

## **GEORGE BOYETT'S SERVICE IN THE CONFEDERATE ARMY**

**Prepared by Suzanne Forte, wife of Richard Forte, great grandson of George Boyett**

George Love Harrison Boyett was 17 years old when he enlisted, July 3, 1861 in Atlanta, Georgia, in Co I, of the 11th Georgia Infantry, the "Quitman Grays", Army of Northern Virginia. The 11th Georgia Infantry was under Major General James Longstreet's corps, Jones Div, Anderson's Brigade, Col George T. Anderson Commanding.

His Confederate military records indicate his description at that time as having blue eyes, light hair and complexion, born in Clay Co, Georgia, occupation farmer. George's unit saw action in most of the major battles of the war; 2d Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, The Wilderness, Malvern Hill, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg. George was paroled at Appomattox (Lynchburg, Virginia) on April 9, 1865, the day of the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia by General Robert E. Lee.

In 1867 the state of Alabama began granting pensions to Confederate veterans who had lost arms or legs. In 1886 the state began granting pensions to veteran's widows. In 1891, the law was amended to grant pensions to indigent veterans or their widows. On the 18th of June 1904, George applied to the state of Alabama for a pension based on his service in the Confederate Army. On his application he indicates \$156.00 worth of personal property; one mule, two cows, eight hogs, one watch, and one wagon and buggy. He was 61 years old at the time. He also stated that he was unable to earn a living due to kidney trouble. Apparently, his request was approved. Records do not indicate how much pension George received.

In January of 1911, after George's death in December of 1910, his wife applied for a widow's pension to the State of Alabama. Certifying as to their knowledge of George's Confederate military service were E. C. Cumbie, and J. W. Peacock. Widow's pension was approved by the Houston County, Alabama Board of Pension Examiners on Jan 7, 1911.

Richard and I have visited the battlefields at Petersburg, VA, Antietam, Maryland, and Gettysburg, PA. We stood in areas of these battlefields where George and the other members of the 11th Georgia fought to defend their homeland. It was an experience neither of us will ever forget. There are many people alive today because someone was watching over George during these bloody battles.

The following information was taken from various sources, and it used here in an effort to convey in some small way, what George and thousands of other Confederate soldiers endured during the four long years of the War of Northern Aggression.

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN THE SHREVEPORT JOURNAL, OCTOBER 31, 1929. MR. LASETER WAS A MEMBER OF CO H, 11TH REGIMENT, GEORGIA VOLUNTEER INFANTRY, ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA, C.S.A.

CO H AND COMPANY I OF THE 11TH GA WERE IN THE SAME BATTLES, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ANTIETAM AND CHATTANOOGA. CO I WAS AT ANTIETAM, CO H WAS NOT, AND CO H WAS AT CHATTANOOGA AND CO I WAS NOT.

**COMPANY I, 11TH GA WAS THE UNIT THAT GEORGE LOVE HARRISON BOYETT WAS ASSIGNED.**

This regiment was ordered to Virginia soon after organization. Reached 1st battle Manasses just as it was over. Went into winter quarters at Center Hill, Va. Spent most of winter there.

There was a great deal of sickness, so Co. H, lost some by death and some by discharge. The company was so depleted that in February 1862, Lt. Henry D. McDaniel was sent back for recruits. These recruits joined the company at Orange Court House, Va. We were ordered on a forced march to Fredericksburg over the old plank road. After a half day's march in a heavy snow, the order was countermanded and we were ordered back to Orange Court House to the old camp. In a short time we were ordered to Richmond and from thence to Yorktown down on the peninsula. We were transported from Richmond on the James River on sail boats attached to tug boats and landed at King's Landing. We were then put on a forced march to our breastworks at Dams Nos. 1, 2, and 3. At Dam #3 the enemy crossed over and drove a South Carolina brigade out of those works and captured a battery. The commanding officer of this brigade was killed. This demoralized them and was the cause of their giving back. By this time we, Anderson's Brigade arrived and were ordered to retake our breastworks and battery, which we did and held them. Later the army was ordered to fall back towards Richmond, where we engaged in all the battles around Richmond.

After this campaign the army moved towards Washington, D. C. Our command was in the 2d battle of Manasses, and from there they moved to Winchester. In a short time the enemy came up the valley; we had a fight with them and drove them back across the Potomac River, after which our command was sent down the Strasburg (?) valley, where we remained for some time. Next we were ordered across the Blue Ridge mountains over to the Shenandoah valley. From there we went to Fredericksburg where we arrived a few days before the first fight.

Longstreet's corps occupied the center of the army and we were not in the hardest of the battle. The hardest fighting was on our right and left and it was a hard fought battle. In December 1862 we went into winter quarters and stayed until March when our command, Longstreet's corps, was ordered to Norfolk and Suffolk, below Petersburg, Va. We did

some fighting while there and then we were ordered back to General Lee at Chancellorsville. We came within one day's march of getting there in time for the battle, and it was there we lost one of our best generals, that matchless Stonewall Jackson.

General Lee stayed up in the valley and recruited his army for the Pennsylvania and Maryland campaign. In June we broke camp and started on the march for Gettysburg. Part of the army reached Gettysburg, on the first day of July when the fighting commenced. Longstreet's corps was on a forced march all day and night of July 1, and reached Gettysburg on the morning of July 2d, 1863. As soon as we were placed in position on the extreme right of Lee's line, our brigade was in Hood's Division. We were immediately ordered forward and when we reached the Emmettsburg road we met the enemy. We drove them back to the Devil's Den, and as we were driving them through the Den Captain Nunnally was killed, and others of our company were killed and wounded, but we continued to drive them through the Den to the little round top mountain and over the mountain, where we captured a battery and drove the enemy to the foot of the big mountain.

