

GENERAL IN THE SHADOW

THESIS

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by

Sidney A. Miller, B.G.S., M.S., M.Acy.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Gettysburg! Nearly everyone has heard of Gettysburg; the town where a three-day battle between the Union and Confederate armies took place. This battle which took place on July 1 to 3, 1863 is often considered as “the” pivotal battle of the war and as such attracted the attention of both amateur and professional historians. As a result hundreds of histories of the battle have been written. It has been dissected, analyzed, fought and re-fought in many books, journals, and Civil War magazines. An amateur general can even re-fight the battle on his computer. Soon after the battle, historians began writing about it. One of the earliest historians to gather material was Colonel John Badger Bachelder’s whose four volumes, comprised of 2,550 pages accompanied by 58 maps was published in 1886.<sup>1</sup> Other historians have published monographs on the general history of the battle; others have written in-depth analysis of the actions of each general, each unit participating in the battle and of events that preceded and followed the battle. Even the ghosts of Gettysburg have amanuensis. The result is hundreds of volumes with many historians battling other historians’ interpretation. For many historians and partisans, this was the battle that was the turning point in the war; but that too, is disputed.<sup>2</sup> Many aficionados can recite the events of the three-day battle such as the fighting that took place on Seminary Ridge, or the defense of Little Round Top or Picketts’ Charge. Many in the general public can recall something about the dedication

of the battlefield and in spite of what Lincoln said about not remembering, his “Gettysburg Address” is well remembered. Some partisans can recall details about the generals: Meade, Lee, Reynolds, Longstreet, Buford, and Pickett. J.E.B. Stuart, who nearly missed the battle, was there and George A. Custer, who disobeyed General Kilpatrick’s orders, was there to counter Stuart.<sup>3</sup> General G. K. Warren was there too, but few tourists of the battlefield know who he was; yet, his statue stands on the summit of Little Round Top, looking west, ever vigilant, observing the battle field, and the cemetery. His statue is there because for many years following the battle, he was considered to be the officer who saved the Union’s left on the second day. The second day, mostly remembered for the Battle of Little Round Top but not for General Warren’s actions, nor for Colonel Vincent’s actions, but for Colonel Chamberlain’s and the bayonet charge of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Volunteer Regiment.

Popular history surely remembers Colonel Chamberlain and the bayonet charge. Recently, many individuals have learned their history from “The Civil War,” an epic television documentary series on public television. However, it was Michael Shaara’s Pulitzer Prize winning book, *The Killer Angels*, which once again dramatized and reinforced Chamberlain’s version of the defense of Little Round Top and refurbished the Chamberlain legend. When Ted Turner made the book into a spectacular movie *Gettysburg*, the heroic legend was well established. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, the college professor turned warrior, was a true American hero. Perhaps, better known today than in his own lifetime, he is remembered today precisely as he wanted to be remembered during his own lifetime.<sup>4</sup> During his lifetime, wrote William Marvel, “Chamberlain proved as magnificent a soldier as he was a literary stylist, but while he

was courageous and coolheaded he also tended to wrap life's little dramas in ribbons of romantic imagery in which he, himself, was somehow entwined.”<sup>5</sup> Responding to criticism by other veterans, both Union and Confederate, during his lifetime, Chamberlain tried to dismiss the inconsistencies and their importance, but when the discrepancies in the tales would not go away, he tried to ignore them. When they did not go away he claimed, “all of them true in their time and place, and so far as each actor is concerned.” Thus, arguing from the premise of truth in the eye of the beholder, or as other military historians suggest in battle, each individual sees only his own little world.

Although, he suggested that truth was in the eye of the beholder, Chamberlain held out that his version of the truth was more true than any other. One early dispute was with Colonel William C. Oates who commanded the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama Regiment on July 2, 1863. In 1902, Oates sought to erect a monument to his regiment. To place a monument on the battlefield, permission had to be obtained from the three park commissioners. Oates applied and the commissioners in turn asked Chamberlain to comment on Oates's description of the fight. Chamberlain replied that Oates's description of the battle differed ‘widely from the well established record of facts in the case.’ Oates complained to William M. Robbins, the Southern member of the three-man commission, and remarked that his (Chamberlain) memory is at fault in some respects. Worse, wrote Oates, was Chamberlain's egotism about the battle.

Chamberlain's egotism touched off a second dispute over the battle. The dispute, this time, was with a former member of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, Captain Ellis Spear. Spear was acting major on the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine's left that day and claimed that he never heard any orders to fix bayonets, or to charge. In a letter to Colonel John B. Bachelder, Ellis suggested

that it was the forward movement of Company K that initiated the charge. He wrote that he was aware that, “[t]his was the story, but I believe not wholly in accordance with the fact as related by Gen. Chamberlain, and of course what Gen. Chamberlain says must be taken as history.”<sup>6</sup> Over the years, Ellis continued to defend the claim that it was the men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine that initiated the charge.<sup>7</sup> In a letter to the editor of a Brunswick, Maine paper, Spear gives credit to the men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine who fought the battle and carried the guns. He wrote, “The officer to whom the greatest credit is due was Strong Vincent, colonel of the Eighty-third Pennsylvania, and commanding the brigade.”<sup>8</sup> In a letter to Bishop Bouget Vincent, brother of Strong Vincent, Ellis wrote, “I had some special feeling in the matter, since it has been a grief to me that the credit of that fight has been unjustly taken by another officer. That other officer was the Colonel of my regiment, who is still living, a man of facile pen and tongue. It has also seemed to me a robbery of Vincent when the avenue at that point in the field was called ‘Chamberlain Avenue’ when it should have been called ‘Vincent Avenue.’”<sup>9</sup> However, it appeared that Chamberlain’s book *The Passing of the Armies*, published posthumously, that riled Spear the most. In a letter to Oliver W. Norton, he called it a “tissue of lies.” Also, within this letter he mentioned Chamberlain’s *Cosmopolitan Magazine* article about the Battle of Fredericksburg.

Perhaps it was ironic that the success of *Killer Angles* and *Gettysburg* encouraged Jeff Shaara to write and Ted Turner to film *Gods and Generals*. These works are prequels to their earlier works. In the book and film, the narrative leads to the Battle of Fredericksburg. Chamberlain, too, wrote of the Battle of Fredericksburg that was published in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, January 1913. In his version, he experiences

many adventures from crossing a bridge under fire, charging up Marye's Heights, and surviving enfilade cannon fire. That was only during the day, that night he patrolled so close to the enemy line that he had to talk his way out of capture; piled up bodies to make a wind break, and used the coats of the dead for cover. After spending a full day and night on the field of battle, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine remained one more day, crouching behind a barricade of bodies and under his and Colonel Ames direction, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine withdrew but not before burying their dead and removing their wounded. Ellis could not recognize the battle from Chamberlain's description and set out to set the record straight. He wrote *My Story of Fredericksburg and Comments Thereon By One Who was There* in which he challenged nearly every Chamberlain assertion. He sent a copy to Colonel Ames and Colonel Alexander and offered to send a copy to Oliver Norton. In a letter to Norton, Spear mentioned a sister and son of Chamberlain and perhaps he was considerate of their feeling in not publishing his narrative. The story was published in 1989 by his grandson, Abbott Spear. Both General Ames and Oliver Norton encouraged Spear to write his comments on Chamberlain's book *The Passing of the Armies*.

In *The Passing of the Armies*, Chamberlain took credit for being in command of the "surrender ceremony" and of rendering a salute; but the tale of the salute was too touching to pass, and General John B. Gordon included it in his reconstructed version of events in his book *Reminiscences of the Civil War*.<sup>10</sup> William Marvel claimed that neither Chamberlain nor Gordon, "were men to leave romantic details lying idle for so long." Even today Chamberlain stands tall in Civil War myth and legend and casts a broad shadow. Thus, one might ask, who is this officer that mustered in as a captain and was awarded the rank of Brevet Brigadier General at the end? General Spear and

General Chamberlain were similar in many aspects. Both came from Maine, both went to Bowdoin College, both became professors, and both mustered into the army after the initial enthusiasm had passed, but they were different in several important aspects. Chamberlain mustered in with a field grade, Lieutenant Colonel; Spear mustered in with the rank of Captain. Because of the difference in rank, Spear was much closer to the common soldier. He recruited his company and later returned to Maine on recruiting duty. He shared their experiences, experienced their dangers, nursed them in sickness, and mourned their deaths whether from sickness or combat. Ellis Spear was a realist and was there to get the job done. Chamberlain was a romantic, battle was martial music, men marching with flags flying, battle was glorious combat, he was a romantic.<sup>11</sup> The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was the initial unit for the military careers for both men. Joshua Chamberlain began as the second in command, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Ellis Spear was the Captain commanding Company G. It is through the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine and its participation in the campaigns and battles of the Civil War, that a historian can trace the military careers of both men. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to research the background and follow the military career of General Spear, the general in the shadow.

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<sup>1</sup> Ladd, David L. and Audrey J., eds. *The Bachelder Papers, Gettysburg in Their Own Words*. Vol. 1, January 5, 1863 to July 27, 1880 by John B. Bachelder. (Dayton: Morningside House, Inc., 1994), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen W. Sears, "Gettysburg in Retrospect," *MHQ*, 15 (Summer 2003), 36-45.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel J. Martin, *Kill-Cavalry: The Life of Union General Hugh Judson Kilpatrick*, (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2000), 113.

<sup>4</sup> Glenn LaFantasie, "Joshua Chamberlain and the American Dream," in *The Gettysburg Nobody Knows*, ed. Gabor S. Boritt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 31-55.

<sup>5</sup> William Marvel, *A Place Called Appomattox*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 260.

<sup>6</sup> Letter Spear to Bachelder, November 15, 1892, John Bachelder Papers, Gettysburg National Military Park.

<sup>7</sup> Spear in letter to the editor, *The National Tribune*. The copy that I have is from the Pejepscot Historical Society's archives and is not dated but content indicates that it was written in 1913.

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<sup>8</sup> Spear in letter to the editor, Brunswick, Maine newspaper, June 24, 1913, Pejepsot Historical society's archives; Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Michigan. In a letter to O. W. Norton, refers to an article printed in the *Washington Post*, June 22, 1913 in which he gave credit to Colonel Vincent.

<sup>9</sup> Spear letter to Bishop Vincent, July 5, 1913, Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Michigan.

<sup>10</sup> John B. Gordon, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 444-45; Ralph Lowell Eckert, *John Brown Gordon: soldier, Southerner, American*, (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 338-44.

<sup>11</sup> Gary K. Leak, "Joshua Chamberlain: A Psychological Portrait." In *Joshua Chamberlain: The Soldier and the Man*, (Conshohocken, PA: Combined Publishing, 1999), 295.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE BEGINNING

The Civil War had a significant impact not only on the nation but also on as the men who fought it. For Ellis, volunteering for military service was doing his duty. In leading his company, his regiment, and his brigade; he was doing his duty. Doing his duty also included setting the record straight and awarding honor and credit to those he believed had earned it. War was not romantic for Ellis; war was episodes of cold, hunger, thirst, fatigue, disease and death. Thus to know Ellis, one must know something of his environment, his ancestors, and his military career.

Using the records and archives of the town of Warren, the county of Sagadahoc, and the state of Maine, Cyrus Easton compiled the *Annals of the Town of Warren Maine*. Twenty-six years later in 1877, his daughter Emily published an updated and revised edition. In the preface Captain Arthur Spear and General Ellis Spear are acknowledged for their contributions to the history. His contribution indicates that Ellis possessed knowledge of the region's history and his ancestor's contributions to its development. This knowledge and awareness influenced his character and personality and created a desire to set forth the truth that posterity is entitled to have.<sup>1</sup>

Located south-west of Augusta, north-east of Portland and Bristol, the area of St. George's River was known but ignored for nearly a hundred years. Several half-hearted attempts were made to settle the area and a fortified trading post was built on the river.

In 1675, the area was abandoned when the Indian tribes under the leadership of Metacomet, known to the settlers as King Philip, drove the traders and the few settlers out of the area. Although on the frontier, world events had a major impact on the area. Settlement was prohibited or discouraged. The abdication of James II in 1688, the accession of William and Mary and the beginning of King Williams's War, between England and France, and the renewed Indian assaults all made the area a "no man's land" between England and France. The lack of law and authority attracted pirates or buccaneers. When their leaders, Kidd and Bradish, were captured and sent to England and executed, numerous stories of hidden treasures, guarded by ghosts of murdered slaves drew treasure seekers. The signing of the Treaty of Utrecht, March 30, 1713, awarded Great Britain undisputed control of the area and a subsequent peace treaty with the Indians brought stability to the region. Tentative resettlement did not begin until about 1719-20 when steps were taken to verify and rectify deeds and patents. A setback occurred in 1721, when the Indians, with French encouragement, again attacked settlers and the fort on St. George's River. The siege of the fort lasted over thirty days and was not relieved until reinforcements arrived. Finally, in 1726, negotiations ended the fourth Indian war. The treaty that ended the conflict drew the territory's eastern boundary near St. George's fort. Trading commenced between the Indians and the English renewed their efforts to settle the area.

In 1733, Mr. Samuel Waldo received a patent to land, at the head of the tide waters, on both sides of the St. George River. The original patent was called the Muscongus patent but it was soon known as the Waldo patent. This was wild, unsettled land and with the help of Captain Gyles, who acted as interpreter, Waldo held a conference with

the Penobscot or Tarratine Indians seeking to gain their consent for a settlement. An additional attraction of the area was the discovery that the limestone near the St. George River was good for making lime, and he established a limekiln. The industry grew over the years producing a considerable quantity of lime for the Boston market. It was shipped in used molasses hogsheads because iron hoops were not available for making casks in the area. Offering liberal terms, he attracted numerous settlers to the area. Originally descended from Scotland, they came from Northern Ireland, were Protestants, and history has named them Scotch-Irish. The land and the limekiln attracted Robert Spear, who had been deputed by his associates in Boston to select a suitable place to settle.

Robert Spear was born in Londonderry, Ireland in 1714, a descendant from Scottish families who had immigrated to Ireland in an earlier period. He left Londonderry with his parents with the idea of joining two brothers in Virginia. For some unknown reason, the destination was changed to Boston. Boston was a temporary home while he and the other members of the party that had left Londonderry searched for a suitable place to settle permanently. He and six other members formed a committee which found the St. George's Settlement of Massachusetts advantageous and settled there in 1735. Robert and the others obtained from Mr. Waldo, tracts of land of about 100 acres; forty rods wide on the river and that extended back from the river until the number of acres were completed. Robert Spear settled on tract 21, and married Margaret McLean in 1735; daughter of Alexander McLean, one of the members of the Londonderry emigrants and a member of the search committee.<sup>2</sup> Their first son, John, was born in 1738, grew up on the farm, but left the St. George's Settlement to become a ship's captain.

The commercial aspects of St. George's Settlement attracted many settlers. The limekilns and gristmill provided employment for mechanics, carpenters, millwrights, and lumbermen. The kilns required wood to burn and the timber in the area produced both fire wood and wood to make casks to transport the lime. The war, known as King George's War (also known as War of the Austrian Succession) disrupted the community. News of the declaration of war reached the settlement in March 1744. Taking advantage of early communication and better preparedness, the French and their Indian allies (Mohawks and St. Johns) commenced the war in Nova Scotia by attacking Canseau and Annapolia. A great effort was made to preserve peace with the eastern Indians (Penobscot Indians), who were historical allies of the St. Johns. So great was the gloom that hung over the settlement, that all deserted their farms. Robert Spear and several other families thought it more prudent to remove from the frontier and sought refuge at Boston. Others enlisted in the militia. The fort at St. George's had been allowed to fall into disrepair but with this new threat it was rebuilt and the garrison was increased to a total of forty men in anticipation of Indians attacks. The Penobscot felt a strong sympathy with their old allies; and having little to lose and resenting the continued English encroachment on their land, joined with the other tribes and their French allies in attacking the English settlements. The first attack occurred in July. Having no success in attacking the fort at St. George, they burnt several building in the vicinity and killed a great number of the cattle. The surrounding communities were attacked resulting in death and destruction through the region. A second attempt to take the fort was made in September. This time, the attackers, it was assumed that the party was made up of both French and Indians, attempted to tunnel from the river under the fort and blow it up. The

recent heavy rains had saturated the soil and their tunnel collapsed. By 1745, the war turned in favor of the English and an expedition against Louisburg, the Gibraltar of America, was organized. Its capture was celebrated with bonfires and the ringing of bells; however, the men who were part of the force that captured Louisburg were upset when that military installation was returned to France by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.

The signing of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle returned life to normal. However, not all of the men returned to their land, Robert Spear being one of them.<sup>3</sup> He sold his lot to John Calderwood. Robert Spear acquired a 100-acre farm near Boston. In the *Annals of Warren*, the Spear family name is not mentioned during the French and Indian War so, it is assumed that if the family participated, in any way, it was in relation to Boston. Eaton reported that tradition has it that Robert participated in the Battle of Bunker Hill but did not live to see the colonies declare their independence, dying in March 1776.

John Spear, Robert's son, married Agnes Lamb in 1762; and their first son, whom they named Robert, was born October 26, 1762; John, with his wife and son, returned to Warren about 1763 and bought back the original lot from Thomas, the son of John Calderwood.<sup>4</sup> Thomas, their second son, was born July 2, 1765. Thomas, the grandfather of Ellis, married Theodosia Vinal on February 2, 1788. The couple had ten children. James M. Spear, the ninth child and Ellis's father, was born on November 28, 1806.

John's uncle, Hugh McLean, tried to enlist his participation in the building of mills on the river. John turned the offer down and continued to farm. The sawmill appears to have been successful as the *Annals* began to list framed houses being built in the area. The outbreak of war in 1776 exerted great pressure on the area for men and finances.

Several companies were formed in the area, but John Spear is not named on any of the rosters provided by Eaton. In November 1776, the area known as Upper town on St. George's petitioned the state for permission to incorporate as a town. Permission was granted and the town was named after Dr. Joseph Warren, who had been killed at Bunker Hill. The first annual meeting of the town of Warren was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1777 and Boice Cooper and John Spear were selected as fence viewers.<sup>5</sup> In 1779, Maine, with the concurrence of Congress, organized a major military operation with the purpose to dislodge the privateers and the occasional British vessel from the eastern harbors and shelters in which they controlled the coast between New York and Halifax. Nearly 600 men were drafted, but Eaton's list does not include the name of John Spear. The operation was unsuccessful. The defeat drew British attention to the area and the British navy patrolled the coast, enforcing an embargo. The militia was frequently called out to defend the area against small parties of British marines and privateers. Warren's annual town meeting of 1779 was held and elected John Spear a member of the Committee of Safety. In this capacity, he was directly responsible for the apprehension of Captain John Long. Long, a notorious British sympathizer and privateer was discovered in Warren. The townspeople surrounded him. When they tried to arrest him; he pulled a knife. John Spear seized him, held him until others could assist with the arrest.

The arrest of Captain Long was the high light of the war for the area. The war continued elsewhere. A national Thanksgiving was observed on December 13, 1781 in commemoration of the surrender of Lord Cornwallis and his army at Yorktown. With the signing of the provisional articles of peace on November 30, 1782, the process of returning to normalcy began for the region.

Peace found the country impoverished with the people in debt. Contributing to the problem was the lack of specie and the declining value of the paper currency. John and his sons, perhaps noting the success of his uncle's sawmill, built a sawmill on the outlet of West Pond. Using the lumber produced by the sawmill, Captain Spear, elected Captain of the local militia company, commenced shipbuilding and built the schooner *Industry*. The business appeared successful as John Spear was listed as a "first class tax payer." Shipbuilding was confined to sloops and schooners, but in 1791, he and Thomas Starrett began the construction of the brig, *Speedwell*. Five years later, Robert, the eldest of the ten sons, built a frame house and took over operation of the sawmill. In 1798, the schooner, *Ten Brothers*, was built for the Spears. A major set back occurred a year later when a French privateer captured the brig *Speedwell*. Prosperity was spotty in the region but it continued to grow until December 22, 1807 when President Jefferson's embargo completely prostrated the commerce of the country.

Shipbuilding declined with the decline of commerce but Thomas Spear built and launched the *General Knox* on September 15, 1810, for J. Paine. Life continued in the settlement. Eaton recorded the deaths of several children, one of which, was the death of the one year old child of Isaac Spear. A nine-year-old son of a neighbor drowned and a barn was struck by lightning and burned. In the autumn of 1811, a comet, perhaps a harbinger for the War of 1812, appeared in the north-northwestern part of the sky.

The embargo and the War of 1812 severely impacted the commerce. Many of the poorer classes, who were thrown out of work, enlisted in the army. Others enlisted as volunteers to act as "coast guards." Warren formed a militia to protect itself and the surrounding area. On the militia rolls are the names of the brothers Samuel, Isaac, and

Alexander Spear. A fourth brother's name, David, appeared on a roll of a militia company that was called out in response to a threat by a British ship at Camden in November, 1814. The threatening brig left the Camden area and the militia was dismissed. In addition to the threat of capture by British cruisers, vessels faced the usual hazards of the sea, deterioration from exposure to the weather, and the threat of a raid in which the vessels would be captured or burnt. One enterprising individual, Mr. Counce, took his new brig, *Alexander*, to Oyster River, where he sunk and kept her submerged till the end of the war. News of the Treat of Ghent, ending the war, reached the area on February 14, 1815.

With peace, life in the area attempted to return to normal; however, the granting of statehood to Maine in 1820 stimulated an interest in politics. A governor and two senators were elected along with the establishment of a state capital and new laws. Peace and statehood failed to stimulate commerce at Warren and the area gradually declined because of the more favorable position of Thomaston.

Thomaston, in addition to producing lime, had the advantage of newly constructed roads and bridges and could handle larger vessels. Most cargoes were hay, lime, wood, lumber, and other locally produced products. Nevertheless, it was the area woods that provided the kiln wood, lumber, ship planks, and barrel staves in which Ellis hunted and gained forest skills that served him well in the war. Eaton provides no indication of how extensive the woods were but they must have been greatly thinned because of the many years of timber cutting for heating and cooking, wood for the limekilns, and shipbuilding. The beaver had disappeared about 1785, and by 1791, a law was passed to protect the more valuable wild animals. Hunting was restricted to proper seasons. A stray seal was

killed near Thomas Spear's ship yard in 1826, a stray bear shot in 1828, and the last deer killed near Warren was shot March 1829.

In 1830, James, the ninth son, married Mary Cushman September 12, 1830 and Ellis was born October 15, 1834, the third child of seven. He had three sisters, Hannah and Pauline, who were older and Emily the next child after Ellis. His brothers were Daniel, Jason and Guilford, the last born in 1842. The family considered Ellis quite gifted and, thirty acres of the family farm were sold to pay his tuition to the Warren Academy and Bowdoin College.<sup>6</sup>

Bowdoin College entrance requirements were challenging, requiring knowledge of both Latin and Greek. Passing the entrance requirements, Ellis Spear entered Bowdoin College in 1854. One of his professors at Bowdoin was Joshua Chamberlain, his future regimental commander, and they established a relationship that was to influence him the remainder of his life. He graduated in 1858 with an AB degree and obtained a teaching position at Wiscasset, Maine. While teaching at Wiscasset he began studying law; however, events occurred which tore the nation apart and affected millions of lives. The election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, the attack on Fort Sumter in 1861, and the call for 75,000 troops changed the course of history.

The election of Abraham Lincoln became the excuse for seven slave states to secede from the union. President Buchanan did nothing, leaving the problem to his successor. Shortly after being sworn in as President in which he swore to protect the properties of the United States, Lincoln learned of the problem of dwindling supplies at Fort Sumter, a federal fort guarding the approaches to Charleston's harbor.<sup>7</sup> The new President held a cabinet meeting. His cabinet, along with Commanding General Scott, could not agree on

a course of action. One member wanted to resupply; others wanted to surrender the fort as a token of peace. In a bid for power, Secretary of State Seward was attempting to negotiate with Virginia for surrender of the fort in exchange for Virginia remaining in the Union. The negotiations with Virginia yielded no satisfactory results, and in desperation, Seward proposed starting a war with Spain and France in an attempt to unite the cabinet and nation. Lincoln soon reached the decision that resupply was the only course of action possible. He persuaded his cabinet that resupply was the best option and sent the governor of South Carolina a letter in which he stated the intent to re-provision, not reinforce, the garrison. Despite the claims to the contrary, resupply was interpreted as an act of war by the Confederacy and early on the morning of April twelfth the Confederate shore batteries fired upon the fort, forcing its surrender on the thirteenth. Lincoln called for 75,000 militia for a term of ninety days. Nearly everyone believed that the war would be short, and four more slave states seceded.

The South rejoiced. Many believed that the “Yankees were cowards and would not fight.”<sup>8</sup> Should they decide to fight, most Southerners knew that a good southern boy could whip at least ten Yankees with one arm tied behind his back. In the North, young men rushed to join the state militias before the war would be over. Nearly all believed that slavery had emasculated the southern males; in addition, they believed that slavery had destroyed the moral fortitude of the South, and it would not fight to destroy the Union. Both sides misjudged.

Ellis was teaching in Wiscasset, a village in Maine, and studying for the bar. He had a sense of responsibility to his students but closely followed the events that summer of 1861. Even prior to the (First) Battle of Bull Run (July 21), he was concerned for the

Union. His last recollection of the Militia of the State of Maine was very vague. He faintly remembered the last “General Muster” consisting of about 150 unorganized men and one old piece of artillery. The North, he believed, was at a disadvantage, as it did not possess a military spirit. Meanwhile, he judged the Confederates as

. . . better commanded and better fitted for war. I feared they were on the whole of superior material for soldiers. We had the impression that the southern people were as a class fighting men with a strain of domineering, or overbearing insolence, bred of a slave-holding state of society.<sup>9</sup>

He closely followed the events of Bull Run and Balls Bluff and held the “Copper Heads” in contempt. Only the battles of Fort Donelson and Henry brought some relief to his sense of despair. He saw in Grant an officer who could win victories; but, which was most encouraging, in general appeared to be modest and to be making truthful reports.

Near Washington, General McClellan was organizing an army. Ninety-day enlistments had been discontinued. Some states were enlisting men for two years, but most were mustering in men for three years or duration, whichever was less. By late November, the War Department believed that the army of regulars and volunteers had reached or surpassed its authorized level of 500,000 men and in December issued a general order slowing the recruitment efforts throughout the North. By March 28, Henry Wilson, head of the Senate Military Affairs Committee, declared that the government ought immediately to stop enlistments, and Stanton complied.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, McClellan’s failure to capture Richmond and the retreat from the peninsula drove home the fact that the war was not ending soon. More soldiers were needed, and on July 2, 1862, Lincoln called for 300,000 new volunteers.<sup>11</sup>

Army Officers and many civilians knew that recruiting to fill vacancies in old, experienced regiments was more valuable than creating new units. The new soldiers

would have the benefits of severing under veteran officers and have experienced comrades from whom they could learn the lessons of camp life and battle. In spite of this wisdom, most of the new recruits were enlisted in new units because, “under war department regulations recruiting for old regiments was controlled exclusively by Federal authorities, and State action was restricted to new formations.”<sup>12</sup> State governors favored the formation of new regiments. It gave the governors an opportunity to build political support by the creations of nearly thirty new officer positions, often the commanding colonel had powerful political friends, and recruitment was conducted at no expense to the state. Ellis “found it easier to go the front than to stay at home.”<sup>13</sup> He procured the necessary authority and forms from the governor and began to recruit volunteers for a new company. With great ignorance of the military, very little money, considerable enthusiasm, and government papers, Ellis set out to recruit a company for the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine.

Beginning in Wiscasset, Ellis searched for recruits but soon found early enthusiasm and second thoughts had reduced available potentials. He soon extended his search to the surrounding countryside and in the villages of Woolwich, Jefferson, Nobleboro, Newcastle, and Edgecomb. Often, sons were willing to enlist, but mothers disapproved of their sons volunteering and going off to war. He recorded an instance where a mother, wielding a pitchfork, initially bested the recruiter. The son escaped and enlisted. One widowed mother had but two sons, both younger than twenty. Ellis persuaded the younger to remain home and care for his mother; the older would later die in Maryland. In spite of bonus inducements, recruiting efforts failed to raise the 300,000 new volunteers; and Lincoln announced on August 4, that any State that failed to meet its quota by August 15 should make up the deficiency at once by special draft.

