

The Bugle



Quarterly Journal of the
Camp Curtin Historical Society
and Civil War Round Table, Inc.

Summer 2011
Volume 21, Number 2



"The field upon which we now stand will be known as classic ground, for here has been the great central point of the organization of our military forces. When my administration of public affairs will have been forgotten and the good and evil will be only known to the investigation of the antiquarian, Camp Curtin, with its memories and associations, will be immortal."

- Governor Andrew Curtin, 1865

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***You are cordially invited to attend the
Camp Curtin Historical Society's
2011 Annual Summer Picnic***

*Free for members, their families, friends & guests
4:00 – 7:00PM – Saturday – August 20th
Fort Hunter Park
5300 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA.*

The Society will provide Chicken, Hamburgers, Sausages & Buns and the cooks! If you plan to attend, please sign-up so that we have enough food and an accurate count of guests. We also need members to volunteer to supply side dishes, drinks, condiments, chips, pretzels, desserts, etc. If you plan to attend, **call Sharon Caba at 732-3204 (day or evening) or email sharoncaba@comcast.net** with the number of your guests and she will provide you with suggestions for what to bring.

The reservation deadline is Monday, August 15.

Cover

Our cover shows the most common weapons of the Union Army during the Civil War. From the top, a Model 1861 U. S. Rifle Musket (approximately 726,567 made at the Springfield Armory and by private contractors), a Pattern 1860 Light Cavalry Saber (approximately 263,285 purchased from various private contractors), a Model 1860 Colt Army Revolver (approximately 129,730 purchased from the Colt Firearms Company), and a Model 1863 Sharps Carbine (approximately 80,512 of this model and the earlier M1859 version were purchased from the Sharps Rifle Manufacturing Company).

***Camp Curtin
Historical Society and
Civil War Round Table***

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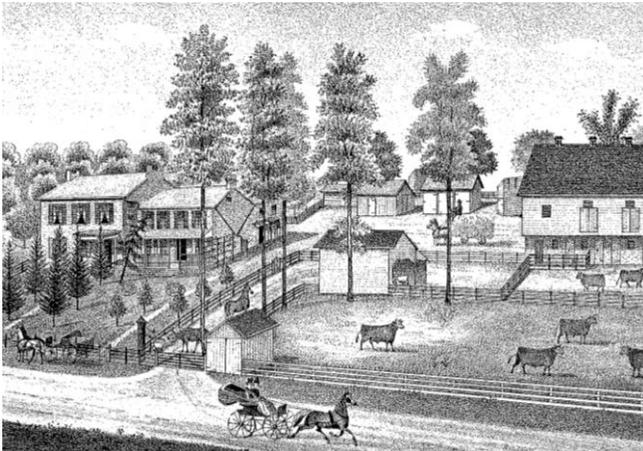
The Real Battle of Sporting Hill: Part I *by Cooper H. Wingert*

Sporting Hill Vignettes

The Battle of Sporting Hill, occurring on 30 June 1863, was the Northernmost Engagement of the Gettysburg Campaign. The Battle can be divided into Three Phases of Battle. The first phase lasted from approximately 3:30 P.M. to 3:55 P.M., including the initial fighting and the Confederate flanking attempt. The second phase included the majority of the Battle, the deployments of the 22nd New York State Militia, the advance of the 37th NYSM, and Confederate artillery action, from 4:00 to 5:00 P.M. The third and final phase included the final infantry deployment, the artillery duel, and a flank threat on the left, ending the Battle shortly after six o'clock in the evening.

