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McLaws Strikes the Peach Orchard

Stephen D. Lee called the battle of Antietam “Artillery Hell,” but E. P. Alexander, who succeeded him in the command of his artillery battalion, thought that the fighting at Gettysburg’s Peach Orchard was worse. Alexander compared the battalion’s losses in the two battles and wrote of the Gettysburg ordeal, “I don’t think there was ever in our war a hotter, harder, sharper artillery afternoon than this.”¹

Artillery dominated the action in the Peach Orchard area that day. Alexander’s and Cabell’s battalions on the Confederate side dueled with nine batteries of the Federal Third Corps and the Artillery Reserve and pounded the infantry around them. The artillery action was the bitter fruit of General Sickles’s intention to man and hold the Peach Orchard and the high ground to the north along the Emmitsburg Road and of General Lee’s design to smash the Federal left by an attack up the axis of that road. The battle fought, as we have seen, was not the battle planned.

To review, it was the task of McLaws’s division to advance from Seminary Ridge, take the high ground along the Emmitsburg Road in and around the Peach Orchard, and, with Hood’s division, roll up the Federal left. To do this, the division’s four brigades formed in two lines on Seminary Ridge astride the Wheatfield Road opposite the Peach Orchard. Cabell’s battalion, the division’s integral artillery support, formed along the ridge in front of the division’s right with the line of its right batteries curving almost perpendicular to the ridge, so that its guns could assail the Peach Orchard area from the west and from the southwest. Cabell’s fire would be augmented by that of four batteries of Alexander’s battalion. Alexander’s guns stood in front of the center of McLaws’s line, astride the Wheatfield Road and opposite the Peach Orchard and Sherfy’s farmyard. Only six to seven hundred yards separated these guns from those of the enemy, and Cabell’s ranges were but a little greater.²

McLaws's attack did not go quite as planned. The failure of Hood's division to drive the Federal forces from the Wheatfield area required that the right wing of Kershaw's brigade and all of Semmes's brigade take part in the fighting there rather than drive north along the axis of the Emmitsburg Road. The responsibility of the assault against the Peach Orchard area and the high ground north of it fell principally, then, to Kershaw's left wing and to Barksdale's brigade, supported by Wofford's.

When the Army of the Potomac's Third Corps advanced to the high ground along the Emmitsburg Road, General Birney assigned his First Brigade, Graham's, to a five hundred-yard front along the Emmitsburg Road between the south edge of the Peach Orchard and Trostle's lane. The 105th, Fifty-seventh, 114th, Sixty-eighth, and 141st Pennsylvania regiments took position there between the Wheatfield Road and the lane, while the Sixty-third Pennsylvania skirmished in the fields west of the Peach Orchard. This left a five hundred-yard gap south of the Wheatfield Road between the Emmitsburg Road and the stony hill. Birney covered the gap by deploying the Third Michigan and Third Maine regiments in front of it as skirmishers. Fortunately, Ames's and Clark's batteries at the Peach Orchard added strength to that face of the salient, while Bucklyn's battery confronted the Confederates from its position at Sherfy's barn. Therefore, when the artillery fire began, Birney had approximately 2,000 infantry and three batteries to man a line that ought to have been defended by 3,000 rifles backed by a strong reserve. He sought further assistance and obtained three additional regiments of infantry from Humphreys's division and four batteries from the Artillery Reserve.³

Two of the regiments came from the Third Brigade, Second Division, commanded at Gettysburg by Colonel George C. Burling. General Birney first halted this brigade in Trostle's Woods, where it had some shelter and was near the center of his overstretched line. When Hood attacked and the firing spread along the south face of the Third Corps position, Birney ordered Burling's command to a high point in a rye field just west of the woods, where it might support Graham's line and, if need be, block the gap between the Peach Orchard and the stony hill. Here the brigade stood in view of some of Cabell's gunners, and Confederate shells fell around it. One hit the staff of the Second New Hampshire's colors, broke it into three pieces, and wounded several members of the color guard. Burling deemed such exposure unnecessary when the enemy infantry was not threatening. After consulting with his regimental commanders, he moved the brigade a hundred yards back toward the woods to a depression that gave it some shelter from Cabell's fire.⁴

Hardly had Burling's men begun to appreciate their cover when Capt. John S. Poland of Sickles's staff rode up and "in an excited manner" demanded to know by whose authority Burling had shifted his brigade. Burling replied that he had done it by his own authority, and Poland ordered him to return the

brigade to the exposed position. Before he could do so, one of Birney's aides galloped up and ordered it to a spot behind the threatened stony hill.⁵ Things were warming up, and Burling soon received other orders. The first was to send his two largest regiments to General Graham; he dispatched the Second New Hampshire and the Seventh New Jersey west up the slope to that front. Additional requests came for other regiments, and soon Burling's brigade was scattered along the Third Corps line.⁶

Col. Louis R. Francine's Seventh New Jersey Regiment formed to the left rear of Clark's battery where it could support the battery and watch the gap to the left. There it endured a long wait under artillery fire.⁷ The Second New Hampshire's 24 officers and 330 men double-quickened in a column of fours up the hill behind the right of Clark's battery. Its colonel, Edward Bailey, had been a post office clerk in Manchester when the regiment was formed in August 1861 and became its colonel in April 1863 at the age of twenty-one. Bailey led the Second up to the Peach Orchard, where he deployed its left wing behind Ames's battery, which was dueling then with Cabell's batteries. Bailey posted the Second's right wing initially so that it faced the Emmitsburg Road near the Wentz house; and Company B deployed as skirmishers. After things settled down a little, Bailey had his company commanders call their rolls and found that only eight men were absent. They had been felled by the heat when the Second double-quickened up the slope. When it became apparent that the regiment's right wing was overly exposed to the fire of Cabell's batteries, Bailey formed nine of the Second's companies back along the Wheatfield Road so that the main line of the Second faced south, its right in the garden at the Wentz house. There it was sheltered somewhat from Alexander's guns by the house and slope, and it fronted toward the guns of Cabell's battalion that fired up the Emmitsburg Road.⁸

Manly's battery of Cabell's battalion, which was posted in an oblong clump of trees on the crest of the ridge about seven hundred yards west of the Peach Orchard, was probably the first Confederate battery to fire on the orchard area. Its two Napoleons and two three-inch rifles fired from the partial cover of the trees, and its limbers and caissons had the shelter of the trees and the reverse slope of the ridge. Therefore, in spite of its nearness to the Federal position, Manly's battery had only eleven casualties in its two days of battle and lost only twenty horses. Manly reported proudly that all of his men had acted splendidly but gave one particular mention. This was Pvt. Henry E. Thain, whose job was to prepare fuses at a limber. One fuse ignited accidentally. To prevent an explosion near the limbers, Thain carried the shell away and pulled the burning fuse from it with his bare hands. Manly believed that this courageous act saved many lives.⁹

One section of Capt. Henry H. Carlton's battery, Georgia's Troup Artillery, two ten-pounder Parrotts, went into position on Manly's right. The battery's other section of twelve-pounder howitzers took position on Manly's left. They dueled with batteries in the Peach Orchard area. One man wrote

that he never saw guns served better—it was the most rapid fire that he had seen, and the earth around them vibrated. As the duel went on, Carlton's men worked like beavers and were covered with dust and smoke. The battery fired until dark, and its casualties were light.¹⁰

Capt. Edward S. McCarthy's First Richmond Howitzers and Capt. John C. Fraser's Pulaski Artillery continued Cabell's line to the right. Although McCarthy had two three-inch rifles and two Napoleons, he used only the rifles on the afternoon of 2 July and fired only two hundred rounds from them. Captain McCarthy described the fire his battery received as the most severe experienced during the war and credited Lt. Robert M. Anderson's courageous example for the good work done by his gun crews. The battery had seven casualties, enough considering that only two gun crews were regularly exposed to the enemy's fire.¹¹

Captain Fraser's battery took greater punishment than the other batteries of Cabell's battalion. The battery was probably posted between Biesecker's Woods and the Emmitsburg Road and fronted toward the Peach Orchard.¹² It opened on the batteries near the Peach Orchard and shot rapidly at first but soon settled into a slower less nervous pace, pausing occasionally to allow the smoke that blurred its targets to blow away.¹³

Lt. William J. Furlong described the fire of Fraser's battery as having been slow and deliberate and wrote that the enemy "replied with spirit, their fire being incessant, severe, and well directed." After an hour of shooting, a Federal shell burst in Fraser's position, mortally wounding Fraser and wounding or killing three enlisted men.¹⁴ Furlong took command, but by this time the battery's casualties forced him to combine his four gun crews into two and continue at half strength. Fortunately for these Georgians, the Federal fire slackened, except for one gun that continued to snipe away at them. Furlong gave it the battery's full attention, and in a while he believed that his efforts silenced it.¹⁵

Although Cabell's four battery commanders reported having dueled only with Federal batteries on the Wheatfield Road line, Cabell wrote that they received some fire from guns on Little Round Top. He ordered two guns to "play upon" them, and they did so after the infantry advance with what he believed was great effect.¹⁶ It was Clark's New Jersey Battery that first dueled with Cabell's guns. It had opened initially on Hood's infantry from the Peach Orchard, but in a short time it pulled back to safer ground out of sight of Manly's gunners. Its new position was near the northeast corner of the Peach Orchard, north of the road, and it fired from there while Ames's battery trotted into the orchard. Someone recalled that Sickles, Birney, and Hunt were all nearby when Clark's battery took its second position and that Sickles admonished the captain, "Hold this position while you have a shot in your limbers or a man to work your guns."¹⁷

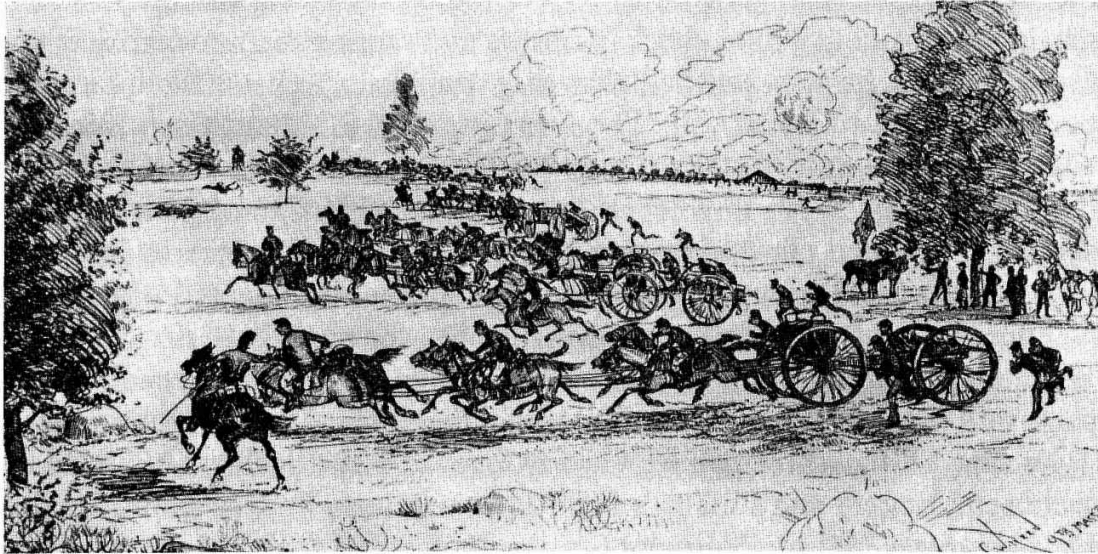
Clark's six ten-pounders fired slowly with shell at ranges up to 1,400 yards. This range indicates that it shot at Latham's battery early in the fight and at

the Texas infantrymen near it. Clark controlled the firing carefully at first, moving from gun to gun to check his crews and caution them to take deliberate aim. After he was satisfied that they would do well on their own, he permitted them to fire at will. The firing went on for about thirty minutes, when an explosion in the target area led the Jersey men to believe that they had hit a limber chest. In celebration of this tangible sign of their accurate shooting, one man climbed upon a gun and cheered. The nearby infantrymen, who had had enough Confederate fire for the day, cheered with him.¹⁸