Ellis obtained some recruits from the villages of the area, but more recruits were obtained from the farming country. In despair, he contemplated enlisting as a private. Other recruiters were having similar lack of success. He met two other recruiters, Joseph F. Land in Edgtecomb from just across the river from Wiscasset, and Joseph J. A. Hoffses of Jefferson. Both had fallen short of the numbers needed to form a company. The three decided to combine their eighty-seven enlistees, not a full company but above the minimum. The company was organized with Ellis Spear, Captain; Joseph F. Land, First Lieutenant; Joseph. Hoffses, Second Lieutenant.<sup>14</sup> The Governor of Maine assigned the company to the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the last regiment recruited by the state of troops that enlisted under the 300,000-man callup. Ellis collected his recruits and took them to Portland.

The officer commanding the regiment was Colonel Adelbert Ames of Rockland, Maine. A recent graduate of West Point, finishing fifth in his class of 1861, assigned to the artillery, he was wounded at the Battle of Bull Run, breveted to major for gallantry and to lieutenant colonel for his role in defending Malvern Hill during the Seven Days campaign on the peninsula. Spear rated him an excellent officer but too “military” to understand how to deal with the inexperienced volunteers. Ames proved to be an effective leader and rose to the rank of Major General.

The second in command was Lieutenant Colonel Joshua L. Chamberlain, on a leave of absence from his professorship at Bowdoin College. Although he had attended the Whiting’s Military and Classical school in Ellsworth, Maine, he had no military experience. He had been one of Spear’s professors at Bowdoin. Chamberlain learned his military lessons well. He is well known for his leadership in the defense of Little Round

Top during the Battle of Gettysburg for which he won the Congressional Medal of Honor. His age and wounds prevented his participation in the Spanish American War. After the war, he served as President of Bowdoin College and four terms as Governor of Maine.

Major Charles D. Gilmore of Bangor had served as a Captain in the 6<sup>th</sup> Maine. Little has been written about Major Gilmore although he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and occasionally commanded the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine. In the collection of letters, edited by William B. Styple, *With a Flash of His Sword*, Melcher mentioned Gillmore suffering from old wounds.<sup>14</sup> Spear had little good to say about him. He wrote,

He appeared to have some political influence but I do not remember that he rendered any material aid in the organization or instructions of the regiment; but I do remember that he afterwards proved to be a most untrustworthy, worthless skulker.<sup>15</sup>

About the nicest think that Ellis ever had to say about Gilmore was that he was absent.

Nearly all of the other officers were without any military experience. One exception was a captain who had served in the Mexican War, but time was to prove that he had forgotten much and age forced him to resign. Another had experience in an earlier regiment raised in 1861, but he resigned after his first battle. A third exception was Captain Atherton W. Clark, who had some experience as a militia officer. Captain Clark had been Colonel of the Town of Waldoboro's militia and with the support of his wealthy father, raised fifty men for his company. Clark, at thirty-seven, was the oldest man in the regiment and soon acquired the nickname "Pap". He was commander of Company E, often-designated senior captain of the regiment, and as such frequently commanded the regiment. He survived the war winning promotion to Major and a Brevet Lieutenant Colonelcy. "Pap" left his wife and two daughters to get the job done.

Another officer, who was there to get the job done, was Ellis Spear. John J. Pullen portrayed him as follows;

Among the company commanders one of the most notable, as it would turn out, was Ellis Spear of Wiscasset. A frail-appearing, bearded young schoolmaster, Spear didn't look as though he could withstand the rigors of army life a month, but he was actually tough as leather and what he lacked in physical stamina he would make up in determination. In many ways, Spear was much more typical of the good volunteer officer than was Chamberlain. To him, war was far from being romantic; it was instead a dull, ugly job that had to be done in spite of all its horrors and official stupidities. Possessed of a dry sense of humor and a Yankee gift for understatement, Spear was the type of Maine man who, if you ask him how he is doing and he happens to be doing very well indeed, will reply, 'All right.' Ellis Spear always took the conservative view of both men and events.<sup>16</sup>

Colonel Ames had a hell of a regiment. These men were not the effeminate, urban dwellers that southerners had characterized for the North but rather men who had worked the farms and in the woods. These men had been farmers, clerks, lumbermen, storekeepers, lawyers, fishermen, builders, sailors, and two Irishmen who had served in the British Army.<sup>17</sup> Farm power consisted of animal and human power; the two-man crosscut saws were scarce in the Maine woods. The men came from widely separated parts of the state with few from the larger centers. In addition, many already were familiar with firearms. The rigors of military life was an unknown quantity, and in some the spirit was stronger than the flesh and the recruitment officer was willing to accept any that volunteered. The average examining physician had no more knowledge of the rigors of military life than the recruiting officer and usually passed anyone willing. Spear remembered one fellow (Henry Pero, of Wiscasset) who was height challenged and passed muster only with an extra pair of taps on his boots. Another was mustered in with a heavy black beard that "soon disclosed an ever widening zone of grey."<sup>18</sup>

This rather disorganized mob slowly was assembled at Camp Mason, near Portland, Maine. Early arrivals found neither quarters nor rations; therefore, they marched into the city and woke up the mayor. Later recruits found tents, beef, and bread, but the Major's uniform was conspicuous in a sea of civilians. Major Gilmore having some idea of military organization mounted a guard and armed them with stove wood. The officer of the day (Captain Spear) was uniformed in a brown cutaway coat, striped trousers, and a silk hat and instead of a sword, brandished a ramrod as his insignia of office.<sup>19</sup> Colonel Ames arrived and instead of being greeted with a salute received "How d'ye do, Colonel."<sup>20</sup> At least the man could recognize a colonel. Evidently that did not please the Colonel who promptly sent for the officer of the day. Closely questioned about his duties concerning the details of guard mounting and the requirements of his office, the worthy officer was as ignorant as a spring chicken, and had no satisfactory answers. In exasperation, the Colonel allowed that "this is one hell of an regiment." Colonel Ames knew he had his work cut for him and suspected that there was little time to accomplish it.

Attempts to organize begun immediately, and, after several days, most of the men could find their proper place in line; but drilling was handicapped by the lack of knowledge of left from right or whatever in between. After a little preliminary drilling, the Colonel attempted to hold a parade. The formation was overwhelmed by the pounding and screeching of a fife and drum corps that could neither play nor march but gave great effort to both. The Colonel ordered them to cease immediately, but, of course, no one could hear an order with all the racket that they were making. Charging the formation, with drawn sword, Colonel Ames scattered the "formation" and the parade

was continued. Soon commissions backdated to August 9, while uniforms arrived, and the regiment was mustered into federal service on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August. In addition to uniforms, the men received a woolen blanket, a rubber blanket, a haversack, knapsack, canteen, a tin plate, tin dipper, knife, fork and spoon, and perhaps a towel. Officers had to buy their uniforms, Spear obtained his on credit but did not remember how he obtained his sword and belt and the regulation sash and shoulder straps. With two companies armed and the rest to receive arms in Washington, the regiment was ready to move out.

September second saw the regiment breaking camp and marching to the train station. They were on their way to Boston. At Boston the Regiment, along with the 36<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment, their camp gear, and apparently the officers' horses, were all crowded onto the United States transport *Merrimac*.<sup>21</sup> The men filled make shift bunks in the hold but hundreds were obliged to remain on deck. Rumors were soon to circulate, that the ship was filled with powder and other munitions was one. Another was that a Confederate privateer was seen in the area. Then there was a loud crash. Men cried, "she has struck a rock!" Jumping out of their bunks many rushed for the gangway; pushing and swearing they surged to find the hatch was fastened. Then it was discovered that a long tier of bunks had fallen. So ended the first night in the hold. Meanwhile, Colonel Ames was putting the idle time to good use. The officers were studying Casey's *Infantry Tactics, for the Instruction, Exercise, and Maneuvers of the Soldier, a Company, Line of Skirmishers, Battalion, Brigade and Corps d'Armee* under the wrathful eye of Colonel Ames. Spear wrote in his "Recollections" that he had no memories of the several days of the voyage until they reached the Potomac River. The regiments disembarked at

Alexandria to be greeted by a number of river steamers crowding the river near the wharves largely occupied by the wounded from the disastrous battle of Second Bull Run.

Ellis remembered that first night in Washington well, Sunday, September 7.

Above Alexandria we were transferred to smaller steamers and soon were landed in Washington, and spent our first night in a spacious and well ventilated hotel which consisted of an open lot on 6<sup>th</sup> Street above the Arsenal, well furnished with old bottles and dead cats. The next day we moved down into the Arsenal ground and the eight unarmed companies were then armed and equipped.<sup>22</sup>

The regiment received Enfield rifles and forty rounds of ammunition. The Regiment was assigned to the Third Brigade (Butterfield's), First Division (Morrell's), Fifth Army Corp (Porter's). Theodore Garrish, a private in Company H, described the march to join the Army of The Potomac. The Colonel did not take into consideration the present capacity of the men for marching and he set a fast pace and without halting soon had the regiment badly straggled. "It was a most ludicrous march. We had never been drilled, and we felt that our reputation was at stake. An untrained drum corps furnished us with music; each musician kept different time, and each man in the regiment took a different step. Old soldiers sneered; the people laughed and cheered; we marched, ran, walked, galloped, and stood still, in our vain endeavors to keep step." How they reached their destination is a wonder. Ellis had no trouble keeping up, and when they reached Fort Craig, the Colonel berated the men. Ellis thought they should be praised as they were the ones who had kept up. The command remained in camp several days. The men were drilled and the officers continued to study tactics under the stern tutoring of their demanding Colonel.

Following his victory at Bull Run, General Lee advanced into Maryland. The Army of the Potomac, once again under the command of General McClellan, searched for him while it also protected Washington. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, the regiment received its

marching orders and moved out on the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup>. It was hard march for a new, inexperienced regiment. Private Theodore Garrish described the scene as follows:

No pen can describe the sufferings and physical exhaustion of an army of infantry marching thirty miles a day. . . .It is 'rout-step and arms-at-will.' The ranks are in disorder, and nearly every file is broken. Every man is for himself; many have fallen out from the ranks; other are footsore and exhausted,--see them limp and reel and stagger as they endeavor to keep up with their regiments. These men were doubtless acquainted with fatigue before they entered the army, but this fearful strain in marching so many miles, in heavy marching order, for successive days, is too much for them. Brave, strong men fall fainting by the wayside, and they will never see their regiment again. They had hoped to defend the old flag on the battle-field, but that is denied them; and far back in the rear of regiment and brigades, is a legion of stragglers, sick, lame, discouraged, cowardly, all grades mixed in hopeless confusion. Some are there from choice; they enlisted only to secure the pay and bounty, and are determined to 'play out' as quickly as possible; others, brave and are mortified because they are not able to keep up with their regiments.<sup>23</sup>

Ellis remembered one night halting for bivouac with only twelve men of his company; the others soon caught up.<sup>24</sup>

On the road to Antietam Creek the Regiment had to go through the passes of South Mountain and lost its innocent visions of war. As they approached the pass they encountered houses and yards filled with the wounded. Pressing forward they encountered a large squad of rebel prisoners, their first sight of the enemy. Entering Turner Gap the signs of battle were seen: debris everywhere at the side of the road, knapsacks, guns, hats, earth torn up, and trees blasted by shells and bullets. Unburied bodies of Rebel soldiers lay near a stone where they had made a stand and had been killed thirty-six hours ago.<sup>25</sup> Night approached, and they bivouacked. The roar of cannons and rattle of musketry that had been heard all day faded with the sunlight but tomorrow promised more. The next morning, after a night of showers wetting everybody and making sleep difficult, the men expected battle but found themselves held in reserve.

As far as Spear knew, “the regiment did not fire a gun. It was in rear of a battery and had the experience of a few hostile shells, but nobody was hurt.”

Blamed for letting Lee escape Antietam by way of the only ford across the Potomac, McClellan fulminated but did nothing. The battle of Antietam had been fought on Wednesday and four days later a portion of the V Corps was ordered to cross to the west bank of the Potomac in an attempt to locate Lee’s army. Two brigades crossed, and the Third Brigade formed line of battle under cover of the bluff. Ellis wrote that as soon as they formed, they discovered that the enemy was present. Ellis wondered why it was necessary to send over two brigades to gain this intelligence. However, being naïve, he considered that it was the proper military tactic. Private Garrish described the morning as foggy and as the regiment advanced it fired at gray forms in the fog. The wisps in the fog fired back. Intelligence obtained, the brigade began to withdraw and again came under enemy musketry. The retreat, under fire, was trying to raw recruits, but the regiment behaved well. Spear wrote that only one man was slightly wounded. The other brigade suffered some killed and wounded. The next day the regiment moved down river and camped near the mouth of Antietam Creek. Spear described the area as low malarial ground,

We remained there during the rest of September and all the greater part of October. I do not now know of any more unhealthy malarial location, or any more unhealthy malarial season of the year, than the place and the season of encampment at that time, but there seem to be either no consideration of such matters, or some supposed military necessity yet unknown to me, which compelled our encampment there. . . .Further, we were not provided with tents and no protection against dew or rain excepting rubber blankets, and as a matter of course slept on the bare ground. Inevitably very many of the men were sick.<sup>26</sup>

Spear blamed the command for the unnecessary illness and deaths. No shelter or food was provided for the sick and the regiment used some old abandoned houses near by, but the ill were placed on the bare floor, most suffering from malaria or diarrhea; and they received very little or no medical attention. "How can this happen," he wondered, "and only seventy miles from Washington with a railroad running to that place. I suppose, to military necessity, or the incompetency of the head of the Army." He suffered along with his men, but had obtained a tent, open at both ends. He well remembered the death of one of his men. Xenophon Heath, the eldest son of the widow with two sons, died despite his personal attention. Colonel Ames knew there was more to come, and his unit was not ready. During this period, he drilled the officers part of the day, and the officers drilled their Companies the remainder of the day and studied tactics by night. Some of the officers broke down. Captain Timothy F. Andrews, of Harmony died and some other officers went to the hospital and did not return.<sup>27</sup> Garrish found the camp depressing. He wrote,

[I]t was a sad mission, to sit by the dying in the midst of all the dirt and disorder with which they were surrounded, to gather up little trinkets to send as priceless keepsakes to distant friends, to write the last good-byes and messages of love whispered from dying lips, and to hold their thin, hollow hands as the spirit floated away from its earthen casket. Then would follow the soldiers' burial, the corporal's guard with reversed arms keeping step to the mournful beat of the muffled drum. That was a hard, bitter experience; and the surviving members of our regiment had not forgotten the hillsides of Maryland, where we laid the bodies of the first victims that death called from our ranks.<sup>28</sup>

Disease and accidents wounded the regiment more than the enemy. Pvt. Lamson wrote of an incident in camp, a man of Company G took a gun by the muzzle to pull it out of a tent when it went off wounding one man severely in the bowels and two others in the arms and some said a fourth in the nose. Another incident that he

wrote about in a letter home was of a man fooling with his gun when it went off wounding him so severe that he required amputation.<sup>29</sup>

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, the regiment moved out. The following day it crossed the Potomac River and passed through Harper's Ferry and then over the Shenandoah River. During the march, Ellis in the rear of his company doing his best to prevent straggling, when the Adjutant rode up with orders from Colonel Ames putting him under arrest. Apparently one of his men had straggled to the front. Spear attributed the arrest to the fact that he had some words with the Colonel a few days before in which he had resented some profanity addressed to him and other officers nearby. Spear informed the Colonel that he was always anxious to do his duty as an officer, but he was accustomed to being treated as a gentleman and profanity was uncalled for. Within a few days the arrest order was revoked. The regiment passed the northern end of the high ridge of the mountain lying east of the Shenandoah then turned to the right and moved into Virginia marching toward a village by the name of Fredericksburg.

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<sup>1</sup> Spear, Ellis, Washington, D.C., to General Adelbert Ames, May 1, 1913. Typed letter signed by Spear. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton; Cyrus Eaton, *Annals of the Town of Warren in Knox County, Maine, with the Early History of St. George's Broad Bay, and the Neighboring Settlements on the Waldo Patent* (Hallowell: Masters & Livermore, 1877. Reprint, Salem: Higginson book company, not dated), v.

<sup>2</sup> Cyrus Eaton, *Annals of the Town of Warren in Knox County, Maine, with the Early History of St. George's, Broad Bay, and the Neighboring Settlements on the Waldo Patent* (Hallowell: Masters & Livermore, 1877. Reprint, Salem: Higginson book company, not dated), 53-56. Eaton spells the name Alexander McLean on page 53 but the spelling on page 56 is McLeen. It is not clear if this is the same man. McLean was with the original party to view the land but absent at the signing of the contract for the land. Listed also in a John McLeen but the footnote explains that his descendants spelled their name McLean.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-82. Spear went to stay with friends in Boston. He worked in Boston several years and bought a 100-acre farm there, selling his land at St. George's to John Calderwood. Spear participated in the Battle of Bunker Hill but died at Lawrence, Massachusetts March 13, 1776. His son John bought the St. George's property from Thomas, the son of John Calderwood about 1763.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

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- <sup>6</sup> Marion G. Waters to Sidney Miller, March 25, 2002, authors files. In this letter Mrs. Waters extracted pertinent information about the Spear family from a collection known as the "Amanda Letters."
- <sup>7</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958; Ballantine Books, 1962), 238.
- <sup>8</sup> Allan Nevins, *The War for the Union: War becomes Revolution 1862-1863* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 64
- <sup>9</sup> Abbott Spear, *The Civil War Recollections of General Ellis Spear* (Orono, Maine: The University of Maine Press, 1997), 4 [Hereafter referred to as Recollections].
- <sup>10</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 491.
- <sup>11</sup> Nivens, *War Becomes Revolution 1862-1863*, 164
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.
- <sup>13</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 5.
- <sup>14</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 6.
- <sup>15</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 7
- <sup>16</sup> John J. Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine: A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War* (Dayton: Morningside House, Inc., 1997), 4.
- <sup>17</sup> Abbott and Ellis Spear. *The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine at Fredericksburg: The Conflicting Accounts of General Joshua L. Chamberlain and General Ellis Spear* (Union, Maine: Union Publishing Company, 1989), 76 (Hereafter referred to as *Conflicting Accounts*.)
- <sup>18</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 7.
- <sup>19</sup> *Conflicting Accounts*, 77.
- <sup>20</sup> Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine*, 1.
- <sup>21</sup> Garrish, *Army Life*, 15.
- <sup>22</sup> *Conflicting Accounts*, 83.
- <sup>23</sup> Garrish, *Army Life*, 25.
- <sup>24</sup> *Recollections*, 12.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>28</sup> Garrish, *Army Life*, 48
- <sup>29</sup> Engert, *Civil War Letters of Pvt. Lamson*, 22.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG

Although he knew better, President Lincoln declared the Battle of Antietam a victory in order to use the occasion to declare the Emancipation Proclamation. The British and the French believed the deception, but the fact remained that General McClellan failed to pursue Lee. Urged on by Lincoln, McClellan finally crossed the Potomac but failed to pressure the Army of northern Virginia, all the while offering weak excuses. Upon receipt of the excuse that his horses were tired, Lincoln queried, “what has his horses done in the past month that would tire them?” For whatever reasons, Lincoln could not get McClellan to move and on November 7 removed him as the commander of the Army of the Potomac and appointed Major General Ambrose Everett Burnside commander.<sup>1</sup>

General Burnside reluctantly took command of the Army of the Potomac. With winter fast approaching most soldiers were thinking of warmer quarters. Lee dispersed his army, with Jackson near Winchester in the Shenandoah Valley, Longstreet south and southeast of Warrenton, and Stuart’s cavalry patrolling the fords of the Rappahannock. The bridge at Fredericksburg had been destroyed and the town was unguarded. Knowing that Lincoln wanted a fighting general, Burnside submitted a plan to Lincoln and General ~~Henry W. Halleck, the temporary overall commanding general.~~ He planned to move swiftly, crossing the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg, getting between Lee and

Richmond, and then capturing the Confederate capital. Success depended upon moving rapidly and obtaining pontoons to build a bridge at Fredericksburg.

On the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> of November, Burnside received a dispatch from Halleck, "The President has just assented to your plan. He thinks it will succeed if you move rapidly; otherwise not."<sup>2</sup> General Halleck, on the twelfth, had visited Burnside, and urged him to use McClellan's plan. Burnside was under the impression that he had won support for his own plan and that Halleck would rapidly forward the pontoons critical for the operation. Burnside put his army in motion on the 15<sup>th</sup> and marched the Army of the Potomac to Falmouth, across the river from Fredericksburg, a distance of about forty miles, in two-and-half days and waited. The element of surprise slowly faded. Lee, not sure of Burnside's objective, sent reinforcements to Fredericksburg and increased cavalry patrols. General Edward Stackpole, a Civil War historian, faults Burnside for not sending General Edwin Sumner across the Rappahannock as soon as he arrived. In Burnside's defense, other historians, Daniel E. Sutherland and William Marvel, argue that not crossing the river was prudent.<sup>3</sup>

Burnside's plan required pontoons to cross the Rappahannock. Following his error at Antietam, once Burnside decided to cross on a bridge, he would not deviate from his plan. Meanwhile, Lee, not sure of Burnside's intention ordered Jackson and Longstreet to Fredericksburg. Jackson occupied positions on Lee's right, across the river and south of Fredericksburg; Longstreet arrived on the afternoon of the 21<sup>st</sup> and positioned his forces also southward and on the hills in back of the town. Nearest the river was Taylor's Hill, south of it Marye's Hill, or more often referred to as Marye's Heights; next came Telegraph Hill. South of Telegraph Hill, Deep Run Creek flowed into the Rappahannock

and then rising land called Hamilton's Crossing. The hills, thus occupied by the Confederate forces, were out of range of effective Union artillery fire. Longstreet assessed Taylor's Hill as unassailable. Marye's Heights being more advanced toward the town, was of a gradual ascent and of less height than the others, and it was considered the point most assailable, and he determined to defend it accordingly.<sup>4</sup>

General Edward Porter Alexander, Longstreet's tactical chief of artillery, arranged the guns in the defense of Fredericksburg. He described the positions as follows:

The front line of the Confederate defence was held by three Ga. regiments in the sunken Telegraph road, the 18<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and Philip's legion of Cobb's brigade. The 24<sup>th</sup> N.C. of Ransom's held an infantry trench, which extended from the Telegraph to the Plank Road.

On the crest of the hill above the road were four 12-Pr. guns, two 12-Pr. howitzers, and three 10-Pr. rifles, comprising the three batteries of the New Orleans Washington artillery under Col. Walton. On the left of the Plank Road were four guns of Maurin's battery, in pits, and, at Stansbury's house, Parker's battery of Alexander's battalion, with four guns, found positions during the afternoon to fire upon the enemy's right flank. His left flank was also partially exposed to the fire of the two Parrotts on Lee's Hill [Telegraph Hill]. The infantry in the sunken road and ditch numbered at the commencement of the action only about 2000; but in support behind Marye's Hill were about 7000 more, most of whom were brought into action later.<sup>5</sup>

Late on the night of December 10, the Union engineers began moving out from the pontoon parks in three columns. Each unit consisted of thirty-four pontoon boats on wheels with twenty-nine support vehicles loaded with lumber, tools, and forges. The wagons and men moved silently, but the animals were far from quiet and alerted all, friend and foe, that an assault would be made in the morning. The temperature on the morning of the eleventh was twenty-four degrees, and as the sun rose fog obscured the river valley protecting the Union engineers. The Confederates waited, peering into the fog, as the bridges reached halfway darker forms could vaguely be perceived in the mist.

Shortly after five, the order to fire was given to the Confederate sharpshooters, sheltered in the building of Fredericksburg. Union engineers, men, horses, and mules were killed and wounded. The myth of the surprise attack was shattered.

General William Barksdale's Mississippi Brigade was in strong defensive positions that consisted of loopholed upper stories and cellars of buildings in Fredericksburg that housed connecting trenches, rifle pits, and barricades of dirt, logs, and sand-filled barrels. Luckily, for the Union engineers, the fog limited the effectiveness of the riflemen, and the engineers' casualties were few; however, the Confederate fire brought the laying of the bridge to a halt. Without the bridges Burnside's army could not cross the river. In frustration, he ordered the Union artillery to shell the city. For two hours the artillery fired on the city, collapsing some buildings, setting some on fire, damaging all. When the firing ceased, the engineers returned to their work and the Confederates rose from their shelters and drove them off. Nine times the barrage lifted; nine times the Confederates drove the engineers off. Burnside insisted that the bridges had to be built. Brigadier General Hunt, the artillery chief, and Brigadier General Woodbury, the engineer in charge of building the bridge suggested to Burnside to ask for volunteers to cross the river in boats and establish a bridgehead and drive the rebels out of town.

The task of leading the "volunteers" fell to the 7<sup>th</sup> Michigan. Led by Lt. Col. Henry Baxter, they ran to the river, pushed three pontoon boats from shore, and took cover in the bottom of the boats, which were rowed by "volunteers" of the 50<sup>th</sup> New York Engineers. Within 100 yards of the Fredericksburg side, the high bank gave them some protection. Even before the boats reached the shore the Wolverines jumped out and assaulted the town successfully, capturing about thirty slow Confederate prisoners. With

the bridgehead established, the 19<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts reinforced the 7<sup>th</sup> Michigan. These two regiments met stout resistance from the Confederates. Each house and cellar had to be cleared and thus Fredericksburg was one of the first cities to be subjected to an artillery bombardment, and became the first to undergo street fighting. The occupied area consisted of about a four-block section of the town. Once this section of town was secured, the engineers resumed their work and one bridge was completed by 4:30 p.m.

The morning of December 12<sup>th</sup> began with a light fog that soon burned off and the temperature rose to fifty-six degrees under hazy skies. Lee continued to move troops into position along Marye's Heights, reinforcing the men behind a four-foot high stone wall all along a sunken road. Ahead of the stone wall ran an additional barrier of a rail fence. Just outside of town, about 500 yards from the stone wall was a millrace, about five feet deep, fifteen feet wide and although attempts were made to drain it about three feet of water remained. Between the stonewall and the millrace was open ground with only a slight depression that provided little protection. Burnside spent the day moving men into the remains of the city. The men spent most of the day looting the city. By nightfall, Burnside had more than six divisions and their support units in what was left of Fredericksburg. The Confederates waited watchfully on Marye's Heights.

About noon, Brigadier General William H. French's division (3<sup>rd</sup> Division, II Corps) was the first to assault the stonewall held by newly promoted Brigadier General Thomas R. R. Cobb's Georgians. As soon as the blue troops left the shelter of the town, they were met with scattered fire from the pickets. Using the shelter of the millrace, they reformed and extended their flanks. Upon leaving the millrace they were subjected to a very heavy artillery cross fire. The Union soldiers charged the stonewall. Shells tore

their ranks, sending “arms, hands, legs and clothing into the air.” wrote a Union soldier.<sup>6</sup> At 200 yards the Georgians stood up from behind the stone wall and fired what was described as a sheet of flame. The ranks tried to advance but there were so few remaining that they took shelter in the swale. They could advance no further. Burnside ordered a second assault about 1 p.m. Brigadier General Hancock’s division met the same fate. Burnside continued to order assaults. The third and fourth assaults had similar results. No one reached the stone wall. Still the troops were ordered in. During the fifth assault, Brigadier General Andrew A. Humphreys ordered a bayonet attack on the stone wall. Humphreys’ attacks failed, and his losses were very heavy. As daylight was fading, Burnside ordered in one more assault. Brigadier General George W. Getty’s Third Division of the IX Corps made a gallant effort, but it too fell fifty yards short of the stone wall. The sun sat on the bloody battlefield. Many units were ordered to remain on the field of battle with the dead and wounded, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was one such unit.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine waited nearly all day before it went into battle. When Brigadier General Charles Griffin’s first two divisions were shredded, he reluctantly called on his division reserves. Colonel Thomas B. W. Stockton commanded the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade composed of the 12<sup>th</sup> New York, 17<sup>th</sup> New York, 44<sup>th</sup> New York, 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan, 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, 83<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania, and the Michigan Sharpshooters. Captain Spear recalled that he tired of waiting and walked over to the center of the line and overheard Colonel Ames tell Lieutenant Colonel Chamberlain, “this is earnest work.” He went back to his company, sat upon a rock and comforted a frightened puppy. Soon a bugle summoned the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade forward. Ellis thought that few had any hope of success but, he would go in and do his duty.<sup>7</sup> Colonel Stockton’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade formed up left to right the 83<sup>rd</sup>

Pennsylvania, 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, 17<sup>th</sup> New York, followed by the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan, 44<sup>th</sup> New York, and 12<sup>th</sup> New York.<sup>8</sup> The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine advanced, with loaded weapons and fixed bayonets, across a level piece of ground. Colonel Ames led, with drawn sword, twenty paces in front. Because of the failure of two regiments on its right to advance, Ames' force was subjected to double fire from the front as well as a battery on the right. Lieutenant Colonel Chamberlain, assisted by the Adjutant, and cheered on by Major Gilmore on the right wing, Company G, led by Captain Ellis, on the left wing advanced to a ravine close to the rebel batteries and rifles, where it was ordered to halt. It then moved cautiously to the crest of a ridge. From this position, it fired at the enemy until dark.<sup>9</sup> With darkness came the secession of both cannon and musket fire and quiet settled over the battlefield. With the silence came a new awareness the moans and cries of the wounded.

