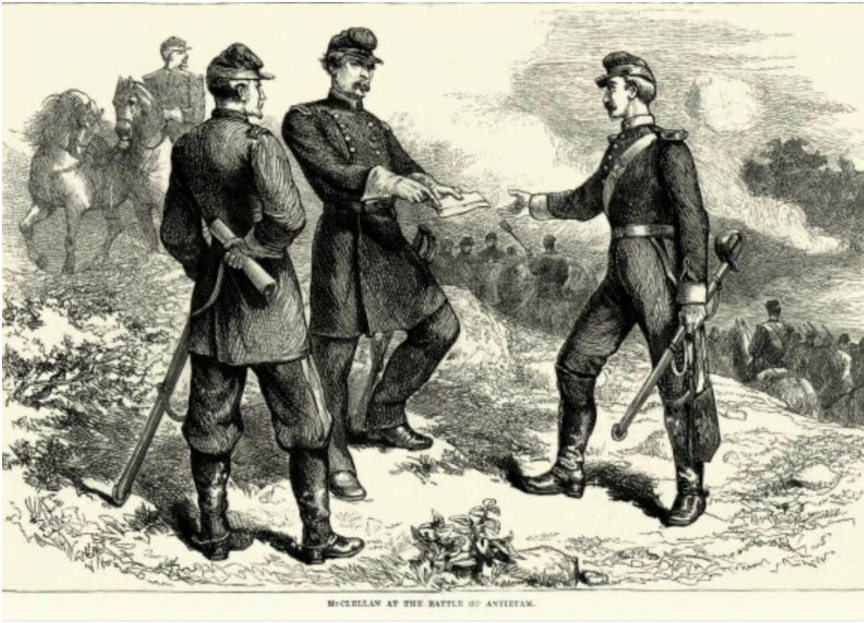
We do not know if McClellan ever intended to corroborate the eyewitness anecdotes presented in this essay or not. By 1881, he had finished a manuscript memoir. Unfortunately, it was destroyed in a fire and its contents lost to history. McClellan attempted a rewrite and had barely restored half of the document before his sudden death in 1885. William C. Prime, McClellan's literary executor, is the actual author of the published *McClellan's Own Story*. He used the unfinished second manuscript and other sources to complete the work. Sadly, the last piece of writing penned by George B. McClellan in the second manuscript was an introduction to the Maryland Campaign.¹⁵¹

Francis W. Palfrey, who laid the foundation for the historical consensus and the popular image of the sedentary General McClellan at the Battle of Antietam, did not actually observe events at the Field Headquarters. Lieutenant Colonel Palfrey was a member of the 20th Massachusetts Infantry of Sumner's 2nd Corps during the Maryland Campaign. As a part of Sedgwick's division, he sustained severe wounds in the West Woods on the morning of September 17. These injuries effectively ended Palfrey's military service. Palfrey wrote his history before the *Official Records* were published. Human nature being what it is, he may have blamed McClellan for his misfortune and that may partly explain the bias against the general in Palfrey's historical study. Yet, at the conclusion of his narrative, Palfrey admitted: "It may appear a strange statement to follow the other matter which this volume contains, but it is nonetheless true, that there are strong grounds for believing that he

of Freedom, 133-34, 154-56; Stotelmyer, *Too Useful To Sacrifice*, 2, 53-55, 141; Rafuse, *McClellan's War*, 331-33; Hartwig, *I Dread the Thought of The Place*, 754-55, 780-81.

150 For a comprehensive analysis of Lee's Movements on September 17 see Alex B. Rossino, *Their Maryland: The Army of Northern Virginia From the Potomac Crossing to Sharpsburg in September 1862* (Savas Beatie, 2021), Chapter Seven: "A Very Personal Fight: The Role of Robert E. Lee on the Field at Sharpsburg, September 17, 1862." For a comprehensive analysis of Lee's physical disabilities during the campaign see Steven R. Stotelmyer, *From Frederick To Sharpsburg: People, Places, and Events of the Maryland Campaign Before Antietam* (The Press of The Antietam Institute, 2023), Appendix A: "Lee's Delicate Condition."

151 Stotelmyer, *Too Useful To Sacrifice*, 104-05 note 23; William C. Prime, *Battles and Leaders*, vol. 2, 545.



*"McClellan at the Battle of Antietam."
(Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, London, 1880)*

[McClellan] was the best commander the Army of the Potomac ever had."¹⁵²

John Harrison Mills, a private in the 21st New York Infantry during the Maryland Campaign, unintentionally wrote a befitting bookend to this essay. It was a tribute to Little Mac and the effect of his presence at the front:

On the march and on the battlefield, the appearance of Gen. McClellan created the wildest enthusiasm among the troops. The more his defamers cry out against him, the more the troops respect and love him. They believe in him, and the simple fact that he is on the field during a battle is evidence that all is going well.¹⁵³

152 Palfrey, *The Antietam And Fredericksburg*, 134-35; Harsh, *Taken At The Flood*, 3; Stotemyer, *Too Useful To Sacrifice*, 96 note 9.

153 Mills, *Chronicles of the Twenty-First Regiment New York State Volunteers*, 293.

“Truly This Is A Strange War:” The Letters of James Silliman (28th Pennsylvania) from the Maryland Campaign, 1862, Part I

by Olin D. Zimmet and Allen C. Guelzo

James Silliman was 28 years old when he enlisted as a private in Company A of the 28th Pennsylvania Volunteers on June 28, 1861. The 28th was recruited largely from Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania coal country of Schuylkill, Carbon, and Luzerne counties, and was an unusual unit. It had 15 companies, rather than the usual ten (those extra companies would be re-assigned in 1862), was recruited and funded by the pious and energetic John White Geary, who had briefly served as territorial governor of Kansas during the “Bleeding Kansas” period, and had other bills paid for by Hazelton coal baron, Ariovistus Pardee. (Two of Pardee’s sons would be commissioned as officers in the regiment). None of that earned the 28th much in the way of military notice.

The regiment served out its first year in occupation duties in and around Harpers Ferry, without much in the way of combat action, and it was not until the summer of 1862 that they were attached to Nathaniel Banks’ corps in John Pope’s Army of Virginia. Even then, they missed the battle at Second Bull Run, and saw little more than skirmish action as Pope pulled his battered forces back to Washington. The 28th’s idyll ended there, as the Maryland Campaign began. Major-General George McClellan resumed command of Pope’s army and his own Army of the Potomac on September 5-6, incorporated the 28th into a newly-renumbered 12th Corps, commanded (temporarily) by Brigadier General Alpheus Williams, and as part of Brigadier General George Sears Greene’s division. The 28th still missed the fighting at South Mountain on September 14, but three days later, the regiment was plunged head-first into action at the Dunker Church. In the wake of the battle, they were moved to Harpers Ferry and took up a lengthy occupation there through the balance of the Maryland Campaign.

James Silliman had by then moved up to sergeant in Company A, and then 1st lieutenant in July, 1862. His military career was unremarkable in all but one respect, and that was the energy with which he wrote letters. Over the course of the war – and he served in all of the 12th Corps’ major campaigns, from Antietam and Gettysburg through Sherman’s march to the sea and the Carolinas – he wrote over 350 letters to his parents and siblings (he was the seventh of 11 children born to a Pottsville merchant

family, James Silliman, Sr. and his wife Mary Schotz), describing in vivid detail the ins-and-outs of everything he saw. Sadly, Silliman survived the war, only to die three months after its conclusion, in Pottsville, of unspecified causes.¹ His letters remained in the possession of the Silliman family thereafter, until finally being acquired by gift of Morgan Silliman Heller by the Union League of Philadelphia's Founding Forward initiative.

Twenty of these letters were written from the Maryland Campaign, including several which directly describe the 28th Pennsylvania's action at Antietam. They are addressed to Silliman's father, his sisters Matilda and Sarah, and his brother Alexander, and perhaps others among his sisters (who are not named in the headings), as follows:

1. September 1, Sister
2. September 5, Sister
3. September 9, Sister
4. September 13, Matilda Silliman
5. September 18, Matilda Silliman
6. September 21, Sister
7. September 24, Sister
8. October 3, James Silliman, Sr.

The first three letters describe the confusion that prevailed in the wake of Second Bull Run, where the 28th Pennsylvania was involved in intermittent skirmishing while Union forces pulled back to the safety of Washington and the Potomac River. By September 9, the 28th had been regrouped to the defenses of the capital. But in only a few days, they were on the move as part of the 12th Corps toward western Maryland and the massive battle at Antietam. Silliman describes the 28th's role at Antietam in his fifth letter, written just a day after the battle (and while Silliman was fully expecting a resumption of fighting on September 19). The sixth and seventh letters provide more detail about the battle, and about the regiment's move to Loudoun Heights as part of the Union re-occupation of Harpers Ferry. Clearly, the most unusual of these letters was the letter he wrote to his father, James, Sr., attaching a sketch-map of the action

1 Francis B. Wallace, *Memorial of the Patriotism of Schuylkill County, in the American Slaveholder Rebellion* (B. Bannan, 1865), 526-7; Robert B. Silliman, *The Silliman Family: Pennsylvania and South Carolina Lines* (Dumaguete City, The Philippines, 1966), 54-55; Samuel Bates, *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers 1861-1865* (Singerly, 1869), vol. 1, 428, 439.

around the Dunker Church and the Hagerstown Pike, and identifying unit locations. Silliman's subsequent letters were written during occupation duties at Harpers Ferry from late September to early November. They chronicle odds-and-ends of skirmishing, the details of junior-grade officers' bookkeeping, President Lincoln's visit to Harpers Ferry in October, and some very sharp criticism of Union army commanders, especially John Pope, Irvin McDowell, and George McClellan. He reserved his admiration for John White Geary (who was out-of-action following the battle at Cedar Mountain, but who returned as Silliman's division commander after Antietam) and, more curiously, for Franz Sigel and Ambrose Burnside.

Silliman was a devoted Unionist and advocate for emancipation; his favorite newspaper (and one which reprinted one of his letters) was the ardently-abolitionist weekly, *The Miners' Journal & Pottsville General Advertiser*. As such, nothing attracted his contempt more than stay-at-homes, politicians, and Democrats. He wholeheartedly supported the Pennsylvania state draft of 1862, and even spoke loosely of the need for a "Military Despotism" to prosecute the war more intensely.

At the same time, Silliman confessed how easily the course of the war through the fall of 1862 had become discouraging. Especially after Antietam, supplies were poor and limited, and pay was months in arrears, and he indulged moments of discouragement when he wondered if the Confederacy was fated to succeed. He shed no tears over the removal of George McClellan in November, and was unusually candid in his description (in his 12th letter) of the collapse of entire Union units - especially the 125th Pennsylvania and the 13th New Jersey - in action at Antietam. As such, James Silliman's Maryland Campaign letters offer a new and unvarnished view of the Antietam battle and its aftermath. The letters themselves are remarkably legible; only some light editing for spelling and punctuation has been necessary. The authors wish to thank Morgan Silliman Heller and the Silliman descendants, and Keeley Tulio, Grace Heller and John Meko of the Union League of Philadelphia, for their enormously generous help in bringing Silliman's letters to scholarly light.

* * *

1.

Berlin² Sunday Sept 1st

Dear Sister,

I have once more changed my location and am now located once more with the Company at this place, being absent from the Company for 11 days with 8 of our men and a small detachment of men from other Companies in the regt.³ We left Hyattstown [Maryland] on Friday morning at 6 o'clock and arrived at the Point of Rocks at 4 in the afternoon after traveling 31 miles. We were in a great fix for 2 or 3 days as the division were to move on towards Washington and we being left alone without any protection feared an attack from the Secessionists in the neighbourhood. We had made a requisition on Genl. [Nathaniel P.] Banks for teams to carry our equipage on, but was informed by him that the teams could not be had, but that he would send on to Frederick (our principal depot) for wagons to carry our baggage back to Frederick and have it shipped from there to Baltimore and we were to follow up the Division next day. But on the afternoon of the 30th our wagons came along from the Point for our baggage and orders for us to return back to the Point which we did not like very well as we had been over the road once before and knew just what kind of travelling we could have in getting back, our leaving in the first place being a fool's errand, the Colonel being so frightened that he did not know what he was about when he gave us the orders to leave the Point.⁴

Yesterday afternoon we took the cars for here and are now with the Company again. They are doing picket duty and are in a very precarious situation as we are the farthest advanced up the Potomac and may at any time be cut off from the rest of the Regt. Our men have had one skirmish which no doubt you have seen the [account] of in the papers, and expect an attack every minute as we know of 3 Regts being directly opposite

2 Berlin, Maryland, is the modern town of Brunswick, on the north bank of the Potomac River, mid-way between Harpers Ferry and Point of Rocks.

3 Silliman's scouting detachment was one of several sent out by Nathaniel Banks to report on Confederate movements on the south side of the Potomac. See McClellan to H. W. Halleck (September 4, 1862), in *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Government Printing Office, 1891), hereafter OR, vol. 19, pt. 2, 174-5.

4 The titular colonel of the 28th was Gabriel de Korponay, as the successor to John Geary; but de Korponay was detailed in July to command a camp of parole in Alexandria, and effective command devolved first on Hector Tyndale until he took command of 1st Brigade of George Sears Greene's division, and then on the regiment's senior major, Ariovistus Pardee, Jr.

here.⁵ They have sent word over that they intended taking dinner over here today and the men are all under arms waiting an attack. If they should attack, we will show fight as long as we can and if they get the advantage of us we have orders to retreat across the Country to Delaware, as we have no troops in our neighborhood, all of them having left for Washington with the exception of our Regt and they being scattered all along the River. Last night, my first night here, we were awakened up at midnight by the picket of Co. D who were firing at a company of Rebel Cavalry who were trying to cross the River, but were driven back by the pickets. Our men since they have been here have killed 1 Rebel: wounded 3, captured 4 Secesh horses, 1 flag, and 1 field piece across the river. I expect to have a horse myself before many days, and if he is worth anything I will send him home, as I intend crossing the river tomorrow with some of our pickets between here and the Ferry. We are well quartered here being in possession of a Hotel where we all have our rooms, the late proprietor of this being a Secesh, and was killed at Bull Run.

Monday morning⁶ Col Pardee and his Company arrived at the Point yesterday afternoon together with 2 other Companies. We expect him up here this morning. They will join our Company here when all the Hazleton boys will all be together. I wrote several letters home from Hyattstown. Did you get any of them? I also instructed you to write and direct to the same place but have not as yet received a letter directed there. The last letter received was from you dated last Sunday, which I received here. I also wrote to Frank⁷ from Hyattstown, and told him after he had read the letter to forward it on to Pottsville. You may now direct your letters to the Point of Rocks again in Care of Col [John W.] Geary 28th Pa Regt and they will be forwarded to us wherever we go, as we change so often and do not know what time we will leave here. We have a spy here who has fled from Loudoun Co. as the rebels tried to press him into service. He crosses the River every night and informs us of the movements of the Rebels. They would have attacked the Co before this did they know our strength, but are afraid we are backed by a large force in the mountain (Maryland Height). We had the word here yesterday that Gen McClellan crossed the Potomac on Saturday with 130,000 men,

⁵ The 28th Pennsylvania was described in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in skirmish actions near Culpeper, Virginia, in "Latest War News," (August 11), and at Thoroughfare Gap, in "Interesting from Culpeper," (August 14).