There was space, three hundred yards of it, for more batteries along the Wheatfield Road line. About 3:30 a courier rode into the Artillery Reserve's park with Captain Randolph's request for batteries. In response, General Tyler sent Lt. Col. Freeman McGilvery forward with Bigelow's Ninth Massachusetts Battery and Phillips's Fifth Massachusetts Battery, both from his First Volunteer Brigade.¹⁹ Bugler Charles W. Reed of the Ninth Battery blew "Assembly," the cannoneers removed grain sacks and other impedimenta not needed at the battery position from the guns, limbers, and caissons, and in a few minutes the gun sections were heading west at a trot toward the Trostle farmyard.²⁰ By this time the air whistled with missiles fired above targets in the Peach Orchard area. The battery halted near the Trostle barn. From there Reed, who was an artist, was able to sketch Sickles at his headquarters beneath a tree a few yards away. During the halt Lieutenants Richard S. Milton and Christopher Erickson asked permission from Captain Bigelow to ride forward and see what was happening. Bigelow assented and, turning to Lt. Alexander Whitaker, remarked, "They will see enough before night."²¹

McGilvery and Bigelow then rode forward, and McGilvery showed the captain where his battery should be. Bigelow led his Napoleons forward. They filed into Trostle's lane and passed through a narrow gate opposite the farmyard into an orchard beside the west end of Trostle's Woods. When the third section cleared the gate, Bigelow shouted, "Forward into line, left oblique, trot!" The first section headed south beyond the orchard into a rye field, and the rear guns fanned left to take their position on line. By this time, the first section had traveled the three hundred yards to the Wheatfield Road. There the line halted with the right guns in the field on the north side of the road and the left in the road itself. A quick glance sufficed to determine that there was a problem. A rise in the ground just south of the road blocked the left section's field of fire. Rather than move beyond the road to the crest of the rise, Lieutenant Whitaker led the section's fifth and sixth pieces across the rear of Bigelow's other four and posted them on the right of the gun line. As formed then, Bigelow's guns were probably just north of the road.²²

Batteries were vulnerable when going into position because they were targets that could not defend themselves. It was so with Bigelow's battery. Before it had a chance to open, one of Cabell's batteries, undoubtedly Manly's, assailed it with spherical case, killing one man and wounding others, including Lieutenant Erickson. Erickson took a shrapnel ball or small shell



The Ninth Massachusetts Battery going into position. Sketch by Charles W. Reed (MOLLUSMASS/U.S.A.M.H.I., Carlisle Barracks, Pa.)

fragment in the chest, and it probably reached a lung. Bigelow sent him to the rear. The Boston Norwegian rode back toward Trostle's farm but returned in a while and told Bigelow that he was ready to resume command of the first section. Bigelow was glad to have him back and probably assumed that he was well enough to do his job. Erickson rode up to the gun line, borrowed a canteen from a cannoneer, and drank most of the water in it.²³

The Ninth Massachusetts Battery went to work and, in the opinion of Bigelow, temporarily silenced some enemy guns. The smoke from its guns gave the battery some cover, but it blinded the gunners. Bigelow saw that one gunner, Augustus Hessie, was dropping to the ground after each shot. He deemed this rather cowardly and improper conduct while firing and went over to Whitaker's section to see about it. As he got closer he could see that Hessie was dropping down beneath the smoke just to see the effects of his shots.²⁴

Bigelow believed that his battery had caused the Confederates to slacken their fire, but other batteries were coming up and taking their share of it. Capt. Charles A. Phillips's Fifth Massachusetts Battery was probably the next to arrive and went in on Bigelow's right, between Bigelow's and Clark's batteries.²⁵ It had followed the Ninth Battery out of the artillery park after a lapse of several minutes and headed for the Third Corps line at a jingling trot. As the Fifth Battery neared the scene of fighting, its men found the air filled with smoke, but they could see snatches of action here and there where the smoke was thin. An unidentified officer tried to persuade Phillips to take his battery to the Little Round Top area, but Phillips stayed on the route to Trostle's farm. On reaching the Trostle farmyard, Phillips's battery turned south through the gate into the orchard and headed for the gap on Bigelow's right with limbers bouncing and crewmen holding to the seats for dear life.²⁶

Haste made waste—two men of the crew of the first piece lost their seats and plunged to the ground. One of them, Cpl. John Egan, a gunner, broke his arm in two places, and both men were lucky that nothing worse happened. As the battery approached the road, it went left into line and over a rail fence so that the first piece was in the road on Bigelow's right, and the remaining five guns went on line to its right just behind the road.²⁷

Cabell's guns, which already had the range to Bigelow's position, were able to zero in on Phillips's pieces as soon as they arrived. One of the first rounds that whistled in killed two horses in the first piece's team. The drivers scrambled to remove the harness from the dead horses and replaced a wheel horse with the bugler's mount. Phillips hurriedly sent to the rear for more horses to replace those killed at the guns.²⁸ Phillips's gunners gave special attention to the smoking woods that concealed Cabell's guns, and they fired on those which they were able to see. After a time, Phillips's men, like Bigelow's, thought that they had silenced the Confederate batteries in their front, but they were not nearly as successful as they had supposed.²⁹

Confederate shells fired at Ames's and Bucklyn's batteries enfiladed Phillips's and Bigelow's batteries from the right. Most came from Alexander's battalion, whose guns were only six hundred or so yards away from the Federal pieces and at the same elevation. It is no wonder, then, that any rounds fired a little high or any that ricocheted from the ground at the Peach Orchard created problems for the batteries and troops in the orchard's rear.³⁰ Alexander's four batteries sat astride the Wheatfield Road. Capt. William W. Parker's battery with four three-inch rifles was on the right of the line, and Capt. Osmond B. Taylor's Virginia Battery with four Napoleons was on Parker's left between Parker's guns and the Wheatfield Road. These two batteries, together with Manly's and with Carlton's section of howitzers, were directly opposite the Peach Orchard and closest to the Federal batteries there.³¹

Capt. George V. Moody's Madison (Louisiana) Light Artillery and South Carolina's Brooks Artillery (Rhett's battery), commanded by Lt. S. Capers Gilbert, were on the ridge line north of the road. Each battery had four howitzers—Moody's were twenty-four-pounders, Gilbert's the smaller twelve-pounders. Both types were quite capable of reaching the Federal line in their front. They were behind the stone wall that bordered the east side of Pitzer's Woods and occupied fronts from 50 to 165 yards north of the Wheatfield Road. The gap between the wings of the battalion permitted the batteries to fire by the Warfield and Snyder buildings.³²

Captain Taylor's orders were to dislodge the Union batteries in his front. In his words, "I opened upon the batteries with my four Napoleons, firing canister and spherical case until our infantry . . . began their charge." Taylor's choice of ammunition seems strange, for solid shot was usually preferred for counterbattery fire. Taylor's battery's casualties turned out to be comparatively heavy while it occupied this position. One of its best gunners, Cpl.

William Ray, was hit while sighting his piece. After being hit, he straightened up, walked a few steps, and fell dead without a word.³³

Parker's battery's three-inch rifles had a higher muzzle velocity and potentially greater accuracy than Taylor's Napoleons and were better suited to knocking out enemy guns. But no one boasted of any triumph of this sort. Rather the Virginians found the Federal shrapnel rattling through the trees nearby to be frightening. When a scared cannoneer started to flee, Captain Parker swung his sword around the fellow's head and kept him at his post. At the same time, another cannoneer, a recruit, performed so well under fire that Parker wrote a letter to the boy's father extolling his courage.³⁴

Moody's battery's cannoneers had their own special problems during the artillery exchange. The wall in front of the howitzers gave them some protection, but the reverse slope behind the wall allowed the heavy twenty-four-pounders to roll back excessively in recoil. Pushing them back up the slope took a lot of effort, and in a little while the howitzer crews became quite tired. After a half hour, Moody asked permission to get help from Barksdale's men who were lying nearby, and eight Mississippi infantrymen offered their services. By that night, five of them were either dead or seriously wounded.³⁵

When his battalion took its position, Colonel Alexander had expected a "short, sharp & decisive" fight, but it was not working out that way. Gilbert's battery, like Moody's, confronted not only Ames's right section at the Peach Orchard but a section of Thompson's battery and Bucklyn's whole battery at the Sherfy buildings. It was also within range of Seeley's and Turnbull's batteries near the Klinge house. It is not too surprising, then, that this South Carolina battery had exceptionally heavy casualties—forty men out of seventy-five were killed or wounded and two of its howitzers were dismounted. A newly arrived lieutenant was with it that day, a cavalryman who had no experience with a field battery. Because he knew too little of his duties to be helpful, Alexander told him to look on until he got the hang of things. That afternoon during the heavy firing Alexander was amused when he saw the ex-cavalryman standing apprehensively behind a sapling at the battery position, watching helplessly while the Federals knocked his new unit to pieces. The lieutenant remained with the battery during the battle but went back to the cavalry after it was over.³⁶

Alexander received a slight wound while walking near Gilbert's guns. A shell fragment ripped through his pants leg and underdrawers and skinned a knee. It was a close call. The colonel summed up this portion of the afternoon by observing that the Federal batteries in his front were "in their usual full force and good practice." Annoyed by the failure of his guns to dislodge them and by their commendable obstinacy, he sent back for Woolfolk's and Jordan's batteries. But the situation changed before they arrived.³⁷

Bucklyn's Battery E, First Rhode Island Light Artillery, was a worthy adversary of Alexander's batteries that day. It had one section under Lt. Benjamin Freeborn between the Sherfy house and barn, and its remaining

two sections were south of the barn. These left sections caught a cross fire from Cabell's guns down the Emmitsburg Road and from Alexander's in their front. Freeborn's section, on the other hand, was harassed by skirmishers who fired on it from the shelter of the Staub barn until the section ousted them with a few shots that must have wrecked the barn. Regrettably, Lieutenant Bucklyn fell wounded at the end of the duel and made no report; Lt. Benjamin Freeborn, his successor, made too brief a statement to explain adequately the battery's many casualties.³⁸