Sheltered by the crest of the ridge, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine shivered that Saturday night on the cold, wet, muddy ground. Dawn exposed them to the vigilant eyes of the enemy, and any reckless movement or attempt to rise brought fire from the entire line and death to anyone who stood. About ten o'clock Sunday night they were relieved by another brigade and fell back to the city. They remained in reserve all day Monday and late that evening they were ordered to provide advanced picket duty to cover the withdraw of the Army of the Potomac. The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was one of the last units to attack during the Fredericksburg campaign and the last unit to withdraw from the battlefield Monday night. These bare facts are undisputed. It is General Chamberlain's highly dramatic narrative, written years later that was challenged by General Spear.

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General Chamberlain's narrative began about two-and-a half months earlier with President Lincoln's visit to General McClellan's headquarters. He wrote, "Being a guest

at our Fifth Corps headquarters, we had the opportunity to discern something more of that great spirit that was ordinarily revealed in those rugged features and deep, sad eyes” He continued his description of the review, “He took in everything with earnest eyes. As the reviewing cavalcade passed along our lines, where mounted officers were stationed in front of their commands, he checked his horse, whose white-dappled color and proud bearing made me almost too conspicuous on some occasions.” In the next paragraph, Chamberlain commented about McClellan’s removal from command of the Army of the Potomac. “Whatever justification there was for these changes, the sundering of long-familiar ties brought a strain on the heart-strings of many men, but it must be remarked in their honor that no murmuring or lack of loyal and cheerful obedience ever betrayed their sorrow.”<sup>10</sup>

Ellis took exception and critiqued the entire episode pertaining to the Lincoln visit, the review and the replacement of McClellan. The first comment was about the Lincoln visit. He wrote:

One moderately familiar with affairs of that time may well wonder how the President of the United States, making a visit of inspection to General McClellan’s Army, could be guilty of discourtesy as to shun the commanding General’s hospitality, and got to the Quarters of one of said General’s subordinates, and the wonder is not diminished when it is remembered that, at the time Fitz John Porter, commanding the Fifth Corps, was charged loudly and widely with gross misconduct at the 2d Bull run a few weeks before, and was soon after cashiered.<sup>11</sup>

Spear’s second rebuttal was against the attention that Lincoln was said to pay to Chamberlain’s horse and to go so far as to halt the review to admire that particular piece of horseflesh. “I was present at the review, in the line just behind Chamberlain. I saw Mr. Lincoln ride past with General McClellan and many other officers. I watched him closely, and with great interest, and was anxious to see his face, having never seen him before. He

did not even turn his head towards us. I had only the side view of an awkward rider, slightly stooping, and with a very tall 'stovepipe' hat. He did not halt while riding past the Twentieth Maine.' And finally, in response to the rendering of long-familiar ties, "... the Twentieth Maine, including the Lieutenant Colonel, had not been in the field more than five or six weeks. There were no 'long-familiar ties' and no 'strain upon the heart-strings' that I noticed among us."<sup>12</sup>

An examination of other sources supported Spear's version. Allan Nevins in *The War for the Union*, wrote that Lincoln took a special train to Harpers Ferry and met General McClellan at Sumner's headquarters. He then reviewed Sumner's corps. General McClellan led him at a gallop along its ranks as unit after unit dipped colors, presented arms, and cheered. General Fitz-John Porter described the scene with Lincoln on a white horse, stirrups too short, trousers hitched nearly to the top of his boots, coat tails flapping in the wind, holding his tall hat with one hand, and heedless of the ludicrous figure that he cut.<sup>13</sup> Mathew Brady took several photos of Lincoln at McClellan's headquarters, thus we know what he was wearing.<sup>14</sup> Historian David Herbert Donald wrote, "He spent the night in a tent adjacent to McClellan's."<sup>15</sup> No photo showed Lincoln on horseback, we have only General Porter's verbal description; however, there is a sketch of Lincoln on horseback, presumably at Harpers Ferry. The descendants of Sergeant Rundlett, Company G, 20<sup>th</sup> Maine published his letters in which there is a sketch of Lincoln on horseback. He is wearing a top hat, coat with tails, stirrups too short and looked ridiculous.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, neither Colonel Ames, regimental commander, privates Gerrish, Lamson, Norton of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine nor Amos M. Judson, Captain of Company E, 83 Pennsylvania volunteers who were all present and have left letters or

memoirs report the events as described by Chamberlain. About the last comment, “long-familiar ties” it is true that the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine had reached Washington on September 7 thus was only part of the Army of the Potomac for less than two months. In contrast to Ellis’ apparently ambivalence, McClellan was very popular with thousands of the soldiers. Captain Francis Adams Donaldson had strong views of McClellan’s removal and blamed Secretary of War Stanton. He wrote, “I have no confidence in Stanton. I think him a politician and an unscrupulous man who is all for self. He is jealous of McClellan and his popularity.” Further in his letter he wrote, “I tell you frankly, had McClellan done this, had he placed himself at the head of the army and instead of marching on to Richmond turned against Washington, all would have followed, and instead of ‘hanging Jeff Davis to a sour apple tree,’ so much and so often advocated by word and song, it would be down with Stanton, down with the whole dishonorable crew who dare to dictate such humiliating orders to the most skillful soldier of modern times.”<sup>17</sup> Spear appeared to be confirmed in his critique of Chamberlain’s version of the Lincoln visit and review. The comments about McClellan’s removal were likely accurate for the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, but for the entire Army of the Potomac, Spear was not aware of the great affection held by the officers and men. When Chamberlain wrote *My Story*, in 1912, there were fewer and fewer veterans alive to dispute his version of the events that had taken place nearly fifty years earlier. Beside, he had lectured many times, without anyone challenging his version.

For whatever reasons, Chamberlain continued to embellished his tales and emphasized his actions. It is this fabrication at the beginning of this story that cast a

shadow of doubt about the veracity of other events that he narrated and of which, Spear took offense.

Chamberlain continued his story with an episode concerning the Union shelling of the city of Fredericksburg. He described an incident in which the battery commander was warned about firing at a white shaft that marked the tomb of Washington's mother. The remark that Spear faulted alluded to the guns "knowing" the significance of the white shaft. In addition, it appeared that Spear's memory was faulty. He believed that the monument was build some years following the war. Abbot Spear provided the best critique of the General's remarks. The monument was begun before the war and was damaged during the firing on Fredericksburg. He provided a photo, although not distinct, showing the shaft of the monument lying to the left of the pediment.<sup>18</sup> It is quite possible that Chamberlain overheard the remarks between the staff officer and the battery commander. It is doubtful that it was Lieutenant Samuel N. Benjamin's Battery E, 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. as that battery was located in the hills above Falmouth covering the flank.<sup>19</sup> Two questions come to mind since the artillery was located on the heights above the bridges. Was Chamberlain out sightseeing and what has it to do with the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine at Fredericksburg. Perhaps, Chamberlain was adding color and poetic license to his tale. Whatever reasons it was doubtful that Spear was present, and he was wrong about the monument.

Chamberlain next commented about the unit being held in reserve. The comments are rather heroic and romantic in tone and may have reflected Chamberlain's true sensations. At Antietam, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was held in reserve. Chamberlain was anxious to enter "glorious" battle. Obviously, Spear did not share Chamberlain's views. He was

there to do his duty; but Spear wrote these comments years later. The question comes to mind, are his feelings tempered by the many times after Fredericksburg that the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was committed to battle and by the many years that had elapsed since the end of the war and time to contemplate upon the war? It would have been well if Spear had not commented upon Chamberlain's enthusiasm. No two individuals experience similar emotions about entering battle for the first time.

We can see from Chamberlain's continuing anecdote that he was a romantic and Spear viewed the battle scene with a lack of enthusiasm or even hope. Chamberlain described the scene of battle, as seen at a distance of a mile or more. Nine assaults upon the stone wall, all repulsed by a sheet of flame. We are told that, "Tears ran down the cheeks of stern men, waiting, almost wishing, to be summoned to the futile, glorious work." And then came the call for the Third Brigade.<sup>20</sup> Ellis recalled none of this. He recalled only lines, dimly, obscured by the musketry smoke. As for the tears and wistful looks, Ellis saw none. Who is right? Chamberlain provided a highly romantic description of the battle, but with the amount of smoke and the time of day it is doubtful that a sheet of flame would have been seen at over a mile. Major Melcher, using a glass reported seeing through the dense smoke only a slight view.<sup>21</sup> The idea of commanders having tears on their cheeks appears highly fanciful. These officers are to lead soldiers into combat. It is unlikely that many men would follow a crying commander. And the description of Griffin's wistful look, it would be impossible to see since he was across the river and one would assume facing the enemy.

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It was time for the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine to cross the river. Chamberlain remembered, "the air was thick with the flying, bursting shells; whooping solid shot swept lengthwise our

narrow bridge, fortunately not yet plowing a furrow through the midst of us, but driving the compressed air so close above our heads that there was an unconquerable instinct to shrink beneath it, although knowing it was then too late. The crowding, swerving column set the pontoons swaying, so that the horses reeled and men could scarcely keep their balance. Forming our line in the lower streets, the men were ordered to unsling knapsacks and leave them to be cared for by our quartermaster.”<sup>22</sup> Spear, in contrast, remembered one solid shot that fell in the vicinity of the bridge.<sup>23</sup> Private Gerrish wrote that they, “rushed across the pontoon bridges, and charged up through the city, until we reached its outskirts, where our brigade formed a line of battle about one-fourth of a mile from our most advanced position.”<sup>24</sup> Major Melcher’s version is very similar. He wrote only that they crossed over the pontoon bridge, through the city, and formed in the line of battle just behind an old fence. Captain Judson of the 83<sup>rd</sup> also only mentioned rapidly crossing the upper pontoon bridge.<sup>25</sup> Other indications that cast doubt upon the “air filled with shot and shell” are found in Francis O’Reilly’s book *The Fredericksburg Campaign*. There is no mention of the Rebels shelling the crossing of Griffin’s division in fact it is reported that General Butterfield met the head of Griffin’s division at the bridge and sent it to Caroline Street.<sup>26</sup> Countering the above reports an anonymous officer of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine wrote an historical sketch for *Maine at Gettysburg*, “At the battle of Fredericksburg the regiment, being in the Centre Grand Division, crossed the Rappahannock in the afternoon of the first day of the battle under artillery fire, and advanced with the brigade through the town to replace the lines which had vainly attempted to reach the stone-wall at Marye’s heights.”<sup>27</sup> It is doubtful that the air was filled with shot and shell for several reasons. It was Confederate sharpshooters that

delayed and prevented the building of the bridges at the beginning and only after establishing a bridge head were the bridges constructed. The sharpshooters had taken shelter in the buildings of Fredericksburg and it seems that the buildings thus shielded the bridges from artillery fire. It is reasonable to expect that if the Confederate artillery could have hit the pontoon bridges that would have taken them out. We know that there was massed artillery, and all soldiers mention coming under heavy shelling once they emerged on the west side of the city. Three reports support the argument that artillery fire was concentrated on the Union troops once they left the shelter of the buildings, on the west side of Fredericksburg.<sup>28</sup> Chamberlain's account appears to belong more to the realm of fantasy than to fact.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade formed in line of battle west of town. Through the murky smoke, Chamberlain saw a battery swing into position on the right. Ellis, leading his company on the left, saw no such event, but then no one else did either. General Edward Porter Alexander, Confederate artillery officer who had sited the guns at Fredericksburg wrote, that "Parker's battery of Alexander's battalion, with four guns, found positions during the afternoon to fire upon the enemy's right flank."<sup>29</sup> Three Union commanders report that there was a severe cross-fire of artillery but none report a battery swinging into position on the right.<sup>30</sup> In his research Abbot Spear wrote to the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military D.A.R. and received the following reply:

'Your assumption is correct that Chamberlain's implication regarding Confederate artillery on his right flank during his assault is misleading. No Confederate guns moved in advance of the Southern Infantry position at the foot of Marye's Heights on December 13. However, artillery posted on the heights north of Chamberlain's approach route could have fired obliquely at Stockton's brigade, thus creating what Chamberlain might have considered a flanking fire. Chamberlain's words are ambiguous enough to allow for this interpretation. In any event, the 20<sup>th</sup> hardly absorbed the volume of casualties

at Fredericksburg commensurate with a sustained and sweeping artillery barrage,<sup>31</sup>

In the casualty report for the Battle of Fredericksburg the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine is reported to have suffered four enlisted men killed, thirty-two wounded.<sup>32</sup> The above letter and the casualty report provides evidence that the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was not subjected to fire from a new battery that moved into position on their flank, in addition Colonel Ames was already leading the regiment according to Major Melcher.<sup>33</sup> It must be concluded that although the regiment was subjected to crossfire, Chamberlain was either mistaken or had the battery move to add drama to his rendition.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine advanced to a ridge crest at the front, where it took shelter and exchanged volleys with the Confederates until sunset when it became too dark to see a target and muzzle flashes revealed their position. Chamberlain's account is highly graphic with a description of "slopes slippery with blood, miry with repeated, unavailing tread." Spear's account is more prosaic, and he took particular objection with the term "final crest." It does not matter how the position is described. What all can agree on is that the ridge crest was as far forward that the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine advanced and remained there for the night.

Chamberlain recounted a cold, windy night that he survived by sheltering between two dead men and using a third for a pillow and using the "flap of his coat over my face to fend off the chilling winds." Ellis recalls no 'bitter, raw north winds' nor does he assess the temperature as cold, 'cool, but not excessively cold.'<sup>34</sup> Major General Darius N. Couch, commander of the II Corps of the Right Grand Division, which had assaulted Marye's Heights earlier that day found the night bitterly cold. He wrote, "That night was bitter cold and a fearful one for the front line hugging the hollows in the ground, and for

the wounded who could not be reached. it was a night of dreadful suffering. Many died of wounds and exposure, and as fast as men died they stiffened in the wintry air, and on the front line were rolled forward for protection to the living. Frozen men were placed for dumb sentries.”<sup>35</sup> Cold is relative. General Alexander provided a better gauge. Writing about the night before, December 12<sup>th</sup>, “The night was quite cold, the thermometer falling to 26 degrees.”<sup>36</sup> Neither General Longstreet or Lieutenant Miller mention the temperature in their contributions to *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, but it is implied with an illustration of a snowball fight in a Confederate camp.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps, after nearly fifty years, Ellis has forgotten and is influenced by his heated critique of General Chamberlain.

Chamberlain continued, “For myself it seemed best to bestow my body between two dead men among the many left there by earlier assaults, and to draw another crosswise for a pillow out of the trampled, blood soaked sod, pulling the flap of his coat over my face to find off the chilling winds, and, still more, chilling, the deep, many-voiced moan that overspread the field.”<sup>38</sup> Spear claimed that he knew where Chamberlain spent the night. It was further to his rear with Colonels Ames and Stockton. It is a shame that neither colonel has left us an account of that night. It would seem reasonable that the staff would gather together, leaving the company commanders with their companies like Spear. Gerrish also reported that his men roamed the area removing unneeded garments from the dead; thus, why would Chamberlain make only a token attempt by covering himself with a flap of a coat over his face. Gerrish commented, “The ground was covered with guns, blankets, knapsacks, haversacks and canteens, while the dead forms of our comrades were lying grim and ghastly around us.”<sup>39</sup> Corporal Melcher, promoted on the

battlefield to Sergeant-Major by Colonel Ames, wrote, "After the firing had ceased, our pickets were sent out in front to keep watch while the tired men lay down upon their blankets, amongst the dead, many of which had to be moved to give the men a chance to lie down."<sup>40</sup> Why didn't Chamberlain use one of the blankets that Gerrish and Melcher saw?

Burnside's original intent was to renew the attack in the morning thus the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine remained on the battlefield all night. The decision to cancel the attack was made too late to pull the troops back to shelter, thus the 20<sup>th</sup> could not retreat in the daylight and remained on the field of battle all day. Very little movement of either side took place that day as sharpshooters on both sides shot at any movement. Chamberlain had the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine constructing a breastwork of bodies to cover their exposed flank. Spear remembered no such event. He was on the left and does not recall using bodies for shelter. On the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine's left was the 83<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania. Captain Judson wrote, "... that the regiment was undercover of the brow of the hill that afforded us a good shelter from the firing of both their artillery and infantry." The regiment laid the whole day in the mud and amidst the dead. "Slight breast-works, such as they could dig with their bayonets, with the aid of the ruins of a fence that had been trampled down in the battle of the day before, were thrown up and this also afforded them a partial protection from the enemy's sharpshooters." Continuing, he wrote,

Even in this unpleasant position there was occasion for considerable merriment among the soldiers. Whether in camp or in line of battle, the men are constantly going to the rear for some purpose or other. Every point of egress to the rear, on this occasion, was exposed except one, a little hollow running out towards the railroad cut. The heads of our men in passing through this hollow were barely visible to the rebels, and they took advantage of it for some time before they were discovered. The rebel skirmishers held possession of a brick house several hundred yards to the front, and in the upper story of this house a number now posted themselves and

indulged in the recreation of shooting at the boys as they passed through this hollow to the rear. Our men, who were accustomed to be shot at and missed, dreaded running this gauntlet but little more than school boys dread to run the gauntlet of as many snow balls. But the ludicrous operation of passing the fiery ordeal never failed to be accompanied by an uproar of laughter from the rest of the regiment.”<sup>41</sup>

On the right of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine two regiments had moved into position, the 17<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> New York. Night came again, and the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was pulled back.

In Chamberlain’s description of the withdrawal, the wounded were assisted back to the shelter of the town but the dead were buried. He wrote:

Our dead lay there. We could not take them where we were going, nor would we leave them as they lay. We would bury them in the earth they had made dear. Shallow graves were dug with bayonets and fragments of shell and muskets that strewed the ground, Low head-boards, made of broken fence rails or musket-butts, rudely carved under sheltered match-light, marked each name and home.<sup>42</sup>

Spear disputed Chamberlain. First he pointed out that orders are orders, and one does not have time to dig shallow graves with bayonets and fragments of shell. Second, he asked why use matches for light to carve the headboards, soldiers carried candles and they had more candles than matches. And third, why use fence rails, why not use boards from nearby buildings. Chamberlain’s account is very emotional, perhaps good reading for the families and audiences, but it has several logical flaws that Spear never addressed. It is doubtful that a delay would be allowed by headquarters to allow the dead to be buried in graves dug with bayonets. The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine assisted the wounded to the shelter of the rear, it would have been much easier to carry the four bodies to the rear than to bury them on the battlefield at night, with the light from matches, and possible sniper fire. Major Melcher, in a letter to his brother, wrote, “After dark we were relieved and returned to the City- first burying our dead where we bivouacked in the street, but some of the

companies occupied the vacant houses, my room was one formerly occupied by a rebel officer, every thing remaining in it.”<sup>43</sup>

The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine spent the rest of that night and the next day resting and sleeping in Fredericksburg. Monday night, about midnight, the regiment was deployed to the front as pickets. Spear reported that they occupied some rude intrenchments. Chamberlain had a much more dramatic rendition. While aligning the line, Chamberlain discovered someone digging and throwing gravel ahead of where the line was supposed to be located. In a confidential tone he told the soldier, ‘Throw to the other side, my man; that’s where the danger is! Golly! came back the confident answer, don’t ye s’pose I know which side them Yanks be? They’re right onto us now. I was rebuked and instructed, but must preserve my dignity as a Confederate on ‘ground rounds.’ “Dig away then, but keep a right smart lookout!” I said – then obeyed my own suggestion and dug away as calmly as my imperfect lookout would permit.”<sup>44</sup> Spear, of course, was not present, but he questions the veracity of the tale. He admits it was dark but not so dark that one could not see the nearest companions. In addition, if the night was as dark as Chamberlain claimed, how could he see the gravel flying in the wrong direction? Furthermore, how close is Chamberlain to the Confederate and how loud was he speaking. One other question comes to mind. If the conversation was as long as Chamberlain reported, why did the Confederate picket not become suspicious of a voice coming out of the dark to his front, with a New England accent then switched to a southern drawl? Historian John J. Pullen accepted this facility with language. But, Chamberlain told of another instance, in daylight no less, where he captured several

Confederate soldiers. They did not recognize his uniform but followed his commands because his voice convinced them he was southern.<sup>45</sup>

The order to withdraw is received. Chamberlain reported that a staff officer blundered to the front and in a loud voice crying, “Where is the commander of these troops?” Chamberlain claimed to be in command. “Get yourselves out of this as quick as God will let you! The whole army is across the river.”<sup>46</sup> Neither, Melcher, Gerrish, nor Spear report this incident. Spear asked in his anecdote where Colonel Ames was. All reports made about the beginning of the withdraw have the weather turning cloudy and the wind blowing from the Confederate lines toward the Union lines. Captain Judson of the 83<sup>rd</sup> described the scene as follows:

A driving south wind had sprung up and huge banks of clouds began to move along the skies. Providence had favored us. The clattering of tin cups and of coffee pots broke in ominous tones upon the stillness of the night, and called forth, from the lips of the more cautious men execrations not loud but deep. But the wind came from the direction of the enemy and the sound of these tinkling symbols broke not upon their ears.<sup>47</sup>

The division reached the town. Judson continued in his report:

That men were sent throughout the city, entering the building and sheds, arousing the sleepy stragglers and urging them across the river. The driving wind soon brought up a rain, and there we stood to our arms for two hours, amidst darkness and the pitiless pelting of the storm. At last the long-looked for and joyful hour of our relief came. The army was all over except our division, and only a few minutes before daylight we were ordered also to cross the river. We passed up the main street at a hurried pace and then over the pontoons; and, as the day dawned upon us, we struck the north shore of the Rappahannock.<sup>48</sup>

Judson gave a dramatic and suspenseful account of the withdraw but nothing like

Chamberlain’s for drama and suspense.

Finally, Chamberlain bade goodbye to the Fredericksburg battlefield, “Over the river, then, we marched, and up that bank, whence we now looked back across at

Fredericksburg, and saw the green slopes blue with the bodies of our dead.”<sup>49</sup> General Spear disagreed. It was mid December, two o’clock in the morning with clouds and rain. There was no looking back and observing green slopes covered with blue clad bodies. Even Chamberlain admitted it was raining. Captain Judson reported the time as a few minutes before daylight, Garrish wrote two o’clock in his memoirs, Melcher, provided no exact time, but suggested near two o’clock. The official reports of Generals Butterfield and Griffin reported the order to withdraw was received at three-thirty and the withdraw completed by four.<sup>50</sup> Apparently, Chamberlain was again being poetic and dramatic. It is highly doubtful that Chamberlain could have seen from across the river, in mid December, green slopes covered with blue clad bodies in the rain and dark of winter.

The Army of the Potomac returned to the camps that it had established prior to the attack on Fredericksburg. General Burnside received a message from General Halleck directing him to explain the reason for his withdraw. Then the United States Congress’s Committee on the Conduct of the War decided to investigate. Burnside remained in command and reinforced by Franz Sigel’s XI Corps and Henry Slocum’s XII Corps. Burnside prepared his army for another move. On January 20, 1863, the Army of the Potomac was put in motion. Burnside moving north toward Banks Ford on the Rappahannock River. Burnside woke up on the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> to the sound of rain on his tent. The rain continued all day and all night, some sleet was mixed with the rain and the roads turned into bogs. The Army floundered. What became known as the “Mud March” ended Burnside’s attempt to launch a new offensive. The Army of the Potomac went into winter quarters, and General Burnside went to Washington where President Lincoln replaced him with General Joseph Hooker.

<sup>1</sup> Nearly all historians and many individual soldiers comment upon the removal of McClellan and the appointment of Burnside. Bruce Catton, *Terrible Swift Sword* (New York: Doubleday 1963; Cardinal Edition, 1967), 453. Catton examined whether McClellan opposed the Emancipation Proclamation because he did not support it, or because he was a Democrat, or reluctant to hurt the South. For whatever reason, McClellan did not pursue Lee and moved only upon the urging of Lincoln and Stanton. Further discussion of why Lincoln waited so long, Catton suggested that it might have been to wait until after the November elections. Other historians who allude to the election are Edward J. Stackpole, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, 2d ed. (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books), 54; McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 569; Allen Nevins, *The War for the Union: War Becomes Revolution 18862-1863* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 164-165. McClellan's removal was not popular with the Army of the Potomac. In his letters home Captain Francis A. Donaldson, a Democrat, who did not like the Emancipation and the outcome of the recent election, blamed Secretary Stanton for McClellan's removal. Gregory Acken, ed. *Inside the Army of the Potomac: The Civil War Experience of Captain Francis Adams Donaldson* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1998), 146, 162-3. Private Garrish, *Army Life*, 54, had little to say. Spear, *Recollections*, 16-17, remarked that the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was indifferent to McClellan's removal since they were a recent acquisition of the Army of the Potomac.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1880-1901), Series I, Volume 31, Part 2, p. 84-113. Hereafter this source is cited as O.R., with series, volume, part, and page numbers given as I, 31, pt.2, p. 84-113. All historians who wrote about the Battle of Fredericksburg have addressed the incident of the delayed pontoons. After the battle an inquiry was held and many of those involved were asked to write reports and comments. Burnside though the pontoons were at Washington when in fact they were near Harper's Ferry. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of November, General Halleck sent an order by mail ordering the pontoons to Washington. The message took six days to reach Colonel Spaulding at Harper's Ferry. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, Burnside in accordance with his plan set his army in motion and asked Lieutenant Comstock, his chief engineer, to telegraph General Woodbury urging him to forward the pontoon trains promptly. General Woodbury responded to the second telegram. He informed General Burnside that this was the first he knew of the order and that the trains could start Sunday or Monday, November 16 or 17, depending somewhat upon the Quartermaster's Department. The horses were worn out and had to be replaced thus the cause for the delay in starting. On the 18<sup>th</sup> Burnside received a message that fresh teams had arrived and the trains were expected to start on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The train was prepared to move on the afternoon of the 19<sup>th</sup> but it began to rain. The rains made the roads worse and the pontoon trains mired in the mud, making at most five miles a day. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> Colonel Spaulding determined that no progress could be made and decided to put the trains on a steamer and tow it to Belle Plain and let the animals go by land. The train was put aboard but when it got to Belle Plain they found the water too shallow for the steamer so a small tug was obtained to tow the rafts in. The wagons were reassembled and loaded and the trains started for Falmouth, across the river from Fredericksburg. The trains reached Falmouth on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Then it rained again, the Rappahannock River rose, and the first attempt to use the pontoons was on December 11. For additional reports see Brigadier General Rufus Ingalls Memorandum for General Burnside (O.R. I, 21, pt 2, 148); Captain H. W. Bowers (O.R. I, 21, pt 2, 1000-1001); Brigadier General Daniel P. Woodbury (O.R. I, 21, pt2, 169-171). Furthermore, in another report General Woodbury (O.R. I, 21, pt2, 794) wrote that he, "... had never received, from any source whatever, any information relative to the necessity or importance of a pontoon train ... but no one informed me that the success of any important movement depended in the slightest degree upon a pontoon train to leave Washington by land." General Woodbury was arrested but at the inquest he apparently was exonerated; however, he ends his report, "In conclusion, I will state that I have never before been under arrest, and that I greatly regret the occurrence."