⁶ Silliman resumed writing this letter Monday morning, September 2.

⁷ Franklin Pott Silliman (1841-1876), a cousin of James Silliman.

which I hope is true, as we will have the sport then here of shooting at them [the Confederates] when they try to cross the river up here, as no doubt they will get across here to save themselves, and palm off as Union men. Our men say, the day they had in the skirmish, that 100 men could stand 1000, as their shots would not reach them across the river some 600 yds but every shot fired from our side made them scratch gravel for the bush. So you see what fine amusement we have, to Shoot, and not be shot. We expect 2 Rifled cannon today which Co A will take charge of, and then will defy anybody of men to cross here. Write soon, and tell me all the news. I receive the [Philadelphia] *Inquirer* daily from John Seitz. I am well with the exception of a cold on my breast which I have had since our first picket duty at Sandy Hook.

Love to all,

Your Brother
Jim

* * *

2.

Georgetown M.D. Sept 5th 1862

Dear Sister

No doubt you are all anxious to hear of my whereabouts. Well in fact I cannot tell myself. On the 19th of Augt we crossed the Rappahannock at the point we were Camped at being the rear guard of the whole army. On the night of the 18th the wagons commenced passing our camp and continued so until the night of the 19th. I did not know at first what it meant but came to the conclusion that our army was retreating which proved to be the case.⁸ When we crossed the River on the 19th our Regt were drawn up in line of battle and remained in that position for two days. The enemy however did not make their appearance until the 3d day when an artillery duel commenced between our troops under

8 On August 18, Major General John Pope, commanding the Army of Virginia (of which the 28th Pennsylvania then formed a part), realized from captured dispatches that Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia were planning to attack him while his army was backed against the Rappahannock River; Pope ordered a general retreat to the north side of the river. See Pope to H. W. Halleck (October 18, 1862), *OR*, vol. 12, pt. 3, 591, and Pope's general report (*OR*, vol. 12, pt. 2, 29), and John Hennessy, *Return to Bull Run: The Campaign and Battle of Second Manassas* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 48-54.

McClellan.⁹ We being unable to hold our position destroyed the bridge and fell back along different points of the River where we had Artillery fighting for two weeks steady. Our Division did not get into any general engagement being held in reserve but have been daily under fire of the Rebel artillery. We have suffered many hardships being continually on the move. We have changed our position from right to left at least 6 times. One day we are called upon to reinforce McClellan who held the center, the next perhaps [Franz] Sigel and [Irvin] McDowell who were on the right and [Ambrose] Burnside who was on the left. We have thus shifted our position daily since the 19th having been on the march daily and most of the time without anything to eat. I lived 60 hours on nothing but green apples and green corn. We were not allowed to build fires. We also had no shelter of any kind not even a blanket, our Company wagons having all been sent on to Alexandria. I have now seen all the horrors of war except a general engagement. I have been upon 3 or 4 battle fields and have been under fire of the enemy and have seen many killed and wounded. We have lost during the last two weeks from 20 to 25,000 killed and wounded and have been defeated at all most every point, not on account of the men but the Generals Commanding. Pope is, as I stated in my former letters to you, nothing but a newspaper Genl. McDowell the traitor defeated us at Bull Run. When in the name of God will the government remove him? He caused just such a panic as he did before on the same ground but on a much larger scale. Our loss at Bull Run was heavy, and our defeat bad. At one time we had them completely surrounded and would have captured their whole army, but McDowell left them out. We had the men to do it, outnumbering them two to one. Sigel and Banks are the favourites among the troops. Sigel I consider our best man. He is the only General we have that uses strategy and is always successful in all his engagements. [Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall"] Jackson has proven himself a good man. He has out-generaled Pope at every point. He gains his successes all by strategy. I will give you one of his many. The day the fight at Bull Run, Jackson's cavalry had a sham battle amongst themselves to draw our cavalry on. They took the bait and when near upon the enemy they wheeled in force upon our cavalry and cut them to pieces. They have many games they play but I think they are all about played out. I think they have made their last ten-strike, but must say they pushed us hard the last two weeks. Washington they will not

9 See descriptions of the "artillery duel" in *OR*, vol. 12, pt. 2, 316, 330, 597. The "McClellan" forces were actually advance elements of Fitz John Porter's Fifth Corps of the Army of the Potomac.

attempt to take, as they have not enough men in their Confederacy to do it with. They may invade Maryland and the Southern part of Penna. That is just what I would like to see. I want to get them on this side of the Potomac, but think it most likely they will fall back again to Gordonsville. Centreville we have evacuated which is a very strong position and which they may possibly retake possession of. In fact, we now have our lines the same as we had them before McClellan made his movement to the Peninsula last spring. We in our retreat destroyed much that we could not take with us. We had some 200 large freight cars together with 6 locomotives between Bull Run bridge and Catlett's Station. These our Regt destroyed together with ammunition, provisions and other articles valued at about \$2,000,000. Our Division was cut off at one time. We made our way for Aquia creek but brought up at Centerville, going some 20 miles out of our way. We have been along the Rappahannock from near Fredericksburg to Warrenton Springs (Sulphur). To trace our route would be almost impossible as we were most of the time on by-roads and in the woods. I have not the time to write you a full and interesting letter of our doings as we are still on the march. Our Division is on its way to Edwards Ferry, and should not be surprised if Berlin would find Co. A before the end of the week. Banks will now have his division increased it is said to 50,000. He has now but 5,000. We laid at Fort Albany¹⁰ opposite Washington on the 2nd and had a fine view of the Capitol and the city, our fortifications around Washington are impregnable. Yesterday we crossed the River at Georgetown and are now encamped at Tenleytown.¹¹ I have seen many of the 48th and 96th during the last two weeks.¹² Also the 129th (Fricks).¹³ Sam Russel¹⁴ told me Tom Silliman¹⁵ was missing from the Bull Run fight I do not know if it is so, however do not say anything to their folks about it. I suppose the North is one state of

10 A 12-gun earthen fort, part of the ring of Washington's defenses, close to the site of the modern Pentagon.

11 Sometimes known as Tennallytown, in the northwest portion of the District of Columbia and occupying the highest point in the District.

12 The 48th and 96th Pennsylvania Volunteers were both, like the 28th Pennsylvania, raised from Schuylkill County.

13 The 129th Pennsylvania was a nine-months' regiment, organized under the command of Jacob Frick, former lieutenant-colonel of the 96th Pennsylvania, and mostly recruited in Schuylkill County.

14 Samuel R. Russel was originally a member of the Washington Artillery, a "First Defender" unit from Pottsville, and later of the 48th Pennsylvania.

15 Thomas Harrison Silliman (1837-1920) enlisted in Company H, 48th Pennsylvania, and served through the end of the war. See Bates, *Pennsylvania Volunteers*, vol. 1, 1226.

excitement and no doubt before long the line of Penna will be threatened. I am anxious to see all this as it will have a tendency to let the North know that we are engaged in a civil war. This war is just about commencing and the Rebels are making a desperate effort. I do think they have failed in their purpose, which was to surround Pope and cut off his retreat. Banks brought up the rear our Regt passed the spot just ½ an hour before [Philip] Kearny and [Isaac] Stevens were killed and no doubt the enemy were in ambush at the time but wanted larger game than the 28th Penna. We have made many narrow escapes at one time we were completely cut off by [James] Longstreet's Division but took to the mountain and escaped with the loss of about 30 men. I would have dropped you a few lines before but the mail communications was stopped. We expect a mail Today in which I expect To get two or 3 from home.

Write and direct as usual

Your Brother
Jim

My health has not been very good owing to the hardships of the past 3 weeks. We are in need of rest which I hope they will give us.

* * *

3.

Camp near Rockville Md

Sept 9th 1862

Dear Sister

Having a little spare time I drop you a few lines to let you know of my whereabouts. We are now encamped on the Frederick City turnpike about 16 miles northwest of Washington and about four miles from the Potomac River. We have been in this Camp about 3 days. Things appear to be on a standstill around hear but troops are daily passing up the road towards Poolesville. We do not hear much news but see by the papers that the Rebels are in Maryland, and have taken possession of Frederick City.¹⁶ Bully for them. They have all chances open to them to cross the river at any point. I do not believe our forces have resisted their progress in crossing the river at any point. The river is now open to all Rebels, and the more that crosses, the merrier. I should like to see their whole force

16 The *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported the entrance of A. P. Hill's division into Frederick in "Latest From the National Capital," September 8, 1862.

on this side of the river, for then I think we could settle the war without going back to Virginia, but think their Generals too shrewd to venture a large force on this side of the River. I believe the Rebel forces that are now on this side of the River are but cavalry, and have only made a raid on Frederick with no intention of staying upon this side. We have the force on the Upper Potomac to resist the crossing of any amount of men should we feel so disposed, but our Generals are giving them all the rope they will take. They may possibly make a raid into southern Penna. That I should like to see. It would help to stir up the north. I suppose you folks at home are very much scared. We were too at first, when we had to skedaddle from the Rappahannock, but now see a little how the thing is going to work and feel much better. Our only fear is that the enemy will fall back before we are ready to move. Maryland will be the battleground if we can coax them over. We had a hard time of it in our Skedaddle. From Rappahannock Station we crossed the river on the night of the 19th being the last Federal troops to cross the bridge. We formed in line of battle on east side of the bridge and remained there one day and night. At this point the fighting first commenced. We not being able to hold our position destroyed the bridge and fell back. Our Regt moved some 3 miles down the ford toward Kelly's ford. Here, part of Burnside's [9th Corps] forces were laying. We went on picket duty at this point, the 48th picketing on our left. Burnside had a skirmish at the ford and drove the enemy back. During the night we were drawn in and moved up the river about 6 miles. This was the 23d and the artillery firing had become general all along the river for a distance of 20 miles. On the morning of the 24th we moved to Freeman's Ford to sustain Bohlen's Brigade. During the afternoon a part of his brigade crossed the river and were caught in a trap and badly cut up, Bohlen himself being killed.¹⁷ From this point we changed our position daily for 10 days moving up and down the river, we being a reserve for all divisions. At the Sulphur Springs we were in the midst of a heavy artillery skirmish. We had fully 100 pieces engaged. Our forces were covering the retreat of our army, the largest portion of it passing in rear of this artillery skirmish. Here I again saw the 48th they passed us thinking that a general engagement had commenced and that they were about entering it. The firing kept up all day when

17 German-born Henry Bohlen was originally the colonel of the 75th Pennsylvania. He was promoted to brigadier general in April, 1862, and was killed on August 22, 1862, as his brigade contested the crossing of the Rappahannock River near Rappahannock Station. See Pope's mention of Bohlen's death in his August 24 communication to Henry W. Halleck in *OR*, vol. 12, pt. 2, 64.

under cover of the night all the batteries withdrew and followed up the Infantry with the exception of our battery and the 1st Maine. Together with our Regt we left the field at midnight and caught up to our troops the next day.

From there we moved on to Catlett's Station, from Catlett on to Bristoe station. Here we were laying while the fight was going on at Bull Run we being 6 miles west of that place. At this station we had about 200 large freight cars full of provisions and articles of war. The trains could not be moved on account of the Rebels destroying the Rail Road bridge at Bull Run. It was our intention of moving on to Bull Run from this point, but found our Communication cut off, so we destroyed the train and moved southeast, expecting to come out at Aquia creek but did not get down that far. Hearing our forces were in possession of Centreville we moved on to it in a roundabout way, arriving there after two days and night march. Genl Banks was with us all the time. We lost about 20 men on this trip they giving out and fell into the enemy's hands, who were in hot pursuit of us. From Centreville we moved to Alexandria and from there to Georgetown. I cannot give you dates on places that we have been at, as I had no paper to keep any diary, but our trials of the past weeks have been fatiguing. I received two letters from you on Sunday, one dated the 22d, the other 30th. Also one from Mama. I think we have orders to move. I am in command alone, the Capt [James Fitzpatrick] being sick and [Lt. Isaiah B.] Robison detached on extra duty. 10 A.M. we move immediately towards Frederick. Write soon and often. Don't be alarmed at home. We are going to finish this war by Christmas if the enemy does not fall back. The 96th passed by this morning. Heavy bodies of troops are moving up the Frederick turnpike.

Sept 11th

You will see by the first date of this that I did not manage to get it off on the 9th being too late for the mail but the Chaplain [Rev'd Charles Wesley Heisley] just informs us that a mail will leave this day. We are now laying on a by-road north east of Middlebrook, being a reserve. We travelled some 4 miles this morning and are now laying for orders to move on. We are on the right wing. I think we will have a fight today or tomorrow. Burnside is running a force of them this way for our forces to trap. I do not know what the Rebel force is but hope it is large. We can whip out anything they bring against us. We have been moving in five different columns for the past 3 days and have enough men to sweep everything before us. We are the outside column, taking the right and rear. [Major-General Edwin Vose] Sumner is in our advance on this road.

We have 8 new Regts in our Division. Genl [George Sears] Greene acting Maj General. [Hector] Tyndale acting Brigadier. [Gabriel] Korponay in Washington on a spree. I do wish Geary was with us to straighten things. Our Regt will be reduced to 10 Companies in a few days, the last five companies going out. Pardee will be Col. of the new Regt.¹⁸ We have many sick at present in our Regt, 33 from our Company. Both the Capt [James Fitzpatrick] and Lieut [Isaiah B. Robison] are sick, and if we had someone to take charge of the Company, I would go off duty but as it is I must weather it out. The sickness is all caused by the exposure of the last month. We had no time to get sick before, but since we have had a little rest began to feel the effects. I received yours of the 7th a few minutes ago. You say you do not see how Banks escaped capture at Manassas. We did make a narrow escape, we being at Bristoe Station and had to make our way towards Aquia but managed to cross Bull Run below Centreville.

I suppose my clothing was destroyed at Manassas when the Rebels made the raid. We did not receive any of the things sent from Hazleton. How I should like to be home for fruit. Apples we have plenty and have had a few peaches, but since we are in this state, pay more respect to private property. I managed to get a water melon in Georgetown.

We have marching
orders

J. Silliman

* * *

4.

Frederick City Sept 13/62

Dear Tillie

Our Division arrived here this morning after making a forced march over the country. Burnside however got ahead of us and got up here last evening he having had a little skirmish with the enemy in the town. They are moving on towards the Penna line. I have been speaking to persons here who say that the enemy's forces that passed through this place amounted to from 80 to 100,000 while about the same number went the lower road. I do not estimate their force So high but hope their whole force is in this State. When they came into town they completely

¹⁸ Ariovistus Pardee was named lieutenant colonel of the 147th Pennsylvania in October, 1862. The 147th Pennsylvania was formed around the five extra companies of the 28th Pennsylvania.

ransacked it, taking clothing of every description and paying for them in Confederate money. The inhabitants had to stand it all.¹⁹ Frederick is still loyal, thousands of flags flying to the breeze, and many while the Rebels were in possession of the town. Our troops are meeting with a warm reception, the town however has been eaten out by the Rebels. Our forces are pushing on towards Hagerstown. The men feel in good trim and are confident of success. Thousands of troops are passing through, enough I think to whip out the whole Confederacy. I am afraid they will move from Hagerstown on to Williamsport and cross the river at that point but nevertheless they will meet with much disaster, as we are after them and beside I do not know the disposition of our forces on the other side of the River, but think Sigel will turn up at some good point to check their crossing to the Virginia side. McClellan and Burnside are both here. [Major-General Jesse] Reno's Division are just passing through the town. Sumner will follow him, then our Division (Banks old,) Gen'l [Alpheus] Williams commanding.²⁰ Gen'l [George Sears] Greene commands our Division and we lay about 1 mile out of Frederick.²¹ Many of our old friends are out here to see us and all appear pleased to see our troops among them. I saw today's paper and see by it that the enemy have really invaded Penna.²² Give them all the rope they will take. I am of the opinion that all those that enter Penna will never get back. Start your bushwhackers. Heavy cannonading in the direction of Harpers Ferry at present. I am still alone in Command, and pretty well broke down as we have been marching night and day for several days without anything to eat. Our teams are still behind. Nothing can be had in town.

