
169th New York Infantry Newsletter

July 2014

The Time Traveler.

Part XI.

Although mostly forgotten by historians, the 1864 spring offensive launched by the Army of the James at Bermuda Hundred on May 4th would threaten Petersburg and the Confederate capital of Richmond with capture. Gen. Butler's forces saw heavy fighting at Drewry's Bluff, Chester Station, Port Walthall Junction, Swift Creek, and Ware Bottom Church, and many a brave man from both sides would fall. Though the 169th N.Y. was called out in line of battle almost every night since the amphibious landing in Virginia, the men never complained of their hardships. The regiment behaved gallantly and was held in high estimation by army commanders.



"Lost But Not Forgotten," by Lloyd Garrison



Review of Gen. Ord's division, opposite Fredericksburg, by Maj. Gen. McDowell and staff (May 1862)
Edwin Austin Forbes (1839-1895)
 Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The 169th N.Y. was reviewed on May 1st, 1864, by Brig.-Gen. Alfred H. Terry, in temporary command of the 1st Division of the X Army Corps, pending the arrival from Hilton Head of Maj.-Gen. Quincy A. Gillmore. A second review was conducted by Maj.-Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, with Col. John McConihe remarking that many of the men "were undoubtedly reviewed for the last time on earth" in a letter to his mother sent on the 2^d, (found in its entirety in the April newsletter):

"The review yesterday was a grand affair, barring the intolerable clouds of dust which almost obscured the columns. First, we were reviewed by General Terry and afterwards by General Butler. We left camp at 12 Midnight and returned at dark. Of course, like all reviews it was tedious. The troops were all in fine condition and I should think there were about 10,000 men on the field. Many of them were undoubtedly reviewed for the last time on earth."

"Back in Old Virginia," Gen. Alonzo Alden wrote in his memoirs, describing the final preparations of the 169th N.Y. for the spring campaign:

"On the 1st of May, all the troops assembled at that point were reviewed by General B. F. Butler, accompanied by General Vogdes and General R. S. Foster. On the same occasion, general orders were promulgated, directing the resumption of drills, battalion, company and skirmish; and, judging from their phraseology they were prompted with an intensity of purpose that signified preparation for a series of desperate battle contests. It was expected that active operations would ensue as we approached the immediate defences of Richmond and Petersburg. All this had been contemplated by the distinguished council of war; the initial step having been the transfer of our field of operations from the Department of the South to the Department of Virginia. It was the supreme purpose of our commander-in-chief, President Lincoln, by this system, to contribute in dealing a decisive blow at the vitals of the Southern Confederacy."

Adjustments were made in the composition of brigades and divisions, with the 8th Maine leaving Drake's brigade in exchange for the 9th Maine. Health inspections were conducted, and men found to be unfit for strenuous campaigning were either sent to hospitals or the Veteran Reserve Corps. The troops conducted

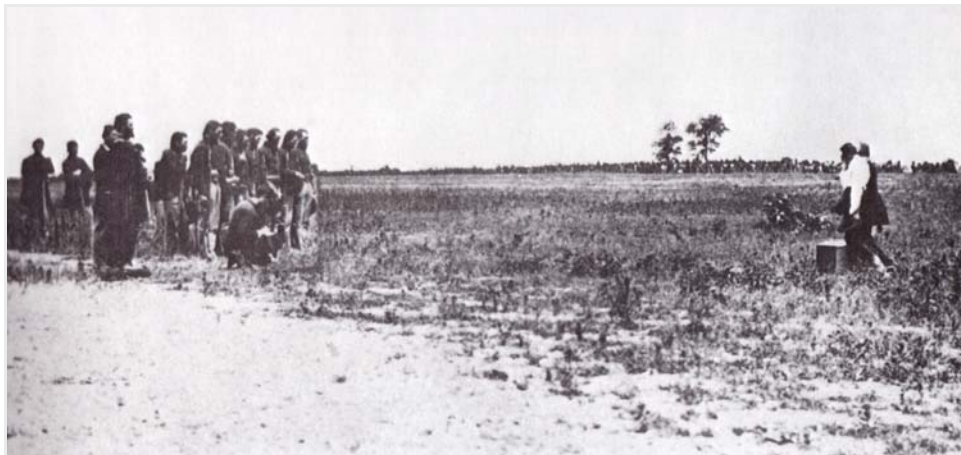


Bayonet drill, camp of the 34th Mass., Miner's Hill, Virginia (1863)

special drill sessions for bayonet exercises, and rapid maneuvers of the skirmish line. These maneuvers would be used by the 169th to fend off attacks by overwhelming numbers of Confederates in their future engagements with the enemy at places such as Chester Station, Port Walthall Junction, and Foster's Plantation.

The officers and men were allowed little more than what they could carry, with dress coats, hats and personal baggage sent away for storage. Each man received two new pairs of army shoes and would carry one-half of a shelter tent when on the march. The men were issued 100 rounds and only one wagon was allowed to a regiment. Company cooks lost most of their mess gear, as beef, beans, potatoes, and fresh bread disappeared from the menu. Bacon, salt pork, and hardtack would be the soldier's rations in the field.

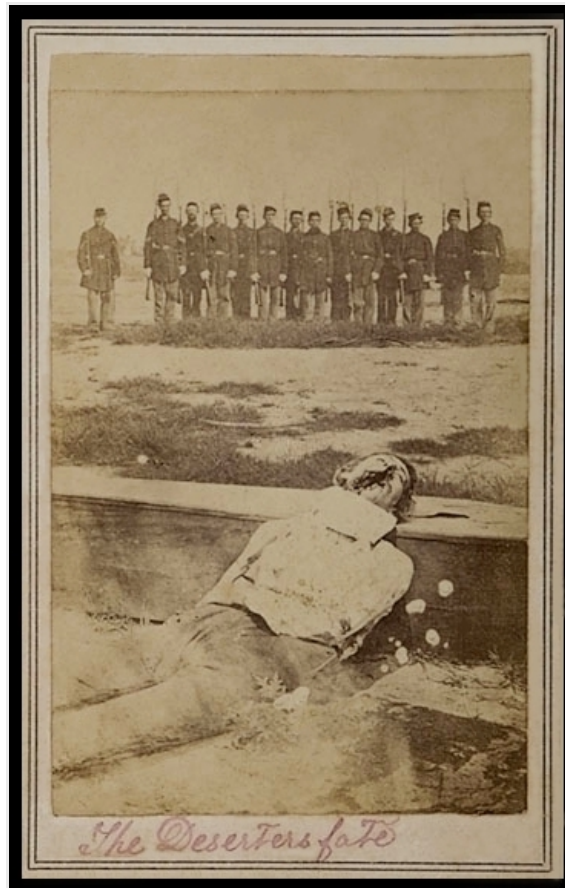
Two deserters from the 2^d N.H. Infantry were executed, a warning to those who may have had similar ideas. The story behind the executions is found in *A History of the Second Regiment, New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry, in the War of the Rebellion* by Martin Alonzo Haynes (1896):



Chaplain intoning a prayer before the execution of a deserter by firing squad

"The regiment was hardly in camp before the bounty jumpers began to jump. Within three days over a hundred men deserted from the Second. But very few got clear away. Some made their way toward the rebel lines, but the greater part struck down the Peninsula toward Fort Monroe, and were gathered in like rats in a bag..."

"It was a military necessity that an example should be made of some of these, and a court martial was convened for the trial of the most flagrant cases. John Egin, of Company A, was tried on the 12th, found guilty, and sentenced to be shot to death between the hours of 5 and 6 p. m. on the 13th. Egin was picked up while making his way toward the rebel lines by a Union scout in rebel uniform. Preparations were made for carrying out the sentence. The Second marched to the place selected for the execution, and Egin was on his way when a reprieve arrived and arrested the proceedings. Egin threw his cap in the air and danced for joy. He probably thought the whole affair was only 'a bluff.' But his reprieve was only temporary. On the 15th he rode forth again, seated upon his coffin, this time with a comrade in misery and to his death. His companion was from Company F, and had enlisted under the name of Henry Holt; but the night before his death he divulged that his name was McGuire, and that he was from Yorkshire, England, where he had a wife and two children.



"The place of execution was about a mile below the fort, upon the bluff overlooking the river. The regulation formalities and arrangements for a military execution were fully observed. The condemned men's own regiment was drawn up in line, with unloaded muskets, facing the spot where the deserters were to die. A section of artillery was upon the left of the regiment, trained to rake it, The One Hundred and Forty-eighth New York, in line to its rear, and two colored regiments on the right, all with loaded muskets, hedged the Second round about. No words can tell how keenly the proud old men of the proud old Second felt the disgrace of the position.

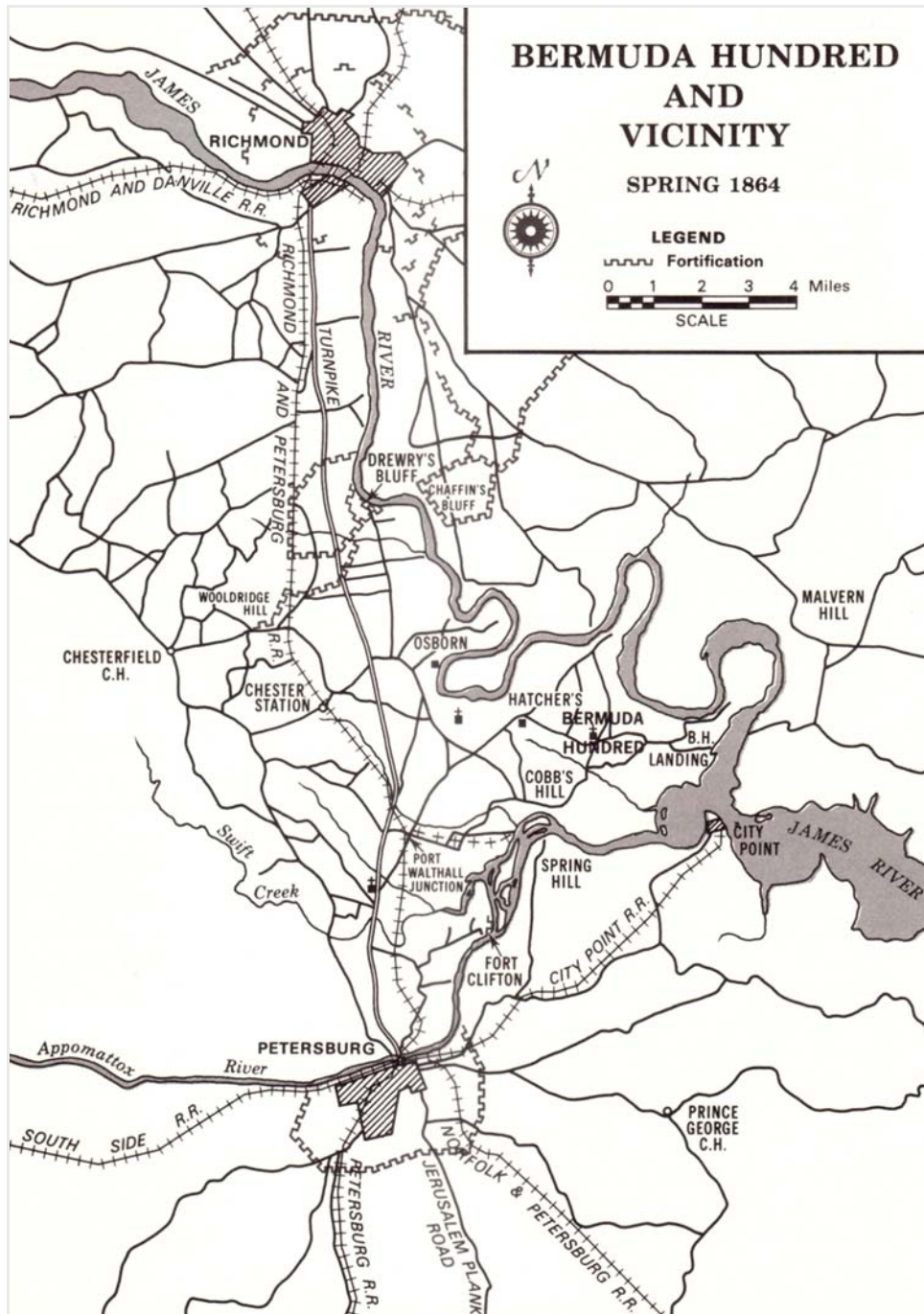
"The condemned men rode to the spot seated upon their coffins, accompanied by a priest. The carts stopped directly in front of the Second, where the men alighted, and their coffins were placed upon the ground, end to end, a few rods from the edge of the river bluff. The provost marshal read the findings of the court and the sentence, when the firing party of twelve men advanced and took position a few feet in front of the coffins. The prisoners removed their coats, and knelt upon the grass while the priest performed the holy offices of the church. Arising, they shook hands with the provost marshal and the priest. Their eyes were bandaged and their wrists tied with white handkerchiefs. Then they were led to and seated upon their coffins, facing the executioners. The marshal raised his hand, and his men brought their pieces to a 'ready;' again, and the guns sprang to the shoulder; a third time, and the volley rang out. Two or three bullets were heard singing out over the river, and Egin and Holt fell back across their coffins. After a short time the bodies were examined by surgeons, who declared life extinct, when all the troops were filed past the bodies and back to their camps."

The plan of the campaign was a closely-guarded secret, revealed to regimental commanders only a day or two before departing on the transports for Bermuda Hundred. Enlisted men had a vague idea that they would be fighting the enemy somewhere in the vicinity of Richmond.



Marble bust of Benjamin Franklin Butler (1863)
Edward Augustus Brackett (1818-1908)
Collection of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution,
Washington, D.C.

Chaplain William L. Hyde described the object of the coming campaign in *History of the One Hundred and Twelfth Regiment N. Y. Volunteers* (1866): "The plan of the campaign as lately disclosed, seems to have been for Butler to move rapidly up from his base at Bermuda Hundred, seize the railroad between Petersburg and Richmond, occupy the bank of the river, prevent Gen. Beauregard, who was coming from the extreme South, from uniting his forces to those of Gen. Lee, until Gen. Grant should have driven Lee behind the intrenchments of Richmond, when he was to form a junction with Grant above the city."



Map of Bermuda Hundred and Vicinity, Spring, 1864
 Published in "Back Door to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign,
 April-June 1864" by William Glenn Robertson (1987)

Just what the Confederate forces of Beauregard were doing at the beginning of May is explained in *Back Door to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign, April – June 1864*, by William Glenn Robertson (1987):

"The first of May found P. G. T. Beauregard at Kinston, North Carolina, supervising Robert Hoke's offensive against New Berne. Hoke had four of Beauregard's seven brigades with him, leaving only one in Virginia and two more scattered about North Carolina in garrison roles. Although Hoke's victory at Plymouth had brought him

promotion to major general at the age of twenty-six, he suggested that Beauregard assume command of the New Berne expedition as senior officer. Since Beauregard harbored deep reservations about the project, he declined the offer, contenting himself with the role of adviser. On 2 May Hoke's troops began their advance and made contact with the Federals that afternoon. Meanwhile, Beauregard departed for Weldon, pausing along the way to notify Bragg that the offensive had begun.



**Bronze bust of Pierre G. T. Beauregard
(1978 casting after 1867 original)
Edward Virginus Valentine (1838-1930)
Collection of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution,
Washington, D.C.**

"Ironically, at the same time that Beauregard had become resigned to the New Berne operation, Jefferson Davis began to have second thoughts. On 4 May he telegraphed Beauregard to cancel the expedition if immediate success was not assured and to prepare to return the troops to Virginia at a moment's notice. Davis's change of heart was due primarily to messages he had received from Robert E. Lee that asked for the return of units (such as Hoke's and Pickett's) that had previously been part of his army. Lee had hinted that without these troops he might have to retreat to a position nearer Richmond to make a stand. Unless the New Berne expedition could be successfully concluded at once, Lee believed Hoke's troops and any others that could be spared should be rushed immediately to Richmond under Beauregard's command...

"While the Confederates tardily began to concentrate troops in Virginia, Benjamin Butler set in motion a diversion originally suggested by General Heintzelman some months before. Baldy Smith was ordered to send a brigade up the York River to occupy the village of West Point. Smith had no confidence in the diversion, sarcastically asking Butler's chief of staff, 'Do you think that particular move will fool anyone?' but he grudgingly complied with the order. On the morning of 1 May, Colonel Guy Henry's brigade from the X Corps landed at West Point and occupied some old fortifications just beyond the town. To give the impression that Henry's men were only the advance party

for Butler's whole army, engineers began to reconstruct the damaged wharf and foraging parties spread the word that the rest of the Army of the James was due to arrive soon.

"Although the campaign had begun for Henry's troops, many units in the Yorktown and Gloucester camps were still collecting excess baggage to be shipped to Norfolk for storage. Others were still welcoming veterans returning from their reenlistment furloughs. Army paymasters continued to make their rounds, visiting regiments they had not seen for



U.S. Army haversack with liner easily removed for washing

The army haversack was second only to the canteen in importance to the soldier in the field. In this greasy, filthy bag he carried his rations, personal hygiene items and precious keepsakes.

months. There were also new activities of a more ominous character. Beginning on 1 May all units were required to have enough cooked rations on hand to last four days. One hundred rounds of ammunition were issued to each soldier, and a final series of inspections was held to see that each man had his full uniform and two pairs of army shoes. Regiments that had left their weapons in the Department of the South were issued rifles. Signal Corps detachments were assigned to the various headquarters and to the army and navy gunboat squadrons.

"Late in the afternoon of 2 May the sky over Yorktown and Gloucester became heavily overcast. High winds sprang up and the staging areas were pelted with rain and hail; men sought whatever shelter they could find on the open plain as the thunder and lightning played above them. Loose papers blew along company streets, and as the wind rose, tents of all sizes were ripped from their moorings, enveloping their occupants in shrouds of canvas or leaving them naked before the violence of



the elements. Drenched to the skin, men raced to secure tarpaulins protecting commissary stores or regimental records. Others braved the hailstones in order to prevent their shelter tents from blowing away. Artillerymen and teamsters strove to quiet frightened horses and recapture those that had broken free and were milling about the camps. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the wind abated and the driving rain slackened into a steady drizzle. As the Army of the James crawled out of its makeshift shelters, the soldiers saw flattened tents in every direction, lying in a sea of mud."

Col. McConihe described the visit to the 169th's camp, by what he determined was a tornado, in his letter to Lavinia Newton on the 3^d:

"Your most welcomed letter of the 26th ult., directed to me at Jacksonville, Fla., reached me at this point yesterday, and I can assure you this 'snifter' [a reference to pressed flower blossoms] is written under entirely different circumstances than that from the orange groves and magnolias of Florida.

"Such a tornado as swept over us last night, I have never witnessed. Just as the sun was going down, a sudden and alarming darkness overspread the northwest. Almost as soon as observed, the wind swept by in a fury, and in a few moments rain and hail beat upon us unmercifully. In less than five minutes, when first seen, it was as dark as a black cat in a close cellar. Then commenced what the soldiers call fun. The 112th on the left were chasing their caps in my camp, and my men were following their caps over into the 13th Indiana camp. Tents were leveled with the ground, and the men in their good nature were shouting the sea phrases which they had learned in our trips on the ocean the past year. As the tents went down they shouted, 'Stack that



Army Camp #6, by Amos G. Chapman

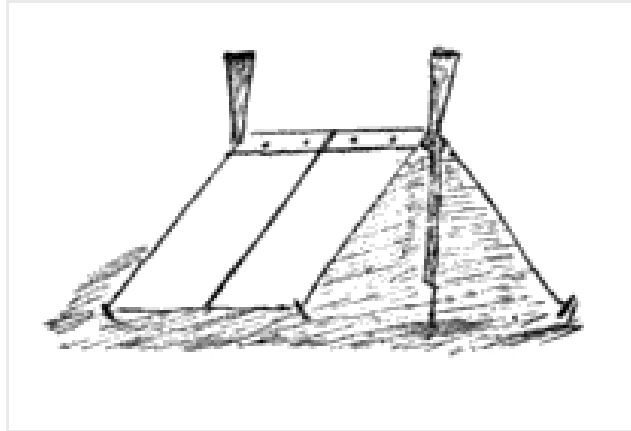
hawser!'; another cried, 'Aye-aye, sir!'; another, 'Larboard!'; and thus one phrase upon another roared above the terrible storm. My tent was a little more fortunate than most others, as it stood the storm, but it was nearly down at 9 o'clock when the wind ceased. The pins were all pulled, and as the sides flapped up the rain poured. My New York clothes were soon reduced to a campaign standard, and the brim of my hat lopped down, bonnet-shaped.



**Union soldier cleaning sword (N.D.)
Xanthus Russell Smith (1839-1929)
Private Collection**

"But what's the use in relating at length this occurrence, and as I surveyed my damaged articles and disarranged quarters, I thought, what's the use in calling yourself an old campaigner if you cannot laugh at

these things, even if you have been north and returned with a new outfit? So I laughed, smoked my cigar, while Billy [Priv. William H. Freeman, Co. B] laid my blankets on the ground, and soon thereafter I was sleeping, heedless of elements and care. But I can never forget the scene and its awful grandeur.



Shelter tent, each part 5 ft. 2 in. x 4 ft. 8 in.

Published in "The Seventh Regiment New Hampshire Volunteers in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865" by Henry F. W. Little (1896)

"We are fully prepared for an active summer campaign. Our baggage has all been sent away and we are allowed but little more than we can carry ourselves. Men and officers carry their own shelter tents and but one wall tent, and one wagon is allowed to a regiment. Everything I carry is contained in a small valise. It looks like work and I am glad to see it. I trust and believe some enduring success will crown our efforts and recompense us for these sacrifices. Where we are going, or when we shall move, I cannot definitely say, but I expect marching orders every hour, and do not believe we shall go up the [York] River. I think we are forming here as a 'blind' to the enemy, and that we will suddenly decamp, and as suddenly land at some unexpected point. But this is all my own imagination, and you can receive it as such, for what it is worth, between us. I am anxious to get started, as every moment's delay is irksome now that we are ready.

"I read your letter, and re-read it, and can assure you, as I often have, that it was most grateful to me. I am only sorry I cannot write as good a letter as you do, but such time as I have, amid my various and stirring duties, is most graciously devoted to you and John. I am pleased to hear of your continued good health and prosperity, and I shall always remember the halcyon days of the captain's *stay* in Cincinnati.

"I hope my services will not be required in the army longer than this summer's campaign, and if so, I shall soon see you. But orders have come to move, so good bye, until you hear from me again.

"This letter has been written under adverse circumstances: orderlies and officers constantly interrupting on business. I intended to say something about your sweet lady friend, Miss C., but have not time. So, with love to her, and my regards to your good father, I am, as ever, yours and John's friend."

A call went out to the Army of the James for volunteers to serve in the U.S. Navy, and Priv. Augustus H. Stiles, Co. K, who enlisted at Schodak on February 18, 1864, accepted the offer and transferred on May 2^d. An experienced whaler from North Adams, Mass., he served as a blacksmith on the Barks *Stella* and

Benjamin Cummings before the war. Augustus survived the war, but fate would lead to his frightful and untimely death, as first reported by the *Troy Daily Times* and subsequently by the *Madison County Times* on October 11, 1873:

"SUFFERING IN THE FAR NORTH. – Augustus Henry Stiles, of North Adams, Mass., left New Bedford December 10th, 1871, on the bark *Ansel Gibbs*, on a whaling voyage to Hudson's Bay, expecting to be absent about eighteen months. The crew consisted of twenty-eight men. They first sailed south and cruised for six months near the equator, when the scurvy broke out among the crew. The captain, without taking in a fresh supply of water and provisions, both of which he might easily have done, sailed north into winter quarters at Marble Island, a barren and uninhabited island in the northwestern part of Hudson's Bay. On the 19th of October following the vessel parted her cables, and, drifting upon the shore, became a total wreck. The men escaped to the shore with the loss of everything but their clothes which they wore. Here they lived, some in the hull of another ship that had been wrecked on the same island, the remainder in a double canvas tent. Their sufferings from privation and scurvy were extreme. Ten of the crew perished, among them Mr. Stiles, who died March 11th, 1872. The *Annie Bradford* reached New Bedford September 7th with a portion of the rescued crew. They report the most horrible sufferings on the island. Of the small quantity of provisions that floated ashore from the wreck, the captain selected the best for himself. The men occasionally caught a seal, and the natives from the mainland would sometimes supply them with a bear, which they would devour even to drinking the blood. Augustus Stiles apparently began to improve a short time before he died, but suddenly declined and died without a struggle." – *Troy Times*.

Although the men of the Army of the James were in high spirits, Robertson reports that there were different opinions circulating concerning the true object of the coming campaign. Was it to cut off the main supply route to Lee's Army of Northern Virginia? Divert reinforcements to Lee from Beauregard? Divert Lee from Grant? Capture Richmond? A lack of agreement on these issues could lead to mistakes in the deployment of Butler's forces:

"Not even such a violent storm could dampen the spirits of the troops. According to an officer in the 98th New York Regiment, 'No army ever took the field with higher spirits, greater confidence in its officers, and brighter hopes of success.' Even the introspective Colonel Joseph Hawley was infected with the ebullient sense of impending victory sweeping the camps. To his wife on May 3 he wrote: 'I have an altogether different feeling that which used to possess me when I received marching orders in some cases down South. I have not the horrible feeling that we are to be *wasted*.'

"Only William F. Smith and a few others continued to doubt that the Army of the James was victory-bound. Among the latter was a reporter for the *New-York Times*. Henry J. Winsor had attached himself closely to Baldy Smith, and perhaps this colored his view of the coming campaign. Winsor was not very optimistic about the possible success of the venture, as he told his managing editor on 3 May:

"The expedition is aimed at Richmond and is intended primarily to divert Lee from Grant. It is looked upon, I believe, as of a desperate character – a sort of forlorn hope ready to be used up in the case of bringing Lee down this way. The chances are considered about even against and for its success. Ten days probably will tell the story.'



**Major-General William F. Smith,
commanding XVIII Corps, Army of the James**

"Butler, who knew that Grant was expecting the expedition to depart on the night of 4 May 1864, had no time to speculate on the future. His primary concern was the X Corps, where Quincy Gillmore's absence was beginning to create difficulties. Unlike Baldy Smith, who at least knew the role he had been assigned to play, Gillmore had not yet conferred with Butler either about the plan or his troops' part in it. Nor had the organization of the X Corps been completed at a time when details involving the order of embarkation for the various units required attention. Countless important matters urgently demanded Gillmore's presence and decision, but he was not to be seen. Even Grant became concerned that Gillmore might not arrive in time, and he informed Butler that the Army of the James might have to delay its departure if Gillmore did not appear soon. The suggestion was especially ominous, because Federal intelligence reports indicated that Beauregard was at Petersburg, some of Hoke's troops had reinforced the Blackwater line, and Confederate probes were becoming bolder. If the Confederates were already moving, any delay in Butler's departure might prove fatal to the success of the operation.

"At Hilton Head, Gillmore appeared blissfully unaware that there was any reason for haste. It seemed almost as if Gillmore could not bear to leave the department in which he had made his reputation. Or perhaps it was the appeal of departmental command itself that hindered Gillmore's departure, for in Virginia Butler would command the department and Gillmore would only lead an army corps. At last, on 1 May Gillmore officially relinquished command of the Department of the South and, that night, sailed in the transport *Arago* for Virginia. He was preceded by a letter that accurately forecast the time of his departure from South Carolina. Butler transmitted this welcome news to Grant, but both officers knew that Gillmore had dangerously reduced his margin of safety if the expedition were to depart on time.



**Major-General Quincy A. Gillmore,
commanding X Corps, Army of the James**

"On 3 May all infantry units were told to be ready to board ship the next morning, while artillerymen began at once to transfer their weapons and teams to barges. The orders were welcomed by the troops, who were becoming impatient to depart...

"While his troops were completing their preparations, Butler carried a copy of the order of sailing to Admiral [Samuel P.] Lee. Since Butler did not want the slow-moving ironclads to delay the procession, Lee's warships were requested to follow the transports. Out in front of everything else was to be Brigadier General Charles Graham's flotilla of wooden arm gunboats. Graham would be followed by transports bearing a brigade of Negro troops that had been assigned a special mission. This contingent was designated the 'first fleet.' The 'second fleet,' which was to depart Newport News around midnight 4-5 May, consisted of the wooden gunboats of the navy, followed by vessels bearing Smith's XVIII Corps and Gillmore's X Corps. Behind the X Corps came the siege train, hospital boats, supply vessels, and Lee's ironclads last of all. In regard to the position of the ironclads, Butler inquired if the navy's wooden gunboats could protect the transports from a sortie by the Confederate fleet until Lee's monitors reached the scene. Lee's reply, as recorded by his fleet captain, was not encouraging: 'There was not one chance in ten that the wooden vessels could do so successfully.'

"The day of departure, 4 May, dawned warm and fair. Almost at once the vast fields of shelter tents began to collapse, as their former occupants split the tents into halves and packed them for traveling. After final roll calls and a last-minute distribution of rations, regimental officers formed their men into column for the march to the river. At the wharves, quartermasters who had previously been concerned only with wagon transportation found themselves straining to bring men and vessels together at the dock at the same time. Everywhere there was

noise and confusion and not a little cursing as the most carefully devised plans and timetables began to go awry. A few men who were determined to avoid service took this opportunity to desert their commands. Over at Gloucester Point it was soon discovered that the loading facilities were inadequate and the lines of men waiting to board ships began to lengthen. The frustration in this sector was relieved only by the report that at long last the steamer *Arago*, with Quincy Gillmore aboard, had arrived from Hilton Head.

"As each transport received its full complement of men and equipment, it moved out into the stream, found its appointed place in the line of ships clogging the York River, and anchored. Several vessels, in an attempt to confuse any watching Confederate agents, steamed some distance up the York, thereby giving the impression that Henry's brigade at West Point was to be reinforced. Troops embarking early were the envy of their fellows still on shore. Some units had been awakened by their officers as early as 2:30 A.M., but although a few had boarded their transports by 10:00 A.M., most did not embark until the afternoon and at least one unfortunate outfit was still waiting for transportation at midnight. This unit was part of the X Corps, which had been experiencing difficulty all day, due partially to the late arrival of its commander... As a result, while Smith's XVIII Corps was arranged in the order in which the units were scheduled to land, X Corps units were loaded without regard to landing order.



Detail from "General Map Showing Fortress Monroe"
From the Journal of Private Robert Knox Sneden, 40th N.Y.V., Topographical Engineer of the III Army Corps, Vol. I, 1861 April 12 - 1862 May 5
Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

"To the men on board ship the scene presented by the flotilla of transports crowded with thousands of men was indescribably grand. Vessels of all sizes and descriptions, all flying large national flags, met the eye in all directions. As night fell the ships one by one dropped down the river and anchored near Fort Monroe, seemingly filling Hampton Roads. The soldiers stood entranced, gazing about them and groping for words with which to describe the scene. A young soldier in

the 118th New York Regiment recorded what he saw:

'As twilight faded into darkness, lights appeared on the transports and these, rocking and changing, seem like so many loose stars playing over the river to cheer our departure. Playing bands, men cheering and singing; busy tugs coughing through the fleet bearing orders; neighing horses and noise of escaping steam; soldiers shouting from steamer to steamer – but not a responsible word as to our destination. The scene is inspiring and the mingled sounds exciting...'"

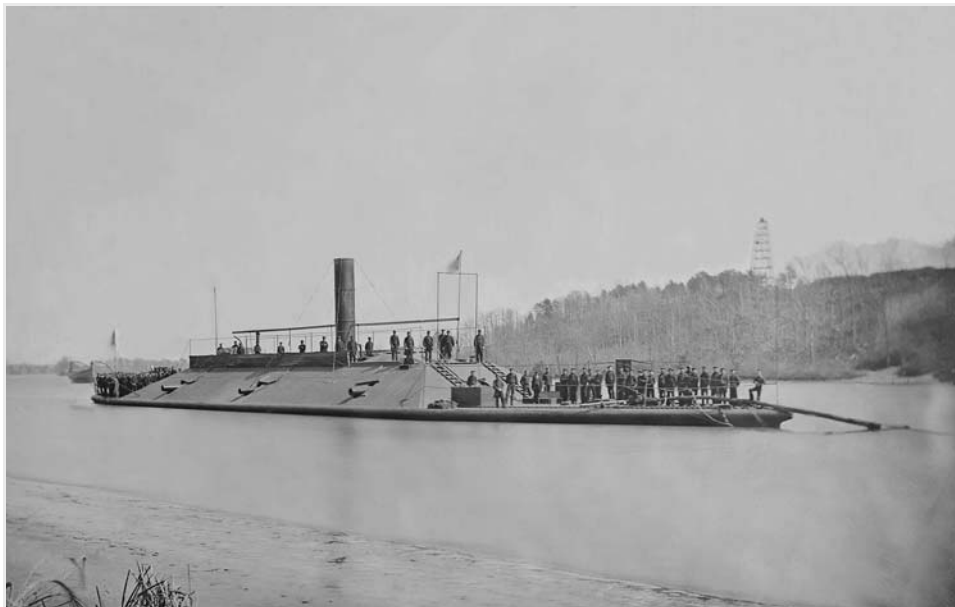
Col. Alden was recalled to his regiment on the 5th, forcing him to terminate his furlough in Troy, as reported in the *Daily Times* the following day:

"LEFT FOR THE FRONT. – Lieut.-Col. Alonzo Alden, of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth regiment, who reached here a week ago on a twenty days' leave of absence, received a telegram yesterday afternoon at 6 o'clock, from the Adjutant-General, ordering him to rejoin his regiment – in pursuance of a 'promise' made to him by his superior officer, in case a movement took place. With a soldier's promptness, Col. Alden started by the *C. Vanderbilt* last evening, with his leave docked and many friends unvisited, but ever ready to do his duty."

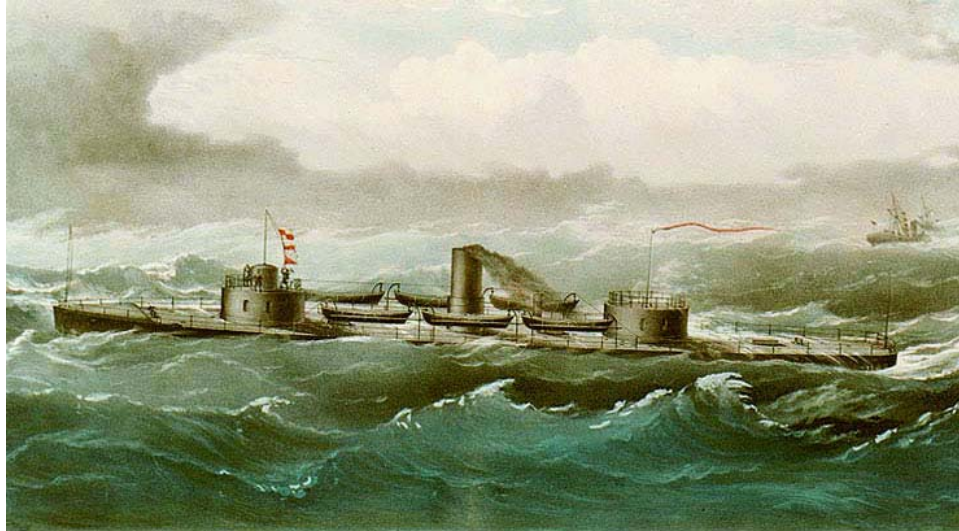
The bloodletting was about to be renewed in earnest and the *Daily Times* called for prayers for divine intervention on behalf of the army:

"PRAYER FOR THE ARMY. – The second of the prayer-meetings for the army and navy, at Third street Baptist church, yesterday afternoon, was deeply interesting. Rev. Dr. Kennedy led, opening the services by reading the 46th Psalm and also an editorial article in the *New York Evening Post* calling on all Christians 'to prayers' in view of the suspense before the battle. Rev. Dr. Baldwin and others took part in the exercises. The attendance was large."

The invasion fleet was well-protected by its escort of six ironclads, including the C.S.S. ram *Atlanta*, captured by the U.S. monitor *Weehawken* near Savannah, Georgia, on June 17, 1863, and commissioned for service in the U.S. Navy. Robertson describes the order of the fleet and its departure for Bermuda Hundred:



The U.S.S. "Atlanta" near the Federal observation tower at Cobb's Hill on the Appomattox River (ca. 1864-'65)



U.S. Iron Clad Battery Onondaga with two Ericsson Turrets
Published by William Endicott and Co., New York (1864)
Collection of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, Norfolk, Virginia

"While the army was embarking at the York River staging areas, Admiral Lee informed his captains of their destination and time of departure. Seven wooden gunboats were to sail at midnight in order to lead the army transports upriver. Lee's six ironclads, [the monitors *Canonicus*, *Onondaga*, *Roanoke*, *Saugus*, and *Tecumseh*, and the former Confederate ram *Atlanta*], were to get underway three hours later, pick up the wooden vessels that would tow them upstream, and be ready to sail at dawn, which would come around 4:00 A.M. Upon reaching Fort Powhatan, the *Atlanta* would support the troops landing there, while the rest of the fleet would continue upstream to the treacherous shoal water around Harrison's Bar. This obstruction had to be reached no later than 1:00 P.M. so that the water would be deep enough to allow the heavy ironclads to pass. After negotiating Harrison's Bar, the wooden gunboats were either to sweep the James and Appomattox Rivers for Confederate torpedoes or take station off the various landing points to provide gunfire support for the army. Only after the channel had been swept clear would the monitors proceed beyond Harrison's Bar.

"Dawn of 5 May 1864 proved to be spectacular. Just as the sun rose above the horizon a small but violent thunderstorm broke over the assembled mass of ships. After a few turbulent moments punctuated by brilliant flashes of lightning, the storm dissipated, leaving the day to the majesty of a pleasantly warm sun. To Butler's chagrin, it was immediately apparent that his great expeditionary force was already beginning to fall behind its timetable. Butler had hoped to begin moving his units upriver shortly after midnight, but Gillmore's difficulties in loading the X Corps, along with other delays, had cost the Army of the James precious hours. At 4:00 A.M. Butler signaled Lee to send the navy gunboats upstream, while he took steps to hurry the army transports along.

"Ever so slowly the huge armada responded to Butler's prodding and by 6:00 A.M. the head of the fleet was in motion. Brigadier General Charles Graham's three army gunboats had sailed earlier and were already some distance upstream. They were followed by the navy's wooden gunboats and the awkward monitors, each of the latter being towed upriver by two small gunboats. Just leaving Hampton Roads and



**Departure of the Union Fleet from Newport News, Virginia, on May 4, 1864
Published in "Harper's Weekly" (May 21, 1864)**

entering the wide mouth of the James River was the motley assortment of vessels bearing the Army of the James. Collected from all over the North, these ships displayed evidence of their diverse origins and peacetime occupations. There were steamships, oceangoing and coastal, driven by propellers or great thrashing paddlewheels. These towed behind them graceful sailing vessels or ungainly barges, the latter laden with heavy items such as artillery and planking for temporary wharves. But the greatest cargo of all was men...

"On board their transports the soldiers gazed in awe at the spectacle presented by the fleet. As the vast armada glided majestically upriver without an enemy in view, most of the troops adopted a festive spirit seldom associated with war. Soon the regimental bands began to play such tunes as 'Hail Columbia,' 'Yankee Doodle,' and 'The Girl I Left Behind Me.' As if on an outing on the Hudson or some other Northern stream, the soldiers leaned on the railings, gazing at the passing scenery, or promenaded on the decks of their transports. Their commander continually steamed among them aboard the *Greyhound*, shouting to the transport captains to "Give her all the steam you can," or just waving his cap while he roared, 'Forward!' As he came abreast of each ship, Butler's infectious enthusiasm was caught by the troops and many of them spontaneously broke into cheers.



Major-General Benjamin F. Butler's flagship, U.S.S. "Greyhound"

"For those soldiers interested in sightseeing, the trip offered many new vistas. First to come into view was the site of the battle between the U.S.S. *Monitor* and the C.S.S. *Virginia*, readily identifiable by the



The Ruins of Jamestown, Virginia, America (1834)
John Gadsby Chapman (1808-1889)
Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

wrecks of the *Virginia's* victims. Farther upstream the vine-covered ruins of the old church at Jamestown appeared to starboard. Periodically, large plantations were visible, surrounded by verdant pastures and fields of cotton and corn. Here and there civilians were observed curiously peering from windows or yards at the passing convoy. On other occasions, groups of slaves carrying bundles came down to the river bank and gestured as if begging to be taken along. Often Colonel R. M. West's 1st and 2nd U. S. Colored Cavalry Regiments could be seen through the trees on the north bank of the James, moving parallel with the fleet.

"Rebel earthworks of undetermined age were seen occasionally throughout the trip, but as the ships continued upstream, the long mounds of yellow earth seemed to take on a new freshness. At first only the men with keen eyesight caught glimpses of Confederate scouts along the bank, but as the hours passed and the river narrowed, the presence of Confederate signal stations became obvious to all. On board the transport *Nellie Penz*, in one of the leading divisions of the fleet, the soldiers of the 9th New Jersey Regiment were formed into companies, inspected, and ordered to load their weapons. Signal traffic between the various corps, division, and brigade headquarters aboard the transports also began to increase in intensity."

Strategic points along the James were occupied by Union forces as the invasion fleet steamed upriver. First among them was Wilson's Wharf, a bluff on the north bank of the James that commanded the channel for some distance above and below. Butler had long believed that Blacks would make good soldiers, and against the opinions of many of his officers and men, he had formed an entire division of two brigades under Brig.-Gen. Edward Hincks of the XVIII Corps,



**Arrival of General Butler's Advance at City Point, Virginia, on May 5, 1864
Published in "Harper's Weekly" (May 21, 1864)**

one of which had been chosen to secure the supply line of the Army of the James and thus had the honor of leading the invasion force.

The next target was Fort Powhatan, situated on another commanding bluff of equal importance. Left behind to provide naval protection were the U.S.S. *Atlanta* and two gunboats. The fleet reached Harrison's Bar by midafternoon, passing safely. The village of City Point, a few miles further, was taken without incident. Robertson continues with his narrative:



**Acting Rear-Admiral Samuel P. Lee,
commanding North Atlantic Blockading Squadron**

"As the advance elements approached, a large Confederate flag was seen flying defiantly on the bluff and a white steamer lay close to shore. The unit assigned to seize City Point was Hincks's Second Brigade, commanded by Colonel Samuel Duncan. As the transports bearing Duncan's men neared the village, they came upon several of Admiral Lee's warships halted just out of range. When Hincks asked the cause of the delay, he was told that Lee was preparing to transfer his flag from the wooden gunboat *Malvern* to an ironclad before risking an



U.S.S. "Commodore Morris," one of Admiral Lee's gunboats accompanying the expedition up the James River

engagement. Aware that Graham's army gunboats were already lying off City Point and appalled at such timidity on the part of the navy, Hincks ordered the captain of his transport to push ahead to the village. His decision was partially influenced by a glance downstream, which showed Butler's Greyhound pounding hard toward the same objective.

"While Hincks's men were occupying City Point, the rest of the armada continued a mile and a half upriver to Bermuda Hundred Landing. As Graham's army gunboats chased a Confederate steamer upstream and Lee's navy gunboats began the hazardous task of dragging the river for torpedoes, the soldiers of Baldy Smith's XVIII Corps began to land. The process was hindered by shallow water that prevented the close approach of the transports to the beach. Consequently, ships' boats had to be utilized to get the first contingents on shore. First to land was the 23rd Massachusetts Regiment, Heckman's First Brigade, Second Division. The rest of Heckman's regiments followed immediately, pausing only long enough to establish their organization before fanning out into the countryside. As they prepared to disembark, the captain of the vessel bearing the 9th New Jersey Regiment passed among the infantrymen, shaking the hands of all he could reach. Once ashore, the 9th New Jersey was temporarily assigned to construct a makeshift dock from old canal boats and scrap lumber brought along by the fleet.

"Heckman's troops had begun to splash ashore between 5:00 and 6:00 P.M. With sunset due a few minutes before 7:00 P.M. and the end of twilight less than an hour later, Butler's army would soon be landing in the dark. As night fell, the transports queued up in long lines awaiting their turns to disgorge their cargoes across the still rudimentary wharves, their lights once again illuminating the dark river as they swung at anchor. All through the night units continued to disembark, form into line, and stumble forward in the darkness to temporary bivouac areas. There the troops lay down to rest, after protecting themselves against being trampled by the men and horses who followed them. Some soldiers, unable to sleep, commenced a search for food and water. At 9:00 P.M., as the landing process was just becoming



Detail from "A map of Hanover, Henrico, and part of Chesterfield Counties, southeast to Williamsburg and east to the York River" (ca. 1861-'65)

Jeremy Francis Gilmer (1818-1883)

Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Bermuda Hundred, part of Chesterfield County, Va., is bounded on the north by the James River and on the south by the Appomattox River.

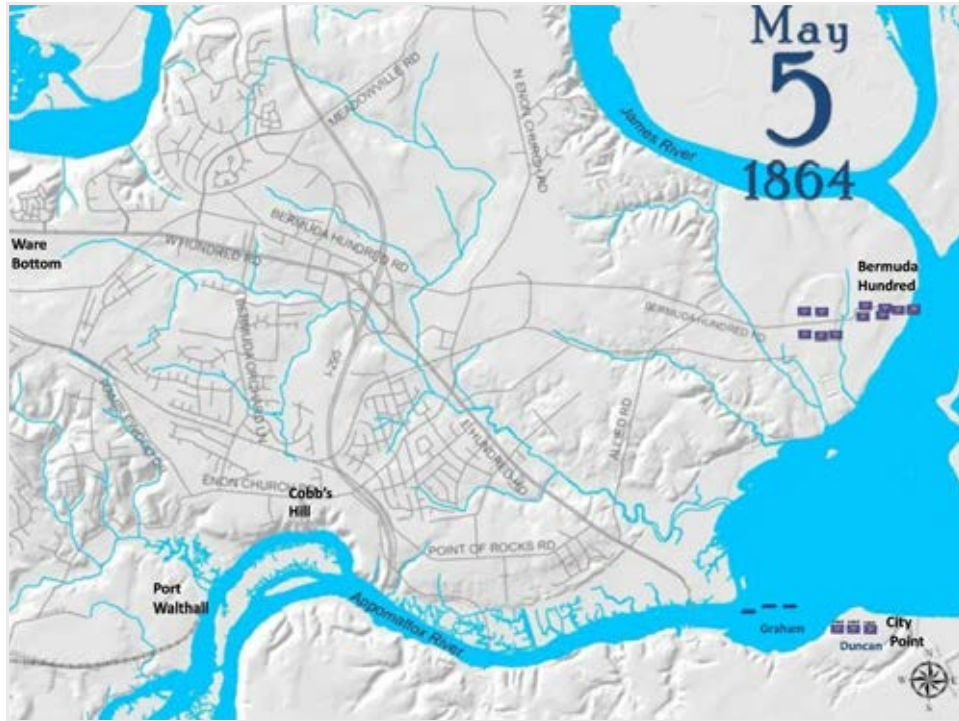
organized, Butler dispatched a message to Grant and Stanton reporting his progress. Grant must have been pleased to read the sentences, "No opposition thus far. Apparently a complete surprise."

The XVIII Corps was the first to disembark at Bermuda Hundred Landing, followed by the X Corps. Both corps proceeded west on the Bermuda Hundred Road the next morning to establish a defensive line between Cobb's Hill on the Appomattox and Ware Bottom on the James. In his historical sketch of the 169th, Col. James A. Colvin reported the regiment's destination as Foster's Plantation:

"On May 4th, some of the troops proceeded on transports to West Point, to divert the attention of the enemy from another movement. In the meantime most of the troops, including the 169th regiment, went down the York River, up the James River, and quickly and quietly disembarked at Bermuda Hundred, and proceeded immediately about seven miles towards Petersburg, to a point known as Foster's Plantation, where they constructed rifle-pits. Other works were added in the course of operations at this point until a strongly-fortified line was established."

Battle animations created by Robert J. Forman, author of *Bermuda Hundred Campaign Tour Guide* (2010), depict the engagements fought at Bermuda Hundred overlaying a modern map of the area. The animations may be found on the Chesterfield Historical Society's website:

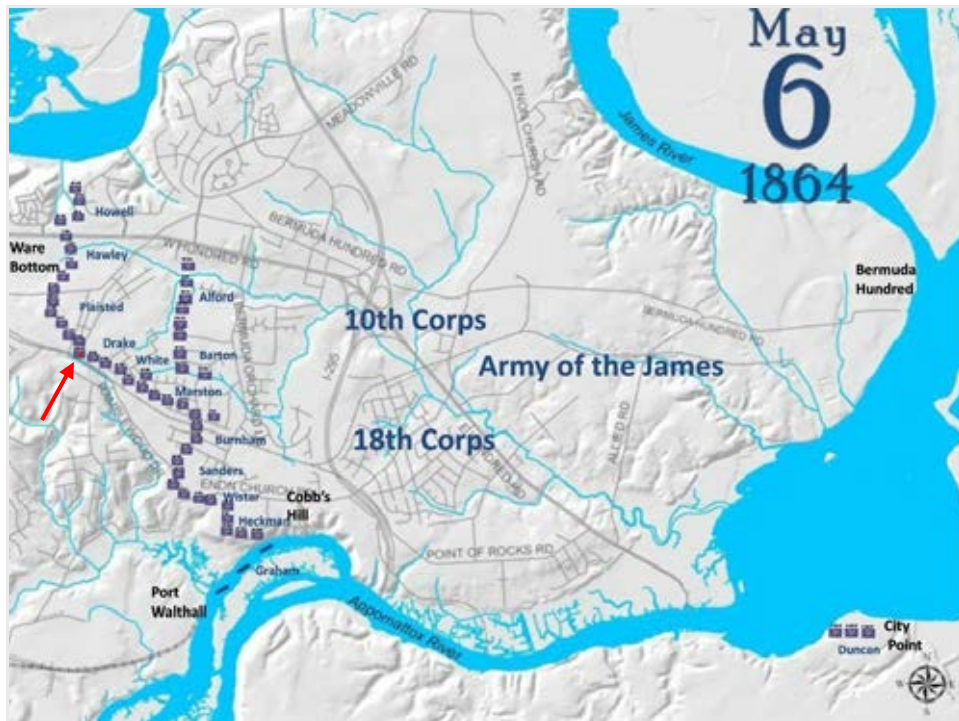
[Animations of the Bermuda Hundred Campaign](#)



The XVIII Corps is seen in the vanguard of the landing at Bermuda Hundred on May 5th, 1864, just ahead of the X Corps. The location of the 169th N.Y. on May 6th is designated by the arrow in the second image. View the animation at the following link:

[Federal Expedition to Bermuda Hundred, Va., May 4-6, 1864](#)

[Note: Click on the icon at the bottom right of the animated map to enlarge the presentation so that the individual regimental designations are large enough to read.]



Images from "Bermuda Hundred Landing (May 4-6, 1864)," an animation created by Robert J. Forman for the Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia (2013)



Confederate Batteries at Drewry's Bluff, Virginia (ca. 1863)
John Ross Key (1837-1920)
Collection of the Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia

The lack of agreement between Butler, Gillmore, and Smith over the objects of the campaign became apparent as soon as Federal forces landed at Bermuda Hundred. Butler, having received intelligence on the night of the 5th that the Rebel fortifications protecting Richmond at Drewry's Bluff were undermanned and that the Confederate capital itself was vulnerable to a Federal attack if he marched at once, failed to convince Gillmore and Smith of the plan's merits:



"Skyline of Richmond, circa 1858" by Joseph Burrough

The painting by Joseph Burrough depicts the Richmond & Petersburg Railroad as it enters the city of Richmond.

"During the night of May 5, while his troops were still streaming ashore, Butler sent for his two corps commanders, Baldy Smith and Quincy Gillmore. At the meeting, Butler announced that shortly after the *Greyhound* had anchored, he had been approached by an operative of Elizabeth van Lew's spy ring... The operative that evening had informed Butler that Richmond was virtually unprotected; all but a few infantry and artillery units at Drewry's Bluff had been sent to reinforce General Lee at the Wilderness. Replacements under Beauregard were not expected to arrive for another day or two. Butler proposed to take advantage of this unexpected opportunity by advancing on the Confed-



Detail from "A map of the vicinity of Drewry's Bluff" (ca. 1861-'63)
 Jeremy Francis Gilmer (1818-1883)

Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

erate capital without waiting for the entire army to be landed. He consulted maps and found that he could move out on an old stage road to the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike, then up the pike to Drewry's Bluff. Richmond was little more than sixteen miles away, a full moon lit up the night and his soldiers were eager for action. But when he broached his idea to Gillmore and Smith, they balked. Gillmore, in fact, said flatly that if he received such an order he would refuse to obey it. This was just the beginning of severe difficulties Butler continued to have with both of these hesitant generals from this point on.

"Butler eventually decided that if a disembarkation at night was dangerous, a nighttime advance through unknown territory posed even greater risks. Butler gave up the idea much to his future regret. The army spent the balance of the night entrenching rather than marching.

"Regiments had continued coming ashore throughout the night. When dawn broke over Bermuda Hundred Landing the following morning, the flow of men over makeshift wharves continued through a heavy mist that shrouded both the river and the invasion fleet. With all but a few late regiments on dry ground, dawn was a wake-up call for those who had been fortunate to get a few hours of sleep. Water was boiled for the coffee that would wash down a few mouthfuls of hardtack, and then the men were called to formation. Butler ordered detachments of both corps on a seven-mile march westward from their landing site. Two miles inland at Enon Church, a crossroads was reached. The Eigh-



The gunboat "Commodore Perry" on the Appomattox at Port Walthall (ca. July 1864)
William Waud (1832-1878)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

teenth Corps took the left-hand road southwest toward Point of Rocks – there a large outcropping of limestone in the face of the bluff gave the area its name – and Cobb's Hill. The Tenth Corps continued west toward the James River and Ware Bottom Church...

"The columns eventually reached Bermuda Hundred Neck, a three-and-a-half mile-wide expanse of ravine-bordered grassland, with magnificent stands of pine and oak that stretched from opposite Farrar's Island on the James to Port Walthall, a coal depot on the Appomattox. In this area, Butler's troops began to construct their main defensive line. There the men labored under the oppressive heat of the sun with axes and spades. Soon engineers were staking out the locations of fortifications, and quartermasters were laying out campsites. The Eighteenth Corps established a line of works, with its left anchored on the Appomattox River at Point of Rocks (Cobb's Hill) and its right in the vicinity of Ware Bottom Church."

"Went up the James to hear firing; prisoners were exchanged; from this time on the regiment is in the fighting," wrote Priv. Charles H. Manning, Co. A, in his journal on the 6th. Just 2½ miles beyond the Federal line of works lay Port Walthall Station, where the turnpike and railroad connecting Richmond and Petersburg intersected.

Petersburg was an important industrial center through which ran most of Richmond's railroad access to the remainder of the Confederacy. If Butler's forces could capture the city and sever Richmond's link with Petersburg, Lee's Army of Northern Virginia would suffer slow strangulation from the lack of supplies, its only remaining link with points south being the Richmond & Danville Railroad to the southwest.