<sup>3</sup> Stackpole, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, 85. Stackpole argued that Sumner should have forded the river and established a strong bridge head and that he had his mind made up on a pontoon crossing, and that Burnside was inflexible. In the second edition of Stackpole's book, D. Scott Hartwig commented upon Stackpole's thesis and supports Burnside's decision not to have Sumner cross the river, 293. William Marvel, Ambrose Burnside, in *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, edited by Gary W. Gallagher, 7, supported Burnside's decision not to split his army. Marvel pointed out that there was a threat of rain, thus raising waters would make resupply and support difficult if not impossible. Marvel has a good argument as it did rain, the river rose, and the construction of the bridges was delayed for over two weeks.

<sup>4</sup> James Longstreet, "The Battle of Fredericksburg," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, ed. Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, 4 vols. (New York: Century, 1887-88), 3:71-72.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander, Edward Porter. *Military Memoirs of a Confederate: A Critical Narrative* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 303 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

<sup>6</sup> Francis Augustin O'Reilly. *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 252.

<sup>7</sup> Recollections 20, 300.

<sup>8</sup> O'Reilly. *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock*, 366.

<sup>9</sup> William B. Style, ed. *With a Flash of His Sword: The Writings of Major Holman S. Melcher 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Infantry* (Kearny: Belle Grove Publishing Company, 1994), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Spear, *Conflicting Accounts*, 19. Chamberlain's article was first published in *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, January 1913. References are made to Ellis's version, which is reprinted in his monograph, for convenience of a single source.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>13</sup> Allan Nevins, *The War for the Union: War Becomes Revolution 1862-1863* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 325.

<sup>14</sup> Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr., Philip B. Kunhardt III, and Peter W. Kunhardt, *Lincoln: An Illustrated Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 170-171, 190.

<sup>15</sup> J. Gregory Acken, ed., *Inside the Army of the Potomac: The Civil War Experience of Captain Adams Donaldson* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1998), 163.

<sup>16</sup> Charlotta Wells, ed. *Rundlett's War: Civil War letters of James C. Rundlett, 20 Maine Volunteers, Co. G, as they fought from Maine to Virginia* (privately printed), sketch following page 32.

<sup>17</sup> J. Gregory Acken, ed., *Inside the Army of the Potomac: The Civil War Experience of Captain Adams Donaldson* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1998), 163.

<sup>18</sup> Spear, *Conflicting Accounts*, 66.

<sup>19</sup> O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock*, 60.

<sup>20</sup> Spear, *Conflicting Accounts*, 27.

<sup>21</sup> Style, *With a Flash of his Sword*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Spear, *Conflicting Accounts*, 28.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>24</sup> Gerrish, *Army Life*, 76.

<sup>25</sup> Amos M. Judson, *History of the Eighty-Third Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers* (Erie: B. F. H. Lynn Publisher, 1865. Reprint: Dayton: Morningside Bookshop, 1986), 102 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>26</sup> O'Reilly, *The Fredericksburg Campaign*, 364.

<sup>27</sup> Report of Maine Commissioners by the Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg* (Portland: The Lakeside Press, 1898. Reprint: Gettysburg: Stan Clark Military Books, 1994), 275 (page citations are to the reprint edition). General Chamberlain was a member of the committee thus the question did he write this report? It is also known that General Spear contributed to this work.

<sup>28</sup> O.R. I, 21, pt 2, report 172 by Brigadier General Griffin; report 178 by Colonel Stockton; report 179 by Colonel Vincent., and report 4. None of the reports mention artillery fire while crossing the bridge. All three reported heavy fire of artillery and musketry from the enemy after leaving the city. The Third Brigade suffered sixteen killed, and 160 wounded for the period 11 to 15 December 1862.

<sup>29</sup> Edward Porter Alexander, *Military Memoirs of a Confederate: A Critical Narrative* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907. Reprint: New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 203 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>30</sup> O.R. I, 21, pt 2, report #170 by Brigadier General Butterfield, commanding V Corps; report #178 by Colonel Stockton, commanding 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade; report #179 by Colonel Vincent, 83<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry.

<sup>31</sup> Spear, *Conflicting Accounts*, 68.

<sup>32</sup> William H. Powell, *The Fifty Army Corps: A Record of Operations During the civil War in the United States of America, 1861-1865* (Dayton: Morningside Bookshop, 1984) 410.

<sup>33</sup> Style, *With a Flash of His Sword*, 13.

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<sup>34</sup> Spear, *Conflicting Accounts*, 50.

<sup>35</sup> Dadius N. Couch, *Sumner's 'Right Grand Division,' Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, eds. Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, Vol. 3 (New York: Century, 1887. Reprint: Castle Books, 1995), 116. (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, William Miller Own 'A Hot Day on Marye's Heights,' *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Vol. 3, 99.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>38</sup> Spear, *Conflicting Accounts*, 29.

<sup>39</sup> Gerrish, *Army Life*, 77

<sup>40</sup> Styple, *With a Flash of his Sword*, 15.

<sup>41</sup> Spear, *Conflicting Accounts*, 35.

<sup>42</sup> Judson, *History of the 83<sup>rd</sup>*, 105.

<sup>43</sup> Spear, *Conflicting Accounts*, 35.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>45</sup> Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, *The Passing of the Armies: The Last Campaign of the Armies* (reprint, Gettysburg: Stan Clark military Books, 1994), 48. Copyrighted in 1915, original publisher unknown.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>47</sup> Judson, 109. Captain Donaldson of the of the 118 Pennsylvania Infantry that his unit was one of the last to withdraw in a drenching rain. Donaldson, *Inside the Army of the Potomac*, 193. Many regiments claim to be the last to with draw. Jim Crawford, *The 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry* (Dayton: Morningside House, Inc., 2002), 252. Lt. Heber Woodruff wrote, ". . . We marched down to be the bridge and our regiment were the ones to cross except a few of the engineers who were waiting to take up the bridge." The time was 7 a.m. in a sleeting rain.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>49</sup> Spear, *Conflicting Accounts*, 37.

<sup>50</sup> O.R. I, 21, pt2, 170 report #170 and page 405 report #172. In report #178, Third Brigade commander Colonel Stockton became ill and turned over command to Colonel Vincent, commander of the 83<sup>rd</sup>, who commanded the withdraw.

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## CHAPTER 4

### THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

Lincoln's selection of General Hooker surprised many. Known as "Fighting Joe", he had schemed behind Burnside's back and had commented that both the Army and the government needed a dictator. Lincoln wrote, "Of course it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes, can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship."<sup>1</sup> Hooker proved popular with the army. His headquarters was reputed to be a place that no self-respecting man would like to go, and no decent woman could go. Never the less, he cashiered corrupt quartermasters, improved the food, cleaned up the camps and hospitals, granted furloughs, and installed unit pride by creating insignia badges for each corps. This concept of unit identification is still used in the United States Army and army units worldwide. The V Corps wore the Maltese cross. The men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine wore a red Maltese cross on their caps.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine spent the next two months in camp, repairing huts and tents, cleaning and organizing their area, and drilling and practicing regimental maneuvers. The troops were finally paid, death due to illness decreased, and in conjunction with the furlough program and mail from home, morale improved. In a letter, Private Lamson wrote that he had heard of a friend gaining a commission and commanding a company of Negroes, and wondered if he too could become an officer. Rumors circulated that Colonel Ames

would bet \$100 that they would all go home by July.<sup>2</sup> Hooker's efforts to improve morale slowly filtered down to company level. Like Hooker, Spear thought rations were abominable and did what he could to improve them. He obtained a barrel of flour and used it to feed the sick gruel made from the flour. Once, he was able to obtain soft bread but without butter. In a letter Sergeant Rundlett mentioned getting paid, that furloughs were being granted, and that food had improved. The soft bread was the first issued since they left Washington. Furloughs were for only fifteen days so he doubted that he would apply for one.<sup>3</sup>

Ellis found camp life boring. He received a furlough and departed for Stamford, New York where, on March 13, 1863, he married Susie M. Wilde. They had been engaged for about a year, but the press of raising men for the company and the haste in which they left Maine for the front had delayed any chance of marriage. Her father conducted the ceremony, and soon after they left New York for Maine.<sup>4</sup>

While Captain Spear was on leave, orders came down directing that the names of individuals worthy for promotion to be forwarded to headquarters. Sergeant Rundlett, a Corporal at the time he was writing the letter, wrote home saying that the lieutenant did not submit his name because he knew that Ellis would be displeased. According to Rundlett, the Captain had not recommended him for promotion to Commissary Sergeant while at Antietam. Then further conflict was reported in this letter home. Lieutenant Hoffses had borrowed from both Rundlett and Spear, and when he sent the money, Captain Spear claimed that there was only enough money to pay the money owed him.

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Rundlett and the company commander had a falling out over the issue of money. Since

then the Captain had been grouchy and had refused to help me, claimed Rundlett, although he had been kept on as acting second sergeant.

Upon the Captain's return, Rundlett claimed that an inquiry was made in to the reasons that he had not been recommended for promotion. According to Rundlett, three line officers had suggested that he be advanced from corporeal to lieutenant but that upon further consideration it was agreed that was to great a step unless there was some extraordinary cause. An alternate suggestion was for a promotion to sergeant major. That, however, did not take place. Due of all the attention, Rundlett claimed, it was in Spear's interest that Rundlett be promoted to Orderly Sergeant.<sup>5</sup> Rundlett provided no reason for Spear not supporting his promotion after Antietam. Spear made no mention in his diary of this conflict.

Spear returned and merged into camp routine of drills, inspections, and more drills. Inoculation of the army for smallpox was part of Hooker's health plan. Through some mistake, the men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine received a defective smallpox vaccine, causing over eighty cases of smallpox. Private Gerrish mentioned the smallpox incident in his book; Private Livermore mentions a death in his company from smallpox; Sergeant Rundlett wrote that the regiment had nearly forty cases; and Lieutenant Melcher, in a letter to his brother, listed four deaths and eighty cases and called the error "murder." Ellis wrote little of the smallpox episode. In his recollections, he wrote the regiment had one case; in his diary he noted, "Left our old camp & pitched tents on a run over a mile distant—leaving our Small Pox patients in hospital."<sup>6</sup> The unit was quarantined at a camp called "Quarantine Hill." Notices were posted at every entrance to the camp, and the doctors imposed a quarantine period of two weeks. Both Colonels Ames and Chamberlain were

upset by the thought that they would miss the next battle. Blanche Ames did not mention the smallpox episode, nor any of the measures Colonel Ames took to avoid quarantine and obtain an appointment to General Meade's staff. Colonel Ames met with his staff to announce his promotion. Lieutenant Colonel Chamberlain was to succeed him as regimental commander. Furthermore, in Colonel Ames' opinion Major Gilmore was not fit for the service. But, to let him down easily, he was to be promoted to the rank of Lt. Colonel and then allowed to retire by resignation. Captain Spear was to be promoted to major; after Gilmore resigned he would be promoted to Lt. Colonel. Captain Keene would then fill the position of major. Gilmore was not present at this meeting, but Lt. Tom Chamberlain, Colonel Chamberlain's brother, informed Spear that he saw Gilmore eavesdropping on the meeting, and then, sneaking away. Chamberlain and Gilmore were promoted. Gilmore; however, did not resign, and due to some contention by Captain Clark, Spear was not promoted to Major.<sup>7</sup> Lt. Colonel Chamberlain assumed command of the regiment.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of April, 1863, Lt. Colonel Chamberlain and the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine watched the Army of the Potomac march out on the road to Chancellorsville. The Governor of Maine, Abner Coburn visited the regiment on the first of May. Spear wrote that he inspected the men's quarters and tried some hard tack. He doubted that that the Governor ordered any for his private table. Meanwhile, not willing to sit in camp playing cards, Chamberlain was frantic, trying to get into action, any action. He went to headquarters asking that the Twentieth Maine be given something to do even if it was giving the Confederates the smallpox. Perhaps, it was this argument that won the day. That night he received orders to move out to Banks and United States Fords on the Rappahannock

River to guard the telegraph and signal lines from Hooker's headquarters to various places on the battlefield.<sup>8</sup> The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was close enough to hear the roar of the cannons and sometimes to observe the fighting; however, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine did not participate in the Battle of Chancellorsville. (May 1-4, 1863)

Following Lee's success at Chancellorsville, General Hooker saved the Army of the Potomac by pulling back across the Rappahannock. The defeat had cost the Union forces 17,000 troops, or about 15 percent of the total strength. Victory, however, had cost the Confederacy about 13,000 casualties, or about 22 percent of their force. For several days the two armies watched each other across the river. Then Hooker gave orders for the army to return to camp. Spear remembered receiving the order at night with rain threatening. Miles from camp, he decided to take his company across country to the old camp. Using skills gained in the Maine woods, Spear led his company directly to camp. The rest of the regiment straggled in about midnight.<sup>9</sup>

The Army of the Potomac remained in camp doing little but drill and picket duty. Near the middle of May, Spear wrote in his diary that they moved camp up river several times but there was nothing unusual to record. Often his entries would be, "All quiet in camp." Meanwhile, Lee in Richmond, argued against a plan to send Longstreet to the west to relieve the siege of Vicksburg. Lee argued that it would take weeks for Longstreet to travel nearly a thousand miles. He believed that if Vicksburg could hold out until June, "the climate in June would force the enemy to retire."<sup>10</sup> Lee proposed what he regarded as a better use for his troops. He proposed to invade Pennsylvania. Lee believed that a crushing defeat of Union forces would remove the enemy threat on the Rappahannock, take the armies out of Virginia, enable him to feed his troops off of the

land of the enemy, strengthen the Peace Democrats, discredit the Republicans, reopen the question of foreign recognition, and even perhaps, conquer peace and recognition from the Union government itself.<sup>11</sup> President Davis and all cabinet members but Postmaster-General John Reagan were awed by Lee's plan and gave him permission to proceed.

June 3<sup>rd</sup> is the official date of the beginning of the invasion on the North. Led by General Lafayette McLaws's division of General Richard Stoddert Ewell's corps, the Army of Northern Virginia began its march north. Using the Blue Ridge mountains as shelter and a partial screen, the army advanced down the Shenandoah Valley capturing 3,500 men in the Union garrisons at Winchester and Martinsburg. General Hooker advanced his cavalry across the Rappahannock on the 9<sup>th</sup> in an attempt to locate Lee and his army. General J.E.B. Stuart was surprised at Brandy Station, (the largest cavalry battle of the war), nevertheless rallied his troops and pushed the Union back across the river. Hooker was indecisive and asked Lincoln if he should drive south to Richmond. Lincoln advised against such a move and told Hooker that Lee's army was the objective not Richmond. Ellis recorded in his diary that all was quiet in the camp. On June 5<sup>th</sup> they marched two or three miles and made camp again. Remaining in camp on the sixth and seventh, he reported that there were rumors of movement but no advance by his unit until the 13<sup>th</sup>. The weather was warm and pleasant.<sup>12</sup>

Weather can be fickle and unpredictable and a storm soaked the men of the V Corps. General George Gordon Meade, corps commander, allowed them to sleep until first light. They prepared breakfast and were on the march by ten. The rain gave way to sun and soon dense clouds of dust choked all. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade now commanded by General Strong Vincent, Colonel Stockton having resigned, now consisted of only four regiments,

the 83<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania, 44<sup>th</sup> New York, 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan, and the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine.<sup>13</sup> Many men fell out because of the heat and choking dust. Halt was finally called after twenty miles about seven that evening. The march continued the next day. Reveille at three, the brigade was on the road by seven. They passed through the First Bull Run battlefield, which still displayed the results of the battle, and finally stopped for an hour's rest. Back on the road, the heat and rapid pace soon had more men falling because of heatstroke. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, the V Corps was allowed to rest, but the next day, by six, they were on the road toward Gum Springs. Again, heat and the lack of water thinned the ranks and a writer from one of the regiments wrote that they began the march with 230 men and ended it with 107, which was a better showing than most regiments.<sup>14</sup>

The next two days, the V Corps remained in camp near Gum Springs. Late in the afternoon of the 19<sup>th</sup>, they broke camp and marched about six miles to Aldie. The rise in elevation and a cooling rain, that settled the dust, restored the men, and many of the stragglers caught up with their units. The heat affected officers too; Colonel Chamberlain was quite ill and, although, he had rejoined the unit he was in no condition to command. In the distance could be heard sounds of a cavalry battle, and Major Gilmore was taken ill, as usual. Captain Spear was detailed to act as field officer. Lieutenant Colonel Freeman Conner of the 44<sup>th</sup> New York was placed in temporary command of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine.<sup>15</sup>

General Hooker probed the gaps of the Blue Ridge Mountains with his cavalry to determine the location of the Army of Northern Virginia and Lee's intentions, but Jeb Stuart's cavalry screened the Army of Northern Virginia. Vigorous probes by General Alfred Pleasonton's cavalry and its infantry support at the vital Blue Ridge Mountain

caused Lee to hesitate. Colonel Strong Vincent's 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade was detached and sent to add weight to the cavalry probe at Ashby's Gap.

Just east of Ashby's Gap, near Middleburg, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade encountered dismounted Confederate horsemen behind stone walls, and a six-gun battery near the road. With Union cavalry on his right flank, Colonel Vincent formed a line of battle with three of his regiments. The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine and the 44<sup>th</sup> New York were in line of battle with the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan on the left. Their objective was to silence the battery. The other two regiments were to drive the enemy from behind the stone walls. The 83<sup>rd</sup>, using some woods on the left to conceal their movements, was to advance rapidly and fall upon the enemy's flank and rear.<sup>16</sup> Spear threw forward a line of skirmishers and drove the enemy from their position in the edge of the wood and advanced under artillery fire through the wood. The enemy horsemen fell back about a half mile and then mounted up but were pursued by the Union cavalry. The cavalry pursuit ended the skirmish that soldiers remembered as the Battle of Middleburg, Aldie, Ashby's Gap, Upperville, Atoka, or Rector's Crossroads. Spear and others in his company remember it more for the men that were killed and wounded in their company. While advancing, Spear's company had been subjected to artillery fire, and a solid shot took off the leg of Sergeant Wood and mortally wounded Private Robinson and several others. The company continued its pursuit of the rebels. The following day, on their return to camp at Aldie, Spear made a detour to bury Sergeant Wood near the stream above the stone bridge about two miles beyond Middleburg.<sup>17</sup>

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The aggressiveness of Hooker's cavalry and infantry at Ashby's Gap caused Lee to pause, and he ordered General Longstreet to remain in camp. Hooker failed to follow up

on the penetration at Ashby's Gap and after two days of inactivity, Lee continued his invasion of Pennsylvania. General Ewell's Corps was already in Pennsylvania, General Hill's Corps began crossing the Potomac River, and General Longstreet's Corps approached the river. General Pickett's division led, followed by General Hood's. General Mclaw's brought up the rear. Meanwhile, Hooker's V Corps was also crossing the Potomac River into Maryland.

On June 27<sup>th</sup> Hood's Division was in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. This division consisted of three brigades of eighteen regiments. The commanders of the brigades were Generals Law, Robertson, and Anderson.<sup>18</sup> It was the Fifteenth Alabama regiment, commander by Colonel William C. Oates, of Law's Brigade that was to clash with the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine of Vincent's Third Brigade on July 2<sup>nd</sup> on Little Round Top. The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was on the road to Frederick, Maryland. Hooker, too, was there, after stopping at Harper's Ferry and finding 10,000 troops guarding the town. Thinking that Lee would capture these troops, as he had done prior to the Battle of Antietam, Hooker sent an ultimatum to Washington, "let me have the troops or relieve me." General Halleck and Lincoln were more than happy to accommodate him and General George Gordon Meade was appointed commander of the Army of the Potomac.

General Halleck considered Meade the logical choice to replace Hooker. Meade was a West Point graduate, veteran of the Seminole and Mexican Wars, and had fought bravely and skillfully in the Seven Days and Second Bull Run, South Mountain, Antietam, and Fredericksburg. His judgement and nerve in the handling of the V Corps at Chancellorsville earned him the respect and recommendation, by two other corps leaders, Darius N. Couch and John F. Reynolds, that he be made head of the Army of the

Potomac. In conjunction with Meade's promotion, General George Sykes, West Point graduate, veteran of Seminole and Mexican Wars, regimental commander during the battles of the Peninsula, Bull Run, Antietam, Shepherdstown, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, was appointed commander of the V Corps.

While the leadership of the Army of the Potomac was being reorganized, The 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama of Hood's Division, rested and foraged in the countryside around New Guilford, not far from Chambersburg and about 25 miles north west of Gettysburg. Lee thought that the campaign was going well but a nagging doubt bothered him. He had not heard from General Stuart nor did he know the location of the Union Army. Late on the 28<sup>th</sup>, Lee learned not only that the Union Army crossed the Potomac River but also was very close to parts of the scattered Confederate Army. Sensing the danger that his army would be defeated in detail, Lee began to concentrate his army near either Cashtown or Gettysburg. Cashtown was an excellent concentration point for it offered good defensive positions, and he could turn either east or west as advantages offered.<sup>19</sup> Nine roads converged on Gettysburg.

Lee sent instructions to Ewell to march toward Gettysburg. Meade reported to Halleck that his army was dispersed in a manner that anticipated a collision at Gettysburg. General Heth sent General Pettigrew's brigade to Gettysburg in search of supplies but returned with the news that Federal cavalry was in town. General Buford's cavalry held off General Pettigrew until reinforced by General Reynolds's I Corps and fought the rebels to a standstill. About noon, General Howard's XI Corps arrived and deployed north of Gettysburg in time to resist General Ewell's Confederate II Corps. Slowly the Union army was pushed through the town and was forced to entrench on

Culps Hill and Cemetery Ridge. The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, for the past two days, had been marching up the Baltimore Pike by forced marches. Passing through Liberty, Private Livermore noticed the Stars and Stripes flying from most every building. Ladies lined the road waving their handkerchiefs, others stood at their gates with buckets of water for the hot, thirsty soldiers. Apparently stronger beverages were offered; the Color Sergeant got drunk, was unable to carry the colors, fell to the rear, and had to be helped along by three men. Livermore had no sympathy for him and hoped that he would be broken. Although the day was cloudy, the forced march and heat caused many men to falter, but they saw the return of their commander, Colonel Chamberlain. June 30<sup>th</sup> found the regiment halted at Union Mills. Livermore found the people friendly and willing to sell them milk, eggs, and pies. Apparently the regiment followed close on the heels of the rebels for he was told that 7,000 rebels had left earlier that day. The townspeople also passed on the story that the rebels had told them that when “the Yankees came along they would burn there [*sic*] buildings and kill there [*sic*] children as they did in Virginia.”<sup>20</sup> On July 1<sup>st</sup>, they marched west toward the sound of the cannons, but by eleven that night, they could stagger no further and went into bivouac.

Meanwhile the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama did not get on the road until nearly four in the afternoon. General Hood, anxious to get to the scene of battle pushed the troops unmercifully and did not halt until after midnight.<sup>21</sup> The sun rose on the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama troops on the march. The day promised to be hot and soon clouds of choking dust rose to torture the thirsty men. Many men fell out, never to rejoin the unit in time for the battle.

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As it neared Gettysburg only about 450 remained with the regiment. Around noon the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama reached March Creek located about four miles west of Gettysburg but did

not reach the town until near 2 o'clock. "But after the record-setting march across Franklin and Adams Counties, Colonel Oates's exhausted Alabamians were in poor shape, especially for offensive operations."<sup>22</sup>

The Union Army's V Corps, after marching most of the night, reached the vicinity of the battlefield about 5:00 a.m.<sup>23</sup> Corporal Elisha S. Coan, a member of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine's color guard, wrote that upon reaching the vicinity of Gettysburg, they rested on their arms until daylight at which time roll was called, arms and ammunition were inspected, and they were ordered to load their pieces.<sup>24</sup> They were issued twenty extra rounds of ammunition but no further actions were required. Years later, when Corporal Coan wrote his recollections of the Battle of Gettysburg, he distinguished the "peach orchard where he rested on the east side of Cemetery Ridge and the "peach orchard" on the west side of Cemetery Ridge, that was the scene of fierce fighting. The men rested, Coan wrote, "upon a hillside in a peach orchard, not – the 'peach orchard' cooking coffee and writing letters, or sleeping." About 3 p.m., a single gun was heard, he thought that it was fired at the suggestion of General Warren. General Gouverneur K. Warren, General Meade's chief engineer, had been ordered to examine the ground on the Union's left. Upon his arrival at the summit of Little Round Top, he found it unoccupied except for a few signalmen. To the west was a long line of woods that offered concealment. Suspecting that the woods were concealing enemy soldiers, he sent word to a battery emplaced on a smaller hill below to fire a shot into the woods. The artillery round startled the Confederate troops causing them to shift and glint of sunlight revealed their presence. Perhaps, this is the shot that Corporal Coan referred to in his memoir. General Warren realized immediately that Longstreet's troops could flank the Union line. He sent

one aide to inform Meade and requested a division and sent another to General Sickles asking for a brigade. Sickles could spare none. One aide reached General Sykes. Immediately Sykes put his corps into motion. Chamberlain wrote that the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine led at the double-quick. Colonel Vincent with Private Oliver W. Norton, his bugler and color bearer raced ahead, and encountered a captain of General Sykes' staff riding toward them. Colonel Vincent, who evidently knew the captain, left the head of his brigade and rode forward to meet him; Norton followed closely with the flag. Arriving, Vincent said, 'Captain, what are your orders?' Without replying directly, the officer said, 'Where is General Barnes?' If Vincent knew he did not answer the question, but said with emphasis, 'What are your orders? Give me your orders.' The officer replied, 'General Sykes directed me to tell General Barnes to send one of his brigades to occupy that hill yonder,' pointing to Little Round Top. Without a moment's hesitation Vincent replied, 'I will take the responsibility of taking my brigade there.'<sup>25</sup>

Colonel Vincent led the Third Brigade from the area of Rock Creek. With the 44<sup>th</sup> New York Regiment leading, Vincent rode ahead to reconnoiter the area to determine the best placement for his brigade. On what is now often referred to as "Vincent's Slope," he placed the 44<sup>th</sup> New York on the west slope of Little Round Top, not on the crest, but well below it. To the left of the 44<sup>th</sup> New York, he placed the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan, then the 83rd Pennsylvania and on the extreme left of the Union line the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine.<sup>26</sup> Colonel Chamberlain placed the companies of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine starting at the left with Company G then C, H, A, the color guard and colors, then companies F, D, K, I, and E on the right.

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Major Gilmore being absent, Captains Clark and Spear were acting as staff officers.

Captain Clark on the right and Captain Spear on the left. Captain Walter Morrill's Company B was thrust forward as a line of skirmishers.

Meanwhile, Colonel Oates and his nearly exhausted soldiers of the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama led the Divisions of Generals McLaw and Hood, in an attempt to remain concealed from Union observers, they were marched and countermarched on a roundabout route toward the left flank of the Union Army. Finally, around 3:30 p.m., Colonel Oates' 15<sup>th</sup> Alabamians began their assault on the Union lines. Understanding the importance of high ground, their initial objective was Big Round Top. But, Big Round Top was isolated from the Union position by a wide gap between the two hills. All the effort of the tired soldiers to climb the steep hill was for naught. In order to attack the enemy lines they had to descend the hill and climb the rugged, boulder strewn, steep slopes of Little Round Top. Their path to the top was blocked by the men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine.<sup>27</sup>

Colonel Chamberlain in his report of July 6<sup>th</sup> wrote that Colonel Vincent told him that he was to, "hold that ground at all hazards." He placed his regiment along:

...the line as should best secure the advantage of the rough, rocky, and stragglingly wooded ground. The line faced generally toward a more conspicuous eminence southwest of ours, which is known as Sugar Loaf, or Round Top. Between this and my position intervened a smooth and thinly wooded hollow. My line formed, I immediately detached Company B, Captain Morrill commanding, to extend from my left flank across this hollow as a line of skirmishers, with directions to act as occasion might dictate, to prevent a surprise on my exposed flank and rear.

