

The Dispatch

Newspaper of the

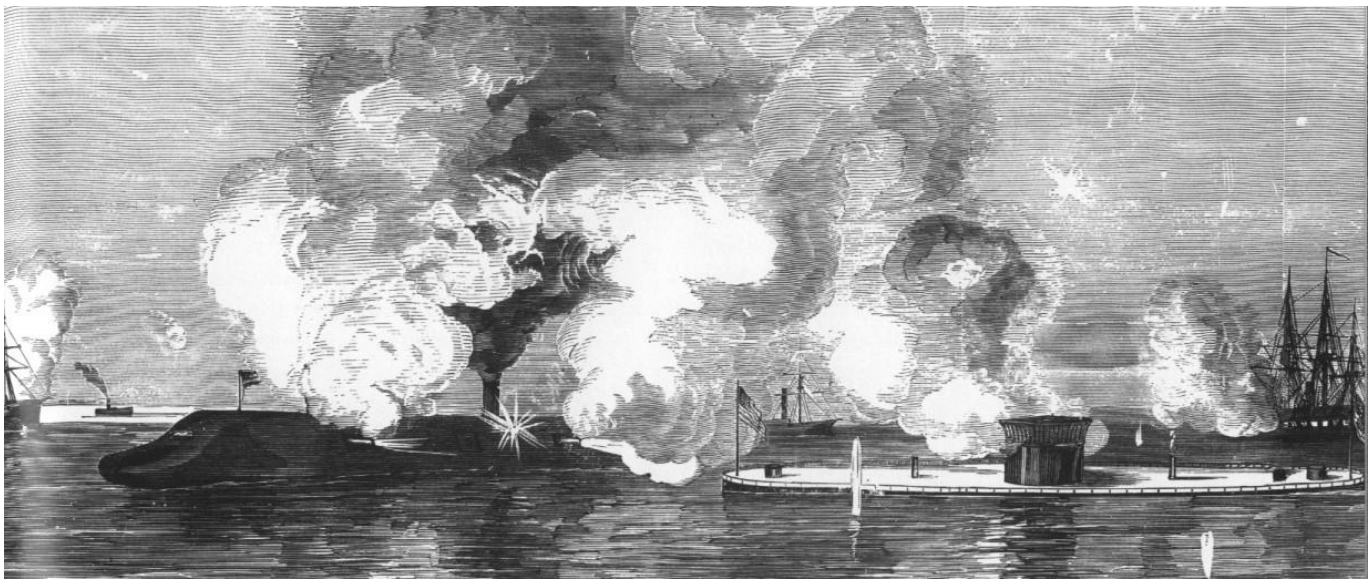
CAPITAL DISTRICT CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

PO Box 14871 Albany, NY 12212
www.cdcwrt.org



Volume 25, Number 7 March 2008

THE MONITOR AND THE MERRIMACK: LITTLE-KNOWN FACTS



Second Naval Battle In Hampton Roads – Fight Between The Federal Ironclad "Monitor," Of Two Guns And The Confederate Iron-plated Steamers "Merrimac," "Yorktown," And "Jamestown," Carrying Twenty-four Guns – The "Merrimac" Crippled, The Frigate "Minnesota."

from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper

In March, 1862, a battle between two small but powerful vessels occurred at Hampton Roads, Virginia, where the Norfolk Naval Yard had been abandoned. The Confederates had converted the USS *Merimack* into an ironclad gunboat, and renamed her CSS *Virginia*. On March 8, 1862, the Virginia attacked Federal warships and sank the sailing frigate, USS *Congress*, and forced the USS *Cumberland* to run aground to prevent her from sinking. Early the next morning the *Virginia* attacked the USS Minnesota, but relief for the Union vessel appeared in the form of the USS *Monitor*. For the next three hours the two ironclads engaged furiously, firing at point-blank range. Neither vessel was the clear victor, but the era of the wooden ship ended with this engagement.

MARCH MEETING
Friday March 14, 2008
Guilderland Library
2228 Western Ave.

THE MONITOR & THE MERRIMACK: LITLE-KNOWN FACTS

SOCIAL HOUR	**6:00-7:00 PM**
BUSINESS	**7:00-7:30 PM**
PRESENTATION	**7:30-8:30 PM**
DISCUSSION	**8:30 – 9:00 PM**

CDCWRT MEETING

The monthly meeting of the CDCWRT will be held at the Guilderland Public Library on Friday evening, March 14, 2008. Our guest speaker will be Capital District Civil War Round Table member and author, **Steve Muller,** ***and his presentation is entitle,*** **"The Monitor and the Merrimack: Little-Known Facts."** ***March 9th marks the 146th anniversary of the historic encounter of the two ironclads at Hampton Roads.***

Steve's talk will focus on the advanced technology John Ericsson incorporated in its design, the methods employed to construct the warship in just over one hundred days, and the impact of the Monitor on the evolution of the armored warship.