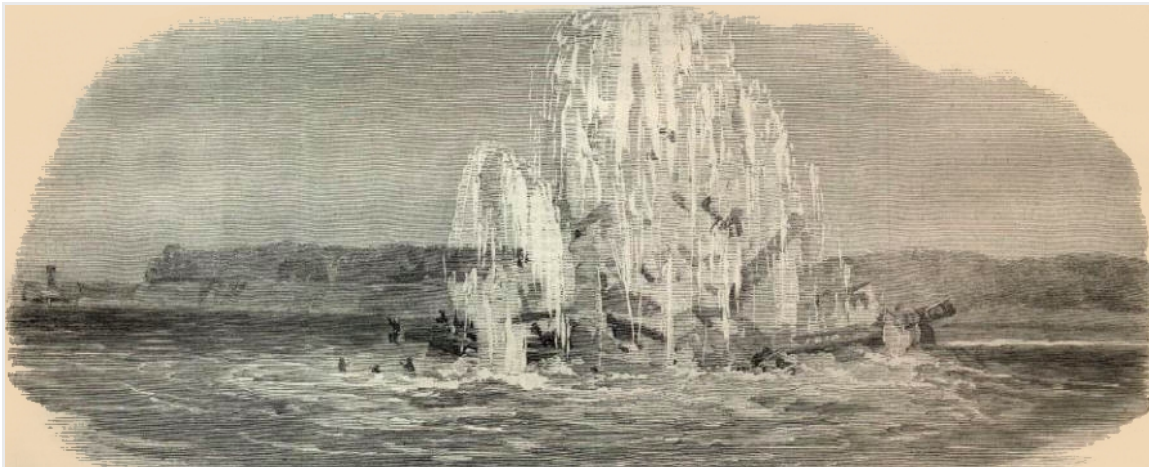
Robertson continues with a description of the events leading up to the First Battle of Walthall Junction, Va., May 6, 1864:

"In midafternoon Butler decided to send a brigade of the XVIII Corps toward the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad, two-and-a-half miles away. At the suggestion of Smith, Butler directed Gillmore to assist the demonstration by sending forward a detachment to protect Smith's right flank. Smith selected Brigadier General Charles Heckman's brigade for the probe, and Heckman's troops departed at 4:00 P.M. Gillmore, however, refused to order any of his men forward, probably because many of his units had not yet completed their march from the landing. Butler and Smith were informed of Gillmore's decision in a terse message from X Corps headquarters: 'The project of striking the railroad to-night with a detachment from this command has been abandoned for what I deem good and sufficient reasons.' As a substitute, other XVIII Corps units supported Heckman's advance by maneuvering beyond the Federal works.



"Unwilling to await the results of the XVIII Corps' maneuvers, Butler resolved to make a reconnaissance of his own on the X Corps front. Gathering his staff and a few mounted orderlies, he made his way through the X Corps camps toward the Federal picket line near Ware Bottom Church. Recognizing their commanding officer, the troops turned out to salute Butler with cheers and renditions of "Hail to the Chief" from regimental bands. Without pausing to acknowledge the greetings, Butler and his retinue continued forward to the picket line, then rode beyond it to the bank of a creek a short distance ahead. Suddenly, amidst a burst of gunfire, a group of Confederate horsemen dashed from concealment toward the startled Federals. In a mad race for the Federal lines, Butler and most of his party escaped safely, to the renewed cheers of the troops. However, the experience had a sobering effect on all concerned, and it was not destined to be repeated.

"On the river, where Admiral Lee's warships were carrying out their assigned tasks in support of the army, another event of the day instilled caution in the Federals. Upstream from Bermuda Hundred Landing three wooden gunboats were gingerly searching for Confederate torpedoes, when suddenly the U.S.S. *Commodore Jones* was blown



**Destruction of the United States Gun-Boat "Commodore Jones" on the James
Published in "Harper's Weekly" (May 28, 1864)**

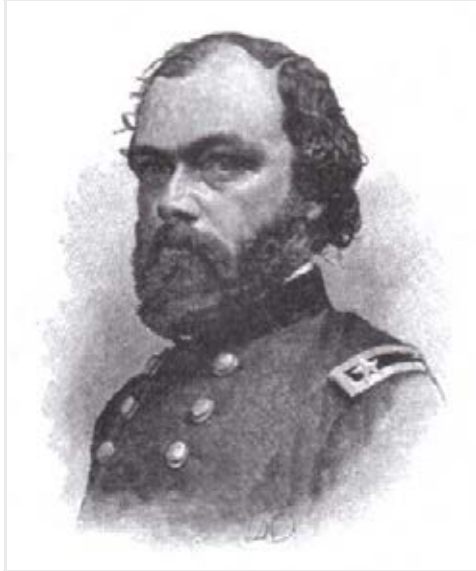
apart by a tremendous explosion. Although several members of the Confederate Submarine Battery Service were subsequently captured and forced to reveal the location of other torpedoes, sixty-nine crewmen of the *Commodore Jones* paid for the information with their lives. The loss of the *Commodore Jones* gave dramatic support to Admiral Lee's earlier decision not to risk his ironclads higher up the James. Butler might fume, but the cautious Lee would now require every foot of the river to be swept clean before moving farther upstream. Like the army, the navy decided that the pace of the advance toward Richmond should be slowed."

Heckman's brigade was ordered forward, its four mile march unopposed until the column reached Barnes's Plantation. Identifying a Confederate force behind a fence in a sunken road about 300 yards from the rail line, Heckman prepared to attack. Behind the fence Col. Robert Graham was posted with 600 men from the 21st South Carolina and three companies of the 25th S.C. Maj.-Gen. George Pickett, in command at Petersburg, had sped the men forward to defend against the expected Union effort against the rail line and to gain time to consolidate a force to challenge Butler. Heckman's advance pushed back the Rebel skirmishers but was stopped cold by a volley from the main Confederate line. Both commanders incorrectly believed that they faced two brigades of the enemy. Thinking himself outnumbered, Heckman made only a weak effort to displace the enemy force before falling back to the Federal intrenchments at nightfall. One of Heckman's men grumbled that he would have preferred more rifles in the front and fewer spades in the rear. The Union force suffered 68 casualties and Heckman lamented that he did not have enough litters to bring all the dead and wounded off the field. Both sides prepared for a larger confrontation the following day. A link to Forman's animation of the battle is below:

[1st Battle of Walthall Junction, Va., May 6, 1864](#)

Robertson addresses Gillmore's refusal to assist in the action on May 6th, the most recent of his problems in the weeks leading up to that point:

"Quincy Gillmore's failure to cooperate with Smith and his refusal to furnish an explanation for his conduct were only the latest in a series of aggravations stretching back into April. Gillmore had been slow in moving the X Corps to Virginia, he had not been available for planning conferences, he had been late in embarking from Gloucester Point and



Brevet Major-General Q. A. Gillmore, U. S. A.
Published in "The Defense of Charleston Harbor: Including Fort Sumter
and the Adjacent Islands, 1863-1865," by John Johnson (1889)

late in debarking at Bermuda Hundred. Now he had failed to participate in a movement that might have severed one of Richmond's most important rail links. With these facts before him, Butler concluded that Gillmore would only hinder the successful prosecution of the campaign and should therefore be removed."

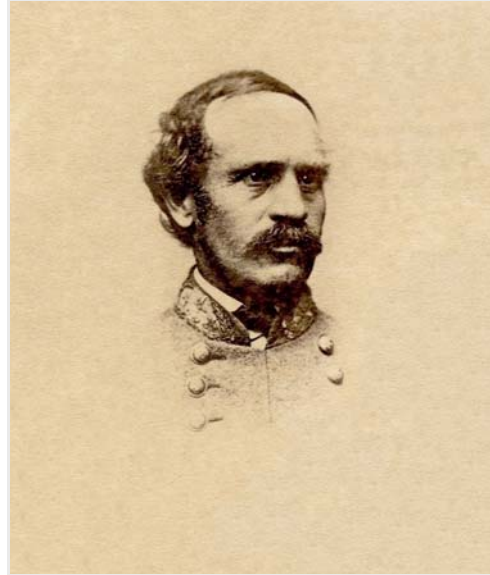
Butler decided to adopt Smith's suggestion for a new attack on the railroad, but in the meantime more Confederate reinforcements were headed to the area. At 10:00 A.M. the following morning, a probe of Federal forces was made by a Confederate column under Brig.-Gen. Johnson Hagood in a northeasterly direction on the Old Stage Road. Robertson describes what happened next:

"They had hardly traveled a mile when they suddenly met an approaching squadron of Federal cavalry. Shots rang out and the second battle for the railroad was joined. The cavalry proved to be eight companies of Colonel Benjamin Onderdonk's First New York Mounted Rifles, which had been assigned by [Brigadier General William T. H.] Brooks to lead the expedition. Pausing only for a moment, the Mounted Rifles swept down the road in an impromptu charge that disintegrated under the fire of the Confederate infantrymen. Having shown that an enemy force was blocking the road, the horsemen fell back upon their own infantry. Although they were subjected to much derision by the foot soldiers, the cavalymen had done their job. After the Mounted Rifles retired, Brooks directed Brigadier General Hiram Burnham to develop the Confederate position further with his brigade. Burnham ordered his leading regiment, the 8th Connecticut, to form a skirmish line and advance along the west side of the road, supported by the 13th New Hampshire. His remaining regiments, the 10th New Hampshire and 118th New York, also deployed west of the road.

"While Burnham's men changed from column into line, Johnson Hagood positioned the 27th South Carolina east of the road and three companies of the 25th South Carolina to the west. Soon the firing grew in intensity, particularly on the Confederate left. Fearful of being outflanked, Bushrod Johnson ordered Hagood to withdraw to his original position behind the railroad. As Hagood's men safely completed



Brigadier-General William T. H. Brooks,
commanding 1st Division, XVIII Corps,
Army of the James

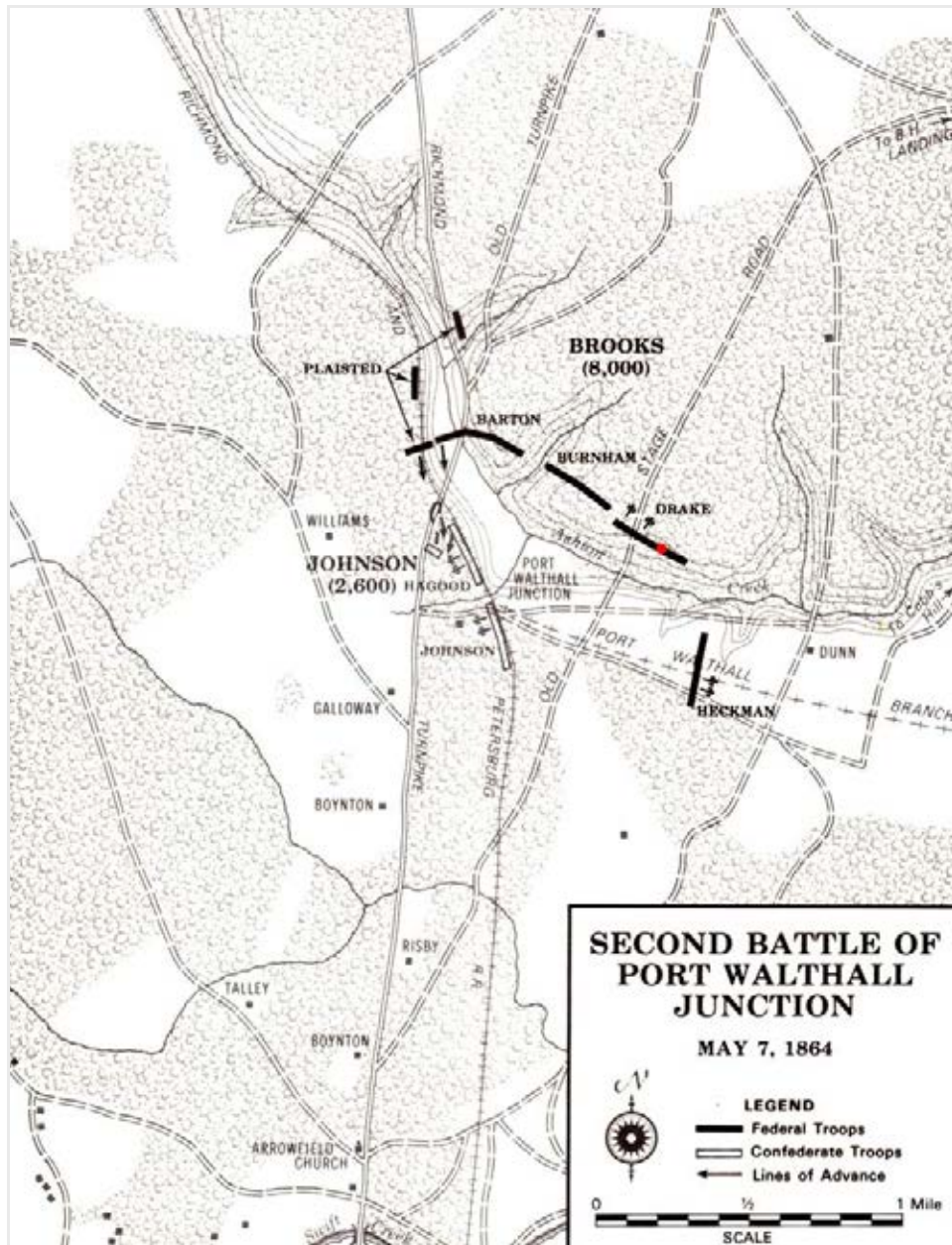


Confederate Brigadier-General Bushrod Johnson,
commanding brigade, Hoke's Division,
Beauregard's Field Command

their retreat, a second Federal force was observed approaching from the vicinity of the Dunn plantation. This proved to be Heckman's brigade, which had been ordered to distract Confederate attention from Brooks's main force. To meet this new threat Johnson sent two of his Tennessee regiments and two of Hankins's guns into the woods south of the road along which Heckman was advancing. As the artillery opened fire, the Federals deployed in line-of-battle and slowly edged forward toward the railroad. To prevent his small detachment from being overwhelmed, Johnson recalled it to the main line, but not before a Federal battery had exploded the ammunition chest of one of Hankins's advanced pieces. Otherwise the Tennesseans safely rejoined their comrades behind the railroad.

"While Heckman attracted Johnson's attention, Brooks's main force slowly deployed far to Heckman's right front. Since Burnham's brigade, which had opened the action, was gradually moving westward away from the Old Stage Road, Brooks called up Colonel Jeremiah Drake's brigade from its position in the rear of the Federal column. At noon Brooks ordered the brigade to advance in support of Burnham, and Drake's four Indiana, Maine, and New York regiments soon came into line on Burnham's left. Drake also deployed two artillery pieces of Battery L, 4th U.S. Artillery, which had accompanied the infantry. The guns opened fire on the Confederates behind the railroad embankment, catching them in a crossfire with Heckman's pieces.

"As Heckman, Drake, and Burnham skirmished with the Confederates, Brooks ordered Harris Plaisted and his brigade to leave the Old Stage Road and detour through the woods toward the Richmond turnpike and the railroad. According to a scouting party of Onderdonk's Mounted Rifles, the distance to the railroad was short and the woods thick, but passable. Deploying his three regiments into separate columns, Plaisted struck out through the underbrush. On the right the 100th New York Infantry entered a convenient ravine and soon reached the turnpike out of sight of the Confederates. Pushing ahead, the New Yorkers easily gained the railroad. Plaisted then ordered the 24th Massachusetts and the 10th Connecticut to detour behind the 100th New



Map of the Second Battle of Port Walthall Junction, Va., May 7, 1864
 Published in "Back Door to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign,
 April-June 1864" by William Glenn Robertson (1987)

Drake's left flank was occupied by the 13th Indiana, followed by the 169th N.Y., (indicated by the red dot), the 9th Maine, and the 112th N.Y. on the right. Drake's brigade engaged in stationary long-range fire from the ridge above Ashton Creek with Johnson's brigade of Tennesseans, including the 17th/23^d, 25th/44th, and 63^d regiments.

York and strike the tracks on its right. As they marched they heard volleys of musketry nearby, which signified that the Confederates had discovered the flanking column.

"Upon returning from his abortive morning advance, Johnson Hagood had placed two regiments behind the railroad and another in reserve on the turnpike. Around 2:30 P.M. he saw the Federals appear on his left flank down the tracks and he called the 21st South Carolina forward

into line. As the regiment tried to take position on Hagood's left, it received several accurate volleys from the 100th New York and other Federal regiments. Suddenly the men of the 21st South Carolina broke and ran for the rear. To prevent the unit's collapse from spreading to other regiments, Hagood, his staff, and D. H. Hill rushed to halt the route. After much shouting and cursing, the officers succeeded in rallying the regiment on its colors. Hagood then ordered the men of the 21st to lie down while he aligned his remaining units with them, so as to present a solid front to the triumphant Federals. In addition he called to Bushrod Johnson for support. Fearing an advance by Heckman, Johnson declined to transfer any of his infantry to the left, but he did send two artillery pieces. These guns, however, soon ran out of ammunition and were retired from the field.

"Hagood's men faced not only Plaisted's troops but also part of the last available Federal brigade, Colonel William Barton's. Brooks ordered Barton to advance to the railroad on Plaisted's left, while maintaining contact with Burnham's right. Pushing slowly through the tangled underbrush, Barton found the terrain so difficult that his brigade lost contact with its skirmish line. After striking the turnpike, he tried to continue toward the railroad, but he was forced to detour because of the rough ground. Veering to the left, Barton found himself on the edge of a natural amphitheater. Below him lay a meadow broken by a small stream, while the Confederates held the railroad on the opposite ridge. In the face of Confederate fire, Barton maneuvered his right regiments down through the meadow and up the far slope, until one of them, the 48th New York, connected with the 100th New York of Plaisted's brigade. Together, these two regiments occupied the railroad and traded volleys with Hagood's South Carolinians.



Tracks torn up and destroyed (ca. 1861-'64)
Drawing from the Diary of Alfred Bellard (1843-1891)
The Alec Thomas Archives, Clark's Summit, Pennsylvania

"When it was found that the two New York regiments masked each other's fire, Colonel George Dandy of the 100th New York sent several companies back down the railroad to aid in wrecking the track. This task originally had been entrusted to the pioneers of the 24th Massachusetts, but the Bay Staters were finding railroad wrecking to be a highly specialized occupation. Arriving on the track at 3:00 P.M., the men of the 24th carried no special tools and were further hampered by the hard-packed roadbed. As a result, when this unit withdrew, only about 100 feet of track had been uprooted. Fortunately for the Federals, the detachment of the 100th New York succeeded in destroying a small trestle, while other men cut the telegraph lines paralleling the

tracks. Otherwise, the railroad was untouched. Even more disheartening was the presence along the track of extra rails and ties, stockpiled by the Confederates for just such an emergency.

"The wrecking crews had been at work only a short time when Colonel Plaisted received an order to withdraw from the railroad. According to Plaisted the order came directly from General Brooks, but Brooks categorically denied this in the report he filed after the battle. No matter who gave the order to retreat, Plaisted proceeded to execute it, calling in his pioneers and withdrawing his whole brigade by the same route it had used to advance. This retrograde movement in turn exposed the right flank of Barton's brigade. To extricate Barton, Brooks called for two of Plaisted's regiments to deploy behind Barton's men as supports, and with this aid Barton's brigade gradually disengaged.



"On Barton's left, Burnham's brigade continued to stand firm on the ridge overlooking Ashton Creek. Beyond Burnham, Drake's four regiments also waited, interested in the proceedings to their right, but uninvolved, while the Federal artillery continued to lob shells at the Confederates across the valley. Some distance to Drake's left, Heckman's brigade was equally quiescent. When Brooks had begun his drive to the railroad, he had sent word to Heckman to advance in earnest, but Heckman believed the Confederates facing him were too strong for such a maneuver. He therefore directed the 9th New Jersey to occupy the swale it had reached the previous day, then ordered the men to lie down. There they lay throughout the afternoon, baking in the glare of the sun and suffering more casualties from sunstroke than from enemy bullets.

"Although he had denied having ordered Plaisted's withdrawal, Brooks decided shortly thereafter to take his entire force back to Bermuda Hundred. According to his report, he ordered the retreat when he discovered that all of his brigades were engaged and he 'had no force left to destroy the road.' Federal casualty figures, however, refute the argument that Brooks lacked sufficient troops to accomplish his mission. Only Barton's brigade had been closely engaged, and it had suffered the heaviest loss, 196 men killed, wounded, and missing. In Plaisted's brigade, the 100th New York alone had been in action and it had lost twenty-seven men. Plaisted had held the 10th Connecticut in reserve and had used half of the 24th Massachusetts as a flank guard, leaving only half of the latter regiment to destroy the railroad. Only one of Burnham's four regiments had taken part, the 8th Connecticut, which lost seventy-two men. The rest of Burnham's casualties totaled

only eleven. On Burnham's left, Drake's four regiments together had suffered only ten casualties. At the Dunn plantation, Heckman had lost only sixteen men from hostile fire, but nearly one hundred from sunstroke."

Col. Drake's report indicates that his skirmishers drove the enemy from his immediate front and across the valley, the Rebels leaving behind some equipment as they retreated. One man from the 169th was wounded in the engagement:



"Just Before the Battle"

From the Journal of Private Robert Knox Sneden, 40th N.Y.V., Topographical Engineer of the III Army Corps, Vol. I, 1861 April 12 - 1862 May 5
Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

HDQRS. SECOND BRIG., THIRD DIV., 10TH ARMY CORPS,
Near Bermuda Hundred, May 20, 1864.

COLONEL: Pursuant to directions from department headquarters, received through intermediate headquarters, I have the honor to forward the following report of the part taken by my command while on expeditions under command of Major General W. F. Smith, commanding Eighteenth Army Corps, which embrace the operations of the 6th and 16th instant:

On the 6th instant, in the affair under Brigadier-General Brooks, my brigade by order followed that of Colonel Plaisted. When we reached the forks in the road, about 1½ miles out, I was ordered to place my brigade so as to support Battery L, Fourth U. S. Artillery, which was posted on the left-hand road. I accordingly placed the One hundred and twelfth New York Volunteers, Lieutenant Colonel E. F. Carpenter commanding, in line of battle on the left of the road and battery, and the Ninth Maine Volunteers, Colonel S. Emery commanding, on the right, throwing out skirmishers to the front. The Thirteenth Indiana and One hundred and sixty-ninth New York, commanded respectively by Colonel C. J. Dobbs and Colonel John McConihe, were held in reserve, forming a second line. About 12 m. I was ordered to make connection with General Burnham's command and support his movement. Having received no information of the position of General Burnham's command, nor of the nature of his movement, some difficulty was experienced in making this connection. It was established, however, and I moved my command forward, in conformity with the movement of General Burnham's command, with five companies of the Thirteenth Indiana Volunteers as skirmishers in front. The enemy retired from the position in



**Union Vanguard – Skirmishers of the VI Corps in front
of their Brigade at The Wilderness, Va. (1889)
Julian A. Scott (1846-1901)
Private Collection**

which they had been in line upon our approach, leaving upon the ground some knapsacks, blankets, and equipments. Having advanced about one-half mile, and reached the top of the hill across the ravine, I halted the command, that of General Burnham having also halted. Reconnoitered the two roads in front, caused the pioneers to clear the right-hand road of old fallen timber, advanced the command and one section of the battery to a position within range of the enemy's battery across the valley and near the railroad, about two-thirds of a mile in advance. My skirmishers drove those of the enemy from our immediate front and across the valley, and after about half an hour our artillery silenced that of the enemy. It was now near 5 p. m., and the fighting on the right having apparently ceased, I, by direction of the assistant adjutant-general to General Brooks, held my command at that point and awaited orders. At about 6 p. m. I withdrew my command, pursuant to orders, following General Burnham's brigade. The casualties in this affair were as follows: *

...

I am, colonel, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. C. DRAKE,
Colonel, Commanding Brigade.

Lieut. Col. NICOLAS BOWEN,
Assistant Adjutant-General, Eighteenth Army Corps.

*Nominal list (omitted) shows 1 man killed and 6 wounded in Ninth Maine Volunteers, 2 men wounded in Thirteenth Indiana Volunteers, and 1 man wounded in One hundred and Sixty-ninth New York Volunteers.

The wounded soldier from the 169th was Priv. Robert Anderson, Co. B, who enlisted in Troy. He would be mustered out at a hospital in that city on August 7, 1865. A link to Forman's animation of the battle follows:

[2d Battle of Port Walthall Junction, May 7, 1864](#)

Robertson's summation of the battle reflects the lost opportunity by the Federals to sever this link between Richmond and Beauregard's reinforcements. If Brooks had attacked and held onto the Richmond & Petersburg Railroad with greater determination the outcome of the campaign may have been quite different:

"In sum, Brooks had brought nineteen infantry regiments to the scene, but only six had been fully engaged. His total casualties from enemy fire amounted to 24 killed, 268 wounded, and 53 missing. In exchange for this sacrifice, Brooks had been able to place upon the railroad only half a regiment. The results amounted to one hundred feet of track ruined, one small trestle burned, and several telegraph lines broken. In addition, as Brooks began to retreat, some of Plaisted's men discovered and wrecked a large steam sawmill that allegedly had been working for the Confederate government.



**Writing a letter home by the light of the Moon (ca. 1861-'64)
Drawing from the Diary of Alfred Bellard (1843-1891)
The Alec Thomas Archives, Clark's Summit, Pennsylvania**

"Post-battle reactions by the opposing sides are revealing. As the Federals broke off contact and withdrew around sunset, men in the ranks began to grumble. A junior officer in the 13th New Hampshire Infantry called the Federal performance 'dawdling damphoolishness' and 'Possibly the nearest answer ever made to the question: How to fight without winning? How to advance without going ahead?' Soon after an even more pointed query began to make the rounds: 'How long will it take to get to Richmond if you advance two miles every day and come back to your starting point every night?' Meanwhile, among the Confederates there were few complaints. With only six infantry regiments, numbering a little over 2,600 men, the Confederates had protected the railroad from all but minimal damage by a Federal force at least three times as large. The price of this success had not been cheap and, like the Federal losses, the casualties had not been evenly distributed. Johnson's Brigade had lost only 7 of its 1,168 men, while Hagood's Brigade had lost a total of 177 of its 1,500 soldiers."

The balance of the Army of the James spent the 7th improving the defenses of the Bermuda Hundred line, while the navy lost another of its wooden gunboats in a surprise attack by Confederate artillery. Robertson explains:

"Smith did not seem greatly concerned about Brook's failure to damage the railroad significantly, and he planned no more than a cavalry scout on the morrow. Having been relieved of offensive responsibilities by the transfer of three of his brigades to Brooks, Gillmore spent the day drawing up contingency plans for the defense of his sector of the works. As a result of this defensive emphasis at the highest levels, the Army of the James slowly began to lose the élan that had characterized it upon landing, which was the very quality needed to complete its mission.



U.S.S. "Shawsheen" (ca. 1862)

"Throughout the day, while Brooks's five brigades maneuvered at Port Walthall Junction, the rest of the Army of the James labored to improve its new home. Behind a screen of pickets, the remaining regiments of the X and XVIII Corps raised the mounds of earth that would provide their security against Confederate attack. Men not detailed to the fatigue parties or the picket line spent the day surveying their new surroundings or foraging for fresh food and water. At Bermuda Hundred Landing, several artillery batteries came ashore, while detachments of veterans arriving from furlough were diverted to serve as stevedores unloading supplies. Sometime during the day Butler moved his headquarters from the landing to Cobb's Hill. Afloat, Admiral Lee lost another gunboat when the U.S.S. *Shawsheen* was surprised by a Confederate artillery detachment and destroyed with heavy casualties. Once more the danger of relaxing one's guard had been demonstrated to the Federals."

Col. Colvin described role of the 169th in the engagement on the 7th, reporting that the regiment "lost a few men in this action":

"A series of movements towards and upon the rebel lines of communication between Richmond and Petersburg was then initiated, the fortified position mentioned forming the base from which they were conducted. On May 7th the troops moved out upon a road parallel with the Richmond and Petersburg turnpike, and towards the railway and



Detail from "Engineer Office 10th Army Corps, Sketch No. 2 of Roads between Hd. Qu. 10th Army Corps and Swift Creek on the South, with Enemy's 2nd Line of Intrenchments around Drury's Bluff on the North. To Brig. Gen. A. Terry, with Col. Serrell's compliments, May 24th, 1864." Collection of the Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

The Richmond & Petersburg Railroad at the top of the map, with the Appomattox River on the left and the James River on the right. Headquarters are indicated as follows: (1.) Gen. Gillmore's X Corps headquarters at Hatcher's farm; (2.) Gen. Smith's XVIII Corps headquarters at Cobb's Hill; and (3.) Gen. Ames's 3^d Division, headquarters, X Army Corps, at Foster's Plantation.

near to what was called Walthall Junction. The enemy was found to be quite strongly posted, and the movement turned out to be more of a reconnaissance in force, preparing the way to subsequent encounters. Considerable loss ensued to both sides, as a briskly-conducted fight was the outcome of this movement. The 169th lost a few men in this action. The troops then returned to Hatcher's [Farm]. On May 8th, Lieut.-Col. Alden returned to the regiment, his leave having only half expired."

In his memoirs Gen. Alden described the difficulties in traversing the Bermuda Hundred Road at night as a "fatiguing march from the river, a distance of seven miles over a stumpy and stubby woods road, obstructions indiscernible except as low sharp stabs, goring the soldiers' feet or making shreds of their uniforms." He arrived at camp only a few hours before the regiment marched to Chester Station:

"May 7th, the troops advanced to a point near the railroad between Richmond and Petersburg, known as Walthall Junction, where they

found the enemy with considerable force already entrenched. A spirited engagement ensued, with small loss by the Federals, while the enemy's loss was unknown. The enemy were at length compelled to yield the railroad, and the track was torn up and destroyed for more than a mile in that section, severing communication between Richmond and Petersburg.

"In this narrative of the movements and experiences of my regiment, from the time of its arrival off Fortress Monroe, *en route* from Jacksonville, to its present field of operations, I desire to make record, as an interpolation, of my first absence from my command since its organization.

"When our troops left Jacksonville on the 20th of April, 1864, I arranged with the commanding general, R. S. Foster, for a leave of absence for twenty days to enable me to visit my home in Troy. The destination of our regiment was known to be via Fortress Monroe, up the James or York River to some point, uncertain at that time. It was expected, at least regarded as probable that two or three weeks would elapse before active operations would commence. The colonel commanding and many other officers, including the general, expressed a desire that I should be present with the regiment in the event of battle, and hence I arranged with Colonel McConihe to telegraph me at the first indication of orders to advance and that I would rejoin them immediately, or by the first means of transportation.

"I reached my home in Troy on the 1st day of May 1864, hastily greeted my nearest friends, attended to some business items, and on the [5th] received a telegram that orders to move up the James and to the front had just been received. I rejoined the regiment, taking the first train after the receipt of the telegram after a hasty farewell, reaching the improvised headquarters of the regiment after a wearying search among strange camps, in dense woods, wrapped in thick darkness, at the midnight hour. The regiment had just bivouacked after nightfall, and no regiment knew of the whereabouts of any other regiment and no comrade knew who was his nearest neighbor. All had heard that the location was called Foster's Plantation, and that the river landing was at Bermuda Hundred. A death-like stillness pervaded the camp after a fatiguing march from the river, a distance of seven miles over a stumpy and stubby woods road, obstructions indiscernible except as low sharp stabs, goring the soldiers' feet or making shreds of their uniforms. From waking comrades I learned that the regiment was under marching orders to move at three o'clock in the morning, May 10th, to Chester Station, and tear up as much as possible of the Richmond & Petersburg R.R., and otherwise punish and weaken the enemy."

Corp. Lyman Ostrom, Co. A, began a letter to his wife Elizabeth while on picket on the morning of the 7th, completing it the next day. He described several interesting incidents during the fight at Port Walthall Junction, including fighting between the 1st N.Y. Mounted Rifles and troops from South Carolina; heavy casualties experienced by the 8th Connecticut; the dismissal of the colonel of the 9th Maine; and the accidental firing upon the 100th N.Y. by the 47th N.Y. As for the main object of the mission, he wrote, "we were perfectly successful":

"Today we are expecting quite a severe battle, but how it or this campaign will end, God only knows. Thus far this army has been very successful. The 18th Corps under Gen. Wm. F. Smith (Baldy Smith) was quite heavily engaged last night while we were being placed on picket, but with what result I have not yet learned.



**Corporal Lyman Ostrom, Co. A, 169th N.Y.
Provided by Katherine A. Nollner**

"We did not leave Gloucester Point Monday as was anticipated and not until Wednesday night. Gen. Gillmore joined us before leaving. One corps started the same morning from Yorktown and went up the Peninsula. Thursday morning we passed Ft. Monroe on our course up the James River and a short distance above landed at City Point the same night. Before reaching City Point, Gen. Butler came down past us and informed us everything was all right ahead. City Point is said to be 20 miles from Richmond and 10 from Petersburg.

"Our regiment came on board the noted fast North River steamer *Chas. Powell*. Yesterday morning we took up the line of march and on the right advance towards Petersburg. Our advance is now about 5 miles from there and today we expect to have our further advance on it disputed by the Rebels as well as they are able to do so. The musketry last night was the by far the heaviest I have yet heard and the right of our own picket line is in sight of the Rebel pickets.

"The morning is fair and warm. The 18th Corps is now in advance. I wrote you Gen. Smith was expected to command this army. He commands the 18th Corps, Gillmore this, and Butler the whole. Yesterday P.M., as we were resting each side the road, Gen. Butler passed us with head uncovered while the air rang with the cheers of the men. I noticed Gen. Martindale was his chief of staff. He recognized us.

"Capt. Davis remains as chief of staff of Foster's staff. Foster is in command of the first division of this corps. Gen. Ames is in command of ours, the third division. Col. Drake is in command of our brigade. The 8th Me. have been taken from our brigade and its place supplied by the 9th Me. Thus you see there are so many changes that it is hard telling one day in what part of the corps we will be the next, or by who commanded, but I think we shall now remain as stationed at present. We have had no mail since my last and there is no telling when we



Gen. Butler's right on James river (1864)
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

shall get to be able to send one. We expect hard fighting but feel confident of final victory. Our army here is large but I am unable to give its number. Our pickets are beginning to fire occasionally on the right and I must get ready to move at a moment's notice, so for the present I bid you good-bye.

"As we came along yesterday I noticed wild violets or pansies rather growing by the roadside in profusion. Wild flowers are plentiful.

Sunday morning, 8th.

"This morning it is very warm again. Yesterday it was so warm that many were sunstroke that were engaged in the fight. The skirmishing on the right resulted in our picket driving the Rebel picket back. When they (our picket) returned to their line, the Rebels returned to theirs also. An orderly of Gen. Butler's got mixed up in the fight, was wounded, and when our picket returned taken prisoner. We were relieved from picket about 9 A.M. and during the day I found I had been stationed on the extreme outpost and nearest of any to where the Rebels were found and the battle of yesterday began. On returning to the regiment we found them in line, ready to march and fight, having left knapsacks where they had been encamped. The troops that had been on picket had been digging rifle-pits all night, and built a line said to be nine miles in length.

"The fighting began by the Mounted Rifles, Col. Onderdonk engaging the Rebel picket. They were found strongly posted each side of the





**Colonel Benjamin F. Onderdonk, commanding
1st N.Y. Mounted Rifles
Provided by Sharon R. Onderdonk**

road among fallen timbers and the Mounted Rifles were obliged to flank them in order to drive them. They took a number of prisoners and found they were South Carolinians just arrived from South Carolina the night before. Later in the day I heard Lt. Col. Patton of the Mounted Rifles say that about 2,000 shots were fired at his regiment and that but two men and a half dozen horses were hit. Col. Onderdonk's horse was shot. Our brigade followed the Mounted Rifles while another flanked the Rebels and afterwards did most of the fighting. The object of yesterday's fight was to burn the Petersburg & Richmond R.R. bridge across the Appomattox and we were perfectly successful, thus leaving the Rebels only the Richmond & Lynchburg Rail Road to communicate with the South. The blow will prove a severe one to them, though our loss is considerable. We also cut the telegraph.

"The 8th Conn. suffered most, their colonel [Col. John E. Ward] stating as we came in that his loss in killed and wounded was 150 men. But one regiment of our brigade was engaged to any extent, the 9th Me. Their colonel [Col. Sabine Emery] was drunk and led them between two lines of Rebels. Luckily, the ground was so low that the Rebel shots passed mostly over them. He was drunk in an action on Morris Island and was the cause of bringing disgrace on the regiment. Yesterday, his men swore they would not fight under him and Col. Drake took his sword from him and sent him to the rear."

The reason for Col. Sabine Emery's behavior was kept a secret from his contemporaries, according to a journal he kept during the war. A transcription of the journal made by Sabine's daughter, Ethyl G. (Emery) Lindsey, was forwarded to your correspondent by his great-great-granddaughter, Nancy W. Tidrick. The colonel suffered from tuberculosis, and alcohol was a widely-accepted treatment for the disease in the 1800s. Moreover, he wished to keep his condition a secret from his men, excepting, of course, the regimental surgeon. Even his wife was kept in the dark while he was away.



**Colonel Sabine Emery, commanding 9th Maine Infantry
Provided by Nancy W. Tidrick**

Col. Emery's journal contains the following entries of interest:

May 12, 1863. "I am sick. My cough has come back and it is worse than ever. My lungs bleed more or less every day and are very sore. I must be very careful or probably I shall never go home again. Am weak and tired now and must lie down. No one knows but that I am perfectly well. Ought I to write my wife? No, I think not. It would do no good."

May 14, 1863. "But to have a terrible cough with lungs so sore that you can breathe with difficulty, and no prospect of getting better, is enough to make one feel blue. I am never given to having the blue devils, but always take things as they come if I can't always make them come as I want them. Lou would feel anxious if she knew of my cough. I hope no one of the officers gone home will tell her... I have not drank any whiskey since I left home until

very recently. My lungs beginning to bleed, I was forced to send to the Post Commissary for a gallon. Hope it will have the desired effect. We are only allowed the privilege of buying one gallon each month. If my gallon goes before the month is over, what shall I do for more!"

June 11, 1863. "A paper has just been shown me addressed to Gov. Coburn signed by every officer in the regiment, requesting that I be commissioned colonel of the regiment."

November 25, 1863. "I drank some whiskey that the Doctor furnished and the result is that this morning I have a glorious headache."

January 30th, 1864. "Guess I'll take a modicum of whiskey. My lungs are troubling me considerably now. Have a cold on them and great soreness and oppression. Must not let Lou know of it or she would be out here before a great while... my lungs are so sore I can scarcely breathe."

The Journal of Tuberculosis reported in January of 1901: "Before the true nature of tuberculosis became apparent, the opinion was somewhat widely held that habits of alcoholic excess were antagonistic to tuberculosis and even preventive." The *Baltimore Afro-American* published the following in an article on April 17, 1954: "The use of alcohol in TB treatment dated back many years. Some doctors prescribed just a little wine as tonic or to stimulate the appetite... Other doctors had their patients drinking a pint of whiskey a day. Most of the physicians who recommended alcohol did it because they sincerely believe it would help their patients."

The *Household Companion: The Family Doctor*, (1909), prescribed alcohol as a way to keep the body in good health and to cure tuberculosis. Alcohol reduces chest pain and is a cough suppressant, the latter factor being very helpful to the colonel in his efforts to mask his condition and thus be able to continue to serve his country in its hour of need. But as seen in Corp. Lyman Ostrom's correspondence, Col. Emery's patriotic intentions backfired in Virginia on May 7th, 1864. He succumbed to consumption in 1868 at age 34, as reported by the *Commencement Bulletin* at Colby University, Waterville, Me., August 12, 1868:

"Sabine Emery died at Baltimore, Md., March 24th, 1868, aged 34 years. On the 4th of September, 1861, he entered the army, and was commissioned successively Captain, Major, Lieut. Colonel and Colonel of the 9th Maine Regt. During the attack upon Fort Wagner he was seriously wounded by a minnie ball in the leg, and received a contused wound of the left breast from the fragment of a shell. As the result of the latter wound, he fell into a lingering consumption, of which he died."

The Portland newspapers published a story on June 5th of this year about the discovery of the long-forgotten colonel's grave at Eastern Cemetery, and the efforts by a local researcher of the 9th Maine to locate the colonel's grave and acquire a headstone from the U.S. Dept. of Veterans' Affairs. Participating in the dedication ceremony were numerous Civil War re-enactors bearing the colors not only of the 9th Maine, but also the 54th Massachusetts (Colored) Infantry, the 3^d Maine Infantry, and the 1st Maine Cavalry.

Continuing his letter of the 7th, Corp. Ostrom describes how Priv. Anderson, only 10 feet away from him, was wounded by a glancing shot which struck his eagle breast plate:



**U.S. Pattern 1826 Eagle Breast Plate
and .58 caliber Minié bullet**

"We were detailed to support Hunt's Battery – Battery L, 4th [U.S.] Artillery. One section of the battery went in the action and our right wing supported it. The other section, which we of the left wing were to support, did not go into action. But one man of our regiment was hit, and he by a glance shot, striking the eagle on his breast and which perhaps saved his life. He was about 10 feet from me at the time he was struck. Belongs to another company. This morning, a man of Company B is missing, supposed to have deserted, and another of Co. C, supposed to have been sunstroke.

"We fell back to our intrenchments last night, having secured object, and where we are still remaining. What the next move will be I am unable to conjecture. Thus far everything has gone well in all we have attempted. While the bullets were flying yesterday the news boys came up crying, 'New York *Herald*, May Fourth,' so that while we were resting we had the gratification of learning that the bill for the increase of soldiers' pay had unanimously passed the House. Isn't this characteristic of Yankee character?

"About 5 P.M., Lt. Col. Patton rode up to near where I was sitting and said he to some of our officers, 'The rebels have fought desperately today, and to the right they are now fighting awfully. From 100 to 200 of our men are now lying wounded in the field from where I have just come and I think our loss in killed and wounded to-day will reach from 1,200 to 1,500.' Afterward, I heard Mr. Sawyer, the N.Y. State Agent, say that our loss could not exceed 600 or 800, but I think these figures far too high. Quite a number of our wounded we were obliged to leave on the field as they were covered by a Rebel gun and they would not allow us to bring them off. All who were directly to the front agree that the loss of the Rebels were very severe.



"I saw one boy of the 8th Conn., no more than 15 or 16 years old, so tired that he reeled as he walked and could only speak with difficulty, who said he had fired 55 rounds of cartridges and that many of his regiment had done the same thing.

"Not a man of our company has yet fallen out. I am well and feeling well. Thus you see, Lizzie, we have great cause for gratitude to our Great Preserver. We are about eight miles from City Point. Are expecting a large mail to-day. Shall probably remain here to-day.

"The 47th N.Y. fired into the 100th N.Y. yesterday by mistake and did considerable harm. Though it is said the bridge destroyed yesterday was on the Appomattox, I think it a mistake and that it was across a large creek instead.

Afternoon.

"It is again reported that Meade has defeated Lee and Lee is falling back on Richmond. At any rate it is understood that Meade was to cross the Rapidan three or four days ago. It is also rumored this P.M. that we are to advance tomorrow, but I think from indications that we shall not.

"The engagement yesterday was near a place called Walthall Station. There is considerable artillery firing this afternoon to our left, but too far away to tell whether there is musketry with it. Of course, you understand that by our right and left we are always expected to be fronting the enemy.

"Our mail carrier has just been along and informed us that in an hour he will start with the mail for the landing, and not knowing when there will be another opportunity, I will send this through. I had not intended



A Welcome Pause (1888)
Julian A Scott (1846-1901)
Private Collection

to so soon, but I know you are anxious to hear from me as often as possible, and therefore I send it, though it may be a long while before it will be allowed to go north. Mails from the North are allowed to come to us.

"It is useless for me to speculate as to the course this army will next take and we must wait for events to develop themselves, though I am somewhat of the opinion that we shall strike next at Petersburg. Of course, our movements will be guided to a great extent by the success and movements of Meade's army. We are all in the best of spirits. We are just detailed for picket. May God ever more guide and keep us, and may we soon be restored to each other."

"I know what a battle is now" wrote one of the new recruits in the regiment, Priv. Otis B. Strong, Co. B, a 19-year-old farmer from Perryville, Madison County, N.Y., to his sister on the 8th:

"I thought that I would write you a few lines to let you know where I am again. We are stationed about 10 miles from Richmond and a short distance from Petersburg. We landed at City Point and then marched here.

"I know what a battle is now. We had a hard battle here yesterday. We lost, it is stated, 1,500 men, but we drove them across the river and we burned the railroad bridge between Richmond and Petersburg. It



Scene from "Gods and Generals," Directed by Ronald F. Maxwell (2003)

has cut off their supplies. It is probable that we have not lost half as many as reported. There was not any killed in our regiment, but some was wounded. I am on guard to-day, but have been relieved, and will have to go on again in a few minutes. I wrote home when I was in Yorktown. I must stop writing for this time. Hurrah for the Rebs."

Three letters by Priv. Strong have been published in a book entitled, *Story Power! Breathing Life into History*, by Elizabeth C. Manvell (2011). "Otis and his Perryville friend, Anson B. Cranson, mustered into the 169th N.Y. Vol. Inf. on February 23, 1864, wrote Elizabeth. "Otis was nineteen years old, and Anson was a mere fifteen. Anson appears to have lied about his age, as his military records have him as eighteen years old. Many soldiers too young for service lied to join the fight. They must have had serious intent to join up, for Madison County was not recruiting for new soldiers. To find a regiment that needed them, they traveled a hundred twenty-five miles east over by the state capital, across the Hudson River to the city of Troy." Elizabeth provided the following account of the discovery of the Strong letters:

"In 1986 I was a teacher in Canastota, N.Y. It was a typical morning. Buses were arriving, students were wandering into their respective classrooms. A sixth grader walked into our room with something in her hand to share. I looked at what she had and realized that this wasn't a typical 'show-and-tell.' Gripped in her hand was a pile of neatly folded, slightly faded letters that, she informed us, her family found in the attic of their barn. She was holding a stack of handwritten letters from the 1860s! These were *original* Civil War-era letters, from a Civil War soldier and his family, and she had brought them to school on the bus with no precautions to keep them safe. I immediately asked her if I could make copies of the letters, and it was a good thing I did. To this day, no one in the soldier's family knows where the originals are. They didn't even know they existed until I shared them.

"I have copies of 11 handwritten letters from Priv. Van R. Strong of the 46th Illinois to his mother, sister, and brother Otis, spanning from 1860 to 1865. I also have copies of letters from Otis Strong, who fought at Petersburg, their sister Lydia Ann Strong of Joliet, cousin Charles

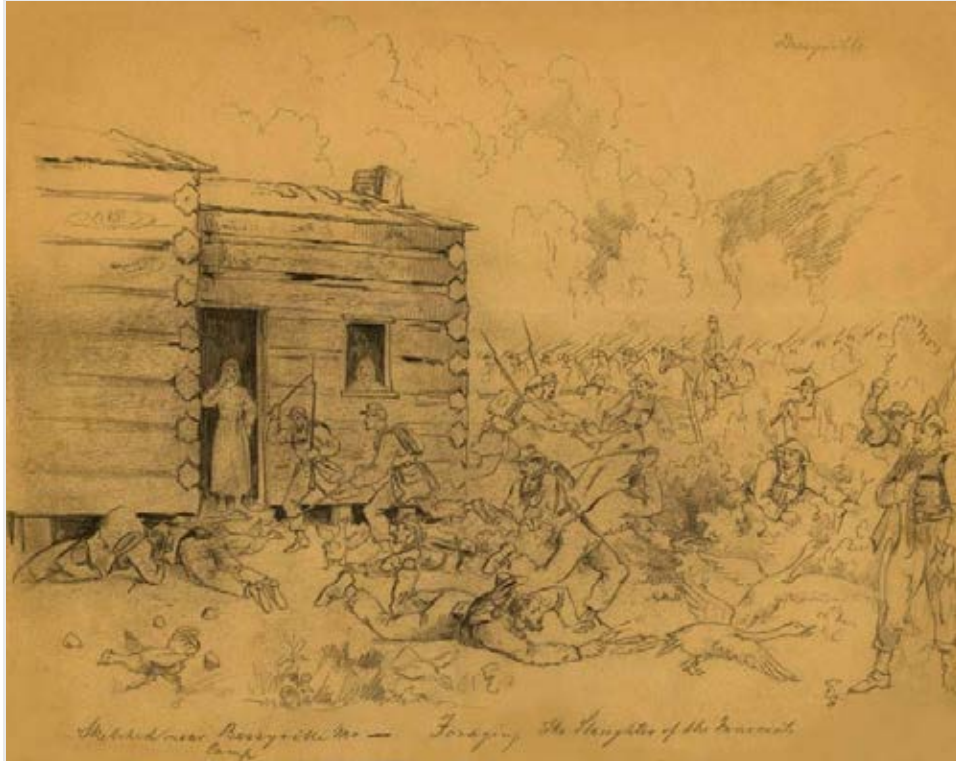


Private Otis B. Strong, Co. B, 169th N.Y. (ca. 1864-'65)
Provided by Steven H. Warner

Mitchell of Coral, and his brother John who went to California in search of gold in 1859."

"On picket, four miles from Petersburg, Va.," wrote Corp. Ostrom to his father on the 9th, the last letter he would ever write. In recalling the siege operations at Morris Island under Gillmore, it was logical for Lyman to expect a similar role for the regiment in front of Richmond: "Should it be necessary to go through a course of besieging operations in order to capture Richmond, I shall not be surprised if our corps under Gillmore will be used mainly for that purpose."

"I will begin one more letter to you without knowing when it will reach you or when I shall receive one from you. The last I received was written a month ago. God has been kind to me and kept me from harm from our country's enemy and from disease. I am well and feeling well. To-day the indications are a heavy battle is to be fought near here, and we were present at a considerable battle Saturday, and



Foraging – Slaughter of the Innocents (N.D.)
Henri Lovie (1829-1875)
The Becker Collection, Boston College

where we gained complete success, though at considerable loss of life and limb, yet with none to our regiment.

"But I suppose you will wish to know all that has happened since I last wrote, and I will go back to that time. Our forces at Gloucester Point and some of those at Yorktown went aboard a fleet of transports last Wednesday afternoon. That morning, one corps of the army started up the Peninsula on foot from Yorktown. Thursday morning found us at Fortress Monroe on our way up the James River, though when we embarked our vessels were headed up the York River, but this of course was to deceive the enemy.

"We landed Thursday night a short distance above City Point on the south side of the James River and 20 miles from Richmond. There I saw the first example of foraging I have yet witnessed on any extensive scale. Early in the morning, one group might be seen coming in with hams or bacon, another with fowls, another with vegetables, &c. I went down to the river for water, and near the bank saw where some Negroes had driven about 30 hogs in a pen to keep them from being gobbled up, but the boys were at them, knocking them in the head and killing them, some skinning them, others cutting out a ham, tenderloin, or whichever part they chose, and soon there was not an eatable squealer left.

"About 8 A.M. we took our line of march toward Petersburg and reached the place where the army has since been encamped the same night. For miles as we came along, the road was strewn with blankets and clothing of various kinds thrown away by our soldiers. That night I chanced to be detailed for picket, and while we were establishing our line could hear the 18th Corps heavily engaged not far from us, but night put an end to the fight. I chanced to be stationed at what I found next day was



the outpost of our picket line, and nearest of any to where the fight of Saturday began, the Rebel outpost being supposed to be no more than 20 rods from me.

"Near where I was was a house, occupied by a widow and her only daughter, her only son having been pressed into the Rebel service. This widow and her daughter were common specimens of what we often meet in the South, the owners of property, almost as ignorant and simple-minded as the Negro slaves, unable to understand our common language, it being too hard for them, wishing for peace and supposing it was



"An Old Settler"

From the Journal of Private Robert Knox Sneden, 40th N.Y.V., Topographical Engineer of the III Army Corps, Vol. III, June 29 - October 25, 1862
Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

all right and carried on that the head of their government might make money by it. [Illegible] daughter was much [illegible] than most women met with in the South, though [illegible] as he walked a time with either the old lady or her daughter, but those who [illegible], but it was

next to impossible to procure help. She could occasionally get an old Negro to work for her, and had given him \$15 for one day's work in cleaning her well. Sugar she stated was \$2.00 per lb., calico \$20 per yard. If they took five bushels of grain to mill, besides the toll for grinding, one bushel went to the Rebel government. She had paid \$15 for railroad fair to Richmond, a distance of 11 miles. One of our men wanted to buy a hen coming here and was asked \$12. There was considerable land on the farm ploughed, sown, and planted. This, the old lady stated, her daughter had done entirely alone, and also that she had to 'tote' and cut all their wood. What would our Northern women think if they were obliged to come to this, think you!

"Saturday morning, we were relieved from picket and found the men who had remained in camp had worked all night building rifle pits, and that the line as it was said was nine miles long. The men were drawn up in line for fighting when we reached camp, having left their knapsacks behind. We did not fairly get in motion until 11 o'clock, soon after which the fighting commenced near where I had been stationed the night before, the Mounted Rifles engaging the Rebel skirmishers and driving them. They took several prisoners and found they were South Carolinians and stated that they had only reached there from the south the night before.

"That afternoon I heard Lt. Col. Patton of the Mounted Rifles say that the Rebels fired about 2,000 shots at his men and hit but two of them and half a dozen horses were hit. By the way, tell Henry that I saw Horse Doctor Jim Brown's son that day, and who belongs to the Mounted Rifles.



**Colonel John E. Ward,
commanding 8th Connecticut Infantry**

"After driving the Rebels from their first position, the 8th Conn. took it and engaged the Rebel skirmishers, and after a sharp skirmish, drove them. They suffered most of any regiment Saturday, their colonel stating at night that his loss in killed and wounded would reach 150 men.

"Our object in Saturday's fight was to burn a bridge on the Richmond & Petersburg Railroad near a place called Walthall Station, about two miles from Petersburg, and also cut their telegraph, thus severing their



Worker repairing telegraph line (ca. 1862-'63)

communication with the more southern states and leaving them but one route, and we were successful, and though our loss was quite severe, all who were nearest the Rebels agree that theirs was greater, while we have gained a great point.

"The 100th N.Y. was fired into by mistake by the 47th N.Y. and suffered considerably. Our brigade was commanded by Col. Drake of the 112th N.Y. The 13th Indiana of our brigade was sent out as skirmishers and had two men wounded. The 9th Maine, now also of our brigade, was also sent forward but had a number wounded, the principal cause of which was that their colonel was drunk and led them between two lines of Rebels. The Rebels fired at them but luckily the men were in a hollow so that most of the shots passed over them. The men swore they would not fight under their colonel any longer, and Col. Drake took his sword from him and sent him to the rear. He was drunk at our line on Morris Island and led his men into a trap and thus disgraced them.

"Our regiment was detailed to support a battery, and as but a part of it became engaged, only the right wing of the regiment went directly to the front. But one man of our regiment was hit, however, and he while standing about 10 feet from me, by a glance shot in the breast, but in such a way that the wound will not prove dangerous. The Rebels fired

a kind of rifle-ball which exploded as it struck. Of course, they were not all of this kind.



**Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander G. Patton,
1st N.Y. Mounted Rifles**

"Our division did nearly all the fighting. Col. Patton, who was at the front nearly all the while, stated in my presence that the Rebels fought desperately and he believed our loss to be from 1,200 to 1,500. Mr. Sawyer, N.Y. State Agent, I heard state he thought it could not exceed 600 or 800, but even these figures I think much too large. We were obliged to leave some of our wounded on the field, as they were covered by a Rebel gun and they would not allow us to bring them off. Many of our men were sunstroke, the day was so warm.

"I saw a boy belonging to the 8th Conn., no more than 15 or 16 years old, who said he had fired 55 rounds of cartridges at the Rebels. He was so tired that he reeled as he walked and could not speak without difficulty. While the fight was progressing, with bullets flying, the news boys went up to us, singing out, 'N.Y. *Herald*,' so that while we were resting we had the pleasure of learning that the House had passed a bill increasing our pay.

"Having accomplished our object, we fell back to camp at night. This morning, all the army here, but three or four brigades that were in the fight Saturday, are advancing and we could hear skirmishing an hour ago.