He continued with his report that the enemy soon attacked his left flank. The assault was repelled with a "brisk fire at close range" and they retired. Soon, however, a new assault was launched along the entire line that "pushed up to within a dozen yards of us before the terrible effectiveness of our fire compelled them to break and take shelter." Soon another attack was launched. Chamberlain reported:

They renewed the assault on our whole front, and for an hour the fighting was sever. Squads of the enemy broke through our line in several places, and the fight was literally hand to hand. The edge of the fight rolled backward and forward like a wave. The dead and wounded were now in our front and then in our rear. Forced from our position, we desperately recovered it, and pushed the enemy down to the foot of the slope. The intervals of the struggle were seized to remove our wounded (and those of the enemy also), to gather ammunition from the cartridge-boxes of disabled friend or foe on the field, and even to secure better muskets than the Enfields, which we found did not stand service well. Rude shelters were thrown up of the loose rocks that covered the ground.

The attacks continued, and Chamberlain account continued:

It did not seem possible to withstand another shock like this now coming on. Our loss had been severe. One-half of my left wing had fallen, and a third of my regiment lay just behind us, dead or badly wounded. At this; moment my anxiety was increased by a great roar of musketry in my rear, on the farther or northerly slope of Little Round Top, apparently on the flank of the regular brigade, which was in support of Hazlett's battery on the crest behind us. The bullets from this attack struck into my left rear, and I feared that the enemy might have nearly surrounded the Little Round Top, and only a desperate chance was left for us. My ammunition was soon exhausted. My men were firing their last shot and getting ready to 'club' their muskets.

It was imperative to strike before we were struck by this overwhelming force in a hand-to-hand fight, which we could not probably have withstood or survived. At that crisis, I ordered the bayonet. The word was enough. It ran like fire along the line, from man to man, and rose into a shout, with which they sprang forward upon the enemy, now not 30 yards away. The effect was surprising; many of the enemy's first line threw down their arms and surrendered. An officer fired his pistol at my head with one hand, while he handed me his sword with the other. Holding fast by our right, and swinging forward our left, we made an extended 'right wheel,' before which the enemy's second line broke and fell back, fighting from tree to tree, many being captured, until we had swept the valley and cleared the front of nearly our entire brigade.<sup>28</sup>

Colonel Oates reported his side of the Gettysburg engagement in an after action report on

August 8, 1863:

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On reaching the foot of the mountain below, I found the enemy in heavy force, posted in rear of large rocks upon a slight elevation beyond a depression of some 300 yards in width between the base of the mountain

and the open plain beyond. I engaged them, my right meeting the left of their line exactly. Here I lost several gallant officers and men.

After firing two or three rounds, I discovered that the enemy were giving way in my front. I ordered a charge, and the enemy in my front fled, but that portion of his line confronting the two companies on my left held their ground, and continued a most galling fire upon my left.

Just at this moment, I discovered the regiment on my left (Forty-seventh Alabama) retiring. I halted my regiment as it left reached a very large rock, and ordered a left-wheel of the regiment, which was executed in good order under fire, thus taking advantage of a ledge of rocks running off in a line perpendicular to the one I had just abandoned, and affording very good protection to my men. This position enabled me to keep up a constant flank and cross fire upon the enemy, which in less than five minutes caused him to change front. Receiving re-enforcements, he charged me five times, and was as often repulsed with heavy loss. Finally, I discovered that the enemy had flanked me on the right, and two regiments were moving rapidly upon my rear and not 200 yards distant, when, to save my regiment from capture or destruction, I ordered a retreat.<sup>29</sup>

Years later, Chamberlain's version of the event changed little, but significant. In the original report it was "we made an extended right-wheel." Later the change was, he "ordered a right-wheel." Oates's reported being "flanked on the right" and "two regiments" were moving rapidly upon his rear. But, it was not until years later that a controversy arose between them. Colonel Oates wanted to place a monument at the furthest point of the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama's advance. Beginning in 1899, he began inquiring about erecting a memorial to the Fifteenth Alabama. Receiving a noncommittal reply he began a campaign to erect the monument. The battlefield commissioners, of which only one was from the south, agreed only to a memorial consisting of a single stone at the center of the Alabamians' line on Little Round Top. Oates wanted three markers, one at the center and two flank markers that would indicate the extent of the Fifteenth's line. None could agree to the proper location, so they contacted Colonel Chamberlain. For years,

Chamberlain and Oates corresponded but could never agree upon the proper locations.

Colonel Oates died in September 1910, and the effort to place a monument to the Fifteenth Alabama died with him, there is no monument to the Fifteenth at Gettysburg.<sup>30</sup>

The controversy over Chamberlain's action on Little Round Top has lasted longer than his dispute with Oates. In his first report to General Barnes, Commander, 1<sup>st</sup> Division, V Corps, there is no mention of a "right wheel." He wrote:

I saw that the defensive could be maintained not an instant longer, & with a few gallant officer rallied a line, ordered "bayonets fixed,' & 'forward' at a run. My men went down upon the enemy with a wild shout, the two wings were brought into one line again. I directed the whole Regiment to take intervals at 5 paces by the left flank, & change direction to the right, all this without checking our speed, thus keeping my right connected with the 83<sup>rd</sup> Penna, while the left swept around to the distance of half a mile. In this charge the bayonet only was used on our part, the rebels seemed so petrified with astonishment. . . .<sup>31</sup>

In the next report, Chamberlain wrote, "As a last, desperate resort, I ordered a charge...." In a report to Governor Coburn of Maine there was no mention of a "right wheel" nor was it mentioned in any of his letters to his wife. Chamberlain kept revising the number of prisoners captured and the size of the force opposing him, which varies from 2, 3, 4 regiments to a whole brigade. The number that he reported killed remained at 150. In his address, at the dedication of the Twentieth Maine Monument, Colonel Chamberlain described how the Lieutenant commanding the color company came to ask permission to advance and protect the wounded in front of the line. He claimed that he gave the instruction, "you are to make a great right wheel." Then he claimed that he gave the order, "Bayonet! Forward to the right!"<sup>32</sup> Finally, the version that many historians believe began the controversy between Spear and Chamberlain was written by Chamberlain and appeared in *Deeds of Valor, or How American Heroes won the Medal*

*of Honor*. In this short narrative Chamberlain wrote, "Giving the order to charge, I placed myself beside the colors at the apex of our formation, sent word to the senior officer on my left to make a right wheel of the charge and endeavor to catch the enemy somewhat in flank on the right."<sup>33</sup> There are two parts to the controversy, did Chamberlain order "bayonets forward" and did he order and direct a "right wheel?"

Private William Livermore was a member of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine color guard recorded a much less detailed account in his diary. He wrote, "We stood until our center had lost half our men, and we knew we could not stand longer. We were ordered to charge them when there were two to our one. With fixed bayonets and a yell we rushed on them, which so frightened them, than not another shot was fired on us."<sup>34</sup> Another member of the color guard was Private Elisha Coan. In his diary he wrote:

Of the 308 men and officers, only one hundred and eighty were now left for duty, other officers joined Melcher in urging a forward movement and Col C gave his consent. Immediately Melcher passed to the front of his Co. and placing himself in front of the colors ordered his men forward other officers followed his example. The men not knowing that the movement was sanctioned by Col C hesitated knowing, realizing the hazardous risk and what the result would be if unsuccessful. Then Col C gave the order 'forward.' This was heard by but few but it sped along ourselves and the regiment with a yell equal to a thousand men sprang forward in a wild mad charge."<sup>35</sup>

Corporal Nathan S. Clark, a member of Company H on the right, recorded in his diary:

Col Chamberlain gave the order fix bayonets, charge bayonets, charge and off we went with a wild yell that surprised the enemy, they at that time being not over four rods from us. They had but little time to choose between surrender or cold steel, so most of their front line dropped their rifles and step[p]ed to our rear for safety."<sup>36</sup>

Years later Captain Melcher recorded his account in the Lincoln County News, March 13, 1885,

When 136 of our brave officers and men had been shot down where they stood, and only 172 remained, hardly more than a strong skirmish line, and the 60 rounds of cartridges each man carried into the fight had been

fired, and the survivors were using the cartridge-boxes of their fallen comrades, the time had come when it must be decided whether we should fall back and give up this key to the whole field of Gettysburg, or charge and try to throw off this foe, that were rapidly drawing the life-blood of our regiment by their deadly fire. It must not be the former; how can it be the latter? Col. Chamberlain decides it can be only the latter and gives the order to 'fix bayonets,' and almost before he can say 'Charge!' The regiment, with a shout of desperation, leaps down the hill and close in with the foe, which we find behind every rock and tree."<sup>37</sup>

In his diary for July 2, Ellis Spear recorded:

Our men fell rapidly. At last we charged drove them & took many prisoners." In his memoirs he provided more details, "Suddenly, in the midst of the noise of musketry, I heard a shout on the center, of 'Forward,' & saw the line & colors begin to move. I had received no orders, other than to hold the left and guard the flank and did not understand the meaning of the movement. But there was no time to seek explanation. The center was going ahead, apparently charging the enemy, if any, then all of course, and we all joined in the shouts and movement, and went in a rush down the slope and over the boulders."<sup>38</sup>

Finally there is the account provided by Private Gerrish. Gerrish was "absent sick in hospital" but put his account together from descriptions of events he obtained from comrades or others who witnessed or had knowledge of these events. Gerrish's account:

A critical moment has arrived, and we can remain as we are no longer; we must advance or retreat. It must not be the latter, but how can it be the former? Colonel Chamberlain understands how it can be done. The order is given 'Fix bayonets!' and the steel shanks of the bayonets rattle upon the rifle barrels. 'Charge bayonets, charge!' Every man understood in a moment that the movement was our only salvation, but there is a limit to human endurance, and I do not dishonor those brave men when I write that for a brief moment the order was not obeyed, and the little line seemed to quail under the fearful fire that was being poured upon it. O for some man reckless of life, and all else save his country's honor and safety, who would rush far out to the front, lead the way, and inspire the hearts of his exhausted comrades! In that moment of supreme need the want was supplied. Lieut. H. S. Melcher, an officer who had worked his way up from the ranks, and was then in command of Co. F, at that time the color company, saw the situation, and did not hesitate, and for his gallant act deserves as much as any other man the honor of the victory on Round Top. With a cheer, and a flash of his sword, that sent an inspiration along the line, full ten paces to the front he sprang-ten paces-more than half the

distance between the hostile lines. 'Come on! Come on! Come on, boys!' he shouts. The color sergeant and the brave color guard follow, and with one wild yell of anguish wrung from its tortured heart, the regiment charged.<sup>39</sup>

From the evidence given it is apparent that Chamberlain did give a command.

Whether it was "Bayonets" or "Forward" or perhaps both is not possible to determine from the accounts. No doubt it was not heard on the left. Apparently, the command was picked up and relayed by the men so that a somewhat coordinated movement was initiated. The second issue, did Chamberlain order a "right wheel" appears much more doubtful? In his early reports there is no mention of a "right wheel" and Spear never received any such instruction. There was no time, and where did Chamberlain get an aide to convey the instruction? The best explanation was provided by Thomas A. Desjardin in his book *Stand Firm Ye Boys From Maine*. The men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine charged ahead, down the slope toward the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama. Captain Morrill's Company B, seeing the charge and the fleeing enemy, fire and joint in the charge on the left, sweeping both the men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine and the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama to the right. Thus, the "right wheel."<sup>40</sup> But, the "right wheel" persists in the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine in the defense of Little Round Top. Harry W. Pfanz in his work *Gettysburg: The Second Day*, quoted Chamberlain as replying to Lt. Melcher, 'Yes, sir. Take your place with your company. I am about to order to order a 'right wheel forward' of the whole regiment" and gives as his source *Maine at Gettysburg* and Spear's letter of November 15, 1892 to John Bachelder. *Maine at Gettysburg* has such a quote but is not supported by any evidence, and Spear in his letter does not recall any such instruction.<sup>41</sup>

Ellis Spear never accepted Chamberlain's claim that he saved the Union left. He always maintained that it was Colonel Vincent and the men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine. In his diary,

Spear wrote nothing about Pickett's Charge on July 3<sup>rd</sup> only about the cannonading. On the 4<sup>th</sup> he reported on how quiet it was on the field of battle, and then it began to rain. General Lee began his march for Virginia and General Meade failed to press him. Although, blocked for several days by the rain-swollen Potomac River, Lee removed his army safely to Virginia with very little interference from the Army of the Potomac. Like McClellan after the Battle of Antietam, General Meade was criticized for letting Lee escape to fight again.

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<sup>1</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 585.

<sup>2</sup> Engert, *Maine to the Wilderness*, 57. Lamson had just returned to the unit from the hospital because of illness; he had missed the Battle of Fredericksburg.

<sup>3</sup> Carlotta Wells, *Rundlett's War*, 65.

<sup>4</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 306.

<sup>5</sup> Carlotta Wells, *Rundlett's War*, 71. Rundlett remained in Company C, was promoted to Lieutenant and commanded the company. In May 1865, he resigned to take a commission as Captain, Company I, 128<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Troop.

<sup>6</sup> Gerrish, *Army Live*, 86; Livermore, *Diary*, entry for April 11; Wells, *Rundlett's War*, 71; Style, *With a Flash of his Sword*, 23; Spear, *Recollections*, 26, 206.

<sup>7</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 28 and 307. The following letters are in the Chamberlain letters files of the State of Maine Archives. In a February 26, 1863 letter to Governor Coburn, Chamberlain recommends promotions of several officers and sergeants. He is still a Lt. Col. thus no vacancy for promotion to major. In a May 28, 1863 letter to the governor from John H. Rice, Captain Clark is recommend for promotion to Major. Who John H. Rice was has not been determined but perhaps this was the contentions that Spear refers to on the part of Captain Clark. In a July 21, 1863, Chamberlain wrote the governor informing him that Gilmore was in a hospital in Baltimore and that he needed a field officer. He asked if he could follow the suggestion of Colonel Ames in the appointment of a major. Spear was promoted to Major August 28, 1863.

<sup>8</sup> Trulock, *In the Hands of Providence*, 111.

<sup>9</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 308-9.

<sup>10</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 646.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 647

<sup>12</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 211-12.

<sup>13</sup> Judson, *History of the 83<sup>rd</sup>*, 115. The Official Records (Vol. XXV/2, page 579) does not shed any light upon the replacement of Colonel Stockton by Colonel Vincent. The only indication of a change is in the report *Organization of the Army of the Potomac, Maj. Gen. Hooker U.S. Army, commanding, May 31, 1862*. The report lists Colonel Vincent in commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Brigade consisting of four regiments, 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan, 44<sup>th</sup> New York, and 83<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania. Trulock, *In the Hands of Providence*, 114, wrote that Colonel Stockton resigned from the service. Crawford, *The 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry*, 315-19, Stockton resigned to accept a position from Governor Johnson of Tennessee to recruit three new regiments. He was unsuccessful and eventually Governor Johnson's authority was revoked, and Stockton never returned to service and his desire for a star never fulfilled. Spear does not mention the change of command in his diary, nor in his 1896 draft of his memoir.

<sup>14</sup> Bradley M. Gottfried, *Roads to Gettysburg: Lee's Invasion of the North, 1863*. (Shippensburg: White Mane Books, 2001), 93.

<sup>15</sup> John J. Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine*, 86. Spear, *Recollections*, 30. Gottfried, *Roads to Gettysburg*, 108.

<sup>16</sup> Judson, *History of the 83<sup>rd</sup>*, 118-19. In Gottfried's account of the battle, page 119, he wrote that it was the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan that made the flanking movement. Kim Crawford, *The 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry*, advanced on the right flank, the objective to silence the battery, while the 83<sup>rd</sup> flanked the dismounted troops sheltered behind the stone walls.

<sup>17</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 30 and 214. Carlotta Wells, *Rundlett's War*, 89. Sergeant Rundlett in a letter to his mother, June 24, 63 gave Wood's rank as Corporal. Thomas A. Desjardin, *Stand Firm Ye Boys from Maine*, 11. Desjardin also mentioned the death of Corporal John P. Wood.

<sup>18</sup> William C. Oates, *The War Between the Union and the Confederacy*, (Dayton: Morningside Bookshop, 1985), 191.

<sup>19</sup> Allan Nevins, *The War for the Union: The Organized War 1863-1864*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 89.

<sup>20</sup> Livermore diary, June 30. Unfortunately, the last entry in this portion of the diary reads, "July 2<sup>nd</sup>, in line of battle before Gettysburg, Pennsylvania." The next page is a front page with "No 8" and the following page is dated December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1863.

<sup>21</sup> Bradley M. Gottfried, *Roads to Gettysburg*, 211-12.

<sup>22</sup> Phillip Thomas Tucker, *Storming Little Round Top*, 79. Gary W. Gallagher, Jubal A. Early, the Lost Cause, and Civil War History," in *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, eds. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 35-59. Advocates of the "Lost Cause" blame General Longstreet for the loss of the Battle of Gettysburg, claiming that if he had attacked early on the morning of July 2<sup>nd</sup>, he could have taken the unoccupied Little Round Top. However, as indicated above the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama was not there in the morning to make an attack.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 221. Chamberlain in his report wrote that they reached the heights southeasterly of Gettysburg at about 7 a.m., July 2. Thomas Desjardin in *Stand Firm Ye Boys from Maine*, wrote that the unit reached the hills southeast of the town at about 11 o'clock, 31.

<sup>24</sup> Elisha Coan paper, Hawthorne-Longfellow Library Special Collections, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine.

<sup>25</sup> Oliver W. Norton, *Strong Vincent and His Brigade at Gettysburg, July 2, 1863*, (Chicago: privately printed, 1909), 6. After the war, Norton was very active in reunions and the establishment and affairs of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion, of the United States (MOLLUS). Ellis Spear maintained a correspondence with Norton, Holman S. Melcher, and others as late as 1916 and often wrote to newspapers giving credit to Strong Vincent for the defense of Little Round Top. James R. Wright, 'I Will Take the Responsibility': Strong Vincent Moves to Little Round top: Fact or Fiction, *The Gettysburg Magazine*, 25 July 2001, 49. Allen Nevins, *The War for the Union: The Organized War 1863-1864*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 100. Nevins wrote, "The only certainty is that credit for the rapid Union thrust which took and fortified the hill in the nick of time belonged to General Gouverneur K. Warren-who might well claim later that his promptness had saved the battle." Certainly someone must agree with Nevins for a statue of General Warren is on the hill. It is only recently after the publication of Jeff Shaara's *The Killer Angels* and the movie *Gettysburg* that there so much recent attention is paid to Colonel Chamberlain. John Heiser, Ranger Historian at Gettysburg National Military Park, in a letter to the author confirmed that General Warren was considered the key officer in the defense of Little Round Top. His statue was dedicated August 8, 1888. "Park commission guidelines ruled out statues to individuals other than generals and even though Chamberlain [earned] stars, he was only a colonel at Gettysburg."

<sup>26</sup> John J. Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine* (Dayton: Morningside House, Inc., 1997), 110. For an extensive discussion of the route and position of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade see Paul Raver, "An Investigation into the Route Taken from Rock Creek to Little Round Top by the Third Brigade, First Division, Fifth Corps on July 2, 1863," *The Gettysburg Magazine*, 27 July 2002, 53.

<sup>27</sup> Oates, *The War Between the Union and the Confederacy and its Lost Opportunities*, 222. When Oates wrote his book years later he listed several factors that contributed to his defeat. First, he had sent Company A to capture wagons that had nothing to do with his objective reduced his force. Second, the capture of the water detail deprived his unit of both men and water. Third, a great number of men had fallen out from heat exhaustion thus his regiment was reduced to less than four hundred officers and men.

<sup>28</sup> O. R., I, XXVII/1, 622.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII/2, 392.

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<sup>30</sup> Glenn W. LaFantasie, "Conflicting Memories of Little Round Top," *Columbiad* 3 (Spring 1999): 106. Thomas A. Desjardin. *Stand Firm Ye Boys From Maine* (Gettysburg: Thomas Publications, 1995). 139-143.

<sup>31</sup> Mark Nesbitt, *Through Blood and Fire: Selected Civil War Papers of Major General Joshua Chamberlain* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1996), 80.

<sup>32</sup> Style, *With a Flash of His Sword*, 122. Style provides the entire text of Chamberlain's presentation. In addition Captain Howard L. Prince's address is provided which does not add to the understanding of what happened on Little Round Top but implies that Melcher suggested the advance, which became the charge down the hill. In a letter to Spear, (1896) Chamberlain comments upon Prince's address and suggests that the "Melcher incident is also magnified. He is now presented to the public as having suggested the charge. There is no truth in this."

<sup>33</sup> Style, *With a Flash of His Sword*, 296. *Deeds of Valor* was published in 1907 and many historians, Style, Nesbitt, Pullen, Desjardin, and Trulock, suggest that the controversy began at this time.

<sup>34</sup> Style, *With a Flash of his Sword*, 76-81.

<sup>35</sup> Elisha Coan papers, Special Collections Archives, Library, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine.

<sup>36</sup> Nathan S. Clark diary, Maine State Archives, Augusta, Maine.

<sup>37</sup> William B. Style, *With a Flash of his Sword*, 132.

<sup>38</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 215 and 34-35. Spear gave basically the same account in a letter to John Bachelder, November 15, 1892. John Bachelder Papers, Gettysburg National Military Park and in an article in the *National Tribune*, June 12, 1913, "The Left at Gettysburg."

<sup>39</sup> Gerrish, *Army Life*, 109-110. Gerrish's book was published in 1882 and perhaps initiated the Melcher claim for suggesting the charge.

<sup>40</sup> Desjardin, *Stand Firm Ye Boys from Maine*, 71-72.

<sup>41</sup> Harry W. Pfanz, *Gettysburg the Second Day*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 234. Pfanz supports his quote with note 111 in which he cites *Maine at Gettysburg* page 257 and Spear's letter to John Bachelder.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS AND THE SIEGE OF PETERSBURG

The Richmond papers closely followed the success of Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania, and when rumors of the Battle of Gettysburg reached the city, it was hailed as a Great Victory. As late as July 7, the *Richmond Examiner* was still editorializing about the susceptibility of the North to invasion. Word of the defeat and of Lee's retreat coupled with the news of the loss of Vicksburg cast the Confederate capital into gloom and despair.<sup>1</sup> Northern papers shouted victory, and public morale surged, but the enthusiasm was not to last long. Battle losses had to be replaced, and draft officers began drawing names on Sunday, July 11. At first, the drawings were peaceful, but on Monday mobs rioted in several eastern cities, New York being the most notorious. In most cities, the police were untrained in riot control, so the War Department rushed several regiments that had just fought in Pennsylvania. Two brigades of Regulars, from the Second Division of the V Corps along with the Vermont Brigade were sent to New York and other eastern cities. The men of these veteran volunteer units had no sympathy for the rioters. They considered them all draft dodgers or bounty men, men who were being paid to fight. They had no qualms with firing into the mobs, and in New Jersey when attacked, they shot seven of the attackers, killing three and wounding four.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, the Army of the Potomac followed Lee into Virginia but, did not press him, and he pulled back into strong defensive position south of the Rappahannock River.

Lee, wanting to take advantage of Meade's lack of aggression, desired to take the offensive. President Davis over ruled him, and he was instructed to send General Longstreet to Georgia to reinforce General Bragg in early September.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine passed a monotonous September guarding Beverly Ford on the Rappahnock River. Chamberlain promoted to temporary brigade commander, was unable to perform his duties and left for Washington for medical treatment. Upon his return on August 26, General Charles Griffin gave him permanent command of the brigade. Ellis Spear was promoted to major, and Gilmore returned on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August, after nearly a sixty-day absence, received his promotion to lieutenant colonel and assumed command of the regiment.<sup>3</sup> A few days after Chamberlain took command of the brigade, five recently drafted soldiers of the 118<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania who had deserted were court-martialed and sentenced to be shot. The V Corps was massed to witness the executions. Nearly all members who have left diaries, letters or memoirs mention the execution. Gerrish wrote, "...it is a very solemn thing to see human beings led forth to be shot like dogs, and those who witness such scenes receive an impression that can never be shaken off."<sup>4</sup> In a letter to his mother, Sergeant Rundlett penned a lasting impression:

The whole Div. was assembled in an open field on one side of a small run and the graves were dug on the other about 200 yds distant. At the appointed time the first that came along was the Band playing a mournful dirge; second, the Guard which were to do the execution no. 50, next came the victims with a guard on each side each following his own coffin, which was carried by four men. The five men dressed in soldier's pants and cap with a white muslin shirt. When they first started from their prison, they reeled and tottered some but, as they passed along through the Div. their step became firm, and keeping time with the Band, they marched to the very edge of their graves, followed by a half dozen Pioneers with shovels on their shoulders to throw on the dirt. There at their graves, they were seated on their coffins facing the Guard which was drawn up in single file about 12 paces distant. After a short ceremony made by the Preast [*sic*] and Ministers, who soon left them sitting on their

coffins unsupported with hands lashed behind them, the order was heard through the whole Div. clear and distinct, 'Ready,' 'Aim,' 'Fire,' and the result you know, for 50 rifles ere instantly discharged at them 45 of which were loaded with ball and 5 with blank cartridges. All I have to say is this, they were no Cowards, but too brave to meet with such an end. The scenes on the Battle Ground at Gettysburg were not half so affecting as that procession as it marched to the graves, a distance of about ¼ mile.<sup>5</sup>

Spear left only a short eight-word statement in his diary but in later years expanded upon the incident adding details that are not present in the diary.<sup>6</sup> The executions are mentioned in the histories of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania, 44<sup>th</sup> New York, and 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan.

The next two weeks were spent in camp drilling and other camp routines. Colonel Gilmore was absent and Major Spear was in command of the regiment. The regiment was ordered to cross the Rappahannock and marched to within a mile of Culpepper. Rundlett described the countryside as showing evidence of war. Fences were broken down and burned, gardens cut down and destroyed, houses stripped of their doors, boards and furniture, and overhung all was a sense of destruction and desolation. Spear wrote only of drills and inspections and a letter from Colonel Gilmore. Finally, on September 24, orders were received to be ready to move, but it was not until October 10 that he wrote that they broke camp. The next two days were spent marching out to confront an enemy that never appeared, and they returned to the old camp at night. The next few days were spent in maneuvers and skirmishes, and Spear recorded that the possibility of contact with the enemy was enough to frighten Colonel Gilmore, who "sneaked back" leaving him again in charge of the regiment. Captain Judson of the 83<sup>rd</sup> and Major Spear wrote about the contact with Lee's army near Manassas Junction on October 14. They were ordered to double quick for two miles to support General Warren but arrived too late to see any action. Judson wrote, "... that a great many fell out from fatigue and most

of the substitutes took good care never to fall in again.”<sup>7</sup> As usual, it rained in the evening making life miserable for all. Spear remembered the hardships of the day as being unusual even in those days of weariness, discomfort, and short rations. “The men had been carrying seven days rations of bread in their haversacks and blankets. So much hard tack however carried on the persons of the men, or on horseback, crumbled and wasted, and ultimately hunger was added to weariness.” Spear was to write, “Thus, I had celebrated my twentieth-ninth birthday anniversary. The unprofitable carcass of the Lt. Col. [Gilmore] was in the ambulance[,] dry, and comfortable.”<sup>8</sup> If Gilmore was dry and comfortable the rest of the brigade was not. Spear recorded in his diary of two weeks of marching and counter marching, often in the rain. By the middle of October, they found themselves bivouacked upon the old battlefield of Bull Run. All chronicles of the Third Brigade record the macabre scene. Strewn about the battlefield were grinning skulls, arms and legs, with rotting clothing partly covering them, sticking out from shallow graves. Although the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine had not been engaged the year before in the battle, Spear mused whether this was their fate, to be killed and unburied, to be placed in shallow pits, to have their bones uncovered by the rain. One company of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania found the body of their captain, recognized by the gold fillings in his front teeth. The remains of Sergeant L. D. Darling of Company H, 44<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry Regiment was identified by his belt, which was marked by his initials. Others were recognized by the nametags and clothing that remained. Their comrades were reburied.<sup>9</sup> The weather continued to be cold and rainy; the men camped out without tents or a change of clothes. Finally, on October 21, the wagons caught up with the regiment, and Spear recorded in his diary about the things that soldiers had learned to appreciate; a

change of clothes, tents, and mail. With the change of clothes, a dry tent, hot food, a warm fire, life took on new meaning. In his journal, Spear expounded upon the simple pleasures appreciated by a soldier. For the next two weeks, the regiment moved occasionally, drilled, and put up with the cold, rain, and some snow. November began as October ended with the army still in the field instead of in winter quarters.