When Confederate batteries opened from his right and rear, Captain Ames shifted his battery's right section to confront them. The battery's Peach Orchard position was a hot one, and the peach trees and noise made it difficult for Ames to watch and command his three sections. Lt. Samuel McClellan, chief of his first section, wanted to fire canister instead of shot, as Ames had ordered, at Alexander's gun crews. He thought that even at a range of six hundred yards the shotgun approach would be more effective against gun crews than shot would be against the guns themselves. Captain Ames told McClellan plainly that he wanted shot fired to knock out the enemy's guns. That matter settled, Sgt. Jesse Burdick, chief of the first piece, fired at a Confederate gun, and the round fell short. He raised the muzzle a little, and the second one whizzed over the target. He then lowered the muzzle a bit, and the third hit the enemy piece and dismounted it. That was exceptional shooting. In the meantime, Sgt. James Hutchinson's second piece hit the wheel of another gun. In spite of its nervous start, Ames's first section did well that day, for even as close as six hundred yards cannons make very small targets. In the meantime Ames's center and left sections boomed away at Cabell's guns and, in Ames's words, "for a short time I had as sharp an artillery fight as I ever witnessed."³⁹

Bucklyn's and Ames's batteries had help from a section of Thompson's battery late in their duel with Alexander's guns. Capt. James Thompson had a battery of three-inch Ordnance rifles that represented a temporary and not altogether happy union between two Pittsburgh batteries—Thompson's Battery C and Capt. Robert B. Hampton's Battery F of the Independent Pennsylvania Light Artillery. Both units had commendable records and had sustained such casualties, including Captain Hampton, in previous battles that it was impractical for them to continue to operate separately. Therefore, at the outset of the campaign they were combined temporarily under the command of Captain Thompson and remained so until the spring of 1864.⁴⁰

Thompson's battery had been in position along the Baltimore Pike until 4:30 or 5:00 P.M., when it received orders to go to the Union left and report to Colonel McGilvery. When the battery reached him, McGilvery placed two sections in the Peach Orchard on Ames's left and the other north of the Sherfy barn.⁴¹ Thompson's report raises a question about what batteries were actually in the Peach Orchard itself. Thompson recollected that his battery relieved Ames's, but other accounts hold that Watson's battery (I,

Fifth U.S.) replaced Ames's battery, and General Hunt reported the unlikely fact that Thompson's guns replaced Hart's Fifteenth New York Battery. Probably Thompson replaced neither Ames's guns nor Hart's, but squeezed his four guns into the east half of the orchard between the two New York batteries.⁴²

Capt. Patrick Hart's Fifteenth New York Battery arrived on the Wheatfield Road line after Phillips's battery but before Thompson's. Unlike the other batteries on the line, the Fifteenth New York had only four guns, Napoleons, and correspondingly few men, sixty-eight. It had been recruited as an adjunct of the Irish Brigade, but that was a year and a half before Gettysburg, and the "exigencies of the service" had terminated the association.⁴³

The Fifteenth New York Battery saw little fighting prior to Gettysburg, and Patrick Hart did not receive command of it until February 1863. Hart, in his late thirties, was older than most of the battery commanders. He had served as a private in the artillery in the Mexican War and had "much distinguished" himself at Chapultepec. He served in the army and in the Marine Corps between the wars, most of the time in the grade of sergeant. He was regarded by some as odd and could be irritating. After the war, Capt. John N. Craig, who had been on Hunt's staff, wrote of Hart that "it was exactly his way to be riding about in the manner most likely to attract the attention of anyone swelling for someone to swear at."⁴⁴

When Hart's battery arrived at the Trostle farmyard that afternoon, Hart halted it and, with McGilvery and Capt. Nathaniel Irish of McGilvery's staff, rode ahead to look for a place for his guns. When Hart led his battery to the area selected for it, General Hunt appeared and assigned it to a spot between the left of the Peach Orchard and to the right of Clark's battery. In Hart's recollection, Hunt admonished him, "It will be a gold chain or a wooden leg for you. Sacrifice everything before you give up that position."⁴⁵

By the time McLaws's infantry attacked, the three batteries in the Peach Orchard area had been increased to seven. A virtually solid line of forty Federal guns extended south from the Sherfy house to the Peach Orchard and east from there along the Wheatfield Road to Trostle's Woods and the stony hill. The Federal line confronted eight Confederate batteries exclusive of Henry's battalion. Alexander recalled having fifty-nine guns in action, but thirty is more like it, not counting those in Woolfolk's and Jordan's batteries. Fortunately, most of the Confederate batteries had some cover, particularly for their limbers and caissons, and had the advantage of converging fire.⁴⁶

The savage artillery duel lasted more than an hour and was particularly hard on the infantrymen posted near the guns. The skirmishers suffered little from it, for they were poor targets and the shot and shell arced over their heads. Furthermore, as one soldier explained, the excitement and activity of being on an active skirmish line could be so intense that it fully occupied the mind, leaving little time for worrying about personal dangers.⁴⁷

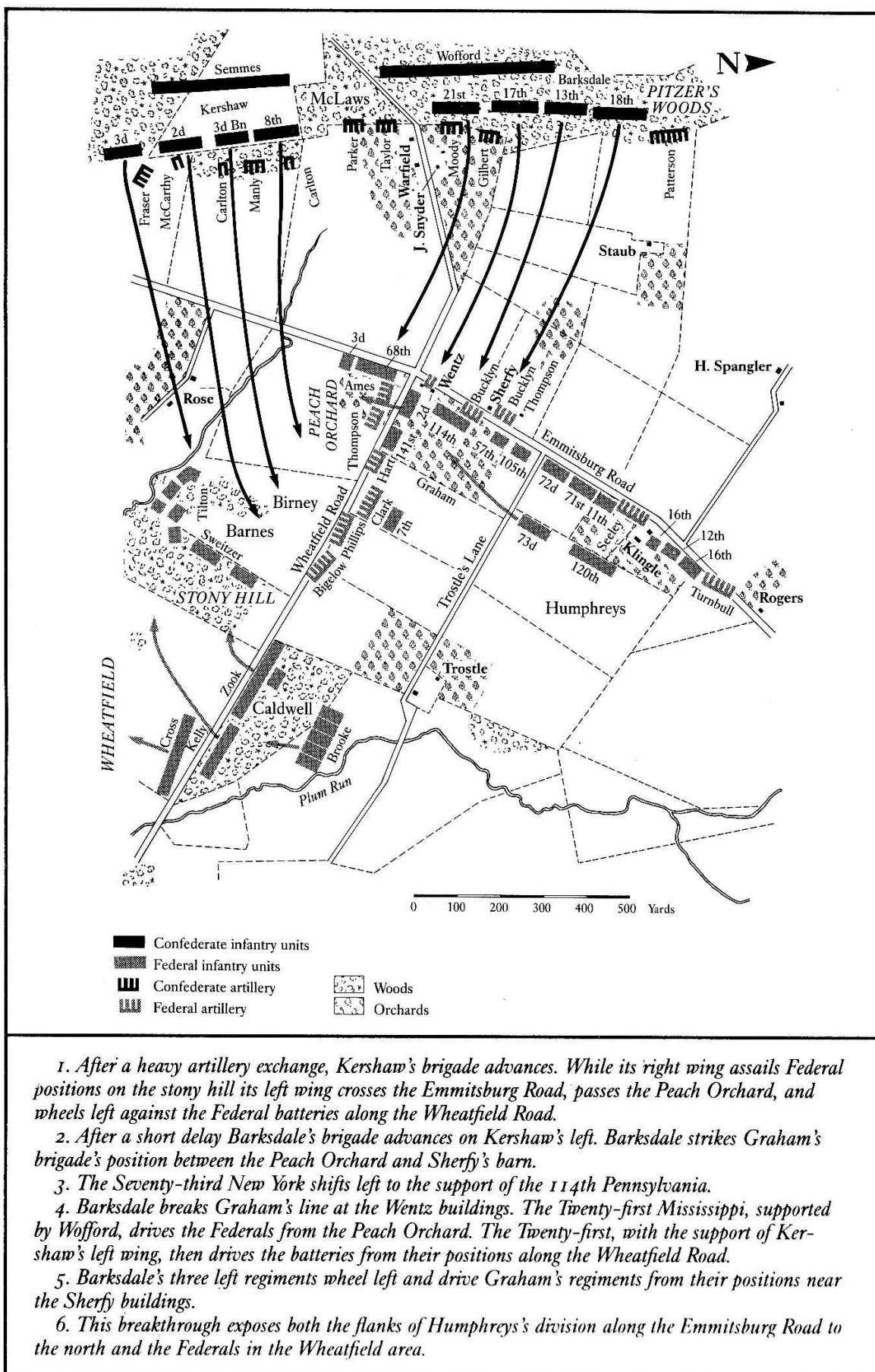
It was different for the infantrymen near the Peach Orchard and along the Emmitsburg Road by the Sherfy house. They suffered heavily, particularly if they were close to one of the Federal batteries that was a target of the fire. They could not seek safety elsewhere, for the position was theirs to hold. Yet they could not relieve their terror and tension by fighting back. They could only wait, try to control their fear, and hope and pray that the pounding would soon end.⁴⁸

The Second New Hampshire near the Peach Orchard had no cover and caught shells from both Cabell's and Alexander's guns. The air around the Second seemed alive with whistling canister and bursting shells. Some of the projectiles that fell short ricocheted toward the Second, bounding and skimming the ground, causing casualties and great fear. One hot fragment hit the cartridge box of Sgt. James House and set off his cartridges, but he was able to yank the box off quickly and got only a severe wound. Another struck the box of Cpl. Thomas Bignall and drove some of the cartridges into his body. There they popped away like firecrackers in Bignall's "quivering form." A fragment hit Pvt. John Barber in the head, knocked him out, and blinded him. Barber finally reached a hospital, where surgeons trephined his skull. A canister ball hit Lt. Col. James W. Carr's sword with a ringing sound, broke its blade into three pieces, and drove the pieces against his groin. To this Carr remarked, "Well, better a sword out than a leg, anyhow."⁴⁹

Although the 114th Pennsylvania, posted north of the Peach Orchard, was subjected to heavy crossfire, it had relatively few men killed or wounded. Its men had no cover, and while "every conceivable kind of missile" flew through the air around them, they could only lie on the ground, each man wondering whether he would be struck and whether, if he was, he would be killed outright or wounded. The fire lasted for over an hour, and when the time for action came some, perhaps only a few, men were rendered helpless by shock. One man in the 141st Pennsylvania was in such shock that when the regiment was ordered to stand and prepare to advance, he could only raise himself to his hands and knees and bob his head as Confederate shells flew by.⁵⁰

It was a relief for the infantry, therefore, when the Confederate fire slackened so that Kershaw's and Semmes's brigades could advance. The South Carolinians and Georgians moved off with great steadiness and precision, though their advance was obstructed by some standing fences and the fire of batteries in the Peach Orchard area. Kershaw described his left wing, the Second and Eighth South Carolina regiments and the Third Battalion, as "moving majestically" across the slope between the Peach Orchard and the Rose farm lane before they wheeled left against the rear of the Orchard and the batteries posted there.⁵¹

The Federal artillerymen who witnessed the assault and fired at the advancing lines did not know the identities of their targets. Colonel McGilvery recalled that two bodies of infantry crossed his battalion's front. One passed through a grain field 850 yards away beyond Rose's farm, where the fighting



Map 13-1. The Peach Orchard

was already in progress. This must have been Tige Anderson's brigade, which the artillery pounded well. McGilvery saw the cannon fire drive some men back into Biesecker's Woods, though most continued on their way.⁵²