Night approached so we fell back a short distance and straightened out our line and stayed there until next morning when we buried our dead and looked after our wounded. On July 3, 1863, the third day of the fight, we occupied our line all the morning with some picket fighting and cannonading. In the afternoon, just before General Pickett made his famous charge on the enemy's line, the artillery on both sides opened up and it seemed as every piece of artillery on both sides was engaged. During this time the Federal cavalry on our extreme right was driving our cavalry back and as our Division (Hood's), occupied our extreme right, so our regiment, the **Eleventh Georgia**, and the Ninth Georgia of General Anderson's Brigade, was ordered to the right to reinforce our cavalry and during this time, when General Pickett was making his famous charge and when we met our cavalry falling back, they were fighting the enemy for every inch of ground. We had formed in line of battle and cavalry fell back over us. Then we charged the enemy and drove them back through a body of woods and when they came to an open field they surrendered, for we were right on them. It was after sundown and the fighting ended.

General Lee gave orders to the army to fall back toward Virginia. The enemy lay still and saw our army march off and made no effort to follow us. Our wagon and ambulance trains were ordered back over the same way we went to Gettysburg. We had a detachment of cavalry to guard our wagon trains and on the day we reached Williamsport there was a command of Federal cavalry which overtook us and got into our wagon trains and cut down a few wagons, so that some of us were cut off from our commands and we reinforced our cavalry and drove the enemy back and saved our wagon train until we reached Williamsport.

It had been raining a great deal for some time and the Potomac River was so high it could not be forded so we had to stop in Williamsport. Late that evening the enemy was reinforced and made an attack on us. Every one who could handle a gun, including the drivers of the teams, went to the ordnance wagons and got arms and ammunition, and we

joined our cavalry and drove the enemy off. Next morning our quartermaster department received orders to send supplies to our army at Hagerstown and Funkstown, Md. We took our wagons and rejoined our company at Funkstown. In a short time the enemy advanced on us and we had a very hard fight.

General Lee got the pontoon bridges across the Potomac River and we crossed over into Virginia, went into camp at Bunker's Hill.

On the morning of January 3 there was a call for seven men to go out over the country to gather up beef cattle for the army. Our command stayed in winter quarters until the latter part of March; we then went to a place called Bull's Gap, near Greenville, Tenn., and stayed there until the last of April. Then General Longstreet was ordered back to Virginia to join General Lee. Our company was on the march, going to General Lee at the Wilderness.

Longstreet's corps was marching right in front; General Field's division was on the right of our corps and General G. T. Anderson's brigade was on the right of Field's Division. The **Eleventh Georgia** was on the right of Anderson's brigade, so that put us in front of Longstreet's corps. We were marching on the plank road, going in the direction of Fredericksburg, and just as day dawned we got to Lee's line of battle where we fought the evening before until dark, and the two armies lay there facing each other.

General Hill's corps was occupying this part of the lines, and as day light came the enemy advanced on Hill's line and Hill's men commenced to fall back, just in front of us. Our regiment was ordered right flank off the plank road into line of battle, and just as half of our regiment cleared the road with Co. H, in the center of our regiment, Hill's men fell back on us and enemy followed and we were ordered to fire on them, which checked them and we commenced to drive General Grant's left with our right and continued to until our corps occupied the entire right of the plank road, and a wilderness it was. We never saw any opening except where there was a right-of-way for a railroad and had been cut out a few years ago, so there could not be any artillery used on either side. The enemy would every now and then make a stand until we could come up and then would fall back. This kept up until about four o'clock in the afternoon, when General Longstreet was wounded. Just as he was wounded we were getting in sight of the opening on the river, and while we were waiting for orders to go forward the enemy got a battery in position in that opening and also got reinforcements in front of us and when we got orders to go forward that battery opened up on us and the first shell exploded right in front of our company. Lee and Grant kept fighting from there down to Richmond and Petersburg.

On the 4th of July we were occupying part of the hill at Petersburg where Grant blew up Lee's line afterwards. We occupied this position for some time. We were relieved every other night and stayed out one day and night and would go back and stay two days and night for about three weeks, and there was firing on this part of our line night and day. We were moved forward to the right. We had some picket fighting at this place. Just before Grant blew up Lee's line at the center to weaken it at Petersburg, Grant sent a force

across the James River below Richmond to make an attack on that place, and Longstreet's corps was sent to Richmond to meet the enemy. Fort Harrison was captured and a part of our breastworks before we could get there.

The next morning we were ordered to retake Fort Harrison. We were not able to retake it, so General Lee had another breastwork built and straightened out, which made our line shorter. The enemy made another flank movement on our left below Fort Harrison, and we met them at Deep Bottom and had a very hard fight and drove them back. Later on the enemy made another flank movement on our left and got possession of some of our old breastworks that we had in the Seven Days' fighting below Richmond in 1862, so we attacked them, drove them out and back to their own breastworks under the protection of their gunboats on the river.

Co. H was the center company of our regiment and the flag was always at the foot of our company. We occupied the main line on the Darbytown road below Richmond until we had to give up Richmond and Petersburg the next spring. About five miles of our breastworks to our left was not occupied except about half way on the Charles City road leading to Richmond.

We had a fort with twelve guns and a battalion of cavalry stationed there. The last of November the enemy made an attack to flank us and captured the fort and got into Richmond, but this was found out soon enough for us to beat them a little to the place, and we gave them a good thrashing and captured over 1,100 prisoners, mostly Germans. After this, on the east side of the James River below Richmond we had only picket duty to do and occasionally a little picket fighting on some parts of our lines.

After Sherman went through Georgia and got into South Carolina and sent reinforcements to Grant at Petersburg, then Grant began to extend his lines and General Lee could not get any reinforcements, so he had to begin to stretch his lines to face Grant. On our part of the line there was only one man for every four or five spaces, and when Grant broke Lee's line at Petersburg our corps was ordered there to reinforce General Lee so he could recapture his line. When we reached Richmond our brigade and some of Field's division were loaded on flat cars and started a little after dark for Petersburg. After we were gone General Lee sent orders to General Longstreet not to come to Petersburg but to go in a different direction. Lee saw he had to give up Petersburg so our train went very slowly; not knowing what was ahead of us.

