THE CONKLING RIFLES: CIVIL WAR HISTORY OF THE NINETY-SEVENTH REGIMENT, NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS

©1998, Steven F. Roth

The following is substantially based upon excerpts and information contained in HISTORY OF THE NINETY-SEVENTH REGIMENT NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS, ("CONKLING RIFLES,") IN THE WAR FOR THE UNION, by Isaac Hall (Press of L.C. Childs & Son, Utica, N.Y., 1890).

Chapter I: The War Begins -- Organization of the 97th -- Departure for Washington

The War began with the bombardment and capture of Ft. Sumter in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina, April 12th and 13th, 1861. This caught the government and the people of the North totally unprepared. Neither the magnitude of the war, nor the resolution of the North or the South was understood. President Lincoln at first called for only 75,000 volunteers to serve three months, because the common feeling was that the rebellion could be suppressed, and the Union soldiers "had embarked on a summer pleasure excursion, or had started on a holiday picnic. ... It was a just cause of apprehension, at first, also, that the rancor of political partisanship would induce many of the Northern people to stand aloof from a hearty support of Government ... A general impression then prevailed that a peace would be patched up and there would be no real war." After all, nobody was killed on either side at Fort Sumter.

For "three weary months, the war dragged feebly on; the North but half aroused and but half in earnest." No great battle was fought until Bull Run on July 21st, 1861. About 30,000 men were engaged on either side -- probably a larger number than ever before in the history of America. Victory, at first, seemed to incline towards the North, but Confederate reinforcements changed the aspects of the field, and Bull Run finally became a most humiliating defeat to the Union army. [While visiting the battlefield of 1st Bull Run (at Manassas, Virginia), I was told by a Civil War enthusiast that a Union uniform factory had just previously been looted by Confederates, who appeared behind Union lines dressed in blue uniforms, and proceeded to attack Union batteries and infantry from the rear; this undoubtedly added to the Union defeat.]

After this battle, "the North became ashamed and immediately aroused. ... Dangerous delusions were dispelled ... The war was known to be a real one." The North became united, and it is said that at this time devise political party lines became essentially "extinct." "Thus the defeat at Bull Run was a blessing in disguise." There came a demand for more men, and the three-months militia (first called out to defend Washington, D.C.) had returned home. Those who had enlisted for two or three years had already gone to the front, some in time to serve at Bull Run, "but their numbers were found to be totally inadequate to the vast proportions the war had now assumed."

On July 22, 1861, the day after the defeat at Bull Run, Congress passed an act authorizing President Lincoln to call out one-half a million new volunteers. On July 25th, the President requested New York's Governor Morgan to furnish 25,000 men to serve three years. As before,

they were to rendezvous at New York City, Albany and Elmira. However, for a time, enlistments were slow, but toward the end of August, the "Governor devised the happy expedient of establishing local camps throughout the State, at such points as seemed to offer the best facilities for completing regimental organizations." Camps were established at Oswego, Saratoga, Rochester and Buffalo, and from almost every village in the State reports came in that enlistments were progressing rapidly. In some instances several partial regiments were consolidated into one. "Such was the time and such was the occasion and circumstances attending the formation of the Ninety-seventh Regiment, New York Volunteers."

September 23, 1861 -- Governor Morgan, by special order, authorized Charles Wheelock to organize a regiment at Boonville, where a depot was established as soon as eight companies, of 32 men each, had been mustered in. Mr. Wheelock had long been a prominent businessman -- a produce dealer, "and the interest he had taken in the enlistment and dispatch of the few companies which had already gone from that place to the field, at the beginning of the war, justified a confidence in his ability to organize and command a regiment with honor to himself and credit to the service." In less than two weeks, 300 men were enlisted from northern Oneida, and Lewis and Herkimer Counties.

The rendezvous was established at Boonville in a canal warehouse owned by Peter P. Prost which was fitted up for barracks. Uniforms were received and a contract was made with John Wilson, Charles and Joel T. Comstock for subsisting the men at 30 cents per day each. The barracks and training area was officially designated "Camp Rathbone." Nine companies had been organized by October 15, "and were gradually filled up by the efforts of the officers." Just as Jack Wolfe reports of Lowville, "the streets of Boonville were alive with the bustle of preparation, and the excitement" incident to the 97th's impending involvement in the war. Drills and parades became frequent. A brass band was organized chiefly of men from Boonville and Turin. Several buildings and halls were obtained for drill rooms, hospitals and other military purposes, "and as the season advanced, the novel spectacle of martial parade drew numbers from the surrounding country to witness the exercises of the volunteers and to get a glimpse of army life."

As the active campaign of the recruiting season closed, the regiment was permitted to spend the winter at the camp, near their families, "but the crowded quarters and course fare, so different from the abundant variety of home life, as a consequent result, brought on some sickness, which the occurrence of the measles in an epidemic from greatly increased." Of about 60 cases, three were fatal. Diphtheria, and scarlet and typhoid fevers affected many others. Those who were disabled were discharged from service. As the organization of the regiment neared completion, various names were suggested for it, among them "Spinner and Conkling Rifles," "Black River Riflemen," "Third Oneida," and "Boonville Regiment." It was "Conkling Rifles" that stuck, and its members were mustered into service of the United States on February 15, 1862, as the "97th Regiment, New York Volunteers."

It should not go without mention that earlier, on December 19, 1861, a "Ladies' Fair" was opened in Boonville for the purpose of "procuring a stand of colors" (flag) for the regiment,

continuing for four days. A public presentation of the colors was made from the balcony of Hulbert's Hotel on December 23. The Honorable Richard Hulburt, presented them on behalf of the ladies, providing words of gratitude for the fine sewing, the progress of those from the North already engaged in battle, and the regiment which "will compare favorably with a like number of citizens in any community as to intelligence and capacity for the various pursuits of life," boding honorable action of the men in battle to uphold the honor of the flag. Colonel Wheelock accepted the flag, and Lt. Col. Spofford, Major Northrup and Adjutant Buck also spoke, expressing appreciation and promising loyalty, valor and sacrifice.

At this time, more than 600,000 men had voluntarily come forward from the North. There were ruminations at this time that the United States might have to fight England again, and officers Lyon and Baker who died at 1st Bull Run, were mentioned. The Reverend J.V. Ferguson, Regiment Chaplain, came forward at the conclusion of the ceremony, "and after a few touching and appropriate remarks, invoked Divine aid and protection in a manner which left a deep and solemn impression upon the assemblage."

Before departure, there were a total of 918 officers and men enrolled in the regiment, 122 of which were from Lewis County. "The men of the 97th were enlisted principally from the farmer, mechanics and woodsmen of the State, and were of a rugged and hardy physique. Many of them were familiar with the use of the rifle and accustomed to daily toil, and especially that labor in the open air which gives solidity to bone and muscle -- an excellent preparation for soldier." It is said that, "Before their enlistment they had, as a class, been law abiding citizens; but there is to some men so great a change from citizens to soldiers that their habits of life are extremely liable to become loose." These words preceded a description of the last night of February, 1862, when "a squad of men" from the barracks marched through the town in military order, and forcibly entering the store of Warren Hunt & Co., rolled out casks of liquors, oils and burning fluids and emptied their contents upon the ground, besides committing much other damage to the furniture and fixtures of the store. Another band "expended their mischievous propensities" upon Mr. F. Adams' bowling alley and billiard saloon, "and having destroyed or damaged every moveable article of furniture, they quietly returned to their quarters. It was never presumed that those who committed these acts of violence were patrons of these establishments." They were never discovered and punished.

It was a severe winter, and the regiment maintained regular military exercises, and "made commendable progress in drill and discipline... and when the time came for its departure for the seat of war it was fully as well prepared for active service as any other regiment coming from the rural districts."

On March 12, 1862, the regiment boarded the train of 18 cars at Boonville which would take them South -- and "cheer after cheer arose from thousands of throats assembled to witness the regiment's departure." They were met by "ovation, salutation and encouragement" at Utica, and "tokens of love and affection" at Little Falls, and with a "final parting of dear friends," the train passed rapidly on to Albany, where they received their first visit by the paymaster. (While at Boonville, Col. Wheelock had magnanimously loaned the regiment thousands of dollars to

"keep the families of the men from want and some of the officers supplied with the needful." On Wednesday, March 19, the train arrived in New York City at 4 a.m., where the regiment was marched to the "Park barracks, on the sight of the new post office." Later that day the regiment received its first arms -- Enfield (British) rifles of .577 caliber (with angular bayonets).

From my research on small arms of the Civil War, this was said to be an excellent weapon for the time. (As mentioned in my introductory letter, the gun believed to be Franklin Hough's was a .69 caliber smoothbore of earlier vintage. However, Franklin did not enter the war with the initial group -- mustering in as a surgeon in Albany on July 3, 1862. It is possible that one of his relatives, Asahel, who commanded a company of troops during the War of 1812, gave the government-issue musket to Franklin, who took it with him in the Civil War. A surgeon might reason that he did not need the latest in weaponry, in that his activities were occupied in activities other than infantry.) From New York the 97th went by steamboat and railroad to Philadelphia, where they were supplied a "bountiful breakfast" by Reverend Thomas Brainerd, D.D., and then on to Washington.

Chapter II: Encampments and Employments Near Washington -- General Duryee -- Plans of Campaign

The men gradually realized that war would not be easy, though not to the extent they would later on. "A portion of the passage to Washington having been in box cars with poor accommodation for comfort or convenience, the men of the 97th already began to realize the fact that a soldier's life is one of hardship." Early on, they were encamped at Fort Corcoran on the Potomac, guarding Washington. "The situation of these encampments was beautiful in the extreme; commanding magnificent views of the broad river with its majestic curves and shaded shores, and of the cities of Washington and Georgetown with their splendid public buildings and numerous mansions." It was difficult to get leave passes from camp. However, the story is told of a soldier who successfully used a note signed by Col. Wheelock ordering someone to come to Wheelock's quarters as a pass to Washington, because Col. Wheelock's handwriting was undecipherable.

After about a month of garrison duty at camp, the 97th learned that they were to form part of a brigade to be made with the 104th and 105th New York, the 88th and 107th Pennsylvania, and the 12th Virginia volunteers -- to be under the command of Brigadier General Abram Duryee. (Before the war, it was said that General Duryee was the popular and efficient colonel of the famous 7th Regiment, NY militia, which was largely composed of "the very elite of the young bloods of New York City," and that "Colonel Duryee had made the military art the study of his life." Shortly after the fall of Fort Sumter, his regiment, popularly known as "Duryee's Zouaves" (uniformed after the French Zouaves with fez hats, short coats, bright red pantaloons, and leggings) was created.

In mid-April, 1862, the brigade was assigned to assist in protecting Washington by occupying Camp Reliance, two miles west of Alexandria, Virginia. It was difficult to find fuel, as most of the wood for fires (fence posts) had been used up by previous occupants. Training continued. "After a day of fatiguing drill the sleepy camp would be aroused by a sudden alarm at midnight, and the different regiments would array themselves in line of battle as promptly as if a real attack upon the camp was about to be made, or had begun."

There were a couple of notable incidents at Camp Reliance. A member of Company H (which was composed of men from Lowville and the near vicinity), on returning to camp, was met by a drunken cavalryman, "who upon some fancied provocation or through a wanton impulse, struck him with a sabre, inflicting a severe wound in the forehead, gashing his face and destroying one of his eyes. The blow crashed through his skull, and, upon examination, the surgeons pronounced the wound mortal; but by the careful nursing of the hospital steward, the man survived."

On another occasion, a detachment of about 160 was sent to a railroad junction to guard military supplies. During the night, a sergeant awoke the commanding lieutenant, exclaiming, "There is a line of men upon the bank of the cut just in front of us; I saw them forming there just before I called you." The lieutenant's duty was clear -- he must attempt to get all his reserves ready for battle before the enemy attacked. While taking the lead, he hurriedly asked his sergeant how that line of enemy could creep to so close a position (about 200 yards away) without his knowledge. The answer came cooly forth: "That is not a line of men; they are (railroad) cars." Railroad hands had run the empty cars into the cut, the noise of which had awakened the sutler, and their appearance above the bank corresponded to the height of a line of men. "The time spent at Camp Reliance were the halcyon days of the regiment; though not realized as such at the time, their memory was often subsequently referred to with pleasurable emotions." After all, communications between Washington and Alexandria were then frequent, supplies were abundant, instructions were of acknowledged importance and the duties "sufficiently varied to prevent monotony." However, new events were occurring in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, which caused the regiment to be sent against the enemy in that direction. "In this movement the 97th with Duryee's brigade experienced its first hardships in actual warfare, which were to test its capacity and endurance to the utmost."

Chapter III: Plan of Campaign of 1862 -- March of 97th to Front Royal -- Thence to Catletts -- March to Warrenton -- General Banks Defeated by Jackson

The general plan of the North's campaign for 1862, says Captain Isaac Hall, "was undoubtedly that of simultaneous attack upon Richmond of four Union armies: that of McClellan from the south, of McDowell from the north, Fremont from the Mountain Department and Banks from the Valley of the Shenandoah." However, masterful Confederate General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson saw this coming, had received reinforcements, intercepted the march of Generals Milroy and Schenck, and, "after a spirited engagement," defeated the Federals and drove them back across the Alleghenies to a point near Franklin in West Virginia. General

Banks pursued General Jackson, but Jackson soon turned and followed him, leaving a small cavalry force behind to mask his designs, then rapidly crossed the eastern valley with his main army.

Jackson's army fell upon a Union force at Front Royal on May 23, 1862, where he was least expected (usual tactics for Jackson). After a vigorous but short conflict, Jackson's force had killed and captured nearly the whole command. Banks retreated (being outgeneraled and outflanked by an army much superior to his own), and managed to escape with almost his entire force and supply trains.

However, in the retreat, 55 of 500 wagons were lost and the Federals were ardently pursued by numerous cavalry and light artillery, and had to fight their way through a detachment Confederates left near Winchester. In the retreat, 38 were killed, 155 wounded, and some 500 were missing. "This unexpected and discouraging disaster, so soon after the victory at Kernstown, spread gloomy forebodings throughout the North and called for vigorous measures of retaliation." At the same time, "No thoughts were entertained that the enemy could possibly hold the territory recovered, as the movement of Union Troops towards Richmond would prevent reinforcements being sent, and maybe Jackson's army could be intercepted before it could retire."

Duryee's brigade (including the 97th) were assigned to General McDowell's division on May 26. They had received false reports that the enemy was coming in force to cut off their retreat. Under orders based on the reports, they burned their camp and garrison equipment and immediately retreated. From then on, they were the brunt of "chaffing" by other troops who chided "Burn your tents," even though it was done under order. They vigorously pursued Jackson's army. However, hot weather and three days of pouring rain swept away bridges of the Shenandoah and Rappahannock. These factors allowed Jackson to "slip through their fingers." It was considered by many in retrospect that if more forces were pulled from the defense of Washington, and toward Richmond in one united force, that Richmond might have been taken at this juncture of the war -- while still defending Washington.

Chapter IV: Troops in Front of Washington Organized into Army of Virginia -- General Pope Called from the West to the Command -- His Famous Order -- March to Waterloo -- Advance to Culpepper -- A Battle Expected

On June 26, 1862, all the Federal troops of Northern Virginia were organized into one body called the Army of Virginia, which was composed of three corps headed by Generals Sigel, Banks and McDowell -- with the 97th under McDowell. General McDowell's was referred to as the "Army of the Rappahannock," which at this time had several regiments and unattached troops near Alexandria, with fortifications around Washington. General Pope was expected to make an advance upon Richmond from the interior while General McClellan was making a simultaneous attack from the Peninsula. Meanwhile, and before these preparations were developed, the "seven days" fighting before Richmond had occurred and McClellan's "bleeding columns" lay at

Harrison's landing. All efforts of the Army of Virginia were to cut off Jackson from getting to Richmond, and for this purpose, McClellan wanted well-drilled troops for the battle in front of Richmond.

General John Pope (who had successes against the Confederates in the West in some easy battles such as New Madrid, Missouri and Island No. 10 on the Mississippi), was made commander of the Army of Virginia -- replacing General McClellan. McClellan had been too cautious in proceeding toward Richmond, always requesting heavy reinforcements for an advance on the Confederate capital. It has also been said in history books that Lincoln's and McClellan's politics conflicted. McClellan advised that military force not be used as an instrument to upset "relations of servitude" -- believing that Americans would rally to the cause of reuniting the nation, but not to freedom for the Negro. Also, Lincoln was well acquainted with the Pope family, and General Pope was a master story-teller who knew all the right things to say to the right Republicans in power, and the President liked stories. However, General Pope did not go down in history as a good general, but rather an inept one in some accounts -- too distant from battle, too political, too autocratic, and called a "bag of wind" by his officers.

The feelings of the 97th, in the words of Captain Hall, are consistent with this image. "The first impressions which the army of Virginia obtained of General Pope, their commander, were derived from his own orders dated 'From the Saddle,' and expressed in such bombastic terms as to inspire contempt rather than respect." Pope said that his army was to "subsist upon the country ... which many of the soldiers interpreted to mean unlimited license to plunder." The residents of Virginia were to take an oath of allegiance to the U.S. government, or to be sent south "of our lines" and condemned to be shot if found violating this oath. Therefore, General Pope was resented by many fellow officers and the troops, and hated by the residents of Virginia, including General Lee, whose home state was Virginia. "These orders did not add anything to the patriotism or courage to the troops already willing to do their best, nor did they tend to conciliate such of the inhabitants as might be found disaffected, but most of whom **must** be left in our rear."

However, the "fatal mistake" of General Pope was expressed in his order of July 14, 1862, in which he was understood to express a contempt for the valor of the Eastern troops and their commanders by saying that in the (easy fought) battles of the West, where they "saw the backs of their enemies," to attack instead of defend, and as he pompously stated, "I presume I have been called here to pursue the same system and to lead you against the enemy. It is my purpose to do so, and that right speedily." Captain Hall says that such "leadership" would have killed morale, except that the Army of the Potomac (including the 97th) was so loyal. They were much happier under the leadership of General McClellan. In the Army of Virginia under Pope, General Duryee commanded the 97th, 104th and 105th New York, and the 107th Pennsylvania Volunteers.

On or about July 19, General Jackson arrived at Gordonsville, Va. with his own division. Among the army orders of General Jackson on this campaign was that "all officers of the Federal Army that might fall into their hands should be denied parole, and kept in close confinement."

This was done in retaliation for General Pope's offensive orders concerning the treatment of the inhabitants of Virginia and their property, so long as such orders should remain in force.

Chapter V: Battle of Cedar Mountain -- General Jackson Retires Across the Rapidan -- Duryee's Brigade Marches to the Rapidan -- The 97th Picket Duty -- Bushwackers Numerous

General Jackson sent cavalry troops ahead of General Pope's, and on August 8, 1862, Jackson's superior force met and attacked the scattered troops of the Federal force while they were guarding roads and bridges at Barnett's Ford, on the Rapidan. The Confederates drove the Federals back and pursued them at some distance towards Culpepper Court House, Virginia. Again, Jackson appeared where he was least expected by the Union soldiers. He seemed to be nowhere, yet everywhere -- he was "ubiquitous."

While the 97th was on the march to Culpepper Courthouse, "a pleasing spectacle" was exhibited to them which "caused a glow of patriotic emotion," especially because it was the first demonstration of loyalty that they had seen on the part of the inhabitants of the country since leaving Catlett's Station: "A small company of negroes had gathered in a valley by the road side, out of sight of the white people, having a little cotton flag [c]rudely painted with the stars and stripes. As soon as they caught sight of the advancing troops they waved this significant symbol of national loyalty over their heads, their smiling faces all aglow with joy at the sight of the Union soldiers. The 'boys' [soldiers] caught the enthusiasm kindled by this spark of patriotism and cheered long and loudly for the 'star spangled banner' to the infinate[sic] satisfaction of the trembling company of slaves who had exhibited it in such an humble manner, but to which they instinctively clung as the true flag of freedom and the emblem of their approaching emancipation."

The 97th knew that the battle of Cedar Mountain started on August 9th at noon when they heard cannon fire ahead of them on this hot and dusty day. They were not called to move toward the front until 5:00 p.m. As reinforcements in this battle, they knew that they were being called in too late, as General Bank's corps had been marching or fighting that hot day since noon. On their way toward battle, the men of the 97th passed Bank`s wounded, thinned ranks, which made evidence of their considerable loss, and the need for their retreat -- despite their valiant efforts. Captain Hall describes the scene:

> The ambulances met were packed with wounded men and officers, and some were walking with bandaged arms and legs still covered with fresh blood and gore of the field. Others were mounted, unable to walk, and occasionally two upon one horse. All were covered with smoke and begrimmed[sic] with the late encounter. Trying as these scenes were to the nerves of our raw troops, none faltered, but all pressed on in silence towards the front. As the 97th with the division approached nearer the battlefield, the remains of broken regiments were met, some of the men without arms, all exhibiting the extreme exhaustion of men who had just retired from a desperate battle.

These broken remains of General Banks' corps were finally passed when the 97th was still about a mile from the battlefield and night fell upon them, so that McDowell's corps was too late for that day's operations. Captain Isaac Hall recants: "It is now known that General Banks with an effective force of about 8,000 men was suddenly attacked while on the march by the veteran troops of three divisions under Major-Generals Winder, Ewell and A.P. Hill, together with a large troop of horse under General Stuart, and seven batteries of artillery, about 20,000 in all, with Stonewall Jackson in supreme command. Banks by order from Pope at Culpepper had moved rapidly forward from Hazel Run and precipitated the attack, for which Pope himself should be held responsible, since other troops were within supporting distance, and which a prudent commander would have had well in hand before permitting an attack."

General Pope had been giving orders from a site distant from the battlefield that did not appreciate the strength of his own forces, or those of the enemy. At the same time, "Jackson from his splendid outlook on Cedar Mountain saw the headlong carelessness of Pope in pushing his advance under Banks so far from his supports and prepared to profit by it. This was just what he had wished and prayed for, and while Pope remained all day at Culpepper studying the enemy's 'probable lines of retreat,' he was pounding the life out of Bank's gallant little band." "General Pope, awakened finally from his complacent mood by the continuous and deepening roar of artillery at the front," soon after 5 p.m. ordered forward Rickett's division, and Sigel's, "and when his lines, with McDowell's corps and Kings division from Fredericksburg were all in hand, he was prepared to fight a battle which had already been fought and lost for the want of the disposition that he now presented."

The 97th bivouacked to stay the night at their position, and several fires were lighted and burned brightly while the men were making coffee and getting ready for supper. The fires were visible from the strip of timber in front of them, and also from Cedar Mountain, about two miles distant in the same direction. Just as twilight was turning to darkness, an officer in Union uniform, "mounted on a spirited horse, rode hastily up to the bivouac and demanded with an assumption of authority, 'What troops are these?' Having been informed that we belonged to McDowell's corps he immediately rode off again and disappeared in the darkness. There can be no doubt that this expert manoeuver [sic] for gaining information was the bold adventure of a disguised Confederate, but had there been a suspicion of the fact at the time he would have been captured."

Half an hour later a flash was seen near the base of Cedar Mountain, "and a few seconds later a shell with burning fuse passed over the heads of the union troops near at hand and burst in a stubble field to the rear." "Others followed in quick succession, and within another half hour a battery or two in the road near the woods in front opened upon us with energy and rapidity, but being aimed at the fires, and the distance short from Rickett's division, it escaped with but few casualties." Stated as matter-of-fact, "The teamsters' supper was interrupted, but with coolness and dispatch they harnessed their teams and were soon out of range to the rear." Two Union batteries unlimbered immediately, "and responded to the Confederate guns with precision and effect."

Lieutenant Colonel Spofford, commanding the 97th at the time, "was conspicuous and important, and served to prevent panic in the regiment, and had influence with other troops, many of whom, as well as the 97th, had never before been under fire. While the regiment was lying down, and protected mainly by the slight elevation of land from the direct range of the enemy's guns, he stood erect ordering the men to keep their places and have no fear, assuring the regiment the enemy's shells were directed upon the fire of the teamsters to our rear, as could be plainly seen ... However, the enemy's guns were speedily silenced by the well directed fire of our batteries, and General Duryee soon after marched his brigade into a cornfield in front of his batteries, and halted in a depression in the field for the purpose of defending our guns should a charge be made upon them."

In analyzing the events of the Battle of Cedar Mountain, Captain Hall directly links General Pope's early performance as commanding general of the Army of the Potomac with Union defeats which might have been victories -- which may have changed the entire war. "The stern realities in Pope's first lesson in the tactics of the late opposers to the Army of the Potomac, should have tempered the romantic notions he had imbibed in his successes at the West; but he continued to read Eastern Confederate tactics without profit to the end of the chapter, which terminated in the defenc[s]es at Washington."

Chapter VI -- Retreat of General Pope -- Battle of Rappahannock Station -- Retreat to Warrenton -- Battle of Thoroughfare Gap -- Retreat to Bristow

The troops under Generals King and Reno had arrived close to where the 97th was encamped near the Rapidan River east of Cedar Mountain, and it began to be known that McClellan's army was about to be united with Pope's. "This movement being at once known to General Lee, nearly the whole of the Confederate Army which had been employed against the Army of the Potomac, was at once pushed forward to unite with that under Jackson, to strike a decisive blow before the two Federal armies could join their forces." This intention became known to General Pope through an intercepted letter of General Lee to General Stuart, dated August 15th, and Pope hoped that he might be able to delay the movement of the enemy until he could be reenforced from the Peninsula. Towards evening the night of August 18th, "the word was passed quietly among the officers, that they were to build up their camp fires as usual, and allowing them to burn down, were to silently march away, following the trains, and their next halt except for temporary rest would be beyond the Rappahannock, some twenty-two miles distant." The men were awakened at 10:30 p.m., and within a few minutes were quietly in line, and on the march towards Culpepper.

However, after two miles, they had to halt and wait until 8:00 o'clock the next morning to allow the immense supply trains to pass on to the front. "The night was chilly, and notwithstanding the orders for a secret movement, miles of fences along the roadside were appropriated for fuel, and the enemy's scouts could have had no difficulty in observing the retreat

and in learning its intention." Along their path, they destroyed a half-built railroad bridge and burned impaired wagons. Pioneer parties marched in advance and ditches were hastily bridged with fence posts for the marching army.

Again, the 97th encountered blacks who had been slaves. "Conspicuous figures of this day's retreat were the crowds of negroes which accompanied the army. They followed mostly in parties by themselves along the railroad track and consisted of families of all descriptions and ages, many of them with bundles, and not a few dressed in the finery they had taken from the deserted homes of their masters. Of all others they had most cause to dread the consequences of these reverses and although the idea of general emancipation had not as yet taken root, the slave had been promised protection within our lines and these humble candidates for freedom were willing to take their chances even with a retreating army."

Towards sunset on the 19th, the division reached the Rappahannock at the railroad crossing which had been planked for the passage of artillery and teams, and during the evening the 97th crossed the river. On the morning of August 21, the Union army built a bridge across the Rappahannock, and at 10 a.m. heavy firing was heard in the distance. Soon the cannonade grew closer and Confederates attempted to cross at the fords above. "The Confederate army could be seen from the high banks near the river passing to our right towards Waterloo bridge and occasionally cheers could be heard from their ranks, probably upon the arrival of some reenforcement or at the passage of some favorite general."

There were several days in which the Union and Confederate forces engaged each other with cannonading and musket fire. During one such session, Lt. Col. Spofford -- then in command of the regiment -- "exhibited his stolid indifference to the fire in his front." As he sat upon his horse beside his adjutant at the front of his command, a solid shot, nearly spent, went between them, and tumbling down carried away the arm of a regiment member and wounded another. "Of course those who saw it were not slow in getting out of the way of this missile. A wag of the regiment cried out: 'Boys, what are you dodging for? The colonel don't dodge.' 'No,' said another, 'he is too lazy to dodge.' Thus the ruling passion of man is often exhibited under difficulties and dangers. The hit on the Lieutenant Colonel was applicable and was keenly relished by the regiment and during his subsequent term of service it was occasionally repeated at his expense, at which none enjoyed the joke better than himself."

The Union continued to destroy bridges crossing the Rappahannock, and at this time the 97th was well on its way to Warrenton where it supposed the enemy was concentrating. On Sunday, the 24th, the regiment arrived at Warrenton. Lacking in supplies, they foraged as they went. "The 97th was destitute of provisions, but a plentiful supply of green corn was found, which with meat obtained by foraging supplied present wants. Forage from well filled barns was obtained, and lovers of the weed did not fail to appropriate from tobacco-houses along the route a plentiful supply of that luxury. Thus with patriotic zeal the boys of the 97th acquired mutual self-reliance, and learned to adapt themselves to the circumstances of the situation."

There was a time when there was confusion as to the location of the Confederates.

Referring to August 27th: “For the last twenty-four hours there seemed to hang over the brigade, division and corps commanders, an uncertainty which was depressing and was felt by the troops. The entire command seemed in a condition of a ship at sea without a rudder.” Soon they learned that Lee “had not been idle.” As the 97th, with the division, moved along the turnpike near Warrenton, “...it was apparent that some destructive element had struck that region. The smoldering fires of a wagon load of grain, and another of ammunition were passed. The command was halted and told to preserve their rations with the greatest economy. It was now apparent to all that the enemy had got in the rear of Pope’s army, and the literal construction of his first general order was being verified.” [The Confederates were retaliating against Pope’s famous order to the residents of Virginia to swear allegiance to the United States, relocate beyond Union lines or be shot, and the order for Union soldiers to confiscate whatever supplies they needed from the residents.]

The sight of destruction at Warrenton revealed a harrowing truth: General Jackson’s army of 25 thousand men, as estimated by General Pope, was between the commander of the Army of Virginia and his supplies, and Washington. “The sky at the northeast was already lit up with the fire and smoke of burning supplies at Manassas Junction, which Jackson had forced the feeble guard to surrender...” During a shower on the evening of August 21st, through his actions Confederate cavalry General Stuart “reminded Pope that it was a fine thing -- in theory -- to ‘discard such ideas’ as ‘basis of supplies’ by relieving the latter of seven wagons from his supply train and appropriating several thousand dollars of his money, not even sparing his wardrobe; some valuable papers, also, fell into the hands of the raiders” who outnumbered the supply train’s guard. The train of General Duryee was saved from attack by its position across a small stream which the rains had swollen, and the attack was repulsed.

After the rigors of long marches and strenuous battles, soldiers can sleep under difficult circumstances. After a bloody encounter at Thoroughfare Gap, Duryee’s brigade retreated to Gainesville upon learning of an approaching Confederate force that far outnumbered them. “Here the division bivouacked about midnight with a forboding[sic] peril hanging over it. But sleep is a sure coil which binds the weary soldier under his greatest difficulties and dangers. Jackson’s army was in his front as the thunder-tones of his artillery had demonstrated; in his rear the overwhelming force of Longstreet was now approaching and at any hour might fall upon him in his slumbers; yet though upon his arms and in line of battle, he sleeps as soundly as he could sleep were he upon the couch of his native home.”

Though courage was frequently displayed, circumstances of war which produce fear were acknowledged and explained. “The booming of cannon, the exploding of shells, the thud of solid shot, the rattle of musketry, and the zip of the bullet can be faced by the soldier without a tremor. He expects death perchance; an honorable death upon the field of battle. He trembles only while held in suspense upon the ragged edge of uncertainty; or when he feels himself, by incompetence and criminal carelessness led into a defenseless trap to await -- like a dog -- his

execution. The sting of dishonor -- ten-fold greater to a true soldier than that of death -- may

unnerve him in such a situation. There is nothing so dreadful and demoralizing to a veteran army as to feel that its commanding general does not know what he is about."

Chapter VII --Battle of Second Bull Run (Second Manassas) -- Retreat to Centerville -- Battle of Chantilly -- Retreat to the Defenses at Washington

The 97th was supplied with a small amount of rations at Bristow, and, after "waiting to rest a few hours where the field of Hooker's encounter with Ewell was still marked by the unburied dead, a little before noon the march was resumed in the direction of Manassas Junction [Va.]." The command was halted here as the ruins of trains, burned two days previous by the Confederates, were still smoking. As Duryee's brigade marched along the Manassas Gap railroad, "the thunder of artillery at the left indicated that Longstreet's forces had sometime previous joined those under the command of Jackson." Orders were received for the division to direct their march to Sudley Church, on the far right of the Union forces, near which a vigorous but unsuccessful attack by the Confederates had been made, and a renewed attack was anticipated. The command reached the Warrenton Turnpike about 400 yards east of the stone house which is so celebrated in the descriptions of the first battle of Bull Run. "As the advance of McDowell's corps drew near the field, red flags at almost every house indicated the temporary hospitals, and they were well filled with wounded of this day's encounter, reminding the beholder of the work begun and suggestive of what might be expected on the morrow."

On August 30th, 1862, Duryee's brigade proceeded from near the Manassas and Sudley Church Road and marched along the woods to the left to support General Reynold's division. During this process, they were "greatly annoyed" by sharpshooters. General Duryee was injured, though not severely, by a fragment as shot and shell were fired at the 97th from a hillside. As the 97th did not have adequate artillery support to cope with the battery in its front, it withdrew and formed a new line behind a rail fence. While a battery of six cannons was established, it was ill positioned to deal with the changing battle scene, which Captain Hall attributed to the fact that these were "raw troops," and that the entire battle plan was orchestrated by General Pope.