"Thus far, we have been successful in all we have attempted, while it is said the Rebels are fortified from here to Richmond. I think a blow is being struck today at Petersburg. Yesterday and early this morning, again the report reached us that Meade's army had whipped Lee's, wounding Lee and Longstreet and killing Hill. Saturday night, a Rebel spy dressed in U.S. uniform was captured. Saturday, one of our gun boats was blown up by a torpedo after it had passed over several without exploding them and had nearly halted to lower a boat to search for torpedoes.



On the James River, Virginia (1864)
Edward Lamson Henry (1841-1919)
Private Collection

"The land along the James River is very fine and many residences splendid. As we neared City Point, Gen. Butler passed us and informed us that everything was all right ahead. He is in command here. He passed through our lines Friday night with head uncovered, the men cheering him as he went by. Gen W. F. Smith is in command of the 18th Corps and Gillmore of this, the 10th. The reason of Foster not commanding our brigade is that he is temporarily acting as Gillmore's Chief of Staff. Lt. B. N. Smith is on Gillmore's staff, also. Gen. Martindale is Butler's chief of staff.



Fort Darling, Drewry's Bluff, Virginia
Published in "Perry's Saints, or The Fighting Parson's Regiment in
the War of the Rebellion," by James M. Nichols (1886)

"Should it be necessary to go through a course of besieging operations in order to capture Richmond, I shall not be surprised if our corps under Gillmore will be used mainly for that purpose. If so, it will in all probability be again as at Charleston, Gillmore and Beauregard trying their

engineering skill against each other. We know that there Gillmore was the victor, until the water prevented his going farther. Here in besieging Ft. Darling, he will not have the water to contend with and cannot doubt the result.



Extreme left of the Bermuda Hundred intrenchments near Point of Rocks (1864)

The XVIII Corps was on the left of the Federal intrenchments at Bermuda Hundred, while the X Corps occupied the right.

"To me the skies are brightening and I believe that with the blessing of God we are seeing the beginning of the end of this war. We are hourly expecting stirring news from both Meade and Sherman. There was considerable artillery firing to our left yesterday, but from what cause we have not yet learned. Our men are in fine health and spirits. Not a man of our company has yet at any time fallen out of the ranks since leaving Gloucester Point. Our supplies come up regularly. The thing we miss most is our letters, while we wonder if our friends receive those we write. But what can't be cured must be endured, and so we live in hope of good things in future. The weather is very warm for the season of the year. We are now so fortified here that should we be defeated in advancing we have something to fall back upon that we can hold securely.

Afternoon.

"The cannonading is very loud to-day, almost all around us, except in our rear. The heaviest of the firing is in the direction of Petersburg, which place we suppose is being attacked."

Maj.-Gen. George Pickett, in command of Confederate forces at Petersburg, was unable to communicate with Richmond now that the telegraph lines had been cut. Meanwhile, the Weldon Railroad, south of Petersburg, was under attack by the Army of the James's cavalry division under Brig.-Gen. August V. Kautz. Under

the threat of being attacked from the north and south, Pickett ordered the 3,500 men at Port Walthall Junction to form a line just north of the city at Swift Creek. By 3 A.M. on the 8th, all of the Confederates in the area were in position.

Butler, expecting Grant to sweep south and join his army, became concerned when he found no sign of the Army of the Potomac. Sensing danger, he ordered his army on the 8th to improve the earthworks of its defensive line. Knowing that he outnumbered the Confederates by a margin of six to one, Butler did not want to sit by idly. He ordered another advance to the Richmond Turnpike for the next morning to finish the work of destroying the railroad. Smith would take five of his seven XVIII Corps brigades, hit the railroad at Port Walthall Junction, and then turn south towards Petersburg. Gillmore would take the X Corps to the turnpike and turn north to hit the railroad near Chester Station.

Finding little resistance at Port Walthall Junction, Smith turned south towards Petersburg, keeping one division on the railroad and the other on the turnpike. The XVIII Corps reached Swift Creek in the middle of the afternoon on the 9th. Brig.-Gen. Johnson Hagood, in charge of the Confederate defenses, pulled back his troops from the north bank of the creek knowing they were vulnerable to the Federal advance.



Destruction of General Lee's lines of Communication in Virginia by Gen'l. Wilson (June 20-25, 1864)
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

But around 4 P.M., Hagood received instructions from Richmond to reconnoiter northward toward the capital to determine the size of the Federal force. Forced to follow this questionable order, Hagood sent the 11th S.C. across Swift Creek to advance up the turnpike. The Federals held their fire until the Rebels were within 50 yards at Arrowfield Church, then fired a volley at the enemy. Soon the 21st S.C. was sent across the creek to rescue the 11th from the suicidal situation it had been thrown into. The Confederate attack was driven back with heavy losses, but Union forces did not press the attack any further. Butler was content to have the X Corps burn the Chester Station and destroy the railroad from Chester to Port Walthall Junction.



Military railroad operations in northern Virginia – Iron rails were twisted by positioning them over piles of wooden railroad ties which were then burned (ca. 1862-'63)



In conjunction with the advance to Swift Creek, five Federal gunboats steamed up the Appomattox River to bombard Fort Clifton, while Hincks's U.S. Colored Troops infantry division struggled through marshy ground from the land side. The gunboats were quickly driven off and the infantry attack was abandoned.

Links to Forman's animations of the railroad raids and the engagement at Swift Creek follow:

[Richmond & Petersburg Railroad Raids, May 9, 1864](#)

[Battle of Swift Creek, Va., May 9, 1864](#)

The Troy *Daily Whig* reported on the 9th where area regiments were fighting, and arrangements were made to telegraph lists of casualties to the city. More surgeons were needed and a call was sent out for local physicians to serve in the field:

"LOCATION OF TROY REGIMENTS. – The 169th Regiment left Jacksonville, Fla., on the 20th of April, ult., and is now with Butler in the vicinity of Petersburg, Va. The 125th is with Grant, and has probably had plenty to do before this time. – The 93^d Regiment, composed in part of Troy officers and soldiers, is also with Grant, and has probably had a hand in the battles of the last week. The (21st) Griswold Light Cavalry is under Sigel in the valley of the Shenandoah, but at last advices was moving up to join Grant's right. We have made arrangements for lists of killed or wounded in Troy regiments by telegraph from Washington at the earliest moment that the accounts of such casualties can be obtained from that city."



Field amputation kit belonging to the surgeon of the 67th N.Y.

"A CALL FOR SURGEONS. – Dr. Seymour left for Washington last night on an official intimation that his professional services would be required in the case of the wounded for field service. Dr. Simmons, a young physician and surgeon of this city, has entered the service in the capacity of a contract surgeon. Surgeon McLean has also received an order to report to the Surgeon General at Washington for field service. A requisition has been made by the Surgeon-General of the U.S. on Surgeon-General Quackenbush, of Albany, for ten surgeons from the State for field service, and Surgeon McLean, and probably Doctor Seymour, go on this requisition."

On the same day the *Daily Times* printed a story about a disloyal remark made in public by a Copperhead or some kind of miscreant:

"AN AWFUL WISH. — We supposed that in this great struggle, the Northern people were of one mind in hoping for the success of Gen. Grant; and that all past bickering was swallowed up in the important issues of the present. It seems otherwise. We are sorry to record the fact that on Friday last a man was heard to say in a public place in this city: *'I hope Grant will get licked like H—.'*"

Robertson describes Butler's options to attack either Petersburg or Richmond, but on the Confederate side, President Jefferson Davis and Maj.-Gen. Robert Ransom, Jr., in command of the defenses of Richmond, had a plan of their own:



**Major-General Benjamin F. Butler,
commanding Army of the James**

"During the late afternoon of 9 May, Benjamin Butler met with Gillmore and Smith to discuss the plan of operations for the next day. Having heard nothing from Grant, Butler decided to threaten Petersburg a while longer, and he may even have believed that the city could be taken. At the very least, a determined assault by both corps in the morning would breach the Confederate defenses at Swift Creek and carry all the way to the Appomattox River. That would permit the destruction of the Swift Creek railroad bridge and bring the much larger bridge over the Appomattox within range of Federal guns. The chances for success would be considerably enhanced by having Edward Hincks repeat his earlier demonstration from City Point. If the timing was right, the Confederates might be so attracted to affairs at Swift Creek that Hincks could walk into Petersburg unopposed...

"Ever since April, one of Butler's guidelines had been that the Army of the James and the Army of the Potomac would coordinate their movements in the ultimate drive upon Richmond. Before the arrival of telegrams containing the first positive news of Grant's progress, Butler had been unwilling to move against Richmond alone, preferring instead to make demonstrations and secure his base. Now at last Butler was informed by the Secretary of War that Lee was in hasty retreat toward Richmond and Grant was following close behind. If Stanton's information were true, the Army of the James could not afford to spend more time dallying around Petersburg, but should prepare to advance toward

Richmond in order to meet Grant. Adapting to the changed situation, Butler at 9:30 P.M. informed Hincks that good news from Grant necessitated the cancellation of the advance on Petersburg...

"Although unaware of Butler's decision to withdraw, the defenders of Petersburg felt a sense of renewed confidence on the morning of 10 May. Just before 9:00 A.M., P. G. T. Beauregard stepped down from his special train and assumed the powers of command previously held by Pickett and Bushrod Johnson. At the same time, the number of available troops began to increase dramatically. Pickett had made his epic defense of Petersburg and its railroads with only Johnson's, Hagood's, and part of Clingman's Brigades. By contrast, before the day was over Beauregard would have seven brigades in the immediate vicinity. Lewis's Brigade had already arrived. Early on 10 May half of Wise's Brigade reached the city, with the rest close behind. About mid-morning Matt Ransom's Brigade rolled into town, while at the same time Terry's Brigade traversed the Stony Creek gap. Corse's Brigade was still on the railroad around Weldon, but it was at last moving rapidly forward...



Colonel Alvin C. Voris, commanding 67th Ohio

"Although the Federal withdrawal was due to the messages Butler had received from Stanton, it was executed in haste because of the situation developing north of Port Walthall Junction. When the X Corps advanced toward Chester Station on 9 May, Colonel Joshua Howell and three of his regiments had established a blocking position near Ware Bottom Church. Located only a mile from the Federal entrenchments, Howell was relatively safe, although he was continuously in contact with Confederate skirmishers. Much more exposed was Colonel Alvin Voris's 67th Ohio Infantry, which Howell had posted at the juncture of

the Richmond turnpike and the road from Bermuda Hundred to Chester Station. Voris's only support was one section of the 1st Connecticut Light Battery. If threatened, his nearest sources of aid were Howell's force a mile to his right and Hawley's brigade (under Colonel Joseph Abbott since Hawley was ill) three miles to the south at Port Walthall Junction. In late afternoon on 9 May, the black cavalymen screening Voris had been routed, and he had been obliged to fall back a short distance to avoid being flanked. As darkness approached in the dense woods around the crossroads, Voris had sensed Confederate forces closing in on him and he had called to Quincy Gillmore for relief. Gillmore had ordered two regiments and another section of artillery from the Bermuda Hundred entrenchments to join Voris, but the courier did not reach the designated units until after 2:00 A.M. on 10 May.



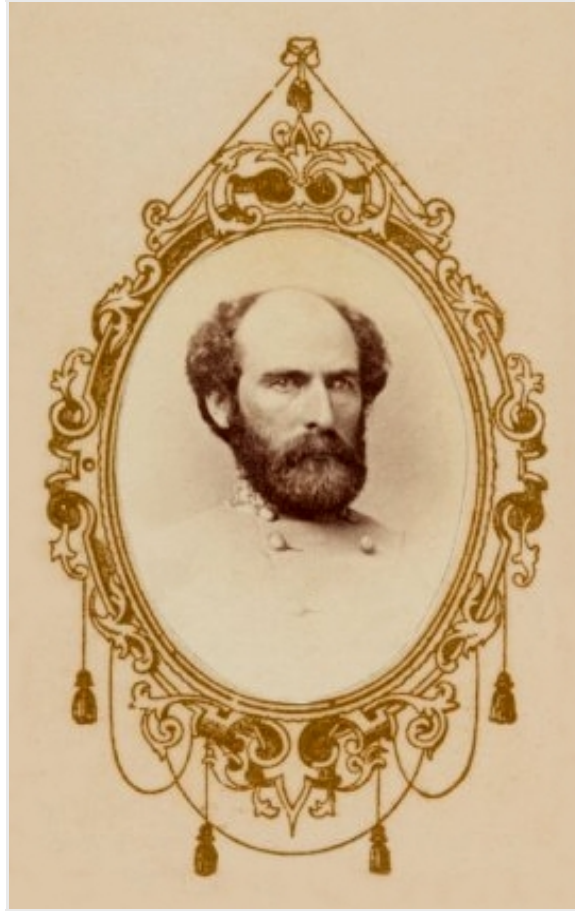
**President Jefferson Davis,
Confederate States of America**

"The Confederate pressure against Howell's brigade was directed by Major General Robert Ransom, who had ridden down to Drewry's Bluff on the afternoon of 9 May. Unaware of Butler's turn toward Petersburg, Ransom had concluded that the Federals' preoccupation with the railroad left them open to counterattack, if their units could be precisely located. Finding that Seth Barton and Archibald Gracie had probed the Federal positions around Ware Bottom Church too gently to learn anything, Ransom had ordered each of them to repeat the process with a regiment early the next morning. After dark Jefferson Davis had visited Ransom at his headquarters, and the president of the Confederacy had personally approved the plan."

Ransom ordered two brigades southward to reconnoiter the Federal strength at Port Walthall Junction. Before long the Confederates approached the junction and ran into the Federal cavalry screen. Upon learning of their presence, Ransom ordered his men to stop while he gathered reinforcements.

After sending news of its distress, the 67th Ohio was joined by two other regiments, the 169th N.Y. and the 13th Indiana, along with two 12-pounder bronze Napoleon guns of the 4th N.J. Battery. Although still outnumbered, the Federals

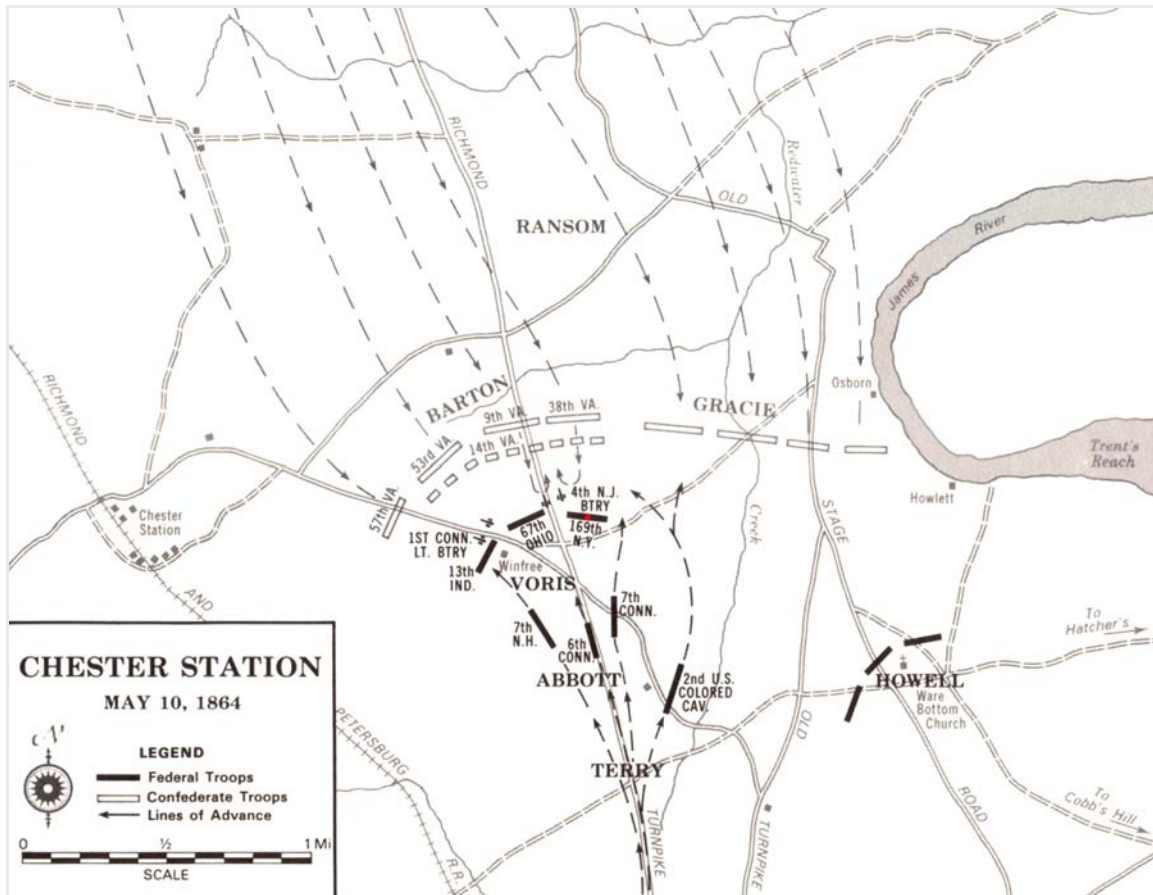
would now at least have a chance to stall the Confederates until more help arrived. Robertson describes the ensuing battle:



**Confederate Major-General Robert Ransom, Jr.,
commanding division, Defenses of Richmond**

"At 5:15 A.M. on 10 May, the Confederate advance began. Gracie's regiment stretched from the bank of the James River to the Richmond Turnpike, while Barton deployed the 14th Virginia Infantry from the turnpike westward to the railroad. Since the railroad diverged slightly, by the time Barton's regiment had crossed Proctor's Creek, its right no longer touched the railroad. At that point both Gracie and Ransom received orders from Ransom to halt and await the arrival of their brigades. Soon the remainder of the two brigades appeared, accompanied by Ransom, who proceeded to berate Barton because his skirmish line did not reach the railroad. Given no time to explain, Barton quickly ordered two companies to fill the gap. He then stumbled into an altercation with the irascible Ransom over whether they were in place or not. Still more harsh words passed between the two generals during the deployment of Barton's remaining regiments. Eventually all was ready to Ransom's satisfaction and the troops started forward through the woods.

"With Gracie's troops deployed on his left and Barton's men advancing in front, Ransom sought the enemy. Almost at once he discovered that part of Gracie's skirmish line overlapped Barton's. Barton was already aware of the problem and was attempting to correct it, but it furnished yet another pretext for Ransom to take offense at the hapless



Map of the Battle of Chester Station, Va., May 10, 1864
 Published in "Back Door to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign,
 April-June 1864" by William Glenn Robertson (1987)

The position of the 169th N.Y. at the start of the battle is indicated by the red dot.

officer's actions. After the skirmish line was rearranged, the brigades resumed their advance into the dense forest. Soon bullets fired by Federal skirmishers began to slap their way through the foliage. As the Federal pickets slowly withdrew, the right wing of Barton's Brigade bent forward until it crossed the Chester Station road. Gradually the action began to center on two clearings in the forest, the turnpike crossroads on the Confederate left and the Winfree farm opposite the Confederate center and right. Barton's Brigade had stumbled upon the small blocking force of Colonel Voris.

"By the time Barton's Virginians had made contact with his skirmishers, Voris had been joined by the reinforcements Gillmore had sent during the night. Moving at 3:00 A.M., the 13th Indiana and 169th New York Infantry and two guns of the 4th New Jersey Light Battery had arrived at dawn. Voris had arranged his three regiments in a long crescent-shaped skirmish line covering Winfree's farm and the crossroads, with the 13th Indiana on the left, the 67th Ohio in the center, and the 169th New York on the right. The section of Connecticut artillery remained at Winfree's and the New Jersey section was posted just north of the crossroads on the turnpike, each section being supported by detachments of infantry. Four companies of the 13th Indiana were retained at the crossroads as a reserve and some Negro cavalry guarded the flanks.



**Colonel Cyrus J. Dobbs, commanding
13th Indiana**



**Colonel John McConihe, commanding
169th N.Y.**

"Once in contact with the Federal pickets, Barton's men vigorously pushed forward through the forest. Soon the Confederates were near enough for the Federal artillerymen to begin firing antipersonnel rounds over their own infantry at the advancing gray ranks. Slowly but surely the thin Federal line was pressed back, reducing the size of the defensive perimeter. The dense woods and rough terrain, however, made it difficult for Barton to press his advantage. His men had lost contact with Gracie's Alabamians, and Barton himself was having trouble with a skittish horse, but still he maintained the pressure. About 11:00 A.M. the 38th and 9th Virginia began a concerted drive along the turnpike that penetrated to the two guns of the 4th New Jersey Battery. Several companies of the 169th New York Infantry supporting the artillery panicked and fled to the rear, taking one of the gun limbers with them. With charging Confederates pouring around their right flank



"Rebel Yell," by Don Troiani



"Action Front," by Dale Gannon (1980)

and driving straight down the pike, the gun crews retreated with their only movable gun. The other gun was left to Barton's Virginians as a prize of war.

"The Confederate charge had not been without cost. The colonel of the 38th Virginia had been mortally wounded and his men had lost their organization during their rush through the trees. Moreover, they were beginning to encounter small-arms fire from the right side of Voris's line and an artillery bombardment from Colonel Howell's position at Ware Bottom Church. These difficulties caused the left wing of Barton's Brigade to end its advance near the abandoned gun, as the troops milled about in confusion. By this time the woods had caught fire from an exploding artillery shell and the tinder-dry pine forest filled rapidly with crackling flames and choking, curling smoke.

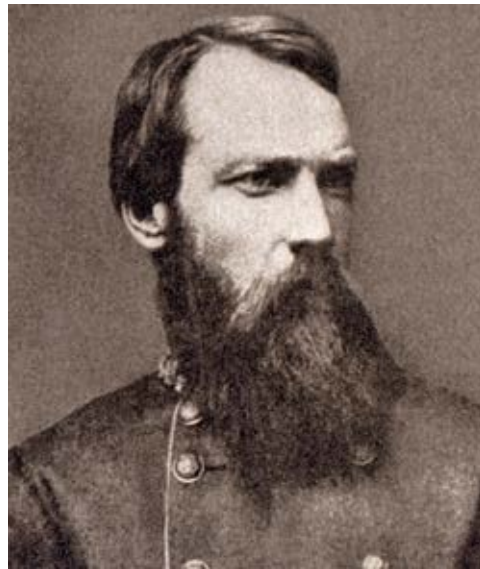
"On the right the remainder of Barton's Brigade continued down the Chester Station road toward the Winfree House. To check them, the gunners of the 1st Connecticut Light Battery began to fire canister. As his ammunition supply dwindled and the Confederates drove in from three sides, Lieutenant George Metcalf feared for the safety of his section. Suddenly, up the road came the reinforcements for which Voris had been calling frantically. Reining in their horses behind the beleaguered gunners were Brigadier General Alfred Terry and Colonel Joseph Abbott, who had marched Hawley's three regiments toward the sound of the firing. Careening along behind the officers were the other four Connecticut guns. With the cannoneers clinging to handrails to avoid falling under the flashing hooves and thundering wheels, the battery whirled into the Winfree lane in a cloud of dust. At the command 'Action front,' they took position by Metcalf's exhausted section, which was allowed to go to the rear.

"Taking charge of the action, Terry ordered the 7th New Hampshire Infantry to support the artillery at Winfree's, then he turned his attention to the serious situation on the turnpike. There he deployed the 7th Connecticut east of the road and the 6th Connecticut to the west, then sent both regiments forward. In the face of this new force, Barton's weary men gave ground, allowing the 7th Connecticut to regain the



Yellow House, aka Winfree House (ca. 1930s)

abandoned cannon on the turnpike. At the other end of the Federal line, the Confederates made repeated advances against the troops around Winfree's. Threatened on three sides, the 7th New Hampshire Infantry fell back a short distance, but it was eventually able to resume its former position. In the Federal center, part of the 6th Connecticut became confused in the forest and retired precipitately, forcing Terry to fill the gap with his last reserves, a company of engineers and the provost guard. On the right, the 7th Connecticut also had a few bad moments in the burning woods when it believed it was being outflanked from the direction of Ware Bottom Church. This final Confederate threat was met by the dismounted troopers of the 2nd U.S. Colored Cavalry, supported by the mountain howitzers of the 1st New York Mounted Rifles and Battery D, 1st U.S. Artillery, all of which had just reached the field.



**Confederate Brigadier-General Seth M. Barton,
commanding brigade, Ransom's Division**

"As fresh units extended the Federal line eastward, Barton's Brigade found its own flank threatened. When he received no reply to a message reporting that his left was turned, Barton went personally to Ransom with the same information. Upon seeing Barton, Ransom exploded into another tirade about the worthlessness of Barton's Brigade and its commander. Ransom believed he had seen Barton riding 'aim-

**Artifacts recovered at the Yellow House Farm
(aka Winfree's House), Chester, Virginia**



U.S. Army commissioned officer's sword belt plate (top) and the nose of a U.S. manufactured 3.67-inch Hotchkiss shell with flame grooves, designed to help the flame from the cannon blast ignite the time fuse at the top (below). Provided by John Burgess, Sr.



lessly' over the field during the action and was positive he had witnessed many of Barton's men fleeing through the trees east of the pike. Barton hotly denied the charges, but Ransom curtly sent him back to his men, smarting under the day's latest rebuke. To protect Barton's flank, Ransom ordered Archibald Gracie to extend his regiments westward to connect with Barton's men near the turnpike. Gracie's troops had done little all day except skirmish around Ware Bottom Church, and they joined Barton without incident. Believing that nothing further could be accomplished with Barton's men, Ransom decided to break off the action.

"Ransom's decision to withdraw proved wise, because Federal reinforcements from Swift Creek were beginning to arrive. White's brigade of Ames's division was the first to appear, although its ranks were depleted by numbers of sun-struck men who had dropped by the roadside. Following White was Wistar's brigade, which had also suffered severely from the 100° heat. Although Wistar's soldiers were thrown forward as skirmishers into the burning woods, White's men were allowed to rest by the road. By the time the last Federal regiment reached the field, both sides had united under a flag-of-truce to rescue



**Brigadier-General Alfred H. Terry,
commanding 1st Division, X Army Corps,
Army of the James**

casualties who lay in the path of the forest fire raging around the crossroads. Unfortunately the rescuers were unable to save all the wounded from the flames. At 4:20 P.M., while the work of mercy continued, Gillmore ordered Terry to fall back slowly toward Bermuda Hundred. Terry complied by extending his right toward Colonel Howell at Ware Bottom Church while withdrawing his left slightly down the turnpike. Shortly after 5:00 P.M. Howell's brigade departed for the fortifications, and Terry's units followed closely behind.

"Out of 3,400 troops engaged at one time or another, Terry had lost 280 men killed, wounded, and missing. In exchange, he had taken more than forty prisoners. Terry believed that he had been outnumbered by the Confederates, but in reality this had not been the case. Barton's Brigade numbered only 1,945 men on 10 May, and many of these had been left behind that morning because of Ransom's haste to depart. Barton's casualties amounted to a total of 249 men. Gracie's

Brigade on Barton's left contained 2,197 men on 10 May but these troops had not been seriously engaged. Only during the early phases of the action were Barton's Virginians numerically stronger than Voris's regiments, and after the arrival of Terry's reinforcements, Barton had been contending against superior numbers. Because of the heavily wooded terrain, however, neither side had been able to determine the true strength of the other."

Below is a link to Forman's animation of the Battle of Chester Station:

[Battle of Chester Station, Va., May 10, 1864](#)

Robertson's description of the retreat of the 169th runs contrary to accounts provided by Federal commanders. To begin with, Col. Alvin C. Voris of the 67th Ohio was highly complimentary of his commanders, writing, "Colonel Cyrus J. Dobbs, commanding 13th Indiana Volunteers, Colonel John McConihe, commanding the 169th New York Volunteers, and Lieutenant Colonel Henry S. Commager, commanding 67th Ohio Volunteers, are deserving of great credit for their efficiency and example on the occasion and the ability with which they managed their respective commands."

Col. McConihe's report stated that the 169th fell back in an orderly fashion, not in a panic, while checking a flanking movement on the right by the enemy, who outnumbered the regiment by a wide margin at the outset:



Panel from a cyclorama of the Civil War

HEADQUARTERS 169th NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS,
Camp at Foster's Plantation, Va., May 11, 1864.

ADJUTANT: I herewith most respectfully report the part borne by the One hundred and sixty-ninth New York Volunteers in the engagement near Chester Station, Va., on the 10th instant. In accordance with orders, that portion of the regiment not doing picket duty left camp at about 3 A.M., and in junction with the Thirteenth Indiana proceeded to a point on the Richmond and Petersburg turnpike near Chester Station and reported to Colonel Voris, Sixty-seventh Ohio, about daylight. Company H, Lieutenant William H. Lyons commanding, was ordered forward on the right, and Company K, Captain Daniel Ferguson, on the left of the turnpike in support of a section of the Fourth New Jersey



Detail from "Map of the vicinity of Richmond and part of the peninsula" (ca. 1861-'65)
 Jeremy Francis Gilmer (1818-1883)
 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

May 10, 1864, 9 A.M. – The positions of Companies B, H, and K, alongside the turnpike, are depicted according to Col. McConihe's report. The relative positions of Companies E and G, supporting the gun on the right side of the turnpike, are unknown, as is the order of Companies A, C, D, F, and I, positioned along the skirmish line between the turnpike and Henry Friend's house.



Battery, Lieutenant [John H. George] commanding. Companies C, (Captain J. H. Allen), D (Captain Spencer W. Snyder), and F (Captain Augustus D. Vaughn) moved out on the right on a side road leading to Henry Friend's house, deploying as skirmishers from the house to the turnpike. Soon the enemy were discovered in force on the right and in front maneuvering to advance and passing around the right flank. Lieutenant-Colonel Alonzo Alden discovered this flank movement in time to change the line of skirmishers, so that our right might connect with Colonel Howell's brigade, and he had but just accomplished this when the enemy made the attack. The first shots were exchanged at

6.30 A.M. At 9 A.M. Companies G (Lieutenant C. D. Merrell), I (Captain Daniel J. Cary), A (Captain James F. Thompson), E (Lieutenant Henry Mulhall), and B (Lieutenant James H. Dunn) rejoined the regiment, having been relieved from picket duty. Companies A and I moved out on the right to strengthen the line of skirmishers while B took position on the left, and E and G on the right in support of the battery. A desultory firing and skirmishing was maintained until about 11 A.M., when the enemy made a general attack with one brigade upon our right flank and another with cavalry and artillery upon our center and left. Their advance was made in column of four ranks, and they were received with a destructive fire both from the regiment and the battery. Every officer and man stood to his post nobly, and the quick discharges of grape and canister made most perceptible openings in their ranks.



Not until the enemy were fairly upon the guns did the line fall back, and then we fell back, firing, but a short distance to our line on the right on the cross road, for the purpose of checking a flank movement of the enemy on our right. The two companies on the right and the two companies on the left of the battery remained in their respective positions, and did not fall back until the gun on the right of the road had limbered up and the caisson, without the gun, on the left was moving to the rear, and then retired in order.

While I consider that the position was held nobly against a very superior force, and that the lieutenant commanding the battery behaved with coolness and gallantry, yet I cannot account for the caissons going to the rear without the gun. The lieutenant commanding endeavored to halt the caissons, and discharged his revolver at the driver, but did not succeed. Being temporarily disabled, my horse being shot under me, I discovered the caisson was retreating and the companies supporting the battery retiring in good order. Re-enforcements coming up, the gun was recaptured and the old line re-established. Great credit is due to Lieutenant-Colonel Alonzo Alden and Major Colvin for their coolness and



"Wounded to the Rear" – One More Shot (1865)
John Rogers (1829-1904)
Collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum,
Washington, D.C.

gallantry as well as to Actg. Adj. Clark Smith throughout the whole engagement and during the day. Surgeon Knowlson was present on the field and unremitting in his attentions to the wounded. I do not know of single exception in the good conduct and intelligent bravery of the officers, and all did their whole duty. The list of casualties, herewith appended, shows more plainly than words can express the earnestness and gallantry of the men.* The chaplain, Rev. Mr. Chapman, was in attendance at one of the field hospitals rendering aid to the wounded.

I am, respectfully, your respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN McCONIHE,
Colonel, Commanding.

Colonel VORIS,
Commanding Sixty-seventh Ohio Volunteers.

* Nominal list (omitted) shows 9 men killed, 34 men wounded, and 13 men missing; total 56.



Confederate monument at the Chester Station battlefield, in front of the Yellow House, 3001 West Hundred Road, Chester, Va.

Col. Cyrus J. Dobbs stated that he detached five companies of his regiment to the extreme right of the 169th as soon as Gen. Terry's reinforcements arrived:

HDQRS. THIRTEENTH REGIMENT INDIANA VOLS.,
Camp in the Field, May 11, 1864.

SIR: In compliance with instructions, I have the honor to report that on the morning of the 10th instant I proceeded with my command to a point about 1 mile beyond the Richmond and Petersburg turnpike and took up my position, throwing forward skirmishers, resting my left on the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad, 1½ miles below Chester Station, the right connecting with the One hundred and sixty-ninth New York Volunteers, Colonel McConihe, who had been placed on the extreme right. One section of the First Connecticut Battery and four companies of the Sixty-seventh Ohio Volunteers having reported to me, I placed the artillery in position, supported by the detachment of the Sixty-seventh Ohio. Immediately after the disposition of this small force, comprising the command, the enemy appeared in my front with the three arms of the service. Seeing that the enemy was in force, I ordered the artillery to open fire and sent to the rear for re-enforcements. The enemy formed promptly and advanced in fine style. I threw forward all my reserve but one company on the advanced line. We allowed the enemy to advance within easy range, when a volley from our entire front threw them in confusion and finally in hasty retreat. They promptly re-enforced their

lines, renewed the attack, with the same result. By this time I was re-enforced by the Sixth Connecticut Volunteers, Seventh New Hampshire Volunteers, and four pieces of Captain Rockwell's battery. I ordered the Sixth Connecticut Volunteers to the right of the road, the Seventh New Hampshire Volunteers to the left, as supports to the advanced lines, and detached Maj. J. C. Burton with five companies of the Thirteenth Indiana Volunteers to the extreme right of the One hundred and sixty-ninth New York Volunteers. The enemy now reappeared from the woods beyond in largely increased force, displaying five stand of colors in our front and two on our right, advancing in splendid order. Again they were allowed to advance within easy range, when a murderous fire opened from both sides, with both musketry and artillery. This contest was final and desperate. The enemy broke and rallied, but was finally compelled to take cover in the woods. The detachment under Major Burton, of the Thirteenth Indiana, advanced under a severe fire and charged the enemy in a hand-to-hand conflict, recapturing two pieces of artillery, but being unsupported on the right, and flanked, were compelled to retire to another position. Captain Rockwell's battery did excellent execution in this assault. The enemy was now evidently making preparations for a final assault. Our troops were in excellent spirits, feeling strong in their superiority over their enemy. At about noon the last advance was made by the enemy, but was soon driven back with heavy loss, and retired from view. The line on the left occupied by the Thirteenth Indiana and Sixty-seventh Ohio was maintained during the whole affair.

The officers under my command without an exception behaved in such a gallant manner that it would be doing injustice to name one and not all. I regret to report that out of 400 of the Thirteenth Indiana the loss was 102. Inclosed please find a list of casualties sustained by the Thirteenth Indiana Volunteers. I would also state that the number of prisoners taken from the enemy on the 10th instant by the Thirteenth Indiana Volunteers is 37.

C. J. DOBBS,
Colonel, Commanding.

Lieutenant PIERCE,
Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.



Satellite view of the intersection of Richmond Turnpike (Route 301) and the Chester Road (West Hundred Road). A few undeveloped parcels of land still remain in this mostly forgotten battlefield. The Yellow House is indicated by the red dot.

In his report of the battle, 2^d Lieut. John H. George of the 4th N.J. Battery cited problems with the deployment of skirmishers from the 169th, having only four companies at the outset. Col. McConihe, he wrote, "behaved with great gallantry, and by his brave and manly example in striving to collect his partially disorganized force, assisted me greatly in saving my guns and my noble men."



12-pounder bronze Napoleon gun and limber (ca. 1886)
Friedrich Wilhelm Heine (1845-1921)
Collection of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin

BERMUDA, Va., May 11, 1864.

CAPTAIN: I have the honor to report that in accordance to your orders, issued and delivered to me at 2 A. M. May 10, I proceeded with my section to report as directed to Major Butler for duty on outpost. Having found the officer designated at a point near the outer intrenchments covering our front, I awaited his orders.

Under his directions, I marched my command to a point upon the Petersburg and Richmond turnpike, accompanied by two companies of the One hundred and Sixty-ninth Regiment New York Volunteers, at which point I was halted by Colonel Voris, commanding the forces of that line, who immediately designated a point upon the turnpike, where I placed my guns in position, bearing directly upon the road, supported by the companies of infantry which had marched with me.

After having inspected my position, I found that no vedettes or pickets were posted in my front, and fearing that the very exposed position of my guns would draw upon them a quick and heavy attack, I requested the officers commanding my supports to post a line of pickets covering my front, and for the purpose of observing the movements of the enemy. A line was established in a very irregular and unsafe manner, the men composing it retiring before they had attacked our position. The first indications of the presence of the enemy given me was at 10 A.M., at which time he made a most furious attack upon me from a heavy underwood, skirting my right and left flanks at a distance not to exceed 50 yards, thus completely raking my section. I immediately commenced firing, using canister, and continued to do so until ordered by the colonel commanding my supports to retire. At this time an overwhelming attack was made upon my right and left flanks.

My support upon the left evinced great disorder and confusion, but upon the entreaties of the colonel commanding, and my own assurance that I would give them a charge of canister, they became more steady, but afterward broke and fled to the rear, which occasioned me the loss of one of my pieces. I withdrew my remaining piece and carriages to

the rear, a distance of 100 yards, where I again placed myself in position and resumed my fire with shot and shell, having for my support a portion of the Seventh Regiment Connecticut Volunteers. I continued firing until the flames of the burning wood upon my left became intolerable, and the enemy had gained a distance of 200 yards in rear of my right flank.

After ceasing my firing, I advanced with my uninjured cannoneers, who were joined by a portion of my support, and recaptured and withdrew my lost piece, after which I retired my section a distance of one-half mile, where I reported to Brig. Gen. A. H. Terry the condition of my command, who instructed me to remain for a short time, which order I obeyed, after which was instructed to take my pieces to the rear.

During the engagement, which lasted a period of twenty minutes, I expended 48 rounds of ammunition, was wounded myself by being struck in two places upon my person, and having 8 men disabled and 5 horses shot.

I would most respectfully state that during the engagement the colonel commanding my supports of the One hundred and Sixty-ninth Regiment New York Volunteers, behaved with great gallantry, and by his brave and manly example in striving to collect his partially disorganized force, assisted me greatly in saving my guns and my noble men.

I am, most respectfully, yours,

J. H. GEORGE,

Second Lieutenant Fourth New Jersey Battery.

Capt. GEORGE T. WOODBURY,

Commanding Fourth New Jersey Battery.

Lieut. George's complaint that the line of skirmishers in his front "was established in a very irregular and unsafe manner" was contradicted by Gen. Terry, who was highly complimentary of the manner by which Col. Dobbs, Col. Voris, and Col. McConihe positioned their skirmishers prior to the Confederate assault:

"I found that Colonel Voris had been forced back from the position which he had occupied somewhat in advance of the Chester road nearly to the road itself; that in order to prevent being outflanked he had been obliged to attenuate his line so as to cover with three regiments a space of nearly a mile, his left being beyond Winfree's house, his right some distance east of the turnpike. One section of artillery (Fourth New Jersey) was on the turnpike, the other (First Connecticut) near Winfree's house. So extensive was the ground covered that much of his line was only a thin chain of skirmishers, with little or no support. These dispositions were admirably adapted to deceive the enemy as to the real strength of the force in their front, and undoubtedly accomplished that object, for could they have suspected that there were but three small regiments before them they would have swept them away at once...

"Colonel Abbott, of the Seventh New Hampshire (temporarily commanding Hawley's brigade); Colonel Dobbs, of the Thirteenth Indiana; Colonel McConihe, of the One hundred and sixty-ninth New York; Lieutenant-Colonel Rodman, of the Seventh Connecticut; Captain Rockwell, First Connecticut Battery, did their duty most ably and gallantly."

A fuller account of the capture of the 4th N.J. Battery's gun was provided four years later in *New Jersey and the Rebellion: A History of the Service of the Troops and People of New Jersey in Aid of the Union Cause*, by John Young Foster (1868). The gun carriage's horses were shot, preventing its removal when the Rebels swarmed across the position:



Confederates advancing to the capture of disabled guns, Gaines Mills (June 27, 1862)
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

"The first action in which the Fourth New Jersey was engaged, occurred on the 10th of May. The battery was stationed behind temporary breastworks, having occupied that position during the whole of the previous night. An order being received from headquarters to send a section of the battery to the front, Captain Woodbury detailed Lieutenant George for that duty, and about three o'clock in the morning that officer reported, with his section, to Major Butler for out-post duty. A point on the Richmond and Petersburg turnpike was designated. Here the guns were placed 'in battery,' bearing directly upon the road, and were supported by two companies of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New York Volunteers. Everything remained comparatively quiet until after daybreak, when the enemy, appreciating the importance of the position, suddenly made a dash from the thick undergrowth on the guns, in overwhelming numbers, from both flanks and front. It was a most critical moment, but Lieutenant George was fully equal to the emergency. The numbers of the enemy were too great to be resisted, and the cannoneers were literally forced away from their guns by the mass of assailants who swarmed in upon them. The pieces were worked as rapidly as possible, but nevertheless the enemy obtained possession of one of the guns. But they paid dearly for the prize. The Lieutenant and his men, with double-shotted charges of canister and shrapnel, piled up the dead in heaps within a few yards of the muzzles of the guns. The wounded in this affair were Lieutenant John H. George, arm, thigh and leg; Sergeant John W. Penn, arm; Corporal William Cairnes, breast; Private Cavalier, arm; Willett, arm; Bush, thigh; Collins, foot; Akers, hand. No one was killed. Five horses were shot, which prevented the removal of the gun captured by the enemy. At this most important moment the lanyards were broken, or carried off by the wounded men, when Lieutenant George seized a piece of telegraph wire, fortunately lying close by, bent it on one end to form a hook, and used it with decided effect. Lieutenant George retired finally with his remaining gun,



Before the Sod Hid Them – The Assault on Corinth, Mississippi
Published in "The Photographic History of the Civil War,"
Vol. 2, by Francis T. Miller (1911)

"The gathered Confederate dead before Battery Robinett, taken the morning after their desperate attempt to carry the works by assault."

"No man can look at this awful picture and wish to go to war. These men, a few hours before, were full of life and hope and courage. Without the two last qualities they would not be lying as they are pictured here. In the very foreground lies their leader, Colonel Rogers, and almost resting on his shoulder is the body of the gallant Colonel Ross. We are looking from the bottom of the parapet at Battery Robinett. Let an eyewitness tell of what the men saw who looked toward the houses on that bright October day, and then glanced along their musket-barrels and pulled the triggers: 'Suddenly we saw a magnificent brigade emerge in our front; they came forward in perfect order, a grand but terrible sight. At their head rode the commander, a man of fine physique, in the prime of life – quiet and cool as though on a drill. The artillery opened, the infantry followed; notwithstanding the slaughter they were closer and closer. Their commander (Colonel Rogers) seemed to bear a charmed life. He jumped his horse across the ditch in front of the guns, and then on foot came on. When he fell, the battle in our front was over.'"

and afterwards, with the assistance of the Seventh Connecticut Infantry, succeeded in retaking the lost piece, and returned to the intrenchments about four o'clock, p. m., where his men were welcomed with hearty cheers by the remainder of the battery. Jefferson Yaudle, a cannoneer of the captured gun, aged only seventeen years, after his piece was lost, picked up a Spencer rifle, fell in with the infantry, and fought with them for more than an hour, until opportunity offered for the capture of the lost gun, when he joined in the charge that recovered it."

Gen. Barton's report was highly complimentary of his brigade, stating, "I have never seen troops fight better, nor behave with superior steadiness under so fierce an onslaught on their flank and rear." His claim that his men "remained masters of the field" is questionable, however, since they ended their assault and retreated in the face of Gen. Terry's counterattack:



Confederate regimental flag captured by the 53^d Pennsylvania on April 2, 1865,
at Sutherland's Station, Va., thought to be that of the 9th Virginia
Private Collection

RICHMOND, May 12, 1864.

GENERAL: I have the honor to submit the following report of the part borne by my brigade in the affair of Tuesday last, the 10th instant:

At daybreak, in obedience to orders received from General Ransom the evening previous, I moved with one regiment (White's, Fourteenth Virginia), deployed as skirmishers, and connecting with one of General Gracie's, under his immediate command, and also deployed as skirmishers, to sweep the country south of the lines at Drewry's Bluff and ascertain the position and strength of the enemy. I was forced to make a detour to the right to avoid an impassable swamp in my front, and returning resumed connection with General Gracie. After proceeding some 2 miles, I was overtaken by a dispatch from General Ransom directing me to have my brigade about a mile in rear. General Gracie received a similar order. This required a halt until the brigade should come up. General Ransom reached the ground about the same time with it, and ordered me to resume command of it, turning over the command of the skirmish line. Just as General Ransom arrived a cannon shot announced the proximity of the enemy. An advance was ordered, and we proceeded about half a mile. General Ransom ordered a regiment to be detached to the right of the skirmish line, to form line of battle at or nearly at right angles to it, the remainder of the brigade to be deployed across the turnpike, so that one and a half regiments should be on each side. The haste with which the brigade had been assembled and marched from the intrenchments by the senior colonel without previous warning left the pickets (one-fifth of the command), besides the detachments and guards over the artillery and in the redans, to follow. These overtook their commands at intervals during the day. My brigade was formed for attack by General Ransom's orders as follows:

From right to left as enumerated, Fontaine's, Fifty-seventh Virginia, in line of battle at angle with rest of the line; White's, Fourteenth, deployed as skirmishers across an open, plowed field; a line of skirmishers from Fifty-third, Ninth, and Thirty-eighth behind this last-mentioned line; Aylett's, Fifty-third (six companies), Phillips', Ninth (six companies), Cabell's, Thirty-eighth (eight companies). Gracie's skirmish line connected with mine (the Fourteenth) near the turnpike, a company or two extending to the right and beyond it. A movement by Gracie to the left caused this detachment to be separated from the rest of his line, and uncovered my front to the left of the turnpike. It was discovered and by my order reported to General Ransom, who directed me to throw out additional skirmishers to relieve this fragment and to cover my front, and informed me that Gracie would close in and connect with it. It was thus that the skirmish line of the three left regiments was formed. When this arrangement was nearly completed on my part, and before Gracie's line had connected, the attack was signaled and the line moved. The Fifty-seventh was placed under command of Colonel R. H. Chilton, inspector-general. The Fourteenth was taken charge of by one of General Ransom's staff, or some one acting as such, no formal order in either case having been given me.

The enemy in large force was strongly posted on a ridge nearly at right angles to the turnpike, and had begun to fortify the position. On his left front was an open field; the remainder of his front, as far as it was developed, was densely wooded to the bottom of the hill, where there was a thick morass. The sides and top of the ridge were covered with a tangled underwood – a growth of young oak and hickory, with fallen timber, and in parts an abatis just begun. Two lines of battle extended across the open fields and into the woods about 1½ miles long. I was unable to ascertain the enemy's force in artillery.

An advance of 100 yards brought us in contact with the enemy, whom we drove steadily before us, keeping as strict lines as the nature of the ground would permit. It was impossible to see more than a few paces; a captain could rarely see his whole company, a colonel never his whole regiment, at one glance. To add to these difficulties the woods were fired early in the action, and the smoke and flames driving into our line blinded us and deranged the precision of movements. I believe the distance between the combatants rarely exceeded 50 paces, often not 20.

Having pushed the enemy about 400 yards, or so much of his force as a little exceeded my line in length, I found that a considerable force was left on my left flank, and that it was firing upon my rear. Turning back the two left-flank companies of the Thirty-eighth, a few well-directed volleys dispersed those immediately annoying us, and the line being reformed we continued the advance. The axis of our march not being exactly parallel to the turnpike, and the dress being to the right, some divergence had occurred between the two portions of the Ninth Virginia. I accordingly crossed the left portion of that regiment to the right of the road, and, moving the Thirty-eighth obliquely, re-established the connection. A Napoleon gun posted on the turnpike had annoyed us much, firing grape and canister during our advance and while we were in 50 yards. The rapid movement of the Ninth and Thirty-eighth prevented its being carried off and it was captured.

We had reached a point about 50 yards from the cross-roads, beyond which I had been ordered by General Ransom not to proceed, when a heavy force of the enemy opened again upon the left flank and rear. I directed the left-flank companies to be retired, and while the gallant



**Grave of Colonel Joseph R. Cabell, 38th Virginia,
killed at the Battle of Chester Station, Va, May 10, 1864**

Colonel Cabell was executing this order he fell mortally wounded, and many men and officers were laid low. Some misapprehension of the orders and the difficulties of the ground caused a little confusion, but no panic. Wherever the voices of the officers or myself could be heard above the din of battle, then men cheerfully and promptly obeyed. I found, however, that it was necessary to, from the whole regiment to the left and rear, to face the flanking attack, and as a large part of it (say a third) had not readily been collected, I directed a staff officer to bend back the left-flank companies of the Ninth in addition. Having seen this partially executed I returned to that part of the Thirty-eighth not in line, and restored a part of them to the right, in no instance meeting with reluctance to rejoin the action. I am thus minute in detailing this part of the Thirty-eighth's behavior because I have heard that injurious deductions have been drawn from its conduct, and having explained why its victorious march was arrested, I must, in justice to it, add further that I have never seen troops fight better, nor behave with superior steadiness under so fierce an onslaught on their flank and rear.

While the advance of the left had proceeded so well, White dashed his line of skirmishers over an open field for about 1,000 yards against a battery supported by a strong line of infantry (at least a brigade), but was unable to take it, though he silenced the guns and drove the infantry from the open ground. Heavy forces of the enemy were brought forward and he was forced to retire. Halting in his original position and resting for a few moments, he again advanced at the charge and retook the position first gained. The dense morass on his left made it necessary for him to double his line there and prevented Aylett (Fifty-third) from connecting closely. Aylett's advance had left a part of the enemy's line between the two regiments, and a heavy fire on the rear and flanks of both followed. White retired his left to face it, and Aylett his right for the same purpose. Re-enforcements came to both flanks and front of

the enemy, thus nearly encompassing the three left regiments and forcing the line back slowly and reluctantly. The whole retired in good order. While collecting the Thirty-eighth, I found myself in a few hundred yards of the position occupied by General Ransom, and my staff and couriers being absent carrying orders, and having no mounted person near me, I felt it my duty to inform him that my left flank was turned, what disposition I had made and was making to meet it, and to request that horses be sent forward to remove the captured gun. Before I had communicated more than the first part of my errand he directed me to return.



Private James W. Millner, 38th Virginia, held the rank of 2^d lieutenant when captured on April 3, 1865, at Petersburg, Va.

Shortly after rejoining (I had been absent from the immediate line about three minutes) we were forced back beyond the gun, which again fell into the enemy's hands and was used. A large force (I saw two colors and could tell from the sounds that their line was much longer than two regiments) gained the left and rear. I at once retired the whole across the morass and took up the position occupied before the assault. The movement was executed in perfect order and so secretly as not to draw the fire of this force. After a desultory fire of artillery on our new position the enemy withdrew, leaving us the field.

In the absence of the reports from the subordinate commanders I am unable to give the numbers and designation of the prisoners. They represented two divisions, and said that the whole corps (Tenth) was on the field – a statement verified as to numbers by the reconnaissance of a most reliable officer. The same cause prevents me from doing full justice to the merits of the officers engaged. The skill and gallantry of Colonels Aylett, White, and Phillips were conspicuous. Lieutenant-Colonel Cabell fell in the midst of the action while nobly discharging his duty, and Captain Griggs, who succeeded him, well supplied his place. The difficulties, so much enhanced by the overwhelming force of the enemy, were sufficiently great to call forth the qualities of the

regimental commanders and taxed them heavily. To say they were equal to the demand is no slight praise.

The conduct of the troops was admirable. All officers agree that there was less straggling than they had ever known. They engaged a force five times their number on ground selected by the enemy and presenting unusual obstacles, drove them 1,000 yards, yielded the ground gained only after an obstinate conflict, and remained masters of the field. I have omitted mention of the part borne by the Fifty-seventh, as it was detached and not engaged under my observation. I am glad to be able to state that Colonel Chilton, under whose immediate command it was placed, commends its conduct. Inclosed please find a list of casualties. I am indebted to Captains Darden and Thom and Lieutenant Lyons, all of my staff, for efficient services.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

S. M. BARTON,
Brigadier-General.

General S. COOPER,
Adjutant and Inspector General.

The New York *Herald's* account on the 12th of the engagement at Chester Station reported that the captured Napoleon of the 4th N.J. Battery was retaken by the 7th Conn., armed with Spencer repeating rifles:

HEADQUARTERS, TENTH ARMY CORPS,
IN THE FIELD, May 10, 1864.

THE ENEMY DEMONSTRATES ON OUR RIGHT FLANK.

"This morning at daybreak a rebel force appeared on one of the roads leading from Richmond, and attempted to break our right flank and get into the rear of our forces on the Petersburg road, and cut it off from its base. Colonel Howell, commanding a brigade in General Terry's division, promptly met the attack and successfully checked the enemy's advance. Heavy skirmishing continued throughout the forenoon, and the enemy's forces began to crowd our line heavily, as they had been reinforced from Richmond. Efforts were made by the enemy to cut off the Eighty-fifth Pennsylvania, which held one approach three miles towards Richmond. The movement was unsuccessful, the rebels being checked in every attempt. Fighting continued for several hours here, and finally the enemy, having been greatly strengthened, moved up the pike and attacked another force to the left, consisting of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New York, Thirteenth Indiana, and Sixty-seventh Ohio, under Colonel Vorhees, of the latter regiment. A section or two of Woodbury's New Jersey battery was stationed at the junction of the Petersburg and Richmond pike, and the Bermuda Hundred and Chester roads. Our line of battle extended across the pike, with a front looking on each road towards the north. The enemy attacked this line in strong force and flanked us on the left, capturing a portion of one of the companies of the Thirteenth Indiana, and crowding our left back. The enemy was quickly repelled, the ground regained, and the line re-established. Repeated charges were made upon the line, but in every instance they were effectually repulsed. The fight went on rather stiffly during the entire noon, while the rebels were massing on our left to completely cut off our force in that quarter. Observing the nature of the affair, a report was sent to headquarters of the situation and the dangers to be apprehended in case of their success.



U.S. Model 1860 Spencer Repeating Infantry Rifle, .52 caliber, seven-shot, with socket bayonet
Private Collection

GENERAL TERRY'S BATTLE WITH PICKETT.

"Gen. Terry's division, which was engaged two or three miles to the left in finishing the work of tearing up and destroying the railroad track, was immediately ordered forward to the assistance of Colonel Voorhees, as he received the report. The brigade, consisting of the Seventh New Hampshire, hurried up the road and took up a position supporting Voorhee's brigade. Rockwell's First Connecticut battery was sent to the left, and took its position in an open field, and was soon sharply engaged with great effect. The Seventh New Hampshire deployed on the left of the battery and on the right the Sixth Connecticut, Colonel Duryea, was placed, the Seventh Connecticut, Lieutenant-Colonel Rodman, having the left flank. After several vain attempts to break our line on the right flank, in which the rebels were badly handled by the Thirteenth Indiana, Colonel Dobbs, and the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New York, Col. McConihe, they massed on the left flank, and charged fiercely on the Seventh New Hampshire, Lieutenant-Colonel Henderson, and Rockwell's battery. The Seventh repulsed the charge with all the steadiness of veterans. Three times did the rebels dash up with a yell; but on each occasion the firmness of the Seventh New Hampshire and its excellent practice with its guns threw back the rebel tide and saved the left from being turned and the safety of the entire force imperiled. If the regiment had acquired an unfortunate reputation for bad conduct at Olustee, its bearing yesterday will relieve it of any stain. It redeemed itself fully and completely in the eyes of all.