Mr. Muller is a retired U.S. State Department Foreign Service Officer. He serves on the Board of Trustees of the Hudson Mohawk Industrial Gateway. He has written a monograph for the Gateway entitled, **"Troy, NY and the Construction of the USS Monitor,"** ***which Steve says he hopes to publish before he dies.***

MONTHLY MEETING

A crowd of 55-60 enthusiasts were on had at the February meeting to hear Fergus M. Bordewich's presentation entitled **"*The War Before the Civil War: The Underground Railroad and the Antebellum Struggle Against the 'Slave Power.'"*** There were many questions from the audience and the Q&A went on until about 9:30 pm.

The roots of the abolition movement originated in the last decades of the 18th century when Quakers concluded it was their moral obligation to free slaves and then protect the free blacks from being sold into slavery elsewhere. The Philadelphia area became a safe haven for escaping slaves and freed blacks, providing shelter and jobs. The Quakers' continued participation in the antislavery movement contributed greatly to the success of the Underground Railroad in the North. As northern states ended slavery one by one, escaping slaves could find refuge in these areas as well. Only a very few moved on to Canada.

The great majority of slaves who fled to freedom came from the border states of Maryland, Virginia and Kentucky. Whenever possible steamboats or railroads were used to move them north. Farther south a few managed to get out through sea ports. Jonathon Walker, a seaman who worked along the coast, was caught helping slaves escape along the Florida shore and banded S.S. (slave-stealer) on the hand. Those aiding escapees in the border areas ran the most risk.

The Underground Railroad was not a centralized hierarchical movement, being made up of independent networks such as central New York or the Hudson Valley. In Albany, a city where approximately one escaped slave a day passed through, the Albany Vigilance Committee was in charge.

In some areas where the Underground Railroad was active, blacks took charge in this biracial movement. Women participated equally with men and the races worked together in this radical movement of civil disobedience.

Traditions of tunnels and secret hiding places in the North are exaggerated because they were unnecessary since the authorities for the most part looked the other way.

The Underground Railroad movement was the war before the war, fought by ordinary people who did extraordinary things. It successfully enabled at least 75,000 people to be free and to benefit from their own labor. Ending up in the towns and cities of the North, these people came in contact with the white population who learned about the evils of slavery firsthand. By the l850s more and more people in the North were influenced against slavery. This was one factor in making men willing to join the Union Army to fight against the South when war broke out.

This excellent summary of the presentation was filed by our secretary, Mary Ellen Johnson.

BOARD MEETING

A Board Meeting was held on February 11, 2008. The treasurer reported $1,514.21 in the regular account, and $5,398.01 in the preservation account. Upcoming events were discussed, including the 145th anniversary of the Battle of Chancellorsville. CDCWRT will be present at the event, and a postal cancellation is being planned. A $1,136 donation was made to CWPT for the purchase of one acre of land at Parker's Cross Roads in Tennessee, where Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest "charged 'em both ways." The 88 acre parcel being purchased will preserve 75% of the core battlefield when combined with previous purchases. Two state government agencies in Tennessee are putting up 87.5% of the $800,000, while CWPT is putting up 12.5%, or $100,000. Thus, this is an 8:1 match, and our $1,136 is leveraged to $9,088.

UP-COMING EVENTS

The following list of up-coming events is provided to help Round Table members plan their long term calendars. These are events that involve our Round Table, especially events that provide opportunities to raise funds for our preservation activities. Some events may change as the year progresses, so members should check the list monthly.

April 11th, 2008, Friday, is the date for the April meeting of the CDCWRT.

April 16th, 2008, Wednesday, marks the preliminary or 'soft' opening of the new Visitor Center at Gettysburg. The CDCWRT is exploring the possibility of our organization handling a special commemorative cancellation for the event.