On the Manassas battlefield -- north of the Warrenton & Centerville Turnpike and west of the Manassas & Sudley Church Road -- Colonel Spofford gave the order to fire cannons and muskets upon a column of Confederates near the woods about 200 yards away, which had some effect. However, the Confederate commanding officer, probably realizing that the Union line was composed of inexperienced troops, and that it was almost dusk and difficult to see, cried out: "Cease firing, cease firing, you are firing on our own men." This checked the firing of the brigade, including that of the 97th. While the Confederates had sustained dead and wounded, they kept closing their ranks and proceeding forward. By the time the Union soldiers realized that this column was, in fact, the enemy, it was too late.

The Confederates had sufficient surprise and number to sustain the Union fire and run right through the brigade, capturing three of their four cannons. One was saved, pulled by six

galloping horses up the Manassas and Sudley Church Road. If this wasn't enough of blow to the brigade, another "overwhelming" Confederate force attacked, taking the regiments on the south flank. "The brigade now understood that the enemy, in dead earnest, was upon them, and made a determined resistance, fighting gallantly. The Confederate line was checked, and a rapid firing on both sides began. But the troops which had passed our front were soon bearing down upon our left and rear, when the order came to fall back in the direction of Bull Run creek; and this order came none too soon."

However, their battles were not over yet for the evening. The brigade fell back through a strip of woods to the field north of it, where it encountered another force from the west, while Confederate cannons fired on them from a more distant, elevated position. "Those who reached the Manassas and Sudley church road in time, and crossing it, escaped from the Confederate lines which were closing in upon the brigade; but others more tardy were taken prisoners. There was no time to carry off the wounded, who including some forty or more from the 97th, fell into the hands of the enemy." Among the wounded was Lt. Francis Murphy, who was shot in the groin and lay upon the field 48 hours, and was finally brought off under a flag of truce.

After crossing the road, the 97th had to make "another stand" against the Confederates, but it was of "short duration." "Taking a circuitous route north of the 'stone house,' the brigade halted at twilight near some alders in proximity to Bull Run creek and awaited a lull in the rush of troops crossing the stone bridge." While the brigade stood listening to the "continual din and rattle of cannon and caissons" crossing the bridge, two lieutenants of the 97th, "tortured by thirst" in the hot August weather, made an unsuccessful search among the alders for water. They remembered the presence of a well at the stone house. Union and Confederate regiments were scattered in unknown locations in the darkness. Nevertheless, they moved in darkness toward the house, encountering a Union regiment, and avoiding another group they dared not approach. When they reached the corner of the house near the well, an officer suddenly appeared from the other side of the house. A few of the officer's comrades hurriedly asked the Union lieutenants, "Are you Confederates here?" As Hall describes the question, "This was conclusive evidence that he was not a Union officer, and undoubtedly belonged to the force just arrived. At that time this mild term was not applied by Union officers to our enemies."

Acting quickly upon their conclusion, the lieutenants "pocketed their thirst" and dashed towards the creek. They did not dare to retreat by the way they came, but they encountered a Union regiment at a greater distance than their own. As they mounted a fence the Union and Confederate regiments fired upon each other. "The Confederate bullets rattled lively on the fence and the 97th officers rolled off the other side -- not dead or hurt -- but as 'discretion is the better part of valor' they waited till the shower had slackened when they made their way to the creek and one waded it, the other continuing down to the bridge, joined his regiment which was passing in single file on either side of the artillery still rushing over."

When the Battle of Second Manassas was over, the 97th had sustained 7 killed, 42 wounded, and 61 missing. After the battle, they retreated and bivouaced near Centerville, Va.

The next morning rations were issued, “of which the regiment was much in need.” They remained here unmolested at their fortifications on August 31, 1862 -- as best they could in the drenching rain. The respite at Centerville was of short duration. On September 1st, it was discovered that General Lee planned to “profit by his success,” had already pushed his forces to the Little River Turnpike, and was moving to Pope’s rear, in the direction of Fairfax Courthouse. The night before, part of Stewart’s cavalry and some artillery had advanced within a mile of Fairfax, and had shelled a train of wagons and ambulances, “without doing material injury to anyone.”

Hall makes curious mention of Department of War clerks, whose role is not made clear. Perhaps they visited the battle scene to analyze the Union’s progress: “About sixty Department clerks, misled by a too previous telegram of a Union victory,” had arrived beyond Centerville and “were taken prisoners in their enterprising adventure.” “Others more tardy” were relieved of their vehicles by the Union Provost Guard, as these were used to carry the wounded, “and the patriotic clerks took their first lesson at marching, and became somewhat foot-sore and disgusted in this new mode of serving their country.”

The order came from Pope for McDowell to march his division rapidly back to Fairfax Court House, as Jackson was reported to be advancing there with 20,000 men. Duryee’s brigade was on the right of this formation, with the 97th at the head. Along the way, Confederates opened up with cannons from opposing bluffs. The battle of Chantilly had begun across the turnpike from the 97th, and “continued with unabating roar of artillery and rattle of infantry.” The conflict is more fully described: “Amid this battle thunder bolts were let loose; and in the raging storm it was difficult to tell whether Heaven’s artillery or the thunder of the contending forces sounded the louder.” The battle was said to be “short but decisive and the loss on both sides considerable,” considering its duration and the numbers involved.

Nor could they rest completely thereafter, for the night brought its own test of the troops. Circumstances required them to spend a cold night in deep woods, permitted neither shelter nor fire for comfort. The continuing storm brought continued rain, which collected in the low ground of the soldiers’ station. Thus, the men passed a miserable night after a miserable day’s battle.

The resilience of the 97th regiment under such conditions, though, was in evidence early the following morning. The next day the sun shined, fires were built, and corn gathered from surrounding fields was roasted, and “the sufferings of the previous night were discussed with mirth and jollity, and many a joke upon one another at the ludicrousness of their late predicament.”

That morning the march was resumed and the whole army went back to the defenses of Washington, “glad to avail itself once more of their protection...” Dr. Franklin Hough, in his history of Duryee’s Brigade, describes the misfortunes of the 97th at the time: “There the brigade, under General Duryee, arrived late in the evening of the second of September, weary and exhausted with hardship -- with wasted numbers but unabated courage -- repulsed but not broken in spirit; and although saddened by the loss of many brave comrades left unburied on the field,

still hopeful in the final issue of events." General McDowell also commented upon the services of his corps (including the 97th), stating that "seldom has one army been asked to undergo more than our men performed." This included making forced marches -- often through the night and without food -- or in battle with "scarcely a half day's intermission." Often separated from their supplies, they had to fight and retreat for 15 continuous days, which is "a severe test of soldiership." Through these trials they preserved their discipline, though they were "sad at seeing their number so much diminished by hardships and battles."

Chapter VIII: McClellan's Campaign in Maryland -- Battles of South Mountain and Antietam

On September 2, 1862, General McClellan was placed in command of "all the troops late of the Army of Virginia, for the defence[sic] of Washington," and on September 7th, at his own request, General Pope was relieved and transferred to the Northwest department. General Lee, "having nothing to oppose his progress," carried out his plan of invading Maryland "which he had long cherished." The Army of Virginia, having again become the Army of the Potomac, was not allowed much time to rest or repair damages caused by "the constant wear and tear of the recent demoralizing campaign, but was summoned once more, under a favorite commander, to put forth renewed energies to repel the invaders." Four days after the army had arrived within the defenses of Washington, at twilight on September 6th, "while in anticipation of another quiet night's repose, [it] was ordered to 'pack up,' and 'fall in.'"

The troops marched rapidly, not knowing their destination "till the outskirts of the city were reached, when a great change in the elasticity of movement was noticable[sic], and a fearful thinning of the ranks were manifest..." The reason for this phenomenon was explained: "The luxuries of the city proved too great a temptation for both men and officers who had been so long deprived of the comforts of civilization." Nevertheless, the march was continued at "quick step" until daylight without stopping. There were many stragglers, but in the three hours of rest which followed the march, most of the stragglers caught up.

At various times, Hall compliments Maryland's people for their patriotism and its land for its fruitfulness, in contrast to Virginia. "The home-like appearance of the dwellings, and large, capacious and well-filled barns and enclosed fields were in striking contrast to those of Virginia, and did not fail to produce an exhilarating effect upon the spirits of the army. From many a housetop was unfurled the flag of our Union and tiny flags appeared in juvenile hands along the way while fair ladies gracefully waved the star spangled banner to welcome and cheer us on." The women provided the soldiers water and food as they marched, and their male companions "replenished their stores" as soon as empty. "Patriotism in this border State was not confined to sentiment, it was a living principle -- intensified by what it cost. It is an easy

matter to be a patriot where all are patriots, but not so easy nor safe when surrounded by traitorous neighbors." Michael Shaara provides a very similar description of the Maryland residents and countryside in his book, The Killer Angels.

The fact that General McClellan was in command gave the soldiers a morale boost. "McClellan's troops loved him for his tender care not to expose them to danger." Hall viewed McClellan as competent, but that his boss, General Halleck in Washington, was "weak" and "conceited," and still held power over McClellan to "neutralize his efforts and render futile his best endeavors." On their way to South Mountain, Maryland, the 97th saw General McClellan. "During a halt a little beyond the village [of Middleton] and while awaiting the passage of troops and artillery to the front, McClellan and his staff passed by. It was the first time he had been seen by the 97th, and his earnest, active appearance, youthful look and eagle eye, at once created a favorable impression, which burst forth in spontaneous cheers."

Around sunset on September 13th, Duryee's brigade arrived at the base of South Mountain, in position where the Pennsylvania Reserves under General Meade (later commanding general at Gettysburg) were engaged in an "indecisive struggle" with a superior Confederate force. The arrival of the 97th was opportune "for at that critical moment the enemy had put forth all his strength in that part of the field, in a final assault; and the Union line with ammunition nearly expended, and bleeding with previous encounter, was being forced back over the ground from which they had driven the enemy." General Duryee ordered a charge, "and with bayonets fixed and a tremendous cheer the brigade advanced to the encounter and up the mountain -- with the Ninety-seventh on the right -- following with cold steel the Confederate hosts." At the summit, the Confederates made a stand, but by a "well directed fire" of the 97th, the rebels "were soon dispersed and disappeared in the darkness down the other slope."

During the night, a reconnaissance party under the direction of a Confederate adjutant was sent out in the darkness to determine if any Union soldiers remained on the summit (where the 97th were "laying upon their arms" in a battle line with sentinels in front). Approaching the line, the adjutant halted his command and proceeded carefully in the darkness, where he was stopped by a sentinel and ordered to advance and give the countersign. "With revolver in hand he obeyed, and when within reach of the sentinel's bayonet fired upon him but missed his aim. His outline having been revealed by the flash of his revolver, the vidette [sentinel], a stout, burly fellow -- acting under the impulse of the moment, dropped his rifle and seizing the adjutant by the throat overpowered him and brought him in...This alarm and capture occurred in front of a Union regiment to the left of the 97th, but it aroused immediately the whole line. The troops soon lay down again to rest as best they could in the chilling wind and with the plaintive call of the wounded Confederates in our [their] front for water and to be helped off the field, ringing in their ears." In the battle of South Mountain, 328 Union soldiers were killed, and almost 2,000 were wounded or missing; Confederate casualties were unknown, but estimated to be at least 3,000.

After the battle of South Mountain, the 97th traveled through Boonsboro, towards Sharpsburg and near Keedysville, where fresh troops passed them to the front, and words were exchanged between the men regarding their appearance and experience. It was here that the news

of the surrender of the Union armory at Harper's Ferry, Va., reached them, "creating deep and profound disgust." The surrender cost to the Army of the Potomac totaled 12,000 troops, 73 cannons, numerous small arms and "immense quantities of military stores."

The Army of the Potomac met the fringes of the Confederates near Sharpsburg, Md., on the Antietam Creek on September 16, 1862. General Meade's division engaged the enemy just before dark and suffered some loss. As darkness fell, the enemy lines were only about 800 yards to the front of the 97th, so they were within reach of Confederate artillery, but a strip of woods lay between them. As the men from the north country lay upon their arms that night, ready for battle at a moment's notice, the picket lines a short distance in front of them "kept up almost a ceaseless fire during the night."

Captain Hall interrupts his narrative to comment on the readiness of the Army of the Potomac as their engagement at Antietam looms near. "Let us pause to take a retrospective view of this army, now confronting General Lee with battle impending, which is sure to come on the morrow. Not a corps, not a division, not a brigade, regiment or man falters. The late campaign, the severe trials, hardships, and mental and moral tests incident thereto, have sifted out the weak, the vacillating and those whose moral perceptions are too transparent to all them to cast a shadow upon the field of battle."

At sunrise the morning of September 17, 1862, the 97th "marched to meet the enemy in position and awaiting attack." After turning right, they marched south, directly upon the Confederate lines, and then in a column of divisions through a strip of woods, where the regiment was ordered to lie down when it arrived at the edge of a cornfield -- "the" cornfield. "After a few discharges of canister shot by our batteries, over us, the brigade was deployed and the march continued through the field of corn, skirted by a row of broom corn which the men began to poke to the right and left to discover what was in their front, when the Confederate line was discovered -- drawn up in rear of a low rail fence -- about 220 yards distant, and the firing on both sides simultaneously began." This action of the battle was devastating. In the space of 30 minutes, nearly one-half of the regiment, then composed of 203 troops and officers, was killed or wounded. The broken row of broom corn in front of the brigade gave evidence to the concentration of fire.

Other action in this bloody battle was likewise wasting. "Longstreet's and Hooker's men had met -- and without advancing -- there they stood and shot one another till the lines melted away like wax." In various locations there were lines of Union and Confederate soldiers who "died dead in their tracks." However, during this slaughter, the men displayed remarkable coolness, as they talked of the battle's progress and the best way of obtaining a favorable result. Two German brothers by the name of Gleasman (Godfrey and George, from Boonville) were standing in line together, when one of them was killed "by the unerring aim of a Confederate marksman who had steadied his piece against a tree." The other brother knew the culprit, and said: " 'There is the man who killed my brother, and he is taking aim now against that tree.' An elbow was seen to protrude from a solitary oak in the enemy's line, and the next moment he lay dead beside his brother, shot by the same hand which had slain the other."

General Duryee's adjutant ordered the remnants of the 97th to retire from the cornfield, as various other regiments were likewise ordered. As the survivors of the 97th came from the cornfield, they were met by General Hooker and his staff. He had followed a fresh brigade which had entered the corn just before the retreating squad came out. Hooker thought the 97th had broken away from his reenforcement, and ordered it back to the front and directed his staff to take the captain's name. "But by its coolness and begrimed condition discovering his mistake, he turned his horse away, and his chief motioned the captain and his men to the rear."

Union reinforcements arrived at the edge of the cornfield just as Gen. Jackson's forces were entering it, and a Union brigade quickly turned and "poured a deadly enfilading fire over a rocky ridge upon the enemy's advancing column. As a result, the Confederates were thrown into confusion and a well directed charge completed their overthrow and secured many prisoners." However, the Federals were soon met by superior numbers of Confederates and were forced to withdraw. Following the devastation of the cornfield, the diminished 97th regrouped and supported the artillery repulsing the Confederates on the Union's right flank.

During the battle of Antietam, General Burnside's corps was across the creek from the 97th's fighting. McClellan ordered Burnside to cross the stone bridge, and take the heights above held by the Confederates. Hall says Burnside made a "feeble" attempt to cross the bridge while the troops were fired upon from the heights. A second order was given, but again Burnside was unsuccessful. It was late in the battle plan (1:00 p.m.) when the 51st NY and 51st Pa. regiments moved forward and carried the bridge. Despite this advance, "Here a halt was made and precious hours lost before the heights were carried, though Burnside was pressed by repeated orders to go forward."

Finally a colonel was sent with preemptory orders to take the heights at all hazards, and to remain and see that these orders were executed. The heights were seized at 3:00 p.m. when the enemy was driven from this position, at which the Union soldiers gave "ringing cheers." However, this success came too late to be of much good, for Lee had been able to spare about 3,000 men, and to hold this flank of this position. Had the heights been taken earlier by the Federals, hindsight reveals that it might have proved decisive in the whole battle. Hall also says that Burnside's force could have crossed the fordable Antietam Creek about 200 yards from the bridge under protection of cannons and sharpshooters positioned behind a 15-20 foot bluff near the bridge. We will never know the true impact of decisions made or opportunities missed, because their ultimate consequences are sometimes greater than immediately thought.

McClellan intended to renew the attack the next morning, but was low on ammunition for his heavy cannons. Thousands of Union soldiers were missing on the field and 14,000 troops were on the march to join him. Therefore, he considered it prudent to await supplies, and in the meantime, gather up the wounded and bury the dead. Everything was ready on the morning of September 19th, and McClellan ordered a renewal of the attack; but the Confederates had retreated to Shepardstown, thus placing the Potomac River between the two armies, with the Confederates in force on the Virginia side.

Franklin Hough writes about the battle of Antietam in his History of Duryee's Brigade: "The battle continued with fearful violence through the day, and night closed in upon a scene of carnage that has few parallels in history. The Union armies had gained possession of the field, with its sad trophies of blood, and all night long, and for days after trains of ambulances were busy gathering up the wounded, and placing them in hospitals, extemporized in farm houses throughout the country in the rear." From the Surgeon General's report, the actions of September 16 and 17, 1862 yielded the following results: UNION -- killed: 2,010; wounded: 9,416; missing: 1,043; total: 12,469; CONFEDERATE -- killed: 3,500; wounded: 16,399; missing: 6,000; total: 25,899. As for the 97th's sacrifices in this bloody battle, out of 203 officers and men, 23 were killed and 62 wounded. Many of the wounded later died from their injuries.

Chapter IX: The Bivouac -- Encampment Near the Potomac -- A Change to the Field -- Picketing the Potomac -- Reorganization of the Brigade -- March to Warrenton -- McClellan Relieved -- Burnside in Command

Two days after the battle of Antietam, the 97th marched about 1 1/2 miles and bivouacked in some woods east of Sharpsburg. On October 11, after receiving part of supply of clothing they had requisitioned, the 97th removed from the woods to an open field on a ridge. The chief duties of the regiment here were picketing the Potomac along the line of the canal, the pickets of the entire brigade extending about 3 miles, the headquarters of the line being at Mercerville, Maryland. On October 26, 1862, the 97th broke camp in the drizzling rain, "exchanging the monotonous duties of camp life, for the more stirring and trying of the march, the bivouac, and the field."

Politics occasionally was made an issue with the soldiers. With the election for New York's Governor having occurred on November 4, 1862, after supper that night the topic arose among the officers as they sat around the camp fires. Bets were made as to the party enrollment of the volunteers versus enlisted men. The soldiers were called from their tents to report their party registration to settle this matter. In the meantime, Colonel Wheelock heard about the situation, and "in his stocking feet, without coat, vest or hat, he hurried to the scene; and with the regimental colors in hand asked the boys if they wanted to desert their colors and go over to traitors?" The men responded, "We came here to fight for the Union and not for a political party" -- political parties resolved to be a secondary issue.

At times the Army of the Potomac could not adequately supply its own rations, and as we have seen in previous accounts, it was "necessary for the army to appropriate supplies from the land." Hall considers it important to point out that if "waste" (plundering) was committed, it was the exception rather than the rule.

On November 7th, General McClellan was relieved from command of the Army of the Potomac, and General Burnside given command. "At this time his [McClellan's] army was well in hand -- with preparations made to attack and defeat the enemy, whose forces were separated --

in fine condition and in good spirits, the main portion of it being near Warrenton." The Confederate army was somewhat vulnerable, as it was in different places -- with Jackson's and D.H. Hill's commands on the western side of the Blue Ridge in the Shenandoah Valley, and Longstreet at Culpepper, Virginia.

While Hall does not express outright disappointment for the Union change of command, speculation on the consequences of this act, are evident: "It is needless perhaps to speculate upon McClellan's full plan of operations so long as he did not remain to execute them; but in the change of commanders several days were allowed and in the interval these troops [Confederates] were withdrawn from the valley and united with Longstreet's command." This time could have been used by the Union army with superior numbers to attack the Confederates while they were separated in smaller groups, instead of allowing the Confederate army time to become united. McClellan appeared to be strongly favored over Burnside by the 97th in terms of increasing the Union army's success. In McClellan's farewell to the Army of the Potomac, he stated: "In parting from you I cannot express the love and gratitude I bear to you."

Chapter X -- Battle of Fredericksburg -- Mud March to Falmouth -- Return to Camp -- Camp Life -- Burnside Relieved -- Hooker in Command

On November 8th General Doubleday's division reached the Rappahannock, crossing in time to save the bridge from destruction, and on the 10th General Pleasanton met and defeated a division of Longstreet's infantry and Stuart's cavalry. Hall comments: "These forces were simply carrying out the orders issued by McClellan prior to his removal, and indicate his advance position." The 97th marched from Warrenton on November 11th and bivouacked late that evening in a field near Bealton. As the night was dark and the troops were very tired from their march, their tents were not arranged in perfect order, especially since they were expecting the order to march again at any hour. General Duryee had been on leave since October 3rd.

It was previously agreed that his command was to have been transferred to Colonel McCoy of the 107th Pennsylvania -- ranking colonel -- but on November 13th, Duryee returned to find another officer in command of the division -- who by date of commission was his junior in rank. Duryee complained to General Burnside, who referred the matter to the corps commander (General Reynolds), but Reynolds "though favorably disposed towards the claim of Duryee," declined consideration of the case while on the march. Duryee returned to Washington, since he was already on leave. Nevertheless, before he exited, General Duryee made sure that the camp was organized in good order, and left for what was supposed to be a short time. However, General Duryee, of such prior acclaim as the general of the brigade including the 97th regiment, never returned.

On November 14th, the new division commander, General Gibbon, reviewed the 97th, and issued a letter to the officers in which he criticized the brigade for the previous slovenly appearance of its camp, which was due to reasons previously described. The unjust letter produced bitter feelings among the brigade, though "principally among the officers, as the men

knew but a very little of the matter." The division was reorganized on November 16th, and "consequently many old associations were broken up, and the seniority of rank of regimental commanders was so changed as to deprive many of positions they otherwise would have enjoyed." Although General Duryee had always been highly respected by the 97th, the new brigade commander, General Taylor "proved to be a gallant and noble officer." At this time, in addition to the 97th New York, the brigade included the 83rd New York (9th NY Militia), the 11th and 88th Pennsylvania, and 13th Massachusetts regiments, and "the 97th soon felt at home among its new associates and especially pleased with General Taylor." Also, regarding the situation of displeasure with division commander Gibbon, "The battle of Fredericksburg brought complete relief from the effects of the aforementioned odious letter by giving the regiment a new division commander, who proved to be a most gallant officer -- General Robinson, of Binghamton, N.Y."

After assisting General Bayard in destroying the railroad bridge at Rappahannock Station, Virginia, the regiment marched and bivouacked about 10:00 p.m. on the road to Fredericksburg. The next day the 97th went into camp five miles from Aquia creek, where it stayed for about two weeks. On November 11th the regiment marched with the brigade, and "during a terrific cannonade upon the enemy's lines" reached the Rappahannock, where it bivouacked and crossed the next day upon a pontoon bridge about a mile below Fredericksburg. After marching a mile down the river, the men again bivouacked -- this time upon the farm of Confederate General Burnett, a former member of Congress. Hall describes the night scene before the next day's battle: "No fires or smoking was allowed. A roll in the land hid our line from that of the enemy; but while standing the bright camp fires of his positions could be seen burning cheerily. The weather was severely cold, the air damp, and the chill seemed to penetrate one's bones. The sufferings of that night were intense and are not to be forgotten."

The following morning (November 13th) "opened with a deep impenetrable fog hanging over the army and enveloping the entire hosts gathered in battle array about to engage in mortal combat with each other and drench the earth with fraternal blood." At 9:00 a.m. the fog began to disperse, and the regiment advanced up the old Richmond stage road, and crossing it entered a large field which was skirted by woods. It was not long after the brigade entered the field when it encountered enemy fire. Captain Hall describes: "Our right rested upon a slight elevation just south of Deep Run, and the 88th [Pa.] was ordered forward a short distance, when it was struck by canister shot from a masked battery near the run or beyond it... Our batteries soon took position on our right and for a time silenced the enemy's firing, when our brigade was ordered forward. It [the brigade] advanced steadily till when approaching the crest of a gentle slope ... it was opened upon with shell and canister." A Union battery was brought forward and blasted the Confederate cannons. Combat was renewed later in the day, but when one of the Confederate

caissons was blown up, the Confederates withdrew, leaving a single cannon. The 97th would have captured the gun, but Deep Run was between them and the cannon, "rendering it difficult if not impossible to run it off."

The 97th remained in position with skirmish lines in front, ordered to lie down. They were fortunate in their location at this particular point in the battle. Hall describes the gallant though vain efforts of the Pennsylvania reserves to overcome Confederate General Jackson's defenses: "In front of these troops [the 97th] was a hill, skirted at the crest and on the westerly slope by woods; but the easterly part was cleared and in plain view of Gibbon's division. Here it witnessed the gallant and repeated charges of the Pennsylvania Reserves. They would press forward with ardor up the slope only to be cut down and destroyed by the well directed fire of Stonewall Jackson's batteries at their front; and as they recoiled and retired a trail of their dead and mangled remains was plainly visible upon the slope from our position. Their efforts were among the most sublime yet heart-rending spectacles ever witnessed."

Hall also makes reference to a much more famous spectacle which occurred to the north of this location (to the 97th's right), as General Burnside, from the distance on the other side of the Rappahannock River, ordered wave after wave of Union soldiers across an open field directly west of the town of Fredericksburg. These Federal soldiers were mowed down by Longstreet's cannons from above, and Thomas Cobb's Georgia brigade protected at the base of "Marye's Heights" by a stone wall at the edge of a sunken road. [I visited Fredericksburg last November, and read quotations such as that of a Confederate officer directing cannon fire from Marye's Heights who said to his superior officer in regard to the Union attack across the open field, "Sir, I don't thing even a chicken could make it across that field." Another Confederate officer (Thomas Cobb from behind the stone wall) estimated with glee that, "I think my brigade can whip ten thousand of them attacking from the front." He was wrong; it whipped 40,000.

Hall describes the attack by the Union to take Marye's Heights, which the 97th could not see, though aware of its magnitude -- even compared to the carnage caused by Jackson's forces. "But the scene on our left was exceeded in volume and power on our right as Niagara exceeds minor waterfalls. These charges were hidden from the view of the officers and men of the 97th, but the cheers of the charging forces and the rattle of small arms and the thunder of artillery were borne in muffled cadences to our ears or swelled in sublime roar over us. To the right was suspended in mid air a balloon in which, it was said, an engineer was taking observations of the battle."

After their engagement with the Confederates, more than half the regiment was out of ammunition. However, Colonel Wheelock told his men to divide up their cartridges, and fire on some Confederates "left oblique," and "by this means some Confederates were started from their coverts behind trees which protected them from a front fire." The order to withdraw was finally given because ammunition was too scarce to wage a decent fight. Various brigades in proximity to the 97th marched off the field -- with the 97th at the rear. However, they could not move quickly because of the deep, wet clay. As a result, the soldiers were harassed by Confederate fire. "It was impossible to take a step of double quick had the occasion required, by reason of the weight of clay upon each man's feet as he retired. The enemy did not follow up to any extent, but continued to fire upon the retiring troops as long as they were within reach." As a result, Captain Palmer was shot in both legs while coming off the field.

Colonel Wheelock marched 32 unarmed men (new recruits, convalescents and musicians) onto the field to carry off the wounded. By this process, since 29 soldiers of the regiment had been killed or wounded, most of the unarmed men were thus supplied with weapons. Captain Hall states that other regiments "were not so fortunate" as to have opportunity to bring their wounded off the field, and that, "death relieved many from their sufferings before they could be reached, as a flag of truce for bringing them off was not recognized." Hall also states, "Hospital provision for a winter campaign had not been made, and much suffering consequently ensued before the sick and wounded could be transported to general hospitals." He also favorably mentions the roles of medical and religious commissions. "The Sanitary and Christian commissions were promptly on the ground, and did everything that could be done to relieve suffering, but the means at their disposel [sic] was too inadequate to reach the extent of such a crimson field. These organizations were institutions whose beneficent acts cannot be overestimated."

Among those sent out onto the Fredericksburg battlefield for this duty was H.W. Garrett of Trenton, New York, a drummer in Company E. When the regiment was ordered to lie down, he took a seat on a bundle of cornstalks beside one of his officers. While getting a diary from his pocket, a shell flew by within feet of them, and exploded just after it passed. Garrett, unstartled by this occurrence commented, "That was a close call for us...Lieutenant, let me take your pencil, please?" As a result of the single day's fighting at Fredericksburg, 12,353 Union and 4,576 Confederate soldiers were dead.

That night (November 13th) the regiment bivouacked on ground it had occupied the preceding evening, and the next morning marched down river about a mile and remained the following two days in support of a Union battery. On the night of the 15th, General Franklin's left grand division re-crossed the Rappahannock on pontoon bridges to the opposite side of Fredericksburg. The next morning, the entire Union army did likewise, and Confederate pickets resumed their position in the village of Fredericksburg. It is interesting to note that, of the Union troops amassed at the battle of Fredericksburg, the 97th was reported as "the first regiment into the field, and the last out."

On November 16th, the 97th marched to near Belle Plain, Virginia, and went into winter quarters for a brief period. In commenting on Fredericksburg and the preceding battles, Hall writes, "Thus ended another battle, most disastrous in its results to the Union cause. If Burnside had been selected to 'destroy this army' a better executioner could not have been found."

In January 1863, the 97th was involved in constructing a road leading down the Rappahannock to below Fredericksburg, the purpose of which was to mislead the Confederates

as to the Union's real intention, which was to attack them several miles above the town. The surgeon of the 97th (Franklin B. Hough) was detailed to take charge of the sick of the Second Division of the First Corps, numbering nearly 200 ill men.

Following the battle of Fredericksburg, the Union army engaged in what is known as the "mud march." This grueling march through the mud was ordered by General Burnside apparently to distance his army from the defeat at Fredericksburg, and show Washington some movement toward the Confederate capital -- Richmond. Long periods of rain caused the axles of cannons and wagons to sink up to their axles. At times, it was necessary to hitch 20 horses to one cannon in order to move it through the mud. Hall describes the general scene: "On every side were witnessed scenes of hardship -- of which the 97th came in for its full share -- and the country for miles around presented the miserable spectacle of a vast sea of mud, in which the army was stuck."

At this time a few civilians from the Boonville area visited their friends in the 97th, where they gained sufficient knowledge of the realities of the mud march: "...but one night's lodging, upon the cold, wet ground, with torrents of water pouring over them, dissipated from their immaginations [sic] the sublimity of the situation, and removed forever from their minds the novelty of army life." The visitors, referred to by Hall as "quasi soldiers," headed for the nearest dwelling for shelter "through a half-leg-deep lake of mortar -- made of Virginia clay ...," which provided the soldiers some humor, as they cheered for them in jest, as well as extending "heart-felt good wishes for their welfare..."

The mud march, "this unequal contest with the elements," continued until January 23rd, when orders were received to return to their previously occupied camps. After a backtracking march of "great fatigue," the 97th returned to their old camp that evening. They set up their tents, and although they experienced cold, stormy weather with snow, Hall indicates the army was generally well-supplied. The brigade even had a bakery which produced "soft bread in great abundance."

On January 25th, General Burnside was relieved from the command of the Army of the Potomac "at his own request." Captain Hall expresses particular disgust with Burnside for blaming his subordinates for his military failures, and likened Burnside to Pope in this regard. "Nothing exhibits the unfitness of a commanding general so much as an attempt to shift the blame of his failure from himself upon his subordinates. It is the natural bent of small and incapable minds to suspect treachery in subordinate officers. Pope attributed his failure to a like cause." At the same time, Hall acknowledged that General Burnside was not totally to blame for the debacle at Fredericksburg. "But the responsibility of the failure of the Fredericksburg campaign does not hinge altogether upon the general commanding the field. The general-in-chief should be held for a share. A surprise had been planned, and [General] Halleck was to have the pontoons upon the spot in time to cross; but he failed, and that ended the surprise; and here is where the responsibility with Burnside began. The slaughter which followed was the result of the failure of the commanding general to discover the trap set for him into which he walked and was destroyed."

Included in Hall's history is an account from the National Tribune ("Veteran's Excursion to Fredericksburg") in which a correspondent states that Confederate General Longstreet had so many cannons trained on the fields behind Fredericksburg, that it was not easy to find places for

all of them on the heights, and there was no escape for the Union soldiers attempting to cross the field below. "General Longstreet, standing on a settee in the cemetery, with [General] Rosecrans on his right and [General] Newton on his left, and a great crowd standing or sitting, pointed out his position. 'I had forty guns on Taylor's Hill, on my left, to sweep the plateau with an enfilading fire. I had fifteen guns in the cemetery to give a plunging fire. Out on Lee's Hill, yonder, on my right I had thirty guns to sweep the plateau from that direction. Before the charge I had one gun that Captain Alexander could not find a place for. I said to him, 'put it in somewhere....Why General', he [Alexander] said, 'you can't rake your head with a fine tooth comb any cleaner than I can comb that plateau with artillery already in place!'" These cannon produced their effect, upon the Union soldiers and anything else in the path of their projectiles. "There was only one fence on the plateau and it was literally torn to pieces by the fire of the two armies." Hall states that despite the severe Union losses and the untenable battle plan, General Burnside would again have issued the order to attack if General Sumner had not dissuaded him from doing so.