On November 7, Spear recorded a skirmish with the enemy at Belcherton and Rappahnock Station. Gilmore, although present, allowed Spear to fall in the regiment and placed it in the line of March. Gilmore led but soon complained of pain in his leg and of an acute attack of neuralgia. Soon they came to a rail fence, the men threw down the top bar, and Ellis jumped his horse over. The Colonel could not cross the fence and soon took refuge in an ambulance at the rear. In this skirmish, in which the V Corps was on the flank, only Company B, led by Captain Morrill, was engaged. Most of the fighting was done by the VI Corps, which took the works with bayonets, capturing eight stands of color, four guns, caissons, and 1,200 prisoners. Spear's utter contempt for Gilmore was expressed repeatedly. He described him as cowardly, incompetent, and unethical.

The tobacco incident thoroughly disgusted Ellis. According to Ellis, Gilmore had contrived to have a large package of tobacco, disguised as dry goods, sent from Washington to him, utilizing government transport. He then sold the tobacco to the soldiers of the regiment for cash.<sup>10</sup> The weather turned colder and a heavy snow fell. Gilmore arranged to be detailed to Washington, "under the protection of some mysterious, but powerful friend." Although Spear was but a major and drew only \$149.50 a month and had to use his own funds to cover the additional expense of commanding the regiment, he was glad to see him leave.<sup>11</sup>

Major Spear, as a regimental commander, gained extensive knowledge about and experienced the bewilderment of Army bureaucracy and regulations. All who have even been in the military know that all supply forms and regulations must be followed to the letter. All Quartermasters insist that battles could be lost, maybe an entire war, if the required forms have not been filled in properly. In this instance, the men had been issued seven days ration of hard bread. Carried all day rolled in their blankets, unrolled at night, rolled up in the morning, constant marched and counter marched, and in nearly constant rain the bread disappeared. Soon the men were hungry, but they could not draw rations. According to supply records, they still had a three-day supply of bread, and could not be issued any until the required three days had past; and of course then, according to records, they would be out of bread. The commissary could issue them more only at that time. Explaining that the bread did not exist proved to be of no avail. Reality does not change supply records, and records showed that the men had a three-day bread supply. Bread was present at the commissary but could not be issued, because, records indicated that the men had a three-day supply. Ellis did not claim to have solved the problem but learned of the solution. He was temporarily appointed Division Inspector. "I had authority vested in me alone of the Division, by authority of the Congress of the United States, and the Army Regulations, but before unknown and unsuspected, to condemn bad bread and order its destruction or burial." He proceeded to what he described as the "Cereal Cemetery" and found row upon row of opened bread boxes all of which contained "mouldy" bread, which he condemned and ordered it buried. "Regulations did not require me to see that order was executed. Indeed, it might reasonably be supposed that an order from such mighty authority would execute this," he wrote. However, the

bread famine was exorcised, the vouchers of condemnation given, & the missing three days['] rations reappeared.”<sup>12</sup>

Following the investigation of the lack of bread, Ellis recorded breaking camp, marching back to camp, marching out of camp and returning, with little accomplished and all usually done in a cold rain. General Meade conceived a plan to attack the Confederates at Mine Run. The plan was to cripple them before Lee could reinforce the position. Rain delayed execution of the plan, and the troops were not in their proper positions until November 30. That morning the artillery opened fire as scheduled, but no attack by the infantry was made. Impatiently waiting for sounds of the attack, General Meade waited for nearly an hour and then received word from General Warren. General Warren, in his dispatch to General Meade stated that upon further reconnaissance in the light of day, “the position and strength of the enemy seem so formidable in my present front, that I advise against making an attack here.”<sup>13</sup> Reluctantly agreeing with Warren and suspecting that the artillery had alerted Lee, General Meade cancelled the campaign and the Army of the Potomac returned to Rappahannock Station and their winter camp.

In the absence of Lieutenant Colonel Gillmore, it was Major Spear’s responsibility of establishing winter quarters for the regiment. The camp was laid out facing the river, the streets running at right angles to it, the parade ground in front, officers tents to the rear. Nearby was pine timber that was used to establish more substantial shelters than what tents afforded. The construction of fireplaces and chimneys taxed the ingenuity and the genius of the builders and was a great source of pride to have constructed one that warmed the shelter and drew out the smoke. A company kitchen was established for each company. Additional buildings were erected for a hospital and a substantial guardhouse.

The days were spent in working on shelters, training and drill. Officers were granted leaves of absence and soldiers were granted leave. Ellis applied for a leave in late December which came back disapproved.

In January, a leave was approved and Major Spear met his wife in Washington. Traveling together, they visited New York and then Wiscasset. His leave was all too short, but permission was given allowing ladies to visit the camp; and his Susie returned with him. Camp life was routine. Occasionally he was tasked with court martial duty. He recorded one case in which a soldier had hidden a horse in the nearby bushes and fed it hay from the quartermaster. The soldier was accused of stealing the hay. He defended himself, and claimed he had stole nothing. The hay was government property, the horse was government property, and he belonged to the government; thus, government hay was put in a government horse. Simply, there was only a transfer of government property to another account of government property. Unfortunately, Spear did not record the verdict.

The approach of spring saw an increase of activity in the Army of the Potomac. A law was passed on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, restoring the grade of Lieutenant General, and Major General Ulysses S. Grant was nominated to fill the office on March 1, 1864. Orders came down that the women were to leave camp and Susie left on March 23. Further indications of preparations for the spring campaign was a reorganization of the V Corps. A fourth division was added, and the Third Brigade was increased with three regiments: the 118<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, the 18<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Michigan. In the table of organization presented in *The Fifty Army Corps*, Major General Gouverneur K. Warren was commander, Third Brigade was commanded by Brigadier General Joseph J.

Bartlett, and the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was commanded by Major Ellis Spear. Colonel Chamberlain and Lieutenant Colonel Gillmore are not listed.<sup>14</sup>

The Army of the Potomac, under the leadership of the new General in Chief, was beginning a summer campaign, the like of which, they had never seen. In the past, they had broken camp, marched out, fought a battle, returned to camp after a defeat, only to scramble to defend a northern state (Maryland and Pennsylvania) from Lee's assaults. This summer the campaign was to be different. Grant, if not brilliant, was tenacious. Initiating probes in the Wilderness, that sparked a three-day battle, Grant disengaged and attempted to slip to Lee's right. Constant maneuverings on Lee's right, by Grant, resulted in the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, a checkmate at the Battle of the North Anna, a block at Cold Harbor, and finally ended with running Lee to ground at the Siege of Petersburg.

The soldiers of the V Corps did not know all that lay ahead of them when they broke camp at midnight, May 4, 1864. They carried their Springfield rifled musket and bayonet, forty rounds of ammunition and caps, three days rations, a canteen of water, an extra suit of under-clothes, and one tent piece. For many, a pipe and tobacco was considered a necessity the rest of their possessions were in the wagons. The wagons would not be seen, but once, until the beginning of the Siege of Petersburg.

The V Corps crossed the Rapidian River at Germania Ford and soon entered the wilderness woods, an area of second growth scrub oak and pine, of nearly impenetrable tangled underbrush, gullies, streams and a hand full of clearings. The 20th Maine advanced down the left side of the Germania Plank Road. Spear recalled it as a hot day and the men discarded their excess baggage, throwing away overcoats, blankets, and

knapsacks. To his front was the 83<sup>rd</sup>, recalled Spear, his regiment formed the second line, the remainder of the brigade was in reserve, and not visible. Slowly they advanced, and the woods became so dense that the officers could not ride their horses and they went sent to the rear. Slowly advancing, the regiment entered a clearing, when the enemy opened fire. Charging across the clearing, the 83<sup>rd</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> scattered the enemy skirmishers and entered dense woods. Emerging into a second clearing, Spear could see that the 83<sup>rd</sup> was greatly broken up, and seeing no field officer, Spear took charge. The 83<sup>rd</sup> had lost its commander, Colonel Woodward.<sup>15</sup> Hearing musketry on his right and rear, Spear concluded that the forces on his right had failed to keep up. Spear swung his right hand companies across the road, and attempted to link up with the units on his right. The regimental commander, Colonel Hays of the 18<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts) that supported his left conferred with Spear and approved of his deployment. The Colonel had hardly left to return to his regiment, when heavy firing broke out on the left, and the line broke and ran. Deserted by the 18<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts on the left and flanked by the enemy on the right, Spear thought it prudent to pull back and reform. In his evaluation of the results of the first day, he thought that the "...chief defects where in the staff. Specifically it was a lack of experience. There was no means of communication, and no proper coordination of movement, and apparently no reserve to repair defects, in the line or, if there were, such reserves were not used." Ellis was thoroughly provoked, having lost 90 men and accomplished nothing.<sup>16</sup> A comrade told the family of Private Lamson that he had last seen the wounded Lamson lying under a tree. Records list him as wounded and taken prisoner. Apparently he died from his wounds and was buried in an unmarked grave in Virginia.<sup>17</sup> Another of those lost was Private Livermore. Shot in the right arm, just

above the elbow, he spent several months in the hospital and convalesce leave, but he returned to his unit in August.<sup>18</sup> A Richmond paper reported that the Yankees had broken two lines of battle, composed of Hill's corps, and that they had run to the rear in such a panic that if the Union troops had been well supported and had followed them up, the attack would have probably resulted in a complete victory.<sup>19</sup>

May 6<sup>th</sup> started early for the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine. Ellis wrote that they were up at 3 a.m. and moved up to relieve troops on the front. The 20<sup>th</sup> expected an attack but heard only heavy musket and artillery firing in the woods to their right. Smoke, created by musketry and artillery fire and from the burning woods, made for poor visibility. The fires were a hazard to the troops of both sides and consumed the wounded that could not avoid them. Ellis believed all his wounded of the day before had been recovered and sent to the rear, but the fire consumed the unburied.<sup>20</sup> That evening, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine fell back to their previous position. Most historians have recorded the Battle of the Wilderness as taking place on May 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, but for Ellis, the dying continued.<sup>21</sup> Ellis saw nothing romantic with war. Years later, even though he had no diary entry, he could vividly recall the horror of seeing a cannon shot strike a corporal of Company A, cutting him in two, so that the upper part of his body seemed to fall, doubling on the lower.<sup>22</sup> On the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup>, the regiment was ordered to probe for the enemy. During this fight, Private Gerrish was wounded in the ankle, but he was able to avoid capture. He retreated more than a mile and made his way to the division hospital.<sup>23</sup> For the rest of the regiment, its mission was to probe for the enemy, and then, was ordered to hold the line. The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was reinforced by the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan and remained undisturbed for the rest of the day only falling back to its former position for the night. In a minor probe of enemy

lines, Spear reported two officers killed and one wounded, two men killed and ten wounded.<sup>24</sup> Disengaging, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine started on the road to Spotsylvania Court House.

The road to Spotsylvania Court House was contested by the Army of Northern Virginia. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, a major roadblock was set up at Laurel Hill, about five or six miles from the court house. Spear mentioned that only part of the brigade was engaged. The 83<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania took part in the engagement. Captain Judson wrote that they rushed the rebels and commenced plying the bayonet.

“...I know not how many others, sprang over among them, like infuriated tigers, and fell to bayoneting the enemy within their own works. So terror-stricken were the rebels by the daring valor of these men that they were thrown into confusion and turned to run, but their officers placed the points of their swords to their breasts and forced them back into the ranks. A score of rebels fell beneath the cold steel of these heroic men; but they paid dearly for their heroism.<sup>25</sup>

The assault failed because not enough Union troops were committed to the attack, and the soldiers were forced back. The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was ordered to the front to support the Pennsylvania Reserves of Crawford's Brigade. Advancing under fire, the reserves broke, but the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine held. Spear described the scene as pandemonium, with clubbed muskets mixing with bayonets, and shooting that went on an undetermined amount of time. The spoils of war included about 100 prisoners, which included four officers. Also captured were one battle flag and two line officer swords. Ellis retained one of the swords for a souvenir. Spear reported that Captain William W. Morrell was killed, Lieutenants Price and Melcher wounded, five other men killed, thirteen wounded, and two missing. In his official report for the tenth and eleventh, Spear reported that he took no active part in the operations, but still listed one soldier killed and two wounded.<sup>26</sup> Major Spear had nothing but censure for Colonel Crawford and his staff. Unsure of his

position, and not knowing what was in his rear, and after consulting with the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan's adjutant, Rufus W. Jacklin, he found that they were unsupported on both the right and left flanks. Spear and Sergeant William B. Greenwood started through the dark woods toward where they thought brigade headquarters was located. He discovered that his regiment was in advance of the brigade; he returned and brought the regiments back to the Union lines. The next morning, meeting Colonel Crawford, he was accused of not supporting Crawford's brigade, for unjustly claiming the battle flag, and for failing to capture any prisoners. The Colonel, out ranking a mere major, took the battle flag as his own trophy. Spear wondered how Crawford could know that we had not supported him. He wrote, "...he (Crawford) had not appeared on our line at any time, during the whole affair, nor indeed any of his staff."<sup>27</sup> As Spear suspected, no report was found in the Official Records that evaluated Colonel Crawford as thoroughly incompetent. Ellis was more than willing to rejoin the Third Brigade. The next few days were spent moving left and right but not forward in support of the IX Corps. From the thirteenth to the twentieth, Spear reported occupying rifle pits in front of the enemy near Spotsylvania Court House; the regiment sustained one casualty. Colonel Chamberlain returned on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Colonel Bartlett was ill, so as senior Colonel, Chamberlain took command of the brigade.

Under command of Colonel Chamberlain, the brigade advanced and skirmished with the enemy. The brigade crossed the North Anna River at Jericho Mills Ford in the afternoon of the twenty-third. Spear reported one officer wounded. What he didn't put in his report was that it was he who was wounded. In his diary, Spear wrote, that he was hit in the groin by shrapnel. He passed it off as "only" a bruise but he could not walk.

Sitting on a stump, he watched the fight, and after dark, one of the men helped him to mount his horse. He went to the rear to recover.<sup>28</sup> Although still very sore, Major Spear rejoined the regiment on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The regiment was on the road. It was marching down bad roads toward the Pamunkey River and a small crossroads called Cold Harbor.

On the way to Cold Harbor was a road junction named after the local church, Bethesda Church. General Burnside of the IX Corps was engaged with Confederate forces and in the maneuvering uncovered the northern end of General Bartlett's Third Brigade. Taking advantage of the situation, the enemy's sudden attack, coming out of the west, was of such force that it met little resistance. The Confederates captured nearly four hundred prisoners from the Third Brigade. One of the new regiments, the 118<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, managed to change front and face the onslaught but was unable to hold. The entire picket line was overrun. Spear was able to hold some higher ground that bordered a ravine in front which curved to the right into open fields. A battery located on the other side opened fire on them and they would have had to retreat but were saved by counter battery fire. Placed in charge of the division's pickets, he entrenched and held. The following day, the enemy tried to enfilade the line on the left, but Spear wrote that Sweitzer [Colonel Jacob B. Sweitzer of the Second Brigade] swung his brigade to the left, connected with Burnside and held. Ellis recorded that losses were heavy.<sup>29</sup>

Blocked at Bethesda Church, Grant again shifted to his left, and put his weary army on the road to Cold Harbor. With Chamberlain's assignment to command of the First Brigade, Spear was again commanding the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine. Other than picket duty, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine did not participate in the Battle of Cold Harbor. Spear commented upon being shelled, but the regiment had no casualties. Burnside's IX Corps and Warren's V Corps

held the Confederates in place, or from the other point of view, were held in place. Grant had nothing good to say about Burnside's and Warren's feeble, half-hearted, piecemeal counterattacks. Many historians have criticized Grant's attacks at Cold Harbor. Gordon C. Rhea argues that the assault on Lee's line made sense in view of the campaign's larger context.<sup>30</sup>

Again checkmated by Lee, on June 5, the Army of the Potomac was on the move again, shifting to the left, Grant was trying to flank Lee and force him to defend Richmond. Spear's assignment was to hold his position as the rest of the army withdrew, pass to his rear, and march on the dusty road toward Richmond. He was little impressed by the maneuvering. He was much more impressed when the wagons caught up, and he was able to get clean clothes and mail. In his diary he recorded letters from Susie and of Colonel Chamberlain being given command of the First Brigade. For the next several days he commanded a picket line along the Chicahominy, but for an occasional shell there was no action. The thirteenth of June found the regiment on the road. It crossed the Chicahominy, and three days later crossed the James River, and marched for Petersburg.

General Benjamin F. Butler, commanding the Army of the James, had orders to take Petersburg, a major rail center for Richmond or to take Richmond. His incompetence, and General Pierre Beauregard's skill, bottled him and his army up, uselessly on the Bermuda Hundred Peninsula. He failed to take Petersburg or Richmond, or to prevent Lee from pulling troops from Beauregard to use in his fight with Grant.

Stymied by Lee, Grant crossed the James River on a pontoon bridge more than two thousand feet long. Gerrish wrote, "the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine crossed the James on a small steam transport, the *General Hooker*". Spear wrote, on the 16th, "crossed the river at Harrison's

Landing. When General Lee discovered that the Army of the Potomac was south of the James River, he pulled back his lines toward Petersburg, shortening them and entrenching on high ground; he that took advantage of the terrain. General Meade, displaying his usual temper, ordered an unified assault. Coordination was not a strong point for the Army of the Potomac, and Chamberlain's brigade was ordered to assault an isolated position without any support. The assault failed, and Chamberlain was wounded. Most believed that the wound was mortal. General Grant hearing of the wound promoted Chamberlain to Brigadier General. In his diary entry for June 18<sup>th</sup>, Ellis wrote, "In the Eve. went back to see Col Chamberlain. He is, I fear, mortally wounded." Years later in his recollections, Spear wrote, "After dark, when I could leave the regiment, I went back to the hospital to see him. I found him sitting up, and taking nourishment in the form of soup, rather clumsily administered by the Chaplain. He was severely wounded, but talked cheerfully."<sup>31</sup> General Bartlett replaced Chamberlain as commander of the Third Brigade. For the next several days, the Army of the Potomac made several ineffective assaults on Confederate earth works. All were repulsed due to lack of coordination, or as James McPherson described it "the Cold Harbor" syndrome, the soldiers failing to press home their assaults.<sup>32</sup> Spear reported that five of the brigade's regiments, the 118<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, 18<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, and 1<sup>st</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan, formed an advanced line and strengthened it with substantial earth works. While holding the line on the twenty-second, Captain Keene, a good friend of Ellis, was struck in the breast by a stray shot or by the bullet of a sharpshooter and died in his arms ten minutes later. The loss of this close friend was a severe blow to Ellis. Years later, in writing his memoirs, Ellis lamented the death of his close friend. Lieutenant White of Company G also was

killed, and Monroe of Company I was severely wounded. Other members of the regiment were having close calls from sharpshooters as the earthworks were out of range of the ordinary Springfield musket. Artillery fire was of little danger. A sentinel on alert would warn of the puff of smoke, and the men would take cover. Ellis noted in his memoir that, "It was apparent now that we had settled down to a siege of Petersburg, and the routine every day was substantially the same."<sup>33</sup> Like Vicksburg, Grant laid siege to Petersburg. The siege of Petersburg (June 1864 to April 1865) lasted much longer than Grant's siege of Vicksburg and at times sorely taxed the patience of the North's public, the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac, and Lincoln's administration.

The constant firing by the Confederate sharpshooters tried the patience of Major Spear. Obtaining permission from the proper authorities, he organized a detail of sharpshooters for his regiment. Many of the men were hunters and expert marksmen from the Maine woods, and they sent home for their sporting rifles. Within a few days, they were ready to even the score. One morning, with the sun at their backs, telescopes on the rifles, they soon made life unpleasant for the Confederate troops in the trenches to the front. Within a day a truce was agreed upon, and Ellis was to write, scrupulously observed on my front, "they would not fire anymore, if we would not."<sup>34</sup> Apparently, enemy sharpshooters did not agree upon this armistice with other units of the Third Brigade, for other historians write of the continued harassment.<sup>35</sup> No agreement was arranged with the artillery and sporadic artillery fire, soon supplemented with mortars, continued throughout the siege. For protection, the troops constructed what they called bomb proofs. Captain Judson describes a bomb proof as follows:

"A hole was cut into the ground in the shape of a cellar, say four feet deep and eight or ten feet square. Blocks, cut from pine trees, a foot in thickness,

were placed as uprights at the corners of the excavations and upon these pine logs were laid, completely covering the cellar. Dirt was then thrown upon them and packed down until there was a covering of several feet of solid earth.<sup>36</sup>

Both armies constructed thousands of these shelters, which also had one other advantage over tents; they were much cooler. Thus, June ended and July began.

July saw the two armies settle into siege warfare, and an informal truce of, “if you don’t shoot at me, I won’t shoot at you.” Both sides were at liberty to sit about upon the parapets without danger and Spear reported only routine activities until July 29. All units were alerted for an assault on the thirtieth.

For over a month, the men of the 48<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania had been tunneling toward the Confederate lines. At a distance of 510 feet they dug two laterals the left thirty-seven feet long and the right thirty-eight feet and loaded them with 8,000 pounds of gunpowder. On the morning of the thirtieth the mine was set off, blowing a hole 150 feet long, 60 feet wide and 25 feet deep, with a rim 12 feet high.<sup>37</sup> The mine worked better than planned. It destroyed the Confederate redoubt and battery but the twenty-five foot deep crater, with a twelve foot rim acted to trap all troops who entered it. In addition, the assault was mismanaged. In spite of General Burnside’s order, the abatis had not been removed. At the last minute, General Meade ordered a last minute change in plans, the division that had trained for the assault was changed to one led by General Ledlie’s. General Ledlie, diplomatically described by James McPherson, had a mediocre record and an alcohol problem; was reported to have stayed behind in the trenches drinking rum, during the assault. The unprepared and leaderless Union troops advanced into the crater and could not get out and no assault was made to either side.<sup>38</sup> The assault was a miserable failure

that resulted in 4,000 Union casualties. The entry in Spear's diary for the thirty-first was "quiet."

Trench warfare, or lack of warfare, continued at Petersburg. Spear reported all quiet for the next two weeks. During this quiet, Ellis wrote that in spite of the death and destruction, there were moments of compassion:

One morning a Confederate came out in plain view, between the lines, with some white object in his hand, waved the branch of a tree, and stuck it in the earth, and placing the white object beside it, [he] left. I sent a man out, who found a letter in an unsealed envelope, directed to some person in Pennsylvania. I found that the letter within had been written by a Union soldier, wounded & in a Confederate hospital near Petersburg.

In expectation of death he had written this to his friends. A note on the bottom, written by a nurse, stated that the poor fellow died the next day after writing the letter. As there was no firing on my line, the letter was sent to me. It was one of pure kindness that the Confederates had taken all this trouble. I sealed the letter, put on a stamp and placed it in the mail, regretting afterwards that I had not kept the address of the parties to whom it was directed.<sup>39</sup>

On August 15, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was relieved on the line and was sent to the rear. Two days later orders came to be ready to move out.

Out to where was the question? Grant was planning another attempt to turn Lee's right flank and capture or destroy the Waldon Railroad. Destruction of the railroad would cut one of Lee's supply lines. With the first Division of the V Corps leading, and the First and Second Brigades in advance, they took the railroad with light opposition. Other units moved into position on their right and the Third Brigade dug new trenches on the left, and held the line under several counter attacks during the next few days. Meanwhile, the railroad was destroyed. With other units holding the line, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was put into camp in the rear, which Ellis often described as a "malarial swamp" and unhealthy.

Ellis reported that for the rest of August and most of September they experienced the novel experience of having not to be under fire or any kind. "Not once for five or six weeks did a shot of any kind or caliber whiz over our heads." The sun was hot, but water could be obtained by digging down three or four feet. The water seemed clean but soon became contaminated from so many troops in the area. To offset the suspected contamination, a new military tactic was devised. "At proper intervals the companies were formed and the sergeant went down the line, with canteen and a big iron spoon, and delivered to the open mouth of each man the regulation dose of commissary whiskey, with as much quinine as it could be made to soak up." Ellis did not mention anything about washing the spoon between doses. During this quiet interval, he visited friends in the hospitals at City Point. In his diary, Private Livermore, who had just returned to the regiment, having recovered from his wounds, recorded many men and officers going to or returning from the hospital. Major Spear was one that was mentioned. Most of his entries for the month of September end with, "All quiet in our front to day."<sup>40</sup>

In his recollections, Ellis recorded an interesting episode. He was asked by General Bartlett to test a new musket that someone was trying to get adopted by the army. Spear wrote:

It was an ordinary Springfield rifled musket, but with two nipples and hammers. On one side the ordinary nipple and hammer, and on the other a nipple (for the cap) with its hammer, the nipple having a passage leading to a second firing chamber above the first; so that one cartridge could be loaded upon the other. The soldier was expected to fire the top cartridge first. I had had experience enough to know that such nice calculations could not be depended on in the heat of battle, and that it sometimes happened that the first and only cartridge did not explode, and the man continued to lad utterly unaware that he had not fired. I had seen muskets after a battle, half full of cartridges. I inquired if the request was an order, and as it was not I declined. [Colonel Norval] Welch (of the 16<sup>th</sup> [Michigan]) took them; and, in the next battle, (in which he was killed) his

men threw them all away & replaced them from arms left by the killed and wounded. The puzzle was that such worthless inventions should have been permitted to come to us, when the repeating arms, such as the Spencer and Henry's Winchester, doing good service in the hands of the cavalry, were withheld from us.<sup>41</sup>

The quiet of September ended on the thirtieth. Grant received news of Sheridan's success in the Shenandoah Valley and determined that it was a good time to probe Lee's lines for weakness. Ordering Generals Ord and Birney of the XVIII and X Corps to cross the James River and assault the northern Richmond defenses. General Meade was ordered to probe the Confederate right at Petersburg. This was to keep Lee from reinforcing his left and to extend the Petersburg lines. Meade's objective was Peeble's Farm located about two miles west of the Union entrenchments and near a junction of Squirrel Level and Poplar Springs Church roads. This engagement is frequently referred to as the Battle of Poplar Springs Church as well as the Battle of Peeble's Farm.

Protecting the road junction was a strong Confederate redoubt (Fort McRae) flanked by entrenchments and protected in front by abatis. The assault was made with full military pageantry, with color flying, the Division band led the way with drums beating, horns blaring, and fifes screeching. The 16th Michigan and the 118th Pennsylvania led the Division. Major Spear was near the front leading the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine in support. With some amusement, Ellis watched the "game" began. An outbreak of musketry silenced the drums, horns, and fifes and the band members ran to the rear. The key to the rebel position was the redoubt, and it was attacked across six hundred yards of open field to the abatis. The commanders, of the two lead regiments were killed, and Colonel Gwyn, commander of the Third Brigade, had his horse fall and disable him. Spear, seeing the need for leadership, took command of the brigade and led the charge upon the redoubt.

Captain Clark assumed command of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine. General Warren, in his report to General Meade, described the charge as “one of the boldest I ever saw.”<sup>42</sup> General Warren also reported that their losses were not very great. Casualty reports listed Colonel Welch of the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan, Captain Keene of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, and several other officers. The Third Brigade captured the redoubt containing one gun, seven officers, and fifty-two men. In his diary, Corporal Livermore described the capture of the rebel works and the taking of two cannons and many prisoners. But, unfortunately, he was ill in the rear. Private Gerrish and Clark recalled charging at the double quick across the open field into the grape and canister. Gerrish wrote that the rebel infantry remained behind their works until the last possible moment then fired a volley in their face before turning and running. An attempt to withdraw the defending cannons was made only at the last moment. Three of the four cannons escaped, but the last had two horses down and was captured by Lieutenant A. E. Fernald.<sup>43</sup> For gallant and distinguished services, Corporal Joseph W. Libbey, of Company I, 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, was recommended for the Medal of Honor. Officers recommended for brevet promotions included Colonels E. M. Gregory, 91<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania Volunteers, James Gwyn, 118<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Volunteers, and Ellis Spear of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine.<sup>44</sup>

The Confederates, not willing to yield the position without further resistance, counterattacked in the afternoon and temporarily broke the Union lines. General Griffin, going to General Mott’s assistance, repulsed the enemy and the lines were reestablished along a line from Peebles’ Farm to the Pegram house. Again, on October 1, an attempt was made to throw back the Union forces, which failed, and the Union advanced their lines and entrenched. Significantly, part of the Union lines faced north. They had turned

Lee's right flank and had extended their lines to the west.<sup>45</sup> The front settled into the routine of siege warfare, and Ellis applied for a 20-day leave of absence due to illness on October 6.