On May 2nd-4th, 2008, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the 145th anniversary of the Battle of Chancellorsville will be celebrated in Virginia. The CDCWRT will be present at this event, and a special cancellation is being planned. There will probably be a re-enactor event associated with this. The CDCWRT provided a cancellation for the 135th anniversary. The cachet commemorating the wounding of Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson was cancelled approximately 50 feet from the actual site. A few **three cachet sets of the 135th are still available from the CDCWRT for $15.00. This can be combined with a three-cachet set of the 135th anniversary of Antietam for $25.00.** Contact Matt Farina, 190 Knoll Rd, Southern Pines, NC 28387 if interested.

On May 9th, 2008, Friday, the scheduled guest speaker for the May meeting of the CDCWRT will be Wayne Mott. This date will depend upon his speaking schedule. Wayne is the Director of the Adams County Historical Society. The extensive collection is housed in the historical Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg. Wayne will talk about the artifact preservation project the society is beginning.

June 7th and June 8th , Saturday and Sunday, mark the dates for the Peterboro Civil War Weekend. This annual event take place in Peterboro, NY on NYS route 20, near Syracuse. Peterboro was a stop on the Underground Railroad. More details will follow.

June 13th, 2008, Friday, is the date for the June meeting of the CDCWRT. Is anyone superstitious about this date? We have no speaker yet.

July 1st through the 3rd marks the 145th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. There are multiple events taking place on the two weekends that bracket the actual anniversary.

Starting with Friday, June 27th through Sunday, June 29th, is "At High Tide", a re-enactor event with progressive battle scenarios. All proceeds will go to Adams County land preservation and conservation.

On Monday, June 30th, and Tuesday, July 1st, the Adams County Historical Society is planning a major fund raiser. The CDCWRT would do a commemorative postal cancellation for this event.

On Tuesday, July 1st through Thursday, July 3rd, the National Park Service will commemorate the actual anniversary of the battle. There undoubtedly will be many activities taking place. This would be an excellent time to visit Gettysburg, but you should make reservations NOW.

On Friday, July 4th, through Sunday, July 6th, the

145th anniversary will be celebrated by the 'usual' re-enactor organization. The committee expects 10,000 to 15,000 re-enactors. Information is available on line at www.gettysburgreenactment.com.

The CDCWRT will be organizing to possibly cover multiple events in this time frame. This would be an ideal opportunity to raise significant monies for battlefield preservation. However, volunteers are desperately needed; the more volunteers, the more we can do. If you are planning on being in Gettysburg during this time frame, and would like to volunteer a half-day or more, contact president J.J. Jennings.

On July 26th and 27th, Saturday and Sunday, the Baseball Hall of Fame Induction Day will be celebrated in Cooperstown. The CDCWRT has been present at these events with our popular baseball items such as T-shirts and commemorative postal cancellations.

September also promises to be a busy month locally for the CDCWRT.

Friday, September 12th, would be the start of the new 2008-2009 year for the CDCWRT.

On Saturday, September 13th, the Civil War Heritage Day at Albany Rural Cemetery will be celebrated. A number of Civil War groups will be present, including your Round Table.

Saturday, September 20th and Sunday, September 21st, mark the Saratoga Springs Grand Army Event.

On September 26th, Friday, and September 27th, Saturday, the National Park Service will celebrate the Grand Opening of the New Visitor Center and the unveiling of the restored Cyclorama painting at the Visitor Center in Gettysburg. The plans for the center were discussed extensively in a newsletter in 2007. It is our hope that the CDCWRT can be part of this historical event.

October 10-13, 2008, Friday to Monday, Columbus Day Weekend: Possible Fall trip for CDCWRT???

Friday, November 14th, is the date for the November meeting of the CDCWRT.

On Tuesday, November 18th, the David Wills house will open in Gettysburg. Lincoln stayed at the Wills house the day before he delivered the Gettysburg Address. The final touches to the address may have been completed at the house.

On Wednesday, November 19th, guest speaker Ken Burns will talk on the 145th anniversary of the Gettysburg Address on Remembrance Day. The CDCWRT usually has a postal cancellation commemorating the event.

Saturday, November 22nd, marks the Remembrance Day Parade in Gettysburg. This is always a huge re-enactor event, and will be more so on a major anniversary year.

Sunday, December 7th, marks the Troy Victorian Stroll, as well as the 67th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. This is another local event where the CDCWRT is present to promote our organization and raise funds for preservation. Volunteers are always needed.

On Friday, December 12th, the CDCWRT will hold its annual elections and holiday party at the last meeting of the 2008 year.

WHY SUPPORT CWPT?