You may expect some stirring news about the middle of next week from the neighbourhood of Hagerstown. Write to me often. The mail goes out immediately.

19 On the Confederate occupation of Frederick, see "Four Days' Experience of the Rebels in Frederick," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 13, 1862, and Alexander Rossino, *Their Maryland: The Army of Northern Virginia From the Potomac Crossing to Sharpsburg in September 1862* (Savas Beatie, 2021).

20 Silliman means Banks's old *corps*, not division, which at that moment was commanded by Alpheus Williams.

21 Silliman's 28th Pennsylvania was at that moment brigaded with the 5th, 7th, 29th, and 66th Ohio, and along with the brigades of Henry Stainrook and William Goodrich, composed George Greene's 2nd Division of the Army of the Potomac's 12th Corps. See Alpheus Williams' comments on the organization of this brigade in his report to Randolph Marcy (October 16, 1862) in *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 2, 435.

22 The *Washington National Republican* carried the sub-headline "Pennsylvania Invaded" in its front-page column on "The War" (September 13, 1862).

6 P.M.

Your brother,

Jim

I heard that Mrs Cooper²³ would not let Genl Lee take possession of their house, he wanting it for his Head Quarters. Lee & Longstreet were the only two commanding Generals at this place. Jackson I think has moved to the Penna line.

* * *

5.

Near Sharpsburg and 3 miles from the Potomac River

Sept 18th 1862

Dear Tillie

I wrote you last from Frederick. Since then we have had a bloody conflict having had a running fight ever since. Yesterday our Regt was in its first engagement and nobly did it do its duty. We fought the enemy for 6 hours and mowed them down by hundreds. We made our first attack on a Georgia Brigade²⁴ which we cut to pieces killing over 2/3 of them. In fact, they lay just as they stood in line of battle. Their wounded say that we killed 2 Colonels and one Genl in our attack upon them.²⁵ We were the Second Brigade that attacked them, they driving back the first. This charge occurred in a corn field from which we drove the enemy into a woods, through the woods onto an open field dealing destruction amongst them every step we took. In fact, we literally mowed them down. We drove four times our number over 2 miles, captured Seven Stands of

23 Jane Mary Miller Cooper was the wife of Brigadier General James Cooper. Cooper had a long career in Pennsylvania politics, serving variously in the state legislature, the U.S. Congress, and as Pennsylvania attorney-general, and lived in Pottsville in the 1850s. He moved to Frederick in 1855, and at the outbreak of the Civil War was authorized to recruit a brigade of Maryland volunteers for the Union army.

24 Alfred Holt Colquitt's brigade, which was part of Daniel Harvey Hill's division and was composed of the 6th, 23rd, 27th and 28th Georgia, plus the 13th Alabama.

25 Colonel William P. Barclay of the 23rd Georgia and Colonel Levi B. Smith of the 27th Georgia were killed in the action around the Dunker Church. The "General" whom Silliman mentions was probably Major William Capers White of the 7th South Carolina. Corporal Henry Hayward of Company D made the same mistake; see his letter of September 21 in *Last To Leave the Field: The Life and Letters of First Sergeant Ambrose Henry Hayward, 28th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry*, ed. T. J. Orr (University of Tennessee Press, 2010), 101.

colors, 2 batteries and prisoners to any amount. We were driven back twice but succeeded always in regaining our ground. We took a position on a small hill from which we were driven twice but to the sorrow of our enemies, for when they came up, we mowed them down by scores. At one time 2 Brigades came against us and our column shook a little when a battery opened upon them with grape which made large gaps in their ranks.²⁶ We took advantage of them and charged down the hill upon them.²⁷ They broke and fled to the woods. We followed them and drove them from the woods, we holding it for 2 hours, when we were obliged to fall back. The enemy being heavily reinforced, we sent for reinforcements, when the 125th P.V. and 13th N.J. Regts were sent to our assistance. They came, however, too late. They had just entered the woods when the enemy came in on our right in overwhelming numbers when these two Regts. broke and fled in disorder, and we, to save ourselves fell back fighting, our other two Regts. throwing away their guns.²⁸ They were both new Regts. and all the new Regts. would not stand.

26 Possibly either Captain J.A. Monroe's Battery D, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery, or Battery A of the 1st Rhode Island commanded by Captain John A. Tompkins. Monroe's battery had been positioned "nearly in front of the Dunker Church, and about one hundred and twenty-five yards from the Hagerstown Pike," and witnessed "a brigade of our infantry" which "charged into the woods just to the north of the Dunker Church." See George C. Sumner, *Battery D, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery in the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Rhode Island Printing Co., 1897), 33. Similarly, in his after-action report, Capt. Tompkins described trading fire with rebel guns "near the white schoolhouse" and using "shell and case-shot" on advancing rebel infantry. "Twice they advanced their flag to the edge of the field, but were forced to retire by the rapid and destructive fire of the battery." See *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 309.

27 On the 28th Pennsylvania's bayonet charge, see D. Scott Hartwig, *I Dread the Thought of the Place: The Battle of Antietam and the End of the Maryland Campaign* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2023), 189.

28 Jacob Higgins, the colonel of the 125th Pennsylvania, insisted that "finding no support in sight," the regiment merely "was compelled to retire." See Higgins' after-action report (*OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 92) and Ezra Carman, *The Maryland Campaign: Antietam*, vol. 2, Thomas Clemens, ed. (Savas Beatie, 2012), 200-201. The 125th Pennsylvania's regimental history, published 44 years after the battle, claimed that "the men of the 125th Regiment unwillingly retired from the [West] woods, at the last moment." See *History of the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1862-1863* (Lippincott, 1906), 73. However, Miles Huyette (Company B, 125th Pennsylvania) in his memoir speaks of the regiment suffering "disintegration." See Huyette, *The Maryland Campaign and the Battle of Antietam* (The Hammond Press, 1915), 39. Samuel Toombs of the 13th New Jersey also conceded that his regiment was "very much scattered." See Toombs, *Reminiscences of the War comprising a detailed account of the experiences of the Thirteenth regiment New Jersey volunteers in camp, on the march, and in battle* (Orange, NJ, the Journal office, 1878),

We had just planted two [artillery] pieces in this woods when the enemy came upon us killing the horses of one when we were obliged to leave upon the field. I cannot begin to describe the engagement, but it was bloody. I have no idea of the loss. You will see more correct statements in the papers than I can give you, but let me speak for the 28th and the Remnants of the 5th 7th 29th + 66th Ohio (the 1st Brigade), we are the praise of the whole field. The Brigade went into action with 1300 men, the 28th having 735 in.²⁹ I do not know the loss of the Ohio Regts but the 28th lost in Killed wounded and missing something over 350 men, over one half of our Regt. Co “A” went in with 64 men had 5 privates Killed 13 wounded and 2 missing.³⁰ I was not at all hurt but it is a miracle that any of us escaped for shot and shell fell among us like hail. Col Tyndale was wounded in the head when we last fell back. Our Capt [James Fitzpatrick] was also struck back of the ear by a spent ball. Tyndale I think dangerous.³¹ Capt of Co C. [Peter F. Laws] was killed [and] 2nd Lieut of B [Joseph C. Markle]. Many made narrow escapes. Genls McClellan, [William Buel] Franklin and [John] Sedgwick who had a fair view of our fight all say that we fought like bulldogs. We ran out of ammunition twice. I am fully convinced by the number of their dead that we killed over 1000 of them. I conversed with wounded from Georgia, Arkansas, North & South Carolina and Virginia Regts, so you see the number of men we had to fight against, the Georgians being in a brigade which we cut to pieces. Their wounded say we must be a Regt of Sharp Shooters by the way we mowed them down. Today all is quiet. We hold the battle ground and are burying the dead, but tomorrow we expect a bloody conflict. We can see the enemy’s lines of battle which is not over a half of mile in front of our pickets. Both armies laying in sight of one another and the pickets

20. The 125th Pennsylvania had only been organized on August 10, 1862. Similarly, it had been “scarcely two weeks” since the 13th New Jersey “had left the mustering camp at Newark.” See Joseph Edgar Crowell, *The Young Volunteer: The Everyday Experiences of a Soldier Boy in the Civil War* (E. Crowell, 1906), 36.

29 Ezra Carman puts the 28th Pennsylvania’s strength at 29 officers and 766 enlisted, making it larger than the remaining three Ohio regiments in Tyndale’s brigade combined. See Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 2, 135-40.

30 The official “return of casualties” for the 28th Pennsylvania at Antietam shows a loss of eleven officers and 255 enlisted men killed or mortally wounded (see *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 2, 199); Bates’s *Pennsylvania Volunteers* lists, for Company A, the loss of four killed, eight wounded and 1 missing (vol. 1, 439-442).

31 Hector Tyndale was struck by a bullet on the back of the head and was knocked unconscious, but survived his wound. He was promoted to brigadier general in November, 1862.

within speaking distance, the enemy hold the woods that we were driven from last night. I do not know the result of the fight, but have driven them back about 2 miles from where the fight commenced. I hear that we have received reinforcements from Chambersburg to the Amount of 15,000 & hope [it] is so for tomorrow I expect to see the decisive battle fought. I place no Confidence in our new troops. They create panics. I am not anxious to go into another engagement but if we are wanted, I will again enter the field. We are now in the rear having been sent there last night by order of Genl McClellan for rest. I have seen many fall by my side, Col Tyndale and myself being close together when he fell. I have conversed with many of the Rebel wounded and rendered them all the assistance I could. Our soldiers in general did all they could for the Rebel wounded, and Rebel prisoners took our wounded from the field to our Hospitals and glad were many to get into our hands. A Rebel Surgeon who stayed behind to dress the wounded attended to both alike. Truly this is a strange war. There is still brotherly affection amongst us. If I survive tomorrow's engagement, I will write you a full description but at present my mind is much unsettled. We are looking at our dead, and the boys have gone to the battlefield to bury them. Their places will all be marked by head boards. Should I fall I want my remains taken to Pottsville when the war is over. I hear that Harpers Ferry is again in our possession. I hope it is true. Write soon.

Yours

Jim

The names of the Killed and wounded will be sent to Hazleton. 19th 4 A.M. we have just been aroused from sleep and received orders to be in readiness. I do not know our movements but think they intend taking us to the front. No doubt a bloody engagement will be commenced at day light. I do not know if the Chaplain will be up in time to take this. He said he would call for letters at 7 o'clock but we move before that hour.

* * *

6.
Sandy Hook Sept 21st 1862
Dear Sister

I wrote you a letter dated the 17th [actually, the 18th] which I hope you have received ere this, giving you a slight description of the late battle in which we were engaged. I have not as yet found out exactly the number of our Killed and wounded, but do not think our Killed will sum over forty in the Regt, and wounded about 150. We had two Commissioned officers Killed and 6 wounded.³² The Lt Col [Tyndale] I think is dangerously wounded, the ball still being in his head. I think we will also lose another of our men. We lost 4 Killed upon the field and 13 wounded, one seriously.³³ It was the battle of the war. I have no idea of the number killed but it is large, especially on the side of the Rebs. Our Regt made dreadful havoc amongst them. They suffered much amongst officers. We passed over the battlefield on the 19th when they were still burying the dead. Our dead were all buried and they were past commencing with the Rebs. The Rebs lay just as they stood in line of battle. I have no idea the number of Killed on our side but it is not near so heavy as that of the Rebs. I wish you would send me extracts of the battle from the Inquirer. You will get more information from the papers than I can give you. We did expect to renew the engagement on the morning of the 19th but the enemy fell back during the night and now I suppose they are all safe on the other side of the River. We are or have been fighting since Thursday all along the river.³⁴ I have not heard how it has turned out. We left the battle ground on the 19th and were ordered on Maryland Heights which place we arrived at yesterday morning. We went to the top of the mountain from which we have a fine view of Virginia. Large bodies of the enemy could be seen moving towards Winchester. Heavy firing could be heard in the direction of Shepherdstown. While on the mountain we saw the remains of many of our dead who were Killed on the mountain before our forces surrendered. Our men were not buried but the Rebel dead were all buried. I do not see why our forces did not hold this position for the number of men that we had there could have held the place against

32 Bates, *Pennsylvania Volunteers*, vol. 1, 437-83, itemizes, for commissioned officers of the 28th Pennsylvania, Lieutenant Joseph C. Markle and Lieutenant Peter Laws among the killed, and Tyndale, Captains James Fitzpatrick, Lansford Chapman, and William Jordan among the wounded.

33 Bates, *Pennsylvania Volunteers*, vol. 1, 439-442, lists Company A's losses as six wounded and four killed; the one whom Silliman notes as "seriously" wounded may have been Sergeant John Lockhart, who died at Harpers Ferry from his Antietam wounds on December 11, 1862.

34 Silliman is describing the action at Shepherdstown, September 19-20. See Carman, *The Maryland Campaign*, vol. 3, 1-16.

50,000 men. The Rebs still hold Loudoun Heights but not in force. I should not be surprised if they would not shell us today. We are now camped, about 100 yards from where we Camped on the 28th of July 1861. Have we not been the rounds? The bridge has been destroyed across the river.

As the mail goes out I close,
Jim

* * *

7.

Loudoun Heights Va.

Sept 24th 1862.

Dear Sister

I received yours of the 18th upon our arrival here, which was yesterday evening. We crossed the River at Harpers Ferry on Sunday, being the first Union troops to enter the town since the traitor [Col. Dixon S.] Miles surrendered it to the Rebel forces. We marched out to Bolivar Heights, and took possession of it. We are camping upon the ground that we fought over in Oct. 1861. The Paroled men under Col Miles all say that he sold them. He had gathered large quantities of provisions and all kind of munitions of war at the Ferry when he surrendered the place. The Rebels drove in their wagons and took such things as they wanted and immediately left. They carried away over 300 wagon loads of stores. The Ferry could have been held by the force that was there against 50,000 men. I have no time to comment upon the doings of Col Miles, but suffice it to say he was Killed by our own men when they found out that he had sold them.³⁵ The place has been strongly fortified since we were here last, heavy breastworks having been thrown up all along Bolivar Heights, and the town encircled by Rifle pickets. The beautiful iron bridge across the River has been blown up, also the Pontoon that was erected last spring. They have also broken the [Chesapeake & Ohio] canal at different points, and have done more damage to the remains of the Arsenal. I think they are at work putting up a new Pontoon today. The troops that have passed over at this point all had to ford the River.