Another column appeared later. The range to it was about 750 yards, and it presented a "slight left flank" to McGilvery's batteries. His guns assailed it with various types of ammunition and wreaked havoc upon it. The formation moved at the double-quick to the Rose buildings about five hundred yards in front of Bigelow's battery, the guns of which raked it with solid shot and canister. The artillerymen saw some men retreat and others take shelter among the stone farm buildings. This must have been Kershaw's right wing, for, as mentioned in Chapter 11, Kershaw well remembered the clatter of canister balls against the stone walls.⁵³

Ames's battery in the Peach Orchard must have been the first to open on Kershaw's and Semmes's brigades. Because his battery's ammunition was nearly gone by then, Ames had all of his spherical case carried to his left section, Lt. James B. Hazelton's, which would shoot at the advancing infantry, while the center and right sections continued their counterbattery fire with shot. After Hazelton's section fired all of its case, the lieutenant ordered his men to take cover until the Confederate infantry approached within canister range. Battery G would then defend its position with the "unwelcome messenger—grape and canister."⁵⁴

Kershaw's left wing crossed in front of the batteries with its left passing along the base of the slope. It was three hundred yards from Clark's battery and was in partial defilade. When the Confederate line swung toward the batteries, Clark's guns assailed it with canister, blasting holes in the Carolinian ranks and knocking down a stand of colors. As the Confederate line pressed nearer, Clark paced back and forth behind his guns, inspiring confidence. Sgt. William H. Clairville, the chief of piece, exuded calm as he notched the stick on which he recorded the number of rounds that "Old Betsy," the first piece, fired. As his gun crew loaded and fired, Clairville chanted to his gunner, Cpl. Elias H. Timm, and the crew, "This is the stuff to feed them; feed it to their bellies, Timm; mow them down, Timm."⁵⁵

Hart's and Clark's batteries and Thompson's two left sections, thundered at the infantry in their front, Hart's Napoleons giving them both case and canister. It was probably during this firing that a Confederate shell exploded near one of the caissons of Clark's first section, killing a swing horse and wounding horses of the other pairs. A fragment disemboweled the near wheel horse. In its pain and fright the whole team started to bolt and went fifty feet before the gutted animal fell and broke the limber pole. The drivers managed to replace the pole and horses and returned the caisson to its place. Another shell passed between the barrel and a wheel of Clairville's piece, grazed the axle, and exploded. The force of its explosion threw the trail to the side, injuring two cannoneers and tossing Corporal Timm and cannoneer William Riley into the air. Timm regained his senses about twenty feet from the gun

and called to Riley, asking if he were hurt. Riley, a skinny fellow, had a sizable chunk of flesh torn from a buttock, and complained, "By Jiminey, I didn't think they could touch me without taking a limb, and now, d— 'em, they have taken half the meat that I did have." Sergeant Clairville got two drivers to replace the two injured men, while Riley stood by in a daze. The chief of section, Lt. Robert Sims, saw Riley standing idly while others labored, and he yelled, "Riley, why the bloody h—I don't you roll that gun by hand to the front?" In answer, Riley turned his backside to the lieutenant and yelled back, "Lieutenant, if your hip was shot off like that, what the bloody h—I would you do?" And with that Riley limped back from the gun line.⁵⁶

To add insult to Riley's injury, a shell fragment punched a hole in the first piece's sponge bucket, and its water ran out. The crew had to find a replacement bucket and fill it with precious water from their canteens. This irritated them. As the No. 2 cannoneer rammed the next round, he growled, "Take that for Riley," and the first piece fired on.⁵⁷ The guns became hot, some men were wounded, and all who served Clark's Parrotts became soaked with sweat and black with the grime of powder smoke. When the advancing line was within two hundred yards of the Parrott's muzzles and the Carolinians obeyed the mistaken command and moved to the right (as described in Chapter 11) Clark's men gloried in the notion that their servings of canister had driven the Carolinians from their front.⁵⁸

Phillips's and Bigelow's batteries got in their licks. In Phillips's opinion the Confederate line moved in pretty fair order in spite of the pounding given it.⁵⁹ Bigelow thought at first that the Carolinians might be Union troops coming back and would not let the Ninth Battery fire at them. Then one of the red battle flags unfurled enough to display a cross instead of stars and stripes, and Bigelow's Napoleons opened on it at a range of four hundred yards. The artillery fire did not stop the Confederate formation. It came as close as two hundred yards to Bigelow's guns before its men took shelter in the trees and in the low ground down toward the Rose buildings. This probably was the Second South Carolina Regiment. McGilvery was nearby pointing out targets to the battery commanders. One was a man on horseback who seemed to be trying to organize an attack. One of Bigelow's shells struck beneath the horse and brought down both horse and rider.⁶⁰

Kershaw's attack and threat to the right of Barnes's two brigades caused Barnes to order the brigades from the stony hill. Tilton's brigade, only six hundred strong, fell back to the stone wall along the west edge of Trostle's Woods 150 yards from the left and rear of Bigelow's battery.⁶¹ It was fitting that a brigade with two Massachusetts regiments should stand by two of that state's batteries, and Tilton halted where the brigade could do so. Pandemonium reigned. Bigelow's and Phillips's twelve Napoleons thundered away, belching clouds of gray smoke with each shot. Shells whistled into the area, horsemen dashed about, and there was always shouting—except at the batteries, where the well-drilled crews ought to have worked with precision and

with a minimum of such noise. General Barnes and Colonel Tilton, as well as their staffs, all on horseback, were out near Bigelow's position, a dangerous place to be. Barnes was wounded, and Tilton's horse was killed. Tilton's new position promised to be no haven of rest. Even as his men took their places behind the wall, they could see Confederates coming through the Peach Orchard six hundred yards to their front.⁶²

As Kershaw's brigade regrouped, Ames's battery prepared to withdraw. Its ammunition was almost gone, and another battery, Lt. Malbone F. Watson's Battery I, Fifth U.S. Artillery, waited to take its place. Watson's battery had come on the field with Barnes's division and had been gobbled up by someone on Sickles's staff. How Watson's guns happened to be there did not concern Ames, who ordered his own guns out by section from the right and instructed them to cover their withdrawal by firing as rapidly as possible.⁶³

Just before the battery pulled away a shell fragment mangled one of Pvt. John Krouse's feet. Krouse, a No. 1 cannoneer, had sponged just before the shell exploded. When the smoke cleared, he stood ready for the No. 2 to place a shell and its charge in the gun's muzzle. Instead of loading, the No. 2 looked at Krouse in astonishment, probably expecting him to collapse and someone to take his place. At this Krouse shouted, "D— you, what are you waiting for; put your charge in; I am going to have one more shot at them leg or no leg." The startled No. 2 obliged, and Krouse rammed the shell home. Just then Ames came up. Said the captain, "Well, John, they have wounded you at last?" Krouse replied, "Yes, the d— fools have shot my foot off, that was the best they could do." Ames offered Krouse a swig of whiskey, and Krouse gratefully accepted. Krouse drank so thirstily that when he returned the flask, Ames felt relieved that the cannoneer had not swallowed it as well as all that it contained.⁶⁴

Battery G rolled slowly back through the fields to the gate to Trostle's lane carrying the battery's wounded on its caissons. Ames rode from the orchard with the last section like a captain leaving a sinking ship. Watson's battery of four three-inch Ordnance rifles took Battery G's place.⁶⁵ Watson's battery's stay was a short one that added no glory to its reputation. Kershaw's left pressed toward the Peach Orchard. The Third Maine fell back from its skirmish line through the gun positions and went into line on the right of the Second New Hampshire. When the Maine men were out of the way, Watson's guns opened on the Confederates in their front. It was not long before Colonel Bailey of the Second New Hampshire thought that he saw one of Watson's men trying to spike a gun, and in his report he accused the battery of inefficiency. The attempted spiking, if that was what it was, suggested to Bailey that the Confederates were getting close. He asked General Graham's permission to advance through the Peach Orchard to save the guns, and Graham gave it.⁶⁶

The men of the Second struggled to their feet, relieved that the nerve-racking ordeal of quiet waiting under artillery fire was over. The regiment

formed a hasty, imperfect line without Company B and at the command "Forward, guide center!" headed through the Peach Orchard. As Watson's guns belched a last volley of canister at the Carolinians, the Second crowded between the limbers and guns, reformed, and emerged at the orchard's southwest corner, its right extending to the Emmitsburg Road. The Second opened fire on the South Carolinians in its front, the Second Battalion and the Eighth Regiment. The South Carolinians' attack stalled, and they fell back to the bottom of the slope 150 or so yards from the orchard's edge. Bailey then shifted the Second's line to the rear of some fence rails that were piled along the side of the orchard where a fence had been.⁶⁷

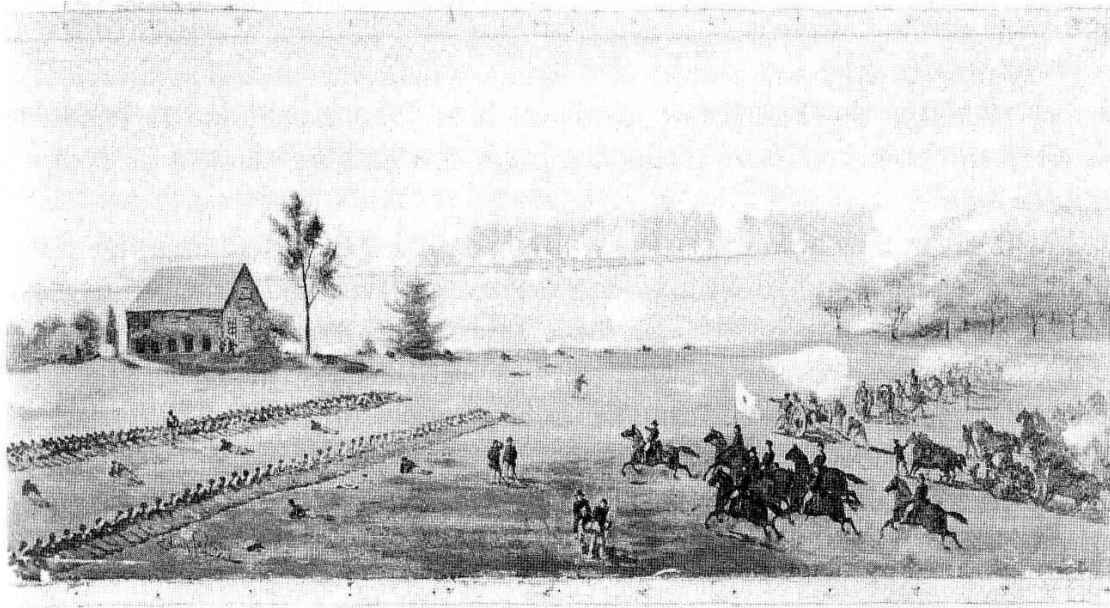
At the same time, the 141st Pennsylvania fired a murderous volley at the attacking Carolinians from its position along the shoulder of the Wheatfield Road. At General Graham's order it advanced with the Third Maine on its right and the Third Michigan on its left. The three regiments crossed to the south edge of the orchard and went in on the left of the Second New Hampshire. Kershaw's left regiments were now moving east across the Federal front. Mess pans, which hung on haversacks suspended over their left hips, glinted in the late afternoon light. The Federals harried them with oblique fire from the left, aiming at the mess pans, which made convenient bull's-eyes.⁶⁸