Many of our members may ask why we donate so much of the funds we raise to support the preservation activities of the Civil War Preservation Trust. Several weeks ago CWPT, the nation's largest non-profit battlefield preservation group with over 65,000 members, announced its land preservation accomplishments for 2007. Hallowed land amounting to 1,616 acres was preserved at 12 different battlefields in five states. This enabled CWPT to reach the historic milestone of 25,000 acres protected over two decades of preservation work at 99 sites in 18 states.

In 1987 a group of historians concerned with the destruction of northern Virginia battlefields formed the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS). In late 1999 this group merged with a similar organization, the Civil War Trust, to form CWPT. In the eight years since the merger the current

group has helped save approximately 18,000 acres of battlefield land.

This past year's most significant land acquisition was 319 acres at the Glendale battlefield in Virginia. Approximately 75% of the core battlefield has now been preserved from scratch. CWPT has also placed conservation easements on 144 acres at the Champion Hill battlefield in Mississippi. To help interpret battlefields, the group also installed nearly five miles of walking and biking trails on the battlefield of Third Winchester in Virginia. This has transformed the battlefield into a premier outdoor classroom for students of all ages. Other additions of land were at sites at Malvern Hill, Petersburg and White Oak Road in Virginia, Perryville in Kentucky, Parker's Cross Roads and Shiloh in Tennessee, and Summit Point in West Virginia.

Our contributions also have been put to effective use. For the second year in a row, CWPT has received a coveted four-star rating for financial accountability from Charity Navigator, an independent evaluator of more that 5000 charities nationwide. Only 15% of charities received the four-star rating two years in a row

It is believed that almost all of the remaining unprotected Civil War battlefield land will be lost or sold to developers within the next five years.

FROM THE SOUTH

I attended my second meeting of the Rufus Barringer Civil War Round Table and heard author Rick Williams speak about his book, ***The Chicago Battery Boys: The Story of the Chicago Mercantile Battery.*** Our friend Ed Bearss encouraged Rick to write this book when Rick discovered the unpublished memoirs of Captain Patrick White and a collection of 400 mounted and preserved letters of William Brown. Both were officers in the battery. Rick's research led him from his home in California to Albany, NY, but more about that later. Ed edited the book and wrote the introductory remarks. A second edition was printed after a large collection of photographs of the men in the battery were discovered. Copies of this second edition were signed by Rick and Ed and were presented to donors to CWPT's fund raising to preserve the Champion Hill battlefield in Mississippi. Thirty-seven men of the battery were church members in a Chicago church where the pastor's wife was Mary Livermore. She referred to the men as "her battery boys," hence the title of the book. Mary was instrumental in the formation of the U.S. Sanitary Commission and later was involved in the women's suffrage movement.

At the battle of Shiloh, the Mercantile Battery was preparing for morning drill when the Confederate attack began. The battery was in the midst of severe fighting. The officers sword of Pat White was ripped from his uniform by bullets, and after the battle the uninjured officer discovered 12 bullet holes in his frock coat. He was later presented with a new sword by the citizens of Chicago, and he swore that he would never surrender that sword to anyone but another officer. In the attack on Vicksburg on May 22, 1863, several Union regiments were trapped at the base of the 2nd Texas lunette. White was asked to provide covering fire to allow the Union regiments to withdraw. He and his men dragged two cannons up a steep slope to the top of an exposed hill where they could provide covering fire, while exposing themselves to enemy gunners. Subsequently, in 1896, six medals of honor were awarded to men of the battery, including White.

After the Vicksburg campaign, the Mercantile Battery was loaned to Gen. Banks in the Red River campaign. The battery was overrun while providing cover fire again in the Battle of Sabine Crossroads. Capt. White refused to yield his sword to a Confederate infantryman, and was prepared to die, when a Confederate officer arrived and accepted the sword. Years later, after the Confederate officer had died, his daughter wished to return the sword. She ran an ad in a veterans newspaper which was seen by a member of the battery. In 1895, Pat White's sword was returned to him.

Now for the Albany connection. After the war, Pat moved to Albany and became a security guard at the Capitol Building. He wrote his memoirs, and donated his medal of honor, his frock and his sword to the NYS Military Museum. He is buried locally. While doing his research, the author Rick Williams visited the NYS Archives and a member of our Round Table helped him to view the medal, sword, frock, and gravesite. It was not Dan Lorello, although Rick did meet Dan. It was Robert Mulligan. Rick mentioned at

the RBCWRT meeting that there was little interest in the Civil War in New York State because these items were kept in the archives and were not being displayed for the public.