Chapter XI: Hooker in Command -- Army Supplied -- Furloughs Instituted -- Reorganization of the Army -- Hooker's Campaign -- Battle of Chancellorsville -- His Retreat -- Brief Period in Camp -- March into Maryland -- Hooker Relieved at His Own Request

After the Union defeat at Fredericksburg and the Mud March, General Hooker replaced General Burnside as commander of the Army of the Potomac, helping the troops' morale. Following the defeat at Fredericksburg, Hall writes, "The spirit of the army had dropped to its lowest ebb, and desertions became alarmingly prevalent, but General Hooker's inaugurated reforms had salutary and encouraging effect and its efficiency and **morale** revived." The bakery for soft bread (previously mentioned) was "a move in the right direction" and "it was very soon felt that his commissary department was being well looked after." Hall summarizes Hooker's personal interest in comfort, which was reflected in how he treated the troops, with uplifting results: "In a word Hooker was a good liver, and he understood that the first requisite to make troops contented was to feed them well, and the army was always well supplied while under his command. The troops were also speedily well clothed and content began to reign; and the shocking realities -- with no redeeming results -- transacted in the Army of the Potomac under the late regime, soon wore away like the imaginary shadows of a hideous dream."

The carrying of rations for eight days was also instituted by Hooker and "ever after followed by all commanders." Ten-day furloughs were granted to allow the soldiers to visit their homes, and the men were kept busy in camp with drills and inspections. A ration of

whisky was generally allowed to each soldier. Grand divisions were abolished and the army was reorganized into corps, with the 97th now in the Second Brigade. As a result, the men felt that Hooker cared about them -- an important asset for a general.

General Hooker also reorganized the function of the cavalry. It would now be used on the army's flanks as infantry -- thus extending its lines. Previously, the cavalry was used mainly for picketing or more advanced skirmishing -- to detect the location of the enemy -- and when a battle was impending and a line about to form, to fall to the rear. This caused the cavalry to acquire an image of cowardice, because the infantry saw the cavalry pass them in the opposite direction as they headed toward the front.

On April 2, 1863, General Hooker reviewed the corps, and on April 6th "the camp was honored by the presence of the President and Mrs. Lincoln." Between April 6th and 17th, it was rumored that the corps was going to be on the move since wall tents were replaced with shelter tents, mules instead of wagons were carrying line officers' baggage, and the soldiers were notified that hereafter they would be required to carry eight days' rations. The soldiers presumed correctly, since they broke camp on April 28th and marched toward the Rappahannock. The Second Brigade, to which the 97th belonged, was now commanded by General Henry Baxter of Michigan who won his general's star at Fredericksburg by volunteering his unit to cross the Rappahannock in boats while being fired upon by Confederate sharpshooters -- routing them and enabling the pontoons to be laid.

Hooker's famous order was read to the 97th on April 29th: "Let your watchword be fight! FIGHT! **FIGHT!**," after they had risen at 3:30 a.m. and continued to Pollock's Mills under artillery fire all along the river. On the next day at about 5:00 p.m., the Union army was shelled by the Confederates "upon the flats," with several casualties in Robinson's division -- though the 97th escaped without injury. During the course of this attack, Union supply trains -- partially unloaded -- were fired upon, at which point the wagons were dashed away from the scene. It was rumored that a barrel of whisky was unloaded, which Union soldiers went back and searched for, but didn't find -- probably because it was never there, given the supplies allowed for the march. Since the Confederate cannons were too far away to be reached by field artillery, General Reynolds brought up several 20 lb. Parrot rifled cannons, which "seemed to have the desired effect."

On May 2nd, the army marched rapidly toward Chancellorsville -- only about 11 miles due west of Fredericksburg. At twilight that evening, the men of the 97th were "cooking" coffee and "preparing for a repast" when an orderly dashed up to General Reynolds, and then "the order came quick and sharp to pack up." Though the soldiers were partly unpacked, and it was nearly dark, in 15 minutes the entire corps was again on the march. Almost immediately, the 97th knew the need for quick movement: "It [the 97th] had scarcely entered the woods when a sound like the distant thunder of Niagara struck upon our ears. As we proceeded the sound became more distinct; the earth jarred, and roar 'like the tread of a might host' filled the woods in our front." Given this furor, Hall comments, "It was well that Reynolds had a corps of veteran troops. Other troops which had never been tried and had not learned not to be surprised at anything under such circumstances, after having strained their capabilities to the utmost in a forced march, might have questioned the propriety of moving to the front during the night, when it seemed as if the whole army was in a disorderly retreat."

Additional disorder and confusion surrounded the 97th with supply trains rattling, teamsters shouting, cattle lowing and herdsmen yelling. Then many stragglers without guns, ammunition, or knapsacks appeared. These men, Germans, were from the demoralized Eleventh Corps. As one of them was pulled from a tree top, he said in broken English, "Me no fights mit Howard, me fights mit Sigel [the German general]." Although a mystery at first, the demoralization and rout of the 11th corps were later explained.

Hall states that General Hooker had visited the right of the Union line where General Howard was posted. He sent Howard an order to advance pickets to the right to detect the possible flanking by the enemy. Hooker did so because the right appeared weak in numbers of men and artificial barriers, and the corps had prepared only for a frontal attack.

Hall states that, "...had Hooker's orders been even partially obeyed, [Howard's men] would have prevented the horrible disaster which followed." Hooker's order was received by General Howard at 10:00 a.m., but largely ignored all day, when at 6:00 p.m., General Jackson's 26,000 Confederate troops attacked just as Hooker predicted. The veteran Confederates had sneaked through the dense woods and attacked the Eleventh, who were "surprised...by the masses of Jackson's veterans and their own pickets together rushing among them..." Hall states that immediately after the battle, the German soldiers were made "scapegoats" for its failure. He also says: "Under a new commander these troops became efficient, thus showing the fault was not with the rank and file." The corps continued its march, pushing the fugitives back to the front. Here the 97th took position in support of the right, and at about midnight began to build breast works under the direction of Colonel Wheelock "who did not favor himself, but stripping off his coat engineered the work and helped roll up logs as he would have done upon his farm at home."

Following the rout of the Eleventh Corps on Saturday, May 2nd, early the next day an attack was made by the Confederates on General Sickles' Corps on the plank road previously occupied by the Eleventh Corps and the 97th. Though the battle continued at intervals for hours, Hall states, "the enemy was punished so severely that he was obliged to withdraw." The attack by the Confederates was later renewed, but with lesser power because of their losses.

Hall states that Union General Sickles correctly claimed that with 10,000 additional troops he could have gained a decided victory over Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart -- who, in command of Hill's troops, made the attack. When Sickles needed reinforcements, there was an absence of direction from the commanding general, because "unfortunately at this critical moment, Hooker was disabled, and the army without a head, and when he revived the crisis had passed." Hooker had been struck in the head by debris as a cannon shell hit one of the porch

posts of the Chancellorsville House upon which Hooker was leaning. Though dazed, Hooker refused to relieve himself from command. [While in Virginia, I stood before the front steps that rose to the porch of this house -- which remain along with the foundation.]

The following morning, the entire regiment was placed as pickets and remained throughout the day anticipating attack, though none was made. General Lee had withdrawn his main forces from General Hooker's front to fall upon General Sedgwick -- who was advancing from Fredericksburg toward the rear of Lee's troops. Hall comments upon Hooker's failure to pursue Lee: "The disaster of Saturday evening, in consequence of General Howard's disregard of Hooker's orders, had so crippled him [Hooker] that he could not or dared not follow Lee, else he was unaware of that general's withdrawal, which seem scarcely possible, as his plan of battle anticipated such an event." Hooker remained idle during Lee's attack upon Sedgwick, and when Hooker returned, rains set in "and the Union commander seemed only anxious to save his own army, which Lee and the elements appeared about to combine to destroy." Hooker realized that should the storm continue, a raging river would be between his army and his base of supplies, and considering "the vantage ground on the side of Lee he determined on a withdrawal."

To provide for this safe retreat from Chancellorsville it was necessary to mislead the Confederates. Therefore, under the command of the 97th's captain of Company A (Isaac Hall at this time), a large detail was made of men and officers with tools for felling timber and making trenches. The group of men were led to the east and north of the Chancellorsville House by General Hooker's chief of engineers, who ordered trees to be blazed and works to be built behind the fallen timber as he led the way toward the Rappahannock River. Spaces were cleared behind the barricades for positioning the artillery. The detail worked all through the stormy night. At daybreak, the captain of Company A received an order to report promptly with his command to the Chancellorsville House. Upon arriving there he found the army had gone, so he gathered the detail and joined the men to the picket line, which then being withdrawn, formed the rear guard.

They felled trees across the road behind them as they went. It was then clear to the captain that Hooker was retreating, and the night's work of the 97th was a diversion to trick the Confederates into believing the Union was to make a stand there, instead of retreating. "The captain in command of the detail was not at all surprised to find that the army had fallen back across the Rappahannock. The constant rumbling of the supply trains and artillery towards the fords of that river had spoken as plainly as tongue could tell that Hooker had ordered a retreat, and the work during the night had been only to mask this movement." General Reynolds was at the river supervising the crossing of his corps, and ordered the commandant of the prior night's work detail to discharge the men so that they could go back to join their various regiments at their camps.

Early in the morning of May 6th, the 97th crossed to the north shore of the Rappahannock, marched back to near Falmouth, and the following day went into camp in the pine woods "between the White Oak Church and the Rappahannock." Hall muses, "Here the regiment resumed its ordinary camp duties, and arranged a neat and pleasant camp..." However, the regiment "scarcely had got settled for its enjoyment, before an order from high medical authority, and general in its application, required that the troops should be moved out into the fields." Commenting on this disruption, Hall further states, "This order was of course obeyed, but with many expressions of opinion dissenting from the views of the medical director with regard to the salubrity of summer camps in the shade."

The troops performed picketing duty along the Rappahannock, growing frustrated with their lack of movement and absence of information concerning what was to come next. The boredom and anxiety of these days of picketing ended, but not as anticipated. "At length the long expected order came and the regiment marched not 'on to Richmond,' but on the back track, to cover our communications with Washington and check another invasion upon free soil."

For many days, the Confederate army had been quietly concentrating around Culpepper and moving north, but the extent and purpose of the movement was not initially understood by the Union troops. The regiment had been under marching orders for several days and had packed up three times ready for marching, only to have the marching orders cancelled. The men were well rested after their repose "and could not resist the temptation to frolic, which this irksome leisure time offered." As a result, the soldiers had a mock battle by establishing lines and throwing at each other rubbish of the dismantled camp -- including broken canteens, cups, bottles, oyster cans and other cast-off articles. Some of the regiment's officers joined in the fun, and Hall excuses their participation as acceptable under the circumstances in a volunteer army: "Such indulgence on the part of officers in the regular service would undoubtedly be considered adverse to good order and disipline[sic], but in a volunteer organization like the 97th -- where many of the men were equal in every respect but in position, to those placed in command over them, such levity did not detract from the morale of the officers nor lessen the respect to duty on the part of the men."

On June 12, 1863, at 1:00 p.m. the regiment fell into line and set out "for another race northward." Lee's army was on its march for Pennsylvania and already the advance corps was in the Shenandoah Valley and on a rapid march towards the upper fords of the Potomac, while portions of the Confederate army were spaced along the Rappahannock for a distance of one hundred miles behind the head of the column, so as "to keep appearances and disguise the true object of their movements as long as possible." At this time the corps to which the 97th belonged -- the First Corps -- was reduced to the smallest in the army, since its regiments who had enlisted for only nine months had gone home. Nevertheless, the soldiers from northern New York had determination and faith in the corps' commanding general, General Reynolds, who was described by Hall as a "true and gallant commander." Reynolds was in command of the left wing of the Union army, consisting of the First, Third and Eleventh Corps, Buford's cavalry and some batteries.

After a rapid march, the 97th reached Rappahannock Station (at least twenty miles) the night of June 12th, and bivouacked. The march was more leisurely the next two days, since "the men had become tranquilized and foot-sore," arriving on the 15th "at the old and familiar station" -- Manassas Junction. [Manassas Junction held particular importance to the Confederacy, as it was the linkage point of rail lines leading south. To control the rail junction was to control a major hub for supplies and troops in the Confederacy, particularly Virginia.] Before leaving Manassas Junction en route to Manassas the next day, a deserter "from some regiment" was shot. The grim reality of the firing squad is briefly described: "Nine balls from the muskets of the twelve men upon whom the sad duty devolved, took effect in the poor

fellow's body, and he died without a groan."

The 97th marched to Centerville, and it went west with the remainder of the corps to Leesburg. Confederate General Mosby's cavalry had just exited town as the head of Reynold's column arrived. Mosby was known as the "guerilla general," and the Union soldiers were warned about being captured. As Captain Hall states, "Guerillas were plentiful in this vicinity, and the men were cautioned and ordered to keep well closed up; notwithstanding, two clerks of the brigade commissary fell into the hands of the Confederate commander." The corps reached the vicinity of Leesburg on June 17th, and the regiment went into camp for a short period on the right bank of Goose Creek.

An amusing incident occurred while camped at this location. There happened to be a tall oak tree which leaned over the creek from the right bank, and from which hung a grape vine almost to the opposite bank. As a test of agility, several men and officers climbed the tree and sliding down the vine close to the water, sprang upon the other shore. An officer had been excused from duty for several days because of rheumatism, "and being a spectator was challenged to try his strength." After some hesitation, he finally accepted a wager of two dollars that he could not spring from the vine where others let go -- to the bank from which they climbed the tree. Hall describes the resourcefulness of this challenged officer: "Seizing a hatchet and reaching out over the water he cut the vine in two, and taking hold of the hanging part where others made their final leap, and giving himself a swinging motion which was increased at each vibration till he acquired sufficient momentum, he landed safely upon the other side amid the shouts of the spectators, and to the no small merriment of all save the one who had lost the wager." However, the "last laugh" fell upon the officer the next morning when he found himself reported for duty by the adjutant -- as his rheumatism proved, by his athletic feat, to be adequately cured.

Hall states that on June 22th, the Guerilla General himself, Mosby, "made a dash within our lines, and it is said came near capturing General Reynolds and part of his staff, at a house near to camp." The 97th marched early the morning of June 25th and crossed the Rappahannock River on pontoons at Edward's Ferry. Being with the First Corps, the regiment was with the first Union troops to reenter Maryland, and the march was continued in a drizzling rain to Poolsville, ten miles from the ferry, where the 97th bivouacked. At 4:00 a.m. the next day, the regiment marched to Barnsville, Greenfield and Adamstown, crossed the Blue Ridge on June 27th, and encamped at Middletown.

As before, Captain Hall compares the land and people of Maryland and Virginia: "The contrast between this part of Maryland and the barrenness and grim desolation witnessed in Virginia, was most striking. Green fields of richest verdure; fields of wheat, corn and other grain, mingled with those of clover and timothy of luxuriant growth, on either side met our gaze. And meeting men and women by the way to greet and cheer, and occasionally to offer a goblet of cold water, with something of the staff of life, was refreshing, and acted like a charm upon the feelings of the army." Here, in Maryland, the army was also relieved from the guerillas and "prowling bushwackers who hung like leaches upon the army on the other side of the river."

Hall states, "...it is no wonder that every one felt that he had entered once more a land of Liberty."

Hall pays tribute to Maryland, citing its origins: "Whatever influences here may have carried away some wayward son to join the 'chivalry' [Confederacy], the manifest feelings of the inhabitants of this part of Maryland impressed upon the mind of the beholder that the incorruptible spirit of Lord Baltimore had fallen like a mantle upon them." Following this remark, Hall curtly states, "Hooker was relieved on the 27th, at his own request."

Chapter XII: March to Emmettsburg -- McClellan said to be in Command -- General Meade in Command -- Battle of Gettysburg -- March to Williamsport -- Lee's Retreat Across the Potomac

On June 28th, their march led the 97th regiment to Emmettsburg, Maryland -- described as a "quiet town" in a region that "had felt none of the miseries of war." Things were currently quiet and peaceful, but the men knew that they would soon again be meeting the enemy. The soldiers treasured their camaraderie prior to the impending battle. "At this moment some one at the head of the column struck the John Brown chorus, which was quickly taken up along the whole line, and presently every man fell into a step in time with the cadence of this simple yet soul stirring hymn." After passing through Emmettsburg, the regiment encamped on what is described as "a flat interval of land, on the west side of Marsh Run."

At 6:30 a.m. "on the memorable morning" of July 1st, 1863, the 97th marched along the Emmettsburg Road toward Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. At this time, General Wadsworth's division was in the advance of the Union's forces, and Robinson's Second Division at its rear. General Buford's cavalry had preceded the infantry the day before, and were already near the town. As the 97th regiment -- with the brigade and the division under Generals Baxter and Robinson -- moved along the Emmettsburg Road, "the sound of artillery at the front struck upon their ears, which accelerated their movement." An aide from General Robinson passed towards the rear with the order to "keep well closed up." This gave the men assurance that McClellan was again in command, as "the word has been freely circulated throughout the corps...and was generally believed by the men and many of the officers, till the close of the day, and added not a little to the spirited resistance to the Confederate attack in that first day's encounter." (The Army of the Potomac placed confidence in McClellan as a commander who would take care of the soldiers, not unnecessarily leading them into harm's way. This may be largely due to McClellan's hesitance to engage the army against the Confederates, which ultimately led President Lincoln to relieve him from high command.) In fact, it was General George Meade who was in command, assigned to this task justdays before.

About a half-mile from Gettysburg, General Robinson's column head turned off the road in a northwest direction, and marched to a point just east of the theological seminary where it was halted and held in reserve. The advance division of the column, under the immediate supervision of General Reynolds, had already encountered and staved off the Confederate advance under General A.P. Hill as Hill approached through the mountains on the Cashtown

Road. (Reynolds had arrived just in time to support Buford's cavalry in keeping the Confederates from reaching Gettysburg.) Some Confederate shells soon reached the crest to the left of Robinson's front, and Robinson immediately pushed forward his Second Brigade, then halted near the railroad bed. From there, he sent forward from the right of the 97th a skirmish line, commanded by the captain of Company A. The skirmish line continued along the easterly slope, almost to a strip of woods very close to the Mummasburg Road. "From the upper end of this strip the presence of the enemy was soon announced by a puff or two of smoke, and bullets."

In the meantime, the 11th Pennsylvania regiment and the 97th advanced and took a position at the northern edge of a piece of woods on the westerly slope, facing a meadow "covered with a rank growth of timothy." The 97th's skirmish line joined with the regiment here. Together, they saw "the colors" and part of a Confederate line on a hill crest north of the Mummasburg road. At this time, the 97th's skirmish line went forth into the meadow, with the 11th Pennsylvania to their left, and pushed the Confederates into retreat. From this effort, one man of the 97th's Company F was killed, and others wounded.

The skirmish line then reached their object, a fence, and the 12th Massachusetts (commanded by Colonel Bates) came up and the 97th flanked to the right, then immediately changed direction and moved along the east crest in the vicinity of a strip of timber to stop behind a stone wall. The wall did not provide perfect protection, since Confederate skirmishers kept advancing from different directions. The soldiers of the 97th used the wall as their advance position, "several men springing up in concert and firing as closely as possible whence the smoke from the Confederate fire arose." From the action Reese Lloyd of Company A was killed, and many others were wounded by "the enfilading fire of this line." A person described as "a young lad" (J. R. Manchester), who had belonged to the instrumental band, supplied himself with cartridges from the fallen Mr. Lloyd's cartridge box. The right of Company A reformed on the right of the regiment, and rested at the south edge of a scattering of trees of the eastern slope -- then containing undergrowth termed "a belt of woods." Hall seems pleased with this location of the 97th as having a strategic advantage, what would have been referred to at the time as "good ground." "Nothing except the wall and a meadow covered with a luxuriant growth of timothy was now in front of the 97th."

The 97th held this position until about 3:00 p.m., when a rapid firing from the 11th Pennsylvania and a "Confederate yell" (intended to rattle the opposing soldiers) was heard from a charging group of North Carolinians known as Iverson's Brigade. The 97th sprang up and moved forward to the stone wall as the Confederate column approached. From this location, the north country soldiers were able to fire over the crest of the meadow and attack the Confederates both in front and flank, as the Confederates shifted the column's left into the front of the 97th. At the same time, Colonel Bates of the 12th Massachusetts swung his regiment into line and "poured a volley 'at short range' upon the flank of the astonished Confederates, as sudden as it was unexpected." The maneuver produced a devastating effect: "This fire was very destructive upon the enemy's line, and it staggered, halted, and sought shelter in a gully, a short distance to its rear, and began to put up white emblems in token of surrender."

Lieutenant Colonel Spofford was on horseback to the regiment's left. He quickly realized the opportunity and, without waiting for orders said, "Boys of the 97th, let us go for them and capture them." As a result, and with the assistance of the 11th Pennsylvania and 12th Massachusetts Regiments, about 400 soldiers "and the flag" of the 20th North Carolina were taken prisoner. Colonel Wheelock was dismounted and at the rear of his regiment at the time his Lieutenant Colonel ordered the movement. Wheelock was surprised that the lower officer gave the order to move the regiment when he, as higher ranking officer, was present, albeit at the regiment's rear. Nevertheless, Wheelock soon understood the situation and the need for quick action "before the Confederates recovered from their panic," and went forward with his regiment without interfering with the order. In advancing to take the prisoners, the 97th was hit on its side and rear by a Confederate skirmish line in the adjoining field on the right. The same skirmishers fired into the 97th's left flank on its return with the prisoners, some of whom were also wounded by the Confederate bullets.

When the 97th reached the position from which it started, another Union regiment composed of fresh troops had gathered on the easterly slope facing north, close to where the 97th had rested. Hall states, "As our regiment came over the wall with the prisoners, and bringing off their wounded, this regiment became unsteady; though, as yet only under fire of a skirmish line, some began to go to the rear, when Colonel Wheelock immediately ordered his regiment to rally them." After the other Union regiment had "become tranquilized," the 97th was again ordered over the stone wall to engage the remainder of Iverson's brigade, as well as fresh Confederate troops approaching from the northwest. In a postscript, Lieutenant Colonel Egelston indicated that the fire from the Confederate skirmish line had "a galling effect," with various Confederate prisoners wounded by their own men.

The movement to which Colonel Wheelock was strengthening was not noticed by Company A. In the noise and confusion created by rallying the regiment, the captain of Company A and a few of his men did not hear the order to move, "and the 97th was on the other slope, and out of sight when the discovery that it was gone was made." Company A encountered greater confusion thereafter: "Supposing that the regiment had retired to the rear, and seeing the prisoners about three hundred yards distant in that direction, under the escort of a regiment, it was at once taken for the 97th, and followed on a double-quick by the captain and his men. But when the mistake was discovered they turned back to find their regiment, and upon arriving at a point east of the seminary, found Wadsworth's division pouring through the woods to the rear of it."

Confederate batteries of cannon had by this time reached the crest north of the railroad cut, and fired upon the retreating forces of the Union's First Division with grape shot (small shot with a shotgun-like effect) and canister (iron balls contained in a metal can with iron plates at each end: the balls spreading outward when fired), "increasing their disorder, and fearfully cutting them." This cannonading prevented Company A from reaching the 97th in that direction, and the squad sought safety in retreat. However, through a tactical maneuver similar to that employed at the stone wall, he and his men were able to traverse the embattled ground: "By dropping onto the ground, and then springing up and running immediately after the discharge of

the enemy's guns, and dropping again in time for another discharge, the captain and his men were enabled to reach the Emmettsburg Road, where Chaplain Ferguson was met riding out from town, who said, what there was left of the 97th had just taken shelter in rear of Cemetery Ridge."

At the same time, the 97th, with the support of other regiments, had charged again over the meadow upon another portion of Iverson's Brigade "and meeting other troops approaching it, had captured 80 prisoners from Ramseur's brigade ... but was overborn by succeeding lines, and fell back, fighting along the Chambersburg turnpike and the railroad bed." As the 97th left the ridge it was flanked by a Confederate line from the north and nearly surrounded, with about

seventy of the 97th captured as they ran to and through the town of Gettysburg. Colonel Wheelock was captured at the home of Elias Sheads "which was occupied as a seminary for young ladies."

A Washington. D.C. newspaper provided an account of Colonel Wheelock's capture, from which the following excerpt was taken:

MISS CARRIE SHEADS AND COLONEL WHEELOCK

> Among the last to leave the field were the 97th infantry, commanded by Colonel Charles Wheelock, who, after fighting hand to hand as long as there was a shadow of hope, undertook to lead his broken column through the only opening in the enemy's lines, which were fast closing around him. . . . Standing in a vortex of fire, from front, rear and both flanks, encouraged his men to fight with naked bayonet, hoping to force a passage through the walls of steel which surrounded him. Finding all his efforts in vain, he ascended the steps of the seminary, and waved a white pocket handkerchief in token of surrender. The Rebels not seeing it, or taking no notice of it, continued to pour their murderous volleys into the helpless ranks. The colonel then opened the door, and called for a large white cloth. Carrie Sheads stood there, and readily supplied him with one. When the Rebels saw this token of surrender, they ceased firing, and the colonel went into the basement to rest himself, for he was thoroughly exhausted.
>
> Soon a rebel officer came in with a detail of men, and, on entering, declared with an oath, that he would show them "Southern grit." He then began taking the officers[']' side arms. Seeing Colonel Wheelock vainly endeavoring to break his sword, which was of trusty metal, and resisted all efforts, the rebel demanded the weapon, but the colonel was of the same temper as his sword, and turning to the rebel soldier, declared he would never surrender his sword to a *traitor* while he lived. The rebel then drew a revolver, and told him if he did not surrender his sword, he would shoot him. But the colonel was a veteran, and had been in close places before. Drawing himself up proudly, he tore open his uniform, and still grasping his well tried blade, bared his bosom, and bade the

> rebel "shoot," but he would guard his sword with his life. At this moment, Elias Sheads, Carrie's father, stepped between the two, and begged them not to be rash, but he was soon pushed aside, and the rebel repeated his threat.
>
> Seeing the danger to which the colonel was exposed, Miss Sheads, true to the instincts of her sex, rushed between them, and besought the rebel not to kill a man so completely in his power. There was already enough blood shed, and why add another defenceless[sic] victim to the list? . . . Fortunately at this moment the attention of the rebel officer was drawn away for the time by the entrance of other prisoners, and while he was thus occupied, Miss Sheads, seizing the favorable opportunity, with admirable presence of mind, unclasped the colonel's sword from his belt, and hid it in the folds of her dress. . . . This artifice succeeded, and the colonel 'fell in' with the other prisoners.
>
> Miss Sheads . . . turned to the rebel officer and told him that there were seventy-two wounded men in the building, and asked if he would not leave some of the prisoners to help take care of them. The officer replied that he had already left three. 'But,' said Miss Sheads, 'three are not sufficient.' 'Then keep five, and select those you want, except commissioned officers,' was the unexpected reply. On the fifth day after the battle, Colonel Wheelock unexpectedly made his appearance, and received his sword from the hands of the noble guardian, with those profound emotions which only the soldier can feel and understand, and with the sacred blade again in his possession, started at once to the front, where he won for himself new laurels, and was promoted to the rank of [brevet] brigadier general."

As a result of the fighting, the entire division to which the 97th belonged "was cut up badly" on the railroad embankment, and like other Union regiments, the "remnant" of the 97th "took their chances" to escape the Confederate lines closing in on both flanks. On July 1, 1863, out of 24 officers who had participated in the engagement, ten were killed or wounded, including Lt. Morrin of Company A (killed in the charge upon Iverson's brigade), Lt. Stiles (killed in the retreat over the railroad embankment), and Lt. Cady (who later died from his wounds). The enlisted men suffered in about the same proportion.

At 5:00 p.m. that same day, the 97th with the brigade and division marched from Cemetery Hill, and formed a line near and parallel to the Emmettsburg Road. They remained in this position until 10:00 o'clock the following morning, July 2nd, when relieved by General

Webb's brigade of the Second Corps, and retired a short distance to the rear where they stayed until 4:00 p.m. The brigade was then ordered to the right a short distance to support a battery of the 11th Corps, and here the regiment suffered some loss by sharpshooters and cannon fire.

At 6:00 p.m., the 97th -- now under the command of Captain Wood (since Colonel Wheelock had been captured) -- was ordered with the brigade and division to move to the left to

support a division of the 3rd Corps. The 3rd Corps was under the command of General Sickles, and here, near the famed "Wheat Field," the 97th suffered some loss. Captain Wood was wounded at this location, and the command of the regiment was transferred to Captain D.E. Hall. At twilight General Robinson's division was withdrawn from the support of Sickles corps, and moved back to near where it had been earlier that afternoon -- in support of cannons of the 11th Corps.

On the morning of July 3rd, the 97th was "finally withdrawn" about 9:00 a.m., and sent to the rear of Cemetery Hill to support the 12th Corps, "which was heavily pressed." Here the division remained until 1:00 p.m., when it was again moved near to and behind Cemetery Hill. This movement was made to prevent the Confederates in town from attacking the right flank of the Union line along Cemetery Ridge, which the 97th would help protect. Hall describes the scene witnessed by the 97th at this time, just prior to Pickett's charge:

> In our immediate front, at the base of the hill and a little up to its slope, stood a clump of woods of large trees, of primitive growth, and when the cannonading began, the incessant whiz, the loud reports of bursting shells and crash of solid shot from more than a hundred of the enemy's guns and the deafening roar from as many of our own -- which shook the earth -- in close proximity, could not be considered at all soothing to the feelings of men who had left nearly a half of their comrades on the battle grounds of the two preceding days. Yet, were nothing but these scenes and the din of conflict to be taken into consideration, these men could look calmly on; but when the foliage and the heavy limbs of trees, with this bursting tempest of missiles came crashing to the ground, and gastly[sic] furroughs[sic] through columns of men began to appear, a look of inquiry towards their officers ran along these meagre[sic] lines. Such men under the eye of their officers could not break and run: their discipline and moral force chained them more firmly than could fetters of steel, to the ground.
>
> But no column could long exist uncovered amid this desolating storm, and the order came quick and sharp to move to the right of the hill, where in support of a portion of the Eleventh Corps, in rear of a stone wall, it was halted and ordered to lie down.

Here, exposed to the fierce rays of the sun, with scarcely a breeze, the men began to get sun-struck. A captain of the 97th, feeling this "malady creeping upon himself," sought shelter beneath a solitary hickory tree a dozen yards to the right. From this location, he had a good view of the field to his front, and could see the 97th's skirmish line as it exchanged shots with the Confederates. The Confederates' main line could not be seen from this position, but the sounds of cannons bode of the impending battle to the seasoned captain. "Taught by experience that the present cannonading was a precursor to a contemplated charge, he naturally felt some anxiety to determine whether it would be made to the right or to the left of the town; but he had reason to believe that a point to the left would be selected." Amid the fire, the captain continued his staunch faith in his troops. "While thus listening to the din and roar of these contending armies -

- awaiting coming events and watching the men of his regiment, brigade and division -- he noticed they were getting badly mixed by changing positions as a solid shot or shell chanced to drop among them; but he felt no solicitude on this account, for he knew they were veteran troops and when called on they would drop as mechanically into their respective positions, and fall into their places as naturally as water seeks its level."

The start of Pickett's charge was evident, even from this position where the main line of Confederate troops could not be seen. "Finally the well known sound of firing grape and canister by our guns was heard. This was the first signal to Robinson's Division -- which was out of sight of this charging force -- that the Confederates were coming; next came the Confederate yell and the rattle of our infantry in quick succession followed." While not being able to see the results, the suspense of not knowing the results was soon broken. "Amid all these tumultuous sounds of infantry and of artillery, and of the din of conflict, the practiced ear and eager eye of the veteran listened, or peered to the left to catch the cheer of success or the first sight of disaster demanding help. The suspense, which was more trying than all this surrounding turmoil, was finally broken by the boys in blue, with the familiar cheer which arose from among the tombs of the cemetery and was born along the lines of the Second Corps."

The order then rang out for General Robinson's division to "fall in," and in three minutes every man was in his place and on a march to the support right of the Second Corps facing the charging Confederates. This movement did not go unchallenged. "In passing to this position the division was under the fire of the sharp-shooters from the houses in town and of the Confederate cannonading -- still going on -- one of the most destructive ever witnessed." Hall vividly conveys examples of the losses sustained in the process: "Just in advance of the 97th, a soldier wounded by a sharpshooter, falling out to the front from the files of his regiment, dropped upon the ground. His comrade came to his assistance, and as the 97th approached, bending over him, was struck by a bullet on the back of his head, and with his brains oozing from his forehead, fell across his companion and the column passed on; but the crack of that man's skull was long retained in memory of the beholder."