"During the engagement a section of Woodbury's battery was captured by the rebels, and recaptured by the Sixth Connecticut, who brought it in, in safety. The Seventh Connecticut made effective use of their Spencers, and checked the advance of the rebels at several points. The engagement continued for nearly three hours, and finally repulsed and thwarted at every point, the rebels retired, with a heavy loss in killed and wounded. They were thoroughly whipped and disheartened. They came down from Richmond the night before, and did not anticipate meeting any large force of men on our right flank. They expected to have captured Colonel Howell's force and gained the works on our right and our base. This nice plan failed in consequence of General Terry's movement, which happened to be in the very nick of time. After the fight had nearly closed, Ames' division came up, followed by Wistar's brigade and Turner's division. A new line was formed; but no rebels were in sight. The line was then extended across all the approaches from Richmond, and the communications from the force on Petersburg pike rendered secure.

CASUALTIES.

"Our losses were not more than two hundred killed, wounded and missing, of which about twelve were killed. The rebels lost very heavily in their charges, and suffered a good deal from our artillery fire. While the fight was going on a fire arose in the woods and spread with marvelous rapidity, sweeping over the ground where a large number of wounded rebel and some of our own wounded lay. As the flames enveloped them their cries of distress became terrible, and finally, to save what few that could be reached, a flag of truce was sent in, asking time to bury the dead and take care of the wounded. It was granted, and an hour was spent in collecting the wounded. The rebel officers looked blue and despondent. They had no good news to tell us. Their confidence in the success of the Virginia campaign had about faded out.

"We took a number of prisoners, who were from South Carolina and Richmond recently. They report every civilian at work on the intrenchments at Richmond and preparing for Grant's army."

A letter describing the 169th's role in the battle of Chester Station by 1st Lieut. William H. Merriam, then serving as aide-de-camp to Maj.-Gen. Robert S. Foster, was published by the *Daily Times* on the 16th and accompanied by the following introduction: "A capital letter from this regiment, written by Lieut. Wm. H. Merriam, will be found on our first page. Troy has a great interest in Col. McConihe's regiment, and the battle of Chester in which they participated, was a severe and successful one. The list of casualties includes Theodore Schutt, a well known Troy printer, wounded and a prisoner in Richmond. Lieut. Merriam's graphic letter will attract attention." The article is presented in its entirety:

The Troy Daily Times.

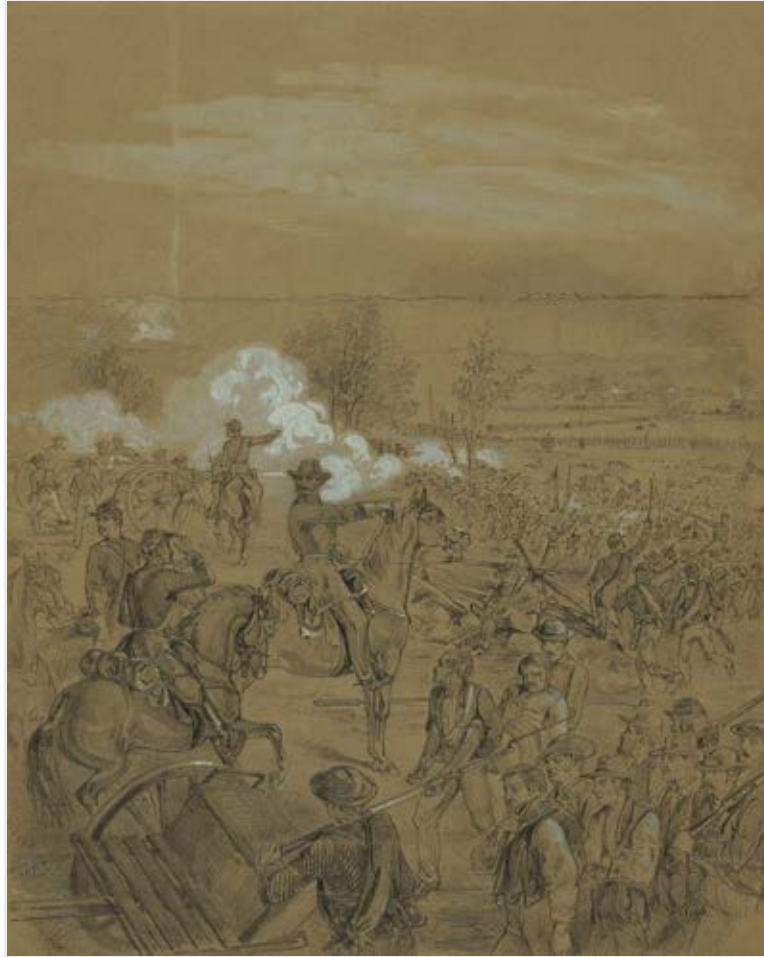
MAY 16, 1864.

From the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth.

Correspondence of the Troy Daily Times.

NEAR PETERSBURG, VA., May 10.

The One Hundred and Sixty-ninth regiment has again witnessed and participated in the scene of a day marked by carnage and blood, and to-night some of its brave men sleep in death on this Virginia soil, others are wounded and prisoners in the hands of the enemy, while yet others languish in the hospitals, all having nobly borne up the honor of the flag on the desperately contested field of Chester. The battle of Chester, on the 10th day of May, 1864, will fill up its page in history, and will long be remembered for the severity of its incidents, and the bloody results upon which night closed in. I shall simply recount the part Col. McConihe's command so nobly sustained in the heat of the day, feeling assured that such recital will best attest the matured character of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth for courage, coolness and well-disciplined military ability. In respect of these attributes, the regiment is already well nigh prepared to take the place of the tried and gallant Thirteenth Indiana volunteers, Col. Dobbs, who go out of the service on the 19th of June proximo, after a magnificent career of usefulness in the armies of the Union, crowned with those exalted laurels



An officer directing his troops into battle (ca. 1861-'65)
John R. Chapin (1823-1907)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

of a lofty and unselfish patriotism that will ever constitute questionless passports to the choicest affections of their countrymen. In all the events of to-day, which I am about to recite, no regiment enacted a more glorious and truly heroic part than the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth, as the noble support it gave Howell's menaced brigade at the front will witness.

In accordance with orders that portions of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth regiment not doing picket duty, left camp, at Foster's Plantation, eight miles above City Point, Va., about 3 o'clock A.M. on the morning of the 10th of May, 1864, and in junction with the Thirteenth Indiana volunteers, Col. C. J. Dobbs, proceeded to a point on the Richmond and Petersburg Turnpike, near Chester Station, – arriving there about daylight, and duly reporting to Col. Voris, of the Sixty-seventh Ohio. Co. H, Lieutenant Wm. H. Lyon, commanding, was ordered forward on the right, and Capt. Daniel Ferguson, Co. K, on the left of the Turnpike, in support of the Fourth New Jersey battery. Co. C, Capt. Joseph H. Allen; Co. D, Capt. Spencer W. Snyder; and Co. F, Capt. Augustus D. Vaughn, moved, all under command of Lieut.-Col. Alden, out on the right side road leading to Henry Friend's House, deploying as skirmishers from the route to the Turnpike. Soon thereafter, the enemy were discovered in force on the right and in front, manœuvring to advance, and passing around our right flank, Lieut.-Col. Alden found this flank movement in time to change the line of skirmishers, so that our right



A Union battery having their first shot at the enemy (October 18, 1861)

Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)

Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

might connect with Col. Howell's brigade. Col. Alden had but just accomplished this when the enemy made the general attack. The first shots were exchanged at 6½ A.M. At 9 o'clock A.M., Co. G, Lieut. C. D. Merrill; Co. I, Capt. D. J. Cary; Co. A, Capt. J. F. Thompson; Co. E, Lieut. H. Mulhall, and Co. B, Lieut. J. H. Dunn, rejoined the regiment – having been relieved from picket duty. Cos. A and I moved out on the right to strengthen the line of skirmishers, while Co. B took position on the left – Co. E and G being on the right in support of the battery. A desultory firing and skirmishing was maintained until about 11 o'clock in the forenoon, at which hour the enemy made a general attack with one brigade upon our right flank, and another with cavalry and artillery upon our centre and left. The advance of the enemy was made in columns of four ranks. They were received with a terrific fire, both from the regiment and the battery. Both the officers and men stood to their respective posts with great courage and nobleness, and the quick discharge of grape and canister made most perceptible openings in their ranks. Not until the enemy were fairly upon the guns did the line fall back, and then the regiment fell back, firing, but a short distance to our line on the right, on the crossroads, for the purpose of checking a flank movement of the enemy on our right. The two companies on the right (E and G) and the two companies on the left of the battery remained in their respective positions and did not fall back until the gun on the right of the road had limbered up, and the caisson without the gun on the left was moving to the rear. The companies then retired by orders. This position was held nobly against a very superior force, the lieutenant commanding the battery behaving with distinguished gallantry; yet Col. McConihe could not account for the caisson going to the rear without the gun. Every effort was made to halt the caisson, the lieutenant commanding the battery discharging his revolver at the driver. There are some few incidents of the day worth relating as favorably affecting the character of the officers of the regiment for bravery and intelligent military discretion. During the heat of the fight, while Col. McConihe was in front of his command, directing the various movements of his regiment, he was made the target of a terrible bullet hail, none of which, in the good Providence of God, struck him; but his escape from



A dead horse (ca. 1861-'65)
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

falling, pierced again and again, was, under the circumstances, truly miraculous. His horse, familiarly known in the regiment as "Old Dick," and formerly owned by Col. Clarence Buel, when that young prelate commanded the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth, fell, while the Colonel was mounted upon him, with sixteen bullets in his equine body. The horse fell with Colonel McConihe, who was with much difficulty extricated from beneath the carcass. – The part enacted in the battle by Lieut.-Col. Alonzo Alden was conspicuously creditable and able. Colonel Voris, of the Sixty-seventh Ohio volunteers, who had command of the brigade, under the general direction of Gen. Howell, of the Thirty-ninth Illinois volunteers, directed Colonel Alden to extend his deployed line until he could connect with the left of Col. Howell's brigade. In compliance with these orders the line was extended about three-fourths of a mile, when a large force of the enemy was discovered about six hundred yards to our right. Col. Alden immediately made a hazardous reconnaissance, in person, for the purpose of effecting a junction of the picket lines. At this point Col. Alden discovered that a large force, at least one brigade, of the enemy was already far advanced in closing upon our rear. With the assistance of Major Butler of the Sixty-seventh Ohio, and the gallant Lieut. Smith, acting Adjutant of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth, Col. Alden, with great difficulty, effected a change of front, by which strategical manœuvre the enemy were prevented from attacking our rear. No sooner had Col. Alden effected this change of front than a vigorous attack was made upon our entire line, by a force of at least three brigades. – At this moment Major Butler of the Sixty-seventh Ohio assumed command of the right deployed line, by order of Col. Alden, with explicit directions to check any flank movement of the enemy. Col. Alden, accompanied by Adjutant Smith, then left to join Colonel McConihe, who was in immediate command of the forces on the Petersburg and Richmond turnpike. At this point the attack was vigorously pressed, and a continuous and heavy fire of artillery and musketry from the solid ranks of the enemy, was most sharply returned by the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New York, the Sixty-seventh Ohio, the noble old Thirteenth Indiana, and a section of the Fourth New Jersey Light Artillery, whereby the enemy were severely punished – as was afterwards confessed by them, under flag of truce they sent in when general defeat was settling down upon them. At this moment it was discovered that large forces of the enemy were being massed upon

our right and left flanks. A rear change of front was effected under a galling fire. In this manœuvre a little incident occurred worthy of mention. Colonel Alden, while rallying his men around the colors upon the new line of battle, received the announcement from Lieut. D. S. Durbin, of Gen. Ames' staff, confirmed by a staff officer of Gen. Gillmore's, that Gen. Grant had accomplished a glorious victory over Gen. Lee, who was fast falling within the entrenched lines around Richmond. In making this announcement to the men, Col. Alden proposed three cheers for Gen. Grant and his army. The response was truly electrifying, the cheers of the men vying with the roar of the cannon, the bursting of shell and the whistling of bullets. As soon as the cheering had subsided, the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth moved to



Battle of the Wilderness, Attack at Spotsylvania Court House, Virginia (1865)
Alonzo Chappel (1828-1887)
The Granger Collection, New York

a point farther to the right and rear, and successfully checked a renewed effort of the enemy to get to our rear, and at the same time effecting a junction with Col. Howell's brigade. The enemy having been effectually repulsed and punished at all points, suffering most severely in killed and wounded, discontinued the attack, and by flag of truce were permitted to enter our lines and bury their dead. Thus ended the hotly contested battle of Chester Station, twelve miles from Richmond – the losses of the enemy being unexaggeratedly triple those of the Union forces engaged. The following is a list of the casualties in the regiment:

Killed – Wm. S. Hand, Theodore Sheldon, Co. A; John Mallery, B; Oliver Gilchrist, J. W. Taylor, E; Leonard Fish, F; Wm. Wilbrand, Wm. Campbell, K.

Wounded – Privates Daniel Osborn, E. A. Prouty, W. H. Shufelt, Jonathan Hoag, Co. A; First Sergeant M. Ryan, privates Robert Anderson, Edward Clary, John Moran, Patrick O'Brien, Owen Tanzey (badly), George Roarbock, John Barlow, Jeremiah Cahill, Co. B; Corporal Hugh Toole (slightly), Co. D; privates G. C. Edgerton (leg amputated), John H. Bligh, George D. Bennett, H. J. Nichols, Charles Peer, Co. E; private S. B. Keech (badly wounded in the abdomen), Co. F; Corporal Louis Winkler (mortally), privates Valentine Rheinoltz (badly), John Beckstein (slightly), John Leach (severely), Co. G; privates H. E. Stuart, Peter Quinlan, Daniel Odell, King Goodell, Co. H; privates Jeremiah Murphy (mortally), Nathaniel Harris, Oliver Santos, Co. I; privates Alfred J. Moss (severely), J. H. Mower, George Burgess, Wm. E. Griggs, Co. K.



Sergeant Jaques, and private Theodore Schutt, Co. A, and several others are wounded and prisoners in Richmond, making the whole number of killed, wounded and missing fifty-six.

Lieuts. Mulhall and Van Santvoord had narrow escapes from bullets which perforated their clothes. I ought not to omit mention of the fact, that at one time during the day, a large portion of Co. A were completely surrounded by the enemy, including Capt. Thompson and Lieut. Alexander R. Bell, who bravely and literally cut their way out, each killing several fierce greybacks with their sabres, while many of the surrounded privates beat rebel brains out with the butts of their muskets. All the officers and men, I may properly repeat, did their whole duty, and did it in a manner to reflect the highest credit upon themselves and the command. This is so true that to individualize would be invidious. Col. McConihe in his report to Gen. Gillmore, speaks in high terms of the services rendered throughout the day, by Lieut.-Col. Alden, the accomplished, energetic, and disciplinary Major James A. Colvin, and Chaplain Chapman, as well as all of the line officers. The Brigade is at present under command of Col. J. C. Drake, of the One Hundred and Twelfth New York volunteers, Gen. Foster having been relieved and made Chief of Staff with Gillmore. Col. Drake is a most hardy, intelligent, efficient and active commander, and in my humble judgment really among those who should grace that "star" by Presidential promotion.

I close with saying that inasmuch as the compositors havocked the *nom de plume* attached to my last letter, I announce this dispatch as being written by

W. H. M.

Absent from Lieut. Merriam's report were the names of the men who were missing in action. One of the missing, Corp. Ostrom, would be found dead on the battlefield a few days later during a truce. He left behind a wife and infant

son, born two months prior to his enlistment on August 11, 1862.

Col. Drake's casualty report for the 13th Indiana and 169th N.Y. was submitted to X Corps headquarters the day after the battle, listing 15 killed, 101 wounded, and 42 missing for both regiments. His report mentioned the gallantry of both regiments and their severe loss sustained in the battle:

HDQRS. SECOND BRIG., THIRD DIV., 10TH ARMY CORPS,
May 11, 1864 – 5.40 p.m.

LIEUTENANT: I have the honor to report that the whole of this brigade was industriously employed on the defenses of this position during the 9th and the night of the 9th instant. At 3 a. m. on the morning of the 10th I sent to the front to report to Colonel Voris, per order of Major-General Gillmore, two regiments, viz, the Thirteenth Indiana Volunteers, Col. C. J. Dobbs commanding, and the One hundred and sixty-ninth New York Volunteers, Col. John McConihe commanding. These regiments were engaged at the front on the 10th instant almost immediately after their arrival and suffered severely, behaving with great gallantry.

The casualties were as follows:

Command.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.
13 th Indiana Volunteers	6	<i>a</i> 67	29
169 th New York Volunteers	9	34	13
Total	15	101	42

a Present, 41; missing, 26.

Fuller reports will be sent from each regiment as soon as possible.

I am, very respectfully,

J. C. DRAKE
Colonel, Commanding Brigade.

Lieut. CHARLES A. CARLETON,
Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

A review of casualty reports, newspaper articles, and the official register of the regiment provides a more accurate list of casualties from 169th N.Y. at the Battle of Chester Station. A total of 19 men died as a result of the battle:

Command.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.
169 th New York Volunteers	7	36 ¹	16 ²

¹ Four died of wounds. ² Eight died of disease at Andersonville, Ga.

The following men were killed in action at Chester Station:

Name	Co.	Enlistment
Priv. Leonard Fish	F	Fort Ann
Priv. Oscar Gilchrist	E	Troy
Priv. John Mallery	B	--
Corp. Lyman Ostrom	A	Nassau
Priv. Theodore Sheldon	A	Nassau
Priv. Jacob W. Taylor	E	Berlin
Priv. William Wilbrand	K	Berlin



"Ministering Angels of Rhode Island" – Nurses at Lovell U.S.
General Hospital, Portsmouth Grove, R.I.
Private William T. Peters, 36th N.Y.

Collection of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, Frederick, Maryland

A list of the wounded men from the regiment follows, including information regarding their recovery, disability, or death:

Name	Co.	Enlistment	Comments
Corp. George W. Bailey	A	Nassau	Died of his wounds, May 11, 1864.
Priv. John Barlow	B	Troy	Would recover.
Priv. John A. Beckstein	G	Nassau	Slightly wounded; mustered out, May 27, 1865, at Norfolk, Va.
Priv. George D. Bennett	E	Fort Edward	Would recover.
Priv. John H. Bligh	E	Berlin	Discharged for disability, May 22, 1865, at Albany, N.Y.
Priv. George Burgess	K	Troy	Mustered out with detachment, July 3, 1865, at Lovell Hospital, Portsmouth Grove, R. I.
Priv. Jeremiah Cahill	B	Troy	Would recover.
Priv. Edward Clary	B	Troy	Discharged for disability, March 12, 1865, at hospital, Troy, N.Y.
Priv. David Cooper	B	Austerlitz	Wounded in action, no date; died of his wounds, May 10, 1864.
Priv. George C. Edgerton	E	Troy	Leg amputated; died of his wounds, June 3, 1864, at hospital, Fort Monroe, Va.
Priv. King Goodell	H	Petersburgh	Mustered out with detachment, July 11, 1865, at Lovell Hospital, Portsmouth Grove, R. I.
Priv. William E. Griggs	K	Troy	Absent, sick, since May 10, 1864, at

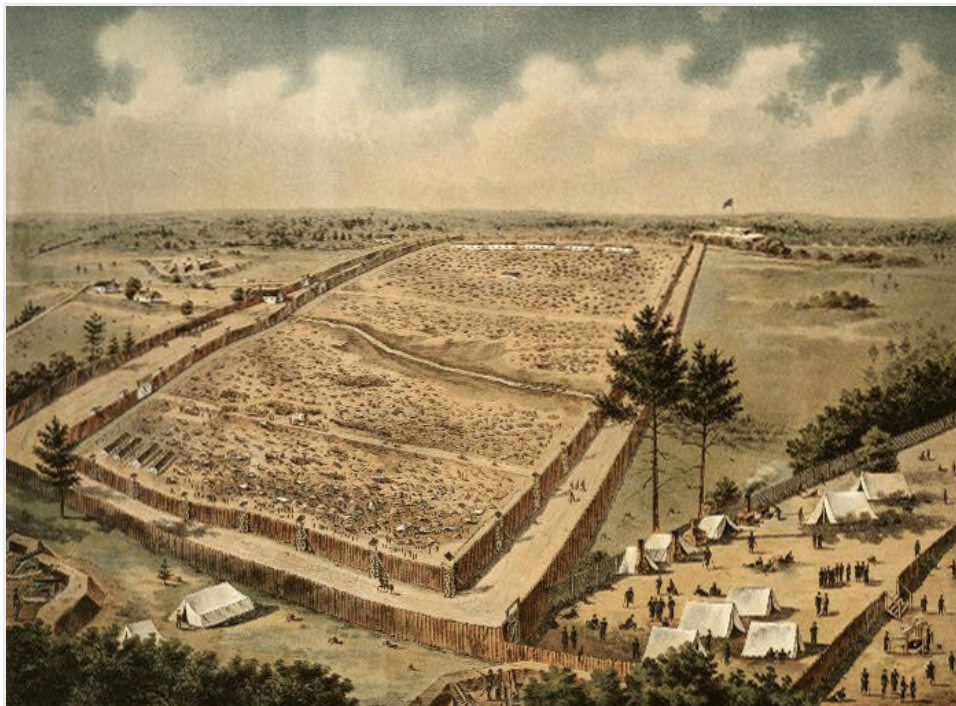
Name	Co.	Enlistment	Comments
			Fort Monroe, Va., and at muster-out of company.
Priv. Nathaniel Harris	I	Troy	Discharged for disability, July 28, 1864.
Priv. Stephen B. Keech	F	Fort Ann	Badly wounded in abdomen; would recover.
Priv. John Leach	G	Troy	Absent in hospital, since May 10, 1864, and at muster-out of company.
Priv. John Moran	B	Troy	Discharged, June 3, 1865, at Washington, D.C.
Corp. Alfred J. Moss	K	--	Promoted corporal, May 8, 1864. Severely wounded; would recover.
Priv. Jacob H. Mower	K	Lansingburgh	Would recover.
Priv. Jeremiah Murphy	I	Troy	Listed as mortally wounded in casualty report; discharged, June 8, 1865, at Albany, N.Y.
Priv. Halsey J. Nichols	E	Fort Edward	Would recover.
Priv. Patrick O'Brien	B	Troy	Would recover.
Priv. Daniel Odell	H	Petersburgh	Would recover.
Priv. Michael O'Neal	B	Troy	Would recover.
Priv. Daniel Osborn	A	Troy	Would recover.
Priv. Charles Peer	E	Fort Edward	Absent, sick in hospital, at Fort Monroe, Va., August 31, 1865; no further record.
Priv. Elbert A. Prouty	A	Troy	Would recover.
Priv. Peter Quinlan	H	Troy	Absent, in hospital, Hampton, Va., at muster-out of company.
Priv. Valentine Rheinoltz	G	Troy	Badly wounded; would recover.
Priv. George Roarbock	B	Troy	Absent, in hospital, New York, at muster-out of company.
Serg't. Michael Ryan	B	Troy	Would recover.
Priv. Oliver Santos	I	Troy	Discharged, May 28, 1865, at hospital, Fort Monroe, Va.
Priv. William H. Shufelt	A	Nassau	Died of wounds, July 25, 1864.
Priv. Hiram E. Stewart	H	Petersburgh	Discharged, June 17, 1865, at Norfolk, Va.
Priv. Owen Tanzey	B	Troy	Badly wounded; would recover.
Corp. Hugh W. Toole	D	Kingsbury	Slightly wounded; would recover.
Corp. Louis Winkler	G	Troy	Listed as mortally wounded in casualty report; would recover.

Gen. Ransom stated in his report on the 21st that "40 or 50 of the enemy" were captured by Brig.-Gen. Archibald Gracie's brigade: "Finally, after about an hour from the beginning of the fight, which was not at any time hot, General Barton reported to me that his line had been pressed across the turnpike to the right, and that he was flanked. General Gracie was ordered to the right, and in reaching it captured some 40 or 50 of the enemy – all that were met in his movement to the right."



Battle flags of the 41st, 43^d, and 59th Alabama Infantry Regiments, Gracie's Brigade
Collection of the Alabama Department of Archives & History,
Montgomery, Alabama

Gracie's brigade included the 41st, 43^d, 59th and 60th Alabama Infantry Regiments and the 23^d Alabama Infantry Battalion, Sharpshooters. The 60th Alabama was in the advance of the brigade on the skirmish line.



Bird's-Eye View of Andersonville Prison from the South-East (1890)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Gracie's prisoners included 16 men from the 169th, listed below, 15 of whom were members of Company A, deployed as skirmishers in the midst of the battle on a crossroad leading from the Richmond turnpike to Henry Friend's house. Eight of these men would die of exposure, starvation, and disease at the notorious prisoner of war camp at Andersonville, Ga.:

Name	Co.	Enlistment	Comments
Priv. Asbury Bacchus	A	Nassau	Died July 4, 1864, dysentery. Grave No. 2870, Andersonville, Ga.
Priv. Edward Barrett	A	Troy	Wounded; paroled, November 11, 1864, at Camp Lawton, Millen, Ga.
Corp. Elijah G. Bradway	A	Nassau	Paroled, November 25, 1864, at

Name	Co.	Enlistment	Comments
			Savannah, Ga.
Corp. James Brown	A	Nassau	Paroled March 4, 1865, at Florence, S.C.
Corp. George Cain	A	Nassau	Paroled, November 25, 1864, at Savannah, Ga.
Priv. William Campbell	K	Troy	Died September 15, 1864, scorbutus. Grave No. 8793, gravestone inscribed "Unknown," Andersonville, Ga.
Corp. Calvin Champlin	A	Schodack	Wounded; paroled, November 25, 1864, at Savannah, Ga.
Priv. Abram C. Folmsbee	A	Nassau	Died September 19, 1864, diarrhea. Grave No. 9283, Andersonville, Ga.
Priv. William S. Hand	A	Fort Edward	Wounded; died October 17, 1864, scorbutus. Grave No. 11076, Andersonville, Ga.
Priv. Jonathan Hoag	A	Nassau	Reported as wounded; died August 29, dysentery. Grave No. 7192, Andersonville, Ga.
Serg't. Edward P. Jaques	A	Nassau	Wounded; paroled, August 1864.
Priv. Darius Morris	A	Nassau	Died October 21, 1864. Grave location unknown, Andersonville, Ga.
Priv. Paul Roberts	A	Troy	Listed in regimental register as "Missing in action, May 10, 1864, at Swift Creek, Va.; no further record."
Priv. Theodore Schutt	A	Troy	Wounded; died October 12, 1864, scorbutus. Grave No. 10794, Andersonville, Ga.
Priv. Edward Stickles	A	Nassau	Died, October 1, 1864, scorbutus. Grave No. 10149, Andersonville, Ga.
Priv. Loren Teator	A	Nassau	Paroled March 9, 1865, at Florence, S.C.



Our Tent (ca. 1861-'65)
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
 Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



**Confederate Brigadier-General Archibald Gracie III,
commanding brigade, Ransom's Division**

Archibald Gracie III was born on December 1, 1832, to a prominent family in New York City in the ancestral home that has since become the official residence of the city's mayors. After graduating from West Point in 1854, Lieut. Gracie served two years in the U.S. Army. In 1857 he resigned his post to join his father's firm, established during the 1840s in Mobile, Alabama, as agents of the London banking firm of Baring Brothers, later becoming president



**Built in 1799, Archibald Gracie Mansion is located at East End Avenue
and 88th Street in the Yorkville neighborhood of Manhattan.**

of the Barings Bank of Mobile. When Alabama seceded in 1861 Gracie enlisted in the Confederate States Army. He was killed on December 2, 1864, by an artillery shell while observing enemy movements at Petersburg, Va. At the war's end, Gen. Gracie's remains were returned to New York and buried at The Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, about 1,500 ft. from the grave of Col. James A. Colvin, 169th N.Y., who died on May 6, 1899.

An article published in the *Albany Evening News* in 1927 tells the story of Corp. Loren Teator, Co. A, who recalled that 75 men were captured when the Confederates "got in the rear, following a charge, and cut them off." The article is presented in its entirety:

ALBANY EVENING NEWS

AUGUST 19, 1927.

Meet Comrade Loren Teator, 83, Once Captive in Andersonville

**Rensselaer Man Comes to
Tell Albany Evening
News His Story.**

**Informs Cherry Valley and
Corinth There's a Third
Survivor.**



LOREN TEATOR.

"Tell 'Uncle' Charlie Lewis, of Cherry Valley, that he isn't the only Union survivor of the Andersonville, Georgia, prison down in Georgia. Tell the Corinth man, too: The one that was in your paper. I wish we three could meet and talk things over, but I don't suppose we ever will."

Comrade Loren Teator, eighty-three, was speaking. He had ridden across from 106 John street, Rensselaer, to inform The Knickerbocker *Press* and *Albany Evening News* – and "Uncle" Charlie Lewis – that he is still responding to the daily bugle call of life, and expects to do so for some time yet.

Corporal Teator lives with his son, Burton L. Teator, and is very active despite infirmities which began in the open air prison that was later held in detestation by the soldiers confined there.

He was born in Chatham in 1844 and got his schooling there. Early a farm boy, he followed farming after the war in the town of Nassau,



Scene from "Glory," Directed by Edward Zwick (1989)

finally taking up the painter's trade. Forty years ago he went to California, becoming a fruit grower, finally returning east. His growing infirmities finally compelled his retirement from active work six years ago. For some years he had held watchman's jobs for various interests in Rensselaer.

"I was eighteen when I enlisted in Nassau," he said. "It was in 1862. I joined "A" company, 169th New York Infantry, that was organized in Troy. I served three years with the army of the Potomac.

"For a while my detachment was commanded by General Benjamin F. Butler; 'Silver Spoon' Butler, the Confederates called him, from the story that he took the spoons from the private houses down in New Orleans, while he was occupying it.

"I saw some service, too, through the South. I was in fourteen major battles, including [Charleston] and the second taking of Fort Sumter, as we called it. Hiked through with the army of the James, and I'll say we got more exercise than we needed."

It was in a skirmish near [Chester Station], in one of the successive thrusts for Richmond, that Lee repeatedly repelled that (then) Private Teator was captured with seventy-five other men. The Confederates got in the rear, following a charge, and cut them off.

"They sent us to Richmond by slow freight," continued Comrade Teator, with an ironic grin. "Libby prison was in Richmond, but we didn't go there. There were other tobacco warehouses in the city; we went to one of them. We stayed there a month and then we were divided up and sent in squads to other main prisons.

"I drew Andersonville. It hadn't been so pleasant, back in the Richmond tobacco warehouse, but it was a swell hotel, with bell hops and everything, compared with Andersonville.

"I was there six months. It was during the time they had 35,000 Union men packed in there. The tenth of May, 1864, was when I went in. In a sense, I never got out. Lying on the ground, in all sorts of weather, started this pesky rheumatism. It's got worse year after year; it finally made me quit work, and I didn't want to quit. Now it's got so that I can hardly raise my hands to my shoulders. I have to make a regular acrobat out of myself to get my hat on."

Whatever the years have done to Corporal Teator, they haven't denied his sense of humor. His talk was spiced with quiet drolleries.

He said that the rations at that time consisted of a pint of corn meal at 9 o'clock each morning – "and that's all you got till 9 o'clock next morning, and then you got the same," he added. "I wore the same clothes when I came out as when I went in; or what was left of 'em. Six months without a bath; there was no cleanliness possible among all that ungodliness."

Upon his being discharged on parole, at the end of the interminable period of misery, he was required not to take up arms again against the Confederacy until after a formal transfer had been effected.

The nineteen year old boy emerged from the stockade wearing a full set of downy whiskers; there were no razors in the stockade. He had cut himself a stout stick somewhere therewith to support his rheumatic and trembling legs.

He repaired to a Union hospital, very much underweight, to be "tuned up," as he expressed it. His return to the army brought a pleasing promotion; Private Teator was made a corporal. He then prepared to rejoin the fighting forces, formal transfer of prisoners having been duly made, but before he was in physical condition to do so the war ended. Then he returned to the north and the farm.

"As a matter of fact, we know now that the South could not remedy conditions much in prisons like Libby and Andersonville, for the Southern armies were practically in as sad case as the Union prisoners," said another Civil war veteran today. "The invaded Southland had been swept clear of produce and Lee's forces were in starving condition. I know of Confederate soldiers who deserted in order to be captured and enjoy the comforts provided in the Northern Union prisons."

There is no bitterness in the heart of Comrade Loren Teator for those days, even when he has trouble to use his crippled hands. He's just glad he is able to carry on, and he expects to carry on for some time yet. He is built that way.

Loren died the following year, and his friend, former Corp. Charles P. Hoag, Co. A, reminisced about their experiences in another article in the *Evening News*:

ALBANY EVENING NEWS

MARCH 27, 1928.

Memories of Days of '61 Recalled By Rensselaer Civil War Veteran

**Charles P. Hoag, 83, Served
in Prison With Late
Loren Teator.**

**Looks Back to Day When
They Were Both Made
Corporals.**

"I put my arm around my father's shoulders, and said don't be one of those who surrender, but he was put in the Andersonville prison. That was the tenth of May, 1864. In August, Loren Teator, who had also been captured the same day, helped carry my father out of the prison stockade and buried him."

It is Charles P. Hoag, eighty-three, of 1647 Third Street, Rensselaer, speaking. Mr. Hoag, who is a veteran, and son and grandson of a veteran, served through nearly the whole Civil War with Loren Teator.

Today Loren Teator, eighty-three, of 106 John street, Rensselaer, who died Sunday at his home, will be buried in Greenbush cemetery. One of the mourners at his grave will be his lifelong friend, Mr. Hoag.

By this death a bond with the past has been snapped for Charles Hoag. But as he talked of the old days of the sixties, the fading glory came back to his old eyes, and he lived again those days of bravery with his father, and Loren Teator.



CHARLES P. HOAG.

"Ours was the 169th regiment of the New York Volunteers," he said with pride, "one of the three hundred fighting regiments of the rebellion. We fought in thirty-three battles.

"It was at Drury's Bluff, Va., not far from Richmond, that my father, and Loren Teator, and seventeen others of Company 'A' were captured. We captured the railroad Sunday, but Monday they came back and licked us up.

"Afterwards, in April, 1865, Teator was freed and both he and I were made corporals the same day at Raleigh, North Carolina."

Memories like those of William Freeman of Troy, who saved four flags for the Union, or of Lyman Ostrom, of Nassau, who was killed by a bullet that first grazed Hoag's own shoulder and cut the shoulder strap came back to Mr. Hoag with his friend's death.

But dearest will be those connected with the man with whom "he was made corporal the same day at Raleigh."

Charles provided further details concerning the capture of his father, Priv. Jonathan Hoag, Co. A, and the death of Corp. Ostrom, in an *Evening News* article published on January 23, 1933:



**Brass company letter recovered at the Chester Station battlefield
Private Collection**



Company letters were worn on the front or more often the top of an enlisted soldier's forage cap. The bugle represents the infantry.

"We were surrounded by the enemy," he said. "Dad was at my side and I touched him and said: 'Don't surrender. We're going to break through their line and escape.' But Dad didn't come with us. We ran for all we were worth and when the Confederates got wise to what we were doing they shot.

"One ball clipped my shoulder strap and flew on to kill Lyman Ostrom of Nassau, who was just ahead of me. The rest of us escaped. I was pretty small, the smallest in our regiment, and that's what saved my life. Dad died in Andersonville Prison."

Chaplain Edgar T. Chapman's letter of condolence on May 27th, 1864, to Corp. Ostrom's widow, Elizabeth S. Ostrom, describes the discovery of Lyman's remains behind enemy lines during a truce by Surgeon John J. Van Rensselaer, 98th N.Y., a relative of the Dutch Patroon of Albany:



Chaplain Edgar T. Chapman, 169th N.Y.

"Your letter was received last night and it becomes my sad duty to inform you that your husband has passed away from earth. I should have communicated to you the facts before, had I known them. He died on the field of battle on the 10th of this month.

"Dr. Van Rensselaer, Surgeon of the 98th N.Y. Reg't., was permitted to visit the field a few days after the action and found the body of your husband and buried him, placing a board at the grave's head with his name upon it. He tells me, as I have just been to see him, that Mr. Ostrom's body laid as though he had disposed himself to die – his gun and equipment lying by his side and an envelope with his name upon it, so placed that any stranger might know who he was.

"I regret I cannot write you more at length and offer you the consolation that you will so much need when these tidings reach you, but our regiment are now under marching orders and are about to leave here.

"In conclusion, however, let me say to you what I would hope to say to every bereaved one, that your husband died a *Christian Soldier* and this, my dear Madam, ought to soothe your grief, for could you know the constant temptations which beset the path of the follower of Christ in this Army, and the very many bearing the Christian name who yield to them, you would bless God that He had given the strength of His grace to bear your husband safely through them. And may He, the widow's friend, be your strength and your consolation in this great bereavement."

In response to Mrs. Ostrom's inquiry concerning the possible recovery of her husband's body for reburial in New York, Dr. Van Rensselaer provided additional details about the location of the body in a letter on June 20th:

Your letter of June 15th just received. In answer would state that I found the body of your husband in a piece of woods; near him lay an

envelope, partially burned, with his name in your handwriting, (I should judge), which I took and handed to the Surgeon of his regiment. The body was in such a state of decomposition that no search was made for articles. Evidently he had died easily, his haversack was underneath his head, his gun by his side, and he seemed to have suffered no pain, finding from position of his body.

"An unknown soldier some 10 rods from him had been stripped by the Rebels, but your husband's body had not been disturbed.



"At present it would be impossible to obtain his body. His grave is marked as best I could, lead pencil marks upon the piece of board, but if possible in future will see that his last resting place is more suitably marked.

"If it is in my power to aid you in any way, please write me, and rest assured that I will aid you as far as able. No thanks are necessary. I simply performed my duty.

Trusting you will find help from Him who has given us the promise of Life to sustain you in this great affliction, I remain, Madam, very respectfully, your obedient servant."

The *Daily Times* reported on May 13th a rumor of the death of Maj. Colvin, while at the same time calling into question its authenticity:

"REPORTED DEATH OF MAJOR JAS. A. COLVIN. – The friends of Major James A. Colvin, of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth Regiment, have received letters saying that he was killed in one of the battles near Richmond. We trust the report will prove unfounded. Major Colvin was a son of Hon. A. J. Colvin, of Albany. He raised a company (A) for the regiment, and was considered one of its best officers. On the promotion of Col. McConihe and Lieut.-Col. Alden, his qualifications and services, as well as his rank, entitled him to the Majority, – a position which he filled with honor."

The *Daily Times* reassured its readers on the 17th that the rumor was false when it published a letter from the major to his father, the Hon. Andrew J. Colvin, a former New York state senator from the district of Albany:



The Bloody Angle (1912)
N. C. Wyeth (1882-1945)
Private Collection

"MAJOR COLVIN SAFE. – The death of Major Jas. A. Colvin, of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth regiment, has been reported. We are glad to learn that he is safe. In a letter dated May 11th he says:

'Dear Father, We had a fight yesterday, and, to my astonishment, I came out safe. Our regiment and the Thirteenth Indiana and Sixty-seventh Ohio fought from 6 or 7 A.M. until 3 P.M. We had skirmishing until about noon, and then came the heavy work. These three regiments fought six brigades of the rebels. The One Hundred and Sixty-ninth lost fifty-six killed, wounded and missing. Out of this, Co. A lost twenty. Edward Jaques is wounded and a prisoner. I am nine miles from camp. We were under an awful fire. Co. A at one time fought hand-to-hand, using their clubbed muskets. Love to all.'"

"Good God! major, see how thick they are!" exclaimed Capt. Daniel J. Ferguson, Co. K, according to Col. Colvin's account of the battle in his historical sketch of the regiment. The colonel explained why the second gun of the 4th N.J.

Battery was left behind and how a Confederate soldier "immediately jumped upon the piece and crowed like a rooster":

"Early on the morning of May 10th the 169th marched out to near Chester Station, on the railway between Richmond and Petersburg, forming line of battle on each side of the Richmond and Petersburg turnpike facing towards Richmond, and supporting two pieces of the [4th] New Jersey Battery which were stationed on the turnpike-road. The regiment, with some other troops, was temporarily brigaded under the command of Col. Voorhes, of the 67th Ohio, and the position thus taken was on the right flank of Gen. Gillmore's main force, which was working down towards Petersburg tearing up and destroying the railway and cutting this line of communication between Richmond and Petersburg. The 13th Indiana was to the left of the 169th, holding a country road running parallel to the turnpike, and supporting a section of [the 1st Conn.] Battery. The ground intervening between the two roads was well wooded, and the connection between the regiments was broken by dense masses of underbrush and young timber. These troops were to guard against any surprise or sudden advance of the enemy from Richmond.



**Captain Daniel J. Ferguson, Co. K, 169th N.Y.
Private Collection**

"This movement, not unexpected, therefore, soon began. The rebels massed in front and began manœuvering to turn the position. Brisk firing ensued between the batteries mentioned and the rebel guns. A stubborn contest on the skirmish-line soon satisfied the Confederates that things were not so easy as they had expected. They formed their line of battle, and deploying a brigade on the right flank of the 169th, charged for the purpose of breaking its center and turning its right. The regiment was greatly overmatched, and the masses of the enemy excited remark as they came down, the exclamation 'Good God! major, see how thick they are!' coming from the lips of Capt. Ferguson, of K Company, to Major Colvin, who held four companies of the left wing in the woods, on the left-hand side of the turnpike.

"The right wing of the regiment, under Lieut.-Col. Alden, and the two remaining companies of the left wing occupied the woods on the right-

hand side of the road, the right wing being posted partially in the woods and partially in open ground just outside and in front of them. The attempted flanking movement on the right was met by Lieut.-Col. Alden with a change of front, and the enemy were repulsed at that point, the engagement becoming very hot. Fresh troops on the rebel side were thrown forward, and overlapping the right wing of the regiment, which as steadily swung around its flank to prevent the rebels from getting in its rear; and it was not until outnumbered, and when the enemy had surrounded and captured a portion of Company A, that the right wing slowly retired, yielding the ground stubbornly. While the right was thus engaged the left wing, posted on the turnpike, was having its share of the conflict. The rebels charged in double formation, or four deep. The steady fire of the 169th did not prevent their advance, and they kept their formation splendidly and pressed forward.



**Shot-canister for a 12-pounder "Napoleon" gun
Collection of the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul**

*The 12-pounder canister contained 27 cast-iron shots,
with an average weight of 0.43 pounds each.*

Major Colvin, in response to the request of the lieutenant commanding the section of the [4th] New Jersey Battery, stationed on the road, swung back the right of his four companies, so as to permit the gun to be fired across his front and obliquely to the turnpike. This gun was handsomely served, and was discharged twice with a full grist of canister, piling up the rebels in front. But the attacking force was too strong; it had already begun to lap over the left of the regiment, and to avoid being flanked Col. McConihe ordered the men to fall back. The artillerymen in charge of the limber had driven furiously away, leaving the gun on the left of the road behind. Its fellow on the right had been withdrawn. Major Colvin called for men to help run the gun off and stooped to loosen the trail-rope, when the bursting of a shell alongside and the close proximity of the enemy warned him that there was no time, and the gun was left to its fate. One of the capturing force immediately jumped upon the piece and crowed like a rooster. The regiment fell back a few rods to a crossroad, where it found reinforcements coming up. A charge was made upon the enemy, and the gun was recaptured. The rebels made a counter-charge, and the position previously occupied by the 169th became debatable ground, neither side



Saving the Wounded from the Flames at The Wilderness, May 5-7, 1864
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

holding it. In this action the regiment lost fifty-eight men, killed, wounded, and missing. Col. McConihe, who was on the turnpike near the center of the regiment, was cool and collected, and had his horse shot under him. The undergrowth caught fire during this conflict, and those who were severely wounded were unable to get away, some of them perishing in the flames. Afterwards a burying detail, under flag of truce, was sent out from each side. The 169th behaved splendidly in this affair, falling back only at the last moment, and gained credit for its steadiness and bravery. Lieut.-Col. Alden's skillful handling of the right wing saved the greater part of the regiment from capture."



Priv. Robert Whitcomb, Co. D, made a reference to his regiment's nickname in a letter on July 23, 1863, apparently given them by their brigade commander while on the march that year to Hanover Junction, Va.: "The 169th has got a good name and they mean to keep it up. They are called the New York Tigers, and when

on a march where we expect every minute to meet the enemy, General Foster puts the 169th in front, for he says that if they see a Reb, they won't turn and run away from them."

Gen. Alden alluded to the "Tigers" in his memoirs, writing about the regiment rallying around the colors upon the new line of battle following its orderly retreat: "The cheers of our men, round after round, by one section after another, and then followed in one grand tumultuous volume of vociferation with a vehement 'tiger' could be heard overwhelmingly above the din of battle":



On the Firing Line
William Gilbert Gaul (1855-1819)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

"May 10th. Before the dawn of day, the 169th commenced its march to Chester Station, on the Richmond & Petersburg R.R. and Turnpike, and with about fifteen hundred other troops under command of Colonel Voorhes of the 67th Ohio, was ordered to protect the right flank of Gillmore's main force that was operating against Petersburg and destroying the Richmond & Petersburg R.R.

"The enemy, six times our number, attempted to drive the Union troops from their position by force of direct attack and by strategic manœuvres. An active engagement ensued and the enemy were repulsed in all their charges and checkmated in all their manœuvres, and our forces maintained their position. As a last resort, the Confederates massed one brigade in our front on the turnpike and one deployed on our right flank, and both simultaneously charged for position with the evident purpose of penetrating our centre and turning our right. The right wing of the 169th, under command of Colonel Alden, immediately accomplished a change of front and poured a rapid fire into the ranks of the enemy, but our line was forced back under the shower of lead that was hurled against it. Every leaf and twig seemed to be cut by the leaden hail. Many of our brave boys fell. Only the God of Battle could have interposed the shield that saved any of us from death.

"After reaching the crossroads a few rods to the rear, emerging from the woods and the dense growth of underbrush into the open country, the compulsory retreat seemed voluntarily and simultaneously checked.



**Brigadier-General Alonzo Alden's Colt Model 1855 Revolving Carbine, .44 caliber, six-shot cylinder, and Colt Model 1849 Pocket Percussion Revolver, .31 caliber, six-shot cylinder
Published in "The Gun Report" Vol. 48, No. 9 (February 2003)**



An internal conviction seemed to possess every intelligence that we had retired far enough. The 'right about, halt' through the lines, though unspoken, seemed intensely imperative. The reformation of the line of battle, facing the advancing foe while under their galling fire, was at least expeditious, almost immediate. The firing at will from the reformed line seemed like a prolonged volley. Amidst the fiercest of the leaden storm between the Rebel and the Union lines, while the Blue and the Gray were falling rapidly, an event occurred, the memory of which will always thrill the heart of the soldier and patriot who recalls the circumstance. While Lieut.-Colonel Alden was rallying his men around the colors upon the new line of battle in order to meet the swiftly advancing Graybacks, an officer at brigade headquarters galloped hurriedly up from the position of the reserve and handed him a paper, saying, in a voice that could be heard above the rattle of musketry, 'Read it to your command.' – and as swiftly galloped away. Amidst the storm of the enemy's bullets, the colonel read aloud the document, which was a message from General Grant, giving the proclamation of President Lincoln, dated at Washington, May 9th, expressing gratitude to God for victories achieved by the Army of the Potomac and recommending thanksgiving and prayer to Almighty God.

"At this supreme moment, the regimental band, which was stationed in the rear where it had halted when the regiment first prepared to enter the woods, struck up a jubilate in response to the enthusiasm that had been kindled by the proclamation, and the wildest fervor of excitement created by its timely strains and the attending circumstances produced a glow of soul in every one of our soldiers that made them, according to their own estimation, equal to the extreme of emergencies.

"The promptness that characterized General Grant's dispatch to his army commanders, of President Lincoln's proclamation, and its immediate transmittal by General Terry, our division commander, to his troops at that instant, engaged with the enemy, afford the best evidence of which there exists a voluminous code; that these officers were on the alert for every item or circumstance contributory to the success of our arms. The concurrent results of all these incidents, which were unmistakably Providential, were electrifying. The cheers of our men, round after round, by one section after another, and then followed in one grand tumultuous volume of vociferation with a vehement 'tiger' could be heard overwhelmingly above the din of battle. Our boys seemed frenzied, and when the immediate orders to charge upon the enemy were given, an opposing force ten times our strength could not have withstood the impetuosity of the onset.



Life Scenes of a Confederate Soldier – "In a Bad Place"
William Ludwell Sheppard (1833-1912)
Collection of the Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia

"The demoralization of the Confederates was complete. The enthusiastic, and to the enemy, the evidently audible cheering of our troops betokened, perhaps, the arrival of re-enforcements; or they may have surmised the fact that news of victory for our arms in some other field had kindled our spirits – either of which would have a disastrous effect upon their courage.

"While thus engaged repelling the assault upon our right flank and right centre; Colonel McConihe with the left wing, in conjunction with other forces, successfully repulsed the enemy, who were endeavoring to penetrate our left centre. Here, the storm of grape and canister from the



**Effect of the shells on the fleeing Confederate forces in the woods
Published in "The Soldier In Our Civil War" by Frank Leslie (1884)**

heavy cannonading on the both sides was severe. The leaden hail was blinding, and the bursting shell as accompaniment to the roaring cannon were deafening to sensitive ears. One moment our boys advanced and the enemy would retire. The next moment the latter would rally their charge, when the Federals would retreat, but only to re-form and charge again; and when the cheers, the yells of the charge and the enthusiasm of victory on the right were repeated by the centre and left, the enemy fled in the wildest confusion and victory crowned our banners.

"The 169th lost in killed, wounded and missing, fifty-eight. Colonel McConihe had a horse shot under him. Among officers and men there were several examples of conspicuous bravery.



**Scene from "The Red Badge of Courage" (1951)
Directed by John Huston (1906-1987)**

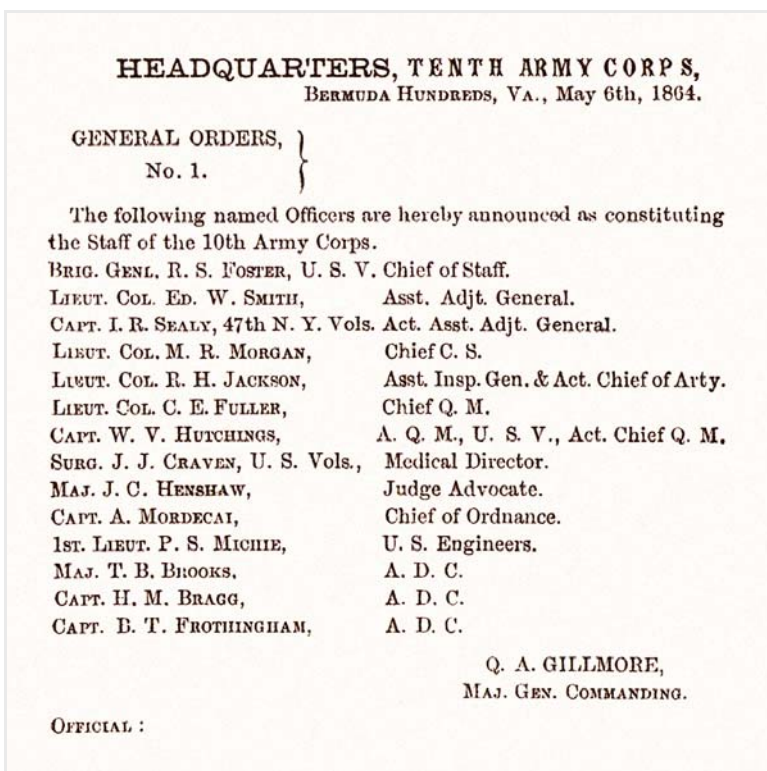
"On this occasion, and I may say, as usual, the 169th gained for itself great credit for its gallantry and bravery, to which must be added the

further merit of promptness and correctness of strategic manœuverings and changes of front and lines of fire in emergencies forced upon us by counter-movements of our enemy.

"The enemy's loss in killed and wounded was estimated at three times the Union loss. Of different sections of the Richmond & Petersburg R.R. destroyed by our troops within a week, notwithstanding the stress of battle accompaniment, there were estimated to be four miles, of which all parts of the road, including switches and ties, were totally wrecked beyond repair.

"Our country may be justified in asking this question: 'What benefit will accrue as a reward for our sacrifices of life and treasure?' – making no mention of the items of effort or sufferings or myriads of minor sacrifices. Let this reply suffice: our purpose was to redeem our country and all that belongs to it. We had done and would continue to do the best we could to that end and acted in all things to the best of our ability and in a manner according to the best of our judgment. If we failed in some respects, give us credit for honesty of purpose."

Col. McConihe wrote a short letter to Mrs. Newton on the 13th to reassure her that he was unharmed after two battles. The letter was penned on the back of official stationery from the headquarters of the X Corps:

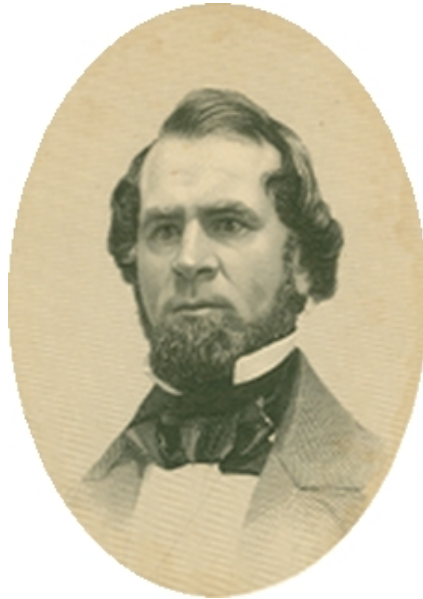


"In accordance with your request, I write to inform you I passed through the two engagements of Saturday and Tuesday unharmed, with only the loss of my horse 'Dick.' The regiment lost in killed and wounded fifty-seven men. One on Saturday, and fifty-six on Tuesday.

"Tuesday's fight was a very severe one, as far as the 13th Indiana and the 169th were concerned. The 13th lost 103 officers and men. We are in the woods maneuvering to the front.

"I am writing this under a rubber blanket, and it is raining hard, and has been raining since yesterday. I will write as soon as we return to camp."

Another call was sent out for physicians in Troy to serve as surgeons in the field as casualties mounted. The *Daily Times* reported on the 12th that Dr. Hawkes, "of this city, recently of North Adams, started for Washington, yesterday, to offer his professional services on behalf of the wounded." James Thorn, M.D., a graduate of the Royal College of Surgeons in London and the mayor of Troy at the time, was even asked to render his assistance by the Surgeon-General of New York, as reported by the newspaper the same day:



John Van Pelt Quackenbush, Surgeon-General of New York

"MAYOR THORN, of this city, was telegraphed, last evening, by Surgeon-General Quackenbush, to ascertain whether he could take the field for ten days, as a volunteer Surgeon. His professional business and official duties compelled him, reluctantly, to decline the appointment."

Laid-up in camp on the 15th, Priv. Strong wrote to his father that Priv. Anson Cranson had "come out all right" in the battle at Chester Station. Only the first sheet of the letter has survived:

"I now take my pen in hand to let you know how I get along. I don't feel very smart at present. Our regiment has gone out but I was left in camp, and while I was laying here in my tent, I thought I would write to you. Our forces are in about a mile and a half of Fort Darling. I suppose we shall hear of some hard fighting up there.