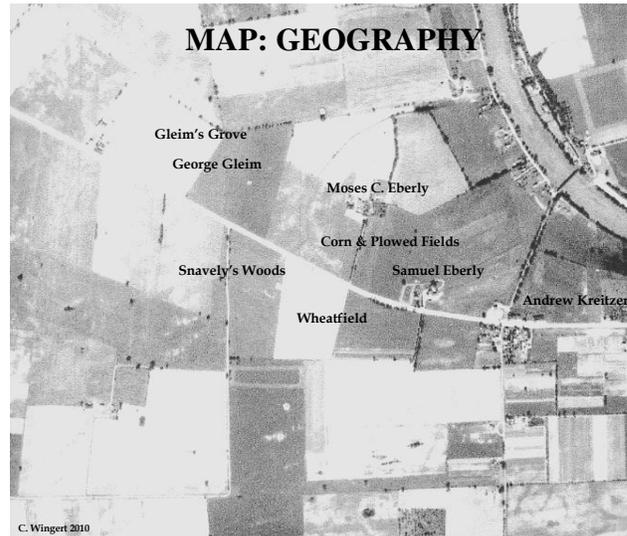
Vignette I: The Battle Begins

The Battle of Sporting Hill began in earnest at approximately 3:30 P.M., on the afternoon of 30 June 1863 near Samuel Eberly's Mansion Farm on the eastern crest of Sporting Hill. Brigadier General John Ewen's 4th New York State Militia (NYSM) Brigade crested Sporting Hill and was fired upon by the 16th Virginia Cavalry Regiment in the Moses C. Eberly (McCormick) Barn, and the New Yorkers flopped to the ground in column near the Samuel Eberly Farm.¹

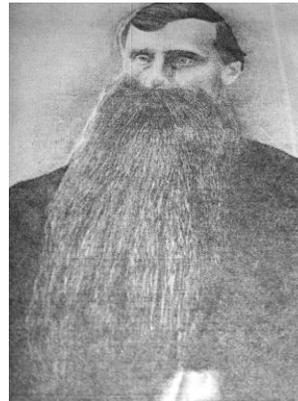


Samuel Eberly's Mansion Farm

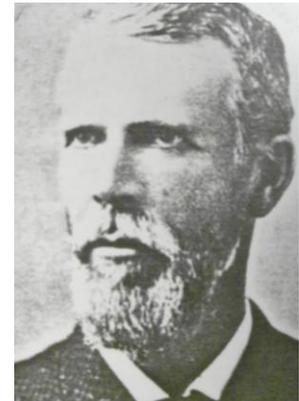
Colonel Milton J. Ferguson had selected a great position for his two Virginia Cavalry Units and battery of horse artillery. Ferguson was Brig. Gen. Albert G. Jenkins' senior colonel; thus when Gen. Jenkins approached the small town of Mechanicsburg on the morning of 28 June 1863, he placed Ferguson in



charge of the force that was to flank the town from the north. He shelled Sporting Hill on 28 June (Part II, Vignette II) and reached the Albright House that afternoon. On 30 June, Jenkins and Ferguson retired to the good grazing and cover of Silver Spring Creek on the belief that Ewell would attack Harrisburg. There Lt. Frank Stanwood's cavalry detachment made contact with them, tempting Ferguson to pursue.²

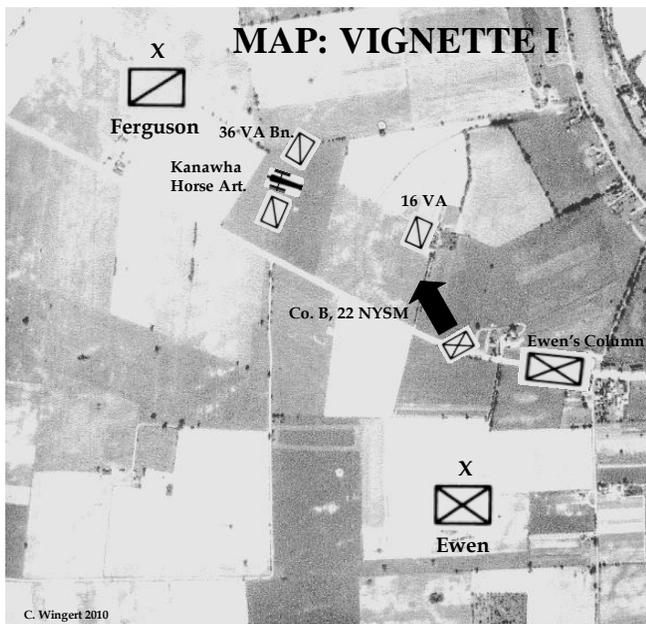


Milton J. Ferguson, CSA



Cornelius T. Smith, CSA

Ferguson posted around four companies (eighty to ninety men) of the 16th Virginia Cavalry Regiment in the Moses C. Eberly (McCormick) Barn as skirmishers.³ He then posted the remainder of his command, the 36th Virginia Cavalry Battalion, two guns from Jackson's Kanawha Horse Artillery, and possibly another detachment of the 16th Virginia Cavalry, to the rear in Gleim's Grove, his main position.⁴