About two hours before day the train was stopped, we were ordered off and into line. We marched about a mile and were in sight of Petersburg. It was on fire. We were on the west side of the Appomattox river, and when we were notified that Lee had vacated Petersburg our officers received orders from a courier from General Lee for us to follow as fast as we could, so we started out on a road leading from Petersburg and had gone about a mile to our left when there were two magazines about a quarter of a mile from each other and when one exploded about two or three minutes after the other, the concussion was so great it almost jerked our line to their knees. It was terrific. We were

on a forced march then until we caught up with our command. From then on there was fighting somewhere on our lines almost every day and night. Longstreet's corps was protecting Lee's rear, and when we reached a place called Rice Station the enemy was pressing on so hard General Lee saw he could not cross the river unless we could hold this point, Rice Station. Longstreet ordered his picket lines doubled. Orders were to hold our lines at all hazards. This was late in the evening.

We held the enemy back until just before day light. Our command had crossed the river by this time. We expected to be captured but the officer in command had been notified by a scout that everything had crossed over the river and it was expected we would be captured. Our officer notified us he was going to make an effort to cross the river and not be captured. When we got through a body of woods and came to the road not far from the bridge across the river, we saw the bridge was on fire and made a run to see if we could get across. The bridge was on fire at both ends but there was space enough so we could get by single file. We found our cavalry in line at the foot of the hill with their picket in front. Before we got past their line the enemy was firing on us. They found they could not cross there but up the river, near Farmville, they put us in a pontoon bridge and got across the river.

Near Farmville many wagons were on fire and rations were issued to the men, one pint of flour and a very small piece of bacon. About the middle of the afternoon the enemy began to advance from where they had crossed the river on their pontoons in Farmville. We were ordered into line of battle and went forward to meet the enemy. We drove them back and held our position until twelve o'clock that night, when we were ordered to follow the rest of the army. Up to this time there had been several commands of our army captured. The next morning we overtook the rest of the army. That was on April 8th. There was considerable fighting at different points all day in front of us. Our command was bringing up and protecting the rear of our army. We kept moving all day and night until about 2 o'clock in the morning. This was on the morning of April 9th. When day came we found that the enemy had gotten in front of our army and when we began to advance the fighting began in front near Appomattox Court House.

The fighting commenced with us. Field's Division was on the road leading to Appomattox and was halted and ordered right face into line of battle, and when we got a short distance from the road upon an incline, we halted and crossed a ravine, there was the enemy about 500 yards from us, as far as you could see, right and left. During this time the fighting in front of us had ceased. General Lee and General Grant met to negotiate terms of surrender and General Grant sent a courier with a flag of truce through our lines for his men to halt and not press on us, and during this time Lee and Grant had agreed on terms of surrender.

In front we heard no salutes or cheering from the enemy, but in our rear they began to fire salutes and cheer when they heard that Lee had surrendered. When Grant heard these salutes and cheers he sent another courier through our lines with orders to cease. They had nothing to cheer over. They had let a little handful of men hold them back from

Richmond and Petersburg for nine days and nights. We were ordered to stack arms and the next morning we were ordered to fall in line and take our arms and march to Appomattox Court House about two miles. Then we were marched between two lines of the enemy and stacked our guns and marched off and left them.

In every direction one could see only blue coats. It has been said that General Lee only surrendered between nine and ten thousand arms and that Grant had nearly one hundred thousand men. General Lee had lost fully one half of this army before we reached Appomattox. On the evening of April 11th, late in the afternoon, we, the members of Field's Division were paroled and let to get home the best we could.

THE BATTLES REFERRED TO IN MR. LASETER'S STORY WERE AS FOLLOWS  
BATTLE OF 2D MANASSES (BULL RUN) - AUGUST 1862  
SEVEN DAYS BATTLE, RICHMOND, VA - JUNE 25 THROUGH JULY 1, 1862  
BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG, VA - 13 - 15 DEC 1862  
BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG, PA - 1 - 3 JULY 1863  
BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS, VA - 5 - 6 MAY 1864  
BATTLE OF PETERSBURG, VA - FOR 10 MONTHS IN 1864 - 65

### **The 11th Ga Infantry at Gettysburg, PA**

#### **The Bloody Battle for the Wheatfield at Gettysburg**

The area surrounding the town of Gettysburg was covered with fields in the summer of 1863. Included amongst these fields were a variety of wheat fields. Only one would, however, be known as the Wheatfield, joining Plum Run, the Peach Orchard, Little Round Top, and the Valley of Death, as names firmly entrenched in the American memory as places where Union and Confederate savagely met on the field at Gettysburg. To scholars and participants, the fighting on July 2nd, in The Wheatfield would be remembered as the most complex of the many small "battles" that made up the conflagration that was named the Battle of Gettysburg. As one soldier remarked "Colonel, I'll be damned if we aren't facing the wrong way!"

On the afternoon of July 2, 1863, the Wheatfield became the center of a swirling, confused whirlpool of fighting. At the time of the sanguinary battle of July 2, the Wheatfield was golden with ripening grain. By the end of the day, however, the wheat would be trampled and the ground soaked with blood.

The Wheatfield was located on the Rose Farm, almost midway between the rocky granite boulders of Devil's Den and the Peach Orchard. The Wheatfield had almost a triangular or trapezoidal shape and was hemmed in by woods. The twenty acres of open ground

were occasionally littered with a boulder or a tree. A fence separated the Wheatfield from the marshy area nearby. The woods surrounding the Wheatfield were known as Rose Woods (on the Devil's Den side), Stony Hill, and Trostle's Woods.