There was a lull of a few minutes. The Sixty-eighth Pennsylvania shifted from a position near Clark's battery to the west side of the Peach Orchard—the Second New Hampshire's right and rear. Colonel Bailey sent some men back to help the cannoneers get their guns away while the rest settled in to await the next assault. It came soon. The Confederate cannoneers worked their guns with vigor, showering a hail of metal on the Orchard that made the trees that were still standing sway as if in a storm. Heralded by the increased fire, a line of infantry emerged from Pitzer's Woods and headed for the Emmitsburg Road.⁶⁹

It was Barksdale's brigade—the Thirteenth, Seventeenth, Eighteenth, and Twenty-first Mississippi regiments—the valiant defenders of the Rappahannock crossing at Fredericksburg. Brig. Gen. William Barksdale stood out in an army of colorful leaders. He was forty-one years old, about the same age as Kershaw, and trained in law, but there the obvious similarities between the two generals ended. Barksdale had been a newspaper editor, a noncommissioned officer in the Mexican War, and a politician. As a congressman, he had walked the national stage in the 1850s, and he was an ardent states' rights Democrat and fire-eater. When secession and war came, Barksdale became the colonel of the Thirteenth Mississippi Regiment. He led his regiment at Manassas, commanded a brigade on the Peninsula, and received a general's wreath around his stars in August 1862. Barksdale was a large, rather heavy man, with a light complexion and thin, light hair. He was not a graceful horseman, as Confederate heroes ought to have been, but his impetuous bearing compensated somewhat for that deficiency.⁷⁰



The Peach Orchard. Painting by F. D. Briscoe (National Archives)



Birney's division awaits Kershaw's attack near the Peach Orchard. (The Rose barn is on the left; the Peach Orchard on the right.) Sketch by Edwin Forbes (Library of Congress)

Barksdale chafed while awaiting the order to attack. Shot and shell fired at Moody's and Gilbert's batteries crashed through the trees of Pitzer's Woods and fell among his men, rounds fired from batteries that seemed to be his for the taking. It was an ordeal. Barksdale's requests to McLaws for permission to attack had gained him nothing, and so when Longstreet appeared along the Mississippians' line, Barksdale confronted him, saying, "I wish you would let me go in, General; I would take that battery in five minutes." "Wait a little," replied Longstreet, "we are all going in presently."⁷¹

While Longstreet was on Barksdale's front, he spoke also to Capt. Gwen R. Cherry of Company C, Seventeenth Mississippi Regiment, whose company was on the skirmish line, and asked him to send two unarmed men forward to an unidentified house that had a paled fence around its yard.⁷² They were to knock the palings from the fence. Cherry told Company C's orderly sergeant to send out such a detail. It looked like a job with a limited future, and the sergeant got no volunteers. Those whom he told to go would not obey him. On learning of this, Cherry announced, "I *will* make the detail." He called out, "Jim Duke and Woods Mears, they will go." When Duke heard this, he commented to Mears, "We will be killed." Pvts. James W. Duke and Woodson B. Mears left their rifles with the company and dashed forward to the house. They knocked the boards from the offending fence and returned to the company unscathed in spite of a Federal skirmish line that was only about fifty yards away and artillery that was posted at the Sherfy house. Perhaps the Federals considered it to their advantage to have the fence torn down and were pleased enough to avoid the danger of doing it themselves.⁷³

During the trying waiting period Barksdale called his regimental commanders together and gave them their orders. Only he, and probably his staff, would go forward on horseback; the other officers would advance on foot. This, apparently, was the practice throughout the corps that day. The regimental officers, therefore, would send their horses to the rear. Barksdale no doubt said some other things, and then, pointing to high ground along the Emmitsburg Road, he concluded, "The line before you must be broken—to do so let every officer and man animate his comrades by his personal presence in the front line."⁷⁴

Kershaw's and Semmes's brigades to Barksdale's right had already advanced. After advancing three hundred or so yards toward the Emmitsburg Road, Kershaw heard drums beating "Assembly." Barksdale was to assault the Peach Orchard from the west, but his brigade was not starting soon enough to cover Kershaw's flank. As a result, the Federal batteries and the infantry in the Peach Orchard were able to rake Kershaw's lines severely, and Kershaw's brigade had reached the stony hill and was being repulsed before Barksdale's brigade came up on its left.⁷⁵

This delay, which was so injurious to Kershaw's brigade, seems not to have become an issue after the battle or in the postwar disputes that sullied the

reputations of some Confederate leaders. Perhaps, if some believed that Barksdale's regiments were not as ready to advance as they might have been, there was a reluctance to criticize him, and Kershaw himself seems to have been the sort not to waste his time in complaints. McLaws did not mention the tardy drumbeat, but he did indicate that Barksdale's and Wofford's brigades had gotten mixed up with Alexander's batteries somehow and "were temporarily delayed in extricating themselves therefrom." In particular, this involved one of Wofford's regiments that did not get free to join the brigade until it had gone a hundred yards.⁷⁶

General McLaws sent his aide, Capt. G. B. Lamar, Jr., to General Barksdale with orders to advance. Here we may wonder why the signal fired by Cabell's battalion for Kershaw's advance did not apply also to Barksdale? Perhaps McLaws sent Lamar to Barksdale after it was apparent that his brigade was delayed; no one said. But when Lamar reached Barksdale with the orders to go forward, the news made the general's face "radiant with joy."⁷⁷ Barksdale ordered his four regiments over the wall. (Had they gone beyond the wall too soon they would have masked Moody's and Gilbert's batteries and exposed themselves to Federal fire unnecessarily.) The general passed around the right of his line, rode across the fronts of the Twenty-first and Seventeenth regiments, and halted in front of his old regiment, the Thirteenth. In the meantime, Kershaw's and Semmes's brigades were advancing. Once the Mississippians were beyond the wall, the regimental commanders called their regiments to attention. It was written of Col. Benjamin G. Humphreys that although he was "noted for excelling in the soundfulness of the word of command, never before did Colonel Humphreys shout 'Attention' with such imperative insistence."⁷⁸

"From his chafing charger," a horse that mirrored its rider, Barksdale addressed his men, reminding them that each man was expected to do his duty.⁷⁹ That done, he shouted, "Attention, Mississippians! Battalions, Forward!" And then, wrote Colonel Humphreys, "Fourteen hundred rifles were grasped with firm hands, and as the line officers repeated the command '*Forward, March*' the men sprang forward and fourteen hundred voices raised the famous 'Rebel yell' which told the next brigade (Wilcox's Alabamians) that the Mississippians were in motion."⁸⁰ Captain Lamar said that he never saw anything to equal the Mississippians' heroism and dash. Barksdale rode in front, leading the way, hat off, his wispy hair shining so that it reminded Lamar of "the white plume of Navarre."⁸¹ When the line reached a fence, the barrier disappeared like magic. The Mississippians met and destroyed with a crashing volley what they deemed to be a Federal line, though it was probably the support for a skirmish line. This done, they continued on, loading and firing as they advanced. They passed over a rail fence and confronted a second line. This one was supported by infantry, particularly red-legged Zouaves. This was Graham's main line. In Confederate recollections, they swept the enemy before them like chaff before the wind.⁸²

Although the Federal position at the Peach Orchard was stronger than the Confederates first believed, it had great deficiencies. That portion of Graham's line fronting west along the Emmitsburg Road was bolstered by eight guns—Bucklyn's battery and a section of Thompson's battery. This amount of artillery was nothing to be sneezed at, but after the long pounding that Bucklyn's battery received, it had lost a lot of its sting. The Federal infantry line was thin. The Sixty-third Pennsylvania Regiment, which had screened the Peach Orchard on the skirmish line, had been sent to the rear after it had run out of ammunition. This seems to have been a wasteful thing to do, for its casualties were low and it must have had a lot of fight left in it.⁸³ This left four Pennsylvania regiments that had been shaken by the artillery fire to cover the broad front. The Peach Orchard–Emmitsburg Road line had some natural strength, but Graham's brigade, like others that day, had done little to improve it with entrenchments or even piles of rails that could have been collected from nearby fences.⁸⁴

The Confederates focused attention on Bucklyn's battery because it had given them a lot of trouble and, so long as it was firing, would give them more. Alexander's guns pounded it with shot and shell, and Confederate skirmishers drilled its men and horses with minié balls. The battery's four officers displayed coolness and daring, and 1st Sgt. Charles Winslow commanded its center section so well that there were those who believed that he would have been rewarded with a commission had he not been disabled in the fight.⁸⁵

Cannoneer William Phinney was a fatalist. When told to take cover during a lull in the firing, he refused to do so on the dubious ground that he was as safe in one place as another. As the Confederate missiles zipped around him, Phinney stood by his piece, arms folded, rocking back and forth on his feet awaiting his fate. Phinney had close calls but came through unscathed. About the same time some kind of missile decapitated Pvt. Ernest Simpson. Simpson was the battery clerk and need not have been with the guns that day. But Simpson's parents had disapproved of his intended bride, and he had no wish to live. A missile from one of Alexander's guns relieved his misery.⁸⁶

Lieutenant Bucklyn believed that Kershaw's attack had drawn his infantry support to the left and away from his battery except for two companies of sharpshooters.⁸⁷ This was not quite so. The 114th Pennsylvania remained in its position east of the road and in the battery's rear throughout the shelling. Barksdale's line approached to a distance of about forty yards from the battery's front and fired a volley at it. As it did so, the infantry on the battery's left seemed to give way. Bucklyn then moved the battery's sixth piece back from its position on the Emmitsburg Road. The artillery fire on the battery seemed to increase, and it appeared to be time for the battery to pull out. Captain Randolph, who though wounded was still in the saddle, rode back to the 114th and spoke with Capt. Edward R. Bowen. Said Randolph, "If you want to save my battery, move forward. I cannot find the general [Graham]. I

give the order on my own responsibility." Bowen took the order and led the 114th through the guns and across the road toward the advancing Mississippi line. As the 114th move to its front, the Rhode Islanders limbered up and began to pull away.⁸⁸

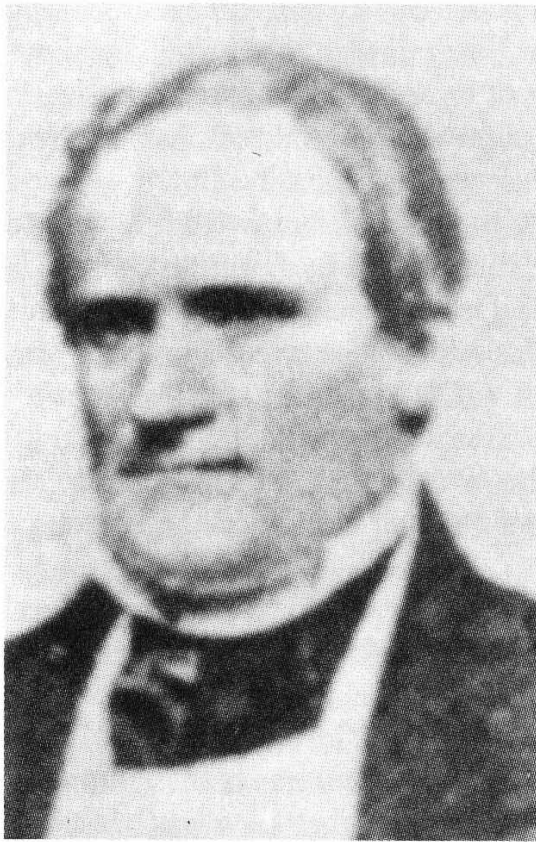
Battery E sustained heavier casualties that day than any other battery on the Third Corps line; twenty-eight officers and men were killed or wounded, and one man was missing. The Confederate fire killed or wounded forty of its horses, nearly a third of its complement, and for a lack of horses, the battery had to leave one of its caissons behind. Sgt. Arthur Hargreaves, chief of the third piece, lost all but two horses out of the twelve in his two teams. His piece was unable to keep up with the battery in its withdrawal, but Hargreaves was able to get his gun to safety using one sound horse and some wounded animals. Lieutenant Bucklyn had three horses shot as he rode around his battery's position and received a chest wound from a shrapnel ball as the battery started away. Six months later Bucklyn was back on duty, but he continued to be bitter about the battle along the Emmitsburg Road. He wrote at year's end, "My battery is torn and shattered and my brave boys have gone never to return. Curse the Rebs."⁸⁹