When Ewen's column was fired upon near the Eberly Farm, the officers immediately ordered the men to lie down on the Carlisle Pike where they were standing. The leading company of the column, Company B, 22nd NYSM, was then deployed as skirmishers and began advancing through the fields towards the barn, taking position behind a rail fence near the barn. It is important to note that Company B faced the barn at a slight northeast-southwest angle. The New York Tribune correspondent reported:

*Just as we gained the crest, crack, crack, went the sharpshooters of the enemy, and down we all went with a rush on our knees in obedience to a command from the officers. Our skirmishers were instantly thrown out, and soon we were responding sharply.*⁵

Another New Yorker recalled:

*The enemy were concealed in a wood on the right of, and about a quarter of a mile distant from the road, and they promptly announced their presence by a volley as soon as the brigade reached the crest of a hill. They had also taken possession of one of the large brick barns for which this section of Pennsylvania is noted, and which they had loop-holed and filled with their skirmishers. The brigade was then in column in the road. It received no orders from Gen. Ewen.*⁶

Vignette II: The Confederate Counterthrust

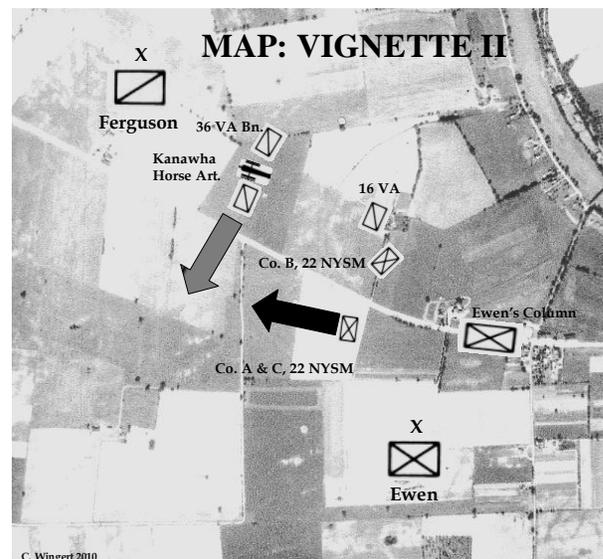
More and more time passed by, and Ewen did not give any more orders to the brigade. Ferguson could readily see this, and, still believing Couch's entire Department

of the Susquehanna was coming down the pike, took advantage of Ewen's exposed left flank. Ferguson ordered Captain Cornelius Timothy Smith, commander of the 36th Virginia Cavalry Battalion to deploy skirmishers in the woods opposite Gleim's Grove, Snavelly's Woods. Smith sent a column of around one to two companies (twenty to forty men) to deploy and cover the main advance that was soon to come.

Smith's column crossing the Carlisle Pike did not go unnoticed by the staff officers of Ewen's Brigade. Lt. Rufus King of Brigadier General William F. "Baldy" Smith's staff spotted this column, and still seeing Ewen was not about to move any of his men, he took matters into his own hands. On his own responsibility, he ordered Companies A and C of the 22nd NYSM to advance through a wheatfield south of the Carlisle Pike and to "seize and hold" the woods.

Companies A and C began their advance, Company A on the left, and C on the right. They not only outnumbered the Confederate skirmishers, but also outflanked them. Company C's right was near the Carlisle Pike, while Smith's skirmishers' left was almost twenty to thirty yards south of the pike. Thus, the skirmishers' flank and route of retreat threatened, Smith wisely withdrew them west, then north to Gleim's Grove.⁷

To avoid any other flanking or ambushes, skirmishers and vedettes were thoroughly posted throughout the area. Companies A and C both claimed after the war that they were the skirmishers, but it is most likely that both companies added a small detachment to the skirmishers and vedettes stationed throughout woods.⁸



During the New Yorkers' advance, small skirmish fire was exchanged. No Federals were wounded, but there remains the possibility that several rebels were wounded. After Smith's skirmishers withdrew, Ferguson must have been extremely bitter. He had lost his chance to rout, what he believed was Couch's entire Department, and harass them or withdraw. For Ferguson, he was now attempting to hold off what he viewed as a much larger Federal force to his front.