As the 97th reached the battlefield of Pickett's charge, their eyes then saw before them what their ears had only imagined. "As the division took position in front of the guns of Hayes' command, on the slope southwest of the town, an indescribable scene of confusion and disorder presented itself. The havoc upon the field in our front was appalling; the dead lay at intervals one upon another, torn and mangled; and were strewn over the field in every conceivable condition. From among the slain arose the wounded, who struggled to reach our line; some in their vain endeavor, fell to rise no more; others who could not rise cried for help and for water."

The Union soldiers reveled in the success of quelling the charge. "General Hayes, mounted and with a large Confederate flag trailed in the dust, rode in front of his line, which made the fields echo again with shouts." Such demonstrations were in sight of the Confederates and were "made for effect." Nevertheless, the 97th did not presume that the battle was over, despite the condition of those in gray upon the field: "Rails were soon brought with which temporary works were built in front of our line."

While such “temporary works” of defense were being constructed in front of the regiment line on the westerly slope of Cemetery Hill, some of the boys of the 97th begged permission to go forward and help off the wounded. Among those allowed to go was Allen Ward of Company A, who found Confederate General Armistead with a broken leg. The account states that “he was too heavy with the help at hand to bring off without a stretcher, and returning he [Ward] brought away the general’s sword -- a fine blade with his name upon it -- which his captain forwarded to Washington.” The “captain” referred to is Isaac Hall.

Official records indicate that among the 97th New York Volunteers engaged at the battle of Gettysburg, 12 were recorded as killed, 36 wounded, and 78 captured -- totaling 126. Following the account of the battle, Hall describes a famous image of a Union soldier killed in the action, Amos Humiston of Portville, New York -- about 165 miles north of Gettysburg, just across the Pennsylvania border. The soldier died holding atop his chest an ambrotype of his three young children. It was from the ambrotype that he was identified. Copies of the ambrotype, referred to as “Children of the Battlefield,” were made into carte de visites and sold for the family’s benefit. To assist this effort, The Presbyterian offered a prize for a poem on the event. This was set to music and was sold to assist the family with their needs. As of July 18, 1863, Brigadier General John C. Robinson, Commander of the Second Division of the Union’s First Corps, reported that about $1,300 had been raised. The following is the poem.

Upon the field of Gettysburg,
  The summer sun was high,
When Freedom met her traitorous foes,
  Beneath a Northern sky;
Among the heroes of the North,
  Who swelled her grand array --
Who rushed like mountain eagles, forth
  From happy homes away --
There stood a man of humble fame,
  A sire of children, three,
And gazed within a little frame,
  Their pictured form to see;
And blame him not, if in the strife,
  He breathed a soldier’s prayer --
O, Father, shield the soldier’s wife,
  And for the children care.
Upon the field of Gettysburg,
  When morning shone again,
The crimson cloud of battle burst
  In streams of fiery rain:
Our legions quelled the awful flood
  Of shot, and steel and shell,
While banners, marked with ball and blood,

Around them rose and fell,
And none more nobly won the name
Of Champion of the Free,
Than he who pressed the little frame
That held his children three;
And none were braver in the strife
Than he who breathed the prayer:
O, Father, shield the soldier's wife,
And for his children care.

Upon the field of Gettysburg,
The full moon slowly rose;
She looked, and saw ten thousand brows,
All pale in death's repose;
And down beside a silver stream,
From other forms away,
Calm as a warrior in a dream,
Our fallen comrade lay.
His limbs were cold, his sightless eyes
Were fixed upon the three
Sweet stars that rose in memory's skies,
To light him o'er death's sea.
Then honored be the soldier's life,
And hallowed be his prayer --
O, Father, shield the soldier's wife,
And for his children care.

On July 4th, the Confederates positioned a Whitworth rifled cannon (English made, breechloader) nearly four miles to the right of the 97th in order to "rake our line with enfilading fire." No great damage was wrought by this cannon, since its distance allowed some time for movement, and even some levity. "The first shot struck into the soft ground a little to the left of the front of the 97th -- scattering the dirt in all directions. After the first shot the artillerymen, in our rear, watched for the smoke and gave timely notice of the coming of the shot, which seemed a minute or two in its transit. They all struck in the ground, in front of our division, except one, which lodged to the right of the 97th, in a pile of rails in front of the 90th Pennsylvania, breaking some into splinters, and wounding some of this regiment, which, springing up, started back, but soon resumed its position amid shouts of laughter in other regiments."

At this same time, Confederate sharpshooters fired upon the 97th from the gable of a brick house -- then owned by W. Henry Dotterer and family -- which was to the left of the regiment's front. "The [Union] artillerymen were frequently importuned to knock out the gable end of this dwelling, but they invariably responded: 'That is strictly against orders,' and thus in idleness our army lay. But the fire from the Whitworth gun ceased after a few shots."

[In July 1995, I re-traced the steps of the 97th regiment upon the Gettysburg battlefields under the extremely capable direction of Gettysburg National Park Guide Ed Clausey. Mr. Clausey possesses special knowledge of the 97th's activities, since for eight successive years he had provided battlefield tours to a descendent of one who fought against the 97th at Gettysburg. The man was from North Carolina, and his great grandfather was a member of Confederate General Iverson's Brigade -- which was engaged with the 97th on the first day's fighting. We entered Gettysburg as the northern New York regiment had 132 years ago (on the Emmettsburg Road), stopped along Marsh Run as they did, saw the house where Union General Reynolds slept the night before he was killed, and traversed the railroad cut over which the 97th – and many other units, both Union and Confederate – crossed in both attack and retreat. We stood where the 97th helped capture 400 prisoners of the 20th North Carolina, where they retreated shortly thereafter while being encircled by superior numbers, and where Colonel Wheelock was forced to surrender at the Sheads house (which stands as it did then, complete with dormer windows used for the seminary occupants). Then there is Cemetery Hill, "the Wheat Field," the Lutheran Seminary, Ziegler's Grove which was the right flank of the Union line facing Pickett's charge, and all the other places which have gone down in history around the world. The men of the 97th fought there, some never to return, and all never to return the same. We, and so many others before us, visit in awe and reverence. Even the campground at which we slept, "Artillery Ridge," was the site of gathered Union artillery prior to the battle. It holds special significance. Despite time and space, somehow we are connected.]

After the burial of the dead and caring for the wounded, the order to march was resumed "by shorter routes" to intercept Lee's retreat, but the First Corps "moved out but a short distance," when it was halted, and remained until the morning of July 7th. The 97th marched "early in the forenoon of the 7th" through Emmettsburg and in following days through Boonsboro and Funkstown. After crossing the Antietam Creek, they halted for about a mile beyond for a time, in sight of Hagerstown, Maryland. From here Confederate pickets were driven off, and then the regiment stopped and entrenched. On the morning of the 13th, the 97th completed its breastworks, while off to its front "some cannon shots from the enemy's guns were heard, but no engagement occurred."

On July 14, the regiment marched to Williamsport. Lee had crossed the Potomac the preceding night "with his army, trains [supply wagons] and all his wagon loads of plunder," leaving behind only two cannon. Many, including President Lincoln, were very disappointed that General Meade's Union force did not pursue Lee in his retreat, and crush the Confederates. However, Hall rebuffs the criticism leveled against the battle-worn Yankees for their "lost chance" of not striking Lee on retreat:

> The "bagging" of large armies was one of the practically impossible feats of war. It is a pleasant thing to talk about but it is a thing that is seldom, if ever, achieved. Equally difficult is it to prevent a retreat of an enemy with a river in his rear. Burnside was defeated at Fredericksburg, but he recrossed the Rappahannock without the loss of a single man, gun or ounce of baggage -- and in

> the very face of the enemy. Hooker was worsted at Chancellorsville; yet he fell back upon the river with 80,000 Confederates almost within cannon range of him and regained his old position on this side without being molested.

Also, Hall states that the difficulty in preventing the retreating force from escaping via a river crossing was even greater than usual. He explains that the Confederates occupied a "narrow tongue of land -- not wholly unlike Gen. Taylor at Buena Vista -- almost inaccessible to a pursuing force." To attack the Confederates at this location is described as "practically impossible," in that from this location only a few thousand Union troops could operate at one time. Also, "the broken character of the country afforded peculiar facilities for defensive purposes." Therefore, Lee was able to render his position "virtually impregnable" until he could arrange for a safe retreat.

Hall praises the Union commander of the Army of the Potomac for his actions at Gettysburg, and thereafter:

> Throughout the battle of Gettysburg even to Lee's retreat across the Potomac, Meade exhibited the true qualities of a prudent and thorough general. Though our chosen ground was well defended it should not be lost sight of that we fought on the defensive and were, at that, as nearly whipped as we well could be. It was better to save our original achievement of position than, like the dog in the fable, to grasp at the shadow and lose the substance. Hooker's noted fighting qualities or some still hotter heads might have dashed the army against the enemy's strong positions and got more decisively beaten than did General Lee. The weak point in Meade's outstart as a commanding general dates prior to the beginning of this battle.

In his last line here, Hall is referring that Union Army Commander-in-Chief Halleck favored keeping reserve troops to guard Baltimore and Philadelphia. Hall asserts that the troops -- 11,000 alone at Maryland Heights, Baltimore -- could have been better used at the front in the battle of Gettysburg, or thereafter in the pursuit of Lee's retreating army.

Chapter XIII: Crossing the Potomac -- Marches and Countermarches in Virginia -- Battle of Mine Run -- Building Various Quarters -- Winter Camp at Culpepper -- U.S. Grant Made Lieutenant General -- Grant in Command of all the Armies of the United States

On July 15, 1863, the 97th marched through Keedysville and Rhorersville to near Crampton Pass (22 miles) and bivouacked. The next day, the regiment continued its march

through the pass near to Berlin and halted, awaiting the laying of pontoons across the Potomac River. Colonel Wheelock returned to the 97th on July 17th, having eluded his captors. Hall indicates that the colonel was received by the regiment "with demonstrations of joy." The next morning the Army of the Potomac began crossing the river at Berlin, and by 6:00 p.m. the 97th was once more in Virginia and continued its march to Waterford where it bivouacked for the night -- a march of 12 miles. The regiment then marched 9 miles to Hamilton and camped. The next day at sunrise the march resumed and the men forded Goose Creek, which was three to four feet deep, and continued on to Middleburg and bivouacked late in the evening after a 16 mile march. Their movements were not unopposed. "Guerillas were again hanging on the flanks of the army. Two of General Newton's staff were captured by them on this day."

The regiment reached Warrenton on the 23rd, where the advance of the column captured a Confederate wagon train, 900 cattle and 35 prisoners. Continuing to march to Bealton where the 97th stayed for about a week, on August 2nd at 8:00 p.m. the regiment resumed its march and arrived later that night at Rappahannock Station, where they crossed the Rappahannock River bridge and entrenched on a hill to its right. Union General Buford's cavalry had attacked Confederate General Stuart's cavalry at Rappahannock Station and driven them back to near Culpepper, Virginia, almost capturing Stuart and his staff. Stuart and his aids escaped "but left untasted their dinner which had been prepared for them." However, General Buford encountered infantry at Auburn and was driven back until reinforced by the Union's First Corps. Opposing soldiers were not the only hazards of war: "During a thunderstorm on August 3d three men in the brigade were killed by lightening."

On August 27th the regiment marched to near Raccoon Ford and the pickets of each army exchanged shots from opposite sides of the Rapidan River. At 8:00 a.m. on August 28th orders came to pack everything but tents and to fall in for marching within 15 minutes. "The whole brigade was accordingly in line at the appointed time and stacked arms." This movement of readiness was in reaction to a report that the Confederates were preparing to cross the Rapidan River above the Union camp. "The alarm proved to be only an exchange of shots

between cavalry and pickets." Therefore, instead of promptly moving out, the 97th remained near Raccoon Ford for almost another two weeks, when on October 9th at 11:00 p.m. the order was again issued to pack up. This time, within three hours, the entire First Corps marched eastward.

However, marching in the middle of the night had its drawbacks. "Mistaking the road it [the First Corps] moved down the [Rapidan] river and remained from noon -- where it had halted -- till eight o'clock in the evening, when resuming its march it retraced its steps, halting near an old camp ground about four miles from Culpepper. It [the First Corps] had marched about four miles out of its way.

On October 11th the march was resumed at 10:00 a.m. and, passing through Stevensburg, the regiment forded Mountain Creek and the Rappahannock River at Kelly's Ford, and bivouacked on the river bank. Union General Pleasanton was guarding the rear of the Union force with his cavalry, and the Confederate

cavalry under General Stuart made an attack upon him near Brandy Station. Hall describes the battle as follows:

> A fierce encounter ensued, by which the main cavalry forces on both sides were drawn in, and made successive charges, in which Pleasanton, Kilpatrick, Custer, Buford and Davis were involved and led their forces in person to the attack. It was considered the greatest cavalry battle of the war, and was fought till the shades of evening -- the flashes of fire glittering along the line of clashing sabers. Stuart finally withdrew, leaving Pleasanton master of the field, who, after burying his dead and collecting his wounded, crossed the Rappahannock.

This was the second clash between the cavalry of the opposing sides at Brandy Station, the earlier occurring on June 9, 1863. The earlier battle ended in a draw, which debunked the Confederate cavalry's reputation of almost invincible superiority over the Union cavalry. From Hall's account above of 2nd Brandy Station, the impression is given that the Union cavalry defeated the Confederate, "leaving Pleasanton master of the field." Accounts by historians Shelby Foote and H.B. McClellan indicate that the second battle was smaller in scale ("a skirmish": Foote), with Confederate cavalry General J.E.B. Stuart the ultimate victor. It appears that here Hall confused the first and second cavalry engagements at Brandy Station.

On October 12th, before daybreak, the march was continued towards Bealton, and on the evening of the next day the regiment bivouacked near Manassas Junction. General Warren, commanding the Union's Second Corps, was assigned the important task of guarding the army's rear. Hall concludes: "For this purpose General Meade could not have selected a more competent commander." On the 12th the Union army's advance column, under General Webb, was suddenly and unexpectedly attacked while crossing Broad Run by artillery and infantry, masked in a piece of woods one hundred yards away. Hall describes General Warren's able counterattack:

> But Warren, who possessed a clear head and a consumate [sic] judgment -- always rendered more acute under difficult and trying circumstances, with skill and precision, so arranged his infantry and posted his artillery along the railroad, that in ten minutes he sent the Confederate line flying from its position, abandoning, in its flight, six guns, which with two battle flags, were secured. Five of the guns were run off by hand, amid the enthusiastic cheers of their comrades, by men whom Warren detailed for the purpose. Repeated and gallant charges were now made by the enemy to recover his guns, but he was repelled in every instance by the gallantry of General Warren's troops, and the attacking forces were met with such a destructive fire that the Confederates sought safety in the woods from whence they came. Desultory artillery firing was kept up till dark, when the enemy withdrew with a loss of thirteen hundred in killed, wounded and prisoners.

This was General Warren's first engagement as sole commander, and Hall states, "it

exhibited in him capacity of the highest order and Meade in congratulating his corps, said, 'The skill and promptitude of Major General Warren, and the gallantry and bearing of the officers and soldiers of the Second Corps, are entitled to high commendation.'"

Between October 14th and 15th, the 97th marched towards the Bull Run battlefield, then towards Centerville, and then back again towards Bull Run. On the evening of the 15th, the regiment bivouacked about half a mile east of Bull Run's famous "stone bridge." On the 16th the 97th marched across the stone bridge, up the hill, and took position in support of the Fourth Regular battery. At 3:40 p.m. on this day Kilpatrick's cavalry, in two separate units, passed towards the front, filing left from the road as soon as they had reached the summit. This action was taken because, as Hall states, General Lee had "boldly taken the offensive" with an inferior force, which he had still further reduced by reinforcing Confederate General Bragg, and "by his skill had forced Meade into a retreat upon the line of the Bull Run." Lee thus gained possession of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, which he destroyed from the Rapidan River to Manassas, Virginia.

On October 19th the 97th packed up and marched through Gainesville, described by Hall as "a place of some two or three dwellings," and continued on to Haymarket, depicted as "a small village which had been rendered desolate by fire in retaliation for its inhabitants firing upon the Union Army as it passed through, and all that then remained of it was a few naked chimneys." A few miles "beyond this place" and four miles from Thoroughfare Gap the regiment bivouacked for the night. The Union army could not go long without being attacked. Hall states,"On the 21st [of October], the enemy's cavalry made a dash upon the line in front of our camp, but they were repulsed with considerable [Confederate] loss in killed and wounded, besides a loss of some 300 in prisoners." Later that day, under cover of darkness, the entire Union First Corps marched through Thoroughfare Gap, leaving their supply wagons at the entrance to the gap.

The corps remained at the far side of the gap for three days, when it marched (with the 97th) 12 miles to Bristow in a cold rain. The First Corps encamped for a few days in this vicinity "and the 97th boys made their quarters as comfortable as possible for a short sojourn." Drills were ordered and the customary camp duties were resumed under the command of Major Northrup, who had been in command of the regiment since July 25th, when Colonel Wheelock "took his departure for Elmira to superintend the forwarding of conscripts." Indications of the prior battle of the Army of the Potomac's Second Corps were evident in the 97th's camp. "In front of where the 97th held its dress parades, fourteen head boards were counted, of as many of the 14th North Carolina Regiment, killed by the Second Corps, on the 14th day of October."

On October 28th, Stephen Pearl, a private of Company F, was accidentally shot and died soon after. A member of Company G had found a Colt revolver (Navy size) on the picket line, and while examining it, his thumb slipped from the hammer, discharging its contents into the body of Pearl. As Private Pearl was stooping over to fasten the cord of his tent, the projectile hit below his shoulder blade and came out just above his collar bone.

On November 6th, at 10:30 a.m., firing of the pickets ("as was supposed") were heard, and the firing increased in succeeding volleys. Hall states that General Baxter's aid "dashed in and gave the command to pack up, and the regiment was soon in line." A brigade was quickly formed "en masse" by battalion, with the 88th New York, 11th Pennsylvania, 12th Massachusetts, and 97th New York (together, as at Gettysburg) forming on the right, and remaining until the firing stopped. The firing was, in fact, from some of Kilpatrick's cavalry who were discharging their carbines on their return from picketing. The next day the regiment marched towards Rappahannock Station, filing to the left at Warrenton Junction, coming upon the Warrenton and Falmouth Turnpike. They continued on towards Falmouth until dark and turned from the turnpike, working until 2:00 a.m. in "passing a slough."

The regiment finally bivouacked at 3:00 a.m. -- having marched about 14 miles. At noon the march was resumed to Kelly's Ford. Here a part of the Sixth Corps was passed and a church near by on the east side of the Rappahannock River was filled with Federal and Confederate wounded, while many more of the Sixth Corps wounded were still outside. A "large number" of Confederate prisoners were held under guard as the regiment passed.

These were the effects of the preceding day (November 7th) when Union Generals Sedgwick and French had attacked a portion of General Lee's army, capturing about five hundred prisoners. By moving rapidly, the Union forces had also attacked the Confederates at Rappahannock Station, which was protected by several strong forts. A fort and two redoubts (breastworks) held by two thousand men (Confederate General Hayes' brigade) on the north side of the river "were carried by storm, cutting off retreat, and the garrison captured." The 14th New York, 5th Wisconsin and 6th Maine "gained the honor" as the assaulting force. Hall describes, "In a close and bloody hand-to-hand contest that ensued the storming party became the victors, by which 1,600 men, four guns and eight battle flags crowned the triumph."

Hall summarizes the recent battles and the effect on Confederate strategy: "After these reverses, General Lee, considering 'discretion the better part of valor,' retired to his old position south of the Rapidan, less jubilant than when he audaciously advanced to drive General Meade across the Rappahannock."

After parking the supply wagons at Kelly's Ford, the regiment forded the river and bivouacked at nightfall about three miles away. At 7:00 a.m. the next day (November 9th), the regiment resumed its march and rejoined the brigade at Brandy Station three hours later. At 10:00 p.m. the First Corps marched towards Rappahannock Station, and crossing the Rappahannock, continued on to Bealton. This move proved to be for the purpose of rebuilding the railroad, and the regiment came in "for a full share of this labor." The men were directed to make their quarters as comfortable as possible, and all their spare time was used for this purpose. Most of the men assumed that winter quarters would be located here -- though no order to that effect was issued -- "and went to work with a will to build good comfortable log huts."

The story is told of a captain who extended great effort to construct a suitable dwelling. "He had built a good stone chimney, topped out with brick, laid a good floor of hewed oak plank,

erected a good bed, and completed a table, which hung on the wall to be raised when needed." Most of the officers and many of the men of the 97th did likewise. Hall continues about the particular captain, "Building a comfortable fire that evening, he sat down to enjoy it: and his thoughts were turned upon his home, his family and friends there, and it seemed as though those home comforts were returning, and sharing the general feelings of the regiment he went to bed happy." Hall describes the irony: "At 3 o'clock next morning he [the captain] was awakened from his pleasant slumber with the command, 'Pack up and have your men get their breakfast and be in readiness to march at 7 A.M.' Such are the trials of a soldier!"

At the "appointed hour" (7:00 a.m.) on November 23rd, the 97th marched to near Rappahannock Station and bivouacked. The regiment remained here, picketing along the Rappahannock River until the 26th, when they crossed the river at Culpepper Ford, and bivouacked near it. At dawn the next day the men marched again, first south, then southeast along a plank road, when they reached a large field and came to a rest. Suddenly at 10:00 a.m. a cannonading was heard to the rear, and skirmishing to the front. The firing at the front proved to be an attack by the famed Confederate "guerilla general" John Mosby upon the ammunition and supply wagon train ahead of the 97th. The Union army's guard was marching in back of the train, with a space in between. Consequently, Hall describes, "Mosby's cavalry dashed in from a cross road and captured several wagons before the guard could come up." One or more of the teamsters were killed, and when the 97th arrived a team of mules lay dead in the road ahead of the wagon to which they were harnessed. These wagons and their operators had "proceeded too far to be turned down the cross road," and therefore were slaughtered. Other teamsters were captured with their teams.

Thereafter, the 97th marched with the wagon trains in a single file on each side of the road. This did not make progress easy. "The woods through which we marched was principally a dense undergrowth of pine. Carrying knapsacks, it was difficult for the men to march, especially since the trees were so near each other. Finally, they reached the Orange Plank Road, and continuing on that westerly course a while, the wagon trains were parked and the regiment bivouacked near the road for the night."

Some firing to the front had been heard, but small enough to know that General Warren had not yet made a vigorous attack. General French had lost his way and had not arrived to form as ordered on Warren's right. General Sykes had also failed to arrive on Warren's left. Therefore, all that General Warren could do was to "assume as bold a front as possible" until these troops and the First Corps under General Newton could arrive.

On the morning of November 28th the Confederates were found to have retreated and formed a new line, and the 97th resumed its march at sunrise towards Orange Court House. Hall describes the scenery of the area: "The face of the country on this side of the Rapidan was covered with an almost unbroken forest of thick undergrowth." On the morning of November 29th, "the boys complained about being out of rations." The division marched at the break of day on November 30th to support the Fifth Corps at the edge of some woods facing the

Confederates. Conditions were not comfortable. "The cold was intense, but no fires were allowed, and to keep from freezing the troops marched -- in the woods -- in a circle instead of standing."

At 8:00 a.m., the first cannon was fired, but only a few shots were exchanged. The Confederates fired high and the shells passed over without injuring anyone. Nonetheless, Hall recants,"One [shell] exploded about 20 feet directly over the 97th," and "a substitute who had never before been under fire, dropped to the ground as quick as he would had he been shot. A roar of laughter brought him to his feet about as quick as he went down."

The 97th's skirmish line charged across a creek (Mine Run) which had separated the opposing forces, and "drove in the Confederate skirmishers, but it was glad to get back." The reason they hastened their return was because the water over which they charged was freezing, nearly four feet deep and ten feet across. Hall states, " ... when our men attempted to return they became benumbed and their clothing so frozen that it was found necessary to employ stretcher-bearers to bring some of them off."

The entire brigade then piled their knapsacks and prepared for a charge. The men were instructed to carry their rifles with bayonets fixed, and charge the Confederates when within 30 paces, giving them the "cold steel." General Warren had taken a large escort and had made a close personal recognizance of the Confederate lines. Twenty men were killed or wounded in this endeavor, but sufficient information was gained to consider a Union assault to be "favorable." However, the Confederates shifted their position, shortened their line and built breastworks, which when added to natural defenses, rendered their position "impregnable." General Warren's final report on the strength of the Confederate position was so convincing that General Meade deemed it wise to withdraw, and as Hall states, " ... thus ended the campaign for the season."

Captain Hall provides his analysis of the failure of the Army of the Potomac to achieve commanding victories over the Army of Northern Virginia in the autumn following Gettysburg:

> Subsequent to the battle of Gettysburg, whatever may be said of the hide-and-seek the two opposing armies had played in Virginia, in which the army of the Potomac had the advantage in numbers and the inside track in manoeuvers[sic], Meade cannot be held wholly responsible for his failure to accomplish any striking results. It must be understood that at Washington the same conflicting counsels prevailed which the preceding year had so distracted our armies and brought the country to the verge of dissolution; and, but for the tried and true patriotism which existed in the army of the Potomac worse disasters might have followed. But this army was destined in the near future to get rid mostly of these deplorable influences which hung like an incubus upon it.

During the night of November 30th, the 97th remained on the north side of the turnpike, and though good fires were kept up, the men suffered from the cold weather. The next day the

regiment marched by way of Robinson's Tavern to Germania Ford and bivouacked. On December 2nd they crossed the Rapidan River on a pontoon bridge, and continued on the plank road towards Culpepper, Virginia. Most of the brigade and division were out of rations, but "a very hard tack could be found in the 97th." The fatiguing march continued: "A rest of ten minutes was taken every few miles and thus the march was continued till dark, when the troops bivouacked in a beautiful grove of young timber and went to bed supperless."

General Robinson's division reached the Rappahannock River at Kelly's Ford the next day at 4:00 p.m., and forded the river, "the boys crying hardtack as they passed through the icy water." As soon as the brigade crossed the river, General Baxter hastened to Rappahannock Station for food, and by 8:00 p.m. the rations arrived and immediately issued to the starving brigade. "Never was hard bread more welcome to the boys of the 97th, nor ever better relished by officers and men."

Hall tells the story of the brigade commissary who was himself short on food, and attempted to use his resourcefulness to his own personal advantage:

> Riding off some distance from the troops, to a fine looking residence, he represented himself to the family as an officer of Stuart's Cavalry, disguised in Yankee uniform, the better to watch the movements of the Yankee army. Without a question he was taken into their confidence. All the information they had was readily communicated, and -- better still for the captain -- preparations were at once made for dinner. An old colored woman, who overheard the conversation, unperceived by the family, started off in all haste for the nearest body of soldiers. She was not long in finding someone to listen to her story, and a lieutenant and a squad of men were dispatched to make the arrest. The squad arrived at the house as the officer was sitting down to the table. Expostulation was useless, they had no time for delay, and he yielded himself a prisoner to the guard. Taken before the corps commander, of course he was recognized as Captain Bucklin, commissary of the Second Brigade, but it was Captain Bucklin *without his dinner*.

On December 4th, the Union troops recrossed the Rappahannock River, and went into camp about a mile from the ford where they began to build log huts for winter quarters. Colonel Wheelock returned to the regiment on December 6th, and following completion of winter quarters, the colonel drilled the 97th almost every day. Details for picket duty on the picket line two miles from camp were made every 48 hours. "Such were the general duties of the 97th New York Regiment, Second Brigade, Second Division of the First Corps, and such they continued till the 20th [of December], when orders came to change camp about one mile to the east." Colonel Wheelock laid out the camp, and two days later the 97th marched to its new location.

The men worked all day on their new quarters, returning to their old quarters at night. On the 23rd, the work was renewed, but before noon an order came to stop, pack up, and in a short time the regiment was on the march towards Brandy Station, near which a halt for the night was made. The march resumed the next morning, and after marching four miles the regiment stopped "in a piece of scattering timber, on low, level ground, which was then frozen, and here the 97th

pitched its tents.

Cannonading was soon heard in the direction of Culpepper, and the regiment expected that they would soon be engaged with Confederates, but the Union army's cavalry "dashed in and drove the Confederate cavalry across the Rapidan." That evening's weather soon changed the environs. "At night it began to rain, and on the following morning our camp seemed to be situated on a small lake, with a saving clause of numerous little islands not yet covered." The rained continued, and Colonel Wheelock looked for higher ground, to which he quickly moved his regiment, and on December 28th "its quarters were made as comfortable as possible by shelter-like life in mid-winter."

On December 31st, the 97th was mustered for pay by Colonel Wheelock, and "commandants of companies under great disadvantages began to make out their muster and pay rolls." Before these could be completed the regiment marched to Cedar Mountain, where it again built winter quarters, but remained only a few days to occupy them, when the camp was changed to a mile west of Culpepper, and quarters built finally for the fourth and last time. Here the brigade remained until May 4th.

While winter quarters became stationary, the 97th did not. On February 2, 1864 the regiment rapidly marched to Raccoon Ford, where on February 6th an engagement with the Confederates ensued. However, the fight mostly involved cavalry and artillery. The Confederates had attempted to cross the Rapidan River, but were met and defeated by the prompt action of the Union soldiers, and the next day the 97th started back for camp.

The usual routine duties of camp life were maintained, and on Sundays, "divine service" was generally held by Reverend J. V. Ferguson, the regiment chaplain. Colonel Wheelock encouraged his men to attend. "The attendants were quiet and orderly, manifesting an interest in the exercises."

Aside from the duties of camp life and picketing the Rapidan River -- which was largely performed by cavalry supported by infantry that went by rail to Mitchell Station -- the men involved themselves in amusements to "while away the hours of winter." Hall states that the most noteworthy of these amusements were the plays of a theatrical company which was organized from the various regiments of the brigade. The actors were excused from duty and

allowed to practice and perform on evenings in a hall or opera house at Culpepper which was modified for this purpose. Hall remarks on the quality of the performances: "Talent was displayed here which would have done honor to any theatre in our country."

Captain Hall tells about Colonel Wheelock's altruistic efforts for the family of a fallen soldier from the 97th, originally described by regimental surgeon Dr. George S. Little:

> In the autumn of 1863, a poor fellow from the vicinity of Auburn [New

York] ... was sent to the regiment, a drafted man. He had left behind him a large and destitute family. About Christmas time he fell sick, and was sent to the hospital and soon after died, as much from home sickness as from disease. A day or two after his death, a Christmas box was received from his wife with a brief letter, in which the poor woman stated how hard it was to struggle on with her helpless little ones, but she remembered him these holiday times. The box contained a small fruit cake, a pair of suspenders, a skein of thread and a paper of needles.

The next day after the box arrived and three or four days after his death -- after dress parade -- the colonel [Colonel Wheelock] mounted a stump and shouted to the boys that he had something to say to them. They came running together; when there was a crowd, he said: "Boys, I am going to drop the dignity of colonel for a little time and play auctioneer." He then told them about the box and read the letter which came with it. "Boys, we do not know how soon our families may be in the same fix. This woman seems like a true wife and mother. I propose to do a little for her to smooth the tidings of her husband's death. A comrade of his company offers to give $5.00 for the box, but I think we can do

better." The colonel then cut the cake into forty small pieces and putting one in his pocket, said: "These are 50 cents each, but I will go better and give double for mine." In five minutes they were all gone.

The suspenders were then put up, and by 50 cent bids ran up to $5.00, at which price they were knocked down and paid for. "Put them up again," said the buyer, and this time they brought $7.00, and were put up again and brought the same price, until $19.00 was realized. The skein of thread was divided up and brought $3.00. The bidding so far had been among the enlisted men, the officers standing around enjoying the auction. The colonel then took one of the needles, and turning to one of the captains said: "Young man, these are one dollar apiece," and they were soon disposed of at that figure to the officers. So the poor wife's box, not worth more than a dollar, brought $79.50, and the auctioneer added enough to make it an even $100, and sent it to her with a consoling letter. As the

colonel dismounted from the stump something that looked like tears were seen coursing down his ruddy face, and he remarked, "Boys, when you want an auctioneer send for me."

It is little wonder that Colonel Wheelock was often called the "father of his regiment." While Dr. Little describes Wheelock as "of a sanguine temperament, somewhat brusque in manner," he also states that the colonel "possessed a tender heart and delighted to assist in smoothing the pathway of his men." The above account bears this out.

On March 12, 1864, Ulysses S. Grant was made Lieutenant General and placed in

command of all the armies of the United States. Hall states, “This appointment was received with satisfaction by the Army of the Potomac.”

Chapter XIV: Army of the Potomac Discusses General Grant’s Appointment -- It is Hailed as an Omen of Success if He be Left Alone -- Grant’s Lieutenants -- His Peculiarities -- Reorganization of the Army -- First Corps Merged into the Fifth, Under General Warren -- Break Camp and March Across the Rapidan -- Battle of the Wilderness -- Battle of Spottsylvania

As soon as General Grant’s appointment became known in camp, “speculation was rife as to the wisdom of the order, and it was generally conceded that his record warranted the event, and that he was certain to succeed if he could be let alone: therefore, as a change it was hailed as an omen of success.” Another factor which bode well for Grant’s leadership was the quality of his subordinates: “Under him were some of the ablest lieutenants that ever commanded an army and superior to him [Grant] in many respects, but in one quality he outshone them all, and this element seemed to be just the requisite need to command, at this time ... it was the flexibility of his nature, which fitted every rank and condition of men and every vicissitude of fortune; yet he was firm in convictions of right and duty.” If these words were not sufficiently glowing, Hall further elaborates on Grant’s composition. “Add to this a good intellect, sound judgment, good common sense, discrimination and activity; also, if not brilliant, solid military knowledge, and you have a man whose capacity, with such subordinates, was sufficient for the requirements of any army, and who with the resources of the Government at his bidding had an opportunity to distinguish himself which no other Union general had possessed.”