On the afternoon of July 2nd, Confederate General James Longstreet reluctantly ordered his divisions forward against the Union lines south of the town of Gettysburg. Meeting his assault would be elements of the Army of the Potomac's Second, Third, Fifth, and Sixth Corps. The Wheatfield would have not been a place so viciously contested had it not been for the forward movement of General Daniel Sickles, commander of the Union Third Corps. Without authorization from his commanding general, General G.G. Meade, and worried about his flank, General Sickles moved his corps forward almost 3/4ths of a mile in front of the Union lines. He formed a new line that was a mile and a half long and held by what would prove to be far too few men. The two divisions (commanded by David Birney and Andrew Humphreys) and 10,000 men of Sickles Corps stretched from the jumbled maze of demonic boulders known as Devil's Den on the left, through the Wheatfield and Rose Farm, leaving open a crucial gap, up the higher ground to the Peach Orchard where the line bent sharply (forming a salient) and then ran for about 3/4th of a mile down the Emmetsburg Road. Sickles exposed position left both flanks in the air and left the vital rock strewn Little Round Top uncovered. Meade was understandably angry with Sickles movement, but it was too late to do anything as Longstreet's Corps had begun their assault.

Fighting would erupt as Longstreet's assault was launched at Devil's Den, what would soon become known as the Valley of Death and for the rock studded slopes and crest of Little Round Top. As the fighting raged for the control of these areas, the fight to the North West in the Wheatfield exploded in earnest.

To help General Philip Regis De Trobriand's brigade of Sickle's Corps, General George Sykes sent General James Barnes, commanding the First Division of the Fifth Corps. Barnes placed two of his three brigades in support (the third brigade would win everlasting fame on the rocky spur of Little Round Top named for the gallant young Colonel who had on his own initiative probably saved the Union left there). William Tilton's and Jacob Sweitzer's brigades were relatively small in number, and General Barnes was a less than exemplary division commander. The 17th Maine, of De Troibriand's brigade, helped General Ward's brigade drive back the 3rd Arkansas and 1st Texas in Rose Woods. Soon after, the real fight for the Wheatfield would begin with the arrival of **George "Tige" Anderson's brigade of Georgians.**

On the Confederate side, the brigade meeting the men of de Trobriand's and the Fifth Corps brigades was that of Brig. Gen. George "Tige" Anderson of John Bell Hood's division. Anderson was a thirty-nine year old Georgian who had served in the ante-bellum army. His command was made up of the 7th, 8th, 9th, **11th**, and 59th Georgia regiments. Attacking to the left of Anderson would be a brigade of South Carolinians -- regiments numbered 2nd, 3rd, 3rd Battalion, 7th, 8th, and 15th, commanded by Brig. Gen. Joseph B. Kershaw. The forty-one year old Kershaw was known for his coolness

and judiciousness of action under fire.

**Anderson's brigade** stormed into action, entering into a heated and fierce fray with De Trobriand's brigade. **Anderson's brigade** streamed forward against De Trobriand's men. The Georgians met stout resistance on the left from the 17th Maine, in particular. The Down Easters were tenaciously retaining a tight hold on a stonewall on the South side of the field. Anderson's brigade fell back to the edge of the woods to reform. General Anderson fell wounded with a bullet in his thigh, the command of his brigade passing to Colonel William Luffman of the 11th Georgia. As Anderson's men fell back they were met by Kershaw's brigade. In advancing on the Wheatfield, Kershaw's brigade took heavy casualties, mainly from artillery fire. As Anderson's brigade reformed on Kershaw's right, De Trobriand's brigade grimly held on. Sweitzer's and Tilton's brigades held the Stony Hill and seemed to be in an advantageous position. Barnes, however, with no orders and seemingly for no reason, withdrew his brigades back to the Trostle Woods, creating an even larger gap between De Trobriand's brigade and Bigelow's battery posted on the Wheatfield Road. Needless to say this withdrawal would later be sharply criticized. With Winslow's battery driven back, Anderson's Georgians entered into the Wheatfield, stepping over the stonewall that had been held onto so strongly by De Trobriand's men. Kershaw's brigade had linked up with Anderson and, with the withdrawal of Ward's brigade from the Devil's Den area, Sickles' line and the Army of the Potomac were in jeopardy.

As Cross advanced into Rose Woods, a Confederate soldier, concealed behind a large rock, shot him in the abdomen, fatally wounding him. The Fifth New Hampshire monument, Cross' old regiment, marks the spot where he fell. He died before midnight, gasping "I did hope I should see peace restored to our distressed country. I think the boys will miss me. Say good-bye to all." Command of the brigade went to Henry Boyd McKeen (who was later killed at the debacle at Cold Harbor in 1864) of the 81st Pennsylvania. Cross' brigade advanced against the Georgians, pushing them back from the stonewall they had taken from De Trobriand's brigade.

Paul J. Semmes and William T. Wofford each commanded a brigade of made up of Georgians Semmes the 10th, 50th, 51st, and 53rd regiments, Wofford the 16th, 18th, 24th, Cobb's Legion, and Phillips Legion. These two brigades made up half of Lafayette McLaws' division. Semmes brigade had filled in the gap between **Anderson's** and Kershaw's brigade. Wofford's brigade advanced down the Wheatfield Road, moving against Stony Hill and the Trostle Woods.

Held in reserve because of the cramped size of the Wheatfield, John Brooke's brigade was soon sent into the fray as well. Brooke's brigade was sent to the aide of Cross' brigade. Amongst those lost, would be Lt. Col. Henry Merwin of the 27th Connecticut, a regiment that was made up of but two companies this day, the remainder having been captured at Chancellorsville. After an exchange of fire with **Tige Anderson's Georgians**, Brooke had his men fix bayonets and advance, supported by the rest of the division. The attack pushed back Anderson's brigade, and again, for the moment at least, the

Wheatfield was in Union hands.

