

THE CIVIL WAR

September 2011



David Nyman, our new president

Roundtable of Central Massachusetts

www.centralmassroundtable.org

WORCESTER AREA SPOTLIGHT

A note about local Civil War history



The John Brown Bell sits safely atop this tower in the center of Marlboro. There are people from West Virginia who would like to have it returned to Harper's Ferry. At the base of the tower (dedicated in 1968) is a plaque with this inscription:

Symbol of a nation's efforts to obtain freedom and equality for it's people.

THE JOHN BROWN BELL

Owned, and placed here, by the John A. Rawlins Building Association, acting in behalf of Akroyd Houde Post 132, The American Legion, with the co-operation and assistance of the Marlboro Chamber of Commerce, in tribute to the men of Co. I, 13th Massachusetts Volunteer Militia. May their ideals, and achievements serve to remind us that freedom with equality is the promise to all men, everywhere fulfilled, only when a nation stands united through the mutual understanding, respect, and determination of all it's people.

Can Wright Also Be Wrong?

On the second day of battle at Gettysburg, Confederate Brig. Gen. Ambrose R. Wright broke through the center of the Union line and was poised for a stunning victory. Or so he says. "I captured artillery on Cemetery Ridge and gained the key to the whole line."

Our resident Battle of Gettysburg expert, Dr. Preston Sturdevant, told versions of the story as told by others who were there.

Confederate General James Longstreet was tasked by General Lee to attack the Union position. After a full day of gathering his men, the attack got under way late in the afternoon. The Union forces had prepared themselves.

Union General Daniel Sickles, without

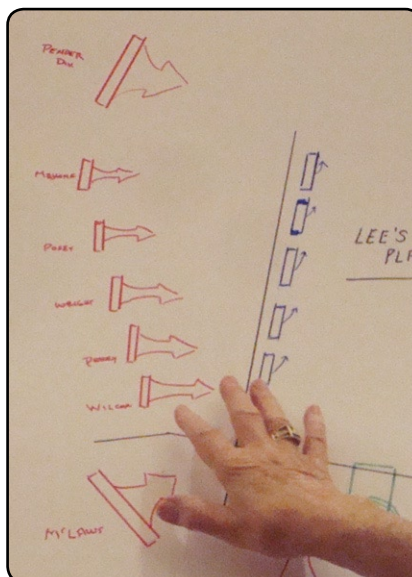
orders, had moved his corps from the Union line's defensive position forward to what became scenes of harsh fighting, the Wheat Field and

the Peach Orchard. Gen. Sickles was severely wounded, he lost a leg, and was carried from the field. His men retreated back to the Union line but the fight did have the effect of delaying the Confederate advance.

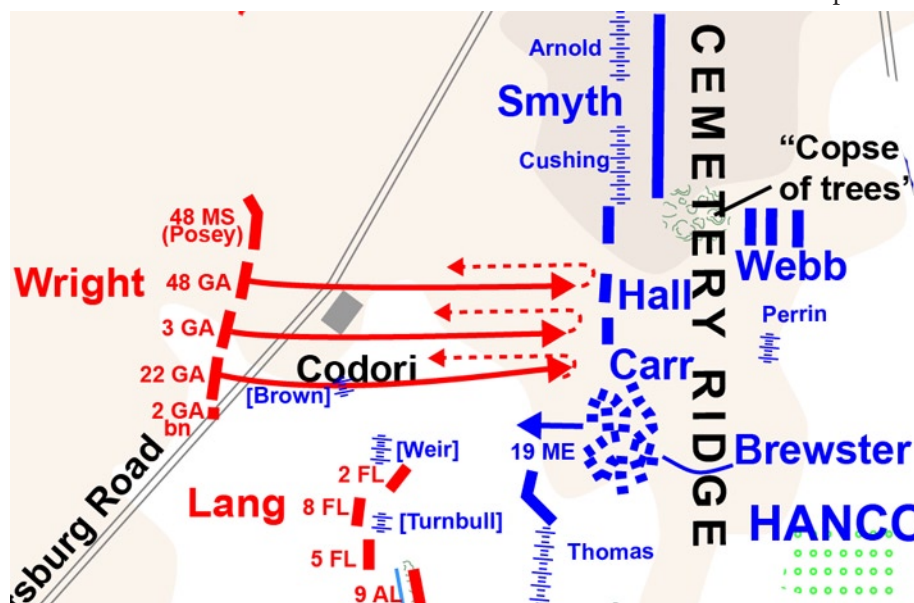
Gen. Wright's part in the attack got underway about 6 p.m. and took place in and around the Codori farm. [The 15th Massachusetts from Worcester County was engaged here, losing many men killed, wounded and captured when they were overrun.