The negative effect of other Union generals yielding to Washington’s politicians and their uninformed meddling in war strategies was well known. Hall quotes Badeau’s Military History of General Grant in reflecting on this revelation, and Grant’s need to avoid succumbing to political influences in order to advance the Union army’s progress:

> ... the political and personal influences of various sorts and of various individuals which centered at Washington has thwarted some generals, and interfered with all who had commanded the Army of the Potomac since the beginning of the war. It was General Grant’s duty to himself to encounter these difficulties, and to withstand, if he could not prevent, political interference: to remain where he could control all the movements of all the armies, absolutely and independently ... If he remained at the east this was secured, but with the general-in-chief a thousand miles away, the government might be unable to resist entreaties or threats of interested or anxious outsiders, and the best concerted schemes might come to naught ... Unless he was near the capital, he could not control all the operations of all the armies without interruption, and could not carry out the plan that he believed the only one by which the rebellion could be overthrown. In Washington General Grant would not stay in time of war; he must then direct, in person, the campaigns of that renowned Army of the Potomac.

However, in his report to the Federal government directly after the war, Grant says that from the date of his appointment to the command of the armies of the United States, "I may here state that commanding all the armies as I did, I tried as far as possible, to leave General Meade in independent command of the Army of the Potomac. My instructions for that army were all through him, and were general in their nature, leaving all the details and the execution to him."

Grant exhibited a new style of tactics that had heretofore not been seen in a commanding general of the Union army. About two months after Grant's appointment (after the battle of the Wilderness in May, 1864, which Grant lost), it became evident that, contrary to previous Union generals, Grant would take risks. He would not withdraw to "heal the army" following a defeat, but would immediately press "on to Richmond," the Confederate capital. During the battle of the Wilderness, Grant flanked the Confederates towards Richmond. In one bold move he thus broke free of having to guard Washington by threatening the Confederate capital and their base of supplies. From this assertive action the Army of the Potomac took courage. It had grown tired of circulating around Washington, as Hall states, "acting as the body guard of a few presidential aspirants, at a great cost of blood and treasure." Lincoln was also encouraged, stating of Grant simply, "He fights!"

General Grant's change from a defensive to an offensive posture was also consistent with the Union army's overall war effort, as Hall states:

> ... witnessing the plundering of the inhabitants of the loyal [Union] States; and, though the overland experiment proved a costly one, as it progressed and the news from Sherman's great army moving at the same time west from the Alleghenies[sic] -- upon Atlanta -- from time to time reached the Army of the Potomac, Grant knew in its estimation from the fact that he had adopted the original plan of Scott and McClellan, of "carry the war into Africa," and crushing the rebellion upon its own soil between these two armies. This was striking at the head and vitality of the enemy, and it was then believed that Grant would thus grind his [the Confederate] power to atoms.

Also, President Lincoln had by now reached the conclusion that the war should not be commanded by Washington politicians far from the battlefields, but instead by a general in the field who understood the art of war. Further, Grant should have authority of decision over the Secretary of War and the President himself. Secretary of War William Stanton did not yield to Grant without a struggle, in which Grant won the contest, as detailed by the following account:

> It is said, that after General Grant had ordered the Army of the Potomac to march, he called upon Secretary Stanton to take his leave. The latter inquired what troops he had left for the defence[sic] of Washington? The number mentioned in the answer not being deemed sufficient by the war secretary, he said he had anticipated this event and had telegraphed for such and such troops to remain. "But you must understand that I am in command of them, and have

> ordered them forward," said Grant. "Well, well, we will see the president about this matter." Calling upon President Lincoln, Stanton said: "State your case, General." "I have no case to state," said the Lieutenant General. The secretary then related the conversation had at his office. Lincoln gave his chair a hitch and replied: "You and I have tried to manage this business long enough, Secretary Stanton, and I have now left it to a general in the field, and he alone must be held responsible."

Most of the volunteers of the 97th, whose three-year terms of service had expired, reenlisted and were returning during March and April of 1864 from their allotted furloughs of 35 days. Hall expounds on the value of these troops:

> These veterans almost universally were true as steel to their country's cause, and many of them had received scars in different battles; and throughout the army of the Potomac their efficiency was felt, not only on the field, but in assistance to their officers in moulding[sic] the raw recruit.

At the same time, desertions of the newly arrived recruits were a problem for which the benefit of training was lost. Hall states, "...the most costly and unreliable material was the high bounty substitutes. The desertions among this class were alarmingly prevalent." At this time of the war, large desertions of recruits were experienced in almost every regiment of the Army of the Potomac, and were reported to be confined mainly to conscripts and substitutes -- many of the latter being "bounty jumpers" who enlisted under assumed names. Some of these deserted to the Confederates and, returning further west to the Union lines as Confederates, were detected, tried and executed.

Early in April 1864 preparations began to be made for the coming campaign. General Grant reorganized the Army of the Potomac, reducing five corps to three -- the Second, Fifth and Sixth Corps commanded by Major Generals Hancock, Warren and Sedgwick, respectively. Though the First Corps was consolidated with the Fifth under Warren, the identifying badge of the 97th (appearing on their hats and other items) was the white disk of the First Corps with the blue Maltese cross of the Fifth resting on it. In the consolidation, the 97th's brigade and division organizations were retained; the four divisions of the Fifth Corps were commanded by Generals Griffin, Robinson, Crawford and Wadsworth.

At 11:00 p.m. on May 3rd, orders came to pack up, and by midnight the 97th broke camp and marched to Germania Ford, crossing the Rapidan River at noon. The regiment later bivouacked on the plank road near the Wilderness Tavern, five miles from the ford. Early the next morning the 97th, with the brigade, resumed its march, crossing the Orange Turnpike, halting for a time in a field near the Lacy House. From here the 97th could hear skirmishing described as "pretty brisk" west of their position, "and a rapid fire of infantry began about 11

A.M., and continued nearly two hours." The regiment then marched in support of troops engaged in the fighting, gathering behind newly built breastworks which it helped to extend and improve.

Near sunset Baxter's brigade, attached to Wadsworth's division, marched across a valley and into the woods to the rear of the Lacy House in order to support General Hancock's right. The brigade advanced in two lines: the 12th Massachusetts and the 97th New York comprising one line, and the 11th Pennsylvania the other. Confederate skirmishers were soon encountered after entering the woods, and were "crowded back, and a lively fire was maintained till darkness closed the contest." The front line took the brunt of the fire and sustained considerable loss. In the 97th, sixty men were killed or wounded. The "colors" (flags) of individual army units and those who held them ("color bearers") were important, for they identified the location of the unit in battle, and served as a beacon for the men to follow in attack, retreat, or aversive maneuver. Therefore, in describing this battle, Captain Hall finds it significant to note, "The color bearer was shot, and the staff of the colors was struck, and about one-third of it splintered off."

A Union skirmish line was then put forth a short distance to the front of the other troops, who in readiness, "lay upon their arms[rifles] during the night." The Union and Confederate forces were so close to each other that it is said they "drew water from the same brook." The 97th took part in the attack the following morning, driving the Confederates back and observing the carnage from the previous day's battle.

> On the morning of the 6th, at the first glean of daylight, the men were carefully awakened, and hastily snatching a cold bite, they readily obeyed the command to charge. The Confederates were surprised while cooking their corn-bread, and driven a mile or more. Some of their deserted Johnny cakes were grabbed smoking from the fire by the boys in blue, and eagerly devoured as they passed along.
>
> As the Confederates were followed [on] a southerly course, the effects of the death-dealing struggle of the preceding day became manifest. Though pressed back by a powerful and determined foe -- Greek meeting Greek -- Griffin had contested, on that day, every foot of the field. In rear of old logs which evidently had been hastily thrown together, occasionally not more than forty yards apart, the alternate lines of Union and Confederate dead lay with their accoutrements and side arms on -- men and officers -- as they had fallen, undisturbed, save by the bold army "bummer,"[thief] whose presence is ever revealed by the inevitably reversed pocket.

After pressing the Confederates over these lines of "moldering clay" to the plank road, the Union forces made a sweep to the right, following the Confederates to their fortifications. From there the Confederates fired artillery, and the Union forces were ordered to halt in order to reform. Hall says the halt was a "fatal mistake." Despite the fact that the Union "line had got considerably mixed in wheeling to the right in the dense woods ... our men were in good spirits,

while the Confederates were panic stricken, and fled beyond their works." However, as a result of the halt in the Union attack, General Wadsworth's division, to the left of the plank road, was outflanked by the Confederates. Wadsworth was killed, and his division ran in retreat. At this time the 97th was to the right of the road and resting on it. General Baxter was ordered to support Wadsworth's division, but upon moving to the left, he found it completely broken up, without a line to attach his forces. Also, upon being struck by Confederate fire from both the front and side, General Baxter was "obliged to withdraw with considerable loss." Baxter was wounded, and the command of the brigade containing the 97th was given to Brevet Brigadier General Coulter. Hall curtly summarizes the 97th's involvement in this battle: "The ground that was gained in the morning was lost, and that ended our part of the Wilderness battle."

Hall assesses that up until the retreat including the 97th, the "contest on this part of the field" of the Battle of the Wilderness had been between Confederate General Hill and Union General Hancock. However, Confederate General Longstreet's veterans arrived and Hancock was forced back to his entrenched line. The united forces of Hill and Longstreet then made a "fierce attack" upon Hancock's left flank. Hall states regarding Hancock: "[h]e was saved from a rout only by desperate and determined fighting; the situation was critical, for a while, for the entire Union Army." However, Longstreet became wounded (by accident of his own men) and was carried from the field. Following this, and additional Union troops which came to the aid of Hancock, the Confederates withdrew, "satisfied with their own severe punishment."

The fighting in the Battle of the Wilderness was certainly fierce in various locations. Touring the visitor's center just a few miles from the battle site, I saw a photo of a tree 22 inches in diameter that was shot completely in two from musket fire. This battle is known for its close geographic proximity to the battle of Chancellorsville, where men traversed and slept among skeletons of those who had fallen victim almost exactly one year before. The Wilderness battle is also renowned for the fires started by smoldering cloth spewed from cannon and muskets. The cloths ignited the dry leaves and wood within the seven-mile stretch of thick bramble which had given the area the "Wilderness" name. About 200 injured soldiers, unable to escape the fire's path, burned to death.]

The Union forces regrouped following the disorder of their retreat, and on May 8th spent the day in reconnaissance of the Confederate lines. They found them well posted and

strengthened for defense -- awaiting attack. Given this situation and the events of the battle to that point, "Grant determined to get out of the wilderness, for it had not been his choice to fight Lee there."

Accordingly, General Warren, preceded by Sheridan's cavalry, started at 9:00 p.m. for Spottsylvania. Lee soon became aware of this movement and pushed forward Longstreet's corps to oppose the advance of the Union's Fifth Corps and its cavalry escort. The progress of the Fifth Corps, including the 97th New York Volunteers, was slowed by the trees the Confederate cavalry had felled across the road. Sheridan's cavalry had a fight with the Confederates here, but soon cleared the road of obstructions. This delay enabled Longstreet's corps to take position and

place their guns on a ridge beyond the River Ny. He was thus prepared to "sweep" the advancing Union columns with cannon fire.

Union General Robinson -- in advance -- upon his arrival at the Alsop farm, pushed Baxter's brigade immediately forward, crowding back the Confederate skirmish line to the hill beyond the Alsop house, expecting to only meet dismounted cavalry. However, the Union brigade was "struck with such a tremendous fire of artillery and infantry that the Federals recoiled and fell back in some confusion." Robinson came to assist the brigade with the remainder of his division and was leading his men to the assault when he was severely wounded by a minnie bullet. The overpowering numbers of Longstreet's corps swept his division from the field, as well as that of Griffin. The command of the division thus devolved upon Colonel Coulter.

In his report of this engagement at Spottsylvania, Coulter says:

> During the advance General Robinson was severely wounded and taken from the field. His being disabled at this junction was a severe blow to the division, and certainly influenced the fortunes of the day. The want of our commanding officer prevented that concert of action which alone could have overcome the enemy in front.

On the condition of Robinson's division as they entered the battle, Coulter comments:

> I may here remark that the division from date of leaving Culpepper had been labored to its utmost ability, either marching, engaged with the enemy, or employed in the erection of defensive works. It had also marched the entire night previous to and went into this action without having had either rest or refreshment.

Following the retreat of Robinson's and Griffin's divisions, General Warren and his staff came upon the field, followed by the remainder of his corps. Hall states that Warren's appearance and actions soon brought order to the situation: "His [Warren's] presence, activity and gallant bearing soon restored order: forming his lines to the left and rear of the Alsop farm, and seizing a flag and rushing forward he arrested the retreat and began at once to intrench."

Later in the day (General Sedgwick having arrived), a part of the Union's Sixth Corps made an assault on a less secure portion of the Confederate force, and succeeded in forcing back their first line. Each side lost about 1,500 men in the assault. The next morning the brigade was moved to the left and dug in. From the position of the 97th, they could see a Confederate wagon train about two miles ahead of them, and "it was one and a half hours in passing a given point."

The 97th could also see an old building frame, west of the Alsop house. On one of its beams was a Confederate sharpshooter, attempting to pick off artillerymen at a long distance, described as follows:

> A post in the direction to which he directed his fire extended upwards from the end of the beam, shielding him in that direction from observation and from any opposing sharp-shooter. At intervals of from five to ten minutes was seen from his rifle a puff of smoke. It was said that he was firing at some artillerymen who were planting a battery to our right, in a northerly direction from his position. This sharpshooter was apparently a mile from our position and not far from half that distance from where the battery was being planted.

It was soon reported along the line of Union troops that Union General Sedgwick was killed. Hall states, "His death created a deep and lasting sensation throughout the army. By the fall of one man no greater calamity could have happened."

On the morning of May 10th, the 97th had its first cooked food in days. "The regiment had remained many days from day to day on the march and in its trenches under arms and cooking was out of the question." Later in the morning the entire regiment was ordered forward on picket, and just before sunset the 97th was combined with other troops into a large column four lines deep, in order to make a charge upon the Confederate soldiers of General A.P. Hill. The 97th was in the last line.

The columns moved forward, each line of soldiers only six feet from the line in front of them. Upon nearing the edge of a woods toward the Confederate position, all except the front line of Union troops was ordered to lie on the ground as a protective measure. The first line of blue began to moved forward, when suddenly, "a line of Confederates, springing suddenly to their feet, fired into their faces." As a consequence, the survivors of the first line fell backwards, just as the line of soldiers behind them was rising, with likewise effect reverberating to the rear line, toppling the soldiers like dominos. Captain Hall describes the scene:

> ...this accumulating mass struck the fourth [line] like with the power of an avalanche and the whole was borne down the slope with the rush and roar of a cataract ... But before our works were reached the mass had become somewhat separated and their speed began to slacken, and the officers had regained their breath, which at the onset was knocked out of them. These now began to be heard from in loud tones of authority, commanding a halt, which was obeyed by most of the men when they had gained their fortifications. A few went beyond but were soon returned by mounted officers and orderlies.

Finally regaining their composure and pride, Hall states, "Our works were again well manned; not a musket had been thrown away; and if the enemy had made an assault he would have met a warm reception." It was now twilight, and a line of skirmishers was immediately sent forward from the fortified works, but the Confederates realized the 97th and their comrades now occupied a defensive posture.

Captain Hall muses on the regiment's retreat with "20/20 hindsight":

> The officer in command of our column should not have hesitated, but gone boldly forward, then he would have followed the advance line of the enemy to his works; or if an attack was expected or deemed probable he should have halted his lines at supporting distances only, then the first would have been stopped by the bayonets of the second. A temporary panic or retreat by a first line under similar circumstances will occasionally occur, but if the second shall be at sufficient distance to get ready in time, the former will be caught and the men recover and become efficient.

After his attacks around Spottsylvania failed to bring decisive results, on May 11, 1864, General Grant dispatched a message to Washington stating that the Union army had ended the sixth day of very heavy fighting, and that, "The result, to this time, is much in our favor." While acknowledging heavy Union losses, he surmised the Confederate losses higher, and claimed to have taken over 5,000 prisoners -- with the Confederates capturing "but few, except stragglers." Further, Grant wrote, "I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer."

In his summary report of the brigade's casualties from May 5th to May 8th, Brevet Brigadier General Coulter indicated the 97th's casualties to be 143 -- 23 killed, 101 wounded and 19 missing. Hall clarifies that, "Many of the missing in action were among those killed in the dense wilderness, but not found." First Lieutenant William Dresher of Company D was among the killed, and Major Charles Northup among the wounded.

About 5:00 p.m. on May 11th, the right of the brigade line was moved back and fortified. "The night was rainy, but the men worked with a will and at daybreak the works were completed." This defensive change was made to correspond to the Confederate position. Early the next day, "a tremendous cannonading and rattle of musketry" occurred to 97th's left. It was soon reported along the line that Union General Hancock had captured a part of Confederate General Ewell's corps and almost all of Johnson's division (including Generals Johnson and Stuart). "Lee himself barely escaped."

Soon thereafter, Union General Baxter's brigade was ordered to the support of the Pennsylvania reserves in making a charge upon the Confederate works, but the charge was unsuccessful and ended in "considerable loss," because "[the] enemy were too strongly posted to be taken by a common assault." The 97th lost 12 men in this endeavor. On the night of May 14th, General Warren moved to the left and occupied a position east of Spottsylvania Courthouse. Two days later a telegram was read to the 97th that 22,000 fresh troops were on their way from Washington to join the Army of the Potomac.

After a couple of days of relative calm between the opposing armies, the 97th was ordered out as skirmishers led by Isaac Hall. They advanced cautiously, not knowing the Confederate position until exchanging rifle fire in some woods. Soon thereafter, "considerable cannonading was carried on between our detached divisions and the opposing lines of the

enemy." At dusk, the regiment was relieved by the 83rd New York. This was fortunate timing for the 97th, for scarcely had they arrived in camp when a "spirited attack was made upon the 83d, driving it back in some confusion, some of its men taking shelter in rear of our works." Colonel Coulter ran out to rally the line and succeeded in restoring order to some extent, when he was severely wounded in the chest and brought out on a stretcher.

Part of the Union's Second Corps passed the 97th on May 19th, indicating another flank movement was in progress, and at 6:00 p.m. rapid infantry fire was heard near the Fredericksburg Turnpike. The Second Division, including the 97th Regiment, was immediately ordered to pack up, and in ten minutes was marching to the scene of the action. However, the Confederates had been repulsed and the fight was over before they got there -- having marched over two miles. It was discovered the engagement was an attack upon Union General Tyler's division, composed mainly of the First Massachusetts and Sixth New York Heavy Artillery regiments drawn from the defenses of Washington and used as infantry. "This was their first contest and they made a gallant fight, and lost heavily, winning the admiration of veteran troops." They fought to their front and rear at the same time "with such a determination that

they were obliged to divest themselves of their heavy laden knapsacks, which were strewn along the road for nearly a half mile over which the 97th marched." The veterans of the 97th quickly determined that these were new troops by their surplus baggage.

Chapter XV: March to the North Anna -- Grant Flanks Again and Crosses the Pamunky -- Change of Base to White House -- Battle of Tolopotomy Creek -- Battle of Bethesda Church -- Battle of Cold Harbor -- Crossing the Chickahominy -- Battle of White Oak Swamp -- March to the James -- March to Petersburg

At 11:00 a.m. on May 21, 1864, the 97th was on the march again for Richmond, proceeding rapidly to and crossing the Po River where they bivouacked for the night. The Confederate cavalry had attempted to burn the bridge crossing the Po prior to the 97th's arrival "but were foiled by the interposition of General Grant's staff, who dashed forward and saved it." Skirmish fire occurred as the Union soldiers sought the location of the Confederates and pushed them back. The next day the brigade advanced in line of battle headed northeast for about four miles. Strong skirmish lines were sent out to the front and sides of the column in order to detect and ward off attack by the "Johnny Rebs" as they marched towards the North Anna River. Nearing darkness, the 97th halted to guard a wagon train "procuring forage." At 6:00 a.m. on May 23, the march continued and in a couple of hours the column passed the Mount Carmel Church, surrounded by a cluster of trees, and soon after emerged in open country near the North Anna River.

In preparing to cross the North Anna, the 97th had their first sight of their new division commander, General Crawford, who commanded the Third Division into which the Second Division had been subsumed. It was not long until they saw their new commander in action:

> Shortly after arms had been stacked and before the pontoon bridge had been completed, a Confederate battery upon our left having an enfilading fire upon our column, opened with shells upon our position. General Crawford and his staff, clapping spurs to their horses, were off without a parting adieu; not an order was left for the action of our division. But it was composed of undaunted troops who knew how to take care of themselves: however, the impress of this example was never effaced from the memory of Baxter's brigade; it was in too striking contrast to the gallantry of our late division and brigade commanders.

Nevertheless, it is said that despite their new commander fleeing the scene, "No demoralization occurred in the brigade." Some soldiers broke from the ranks and took shelter under the river bank, "but the boys of the 97th, taking their arms, stood firm under the cheer of their officers till General Warren had crossed his artillery and silenced the enemy's guns." Even the boys in the instrumental band remained in their position until advised to withdraw -- following the example of the 97th. The artillery fire continued for about 20 minutes. However, most of the Confederate shells hit high and no casualties occurred in the 97th, though they tore up the ground in the regiment's front and rear. It is ironic that most of the killed were shifting positions to avoid being hit. It is surmised that the shelling was directed more at the pontoon bridge being built, than at Baxter's brigade.

Captain Hall comments that had the brigade been under infantry fire for this length of time, it would be likely that one-third of its force would have been killed or wounded, "yet, men are often more demoralized by shot and shell and the sound of artillery than by the destructive fire of infantry." The shelling had been so sudden and rapid that horses broke from their fastenings and ran around the fields, and several steeds were lost.

The brigade was soon moved to support Colonel Coulter, and pushing back the Confederates, the Union soldiers advanced to some woods and lay upon their arms during the night. On May 24th the Union's Sixth and Ninth Corps connected so the "blue line" now formed a circle, with portions resting on the North Anna River. Below, General Hancock crossed the river without difficulty, but the banks were so high and rocky in Burnside's front that

he was unable to cross. Consequently, General Lee's center rested upon a bow in the river, with his flanks protected by natural barriers of a swamp on one side and the Little River on the other. This was a strategic position which Lee would hold. Hall states:

> Lee's position to Grant's was similar to that of Meade's to Lee's at Gettysburg, with this additional disadvantage here to Grant of a necessity of crossing the river twice to reenforce either wing. And the Lieutenant General [Grant] by careful examination found that there was no alternative but to attack the enemy in his strong chosen position -- strongly fortified -- or execute another flank movement, and wisely chose the latter.
>
> Therefore, Grant's right was first withdrawn, and Crawford's division left its trenches at

8:00 p.m. on May 26th, quietly re-crossed the North Anna, and marched east and south along back roads until morning. The 97th continued the march, and on May 28th crossed the Pamunky River at Hanovertown, Virginia, forming a line on Dr. Talley's plantation. The town of White House was now Grant's base and here he stayed unmolested until he marched to the James River.

At 5:00 p.m., 160 men of the 97th were detailed for picket duty, advancing nearly a mile to the front under the command of Captain Isaac Hall. They remained on duty until 9:00 the next morning when they rejoined the brigade as it advanced further towards the front. Arriving near the Confederate lines at Tolopotomy Creek, the brigade was moved from one area to another several times during the day, sometimes under fire. On May 29th the 97th encamped within 200 yards of the tomb of Patrick Henry, the great patriot and orator of the Revolution famed for "Give me liberty or give me death." Captain Hall was very discouraged by the neglect of Henry's tomb, overgrown with briars and a crumbled surrounding brick wall. He thought this was not a proper tribute to "the spot where sleeps one of the greatest orators the world ever knew."

The next afternoon, after hearing "a lively fire of infantry," the brigade including the 97th encountered a part of a Maryland brigade which was "met with disorder coming from the field" near Bethesda Church. The brigade immediately put forward a strong line and, after a "sharp contest," the Confederates under General Rhodes were driven back. During this encounter which lasted nearly an hour, " ... the loss in our brigade was considerable but not heavy." Large numbers of Confederates were discovered, and preparations for battle were made.

The 97th lay in rear of its breastworks on the night of May 30th, and before dawn, some "lively skirmish firing" occurred to their front. "The boys of the regiment hearing the hiss of bullets over them, sprang up and were ready to repel an attack, but the enemy soon retired ..." As another example of "rough and readiness," a story is cited exemplifying the quick thinking and action of Union Fifth Corps commander General Warren:

> One morning, while a captain of the 97th was in command of the skirmish line [Captain Hall as described above], which was in an open field in the proximity to a piece of woods near the Bethesda church, sitting with his back against a tree taking notes on this pocket diary, he heard the rattle of a sabre. Looking up he was surprised to behold General Warren near him in the act of bringing his glass to his eyes -- just at that moment he heard the loud report of a cannon near the enemy's skirmish line, and at the same instant came the rattle of a charge of canister into the edge of the woods close to their position. Warren about faced -- and in three minutes three of his guns unlimbered at a point near where he had stood and their fire was concentrated on the position of the enemy. When the smoke had cleared away all that was seen was a few dead men and horses, a broken caisson, and the gun, which stood naked and alone, a little in advance, where it remained during the day. The living, if any, had disappeared.

On the morning of June 1st it was discovered that the Confederates had withdrawn their

skirmish line and moved nearly a mile from the Union front. The brigade advanced until they found the Confederates entrenched in a strip of woods on the far side of a large field. A halt was made and the boys in blue entrenched. Near dusk the march resumed with a flanking movement, and by a circuitous route the regiment marched nearly to the Cold Harbor Road and spent the rest of the night digging trenches. The following day the 83rd New York was put forth as skirmishers, but the Confederates soon strengthened their line and drove the 83rd back to their trenches. Hall states that the 97th could not tolerate this retreat. "This was too much for the boys of the 97th to submit to, and permission was given for some to volunteer from each company to drive them back, which work -- with the 83d -- they performed in ten minutes."

The Sixth Corps and the Eighteenth Corps (a reenforcement of 10,000 men which had been detached from Butler's command and shipped to the Army of the Potomac) were ordered to force back the Confederates in front of them so as to open a passage across the Chickahominy River. This force moved forward at 4:00 p.m., overcoming the advance line of Confederates,

and capturing 400 prisoners. However, they were unable to take the second Confederate line, and lost 2,000 killed and wounded. Nevertheless, the Union soldiers held the ground gained, and strongly entrenched themselves.

During the night of June 2nd, preparations for various flanking movements were made by Union Generals Hancock, Warren, Smith and Burnside. They intended to engage when the sun came up. Such movements Hall describes as "always critical in open day in face of a vigilant enemy." However, prior to initiating the movements, Warren's left was attacked, and 400 of his men captured. At the same time, the Confederate corps under Longstreet (Anderson in command) was making movements in response.

On June 3, 1864, the entire Union force present at Cold Harbor moved forward to attack the Confederate works. The Confederates were heavily entrenched on naturally defensive landscape, and very much ready for the Union attack, for which the Union forces paid dearly.

The battle began as follows:

> Hancock and Wright having the shorter distance to traverse, and holding the key to the position, soon gained some vantage ground, but were met with such a deadly fire that they were obliged to retire. Barlow's division, of Hancock's corps, succeeded in carrying a part of the enemy's position and captured several hundred prisoners, but his success was of short duration, when he was forced back, though but a short distance, where taking advantage of the ground, he quickly and so thoroughly intrenched that the enemy could not dislodge him. Hancock's whole corps was repulsed with heavy loss.

Without taking the Confederate left flank, "Nothing more than holding the enemy in their front could scarcely have been expected of Smith, Warren and Burnside." General Burnside was

in the best position to attack the Confederate left, so he did so with a heavy cannonade, preparatory to an advance should the infantry attack in front be prolonged. However, this assault "ended in a few minutes after it began with the blood of 10,000 troops of the flower of the army of the Potomac saturating the soil: yet this slaughter was suffered by repeated charges till our veterans utterly refused to obey the mandate of him who ordered it." As stated in Greeley's American Conflict, the Union soldiers simply "knew that success was hopeless, and the attempt to gain it murderous; hence they refused to be sacrificed to no purpose." The Army of the Potomac refused to obey the slaughterous commands like those they earlier had obeyed at Fredericksburg. After the war, General Grant said that his greatest regret of command was ordering the third assault at Cold Harbor.

While the Union army had not gained any Confederate works, a part of General Gibbon's division (Colonel McKean's brigade) was so close to them and so strongly entrenched that the Union soldiers could not withdraw "without certain destruction," nor could they be dislodged from their trenches. The rebels tried to overcome these soldiers, and Confederate officers could be heard encouraging their double columns of soldiers by understating the numbers of the boys in blue by three to four hundred. "But the moment the rebels showed themselves above the parapet, a line of fire flashed out from behind the earthen mound, where the 800 heroes stood in a new Thermopylae [ancient Greece battle scene in which the Persians destroyed the Spartan army], and many a rebel threw up his arms and fell prone, under their swift avenging bullets." While the rebels dared not venture out to assail McKean's men, neither could McKean's brigade recede from the "perilous position." To overcome this dilemma, the Union line behind McKean ingeniously dug a 'sap,' or zigzag trench, from their position to McKean's. By this method, a working party was able to dig to the trapped soldiers, "begrimed with powder, and worn down with fatigue," and bring them safely away. McKean, their leader, was not one of the survivors.

General Lee ordered a surprise attack on the night of June 4th "as the dim light of the moon in early evening favored it." Hall surmises that Lee thought that the repeated defeats and heavy losses of the Union army had demoralized it, and that this was the time to strike. However, Hall concludes that Lee "paid dearly for his rashness":

> The approach of his [Lee's] heavy sombre columns first reached the ear, then the eye of Hancock's veterans, and their avenging bullets met the defiant yells of the Confederate hosts, and quenched them in the dust, though accomplishing all that mortal man could do. All along our line General Lee suffered a terrible repulse.

The attack was not repeated, and "this ended the work of that day, and virtually the battle of Cold Harbor." Slight attacks were made to the 97th's right and left, which were easily repulsed. Soon thereafter, a truce of two hours was called to bury the dead and care for the wounded between the lines, but the wounded had lain four days without attention, and all but two had died.

On the morning of June 4th, a captain, two lieutenants (A. H. Van Deusen and John

Koch) of the 97th and a hundred men were detailed to relieve the skirmish line in front of the regiment. However, delay brought troubled results. This detail was ordered out at 3 A.M., but the 1st sergeants were so dilatory in getting out their respective squads that the day had begun to break before the line advanced, consequently firing from the enemy's line began before the rifle pits were reached. A sharp firing was kept up between the opposing lines throughout the day, and frequent shots during the night.

This line expected to be relieved in twenty-four hours -- as was usual -- from the time it went on duty, and had supplied itself accordingly. But when morning broke and no relief came, and at noon, while Lieutenant John Koch, in charge of the left of the line, was talking the matter over at headquarters of the captain in command, Colonel Pray, division officer of the picket, approached and said he had relieved the pickets of his brigade that morning, and sent word to the Second Brigade commander to do likewise. He made inquiry in regard to the left of the line, which extended in the woods. The captain offered to show him its locality, but Lieutenant Koch said he would point out the line, as he was more conversant with its situation, and the two started off together. In ten minutes Pray returned with the report that Koch was killed. It seems they had proceeded only a short distance, when halting, the lieutenant was pointing out the course of the enemy's line, when he was shot through both lungs and instantly killed.

In some places, the lines of the opposing armies were not more than 125 yards apart, "and in front of the captain's headquarters the enemy could be reached by the rifles of our men." On the morning of June 5th, men within the Confederate's main line were seen "standing or lounging carelessly about," watching their skirmishers out ahead of them firing every so often at some exposed portion of the Union line. The 97th sought to "return the favor" in good measure:

> ... the boys of the 97th were too eager to content themselves with occasional shots; so elevating their sights they fired where the enemy was more plenty and more exposed. The inmates of a dwelling house just to the rear of the enemy's works, who were lounging about the dooryard first showed their appreciation of this marked attention by running inside: then the Confederates in rear of their fortifications exhibited their extreme politeness by bowing gracefully to the call; finally, not a man was to be seen in rear of their lines unless out on urgent business which required a double-quick [trot] for its dispatch.
>
> Further to the right the respective rifle pits were at greater distance apart than the enemy's main line from our centre. Here at one of his pits stood a "Johnny" upon his mound, satisfied apparently to get a glimpse at a live "Yank" which a shot from his smooth-bore could not reach. Seeing a couple of our boys -- crack shots -- ready to pay their respects to him, he "about faced" and bending forward towards his pit made signs as much as to say "hit me if you can." Though the distance was great -- about 400 yards -- the boys had prepared for it and they fired. They had the satisfaction of seeing him plunge, head first, into his pit, from which he did not reappear.