³⁵ This was a common rumor. The September 27 issue of the *Miner's Journal & Pottsville General Advertiser* likewise asserted that Miles "was shot by a Union soldier who was incensed by the base surrender of our forces" ("The Surrender of Harper's Ferry"). Miles was mortally wounded by a Confederate shell just as the surrender was taking place on September 15, 1862, and died the following day.

None but Banks' and Sumner's corps have crossed at this point. I do not know what has become of the balance of our troops, as we get no information. We know only what we see. There appears to be a standstill at present at least in this vicinity. I was in hopes, as well as our whole army, that we would have captured the largest portion of the Rebel army before they could recross the River; but we have been much disappointed. Had we followed up our success of the 17th the following day, the Rebel army would have been ours; but under a flag of truce to bury their dead, the enemy made preparations to fall back, and are now all landed safely on this side of the River. I don't know their intention. Reason says they intend making a stand at Winchester. On Sunday night, while on picket, a Rebel messenger rode up to our lines and was challenged by the Picket. He replied, "I was looking for you for the past hour." The picket asked him who he was. He replied, "A messenger from Genl Lee to Col [Thomas T.] Mumford." The Picket ordered him to dismount, and show his message, which he did. It was from Genl Lee to Col Mumford, ordering him to gather up all articles of use and send them on to Winchester for the use of the new troops daily arriving at that point. I should judge from the Tenor of the note that they were being reinforced. If they intend making a stand this side of Gordonsville, I hope we will be after them immediately. We all feel badly about our getting into Virginia when we had the opportunity of whipping them in Maryland. Had [Major-General Ambrose E.] Burnside, who was on our left, been reinforced, we would have caught their army before they could have got to the Virginia side. By defeating Burnside, they gained possession of a grand force. When we went into the battle about 6 A.M., the Penna Reserves were engaging them and were falling back. We came in on a double quick (closed in mass), formed our line of battle on the run, and met the enemy in the wood. We drove them from the wood into a corn field. Here stood a Georgia Brigade. We gave the war-cry and into the corn field, we rushed.³⁶ Every corn stalk had a Rebel. Here we mowed them down. I have since heard that over 1200 of their dead were found on this field and the 28th was the only Regt that passed over this field. I spoke to a wounded Georgian who told me that we had annihilated the flower of the Rebel Army. He said but few of their Brigade left the corn field alive. We Killed near all of their officers. Their wounded wanted to know how many sharp shooters we had. We fought five times our

36 See George S. Greene's after-action report of September 29, in *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 505, as well as the after-action reports from the 5th, 7th and 66th Ohio and Major William Raphael's report for the 28th Pennsylvania (*OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 506-10).

number all day, and drove them from every position, until about 4 o'clock, when we were nearly surrounded while in the woods from which we drove the enemy twice. We were not reinforced during the day until about 20 minutes before we were driven from the woods, when the 13th N.J. and 128th Pa Regts³⁷ were sent in on our right. The enemy opened a heavy fire upon them, ~~and they ran, which~~ which threw them into disorder, and exposed us on our right, and placed us under a cross fire. We then fell back, but rallied our small force (the Regt at the time being reduced to about 150, the men being worn out) on the rise of a small hill; gave them a volley and then fell back to the woods, about 300 yds. in our rear. Had we been properly reinforced we could have held the Rebels. At the edge of this woods stands the Dunkard church which you perhaps, will see accounts of in the papers. It was in the rear of this church that I had a conversation with a Rebel wounded officer, and who died before we left the woods. He said that they were much cut up and hoped we would capture their whole army. Many were glad to get into our hands, while others were saucy. Relics I did not pick up, but everything laid around in profusion. When we took possession of the woods, hundreds of the Rebels came running towards us and gave themselves up. I do not know where they got to as no one paid any attention to them, but told them to go to the rear. We did not go in for taking prisoners but went in to Kill. Our Regt claims the honor of saving our centre. We captured seven colors, and two field batteries. Co. A captured the first color in the corn field. It belonged to a Georgia Regt, and had inscribed upon it "Seven Pines."³⁸ We lost one piece in the woods, of [Joseph] Knap's battery.³⁹ The men fired during the day on an average 150 Rounds, having run out of ammunition three times. It was when we fell back, that Col Tyndale was shot in the head. He was carried to a Hay stack, about 100 yds. from the spot, where many of our wounded and Rebels laid, and was

37 Most likely Silliman means the 125th Pennsylvania. See Letter #5.

38 This capture may have occurred as Tyndale's brigade emerged from the East Woods and struck Colquitt's brigade, with its four Georgia regiments and the 13th Alabama. Corporal Jacob Orth of Company D earned the Medal of Honor for capturing the flag of the 7th South Carolina. Orth wrote, "It fell to my lot to encounter the color sgt. of the 7th South Carolina regt. A hand to hand fight ensued. The final result of our short but sharp conflict was that the Carolinian was minus his flag and I had secured the trophy. I also had a shot wound through my shoulder. Six other stands of colors were taken by our Regt in this charge." See W. F. Beyer and O. F. Keydal, *Deeds of Valor: How American Heroes Won the Medal of Honor* (Perrien-Keydel Company, 1905), vol. 1, 86.

39 Battery E, Pennsylvania Independent Light Artillery.

cared for by a Rebel Surgeon, who remained behind to take charge of their wounded. He was very attentive to our wounded. Majs Pardee & Raphel [William Raphael] both had their horses shot from under them. We lost all of our color Corporals (8) and both color Sergts (2). We have not much of our colors to show, they being almost all carried away by the shell and balls of the enemy. Their artillery played upon us for over two hours, but did not Kill a man. They fired railroad iron.⁴⁰ When we first went into the engagement our Right wing of the centre was giving away. This was noticed by our Regt, and the only way to save ourselves was by making a charge. This we did and against such fearful odds, that the enemy gave way. We kept up the chase for over a mile, when the right was reformed and came to our assistance. I am sorry to say that Thousands of our troops ran without firing again. Lieut [Isaiah B.] Robison was not in the battle, he being back at Frederick sick. The Capt [James Fitzpatrick] had only joined us the day before. I have not seen our company wagon since we left Georgetown. Our clothing is not in the best of trim. I have not seen enough water to wash my face since the battle. In fact, we have had no time to wash. ~~I would like to write to Hazleton but have no time you can forward this letter to them. If I had the paper I would send you a sketch of our position and that of the enemy during the hottest of the engagement. I will however send it in a day or so.~~ On Loudoun Heights⁴¹ we have a fine view of the surrounding Country.

Yours, brother

Jim J.

* * *

8.

Let me hear from home often and I will write from here if anything turns up

Loudoun Heights Oct 3rd 1862

Dear Father

40 It was commonly believed that "during the battle of Antietam, broken railroad iron, blacksmith's tools, hammers, chisels, etc., were fired at us from rebel cannon." See P. Fishe Reed, *Incidents in the War; or, The Romance and Realities of Soldier Life* (Asher & Company, 1862), 48.

41 The 28th Pennsylvania occupied Loudoun Heights on September 23. Loudoun Heights overlooks the southern bank of the Shenandoah River, across from Harpers Ferry.

Yours of the 28th came duly to hand together with the Journal [*Miners' Journal & Pottsville General Advertiser*]. Nothing of any importance has transpired here since Alexander⁴² has left us the particulars of which no doubt he has given you. Yesterday morning President Lincoln paid us a visit.⁴³ He arrived on top of the mountain about 7 o'clock in a dense fog. We at the time could not see 50 yds ahead of us. Our Division was drawn up in line. The President rode along the front accompanied by Genl Geary and a number of other Military men of rank. He also paid a visit to Genl Sumner's Corps who are camped in Bolivar Heights and that of Genl [Alpheus] Williams' Division camped on Maryland Heights. Genl Geary has again taken command and has now the 2nd Division of Banks' old Corps under his charge.⁴⁴ We are clearing the mountain westwards to give our artillery full sweep should the enemy think proper to give us a call. Oct 5th Since the heading of this, our camp has been changed about 1 mile west of our former Camp, and about half way down the mountain. How long we remain here I know not, but by present appearance we may remain for some time, as we are making preparations of defence upon the top of the mountain. Genl Sumner has made a few reconnaissances from Bolivar Heights towards Charlestown, but found no enemy in force, Charlestown being about 8 miles from here. Sumner has received some few reinforcements since his arrival at Bolivar and now think his corps will run up to about 18,000, while our two Divisions will sum about 7000, making a total of about 25,000 men about Harpers Ferry. I do not know the position of our forces in Maryland or what is the intention of McClellan. The men however are anxious to push on. Nevertheless, they are much in need of shoes and clothing, many of our men being bare footed. I do not know how the new troops are coming in but will say if we had 300,000 men to

42 Alexander Silliman (1816-1900), James Silliman's oldest brother.

43 Lincoln left Washington on October 1 and visited General McClellan near the Antietam battlefield; he stayed that evening in Harpers Ferry and conducted a review there on October 2. Lincoln returned to Washington on October 4.

44 John White Geary returned to command on September 25, this time assuming responsibility for the entire division that had been commanded by George Sears Greene at Antietam. See Geary to Mary Geary (September 30, 1862), in *A Politician Goes to War: The Civil War Letters of John White Geary*, W. A. Blair, ed. (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 57-8. Alpheus Williams' October 16, 1862, report to Randolph Marcy observes that Geary's brigade is "encamped on the summit of Loudoun Heights, a long distance from water, and upon rocky or stony ground, quite unsuitable for a well-ordered camp," and has resulted in "the neglect of camp guards, police parties, and other precautions...." *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 2, 434.

work with, we could cage the whole Rebel army before October closes, and end the Campaign as far in Virginia is concerned, but no time is to be lost we must push them and that immediately or we will lose them. I do not believe Lee's halt in the neighbourhood of Winchester was done to retard our progress but to reorganize their demoralized forces, which no doubt they have accomplished by this time, and if we are not wide awake the next thing we will hear of [is] their forces being in Gordonsville and on their way to Richmond. I see by the papers that our forces have been to Warrenton.⁴⁵ If the road is open to a small force, why not send Sigel and [Major-General Samuel P.] Heintzelman with the troops in front of Washington down along the Rappahannock and cut off their retreat to Gordonsville? By sending 30,000 to Sperryville they can hold both the Luray and the valley leading direct to Gordonsville (the name of which I forget) by holding these two valleys, the enemy, if they wish to move south, must go down the Valley of Virginia, which is almost certain death to them, as they could not subsist an Army $\frac{1}{2}$ the size of theirs two weeks in this valley. But if the enemy escapes, as it will be, by going down the Valley of Virginia, to Staunton, it is within the power of our army to cut off their retreat, and if it is not done it will be a great disappointment to the troops in the field in Maryland and Virginia. We were much disappointed in not bagging the largest portion of their Army in Maryland, when we had them within our grasp. If our Generals let them slip again it will cause trouble in our Ranks. The men are tired of the war and want to finish it and all they ask is to lead them on, with plenty assistance. The last Proclamation of the President⁴⁶ has caused a division of opinion in the Army, but not to any serious effect as far as I can learn. Harpers Ferry is beginning to assume its usual activity. The bridge has been completed across the Potomac, also another Pontoon thrown across, which gives room for throwing a large body of men across at a short notice. A Pontoon bridge has also been thrown across the Shenandoah below us.

I received last week's Journal with the testimony of the parties against Frank Hughes loyalty.⁴⁷ Can't something be done with him? You say in

45 "From Washington," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 1, 1862, "Advance from Sigel's Corps," *New-York Tribune*, October 1, 1862, and "The War News," *Baltimore Sun*, October 1, 1862.

46 The Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation of September 22, 1862.

47 Francis Wade Hughes was a Pottsville lawyer and the Commonwealth's attorney-general from 1853 to 1855, as well as a relative by marriage of the Sillimans. As the chair of the Democratic State Committee, he was accused of sympathy with secession,

yours that the Democratic party will carry the fall election in the county. I expected nothing more, and am almost certain that [James Hepburn] Campbell will be defeated. Lebanon [County] cannot overbalance the Democratic majority that Schuylkill [County] will give for [Myer] Strouse. The Democrats will elect a majority of their men to the Legislature and Congress the coming election, which still send Hughes to the United States Senate. I am afraid the state elections of all the Northern states will send a Democratic majority to the next Congress, but I hope we may settle this war before they are in power. I feel sorry that Campbell⁴⁸ should be defeated by such a man as Strouse. It will be a disgrace to the District. Had the Army a chance to vote I think the result would be different, but as it is we are laid to one side. I received the box that was sent to me directed to Warrenton this week and found everything in good order that was canned. The cakes and tongue were spoiled, the Jelly jars broken, but the cake and Ginger cakes in the tin box were in good condition. They were very acceptable as provisions are difficult to get from our present position. My box of clothing has not as yet come to hand but think they are at Alexandria. The Express office has again been open in the Ferry and think the box will turn up in the course of a week. I received Tillie's letter of the first on the 3rd. We now have daily mail to and fro. I do not see why the draft has been postponed so long in the different states.⁴⁹ The men are wanted badly and it is useless postponing it,

especially after it was learned that two of his nephews were in the Confederate army. The *Miners' Journal* (September 27 and October 4) published a damaging series of depositions, alleging that Hughes had advocated Pennsylvania's secession from the Union. Democrats won a majority in the state legislature in the 1862 elections; but Hughes had become a liability, and the legislature declined to reward him with election to the U.S. Senate. See Arnold Shankman, "Francis W. Hughes and the 1862 Pennsylvania Election," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography* 95 (July 1971): 388-92.

48 Myer Strouse was a German-born lawyer from Pottsville who defeated John H. Campbell for Schuylkill County's seat in the 38th Congress in 1862. Campbell was also a Pottsville lawyer and the incumbent Congressman. See "What Has Jas. H. Campbell Done?" *Miners' Journal*, October 4, 1862. In the 1862 election, Schuylkill County gave Democrats a 1700-vote majority; see "The Election," *Harrisburg Patriot-News*, October 18, 1862.

49 On July 1, 1862, President Lincoln called on the governors of the Northern states to provide 300,000 fresh troops for the war effort, with quotas apportioned on a state-by-state basis. States which did not meet their quotas from volunteering were authorized by the Militia Act of July 17 to institute conscription - the first Northern draft of the war. By September, volunteering in Pennsylvania had failed to meet the state quota, but the Confederate invasion of Maryland forced Governor Curtin to re-schedule a draft in Pennsylvania until mid-October. On the mechanics of the state draft in Pennsylvania,

expecting the men to come forward of their own free will. We have got all the men in the field that we can get without a draft and the business should have been pushed forward when the first date was set. State pride must be set aside when men are wanted. Men have had warning enough. So let the work commence and fill up the old Regiments. They stand most in need. An old Regt filled up to its full quota I consider as good as two new ones. The present time our Regt now only numbers 700 men for duty out of 1500. This is about the proportion amongst all old Regiments. I suppose the coal track is good with high wages. This will have a tendency to keep men back from the mining region. When do you expect to ship coal from Mahanoy?⁵⁰ Will you have the Rail Road finished this fall? I heard sometime ago that one of the gangaways had been or is in fault.⁵¹ Are you through [with] it? News of interest are scarce at present nothing going on. We are trying to make ourselves as comfortable as the nature of the ground will permit, but find it impossible to find place enough to sleep unless on a rock, the mountain [Loudoun Heights] being something similar to the Sharp Mountain back of Morris addition, but a much higher one.⁵² The nights and mornings are getting quite cool. I think a good spell of Cold weather and a snow storm would go as far towards settling this war as would a battle. The enemy are hard up for shoes and clothing with but poor prospects of getting any unless they should get a hold of some of Uncle Sam's. I am sorry to say that we supplied them with many articles of clothing, they taking many trains during our Skedaddle from the Rappahannock. I see by the Journal that [James] Nagle has been promoted to a Brigadier, which I am glad to hear.⁵³ The 48th [Pennsylvania] did not suffer much in proportion to the other Regiments in Burnside's Corps. I do not know what position they held on the battle ground. I was over all the ground that Burnside fought on. The hottest contested point was at the bridge across the Antietam

see Arnold Shankman, "Draft Resistance in Civil War Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography* 101 (April 1977): 191, and Robert M. Sandow, "The Limits of Northern Patriotism: Early Civil war Mobilization in Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 70 (Spring 2003): 177.