With a surgeon's certificate, Ellis's application was forwarded up the chain of command and was approved on the eighth by General Crawford.<sup>46</sup> Ellis left for home that evening. For the rest of the month, Livermore heads his diary entries "in camp near Popular Grove." The weather was clear and cold, a large fire was welcome and all was quiet. On the twenty-fourth, Spear saw a doctor in Stanford, Maine in order to obtain a new surgeon's certificate to attach to a request for an extension of his leave of absence. Gerrish wrote of no action in the month of October. General Grant, believing that the lines were secure, extended his railroad from City Point to a newly constructed station at Peebles' Farm.<sup>47</sup> The quiet of October continued in November.

Major Spear was home for the birth of his first child, Julia, born on November 9, 1864. Livermore and Clark recorded quiet at the front, a time to visit friends in nearby units, and of the unit sending to the rear for their overcoats. Word of Sheridan's valley victory cheered the men. Receiving orders to be prepared to march on the twenty-sixth, officers' tents were taken down and sent to the rear. On the morning of the twenty-seventh two divisions of the V Corps moved out to the left and rear, drove in the rebel pickets and encountered heavy resistance. The attack was not well coordinated with woods and streams breaking up formations, and it began to rain. Lee reinforced his right, and the Union ran low on ammunition. By the twenty-eighth, it was apparent that the Union forces were unable to accomplish their objective of capturing the South Side Railroad. These moves and countermoves ended what was known as the Battle of

Boynton Plank Road or Hatcher's Run. The V Corps had twenty-five men killed, 189 wounded, and sixty-five captured or missing. The corps pulled back to its original position. The soldiers reerected their tents in the old location, drew rations, and settled back into the old routine.<sup>48</sup>

Clark, Gerrish and Livermore made comments in their diaries upon the presidential election. Corporal Livermore recorded the vote as 137 for President Lincoln, thirteen for McClellan and “on the state vote it stood Union 148 Copperhead two”<sup>49</sup> Colonel Gilmore returned and the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine began building their winter camp to the left of the present camp. For the remainder of the month, Corporal Livermore recorded cold weather, working on tent shelters, drawing rations, and all quiet on the front. About the only thing to break the monotony was the arrival of 104 draftees, and a visit by General Chamberlain. For Corporal Clark, the monotony was broken on the eighteenth with the assignment of thirty recruits and his promotion to sergeant.<sup>50</sup> Thanksgiving passed quietly, Livermore wrote, “the company received two turkeys, one mince pie, twenty-five small cakes and forty-five apples.” The month ended, he wrote, “good news about General Sherman and all quiet at Petersburg.”

Leaving home on December 1, Major Spear arrived back at the front on the fourth of December to spend his third winter in a cold, army camp. But, if you are comfortable, the army will move you and that is what happened. Ordered to break camp on the sixth, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine marched toward the south, encountered the Weldon Railroad and tore it up. Spear commented that the day was an unprofitable day for the stockholders of that road. Rumors were that they were going to North Carolina to support Sherman.<sup>51</sup> On the tenth, they marched in a cold drizzle that turned into sleet and snow to Sussex Court House and

bivouacked. On the eleventh, ice still covered everything, but that did not hinder them in burning the courthouse in retaliation for some of the men being killed by bushwhackers. Ellis reported the incident was about a staff officer, who had ridden too far from the flank of the column. Citizens or guerrillas lurking among the citizens murdered him. Spear claimed that:

We had been pursuing our march peaceably and without molesting the people or their property, excepting the inevitable theft of eatables; but after the report as to the murder of this officer, the smoke of burning buildings blackened the December sky. This was of course, unauthorized, but it was impossible to restrain the men, when they were under such provocation. Unfortunately, such revenges are likely to fall upon the unoffending, and are wholly unjustifiable and I do not think than any of my men were implicated in these affairs.<sup>52</sup>

Orders to build winter camp arrived, and Livermore headed the pages in his diary “In Camp, Near The Jerusalem Plank Road. All quiet.” Christmas was fair but Livermore said it passed like all other days. The year ended cold and rainy.

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<sup>1</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 648.

<sup>2</sup> George W. Parsons, *Put the Vermonters Ahead*, (Shippensburg: White Mane Publishing Company, Inc., 1996), 66.

<sup>3</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 47 and 223.

<sup>4</sup> Gerrish, *Army Life*, 124.

<sup>5</sup> Wells, *Rundlett's War*, 111. All writers put the date of the executions on Aug. 29 except William Powell, who gave the date at August 20, *The Fifty Army Corps*, 571. Kim Crawford, *The 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry* (Dayton: Morningside House, Inc., 2002), 392. Brian A. Bennett, *Sons of Old Monroe: A Regimental History of Patrick O'Rorke's 140<sup>th</sup> New York Volunteer Infantry* (Dayton: Morningside House, Inc., 1999), 294. John J. Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine*, 156.

<sup>6</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 47 and 223.

<sup>7</sup> Judson, *History of the 83<sup>rd</sup>*, 155.

<sup>8</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 56.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 58, and 228. Kim Crawford, *The 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry*, 398. Judson, *History of the 83<sup>rd</sup>*, 155; Eugene Nash, *History of the Forty-fourth Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War* (Chicago: R.R. Donnelly & Sons Company, 1910; reprint, Dayton: Morningside Bookshop, 1988), 165 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 326.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-66. Apparently, no matter how the Army advances some things never change, for we can thank Joseph Heller for identifying the situation as “Catch 22.”

<sup>13</sup> Powell, *The Fifth Army Corps*, 586.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 593-596.

<sup>15</sup> Judson, *History of the 83<sup>rd</sup>*, 195. Colonel Woodward was shot in the leg but survived the war. Norton in *Attack and Defense of Little Round Top* refer to a letter received in 1912 from the colonel, and at that time, he was 77 years old and enjoying fairly good health, (246).

<sup>16</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 239. O. R. I, XXXVI/1, 573. Gordon C. Rhea, *The Battle of the Wilderness: May 5-6, 1864*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 156; Edward Steere, *The Wilderness Campaign*, (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1960), 162-165; Engert, *Maine to the Wilderness*, 98. Private Lamson's last letter was written May 3<sup>rd</sup>. A comrade told the family that he had last seen the wounded Lamson lying under a tree. The Maine's Company Descriptive book reads, "wounded and taken prisoner May 7/64."

<sup>17</sup> Engert, *Maine to the Wilderness*, 98.

<sup>18</sup> William L. Livermore diary, Fogler Library special collections, University of Maine, Orono Maine.

<sup>19</sup> Judson, *History of the 83<sup>rd</sup>*, 194. Confusion existed on the Confederate side also; Rhea in *Battle of the Wilderness*, 154, wrote that a panicked officer ordered a retreat and several regiments thought it was a general order and fell back.

<sup>20</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 97.

<sup>21</sup> Rhea, *Battle of the Wilderness, May 5-6, 1864*; Steere, *The Wilderness Campaign; Priest, Victory Without Triumph*; Powell, *The Fifty Army Corps*, 627, "This virtually closed the battle of the Wilderness, although the two armies lay confronting each other during the entire day of the seventh without action, except upon the skirmish line."

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>23</sup> Gerrish, *Army Life*, 169.

<sup>24</sup> O.R. I, XXXVI/1, 573.

<sup>25</sup> Judson, *History of the 83<sup>rd</sup>*, 197; Gordon C. Rhea, *The Battles for Spotsylvania Court House and the Road to Yellow Tavern: May 7-12, 1864*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 56.

<sup>26</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 101 and 240. O.R., I, XXXVI/1, 573.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 103. Perhaps in Crawford's defense, in *The Battle for Spotsylvania Court House and the Road to Yellow Tavern*, Rhea wrote that a Confederate artillery shell hit a nearby tree stunning him, 63.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 114 and 244. Spear's military record includes a casualty sheet. On the line for "nature of casualty" it lists only "wounded."

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 247. Wells, *Rundlett's War*, 155-7. One of the wounded was Sergeant Rundlett who received a head wound. He spent two months in the hospital. His letter of June 15<sup>th</sup> is the last that survives but he returned to Company G of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, was commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant and was with the unit during the siege of Petersburg, the fall of Richmond, and surrender at Appomattox.

<sup>30</sup> Gordon C. Rhea, *Cold Harbor: Grant and Lee May 26-June 3, 1864*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 389.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 250 and 123.

<sup>32</sup> McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 741.

<sup>33</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 128.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>35</sup> Crawford, *The 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry*, 458; Judson, *History of the 83<sup>rd</sup>*, 221.

<sup>36</sup> Judson, *History of the 83<sup>rd</sup>*, 223.

<sup>37</sup> John Horn, *The Petersburg Campaign: June 1864-April 1865*, (Conshohocken: Combined Books, Inc., 1993), 109; Powell, *The Fifth Army Corps*, 708; Powell, "The Battle of the Petersburg Crater," in Johnson, *Battles and Leaders...*, Vol. 4, p. 545-562.

<sup>38</sup> Bruce Catton's *Civil War, Stillness at Appomattox*, (New York: The Fairfax Press, 1984), 604. John Horn, *The Petersburg Campaign*, 118. General Grant appointed a court of inquiry. In his testimony General Burnside stated that, "...in the case of General Ledlie, who was quite sick on that day, and who I thought afterward ought to have gone to the crater the moment his men were in, but I understood that he was very sick and could hardly have walked that far under the oppressive heat." O.R. I, XL/1, 64. However, Surgeon O. P. Chubb testified that General Ledlie sat in the bombproof and sent out aides but there is no mention that he was sick (103). Under further questioning he stated that the general claimed to have been hit by a spent ball but did not ask for any treatment. Surgeon H. E. Smith present in the bombproof testified that General Ledlie asked for stimulants. When asked to be more specific, he testified that he gave the general rum. He was then asked how often he gave him rum and the surgeon replied, "I think that once

was the only time" (119). He was not asked, how much. In his diary for July 30<sup>th</sup>, Corporal Nathan S. Clark (Maine State Archives) recorded the rumor that the leading officers of the 9<sup>th</sup> Corps were intoxicated.

<sup>39</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 138.

<sup>40</sup> Livermore Diary, September 10.

<sup>41</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 146.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, *Recollections*, 149. Report of Maine Commissioners, *Maine at Gettysburg*, 282; Powell, *The Fifty Army Corps*, 730; Crawford, *The 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry*, 478; Judson, *History of the 83<sup>rd</sup>*, 232; John Horn, *The Petersburg Campaign*, 164; Styple, *With A Flash of his Sword*, 270; Gerrish, *Army Life*, 215; Livermore Diary, Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>; O.R., I, XLII/1, 31, 41, 544, 1132.

<sup>43</sup> O. R., I, XLII/2, 1132; Livermore Diary, Sept. 30; Gerrish, *Army Life*, 215; Nathan S. Clark Diary, Maine State Archives, September 30.

<sup>44</sup> O. R., I, LI/1, 1191. O. R., I, XLII/3, 50. The recommendation for Major Ellis Spear has not been located but an order dated December 29, 1864 assigns him duties as Brevet Lieutenant Colonel (O. R., I, XLII/3, 1095). In Spear's service record is the General Order 15, War Department, Adjutant General's Office, February 6, 1865, promoting him to Lieutenant Colonel to date from September 30, 1864.

<sup>45</sup> O. R., I, XLII/1, 545.

<sup>46</sup> Spear's military records, NARA. In the report of Asst. Surg. Charles Smart, of the Second Corps, for the month of October, he reported a sick rate for the month of 39%. Most of the illness was typho-malarial fever, O. R., I, XLI/1, 277.

<sup>47</sup> Horn, *The Petersburg Campaign*, 171.

<sup>48</sup> Livermore Diary, October 26; Powell, *The Fifth Army Corps*, 736. For General Grant's report see O. R. I, XXXIV/1, 29. O.R. I, XXXVIII/1, 22. For subordinate reports see O. R., I, Volume XLII, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Livermore Diary, November 8<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> Clark Diary, November 18<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> Livermore Diary, December 7.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, December 11. Spear, *Recollections*, 164.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE SURRENDER AT APPOMATTOX

The new year began cold with a light snow on the ground. All hoped that the New Year would see the end of the war, and of course with a Union victory. Many thought that victory was but a matter of time now that Richmond and Petersburg were under siege. But, the campaigns of 1864 had bled the strength of the Union Army. From May to the end of the year, the V Corps had lost more than 12,027 men.<sup>1</sup> In spite of receiving a few draftees that Sergeant Livermore mentioned in November, something needed to be done. Spear wrote about the problem. The problem had two major elements. First, the governors of the states preferred to form new regiments rather than send replacements to veteran units. The advantages of sending replacements to veteran units was that new recruits mixed with veterans quickly learned the details of camp and march, and steadied in battle, fought like veterans. In spite of what veterans thought as common sense, governors instead, being politicians, played politics. They formed new units that required the appointment of new officers; they could fulfill political promises or bestow favors. Secondly, a perception, that existed in the minds of many contemplating enlistments, was that a new regiment was a safer place than an old regiment. Major Spear, having in 1862 recruited a company and understanding the problems and aware of the needs of the regiment, volunteered for recruiting duty.

report of the seventeenth they recommended that Lieutenant Colonel Gilmore be honorably discharged for disability. Lieutenant Gilmore was discharged on February 22, 1865. Special Order # 141 dated March 23, 1865 mustered him out of the service as a Lieutenant Colonel and back into the service as a Colonel in the same regiment to date from March 16, 1865. This last order or special order #262 dated May 29, 1865 that honorably discharged him must have caught someone's attention of the Adjutant General Officer. In Gilmore's military record is the following addressed to General Meade:

I am directed to invite your attention to the fact that the resignation of Lieut. Colonel C. D. Gilmore, 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Volunteers was accepted by Special Order -par. 4. Headquarters 5<sup>th</sup> Army Corps, February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1865 and that he was subsequently restored. As there are no papers on file in this Office, relative to the same, you are requested to inform this Department under what authority his resignation was revoked. This letter to be returned with your report.<sup>6</sup>

Whatever the reply, it does not exist in Gilmore's military file. When Spear returned from recruiting duty, he met Gilmore in Washington, and commented in his diary, that Gilmore had showed him "the order reinstating him as Col."<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile back at the front, the two Sergeants, Clark and Livermore recorded routine duties such as drills, inspections, and weather that alternated between fair and rain. On the twenty-third, Livermore mentioned that Doctor Shaw's and Lt. Col. Gilmore's discharges came. February ended with rain and March started cloudy.

Sergeant Livermore wrote that Captain Morrill was on picket duty and "Col. Land" was in command.<sup>8</sup> It was all quiet on the line at Hatcher's Run, and the number of rebel deserters was increasing. Both Sergeants Livermore and Clark noted the return of Captain Clark to the regiment on March 12. On the thirteenth Sergeant Clark wrote "Major Clark commanding."<sup>9</sup> Preparations for a move were also noted. Four days rations were issued,

extra cartridges drawn, overcoats and extra clothing were packed up and turned over to the Christian Commission to be forwarded home. An additional indication of a move was that Sutlers were ordered out of camp. Friday found the regiment still in camp. They received several recruits but this did not increase their strength very much, because two from Company K deserted to the enemy the next day. The twentieth was fair, and Sergeant Livermore noted that Captain Morrill received his commission as Lieutenant Colonel along with several other promotions in the regiment. Saturday morning, March 25, Livermore was awakened by the sounds of musketry and cannonading.

The sounds of musketry and cannonading that awoke Sergeant Livermore were Major General John B. Gordon's attack upon Fort Stedman. General Lee, knowing that it was but a matter of time until Sherman joined with Grant in the siege of Petersburg and Richmond, authorized the attack. The attack's purpose was to buy time by disrupting Grant's lines. Lee knew that he could not hold Petersburg and Richmond but the roads were soft and his horses weak and would soon collapse in any attempt to pull back with his artillery. At first, the attack was successful but soon fragmented in the dark. Failure to take the forts on each shoulder narrowed the attack. Forces, that were to breach the line and take forts and batteries in the rear, could not find them in the dark. The Union Army rallied and held. Gordon's force was caught in a crossfire of musketry and cannon that inflicted heavy losses. Lee and Gordon realized the attack had failed. Grant, believing that Lee had weakened his left, launched a counter-attack. Supporting the II Corps, the Third Brigade launched an assault upon the rebel works to their front. They took several positions, several redoubts, and two to three thousand prisoners. Near

midnight they returned to camp near Hatcher's Run.<sup>10</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Spear arrived at the front on the twenty-seventh and found the troops ready to move.

Although ready to move on the 27<sup>th</sup>, the V Corps did not break camp until the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup>. General Chamberlain led the First Brigade composed of two regiments, the 198<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania and the 185<sup>th</sup> New York, followed by the Second Brigade made up of three regiments, and the Third Brigade of nine regiments. Brevet Major Clark was commanding the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine. They moved up the Quaker Road, through some woods, as far as the Lewis house. They captured the outworks with relative ease, until Chamberlain encountered the Confederate brigade commanded by General Henry A. Wise. Meeting with stiff resistance, the First Brigade reformed and was reinforced by regiments sent by Spear, who was now a staff officer. Both General Griffin and General Chamberlain, reported that the fight lasted about two hours.<sup>11</sup> Once the fighting was over, Ellis rode to where Chamberlain was sitting on his horse in an open field. Spear wrote that a bullet had hit Chamberlain, which harmed only his coat. Chamberlain's narrative of the event had more dramatic details. The bullet, fired at close range, passed through the neck of his horse, then:

...through a leather case of field orders and a brass-mounted hand-mirror, around his chest out the sleeve of his coat striking the pistol of his aide, destroying the pistol and knocking the aide off of his horse. Everybody thought that I was gone he wrote, that is why a telegram went to the new York morning papers reporting me as killed.<sup>12</sup>

General Warren reported only that, "The brave General Chamberlain, of Maine, was slightly wounded and his clothes quite riddled with bullets..." Major Melcher reported that Chamberlain had been wounded twice.<sup>13</sup> Years later, we learn more details about this battle from Chamberlain's book, *The Passing of the Armies*. After rallying his

troops, Chamberlain's horse became weak from loss of blood and was sent to the rear and Chamberlain became a foot soldier. In the confusion of battle near the sawdust piles at the mill, he became surrounded by Confederates. Dressed in an old dingy coat that was almost gray, he addressed them with a southern accent then led them forward to be captured by Union forces.<sup>14</sup> Chamberlain's narrative, written years later, has several incredible points. Using his language skills to deceive the Confederate troops could almost be believed, if that, a nearly similar escape had not been used at Fredericksburg to also avoid capture. Even though his uniform coat was old and dingy and almost gray, he should have been recognized as a Union officer. Confederate general officers wore their rank on the collar; Union officers wore their rank on shoulder straps. And finally, Spear wrote, "...and then rode to C. who was sitting on his horse in the open field."<sup>15</sup>

There was some confusion how this skirmish or battle was recorded. Some reports in the *Official Records* report the battle as the battle of the Quaker Road, or Boydton Roads, or at the junction of the Quaker and Boydton Roads. General Humphreys, commander of the II Corps, did not give it a name, only reported that he supported the V Corps along the Quaker Road beyond the old sawmill. Three reports name it as the Battle of Lewis' Farm. However, General Warren's report was nearly a repeat of General Chamberlain's report. One difference between Warren's report and Chamberlain's report was that Warren reported that, "The One hundred and eighteenth Pennsylvania Volunteers drove the last of the enemy out of the position where the two roads join..."<sup>16</sup> Although Ellis Spear was not mentioned in any of these reports, General Chamberlain, on April 27, 1865, recommended Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Ellis Spear, Twentieth Maine Volunteers, to be promoted to the rank of Brevet Colonel for meritorious services at the

battle of Lewis' farm, March 29. Ellis received his promotion to Colonel on General Order number 133, August 22, 1865 for gallant and meritorious services at the Battle of Lewis' Farm, Virginia to date from March 19, 1865.<sup>17</sup>

Sensing his advantage, Grant maintained the pressure on Lee's right. In their diaries Spear, Clark, and Livermore recorded attacks and counter-attacks. And, of course, to make the situation as miserable as possible it rained. What began as a raid by General Sherman on the Southside Railroad was changed to an attempt to dislodge Lee from his entrenched positions. The II and V Corps were ordered to shift left, and The Army of the James was ordered forward for their support. The key to Lee's left was Five Forks, defended by General Pickett of Gettysburg fame. Sheridan attacked Pickett's positions and both commanders requested reinforcements. Both commanders shifted troops to the scene of battle over the next couple of days. In the fighting, the 198<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania had its commander, General Horatio B. Sickel, wounded on the twenty-ninth and his replacement, Major Edwin A. Glenn killed on the first. Ellis took command of the regiment on the third. His command must have been temporary, because Captain John Stanton was listed as the commander in all the *Official Records* organizational reports for the Appomattox Campaign. Grant had more troops, and sensing that Lee was weakening his left to reinforce his right, he ordered an assault all along the lines on April first. The pressure on Lee's lines and Sheridan forcing his way through Five Forks, cutting off Pickett's corps from the rest of the Army of Northern Virginia, convinced Lee that he could no longer hold his positions at Petersburg and Richmond. Lee notified President Davis on the second that he could no longer defend Petersburg and Richmond. Lee told Davis that he planned to withdraw to the west and, if possible, join General Johnston in

North Carolina. The smoke from the burning Richmond warehouses alerted Grant of Lee's withdraw, and he ordered a renewed assault on the Petersburg and Richmond lines for the morning of the third. On the third, the Union Army found that Lee had abandoned his position. The forces of General Willcox entered Petersburg, and General Weitzel accepted the surrender of Richmond at the City Hall at 8:15 a.m.

News traveled quickly. Sergeant Livermore's entry for April 3 stated, "We hear that Richmond is in our possession." General Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia were not defeated. Taking as many cannons and military stores that his weakened horses could drag, Lee conducted a fighting withdraw in an attempt to flank Grant, turn south and join General Johnston in North Carolina.

General Grant, understanding Lee's maneuver and his attempt to reach either Danville or Lynchburg to the west, ordered General Sheridan to parallel him on the south side of the Appomattox River. Sheridan pushed both his cavalry and the V Corps in an attempt to get ahead and block the Army of Northern Virginia. General Meade, with his II and VI Corps, followed Sheridan to provide support and to prevent Lee from doubling back and breaking through Sheridan's thin lines. General Ord, with the XXIV Corps, applied pressure from the rear and constantly threatened Lee's slow moving artillery and wagon trains. Weak horses and bad roads delayed Lee's retreat. A rearguard was overtaken by Union cavalry near Deep Creek. A severe fight resulted in many Confederate prisoners and five pieces of abandoned artillery together with a number of wagons. The V Corps pushed on to Jetersville and entrenched with the view of waiting for the rest of the army. On another road about five miles north of Jetersville, the cavalry overtook a wagon train, drove off its guards, and captured five artillery pieces and burned

the wagons. Not far away, on another road, The II Corps and VI Corps overtook another wagon train, guarded by General Gordon, near Sailor's Creek (some historians use Sayler's Creek). The hardest fight of the retreat was here. Gordon was overwhelmed, losing thirteen flags. Casualties were 2,000 killed and wounded, 1,700 men taken prisoner. The material lost was four guns and a large number of the wagons captured. Union forces lost 311 men. Gordon and his remaining men were able to escape in the dark. Meanwhile, the V Corps, meeting no resistance, forged ahead in an attempt to get ahead of Lee's lead elements. On the evening of the eighth, Union cavalry, led by General Merritt, arrived at Appomattox Station and captured a large train of wagons and artillery. In addition, they captured three railroad cars of subsistence that Lee had expected to have to feed his army. Another depot of rations was captured and destroyed at Pamplin's Station. Following the XXIV Corps, the V Corps marched about twenty-nine miles from Prospect Station to within about two miles of Appomattox Court House. With only about two hours rest, they broke camp without breakfast, and by 6 a.m. came to General Sheridan's support as he lay across the Confederate line of march.<sup>18</sup>

General Chamberlain in his narrative *The Passing of the Armies*, wrote that his brigade, with perhaps a little support from the Third Brigade, relieved Sheridan's cavalry, and held the advanced units of Lee's army at bay.<sup>19</sup> Very heroic, but how did the First Brigade, consisting of two regiments and supported by the Second and Third Brigades with a total of twelve regiments block General Gordon's three divisions? It didn't. In command of Gordon's Corps was General Grimes who attacked Sheridan's cavalry and opened the road to Lynchburg. Grimes sent word back to General Gordon that the road was open for the escape of the wagons and that he was awaiting further orders. While

awaiting instructions, the wagons, and the infantry, he used two of his divisions to hold his right flank. The orders he received were completely unexpected; he was to withdraw his command immediately.<sup>20</sup> The army was to surrender.

General Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to General Grant on April 9, 1865. Grant and Lee worked out the general terms of the surrender and appointed a commission composed of officers from either army to work out the details. The first of the five paragraphs of the agreement required the troops to march by brigades and detachments to a designated point, stack their arms, deposit their flags, sabers, pistols, &c., and from thence march to their homes under charge of their officers.<sup>21</sup> On the tenth, General Longstreet's First Army Corps stacked arms in Captain Flood's fields. General Gordon, commander of Second Army Corps, called his troops into a hollow square and assured his troops that they had been surrender only as a result of circumstances beyond their control, thus setting the tone for a generation of "Lost Cause" historians to come. On the twelfth, when Gordon had his troops stack arms in an open field, Generals Gibbon and Griffin reminded him, who was a party to the surrender commission, that a formal parade was required. He objected strenuously but was forced to comply. Gibbon held the parole certificates.

The formal parade was held on April 12, 1865. General Chamberlain penned the most sterling description of the parade. In Chamberlain's version, he was personally selected by General Grant to command the troops that would receive the surrender. Now in command of the Third Brigade, he positioned himself and staff to receive the surrender. He wrote:

Instructions had been given; and when the head of each division column comes opposite our group, our bugle sounds the signal and instantly our

whole line from right to left, regiment by regiment in succession, gives the soldier's salutation, from the "order arms" to the old "carry" –the marching salute. Gordon at the head of the column, riding with heavy spirit and downcast face, catches the sound of shifting arms, looks up, and taking the meaning, wheels superbly, making with himself and his horse one uplifted figure, with profound salutation as he drops the point of his sword to the boot toe; then facing to his own command, gives word for his successive brigades to pass us with the same position of the manual, - honor answering honor. On our part not a sound of trumpet more, nor roll of drum; not a cheer, nor word nor whisper of vain-glorying, nor motion of man standing again at the order, but an awed stillness rather, and breath-holding, as if it were the passing of the dead!<sup>22</sup>

Breath taking, romantic, this version has become legend, myth, and the accepted truth by historians. Like most legends and myths this fable is too good to be true. It never happened. Myths and legends die hard, or never die at all and to dispute them is to draw condemnation from all who want to believe in them. Ellis Spear was there as a Third Brigade staff office. He wrote it never happened. Major Holman Melcher was there. His diary entry for April 12 mentioned no salute. Sergeant William T. Livermore was there. He made no mention in his diary of a salute. He wrote that, "half of the regiments were without colors and some regiments were with less than one gun to ten men."<sup>23</sup> In a letter to his sister written the day after the ceremony, Chamberlain made no mention of a salute.<sup>24</sup> Knowing Chamberlain's propensity to inflate his role, it is inconceivable that he would not have mentioned the salute in this letter. He claimed nearly everything but that. For example, he claimed in the letter "15,000 stacks of arms & 72 flags were stacked before my line." This is a Chamberlain exaggeration. Longstreet's corps had stacked arms on April 10, and Livermore remembered that "Gordon had about 6,000 soldiers and most regiments were without flags." Both William Marvel and Glenn LaFantasie wrote that it was nearly forty years later, after Generals Grant, Griffin, Bartlett, Gregory, and Pearson had died, when Chamberlain

began claiming that he had been selected by General Grant to be in command at the surrender ceremony. Chamberlain was the only original source of the claim that he commanded the surrender ceremony and that a salute was rendered; he offered neither witnesses nor documentation, and none has been found.<sup>25</sup> In *Lee's Last Retreat*, William Marvel wrote, "No Confederates mentioned a salute either, although some of them noted the quiet courtesy of the assembled victors and the orderly conduct on both sides."<sup>26</sup>

Isaac G. Bradwell (31<sup>st</sup> Georgia Infantry, Company I) did not observe such courtesy. He wrote in the *Confederate Veteran*:

Finally, on the fifth morning, when all the Confederate troops were gone, we were ordered to take up our arms and were marched to the public road, where we found a long line of Yankee troops already formed and awaiting us about thirty feet on the other side. They appeared to be well fed and clothed while we were ragged and almost dead from starvation. We were formed about thirty feet in front of them and stood there a few minutes, while not a word was spoken. Presently someone in the ranks of the enemy began to address us in the most opprobrious language. The others joined in with him, using the vilest epithets. This continued for some time, when a mounted officer in the rear spoke to his men and told them to hush or he would break his sword over the head of the next offender, winding up by calling them a set of cowards and saying that those Confederate soldiers were brave men, and if they were half as brave they would have whipped them long ago. It was our turn now, and every one of us yelled and cheered the officer.<sup>27</sup>

On April 17, General Johnston worked out a political settlement with General Sherman that was rejected by the Lincoln administration. Rather than renewing the war, he surrendered his army on April 26, 1865. For the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac, the war was over; they could go home.