After the visit of Colonel Pray, a call to be relieved was sent to the commander of the 97th, but no relief came until 10:30 p.m. "and such was the sharpness of the enemy's fire that it was one o'clock next morning before this duty was fully performed." The Fifth Corps was now moving towards the Chickahominy and the entire line of pickets was withdrawn before sunrise. On this outpost duty of the 97th, one lieutenant and four men were killed and five men were wounded. Greeley's details the particular factors which Lee used to his advantage at Cold Harbor, and which the "on to Richmond" scheme under Grant ignored. These factors were Confederate fortifications, in addition to weather and troop losses:

> Lee not only had a very good position naturally, but he knew how to make the most of his advantages -- the single point in which (but it was a vital one) his admirers can justify their claim for him of a rare military genius. No other American has ever so thoroughly appreciated and so readily seized the enormous advantage which the increased range, precision, and efficiency given to musketry by rifling, have insured to the defensive, when wielded by a commander who knows how speedily a trench may be dug and a slight breastwork thrown up which will stop nine-tenths of the bullets that would otherwise draw blood. The lessons of Bunker Hill and New Orleans, impressive as they were, must have been terribly so had our countrymen been armed with the Enfield rifle or Springfield musket of today.

Following the battle of Cold Harbor, the Union army waited for development of operations by the cavalry which had been sent around the Confederates. On the morning of June 11th, the Army of the Potomac flanked towards the James River. Preceded by Union cavalry, Warren's Corps (containing the 97th regiment) crossed on Long Bridge on the night of June 12th, and moved to the right to control the roads leading to the James, and provide defensive cover for the wagon trains and the rest of the army crossing at and below Jones' Bridge.

The Second Brigade, including the 97th, proceeded nearly three miles further up the river, near Bottom's Bridge, and forming a line facing the passage through White Oak Swamp, and began entrenching. "The men had scarcely begun to fortify when the line was opened upon by artillery from the enemy's fortification on the other side of the swamp: sharp-shooters also sent their compliments from their safe retreat on the other side." The brigade soon protected itself with earthworks, but not before it had suffered "considerable loss." In the 97th, one man was killed and six were wounded. Of the wounded, Dwight Stannard and David Green each lost an arm, and one lost a leg -- carried away by a solid cannon shot.

The brigade's position was held until evening, at which time the rest of the Union army was well on its way toward the James River. The brigade followed as rear guard under General Warren. "As the shades of evening closed in the enemy made a determined effort to break his [Warren's] line, but he [the Confederates] were repulsed and the march continued unmolested through the night." The troops bivouacked near Charles City Court House, Virginia. On the morning of June 16th the 97th marched to the James, and crossed it with the brigade on the

Steamers “James Brooks” and “Joseph Powell.” After the entire Fifth Corps had crossed the river, the march was continued towards Petersburg, bivouacking near Prince George Court House at midnight.

Hall comments on the apparently pointless Union losses at Cold Harbor, and other battles costing many men under Grant in his “on to Richmond” campaign:

> If the object -- as alleged -- of shipping Smith’s corps from General Butler’s command to the Army of the Potomac, and the combined attack of these forces upon the enemy’s strong position at Cold Harbor, were for the purpose of affording General Meade a safe passage to the James [r]iver, after the loss of 13,153 of his command, and the 18th Corps departed, we fail to see wherein the safety of his transit was more secure than before the attack was made.

The Surgeon General of U.S.A. reports the losses in the Army of the Potomac, up to crossing the Chickahominy, as follows:

Wilderness, Va., May 5th to 7th, 1864. -- Union losses: Killed, 5,597; wounded, 21,463; missing, 10,677; total, 37,737. Confederate total, 11,400.

Spottsylvania, Va., May 8th to 21st, 1864. -- Union losses: Killed, 4,177; wounded, 19,687; missing, 2,577; total, 26,441. Confederate total, 9,000.

Cold Harbor, Va., May 28th to June 3d, 1864. -- Union losses: 13,000 [approx.]. Confederate about 1,000.

Total Union loss: 77,178. Confederate total: 21,400.

Taking into consideration those disabled by sickness in such a trying campaign, it is fair to compute, would swell the aggregate to at least 100,000. The loss in material was [also] immense. Replacements filled the losses in Union soldiers, which the South could not similarly recoup. This imparted confidence, at least to the new recruits, because of the sheer numerical advantage of the Union to the Confederate army:

> Although a host of tried and true officers and men of the Army of the Potomac had been left along its bloody trail, from the Rapidan to the Chickahominy, its continual supply had kept up its numerical force, imparting confidence to such of the survivors as failed to appreciate the difference between veteran troops and raw substitutes. The enemy felt the blows administered, like those of an overtowering giant, and they were not devoid of effect.

At the same time, Captain Hall felt it wasteful to lose so many soldiers, despite the Union’s numerical superiority. He believed the same Union advantages could have been gained without fighting the Confederates where they were entrenched in excellent defensive positions.

To Hall, Grant's report that the Confederate loss was at least as large in relation to the smaller Confederate army was a hollow victory for the dead Union soldiers:

> A correct recorder of history, as far as his statements of the transactions of the field are concerned, whose facile pen was prone to give color to the truthfulness of his statements -- where his feelings were enlisted -- to fit selfish ends, in answer to the question of General Grant's march to the Chickahominy or the James, "Why not embark his army at once for City Point?" says: The question not only ignores the rebel losses in the course of his movement -- losses which were at least as large in proportion to their resources as ours -- but ignores also the obvious fact that Lee's army around Richmond, hard pressed by a superior force, was no peril to Washington and the loyal States: whereas, to leave it on the Rapidan and take ship for the James was either to make the enemy a present of our capital, with its immense stores of every warlike material ... Lee at Richmond, with the country northward to the Potomac thoroughly exhausted and devastated, could not reach Washington at all without abandoning Richmond to its fate: and corps after corps of our army could be transferred to the Potomac in less than half the time required for a march of the rebel forces to Centerville.
>
> It is a trite saying, universally admitted, that "discretion is the better part of valor," then is it discreet to carry on a war where the enemy's loss is only -- "at least as large in proportion to his resources as ours?"

Grant continued with his steady press towards Richmond, fighting the Confederates where they were and sustaining heavy Union losses, while inflicting proportional losses on the Confederates that could not be replaced. Grant did not retreat in defense of Washington, but left it relatively undefended -- creating the lure of a "present" for the Confederates to grasp at as Grant surrounded the Confederate capital of Richmond. Hall describes this strategy:

> General Grant -- though not the greatest of American generals -- before he was placed in chief command of our armies had said: "The true way to Richmond was by approaching from the south," and after losing one-third of his force in the battle of the Wilderness, he showed his disregard for the "regency" and of their ideas of keeping his army between the enemy and the Federal Capital, by cutting loose from his base on the Rapidan, and leaving the enemy there to march to Washington, while he moved around his flank and marched on Richmond. But Lee was too good a general to covet the "present of our capital" at such risk to the destruction of his army, and he did as he had done in the spring of '62, while in front of Washington, he threw his army again between the Federal army and Richmond. This offer to Lee of the "present of our capital" was repeated at the North Anna and the Chickahominy, and all the way along to Appomattox, where the Confederate army was surrendered, while between the Federal army and Washington.

Grant also told Major General Halleck in Washington that he was sending General Sheridan to command troops south of the Confederates, vigorously pursuing the southern army at every opportunity. This met the objection of Washington bureaucrats and politicians, who feared for defense of their capital. Lincoln caught sight of Grant's dispatch to Halleck and informed Grant (in his characteristic style) that he agreed with Grant's aggressive tactics:

> Lieutenant General Grant,
> City Point, Va.:
>
> I have seen your dispatch in which you say, "I want Sheridan put in command of all the troops in the field, with instructions to put himself south of the enemy, and follow him to the death. Wherever the enemy goes let our troops go also." This, I think, is exactly right, as to how our forces should move. But please look over the dispatches you have received from here, even since you made that order, and discover, if you can, that there is any idea in the head of any one here, of "putting our army *south* of the enemy," or of following "him to the *death*," in any direction. I repeat to you it will neither be done nor attempted unless you watch it every day and hour, and force it.
>
> "A. Lincoln"

Chapter XVI: The Army Formed Around the Defenses of Petersburg -- Assault Upon the Enemy's Works -- A Charge of the 97th and 104th N.Y. into the Northern & Pacific Railroad Cut -- General Grant's Tenacious Strength of Purpose and Superior Judgment -- Morale of the Army -- News of Unsuccessful Termination of Wilson's Raid -- Springing the Mine Under Confederate Fort

On the morning of June 14th, the Union army formed around the defenses of Petersburg, Virginia. General Warren formed his corps on the left of Burnside, and near dusk the 97th's division was sent to assist part of the Ninth Corps in an assault upon the Confederate works. This assault was made just before sunset, mainly by the Third Division of the Fifth Corps, and "was repulsed with considerable loss." The attack lasted until late in the evening, when the division finally withdrew into a ravine and lay upon its arms the remainder of the night.

The next day at about 5:00 p.m., the 97th and the 104 N.Y. were directed by the army's flank along a board fence of the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad. They did this in preparation for a charge into a railroad cut, in which Confederates were positioned, so as to drive them out. Hall describes:

> With bayonets fixed and without firing a shot, when the order was given these regiments sprang over the fence while the Confederate fire rattling upon it was directed upon them, and dashed down the declivity into the railroad cut. The Confederates held their ground until our line was within thirty yards of them,

> when they left for their main works about four hundred yards distant. They had nearly 100 yards to traverse before reaching a strip of timbered land on the side of a bluff, and under the fire of our line they made the best of time to reach this place of shelter.

Captain Hall indicates that although the Confederates were on the run from the attacking soldiers, if a whole division or even a brigade had been used instead of just two regiments, the results would have been different. Hall states that if greater numbers of attackers had been employed, the "outer line" of Confederates "could have been carried," because the Confederate artillery had been moved to an inner line. Thus, while the outer line was thin, it was well extended and curved towards the attackers' approach. The Union plan was for the 104th to proceed in advance, supported by the 97th. "At the word of command" the column moved briskly forward, but when they emerged from a strip of timber, they were struck by enfilading rifle fire from the Confederate line on their front and side. The 104th dropped behind a gentle slope which shielded them from the Confederates.

The 97th, following this example, also dropped down and closed up to the 104th. "For half an hour or more these regiments thus lay: the men and officers knowing the utter impracticability of carrying, unsupported on its flanks, a line of works strongly fortified and manned by an extended line on either hand, hesitated to go forward." Nevertheless, the order to charge the Confederate works had been given "and being veteran troops they felt the responsibility of its execution." Initiative by the 97th spurred the advance under these difficult conditions:

> While to the rear of the 97th, the officer in command and the adjutant were urging the regiment to go forward, a captain on the right sprang to his feet and swinging his sword said: "Boys of the 97th, follow me!" One man [Evan Evans] followed close to his heels, and as he looked over his shoulder he saw most of his regiment and part of the 104th coming in broken lines over the field made dusty by the enemy's bullets. As he neared a low rail fence, about 100 yards from the enemy's fortifications, he halted in the rear of a pile of rails and waited the closing up of his regiment. In three minutes the color bearer of the 97th was by his side, and his regiment had arrived at the fence and kept the Confederates down by its well directed fire.

As evening fell, the two Union regiments were withdrawn, suffering some loss in retiring. John Ellisbur of Company A was killed while retiring, and Lieutenant A. H. Van Deusen was wounded. Captain Hall states that even if part of the Confederate outer line had been taken, the Confederates' inner line next to well-posted cannon would have rendered the Union position untenable. Hall surmises that the only reason that any "rational general" would order just two regiments in this engagement was to determine whether the withdrawal of the main body of Confederate soldiers and their cannon had occurred. Even in the most positive terms, it was a risk and waste of men for information which could be gathered by other means. Hall looks back on the difficult battles of the previous six weeks, and despite their losses, comments upon the

morale of the men and their faith in General Grant:

> While taking a retrospective view of the hardships endured for the six preceding weeks by the Army of the Potomac, it was surprising to note its morale and bouyant[sic] hope for the future. Amid the thin, hardened sun burnt features of the men of the army, could be witnessed a gleam of satisfaction that nothing but the true spirit of a patriot could feel and which was as unconquerable as the granite hills of the north. Grant's tactics had been hard to follow, with scarcely a success to mitigate their severity, still the elastic vigor and fixed determination not to yield pervaded the remaining veterans of this army. Its faith in General Grant's ultimate success was unshaken. There was nothing it had so much reason to dread as a change in commanders: and these patriotic men felt that Grant was honest in his endeavor and determined to win, consequently he had gained their confidence and they were content, and gratified that he held supreme control.

At the same time, given General Grant's reputation, it astounded many that he allowed General Butler to lead the attack on Petersburg, instead of one of the many "fine and experienced generals of the Army of the Potomac." According to Hall, certain evidence also indicates that the prime generals of the army were not even notified of the plan to attack:

> When his [Grant's] efficiency is properly understood, it requires no little stretch of the imagination to conceive that General Grant's blunder in trusting the execution of his order to capture Petersburg, to General Butler's department, instead of his tried and true officers of the Army of the Potomac, was an original idea of his own. His firm grip upon his antagonist [Lee's army] all the way from the Wilderness to the Chickahominy, indicates no such even as the looseness of this concluding act. Swinton in his history says: "There is on file in the archives of the army, a paper bearing this indorsement by General Meade: 'Had General Hancock or myself known that Petersburg was to be attacked, Petersburg would have fallen.'"

In the meantime, General Grant's efficient cavalry general, Sheridan, on the north of the James River, had been sent to Charlottesville with two divisions of cavalry to complete the destruction of the Central and Fredericksburg Railroad. This was done so that Grant would now be able to concentrate on capturing Richmond and Lee's army. The 97th now occupied a position behind strongly built earthworks to the left of the Ninth Corps, and there they "remained for some time in comparative quiet, taking a little rest, which the troops very much needed."

Orders came on July 12th to withdraw the 97th quietly from the front ditches, and at midnight the regiment marched with the brigade and occupied Fort Prescott, which was not quite finished. The next morning the 97th pitched their tents in the woods about 150 yards behind the fort and they worked in details to complete it. On the night of July 22nd, "considerable firing was kept up," mainly by mortars on Warren's right under Burnside's command. Hall describes: "To watch the fuses of the shells from these mortars in their curvitures[sic] during the night, was

a beautiful sight, and the reverberating reports added sublimity to the scene, but more thrilling must the effect have been to those upon whom the fire was directed."

At 1:30 a.m. on July 30th, Adjutant Judd notified all commandants of companies to pack and be ready to march at 2:00 a.m. Everything was packed at the appointed time. The men fell in and, stacking arms, awaited the order to march. Delay followed thereafter, but soon the men were jostled by the sound of cannon, as Hall describes:

> Just after the break of day, when the men had become weary in waiting, and some had fallen asleep, all at once a jar and rumbling sound, similar to that of an earthquake, was heard, and the artillery all along our line thundered forth their fire. The heavy guns and mortars to our right, were particularly active, and news soon passed along our line that a fort in front of the Ninth Corps had been blown up by a mine, and that our lines there had gone forward into Petersburg, or had taken the enemy's works in close proximity to the city. Our brigade and division expected momentarily to advance upon the enemy's fortifications, but the distance was so great, and success on our right so uncertain, that no order came to go forward.

By noon all efforts of attack had ceased, and the 97th was allowed to pitch their shelter tents and cook rations, "though a lodgment of [Union] troops in the crater -- which was about one hundred and fifty feet long, sixty wide and twenty-five deep -- held their position till about 2 [p.m.], when most of them were taken prisoners." The soldiers captured in the crater were under the command of General Ledlie, who stayed in the security of a "bomb-proof" behind the Union earthworks. In addition, General Burnside repeatedly ordered General Ferrero to go forward with his division, but it went without him. Ferrero's division was delayed in getting through the Union army's outer line of parapets (protective earthworks atop their trenches) and abatis (barricade of felled trees with branches facing the enemy). General Burnside had been ordered to remove these obstacles in preparation for the attack. His failure to execute this order would repeatedly impede Union effectiveness in the engagements that followed. The Union attackers later reached the crater and, finally, the Confederates' partially deserted works.

The division attacked the Confederate line, capturing two hundred prisoners and a flag. While the attack was on, General Ferrero stayed in the bomb-proof with General Ledlie, to the rear of the 97th's lines. This was set forth in testimony before the United States Army's Court of Inquiry, which was subsequently ordered by President Lincoln at the request of General Meade.

Hall provides more detail as to what happened with the Union troops who attacked while the 97th was allowed to eat. At 10:30 in the morning, Confederate General Mahone made an attack with two brigades upon the crater in which Union soldiers were stationed, as well as upon Union General Wilcox's troops in the works to the left of the crater. However, Mahone's force was repulsed by the "well directed fire" of Wilcox's men and by artillery which included the 97th's.

The Confederate soldiers were "obliged to take shelter in one of their contiguous trenches." However, at about 2:00 p.m. Confederate Generals Mahone and Johnson (on whose

front the work was mined) made a successful attack upon the 97th's advance line. Other Union Generals, including Potter and Griffin, moved out to the Confederate works and beyond, reporting that "the enemy had abandoned them in great consternation for a distance of from two to three hundred yards on each side of the crater." Union General Ord, supporting the right of the Ninth Corps, also advanced and took part in the attack. But, like all the advancing Union lines, his force was slowed by the earthworks along the Union lines and at the crater.

Later, when the Confederates had regained their composure, they opened an enfilading fire upon the retreating Union forces from a battery covered from the reach of the Union guns by a small piece of woods which General Burnside had been ordered to cut down. Hall comments, "In retiring, our troops -- though the distance from the crater to our defences[sic] was only about 100 yards -- suffered fearfully from this Confederate battery and from that of another in a ravine covered by the traverses."

Generals Warren on the left and Hancock on the right reported no change in the strength of forces in their respective fronts, "and while this incongruous chapter of events was being enacted by the Ninth Corps and its immediate supports, these commanders awaited in trying suspense an opportunity for decisive action." The crater was such an impregnable obstacle to overcome that General Burnside had his men build a 100-yard long tunnel under the ground almost to the crater. A mine was then set off which blew a hole in the crater and was intended to create a diversion, panic and confusion among the Confederates, at which time the Union forces would attack. Hall states, "It was expected that the whole of the Ninth Corps during the panic of the enemy consequent upon the exploding of the mine, would be moved forward beyond the crater and taking possession of the crest, it would hold the key to Petersburg, and the enemy's lines to the right and left would give way under its enfilading and rear fire: when the whole army would follow up this success."

Captain Hall indicates that General Meade had given detailed orders to each commander regarding this plan, and had personally endeavored to communicate to them the mode of execution and the "imperative necessity of prompt, harmonious and vigorous action." Hall also states that every commander performed his duty except General Burnside, who was brought before the Court of Inquiry for his dereliction of duty. The failure of the operation was attributed to a lack of performance of some general officers of Burnside's command in allowing the Union troops to mass in the crater, and in the Confederate works, instead of deploying and going forward to the crest during the panic following the springing of the mine. General Grant, in his testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, elaborated further on Burnside's failure. He said:

> General Burnside failed to obey orders which were essential to success, in that he neglected to prepare his abatis and parapets for the passage of troops, which could have been done without the knowledge of the enemy; also, in neglecting to equip and distribute to each command pioneers with intrenching tools for work in opening passages for artillery, and for the purpose of effecting lodgments in the enemy's works; and furthermore he said if he had been a corps

> commander with the responsibility that Burnside was charged with, he would have been upon the ground to see his orders carried out, and had he been a division commander he would have gone in with his command, and, he added, many officers of the army would have done the same.

It has also been written that the initial plan for the attack involving the mine explosion included a well-trained contingent of black soldiers leading the way. However, this plan was changed at the last minute by political influence from Washington. Decision makers there feared that sending black soldiers in first would make it appear that they were being used as "cover" for the white troops that followed, while taking the brunt of the Confederate fire. Negative political repercussions were presumed to follow such a precedent. Therefore, instead of the crack black troops forging the attack, they were moved back. Unprepared white soldiers, many of whom did not even know that an explosion was to occur, were sent out first -- some being caught in the midst of the explosion. These events contributed to the failure of the attack, aside from Burnside's actions.

Chapter XVII: Baxter's Brigade Ordered on Picket -- Relieved and Marched Two Miles to the Rear -- Colonel Wheelock in Command of Brigade -- Wheelock Relieved from Command by Colonel Coulter of the 11th Pennsylvania -- General Warren Takes and Holds the Weldon Railroad while Wheelock was again in Command of the Brigade and Captain D.E. Hall in Command of the 97th -- Episode on Surgeons and Chaplains -- Hancock's Defeat.

At 5:00 p.m. on July 31st, Baxter's brigade (which included the 97th) was ordered to the front, nearly two miles away, to relieve the Third Brigade whose members were there on picket. Colonel Wheelock was in command of the brigade and Captain D.E. Hall led the 97th, as he had done since Colonel Wheelock's sunstroke at the battle of the Wilderness. However, by order of General Meade, Captain D.E. Hall was temporarily replaced in command of the 97th on August 3rd by Captain Isaac Hall of Company A, next in rank. We owe the official regimental history of the 97th to Isaac Hall. On August 15, 1864, the 97th was relieved from picket duty and returned to camp. After remaining there only one hour, Baxter's brigade, including the 97th, marched two miles to the rear and occupied an old camp ground formerly belonging to the Second Corps.

Orders were received on the 16th to police camp, "but while the men, that evening, were agitating the question of a probability of remaining there for a time, the order came to pack up and be in readiness to march at 3 [p.m.]." The next day, Colonel Wheelock took command of the 97th. Colonel Coulter of the 11th Pennsylvania had been assigned command of the brigade as a whole. However, "the day passed off and the regiment still remained in camp." That night a rain storm occurred but there was fair weather the next day and General Crawford's division pulled out, halting along the way until most of the Fifth Corps was on the move, to seize and hold the Weldon Railroad.

At about 2:00 a.m. on August 17th, Union mortars and heavy guns around Petersburg

opened as the Union troops attempted to take the Weldon Railroad by softening the Confederate positions. These cannon "kept up a ceaseless fire for several hours." The march was continued without stopping except to await the movement of artillery over bad places in the road. "The weather was extremely warm and sultry, and during the march several cases of sunstroke occurred." The 97th reached the Weldon Railroad near the Globe Tavern where they halted. The men were preparing for a rest when the Confederate skirmish line began firing. Soon the skirmish lines of both armies were engaged. An order immediately came to fall in, and the 97th with Baxter's brigade marched along the east side of the railroad towards Petersburg. The march continued for about a mile "under some pretty lively skirmishing" when the brigade was halted because the Confederates continued their retreat.

Later, a Union advance was begun, and as Captain Isaac Hall describes, " ... at twilight while cautiously feeling our way with skirmishers only a short distance in advance of the main line, they ran nearly into those of the enemy, who at once began firing. The flashes of their pieces revealed their faces, discovering their nearness, when a halt was ordered; and the men immediately began intrenching." The Confederates soon stopped firing and withdrew from the 97th's immediate front. In this encounter two men of the 97th were killed, and Captains Alexander and Grimmer and several men wounded. Captain Chamberlain, Lieutenants Faville, Burke, Snow and Sergeant Legg were taken prisoners. An advance team of pioneers with intrenching tools were soon brought to the front and work by reliefs continued until "the works were rendered sufficiently strong to protect the regiment from minnie bullets."

On the morning of August 19th, the brigade skirmish line was relieved by Companies A and I of the 97th. Soon after these companies reached the front, their right as well as an area between Baxter's brigade and the Ninth Corps was vigorously attacked by a Confederate skirmish line. The Confederates were met with return fire and driven off, but not before they

wounded three of the 97th, and took Lieutenant Yerdon and another prisoner. Later a main line of Confederates approached to the left of a corn field in the 97th's front. The 97th's Company I fell back, followed by the other companies, all firing as they withdrew.

Trees were felled for thirty yards -- tops towards the Confederates -- to the front of the Union's main line. Before the 97th's pickets made their way through their "tangled tops," the left portion of the Union line had begun firing, "and so soon as the skirmish line was all in, the enemy was speedily repulsed." There was a space of 300 yards between the Ninth Corps and the brigade to which the 97th belonged. This presented a weak spot in the Union line which the Confederates could exploit to split and encircle the Union force.

Colonel Wheelock, again in command of the brigade (Colonel Coulter again having been temporarily relieved), attempted to correct this vulnerable spot, but without immediate success. He sent Assistant Adjutant General J. H. Smith to division headquarters to notify General Crawford of the problem, "but [Wheelock] hearing nothing from it, and becoming impatient, he sent again a written communication in regard to the situation." In response, a company with

Spencer repeating rifles was sent by the General to strengthen the skirmish line in front of the gap, and "thus the matter rested."

The brigade was located in dense "second-growth" woods, with sparsely timbered woods to the right of it. In front of this space, a little before 5:00 p.m., "[Confederate General] Mahone's brigade or more of his division, in solid column, attacked the picket line, and following it up rapidly was soon in our rear, and deploying was about to sweep down towards our left, when General Warren opened upon it with grape and canister." Hall states, "Wheelock's command, all unconscious of this change in the programme, was astonished only at the direction and emphatic manner in which the attack was made. Several of the 97th were killed and wounded, Lieutenant Fitzpatrick among the former."

Colonel Wheelock immediately dispatched his adjutant general to report to General Crawford that he was killing his own men. That Union and Confederate forces were close to each other, in circling movements. The 97th encountered other Union troops who had considered themselves surrounded and helpless to the Confederates. They were found "lying down with their arms on the ground awaiting escort to the enemy's rear." These men advised the 97th to throw down their arms and surrender or they would all be killed. "But a prompt command from the commandant of the regiment was in time to prevent this demoralization; the men being told to keep their arms and use them if necessary, and our circuitous route saved the 97th from coming in contact with the enemy."

The regiment reached a point near the front again, when a rapid firing of infantry was heard from the position occupied by the brigade, and soon thereafter Colonel Wheelock emerged from the woods with the remainder of his command. "At Wheelock's appearance a shout of triumph arose from all the troops in sight, which was borne along our lines to the right and left." The colonel was on the scene in time to retain the balance of the brigade but too late to stop his own regiment from moving towards the Confederates. He quickly ordered his troops forward and soon had the opportunity to give Mahone's soldiers a volley of bullets, which threw the Confederates into confusion. However, most of Mahone's men were able to make it past Wheelock's front, and headed for their own lines. Colonel Wheelock responded by immediately putting forth a skirmish line, and marched towards the Confederates. Thus, Wheelock's soldiers cut off and captured sixty of Mahone's brigade. They also freed several of their own men who, in an effort to escape capture, had left their regiments and run into the Confederate lines and been captured anyway.

As a result of this engagement, nearly 2,500 troops under command of Union Generals Crawford, Ayers and Hayes became prisoners. Hall states that their capture occurred "for the want at the front of a commanding officer with a clear head who could have momentarily devised a plan for the entire division, or the right wing of it, to act in concert in carrying out an order similar to that inaugurated by Colonel Wheelock, and the escape of Mahone's command would simply have been impossible." General Warren had ordered Brigadier General Bragg to fill the gap, but the order was not executed, and when this was discovered the order was repeated. However, before it was carried into effect, Mahone had made his attack.

The forces of Generals White and Wilcox of the Ninth Corps now joined with those of Warren, and Baxter's brigade advanced again to the front. The ground here was low and somewhat swampy, and a drizzling rain set in. To keep themselves above the water, many soldiers of the 97th cut small poles and lay upon them during the night. "The tediousness of this dark, dreary night, was enlivened by a man from each alternate company firing every ten minutes."

General Warren knew that the Confederates would not allow his force to cross the Weldon Railroad without resistance, and made plans for the impending encounter. On August 20, 1864, Warren "went earnestly to work ... and prepared to receive company." He knew that the thick woods would not be the best place to engage the Confederates, and instead selected an open field as the battle site into which he would lure them. Hall describes the outcome, with comparison of Warren's actions to some less respected Union generals:

> He [Warren] removed his command onto the position selected, and soon had the opportunity of giving his Southern brethren a warm reception, but on their arrival he did not -- like General Howard sit quietly down to a game of cards, and get surprised with his arms stacked [at Chancellorsville], nor -- like General Ben. Butler -- rest complacently on laurels won, awaiting the enemy's approach, and finally leave the ground achieved, and retiring into his hole, submit to its being "corked," though he allowed the Confederates to come again and take their fill of such as he had to spare, until perfectly satisfied they were glad to depart.

An "episode" happened later that day which also deserves mention. Between the line of Union soldiers in a railroad cut and the 97th was a small frame house, about 16 x 20 feet, which some surgeons (unknown to the regiment) allegedly occupied for a hospital. At the time, the surgeons had no patients, but were using the building to shelter themselves from the weather. They referred to the building as a "hospital." The right of the 97th rested about 20 feet from the end of this building, and the men had stuck the bayonets of their rifles into the ground, "leaving them capped and half cock -- the safer mode for a rainy night -- and were preparing to lie down."

A captain of the regiment, while looking around the building for a board on which to lie for the night, was verbally "accosted" by an assistant surgeon who inquired if he was looking for something to lie on. "Upon being answered in the affirmative, he [the assistant surgeon] said there were some loose boards in the upper part of the house, and thought one could be obtained by applying to the surgeon in charge; that he was a Scotchman and "would need be approached in a deferential manner commensurate to his opinion of his position." Hall tells more:

> Thus armed the captain entered the house, passing a guard with musket in hand at the door, a convalescent -- such as doctors put to such duties. In a courteous and delicate manner he inquired for the principal surgeon, and addressing him in as deferential and urbane language as he was capable of, inquired if there was a board in the house which he could obtain to lie on during

the night; as he had heard of some loose ones in the chamber? He was answered gruffly, that no boards could be obtained there ... The house had just been lighted and as he passed the threshold he noticed the guard's gun standing at the door, that functionary having disappeared. He also noticed three loose clapboards -- about three feet long -- extending from the door to the window casing, and these he appropriated by running his hand up between the studs and taking them off.

He started away when a surgeon, as he supposed, came to the door and called the guard who failed to appear, whereat he seized the musket himself and followed, and addressing the captain, who had halted, he said: "Do you intend to tear down the house?" Receiving a negative reply he next ordered him to lay down the boards. This the captain said was his intent. "But drop them immediately," said he. The former perceiving his earnestness turned without reply to walk leisurely away, when the latter bringing up his piece quick at arms-port pushed it against the captain's face, and the screw to the band broke the skin to his ear, starting the blood: but his feelings were lacerated more than his ear. Dropping the boards he seized the gun with the intention of taking it away from his assailant, but he was a burly fellow -- heavier than himself -- and he held it fast.

But the captain -- reduced to fighting weight -- had the advantage in muscle, and his indignant feelings caused him to make quick use of it. Pushing his opponent back a short distance, with the piece between them, he found to be only boy's play, and he let go with his right hand and knocked him [the surgeon] down. Now thoroughly aroused the captain laid aside the gun and seized his antagonist by the throat, intending to give him another blow; but finding him limp, with the fight knocked out of him, he let go his hold. As he cast a look behind himself the captain saw a line of doctors in "Indian file," on a double quick towards the house, and most of his company rallying for their arms. Taking in the situation at a glance, he interposed, quieting the feelings of his men, who desired to be led into the building to clean the surgeons out.

Meanwhile the captain's antagonist had got upon his feet ... and accused him of striking a commissioned officer, the penalty for which was death; and added that he was a chaplain. The former replied that it mattered not to him what his rank or profession was, he should knock down any officer who attacked him with a gun if he could; adding, "if you had been attending to your legitimate duties you would not have got hurt."

It seems while the captain was contending with the chaplain, the doctors sallied forth, and one of them seizing a rifle belonging to the company of that officer drew it up to shoot him. His first sergeant, Joseph Fenton, a quick and resolute follow -- caught the piece in time, and slinging the surgeon onto the ground took it away from him. And the men at this juncture started for their arms,

> when the doctors thinking "discretion the better part of valor," beat a retreat, as the captain discovered upon looking towards the building.