"Our regiment had a fight the other day. Our company lost 11, one killed, one taken prisoner, and the rest wounded. There was about four thousand on our side and five thousand of the Rebs, but we drove them and took some prisoners. Anson was in the fight and come out all right."

In his memoir of Col. McConihe, John Newton wrote: "In the closing days of his life I find the record furnished me more minute, and I can give the events of every day up to the hour of his death. The 169th remained at Gloucester Point from the 26th of April till May 4, 1864. Then they were ordered to Bermuda Hundred, the base of General Butler's operations. They arrived there May 5th, marched into the interior, and on the 6th camped in the woods at Hatcher's. Then they retired to a point nearer the James River, where they entrenched, working all the night and the next day. During this time, the colonel was on duty without

sleep. On the 9th, the regiment was ordered to march to the Petersburg Turnpike, where they arrived early the morning of the 10th, and prepared for battle, which took place that day near Chester Station. The 169th was in the front, and as the colonel says, 'behaved very gallantly.' His horse Dick was killed under him, being pierced by six or eight balls. Of this action he writes two letters. The following, the last one he ever wrote to his mother, was written in pencil, being in the field and away from pen and ink."



Headquarters, 169th N.Y. Vols.,
In Bivouac, May 15, 1864.

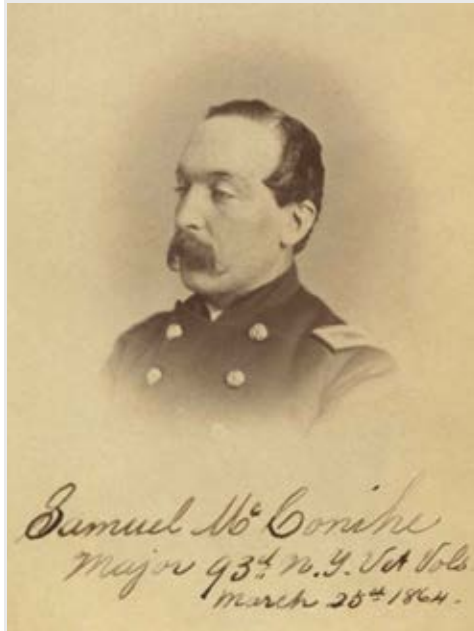
Dear Mother,

The sun shines after four days of almost continuous rain and the past week has been one of great activity on the part of the troops. A week ago yesterday, we participated in a battle but our position was such that we lost but one man.

On Tuesday, we became hotly engaged and lost fifty-six killed and wounded. The Rebels rushed upon us neatly and in solid column, and although we retreated about 100 yards, yet our musketry and artillery killed three to each man we lost. We soon recovered our ground and held it. The Rebels acknowledged defeat by sending in a flag of truce to bury their dead. I visited the field while the flag of truce was in session, and the sight was indeed horrible. The woods had taken fire and I have no doubt but that many of the wounded were burned to a crisp. My horse Dick, who was killed by bullets, was charred and his equipments burned off him when I last saw him. The battle was a fierce one and the Rebels seemed not to care for death but pushed forward to the very muzzles of our muskets. Some of my men were clubbed with the butts of the Rebel muskets and then taken prisoners.

We are now far in advance of our battleground of Tuesday, and our right is said to be within the outer works of Fort Darling. The 169th and 13th Indiana are now holding the railroad. Twice during the night my pickets fired such heavy volleys that I held the reserves in line of battle, but the Rebels, whatever their number, did not press our lines. The 112th N.Y. and 9th Maine moved to the right during the night, leaving the 13th Indiana and the 169th here. These regiments compose our brigade, which is now commanded by Colonel Jeremiah C. Drake of the 112th N.Y. Vols., General Foster having been made chief of General Gillmore's staff. We are styled the 2nd Brigade, 3rd Division of the 10th Army Corps, and Colonel Drake is the senior officer commanding.

I saw brother Sam was mentioned in the paper of the 11th as slightly wounded, and hope he is but *slightly wounded* and will be able to get home to receive his mother's ministrations.* We brothers have now all been wounded and I trust nothing worse will happen to us in the future.



Major Samuel McConihe, 93^d N.Y.
Collection of the New York State Military Museum,
Saratoga Springs, New York

Our operations here have been so far a success, and if Grant continues to engage Lee, the results will be most glorious. This is a rich region and well-supplied with the necessaries of life, and I can perceive no vestiges of loyalty among the inhabitants. They all fly at our approach and the men are all in the Rebel army. Nothing but hard knocks will overcome them. May God grant victory to our arms and may we soon win a peace and a re-established Union.

With much love to all, I am, your affectionate son,

- John

*Note from John Newton: "The brother alluded to was not hit. It was a false report."

The colonel's second letter, written to Mrs. Newton, included the following statement from Gen. Terry concerning the 169th's performance at Chester Station: "General Terry tells me the engagement of the 169th and 13th Indiana was the most brilliant in his experience throughout the war."

"My good friend, I undertake this morning to scrawl you a few lines, although I must be compelled to say in the outset that the circumstances surrounding this epistle are not of such a nature as to bring a week's continued activity in front of the enemy, in my own person, down to the quiet standard of a sabbath morning letter. Could you but see me sitting on the ground, torturing my limbs into position, to write you and John that I still exist, and have my being in the pine wood on the Petersburg & Richmond R.R., within six miles of the former city, continually casting a sly glance at my pickets and skirmishers on the railroad, about 200 yards in advance, to see if there is any stir among



Headquarters, 1st Division, X Corps, Brigadier-General Alfred H. Terry, Hatcher's Farm, near Bermuda Hundred, Virginia (December, 1864)

them, indicating the approach of the enemy, you would immediately write me a good, long letter, knowing that the colonel forgets not his good old friends, even when far away among enemies.

"I wrote you a few lines from our bivouac and told you I only lost my horse 'Dick' in the terrible onset upon the 169th on Tuesday last, and to assure you I was still in the land of the dead and dying, alive. I will not attempt, Mrs. Newton, to portray to you the scenes of that day, and the appearance of the battleground, when the strife had ceased under a Rebel flag of truce to bury the dead. It was such a scene as you have read of, and in the quiet moment of *covering up*, I will not call a *burial*, when friend and foe meet to hide the carnage, no pencil can portray the 'battleground.' The woods became ignited during the battle, and it was hard to distinguish the charred remains of a well-known companion from those of a stranger. My horse lay dead, with his equipments burned to a cinder.

"But I will not recite anymore these things, and simply say we gained a victory, and that I lost of my regiment fifty-six men in the battle. The regiment behaved gallantly, and though forced to retreat temporarily about one hundred yards, only to return to our original position, General Terry tells me the engagement of the 169th and 13th Indiana was the most brilliant in his experience throughout the war.

"The 169th covered a front of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, besides supporting two pieces of a battery which had never before been under fire. Had the battery remained in position, the 169th would not have retired one inch, but they losing six men (out of 30) and two horses, suddenly limbered up one piece, when I fell under my horse, and without limbering up the other, leaving it on the ground, rushed to the rear. The Rebels were at this time right upon our muzzles, and they immediately jumped upon the deserted gun and crowded. But up came the reinforcements, and those that could get out alive did so on the double-quick... It has been raining for four days and nights, yet we are pushing on to Fort Darling."

Col. McConihe wrote to his friend John Kellogg on the 15th of his determination to risk all to save his country: "The Rebels are indeed making a bold stand at all points, but I honestly believe they will be routed and dispirited in this grand campaign. I am willing to endure and risk all to assist in achieving victory for our cause."

"I have had but little opportunity and no material to write with since our battles of Tuesday and Saturday. Of them you will read fuller accounts than I can write, sitting on the ground in this pine wood. Suffice it to say the 169th behaved gallantly and lost heavily, and the horse 'Dick,' which I purchased of Colonel Buel, fell dead under me, pierced by several bullets. On Tuesday, the 169th lost fifty-six men, and on Saturday we lost but one man.



"On Tuesday, our whole line was temporarily driven back by superior numbers, but reinforcements coming up, we drove the Rebels in turn, and they acknowledged defeat by sending in a flag of truce to bury their dead, which was granted. But enough, John. I will not describe the terrible scenes of the battle, and will only say I rode over it while the flag of truce was in session, to pick up my own killed and wounded. The woods had taken fire and their charred remains were hardly recognizable.

"Since the battle, we have been participating in the reduction and approach to Fort Darling, although not in the extreme advance. We are holding the railroad between Petersburg and Richmond, being within about six miles of the former place and on our line to Fort Darling. Twice I had my reserves in line of battle last night, the firing of my pickets being quite severe. My pickets are just in front on the railroad, in full view, and we watch closely yonder wooded hill for the momentary approach of the Rebels from Petersburg. It is a constant watch and there is little rest. The nights are bright moonlight, and an attack could as well be made at night as by day. On said hill you can discern the steeples of the city and the Rebel drums are plainly heard as I am writing this scrawl. The heavy guns further to the right are booming.

"My spirits are good and my health excellent, and I stand ready to do all I can to reestablish our Union. The Rebels are indeed making a bold



View of Petersburg, Virginia (1865)

stand at all points, but I honestly believe they will be routed and dispirited in this grand campaign. I am willing to endure and risk all to assist in achieving victory for our cause."

The Army of the James spent the 11th in camp recuperating from the previous days' battles and strengthening its defensive line, leaving the Confederates with the perfect opportunity to send reinforcements from Petersburg to Drewry's Bluff, Butler's next target. Robertson explains:

"Wednesday, 11 May, dawned fair but hot, and the temperature again climbed toward the high nineties. Fatigued from their brief expedition beyond the entrenchments, the men of the Army of the James anticipated a day of relative calm. Except for the usual picket and fatigue duty, there was little to do. A few regiments took the opportunity to move their camps to more advantageous locations, but by and large the day was given over to individual pursuits. Some soldiers passed the time by washing their clothes, while others caught up on their correspondence. In some units the arrival of mail from the outside world enlivened dull campsites as few other occurrences could..."

"Benjamin Butler's reasons for keeping the army in camp on 11 May were twofold. First, Kautz's exhausted cavalry regiments needed time to catch their breath before departing on another raid. Second, although the fortifications were already strong, Butler wanted 'to put the lines in the best possible order to be held with a small force,' and that would also require extra time. Thus 11 May was both a day of rest and a day of preparation for the offensive that would begin on the following morning. Unfortunately, this precluded the occupation of the transportation corridor between Petersburg and Richmond, which remained free of Federals for more than twenty-four hours..."

"Meanwhile, the Confederates were finally acting to neutralize the Army of the James. Just before 3:00 A.M. on 11 May, P. G. T. Beauregard received a telegram from Braxton Bragg. Although no longer extant, this message apparently required an immediate forward movement by Beauregard's mobile forces under Hoke. Bragg and Secretary of War Seddon had concluded that Hoke should advance due north toward a junction with Robert Ransom's forces concentrated around Drewry's Bluff. If Butler's troops remained on the turnpike blocking Hoke's way, the young North Carolinian was to clear his front of the enemy and to join Ransom at all costs. Bragg and Seddon believed that

Hoke's and Ransom's combined forces would protect Richmond from both the Army of the James and Sheridan's cavalry raiders. Because the movement was of such importance, Beauregard was advised to send Hoke northward as soon as possible...

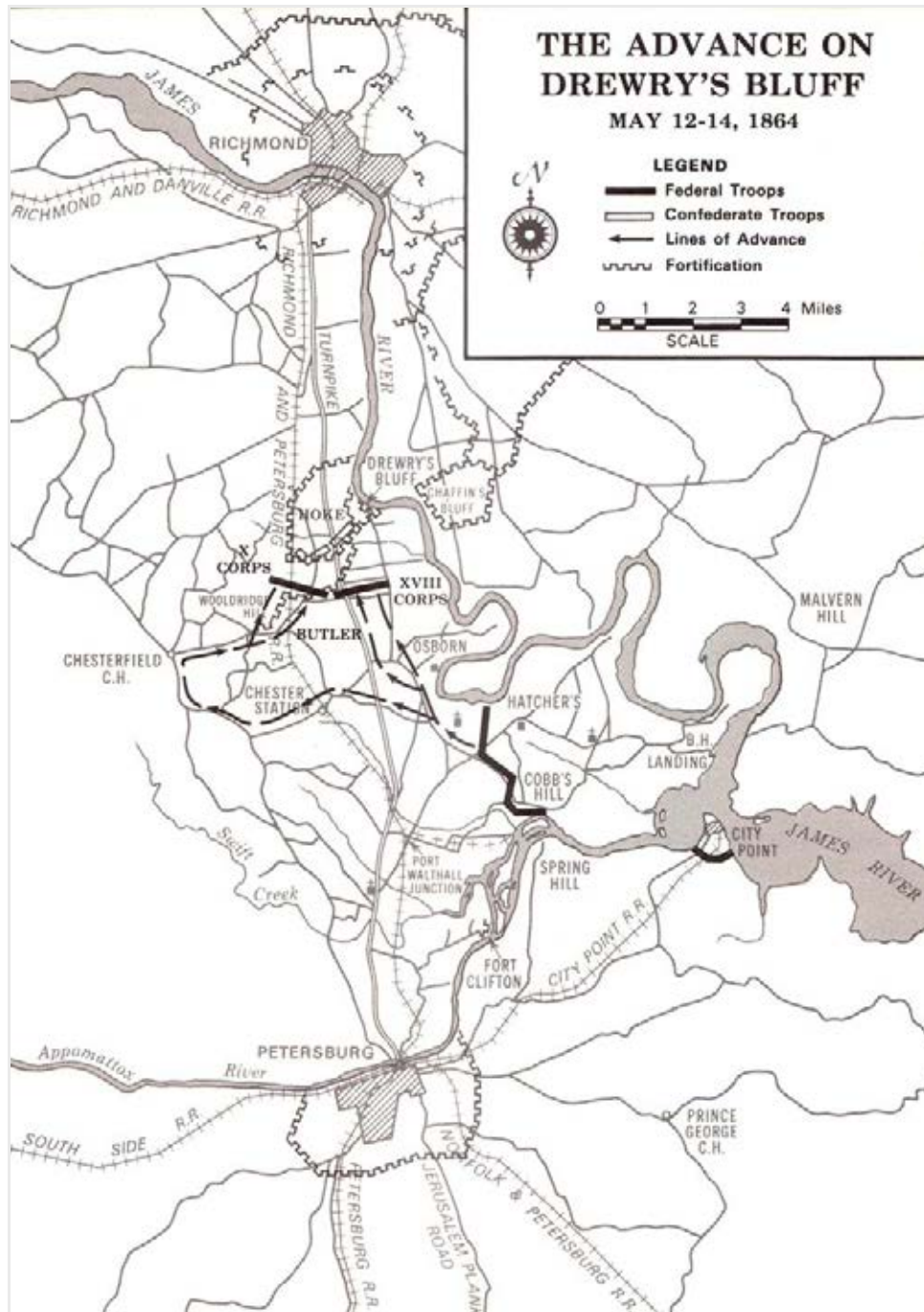


Confederate troops on the march

"At 10:00 A.M., Hoke's command took to the road. Progress was slow because both cavalry and infantry skirmishers had to precede the column in case the Federals were still blocking the way in force. When no Federals were discovered, Confederate officers allowed their men to move in column of fours on the turnpike. The artillery was spaced along the column at intervals and the few baggage and ordnance wagons available followed their individual brigades. Because it was assumed that the Federals were somewhere off to the east, an outer line of cavalry skirmishers and an inner line of infantry pickets paralleled the column on the right flank. In this way Hoke spent the rest of the day marching leisurely across the Federal front. Two or three miles away the men of the Army of the James whiled away the hours washing clothes, writing letters, and generally relaxing..."

The advance toward Richmond by the Army of the James would culminate in the greatest battle of the Bermuda Hundred campaign. As the XVIII Corps and X Corps marched north in heavy rain towards the outer defenses of Drewry's Bluff, Ames's Division, including the 169th N.Y., was ordered once again to Port Walthall Junction to block any enemy attack from the rear. Robertson describes the movement by Butler's main force:

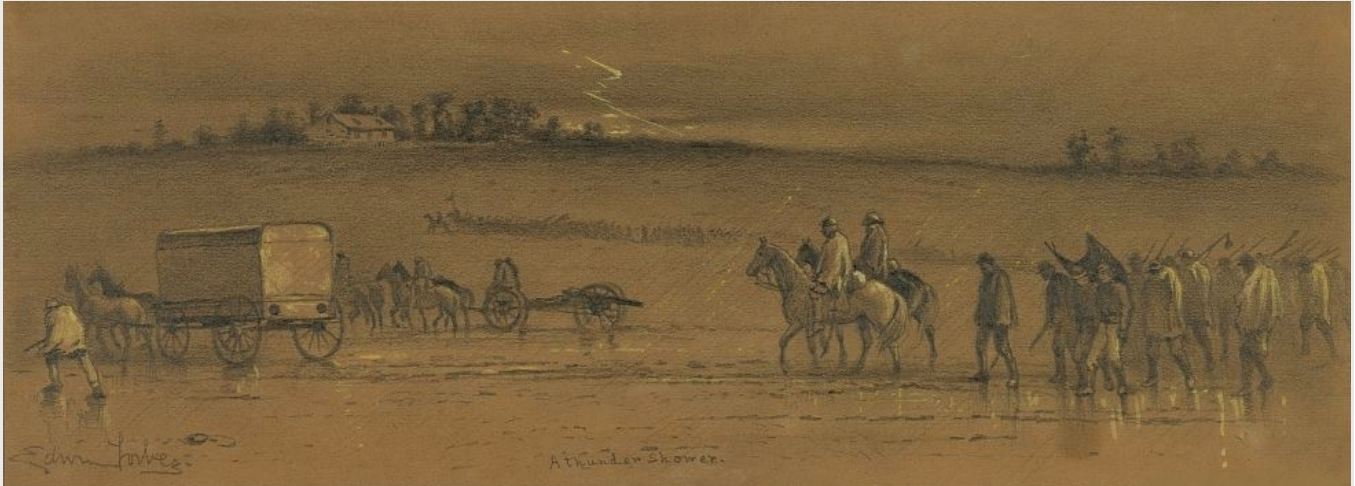
"At 9:30 P.M. Butler issued his orders for the next day's advance. Smith was to take his own XVIII Corps plus one of Gillmore's divisions and move northward along the turnpike. As he advanced, Smith would attempt to outflank the Confederates facing him, either surrounding them or forcing them within their fortifications. Meanwhile, Gillmore would protect Smith's rear against possible Confederate attacks emanating from Petersburg, then form the remainder of his troops on the turnpike as a general reserve. To complete the plan, Kautz's cavalry would raid toward the Richmond and



Map of the Advance on Drewry's Bluff, Va., May 12-14, 1864
Published in "Back Door to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign,
April-June 1864" by William Glenn Robertson (1987)

Danville Railroad, while Hincks established a new fortified position on the Appomattox River across from Butler's headquarters.

"Sometime around 4:00 A.M. on 12 May, the Army of the James lurched into motion. Unknown to the men in the ranks, the Confederate capital was not the objective for which they were striving, except in a very general way. As Butler later explained to Secretary of War Stanton, the advance of the Army of the James was not a serious attempt to capture Richmond. Rather, it was a massive demonstration



A flank march across country during a thunder shower (1876)
Edwin Austin Forbes (1839-1895)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

that would spring Kautz free for another raid and prevent Beauregard from sending units northward to reinforce Lee's army. Of course, should an opportunity for more than a demonstration present itself, there could be a change in plans. Until then, the great forward movement so long anticipated by the soldiers remained a demonstration to the generals.

"To alleviate the lack of harmony that had surfaced earlier between his corps commanders, Butler planned to take the field himself, thereby eliminating the bickering between Smith and Gillmore. Because he trusted Smith's professional judgment but doubted Gillmore's ability to lead troops in the field without close supervision, Butler assigned to the XVIII Corps the task of making the demonstration toward Richmond, while Gillmore would guard the army's rear and maintain a mobile reserve. Because the XVIII Corps had only two divisions at Bermuda Hundred, Smith received Brigadier General John Turner's division of Gillmore's X Corps as a reinforcement...

"Smith's leading division, Weitzel's, stepped off promptly at daybreak. After marching northward within the Federal lines until he reached the X Corps front, Weitzel turned his column westward toward the turnpike... By 9:00 A.M., Weitzel had reached the turnpike and was ready to turn toward Drewry's Bluff and Richmond. Deploying Heckman's brigade on the left and Wistar's brigade on the right, he sent his division forward. At the same time Baldy Smith ordered Turner to advance on Weitzel's right flank. In a long blue line extending approximately a mile and a half, the Army of the James plunged into the dripping forest. Meanwhile, the rain continued to pour down in torrents upon the men. Drenched to the skin, the Federals clawed their way through the dense underbrush, and soon passed through Terry's old battlefield of 10 May, where half-burned corpses still lay unburied in the charred woods. In front, Confederate skirmishers obstinately contested every foot of ground.

"Along the turnpike the Federals found unmistakable evidence that large numbers of troops had recently passed that way, many leaving their bare footprints in the mud. Unknown to Weitzel's men, the last of the footprints had been made just a few hours before. Although Robert Hoke had reached Drewry's Bluff on the afternoon of the previous day, many of his troops had halted along the turnpike wherever night had

caught them. Several units had camped near the 10 May battlefield, which was just two miles beyond the entrenched line of the X Corps. The Confederates had resumed their march earlier than the Federals, moving between 3:00 and 4:00 A.M. This initial lead had widened because the XVIII Corps had to travel nearly two miles before it left the Federal lines. As a result, several miles separated the opposing armies as both marched northward through the rain...

"Three miles behind the XVIII Corps, Ames's division of the X Corps occupied a blocking position near Port Walthall Junction and Alfred Terry was preparing to take two of his brigades out to the turnpike as a general reserve.



Half-Way House on Turnpike between Richmond and Petersburg (1863)

Herbert Eugene Valentine (1841-1917)

Collection of the National Archives, College Park, Maryland

"After a difficult advance of about a mile through the wet, tangled forest, the Federals reached a high ridge overlooking the marshy bed of Proctor's Creek. Across the valley the skirmishers of Corse's Brigade and a section of the Washington Artillery deployed for action along the turnpike. Resting half a mile behind them a local landmark called the Half-Way House were several more of Robert Hoke's brigades. Hearing the increased firing during the middle of the afternoon, Ransom's and Terry's Brigades prepared to assist Corse, while Clingman's Brigade continued its march toward the Drewry's Bluff fortifications already reached by Hagood's Johnson's, and Lewis's men. Meanwhile, the rain increased to a heavy downpour. As the last of the baggage wagons passed the Half-Way House, Ransom and Terry expected to be ordered back to Proctor's Creek to dispute the Federal crossing, but no order came because the Army of the James had halted.

"Faced by a naturally strong defensive position that appeared to be occupied in force, Baldy Smith paused to consider the alternatives. His line was long and exceedingly thin, and the only available corps reserve was the remainder of Marston's brigade. Before proceeding farther, Smith decided to make a personal reconnaissance. This took time, and at the end of the investigation Smith concluded only that he needed more men. His right was in no danger, but the Confederate position there was strong. If the Federals wanted to cross Proctor's Creek, they would have to extend their left in an effort to outflank their opponents.

Smith first sought to have Kautz's cavalry turn the Confederate flank, but Kautz and his men had already departed on their raid. Smith then asked for part of the X Corps. Butler obliged by ordering Gillmore to move to Smith's aid with as many troops as he could spare.



Life in Camp, Part 1 – "Stuck in the Mud"
Winslow Homer (1836-1910)
Published by Louis Prang & Co., Boston, Massachusetts (1864)
Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

"During the afternoon Gillmore had advanced to the turnpike with Hawley's and Plaisted's brigades of Terry's division. Oddly, it had not been anticipated that these troops would be needed for strenuous duty, and many of them had left camp without full loads of ammunition and rations. Now they were called upon to join Smith at the front with no time for additional preparation. With them went two regiments of White's brigade of Ames's division. This left Ames with only a brigade and a half to guard the army's rear and wreck more of the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad. Marching with difficulty along the muddy turnpike, which had been churned into mush by the passage of the XVIII Corps, Gillmore's troops by late afternoon had reached the Perdue farm just beyond Redwater Creek, where they bivouacked.

"Gillmore arrived too late for an attack to be mounted, so Smith withdrew his men behind the ridge crest to wait for dawn. There the troops tried to shield themselves from the incessant rain. Some cut branches to form makeshift shelters, while others huddled close to large trees. In many places along the line the miserable soldiers were refused



permission to build fires, which would be visible to the enemy across the creek. Not only did this prevent the men from warming themselves, but it also kept them from boiling water for coffee. As the troops lay on the wet ground patiently enduring their lot in silence, the regimental pioneers searched the woods in the rear for casualties of the day's skirmishing. In front, the pickets crept forward to positions near the creek and there suffered their own private torment as the rain continued...

"Throughout the early afternoon the XVIII Corps gradually pressed forward in the rain against stiffening opposition. Upon reaching the edge of the forest, the Federals found themselves facing a clearing seven hundred yards wide, bordered on the north by a line of fortifications. When Smith learned that Confederate works were visible in his front, he crept forward to the edge of the trees and studied the defenses carefully. Almost a mile of earthworks could be seen, all of standard construction, with a ditch in front and many embrasures for artillery. Smith advised Butler, waiting in the rear, 'that if the line was held in force by the enemy, it could not be carried by assault, and that I should not attempt it unless I received orders to do so.' Butler, who still relied upon Smith's professional judgment because of his own relative inexperience, accepted the recommendation. As a result, skirmishing continued along the front of the XVIII Corps, but the advance ceased."

Butler sent Gillmore on the 13th to circle to the west to outflank the Confederate line at Wooldridge's Hill, as Smith pushed across Proctor's Creek and deployed for battle. Terry's Division drove Ransom's Division from its fortifications and by evening the Confederates had retreated to an inner line of defenses.

Beauregard arrived to take command of the situation the following day and constructed a new line extending westward from Drewry's Bluff. Butler would not follow-up on this early success because the gunboats that were intended to support his right failed to materialize when the water level was discovered to be

too low. He instead followed the retreating enemy back to their main line of prepared positions and began to construct his own defensive line of breastworks made of earth and logs.

Below is a link to Forman's animation of Butler's advance:

[Advance by the Army of the James, May 12-14, 1864](#)

Butler's forces spent the 15th strengthening their new line. Gen. Heckman, whose brigade guarded the right flank of the Army of the James, discovered the Old Stage Road running deep into the Federal rear. Smith informed Butler that his line was short and requested reinforcements to extend it all the way to the James River and fill the dangerous gap. Two regiments were sent to Heckman, and with these reinforcements the line was stretched but was still, in the words of Gillmore, "long, thin, and weak."

Beauregard saw his chance, according to CivilWarWiki.net: "The Union commanders were not the only ones noticing trouble near the river. Beauregard, now in personal command, saw it as well. In his instructions for a surprise attack Beauregard told MG Robert Ransom that 'we shall attack and turn by the river road his right flank.' To accomplish this he stacked four brigades, under Ransom, on his extreme left with orders to begin the assault early on the 16th."

As evening neared, working parties strung lengths of telegraph wire 50 yards in front of their line to serve as entanglements. "On the picket line," Robertson wrote, "the sentinels could hear sounds of trees being felled and the creaking of artillery wheels. Occasionally shots were exchanged across the no man's land separating the opposing lines. Now and then a hideous, bloodcurdling screech ripped through the fog, the effort of some Southerner to spoil the Yankees' peaceful dreams..." CivilWarWiki.net continues with a description of Beauregard's attack on the 16th:



Rebel Advance, by Chris Collingwood

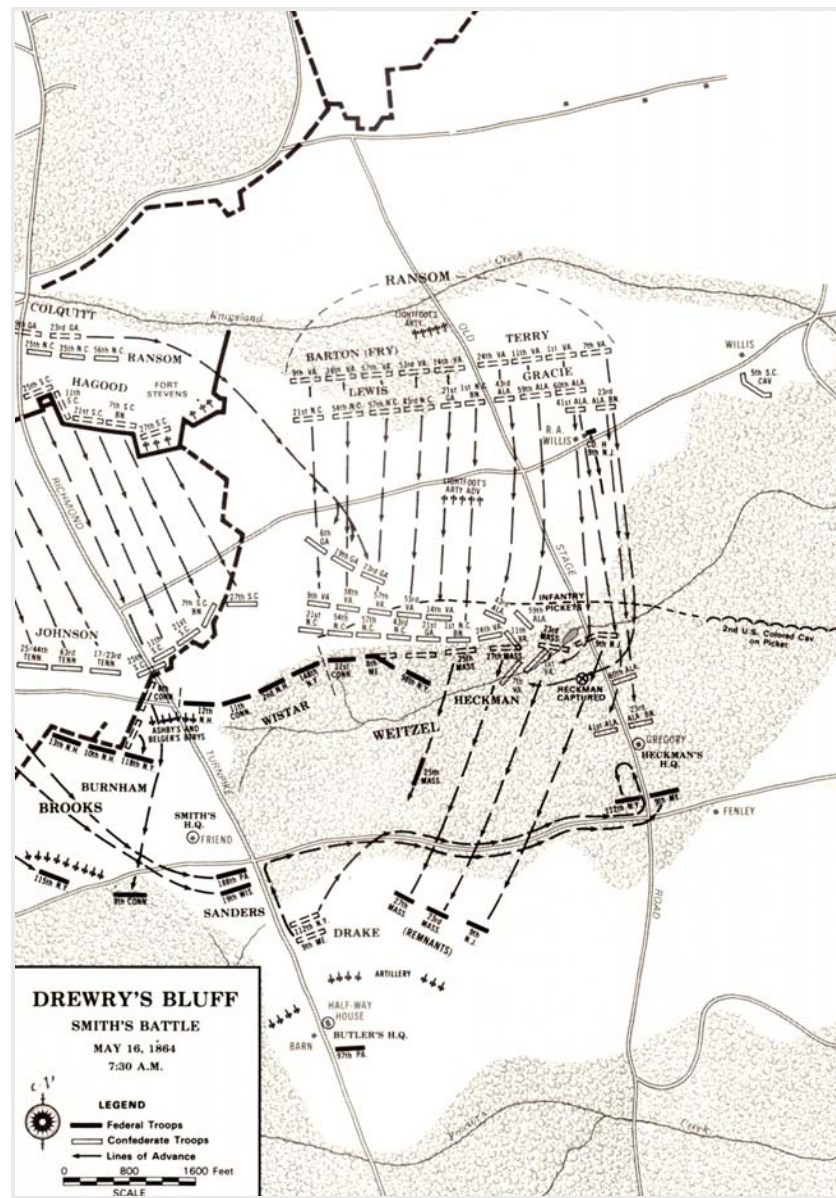
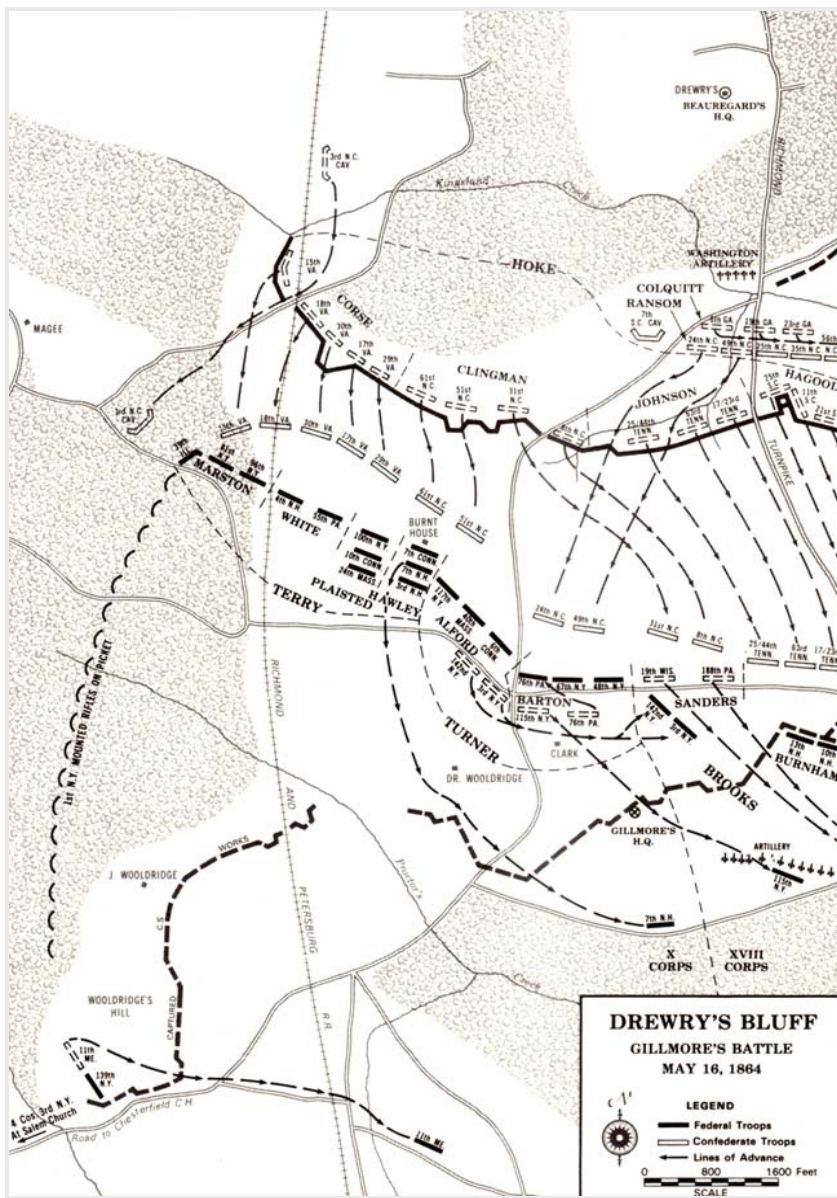
"The morning of the assault found a dense fog enveloping the entire area. The poor visibility initially aided the attack force by masking their movements into their jump off positions. Anticipating a grand success, Beauregard gave the attacking force a secondary mission of cutting the Union forces off from their line at Bermuda Hundred. The



Union Soldiers in Combat (1895)
William B. T. Trego (1859-1909)
Private Collection

Confederate commander expected that Butler would give way under his attack and make for the safety of his own entrenched line. To assist Ransom in preventing the Yankees from reaching their line, Beauregard ordered a secondary attack by a force from Petersburg. This force consisted of the Virginia brigade of Gen. Wise, the North Carolina brigade of Gen. Martin (with one regiment from Colquitt attached) and Dearing's cavalry brigade. It was a bold, imaginative and elaborate plan and Beauregard was supremely confident in it.

"When visibility finally reached a minimum for operations Ransom hit the Federals like a thunderbolt at 4:45 A.M. The entire right end of the Union line collapsed in confusion. A follow-on assault by Hagood and Johnson met much stiffer resistance but still the blue line was pushed back. These two brigades fought off a desperate counterattack. Hagood's South Carolinians were savaged in the day's fighting. The brigade reported 664 casualties for their effort, by far the most of any Confederate brigade. On the Confederate right Hoke experienced the same problem against rugged Union resistance. The fog made it impossible to take full advantage of the early success. The overwhelming success of the attack actually proved to be its downfall. The rapidly advancing Confederate lines became entangled and lost in the fog in their rush forward. Ransom and Hoke were forced to bring the advance to a halt to sort the scrambled units. These pauses, created by the confusion in the Confederate ranks, allowed Butler enough time to begin his fighting withdrawal. The battle lasted thirteen hours as the Rebels pursued Butler's troops southward. Whiting's force, that was supposed to block the retreat route, never appeared. Suffering from poor communications and the extremely timid leadership of Whiting, the blocking force did not reach the expected location in time and ended up bivouacking while Butler made good his escape. The action



Maps of the 2^d Battle of Drewry's Bluff, Va., May 16, 1864
 Published in "Back Door to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign,
 April-June 1864" by William Glenn Robertson (1987)

was costly for both sides. About 6,600 equally divided casualties littered the field. Hundreds of Federal prisoners, including Gen. Heckman, five battle flags and several artillery pieces were claimed. Beauregard was disappointed that the complete destruction of the Federal forces had not been accomplished and placed a major portion of the blame on Whiting, who asked for and was given relief. Butler, however, was back where he started and now had very little hope of influencing the campaign."

Below is a link to Forman's animation of the 2^d Battle of Drewry's Bluff, also known as the Battle of Proctor's Creek:

[2d Battle of Drewry's Bluff, May 16, 1864](#)

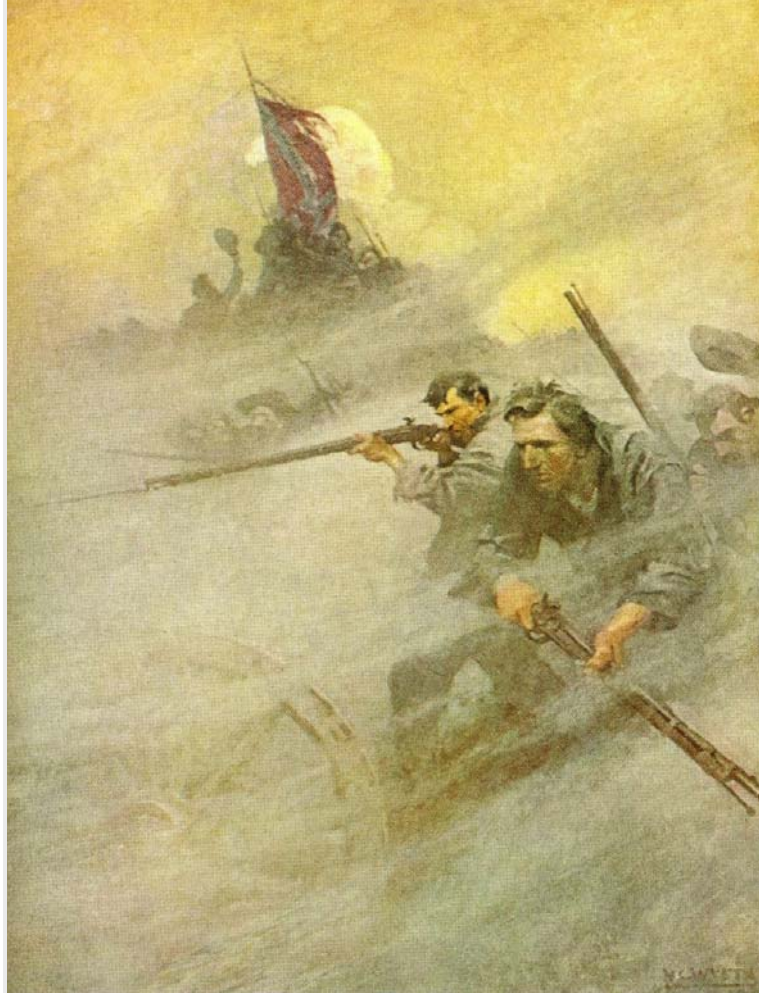
The 1st Battle of Drewry's Bluff, May 15, 1862, part of the Peninsula Campaign, was fought between the Union Navy and Fort Darling.

Chaplain Hyde of the 112th N.Y. explained how his regiment and the 9th Maine saved the XVIII Corps from destruction by Ransom's Division after it turned Smith's right flank:



Scene from "Gods and Generals," Directed by Ronald F. Maxwell (2003)

"That night, [the 12th], the whole Brigade was ordered to Walthall Junction, fourteen miles from Richmond, and eight from Petersburg, throwing up hasty intrenchments as a protection against an attack from the direction of Petersburg upon the army as it was now operating upon the enemy's works, on the bank of the river. The next morning Col. Drake, leaving the 13th Indiana and 169th N. Y. at Walthall, moved his other two Regiments in obedience to orders, toward the right wing of the main army, taking position on the left of Heckman's Brigade of Gen. Smith's forces. In this position the Regiment remained during the 15th. It has been said that Gen. Smith was in favor of a bold assault on the 15th and that such an assault would have proved successful, and given Butler a position from which Beauregard could not have dislodged him, and would have insured the success of Grant's original plan. If this might have been, it was not done, and while our army was waiting, Beauregard was straining every nerve to get to the river. That night



The Battle (1910)
N. C. Wyeth (1882-1945)
Private Collection

he brought his army up, some of his brigades reaching the ground about 3 o'clock in the morning. The night was very dark, and in the morning a dense fog obscured everything. So well were Beauregard's men acquainted with the ground, that they were able to take their positions at once. About 4 o'clock, they made a desperate attack on the right wing of Gen. Smith. The volume and rapidity of the musketry firing was far in excess of anything these troops had ever before encountered. Heckman's Brigade was completely crushed, and the brave General, with a very large number of his men, taken prisoners.

"When the General was taken, he was in the front with his men, fighting with musket in hand. Col. Drake, at this juncture of affairs, was ordered to move one Regiment immediately to the support of Gen. Heckman. The 112th under Lieut. Col. Carpenter was sent at once to report to Gen. Heckman, or whoever might be in command. Proceeding as rapidly as possible, on reaching the position where Heckman should have been, and not finding him, Lieut. Col. Carpenter sent Lieut. S. P. Hedges, Acting Adjutant, forward to find someone to whom to report. The Adjutant soon found himself among the rebels, and about three hours after reported to Gen. Heckman in Libby Prison. Col. Carpenter, anxious about Hedges, soon after he had left, put spurs

to his horse to see for himself what was in advance. Having ridden a few rods, looking intently, but not able to discover any troops, he heard the summons 'surrender!' His first and only thought was for the Regiment, fearing he had carelessly led them into an ambush. Wheeling his horse instantly, he shouted at the top of his voice, 'Men, fall back!' A volley from the enemy instantly followed. One shot struck the Colonel as he was bending forward on his horse, just below the right lung, traversing which it struck the shoulder blade with such violence as to break it, but not pass through; another shot knocked the hat from his head, and another struck his horse, inflicting only a flesh wound. The furious animal tore through the ranks of the Regiment, knocking down several men, and on to the 9th Maine, which Col. Drake was now leading up. Here he was arrested, and the wounded Colonel lifted from him. When the Regiment heard the Colonel's order, thinking he said fall down, they fell instantly on their faces, and the volley passed over



Lieutenant-Colonel Elial F. Carpenter, 112th N.Y.
Private Collection

them. When the Colonel came rushing through, not knowing what it meant, they scattered in some confusion into the woods by the wayside. Capt. Chaddock was acting Major. His horse, struck by a spent ball, became unmanageable, and rushing through the forest, he was dragged from him and thrown heavily upon the ground. Recovering himself, he quickly formed the Regiment in line of battle across the road, throwing out a strong body of skirmishers in front. Col. Drake was near when Lieut. Col. Carpenter was taken from his horse. After making provisions for his safety and comfort, he rode forward to see what had become of the 112th. Meeting two men, (the only two who straggled towards the rear), he asked where the Regiment was. They replied they did not know, and left the impression that it was badly cut to pieces if not captured. What was the Colonel's relief on riding forward, to find his noble Regiment in good position and in good order, firmly planted across the road, with their faces toward the foe.

Gen. Weitzel, Chief of Staff to Gen. Butler, now rode up and told Col. Drake that the right wing of the army was to be drawn within the intrenchments of Bermuda Hundred, along that road, ordering him to hold

the position as long as possible, so as to enable them to bring off the wounded. So well did Col. Drake maneuver the small force at his command, moving them from point to point, and keeping up an incessant fire, so as to create the impression of a much larger force, that the enemy were held at bay until everything was moving securely towards our lines. Later in the day, in conjunction with other forces, the Regiment assisted in driving back the enemy to the rifle pits they had taken in the morning; thus enabling the General to take care of the dead and wounded. The retreat was accomplished in good order, and before 6 o'clock P.M., the whole army was within the intrenchments of Bermuda Hundred.

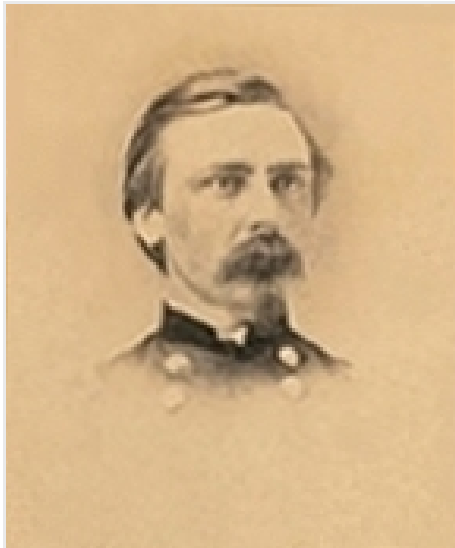


Wounded soldier (ca. 1886)
Friedrich Wilhelm Heine (1845-1921)
 Collection of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin

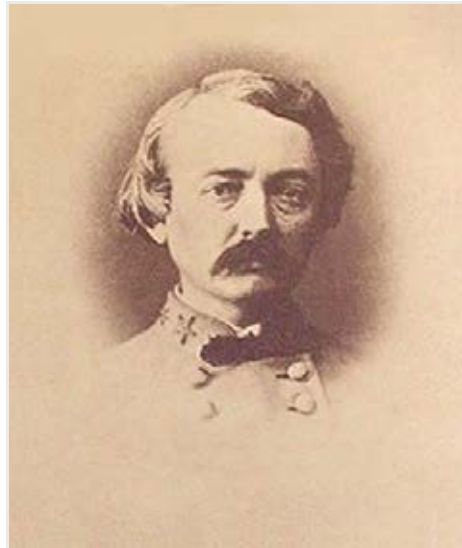
"Among the incidents of the day, we make note of two. Wm. Foye, Company A, was taken prisoner in the morning's fight. After being deprived of his gun, he was handed over to a single soldier to take to the rear. Watching his opportunity, he wrenched his gun from the hands of his guard, and telling him that he was his prisoner, brought him inside our lines. Edward Shelters of Company A, was shot in the arm and taken prisoner. The guard left him lying upon the ground; seeing no one near him he started and ran for our lines, but before he reached them he was fired upon and wounded in the leg. Soon after some of his comrades found him and brought him in. His wounds, which were very severe, resulted in his death, after a month of suffering. The casualties of the day were, Lieut. Col. Carpenter mortally wounded; Adj. Hedges taken prisoner; Abraham Danforth, Co. A, killed; John Jones, Harvey Davis, Edward Shelters, Fred L. Redington, Co. A, severely wounded. Corp. Walter Strong, B. S. Haight, Jacob Vader, Co. B, F. Harrington, Co. C, and W. S. Carpenter, Co. D, wounded. Lieut. Col. Carpenter lingered in the Hospital until Wednesday morning. His death cast a gloom over the whole Regiment, for he had the respect and esteem of both officers and men... The 26th of May a circular was sent by Gen. Weitzel, complimenting Col. Drake and the officers and men under his command, for gallant conduct on the 16th."

Robertson's description of the rearguard action on the 16th at Port Walthall Junction, from a mostly Southern perspective, paints a picture of incompetence by Maj.-Gen. William H. C. Whiting, in command of a division of two infantry brigades (Wise's and Martin's), several artillery batteries, and two cavalry regi-

ments (7th Confederate and 62^d Georgia). Facing this force was the rest of Gen. Ames's division (13th Indiana and 169th N.Y.) reinforced by Battery E, 3^d U.S. Artillery, and a detachment of the 1st U.S. Colored Cavalry.



**Brigadier-General Adelbert Ames,
commanding 3^d Division, X Corps,
Army of the James**

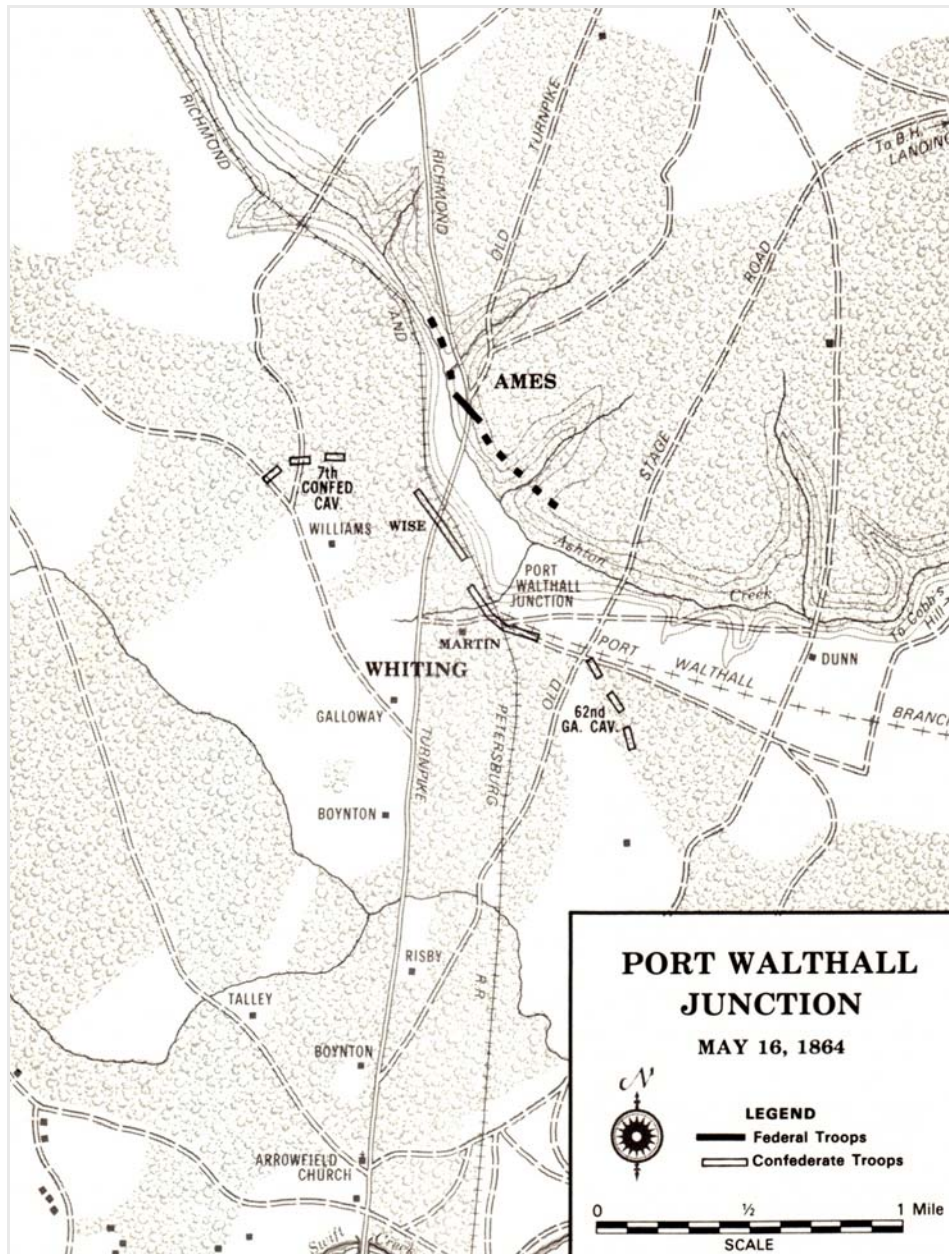


**Confederate Major-General William H. C.
Whiting, commanding division,
Defenses of Petersburg**

Both generals were graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Gen. Ames graduating fifth in his class (1861), and Gen. Whiting graduating first in his class (1845).

"Arriving at Petersburg on 13 May, Whiting found himself placed in charge of the department while Beauregard marched to Drewry's Bluff. Handicapped by ignorance of the surrounding country and by the absence of his staff, harassed both by routine department business and by a stream of messages from his superiors, Whiting slowly began to lose control of the situation at Petersburg. Because he realized the significance of the city to the Confederacy, he became convinced that Petersburg was the primary objective of the powerful Army of the James. Throughout 14 and 15 May, as Butler's army gingerly pushed northward toward Drewry's Bluff, Whiting expected to hear at any moment of a Federal advance upon the Swift Creek defenses. This constant anxiety and the resulting loss of sleep left Whiting unprepared for coping efficiently with the series of contradictory orders that arrived at Petersburg on 15 May. It was not until late in the evening that Whiting received Beauregard's final instructions to move northward toward the sound of the guns on the following morning.

"After another sleepless night marked by feverish preparations, Whiting rode out to the Swift Creek defenses. There he found the Virginia brigade of former governor Henry Wise, numbering some 2,300 men, and the North Carolina brigade of James Martin, 3,000 strong. Also present were several artillery batteries and some of James Dearing's cavalry. At Whiting's command, Wise's four regiments led the way across Swift Creek, followed by the artillery, while Martin's three regiments brought up the rear. Within a mile Federal pickets were encountered, which necessitated a slackening of the column's pace. At this point the Richmond turnpike continued due north, while the Old Stage Road diverged in a northeasterly direction, where it soon crossed the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad.



Map of the Battle of Port Walthall Junction, Va., May 16, 1864
 Published in "Back Door to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign,
 April-June 1864" by William Glenn Robertson (1987)

"At the junction Whiting decided to rearrange his units before proceeding farther. Concerned about his right flank, which would soon draw opposite the Federal camp at Bermuda Hundred, he assigned Wise's Brigade to advance along the turnpike, while Martin took the Old Stage Road to guard against a potential Federal turning movement. Because the terrain was rough and thickly wooded, Whiting asked D. H. Hill, who was still acting as an unofficial adviser, to supervise Wise's movements, while he remained with Martin. To ensure a further margin of safety, Dearing assigned the 62nd Georgia Cavalry to cover the infantry's right flank and the 7th Confederate Cavalry to operate on the left, so as eventually to link up with Beauregard's forces at Drewry's Bluff.



Satellite view of Ashton Creek, Chester, Virginia, (top), site of the battles at Port Walthall Junction, west of Woods Edge Road. Below is a view of the valley looking west from Woods Edge Road.



Ames's Division was positioned on the right, along the tree line north of the valley.

As soon as the troops were deployed, Whiting's force resumed its northward march.

"Ahead of the Confederates the handful of Federal skirmishers retired slowly, fulfilling their role of harassment and delay all the way from Timsbury Creek to Port Walthall Junction. By this time Whiting's troops were only six miles south of the contending forces near Drewry's Bluff. Although the battle there had been raging since daylight, Whiting claimed he heard only three or four cannon shots, which did not signify the full-scale action he had been led to expect. To others, particularly



Satellite views of Ashton Creek, (top), east from Woods Edge Road.
Below is a second view looking further east.

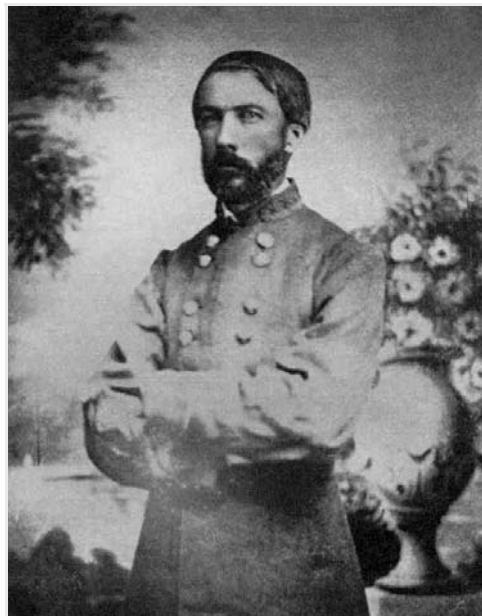


Colonel Thomas Logan, who had brought Beauregard's attack order to Whiting the previous night, the firing signified that Beauregard's forces were engaged and that the plan was in motion. Uneasy, Logan waited for Whiting to increase the speed of the advance.

"Disregarding the distant sounds of conflict, Whiting pushed gingerly toward Port Walthall Junction, which was reached around 8:30 A.M. Arriving on the southern rim of the amphitheater created by the valley of Ashton Creek, the Confederates could see small numbers of Federals crossing the creek and ascending the ridge on the north side of the valley. Instead of impetuously following the retreating Federals into what might

be a trap, Whiting halted his infantry and ordered his artillery to bombard the opposite ridge. Following Whiting's orders, two Confederate artillery batteries unlimbered and began to rake the ridge with shells.