A member of Company A, 22nd NYSM, vividly recalled this stage of the Battle:

Lieut. (now Colonel) Rufus King, Fourth Artillery U.S.A., Gen. Smith's chief of artillery, seeing the enemy's skirmishers approaching to take possession of a wood on the left, rode up, and, on his own responsibility, directed two companies of the Twenty-second-Company A (Otis) and Company C (Post)-to seize and hold it. They at once deployed and took possession of it, thus covering the left flank of the column...⁹

Vignette III: Ewen's Brigade Deploys

Around 4:00 P.M. (The Beginning of the Second Phase), Ewen ordered the remaining seven companies of the 22nd NYSM north and south of the Carlisle Pike. Major James F. Cox commanded the three-company detachment north of the Carlisle Pike. South of the Pike, Colonel Lloyd Aspinwall commanded the four companies arrayed there. Aspinwall's companies were in position shortly before Cox's companies.¹⁰

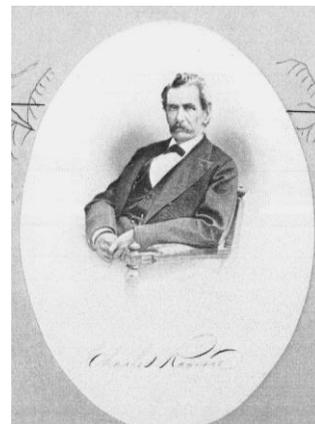
Aspinwall's men were taking fire, being within range of the 16th Virginia. Aspinwall ordered his men to lie down in the wheatfield, an order they executed "promptly," due to the "warm" fire they were receiving which was becoming more intense by the minute. Ewen later reported that he considered Aspinwall as a reserve line. This would seem to indicate that he considered Companies A and C in the woods beyond as either skirmishers or an advance detachment and Aspinwall as a skirmish reserve.¹¹

Cox's men filed behind the 37th NYSM, but somehow they reached their position north of the Carlisle Pike before the 37th. Cox's men formed their line of battle on a small ridge or rise, called Eberly's Ridge, approximately two-hundred and fifty yards from the McCormick Barn, as a support for the skirmishers of Company B. Little is recorded at all of Cox's fight, other than his men were under a hot fire as they advanced to the ridgeline. Of his three companies,

only two are presently known. These were Companies G and I. The latter was the right company in the battle line, and commanded by Captain Asa Bird Gardiner, who would later win the Medal of Honor for his gallantry at Sporting Hill and Carlisle. Cox's men advanced onto Eberly's ridge, and as will be discussed, came under a hot fire.¹²



Lloyd Aspinwall, USA
(MOLLUS-MASS, USAMHI)



Charles Roome, USA
(MOLLUS-MASS, USAMHI)

Shortly after Cox's men were settling into their position, Colonel Charles Roome's 37th NYSM proceeded further towards the barn. The 37th NYSM had been in the rear of the brigade column, and, filing by the right flank had come upon a straight path with the barn. Roome's regiment advanced, and as the regiment crested Eberly's ridge with a wheatfield spanning no longer than thirty to forty yards from east to west, the 16th Virginia hit them with a devastating volley. This volley gave Ewen his first battle casualties. One New Yorker recalled:

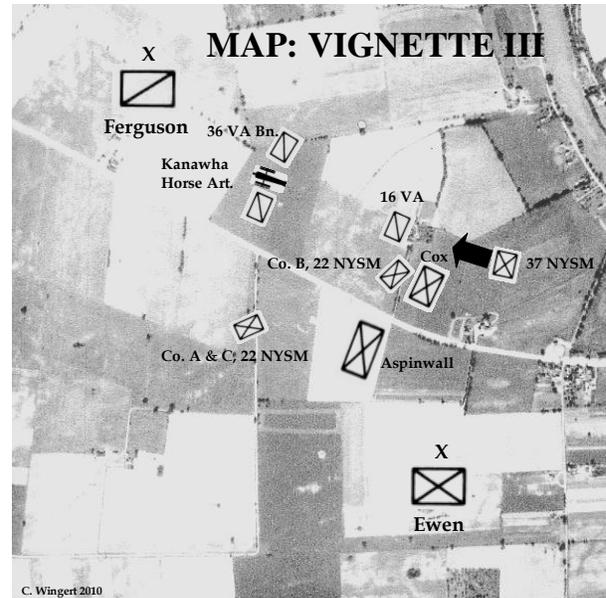
As the leading file came over the brow of the hill, a severe fire was opened upon them, wounding several, among whom were Lieut. Colgate, who was shot in the neck, and a drummer boy, who was shot in the hip.¹³

This author has thoroughly researched this "Lieut. Colgate," who is further identified in this account as a member of the 37th NYSM. The records of commissioned officers in several sources do not speak of a "Lieut. Colgate." Was the rank recorded incorrectly? The records of the 22nd NYSM were checked, which led to the discovery that this was not a lieutenant as has been portrayed in local history for years in Wilbur S. Nye's *Here Come The Rebels*, but rather Corporal Bowles Colgate of Company G, 22nd NYSM. However, in the 3 July 1863 issue of the New York Times, it is confirmed that a Lieutenant of the 37th was wounded, by the name of William C. Abbe,

Company F. This totals the casualties to this point in the battle at three wounded.¹⁴

Ewen sent Major J. Henderson Grant of his staff to order the Thirty-seventh “to rise and deploy forward,” through the wheatfield and take cover behind a post-and-rail fence. The New Yorkers refused to advance under such a severe fire. Ewen then ordered Grant to return and order Capt. Gardiner “to compel them”, using force, bayonets if necessary, to get them to advance.¹⁵

Gardiner, the future Medal of Honor winner, pulled a ‘Longstreet,’ or delaying action, to execute an order. Luckily enough, his ‘Longstreet’ worked. On their own initiative, likely hearing of this order, the men of the Thirty-seventh made a sprinting dash to the fence where they immediately flopped down and resumed firing at the stone-masonry and wooden upper structure of the McCormick Barn.¹⁶



NOTES

¹ Wingate, *History of the Twenty-Second National Guard of the State of New York: From Its Organization to 1895*, (New York: E.W. Dayton, 1896), pp. 194-195: Hereafter cited as, *Wingate, History of the 22nd New York; Wingate, The Last Campaign of the Twenty-Second Regiment, N.G., S.N.Y. June And July, 1863*, (New York: C.S. Westcott & Co., 1864), pp. 11-12: Hereafter cit. as, *Wingate, Last Campaign*.

² U.S. War Dept., *The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union And Confederate Armies*, (Washington: U.S. War Dept, 1880-1901), Vol. 27, Pt. 2, p. 235: Hereafter cit. from Series 1, cit. as, *OR*).

³ In 1863, there was no McCormick Barn, but rather the Moses C. Eberly Barn. In 1864, this was sold to James McCormick. This, however, was used for decades in local history because this name appeared in Wilbur S. Nye’s *Here Come the Rebels*, and any map after 1864.

⁴ V.A. Witcher to J.W. Daniel, 15 March 1900, John W. Daniel Papers, University of Virginia (copy at GNMP Library).

⁵ Wingate, *History of the 22nd New York*, p. 195.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 194.

⁷ *Ibid*; pp. 194-195; “Famous Twenty-Second” *New York Times*, 28 June, 1896.

⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 194-195; The *New York Tribune* Correspondent claims that Company C deployed as skirmishers, while Wingate claims Company A was posted to that duty.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 194.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 194-195; Moore, Frank, ed., *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events, With Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, Etc.*, (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1864), Vol. 7, p. 20: (Hereafter cit. from Vol. 7).

¹¹ *Ibid*, 194,195; *OR*, 27, Pt. 2, 235; Aspinwall to Philadelphia North American, *New York Times*, 26 July, 1863.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 244; “Gen. Asa B. Gardiner Dies in 80th Year”, *New York Times*, May 29, 1919.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 194; *OR*, 27, Pt. 2, p. 235.