Dr. Preston Sturdevant, a founding member of the CWRT of CM, has visited Gettysburg at least one hundred times. He knows a lot about it and shares a story each year with our members.



General Lee's Tuesday morning plan. An enfilade attack against what he perceived was a weak Union center.



Map showing the attack and repulse of Wright's Brigade on the second day at Gettysburg.

Their commander, Col. George Ward was mortally wounded.]

There were counter charges from Union forces who had to contend with "friendly fire" from Union artillery from behind their backs. Among the Union soldiers were the "green" Green Mountain Boys from Vermont, Gen. Stannard's Brigade.

When Wright attacked he did not get much support on either

Continued on the next page.

The John Brown Bell



Hope Again

Did you miss past-President Mark Savolis's tour of Hope Cemetery? Over 1400 Union soldiers are buried there and Mark has numerous stories to tell. On November 6 at 1:30 Mark will lead a tour again and focus on about 15 of those soldiers. Included will be Worcester's Fredericksburg Battlefield hero, Sgt. Thomas Plunkett, recipient of the Medal of Honor. The "walk and talk" was attended by 30 enthusiastic people when last done in May, 2010.

Did you know . . .

that with a library card you can get any item from all the libraries in Central Massachusetts delivered to your local library. FREE.

Login in to your library's website and search the C/W MARS database, find what you want, click to select and it will come to your local library where you can pick it up. You can get almost anything. Enough CW stuff that can fill a lifetime.

At the start of the Civil War, **Ambrose Wright** enlisted as a private in Georgia Militia, but he was commissioned colonel of the 3rd Georgia Infantry on May 18, 1861, and served in North Carolina and Georgia until the summer of 1862 and won a victory for the Confederacy at the Battle of South Mills in North Carolina in April 1862. He was promoted to brigadier general on June 3, 1862, and sent to Virginia. Wright's Georgians made a distinguished record in the Army of Northern Virginia from the Seven Days Battles to the Siege of Petersburg. He was badly wounded at the Battle of Antietam in 1862 and at Chancellorsville in 1863. At the Battle of Gettysburg, Wright's brigade, part of Maj. Gen. Richard H. Anderson's division of Lt. Gen. A.P. Hill's Corps, had the distinction of penetrating the farthest into the Union defenses on Cemetery Ridge on July 2, 1863. As of November 26, 1864, Wright was named major general on a temporary commission (which was not made permanent) and ordered to Georgia, where he exercised command until the end of the war.



of his flanks. Gen. Pender's division was in disarray after Gen. Pender was severely wounded and the second in command was not put in charge right away. Gen. Mahone did not move to help either. Dr. Sturdevant believes that the bulk on Wright's brigade did not make it to the stone wall. The attack had bogged down at the point of Wright's brigade. With no support on his flanks, there was also no support from his rear. After briefly penetrating the stone wall, the furthest of any Confederate forces that day, they made a hasty retreat. The bulk of his men did not make it to the stone wall although he suffered 49% casualties. Historian Ed Bearss does not believe they actually made it to the stone wall. Wright's men did capture some Union artillery but they were recaptured.

General Robert E. Lee was watching from at least a mile away and from the smoke and chaos he perceived what he thought was a weak Union line. Based on his observations and Wright's report of his breakthrough he devised a plan. The next day he would concentrate his cannon fire and 11,000 men for a charge at the Union center. The decision for Pickett's Charge was made.

2011-2012 Schedule - 7PM, Holden Senior Center

October 26	Jed Watters	Riverine Tactics 1860 Compared to Riverine Tactics 1960
November 16	Chris McCarthy	Battle of New Market
December 21	Members & Guests	Christmas Meeting/Show and Tell
January 25	Ted Browne	Battery H, First Ohio Light Artillery - Huntington's Battery
February 22	Dick Swanson	How the Confederate Navy Was Started
March 28	Sherman Lohnes	Arming the Massachusetts Volunteers in the Civil War
April 25	Tom Army	Civil War Engineering
May 23	Chuck Veit	Alligator: The Navy's First Submarine
June 27	Michael True	Topic to be announced

OCTOBER ROUNDTABLE QUESTION:
Top 5 Northern and Top 5 Southern Generals?

NOVEMBER ROUNDTABLE QUESTION:
What do you think of the recent CW movie *The Conspirator* and what is your favorite CW movie?