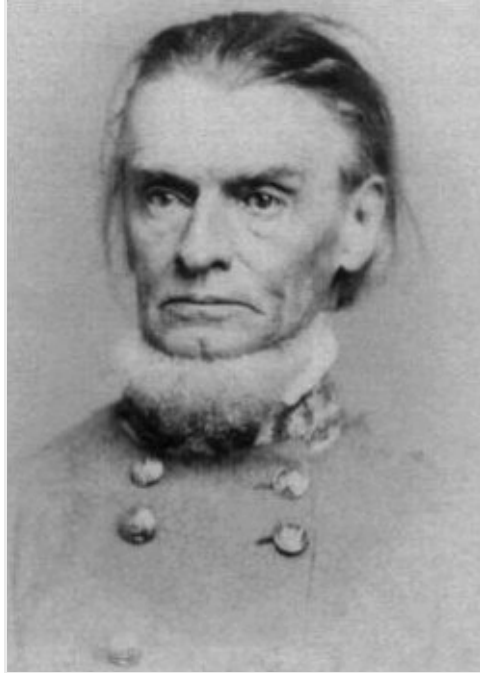
"Unknown to the Confederates, their elusive targets were only the 13th Indiana and 169th New York Infantry Regiments, Battery E, 3rd U.S. Artillery, and a detachment of the 1st U.S. Colored Cavalry, all under Brigadier General Adelbert Ames. Ames had had the disagreeable assignment of covering the rear of the Army of the James ever since the advance toward Drewry's Bluff had begun. Initially, his division had consisted of two brigades, but Confederate inaction and more pressing needs elsewhere had caused the early detachment of two of his regiments. Four of the remaining six regiments had been called north on the previous day to participate in the planned Federal attack that never occurred. With three-fourths of his division already in action elsewhere, Ames found himself attempting to block the advance of two large Confederate brigades with two small regiments and a battery. Believing that the artillery bombardment was the prelude to an assault, he slowly began to withdraw his men northward. At 9:00 A.M. he was met by the 97th Pennsylvania Infantry, sent by Butler as a reinforcement. This unit had been stationed at Butler's field headquarters until it was ordered at 6:00 A.M. to move toward Port Walthall Junction.



**Confederate Major-General D. H. Hill,
advisor to Major-General W. H. C. Whiting**

"Both Ames's retreat and the arrival of the Pennsylvanians were noted by D. H. Hill from his vantage point with Wise's Brigade on the ridge south of Ashton Creek. Hill urged Whiting to order an advance across the creek and Whiting complied, but it was not until nearly 10:30 A.M. that the Confederate infantry reached the northern rim of the valley. By this time Ames's three regiments had retreated again, just out of the Confederates' reach. Once north of Ashton Creek, Whiting halted his men, although his officers desired to press the obviously weak Federals. Concerned about his right flank, which was only two miles distant from the Bermuda Hundred lines, Whiting dispatched scout Roger Pryor on a reconnaissance. As he awaited Pryor's return, Whiting began to allow the uncertainties of his position to affect his judgment. Exhausted by

three days of constant exertion, unacquainted with the tangled terrain, and out of touch with Beauregard, Whiting began to fear Federal moves against his left flank as well as his right. Repeatedly he ordered Henry Wise to guard his left and at last visited Wise in person with the same order, appearing so overwrought that Wise believed him to be intoxicated.



**Confederate Brigadier-General Henry A. Wise,
commanding brigade, Defenses of Petersburg**

The 169th N.Y. fought against Gen. Wise once before, during the expedition to Johns Island, S.C., February 7-12, 1864.

"By this time Wise had become thoroughly disgusted with Whiting and his erratic behavior, but Whiting appeared not to have noticed, returning instead to his nightmare world of massed Federals bearing down upon him. Even Ames's retreat was construed by Whiting as a ruse to cover a surprise dash against Petersburg. Whiting's confusion, both about Federal intentions and his own role in Beauregard's plan, is quite evident in a message dispatched to Beauregard about the time of his visit to Wise:

'I have been some time in advance of Walthall Junction, having drawn enemy, after sharp skirmish. He appears to be retiring to his line of fortification. I hear nothing of you. I cannot assault his left on Appomattox. I am advancing my left, and have crossed Baker House, [Ashton] Creek. Enemy retiring in my front. If they cross the river Petersburg is gone. Can't you press down the river, provided you don't press him in my rear?'

"While Whiting vacillated, D. H. Hill and Colonel Hilary Jones of the artillery rode forward to scout the Federal positions. By then Ames had put his own artillery in position and was making threatening demonstrations to further retard Whiting's progress. Hill was not fooled and returned to the Confederate lines with the intention of advising that the advance be resumed. Upon reaching Wise's headquarters, he was told that a heavy force of Federals was moving toward Wise's left. With a creek directly in their rear, Wise's infantrymen were in an awkward

position to repel an attack, and, although he doubted the validity of the report, Hill advised a temporary withdrawal across the stream. According to his own testimony, Wise brushed aside Hill's recommendations until he received direct orders from Whiting, which he sourly obeyed. Yet Wise had only himself to blame, because it had been his erroneous report of Federal forces approaching the Confederate left that had triggered the retreat. Of course Whiting in his confused state had already concluded that such a Federal move was imminent, making Wise's report only the confirmation of a foregone conclusion. In his account of the day's events, Whiting spoke of much confusion during this period and it is obvious that he was passing beyond the ragged edge of self-control.



**Confederate Brigadier-General P. G. T. Beauregard,
commanding Department of North Carolina
and Southern Virginia**

"The withdrawal was conducted during a heavy shower of rain. Riding up to the southern rim of the valley, Hill and Wise were horrified to find that the troops were not halting on the crest. Hurriedly seeking an explanation, Wise discovered that Whiting had ordered the retrograde movement to continue without informing the brigade commander. Learning what had happened, Hill rode to Whiting and persuaded the befuddled general to allow the troops to return to the ridge overlooking Ashton Creek, while Hill attempted to locate the Federals. Taking Colonel Logan along, Hill quickly ascertained that the only Federals in the vicinity were the handful of Ames's men that had been present all day. Sending Logan to inform Beauregard of affairs at Port Walthall Junction, Hill dashed off a note to Whiting advocating an immediate advance. This appeal was ignored by Whiting, who was content to rearrange his two brigades along the southern rim of the valley. There Whiting watched cautiously as Ames, emboldened by the inexplicable

Confederate retreat, pushed his skirmishers forward to the crest so recently occupied by Wise's men. Fearing a Federal attack, Whiting ordered his artillery to shell the enemy skirmishers, and in that fashion the rest of the afternoon was spent.

"While Whiting dallied and his subordinates fretted, Colonel Logan made his way toward Drewry's Bluff. Guided by Dearing and a detachment of cavalry, Logan road northward via Chester Station. There the mounted party encountered hundreds of fleeing Federal soldiers, the remnants of X Corps units that had been left behind during Gillmore's withdrawal. While his escort rounded up the demoralized Federals, Logan continued his journey, appalled at the opportunity Whiting had cast away by refusing to advance into the rear of the retreating Army of the James. Finding Beauregard and President Davis in conversation near the captured Federal works, Logan reported that there was no need to rely further upon Whiting that day. Beauregard received the news calmly, giving Logan the impression that he had long since ceased to expect any contribution by Whiting to the battle at Drewry's Bluff.

"While Logan made his way to Beauregard, conditions at Port Walthall Junction were becoming even more chaotic. Some time after having advised Whiting to advance against Ames's pitifully small force, Hill rode to the headquarters of Brigadier General James Martin, a one-armed professional soldier from North Carolina who commanded the second of Whiting's two brigades. While Hill and Martin discussed the situation, Whiting appeared and ordered Martin to withdraw his skirmishers. Aghast, Hill remonstrated, 'General Whiting, you cannot occupy this place if you withdraw your skirmishers.' Whiting retorted, 'You don't think that I intend to remain here?' Convinced that further conversation would be useless, Hill replied that he 'did not know what his intentions were,' and lapsed into silence. Whiting then directed Martin to withdraw his skirmishers, followed by his entire brigade. When Martin noted this was the exact opposite of customary procedure, Whiting remarked that 'It makes no difference; there is no enemy in our front.'

"Whiting explained his decision to retreat in a slightly different fashion in a later report to Beauregard. There he claimed that he based his decision on such factors as the lateness of the hour, the lack of news from the main army, and reports of Federal movements on his left, right, and rear. Unsure about whether Beauregard had engaged the Federals as planned, or about the location of the Army of the James, Whiting began to see his primary mission as the protection of Petersburg, seven miles in the rear. Reasoning that Port Walthall Junction was a poor place from which to cover Petersburg, Whiting decided to withdraw from what he felt to be a dangerously exposed position...

"Soon after Hill departed for Swift Creek, a messenger brought Whiting news of Dearing's activities up to 1:30 P.M. The rider also brought a copy of Beauregard's 9:00 A.M. note to Whiting, by then hopelessly out of date. Nevertheless, Whiting was so stirred by this tangible sign of Beauregard's activity that he halted the retreat. Dearing himself then arrived and confirmed the news already received, further strengthening Whiting's resolve to wait a bit longer before withdrawing to Petersburg. Since Ames had by that time been joined by two more regiments, the 11th Maine and the 115th New York, there was no thought in Whiting's mind of advancing, but at least he might tarry awhile in case Beauregard was on his way south... Across the creek, Ames called in his skirmishers as soon as darkness fell and withdrew to Bermuda Hundred, the last element of the Army of the James to return to camp...

"As his weary soldiers settled into the Swift Creek defenses, Henry Wise made his way to Dunlop's house for a few hours of rest. His casualties had amounted to a total of thirty men and he had taken ten prisoners, but Wise knew, as did Hill and Martin whom he found already at Dunlop's that a great opportunity had slipped from the Confederate grasp."

In his history of the 97th Penn., Col. Isaiah Price described the hazardous march from Port Walthall Junction back to the Federal intrenchments in the early hours of the 17th:



"Head Quarters in the Saddle!"
From the Journal of Private Robert Knox Sneden, 40th N.Y.V., Topographical Engineer of the III Army Corps, Vol. III, June 29 - October 25, 1862
Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

"At dusk, Lieut. Col. Pennypacker received orders to retire cautiously to the intrenchments. Rain had set in during the afternoon and it was quite cold, the men suffering greatly while lying upon the wet ground to avoid the fire of the enemy. Soon after dusk, it became evident the rebels were preparing to advance by a flank movement. Orders were now sent to the force on the left to fall back on the reserve, already upon the march by the main road to the intrenchments. The rebels were by this time on the march, also, by a parallel route, but our forces, having the inside and shorter line, reached camp in safety; the enemy, however, being within musket shot when the outer line was reached. Capt. Lewis' force, in retiring, was almost intercepted, the enemy having reached the main road in advance of his company, obliging him to make a detour to avoid capture.

"The men reached camp about 2 A.M. on the 17th, wet, cold, hungry and tired, having accomplished all that was deemed possible from so meagre a force, thrown across the advance of an adversary so wary and powerful, thereby saving the Army of the James from a serious disaster."

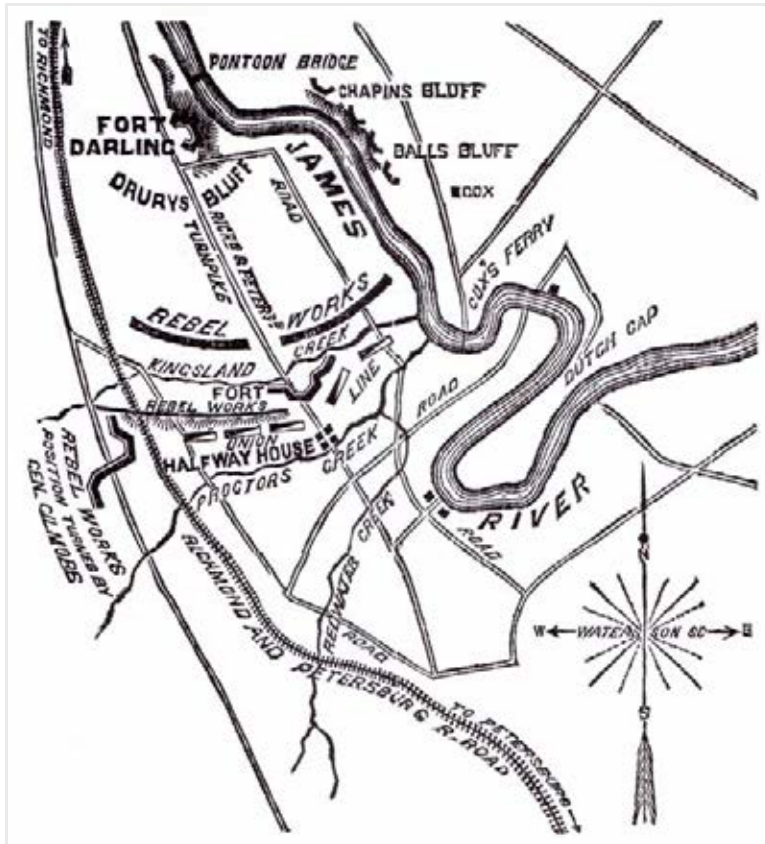
The New York *Herald's* account of the Battle of Drewry's Bluff from X Corps headquarters stated, "The rebels fought with more than their usual dash and bravery, as they seemed determined to crush our army, as the only way to save Richmond. They met with a bloody failure. Their losses in killed and wounded exceeded ours, although the balance of prisoners is probably slightly in their favor." The article is presented in its entirety:

THE NEW YORK HERALD.

MAY 19, 1864.

GENERAL BUTLER'S OPERATIONS.

The Rebel Defences at Drury's Bluff ---
The Position of the Union Forces.



Mr. Oscar G. Sawyer's Despatch.

HEADQUARTERS, TENTH ARMY CORPS,
HATCHERS, Va., May 16, 1864.

To-day we have had the most severe battle that has occurred in this campaign, and we were somewhat worsted in the conflict, in so far as we were driven from the position we held last night.

This line, which we gained night before last by the gallant conduct of General Terry's division, under General Gillmore, which turned the enemy's first line of defences on their right, and compelled them to evacuate most of it, extended from the river to a point beyond the railroad, and was in every respect a formidable work, and one not easily captured by a direct attack. Our forces were drawn up some distance beyond the intrenchment, and near the second line of their works, which we were constantly threatening. The Eighteenth army corps, under General Smith, held the right of our line to the turnpike, and to the left of it the Tenth corps laid, with Terry's division holding the left, and Turner's the right of the corps' line.

OPERATIONS OF YESTERDAY.

Throughout the night before last and yesterday there was very heavy picket firing along the entire line, and at times considerable artillery fire, which occasioned considerable loss to both sides. The musketry fire at times assumed battle proportions, but would die away into desultory discharges, with occasional lulls, in which the silence was unbroken by a single shot. During the day the rebels attempted one or twice to force back our lines on the left by charges, but were repulsed on each occasion with heavy loss, and the attempt was finally relinquished by them when they found our position so strong. So the day wore away, without any results to either side.



BEAUREGARD ATTACKS OUR LINES.

Daylight was ushered in this morning by a tremendous discharge of artillery from the entire length of the rebel lines, and the shells came into our position in showers, rudely arousing the dreaming and tired soldiers by their rapid and deafening explosions. The men were quickly in their respective places, and the line was formed in a moment. It was known that something was about to take place, and that it was probable that the vigorous shelling was to be followed up by an assault upon our position; but where the blow was to fall no one could conjecture with any degree of confidence. The time was peculiarly favorable for such an operation. A dense, impenetrable fog enveloped the country, and wrapped the contending forces in its misty veil. The gray dawn was made still more dusky by the fog, and objects could not be discerned by the keenest vision a dozen yards distant. We knew little or nothing of the topography of the country in our front, and comparatively little of that which laid about and behind us. The rebels were familiar with it, and knew how to move through the mist as readily and surely as under the sun's rays. This was the condition of affairs when the rebels, massing their troops, struck our right, under General Heckman, enveloped its flank and took it in reverse.

THE FIRST BLOW

was dealt with terrific force. General Heckman's brigade of the Eighteenth corps, holding the right, was doubled up and forced back on the next brigade, which was also thrown into some confusion. Our men did not observe the rebels until they had succeeded in passing a column between Heckman's right and the river, and, taking him in front and rear, crushed him between the columns, and for a time created some confusion. General Heckman made a gallant fight as long as he could; but the enemy came upon him so suddenly, and with such overwhelming numbers, that successful resistance was quite impossible in the darkness and confusion. Some of the brigade were captured. Perhaps the stragglers who will report will diminish the loss somewhat. General Heckman is missing; but whether he is killed or wounded or a prisoner has not been ascertained.



After this operation, having forced back the right, a heavy attack was made on the entire line of the Eighteenth corps, with feints along the Tenth corps line, and the entire right was forced back some distance after several hours of most severe and sanguinary struggles. The battle raged with unexampled fury until nearly twelve o'clock, the rebels throwing heavy masses upon our lines, and finally forcing it back nearly a quarter of a mile. Our men fought stubbornly, with few exceptions, and resisted every step, and repeatedly checked the rebel advance, with terrible slaughter, but not without some loss on our side. The enemy numbered not less than fifteen thousand, and pushed into the murderous fire with a recklessness and steadiness that are rarely seen. Some prisoners we took were evidently under the influence of liquor, which maddened them and made them indifferent to death.

In the attack on our right we lost a gun or two, and it is said some light pieces – precisely how many it is difficult to ascertain. Probably four will cover the loss in light pieces. Captain Belger, of the First Rhode Island artillery, is said to have been captured, and his lieutenant killed.



**U.S. Model 1861 Springfield Rifle-Musket (manufactured in 1862) and .58 Cal. Socket Bayonet
Private Collection**



Finally, after forcing the Eighteenth corps back from its position and regaining a portion of their first line of intrenchments, they massed their forces on the Tenth corps, to drive it back.

THE ATTACK ON THE TENTH CORPS.

They first hurled their column upon Turner's division, which held the right of the corps' line, joining the Eighteenth corps. They formed in a beautiful manner and moved steadily on Barton's brigade, on the right of Turner's division, advancing as if upon parade, and not firing a single shot. Waiting until they had reached a good distance for effective range, the brigade poured into their lines such a terrific fire that the line melted away, and the thinned and broken line, after vainly endeavoring to advance against the storm of bullets, fled, with terrible loss, to the woods in their rear. The volleys were as continuous and heavy as the musketry of a brigade could well be, and such as no living beings could stand against.

The rebels were scattered like chaff, and broke for the woods in a disorganized mass. Under their friendly cover, after great exertion, the line of attack was again formed, and again a brigade advanced in splendid style against our line. Again did they receive the terrible fire and pushed steadily on until a fourth of them laid killed or wounded on the field, when they broke and rushed quickly to the cover of the woods. Our boys gave them hearty cheers, and sent a volley after them which told upon them. Being twice bloodily repulsed at this point, they moved further to our left and buried a column upon Colonel Hawley's brigade, of General Terry's division. They came up in the same steady and confident manner, but were received with a more rapid and equally as deadly a fire as that they were treated to by Turner. The Spencer repeating rifles, in the hands of the Seventh Connecticut, and the Spring-

field rifles, in the hands of the rest of the brigade, delivered a fire so hot and withering that the rebels could not withstand it, but broke and ran for the woods, accelerated in their flight by the music of the Spencer bullets about them. They were determined, however, to break our line and force it from its position, cost what it would. They again formed, and were strengthened by reinforcements. They charged again; and after ten minutes' hot work they were disastrously repulsed and driven back at all points. That ended any serious effort on their part to force our position; and, leaving their dead and wounded, to the number of a thousand, on the field before our line, they again massed upon Gen. Smith's front and attacked his left. Gen. Gillmore immediately ordered Gen. Turner to attack the enemy on their flank, and ordered Gen. Terry to support him. Turner's attack was hardly commenced before Gen. Gillmore was ordered by Gen. Butler to retire and strengthen Gen. Smith's corps by forming in his rear. Our troops fell back slowly and in order, repulsing every effort of the rebels to quicken its movements, and making a stand at every favorable position, until the enemy ceased to follow up and fell back to their first line of intrenchments. Gen. Gillmore then drew off his corps, and formed to support Gen. Smith.

The fighting, which had been going on with more or less violence along the entire line, now ceased (at half-past two), and preparations were made to draw off our forces from the field and return to our intrenchments. The artillery was sent to the rear, except a section to cover the rear guard. The ambulances, loaded with wounded, and the supply trains, were despatched to the rear, and finally the entire army fell back, the enemy not pursuing. Thus ended this rebel attack on our lines.

General Beauregard commanded in person, Generals Hoke and Ransom commanding divisions. A brigade from Tennessee, under Ransom, arrived last night, and added to Beauregard's force considerably. The rebels fought with more than their usual dash and bravery, as they seemed determined to crush our army, as the only way to save Richmond. They met with a bloody failure. Their losses in killed and wounded exceeded ours, although the balance of prisoners is probably slightly in their favor. Our men fought splendidly, with few exceptions, and the Tenth corps has established a reputation for fighting qualities that will equal that of any in the army. It is well disciplined, brave and efficient, and is an honor to the department.

Major-General Gillmore commanded the left throughout, and displayed as high qualities in the field in the handling of a corps as he has as an engineer officer. He was assisted in every way by Brigadier-General Robert S. Foster, chief of staff, whose abilities as a commander, and energy and zeal, combine to make him an invaluable officer to any commander, whether as chief of staff or in the command of a brigade or division. No little of our success is due to his energy and skill. Generals Terry, Ames and Turner, each performed their respective parts to the complete satisfaction of all. No corps has better division commanders. When all the brigadier commanders did well, it would be unjust to discriminate between them. They have all the desirable qualities found in good soldiers.

A REBEL DEMONSTRATION ON OUR LEFT AND REAR.

While the fighting was going on at the front so fiercely in the morning, a rebel brigade attacked a small force, consisting of the Thirteenth Indiana, Colonel Dobbs; the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New York, Colonel McConihe, and Battery E, Third United States

artillery, Lieut. Sanger commanding, all under Colonel Dobbs, guarding our extreme left on the approaches from Petersburg, and after a severe fight drove our forces back towards our intrenchments, but finally gave up the pursuit. Our loss was about thirty in killed, wounded and missing.

CASUALTIES.

Among the officers killed to-day were, of the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts, Lieutenants Roy and Wood, and Lieutenant Birdsall, of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New York. In the fights of the previous days, Lieutenant Metcalf, First Connecticut battery; Lieutenant Hoyt, One Hundredth New York; Captain J. G. Young, Seventy-sixth Pennsylvania, wounded; Colonel Osborn, Thirty-ninth Illinois, in arm; Lieutenant French, One Hundredth New York, wounded and a prisoner, and Lieutenant Evans, Lieutenant Howell, Lieutenant Babbitt, in enemy's hands, same regiment; Lieutenant-Colonel Carpenter, One Hundred and Twelfth New York, mortally; and a number of others, whose names I will send, with a full list of casualties, to-morrow.



The Charge (1904)
Howard Pyle (1853-1911)
Published in "Harper's Monthly Magazine" (November 1904)

SUCCESS OF GENERAL KAUTZ'S RAID.

We have information to-day, through a Richmond paper, of the success of General Kautz's raid on the Richmond and Danville Railroad. He has torn up several miles of track and destroyed the rails

and ties, and has blown up the iron bridge over the Appomattox river at Mattox Station, completely destroying it. Where he had gone from there the rebels do not seem to know. You may hear from him before we do.

General Sheridan's forces again started on a raid around Richmond yesterday afternoon, after refreshing their horses. The cavalry will keep the railroad communications to Richmond cut for a while.

Excellent coverage of the role of Drake's Brigade on the 16th, including the portion under the command of Col. Cyrus J. Dobbs at Port Walthall Junction, was provided by the *Herald*. The highly complimentary article is presented in its entirety:

THE NEW YORK HERALD.

MAY 21, 1864.

BUTLER!

Two Heavy Rebel Columns Seen Near Petersburg.

Beauregard Sending Supplies to Lee.

ANOTHER NIGHT ATTACK

The Rebels in Force in Our Front.

An Assault Expected at Any Moment.

ACTIVITY OF THE ENEMY,

&c., &c., &c.

Our Army Correspondence.

**HEADQUARTERS, FOSTER'S PLANTATION,
NEAR BERMUDA HUNDRED, Va., May 16 – Evening.**

THE PROCTOR'S CREEK FIGHT.

From this intrenched camp, after the accomplishment by our brave troops of a desperate day's work, I am enabled to send you, not without great difficulty, however, some account, plain in its nature and diction, of the important part enacted in the bloody scenes over which night has just closed by this brigade – a part so nobly taken and sustained, even in its divided responsibility and action, as to elicit the official commendations of all the commanding generals.

COLONEL DRAKE'S BRIGADE.

The second brigade of the Third (Ames') division, General Gillmore's (Tenth) corps, is commanded by Col. J. C. Drake, who came to the field in command of the One Hundred and Twelfth New York Volunteers – a regiment made up of the intelligent yeomanry and hardy and thrifty sons of Western New York, mostly residing in Chautauqua county. Colonel Drake is about thirty-eight years of age, and was born and brought up in Herkimer county, New York, whence he removed to Wisconsin, and engaged in mercantile affairs for a considerable period. Subsequent to this, feeling the necessity of a liberal education to be imperative, he repaired to Rochester, New York, and commenced his studies preparatory to entering college, which step he was finally

enabled to take only after heroically overcoming almost insuperable difficulties not infrequently encountered by young men who coolly and dispassionately determine to rise above the common level, and take rank among those most perfect of all sovereigns – educated rulers of themselves in the great drama of life. He entered Madison University at the opening of the academic year, in 1849, under the learned and graceful chancellorship of the Hon. Ira Harris, LL. D., now one of the accomplished Senators in Congress from New York. Colonel Drake, after an academic curriculum, marked by more than common industry, faultless conduct and fruitful and solid results, was admitted to his degree in the baccalaureate at the University anniversary occurring in the summer of 1852. He then mastered a thorough course of theology, and the outbreak of the war found him in the occupancy of the Baptist pulpit in Westfield, New York, where he was preaching most acceptably when called to be the ranking captain of the Forty-ninth regiment



**Colonel Jeremiah C. Drake, commanding 2^d Brigade,
3^d Division, X Army Corps, Army of the James
Collection of the New York State Military Museum,
Saratoga Springs, New York**

New York Volunteers. He served in this capacity about one year, being frequently in command of the regiment. On the successful organization of the One Hundred and Twelfth regiment New York Volunteers he was invited to accept the colonelcy. In the command of this regiment he has served with distinguished usefulness and credit under Major-General Peck in the prolonged siege of Suffolk in 1862 and 1863, under General Gillmore in the memorable Department of the South, in the recent Florida campaign under the ill-fated General Seymour, and is now doing noble duty as commander of the Second brigade, Third division, in the Tenth army corps, one of the corps now operating in Eastern Virginia under Major-General Butler, in his historic campaign in front of and against Richmond.

The brigade was ordered hence on the night of the 12th instant to Walthall Junction – a point on the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad, distant from the so-called rebel capital fourteen miles, and from Petersburg eight miles – for the purpose of protecting the left flank of the army operating on Fort Darling and Richmond. On the night of the 14th two regiments – the One Hundred and Twelfth and Ninth Maine – under Colonel Drake, were ordered to advance to Drury's Bluff. The

whole command, which for the time being was, by reason of a sudden military necessity, divided into two brigades, were at one o'clock on the morning of the 15th situated respectively as follows: – The Thirteenth Indiana, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel J. M. Wilson, and the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New York, Colonel McConihe, with temporary attachments of the First and Second United States colored cavalry, Colonel West; two sections of the Third United States battery, Lieutenant Sanger commanding, and a squadron of the First New York Mounted Rifles, Lieutenant Owen Hale commanding, were doing duty on the railroad, as already indicated, at Walthall Junction, the whole under command of Colonel Dobbs.

Colonel Drake's command was at Drury's Bluff, where, after a day's quiet, they, in common with our whole line, were attacked early this morning by the enemy, driving back Heckman's brigade, dispersing it, and capturing him. At this moment Colonel Drake received an order to immediately send a regiment to the extreme right.

In prompt compliance with this order, Colonel Drake immediately dispatched the One Hundred and Twelfth New York Volunteers, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel E. H. Carpenter, ordering him to report in great haste to General Heckman, on the right of the line. The increasing intensity of the firing led the distinguished colonel commanding to the impression that another regiment of his brigade would soon be wanted, which at once proving to be the case, he ordered the Ninth Maine Volunteers, Lieutenant-Colonel Robinson, to the right, himself advancing with the command.

Colonel Drake, who was accompanied by his brilliant staff, earnestly hoped to make a connection with the regiment previously sent to the right. With this intention he proceeded a short distance up the Petersburg pike, and turning to the right on a crossroad, came upon a road parallel to the pike and which ran between it and the James river. On reaching this point the commanding colonel discovered that the enemy had driven everything before them to a point near General Heckman's headquarters. It was found that General Heckman was missing, and that none of his organized force was discoverable in that vicinity. It appears that the rebels, owing to the density of the fog, had been enabled to rush through our pickets on to our forces, depriving us of the usual notifications "made in such cases," and dispersing and capturing Heckman's troops, who occupied the extreme front and who had not time to cease from the admiration of the first impression when they found themselves entirely discomfited by the enemy, under the direct command of Jeff Davis and P. G. T. Beauregard. And herein is probably to be found the reason why Col. Drake's brigade was divided – to the end that it might occupy the space in the line made vacant by the absence of Heckman's brigade. It was while leading his devoted and brave regiment, the One Hundred and Twelfth, up the pike towards the front, that Lieut.-Col. Carpenter, of Jamestown, Chautauqua county, N. Y., commanding, received a bullet wound that it is greatly feared will prove mortal. He was immediately borne from the spot, where he was in the gallant discharge of his duties, to Bermuda Hundred, and thence to Fortress Monroe, where he lies in critical condition in the General Hospital. Col. Carpenter is a homely, honest, hardy and intelligent soldier, beloved by his men, in whose direct and especial interests he makes every movement of his life in the field. It is most sincerely hoped by all connected with the brigade, both officers and men, that he will be spared yet a while longer, to lead his invincible regiment upon those, the final fields of the rebellion. Lieutenant Hedges, Adjutant of

the One Hundred and Twelfth, was taken a prisoner by the enemy at the same time with Colonel Carpenter. The command of the One Hundred and Twelfth now devolved upon senior Captain W. H. Chaddock. He at once formed his regiment in line of battle across the road, and, throwing out skirmishers, most effectually resisted the further advance of the enemy. At this important moment in the day, General Weitzel entrusted and charged Colonel Drake with the difficult duty of covering, defending and holding the pike road, the possession of which was of the utmost and vital importance to the Union forces.



Captain William H. Chaddock, 112th N.Y.
Collection of the New York State Military Museum,
Saratoga Springs, New York

From this period of the day this portion of our brigade formed the right of the line, Colonel Drake throwing out and maintaining a strong line of skirmishers, which was hotly engaged with the advance of the enemy during most of the day, and suffering some loss, nevertheless resisting effectually the enemy's advance. At about two o'clock P. M., in conjunction with the whole line, Colonel Drake advanced his brigade and his skirmishers above the enemy over the whole ground of the battle and into the rifle pits occupied by Heckman's brigade in the morning.

OPERATIONS OF COL. DOBBS' COMMAND.

At about five o'clock this morning, preliminary skirmishing commenced along Colonel Dobbs' front, extending about two miles towards Richmond on the Petersburg railroad. The enemy, as before intimated, availing himself of the dense fog, massed along the whole army line without our knowledge.

At twenty minutes to seven there was a sudden appearance of a strong skirmish line on one of two large hills, one immediately opposite Colonel Dobbs' position, and the other in the rear. This was the first intimation that the colonel commanding had of the enemy's presence in force, and the troops above named as being stationed at this point were all that protected the left flank of General Butler's force operating against Fort Darling and Richmond. The determined attack of the enemy was obstinately and successfully repulsed by our skirmishers, until our colored cavalry flankers gave way and exposed our flanks.



**Star from the regimental banner of the 169th N.Y., shot off at the 3^d Battle of Port Walthall Junction, Va., (the rear-guard action of the Battle of Drewry's Bluff), May 16, 1864
 Provided by Linda Cary**

Sergeant Henry A. Slack, Co. A, 169th N.Y., gave the star to G.A.R. Commander Edward Williams many years after the war. The back reads, "Star from the flag of the 169th N.Y.S.V., shot off at the battle of Drury's Bluff, Virginia, June 1863 [sic]. The frame was made of Georgia Pine taken from the State House, Charleston, S.C., at the raising of the flag over Fort Sumter after the fall of the Confederacy."

At this point the rebel artillery opened a murderous fire, causing us to fall back. It was at this moment that the gallant and noble young patriot, Lieutenant W. S. Birdsall, of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New York, fell dead. The enemy then charged in solid line upon our right, left and centre, with a force certainly ten times our own. Our forces then fell back in excellent order to the reserves, where, receiving reinforcements from General Ames, they formed a new line, advanced and, gallantly driving the enemy back, successfully occupied the old position. About the same time the enemy made a most desperate effort to break our forces upon the right, under Generals Baldy Smith and Gillmore. In retiring a portion of our forces assembled upon a road to our extreme left, and a portion upon a road leading to the rear from our right. About half a mile to the rear the forces on the right re-formed in line of battle, which line was reinforced by the One Hundred and Fifteenth New York Volunteers and the Fifty-eighth Pennsylvania Volunteers. The forces upon the left were also reinforced by the Eleventh Maine and Ninety-seventh Pennsylvania. After the line had been re-established General Ames appeared upon the field and ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Alonzo Alden, of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New



Henry A. Slack at his home in Albany, N.Y., showing evidence of the gunshot wound of his lower left arm received at Petersburg Va., June 30, 1864. The flag's star is on the top of the desk on the left side. Provided by Linda Cary

York, to advance in line of battle upon the right and form a junction upon the left with the right of a line of battle, under command of Col. John McConihe, the entire movement being under the general superintendence of Colonel Dobbs. The enemy retired as the advance was made, thus enabling our forces to reoccupy and maintain the old position, as already stated, overlooking the railroad. The enemy's artillery, already in a commanding position on the ridge beyond the railroad, opened upon us a galling fire, whereupon Colonel Dobbs' forces retired a few rods, and held the position until ordered within the intrenchments. Colonel Dobbs' efforts to prevent the enemy from flanking were entirely successful, and the behavior of both officers and men of his command, particularly of the Thirteenth Indiana and the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth was worthy of this public commendation. These gallant regiments confronted a largely superior force from the outset with great bravery. From daylight until dark the troops were wholly without rations or rest, continually fighting and skirmishing.

THE CASUALTIES.

Annexed is a list of the casualties in the Second brigade, Third division, Tenth army corps, in the battles of Drury's Bluff and Walthall Station, Virginia, May 16, 1864: –



Wounded Soldiers (1884)
William B. T. Trego (1859-1909)
 Private Collection

ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-NINTH NEW YORK.

Killed.

1 st Lt. Walter Scott Birdsall, D	Pvt. Wm. Mercy, K
Pvt. Darius Morris, A	Pvt. Edward Mann, I
Pvt. J. F. Cagle, C	Pvt. Joseph Lenoth, D

Wounded.

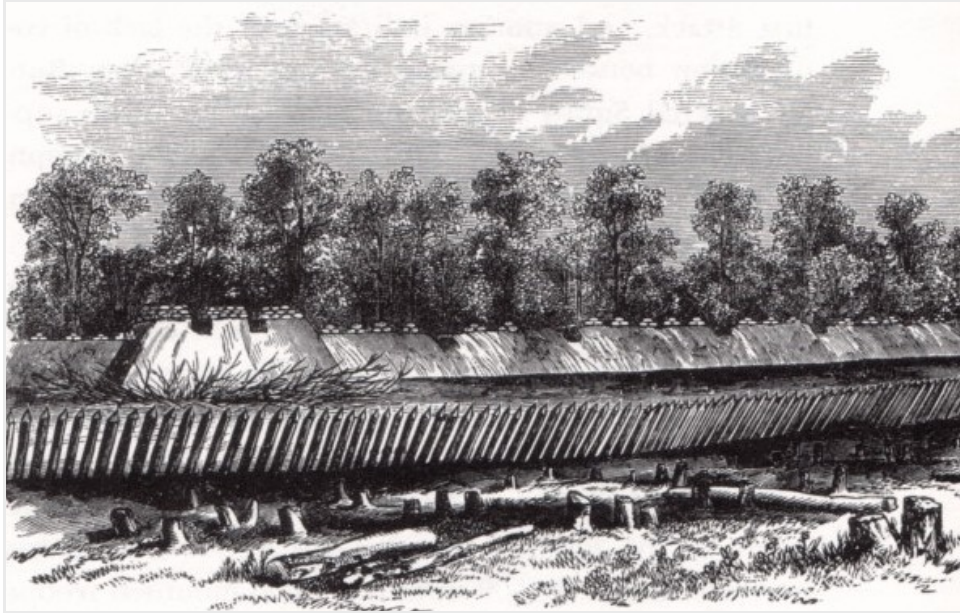
Sergt. D. Corbett, D, contusion from shell in right foot
 Corp. Wm. Donegan, D, left clavicle, from bullet
 Corp. Samuel Harris, D, right shoulder, from bullet
 Pvt. Joseph Hillis, D, left on the field
 Corp. M. S. Knowlton, H, contusion, bullet, left shoulder
 Pvt. Adanson Lewis, C, left side neck, bullet
 Pvt. John McMahan, B, finger, left hand, bullet
 Pvt. Jerry McCarty, F, fracture shoulder, right arm
 Sergt. John Quinn, K, fracture left foot
 Pvt. F. H. Smith, K, contusion by shell
 Pvt. Thomas Kane, K, hand, left side, bullet
 Corp. Thomas Tilley, G, left shoulder, bullet
 Corp. B. G. Walker, G, left side face, bullet
 Corp. Adolph Lavine, I, contusion right leg, shell
 Pvt. M. Fitzpatrick, I, left knee, shell
 Pvt. James Haley, I, right side neck, bullet
 Pvt. Patrick Smith, I, both legs, bullets
 Pvt. Louis La Duke, I, right tibia, bullet
 Pvt. M. O'Brien, I, slightly, bullet
 Sergt. H. A. Slack, A, windage of shell
 Pvt. C. Varney, E, windage of shell

Missing.

Corp. Hugh W. Toole, D	Corp. John Keenan, B
Pvt. Frank Clark, D	Pvt. Charles Farrar, G
Pvt. David Duncan, K	Pvt. John Gartland, G
Pvt. Robert Duffy, B	Pvt. William E. Carpenter, G

[Note: The article continues with the casualty lists for the remaining regiments under Col. Drake's command.]

Robertson describes the scene of the return of Butler's forces to their intrenchments, tabulating what was gained or lost by each side:



**Earthworks near Bermuda Hundred, Va, Army of the James
Published in "Perry's Saints, or The Fighting Parson's Regiment in
the War of the Rebellion," by James M. Nichols (1886)**

"Protected by their fortifications, the men of the Army of the James at last gave vent to their emotions. The very sight of the camps so confidently vacated on 12 May brought tears to the eyes of many veterans when they thought of their comrades who would not be returning to their tents. Others were struck by the contrast between their own dirty, haggard appearance and the spit-and-polish sharpness of the newly arrived 1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery. Undaunted by the stories spread by the returning troops of thousands of pursuing Confederates, the Connecticut artillerymen and the camp guards turned out to welcome their comrades with rations, fresh water, and sympathy. Although some of the returnees collapsed into undisturbed sleep immediately, others took the time to bathe or to write letters home announcing their safe arrival.

"During the night some units conducted roll calls to determine losses and others completed that sad but necessary task on the following day. The final tabulations showed that slightly more than 3,000 Federal soldiers had been killed, wounded, or captured. The Confederates had gathered up 1,388 prisoners, including many wounded. Most of the dead had been left on the field unburied, leaving only the returning wounded to be cared for. These had either been carried to regimental aid stations during the course of the battle or had stumbled to safety by themselves during the retreat. Upon reaching the fortifications, the wounded were taken first to the large hospital established near Butler's headquarters at Point of Rocks, where they were given such emergency treatment as their numbers would permit. Most were then transported in ambulances to the landings, where ships waited to carry them down the James River to the more elaborate medical facilities near Fort Mon-



Wharves at Bermuda Hundred Landing, Virginia (ca. 1864-'65)

roe. In a few days, many were transferred from there to hospitals scattered throughout the North. For others, Fort Monroe was the last stop.

"Among Beauregard's forces, casualties had also been heavy, amounting to just under 3,000 killed, wounded, and missing. Confederate wounded, however, had a much shorter distance to travel than did the Federals. From a collection point at Drewry's Bluff, they were conveyed by steamer or ambulance to Richmond and distributed among the city's military hospitals. Serving to mitigate the sense of loss among



Scene from "Gone With the Wind," Directed by Victor Fleming (1939)

Beauregard's troops was the knowledge that, by almost any measurement, they had won the battle. Besides the nearly 1,400 Federal prisoners, the booty included five battle flags, five artillery pieces, 3,968 rifles, and more than 60,000 rounds of ammunition. Most important, the Federals had left the battlefield and retired behind their defenses, thereby vacating the transportation corridor between Richmond and

Petersburg. Officers were proud of their men and the troops were proud of themselves. A Virginian expressed the sentiments of most when he told a relative that "we gave the Yankees the completest thrashing that they have ever had although we fought them under great disadvantages for they certainly had five men to our one." Such optimistic assessments even gave rise to hope that the war would soon be successfully concluded; as a North Carolinian told his wife: 'the yankeys say the war has to stop till the fourth of July I hope it will for the Yankeys are getting repulsed at all points.'



**Colonel Joseph R. Hawley,
commanding 2^d Brigade, 1st Division, X Army Corps,
Army of the James**

"Following the battle, both sides indulged in recriminations. On the Federal side a soldier in the 23rd Massachusetts wrote his parents that 'Old Baldy Smith is to blame I think for it was an ill managed concern.' In a letter to his wife Colonel Joseph Hawley of the X Corps found fault at an even higher level: 'Gen. Butler failed as a great general. Our position was weak & line thin. Most of the leading officers in our corps felt the defeat coming for two days.' Others, however, were not so sure the blame for the Federal defeat lay with Butler, claiming that Gillmore could have changed the outcome by attacking earlier on the left. Even among the victors, there was fault to be found, with Beauregard castigating both Ransom and Whiting for their dilatory movements. Nor was the government in Richmond totally satisfied, particularly since Jefferson Davis had argued strenuously against attempting to unite the Confederate forces on the field of battle."

The fighting at Port Walthall Junction on the 16th was much heavier than that alluded to in Robertson's treatment of the subject, as evidenced by three dispatches to the *Daily Times* from 1st Lieut. William H. Merriam, aide-de-camp to Gen. Robert S. Foster, serving on Gen. Gillmore's staff. Lieut. Merriam's first dispatch on the 16th is presented in its entirety:

The Troy Daily Times.

MAY 21, 1864.

From the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth.

Correspondence of the Troy Daily Times.



**1st Lieutenant Walter S. Birdsall, Co. D, 169th N.Y.
Private Collection**

NEAR PETERSBURG, Va., May 16 – 10 A.M.

As a part of the exceedingly sharp operations of this morning, now and about Richmond and Petersburg, Va., the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth, Col. McConihe, and the Thirteenth Indiana, Col. Dobbs, of Acting Brigadier-General J. C. Drake's brigade, were guarding the railroad and the turnpike. At an early hour this morning, they were attacked by a heavy force of infantry and cavalry, and fought superior numbers with the greatest gallantry. The mail is just leaving, and I have only time in this despatch to say, that the gallant Lieutenant Walter Scott Birdsall, is rumored killed; – some saying that he is dangerously wounded and a prisoner. Private William Mercy of Co. "K," is certainly killed, having fallen dead from a shot through the head. Privates James Haley, Patrick Smith and Edwin Mann of Co. I, and Private [Adanson] Lewis of Co. C, and John McMahan, Co. B, are

severely wounded. I shall send the full particulars as soon as I can gather them, reliably. Enough is known to assert that the regiment is badly cut up. Lieut.-Colonel Carpenter, commanding the One Hundred and Twelfth New York, of our brigade, is mortally wounded.

MAY 16, 11 A. M. – I have caused the detention of the mail for a short period in order to furnish you with the latest news from the front. The One Hundred and Sixty-ninth is terribly cut up. The wounded are being brought in every moment. I am deeply pained to announce that there is no doubt of the death of the lamented Birdsall. He fell early in the engagement, struck by a shell. Shortly after he fell, private Joseph Lennoth, of his company, was wounded and fell by the body of Lieut. Birdsall. He asked the Lieutenant a question, but met with no response. Private William M. Swartwout, of Co. G, saw him dead on the field. His body has not yet been brought off. Thus has a brave, intelligent and noble young officer fallen, another victim to this insatiate and awful rebellion. Lieut. Birdsall was ever conspicuous in the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth for candor of mind, engaging manners, and a thorough knowledge of his military duties. Socially, he was artless and attractive – far in advance of the common measure. I believe he was ready to die. I have heard him say that he counted his life as nothing if called upon to lay it down in the cause of his country. We shall long mourn his loss as that of a gallant, efficient and modest young officer, who desired to live a blessing to his friends and his country. Lieut. Thomas B. Eaton, of the brigade staff, is both safe and well, though actively engaged in the discharge of his arduous duties. Among the losses are the following:

Killed – Patrick Farrell, Co. D; Edward Mann, Co. I.

Wounded – Co. D, Sergeant Dennis Corbett, Corporal Donegan, Corporal Samuel Harris, badly, probably mortally; Joseph Hillis, Joseph Lennoth. Co. G, Corporal Benjamin G. Walker, shot through the mouth, with ball in the back of his neck; Walker shot his rebel; Corporal Thomas Tilly. Co. K, Sergeant John Quinn, slightly in foot; Frederick Smith, slightly. Co. I, Adolphe Lavine, slightly.

Taken prisoner – Sergeant Charles O'Reilly, Co. B.

MAY 16, 2 P. M. – Just as I close this I learn that Colonel Alden and Major Colvin are missing, but it is probable they are safe. The heaviest firing has just commenced. General Martindale is in assumed command of these defenses to-day. The news from here will continue to be stirring for the next forty-eight hours. Will send full account after the battle.

W. H. M.

Priv. Patrick Farrell, Co. D, was erroneously listed as killed. The *Daily Press* and *Daily Times* reported the news of Lieut. Birdsall's death on the 19th:

FROM THE ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-NINTH. DEATH OF LIEUT. BIRDSALL. – Among the killed in the great battle on the Peninsula on Tuesday, was Lieut. Walter S. Birdsall, of Company D, One Hundred and Sixty-ninth Regiment, and son of Supervisor Birdsall, of this city. His name appears in the *Herald* list of to-day. The deceased went off as Sergeant-Major, of the 169th, and was soon after promoted to a Lieutenantcy. He was in command of Co. D for a long time. He was a young man of great personal bravery, of irreproachable character, and of a generous disposition. His father and family will have the sympathy of the whole community. He was about 20 years of age.

H. W. Toole and Wm. Donegan, of Co. D, and John H. Bligh, of Co. E, 169th, were among the wounded in the same fight.



LIEUT. BIRDSALL KILLED. – Our esteemed townsman, Z. P. Birdsall, a prominent resident of the Fifth Ward, will have the most sincere sympathy in the loss which he has sustained. – His son, Lieut. Walter S. Birdsall, of Co. B, One Hundred and Sixty-ninth regiment, was killed in Beauregard's attack on our forces last Monday.

A rebel brigade made a charge on a small force, of which this regiment formed a part, and Lieut. Birdsall's death is announced in to-day's *Herald*. The deceased was a young man of fine promise and excellent character. He was appointed Sergeant-Major of the regiment when it was formed, and was soon advanced to a Lieutenancy. All who knew him will testify to his merit and join with us in regrets at his death.

The *Daily Whig* reported the following day that attempts were being made to return his remains to Troy for interment, but the Confederates were hardly interested in cooperating with the Federals in such matters.

Serg't. John Quinn, Co. K, was initially reported as having been wounded, "slightly in foot." The severity of a gunshot wound to Serg't. Quinn's left foot would necessitate the amputation of the metatarsus, however, now part of the collection of the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Washington, D.C.:



Metatarsus of Sergeant John Quinn's left foot – Superior view (top) and Inferior view (below)



Catalog No.:	1000270	Company:	K
Doctor:	Thompson, J. H.	Regiment:	169
Soldier Name:	Quinn, John	State:	N.Y.
Title/Description:	Tarsals, Metatarsals	Rank:	SGT.

The following record appears in *Catalogue of the Surgical Section of the United States Army Medical Museum*, by Alfred A. Woodhull, p. 429, (1866):

3102. f. 76.	The metatarsus of the [left] foot, three months after injury. A bullet has passed through the base of each bone, except the first. The injured portions are necrosed.
Sergeant J. Q., "K," 169 th New York, 21: Drury's Bluff, 16 th May; admitted hospital, Washington, from hospital at Point Lookout, 6 th August; amputated in lowest third, 19 th August, 1864. Recovered. Contributed by Assistant Surgeon P. C. Davis, U. S. Army.	

The 1890 U.S. Federal Census listed Serg't. Quinn as living at Lansingburgh, N.Y., with the following comment: "Disability Incurred: Left foot shot off."

Robertson reports that Federal losses at Drewry's Bluff and the Shenandoah Valley, along with difficulties for the Army of the Potomac at Spotsylvania, cast Grant into a depression:



**Lieutenant-General Ulysses S. Grant,
commanding of all Union armies (ca. 1864)**

"Near Spotsylvania Court House, Grant received a telegram from Halleck informing him of Butler's withdrawal from Drewry's Bluff. Coupled with his own repulse by Lee's army and the news of Franz Sigel's defeat at New Market in the Valley of Virginia, word of Butler's troubles cast Grant into a depression. Believing that the Confederates would now reinforce Lee from Beauregard's army, Grant considered calling most of the Army of the James north at once. Upon reflection, however, he delayed the implementation of such a drastic step."

Fighting resumed on the 18th when the Confederates attacked the Federal picket line in front of the X Army Corps' line of intrenchments in an engagement generally known as the Battle of Ware Bottom Church, sometimes referred to as the Battle of Foster's Plantation or the Battle of Green Plains. Southern accounts refer to the fighting as the Battle of Clay's Farm or the Battle of Howlett's Farm. Robertson provides a brief summary of the engagement:

"The 18th of May was another day of consolidation for both sides, as Confederate skirmishers engaged the stoutly resisting Federal pickets. At times the action became heavy, particularly in the center of the Federal line, where the 97th Pennsylvania Infantry suffered fifty-seven casualties in losing and recapturing its picket line. As the skirmishing waxed and waned throughout the day, the majority of soldiers on both sides spent their time building or improving their defenses. Among the Confederates, particular effort was expended upon an earthwork located on a bluff overlooking the James River near the Howlett mansion. This work commanded a long sweep of the river known as Trent's Reach, in which lay the advanced elements of Admiral Lee's fleet. Both Lee and

the Confederates were well aware that, if completed, the Howlett battery would effectively close the James River to further naval penetration. As a result, the workmen from [Confederate Gen.] Terry's Brigade labored under constant bombardment from Federal warships."

The New-York *Daily Tribune* of the 23^d covered the fighting on the 18th, reporting how the Rebels were "gallantly charged upon by the 169th New-York" and were driven back to their lines. The article is presented in its entirety:

New-York Tribune.

MAY 23, 1864.

LATEST FROM GEN. BUTLER.

He is Having a Rough Time.

BUT HE HOLDS HIS POSITION.

Appearance of the Rebels in Front of the Intrenchments – Skirmishing – Gen. Ames's Division Engaged – Rebel Earthwork on the Opposite Bank of the James – Beauregard's Force.

From Our Special Correspondent.

TENTH ARMY CORPS, NEAR CITY POINT,
WEDNESDAY EVENING, May 18, 1864.

My last letters left the army safely returned to its intrenched line across the Peninsula; to-day the Rebels are lying before us. At one this morning, the word was passed that the enemy was firing on our pickets. A considerable force, apparently, was seen, and there was a brisk running fire for an hour, with an occasional discharge of artillery. The moon was setting when I groped my way back to camp, and though it seemed probable that the Rebels might seek to take advantage of the fog, no further disturbance came.

At nine, the firing was renewed, and it now proved that the Rebels were advancing on the front in force.

In front of Gen. Ames's division has been nearly all the fighting of to-day. Two strips of wood are about a fourth of a mile in front of this, on right and left, with a ravine between them further back; on the right, nearer us and overlooking the guns, is a long strip, already slashed to thinness; directly in front is a burned spot covered with fallen trees, and just beyond, open field. [The Rebels engaged our pickets, drove them into the burned stubble, but the guns opened with shell, and they were gallantly charged upon by the 169th New-York, and fell back to the shelter of the woods and the ravine, from which they have not since emerged.](#)

The day passed without anything of special moment, but the excitement was intense. Firing on the skirmish line was incessant, and probably our wounded of the day will not fall short of 150. The Rebels



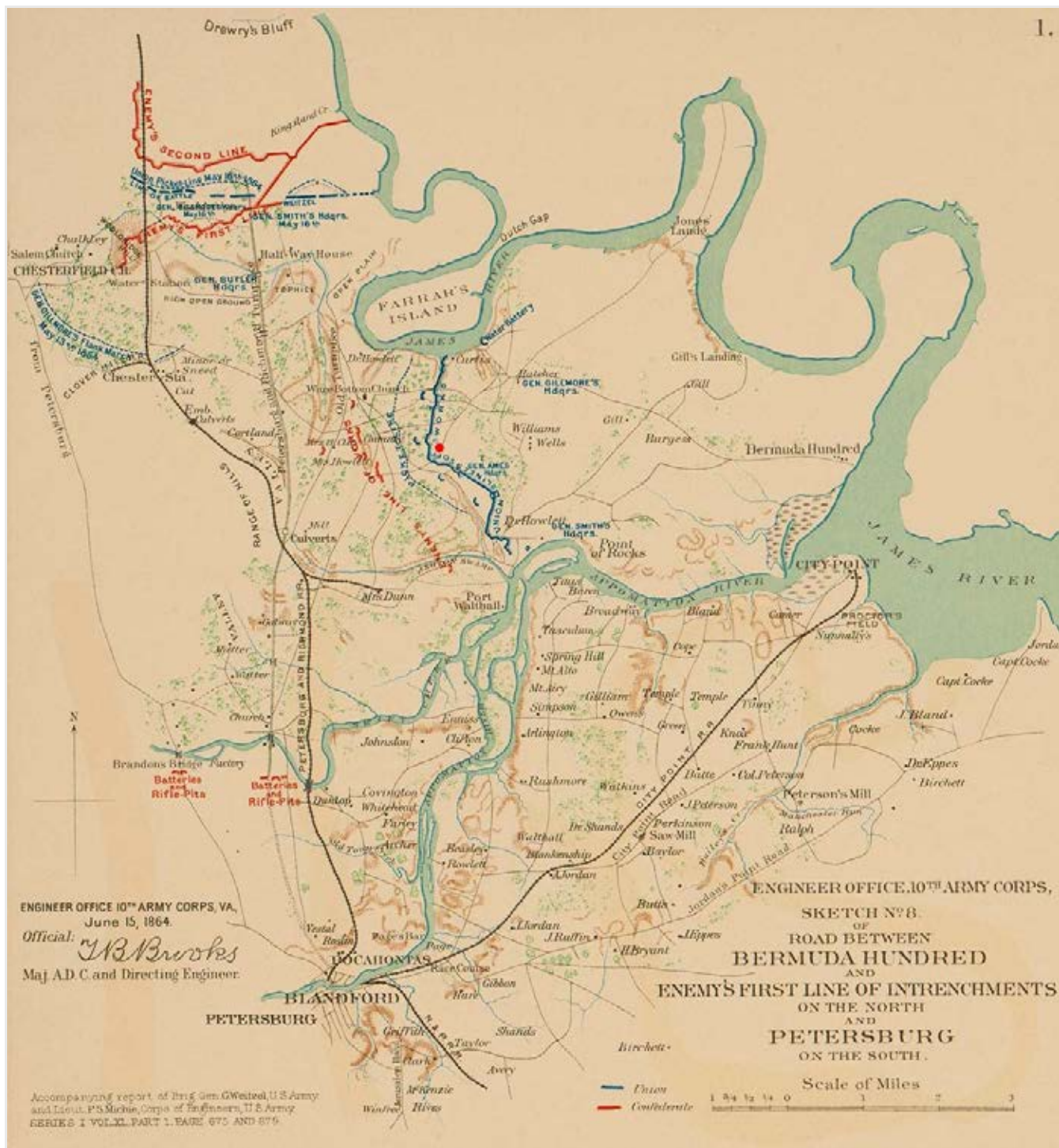
Study of Three Union Soldiers (1899)
William B. T. Trego (1859-1909)
Private Collection

managed to get a gun or two in the yard of an abandoned house near the river, partially covered by a fall on the ground, and they shelled the woods on the right of this front all the afternoon, at very short range, only throwing two or three shells and round shot at the tier of guns which faced them from the front. Our own guns only fired a few shots. On the bank of the James I looked down upon Admiral Lee's flagship, in company with other gunboats and monitors. An incessant shelling was kept up from the wooden gunboats upon a Rebel work which was commenced on the bank, further north, the previous day.