When Barksdale's line approached the Emmitsburg Road between the Sherfy buildings and the Peach Orchard, the Fifty-seventh and 105th Pennsylvania regiments crossed the road into the farmyard and the fields to the Confederates' left. Probably they did so to cover the right of the 114th Regiment and to give added support to the gun sections near the Sherfy house. The Fifty-seventh joined its skirmishers in the house and farmyard and the 105th went into line on the brow of the rise to the Fifty-seventh's right. Some of the men of the Fifty-seventh occupied the Sherfy house and its outbuildings and fired from them at the advancing line, which was very near.⁹⁰

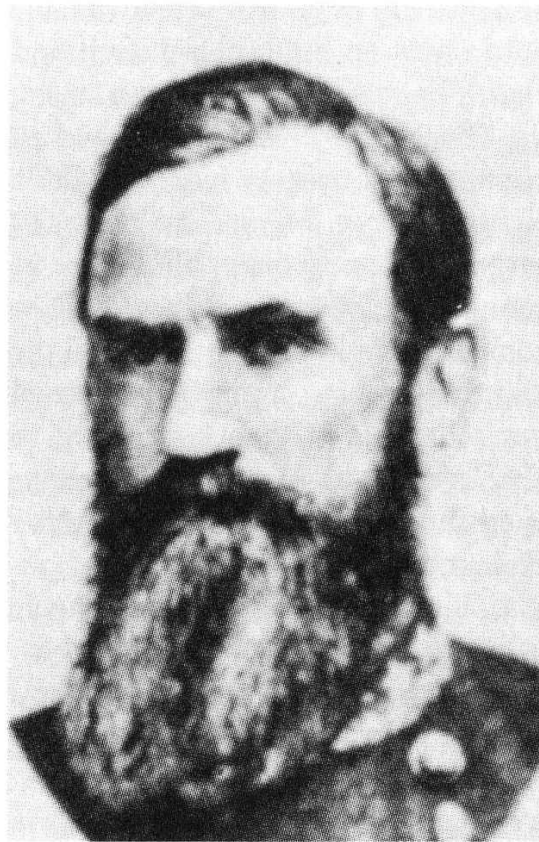
By the time of Barksdale's advance, it was obvious that Graham's line was weak, probably too weak to hold its position along the road. At Graham's request and with Sickles's concurrence, Major Tremain galloped off to see General Humphreys, whose two brigades were not yet engaged, and asked him for a regiment. With Humphreys's permission Tremain borrowed the Seventy-third New York (also called the Fourth Excelsior and the Second Fire Zouaves), which conveniently awaited action at the left of Humphreys's support line. Tremain led the Seventy-third south toward the Sherfy buildings and halted it on the rise in the ground in the rear of its fellow Zouaves of the 114th Pennsylvania Regiment, who were already blazing away at Barksdale's nearby line. The men of the Seventy-third were panting from their hurried march, but there was a clicking of hammers being cocked that indicated that they were ready for action. The yelling Mississippians emerged from the smoke in their front and greeted the New Yorkers with a volley. The men of the Seventy-third could not reply because the 114th line still masked their front.⁹¹



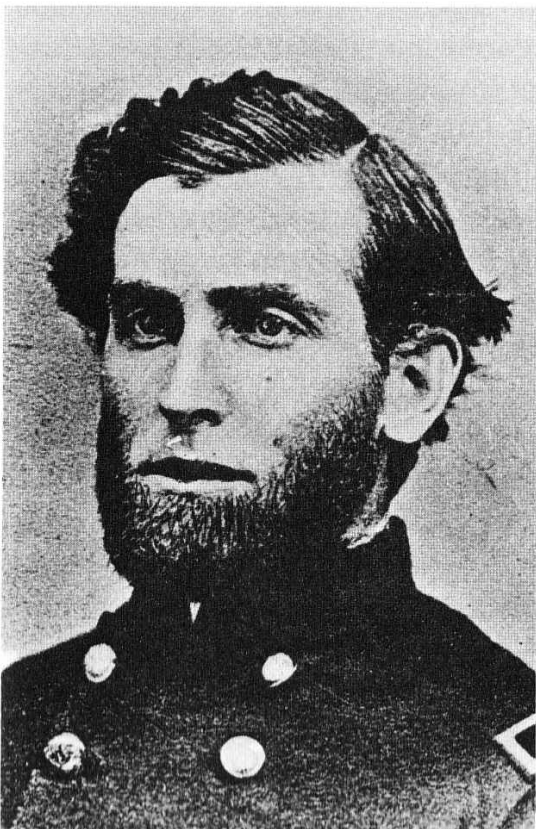
Brig. Gen. Charles K. Graham
(National Archives)



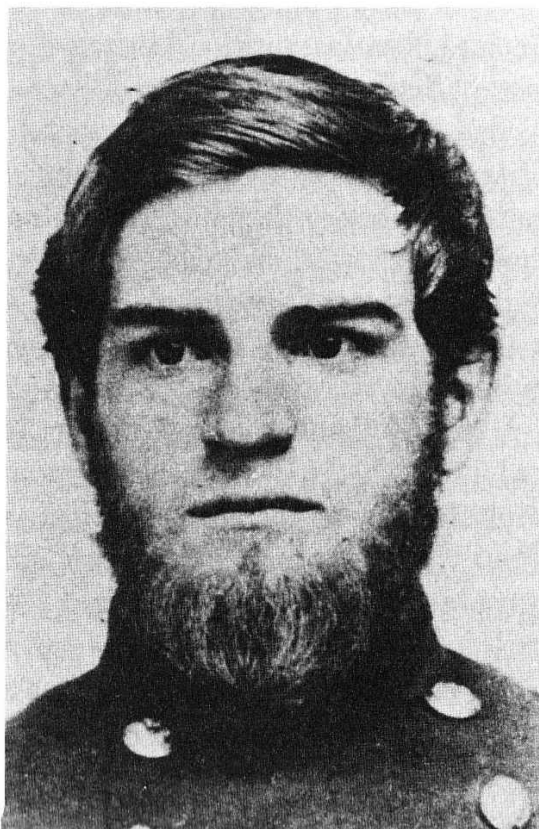
*Brig. Gen. William Barksdale
(Library of Congress)*



*Col. Benjamin G. Humphreys
(Library of Congress)*



*Col. Henry J. Madill (MOLLUS-MASS/
U.S.A.M.H.I., Carlisle Barracks, Pa.)*



*Col. Edward L. Bailey (MOLLUS-MASS/
U.S.A.M.H.I., Carlisle Barracks, Pa.)*

The right regiment of Barksdale's brigade, the Twenty-first Mississippi, bore down on the orchard itself and the Federals posted there. The Sixty-eighth Pennsylvania, over 350 strong, must have been comparable in size to the Twenty-first Mississippi and with some help from the Second New Hampshire ought to have handled the Twenty-first easily. But the Sixty-eighth did not do so. The right of the Second, which was fronting south, turned and poured an oblique fire in the direction of the Twenty-first, but it cannot have been too damaging. Colonel Tippin of the Sixty-eighth told his companies to hold their fire until the Mississippians reached a certain point and then to blast away. The Sixty-eighth did this and brought the Twenty-first to a stand at a fence, probably that bordering the Wheatfield Road, until the Seventeenth Mississippi supported the Twenty-first on its left and threatened the Sixty-eighth's flank. Both regiments then continued their advance against the Union line.⁹²

Colonel Alexander had become annoyed by the obstinancy of the Federal batteries, for what had promised to be a short and successful Confederate artillery preparation had grown very long. Therefore, just before Barksdale's brigade went forward, Alexander sent to the rear for Jordan's and Woolfolk's batteries, which he had left in reserve. He placed them under the temporary command of Maj. James Dearing whose own artillery battalion was back with Pickett's division but who had come forward to see the fight. The two batteries came up the road at a trot about the time of the infantry's advance.⁹³

From the Peach Orchard area Pvt. Wyman W. Holden of Company B, Second New Hampshire, saw two Confederate batteries charge from the tree line on Seminary Ridge. One followed the road toward his company and then turned left into a field and dropped trail. Holden adjusted the sight on his Sharps rifle and fired at a cannoneer. Others fired at the battery also. The battery replied with canister, which—if indeed this was the case—indicated that at that time there was no Confederate infantry between it and the Wentz buildings. After the battery's second volley, there was so much smoke around it that the men of Company B were able to fire only at its muzzle flashes rather than at individual cannoneers.⁹⁴

It seems likely that the batteries seen by Private Holden were Woolfolk's and Jordan's. From positions east of the Warfield and Snyder houses they could have fired toward the Federals along the Emmitsburg Road near the Sherfy buildings before Barksdale advanced. More important, as Barksdale's brigade closed on the Sherfy farmyard area, the batteries could have fired to its left and enfiladed Humphreys's line along the Emmitsburg Road. This could have been done until Wilcox's brigade charged into their fields of fire.