When things calmed down, the men of the 97th returned to their shelter tents, but the captain, "not possessed of such a luxury," lay down on his blanket and was "soon wrapped in slumber" on the cold, wet ground. However, "[a]mid the pattering rain he was soon awakened by the commandant of the regiment, and told to consider himself in arrest..." Furthermore, the captain was to report to Colonel Wheelock's headquarters the next morning because "the belligerent surgeon had ordered him and his first sergeant in arrest to await an impending court martial." The captain appeared at Colonel Wheelock's tent early in the morning, and the exchange between the two is described:

> "Well, captain, it seems you have got into difficulty and have struck a commissioned officer" [said the colonel]. "I have, colonel, and under similar circumstances, had he been a major general I should have done the same" [responded the captain]. Throwing himself back upon his couch Colonel Wheelock lay a while and shook with laughter, and then sitting up and bringing down his hand in an emphatic manner, he said: "We will make it hot for those doctors, and I will go directly and see what they have to say for themselves." The captain took his leave after being told to come again in an hour. He was on time to hear the colonel's report.
>
> The chaplain begged off and said he himself was the more to blame: that he had formerly been out as a soldier -- three months' man -- and learned to handle a musket; that at first he did not know he was following up a captain, and when he discovered his mistake he did not like to back down. But the wrath of the belligerent surgeon was not to be appeased; it required blood to wipe out the stigma of this rough handling by a non commissioned officer and heal his wounded feelings. He belonged to a Maryland regiment, and many of the doctors present agreed with him and felt themselves injured by the boards being taken from their hospital.
>
> Colonel Wheelock was equal to the emergency. His feelings were always aroused on the side of right and of suffering humanity, and under all circumstances he was never slow to express them. He scouted the idea of the availibility[sic] of that building for a hospital, and suggested that no sick or wounded were there, and in such an exposed position from the impending storm, should a fight occur was no place for them. Upon the surgeon who had caused the arrest he wound up his invective by stating that as he understood the case, if a court martial were instituted but one officer was sure to be shot, and this would not be the captain.

Colonel Wheelock was effective in his representation, for within the hour the captain was returned to duty, but "soon after the surgeons and chaplains who had taken shelter in the alleged

hospital from the inclemency of the weather found themselves exposed to another storm from which the building would not protect them." This was referring to an attack made by Confederate General A.P. Hill upon General Warren's right front and left flank, using 30 cannon. Initially, the Confederates aimed too high, largely missing their targets. The placement of the "hospital" during this attack and the situation of its surgeon occupants during this battle, shows the irony of their prior petty dispute, as described:

> ... at the first rattle and explosion of shells through the tree-tops in close proximity to the surgeons ... the hospital swarmed, and all its inmates, including the late belligerents took shelter on the opposite side from the storm, and when the fire came from the left and the regiment reversed front with its works, these non-combatants changed sides with the building. Though exposed to this tempest of shot and shell, from which it was difficult to shield themselves, the boys of the 97th found time to jeer and hoot the surgeons at their discomfiture, and when they took shelter at the gable end of the house -- very near the regiment -- they cried out: "Oh! How are you surgeons and chaplains? We are glad to see you. Ain't you glad you are here?" and many other endearing expressions in ridicule were heard.

After General Hill's charge upon the 97th, "in which he was handsomely repulsed," the 97th changed front and was brought over into the railroad cut, covering the extreme left of the Union's front line, with General Warren's batteries to the right. The weather had cleared, and the day was "warm and sultry." The sun was fiercely shining into the railroad cut, which caused three non-commissioned officers of Company A (Sergeants Joseph Fenton and George Vannier, and Corporal Simon O'Connor) to seek shelter under a hickory tree eight to ten inches in diameter. They had not been there long when a solid cannon shell was seen "coming down in their midst." Hall describes:

> "Look out!" arose from half a dozen throats in the cut. Taking in the situation at a glance they all acted under the impulse of the moment. Two of them rolled in opposite directions and the third springing upon his feet, grabbed the tree and swung himself around it. The shot struck the center of the tree about eighteen inches from the ground and bounded back, raising shouts of laughter among the boys in the cut.

Captain Hall gives high praise to General Warren's military abilities, including here at the Weldon Railroad:

> General Warren seems to have calculated to a certainty where and how the attacks of the enemy would be made, and every part of his programme thus far had been admirably played, and now the last, most decisive and concluding act was about to be enacted, and he was calmly awaiting its realization. His guns in

> position here had maintained an ominous silence, double shotted and prepared for an emergency. It soon came.
>
> From the woods off the left flank of Warren's front line came Mahone's heavy and compact columns in grand array. Time was given them to swing clear of the woods and open out on the plain towards the left of our main, front line. It was a grand sight: with their steady, firm tread now just begun, and their colors floating in the breeze agitated by this steady, moving phalanx.
>
> A change comes suddenly over these moving battalions; Warren's batteries open and this living mass of humanity becomes a mass of mangled flesh and bones; and the living drop with the dead and dying. No infantry fire touches their ranks, yet they down like wheat before a reaper. White emblems of a surrender arise and our batteries cease firing.

And yet the "best laid plans can be rent asunder," and this saying holds merit for the events thereafter. Following the cease fire, a part of the Union brigade was sent forth to bring in the surrendering Confederates. However, their indications of surrender were only a ploy and when the Union soldiers got close, able-bodied Confederates sprang to their feet and fired their rifles into them at close range. Many of these Confederates then immediately retreated into the woods. Warren's cannon could not touch the Confederates still in the field without destroying his own men. Even so, many of them surrendered, as opposed to taking their chances in running to the woods.

The Confederate casualties consisted largely of "Hagood's brigade," consisting of 517 officers and men, and six flags. Warren's command found and buried 211 of their dead, "and their number of wounded was correspondingly large." Warren's entire loss on that day of dead, wounded and missing, was 301. Many of the missing were among the sunstruck ones. Colonel Dushane, commanding the Maryland brigade, was killed and General Cutler wounded. Fortunately, none of the 97th on this day were killed or mortally wounded. "Thus ended the Confederate attack on General Warren's position on the Weldon railroad, and no further attempts were made upon it."

The Ninth Corps soon extended its entrenchments from the Jerusalem Plank Road to unite with Warren's. It was deemed necessary to destroy the Weldon Railroad as far as Rowanty Creek to make the Confederates carry their supplies an extra thirty miles to Petersburg (from Stony Creek Depot to Dinwiddie Court House, and then via the Boynton Plank Road). General Hancock, with two of his divisions, under Generals Miles and Gibbon, and Greig's cavalry were assigned to this task. General Hancock had just returned from Deep Bottom, Virginia, on the morning of August 21st, and his troops were exhausted because of the muddy roads they had traversed. But, ignoring their fatigue, they were ordered that afternoon to the Gurley house behind General Warren's position.

Leaving the cavalry to guard his rear and left, Hancock pushed the work forward, and on the 24th had reached Malone's crossroad, three miles south of where Hancock's main force now rested, at Ream's Station. Five miles of undisturbed track still lay ahead. "But this channel of supply was of too great importance to the enemy to allow a further destruction of the road without a struggle, and to General A.P. Hill was given the task to prevent it." Hill had a sizable force to halt the railroad destruction, with most of his own corps, Anderson's brigade of Longstreet's corps, and two divisions of cavalry under General Hampton.

That day General Hancock was informed by signal officers of the approach of 8,000 to 10,000 Confederates, and the next morning the Confederate cavalry with infantry support appeared on Hancock's left. At 2:00 p.m. Confederate General Wilcox "made a determined attack upon General Miles, but was gallantly repulsed." General Meade notified General Hancock that he had sent Wilcox to connect with General Hancock, or if forced to, withdraw and connect with General Warren. Hancock responded that he was too closely engaged with the Confederates to withdraw then, but would do so at night, "as he could not at present finish the work begun with such a force to oppose him." The brigade to which the 97th belonged (Baxter's) was held in reserve near Reams Station, where they intrenched at the outer edge of a piece of woods. The 97th also made another trench in front of their position, into which were put the bottoms of "sprangled tops of trees the ends of the limbs trimmed and sharpened -- firmly imbedded with earth, forming strong abatis."

The First Brigade of the First Division then came up to the 97th's left and formed a right angle. This formation was made to cover the retreat of General Hancock, as instructed by General Meade. By 5:00 p.m., Confederate General Hill had prepared his entire force for an assault upon General Hancock's position, first opening for about fifteen minutes with shell to the right of the 97th, which was held by General Miles. "This fire effected but little except to shake some raw troops," taking them by surprise.

At this point Confederate Generals Heth and Wilcox moved four brigades forward in assault. Hall describes the scene:

> For a while they [the Confederates] were roughly handled by Miles' severe fire, and were thrown into some disorder by it and the obstructions they met. But where a little more endurance was necessary, and would have resulted in their repulse, in a critical moment a part of his line, composed mainly of new troops, gave way, leaving a gap which General Gibbons was ordered to fill with a small reserve brigade, but he could not induce his men to go forward nor prevail on them to fire.

Concerning this engagement, Hall states in candor, "... most of the [Union] Second Division acted badly," as they were driven from their protective earthworks by dismounted cavalry. He said that if not for the "intrepid gallantry of General Miles and the usual intrepidity of General Hancock," the Union soldiers would have been "swept from the field." As part of this

effort, Union General Greig's dismounted cavalry flanked the Confederate cavalry under General Hampton and checked their advance. Confederate General Hill then left Hampton's cavalry force to watch the railroad, and returned with his infantry to his entrenched position at Petersburg.

From the fighting at and around Petersburg, Hancock's losses were 610 dead and wounded, 1,762 missing (totaling 2,372), and 9 cannon. Confederate General Hill reported 720, of which almost all were killed or wounded, with very few missing. Hall gives high praise to General Hancock's military leadership at Petersburg. "General Hancock's fighting here, like a gallant, intrepid captain, in the performance of a subordinate duty with two divisions of his corps, composed in great part of raw substitutes, while no relief could be expected to reach him in time, displays the true qualities of a soldier in as strong a light as his grandest charge with the Second Corps."

Hancock attributed his failure to the previous exhaustion of his men and the severe losses his divisions had recently sustained. He was doubly affected by the high loss of officers and the large number of new, raw troops -- most of whom were substitutes. Hall surmises that had the effect of inexperienced soldiers upon the morale of General Hancock's command been fully considered, veteran troop reinforcements would have been sent to him that morning.

Chapter XVIII: Movements Against Lee's Right -- Charge on Fort Sawdust -- The 97th Color Bearer Wins the Race -- Why 332,000 of 500,000 Quota Filled Never Reached the Front -- The 97th Placed in a Camp of Instruction -- Crawford Keeps an Officer of the 97th in Arrest Four Months after being Acquitted by Court Martial

While operations against General Lee's left on the north side of the James River were pending, General Grant also planned operations to turn the Confederate army's right and occupy the South Side Railroad. Consequently, on August 24, 1864, Grant ordered General Meade to prepare to march in three columns early the next morning and take possession of the South Side Railroad. Accordingly, the Ninth, Fifth and Second Corps moved out at five o'clock the next morning to Hatcher's Run, "but found too many obstructions to be surmounted in the dense undergrowth and narrow defiles of that region to meet with success."

Although the Union forces gained several hundred prisoners, two flags, two cannon the Confederates had previously captured, and tactical advantages, the main goal of the move was not achieved. This was because the operation was intended to be a surprise, but was not. Captain Hall attributes the lack of surprise to a dark and rainy morning "and other impediments" which "so caused delay that the enemy had ample time to avail himself of every advantage." The Confederate works at Hatcher's Run were "quite formidable, their approaches being guarded by slashings and abatis." As a result, although the advance column gained a position within six miles of the South Side Railroad, so much time had been consumed that Grant and Meade deemed it expedient to withdraw, and the next day the Union troops returned to their entrenched positions.

Again, Hall posits the failure of the Union forces to the general inefficiency of raw recruits and substitutes with which the various corps had been supplied to fill the vacancies that occurred during the prior summer:

> These high bounty men were of different material from those who volunteered at the beginning of the war. Lured to join the service by the $500 to $1,200 or more bounty paid at that time [summer of 1864], many sought an opportunity to desert, and if compelled to remain, they were in many instances, in battle, but a dead weight on the remnant left of the army's former power. In fact many were mere bounty jumpers, mustered under assumed names, some of whom escaped before they could be brought to the front; but among these substitutes were some honorable exceptions.

Regarding the problem of Union substitutes at this time of the war, Greeley's states: "It was officially stated that of 500,000 men drafted in 1864, the requisitions being filled by the payment of $500 to $1,000 each, as bounty, only 168,000 ever made their appearance at the front." Even so, Hall was careful to mention that there were some "honorable exceptions" among these substitutes who made good soldiers. Hall states that those of the 97th had seen no official statement of how many of the balance -- 332,000 -- were soldiers on paper only. However, he recounts that " ... we remember distinctly, while on the road in 1867, in company with two men who had the contract of filling the quota of two or three adjoining counties, of hearing one of them -- the more vivacious of the two -- in his most happy mood, boast that in this business he made $40,000 one morning before breakfast." With a little coaxing, the two entrepreneurs relayed their mechanism for achieving such profits during wartime. It was fraud in delivering only a small portion of the substitutes for which payment was made, and promising to produce the rest -- a promise that was never fulfilled:

> A law had been passed in Congress ... which allowed procuring negro substitutes at the front to be accredited to fill their quotas of the counties of this State and those of others, no matter to what organizations they should be assigned.
>
> Pursuant to this enactment these quota fillers, with due authority, repaired to the winter quarters at the front, and soon ingratiated themselves with all the officers of the department. They were invited from tent to tent, and at the evening gatherings, and fared sumptuously. Now it became their turn to act the part of a host and at the same time apply themselves to business; and they had prepared for it. The purveyor had been all this time assiduous in filling a heavy order, on a grander scale than had been before witnessed in all that region, and a magnificent champagne supper, costing several hundred dollars, was the outcome of all this preparation, to which all the officers were invited. In the meantime the clerk [who the two men hired] had not been idle. He had recruited about fifty

> men; at all events his muster-roll showed this, and that was enough when that paper should be certified to by the commandant of the department.
>
> Champagne flowed, not quietly, like a deep river; but it bubbled, sparkled and foamed like the ocean, and all went merry "as a marriage bell;" and when the small hours were waning the commandant was taken aside, and a few whispers -- a promise -- and a signature was affixed, and all was accomplished. This document was sent to its proper head, and the money drawn. But what capped the climax, and in the eyes of our informant, was the pith to the whole transaction, was the manner in which his partner got away with all the money, and the commandant of the department got left. [Hall asks rhetorically, "Does any one suppose that this enterprise was an isolated case?"]

At about 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 30th, a part of the Union's Second Corps picket, which was slightly to the right of the 97th, was captured. Hall describes the capture: "At this place an acute angle to the left occurred and the Confederates, taking the advantage of twilight, raw troops and the hour of relieving the picket line, relieved a portion of it, but the men relieved, to their surprise, were marched to the enemy's line." Captain Hall also blames the 97th's new division command:

> The loss to the 97th, sustained at Spottsylvania by the severe wounding of our gallant division commander, was not at all mitigated by the transfer of the Second Division to the command of General Crawford, commanding Third Division. He was vain, conceited and austere, and not possessed of that gallantry and nice sense of honor which characterizes a true soldier and inspires respect in a command.

Hall provides an example directly involving the 97th and General Crawford to illustrate Crawford's staunch lack of humor which impeded his ability as a commander:

> During a warm day in October [1864], while a friend of Crawford's was visiting at his headquarters, together they rode out to the picket line, and there finding two of the outpost -- soldiers of the 97th --while off duty, with their underwear removed and "skirmishing" on their own account, he was so indignant that on his return to camp he immediately issued an order placing the 97th Regiment, New York Volunteers, in a "camp of instruction and discipline."
>
> This so aroused the feelings of Colonel Wheelock that he mounted at once his sorrel horse and rode to division headquarters. But on sending in his name by an orderly, Crawford returned an inquiry to know for what purpose he desired to see him, and when informed he returned an answer that he could not admit him for the purpose of discussing the matter in relation to this order, and Wheelock returned to his headquarters; but in the meantime he called at the division adjutant general's quarters and casually dropped a word that General Crawford would find

> that he had just as much influence at Washington as the division commander. The slur intended by Crawford for the 97th Regiment was felt throughout the Second, or Robinson's division, and the act aroused indignant feelings of all, more especially felt among the officers; for no regiment of the division was more universally respected than the 97th; and in witnessing such treatment no regiment felt security for itself. Wheelock immediately called for a court of inquiry in regard to the matter, and the division commander soon ordered a special inspection of the regiment and relieved it from the camp of instruction...

While on dress parade on December 4, 1864, the 97th was ordered to be ready to march at a moment's notice. They moved out with the Fifth Corps the next afternoon towards the Jerusalem Plank Road, where they halted and remained for the rest of the day and all day on the 6th. Captain Hall describes the evening weather: "The nights were cold and much suffering was experienced in consequence of insufficient camp and garrison equipage." Notations are made regarding the next day's activities:

> Marched on the 7th from the Jerusalem plank road to Sussex Court House and bivouacked for the night; and crossed the Nottaway [R]iver on pontoons on the morning of the 7th, and continuing its march to the Weldon railroad, the 97th assisted the other troops in tearing up and destroying this great avenue of supply to the Confederacy. The troops worked all night and during operations were somewhat annoyed by Confederate cavalry; but these were easily brushed away without serious loss to the Federal troops; in the meantime General Warren and staff received a share of their attention and narrowly escaped.

The work continued "with a will" until almost forty miles of it were destroyed. The soldiers bivouacked near the railroad 38 miles from Petersburg and 20 miles from Sussex Court House. When returning to destroy more track the next day, the "bluecoats" were followed by Confederate cavalry and frequent skirmishing occurred between the armies. At dusk the Confederates attacked Baxter's brigade, and the 97th was described as "conspicuous" in resisting the Confederate "dash." Working in concert, Colonels Coulter and Wheelock were able to repel the Confederate charge "with considerable loss to the enemy." The coordinated defense by the Union colonels is described:

> A plan was inaugurated by which Coulter's force was so arranged in ambush by the roadside, and Wheelock's command placed along a fence in an open meadow at a right angle to Coulter's, that when the enemy charged down the road he was cut by Coulter and several saddles emptied, and not daring to return by the same route the troops broke across the meadow as anticipated, and were roughly handled by Wheelock's command.
>
> A considerable number [of Confederates] were killed and wounded and some prisoners were taken. In this encounter Colonels Coulter and Wheelock

> were conspicuous for their judgment and gallant bearing; the latter, it is said, cutting down a cavalryman who rode up and demanded to know where he belonged. Other officers received similar attention from these Johnnies. Captain Van Deusen had a hat snatched from his head on a passing charge of their cavalry; a rather inopportune affair for the captain on a cold December day.

The 97th marched to Sussex Court House, Virginia, on December 11th, and bivouacked for the night after recrossing the Nottaway River. The following day they marched to the Jerusalem Plank Road where the regiment rested before going to winter quarters. On December 16, 1864, the men of the 97th staked out a camp under the direction of Colonel Wheelock (who had been bestowed the rank of Brevet Brigadier General). The regiment began to prepare winter quarters by "going earnestly at work to make comfortable log huts."

In January 1865, Lieutenant Colonel Spofford returned to the regiment from Libby Prison where he was imprisoned following his capture at Gettysburg six months earlier. A short time after Spofford's arrival, General Wheelock became ill, was sent to Washington, and died of disease on January 21st. The news of his death reached the men of the 97th three days later. Hall states, "The official announcement of his death created a profound sensation of grief among the officers and men of his regiment; no commandant of a regiment was more beloved by his men or possessed more respect among subordinant officers: besides he was well known and much respected throughout the brigade and division." For the remainder of the war, the 97th's flag was draped with a banner and the officers wore mourning badges on their uniforms as a sign of respect for General Wheelock. A funeral sermon concerning Wheelock was also preached to the regiment on the Sabbath following his death. Resolutions honoring General Wheelock and his exceptional service as a "devoted friend ... noble commander ... affectionate husband and father and ... gallant defender [of the Union] were sent to his family and the Utica Morning Herald, the Black River Herald and the Herkimer Journal.

On February 2nd orders were received for every man to be supplied with sixty rounds of cartridges, and on the 4th to be in readiness to march at a moment's notice. At 7:00 a.m. on February 5th, Baxter's brigade (including the 97th) began marching, following others of the Fifth Corps who were already on the move. Hall states, "It was generally supposed that another demonstration on the enemy's right was intended." After marching south on the Weldon Railroad about three miles the column of men diverged to the right and crossed Hatcher's Run below the Vaughn Road, where Greig's cavalry had recently driven the Confederates from their works on the opposite bank of the run. The 97th were "partaking of some refreshments" a mile from the creek later that day around 5:00 p.m. when, as Hall describes, "...the sound of artillery and rattle of small arms burst upon our ears." Brigade commander Baxter was ordered to move his brigade (including the 97th) towards the direction from which the firing came -- not far from the right rear of the column -- near ground over which the 97th had recently marched.

The brigade and the regiment formed a line there and remained until the rest of the corps

joined them, after which the 97th fell to the corps' rear and recrossed Hatcher's Run. The firing turned out to have been a Confederate attack on the rear of the Union force which was repulsed because the rear was guarded on both back and sides, and reinforced when the firing started. Later that day, the regiment came to the opening of what the men believed was a "formidable fort." When this "fort" came in view, an argument arose between the color bearers of the 16th Maine and the 97th as to whose flag should be planted there. "The 97th contestant achieved the victory; but great was his disappointment when instead of a veritable fort he found it only a huge heap of saw-dust."

Nevertheless, a lively encounter occurred here for about a half-hour between the "captors" of the sawdust pile and the Confederate line nearby which was supported by Confederate General Mahone's "heavy columns." This engagement was inopportune for the entire Fifth Corps under General Warren, since many of the men were already out of ammunition, and the Union line surged back in retreat, in spite of officers' commands. The officers also retreated under these conditions. Hall describes the circumstances:

> General Warren himself was at the front and with his ready glass was coolly surveying the enemy. He was pointed to by his officers, and the men as if ashamed of themselves, faced about; but this was of no account, a few shots only, were fired. The best of men will not stand with empty muskets and be shot down, and to charge with empty cartridge boxes and unloaded pieces was out of the question; hence the retreat was continued, not precipitately, but the line surged slowly and sullenly to the rear.

However, the Confederates did not rashly follow, "as if doubtful of the sincerity" of the Union retreat. Union ordnance had been ordered and about 500 yards to the 97th's front, Captain Trembly was met with an ammunition wagon. However, in the narrow road, the captain could not advance or turn the wagon around, and therefore was about to destroy it so the Confederates could not capture it. But before this waste occurred, the men of the 97th caught up with the wagon, lifted it, quickly turning it around and distributing its contents.

The morning of February 7th was described as cold and rainy. Rain quickly changed to sleet which covered the ground and made the movement of troops difficult and somewhat dangerous. The men's hands became so numb that it was difficult for them to hold their rifles. Nevertheless, the 97th held its position and occasionally advanced upon the Confederates "who seemed but a thin line that covered itself in the woods," which every so often fired upon the 97th. Hall describes the continuing action:

> This desultory firing was kept up throughout the day and several of the 97th were killed and wounded. Among the latter were Colonel Spofford and Adjutant Judd. These officers were noted for their intrepidity and the latter was

> sometimes reckless, that showed itself on this occasion by which he was severely wounded and lost a leg, from the effects of which he died. Bodice and Bings, of Company A, were also mortally wounded here, and several men of other companies.

During this movement, the Fifth Corps (which included the 97th) incurred 1,165 dead and wounded, and 154 missing. The 97th itself suffered 29 dead and wounded, and 6 missing in action from the fighting on February 6-7, 1865. The Union's advance columns were withdrawn on the morning of February 8th to the north side of Hatcher's Run, to which the army's fortifications were extended. The brigade, including the 97th, then went into camp near the Goshan house. The men of the regiment soon busied themselves again in erecting log cabins.

On February 25th, several members of the 97th were mustered out on expiration of their term of service. Among them were Captain Chamberlain and Frank Budd -- who went out as a member of the regimental band, but was promoted to the position of commissary sergeant.

Captain Hall tells of a picket line over which soldiers were ordered not to cross, an order which was disregarded by men on a detail -- with full knowledge of their brigade commander. Hall also describes how he was ironically brought up on trial for violating these orders, with undue delay as to the court's ruling. This caused him unjust and unnecessary embarassment and disgrace:

> Some two or three hundred yards outside the picket line in front of our camp, and nearly opposite division headquarters, lived a widow lady, a Mrs. Wyatt, and her daughter. Some of the officers from division headquarters used to call occasionally on these ladies, though strictly against a standing general order from corps headquarters, to go outside the picket line without a pass from the same. Because they came from the headquarters of the general commanding the division these officers were allowed by some officers commanding the picket line to pass through, though the order read "let no person pass without an order from these (corps) headquarters." When a 97th captain was on duty in command of the picket line he placed a literal construction on these orders -- in keeping with the discipline of his regiment, and compelled by the officers from division headquarters to turn back -- even the general himself was not allowed to pass.

Soon thereafter, an order from corps headquarters was issued for a detail to "slash" [cut branches from] evergreen trees surrounding Mrs. Wyatt's dwelling. Issac Hall, Captain of the 97th's A Company, was placed in command of the detail of about 160 men. Hall continues his description of the working party beyond the picket line:

> Although no alteration was made in the original picket line, or the orders concerning it, a line of videttes [sentries] was thrown around the working party to prevent a surprise from the enemy; this was well understood by all concerned, and the party continued work throughout the day. Parties of workmen passed and

repassed through the original line during the day for tools to carry on the work, and on other errands -- the sutler, J.T. Comstock, bringing the commandant of the detail his dinner, without being halted or molested in any way, and others from camp not belonging to the fatigue party took advantage of this opportunity, and carried away boards from some old outhouses with which to fit up their quarters. The division officer of the picket line was cognizant of these doings but interposed no objections.

The next day a new detail was made to continue the slashing, and another captain and officers to command it; and the line of videttes to protect the working party was kept up.

The captain in command of the fatigue detail of the previous day [Captain Isaac Hall], mindful of the opportunity to procure some boards for gable ends to his log hut and for a floor -- of which he very much stood in need -- taking four of his men with him, repaired to the old buildings near Mrs. Wyatt's, and while laying in a supply of boards the division officer of outpost, H. Richardson, Lieut. Col. 7th Wisconsin Veteran Volunteers, rode up and demanded to know if he [Hall] had a pass to come outside the picket line? Upon being answered in the negative he [Richardson] ordered him [Hall] to take his men from outside the picket line and report to Adjutant General Baird, at division headquarters, in arrest. Richardson would accept of no explanation, and the captain [Hall] reported accordingly, and was told to go to his quarters and observe the rules for officers in arrest.

The following evening, March 2, 1864, William B. Wright, Judge Advocate, called upon Hall at his headquarters and read him the charge with specifications:

Charge: Disobedience of orders.

1st Specification -- In this, that Captain Isaac Hall, Company A, 97th New York Volunteer Infantry, did without proper authority and in violation of existing orders go outside and beyond the picket line of his Third Division, Fifth Corps.

2d Specification -- In this, that Captain Isaac Hall, Company A, 97th New York Volunteer Infantry, did, without proper authority and in violation of existing orders go and take with him, under his charge and direction, four enlisted men of his said company outside and beyond the picket line of his, the Third Division of Fifth Army Corps, being outside the said picket line, did there and then commit depredations upon the property, to wit: A dwelling house, the property of, to wit:

Mrs. Wite (Wyatt) then and there a citizen of the State of Virginia, by tearing up the floor with a view to carrying it away and converting it to his own use. All this

near the Goshan house, near Petersburg, Va., on or about the 28th day of February, 1865.

Respectfully referred to Lieut. Wm. B. Wright, Judge Advocate, by command of Brevet Major General Crawford.

(Signed) "Edward C. Baird"
Major and Assistant Adjutant General
"Tried March 3d, 1865"

After reading the charge and specifications to Captain Hall, the judge advocate said: "The court now in session has finished the cases before it but has not adjourned, and if you are ready you can now be tried, or wait till a special court martial shall be convened for your case." Captain Hall said that he was ready and his case was scheduled for the next day at 10:00 a.m. He wrote out a statement of his "offense" that evening, acknowledging his disobedience of a general order, and relating in detail the mitigating circumstances previously described. Isaac found on his arrival at division headquarters, before the court, that Colonel Tilden of the 16th Maine Regiment, was the court's presiding officer, and he was the only officer of the court with whom Captain Hall was acquainted. The trial was soon over and the captain returned to his quarters to await the court's findings. Hall expounds on the nature of the charges and the trial:

Pending the arrest and trial by court martial of this officer [Isaac Hall], sufficient proof that the whole affair of the charges and bringing to trial was a farce and malicious, is found in the fact that the headquarters' wagon of the Third Division was sent under the charge of an officer without a pass, outside the picket line, to gather evergreen bows with which to decorate the division general's headquarters. This proceeding was discovered by an officer of the 97th in charge of the line, and he turned the officer and team back, reporting the affair to General Crawford without causing a ripple.

Meanwhile time hung heavily upon the captain [Hall]; while he was under a doctor's care and continued to be reported in arrest awaiting the promulgation of the findings of the court. His sensitiveness in regard to his condition received no encouraging sign of being assuaged; as he was deprived of his command, and under the rule for an officer in arrest, obliged to follow in the rear of his regiment on a march. Under these circumstances his strength continued to fail and on the 28th he was sent by the surgeon in charge to a hospital at City Point, Va.

When the spring campaign ended Captain Hall marched from Richmond with his regiment, at its rear, while Lieutenant Meade was in command of his company. While marching one day, Colonel Tilden questioned Hall if he was still under arrest, and when Hall answered in the affirmative, the colonel responded, "This proceeding is an outrage." Soon thereafter the regiment arrived in camp near Washington, and Colonel Spofford instituted an inquiry to relieve Captain Hall from his "embarrassing situation," and Hall was thereafter restored to his command.

Part of Colonel Spofford's petition read:

> It may be proper to state that up to the time of Capt. Hall's arrest and trial ... his record, with regard to good conduct and gallantry, was second to no officer of his regiment, and out of justice to him and the cause he has nobly defended, I deem it my duty to respectfully ask why he should longer be kept in suspense in regard to the findings of the court.

However, it was not until after the war had ended, that Isaac Hall was sent a letter dated June 30, 1865 from Adjutant General Wright that Wright had made an error for which he stated his deep regret. Hall had been immediately acquitted by the court, yet Wright forwarded the case to "higher authority," as he was under the impression that the action of the division commander could not be final. The papers finally came back from superior headquarters, saying that no higher action was needed. Isaac summarizes the significance of the letter at that point in time:

> This letter does not at all mitigate the case or relieve the commanding general from the responsibility of keeping an officer, acquitted by a court, in arrest. [General] Crawford was the reviewing officer in the case, and Captain Hall was reported in arrest to his headquarters every morning. If he was not cognizant of the acts of his judge advocate he should have been.

Of course Isaac Hall felt bitter about this mishandling of the case, but with the war over, saw other things to pursue:

> The captain [Hall] felt chagrinned and indignant, when not so much as a reprimand was found against him, that no orders of his acquittal were read on dress parade; but he felt grateful toward Col. Spofford; nevertheless he would have called for a court of inquiry concerning this indignity, heaped upon him by the division commander -- it is more than probable that the findings of the court never went out of his office -- but a court of inquiry would have consumed a great deal of time. The war was ended; his regiment was about to be mustered out, and the desire to go with it and rejoin his family overcame all resentment and outweighed every other consideration.

The next regimental account provided by Captain Hall speaks of heavy artillery firing heard along the Union Lines about ten miles from the position of the 97th on March 25,1865, at around 5:00 a.m. The Fifth Corps, including the 97th, was immediately ordered toward the firing

in “light marching order.” Hall describes:

> It was a grand sight and thrilling at the first sound of alarm, to see the old Fifth Corps move out from its various camps, in battle array, with General Warren at its head, eager to be present at the scene of conflict ...

However, before the regiment could reach the battle, the firing had ceased. Therefore, a halt was ordered and the corps held in position until danger from another Confederate assault was over, when it returned to camp. The 97th was later informed that the attack was made by Confederate General Gordon upon Fort Stedman and was successful as far as taking the fort and its tributaries -- including Batteries 10, 11 and 12. Hall states that the attack was skillfully planned and well executed at the beginning, but failed for lack of sufficient support. The Union and Confederate lines were very close to each other, which presented a precarious situation, as Hall states:

> The lines at this point were near each other and desertions from the enemy had become so frequent that deserters were allowed to enter our lines with arms in their hands; this fact having become known to the enemy he was not slow to take advantage of it.
>
> At the first signs of dawn quite a detachment, with arms in hand, from the enemy, approached our pickets in a creeping manner, as if stealing away from its own lines and taking possession quietly of some half a dozen of our out-posts and sending them prisoners to the rear, opened a way for a noiseless advance of his columns, and when sufficiently near dashed through our line between battery 10 and Fort Stedman; and facing to right and left, soon had possession of these fortified positions with their armaments. But in the absence of General Meade -- who was at City Point -- the enemy was soon checked in his onward career by the prompt orders of General Parke -- commanding Ninth Corps -- who ordered Generals Hartranft, Wilcox and Tidball to recapture the works.

General Tidball posted his batteries on high ground and began firing simultaneously with the forts to the right and the left, resulting in the Confederates being “speedily repulsed and driven within the fortifications, and batteries 11 and 12 were soon recaptured.” General Parke quickly encircled Fort Stedman and Battery 10 with Union soldiers, “... and poured such an incessant fire of artillery and infantry upon the enemy’s position and on the space between the lines, that reinforcements were cut off and his [the Confederates’] chance of escape rendered impossible.” Hall states as matter of fact: “At 8 A.M. the whole affair was over.” The Confederate loss in this engagement was about 4,000, and the Federal casualties nearly half as much.