50 Mahanoy City is in northern Schuylkill County.

51 Horizontal tunnels used for coal mining.

52 Sharp Mountain, or Sharp Ridge, runs through Schuylkill County.

53 The September 27 issue of the *Miner's Journal & Pottsville General Advertiser* contained a letter from Nagle, describing the battle of Antietam, and signed as "Brig.-Gen. Commanding 1st Brigade, 2nd Division, 9th Army Corps." He had been promoted to command of 1st brigade in Samuel Sturgis's Division of the 9th Corps on September 10, and participated in the attack on Burnside Bridge at Antietam.

about 1 mile south west of Sharpsburg. The position of the enemy there was all that could be desired. Burnside's right joined our Regt on the left during the fight. I think it was the 13th Mass.⁵⁴ They fought around Sharpsburg, we about ½ mile to the right and from there up to the Dunkard Church, we being in possession of the woods in rear of the Church for some time and from which we were driven by not having the proper support. I suppose Alexander gave you the position of the ground. The battle ground is visited daily by hundreds, many in search of lost ones while others visit from mere curiosity. I send you a small sketch of the battle ground in the vicinity and our position and that of the enemy which I have designated by number and will here explain. No 1 is a field [Samuel Mumma farm] from which we drove the enemy they crossing the Pike and fell back into the woods going between 5 and 9.

2 is an elevated position in the field with a descent towards the road. It was upon this rise of the ground that we fought the enemy for over 3 hours, they charging upon us twice and were repulsed.³ Haystacks behind which we found many Rebel wounded together with a Rebel Surgeon, when we crossed the field. We caught quite a number of prisoners at those stacks. xx two guns from which we drove the enemy from, killing all their horses.⁵⁵ 4 Two pieces of our battery⁵⁶ firing over to No 7.5 Ploughed field from which we drove the enemy. x a disabled cannon, [*flag symbol*] a red flag which the enemy had thrown up for a Hospital flag, for us not to fire upon, but which we found was put there to cover some movements of the enemy.

Remarks.⁶ Ploughed field [Samuel Reel farm] in which part of Burnside forces were engaged.

⁵⁴ The 13th Massachusetts was part of James Ricketts' 1st Corps division.

⁵⁵ Silliman is describing Captain Pichegru Woolfolk's (Ashland) Virginia Battery.

⁵⁶ Either Knap's Independent Battery E (since the 28th Pennsylvania regarded Knap as "ours") or Captain John A. Tompkins's Battery 1st Rhode Island Artillery, Battery A.

repulsed after passing to ploughed field 11.⁵⁸ 12 Batteries⁵⁹ which threw grape and canister among the Rebel columns and mowed them down like grass. We also made sad havoc amongst their ranks from our elevated position 2, range 100 yds. Rebels are driven back from this position and are followed to the woods by our Regt. 13 Woods [the West Woods] from which we were driven and behind which the enemy had a large force massed. We fell back over the same ground that we went in. 14 Woods [the East Woods] in which our Reserve were posted. After falling back the enemy followed us to our position (2) when batteries 4 and 12 opened upon them and set them to flight. By this time reinforcements came out of the woods 14 and did not pursue the enemy to the woods. They held possession during the balance of the day but fell back during the night. 15 The position we reformed our line of battle and were then taken back to the rear, being worn out by continued fighting from 7 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon. In woods 13 position 2 and 11 the dead of the enemy laid by hundreds. We ran out of ammunition 3 times, each man firing upwards of 150 rounds during the day. When a gun would become so dirty by constant use the men would throw them away pick up others and use them. Not a man of ours that was in the engagement has the same gun that he took in the action. Relics were plenty on the field but no one thought of them. The men fought as Genl [George Sears] Green said more like Tigers than men.

I have not been well for some time but am still on duty.

Jim

58 Possibly Barksdale's Mississippi brigade (13th, 17th, 18th, and 21st Mississippi. Tyndale's brigade is generally supposed to have deployed perpendicular to the Smoketown Road, with the 28th Pennsylvania forming the left-most regiment in the brigade front, with the whole brigade passing to the *left* of the Dunker Church; however, Silliman's sketch has the 28th Pennsylvania crossing the Hagerstown Pike and passing to the *right* of the Dunker Church. This may be one reason why the 28th became detached from the other units of Tyndale's brigade and found itself fighting alongside the 13th New Jersey. See Bradley Gottfried, *The Maps of Antietam: An Atlas of the Antietam (Sharpsburg) Campaign* (Savas Beatie, 2020), 181-183, and Ethan Rafuse, *Antietam, South Mountain & Harpers Ferry: A Battlefield Guide* (University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 76-77. There is no monument to the 28th Pennsylvania on the Antietam battlefield.

59 Probably Lieutenant George Woodruff's 1st United States Artillery, Battery I, or Monroe's 1st Rhode Island Artillery, Battery D.

Hail to the Chief: Presidential Visits to Antietam

by John Schildt

Although not yet in office, George Washington was the first president to visit Antietam. First as a surveyor for Lord Fairfax, and then as a Colonel in the Virginia militia with Major General Edward Braddock in 1754 during the French and Indian War. Thus, when the founding fathers suggested Sharpsburg as a possible site for the nation's capital, he could relate to the proposal.

On October 2-4, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln visited General McClellan and possibly conceived the idea of the Gettysburg Address at the Grove farm.

This was followed by Andrew Johnson, accompanied by Ulysses S. Grant for the dedicatory ceremonies of the Antietam National Cemetery.

Thirty years passed before another president came to Antietam. This time it was a veteran of the Battle of Antietam, now an occupant of the White House, former commissary sergeant William B. McKinley. There were 10,000 in attendance. This presented a huge problem with parking due to all the horses and buggies.

On September 17, 1903, during several days of rain, President Theodore Roosevelt dedicated the New Jersey monument. The previous night was sleepless for the director of the local band. He received last minute notification that the band was to play "Hail to the Chief." The conductor had the only copy. Thus, he spent the night copying the music for the band. The rain stopped as Teddy rose to speak.

The year 1937 brought the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Antietam. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was invited to speak. He was also invited to come via the Shepherdstown Ferry as the bridge had been washed away in 1936. However, he chose the National Road, Alternate Route 40. The ceremonies were held at Bloody Lane. The President seemed to enjoy speaking with the veterans of 1862. He listened intently to their stories. This was the last major gathering of the veterans at Antietam.

The 75th anniversary brought another first. In 1862, the Alexander Gardner photos of combat dead were the first of their kind in the United States. In 1937, Associated Press wire photos sent the story of the Antietam ceremonies across the nation.

On a Saturday evening in March, another president made a whirlwind drive through Antietam. In fact, a secret service agent was able to get some

brochures from Superintendent Harry Doust. This was Dwight David Eisenhower who had been nominated to the highest office in the land by his friend, Theodore McKeldin.

On Sunday, April 9, Antietam National Battlefield received its most important visitor of 1963. At 11:35 a.m., a helicopter brought none other than the President of the United States. It landed on the Spong farm on the west bank of the creek. The bypass had yet to be built. The Burnside Bridge still carried vehicular traffic across the creek. From the helicopter stepped the young, handsome, witty, and charming John Fitzgerald Kennedy. As a keen student of American History, he was familiar with the battle and asked his tour guide, Superintendent Robert Lagemann, several questions about the heavy losses. Lagemann lamented later that he forgot to share the story of President McKinley with Mr. Kennedy. Then it was off on a tour. Senator Edward Kennedy and his wife followed in another car with another park employee. This was the first time a president had come on their own for an unofficial visit and tour. Very few people were aware of the visit. President Kennedy had written two best sellers, *Why England Slept* and *Profiles in Courage*. Years later, Senator Kennedy returned to Antietam with his family and that of Robert's and was given a tour by Ranger Keith Snyder. Sunday afternoon visits to historical places was a Kennedy family ritual.

The last president to visit the fields was Jimmy Carter along with his wife on July 1, 1978, accompanied by Shelby Foote and Park Historian Betty Otto. After touring Antietam, the Carters took the back road from Shepherdstown to Harpers Ferry. The next morning the local newspaper read, "Presidential motorcade delayed by cattle."

That was 50 years ago. Who and when will the next president to visit Antietam.

Post-Script:

- Ulysses S. Grant attended the Great Frederick Fair. He wanted to see the horses. Supposedly, he came from Frederick, once or perhaps twice, to visit Antietam. Keep in mind, a horse and buggy trip from Frederick required four to five hours of travel time.
- George B. McClellan, who ran for president in 1864, was also here.
- First to arrive by car: Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- First to arrive by helicopter: John F. Kennedy

In Their Own Words: The Antietam Report of Brigadier General Truman Seymour, 1st Brigade, 3rd Division, 1st Corps by Darin Wipperman

In the vanguard of the 1st Corps, Army of the Potomac, at South Mountain and Antietam, the brigade of Pennsylvania Reserves under Brigadier General Truman Seymour suffered severely in the Maryland Campaign. The excellent command—1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, and 13th Reserves—served with two additional brigades in George Gordon Meade's division in the Maryland Campaign. Seymour's report of South Mountain found publication in the *Official Records*, but the general's Antietam report did not. Transcribed here, Seymour's report covering September 16 and 17 survives in Box 9, Joseph Hooker Military Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. The report discusses the fighting that began late in the afternoon of September 16, when Colonel Hugh McNeil, 13th Reserves, lost his life near the East Woods. McNeil became the first regimental commander to die during the war's bloodiest battle.

* * *

Headquarters 1st Brigade P. R. V. C.
Near Sharpsburg Md
September 24 1862
Captain

I have the honor to report that on the afternoon of the 16th when Hooker's Corps crossed the Antietam Creek, this Brigade was in the advance. Soon after leaving the Keedysville and Williamsport road to the right, and taking the direction of the Dunker Church toward Sharpsburg, the Bucktails¹ deployed as skirmishers came in contact with the enemy's outposts in an open wood, from which they were soon driven. Still advancing, supported by the 1st & 2nd, the 5th and 6th in reserve, the

¹ The nickname for the 13th Pennsylvania Reserves, the Bucktails earned their name by placing a critter's tail, most often a deer, on their cap, a sign of their shooting prowess. The regiment wielded the Sharps Rifle, a single-shot breach loader, capable of rapid fire compared to the muzzleloaders more common during the war. The Bucktails often played the role of skirmishers for their brigade or division.

enemy's skirmishers were met in force, in a wood several hundred yards to the front of the wood already gained, and from the edge of which our progress was disputed. While pressing forward his line with a coolness and skill that could not be surpassed, Col. Hugh W. McNeil was killed, an officer who was winning in every action the highest esteem of his superiors for every quality that adorns a soldier²; but the men did not falter, and after a few moments sharp work drove the enemy from behind the trees and rocks into the open ground beyond - A gentle slope led to the crest occupied by large masses of the enemy. Numerous little irregularities of ground and rock sheltered their sharpshooters and lines. Sheltered by these advantages the rebels kept up a strong and accurate fire, and artillery opening, the wood soon became a scene of hot contention. The ground gained was firmly held, however. The 1st was deployed to relieve the Bucktails, whose ammunition was now exhausted; the 6th was placed in line on the right of the woods and the 5th on the left, and in rear of it. This Regiment while taking position in the dusk of the evening, was fired upon by a body of rebel infantry at very short range; the 5th rising, poured in a volley that (so say prisoners) laid many low, and cleared them of farther annoyance for the time.

Sharp picket firing continued through the night by such light as a veiled moon allowed, and so close were the enemy's pickets that, on both sides, several were captured at arm's length. Lieut. Petriken³, of the 5th, whose gallantry has been the subject of frequent praise, was mortally wounded here, and died in the enemy's hands. Early in the morning, as soon as there was sufficient light to distinguish objects, the skirmishing recommenced, and a heavy fire was soon opened upon us by the force in front.

Many fell - but the ground was held until Ricketts' Division came to the front and relieved us.

Exhausted by the previous evening's fighting, with the watching of the night and with ammunition spent, the Regiments fell slow to the rear, and remained in reserve during the rest of the action.

² Only 32 years old, McNeil would be buried at Fort Hill Cemetery, Auburn, New York.

³ Hardman Petriken had enlisted as a 1st lieutenant in June 1861.

To the commanders of Regiments, especially is due much honor, Cols. Sinclair⁴ & Fisher⁵, Capt. McGee⁶, to whom fell the command after the loss of Col. McNeil, Capt. Byrnes & Capt. Tally⁷ who commanded the 1st during the temporary absence of the Colonel, who, seriously ill, nevertheless hastened to join his Regiment as soon as the action engaged.

My Aide Lt. A. T. Cross⁸ 2nd Regt. was mortally wounded on the afternoon of the 16th, after having won every where the name of a gallant and efficient soldier, and I must again mention Lieut. Jackson⁹ of my staff with honor. Not a few officers and men are highly deserving of more extended notice, and their names will form the subject of another and special report.

I have the honor to be
Very Respectfully
Your obd't Servt
(Signed) T. Seymour
Brig. Genl. U.S.V.
Capt. E. C. Baird
A. A. G. Hd Geo Meade's Div.

4 William Sinclair had led the 6th Reserves since June 1861. Only 27 years old at Antietam, he graduated from West Point in 1857. In the spring of 1863, Sinclair took a staff position in the Army of the Gulf.

5 Joseph W. Fisher took command of the 5th Reserves after the death of their original colonel at the battle of Glendale, June 30, 1862. He remained with the regiment for much of the rest of the war.

6 Dennis McGee held command until supplanted by Charles Taylor, who returned to the regiment soon after Antietam after being taken prisoner on the Peninsula in June.

7 William Cooper Talley originally served as captain of Company F, 1st Reserves. He became the regiment's colonel in March 1863.

8 Before joining Seymour's staff, Augustus T. Cross became sergeant major of the 2nd Reserves in May 1861. He became a 1st lieutenant (and regimental adjutant) less than a year later.

9 As at Antietam, Charles Nelson Jackson served later in the war and earned praise from Seymour as a member of the general's staff.