Brooke's position was quickly becoming impossible to hold, and he ordered his men to retreat, which they did in good order. Zook's and Kelly's brigades were still hanging onto the Stony Hill. The approach of Wofford's brigade from the Peach Orchard area also placed pressure on the already bruised lines of Caldwell's division and they fell back. Into the ensuing pandemonium, General Barnes sent in Sweitzer's brigade. The brigade bravely advanced into the wheat that had been stomped down many times by now. **Anderson** and Kershaw's brigades both advanced down upon Sweitzer's three brigades. The new flag of the 4th Michigan fell, and young Colonel Harrison Jeffords, who had pledged his life to defending the banner, dashed for the flag, and as he wrestled his precious flag away from the Rebels, he was bayoneted through the stomach, dying sometime that night.

Sweitzer's brigade was in trouble, and it was not long before the Confederates pushed them back. The only Union troops available to meet the onslaught of this latest Confederate advance were the men of Brigadier General Romeyn Ayres' two remaining brigades (Weed's brigade having been detached to Little Round Top). The hard bitten Regulars of Colonels Day and Burbank advanced, Burbank's brigade in front. They crossed Plum Run and advanced up a knoll to the east of the Wheatfield. The Regulars advanced into the field. Attacked on three sides, while suffering appalling casualties the Regulars were forced back as well, though in good order. With the retreat of Ayres brigades the Wheatfield was now in Confederate hands. The Wheatfield would remain in Confederate hands until the end of the battle.

Civil War battles were confusing affairs, many times making it impossible for either historians or participants to obtain an accurate account of events as they transpired. Smoke, bullets flying by, and the sounds and sights of battle make the description of combat during the American Civil War a daunting task. In the case of the Wheatfield on the afternoon of July 2nd, 1863 this is especially true. For one thing, especially on the Union side, brigades from three Army of the Potomac Corps were fed in piece meal into the battle. Secondly, many of the commanders both Union and Confederate Cross, Zook, Semmes, and many regimental commanders did not live to write reports. Certainly, the sanguinary and fierce fighting of the Wheatfield numbers amongst the most confusing and hard to comprehend parts of the bloody and complicated battle of Gettysburg.

## ANDERSON ATTACKS THE WHEATFIELD

by Jay Jorgensen

With the setting of the sun on July 1, 1863, Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia stood poised to strike a blow for Confederate freedom. His army had driven Maj. Gen. George G. Meade's Army of the Potomac's First and Eleventh Corps back through the streets of Gettysburg, and Northern soldiers sought protection at the high ground south of town, as they awaited reinforcements and the savage fighting sure to resume the following day. July 2 would see some of the hardest fighting of the Civil War, as Confederates stormed Federal positions relentlessly; beginning at 4 p.m. Confederate Lt. Gen. James Longstreet commented in later years that it was the best three hours fighting ever done by any troops on any battlefield.

Lee's plan of attack called for an en echelon attack upon the Federal left flank, spearheaded by Longstreet's First Corps. Maj. Gen. John Bell Hood's division started the action by advancing upon the Union positions in Devils Den and Houck's Ridge. The fighting soon spilled over onto Little Round Top and John Rose's Wheatfield, and the division of Maj. Gen. Lafayette McLaws joined the fray. **Brig. Gen. George Thomas Tige Anderson's brigade** played an especially intriguing role in the attack on the Wheatfield.

**Anderson's brigade of Georgians was part of Hood's division of Longstreet's First Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia.**

When the **11th Georgia** was organized in July 1861, Anderson was elected colonel, and he immediately took his regiment to Virginia and reported to Brig. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston at Manassas. Anderson was given command of a brigade, consisting of the 7th, 8th, 9th and 11th Georgia regiments and the 1st Kentucky. On November 1, 1862, he was promoted to brigadier general and served in that capacity with the Army of Northern Virginia through the end of the war.

By the time of the Gettysburg Campaign the 1st Kentucky had been replaced in Anderson's brigade by the 59th Georgia. The 7th Georgia, and the 8th Georgia had 330 men in ten companies at Gettysburg. The 9th Georgia came to Gettysburg with nine companies totalling 361 men. The smallest regiment in the brigade, containing 328 men, was the **11th Georgia**. Its commander, Col. Francis H. Little, had graduated from the University of Georgia in 1861 and began practicing law. At Gettysburg the twenty-three-year old Little would be wounded, and command would devolve to Lt. Col. William

Luffman, a Mexican War veteran. When he too was wounded, Maj. Henry D. McDaniel, a participant in the Georgia Secession Convention, took command.

The march northward into Pennsylvania had not been without hardship for **Anderson's Georgians**. On June 21, 1863, Pvt. John A. Everett of the 59th Georgia wrote his mother

" We have bin marching very hard for 1 week we would march from 20 to 25 miles a day and it was the warmest wether that I Ever Saw in my life thair was Several of our Div dide on the road I fell in the road and was left but I Soon got Over it and went on after my Regt it was a hard march but it was obliged to keep Oald Hooker from Whiping us. "

In spite of the hardships, the men were confident. Pvt. Samuel Brewer of Company I, 8th Georgia, recalled that, "All the Army impose the utmost confidence in our hero (Genrl R. E. Lee), for what ever he says must be done."

By June 30, 1863, the brigade reached Greenwood, Pennsylvania, and at 2 p.m. the following day it set out with the rest of Hood's division on a forced march for Gettysburg, a distance of twenty- four miles. Ten hours later the soldiers rested four hours at Marsh Creek, then resumed the march to Seminary Ridge, arriving before dawn on the morning of July 2.

While resting with the division along the crest of Seminary Ridge, the Georgians could see Federal troops in position on Cemetery Ridge and Cemetery Hill. Soon after sunrise Robert E. Lee passed by the position on his horse. Capt. George Hillyer, Company C, 9th Georgia, recalled fondly the words of a fellow comrade upon seeing Lee, Boys, there are ten thousand men sitting on that horse.