In a larger context, General Lee had considered abandoning his lines around Richmond and was waiting for the improvement of the roads to march his forces and unite them with those under General Johnson. This was part of a plan to defeat General Sherman before General Grant

could unite with him, which Lee considered feasible. Thus, the aforementioned attack by Confederate General Gordon on Fort Stedman was part of Gordon's efforts to go around the limits of Grant's army as far as possible, while still maintaining some strength near Richmond as Lee's army left that area. However, General Grant had anticipated such maneuvers and had already issued orders to counteract the Confederate movements. The first part of Grant's plan was to intercept Lee and beat him before the two Confederate armies could be united.

Chapter XIX: Opening of the Campaign of 1865 -- Sheridan's Movement Around Lee's Right -- Battle White Oak Road and Five Forks -- Pickett's Defeat -- Pursuit and the Evacuation of Richmond -- Lee's Surrender -- General Rejoicing -- March to Washington

On March 24, 1865, General Grant ordered a broad movement of the Army of the Potomac. The purpose of this movement was to threaten or capture the South Side and Danville Railroads with intent to draw Lee out from his entrenched positions "and attack him on equal grounds, and at the same time prevent his escape with any considerable force to join Johnston's army." In preparing for the advance of this army around General Lee's right, the Union's Army of the James made a secret and rapid march of 36 miles, arriving behind the Second Corps on the evening of March 28th. This involved General Ord taking three divisions of infantry and cavalry to relieve the Second Corps which "was so skillfully managed that the enemy was in total ignorance of it ...". Also on the 28th, General Grant directed General Sheridan, who had just joined him after a successful raid in the Shenandoah Valley, to march early the next morning.

Both tactical and political considerations were involved in Grant's decisions to close in on Lee and end the war, as Captain Hall explains:

> General Sherman, now in the vicinity of Boonsboro -- his army in fine condition and spirits -- was ready for any emergency; and with him arrangements had been made for his cooperation with Grant whenever and where he should be most needed. But now that he had planned, unaided, nevertheless free from the influences and interferences at Washington, one of the greatest military movements of any age -- instituting a new principle in military science -- and crowning it with one of the most successful achievements, he was prepared to march victoriously along and help General Grant finish up the war, at Richmond.
>
> The Lieutenant General [Grant] full realized the extent of Sherman's successes; and felt that he had really picked the meat out of the Confederate egg. If he should now allow him to come immediately in and cooperate with him around the Confederate Capital in crushing in the empty shell upon Lee, there would be no end to the bickerings that would inevitably follow between the Eastern and Western armies, extending in effect to the most remote localities, where time itself would be slow to obliterate it.

> General Grant was the first to foresee this; but he also knew the feelings of the sovereign people in regard to the prolongation of the war, and who in a great measure reasoned that their best blood had been lavished on experiments foreign to the better principles of military art: and a failure now, single-handed, to cope with General Lee, would be more fatal to himself, as a military leader, than to the country; however, in such an event he knew the clamor of the people would be long and loud.

Captain Hall again writes of the influence of Washington politicians and bureaucrats, which could easily impede the Union commanders from making wise tactical judgments of their own. Hall states that President Lincoln was also subjected to negative influences in Washington, but that the President rose above his surroundings:

> The heart and soul of Lincoln, ever warm in patriotic zeal, was sometimes nearly crushed out of him by the overriding crew by whom he was surrounded, and the country at one time was finally brought nearly to the very verge of dissolution: and then as if these electric lights of intelligence believed our forbearing President to be the Jonah of the storm which their own indiscretions had created, they desired to throw him overboard. But thanks to the *Hand* that overruled the whole! Though not permitted to behold the end and participate in its fruits, Lincoln lived, as President, to feel and see that the end was nigh.

Hall also speaks of the past experiences of the Army of the Potomac, which was now under the ultimate control of General Grant:

> The truly patriotic and ever faithful Army of the Potomac, conceived, reared and wrought into the sublime military mechanism which arises only from a free and independent people, had throughout the war been made the scapegoat for the sins of those who assumed to control it. By the power of these spirits it had been made to lay down its lives at Bull Run, South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor and around the defenses of Petersburg and of Richmond, in trying to climb up some other way. But finally, when they had left him, and General Grant was again “clothed and in his right mind” the way by the military door, marked out and sought to be entered by military men at the beginning of the war, was found to be easy. And now Grant girded on his sword for a grand entrance through it to success. Though his veteran army, the volunteer force of the first outburst of patriotism from a noble people, was mostly laid low in the dust,
>
> enough came out of its bloody trail from the Rapidan to the James -- when joined by the raw recruits which made his numbers good -- to start the game a-flying, and

the recruit was always effective in a running fight.

Thus, the stage set, on March 29, 1865, General Sheridan was to cross the South Side Railroad between Burkeville and Petersburg. Then, "if practicable," his forces were to destroy part of the railroad and cut the Danville Road. After these actions were completed, Sheridan was to concentrate on the South Road west of Burkeville. General Warren (commanding the Fifth Corps including the 97th New York) was to cross Hatcher's Run at Monk's Neck bridge on the same morning. He was to take the corps as far as the junction of the Vaughn and Quaker Roads, wait there for the arrival of the Second Corps under General Humphreys, and then advance upon the Confederates by the Quaker Road.

Lee had learned of Sheridan's position to the left of the Army of the Potomac, and therefore ordered General Fitzhugh ("Fitz") Lee's division to Five Forks, Virginia. Fitz Lee was to assume command of the cavalry there and of such infantry as might be sent him to operate against Sheridan in that vicinity --arriving at Sutherland Station on the night of March 29th. A heavy rain fell that night and rendered the roads almost impassable. Nevertheless, Union General Humphreys moved forward on the 30th and drove the Confederates into their entrenchments; however, he refrained from making an assault.

General Warren advanced to the Dabney Mill Road -- covering the Boydton Road to Gravely Road. Union General Merritt was directed by General Sheridan to get possession of Five Forks, but his forces met the Confederate cavalry "and a brisk skirmishing followed."

Early on the morning of the 30th, Fitz Lee's forces advanced to Five Forks and marched towards Dinwiddie Courthouse. Here they met Sheridan's cavalry, with whom they had vigorous skirmishing and had a general officer wounded. That evening Confederate Generals W.H.F. Lee and Rosser joined Fitz Lee. About the same time, General Pickett's command arrived by way of White Oak Road. Sheridan was soon notified of Pickett's presence and reported the same to General Grant.

General Pickett assumed command of the force to be directed the following morning against Sheridan. General Lee's plan was to attack the left flank of the Fifth Corps and "roll it up." Grant had intended to strengthen Sheridan's force and turn Lee's right, and at the same time overcome the Confederate works at Petersburg. However, the condition of the roads by recent rains prevented this. Early on the morning of March 31st, General Pickett's arrival was made known to Union General Ayres (a division commander under Warren), who expected an attack from Pickett, since his forces were only four miles away. Ayres therefore prepared against attacks to his front and side.

By this time the soil had become so soaked by rain that Grant notified his corps commanders to maintain their current positions because of the difficulty of moving men and equipment in such conditions. Despite the muddy ground, General Lee was present on the scene and decided to take the initiative. His skirmishers soon appeared in General Warren's front and Warren directed Ayres to dislodge them or discover if the Confederates were there in force. This

information was to be telegraphed to General Meade. General Meade directed Warren that if the reconnaissance showed an opportunity to gain possession of the White Oak Road, to do so, regardless of his previous order to suspend operations for the day.

General Lee, conforming to his plan to attack the Fifth Corps (including the 97th) on its flank, formed large numbers of soldiers -- massed in the woods overlooking the open fields near W. Dabney's house. Various Union divisions proceeded in the direction of the Confederates but retreated in the face of overwhelming numbers of rebels. In their retreat, some Union soldiers experienced "desolating flank and front fire." Union General Crawford's division retired in confusion, but not without an attempt -- though futile -- on the part of some brigade commanders to make a stand. The 97th (of Coulter's brigade) participated in this effort. "By the sound of rapid infantry fire and a stream of stragglers coming from Warren's advance," General Humphreys was apprised that the Fifth Corps needed support. Therefore, he immediately dispatched General Miles with two brigades which advanced rapidly and attacked the Confederates in flank.

These Union forces were joined by two other Union brigades, which by their numbers and positions were able to deliver "such an onset" that the Confederates "were at once put to flight." Three hundred Confederate prisoners and a battle flag of an Alabama regiment were taken "besides [the Confederates] suffering a severe loss in killed and wounded." As a result of this engagement, Warren's loss in dead and wounded was 936, and 470 were missing. Humphrey's loss was 374. General Ord also "crowded hard" upon the Confederates' strong position, which resulted in Ord's forces "losing considerably." Nevertheless, Ord was "successful in inflicting quite a loss upon the enemy, especially in prisoners."

While moving towards Five Forks on the morning of March 31st, Union General Devin's division met Fitz Lee's cavalry on the "direct road" to Dinwiddie Court House. While engaged with a part of this cavalry force, Fitz Lee, in conjunction with the cavalry of Generals W.H.F. Lee and Rosser (supported by Pickett's infantry), made a detour by way of Little Five Forks and Chamberlain's Creek. They did so in order to strike Sheridan's flank while Confederate General Munford attacked Sheridan's front. General W.H.F. Lee was the first to engage Sheridan's troops, attacking at Fitzgerald's Crossing. W.H.F. Lee forced a passage, but was immediately driven back, losing heavily.

In the course of various movements in pursuing the Union forces, General Pickett had exposed his rear. Sheridan quickly took advantage of this and ordered Generals Greig and Gibbs to attack Pickett, as well as ordering General Custer to bring Capehart's and Pennington's brigades "into the contest." Other Union forces were thus freed from Pickett's pursuit and he was compelled to turn around at Dinwiddie Court House to meet Sheridan's line of attack. Hall states, "An obstinate fight ensued, lasting till dark. Upon [Union General] Smith's brigade the

heaviest fighting fell, which was gallantly sustained by that command." Much of the battlefield was dense woods, and the rest was on "heavy" (wet) soil. The two opposing armies lay close to each other during the night.

At 5:00 p.m. on the same day (March 31st) and while on the White Oak Road, General Warren heard the sound of battle in a southwest direction. Since the sound was coming from the vicinity of General Sheridan's command, Warren sent Barlett's brigade across the fields to support Sheridan by attacking the Confederate flank. Warren was soon ordered by General Meade to send a brigade along the White Oak Road to clear the way for Sheridan since the Confederates had penetrated between Warren and Sheridan's main line. Warren sent General Pearson leading a brigade to execute this order. However, the Confederates had destroyed the bridge across Gravely Run and recent rains had rendered the stream unfordable, so Pearson's command was brought to a halt.

Warren was soon notified that Sheridan had been driven to Dinwiddie Court House by strong bodies of Confederate cavalry supported by infantry. As a result, the rear of the Union's Second and Fifth Corps (including the 97th) was exposed -- "requiring great watchfulness on the part of their corps commanders."

At 8:40 p.m., Warren suggested to Meade by telegraph that Warren should attack the Confederate army's rear while Sheridan attacked in front. Meade advised Grant of these suggestions and received the reply, "Let Warren move in the way you propose and urge him not to stop for anything." Sheridan was notified by both Grant and Meade of these orders, and of efforts being made to move troops to support Sheridan. Grant had also informed Sheridan that he had sent MacKenzie's cavalry to assist Sheridan in the frontal attack.

Grant's headquarters were at Dabney's Mills, and two miles away were Meade's on the Vaughn Road, while Warren's were on the Boydton Road five miles from Meade's -- and all were connected by telegraph! Even so, it was over two hours before Warren received a reply to his suggestion of attack from Meade, "showing a bad condition of the working wires."

General Warren replied that he would send General Ayres' division to Sheridan for the frontal attack, as Ayres was closest to Sheridan by the chosen route. At the same time, Warren ordered two other divisions to assist General Bartlett in attacking the Confederate rear. Captain Hall alludes to Warren's delay in sending forth two divisions to join Bartlett:

> The drift of General Grant's and General Meade's dispatches shows the principal anxiety was to get a division to General Sheridan, and it is to be inferred that Warren's hesitancy in starting his other two divisions arose principally from a desire to first learn of the success of Ayres, to be assured that Sheridan would not be forced back, for in such an event, he deemed the better way of moving upon the enemy's rear would be [by another route].

Sheridan sent Warren a dispatch at 3:00 a.m. on April 1st stating that he and Custer were holding in front of Dinwiddie Court House on the road leading to Five Forks. The Confederates

under Pickett were directly in front of Custer's division, and the Confederates might attack at daylight. Sheridan ordered Warren to send one of his divisions to attack on the Confederate flank at dawn, regardless of whether or not the Confederates attacked Custer. By this maneuver, Sheridan hoped to encircle the entire Confederate army.

During the night, Pickett learned of infantry arriving to support Sheridan, and withdrew through the early morning. Sheridan's plan was to make a feint upon Pickett's right flank with his cavalry force while the Fifth Corps would make a vigorous assault upon the left flank -- with General Merrett attacking in front. If these combined assaults were successful Pickett would be separated from Lee and driven westward. In the afternoon of April 1st, the Fifth Corps moved to the right of General Devin who occupied a position near the Confederate right center, with Custer to his left. Generals Ayres, Crawford and Griffin also assisted in this vicinity. General MacKenzie's cavalry had forced his way "by a sharp contest with the enemy's cavalry" to the White Oak Road about three miles from Five Forks. MacKenzie's forces moved along this road to connect with the right of the Fifth Corps, and when the attack should be made MacKenzie was to get possession of the Ford Road and thereby prevent the Confederates' escape.

Warren reached the White Oak Road with Crawford's division, and meeting no opposition there except a skirmish line, continued on, expecting to find the Confederate works in the edge of the woods beyond the field he was crossing. Thus, the whole line of Union soldiers had crossed the White Oak Road when Ayres' division was struck by Confederate artillery and infantry fire. Sheridan was riding with Ayres when the attack was made, and "Ayres division was thrown into some disorder, which they remedied, and Ayres changed front by the left to meet this attack." Warren, "at once catching the import of this fire," ordered Kellogg's brigade -- on Crawford's left -- into line at right angle to the former line of march. Warren then sent members of his staff to direct Crawford to form the balance of his division on the right of Kellogg. But since most of Crawford's and a part of Griffin's divisions had entered the dense woods, it was difficult to catch up to Crawford. General Warren had sent all his staff officers to stop General Crawford's march -- to no avail -- and finally went himself.

As a result of Union infantry and cavalry operations, the Confederates were dislodged and "struggled to find a way out of the woods." They retreated but quickly entrenched on the edge of Gilliam Field. General Warren and Crawford's division followed the retreating Confederates until they came to the edge of the field across from them. Warren formed his line in the woods for an assault upon the Confederate forces. According to Captain Hall, General Warren then took the initiative, followed by General Custer:

> At the word of [Warren's] command, the troops hesitated to move upon the enemy's works -- a brisk fire at the time being kept up by the enemy's line -- till Warren, taking the Fifth Corps flag and riding forward with it, his troops followed him to the charge. His horse was shot [from] under him in crossing the field. Custer -- on his left -- moved to the assault, at the same time having notified him, by a member of his staff, of his intent. The [Confederate] works were carried under a severe fire, and a large part of the enemy's line was captured.

Sheridan's cavalry continued the pursuit of General Pickett's disorganized command until late in the evening of April 2nd. Hall describes Sheridan's victory as "most decisive." Pickett's forces were routed, and lost 4,500 prisoners, 13 colors and six cannon. While no number is indicated for Union losses, Hall comments, "But General Sheridan's loss in killed and wounded undoubtedly fully equaled that of General Pickett." General Warren reported that in the battle of Five Forks the Fifth Corps captured 3,244 men with their arms, 11 regimental colors and one four-gun battery. The corps lost 634 in dead, wounded and missing.

General Warren's performance at Five Forks was criticized by General Sheridan. General Andrew Humphreys, who commanded the Union army's Second Corps throughout the campaign of 1865, says in his "Virginia Campaign of '64 and '65":

> General Warren states that after the last of the enemy had been captured at Five Forks, he received, at 7 P.M., an order from Major-General Sheridan relieving him from duty, and directing him to report for orders to Lieutenant-General Grant. This action of General Sheridan was taken under an authority sent him by General Grant some time in the morning of the 1st of April, "to relieve General Warren, if in his judgment, it was for the best interest of the service to do so."

In his report of this battle, dated May 16th, 1865, General Sheridan states that in bringing up and forming his corps at Gravelly Run Church, "General Warren did not exert himself to get up his corps as rapidly as he might have done, and his manner gave me the impression that he wished the sun to go down before dispositions for the attack could be completed. Further, he states: "During this attack (that of the Fifth Corps and the cavalry upon Pickett's intrenched position), I again became dissatisfied with General Warren. During the engagement portions of his lines gave way when not exposed to a heavy fire, and simply for want of confidence on the part of the troops, which General Warren did not exert himself to inspire. I therefore relieved him from the command of the Fifth Corps, authority for the action having been sent to me, before the battle, unsolicited."

Captain Hall summarizes the nature of General Sheridan's claims: "These are very grave accusations or imputations, and of such serious character that no officer could rest under them. Any officer against whom they were made would be entitled, whatever his rank might be, to an investigation of them before a proper court.

A court of inquiry was finally appointed by President Johnson after General Warren had repeatedly requested it. Many Confederate as well as United States' officers who had been engaged at Five Forks appeared before the court, which conducted a detailed and extended investigation of the circumstances attending the battle. General Sheridan explained further to the court that though his troops were victorious at Five Forks, they were isolated from the Army of the Potomac. Sheridan stated that Warren had disappointed him in the movement and management of his corps in battle, and therefore he deemed it to be in the best interest of the

service to relieve him, and did so.

Among the testimony presented before the court was the following:

> General Warren received his orders near Gravelly Run church to move up his corps at 1 P.M., and it took some time to communicate those orders to the divisions and for the movement to begin.
>
> The route to the place of formation was along a narrow road, very muddy and slippery, somewhat encumbered with wagons and led horses of the cavalry corps, and the men were fatigued. The testimony of the brigade and division commanders is to the effect that the corps in line of march was well closed up, and that no unnecessary delay was incurred.
>
> The corps reached its destination, and was formed ready to advance against the enemy at 4 P.M.
>
> It is in evidence that General Warren remained near Gravelly Run Church, directing the formation, explaining the mode of attack to the division and brigade commanders, with sketches prepared for this purpose.
>
> General Warren also repeatedly sent out staff officers to the division commanders in order to expedite the march.

The court ruled that there was no unnecessary delay in this march of the Fifth Corps, and that General Warren "took the usual methods of a corps commander to prevent delay." The ruling continued:

> The question regarding General Warren's manner appears to be too intangible, and the evidence on it too contradictory for the Court to decide, separate from the context that he appeared to wish "the sun to go down before dispositions for the attack could be completed; but the actions, as shown by the evidence, do not appear to have corresponded with such wish if ever he entertained it."

General Sheridan's "imputation" that General Warren failed to keep his command cohesive and ready at the battle of Five Forks also found little support at the inquiry. The court found no evidence of this charge based upon the testimony of "officers of high character and great experience, formed under the sanctity of an oath to examine and inquire into the matter according to the evidence, without partiality, favor, affection, prejudice or hope of reward."

General Grant spoke highly of General Warren's decisiveness and assertiveness in battle, as did Captain Hall. Further, Captain Hall credits Warren for the Union's success at Five Forks,

and ponders whether Sheridan brought the charges because Sheridan was jealous of Warren's ability. Hall goes to some lengths to describe his own and others' esteem for Warren:

> The love Warren's command bore for him arose principally from the acquired knowledge of his superiority as a commanding general ...
>
> In his intensest thought and action, under the most trying circumstances, his brain never got perturbed. In connection with a firm brain, a clear head and a steady nerve, he also had discretion. Himself an expert engineer, he never overestimated or underrated the enemy's defences[sic]. He never pushed his men to a useless slaughter, nor hesitated to attack whenever an opportunity to success offered.
>
> Had he been placed in a position to have given his powers full scope there is no doubt but that he would have been ranked among the most illustrious generals of the age.
>
> His seizure of Little Round Top, the key to the position at Gettysburg -- though a side act from his command -- exhibited his intuitive knowledge and promptness in action.

Following the battle of Five Forks, the fighting of the 97th was minimal, "though with the Second Brigade, Third Division and fifth corps, under General Griffin -- a gallant officer -- it was destined to do some lively marching." Morale was high because of the Union army's successes of the last few days. Spirits were also lifted because the Federal forces were now occupying important Confederate locations and tightening their encirclement of the Confederate army -- leading to surrender by the South and an end to the war. Hall describes:

> Petersburg and Richmond now occupied by our troops, and General Lee endeavoring to escape and join General Johnston, was enough to nerve the weakest to desperate resolution, and it did add an impetus to our army, and every man of the Fifth Corps did his best to keep up with Sheridan's cavalry, to head off Lee. On the 7th [April 7, 1865] the Sixth Corps took the left next to Sheridan, and was under his direct command, and General Lee was soon brought to bay confronted by the Fifth and Sixth Corps and Sheridan's cavalry. General Lee supposing cavalry only to be in his front, endeavored to break through, but when this force withdrew to the flanks, and the heavy columns of infantry were uncovered he saw at once the uselessness of resistance, and raised a white flag.
>
> Grant had previously asked Lee to surrender; and great was the rejoicing of our troops when General Lee was finally headed off, and formally surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to General Grant, at Appomattox Court House, on the 9th of April, 1865.

The next day the men of the 97th New York Volunteers started for Burkeville, Virginia. Two days later they headed for Richmond, and then on to Manchester, Virginia. Remaining opposite Manchester a few days, the "Conkling Rifles" marched for Washington. They were quartered at Ball's Cross-Roads to await the mustering out of the regiment.

Chapter XX: Camp Life at Ball's Cross-roads -- Review of the Armies -- Muster Out and Departure for Home -- While Awaiting Pay at Syracuse Received, on Invitation, a Welcome at Utica -- Paid Off on the 5th of August and Separated for their Homes.

The war now over, the 97th awaited mustering out at Ball's cross-roads, outside Washington, D.C. Camp life there was boring and tiring for the men, as Captain Hall describes:

> With nothing to do, the war ended, anxious friends at home waiting patiently for our return, and the dull monotony of camp life repeated from day to day in tedious sameness, it was not surprising that both officers and men should get tired of the delay and weary in waiting for their discharge. At such a time, drills, discipline or prompt discharges of duties could scarcely be expected, nor could the officers feel inclined to notice faults in men who had served faithfully through the war, when a strict enforcement of duty would mar their record.

Soon after the transfer of the 83rd New York Volunteers to the 97th, recommendations were forwarded to the Executive of State for promotions of the non-commissioned officers of the 83rd New York. Captain Hall laments the apparent unfairness of some of these promotions:

> To a limited extent these promotions seemed necessary and equitable, and so long as good and capable men were selected no fault could be found, but like many innovations the business was overdone, and vacancies in the various companies were soon filled, the line officers and men of the 97th knowing nothing about the matter till confronted by a full fledged officer from the men late of the 83d -- sword in hand -- to report for duty, of whose qualifications they were ignorant and whom they perhaps had never seen. Thus, in the old regiment were the rights of veteran non-commissioned officers, whose gallantry on many a well-fought field, and whose ability would have enabled them to fill positions in line, disregarded and their feelings sometimes severely tried by the incapacity or vulgarity of some one of those so placed in command over them.

While awaiting muster out at Ball's cross-roads, many of the soldiers were allowed to visit Washington to witness the grand reviews of the Army of the Potomac and of the Western Army under General Sherman. Hall states, "Though that of the Grand Old Army of the Potomac was a thrilling sight to us who had served in it, a deep interest was also felt in that which had marched from Atlanta to the sea, or through Georgia."

The troops assembled at Ball's cross-roads were organized into a Provisional Corps under

General Wright. One at a time the regiments received orders to set out for their respective homes, "and their departure only rendered the stay of those who remained more lonely." Thus every regiment of the brigade except the 97th was finally withdrawn, and on the 18th of July, 1865, an order dated eleven days prior was carried into effect, and the regiment was drawn up for final muster-out. Soon thereafter the 97th started for home by way of Binghamton and Syracuse, New York. It was kept together by an order which did not allow final payment of the regiment members until they reached Syracuse as a single unit. A great ceremony was held in Utica to honor the 97th New York Volunteers while they waited for their pay, as described in a "publication of the day" (probably a newspaper):

> While awaiting payment at Syracuse permission was obtained, allowing the 97th Regiment to visit Utica for the purpose of receiving a welcome prepared by the citizens of that city and vicinity for the occasion. This was the last Oneida regiment of infantry to return from the war, and it is but just to say that none of the brave men who had gone forth at their country's call -- at the hour of her greatest peril -- were more worthy to receive the thank offering of a grateful people.
>
> A meeting of the reception committee was held at the city of Utica on the 29th of July, at which the arrangements were made for a dinner and an escort. A ladies' meeting was held the same day at the Common Council room, and committees for each ward were named to prepare for the entertainment. Donations of cooked provisions, fruits and flowers were invited. The supplies were to be collected at the house of Wm. Kernan, Jr., 47 Elizabeth street, and the tables were to be set in Chancellor Square.
>
> The 1st day of August was selected for the reception, and proved pleasant throughout. At an early hour the friends of the returning soldiers began to assemble, and at the appointed hour the procession, led by Brevet Brigadier General Daggett, the marshal of the day, was formed and the 97th, escorted by the 45th Regiment N.G.S.N.Y., and the fire department, marched from the railroad station through Genesee, Rebecca, South, Howard, Arcade, Rutger, John, Lansing, Second and Bleecker streets to Chancellor Square, where tables were set in the south and west promenades for six hundred men, including the regiment and its escort. The 97th numbered 270 men on this occasion.
>
> After "Home Sweet Home" had been played by the band, the Hon. A. Hubbell, chairman of the committee, introduced the Rev. Dr. S. Hanson Coxe, who, in the necessary absence of the Hon. Roscoe Conkling ... had been selected to give a formal welcome. After alluding to the circumstances that had devolved the duty upon him he [Coxe] said:
>
> "I feel, however, that words are feeble at such an hour as this, and that bells and banners and cannon are proper ovations of the day; bells ringing out

their joyous pleals of welcome; banners flashing over you the bright colors of our country's glorious light; cannon giving utterance to emotions which are too deep for tears; crowds gathering to look upon, bless and cheer you -- such are the true exponents of the heart of Old Oneida, speaking a language which requires no interpreter, for their unmistaken import is honor to the brave! Welcome faithful and victorious to the homes which you have so signally honored by the prowess of your arms.

We recognize you, worthy representatives of those mighty armies of the unconquerable United States, whose brilliant valor has repulsed the foe, whose incorruptible patriotism allied with the strong arm of power under the protecting aegis of the Almighty, has hurled back the legions of rebellion and established the country on the basis of Liberty and Union, and advanced its glory among the nations of the earth. To you we owe it, and to you, comrades in arms, that we are citizens today of the freest, and I thank God, the strongest nation on the globe. We trust you recognize around you men and women who appreciate your deeds of lofty daring; who have followed you with prayers to the field of battle; and wept in anguish over your noble slain; who now behold you with admiration, gratitude and pride; who would leave nothing undone which should be done to attest to these emotions.

Your splendid achievements from Cedar Mountain, through so many battles that time would fail me but to name them, till your glad eyes caught the light of the white flag of Lee's surrender, which was like the fluttering of wings of the angel of peace over the smoke of battle, are known and read and gloried by all. Your heroic endurance and self-sacrifice -- your hardships, toils and trials, are they not written in our hearts; and in the book of God's remembrance, for your everlasting reward? You have borne the flag of our country triumphantly, and in the name of Oneida, in the name of Washington, in the name of GOD I thank you! We knew that it would be so, when we bad you a sorrowing farewell, and committed that sacred ensign to your hands; we knew that its bright stars would glow amid thunderbolts and its stripes amid streams of fire.

Allow me to say, Colonel Spofford, that you have illustrated the career of a hero and in the patience of a martyr. Tears of sympathy have been yours, for the long, weary months during which you pined in the noisome damps of the Libby Prison, from thousands who would willingly have suffered with you, rather than that the standard of our hopes and affections should go down in blood. For the honors which you there sowed in tears, may you through your life hereafter, reap in joy.

WHEELOCK, MORVIN, CADY, STILES, and all others of your illustrious dead, we mourn your absence on this joyful day; but there is a victory in dying well for freedom, and you have not died in vain! Thousands will be fired

by the virtues of your example to be watchful sentinels on the walls of the Temple of Liberty. Those who have fallen in this great struggle have not only embalmed their memories in the hearts of the people but have kindled a sacred flame on the altars of their country, which never can expire, but will blaze and burn a beacon light to future generations.

My friends, it is glorious to stand as you do today, in the radiant light of peace, won by your courage and constancy ... bronzed in the sacred service of your country. And it is glorious to sleep in the grave of a Union soldier, hallowed by Christian patriotism, such as burned in the heart of WHEELOCK, lighting for him the path of duty, which led him away from the love and shelter of a happy home, the reward of manly and honest industry, to battle, toil and death. And be it yours to stand with him, in the perfect peace of the resurrection morning, when the Great Captain distributes promotions for the ranks of eternity.

Receive an united benediction, war-worn heroes of the 'Third Oneida' and enjoy through life the proud consciousness of having done your duty in the hour of your country's peril. We have no royal decorations to offer you; no crosses, or garters or stars of the Legion of Honor. The battles inscribed upon your tattered and blood dyed banners are the insignia of your title to nobility; and the wandering stars which you have helped to fix in the azure of the dear old flag, will outshine and outlast these glittering toys of monarchs and despots. These, I say, it is not ours to bestow; but we give you gratitude and love which shall never grow cold; a heart-felt welcome to all the joys of peaceful life, and the rewards of

honorable toil; and a soldier of the Republic needs no more. His deeds will be his children's heritage, and in the ages to come, will glow with undimmed luster on history's deathless page."

Colonel Spofford replied by apologizing for not being allowed to appear with their arms and equipments, as they desired. He said his men were not handsome, but they were much better than they appeared to be. Their clothing was not first rate -- it had been worn through hard fought battles. [Spofford stated:] "Our late colonel, Brevet Brigadier General Wheelock, when he raised the regiment, did not fill it with holiday Fourth of July soldiers, but with men who were expected to receive hard knocks, and the tattered remnant of 2,200 men whom you see before you shows how faithfully they have fulfilled their mission.

Their hearts are right. We believe you sympathize with us, and are satisfied with our conduct on the bloody field. Permit me in behalf of my officers and men, to return to you our sincere thanks."

After "cheers of welcome aided by the bands," the regiment sat down to dinner. The three flags the men had carried in battle were exhibited, and at 3:20 p.m. they departed on the

train back to Syracuse. On August 5, 1865, the members of the 97th were paid and discharged. With "heartfelt adieus" they separated from one another to "meet again joyous greetings at their homes."

Afterthoughts

The survivors of the noble 97th had come "full-circle." They had left their homes, families and friends, marched thousands of miles, endured the sufferings and other experiences of war, and come home again. They would never be the same, and in a certain sense, after reading and writing about these men and their endeavors, I will never be the same. When I feel the cold of winter, I think of them "laying on their arms" unprotected all night at Fredericksburg, Virginia -- awaiting a fearsome battle the next day. How they sacrificed and still continued, while some of their families barely scraped by -- or did not -- back at home. I think of how they maintained their commitment during such a long and trying undertaking, while still keeping their humor -- whether it be a mock battle with camp utensils or a contest of jumping from a tree to a river bank.

These were true individuals. They were volunteers, not self-promoters or entrepreneurs of war. They were there and gave their all for the cause to an extent which is difficult to fathom today. They "went the distance," and the survivors came home when the job was finally finished.

Although such sacrifice for country is hard for some of us to understand today, we relate to the soldiers of the American Civil War and the particular experiences of the 97th New York

Volunteers. They were self-reliant individuals, and lived lives of purpose which many today can only dream of.

And so have I also come "full-circle." Little did I know when I asked about my father's musket -- which he discovered as a boy of five in his grandmother's garage on Trinity Avenue in Lowville -- that I was to embark on almost two years of research and writing on the 97th Regiment. Nor did I surmise at first that the firearm belonged to Franklin B. Hough and was given to this surgeon of the 97th by his relative, Asahel, of West Martinsburg -- a company commander in the War of 1812. My pursuit of this portion of the history of Lewis, Herkimer and Oneida Counties -- particularly the Lowville area -- has been personally rewarding. I sincerely hope that the readership of the Journal and Republican has gained from the series, in which I am very grateful to have participated.

Still, the interest continues, and the thirst for knowledge remains unquenched. Stimulus can arise at any time and place, when we might be reminded of people of a different time who gave so much of themselves. Such an occasion for me is when I visit Saint Peter's Cemetery, New Bremen, in which my mother, Maryann Buckingham Roth, and other relatives are buried. Near the front of the cemetery beside the walkway stands the gravestone of Michael Wagner, Company H, 97th Regiment, New York Volunteers. The Wagner Road and the site of his homestead are nearby. I have fished in the creek that ran by his house, as he likely did, and others will after me.

When these associations are combined, I feel a sense of closeness. I did not know Michael Wagner or the other members of the 97th. But, I would like to have known them as individuals, heard them tell of their experiences, and shaken their hands for a job well done. In this way, although separated by time and space, we are somehow connected.

Sincerely,

Steven F. Roth