Toward dusk, when our relief skirmishers went out, the Rebels made a vigorous attempt to force them from the woods, but apparently without effect. Our defenses have been greatly strengthened during the day, and the woods, which I have anxiously watched all day, have narrowed under the blows of axmen. The men are in good spirits, though fatigued, and will fight with bravery if the fight comes.

Rebel deserters of to-day represent a force of 20,000 to 30,000 in front of us, under Beauregard, and some tell the curious story that Grant is in Richmond, and Lee falling back here. It is probable that the force which opposed us at Petersburg and Fort Darling is largely here, and that our further raiding will be delayed; but the prevalent impression is that this is designed to cover the repairs of the railroad and the transportation of supplies.

There is grounds for fear that the Rebels may get batteries in the woods during the night and open upon us in the morning at the front of Ames's position, which I have described, where the fight will be, if anywhere. As I retire to-night, our old enemy, the fog, begins to collect, and there may be an attack before morning.



"Engineer Office, 10th Army Corps, Va., Sketch No. 8 of Road Between Bermuda Hundred and Enemy's First Line of Intrenchments on the North and Petersburg on the South." (June 15, 1864).

Accompanying report of Brig. Gen. G. Weitzel, U.S. Army, and Lieut. P. S. Michie, Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, Series I, Vol. XL, Part I, Page 675 and 679.

United States Topographical Bureau. Atlas to accompany the official records of the Union and Confederate Armies, 1861-1865, Plate LXV., Map, [1891-1895].

The location of the camp of the 169th N.Y. at Foster's Plantation on the Union Line of Works is indicated by the red dot.



U.S. Monitors below Howlett's House near Dutch Gap, James River, Va, with boom across River and Torpedo Grapplers. The observatory is Gen'l. Ben. Butler's, right of line at Cobb's Hill, Bermuda Hundreds. From the Journal of Private Robert Knox Sneden, 40th N.Y.V., Topographical Engineer of the III Army Corps, Vol. VI, 1864 September 1 - 1865 May Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

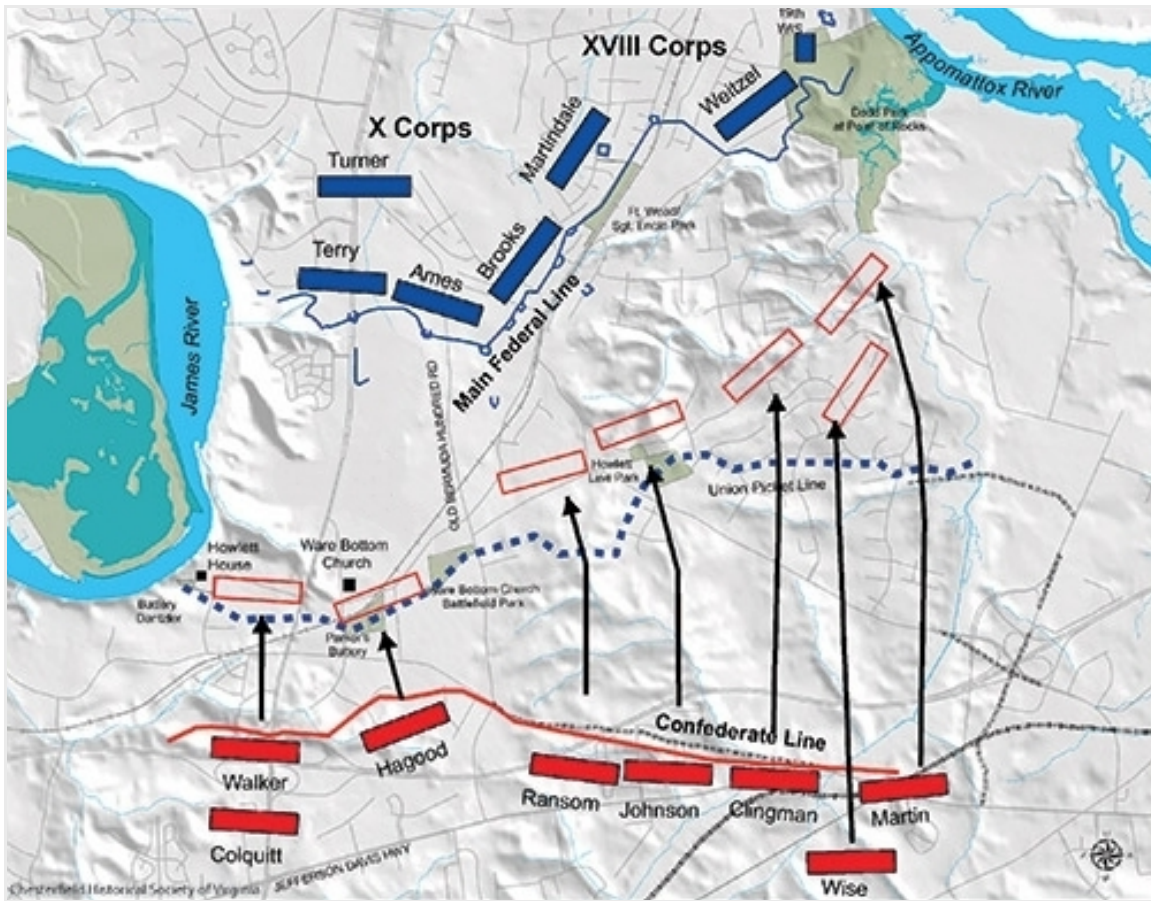
THURSDAY, 6 a.m. – The night has passed quietly, but a rapid artillery fire has just begun at the position I referred to. The ball may be already opened, and as I close these lines I am about to ride on to ascertain the facts.

P.S. – The firing has ceased, at least temporarily. I find it to proceed from the Rebel batteries in the hollow and the ravine in front, where is the "Howlett House" I spoke of, which have probably been strengthened during the night. They are pounding away at the woods on the right of them, dropping a shell or two also inside the works, but nothing except the smoke is visible. Next house is a Rebel nest, and yesterday was filled with sharpshooters. Two guns went over to shell it yesterday, and it has been well riddled.

There will probably be some fighting done to-day, for besides using their force as a cover, the Rebels perhaps hope to take this position.

Heavy fighting continued on the 19th, immediately in front of the X Corps' intrenchments. From Drake's Brigade the 112th N.Y. and 13th Indiana operated against the enemy outside the rifle pits, while the 169th N.Y. manned the works with the 9th Maine. The Confederates were driven back once again, but on the 20th another Rebel assault proved more successful. Robertson continues:

"On the morning of 20 May, as [Confederate Gen.] Terry's Brigade paraded its captured battle flags through Richmond and the last dead were buried on the Drewry's Bluff battlefield, Beauregard's troops advanced in an effort to secure more advantageous terrain. Because the front of the XVIII Corps on the Federal left was covered by a deep ravine, the Confederate assault was directed against Terry's and Ames's divisions of the X Corps, which occupied relatively level ground. Pressing forward under a heavy fire from the Federal pickets, the Confederates successfully gained the first line of rifle pits along most of Gillmore's front. The greatest penetration of the Federal defenses occurred



Map of the Battle of Ware Bottom Church, Va., May 20, 1864, prepared by Robert J. Forman for the Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia (2013)

in Ames's sector, where Wise's and Martin's Brigades, aided by Federal mistakes, advanced nearly three-fourths of a mile. To the north, Confederate units were not kept well in hand, and although they seized considerable ground, their hold on the position was tenuous.

"That afternoon Gillmore ordered a counterattack in the hope of regaining his lost picket line. On Ames's front the 97th Pennsylvania and 13th Indiana Regiments attempted valiantly, but unsuccessfully, to drive the Confederates from their new positions. There would be no return to Ames's old picket line, making it necessary to establish a new one nearer the Federal main line. By contrast, Terry's situation appeared much more favorable. Terry had lost only the southern portion of his picket line, which connected with that of Ames. Shortly after 2:00 P.M. Colonel Joshua Howell led two of his own regiments, supported by one of Joseph Hawley's, in an effort to recapture the lost ground. At the cost of numerous casualties, Howell eventually succeeded in driving the Confederates back toward their starting point, after which he reestablished the original Federal position.

"Just then Brigadier General William Walker's South Carolina Brigade arrived on the field and was ordered to drive Howell back before he had time to consolidate his gains. Unfortunately for the South Carolinians, Walker had not had time to familiarize himself either with the terrain or the situation. The resulting attack was a disaster. The individual regiments advanced disjointedly and were repeatedly flanked by the Federals. A survivor later admitted that 'it was just such a place that this child never wants to be caught in again.' Walker remained in the thick of action encouraging his men until it became obvious that the brigade

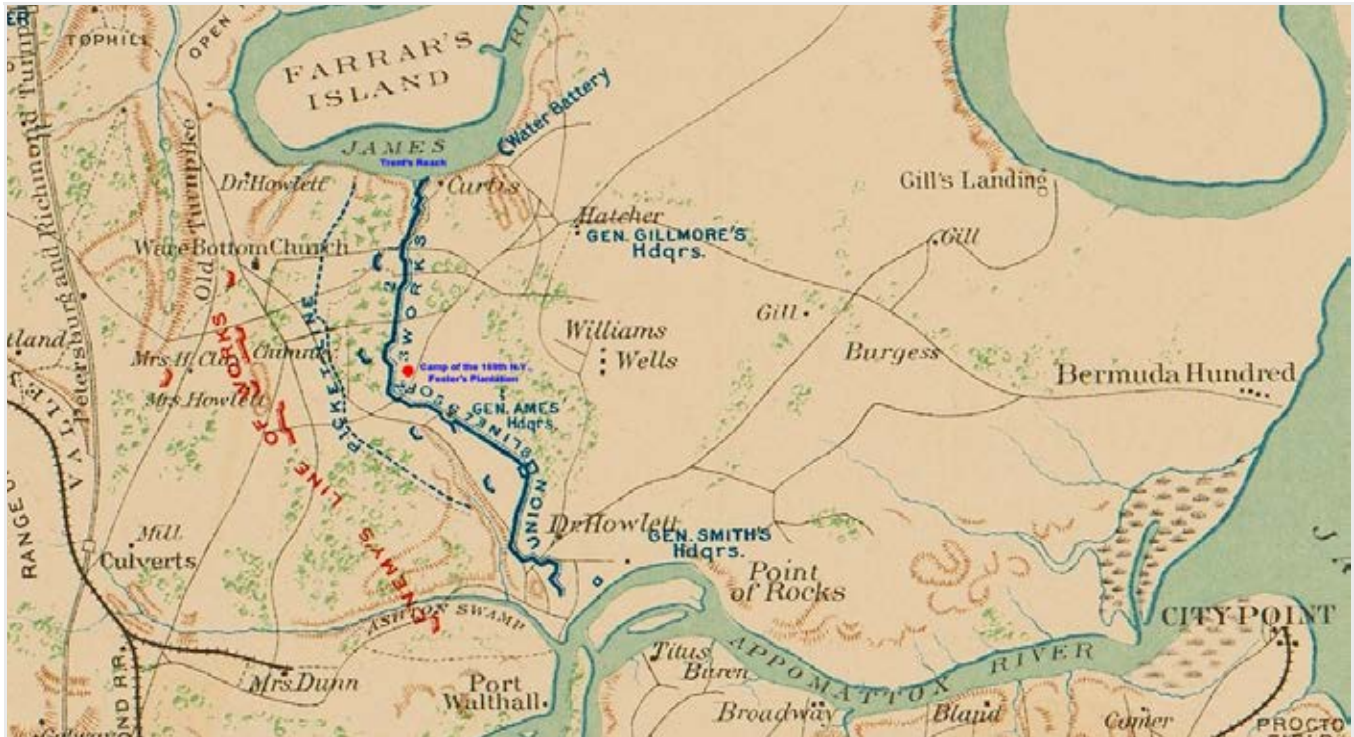
would require aid to avoid destruction. Riding in search of help, he mistook his direction and headed directly toward the Federal lines. Realizing his error too late, Walker tried to flee, but was cut down by a volley from the 67th Ohio Infantry. While his men retreated in disorder, Walker lay on the field bleeding from three wounds until brought within the Federal lines. Near midnight, he was operated upon by Surgeon John Craven who, working by the light of a bonfire, amputated Walker's [right foot] in order to save his life.



Confederate Brigadier-General William S. Walker, commanding brigade, Beauregard's Field Command

"Unaware of Walker's fate, Beauregard at 6:15 P.M. reported to Bragg that the terrain needed for the shortest possible defensive line had been acquired. At a cost of 800 Confederate casualties and 702 Federal, Beauregard's troops had established themselves in a continuous line across the Bermuda Hundred peninsula, and work began at once to fortify the position. The new defensive line had been obtained none too soon, for during the day the War Department ordered Beauregard to transfer Gracie's Brigade to the Department of Richmond. Upon Gracie's departure, Beauregard had only 14,500 infantry, 2,500 cavalry, and 1,000 artillery with which to contain Butler's larger army and to defend Petersburg. Nevertheless, Beauregard continued to look for offensive openings. Because the possibility of further action south of the Appomattox required a more stable person in charge at Petersburg, Chase Whiting was relieved of command 'at his own request...'

"Within the Army of the James there was no talk of leaving the Bermuda Hundred peninsula. By 20 May, however, the frustration generated by the army's lack of success was beginning to emerge. When the Confederate attack showed that the defensive works did not join well at the boundaries of the X and XVIII Corps, Butler appointed his friend Godfrey Weitzel to supervise all engineering operations. This arrangement was fought bitterly by Gillmore and his engineer, Colonel Edward Serrell, with the result that Serrell was gently reprimanded by Butler. During the afternoon a second incident occurred, when Butler ordered Smith to send Brooks's division to aid Gillmore in



Detail from "Sketch No. 8 of Road Between Bermuda Hundred and Enemy's First Line of Intrenchments on the North and Petersburg on the South" (June 15, 1864)

retaking his lost picket line. Smith was alleged to have replied, 'Damn Gillmore! He has got himself into a scrape; let him get out of it the best way he can.' Although Smith denied making the remark, it seems in character for him, and he definitely did not send the troops. Because Gillmore did not feel strong enough to recapture his line alone, he angrily gave up the attempt...

"On 21 May the Confederate forces facing the Army of the James completed the occupation of their new line, roughly three miles long... Throughout the day Federal fatigue details labored on the defenses, particularly on the more exposed X Corps sector. Since the Confederate attack of the previous day, it had been decreed that, until further notice, all troops would rise at 3:30 A.M. each morning and occupy the works until daylight. Although some units evaded the order by sleeping in the trenches, the long hours of watchfulness, the rigors of fatigue duty, and the harassing fire of the Confederates were sapping the troops' strength. In the XVIII Corps Smith tried to ameliorate the hardships by issuing to each man a morning ration of whiskey and quinine, or coffee, as long as the 3:30 A.M. alert remained in force. This measure was soon adopted in the X Corps also, although in one soldier's opinion the commissary whiskey tasted like 'a "wide awake" torchlight procession going down the throat.' On the picket line another stimulant, tobacco, was obtained from the Confederate sentries in exchange for coffee or newspapers. Although frowned upon by officers, such illicit fraternization became a fixed custom as long as the lines remained static...

"During the night a noisy skirmish erupted on the Bermuda Hundred picket line, but by dawn of Sunday, 22 May, the volume of fire had slackened. Hostilities generally continued at a reduced level throughout the day, except on the river where the Federal monitors vigorously pounded the Howlett battery."



Point of Rocks on the Appomattox River (center) in the distance, with the X Corps
U.S. General Hospital to the left of the bluff (1864)

We continue with Lieut. Merriam's reporting of the 169th's role in the engagement at Foster's Plantation up to the evening of the 18th, including the names of those men counted among the casualties. The extant portion of his dispatch is presented in its entirety:

The Troy Daily Times.

MAY 24, 1864.

From the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth.

Correspondence of the Troy Daily Times.

FOSTER'S PLANTATION, Va., May 18, 8 P.M.

My last dispatch was suddenly terminated yesterday morning by the opening of fire from the enemy on our front. Since that moment, we have known no cessation from such active duty as belongs to a large army operating immediately upon the enemy, and I now snatch an instant to mail you a list of our killed and wounded on and since the 16th inst., inclusive up to this hour. For the past thirty-six hours, we have been engaged constantly with the enemy, Col. Drake's, formerly Gen. Foster's brigade, to which the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth has been assigned, doing by far the largest share of the duty. The fighting to-day, which has been both with infantry and light and heavy artillery, has been most intense, prolonged and terribly bitter, and the results have been correspondingly sanguinary. Our brigade suffers less than it otherwise would, were it not for the coolness, sagacity, hard work and effective heroism of the distinguished Colonel commanding. He is a safe man, and works his brigade to the end that it may do its whole duty

with the least possible impairment of its individual and collective strength beyond what is absolutely necessary for the public good. He is recognized by all the commanding Generals as a most accomplished and able officer. I have said this much of Col. Drake for the reason that I am anxious that the friends of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth may rest assured that the regiment is brigaded under an honest and competent commander, who like Gen. Foster, its beloved chief, will not sacrifice his troops for the object of advancing his own military ambition or forwarding selfish interests at the expense of precious blood. The results of to-day's contest are best set forth in the list of casualties occurring in the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth, herewith appended:

Killed – First Sergeant Frederick French and private Richard Kearney, Co. D.
Wounded – Capt. Spencer W. Snyder, commanding D Co.; privates James Boyce, Patrick Murphy, Ed. Connor, L. Woodcock, Co. E; Corporal Patrick Holly, privates Jeremiah Wallar, John Dillon, D; privates George Woodruff, Jas. Hever, Edward Smith, B; Corporal Conrad Albert, privates Nicholas O'Brien, Louis Braxmarer, G; privates Jere. Robollard, Thomas Plunkett, Peter Riley, Thomas Abbey, I; private Jas. W. Hummell, C; Sergeants Thomas Jessup and McGregor, privates John H. Grose, William Messenger (badly), A.

I am gratified to be able to state that Capt. Snyder is but very slightly wounded, and is in the corps hospital. He was wounded while gallantly operating against the enemy. In my dispatch of the day before yesterday, I sent you a list of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth killed in the battle of the 16th inst. I now append a list of the wounded in the regiment on that day. My full account of the battle of that day I am compelled to defer for another mail, owing to the excitements in the field:

Sergeant Dennis Corbett, Corporals William Donegan and Samuel Harris, private Joseph Hillis, Co. D; private M. S. Knowlton, H; private Adanson Lewis, C; private John McMahan, B; private Jerry McCarty, F; Sergeant John Quinn, privates F. H. Smith, Thomas Kane, K; Corporal Thomas Tilley, private B. G. Walker, G; Corporal Adolph Lavine, privates M. Fitzpatrick, James Haley, Patrick Smith (said to be dead), Lewis La Duke, M. O'Brien, I; Sergeant H. A. Slack, A; private C. Varney, E.



The preliminaries of the flag of truce to which I alluded in my last are fast approaching settlement. Col. McConihe is making every effort, with some prospect of success, to induce Gen. Butler to earnestly ask for information touching the disposition by the rebels of the body of the



Confederate Battery
Isaac Walton Tabor (1860-1933)
Published in "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War" by Robert
Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel (1887-'88)

deeply lamented Lieut. Birdsall. The campaign is so active and bloody that but little attention can be paid to these distressing features of the casualties on either side, and therefore we may not hope to recover the body of the fallen young hero, but we have a right to expect that the enemy will tell us what became of the remains.



**Ball, solid shot, 4.62 inches in diameter, fired by a smoothbore
12-pounder, recovered at Bermuda Hundred, Virginia
Private Collection**

Col. Alden, who is in chief command to-night of the grand picket line, – a most responsible and hazardous duty, to the discharge of which he is fully equal, – narrowly escaped instant death this noon from one of the enemy's solid shots. The Colonel was just leaving his tent for the extreme front, where the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth was doing some fighting, when a heavy solid shot from the enemy landed at his feet and rolled from him. The imperturbable Colonel walked on as though noth-

ing had happened. Had I been in his position, I should have at least regarded it as an approach to a solemn call for... [Note: The article ends at this point.]
W. H. M.

Lieut. Merriam's dispatch on the 20th, published by the *Daily Times* on the 27th, describes in detail the actions of each company during the battle at Port Walthall Junction on the 16th, and included brief descriptions of the fighting from the 18th to the 22^d. The letter was introduced with the utmost praise from the editor, (deservedly so), and is presented in its entirety:

"WAR CORRESPONDENCE. – The graphic and really admirable letter of Lieut. W. H. Merriam, from the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth Regiment, on our first page to-day, will be read with attention and interest. We scarcely recollect its superior in the way of correspondence from a home regiment to a local newspaper."

The Troy Daily Times.

MAY 27, 1864.

From the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth.

Correspondence of the Troy Daily Times.

FOSTER'S PLANTATION, VA., May 20.

Now that the dense smoke of an awful scene of carnage, such as Gen. R. S. Foster promised us, in a stirring speech addressed to a party of officers and musicians who called to pay their respects to him in a serenade just before we left Gloucester Point, has cleared away, I am enabled to send you a definite account of the operations of the memorable sixteenth and twentieth days of May, 1864, and the exciting scenes that marked their opening and waning hours, so far as this brigade is concerned. I shall furnish your readers with some account of the participancy of Col. Drake's brigade in the battle of Drewry's Bluff and Port Walthall Station, which will necessarily include the noble and patriotic part enacted by our own One Hundred and Sixty-ninth, under the honored lead of Col. McConihe and his associates in the field, Lieut.-Col. Alonzo Alden and Major James A. Colvin, thus rendering complete without loss of time my somewhat hurried, but in the main, correct dispatches of the morning of the 16th in this army corps.

THE BRIGADE

of which the able, cool, cautious and reliant Colonel J. C. Drake, of the One Hundred and Twelfth New York volunteers is the commander, is the one from which the gallant Gen. R. S. Foster, of Indiana, was recently relieved to become Chief of Staff in the military family of Maj.-Gen. Quincy A. Gillmore, commanding the Tenth army corps. It is known as the Second brigade, Third division, of that army corps, and consists of the following named regiments, who will in all probability compose it during this eventful campaign in Virginia: The Thirteenth Indiana volunteers, Col. Cyrus J. Dobbs; the One Hundred and Twelfth New York volunteers, Col. Drake being in command of brigade, Lieut.-Col. Carpenter, mortally wounded; and Major Smith, Provost Marshal, is now commanded by senior Captain Chaddock; the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New York volunteers, Col. John McConihe; and the Ninth Maine volunteers, commanded by Lieut.-Col. Z. H. Robinson.



"Leading a Charge"
Charles Wellington Reed (1841-1926)
Collection of the U.S. Army Heritage & Education Center,
Carlisle, Pennsylvania

THE MORNING OF THE 16TH

dawned upon a heavy and impenetrable fog, which lasted until 10 o'clock, and which constituted the greatest advantage of the rebels during the day. At a very early hour an exceedingly heavy musketry firing was heard at the front. Colonel Drake at once received a verbal and hasty order through General Ames to instantly send a regiment to the right of our line, (thus dividing the brigade for the day into two brigades,) as the enemy had suddenly emerged from the fog and were making a desperate effort to turn that flank. This order found Colonel Drake's command just set down to breakfast. The matutinal meal was most precipitately abandoned, which in the end amounted to a great hardship, as neither officers nor men had anything to eat until late in the evening. In compliance with this order, the One Hundred and Twelfth New York, and subsequently the Ninth Maine volunteers, were sent to our right, at the time resting on the James River, near Spring Hill. The One Hundred and Twelfth regiment proceeded to Gen. Heckman's headquarters. At this point, the lamented Colonel Carpenter halted the column, and ascertained that Gen. Heckman had gone to the front. – Sending his Adjutant, Lieut. Hedges, to the front to report to Gen. Heckman, he was captured by the enemy, and Col. Carpenter following him, was mortally wounded after finding himself on account of the fog within the enemy's lines, and refusing to surrender. At this juncture the gallant Colonel Drake moved up with the balance of his command, and immediately forming them in line, most successfully resisted all further advance of the foe. At this point, Gen. Weitzel, commanding division, ordered Col. Drake to retire his brigade to what he deemed a more favorable position. The brigade supported Follett's battery several hours, and finally made a most able and gallant charge,



Skirmishing in the Wilderness (1864)
Winslow Homer (1836-1910)
Collection of the New Britain Museum of American Art,
New Britain, Connecticut

driving the enemy clear into the rifle-pits, and repossessing themselves of all the ground lost in the morning by reason of the fog. The conduct of Col. Drake and his staff, consisting of Lieut. George L. Pierce, One Hundred and Twelfth New York; Lieut. Thomas B. Eaton, One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New York, and Lieut. William Lincoln Hughes, of the Ninth Maine, was of the most questionless and soldierly character throughout the entire day.

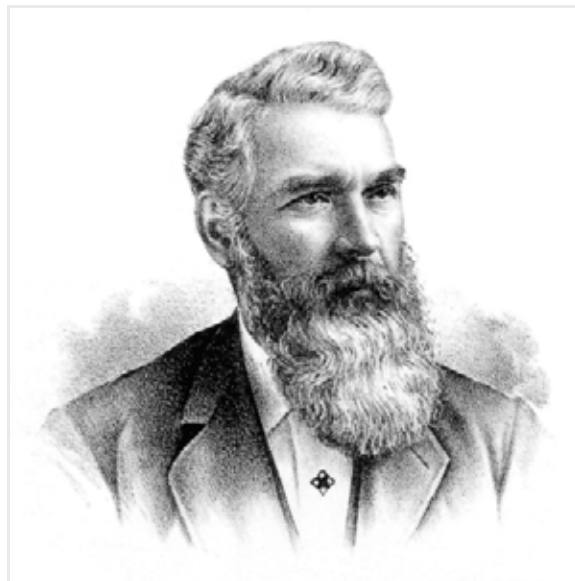
WHY THE BRIGADE WAS DIVIDED.

So much by way of showing cause why Col. Drake's command was made the subject of a military necessity suddenly arising, and temporarily divided into two brigades. The controlling reason for the division is a most flattering one, and is to be found, by common consent, in the efficiency and solid character of the organization. Two important points were to be held, and it was justly deemed that the Second brigade, Third division, Tenth army corps, separated into *two brigades* could more satisfactorily accomplish the difficult military *roles* to be enacted than any other two whole brigades in the corps. The result fully justified the honorable confidence reposed.

COLONEL M'CONIHE'S COMMAND, AND WHAT IT DID THROUGHOUT THE DAY.

The One Hundred and Sixty-ninth, in conjunction with its bosom companions, the good old Thirteenth Indiana volunteers, under command of Lieut.-Col. Wilson, the two forming a Provisional brigade, and the whole commanded by the veteran and long-trying Col. Cyrus J. Dobbs, were charged with the arduous duty of protecting a front of at least two miles in extent – thereby protecting the left flank of Major-Gen. Butler's heavy and main force operating against the rebel stronghold, Fort Darling. For a period of three days, anterior to the 16th

inst., the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth and the Thirteenth Indiana had been thrown out as skirmishers on the portion of the railroad running for a considerable distance beyond Walthall Junction. All of a sudden on the morning of the 16th, during the heavy fog already alluded to, the enemy advanced in solid column, with a line of skirmishers in front and in greatly superior force directly upon the two regiments, the section of artillery, and the two hundred colored cavalry in support. The line was splendidly held to the moment when the enemy in vastly greater numbers appeared on our flanks, compelling an absolute withdrawal. The regiment fell back slowly in admirable skirmishing order to a distance of six hundred yards, when an advance was again made towards the junction. At the end of this advance, the enemy were found to be in such force and strong position that it was tantamount to a sacrifice of the command, without hope of success to attempt to dislodge them. The regiment returned inside the entrenchments, having experienced a day of uninterrupted skirmishing and fighting through dense underbrush, and almost impenetrable thicket from daylight to dusk. And all this after having been on duty incessantly at the front for a period of four days and nights. I propose herewith to add some account of the part taken by the several companies of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth in the tedious, trying and arduous duties of this new calendar day in the career of Colonel McConihe's command. I will begin with



**Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel and Major Joseph H. Allen, 169th N.Y.
Published in "History of Rensselaer County, New York"
by Nathaniel B. Sylvester (1880)**

COMPANY C, CAPT. JOSEPH H. ALLEN, COMMANDING.

This company, when the regiment was attacked by the enemy, was in reserve with Co. F, (Capt. Vaughn's). The company was immediately ordered forward and advanced at "double quick" to a small stream in rear of the picket line. The enemy opened with artillery on our forces, havocking them. During this firing, Co. C laid by the creek, and suffered in the loss of one man killed and two wounded. The men, however, held their ground stubbornly throughout the entire action. Capt. Allen, Lieut. Morey and Orderly Jonas H. Warren were actively efficient all the day, and were ever in the thickest doing their whole duty to themselves, the company and the country.



Captain Charles D. Merrill, Co. D, 169th N.Y.
Collection of the New York State Military Museum,
Saratoga Springs, New York

**COMPANY G, LIEUT. CHARLES DOUGLAS MERRILL,
COMMANDING,**

held a position in front of the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad, on the turnpike and in the woods on a side hill, when the firing, which quickly ran through the whole line, commenced. Lieut. Merrill's orders were to hold the turnpike, which he did against the enemy's skirmishers and sharpshooters until the rebels moved a large column in and deployed them in his front, when he had orders to fall back, which he did, covering the retreat on the turnpike, and at the same time stoutly contesting the ground inch by inch – during all which time he lost but three men. Lieut. Merrill, on reaching the grove in the rear, rallied his men, faced them to the foe, and gallantly joined a destructive volley of musketry into their threatening front, when he withdrew and joined the regiment in obedience to Col. McConihe's orders. Upon the division of the regiment, Lieut. Merrill, with Co. I, Capt. Cary, were ordered as a reserve to support a line of skirmishers commanded by Capt. James Thompson, commanding Co. A, which duty occupied the remainder of the day – devolving on the entire reserve a vast deal of tiresome marching from point to point through the woods, beating back the enemy. The company, thus fatigued, was under fire a number of times at different points of the field of battle.

COMPANY K, CAPT. DANIEL FERGUSON, COMMANDING.

Firing commenced on the left of the picket line commanded by the now immortal Lieut. W. S. Birdsall. At about 6 o'clock in the morning, they were forced to fall back upon Co. A, thence on the reserve on the centre of the picket line. Capt. Ferguson commanded at this time but a portion of his company. Shortly after, the balance were brought up by Lieuts. E. R. Smith and Eugene Van Santvoord, brother of the late Hon. George Van Santvoord, from the right and left. Here the enemy's fire became so intense that the company was forced to fall back on the way, passing, unavoidably, an open field, where they were exposed to a deadly fire from at least two regiments and three pieces of artillery.

Lieut. Van Santvoord again nobly rallied the men, who did their best in a return fire. The company had rejoined the regiment, when Lieut. Birdsall was killed. It is thought that the brave Lieutenant was the victim of a sharpshooter, as they were seen posted in the tops of trees. Capt. Ferguson was frequently shot at by them, but the only injury he sustained was a shot through the hat.



Captain Augustus D. Vaughan, Co. F, 169th N.Y.
Collection of the New York State Military Museum,
Saratoga Springs, New York

**COMPANY F, (WHITEHALL,) CAPT. A. D. VAUGHN,
COMMANDING,**

was deployed on the left, early in the morning, under Col. McConihe. Co. F, with Co. C, was ordered to hold the hill on the extreme left of the turnpike. This they did until ordered to fall back. Subsequent to this, a part of our line was ordered up to the rebel batteries under a heavy fire. Proceeded thence and back, accomplishing their mission, and falling back under a galling fire, both companies losing their knapsacks and rations.

**COMPANY E, (FORT EDWARD,) LIEUT. H. MULHALL,
COMMANDING,**

did nobly. This company occupied a position on the right of the turnpike, and on top of the railroad bank, where there was a deep cut through a rise of ground. The attack commenced on the left by the enemy's skirmishers, Co. E fully participating and doing so to its credit throughout the day. Lieut. Mulhall was conspicuous for his bravery, dash and soldierly bearing. At one time the order to fall back was given, but did not reach Lieut. Mulhall, who, in consequence, continued to hold his position for some time after the rest of the line had fallen back. The company were subjected to a flank fire. Lieut. Mulhall made a stand at this sharp fire, pouring back several volleys. He was driven back by numbers involving ten to one.



Captain Spencer W. Snyder, Co. D, 169th N.Y.
Private Collection

COMPANY D, CAPT. SPENCER W. SNYDER, COMMANDING.

The company raised at Sandy Hill by Col. William Coleman and his patriotic son, Capt. Warren B. Coleman, was remarked throughout the day for its pertinacious bravery and daring. Upon reaching the railroad the company was divided, Lieut. Birdsall taking command of the second platoon, on the extreme left, and Capt. Snyder the first, on the extreme right, supported by a reserve from the Thirteenth Indiana. The attack beginning at the left, Lieut. Birdsall's portion of the command was the first engaged. They fought splendidly, and held their position until the sainted Birdsall fell mortally wounded, and all his men, save two or three, were bullet-pierced, when they fell back to the reserve, having done their duty magnificently. Falling back, Capt. Snyder gave the command to fire vigorously upon the enemy as they fell back. This splendid set of soldiers occupied several other positions during the day, receiving at one time subsequent to the above events a heavy fire of grape and canister from the "greybacks." Capt. Snyder was at the front all day.

**COMPANY I, (NAIL FACTORY,) CAPT. D. J. CARY,
COMMANDING,**

was proudly grand during the battle, for massive endurance, unyielding defiance to the enemy, and a cool and lofty courage that had its origin and basis in Nail Factory bone and sinew. It was a grand sight to watch their movements during the day. Always so correct, so forcible and marked by sterling results. It is the hardy, plucky, physically enduring company of the stalwart old One Hundred and Sixty-ninth. Its position was on the left of the turnpike, and in advance of the skirmish line. Company I aided materially to hold portions of the enemy in check



Captain Daniel J. Cary, Co. I, 169th N.Y.
Published in "History of the Police Department of
Troy, N.Y." by Frederic T. Cardoze (1902)

when they advanced in force on the front and flank. The company only fell back when absolutely compelled to by superior numbers.

COMPANY B, COMMANDED BY LIEUT. J. H. DUNN,

acted in cooperation with Co. E, Lieut. Mulhall commanding, during the day. The action of the company was energetic, bold and useful.

COMPANY H, LIEUT. WM. H. LYON, COMMANDING,

was stationed in a most important position at the right of the railroad, connecting with Co. D on its right. When the massed column of the desperate enemy came pouring down the hill, Lieut. Lyon and his brave and devoted men were the last to leave the road to the rebels. Lieut. Lyon promoted on the spot private Phineas W. Holt and Minturn S. Knowlton, to be Corporals in Co. H, for marked bravery in full presence of the enemy on the field of battle. In the fight of Chester Station, on the 10th of May, Lieut. Lyon, let it be remembered to his immortal credit, was ordered by Col. McConihe to support a battery with his company, and being subsequently reënforced by Lieut. Mulhall, of Co. E, and Lieut. Merrill, of Co. G, with additional orders to hold the battery at all hazards, held it beyond hope of capture, rallying his men three times in front of hundreds of rebels, whom he checked and drove back. All this accomplished, Lieut. Lyon very coolly reported to Col. McConihe, "Colonel, I have obeyed orders; the battery, thank God, is saved." During all the firing that marked this incident of that severe day, Lieut. Lyon was shouting to his men in a noble and pardonable excess of patriotic ardor, "Give it to 'em, d---n it boys, give it to 'em. They need it, d---n 'em." And thus it was he did his duty, and is now Capt. William H. Lyon, an idol in the regiment.

**COMPANY A, CAPTAIN JAMES F. THOMPSON,
COMMANDING,**

was posted as pickets along the railroad (Richmond and Petersburg) between Walthall station and the turnpike. Capt. Thompson's orders were to hold his position at all events, until he should receive orders to fall back. Capt. Thompson was cordially sustained and ably seconded by Lieut. Alexander R. Bell, a most accomplished, tenacious, fearless and energetic officer, who were inspired by the heroic courage of this brave and idolized young soldier of the Republic. Lieut. Bell has been personally congratulated by Col. McConihe, Lieut.-Col. Alden and his Captain (Thompson) for his grand qualities in battle. I have heretofore sent you a list of the killed and wounded in this engagement; had I not done so, the list would have terminated this branch of my letter.

**COLONEL McCONIHE'S REGIMENT IN THE ACTION
OF THE 18TH OF MAY, 1864.**

On the night of May 17th, three Co's. of the regiment, E, H, and D, went to the front on picket duty. Early in the morning the picket line was attacked. This was so stoutly done that Co's. A, I, B and G were sent out as supports, at once deploying as skirmishers. The enemy had broken the original picket line, and the pickets, about eight hundred strong, were falling back. The One Hundred and Sixty-ninth went at the rebels with a yell that I apprehend neither party will soon forget. A grand charge was made by the command. The "rebs" ran like sheep, our boys driving them and gallantly retaking the original picket line. The fight lasted all day; the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth being relieved at night. The entire loss of the regiment was twenty-eight. It was in this action that Capt. Snyder received his wound. I have already sent you the list, numbering twenty-seven in killed and wounded.

ON THE 19TH

heavy fighting was going on immediately in front of our intrenchments, all day; the One Hundred and Twelfth and Thirteenth Indiana, operating against the enemy outside the rifle pits; the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth, and Ninth Maine, of Col. Drake's brigade, manning the works. The enemy suffered severely on this as on the subsequent day, by reason of attempting to approach our fortifications.

OPERATIONS OF THE 20TH OF MAY.

Just before 8 o'clock, A.M., on the 20th, the enemy made two stout assaults upon the picket line, on Gen. Ames' division, and Colonel Drake's brigade fronts. The first advance was most vigorously repulsed amid musketry and cheering of our troops. The enemy immediately advanced again in force, and made a truly tremendous effort to successfully storm and carry our works. They succeeded in driving in our pickets, and owing to the ignorant treachery of a federal Lieutenant, who was at once reduced to the ranks by Major-Gen. Butler, succeeded in taking our entrenched picket line. Colonel Dobbs with the Thirteenth Indiana, made a gallant charge upon the enemy, in the hope of retaking the line, but was repulsed – his regiment suffering terribly, in the loss of seventy men. The enemy were entrenched behind rail fences and earthworks. Another charge was subsequently made by Major Pennypacker, and the Ninety-seventh Pennsylvania volunteers, who were literally decimated by artillery and musketry. It was awful



"In the Trenches"
**From the Journal of Private Robert Knox Sneden, 40th N.Y.V., Topographical
 Engineer of the III Army Corps, Vol. III, June 29 - October 25, 1862
 Collection of the Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia**

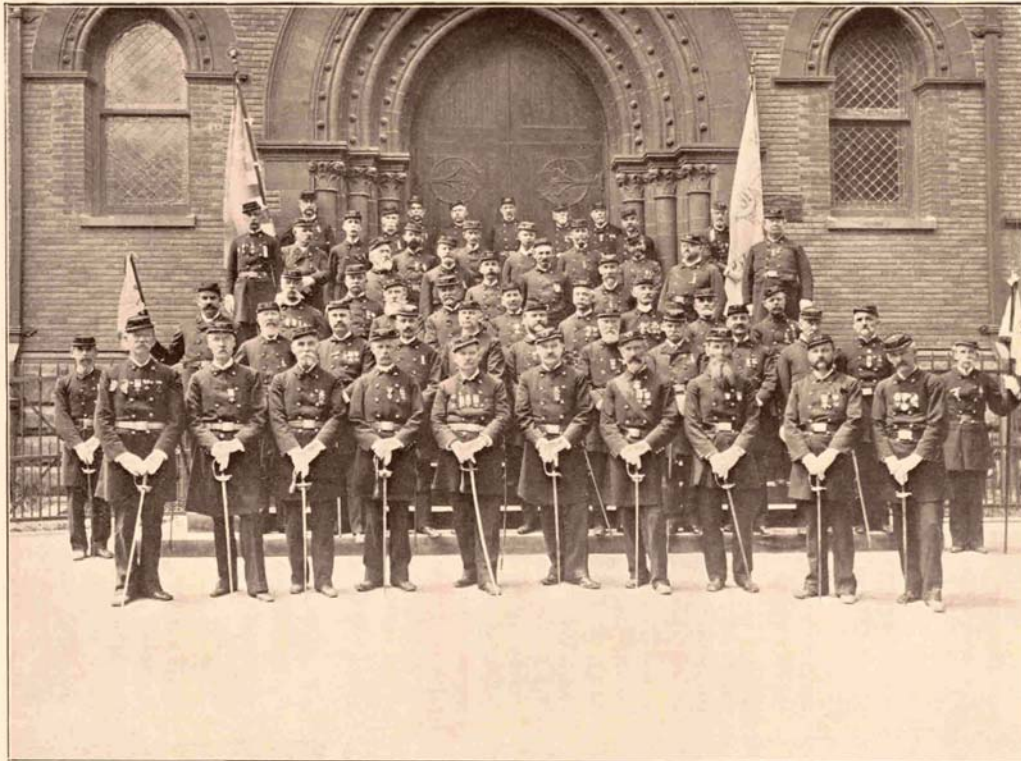
On May 18th, 1864, the first day of the battle of Ware Bottom Church, the 169th N.Y. launched a successful counterattack against the Confederate advance. In the remaining days of the battle, from the 19th to the 22^d, the regiment manned the trenches of the X Corps' line.

and Alden, to see those noble Keystones fall, decade after decade, within a space of eight hundred yards. The assaulted foe was yet in possession of the line. The artillery then opened, and after a short duel night "threw its opaque mantle" over the scene. The enemy worked industriously during the night, improving upon the line of works. Last night (the 21st) the enemy advanced upon our entire line and were met by a terrific fire of artillery and musketry along Terry and Ames' fronts, doing them immense damage – blowing up one of their caissons, and driving them back – it must have been with great slaughter. A decisive blow will have to be dealt the foe in the course of a few hours, and when it comes it will cause them to reel back towards their so-called capital – let us hope entirely discomfited.

INCIDENTS AND PERSONAL.

The preparation of this dispatch covering a period of several days, has been frequently interrupted by engagements of the contending parties, and these headquarters being in direct range of a convergent fire usually directed upon three of our defenses, by the enemy, may account for the somewhat incoherent nature of this letter. I beg to assure you that I write in the field, crouched beneath a shelter tent, instead of sitting upright at a spacious table in the cool recesses of the *Times* office, not knowing the moment when a shell or a bullet may strike my capacious *omentum*, and send *all* this mortality *ad astra dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, even though one is required to depart suddenly while catering to the public in the way of a newspaper dispatch.

Gen. Ames yesterday waited on Major Colvin, of the One Hundred and Sixty-ninth, who had command of the outer picket line on the 19th,



ALEXANDER HAMILTON POST, MEMORIAL DAY, MAY 30, 1896.
JAMES A. COLVIN, COMMANDER.

**Alexander Hamilton Post No. 182, G.A.R., Memorial Day, May 30, 1896,
James A. Colvin, Commander (front row, fifth from left)
Published in "Annals of Alexander Hamilton Post, No. 182,
Department of New York, G.A.R." (1896)**

and thanked him for the cool and useful part he enacted on that day amid so many doubts and perplexities.

All through the various operations in which the brigade has been engaged since the 17th, the Colonels and all other officers could not fail to note the prompt and facile manner, added to the energy and discretion, with which Col. Drake, commanding the brigade, encountered and overcame every emergency that presented itself to his cool judgment and dispassionate nature. – These urgent and trying times directly in front of the enemy, where we are compelled to contest his pretensions more or less stubbornly every successive day, imperatively bring to the surface a man's character and capacity. This tremendous ordeal through which we are now passing, has in Col. Drake one of the few men capable of eliminating it, by force of ability, energy and elevated military character, and a comprehensive knowledge of this fact inspires the entire command.

THE DEAD.

The common grief in the regiment, occasioned by the death of Lieut. Birdsall, is not yet assuaged, notwithstanding the rapid and ceaseless march of events. Col. McConihe, in his official report to the commanding Colonel of the part the regiment took in the operations of the 16th, says of the brave fallen: "Lieut. Birdsall was a true soldier and gallant officer, whose loss falls heavily upon the regiment, and whom, among all others, we had learned to love and respect. Feeling sad at his

loss, yet we are consoled to know that he died bravely in the intelligent discharge of his duties."

Among the dead is announced Theodore Schutt, private of Co. A. Private Schutt will be remembered as the accomplished correspondent in the field of Pease's *Press*. He was a genial, companionable man, always prompt to duty, and fell nobly doing it. He lies buried in the enemy's country and lines. [Note: Priv. Schutt was captured and sent to Andersonville Prison.]



Orderly Sergeant Frederick French, of Co. D, (the Sandy Hill company,) is also among the dead, and buried beyond the lines. He was an efficient First Sergeant, modest and retiring, and respected by his comrades. He had been favorably, though ineffectually, recommended to Gov. Seymour by a large body of his friends in Washington county for promotion to a Lieutenancy.

There are no other casualties in the regiment since my last list, save that of private [Patrick] Devin, of Co. E, who was shot through the head inside the entrenchments while talking with Lieut. Mulhall. I am now up to the 22^d of May.

We give the following inclusive list of casualties in Co. A, One Hundred and Sixty-ninth New York volunteers, since May 10, 1864, at the request of Major James A. Colvin:

Sergeants Edward P. Jaques, wounded and prisoner; Henry A. Slack, killed by windage of shell; Thomas Jessop, wounded; Thomas H. McGregor, wounded; Corporals Calvin Champlin, wounded and prisoner; Jas. Brown, Geo. Cain, Elijah G. Bradway, prisoners; privates Theodore Schutt, Theodore Sheldon, Wm. S. Hand, Edward Barrett, Darius Morris, killed; George W. Bailey, wounded and died; Wm. H. Shufelt, E. A. Prouty, Daniel Osborn, wounded; Paul Roberts, Lyman Ostrom, wounded and prisoners; Jonathan Hoag, Edward Stickles, Loren Teator, Asbury Bacchus, Abram C. Folmsbee, prisoners; John H. Grose, Geo. H. Sheldon, Henry Andrus, wounded slightly; Wm. F. Messinger, wounded, since dead. W. H. M.

A review of casualty reports published in newspapers and the official register of the regiment provides the following list of casualties from the 169th N.Y. at the 3^d Battle of Port Walthall Junction, May 16, 1864. A total of 17 men died as a result of the battle:

Command.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.
169 th New York Volunteers	5	21 ¹	8 ²

¹ Six died of wounds. ² Three missing in action likely killed; three died of disease at Andersonville, Ga.

Below is a list of the men from the 169th N.Y. who were killed in action:

Name	Co.	Enlistment
1 st Lieut. Walter S. Birdsall	D	Troy
Priv. Joseph F. Cagle	C	Troy
Priv. Edward Mann	I	Troy
Priv. William Mercy	K	Troy
Serg't. Charles O'Reilly	B	Troy



A list of the wounded men from the regiment follows, including information regarding their recovery, disability, or death:

Name	Co.	Enlistment	Comments
Serg't. Dennis Corbett	D	Kingsbury	Contusion from shell in right foot; died of his wounds, June 2, 1864, at field hospital.
Corp. William Donegan	D	Kingsbury	Left clavicle, from bullet; treated at the XVIII Corps Hospital; died of his wounds, June 15, 1864, at hospital, Washington, D.C.
Priv. Robert Duffy	B	Troy	Died of his wounds, May 17, 1864.

Name	Co.	Enlistment	Comments
Priv. Michael Fitzpatrick	I	Pittstown	Left knee, shell; absent in hospital at Fort Monroe since May 18, 1864, and at muster-out of company.
Corp. Samuel P. Harris	D	Kingsbury	Right shoulder, from bullet; treated at hospital, Fort Monroe, Va.; discharged for disability, February 8, 1865, at hospital.
Priv. James M. Healy	I	Troy	Right side of neck, bullet; would recover.
Priv. Thomas Kane	K	Troy	Hand, left side, bullet; absent, sick in hospital, Fort Monroe, Va., since May 16, 1864, at muster-out of company.
Corp. Minturn S. Knowlton	H	Sand Lake	Contusion, bullet, left shoulder; died, August 13, 1864, at hospital, Hampton, Va.
Priv. Lewis La Duke	I	Troy	Right tibia, bullet; discharged, July 7, 1865, at Lovell Hospital, Portsmouth Grove, R.I.
Corp. Adolphus Lavine	I	Troy	Contusion right leg, shell; would recover.
Priv. Joseph Lenath	D	Kingsbury	Died of his wounds, May 18, 1864, at field hospital.
Priv. Adanson Lewis, Jr.	C	Easton	Left side of neck, bullet; treated at hospital, Fort Monroe, Va.; died of his wounds, June 8, 1864.
Priv. Jeremiah McCarty	F	Lisbon	Fracture shoulder, right arm; would recover.
Priv. John McMahon	B	Troy	Finger, left hand, bullet, treated at hospital, Fort Monroe, Va.; would recover.
Priv. Michael O'Brien	I	Pittstown	Slightly, bullet; discharged for disability, February 11, 1865.
Serg't. John Quinn	K	Lansingburgh	Shot in left foot; amputated in lowest third, (metatarsus), August 19, 1864, at hospital, Washington, D.C.; would recover.
Serg't. Henry A. Slack	A	Nassau	Windage of shell; would recover.
Priv. Frederick H. Smith	K	Troy	Contusion by shell; would recover.
Priv. Patrick Smith	I	Troy	Both legs, bullets; transferred to Veteran Reserve Corps, January 2, 1865.
Corp. Thomas Tilley	G	Troy	Left shoulder, bullet; would recover.
Corp. Benjamin G. Walker	G	Troy	Left side face, bullet; also described as "shot through the mouth, with ball in the back of his neck;" would recover.

Serg't Benjamin G. Walker, Co. G, was "getting along first rate" at Mower U.S. General Hospital at Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, according to his letter on June 11th to his niece, Ella G. Bond, of Hague, Warren County, N.Y.:



Mower U.S. General Hospital, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia (1865)
James Fuller Queen (ca. 1820-1886)
P.S. Duval & Son Lithography, Philadelphia
Collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

"Your fine letter came to me in good time and found me getting along first rate. My wound is getting better all the time and if it don't get any worse I will be able to come home soon. I am glad you have not forgotten me for I can see I [illegible] to look when I was to Hague last, but you did not tell me how all the little ones get along. But I suppose they are alright, as you would have said so.

"You mustn't worry about your Papa, for God will take good care of him in all things, and if he gets home alright he will tell you some fine stories. So don't feel sad about him for if he got wounded he will come home to see you. But I hope he will not get hurt.

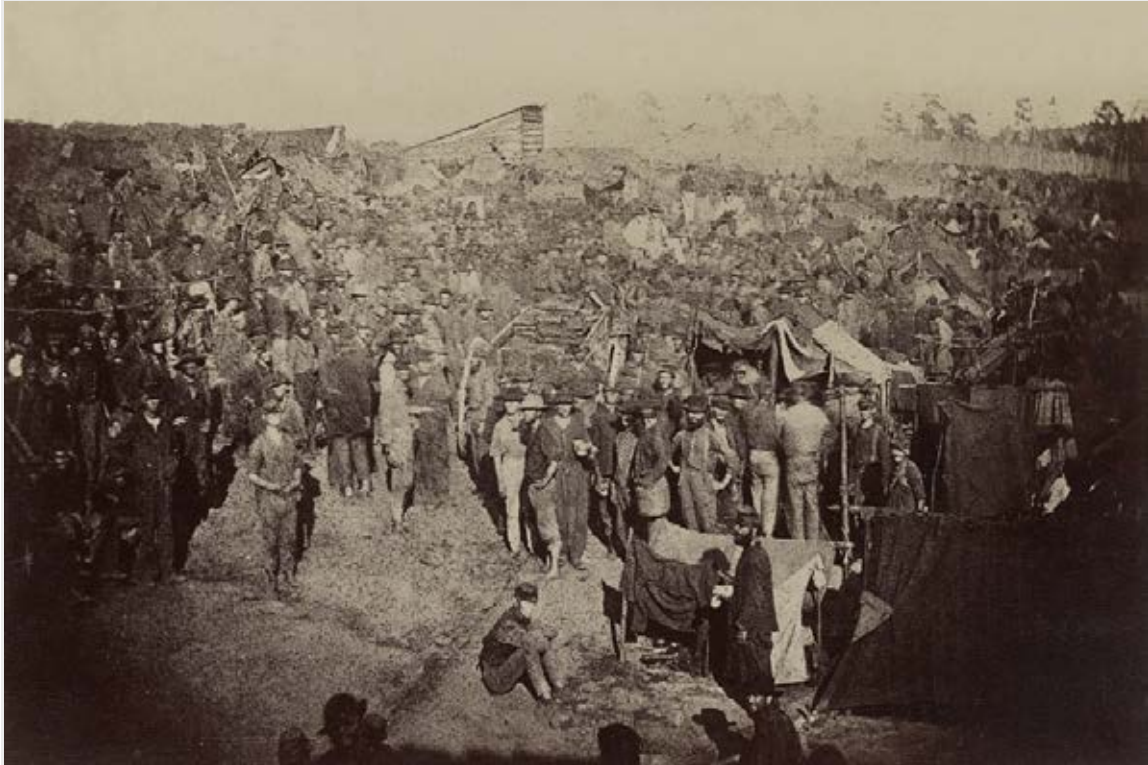
"I am glad you go to school. You must get all of the learning you can for when you get to be a big girl your mouths will want you to seek the house most of the time.

"I wish you were here for there is a fine concert in the chapel this afternoon, and I am going, but you can't come here unless you fly, and that ain't safe now for you might get into the land of the Rebels!

"You must tell all of the big boys, if there is any left in Hague, to go down to Dixey to help the rest that are in the field. Good-bye from your Uncle Ben, of Co. G, 169th N.Y.S.V."

Three men classified as missing in action were likely killed:

Name	Co.	Enlistment	Comments
Priv. William E. Carpenter	G	Troy	Missing in action, since May 16, 1864, at Drewry's Bluff, Va.; no further record.
Priv. David Duncan	K	Troy	Missing in action, May 16, 1864, at Walthall Junction, Va.; no further record.
Priv. Joseph Hillis	D	Kingsbury	Missing in action, since May [16], 1864; no further record.