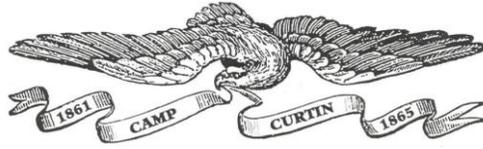
¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 194, 644; “Harrisburgh” *New York Times*, 3 July 1863.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 194-195.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 195; *OR*, Vol. 27, Pt. 2, p. 235 *Wingate, Last Campaign*, pp. 11-12.

Author: Cooper H. Wingert is a member of the Camp Curtin Historical Society. He is 13 years old and is enrolled in a cyber school. He recently published a booklet entitled *The Battle of Sporting Hill, A History and Guide*. He will be the speaker at our November meeting.

Part II of this article will appear in the next issue of *The Bugle*.



*The Camp Curtin Historical Society and
AMART – Association of Mid-Atlantic Civil War Round Tables
are pleased to announce the*

2011 AMART Civil War Symposium

9:00AM to 4:00PM - Saturday, October 1, 2011

at the

U. S. Army Heritage and Education Center, 950 Soldiers Drive, Carlisle, Pa.

Join us for an informative day with distinguished speakers and the opportunity to visit AHEC's living history encampment

"Civil War 150: Entering Winter Camp" - September 30 to October 2

After the first campaigns of 1861, both Union and Confederate armies went into winter quarters for the first time. See Union and Confederate Winter Camps, Drilling Competitions for Infantry, Artillery and Cavalry, Large Sutler's Row, Special Civil War Exhibits from the USAHEC Collections, Period Baseball Game, Victorian Dancing, and Much, Much More !!!

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

- 8:00-9:00AM - Registration & Continental Breakfast, with fruit juices, pastry, yogurt, coffee, tea
During this time, the Visitor and Education Center exhibit, "**A Great Civil War, 1861: The Union Dissolved**," will be open to AMART attendees (it will not open to the public until 9:00AM).
- 9:15-10:15AM - **Dr. Richard J. Sommers**, Senior Historian, Army Heritage Center, speaking on
South-Central's Celebrated Soldiers: Civil War Generals from Our Part of Pennsylvania
- 10:30-11:30AM - **Robert Lee Hodge**, Civil War preservationist and historian, speaking on
Remembering "The War of the Rebellion"
- 11:30AM-1:45PM Lunch on your own from the food vendors at the living history encampment and an opportunity to see the demonstrations and special exhibits
- 1:45-2:45PM - **Scott L. Mingus, Sr.**, author of seven books on the Civil War, speaking on
Flames Beyond Gettysburg: The Confederate Expedition to the Susquehanna River, June 1863
- 3:00-4:00PM - **Jeffrey D. Wert**, author of nine Civil War books, speaking on
The Army of Northern Virginia From the Seven Days to Gettysburg

Speakers' books will be available for sale & signing

★ Cost is only \$10.00 per person ★

Reservations must be received in advance.

Special parking and seating will be provided to preregistered symposium attendees.

Complete and return enclosed registration form.

For more information, contact James Schmick, 717-732-5115 or genjenkins@aol.com



*History comes alive at the
Camp Curtin Historical Society's*
Harrisburg Cemetery Tours
Sunday, September 11



All tours will leave from the Caretaker's House beginning at 12:30PM.

Visit the graves and hear the stories of numerous personalities who influenced local, state and national events in the 19th century. Visitors will learn about Lincoln's first Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, and Brig. Gen. Joseph Knipe, the man who named Camp Curtin. They will hear the story of the Confederates buried in Harrisburg, admire Maj. Gen. John Geary's beautifully restored monument, and see Mary Todd Lincoln's great grandfather's grave. The tours will visit more than two dozen "residents" of the cemetery.

Display of Civil War artifacts and presentations by living historians, including the odd Victorian custom of picnicking at a grave.

Adults - \$5.00 (CCHS Members - \$4.00) All children under 16 - \$1.00

The Harrisburg Cemetery is at the eastern end of the State Street Bridge.

For information call 717-732-5115 or email genjenkins@aol.com.