Holden and others of the detached companies near the Wentz buildings probably deployed in an open formation rather than in a compact line, and in reality did not fill the gap in the Third Corps line. Some of the men of Holden's company took shelter behind a chimney, but Holden stayed in the open and fired as fast as he could at that portion of Barksdale's line that was

bearing down on him.⁹⁵ He could see a cannon nearby, which he identified as Ames's right piece, manned then by only two artillerymen in their shirt sleeves, but soon it pulled away. The nearby Wentz barn was riddled. Splinters from it littered the ground and finally caught fire. In contrast, the Wentz house off to the left and nearer the Wheatfield Road seemed virtually unharmed.⁹⁶ The Confederate lines, particularly their battle flags, made good targets. But they were formidable, and as they drew near, the detached companies fell back. Some of the wounded of Company B took shelter in the cellar of the Wentz house, where the Mississippians captured them.⁹⁷

Barksdale's 1,400 Mississippians advanced in a tightly closed, compact line. The Twenty-first Regiment on the right of the brigade line guided for the Peach Orchard, while the Eighteenth on the left made for the Sherfy barn.⁹⁸ The 350-yard section of the Union line toward which Barksdale directed his brigade, therefore, was that manned by the Sixty-eighth and 114th Pennsylvania regiments until they were reinforced by the Seventy-third New York. The Pennsylvanians had half the strength of the Mississippians and were too few to cover the allotted space without leaving a soft spot, particularly when they were assaulted by a hard-charging brigade like Barksdale's. Since the Sixty-eighth was pinned to the Peach Orchard and the 114th to the Sherfy buildings, the weakest spot had to be between them at the road intersection and the Wentz farmyard.⁹⁹

Wofford's brigade supported Barksdale's, but instead of moving in its rear, it veered to the right, as discussed above, and swept east astride the Wheatfield Road.¹⁰⁰ This fine brigade of Georgians was composed of the Sixteenth, Eighteenth, and Twenty-fourth regiments and the infantry of Cobb's Legion and Phillips Legion. The brigade had gained a niche in American military history when, under Brig. Gen. Thomas R. R. Cobb, it had slaughtered troops of the Army of the Potomac's Second Corps in front of the Sunken Road at Fredericksburg. After Cobb's death, William T. Wofford, colonel of the Eighteenth Georgia, had succeeded to its command. Wofford, like McLaws's other brigadiers, had been a lawyer before the war. He was born in Georgia in 1824, had been a captain during the Mexican War, and, like Barksdale, had been active in politics. He served in the state legislature and as a delegate to Georgia's secession convention but had opposed secession. When war came, Wofford became commander of the Eighteenth Georgia Infantry. Prior to Fredericksburg he had served with it in Hood's brigade. Wofford did not become one of the luminaries of the Army of Northern Virginia but served it well until he was transferred south to aid in Georgia's defense in 1865. Wofford's distinguishing features were a military bearing and a bald head. McLaws characterized him as being "very ambitious of military fame and one of the most daring of men." B. G. Humphreys remarked that "we all know that he was but too prone to go forward . . . even into disaster."¹⁰¹

At least half of Wofford's line must have been deployed south of the

Wheatfield Road, and its right moved through Taylor's and Parker's batteries. Wofford himself rode by Parker's battery, hat in hand and bald head glistening through the smoke in the late afternoon sun. The men of the battery stopped firing as the infantry passed through and gave the Georgians "a thousand cheers from full and admiring hearts." When he spotted Wofford, Captain Parker was so enthused that he saluted him with his sword and shouted, "Hurrah for you of the bald head!" The cannoneers took his cue and repeated the shout. Wofford's response to this peculiar salutation was not recorded.¹⁰² But Parker had been truly inspired. In recording his recollections weeks later, he wrote of Wofford's advance and commented, "Oh he was a grand sight, and my heart is full now while I write of it. . . . Long may Gen. Wofford live to lead his men to victory!"¹⁰³

Sometime early in the advance, perhaps after the brigade crossed the ridge, or even when it was in the Peach Orchard area, General Longstreet rode to the front of the Georgians' line to lead it on. Although McLaws believed Longstreet to have been disconcerted and annoyed because the battle plan was not working out, the corps commander's conduct before his Georgians was "gallant and inspiring." In response some of the Georgians cheered, but the dour Longstreet cut the cheering short with the admonition, "Cheer less, men, and fight more."¹⁰⁴ It was not a gracious reply, but it was good advice.

Wofford's brigade took little active part in the smashing of the Federal position at the Peach Orchard, for Barksdale's took care of that. Wofford's brigade's impact was on morale. It was a fresh, disciplined body of men that intimidated the battered and disorganized Federals in the Peach Orchard, in the stony hill area, in Trostle's Woods, and in the Wheatfield. Its appearance gave new life and hope to Kershaw's and Semmes's men on its right, and its advance carried them in its wake. Sometime in the course of its sweep the brigade flushed a rabbit that probably had been cowed by the events of the day. The creature fled from the awesome Georgians toward the Federal position. As it did so, "Wofford's men, reckless fellows as they were, raised a shout, and about fifty shots were fired at the rabbit." But the rabbit got away.¹⁰⁵

The Confederate shelling, the onset of Barksdale's brigade, and the sight of Wofford's line marching grandly in Barksdale's rear discouraged the Federal regiments in the Peach Orchard. The Sixty-eighth Pennsylvania's colors fell, but a corporal caught them and waved them defiantly. The Sixty-eighth's lieutenant colonel and major both fell, along with numerous others in its ranks. The yelling Mississippians were crossing the Emmitsburg Road to its right and threatening to enfilade it and take it in the rear. It is no surprise, then, that Colonel Tippin thought that the Sixty-eighth's roadside position was untenable and ordered it to fall back to the rear of the batteries east of the Orchard. The regiment withdrew to the center of the Peach Orchard.¹⁰⁶

The Sixty-eighth's withdrawal symbolized, if it did not signal, the demise

of the Peach Orchard position. Once that keystone began to crumble, the salient was doomed. The Wheatfield Road line became untenable because an enemy force at the Peach Orchard could enfilade and flank it; the Emmitsburg Road line could not be held because an enemy force at the Peach Orchard could assail its left and reach its rear. Whether at Graham's orders or at their own volition, the Third Maine and Third Michigan regiments pulled back from their position facing Kershaw and changed front to the west. This left the Second New Hampshire and the 141st Pennsylvania on the original line fronting south with flanks open, facing Kershaw's men in their front, and with Barksdale's and Wofford's men threatening their right. Thus, the two Federal regiments had no option but to fall back and change front to the west.¹⁰⁷

Colonel Bailey's Second New Hampshire faced about and fell back to the slightly higher ground midway through the orchard, about faced again, and prepared to deliver a volley at short range.¹⁰⁸ The nearby 141st Pennsylvania, with 180 men in its ranks, stood alone. Col. Henry J. Madill held them in this position for a short time and then backed off to the Wheatfield Road and the remnants of a board fence, where he formed a new line near the Sixty-eighth.¹⁰⁹

The batteries had already started away. Just as no one wrote of the arrival of Watson's battery, no one described its departure. Thompson's four guns in the east side of the Orchard must have gone next, for they too could no longer fire with Union infantry in their front. Thompson's guns pulled back about three hundred yards to a point near the right of Clark's battery, where they unlimbered fronting south and prepared to open again.¹¹⁰ Hart's battery had exhausted all of its ammunition but a few solid shot by this time, and it limbered up also and headed for the rear. In later years Hart fumed about running out of ammunition. He maintained that he had sent back for two of his caissons that he had left in the rear. At first they had been moved and could not be found. A second messenger found them, but before they reached Hart they were ordered back. Why he had not kept them with the gun sections he did not say. Hart believed that his reputation was at stake, for no one had ever seen his battery leave the field because of an ammunition shortage. Hart thought that McGilvery was the culprit: the men left with his caissons said that it was McGilvery who had ordered them from the field. This was a great grievance for Hart in the long postwar years.¹¹¹

Barksdale's center regiments, the Thirteenth and Seventeenth, pressed over the Emmitsburg Road north of the Wheatfield Road to the Wentz farm. The Seventeenth Mississippi overran the Wentz buildings and supported the Twenty-first's attack against the Peach Orchard by clearing the Federals from the ground north of the Wheatfield Road. The Seventeenth and Thirteenth pivoted left on the Eighteenth Mississippi at the Sherfy barn and drove along the east side of the Emmitsburg Road against the left of the 114th Pennsylvania and Seventy-third New York regiments. The 114th gave way to the right

and retreated up the Emmitsburg Road past the Sherfy house into the rear of the Fifty-seventh and 105th regiments, which still clung to their positions. Sometime early in the 114th's withdrawal, Captain Bowen saw its commander, Lt. Col. Frederick F. Cavada, sitting exhausted by an outbuilding. Bowen begged Cavada to fall back with the regiment, but Cavada could not. Since the Confederates were pressing them hard, Bowen left Cavada behind to become a prisoner of war. The 114th cut from the road into the fields that stretched east back to Cemetery Ridge. Bowen, now in command of the 114th, employed a tactic that served the regiment well. He sent the colors some distance to the rear and then ordered the Zouaves to fall back to them. The 114th repeated this simple maneuver several times in its retreat to Cemetery Ridge.¹¹²

The Zouaves of the Seventy-third New York witnessed the Confederate assault from their thin line a hundred yards in the rear of the 114th's. It was a spectacle. There were the yelling, smoke-stained Confederates; mounted officers and couriers dashing about; Zouaves in their exotic uniforms fleeing, fighting, and dying; whistling shells; and zipping minié balls. The Sherfy barn in their front was full of holes, and a shell hit a rail pile and sent the rails flying like toothpicks. The noise was so loud that it drowned out officers' shouted commands even at a distance of only twenty paces.¹¹³

As soon as the 114th cleared its front, the Seventy-third poured a volley into the incoming Mississippians, dropping many of them among the fallen of the 114th. Both sides blazed away at short range, polluting the air with noise, lead, and acrid smoke. The Seventy-third's color sergeant fell; the next man to hold the flag was struck in the arm by a minié ball; and then a third man grasped the staff and held the banner high. Maj. Michael W. Burns rode behind the Seventy-third's line, conspicuous on his gray horse. Capt. Frank E. Moran of Company H was told that the regiment was about to charge, and the men cheered the news, but no charge was made. It was too late. The Mississippians were already among the Wentz buildings on their left, and the Federal troops in the Peach Orchard were falling back.¹¹⁴

When it became apparent that the Seventy-third was flanked on the left, a courier brought an order to Major Burns to take the Seventy-third back toward Humphreys's division, which, as yet, had not been attacked by infantry. As the Seventy-third started off, an artillery officer, probably from Thompson's battery, rode up to Captain Moran and begged him to help save a couple of guns whose horses had been shot. Moran got permission from Major Burns to do so. Moran and his company started for the guns, guided by the artillery officer, and apparently recovered one piece. A shell burst close to them and knocked Moran unconscious. When he regained his senses, a Rebel officer was trying to pull him from beneath a dead horse, and the Thirteenth Mississippi Regiment went charging by them, "firing and shrieking like Indians."¹¹⁵

The Sherfy barn was an easy point for Barksdale's left regiment, the

Eighteenth Mississippi, to guide on, and the regiment moved around it. As it did so, Maj. George B. Gerald asked some of its men to follow him, went to a barn door, and yanked it open. The barn was filled with smoke but was not large. In a couple of minutes Gerald's party rounded up all of the Union troops inside of it. In the meantime, beset by such diversions, Barksdale was trying to keep his brigade moving by shouting, "Forward, men, forward!" and probably some things that were more profane. He did not wish to give the disordered enemy a chance to rally.¹¹⁶

The Fifty-seventh and 105th Pennsylvania regiments to Barksdale's left were the Mississippians' next victims. This meant, of course, that instead of continuing his thrust to the east toward the Trostle farmyard with the entire brigade, Barksdale wheeled the Thirteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth regiments left more or less up the Emmitsburg Road. The two Pennsylvania regiments now in its path had fired on the Mississippians' left as soon as it came within a reasonable range. Barksdale's men did not return the fire until they reached a rail fence that was about one hundred yards in front of the Pennsylvanians' position. They exchanged fire, but then, as the Confederates pressed closer, Capt. Alanson H. Nelson said to Col. Peter Sides, "It looks as though we will soon have to move out of here, or be captured." The colonel looked to the left and right and replied, "Yes, I think we will go now."