Antietam Artifacts: A Maryland Quartermaster on Sharpsburg Ridge

by Joseph Stahl and Matthew Borders

The Antietam National Battlefield visitor center sits near the center of Sharpsburg Ridge. Its presence obscures the attack made by Brigadier General George S. Greene's division of the 12th Corps following their advance through the East Woods on the morning of September 17, 1862. After holding their position along the ridge against repeated Confederate counterattacks, Greene's division advanced across the Hagerstown Pike and into the West Woods around Dunker Church. Among the Federal troops maintaining this toehold in the Confederate line were men from both Maryland and right across the Potomac River in Jefferson County, (West) Virginia, the soldiers of the 3rd Maryland Infantry.

The organization of the 3rd Maryland Infantry began on June 18, 1861, from both Baltimore and Williamsport, Maryland. The enlistment process proved difficult over the summer of 1861, as secessionist sympathies ran high in eastern Maryland following the United States' defeat at First Bull Run. On the other hand, those companies raised in Williamsport included loyal men and refugees from Jefferson and Berkeley County, Virginia. The Williamsport companies were designated A, B, C, and I, while those from Baltimore were re-designated D, E, F, and G. Companies E, H, I, and K were completed using men from the 4th Maryland Infantry and the Baltimore Light Infantry. Due to this delay, the 3rd Maryland was not mustered into Federal service until February 17, 1862.¹

Ordered to Harpers Ferry in the spring of 1862, they later became part of the Second Corps of Major General John Pope's Army of Virginia, under whom it fought its first battle at Cedar Mountain on August 9, 1862. The 3rd Maryland, along with the rest of the 2nd Corps, was in reserve for the rest of the Northern Virginia Campaign and fell back with the Army of Virginia into the defenses of Washington. Transferred to the Army of the Potomac, the 2nd Corps was re-designated the 12th Corps and fought through the Maryland Campaign in the fall of 1862. At Antietam the 3rd Maryland distinguished itself in

1 L. Allison Wilmer, J. H. Jarrett, and George W. F. Vernon, *History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers, War of 1861-5*, Vol. 1 (Press of Guggenheimer, Weil & Co., 1898), 110.

both the East and the West Woods. When the 12th Corps retook Harpers Ferry on September 22, 1862, the 3rd Maryland became part of the garrison. The regiment remained at Harpers Ferry until early December thereby missing the Battle of Fredericksburg. Upon rejoining the army, the 3rd Maryland moved with the 12th Corps to Fairfax Station, Virginia, in preparation for winter.²

Unfortunately for them, on January 19, 1863, the 3rd Maryland was ordered out of camp and struggled through the “Mud March.” After which, the men were ordered to Stafford Court House, Virginia, where they went into winter quarters. The following spring the 3rd Maryland suffered its greatest loss at the Battle of Chancellorsville. It then went on to fight on Culp’s Hill at Gettysburg that summer and was involved in the pursuit of Confederate forces back to Virginia. In late September, the 12th Corps, the 3rd Maryland included, was transferred to the Western Theater and assigned to the Army of the Cumberland, where the regiment guarded the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad for the rest of 1863. In February 1864, the 3rd Maryland reenlisted and received thirty-day veterans’ furloughs home that March. Those who had veteranized returned to service in April and were assigned to the 9th Corps, Army of the Potomac just in time for the Overland Campaign. Following the bloody fighting that spring, the regiment served through the Siege of Petersburg and the subsequent Appomattox Campaign. Though not present at the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, the 3rd Maryland briefly garrisoned at Petersburg, before returning to Washington to participate in the Grand Review on May 23, 1865. It remained part of the garrison of the Department of Washington and was mustered out at Tennallytown in the District of Columbia on July 31, 1865.³

After the Battle of Antietam, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Sudsburg wrote the after-action report of the 3rd Maryland:

Sir: I hereby respectfully submit to you the following report concerning the action of the Third Maryland Regiment in the battle near Sharpsburg on the 17th of this

2 James Stewart, Jr., William R. Holloway, Benjamin H. Grierson, and Byron Root Pierce, *The Union Army*, vol. 2, (Madison, WI: Federal Publishing Company, 1908), 271–72.

3 Wilmer, Jarrett, and Vernon, *History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers*, 111; Stewart, Holloway, Grierson, and Pierce, *The Union Army*, 2:272.

month: We rested from 3 o'clock a.m. in a field about 1 mile from the bridge over the Antietam. At 6.30 o'clock in the morning Gen. Greene, commanding the division, marched us from this field in column by companies, and, advancing in a southerly direction, we reached a point about 1 mile from our starting place. We here met the enemy, who was in possession of a piece of woods. Deploying in line of battle, we here met our first loss; 3 of our men fell. After a short but severe contest, we drove the enemy out of this wood and across a newly plowed field. This woods was filled with the wounded and dead of the enemy, who had taken refuge behind one of the batteries in front and toward our left. Arriving at the farther end of this field, we halted for some minutes, in order to form again in line. Our left rested on a burning farm-house, said to have been the commissary store-house of the enemy, who had, before leaving, set fire to the same and thrown his salt in the well.

After again being formed, we advanced over a meadow toward the battery of the enemy, who had vigorously shelled us during our advance from the woods. Arriving behind the crest of a little elevation, we were ordered to lie down and wait the arrival of a battery which had been ordered to our support, and of which a section shortly came up and unlimbered. A full battery, said to have been Knap's, came up soon after and went directly into action. The enemy's infantry advanced from the right, apparently designing to take our battery. We were ordered up, fixed bayonets, and charged forward past the battery, which in the mean time had given the enemy the benefit of two rounds of canister. We drove the enemy, who flew before us across the fields and across the road leading from Bakersville to Sharpsburg. On the other side of the road is a church or school-house, surrounded by woods. Charging through this piece of woods, we drove the enemy out, and held possession nearly two hours. The enemy occupied a corn-field in front of us, and, judging from his fire, must have been in strong force. In this

woods I lost most of my men. I took 148 men into action. Our casualties amount to 1 killed and 25 wounded, some of whom have since died. Four were missing.⁴

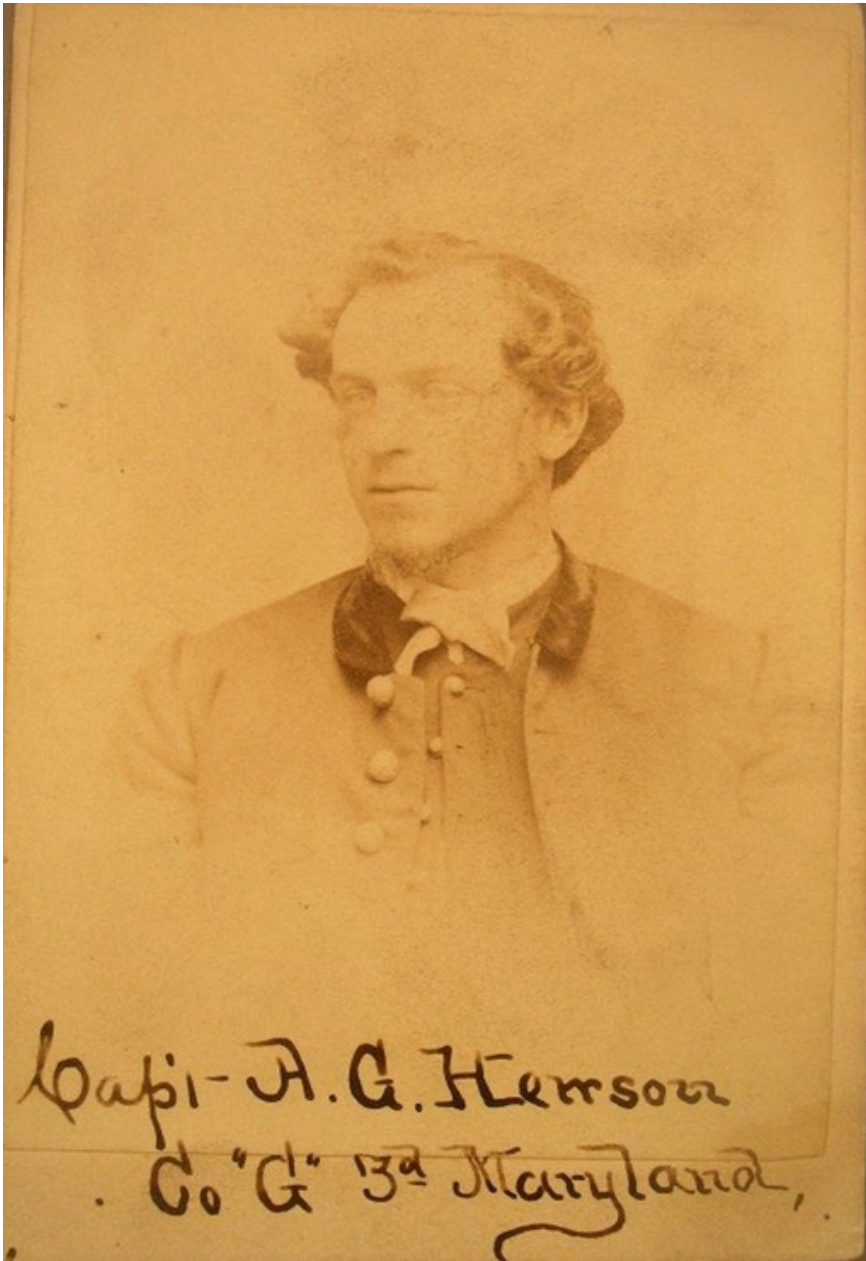
Among those 148 men was Quartermaster Sergeant Augustus G. Hewson. Born in New York City in 1840, Augustus worked as a clerk before the war. Described as 5 foot, 7 inches with a light complexion, blue eyes and brown hair, he enlisted in New York City on August 24, 1861.⁵ Shipped to Camp Lamon, Maryland, Augustus was formally mustered into Company C of the 3rd Maryland Infantry as a private on September 27, for three years of service. Promoted to sergeant the next day, Augustus was listed as present for duty for the rest of the year. Promoted again on May 1, 1862, to Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant, Augustus became part of the 3rd Maryland's command staff. Throughout the summer of 1862 Augustus was noted as being on business for the regiment and with the regimental wagon train. He returned to the regiment in September and remained present for duty through the late winter of 1863. In March, he was promoted to 2nd lieutenant and assigned to Company G before being formally mustered in at that rank on April 10. That spring he was made the Acting Adjutant of the Regiment and remained so through the summer of 1863. "Still on special duty as acting adjutant into the fall, he was also due extra pay for commanding Company D from August 31 to October 31. In addition, on October 29, 1863, he was promoted a final time to captain of Company G, effective November 1, 1863. As with most of the 3rd Maryland, Augustus re-enlisted and on February 20, 1864, he went on veterans' furlough. He returned to the regiment in time for the Overland Campaign and led Company G into the Wilderness where he was wounded in the left side on May 6, 1864. Evacuated from the field, Augustus arrived at the Ladies Home Hospital, a branch of the New England Soldiers Relief Association, located at Lexington Avenue in Manhattan on June 28.⁷ Initially it appears that Augustus was granted 30

4 *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, 511.

5 Miscellaneous Card Abstracts of Records, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed March 26, 2025, Hewson, Augustus G.—Company Descriptive Book.

6 Augustus G. Hewson, Military Service Records, Company G, 3rd Maryland Volunteer Infantry, National Archives

7 Augustus G. Hewson, Military Service Records, Company G, 3rd Maryland Volunteer Infantry, National Archives



Quartersmaster Sergeant Augustus G. Hewson, 3rd Maryland Infantry.

days leave to recover. However, with the consolidation of the much-reduced 3rd Maryland into a Battalion that summer, his position was no

longer necessary, and he was mustered out of the service on June 28, 1864.⁸

There are very few details of Augustus Hewson's life following the war. He returned to New York City and filed for a pension on September 22, 1879.⁹ Four years later he married Margaret Crane (Bosworth Doughty) in 1883. While Margaret lived until 1913, Augustus did not survive another decade, dying on December 7, 1892, in Manhattan, New York. He was buried in the All Faiths Cemetery, Middle Village, New York. Interestingly, Augustus' grave was not marked until a War Department stone was placed in 1940.¹⁰

Taken in Brooklyn, New York this simple bust image was shot in 1864. Augustus Hewson was already a Captain by that point and had this taken either when he was home on veterans' furlough in February 1864 or after he was transferred to New York in June 1864. While a previous collector has listed Augustus' details on the reverse, his name, rank and regiment have also been included on the front.

For this image Augustus is wearing a privately purchased officers' frock coat. The large, closely spaced buttons identify the coat, while the black velvet collar is indicative of a private purchase.¹¹ Interestingly there is no rank insignia on the frock, and while a subdued rank insignia is possible, it is just as likely that this is a photographer's prop. The coat, as well as the vest underneath, are both open, suggesting that this was indeed taken in the summer of 1864. Finally, Augustus has also retained his cravat, a requirement for officers' uniforms at the time. He has however, added a personal touch as the cravat is white or cream colored as opposed to regulation black.¹²

8 Wilmer, Jarrett, and Vernon, *History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers*, vol.1, 142.

9 Pension Card Index, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed February 16, 2025, Hewson, Augustus G. - US, Civil War Pensions Index, 1861-1900—Fold3.

10 "Augustus G. Hewson," Find a Grave, accessed on February 14, 2025, Augustus Groesbeck Hewson (1840-1892) - Find a Grave Memorial.

11 Frederick P. Todd, *American Military Equipage, 1851-1872*, vol. 1, (The Company of Military Historians, 1974), 555-56.

12 United States War Department, *Revised United States Army regulations of 1861, with an appendix containing the changed and laws affecting Army regulations and Articles of war to June 25, 1863*, (Government Printing Office, 1863), 467.

In Antietam's Footsteps: Major General Daniel Harvey Hill Reconnoiters South Mountain

by Michael Hill

Let us place ourselves in the boots of Confederate Major General Daniel Harvey Hill on the morning of September 14, 1862, a Sunday that would prove decisive to the fate of Robert E. Lee's Maryland Campaign. To do this we travel to the top of the South Mountain range via Alternate U.S. 40 which runs from Frederick to Boonsboro. This is a historic route as it is the original path of the National Road, the nation's first major highway, a 25-foot-wide macadamized roadway that connected the bustling port of Baltimore with the growing population beyond the Ohio River. When you drive this road, you are following in the footsteps of both Confederate and Union troops as they made their way to their encounter on the banks of Antietam Creek. But before they got there, they met at South Mountain, an oft-overlooked engagement because of what happened four days later. Suffice it to say that, if not for the Battle of Antietam, there would probably be a major National Park atop this mountain. For now, there is a patchwork of preserved land as the state of Maryland works to develop a cohesive park that will allow visitors to give this battle the appreciation it deserves.

When you reach the top of the mountain, you are in Turner's Gap. You will notice a large stone building, until recently a restaurant. Known as the Mountain House, it was here in 1862, and was an inn for travelers on the National Road. Now owned by the state of Maryland, one day it will be the headquarters of South Mountain State Battlefield. On September 14, 1862, it was the headquarters of D. H. Hill. Park in the lot next to the building, right on the crest of the mountain.

Hill was nervous that morning and he had reason to be. The 5,000 or so troops under his command were essentially all that stood between a Union army of about 70,000 and Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, divided up to take Harpers Ferry. And those Union troops were, in Lee's words, "advancing more rapidly than convenient." That was true even before General George McClellan was given a copy of Lee's Special Orders No. 191 in the afternoon of September 13, and now they had sped up. The Confederate cavalry commander, Major General Jeb Stuart, had told Hill of an encounter with Union cavalry the day before but had assured him the pass could be defended by one brigade. Hill had

placed the troops of Brigadier General Alfred Colquitt down the mountainside along the National Road.