Issuing rations near the main gate, Stockade No. 2, Andersonville Prison, Georgia (August 17, 1864)

Of the five men who were captured, three would die at Andersonville Prison:

Name	Co.	Enlistment	Comments
Priv. Frank Clark	D	Troy	Paroled, no date; mustered out, December 24, 1864, at Annapolis, Md.
Priv. Charles Farrar	G	Troy	Died August 16, 1864, scorbutus. Grave No. 5840, Andersonville, Ga.
Priv. John Gartland	G	Nassau	Died August 27, 1864, diarrhea. Grave No. 7044, Andersonville, Ga.
Corp. John Keenan	B	Troy	Paroled, November 25, 1864.
Priv. Cassius M. C. Varney	E	Fort Edward	Died, August 22, 1864, diarrhea. Grave No. 6472, Andersonville, Ga.

Col. Colvin provides his account of the 3^d Battle of Port Walthall Junction, including the story of how the knapsacks of 100 of the regiment's men were captured in the fighting:

"On May 14th the 169th, with other troops, numbering about two thousand, under command of Brig.-Gen. Ames, was sent to the left flank of the army then operating against Drury's Bluff, on the James River. On this occasion the regiment was at the other extreme of the forces, having been transferred from the right to the left flank. It was stationed on the line of the railroad at and across the Richmond and Petersburg turnpike, with pickets thrown out on high ground overlooking the latter city, and facing in just the contrary direction from the position of May 10th. On the 15th most of the troops composing Ames' command were ordered to join the forces operating against Fort Darling, and only the 169th New York and the 13th Indiana, with Sanger's



**U.S. Pattern 1855 Double Bag Knapsack with tarred canvas and gray wool blanket
Private Collection**

regular battery of light artillery and a regiment of colored cavalry, remained. Maj. Colvin as division officer of the day had been left in charge of the picket-line in front of the works at Foster's Plantation, and included in his command were one hundred men of the 169th. Late on the evening of the 15th he was ordered to bring these men to the front, and, relieving this detachment from the picket, they rejoined the regiment without waiting to send the knapsacks back to the works. From this little event arose an interesting episode in the history of the regiment which will be given farther on. The morning of May 16th opened with every prospect of a bright and pleasant day. An extremely dense fog overhung the land early in the morning, but it was of that kind which rises to meet the sun and bears promise of something livelier and more cheerful behind it. In this instance it had something of a lively surprise in store. The air was pleasant, the sun lighting up the fog; the camp-fires sent up their curling smoke from where the regiment lay lazily enjoying the opening day on the slope of the hill which rose gently from the cut through which the railroad ran; the pickets were well out and alert, cavalry videttes being posted on the front and flank of the forces, and everything seemed secure. But as 'things are not what they seem,' so it proved in this case. Just as the breakfast had been served to the field officers, and before they had a chance to taste of it, a hurried rush of horses, the sharp challenges of the picket, and an instant alarm brought every one to his feet and the regiment quickly into line. The picket along the railway was reinforced, and Col. McConihe was told that the enemy had driven in the cavalry and were close at hand. Sharp firing soon began, although as yet the enemy were invisible, but as if it needed only this to start the tremulous mist, the curtain slowly rose to a scene of exciting warfare. The rebel skirmish line occupied one side of the railroad, and the 169th picket, deployed, held the other, while on the rise of ground beyond the railroad the rebel line of battle was advancing. Sanger's Battery, in position on the crest to the rear of the 169th, opened fire, and was quickly answered from the other side. Forced back by superior numbers, the outpost retired slowly. Here Lieut. W. S. Birdsall, a young and promising officer, was killed.



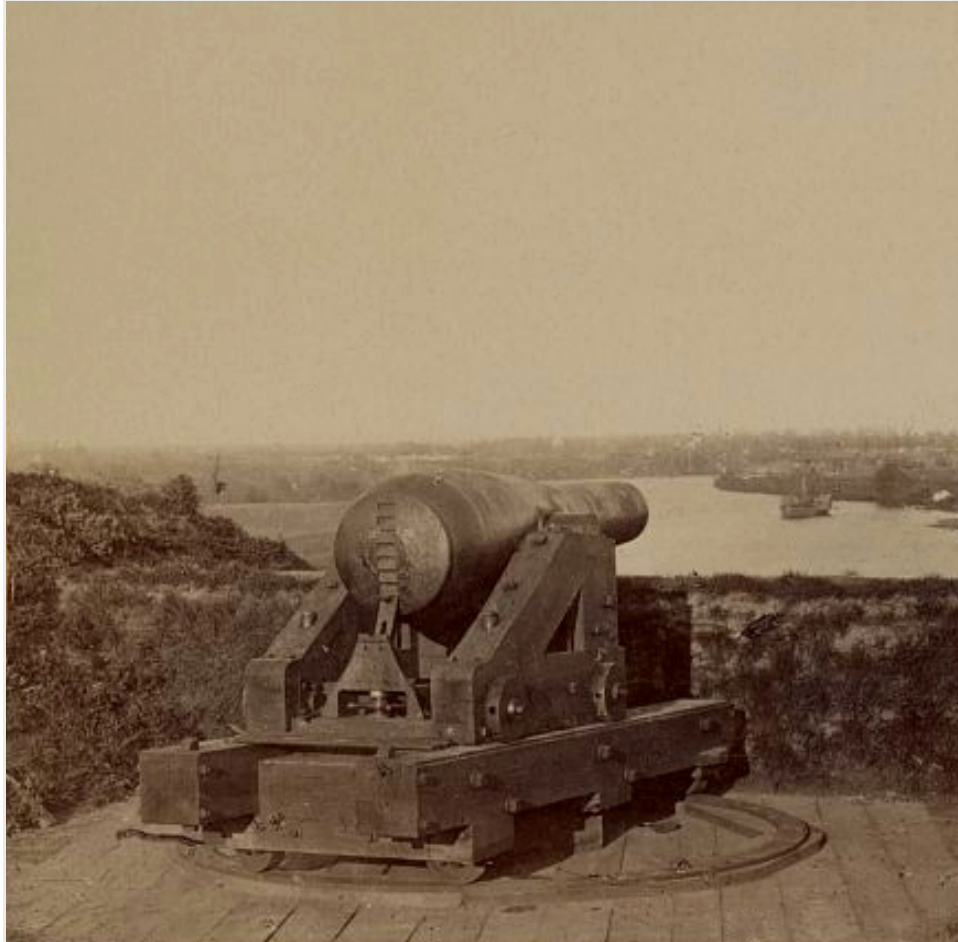
Fighting in the woods (June 30, 1862)
Alfred Rudolph Waud (1828-1891)
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The entire regiment was then deployed in skirmishing order, and, being hard pressed, fell back, facing the enemy and preserving its line, across a ravine and up an adjoining slope, where it halted. The needed reinforcements by this time coming up, the line was advanced to reoccupy its former position. The rebel line was steadily driven back to the railroad, and the camp of the morning was regained, but the breakfast was gone, the shelter tents were missing, and the knapsacks belonging to the men brought up the night before had disappeared. These knapsacks, however, have still another part to bear in this history. The loss of the regiment in this action was thirty-six officers and men, killed, wounded, and missing."

Gen. Alden's memoirs refer to the battle on the 16th as "Walthall Junction No. 2," as it was in fact the second engagement fought at that place by the 169th, the regiment not having participated in the first engagement on the 6th. Not long after Gen. Ames sent most of his forces north to reinforce Gillmore and Smith, the attack by Whiting's much larger Rebel force necessitated a call for reinforcements of his own, which were described by Gen. Alden as "six skeleton regiments" of 900 men. The *Herald* identified four of these regiments as the 11th Maine, 115th N.Y., 58th Penn., and 97th Penn.:

"After a day of rest in camp within the entrenchments of Bermuda Hundred, by order of General Butler, the 169th, with about 2,000 other troops, all under the command of General Ames, moved about three miles west to the section of country utilized by the enemy for assembling reinforcements in defence of Fort Darling.

"The Richmond & Petersburg R.R., which had been destroyed by our troops, was strongly picketed to prevent its reconstruction or the movement of troops in any manner for the defence of the fort. It was the evident purpose of the enemy to make a flank or rear attack upon the Union forces under Generals Gillmore and William F. Smith. Fort Darling, a very strong fortification of the enemy on Drury's Bluff com-



Columbiad gun in Fort Darling defending the James River (1865)

Fort Darling boasted three large seacoast guns in its armament, including one 10-inch Columbiad and two 8-inch Columbiads.

manding the James River, was the main defence of Richmond, and hence its retention by them warranted the greatest effort possible and a great sacrifice.

"May 14th, the manoeuvring of the enemy on the ridge of the highlands overlooking the city of Petersburg and on the railroad south of Walthall Junction indicated preparation for an assault upon our brigade, thence upon the Federal troops operating against Drury's Bluff. General Ames directed our batteries to open upon the Confederates





Scene from "Gods and Generals," Directed by Ronald F. Maxwell (2003)

positions, while our colored cavalry and about 2,000 infantry, with Sanger's Regular Battery, received the hesitating fire of the enemy. The firing ceased as darkness settled down upon the contending armies, except now and then a bursting shell reminded us that the Rebels were waiting for more light.

"Before the dawn of the 15th, General Ames had been summoned to report with all the troops he could spare to General Gillmore within the trenches near Fort Darling. Most of the troops composing General Ames' command quietly withdrew, leaving only the 169th, the 13th Ind., Sanger's Regular Battery of light artillery and the regiment of colored cavalry, under the command of Colonel [Dobbs]. At daybreak on the very foggy morning of the 16th, while both officers and men were partaking of a hasty breakfast of hard tack and bacon, musketry was heard on the picket line and very soon the firing became general, and a large force of the enemy appeared and charged our feeble line on the railroad. The picket line obstinately held its position until it was literally overpowered by overwhelming numbers of the enemy. Sanger's Battery maintained a deadly fire upon the enemy's advancing columns but finally deliberately limbered up and retired to the rear.

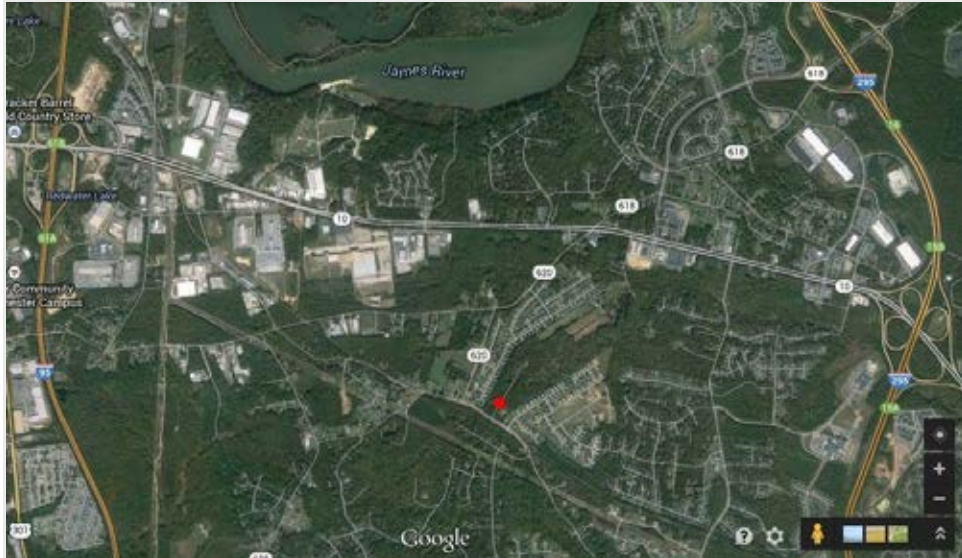


"As soon as the retreat of our reduced force before the overpowering force of the enemy became inevitable, I dispatched a mounted courier to General Ames, asking for reinforcements. The infantry had retired slowly, contesting every foot of ground. The cavalry menaced the flanks of the enemy and the battery would secure good positions, unlimber,

deliver a hasty round or two at the enemy's apparently vulnerable points, and before the enemy's artillery could command our position, would again limber up and seek a new position. Thus the advance of the enemy was at a snail's pace. Another peril doubtless caused the enemy to press our retreat slowly and cautiously, which was the fact that they were getting within range of our heavy guns at Bermuda Hundred.

"After our retreat had covered about a mile, six skeleton regiments with only three lieutenants arrived as reinforcements. This force, about 900 men, I distributed as best I could and where they would be of the greatest service; and thereby menaced the flanks and rear of the enemy, causing them to retreat in turn, many skedaddling, utterly demoralized. My re-enforced line again advanced, driving the enemy across the railroad, where they were held until the forces under Butler retired behind the defences of Bermuda Hundred; then my command returned to camp in good order.

"The 169th lost thirty-six killed, wounded and missing, including First Lieutenant Walter S. Birdsall, a bright young officer who was shot in the head early in the action on the railroad, May 16th, and left in the hands of the enemy, supposedly dead."



Satellite view of Chester, Virginia, site of the Battle of Ware Bottom Church

The location of the 169th N.Y.'s camp at Foster's Plantation is indicated by the red dot.

Casualty reports published in newspapers and the official register of the regiment provides the following list of casualties from the 169th N.Y. at the Battle of Ware Bottom Church, May 18-22, 1864. A total of 3 men died as a result of the battle:

Command.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.
169 th New York Volunteers	3	31	0

Below is a list of the men from the 169th N.Y. who were killed in action:

Name	Co.	Enlistment
Priv. Patrick Devin	E	Troy
1 st Serg't. Frederick F. French	D	Kingsbury
Priv. Richard Kearney	D	Kingsbury

A list of the wounded men from the regiment follows, including information regarding their recovery, disability, or death:

Name	Co.	Enlistment	Comments
Priv. Thomas J. Abbey	I	Claverack	Arm; treated at McClellan Hospital, Camp Hamilton; discharged for disability, June 12, 1865.
Corp. Conrad Albert	G	Troy	Finger; would recover.
Priv. Henry Andrus	A	Nassau	Wounded slightly; mustered out, July 27, 1865, at Lovell Hospital, Portsmouth Grove, R.I.
Priv. John A. Becker	B	Troy	Hand; would recover.
Priv. James Boyce	D	Fort Edward	Hip; treated at McClellan Hospital, Camp Hamilton; would recover.
Priv. Louis Braxmarer	G	Troy	Hand; discharged, June 27, 1865, at Troy, N.Y.
Priv. Edward Connor	E	Fort Edward	Hand; would recover.
1 st Lieut. Patrick Connors	I	Troy	Treated at Chesapeake Hospital, Fortress Monroe, Va.; discharged for disability, July 24, 1864.
Priv. John Dillon	D	Troy	Elbow; treated at McClellan Hospital, Camp Hamilton; mustered out, July 31, 1865, at McDougall Hospital, New York Harbor.
Priv. John H. Grose	A	Troy	Shoulder; would recover.
Priv. John H. Ham	B	Troy	Hand; deserted, no date, from hospital, at Troy, N.Y.
Priv. James Hever	B	Troy	Hand; absent, in hospital at Troy, N.Y., at muster-out of company.
Corp. Patrick Holly	D	Kingsbury	Arm; would recover.
Priv. James W. Hummell	C	Sharon	Arm; transferred to Veteran Reserve Corps, June 20, 1865
1 st Lieut. Thomas D. Jellico	F	New Dorp	Treated at Chesapeake Hospital, Fortress Monroe, Va.; discharged for disability, September 26, 1864.
Serg't. Thomas Jessup	A	Troy	Finger; would recover.
Priv. Philip McCluskey	F	Lisbon	Discharged, May 22, 1865, at McClellan Hospital, Philadelphia, Pa.
Serg't. Thomas H. D. McGregor	A	Troy	Side; would recover.
Priv. William F. Messenger	A	Glenn	Breast, badly wounded; treated at McClellan Hospital, Camp Hamilton; discharged for wounds, June 13, 1865.
Priv. Patrick Murphy	E	Troy	Leg; would recover.
Priv. Nicholas O'Brien	G	Troy	Thigh; treated at McClellan Hospital, Camp Hamilton; would recover.
Priv. Thomas Plunkett	I	Troy	Hand; discharged for disability, April 24, 1865.
Priv. Peter Riley	I	Troy	Side; furloughed from hospital, David's Island, New York Harbor, July 12,

Name	Co.	Enlistment	Comments
			1864; no further record.
Priv. Jeremiah Robillard	I	Troy	Hand; treated at McClellan Hospital, Camp Hamilton; discharged, July 10, 1865, at Lovell Hospital, Portsmouth Grove, R.I.
Priv. George H. Sheldon	A	Nassau	Back, wounded slightly; would recover.
Priv. Edward Smith	B	Troy	Nipple; would recover.
Capt. Spencer W. Snyder	D	Troy	Shoulder, slightly; treated at McClellan Hospital, Camp Hamilton; discharged, July 19, 1864, for wounds received in action.
Priv. Jeremiah Wallar	D	Troy	Hand; absent, detached in hospital, Fort Monroe, Va., since May 18, 1864, and at muster-out of company.
Priv. Lorain R. Woodcock	E	Fort Edward	Hand; would recover.
Priv. George H. Woodruff	B	Troy	Head; would recover.

Col. Colvin's historical sketch refers to the Battle of Ware Bottom Church as "Hatcher's Run," from the fact that Gen. Gillmore's headquarters were located to the rear at Hatcher's farm. Hatcher's Run is a stream in Dinwiddie County, Va., south of Petersburg, and was the site of a battle on February 5-7, 1865.

"The fortifications on the Bermuda Hundred front, previously referred to, had been made very strong, and extended from the James River to the Appomattox. The position was strategic, and consequently a source of annoyance and discomfort to the enemy. On May 18th an effort was made in the vicinity of Hatcher's Run to break the line and dislodge the Union forces from their intrenchments. The picket line was strongly attacked and forced at one or two points, but the enemy were vigorously met, and the artillery prevented any further advance. This attempt was renewed on the 20th, and again on the 22^d, but without success, the rebels being repulsed in every attack. In these engagements the 169th lost twenty-seven men."

In his historical sketch of the regiment, Gen. Alden wrote of the attacking Rebel infantry being "severely punished" from the 18th to the 22^d:

"May 18th the enemy made a desperate effort in the vicinity of Hatcher's Run to dislodge the federals from their well intrenched position. The picket line was strongly reinforced, but the enemy appeared in force and the pickets were drawn in. When the enemy came near enough, the artillery in the redoubts gave them a warm reception and checked their advance. In the vicinity where our old picket line was the enemy constructed rifle pits. On the 20th and 22^d the enemy tried to dislodge us from our position, but utterly failed, after being severely punished. In the fights at Hatcher's Run the 169th lost 27 killed, wounded and missing."

In response to casualty reports arriving from battlefields across the country, hospital supplies were donated by the citizenry to the Troy Soldiers' Aid Society. These items were in turn forwarded to the U.S. Sanitary Commission. Items from the garden such as pickles, currant jelly, and dried fruit were out of season, but that would change by late summer:



Our Women and the War
Published in "Harper's Weekly" (September 6, 1862)

"TROY SOLDIERS' AID SOCIETY. – On Tuesday, the 11th inst., this Society forwarded to the United States Sanitary Commission, one box of hospital stores, containing the following articles: 11 pairs socks, 5 pairs slippers, 16 flannel shirts, 28 pairs flannel drawers, 18 pairs cotton drawers, 48 cotton shirts, a lot of letter paper, pens and envelopes, and a lot of newspapers and magazines.

"BUNDLES of linen and cotton cloth have been received at the rooms of the Troy Soldiers' Aid Society, Wotkyn's Block, since the evening of the 25th inst., from Mrs. Geo. T. Steenbergh, Mrs. John P. Cushman, Mrs. Wade, Mrs. J. H. Nichols, Mrs. M. Burr, Mrs. Ridgway, and a friend; also bandages from C. Priest, farina and pickles from Mrs. Wade, two cotton shirts from Mrs. Burr, and prior to the 25th inst., one jar of currant jelly, one jar of dried fruit, three pairs socks, writing paper and envelopes from Mrs. E. H. Follensbee."

The arrival of hospital trains and the shocking condition of their occupants once again brought home the reality of the war to the populations of the North. The *Daily Press* reported on the 25th the passage of trains through Troy en route to Washington County and Vermont:

"WOUNDED SOLDIERS. – Quite a large number of wounded soldiers from the late battlefields passed over the Troy & Boston and Rutland & Washington Railroads to their homes, during the past week. Several of the soldiers belonged in Washington county, but the greater portion to Vermont."

A complete list of casualties from the 169th N.Y. during the Bermuda Hundred Campaign was published by the *Daily Press* on June 1st. The wounded were treated at hospitals in Virginia, Washington, D.C., and points further north:



The Interior of a Hospital Car
Published in "Harper's Weekly" (February 27, 1864)

The Troy Daily Press.

JUNE 1, 1864.

From the 169th Regiment.

The following is a complete list of the killed, wounded and missing in the 169th regiment, from May 7, to May 23, 1864, and including the actions of Walthall Junction, Chester Station, Proctor's Creek, the Second Walthall Junction, and before the entrenched camp at Foster's Plantation:

Killed. – Richard Kearney, Company D; Edward Barrett, A; Wm. S. Hand, A; Theodore Sheldon, A; William Campbell, K; William Wilbrand, K; Leonard Fish, F; John Mallery, B; and Jacob W. Taylor, E.

Wounded. – Jeremiah Murphy, I; Nathaniel Harris, I; Oliver Santos, I; George C. Edgerton, E; First Sergt. Michael Ryan, B; Edward Clary, B; John Moran, B; Owen Tanzey, B; John Bligh, E; George D. Bennett, E; George Roarbock, B; John Barlow, B; Jeremiah Cahill, B; Stephen B. Keech, F; John Leach, G; Corporal Louis Winkler, G; Valentine Reinholz, G; Corporal H. W. Toole, D; John A. Beckstine, G; Jacob H. Mower, K; John Sullivan, B; Patrick Devin, E, head, mortally; Capt. Spencer W. Snyder, D, shoulder, slightly; Corp. P. Holly, D, arm; John Dillon, D, elbow; Jeremiah Wallar, D, hand; Corp. C. N. Albert, G, finger; Louis Braxmeyer, G, hand; Nicholas O'Brien, G, thigh; Geo. H. Woodruff, B, head; John Ham, B, hand; Edward Smith, B, nipple; James Hever, B, hand; John Becker, B, hand; John H. Gross, A, shoulder; George Sheldon, A, back; William Messenger, A, breast; Sergt. Thos. Jessop, A, finger; Sergt. T. H. D. McGregor, A, side; J. W. Hummell, C, arm; Pat Murphy, E, leg; Edward Connor, E, hand; James H. Boyce, E, hip; Corpl. L. R.

Woodcock, E, hand; Thos. J. Abbey, I, arm; Peter Riley, I, side; J. Robellard, I, hand; Thos. Plunkett, I, hand; Wm. E. Griggs, K; Geo. Burgess, K; A. J. Moss, K; Peter Quinlan, H; Hiram E. Stewart, H; Daniel Odell, H; Elbert A. Prouty, A; Daniel Osborn, A; Corpl. Calvin Champlin, A; Lyman Ostrom, A; Paul Roberts, A; Jonathan Hoag, A; Wm. H. Shufelt, A.

Missing. – Corporal Jas. Brown, A; Corp. George Cain, A; Corporal Elijah G. Bradway, A; Sergeant Edward P. Jaques, A; Asbury Bacchus, A; Loren Teator, A; George W. Bailey, A; Abram C. Folmsbee, A; Edward Stickles, A; King Goodell, H; Philip McCluskey, F; David Cooper, B; Theodore Schutt, A; First Sergeant Fred. French, D.

In response to the losses experienced by the army's officer corps and in anticipation of heavy casualties in the future, New York's Adj't.-Gen. General John T. Sprague published an order requesting officers of volunteer regiments from New York who had left the service by resignation, expiration of term of service, or for other causes, to send to headquarters their Post office address, designating their rank and the regiments in which they served.



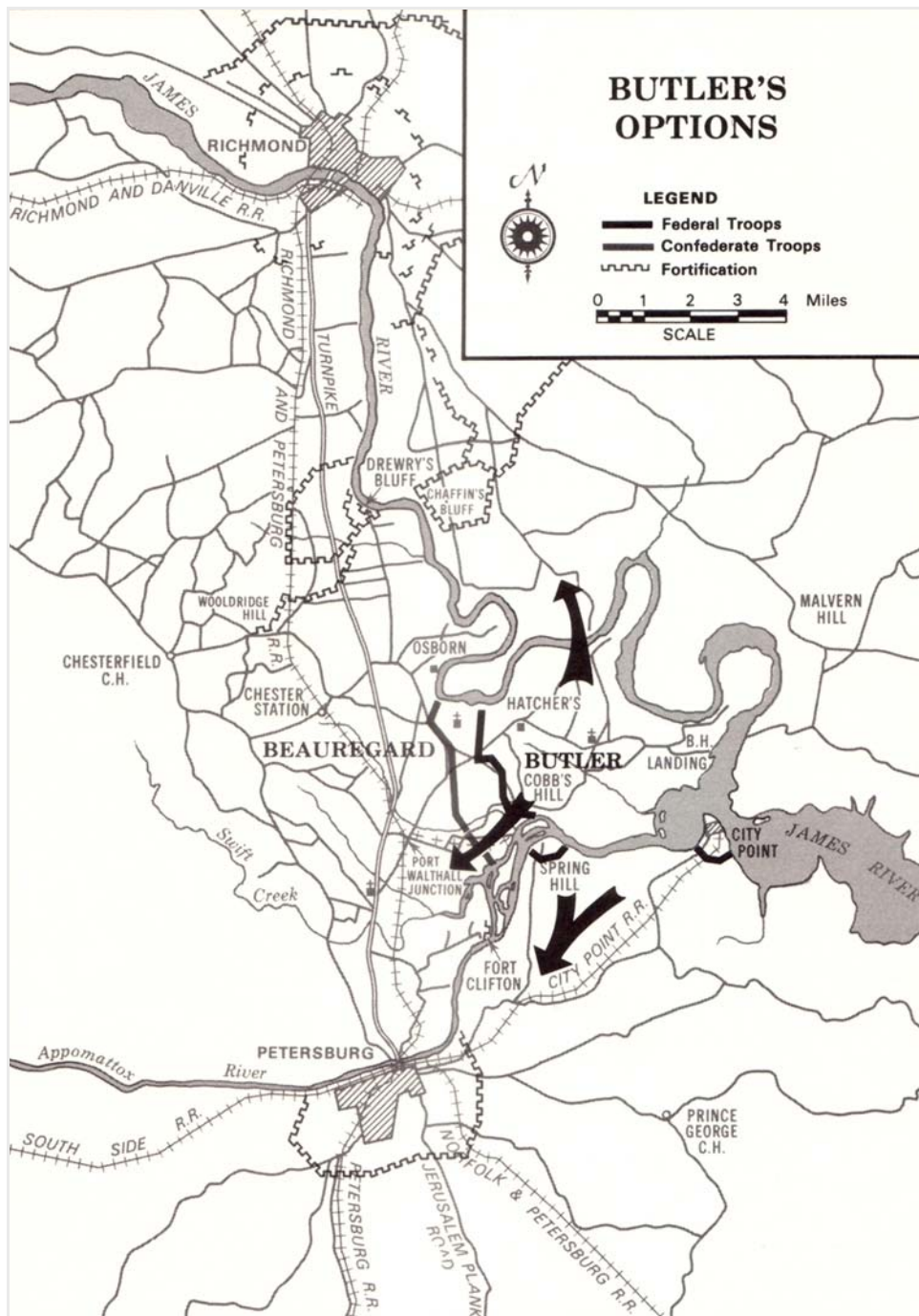
X Army Corps Badge, 3^d Division, gilt silver

Red = 1st Division, White = 2^d Division, Blue = 3^d Division

The *Daily Press* reported the promotions on the 24th of two officers in the regiment, Capt. Bernard N. Smith, Co. B, and 1st Lieut. Clark Smith, Co. B: "Two gallant and patriotic members of the widespread Smith family were today mustered into promotions in the United States service in the Tenth Corps – Captain Bernard N. Smith and Lieutenant Clark Smith – both of the 169th New York Volunteers, Col. McConihe. Captain Smith is attached to the staff of the corps General, and is an officer of great merit and popularity. Lieut. Clark Smith, like his friend the Captain, is popular."

Henry Ensign, leader of the regimental band, returned to Troy on the 19th, as reported by the *Daily Times*: "Music being unused, he received a leave of absence. Mr. Ensign saw Lieut. Birdsall, alive and well, on Monday morning." Gen. Alden's memoirs recalled what would be the last performance for some time by the regimental band during the Battle of Chester Station (see p. 109).

Gen. Alden's memoirs explain the strategic importance of the Federal intrenchments at Bermuda Hundred. The Union Army's foothold in that part of Virginia would be used to support the coming siege of Petersburg and to attack the defenses of Richmond from the southeast later in the year:



**Map of Butler's options in the early summer of 1864
Published in "Back Door to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign,
April-June 1864" by William Glenn Robertson (1987)**

"A strong line of defence, including rifle pits, redoubts and forts, had been constructed along the Bermuda Hundred front, extending from a point on the Appomattox about eight miles up the river, describing the arc of a great circle northerly to the James River. This defensive line the Union forces were prepared to hold against any force that the enemy might precipitate against them. It was a strategic position and of great importance to the Confederates and Federals as well, as a key to Rich-



View from Weitzel's lookout & signal tower, Bermuda Hundred, looking south (July 1864)
William Waud (1832-1878)
 Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

mond and Petersburg, to the railway communication between the two cities, to all merchant marine service through the channel of the James and all water communication practically, with the world outside of Richmond. As a menace, if for no other consideration, the Bermuda Hundred Army was equal to at least 30,000 of Lee's veterans, to which should be added the loss to the enemy of war material and expense of maintaining all their fortifications. The summary of such damage or loss to the enemy, as also the advantages accruing to the Union for victories credited to the Army of the James, may be regarded as the yet inadequate measure of credit due the Union arms in this section of the Great Union Army."

In his autobiography entitled, *Personal Memoirs*, completed just five days before his death, Grant described a conversation with his chief engineer, Brig.-Gen. John G. Barnard, regarding Butler's position at Bermuda Hundred:

"The position which General Butler had chosen between the two rivers, the James and Appomattox, was one of great natural strength, one where a large area of ground might be thoroughly inclosed by means of a single intrenched line, and that a very short one in comparison with the extent of territory which it thoroughly protected. His right was protected by the James River, his left by the Appomattox, and his rear by their junction – the two streams uniting near by. The bends of the two streams shortened the line that had been chosen for intrenchments, while it increased the area which the line inclosed.

Previous to ordering any troops from Butler I sent my chief engineer, General Barnard, from the Army of the Potomac to that of the James to inspect Butler's position and ascertain whether I could again safely make an order for General Butler's movement in co-operation with mine, now that I was getting so near Richmond; or, if I could not, whether his position was strong enough to justify me in withdrawing some of his troops and having them brought round by water to White House to join



"As if he had been in a bottle strongly corked." (1865)
William H. Tevis
Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

me and reinforce the Army of the Potomac. General Barnard reported the position very strong for defensive purposes, and that I could do the latter with great security; but that General Butler could not move from where he was, in co-operation, to produce any effect. He said that the general occupied a place between the James and Appomattox rivers which was of great strength, and where with an inferior force he could hold it for an indefinite length of time against a superior; but that he could do nothing offensively. I then asked him why Butler could not move out from his lines and push across the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad to the rear and on the south side of Richmond. He replied that it was impracticable, because the enemy had substantially the same line across the neck of land that General Butler had. He then took out his pencil and drew a sketch of the locality, remarking that the position was like a bottle and that Butler's line of intrenchments across the neck represented the cork; that the enemy had built an equally strong line immediately in front of him across the neck; and it was therefore as if Butler was in a bottle; he was perfectly safe against an attack; but, as Barnard expressed it, the enemy had corked the bottle and with a small force could hold the cork in its place. This struck me as being very expressive of his position, particularly when I saw the hasty sketch which

General Barnard had drawn; and in making my subsequent report I used that expression without adding quotation marks, never thinking that anything had been said that would attract attention – as this did, very much to the annoyance, no doubt, of General Butler and, I know, very much to my own. I found afterwards that this was mentioned in the notes of General Badeau's book, which, when they were shown to me, I asked to have stricken out; yet it was retained there, though against my wishes.



U.S. Grant writing his memoirs (June 27, 1885)

"I make this statement here because, although I have often made it before, it has never been in my power until now to place it where it will correct history; and I desire to rectify all injustice that I may have done to individuals, particularly to officers who were gallantly serving their country during the trying period of the war for the preservation of the Union. General Butler certainly gave his very earnest support to the war; and he gave his own best efforts personally to the suppression of the rebellion."

Col. McConihe wrote of his many "hairbreadth escapes" in a letter to John Kellogg on the 20th. The "splendid reputation" gained by his regiment during the campaign was well-deserved. Sensing something ominous coming his way, the colonel made a final payment to Mr. Kellogg to settle his obligations in Nebraska Territory, dating back to the time when they were partners in the land speculation business. While writing the letter, a Confederate solid shot passed within two feet of John's head:

"I have just received the enclosed payment and return it to you to settle with R. M. Carpenter and apply the balance to my account.

"We have fallen back within our entrenchments with *heavy loss*, and as I write, the enemy are in strong force in front, besieging us, and the artillery and infantry are at work. I expect every moment something *active*, and hasten to get these checks, which have been following me so long, off my hands.

"The result here no one can foresee. Privately, our prospects are not bright here, and yesterday we were driven back. I, like others under such constant and severe firing and desperate fighting, had many hairbreadth escapes. The 169th has behaved nobly and has won a splendid reputa-



tion, losing *so far* about 130 men. Lieutenant Birdsall has not been heard from since the fight of Monday when he fell, mortally wounded.

6 A.M., May 21st, 1864.

"I have just received my pictures from that veritable imposter Rockwood, and send one to Mrs. Kellogg and one to Miss Emma, with my respects.

"I am trying to find some ink to endorse these checks, and *just* as I have received it, a solid shot has passed through my tent within two feet of my head... The rebels are yelling now like demons."

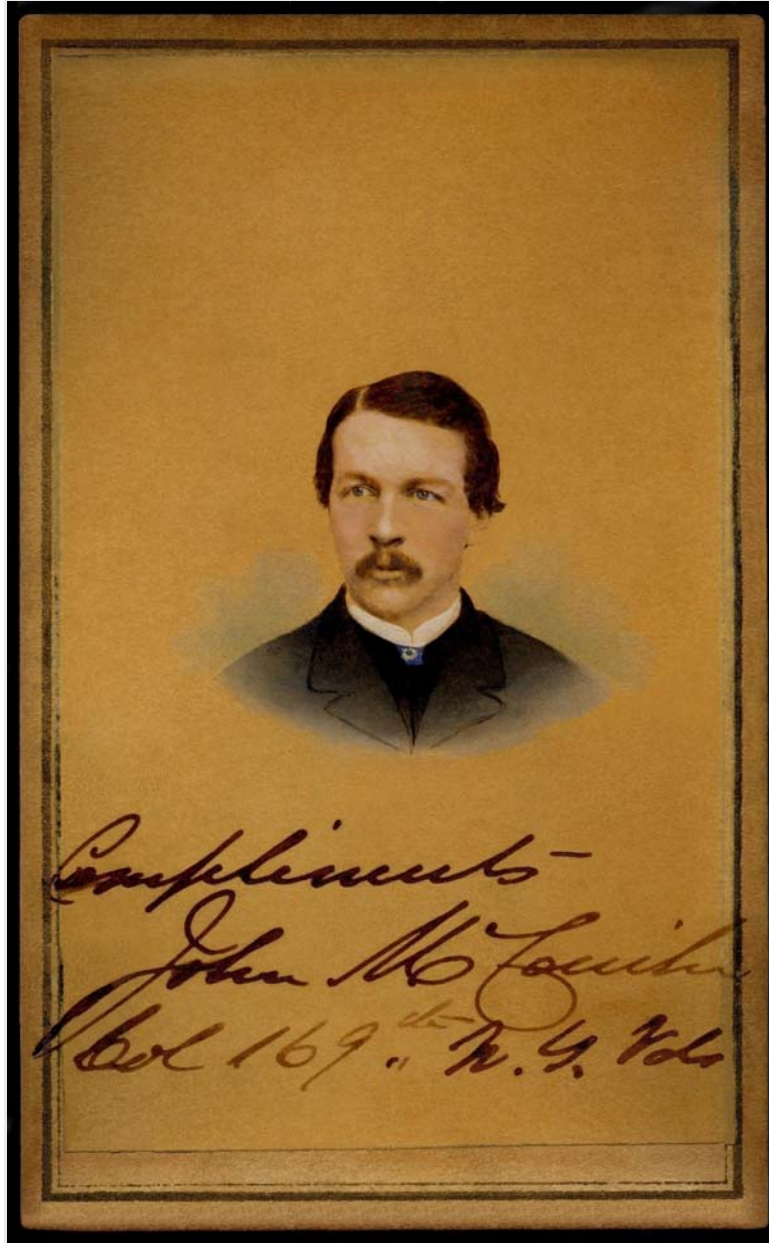
In his memoir of the colonel, John Newton wrote of the "forebodings of the event which shortly befell him," as evidenced by the constant fighting and hardship during the campaign:

"During the night of the 11th, the colonel got very little rest, as he had to make out his orders and the report of the battle. On the 12th, they marched to Walthall Station with their brigade, which was composed of the 169th and 112th N.Y., 9th Maine, and 13th Indiana, to hold the Richmond & Petersburg R.R. They did picket duty on the 13th, 14th, and 15th. The brigade then marched towards Drury's Bluff, and on the 16th, they were attacked by a large force of the Rebels during a dense fog. They fought all that day and at night retired within their entrenched camp. The colonel lost in this action 36 men. From this time until the 28th of May, the regiment was constantly on duty, day and night, fighting and marching through the mud, from place to place, while a heavy rain poured down upon them by day and the night gave them no rest or comfort, as they had not in their fighting trim shelter tents to keep them dry. During these last days, we received the last letter he ever wrote us. It is in pencil, and as I now look upon it as it lies open before me, I think I can trace in it forebodings of the event which shortly befell him."

Within Intrenchments, Va.,
May 20, 1864.

Mrs. Newton,

My mail, including some photographs, but not the one ordered for you, has just arrived in the midst of a battle. I send one to you as a reminder of me.



**"Compliments, John McConihe, Col. 169th N.Y. Vols."
Collection of the Albany Institute of History & Art,
Albany, New York**

Photograph sent by Colonel John McConihe to John and Lavinia Newton of Cincinnati, Ohio, on May 20, 1864. The date is handwritten on the verso. Produced by the studio of George G. Rockwood, Photographer, 839 Broadway, New York.

George Gardner Rockwood was born in Troy, N.Y., on April 12, 1832, and was educated at the Ballston Spa Institute, an English and Classical boarding school for boys in Ballston Spa, N.Y. He began his career in 1853 as a newspaper reporter for the *Troy Daily Times* and two years later became the managing editor of the *Troy Daily Post*. In 1857 Rockwood opened a studio at 839 Broadway in New York with his brother Elihu, a colonel of the 10th Mass. during the Civil War. A rare Rockwood photograph taken in 1874 of "Wild Bill" Hickok recently sold at auction for over \$34,000.

Bullets and shells flying fast. I have little but my best respects to send you and John.

We have lost so far of the 169th one hundred and thirty-one men and three officers. God only knows how many of us will survive this campaign. The regiment has behaved gallantly and is held in high estimation. Many a brave man of us has already fallen.

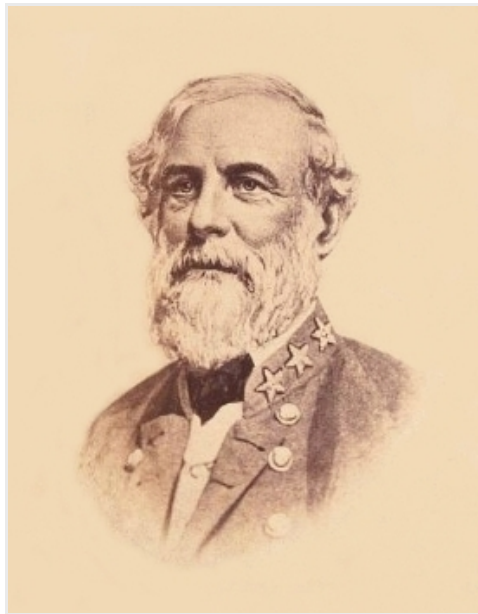
Yours truly,

- John McConihe

Robertson describes the stalemate between the opposing Federal and Confederate intrenchments at Bermuda Hundred in the final week of May:

By 23 May the military situation on the Bermuda Hundred peninsula gave every indication of having become a stalemate. Both armies occupied their time primarily by digging their trenches deeper and raising their parapets higher. To restrict the flow of information reaching the enemy, Beauregard warned Bushrod Johnson against casually accepting Federal flags-of-truce and he instructed D. H. Hill to enforce the order forbidding fraternization with the enemy's pickets...

"Both Lee and Grant were more than willing to accept a stalemate below Richmond in order to reinforce their own commands. Lee was now ready for cooperation with Beauregard, either above or below the Confederate capital, but he especially favored a concentration against Grant. As he explained to Davis:



**Confederate General Robert E. Lee,
commanding Army of Northern Virginia**

'As far as I can understand, General Butler is in a position from which he can only be driven by assault, and which I have no doubt, has been made as strong as possible. Whether it would be proper or advantageous to attack it, General Beauregard can determine, but if not, no more troops are necessary there than to retain the enemy in his intrenchments...'

"At the front, 25 May was another quiet day. Fatigue details were still active, but a new spirit seemed to animate the combatants. On the picket line a soldier in the 56th North Carolina loaned his shovel to a



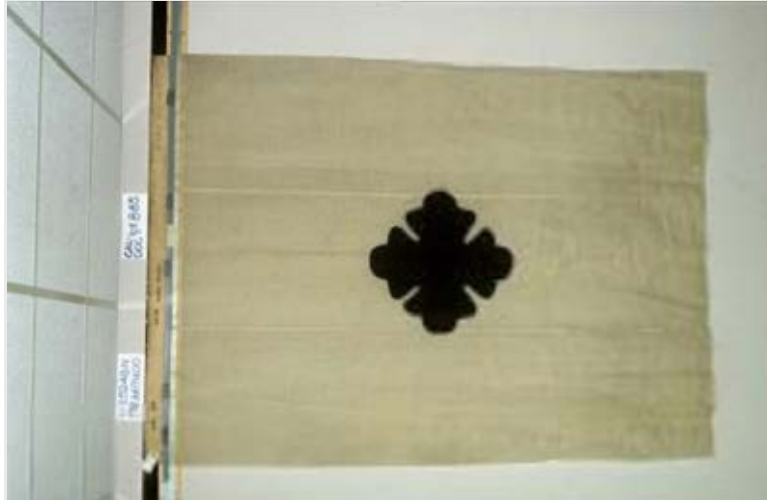
**Between the Lines (ca. 1904-'08)
William Gilbert Gaul (1855-1919)**

Collection of the Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Alabama

Federal sentry who needed it to construct a rifle pit. Other pickets leaned their guns against trees and read newspapers in full view of their opponents. Several flags-of-truce passed between the lines, in contravention of the spirit if not the letter of Beauregard's orders. Within the Federal works, spirits momentarily rose with the arrival of a War Department dispatch announcing that Grant had crossed the North Anna River and was in pursuit of Lee. Other Federals, hearing train whistles from the direction of the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad, doubted that the Union cause was so near triumph. Had they known that the railroad would officially be reopened to traffic on the following day, their doubts would have been even greater..."

Changes were in store for the Army of the James when it received orders from the War Department to transfer the XVIII Corps under Smith to the Army of the Potomac. Two divisions from the X Corps, including the 2^d (Turner's) and the 3^d (Ames's) were transferred to the XVIII Corps and would also form part of the reinforcements for Grant. Drake's Brigade, (including the 169th N.Y.), was now the 2^d Brigade of the 3^d Division, XVIII Corps, under the command of Brig.-Gen. Charles Devens, Jr. Robertson continues:

"[On 26 May], Smith had just received the War Department's order for him to prepare to join the Army of the Potomac. Butler estimated that he could spare 17,000 troops if certain steps were taken to fill their place in line. These measures were outlined in General Order No. 70: Terry's division would take over the entire X Corps line; Kautz's cavalry division would occupy the line held by Brooks's division of the XVIII Corps; Cole's cavalry regiment and two infantry regiments would replace Martindale's XVIII Corps division (formerly Weitzel's); Hincks would form a provisional brigade to be stationed behind Kautz's



**Designating Flag, Third Division, XVIII Army Corps
Collection of the National Museum of American History,
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.**

right as a reserve; and finally, Gillmore would command the entire line of defenses. Such shuffling of units would free two divisions from each corps for duty in the mobile column...

"From his vantage point, Butler saw dire portents in Grant's call for reinforcements from the Army of the James. He wrote his wife that 'This is a sign of weakness I did not look for, and to my mind augurs worse for our cause than anything I have seen.' Butler believed that Smith's contingent would arrive too late to be of any possible benefit to Grant, and he began to ponder ways to prevent its departure from Bermuda Hundred...



**Major-General William F. Smith,
commanding reinforcements from the XVIII Corps,
Army of the James**

"Before leaving to join the Army of the Potomac, Smith visited Butler's headquarters at Cobb's Hill for a farewell meal. The occasion was somber because all realized that a great opportunity to seize Peters-

burg had been lost, especially since new intelligence from Hincks indicated that the city's garrison was woefully weak. Butler doubted that transportation sufficient to carry Smith's entire contingent was at hand, but enough was present to make retention of the troops a disobedient act, so Smith had to go. By his own account Smith was taking with him 16,000 infantry, plus sixteen artillery pieces and a squadron of cavalry. In messages to both Grant and Secretary of War Stanton, Butler announced that Smith was embarking. To Stanton, Butler remarked plaintively, "I regret exceedingly the loss of this opportunity upon Petersburg."

We conclude our journey back in time in this issue with the last letter Col. McConihe would ever write. "The following letter," wrote John Newton, "written four days before his death, the last one he ever penned, is to his father and shows how clearly and steadily the pure flame of patriotism burst within him."

Headquarters, 169th N.Y. Vols.,
In the field near Petersburg, Va.,
May 27, 1864.

Dear Father,

I have been so situated in the field, (or rather in the woods), that it has been almost impossible for me to write home such a letter as I have wished. Since we left Gloucester, we have been without tents or baggage within reach, and have performed the most arduous work. During my whole service of over three years, I have never experienced such constant labors, or passed through such unceasing dangers. Hardly a night has passed since the 5th inst., when we landed at Bermuda Hundred, that the regiment has not been called out in line of battle, and most of the time we have been in sight of the enemy. There has been no rest for one, night or day, and it does not hardly seem credible that men can endure what the troops have passed through, without being completely used up and exhausted.

We now report but three hundred and ninety-seven men for duty, and it would, out of this number, be impossible to furnish 350 men for fatigue. I have been constantly with the regiment on duty, and have never for a moment complained or asked to be relieved from any assigned duty. It is so with all the troops, and we all seem to feel, both officers and men, that we are willing to exhaust our physical and mental abilities, and give up even life itself, to push forward vigorously this summer's campaigns.

Orders have arrived to move, and I must close with an affectionate remembrance to all, and sorry thus to be interrupted. Love to Mother and all.

Your affectionate Son,

- John



The month of May, 1864, would provide us with the final letters from 1st Serg't. Frederick F. French, Co. D, killed in action; Corp. Lyman Ostrom, Co. A, killed in action; Priv. Theodore Schutt, Co. A, captured; and Col. John McConihe, who would be killed while leading the charge at Cold Harbor, Va., June 1, 1864. Other men from the regiment would on occasion see their letters published in Troy and Lansingburgh newspapers, but by and large our understanding of the final year of the war will be increasingly dependent upon other sources of information than in the past.

Special thanks are given to Katherine A. Nollner for graciously providing your correspondent with a scan of a tintype image of her great-great-grandfather, Corp. Lyman Ostrom. Several years ago Katherine's father, John S. Ostrom, donated Lyman's correspondence to Cornell University, their alma mater.

The carte-de-visite image and wartime journal of Col. Sabine Emery, 9th Maine, were kindly provided by his great-great-granddaughter, Nancy W. Tidrick. The journal helped me get to the bottom of the issue concerning the colonel's departure from the service, mentioned in two letters by Corp. Ostrom.

My appreciation is also extended to Sharon R. Onderdonk for a biographical sketch of her husband's ancestor, Col. Benjamin F. Onderdonk, 1st N.Y. Mounted Rifles. The sketch includes a rare photograph of the colonel. John Burgess, Sr., graciously furnished photographs of battlefield artifacts found at his family's property, the Yellow House Farm (aka the Winfree House) in Chester, Va. Linda Cary kindly provided photographs of Serg't. Henry Slack, Co. A, and the star from the regimental banner of the 169th N.Y., shot off at the 3^d Battle of Port Walthall Junction, Va., May 16, 1864.

Just a few days ago a great-great-granddaughter of Capt. Daniel J. Ferguson, Co. K, requested information about her ancestor, and a search of New York newspapers by your correspondent led to the discovery of the following article:

The Troy Daily Whig.

JANUARY 15, 1872.

"LANSINGBURGH. Before Capt. Daniel Ferguson started for the scene of war with the 169th regiment, Jerusalem Lodge presented him with an elegant sword and belt. Capt. F. was killed by the explosion at Fort Fisher, and his sword and belt were returned to this village. This evening they will be represented to Jerusalem Lodge, and be deposited among the archives."

A search is now underway to locate the sword of Capt. Ferguson, who was Worshipful Master of the Lodge in 1862, and inquiries have been forwarded to the Lansingburgh Historical Society and the New York Phoenix-Jerusalem Lodge #58 in Troy.

Marie E. Hoffman, who along with Eva H. Gemmill edited the book, *Marcus Peck: Letters of a Civil War Soldier and His Family* (1993), informs us that the letters and historical artifacts of Serg't. Marcus Peck, Co. H, are now part of the collections of the Rensselaer County Historical Society in Troy.

Presented for your review and contemplation are photographs of gravestones for soldiers of the 169th N.Y. who were among the casualties during the Bermuda Hundred Campaign. Some would survive the experience, others did not.



Corporal Edward Barrett, Co. A
Irish Hill Cemetery, Cooperstown,
Otsego County, N.Y.



Private Joseph Lenoth, Co. D
City Point National Cemetery, Hopewell, Va.



Corporal William H. Shufelt, Co. A
Hampton National Cemetery, Hampton, Va.



Corporal George W. Bailey, Co. A
City Point National Cemetery, Hopewell, Va.



Sergeant John Keenan, Co. B
Togus National Cemetery, Togus, Kennebec County, Me.



Corporal Lyman Ostrom, Co. A

Nassau-Schodack Cemetery, Nassau,
Rensselaer County, N.Y.



Private Stephen B. Keech, Co. F
Orcutt Cemetery, Fort Ann, Washington County, N.Y.



Corporal Robert Anderson, Co. B
St. Peter's Cemetery, Troy, Rensselaer County, N.Y.



Private Jacob W. Taylor, Co. E
Center Berlin Cemetery, Berlin, Rensselaer County, N.Y.



Private Jeremiah McCarty, Co. F
Ogdensburg Cemetery, Ogdensburg,
St. Lawrence County, N.Y.



Private Philip McCluskey, Co. F
St. Mary's Cemetery, Ogdensburg,
St. Lawrence County, N.Y.



Private George Sheldon, Co. A
Brainard Rural Cemetery, Brainard,
Rensselaer County, N.Y.



Private William E. Griggs, Co. K
Old Mount Ida Cemetery, Troy,
Rensselaer County, N.Y.



Captain Spencer W. Snyder, Co. D
Albany Rural Cemetery, Menands, Albany County, N.Y.



Private William M. Mercy, Co. K
New Mount Ida Cemetery, Troy, Rensselaer County, N.Y.



Private Asbury Bacchus, Co. A
Andersonville National Cemetery, Andersonville,
Sumter County, Ga.



Private Charles Farrar, Co. G
Andersonville National Cemetery, Andersonville,
Sumter County, Ga.



Private Abram C. Folmsbee, Co. A
Andersonville National Cemetery, Andersonville,
Sumter County, Ga.



Private William S. Hand, Co. A
Andersonville National Cemetery, Andersonville,
Sumter County, Ga.



Private Jonathan Hoag, Co. A
Andersonville National Cemetery, Andersonville,
Sumter County, Ga.



Private Theodore Schutt, Co. A
Andersonville National Cemetery, Andersonville,
Sumter County, Ga.



Private Edward Stickles, Co. A
Andersonville National Cemetery, Andersonville,
Sumter County, Ga.



Private Cassius M. C. Varney, Co. E
Andersonville National Cemetery, Andersonville,
Sumter County, Ga.



Private William Campbell, Co. K
Andersonville National Cemetery, Andersonville,
Sumter County, Ga.



Private Jeremiah Robillard, Co. I
Riverview Cemetery, Trenton,
Mercer County, N. J.



Private Lewis La Duke, Co. I
Center Berlin Cemetery, Berlin, Rensselaer County, N.Y.



1st Lieutenant Patrick Connors, Co. I
St. Peter's Cemetery, Troy, Rensselaer County, N.Y.



Corporal Adolphus Lavine, Co. I
St. Joseph's Cemetery, Troy, Rensselaer County, N.Y.



Private Valentine Reinholz, Co. G
Hampton National Cemetery, Hampton, Va.



Corporal Elijah G. Bradway, Co. A
Hillside Cemetery, Stephentown, Rensselaer County, N.Y.



Private Hiram E. Stewart, Co. H

Meadowlawn / Pleasant Valley Cemetery, Petersburg, Rensselaer County, N.Y.



Private John H. Bligh, Co. E

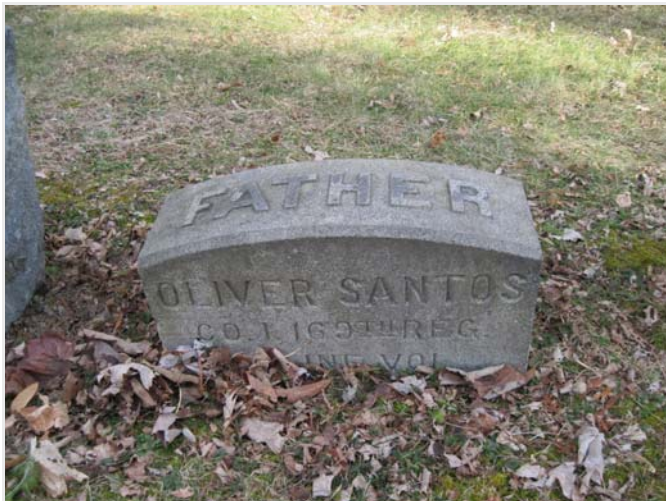
Garfield Cemetery, Stephentown, Rensselaer County, N.Y.



Private Elbert A. Prouty, Co. A
Oak Hill Cemetery, Bellows Falls, Windham County, Vt.



Private John A. Beckstein, Co. G
Elmwood Cemetery, West Sand Lake, Rensselaer County, N.Y.



Private Oliver Santos, Co. I
St. Jean's Cemetery, Brunswick, Rensselaer County, N.Y.



Corporal Calvin Champlin, Co. A
Denny Cemetery, Meadville, Crawford County, Penn.

Cheers,

- Steve Wiezbicki

Steven M. Wiezbicki
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smw107@columbia.edu
smw700@hotmail.com

http://dmna.ny.gov/historic/reghist/civil/infantry/169thInf/169thInf_Newsletter/169thInf_Newsletter.htm