From the Pitzer School House **Anderson's brigade** marched southeast 1,400 yards into a position across the Emmitsburg Road in Bieseker's Woods, arriving there approximately mid-afternoon. Hood's division straddled the Emmitsburg Road once the men were in position. The four brigades were placed into two lines. Brig. Gen. Evander Law's brigade of five Alabama regiments occupied the far right of the first line, with Brig. Gen. Jerome B. Robertson's brigade, consisting of the 3rd Arkansas, 1st, 4th, and 5th Texas, on the left of the first line. Approximately 200 yards behind this first line was Brig. Gen. Henry L. Benning's brigade of four Georgia regiments (2nd, 15th, 17th, and 20th Georgia) on the right and **Anderson's brigade** on the left. **Anderson's Georgians** were placed in line, left to right, as follows 9th, 8th, **11th**, and 59th Georgia. Col. William W. Whites 7th Georgia had been detached to guard Hood's right flank from Federal cavalry threats. The regiment took up a position near the Kern house, half a mile south on the Emmitsburg Road. The 7th Georgia continued to guard that position for the remainder of the day, thereby depriving Anderson of 400 men in the ensuing battle in the Wheatfield.

After his division was in place, Hood ordered two batteries to open fire on the Federals, with Union gunners on Houck's Ridge and in the Peach Orchard returning fire. Enemy

shells soon began to fall among **Anderson's** men; it was during this barrage that the first casualty to **Anderson's brigade** occurred. Jackson B. Giles, a courier, was dismounting his horse when a shell tore off his left leg above the knee and threw him ten to fifteen feet in the air. Captain Hillyer came to his aid, asking the mortally wounded Giles if there was any message he could relay to Giles parents. The dying private reportedly responded, Tell them I died for my country. The cannonading, in Anderson's words, created, a very unpleasant condition.

Before long Law's and Robertson's brigades advanced against the Federal positions on the Round Tops and Devils Den. The 4th and 5th Texas, fighting near Little Round Top, needed reinforcements. General Robertson sent a messenger to Lieutenant General Longstreet for reinforcement, and at the same time sent to Generals Anderson and Benning, urging them to hurry up to my support. The messenger pointed out the position where Anderson was to lend support, and the Georgian acted promptly, ordering his men forward, with one private in the 8th Georgia recalling that the line rose from the grass upon which they were resting and boldly marched to the field.

The four Georgia regiments moved quickly and in good order across the Emmitsburg Road, into a field of wheat north of Slyders Lane. As they continued for the next 300 yards, they were exposed to the fire from Federal artillery, which caused several casualties. Captain Hillyer came upon John Stevens of his regiment, who had been shot. The bullet had gone through his clothes, and I had not noticed any wound. I said 'What's the matter John?' He didn't tell me he was wounded, or complain of his hurt, but he replied, 'Captain, if you will help me over the fence, I will try to go on.' Hillyer, realizing the wound was serious, told his friend to lie down there and the litter corps would care for him. Stevens died at the spot and was buried there before the day was over.

Lt. Col. John C. Mounger was another fatality of the advance, struck down by a shell fragment. Continuing on, **Anderson's** men headed in a northeasterly direction, passing just north of the Timbers buildings and entering Roses Woods, finally obtaining some protection from the artillery fire.

The regiments continued to push forward through the woods. The middle regiments in the line (8th and **11th Georgia**) worked their way onto the west branch of Plum Run, while the 9th Georgia, on the left of the brigade, angled toward a ravine nearly due east of the Rose house. The left flank of the 9th Georgia was exposed to heavy enemy fire from its front and on its flank. General Anderson reacted promptly to the crisis, dispatching Lt. William A. Tennille, regimental adjutant of the 9th Georgia, to Captain Hillyer with a twofold message. All field and line officers superior in rank to Hillyer had been killed or wounded, so Hillyer was informed that command of the regiment devolved upon him. Second, Hillyer was informed that Anderson wished him to change the direction of the three companies on the left, in order to face the enemy on that flank.

[Hillyer] gave the command, Attention three left companies, but the men could not hear my voice, so great, at the moment, was the roar of musketry and artillery. I ran to the left

of the line, and touching the men on the back, made the movement mainly by signs; and fronted the three companies to the left and rear at right angles to our position.

The left wing of **Anderson's brigade** continued pressing the Federal soldiers posted to the right of a stone wall located at the southern end of the Wheatfield. These soldiers were from the 115th Pennsylvania and 8th New Jersey. While Captain Hillyer and three companies of the 9th Georgia held Anderson's left flank position, the remainder of the regiment joined the 8th Georgia in trying to exploit that gap. As they rushed forward, they were able to fire into the right flank of the 17th Maine positioned along the stone wall. Maj. George W. West ordered the three companies on the right of the 17th Maine, Companies H, K, and C, to change front and take up a position along a rail fence. The **11th Georgia** kept the remaining companies of the 17th Maine along the stone wall heavily engaged. The **Georgians** rushed forward, and the fighting on both sides became desperate. The Confederates attempted to plant their colors on the wall, were repulsed, and in the procession of the color guards was captured by Lt. Joseph Perry. When the fire grew too deadly, the men of the **11th Georgia** were forced to disengage. A short while later the gallant prisoner was shown around as a model soldier and sent back under guard.

While the 59th Georgia continued its attack against the right of Wards brigade, the 11th Georgia concentrated on silencing the 17th Maine. Maj. Henry D. McDaniel of the 11th Georgia reported that " The advance was made in good order, and, upon reaching the belt of woods in front, a vigorous fire was opened upon the enemy, followed up by a vigorous charge, which dislodged them from the woods, the ravine, and from a stone fence running diagonally with the line of battle. This formidable position was occupied by the **11th Georgia**, and a galling fire opened upon the enemy's front and flank, causing his line to recoil in confusion.