To get an idea of what made Hill so nervous, carefully cross the roadway to the north side and follow what is now the Appalachian Trail up the hillside into a clearing. A vista point there gives a clear view to the east of the valley between South Mountain and the Catoctin range on the outskirts of Frederick. In those pre-dawn hours, Hill could see thousands of campfires spilling down the mountain into the valley. This was not a couple of cavalry brigades as Stuart had told him; this was a major federal force. And Hill was getting no more intelligence from Stuart as he had taken his cavalry south to Crampton's Gap.

As Hill awaited more troops that he had ordered up from Boonsboro, he decided to check out the situation a mile south at another passageway through the mountain range, Fox's Gap. Hill was accompanied by his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant James Ratchford, who was wearing a nice blue coat he had taken from a Union officer at the battle of Seven Pines. It is their footsteps we will follow though they were trotting along on horses.

Carefully cross back across Alternate U.S. 40 and stay on the Appalachian Trail. This is essentially the route Hill and Ratchford rode in the pre-dawn darkness. In your walk, you will be sheltered by towering trees. As with most of this area, in 1862 it was far less wooded. Indeed, most of South Mountain had been cleared of trees to feed the fires of iron works at the mouth of Antietam Creek. But that had shut down a decade before and nature had taken its course with trees growing rapidly along with the undergrowth that thrives in second-growth forests. Union troops would complain of the entangled vegetation that impeded their movement up the mountainside.

It is easy to imagine how alone and nervous Hill must have felt as he moved along this crude roadway, known as the Wood Road, in the darkness. Stuart was gone. The bulk of the Confederate army was at Harpers Ferry. The rest of it, along with Lee and Major General James Longstreet, was more than 10 miles away in Hagerstown. And now, as he and Ratchford approached Fox's Gap, they heard the whinnying of horses, the squeak of wagon wheels, and the clank of harnesses. Hill's worst nightmare had come true: Union troops had already taken this pass. Not only his mission, but the entire Maryland Campaign was now in serious jeopardy. Hill and Ratchford turned around to return to Turner's Gap to get some help.

We will do the same. But as long as we are Fox's Gap, let's look around and get ahead of our story. Be careful crossing this roadway as well; it's not as busy as Alternate U.S. 40 but cars have little visibility as they come whizzing across the gap. To your right is a small parking lot. In 1862 this was the site of the cabin owned by a man named Daniel Wise. Much of the battle for Fox's Gap would be fought on his hardscrabble farmland. Steven Stotelmyer's research has placed Wise's well in what is now the mound of earth alongside the roadway. It would become the burial side of more than 50 Confederates killed in this battle.

To your left you will see the imposing monument to Major General Jesse Reno, the 9th Corps commander who would be mortally wounded near this spot at the end of the day's fighting. The monument, placed here in 1899, is the only part of this battlefield owned by the National Park Service. In front of you is a small monument to Confederate Brigadier General Samuel Garland who was also mortally wounded near this spot, but early in the battle. It was placed here by the Sons of Confederate Veterans in 1993. The symmetry of the generals' deaths would continue four days later.

Farther in front of you, past some wayside markers, a pathway leads into woods. It ends in a few hundred yards at a monument to North Carolina troops. Much of the early morning fighting would take place farther to the south, but this gives a good idea of the terrain. Confederates waited behind stone walls as Ohio troops of the 9th Corps came across cleared fields to attack them.

Retrace your steps and as you once again carefully cross the road, realize it is the original Sunken Road of the Maryland Campaign. Later in the day, Confederates would essentially be surrounded in this roadway and suffer fearsome casualties.

Now, head back along the Appalachian Trail toward Turner's Gap just as Hill and Ratchford did after hearing what they thought was Union troops. Somewhere along here, perhaps where there is now a clearing for an Appalachian Trail campground, the two Confederate officers came across a farm cabin belonging to a man named Hartley. By this time, it had gotten light enough that Union artillery had begun firing at the mountainside. The two Confederate officers wanted to know if Hartley, who was accompanied by his young daughters, knew anything about troop positions. As he answered their questions it became clear that, probably due to Ratchford's coat, Hartley had mistaken them for Union officers whose side he supported. As they talked an artillery shell came

through the trees and one of the young girls screamed in terror. As Hill would write later, “Having a little one at home of about the same age, I could not forbear stopping a moment to say a few soothing words to the frightened child before hurrying off the work of death.”¹

When they reached Turner’s Gap, Hill found Garland’s small brigade of about 1,000 troops that had come up from Boonsboro. He sent it to Fox’s Gap, telling Garland it was imperative they take the gap from the Union troops and hold it “at all hazards.” But when Garland got there, he discovered that Hill and Ratchford had heard the horses of Confederates—Colonel Thomas Rosser’s 5th Virginia Cavalry and Captain John Pelham’s horse artillery. Stuart had put them there to hold the gap before he rode south, but had neglected to mention this to Hill, one of Stuart’s many missteps in the buildup to the Battle of South Mountain. The 31-year-old Garland, a rising star in the Confederate army, was depressed by the recent deaths of both his young wife and infant son, and his men were concerned that he might be careless on the battlefield and endanger his life. A few hours later, that would prove to be true. Garland fell as his brigade desperately fought to hold onto Fox’s Gap in the morning hours of September 14, 1862.

1 Daniel H. Hill, “The Battle of South Mountain, or Boonsboro: Fighting for Time at Turner’s and Fox’s Gaps,” in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (New York: The Century Co., 1887), vol. 2, 562.

Institute Interview: Sitting Down with Chris Vincent by Laura Marfut

Chris Vincent was the driving force behind the creation of the Antietam Institute, an idea sprung from a casual conversation in 2019 with fellow Antietam Battlefield Guides in the backyard of Chris' and his wife Amy's historic bed and breakfast. As innkeepers of the Jacob Rohrbach Inn, Chris and Amy had been sharing stories of Antietam, Sharpsburg, and its inhabitants for years through their blogs and summer lecture series. But there was only so much they could do on their own, and at the same time, there was no lack of local historians and others ready to help. That backyard conversation led to more, and the Antietam Institute - a non-profit to offer events, publications, scholarships, and philanthropy to preserve and promote the battlefields of the Maryland Campaign of 1862 - took shape. Chris was elected as its first president and, a year later, was awarded the one-and-only Founders Award by the board of directors to recognize his contributions to every aspect of the start-up. He recently transitioned to the role of the institute's first executive director, running the day-to-day operations.

In addition to his institute duties and running two businesses in Sharpsburg, Chris serves as Chief of the Antietam Battlefield Guides and chairs the Washington County Antietam Battlefield Advisory Board.

LM: After a 24-year career in the United States Army and several more years as a Department of Defense contractor, what led you and your wife, Amy, to Sharpsburg to become innkeepers?

CV: My last assignment brought us to Fort Meade, Maryland, in 2006. Around that time, the Antietam Battlefield Guides started. I had just finished my master's degree in military history and was planning on retiring soon, and I thought, "I want to be a guide," so I inquired how to become a guide. With our two boys still in school, I knew I would not be able to dedicate the time needed to fully prepare to become a guide, but we started coming out to the battlefield for different events and activities. On one of our trips, we were passing by the big Victorian house that sits next to the National Cemetery, and Amy said, "You buy me that house and I'll move out here." Well, fast forward a few more years, and that house is for sale... it was the Inn at Antietam. So that started the gears turning and a complete career change. We spent the next couple of years learning about the hospitality industry, staying at other bed and breakfasts all over, and making different breakfast recipes (just ask our boys how



many times we had breakfast for dinner). Finally, in the fall of 2014, we were ready to make the move, and then the Jacob Rohrbach Inn went on the market—and we bought it! Complete turnaround from focusing on the other property, but it was a win-win for us. The house is a pre-Civil War building with ties to one of the battlefield families. I had passed the guide exam earlier that year, so now we would be living in Sharpsburg as innkeepers.

LM: What is your personal connection to the Battle of Antietam?

CV: My great-great-grandfather was here. Like many Union soldiers, Antietam would be Henry Vincent's first sting of battle, or "baptism of fire." Henry was born on Christmas Day, 1844, in England. In 1852, he immigrated with his family to America, where they settled in Montour County near Danville, Pennsylvania. Henry worked in the local roller mills from the age of ten until he answered President Lincoln's call for 300,000 more volunteers in July 1862. Henry enlisted in the Danville Fencibles, which was comprised of men mostly from the Danville Iron Works. By mid-August, they joined other recruited companies from Wyoming, Bradford, Carbon, Luzerne, and Columbia counties at Camp Curtin near Harrisburg, where they were mustered into service as a 'nine-month regiment' and organized as Company A, 132nd Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers. The 132nd was assigned to Brigadier General Nathan Kimball's 1st Brigade alongside three veteran regiments; the 8th Ohio, 7th West Virginia, and the 14th Indiana. The brigade was part of



Henry Vincent

Major General William H. French's Division of Major General Edwin V. Sumner's 2nd Corps.

At Antietam, the 1st Brigade advanced to the Sunken Road after the other two brigades had failed. As the 132nd Pennsylvania approached

the lane, their commander, Colonel Richard Oakford, was shot and killed, but the regiment held the line with the veteran regiments. Henry's coat sleeve was shot completely off, but he was unscathed. Henry would go on to fight with the regiment at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville before being mustered out in May of 1863. According to the county history, Henry's jacket had five bullet holes in it when he returned home unwounded. Henry Vincent became a lawyer, a businessman, and a member of the Goodrich Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Post 22 and the regimental association. So that's my connection to Antietam and the Civil War.

LM: Prior to the founding of the Antietam Institute, you and Amy launched several initiatives to help educate the public on Antietam and the Maryland Campaign. Tell us about those.

CV: It started out as just blogging about the national parks in the area as part of our marketing campaign to inform our guests about all the history and things to do in the area. There is just so much to see and do within an hour's drive of us, it's amazing. The following year, we wanted to draw midweek guests over the summer to the Inn and build a community relationship, so in 2016, we started the Civil War Lecture Series. The 13-week summer lecture series was a way to bring in Antietam Battlefield Guides, park volunteers, and local historians to discuss what they were passionate about. Right after Memorial Day weekend, we would set up a large white tent in the backyard with some chairs. That first year, we had 20-25 attendees each week. Soon, that number doubled, and some nights, 70-plus people gathered around the yard to listen to outstanding speakers and interesting stories of Antietam and the Maryland Campaign. As part of our lecture series, we held a fundraiser for the Save Historic Antietam Foundation (SHAF). It seemed each year we raised a little more than the previous year, and we're proud to say that after nine years, we've raised over \$4,000 for SHAF. This year, the Antietam Institute has taken these lectures over with great success: we have great attendance; we're filming each talk to reach a wider audience; and we're still raising money for SHAF.

After the first year of our summer lecture series, while researching the Rohrbach family that winter we thought it would be interesting to tell the story of the other families and farms through our blog. We tend to forget about the civilians that are caught up in the events swirling around the homes where for generations families lived, worked, played, and died. One of the most frequently asked questions from our guests is about the

families that lived in and around Sharpsburg. Thus, the “Farmsteads of Antietam” blog series began and before we knew it, each farmstead became a full-length blog post where we explored what the farm looked like, who lived there before the battle, and what the families did during and after the battle. Over the last few years, we’ve written about seventeen farmsteads on and around the Antietam battlefield. You can read about these at: <https://jacob-rohrbach-inn.com/blog/category/farmsteads-at-antietam/>

This research led to creating a specialty tour of the farmsteads that I do, along with another one called “Civil War Sharpsburg.” This tour discusses some of the residents of Sharpsburg and what happened to them during the Civil War. Of course, there are several other nearby farmsteads we’d like to research and write about. Maybe next year we’ll have more time to get back to it.

LM: Where and how did the idea for the Antietam Institute originate?

CV: The idea for the Institute originated in the backyard of the Inn and was really a combination of three ideas. In 2019, several guides started to discuss the idea of putting on a fall seminar. This would focus on a specific topic or part of the battlefield with a guest speaker and battlefield hikes. Next, we wanted to publish a magazine or digest about Antietam and the Maryland Campaign. With all the publications out there about Gettysburg, we felt that Antietam deserved it’s just reward. We knew there were plenty of historians, guides, and Antietam enthusiasts who had something to share. Finally, the third piece came at the beginning of 2020 when Brad Gottfried approached me with the idea of writing a book. Brad had written the *Brigades of Gettysburg*, and was considering writing one for Antietam, but he wanted to include the guides and others as contributors instead of writing it all himself. I thought this was a great idea, and of course, the next month we rolled into the COVID-19 pandemic.

So, while everyone else was learning new hobbies, reading all those books, and working on DIY projects, we started a non-profit organization to embody these ideas. Over a period of a couple of months, we formed the Institute with a set of bylaws, laid out the member levels, benefits, publications, events, and even the logo. I think the logo may have been one of the most difficult pieces to come up with. After several prototypes, we felt this one captured the essence of the Maryland Campaign. The three green mountain peaks represent the battles of South Mountain.

The blue wavy line depicts the Potomac River and Harpers Ferry. The silhouette of the cannon characterizes the battle of Antietam, while the “1862” is for when the campaign occurs. Of course, during this process, Amy was my immediate sounding board for all of these ideas and reviewed all the documents. Once she approved, I’d send it to Brad for a second opinion and by January 2021, we were ready to become official. And as they say, the rest is history.

LM: As its founder and first president, what were your initial goals for the Institute and how did those goals evolve over the four years of holding that office?

CV: I think my initial goal was to get a hundred members. That first year, we had about 150 members. Four years later, over 400 members! Who would have thought Antietam was so popular?

The concept of the Antietam Institute was built on the foundation of inspiring historical research, creating unique opportunities for discovery, and facilitating collaborative learning and knowledge exchange. To accomplish this, we established several pillars that would help us achieve our overall mission of education, scholarship, and philanthropy. That first year was about setting the standard for all the Institute pillars. This included publishing our first member incentive book, the *Brigades of Antietam*, printing the first *Antietam Journal*, conducting the fall conference and spring symposium, and developing a partnership with the George Tyler Moore Center for the Study of the Civil War at Shepherd University. This partnership with the Center led us and its director, Dr. Jim Broomall, to establish an internship and scholarship program. We also developed the Historical Research Center, which is an online repository to collect and share digital copies of historical and contemporary material about the Battle of Antietam and the related Maryland Campaign of 1862.

Over the last couple of years, we have expanded our programming with not only the summer lecture series, but monthly membership hikes and contributor talks. We started to conduct leadership seminars for military and corporate groups. Four years ago, we were not really thinking of having a facility or a place to hang our shingle; now we have the Education Center, which opens up a number of opportunities for research and public outreach.

LM: How does the Institute partner with its Corporate Members and other non-profits, such as the Save Historic Antietam Foundation (SHAF)?