Well the honor of our CDCWRT was at stake now! I raised my hand and explained to the speaker who I was and that I was fascinated by the Albany connection. I agreed that in the 1990s the State was just beginning to realize the size and value of its collection. I told the group about the acquisition of the armory in Saratoga and its progression into the NYS Military Museum. I told the group about the flag restoration project. I also told the group about the unfortunate Lorello affair. The March meeting was to consist of presentations by RT members, like our potpourri meeting. There were no volunteers who had yet signed up. So I volunteered to do a presentation, and we have agreed on the title of ***"Doctor Hunter Holmes McGuire and the Wounding and Death of Thomas 'Stonewall' Jackson."*** My daughter Mary Alice, who lives nearby, has agreed to design a website for their round table. I passed out some copies of our newsletters which I happened to have on hand. Finally I have volunteered to help them with a newsletter. To quote a famous Roman general, "Veni, Vidi, Vici."

FIRST ON THE FIELD
CORTLAND'S 76TH AND OSWEGO'S 147TH NYS VOLUNTEER REGIMENTS AT GETTYSBURG

This July 1-3 will mark the 145th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. The new Visitor Center and Museum will open next month for members of the Friends of the National Park at Gettysburg. The Center is gearing up for May, which is when many school children visit Gettysburg. A brand new movie will introduce audiences to the battlefield and museum. By the time the anniversary rolls around, the museum should be in full swing. The huge Cyclorama painting has been restored and the parts have been hung. The panels are yet to be joined. There will be new sky panels added (like there originally was) and a foreground diorama will be added. The Cyclorama will be dedicated in the fall and is not yet open.

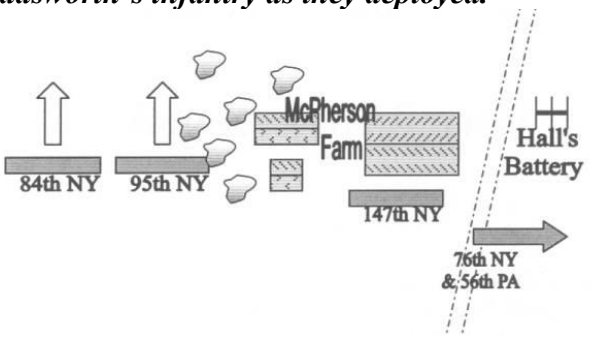
The CDCWRT will be very involved with the events in Gettysburg. Wayne Mott will be coming to talk to the RT about the Lutheran Seminary. The RT is planning on a postal cancellation relative to the Seminary. The RT will be at the re-enactment and hopes to have a postal cancellation for that also. On our trip to Gettysburg last fall, members of the RT had the opportunity to climb up to the famous cupola where Gen. John Buford observed the Confederate advance and spoke, "The Devil's to pay!." It was also likely that Gen. Robert E. Lee climbed to the copula after the Confederates swept Seminary Ridge. But there is another local connection to our Round Table, and that is the 76th NYSVI, which also happens to be on our Civil War baseball t-shirts and sweatshirts.

R. L. Murray published a monograph entitled ***First on the Field*** in 1998. It is a brief story of the 76th NYSVI and 147th NYSVI at Gettysburg. This is a brief summary of that monograph.

On the morning of June 30, 1863, the men of the 76th and 147th NYS Volunteer Regiments awoke and began making coffee. They had been marching five days in a row, and the previous day's march had been twenty-six miles. The 76th had been recruited from Cherry Valley, Cooperstown, Ostego and Schoharie counties. The 147th came from Oswego county. They had been assigned to the Second Brigade, First Division of the First Corps. The Second Brigade also included the 7th Indiana, 56th Pennsylvania, 95th New York, and the 84th New York (but referred to as the 14th Brooklyn because the nucleus was made up of men from the 14th New York militia unit). Maj. Gen. John Reynolds commanded the First Corps. The First Division was under the command of Brig. Gen. James Wadsworth from Genesseo, and the Second Brigade was commanded by Brig. Gen. Lysander Cutler.