The **Georgians** advance through Roses Woods was hampered by the fire of the 17th Maine, as well as from artillery fire from Capt. George T. Winslow's Company D, 1st New York Artillery. Captain Winslow's six Napoleons were position 300 yards to the north of the stone wall position held by the 17th Maine, and he had his gunners fire solid shot into the woods to impede the advancing Confederates. Then, too, the men were completely exhausted when they made it [the initial charge], having double-quickened a distance of some 400 yards under a severe shelling and a scorching sun, which contributed to the 59th Georgia's inability to sustain the initial charge.

In spite of the partial success enjoyed by the **11th Georgia**, Anderson's position in Rose's Woods was tenuous. As enemy fire upon his left flank continued, Anderson came forward to confer with Colonel Little of the **11th Georgia** and ordered Little's regiment to withdraw towards the edge of the woods to regroup. This maneuver was carried out successfully, and a temporary lull in fighting took place around 5:30 p.m. Thus ended the first phase of Anderson's attack in the Wheatfield.

During the next two and one-half hours the Wheatfield became a swirling mass of confusion, as desperate fighting between Northerners and Southerners transformed the

twenty-four acres into a vast sea of misery.

Realizing he needed support on his left flank, Anderson sought out Col. W. D. De Saussures 15th South Carolina of Brig. Gen. Joseph B. Kershaw's brigade. Finding him, Anderson made the appropriate arrangements and returned to his Georgians in Roses Woods. Upon his return he walked toward the right of his brigade to make further preparations to resume his assault. While doing so he was struck down near a large boulder, as a mini ball hit him in his right thigh between the femoral artery and the bone. The wound was not mortal, but it did take him out of the action that day. He was evacuated to a temporary hospital (one of the Plank family houses) near Black Horse Tavern. Lt. Col. William Luffman of the **11th Georgia**, Anderson's old regiment, took over command of the brigade.

When the right wing of Kershaw's brigade, consisting of the 3rd, 7th, and 15th South Carolina regiments, passed near Stony Hill and Roses Woods, Anderson's brigade resumed the offensive. On the left of the brigade the 9th Georgia . . . moved some distance to the front and down a declivity into a strip of meadow land, where a little brook ran parallel with our position. This little brook made a natural ditch some two or three feet deep, and in its meandering with its grassy banks, made a fine natural rifle pit. We were quick to take advantage of the opportunity and occupied it. . . . We met with some losses and the water of the brook soon became red with blood, but the enemy in the front suffered more than we did.

The enemy in the front consisted of the 22nd and 32nd Massachusetts posted on the southern portion of Stony Hill. Captain Hillyer of the 9th Georgia further recounted a particularly devastating exchange with Union troops not more than forty yards away

With the precision of a dress parade, that magnificent line of Federals lowered their pieces and the volley came. But we had time to duck our heads and the sheet of lead passed harmless over us, but I could see where the bullets cut and plowed the ground behind us. Every man of us then seemed to realize our tremendous advantage. There we were in this splendid natural rifle pit,  
every gun loaded. . . . Our men rested their guns on the grass in front, and with the solid line of the enemy in easy, close range, returned the fire. It seemed that not a bullet went above their heads or below their feet. They fell right and left.

The center and right flank of the 9th Georgia, along with the 8th and **11th Georgia**, surged forward and pressed the attack against the Federal soldiers posted along the stone wall. The men of the 17th Maine had resupplied themselves with ammunition between Anderson's first two attacks and were now ready to hold their position.

The withdrawal of the two brigades from Stony Hill left de Trobriand's 5th Michigan, 110th Pennsylvania, and 17th Maine alone to contend with **Anderson's Georgians** and Kershaw's South Carolinians. Pvt. John Haley of Company I, 17th Maine, remembered Colonel de Trobriand ordering the 17th Maine to, "hold your ground and hold them with

the bayonet." Obeying orders, a bayonet charge was made, but the **Georgians** repulsed it. The Union position was no longer tenable, and the 5th Michigan and 110th Pennsylvania retired across Stony Hill in the same direction taken previously by Tilton and Sweitzer's brigades. While they were retreating, the 17th Maine engaged in a fighting withdrawal through the Wheatfield, with the 8th and **11th Georgia** regiments in pursuit.

The devastating artillery fire kept the Georgians at bay for only a short time. Kershaw's advance on Stony Hill enabled his men to get to the right and rear of Winslow's cannoneers, forcing the battery to withdraw. With the threat of shell and case shot now removed, the 8th and 9th Georgia regiments moved midway into the Wheatfield while the **11th** and 59th Georgia regiments secured their position along the stone wall. Brig. Gen. John C. Caldwell's First Division of Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock's Second Corps came to the assistance of the Federals in the Wheatfield. Before that division arrived however, General Birney personally ordered the 17th Maine to attack the **Georgians** in the Wheatfield. Lt. Col. Charles B. Merrill of the Maine regiment reported

"With cheers for our gallant commander, the regiment moved quickly forward, and pouring into the enemy volley upon volley, their advance was checked. The contest was now of a most deadly character, almost hand to hand, and our loss was very severe. In the color guard of 10, but 3 escaped uninjured."

Colonel Cross, the hard fighting commander of the First Brigade, had a premonition that he would die at Gettysburg. Earlier in the day, General Hancock had mentioned to Cross that this day will bring you a star, and the colonel's response was, "No, General, this is my last battle." Shortly after his brigade took its position in the Wheatfield, Cross moved to the left of his line, occupied by his old regiment, the 5th New Hampshire. This regiment was in the eastern end of Roses Woods and was taking flanking fire on its left from the 1st Texas and 59th Georgia regiments. It was also hotly engaged with the right wing of Anderson's brigade, which was slightly refused from the stone wall in order to fight the 5th New Hampshire. While on the left of his brigade line, Cross premonition came true. He was mortally wounded in the stomach, and died at midnight. His last words were, "I think the boys will miss me."