As their conversation suggests, the Fifty-seventh was not being stampeded. In fact, it had delayed too long. A number of the Fifty-seventh's men were scattered through the Sherfy buildings and could not be rounded up quickly. That portion of the regiment at hand would start back at once, while Captain Nelson tried to retrieve its scattered lambs.¹¹⁷ Nelson turned his company over to a lieutenant and ran first to the more distant outbuildings and then back to the house. By this time the noise was so great that he could not call to the men about to be captured. Calling was not enough; he had to get each man's attention by shaking him by the shoulder, and this took time. While going from room to room in the house, he looked from a window and saw the Confederate line only fifty feet away. That was too close. Without further ado Nelson sprinted from the building toward the retreating Fifty-seventh, trailed by demands for his surrender and passed by the minié balls that missed him. In a few minutes Colonel Sides was wounded, the major was captured, and Nelson was in charge of what was left of his regiment.¹¹⁸

The 105th Pennsylvania on the brigade right was the last of Graham's regiments to leave the forward line. As the Confederates approached, it formed across the road in a futile effort to stop them, but the Mississippi line extended far enough east of the road and beyond the 105th's left to envelop it. The regiment retreated a distance and then rallied. Then, at what was said (probably wrongly) to have been an order from Sickles himself, the 105th counterattacked and pushed the Rebels in its front back to the Sherfy farmyard. This was but a very small and temporary victory. Soon the 105th, like its sister regiments, was heading back toward Cemetery Ridge. In the estimation

of Col. Calvin A. Craig, the 105th had rallied eight or ten times after the brigade disintegrated—"the boys fought like demons. Their battle cry was 'Pennsylvania.'" About half of them became casualties that afternoon.¹¹⁹

As the remainder of Barksdale's brigade struck Graham's center and right north of the Wheatfield Road, the Twenty-first Mississippi pushed into the Peach Orchard and a Federal line that was forming there. The Second New Hampshire had swung back from its position along the south edge of the orchard and gave the Twenty-first a volley at close range. But the movement through the littered orchard and the pressure from the Twenty-first created disorder in the Second's ranks. This prompted Bailey to move the Second to a position behind the crest within the orchard and reform there. Having a little time, he ordered the regiment to dress on its colors. There was the usual shuffling and muttering, and soon the Second had a line. In keeping with the regiment's informal surroundings, Capt. Henry Metcalf of Company H called to Bailey, "How does that line suit you, Colonel?" Bailey replied, "Excellent! excellent!" With that approval, Metcalf turned to Cpl. William H. Piper and remarked, "A good line, that, Henry," and fell dead with a bullet in his head.¹²⁰

Captain Metcalf's fall signaled the opening of another round, but this time the Second New Hampshire was not alone. Its good line formed the lead of a V-shaped echeloned formation with the Third Maine to its left rear and the Sixty-eighth Pennsylvania twenty paces to its right rear and ready to move forward. It is likely that the 141st Pennsylvania and the Seventh New Jersey were nearby, somewhat to the right and rear beyond the road.¹²¹ It was at this time, perhaps, that Colonel Tippin of the Sixty-eighth met General Graham and received orders to take on the Seventeenth Mississippi, which was off the Sixty-eighth's right flank. Then Graham was wounded. The general turned his brigade over to Tippin, what there was of it, and started to the rear. That was the last that Tippin saw of him.¹²²

The new line stemmed the Confederate flood no better than had the old. The Mississippians smashed the Sixty-eighth and sent it reeling back. The Second New Hampshire swapped fire with the Twenty-first Mississippi until the Second's line had gaping holes. Then, fearing envelopment by Wofford's line and capture, Bailey ordered the Second to break off the fight and pull back toward Cemetery Ridge. The location of the Second's last line is unmarked today, but it was obvious to all those who visited the Peach Orchard immediately after the battle. Each company's dead marked its place in line. The Second New Hampshire, once 354 strong, had 21 of its 24 officers and 136 of its 330 enlisted men killed or wounded in the Peach Orchard that day; the Sixty-eighth's casualties numbered 152.¹²³

The retreat of the Sixty-eighth Pennsylvania left the 141st alone somewhere just north of the Peach Orchard and the Wheatfield Road. Capt. John F. Clark asked Colonel Madill if it was not time to leave. Madill replied stubbornly, "I have no order to get out." Then, looking at his short line, he

said, "If I had my old regiment back again, I could whip all of them."¹²⁴ But the old regiment was gone. A formation appeared on the 141st's right, but the Pennsylvanians could not see it clearly through the smoke. Some men fired at it, but Maj. Israel P. Spalding ordered them to stop because he thought that it might be Union troops. It was not, and it repaid Spalding's caution with well-fired volleys that chopped the 141st's line into pieces. Confederate balls hit twenty-seven men in the first volley, and soon all of the men in the color guard were dead or wounded. The color corporal refused to give over the Stars and Stripes until a fourth wound rendered him incapable of carrying it. A ball shattered Major Spalding's femur, and only three of the regiment's nine officers emerged unscathed. Madill thought that the 141st had delayed the Confederate advance about twenty minutes. Colonel Madill, whose horse had been killed, carried the colors and led twenty men from the Peach Orchard area. They left Major Spalding sitting with his back against a tree and did not see him alive again.¹²⁵ As Madill and the remnant of the 141st trudged to the rear, they met General Sickles. Sickles said, "Colonel! for God's sake can't you hold on?" Looking at his corps commander with tear-filled eyes, Madill replied simply, "Where are my men?"¹²⁶

This must have been one of Sickles's last conversations on the field. Sickles, the wounded Captain Randolph, and perhaps some orderlies and clerks of the headquarters staff started for the east side of the Trostle barn to avoid some of the Confederate shot and shell that were falling in the area. Sickles must have been preoccupied with the fate of his corps. He had disregarded Meade's orders because he had considered the Cemetery Ridge position to be a poor one and had advanced the Third Corps to what he deemed to be a better one. And now his line was crumbling. Hood's division had driven Ward's and de Trobriand's brigades from Devil's Den and the Wheatfield and the Fifth Corps brigades from the stony hill; the Wheatfield area remained in Federal hands only through the exertions of Caldwell's division of the Second Corps. To make matters worse even the troops of Graham's brigade were being driven from the Peach Orchard, the salient of his line. With its capture by the Confederates, the corps's right wing, Humphreys's division, would also have to fall back, and the Wheatfield would be untenable. He had sown good intentions and reaped a bitter harvest.

What Sickles would have done in an attempt to salvage the situation we cannot know. A round shot struck him in the right knee. It was a freak wounding, for the shot flicked the rider so lightly that it did not spook or hurt his horse, which already had one wound, and the animal remained under control. Somehow or other Sickles was able to dismount without further injury and those present made makeshift dressings for his wound with handkerchiefs until additional aid appeared.¹²⁷ Pvt. William H. Bullard, a musician from the Seventieth New York, who was serving as a stretcher-bearer, soon came on the scene. Bullard made a tourniquet from a saddle strap and stopped the general's bleeding. By then Sickles had grown pale with shock

and loss of blood, and Bullard gave him a drink from a canteen. They placed him on a stretcher and waited for an ambulance to come. The general remained conscious throughout the ordeal, alert enough to appreciate his helplessness and show understandable apprehension. He asked to be placed behind a large boulder and expressed concern about being captured. He repeatedly urged those around him not to let him be taken prisoner.¹²⁸

Major Tremain wrote that he returned to headquarters at about this time and found his chief lying propped against the barn (or was it a boulder near the barn?) and a soldier applying a tourniquet. The general told Tremain to tell Birney of his condition and that Birney was now in command of the Third Corps. Sickles then took a small flask of brandy from his pocket and took a sip. General Birney rode up as Tremain was starting off to find him, and Tremain began to relay Sickles's message. But Sickles saw Birney and with a voice that belied his condition shouted, "General Birney, you will take command, sir."¹²⁹ Birney and Sickles talked briefly, and Birney rode off to attend to his duties. Sickles asked Bullard for a cigar. Bullard took a case from the general's pocket, took a cigar from it, bit off an end, lighted it and gave it to him. Sickles took it and puffed away.¹³⁰ Sickles's condition soon attracted attention. In order to present a brave and calming front, Sickles raised himself on the stretcher so that passers-by could see that he was alive if not well and asked them to stand firm.¹³¹

An ambulance rattled up in a short while. They put the general into it, and Tremain joined him. One cannot help but reflect that though Tremain was of some use to Sickles at this time, Birney and the Third Corps might have needed him much more. As they bumped along, Tremain feared that the ambulance might be hit by an artillery round, but it was not. Tremain tried to fortify Sickles with sips of brandy from the flask as often as he would take them. Somewhere along the way they met Father Joseph B. O'Hagan, the chaplain of the Seventy-fourth New York, who joined the general in prayer. The ambulance reached the Third Corps hospital about dusk. Chaplain Joseph H. Twichell of the Seventy-first New York met it there and helped lift Sickles out. Sickles went under the care of the Third Corps surgeon, Dr. Thomas Sim. Twichell, who administered chloroform to Sickles, wrote that the general's bearing and words were of the "noblest character." "If I die, let me die on the field," said Sickles, and "God bless our noble cause."¹³²

Sim amputated at once, cutting the leg off just above the knee. It was a dramatic scene worthy of a fine artist's skill. Sickles lay on a makeshift operating table surrounded by the surgeon and his assistants, their anxious faces glowing dimly in the light from candles held in the sockets of bayonets. Some aides were probably standing close by, and there was still the sputter of distant firing on Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill.¹³³ The operation went well. Sickles remained at the field hospital that night while his aides and at least one orderly cared for him. Someone there, possibly Dr. Sim, took care of Sickles's special souvenir of the battle, his amputated leg.¹³⁴

The 141st Pennsylvania Regiment had come to Gettysburg with 209 officers and men, and 149 became casualties in the Peach Orchard action; the Second New Hampshire suffered 193 casualties. Graham's brigade's casualties numbered 740. Confederate casualties for the Peach Orchard alone cannot be ascertained and, though not as heavy, were great enough. Company D, Twenty-first Mississippi, lost half of its men. Lt. James Ramsaur of the Seventeenth was wounded in both his hand and mouth. He could not shout orders but pushed his men on by waving his hat with his wounded hand and brandishing his sword with the other.¹³⁵

Pvt. Archibald Duke of the Seventeenth fell in front of the Emmitsburg Road with a leg wound. He had had a presentiment of trouble and had asked his brother, J. W. (James) Duke, the fence-buster, to write home when the battle was over. J. W. found Archibald after the fight, and the wounded man exclaimed, "Thank God! My prayers are answered. I have asked Him to take me in place of you as I am prepared and you are not." Gangrene set in, and Archibald Duke died.¹³⁶

After the fighting had passed on to the east, Capt. Francis E. Moran of the Seventy-third New York, who had been partially blinded and wounded in the ankle, limped into the Sherfy yard. Here on the ground that had seemed so vital to the Union a short while before, he washed his powder-stained and bleeding face and bandaged up his eye, perhaps with a handkerchief obtained from a Confederate officer in exchange for a sword belt. He saw dead men from both armies lying thickly around the splintered Sherfy barn. It was a sad sight that inspired sober thought. Most of all Moran was affected by the presence there of numerous dead and wounded horses from Bucklyn's and Thompson's batteries and from other units as well. "The poor horses had fared badly," Moran wrote, "and as we passed scores of these ungazetted heroes stood upon their maimed limbs regarding us with a silent look of reproach that was almost human in expression."¹³⁷ Humans had made the Peach Orchard salient a particular kind of hell.