The joy of victory was short lived. It ended with the news of President Lincoln's assassination. Saddened by the news, the men of the V Corps began their march home. For the next four days the troops marched back along the route that they had taken in pursuing Lee. On the nineteenth, they remained in camp in deference for the slain

President. The chaplain conducted a memorial service. Livermore commented that it seemed like Sunday. In his diary, Ellis wrote that he had his black mare stolen and that he made “document against Gilmore.” It is not clear if Spear was initiating the investigation of Gilmore’s misuse of rations with these papers. On April 27, Ellis forwarded the Gilmore papers. Just over a month later, on May 28, Gilmore met with Ellis over the use or misuse of rations and commented that the department was delaying his mustering out. Special Order #262, discharging Gilmore withheld his final payments until he had satisfied the Pay Department that he was not indebted to the government.<sup>28</sup> Ellis believed that he got off scott free with his “illgotten unearned pay.” Farmville, Nottoway, Five Forks, and Peebles’ Farm, the V Corps retraced its path through the Virginia countryside on its way to Washington. Spear, now division inspector, shared the sunshine and rain, the heat and the cold as the men marched with ease and relaxation. Discipline was maintained, homes along the route of march were protected, and Ellis continued to be involved with paperwork. Three weeks following the surrender, the V Corps marched through Richmond. Ellis visited Libby Prison in Richmond. They marched pass Fredericksburg, where the 20<sup>th</sup> had charged toward Marye’s Heights. May 12, thirty days after Appomattox, they were in sight of Washington. The Army of the Potomac, with battle flags proudly carried, marched down Pennsylvania in the “Grand Review” on May 23, 1865. Sherman’s army from the west was reviewed the next day.

In what Ellis described as, a fly infested camp on the Columbia Pike, the unit waited to be mustered out. On May 29, he was mustered as the Colonel of the regiment, which he felt, was about time. Of course, he had to wait until Gilmore had resigned. Ellis never had a kind word for Gilmore or for anyone who did not do his job. By

remaining in the unit, on paper, Gilmore had prevented Spear of being promoted to Colonel. Ellis had performed the duties and incurred the expenses of regimental command but had only drawn the pay of major. He held Gilmore responsible for the loss. Paper work, muster rolls, all the numerous papers, files, and forms necessary in disbanding of army needed to be completed. Apparently, it takes more paper to disband an army that to muster one. Sergeant Livermore and the other veterans of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, along with the veterans of other regiments were mustered out and began their return to Portland, Maine. Colonel Spear remained as commander of the remaining men of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Maine and the 1st Maine sharpshooters in the recombined 20<sup>th</sup> Maine which now numbered about one thousand men. All were looking forward to being mustered out.

The process was slow, and the responsibility of caring for 1,000 impatient men and arranging for their transportation from Virginia to Maine involved myriad details. Contributing to the problems was that some wished to go in their own way, and others, claiming that the war was over, wanted to throw off all restraints of military discipline and return to the unfettered joys of civilian life. With all the attractions of wine and women offered by Washington, Ellis had his hands full. It was necessary to assemble the regiment and to remind them that they were still in the military, that discipline must be maintained, and that they should take care not to tarnish the honors won by the regiment. Finally, on July 16, they were mustered out of federal service. But, Colonel Spear had to get them home. They broke camp for the last time and marched for Baltimore. The train took them through Philadelphia to New York. By ship they were transported to Providence. They then rode the train to Boston, changed trains and arrived very late in

the evening at Portland. After being fed, they arrived in camp where they had begun their military service in 1862 to await mustering out. Colonel Ellis Spear and the remaining men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, except for Company K, were paid and signed the rolls for the last time on July 25, 1865. Colonel Spear and the men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine could go home proud of a job well done.

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<sup>1</sup> Powell, *The Fifth Army Corps*, 695. This number does not include the casualties lost between the major campaigns.

<sup>2</sup> Livermore Diary, January 21.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Jan. 4; Nathan S. Clark Diary, Jan. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Nathan S. Clark Diary, Jan. 6; R. H. Stanley and George O. Hall, *Eastern Maine and the Rebellion*, (n.p.: R. H. Stanley & Company, 1887; reprint, Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 2002), 350-351 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>5</sup> Military file for Charles D. Gilmore, NARA, Washington D.C.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 270.

<sup>8</sup> Livermore Diary, March 1, 1865. There is no elaboration of who this Col. Land was. A Joseph F. Land was mustered in to the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine as Captain in command of H Company. Captain Joseph F. Land is listed as mustered out on the roster contained in *Maine at Gettysburg*, 287.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., March 13, 1865.

<sup>10</sup> Livermore Diary, March 25; Clark Diary, March 25.

<sup>11</sup> O.R., I, XLVI/1, 845-848.

<sup>12</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 167. Joshua L. Chamberlain, *The Passing of the Armies: The Last Campaign of the Armies, Based upon Personal Reminiscences of the Fifty Army Corps*, (New York: n.p., 1915; reprint, Gettysburg: Stan Clark Military Books, 1994), 46. (Page citations are to the reprint edition). Chamberlain also claims that New York morning papers reported his death but the reference can not be found, nor is there a casualty report in his military file. O.R. I, SLVI/1, 848. This is Chamberlain's report for the Appomattox Campaign, March 29 to April 9, 1865 in that there is no mention of him being wounded.

<sup>13</sup> O. R., I, XLVI/1, 800; Style, *With a Flash of His Sword*, 210.

<sup>14</sup> Chamberlain, *The Passing of the Armies*, 48.

<sup>15</sup> Spear, *Recollections*, 167.

<sup>16</sup> O.R., I, XLVI/1, 676, 800-801, 848-849, 858-859. Some confusion exists over the name of this battle. Clarification can be found in *A guide-index to the Official Record, Volume II: Main Eastern Theater of Operations, Virginia [Q-S]*.

<sup>17</sup> Spear's service record, NARA.

<sup>18</sup> Powell, *The Fifth Army Corps*, 829-849; Humphreys, *The Virginia Campaign 1864 and 1865*, 380-398; Calkins, *The Appomattox Campaign*, 85-157.

<sup>19</sup> Chamberlain, *The Passing of the Armies*, 235; Humphreys, *The Virginia Campaign*, 391; Calkins, *The Appomattox Campaign*, 165; Marvel, *Lee's last Retreat*, 172; Marvel, *A Place Called Appomattox*, 236-237.

<sup>20</sup> T. Harrell Allen, *Lee's Last Major General: Bryan Grimes of North Carolina* (Mason City, Iowa: Savas Publishing Company, 1999), 253.

<sup>21</sup> O.R., I, XLVI/3, 685.

<sup>22</sup> Chamberlain, *The Passing of the Armies*, 260-61.

<sup>23</sup> Livermore diary, April 12.

<sup>24</sup> Chamberlain in letter to his sister dated April 13, 1865.

<sup>25</sup> Marvel, *A Place Called Appomattox*, 358; LaFantasie, "Joshua Chamberlain and the American Dream, in *The Gettysburg Nobody Knows*, 34.

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<sup>26</sup> Marvel, *Lee's Last Retreat*, 194. For an in depth analysis of Chamberlain's part in the surrender ceremony see note 38 pages 358-59. Glenn LaFantasie, "Joshua Chamberlain and the American Dream," in Boritt, *The Gettysburg Nobody Knows*, 31-55 and 254-256. Edward G. Longacre. *Joshua Chamberlain: The Soldier and the Man* (Conshohocken, PA: Combined Publishing, 1999), 247. Longacre commits upon Chamberlain critics. He cites a statement made in the *Confederate Veteran*, "Coming Home Again," 36 (January 1928), 50. An examination of this article reveals that it was made at a ceremony of the return of seven flags, captured by Maine units. General (honorary rank) W.B. Freeman, (there is a private Walker B. Freeman, Virginia, 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry, Company G., listed in the parole records) speaking nearly sixty years after the surrender, not contemporary. Freeman wrote, "Then, suddenly-I hear it yet-a voice rang out through the silence with a sharp order to the Union troops that stood in stalwart ranks around us. Down the lines the order went and, on the instant, that magnificent Federal command presented arms-presented arms to us, to us who had come to lay down our weapons and to end the strife that had riven America." There is a major problem with this narrative. The 34<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry was part of A.P. Hill's Corps. The surrender ceremony began about 6 a.m. and continued until about 4 p.m.; Hill's corps was one of the last units to surrender. Freeman, a member of one of the last units would not have participated in the salute. Freeman's account is similar in tone to both Chamberlain's and Gordon's. Another account of the surrender can be found in the *Southern Historical Society Papers* Vol. XXV (Jan.-Dec., 1897). This is a reprint of a letter written by Colonel Eugene Waggamen, 10<sup>th</sup> Louisiana Infantry, to the *New Orleans Picayune*, "At Appomattox every respect was shown the Louisiana soldiers. At the surrender they marched with heads as erect as ever, when they impinged on the line of the conquering enemy the victors shouldered arms with grave faces, on which was neither snide nor cynicism, nor suggestion of the defeat of their adversaries." If there had a salute, Colonel Waggamen would have mentioned it. In contrast to Chamberlain and Gordon, who describe heads hanging low; he claims that they marched with heads proudly held high.

<sup>27</sup> Isaac G. Bradwell, *Confederate Veteran* XXIX (Jan. 1921): 56-58.

<sup>28</sup> Colonel Gilmore service record.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

The war was over and now the job was to rebuild lives that had been shattered by the war, to start over, or to attempt to pick up where one had left off. Ellis Spear returned to Maine to his invalid wife and daughter and son, but like all who had fought in the war, it had changed him. He did not return to teaching, nor did he remain in Maine. Returning to Washington in November 1865, Ellis entered the United States Patent Office as an assistant examiner of railway and civil engineering. He earned promotions to second and first assistant examiner. In 1869, he was made Principal Examiner. President Grant appointed him Examiner in Chief in 1872; he became Assistant Commissioner of Patents in 1874. Desiring to practice his profession, he resigned in 1876 and joined the law firm of Hill, Ellsworth & Spear, Washington D.C. Concerned about the shortage of personnel in the patent office, he accepted the position of Commissioner of Patents on January 29, 1877. Unfortunately, his tenure was marred by a fire, in the supposedly fire proof building, on September 24, 1877. Most of the 114,000 models in the west and north halls of the model room were totally destroyed or at least seriously damaged, but no patents were completely lost. Desiring to return to his law practice, he resigned in November 1878 and specialized in patent law. He was admitted to the bar for the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia and was active in the affairs of the District. He held the position of Director of the Board of Trade, served as Trustee of the Public Schools, and President

of the Society of the Mount Pleasant Congregational Church, President of the Patent law Association of the District of Columbia. He maintained a close association with his alma mater (Bowdoin College) as member of the Board of Overseers. When in 1902, the President of Bowdoin College requested his help; he solicited funds for the purpose of procuring for the college a portrait of General Chamberlain.<sup>1</sup> The college conferred upon him a degree of LLD in 1909. He maintained contact with former regiment members of the Army of the Potomac. As Commander of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States (MOLLUS) of the District of Columbia, he addressed MOLLUS twice, each time without heroics or glorification. His topics were recruiting his company (The Story of the Raising and Organization of a Regiment of Volunteers in 1862) and in his second address (The Hoe Cake of Appomattox) obtaining something to eat after the surrender at Appomattox. When it was decided to assemble a commission to write the history of *Maine at Gettysburg*, he made major contributions about the events on the left. He helped with the design of the monument to the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine placed on the Gettysburg battlefield. In 1893, he was chairman of the Committee of Parade of the Grand Army of the Republic's encampment. About 1902, he retired from the law firm Spear, Middleton, Donaldson & Spear and in 1905 applied for a government invalid pension under authority of the Act of June 27, 1890, as amended by act of May 9, 1900. On this declaration the following is quoted, "That he is suffering from disability of a permanent character, not the result of his own vicious habits, which incapacitates him for the performances of manual labor in such a degree as to render him 'wholly' unable to earn a support, to wit: 'old age.'"<sup>2</sup> Spear's pension was approved. He died April 3, 1917, at St. Petersburg, Florida. A little more than a month later, his wife was taken ill and died June 6.

Thus ended the life of a man who survived over three years of combat. He entered the service with the rank of captain, with no military experience, commanding a commanding a company of volunteers. He was promoted to the rank of colonel and commanded a brigade under fire and was mentioned in reports and at the end of the war, promoted to the rank of Brevet Brigadier General for his honorable and military expertise. He fought in the battles of Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, the campaign that began in The Wilderness, and ended with the siege of Petersburg. During the siege of Petersburg, at the Battle of Peeble's Farm, he commanded the brigade and won a brevet promotion to colonel. In spite of his accomplishments, he remains in Chamberlain's shadow and is mostly remembered for the controversy over his criticism of Chamberlain's anecdotes.

There are several opinions about the controversy over the Battles of Fredericksburg and Gettysburg, and the surrender at Appomattox. Alice Rains Trulock, in her hagiography *In the Hands of Providence*, dismissed the dispute as "deep envy" of Chamberlain by Spear. In her critique, Trulock referred to "modern independent research" finding that many of Spear's allegations false, others obviously a "product of a poor memory," and still others "unprovable"; however, she provided no reference for this "independent research," nor has any been found.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, a perusal of the correspondence between Spear, Oliver Norton, and Bishop Vincent, Colonel Strong Vincent's brother, failed to substantiate an assessment of "envy." In this correspondence, Spear wrote to Norton giving the credit of saving Little Round Top to Colonel Vincent and wrote that some of the credit should be shared with Colonel Rice. Spear was provoked that another was taking the glory due them. Spear continued in this letter, "In this I have not trusted solely to my own memory." In a letter to Bouget Vincent, he

rejected any credit for “an important share in the battle of the Little Round Top at Gettysburg.” He wrote, “I had some special feeling in the matter, since it has been a grief to me that the credit of that fight has been unjustly taken by another officer. That other officer was the Colonel of my regiment, who is still living, a man of facile pen and tongue.”<sup>4</sup> The only credit claimed by Spear was “. . . did no more than the humblest private.”<sup>5</sup> One can only assume that the reason for Trulock’s assertion of “envy” is to discredit Spear and to prevent any blemish upon Chamberlain’s armor.

Another critic of Ellis Spear was Blanche Ames Ames in her biography of General Adelbert Ames. It appears that Blanche Ames has done no original research for her narrative of the Battle of Fredericksburg. It is an uncritical word for word repeat of Chamberlain’s *Cosmopolitan Magazine* story. Blanche Ames had access to the copy of Spear’s critique to this article and uncritically dismisses it as follows: “Whoever writes war memoirs seems to become a special target for criticism, and Lieutenant-Colonel Joshua I. [sic] Chamberlain was no exception. ‘My Story of Fredericksburg’ by him is amusingly subjected to penetrating analysis by Captain Ellis Spear.”<sup>6</sup> Blanche Ames was pleased with John J. Pullen’s *Twentieth Maine* that gave full credit to “Chamberlain’s picturesque descriptions.”

Unfortunately, Pullen’s *Twentieth Maine* was published before Abbot Spear published the conflicting accounts of Generals Chamberlain and Ellis Spear. Pullen’s work, when published, was well received and is included in David J. Eicher’s *The Civil War in Books: An Analytical Bibliography*.<sup>7</sup> Pullen evaluated the sentiment of both Chamberlain and Spear. “The war had been Chamberlain’s dish; he had swallowed it whole and savored it to the full.” Spear, in contrast, “. . . was much more typical of the good volunteer officer

than was Chamberlain. To him, war was far from being romantic; it was instead a dull, ugly job that had to be done in spite of all its horrors and official stupidities.”<sup>8</sup>

In his second book *Joshua Chamberlain*, published ten years after Abbott Spear had published *The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine at Fredericksburg*, Pullen examined the Chamberlain/Spear controversy over the defense of Little Round Top. Pullen does not address the controversy directly but referred to three books as the best references for understanding what occurred. The first is Theodore Gerrish’s *Army Life: Reminiscences of the War*. However, recent research by Thomas Desjardin, determined that Gerrish was not present at the battle, but absent, in the hospital sick. The second book, *The Attack and Defense of Little Round Top*, was compiled by Oliver W. Norton, who was present at the battle. Using after action reports, plus the accounts of several historians, he analyzed all the available material; however, Pullen suggested that this was of limited value as both regimental commanders Colonels Rice and Colonel Vincent were killed before they could write their accounts. Furthermore, Pullen suggested that even Norton had made mistakes. Pullen’s third reference is to Thomas Desjardin’s *Stand Firm Ye Boys from Maine* as “probably the most thorough and penetrating study even made.”

Pullen concluded his book with a summary of conflicting versions of the event by other participants, who over the years, relived that eventful day and never directly addressed the Spear/Chamberlain controversy. In his analysis, he diplomatically commented that over the years, all memories had begun to slip. Chamberlain, as in 1863, always defended Little Round Top. Pullen wrote, “In refighting the war Chamberlain more than held his ground, but it took hours, days, and weeks of time, particularly in trying to determine for the public record who was at Gettysburg and what they did there.”<sup>9</sup>

Pullen did not examine the beginning of the dispute and suggested that the controversy between Chamberlain and Spear was more a matter of old age and fading memories.

A historian who has explored the controversy between Chamberlain and Spear more than Pullen was William B. Style. Style included in his book, in addition to the writings of Major Melcher, letters, and papers read before the members of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion at reunions, and newspaper articles. In appendix I, Style explored the thesis that it was Chamberlain's egotistical version of his actions on Little Round Top in "Deeds of Valor," published in 1907, that Spear found most insulting.<sup>10</sup> In "Deeds of Valor," Chamberlain constantly used the pronoun "I" and claimed credit for the defense of the position, the concept of the bayonet charge, the ordering of the "left wheel," the forced change of Lee's battle plan, and the saving of the Union.<sup>11</sup> Spear took offense. Spear never took any credit and in letters and articles gave credit to Colonels Vincent and Rice, Captain Melcher, and the men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine.

The controversy may date from an earlier period. Style suggested the 1907 publication of "Deeds of Valor" as the beginning. The beginning, perhaps, began as early as November 15, 1892. In a letter to John B. Bachelder, Spear wrote, "This is the story, [about the defense of Little Round Top] but I believe it is not wholly in accordance with the fact as related by Gen. Chamberlain, and of course what Gen. Chamberlain says must be taken as history."<sup>12</sup>

A historian that made a more critical analysis of the Chamberlain/Spear controversy was Edward G. Longacre. In his Chamberlain biography, he made thirty-nine references to Ellis Spear, only generals Lee, Meade, and Griffin had more; Gerrish was mentioned but twice. Blanche Ames would not have liked his evaluation of Chamberlain's version of

the Battle of Fredericksburg. According to Longacre, General Ames also was upset about Chamberlain's "distortions and fabrications that permeated it" [the article in *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, January 1913] and asked Spear to match his own recollections against Chamberlain's. The result, Longacre wrote, "While some of his comments read like carping, others the bitter fruit of jealousy, numerous criticism appear to hit the mark, making his old commander out to be a myth-maker, a dresser-up of events—at times, a liar."<sup>13</sup> Longacre proceeded to explore why Spear wrote his critique. Longacre concluded that, "Spear hoped the critique would correct the record for posterity, but his wish went largely unfulfilled: his rebuttal was not published for another 75 years and then only in a limited edition edited by his grandson."<sup>14</sup> Thus, it was Chamberlain's version of the Battle of Fredericksburg that has become "history" and once established carried over into Chamberlain's narratives of the Battle of Gettysburg and the surrender at Appomattox. Longacre attempted to evaluate the two individuals. Chamberlain and Spear saw things differently. "Joshua Chamberlain was a romanticist; even when describing the horrors of a bloodbath his prose could be colorful, lyrical, even poetic. Spear did not permit himself to see things that way. Even at his most nostalgic, he never confused war with poetry."<sup>15</sup>

As the years passed, many former soldiers, on both sides of the conflict, came to view their war experience as a badge of honor, the wounds healed, memoirs written, unit reunions attended, and monuments erected. The nation put the war behind and moved on to settle the west. Ellis Spear never made this transition. "To him, the war remained a miserable, horrifying experience to be mourned rather than glorified."<sup>16</sup> He had recruited young men, taken them from their loved ones, led them in battle, and buried them. "Burdened with this responsibility, and the loss of his best friend Sam Keene, who died in

his arms at Petersburg, Spear found the ‘vain glorying’ of veterans in the 1880’s and 1890’s both foolhardy and irritating.”<sup>17</sup> This was written by historian Thomas A. Desjardin in the forward to the critique of Chamberlain’s account of the Battle of Fredericksburg.

Desjardin was asked by Abbott Spear to write the forward to the unpublished critique written by his grandfather nearly eighty years earlier. Thomas A. Desjardin, who John J. Pullen wrote, had dug deeper into all aspects of the defense of Little Round Top and into the effect that the battle had on the veterans lives also examined the disagreement between Chamberlain and Spear. Desjardin wrote that even Chamberlain was not pleased with the story of Fredericksburg that appeared in the 1913 issue of *Cosmopolitan* magazine which was followed six months later in *Hearst’s* magazine. Both publications were owned by William Randolph Hearst, and were well known for their sensationalism and yellow journalism. The story had been extensively edited to suit the style of the magazines. Desjardin wrote that Chamberlain was so thoroughly dissatisfied with the article that he refused to keep his own copy.<sup>18</sup> It is a shame that Chamberlain did not retain his original for historians to compare the original with the printed story. It appears that Spear did not know of Chamberlain’s dissatisfaction. Spear wrote his version, but in consideration to Chamberlain’s family did not publish it, sending it to only a few selected correspondents. Later, when *The Passing of the Armies* was published, Spear had had enough of the “vain gloriousness” and under the urging of General Ames, began to write his account of the war but never completed it.

Desjardin wrote, “In a sense there need not have been a controversy between Spear and Chamberlain, and it was unfortunate that their relationship decayed as it did, largely

over literary styles. They simply saw things differently; Spear was a practical man, Chamberlain a romantic. The two men experienced different battles at Gettysburg...."<sup>19</sup>

Spear and Chamberlain were alike in many ways. Both were raised in Maine, both attended Bowdoin College, both were teachers, and both waited, not rushing into war with the first flush of enthusiasm. But, from there their similarities end. Chamberlain viewed battle and war on a different level, from the level of middle or high command, beginning the war as a Lieutenant Colonel. Spear began as a captain. Twice, Spear was on recruiting duty. He had personal contact with the men, their families, their hopes, and their fears. Chamberlain was above that. Spear nursed them when they were sick, fed them when they were hungry, marched with them in the dust, and buried them when they died. For Chamberlain, the war and his memories of the battles were glorious and romantic. The war for Spear was horrible, it was death and destruction, and he was there to get the job done. Chamberlain took credit for the success, Spear always gave credit to others, Colonel Vincent, Colonel Rice, the men of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine. As Desjardin wrote, it was not necessary for Chamberlain to seek fame. It was not necessary for him to embellish his accomplishments; he had earned them. Spear did not seek fame; he does not appear envious, nor did he intend to write "amusing" stories. His descendants, even today, believe that he would wonder about the interest and research about him. One of them questioned the attention paid by Thomas Starr, who has adopted the persona of Ellis Spear in Civil War reenactments in California. Thomas Starr, who has researched his role, found Ellis to be a man of integrity, who fought to get the job done. Myths are hard to kill. Chamberlain is portrayed heroically on canvas and in film, his exploits have become

legend; he would bask in the cynosure. In contrast, Ellis Spear would prefer to remain the general in the shadow.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter Spear to G.T. Little, June 20, 1902, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, ME. This is part of a collection of correspondence between Spear, Little and others in obtaining funds for the Chamberlain portrait.

<sup>2</sup> Spear pension file, National Archives, Washington, D.C..

<sup>3</sup> Trulock, *In the Hands of Providence* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 528-29.

<sup>4</sup> Letter Norton to Spear, July 2, 1913; Letter Spear to Norton, July 5, 1913; Letter Norton to Spear, July 7, 1913; Letter Spear to National Tribune, March 20, 1913; Letter Spear to Vincent, July 5, 1913; Letter Spear to Norton, Aug. 19, 1913; Letter Spear to Brunswick, Maine newspaper editor, June 24, 1913, Ltr. Spear to Norton, January 18, 1916; Ltr. Spear to Norton, February 1, 1916. All correspondence in Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Michigan. In all this correspondence, Spear denies any credit for Gettysburg and denounced Chamberlain's version of the surrender at Appomattox. It is impossible to read a sense of "envy" into this correspondence.

<sup>5</sup> Newspaper article in Brunswick, Maine paper, June 24, 1913, copy in Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University.

<sup>6</sup> Blanche Ames, *Adelbert Ames: Broken Oaths and Reconstruction in Mississippi 1835-1933* (New York: Argosy-Antiquarian Ltd., 1964) 103-108. One can almost sense, Blanche pointing her nose in the air and humphing, my mind is made up, don't bother me with the facts. A copy of the original *My Story of Fredericksburg and Comments Thereon By One Who was There*, was obtained from Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

<sup>7</sup> David J. Eicher, *The Civil War in Books: An Analytical Bibliography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 367. This is a must have for students and scholars for it is a critical bibliography of the best books about the Civil War available at the date of publication.

<sup>8</sup> John J. Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1957; reprint, Dayton: Morningside House, Inc., 1997), 286; 4 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

<sup>9</sup> John J. Pullen, *Joshua Chamberlain: A Hero's Life & Legacy* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole books, 1999), 147. Chamberlain defended Little Round Top from Colonel Oates of the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama twice. Once in 1863 and the second time years later over the location for the placement of a monument to the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama. A discussion of this fight was found in the article "Conflicting Memories of Little Round Top" by Glenn W. LaFantasie in the journal *Columbiad*, Spring 1999, 106-130.

<sup>10</sup> William B. Style, *With a Flash of His Sword* (Kearny, N. J.: Belle Grove Publishing Company, 1994), 294.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>12</sup> Letter Spear to John B. Bachelder, November 15, 1892; John Bachelder Papers, Gettysburg National Military Park.

<sup>13</sup> Edward G. Longacre, *Joshua Chamberlain: The Soldier and the Man* (Conshohocken, PA, Combined Publishing, 1999, 90.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 95. Any student of Chamberlain should read the psychological portrait that is included in Longacre's book. The study was made by Gary K. Leak, Department of Psychology, Creighton University.

<sup>16</sup> Abbot Spear, *The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine at Fredericksburg* (Union, Maine, Union Publishing Company, 1989), 5.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>18</sup> Desjardin, *Stand Firm Ye Boys From Maine*, 151.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

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## VITA

Sidney Arthur Miller was born in Monterey Park, California, on October 29, 1938, the son of Frances Miller and William V. Miller. Dropping out of high school, he entered the United States Air Force. He soon learned that education was essential and obtained a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Continuing his education, he graduated from the University of Nebraska (Omaha) with a Bachelor of General Studies in History. Further education included a Master of Science in Business Administration from the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, and a Master of Accountancy from Texas State University - San Marcos. He has taught accounting and history at Austin Community College. In August 1998, he entered the Graduate College of Texas State University - San Marcos.

Permanent Address:           9507 Castlewood Drive  
  Austin, Texas 78748

This thesis was typed by Sidney A. Miller.