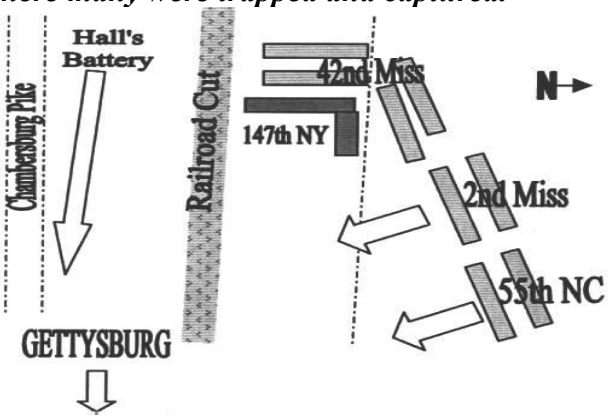
John Buford's Cavalry Corps engaged Henry Heth's Division on July 1st on McPherson Ridge west of Gettysburg. The First Corps had camped in the Emmitsburg area of Maryland, south of Gettysburg, on the evening of June 30th. The infantry was urgently called upon to support Buford, and Cutler's Brigade was put in motion. Eighteen men from the 147th served as the brigade guard at the head of the column, followed by the 76th NY, 56th PA, 147th NY, 14th Brooklyn and 95th NY. They left the Emmitsburg Road and cut diagonally across field to relieve Buford. Hall's 2nd Maine Battery rushed by the infantry. The troops descended the slope on

Seminary Ridge amid Confederate artillery fire. A cannon ball passed between the legs of Capt. Robert Story of the 76th NY and plowed the earth behind him. Gen. Reynolds had ridden on ahead with some of his staff, and he ordered Hall's battery to deploy on McPherson ridge to help draw the fire off Wadsworth's infantry as they deployed.



The Second Brigade was divided and Brig. Gen. Cutler led the 76th NY and 56th PA north across the Chambersburg Pike and a railroad cut, while the 14th Brooklyn and 95th NY took positions on the south side of the road near the McPherson farm. In the confusion the 147th was not given orders and halted near the McPherson barn. Its commander, Lt. Col. Francis Miller, rode off to find out where to deploy. Firing on the front and right flank of the 76th NY marked the positions of the Confederate forces consisting of the 42nd Miss., 2nd Miss. and the 55th NC, all from Gen. Joseph Davis' Brigade. The 76th NY refused its right flank to deal with the 55th NC. Shortly after giving that order, Maj. Andrew Grover, commanding the 76th, was struck near the heart and died minutes later. He had led the regiment as a major, and his commission to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel was not received until after his death. The situation became desperate, and Brig. Gen. Wadsworth ordered Cutler with the 76th and 56th to retire.

Meanwhile, the 147th NY finally got orders to join the 76th and support Hall's Battery. They moved north and crossed the Chambersburg Pike and railroad cut, and were immediately set upon by the 42nd Miss. After several minutes the Mississippians began to also move on Hall's Battery, which limbered up and headed for the rear. At the same time, the 76th NY and the 56th PA were ordered to retreat. The 147th remained and provided valuable cover fire for Hall's Battery. Just after receiving the order to retreat, the commander of the 147th received a head wound. The regiment did not know they too were to retreat. While they were being flanked, the 147th received a second order to retire. They pulled back to the railroad cut where many were trapped and captured.



As the captured Union soldiers were being moved to the rear, they heard a Union cheer as three regiments --- 6th Wisconsin, 95th NY and the 14th Brooklyn --- countercharged the Confederates. Now many of the Confederates moved into the same railroad cut for cover, and became trapped in a similar fashion. Hundreds were captured.

While the remnants of Cutler's Brigade began to reorganize near Seminary Ridge, Gen. Wadsworth's other brigade, the Iron Brigade, had come onto the field and engaged the Confederates of Archer's Brigade on the other side of the Chambersburg Pike. The Iron Brigade overlapped the Confederate right. They captured many of Archer's Brigade including Gen. Archer.

Following this initial infantry clash, the battlefield became quiet. Maj. Gen. Abner Doubleday assumed command of the First Corps when John Reynolds was killed. A little after 11:00 a.m. the Second and Third Divisions had come up. Wadsworth's troops were ordered back to their original positions. However Confederate artillery fire from Oak Hill to the north forced the troops to form a new line in some woods. Gen. Alfred Iverson's Brigade was ordered to attack the north end of the First Corps line. Cutler's men had the opportunity to wheel in the woods and hit the exposed flank of Iverson's brigade while another Union brigade (Baxter's) hit the front. Within minutes nearly 500 Confederates fell, and the charging 76th NY captured the colors of a Confederate regiment. Low on ammunition, the 76th was finally relieved, and ultimately they retired to Cemetery Hill.

Stay tuned until next month when we follow the adventures of the 76th and 147th at Gettysburg on day two of the battle.