**Anderson's brigade** was busily engaged with Cross brigade. Colonel McKeen, discovering that most of his men were dangerously low on ammunition, reported the problem to Caldwell, who promptly sent his reserve brigade, under Col. John R. Brooke, to relieve McKeen's men.

Brooke's brigade went into action (from left to right) as follows 2nd Delaware, 64th New York, 53rd Pennsylvania, 27th Connecticut, and 145th Pennsylvania. As they swept forward into the Wheatfield, the 61st New York, 81st Pennsylvania, and the right seven companies of the 148th Pennsylvania withdrew. The remaining companies of the 148th Pennsylvania and the 5th New Hampshire stayed in line and continued sparring with Anderson's right flank.

The time had come for a Confederate counterattack, carried out vigorously by the

brigades of **Anderson**, Benning, Semme's, Kershaw, and Wofford. Caldwell's division extricated itself from the Wheatfield through the northeastern corner, retreating through Sweitzer's brigade and Burbank's Regulars. Sweitzer's left flank, held by the 32nd Massachusetts, was attacked by Anderson's men, while Semme's and Kershaw's men attacked Sweitzer's center and right regiments.

**Anderson's** brigade had fought with Brooke's brigade for approximately half an hour in Roses Woods before starting a final push to the base of Little Round Top. As the Georgians entered Plum Run Valley between Houck's Ridge and Little Round Top, they were joined on the right by Benning's brigade and on the left by the brigades of Semme's, Kershaw, and Wofford. The Federal position on the northern slope of Little Round Top was formidable. Captain Hillyer recalled the advance against what he referred to as the strongest natural position I ever saw "Our line emerged from the stumpy brush through which we had charged and came out into a long, narrow but nearly straight opening, which skirted the foot of Little Round Top. . . . We had been fighting for over three hours. . . . I could see to the right and left along the opening I have mentioned, thirty-five or forty battle flags, and only from thirty to fifty men with each. On crossing this opening and going a little way up on the rocky slope . . . we saw that no one of the entire line was nearer to the enemy's position than we were, and that our little attacking column hesitated. They were all veterans in the highest sense. I heard no order to retreat and gave none, but everybody, officers and men, seemed to realize that we could not carry the position. . . .

By common consent we fell back."

The fighting had been hard for **Anderson's men** they had been fighting for more than three hours. All the regimental reports for the brigade mentioned the men's exhaustion, attributing it in large part to their withdrawal from the base of Little Round Top. Major McDaniel reported "The rout was vigorously pressed to the very foot of the mountain, up the sides which the enemy fled in the greatest confusion. The loss of the enemy was here very great, his dead lying upon the field by the hundred. Nothing but the exhausted condition of the men prevented them from carrying the heights. As it was, with no support of fresh troops, and with the knowledge that the enemy was pouring reinforcements from their right into the ledges of the mountain, it was found impracticable to follow him farther."

By now the sun was setting, and Brig. Gen. Samuel W. Crawford, commanding the Third Division of the Fifth Corps, was organizing a Federal counterattack against the Confederates in the Plum Run Valley. Col. William McCandless, commanding Crawfords First Brigade, formed his men into two lines, the front line consisting of (left to right) the 1st, 11th, and 6th Pennsylvania Reserves, while the second line had the 13th Pennsylvania Reserves on the left and the 2nd Pennsylvania Reserves on the right. When the order was given, the Pennsylvanians fired a volley and charged down the hillside, driving the Confederates toward a stone wall along the crest of Houck's Ridge. The 13th Pennsylvania Reserves, also known as the Bucktails, struck Anderson's brigade and forced it back.

Captain Hillyer and Major McDaniel reformed their respective regiments (9th and 11th Georgia) along the stone wall, and a brief stand was made to stem the rush of McCandless men. Shortly thereafter, Anderson's brigade, as well as the rest of the Confederate brigades, pulled back across the Wheatfield. **Anderson's** men took up their previous positions in Roses Woods, where they remained during the evening of July 2. Pickets were sent into the southern portion of the Wheatfield, and for approximately one hour after sunset the picket lines exchanged shots. Then the firing stopped, and the groans of the wounded could be heard all night from the Wheatfield.

The **Georgians of Anderson's brigade** had performed splendidly. They had fought for more than three hours and inflicted severe casualties upon the enemy. However, their effort was not without sacrifice. General Anderson remembered thirteen years after the battle

" I know we were in a very hot place during the fight as witness the 8th Ga. Regt. When we entered the fight this regt. had 36 officers on duty and at the close only 6 were unhurt. In my brigade of 5 regts. (the 7th Ga not engaged . . . ) the youngest Lt. Col. in the brigade was in command. My military family staff & couriers ten men and out of this number 7 were killed or wounded. I can not now recollect total casualties, but my loss was very heavy.

The four regiments of the brigade that went into the Wheatfield contained 1,497 men. Of these, 47% were killed, wounded, captured, or missing in action. The 8th Georgia suffered a 55.1% loss (172 out of 312), the 9th Georgia suffered a 55.6% loss (189 out of 340), the **11th Georgia a 64.8% loss (201 out of 310)**, and the 59th Georgia suffered the lowest percentage of loss, 27.0% (142 out of 525) The greater than 50% casualty rate in three of the regiments place them among the top twenty-five Confederate regiments sustaining a greater than 50% loss at Gettysburg, and the **11th Georgia (156)** and 9th Georgia (123) were among the top 20 Confederate regiments with the greatest number of wounded at Gettysburg.

In spite of the high casualty rate, **Anderson's Georgians** were still full of fight. Pvt. Jeremiah Watson of the 59th Georgia summed it up best for his fellow comrades when he stated that he did not believe, they were licked, for the Georgia boys were fightin fools and there was plenty of fighting left to do wherever they went.