CV: From the beginning, we decided that instead of “sponsors,” we would have annual Corporate Members. We want businesses to be a part of and benefit from the Institute, just like our members. Corporate members receive some of the same benefits and publications, and can attend our events. In turn, we highlight each of them throughout the year on social media, in the journal, and in our event brochures. We also try to partner with them for some of our events and activities: like box lunches from Bonnie's at the Red Byrd, or holding our annual Honor Guard event at Antietam Creek Vineyards. We look forward to working with all our corporate members in some way in the coming years.

We have also partnered with several local non-profit organizations like Save Historic Antietam Foundation, Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association, and the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area. I believe in the old idiom, "A rising tide lifts all boats." All of these organizations and the Institute are promoting some of the same aspects of the Maryland Campaign, so our members benefit from their organizations, too. We have brought these groups and others to our events to set up information tables to make our members aware of their mission and activities and to support some of their efforts in preserving our critical battlefields.

LM: How has your role changed in the transition from the Institute's president to its executive director?

CV: As the executive director of the Institute, I oversee the day-to-day operations and assist our committees in achieving our goals and annual objectives. Part of these daily duties include helping members register for events, purchase publications, or renew their membership. I also maintain the Institute's social media platforms, promoting the Institute, our events and publications, and highlighting membership opportunities. Another one of my primary duties is working with the programs committee to coordinate and execute outstanding programs and events for our members. Of course, this includes the symposium and conference, but this year we expanded our programming by assuming the Summer Lecture Series. This is much like a Civil War Roundtable compacted into three months, with leading historians and authors speaking each week to a crowd of 40 to 50 people. The lecture series has been a great recruiting tool for the Institute, drawing in a new member every week. As many of our members know, we now have an Education Center located in the middle of Sharpsburg. Right now, we're open to the

public the first Saturday of each month from 1:00 to 3:00 pm to provide information about the Institute and to host programs.

LM: Where do you see the Institute going in the future?

CV: I see the Institute moving in a couple of areas in the future. First, one of Jim Rosebrock's (Institute president) initiatives is to focus on the next generation of historians – getting our younger generation involved and interested in history. We will be looking at several projects and programs with students at Sharpsburg Elementary School, Boonsboro High School, Shepherd University, and others. These could include sponsoring a battlefield tour, an all-day program, maybe a writing contest, or even publishing an article. As we continue to develop our leadership seminar program, we will also focus on developing a teacher workshop. This would cover some critical learning objectives like Slavery and Emancipation, Antietam and Memory, a Soldier's Story using first-hand accounts of soldiers, and understanding the social and economic hardships on the civilian community.

An area I would like to see expand in the future is the Historical Research Center (HRC). This can become a great resource for future scholars and researchers. Currently, we only have 722 items in the HRC, but this can grow exponentially with help from our members. If you have a photograph of an ancestor who was here during the Maryland Campaign, or a letter, diary, or other artifact relating to the battle of Antietam, we want to post it on the HRC. This collaborative digital repository is not there for us, but for future generations to learn and write about Antietam and the Maryland Campaign. We don't want the physical item, just a digital scan or photo so that we can document the item to use in the study of Antietam.

I believe the future is very promising for the Antietam Institute. Membership continues to grow, more and more members are writing articles for the journal, authors are coming to the Antietam Institute Press to publish their works, and there is never a shortage of topics and themes for our programs. I am excited to think where we will be in another four years.

Antietam: Then and Now

by Chris Vincent

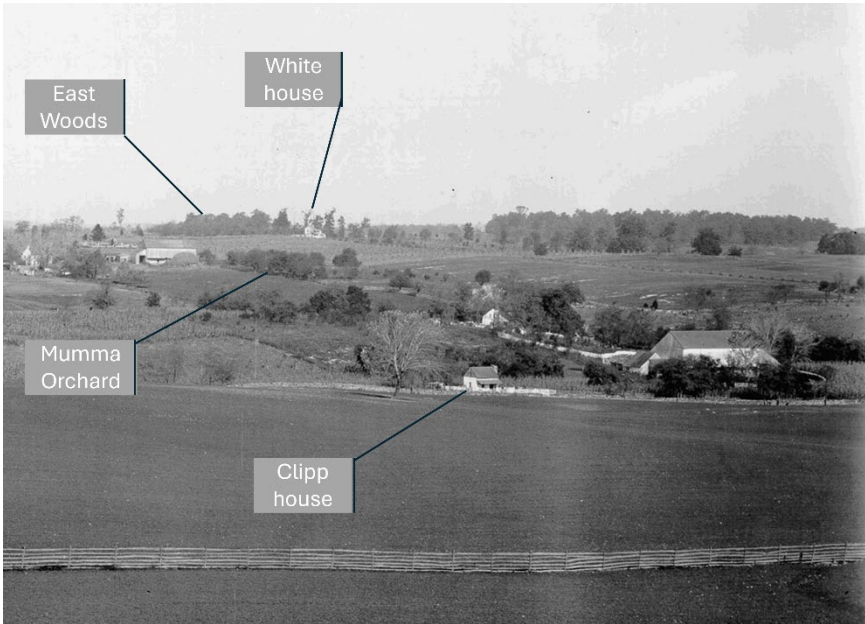
In 1906, Oliver T. Reilly, the first Antietam Battlefield Guide, published a souvenir guidebook called *The Battlefield of Antietam*. Along with unique stories and anecdotes in his book, O. T. Reilly captured some outstanding views of the battlefield only 40-plus years after the battle.¹ These photos not only show how the landscape was but begin to show the signs of change with the monuments, War Department additions, and the new houses. One of the interesting panoramic views Reilly provides is from the Observation Tower looking toward the north. In the forefront, we see one of the tenant houses on the Roulette farm. The house was built around 1830, and it is believed that either Hiram O. Clipp or Jacob Myers lived there at the time of the battle. Both were tenants of William Roulette.² Around the house there is a white picket fence with a small corn field surrounding it. The house was removed sometime before 1930, as it does not appear in the United States Army aerial photographs taken of the battlefield. Coming down the Roulette Lane is a combination of fencing leading to the Roulette barn, where several new agricultural buildings can be seen.³

Beyond the Roulette farm, the rebuilt Mumma farm can be seen with several new outbuildings. A white fence appears to be enclosing the family cemetery and next to the barn and the large haystack is the Mumma orchard. In the distance, the East Woods stretches across the background with a prominent “modern” feature, the white-sided house that sits along the Smoketown Road. This structure, built a few years before the photograph was taken, remains as a marker of the southern edge of the East Woods.

1 Oliver T. Reilly, *The Battlefield of Antietam* (Hagerstown Bookbinding & Printing Co., 1906), 23.

2 Steven Cowie, *When Hell Came to Sharpsburg: The Battle of Antietam and Its Impact on the Civilians Who Called It Home* (Savas Beatie. 2022), 176.

3 National Park Service, *Roulette Farmstead Cultural Landscape Inventory*, (Government Printing Office, 2004), 51, 63, 64.



*View from the Observation Tower towards the Roulette Farmstead, circa 1906.
Clipp House is visible to left of bank barn. (The Battlefield of Antietam)*



*View of the Roulette Farmstead from the Observation Tower showing strip
cropping. (NPS/Antietam National Battlefield)*

Book Review

Stahl, Joseph, and Matthew Borders. *Faces of Union Soldiers at South Mountain & Harpers Ferry*. 2021 History Press, Maps, photos, endnotes, index, 188 pages.

ISBN: 9781467147439. www.historypress.com. \$21.99.

Review by John Michael Priest

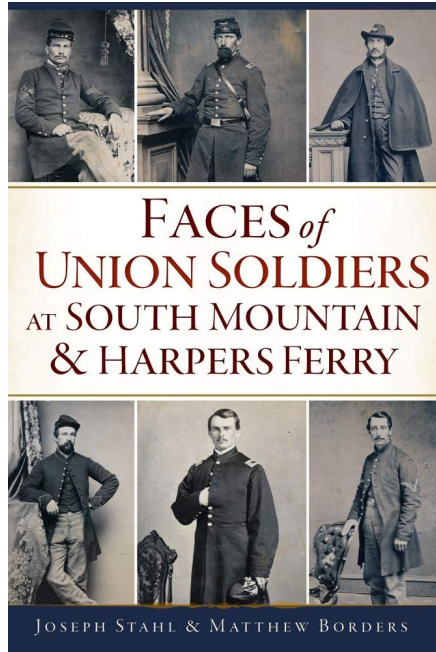
Stahl and Borders have “... humanized 30 individuals who saw action in the crucial actions at Harpers Ferry and the three gaps at South Mountain.”

In 2019, Joseph Stahl and Matthew Borders published *Faces of Union Soldiers at Antietam*, then followed other campaigns as well. Two years later, the authors continued their look at the Maryland Campaign with this book. Mr. Stahl, a renowned collector of soldiers’ *cartes-de-visite* and of Civil War identification discs and Mr. Borders, recipient of the Save Historic Antietam Foundation’s Dr. Joseph Harsh Award, and an excellent historian and uniform expert, have humanized 30 individuals who saw action in the crucial actions at Harpers Ferry and the three gaps at South Mountain.

A brief personal biography and unit history accompany each photograph.

The biographies in *Faces of Union Soldiers at South Mountain & Harpers Ferry* emphasize the tragedy and hardships of war. Quite a number of the men, like John G. Rohm (Company C, 12th Pennsylvania Reserves) survived South Mountain only to get wounded at Antietam, three days later. He finished the war as a breveted first lieutenant. He died on July 4, 1867 at the age of 27, leaving a widow behind to collect his pension. Captain Patrick W. Bradley (Company H, 105th New York), was present at South Mountain and wounded in the Cornfield at Antietam. He lived to be 48. He died on October 10, 1880, place of burial unknown.

There is so much to glean from this book. Officers’ coats often had three cuff buttons. Not all slouch hats were of the Hardee design. The Pennsylvania Reserves had two regimental designations. The one they usually identified with was their Pennsylvania Reserve number, which they received before mustering onto Federal service, for instance the 6th Pennsylvania Reserves. Once they joined the Federal army, they added



twenty-nine to that number and became the 35th Pennsylvania Infantry, which they traditionally did not reference during or after the war.

Ideal for the traveler or the individual who has to temporarily put reading aside to attend to something else, the reader can pick up this book and resume without having to worry about having forgotten what preceded. I personally intend to go through it and take copious notes of the myriad details and tidbits which will enhance my tours at Antietam and South Mountain battlefields.

Contributor Biographies

Steven R. Stotelmyer is a native of Hagerstown, Maryland. He first visited Antietam National Battlefield as a child picnicking with his family in the Philadelphia Brigade Park. He has been fascinated with Antietam ever since. After serving in the U.S. Navy, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Frostburg State College and a Master of Arts from Hood College in Frederick. Mr. Stotelmyer was employed as a teacher in Washington County. The high point of the school year in the spring for his students was the all-day field trip to Antietam. After ten years teaching Steve made a career change into surveying, and civil engineering, in Frederick County. His daily commute took him over the South Mountain Battlefield. This travel, and the 25 years in “Fredericktowne” expanded his curiosity into the Maryland Campaign. He returned to Washington County and was employed by county government in the Public Works Department. Steve retired in 2014 and has since been pursuing his lifetime avocation at Antietam. In 1989 Stotelmyer was a founding member of the Central Maryland Heritage League, a non-profit land trust which helped preserve some of the South Mountain Battlefield. During his tenure with CMHL he discovered significant information regarding the Battle of South Mountain and the Legend of Wise’s Well. This led to the publication of *The Bivouacs of the Dead: The Story of Those Who Died at Antietam and South Mountain* (Toomey Press, 1992). In 2019 Stotelmyer authored *Too Useful to Sacrifice, Reconsidering George B. McClellan’s Generalship in the Maryland Campaign from South Mountain to Antietam*. (Savas Beatie, 2019). Currently, Steve is a National Park Service Volunteer as well as a NPS Certified Antietam and South Mountain Battlefield Tour Guide. His most recent book, *From Frederick to Sharpsburg: People, Places, and Events of the Maryland Campaign Before Antietam*, was published by the Antietam Institute.

Olin D. Zimmert

Allen C. Guelzo

John Schildt was writing Civil War articles for local newspapers while still in high school. His *September Echoes*, published in 1960, was the first Civil War book on Antietam in 80 years. Since then, he has written

32 books and hundreds of articles, given thousands of tours, talks, and lectures, and pioneered public education in Civil War field medicine. He is a pastor, Antietam Battlefield Guide, and founding member of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, Save Historic Antietam Foundation, and the Antietam Institute. Along with *September Echoes*, his books include *Drums Along the Antietam*, *Roads from Gettysburg*, *These Honored Dead*, *Islands of Mercy*, *Hunter Holmes McGuire*, *Stonewall Day by Day*, and *Roads to Antietam*.

Darin Wipperman's first two books on the Civil War discussed the histories of the 1st and 9th Corps. His most recent book, *Thunderbolt to the Rebels: The United States Sharpshooters in the Civil War*, was released in February 2025. Darin completed nearly 17 years of service in the federal government, then moved to northern New Hampshire, where he was a reporter and editor for weekly newspapers. Continuing his lifetime of studying the Civil War, Darin's fourth book on the conflict is currently entitled, *A Dangerous Man: Major General Joseph Hooker and the Civil War*. Darin plans to complete his manuscript on "Fighting Joe" by the end of 2025.

Joseph Stahl retired from the Institute for Defense Analyses. He is active in the Civil War community and has authored more than two dozen articles. He has coauthored five books, including most recently *Faces of Union Soldiers at Culp's Hill: Gettysburg's Critical Defense*.

Matthew Borders is a graduate of Michigan State and Eastern Michigan University. Matthew Borders holds a BA in United States History and an MS in Historic Preservation. He briefly taught before accepting a position with the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program. He is a certified battlefield guide for Antietam National Battlefield and Harpers Ferry National Historic Site and president of the Frederick County Civil War Round Table. A founding member of the Antietam Institute, currently Matthew is a Park Ranger with the National Park Service. He, along with fellow guide, Joe Stahl, has published multiple books in their *Faces of Union Soldiers* series.

Michael Hill spent 35 years as a reporter and editor at the *Baltimore Evening Sun* and *Sun*, including four years as a foreign correspondent in Africa where he covered the election of Nelson Mandela, the Rwandan

genocide and a wide variety of other stories. A native of Atlanta, where he grew up on the battlefield of Peachtree Creek, he came to Baltimore to attend the Johns Hopkins University and never left. He has been a certified Antietam Battlefield Guide since 2021.

Laura Marfut is a retired United States Army colonel with master's degrees in International Relations and Education, and a Master of Strategic Studies degree from the United States Army War College. She has been a Certified Antietam Battlefield Guide since 2019.

Chris Vincent is Executive Director of the Antietam Institute and Chief Guide of the Antietam Battlefield Guides. Chris is a 24-year veteran of the United States Army, where he took part in combat operations in Desert Storm and Kosovo. His ancestor fought with the 132nd Pennsylvania at Antietam. He holds a master's in military history from American Military University. Chris owns and operates the historic Jacob Rohrbach Inn.

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The Antietam Institute was established in 2021 as a member-based, educational, and philanthropic 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Institute educates the public on the central role of the Maryland Campaign of 1862 and Battle of Antietam as a major turning point of the Civil War that directly resulted in the issuance of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Antietam Institute sponsored conferences, symposiums, publications, and leadership forums facilitate collaborative learning and knowledge exchange, create unique opportunities for discovery and inspire further historical research.

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