

# LITTLE ROUND TOP

## A Detailed Tour Guide

Situated on the southern end of the Gettysburg Battlefield, Little Round Top was the site of a pivotal struggle between elements of the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia in July 1863. In the late 19th century, it was memorialized by those who were fortunate enough to live through the horrific event, and it remains a popular attraction today.

This book will take the reader on a tour through the critical events that happened on Little Round Top and detail the physical remnants of both battle and post-battle features. Have you ever wondered:

- ☛ From where did the 15th Alabama make their attack upon the left flank of the 20th Maine?
- ☛ Are there rock carvings on Little Round Top?
- ☛ When were the monuments on Little Round Top erected?
- ☛ How different does Little Round Top look compared to 1863?
- ☛ Were the avenues on Little Round Top in existence during the battle?

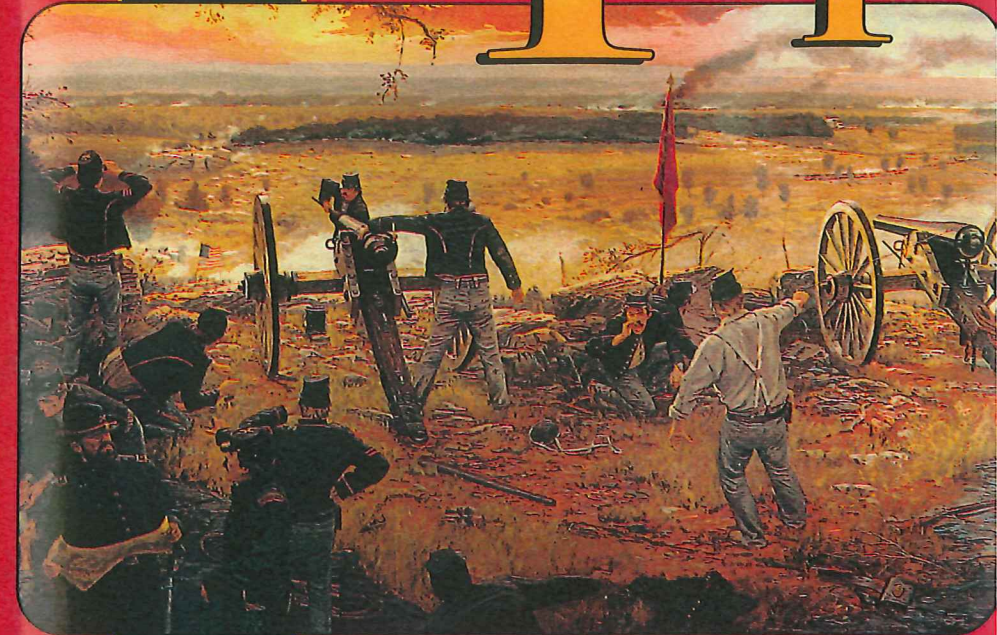
With detailed maps and over 35 photographs, *Little Round Top: A Detailed Tour Guide* takes the reader on a journey to the most popular site on the Gettysburg Battlefield.

\$7.95

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# Little Round Top



## *A Detailed Tour Guide*

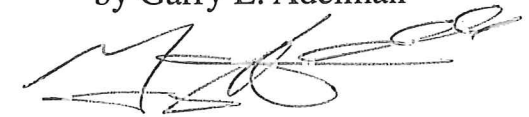
**Garry E. Adelman**

# Little Round Top

## A Detailed Tour Guide

Frederick, MD  
10-19-00  
To JERRY  
HOPEING YOU ENJOY!  
Garry

by Garry E. Adelman



Thomas Publications  
Gettysburg, PA 17325

*To my brother and sister—*

*Marc Stuart Adelman  
Deborah Michelle Woolf*

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## Introduction

Little Round Top was simply an insignificant rocky hill until the Battle of Gettysburg in July of 1863. Its location on the southern end of the battlefield, however, forever changed that. Union and Confederate soldiers fought, bled, and performed heroic deeds on its slopes in an intense struggle which few remembered the same way. Literally hundreds of books and articles have explored the myriad of battle movements and the memorialization of the actions there. But there is one resource that has not been sufficiently tapped—Little Round Top itself.

This book is designed to fill a void in the study of Little Round Top—that of incorporating the physical resource into the larger historiographical picture. No amount of reading about the nature of Little Round Top can teach as much as actually splashing across Plum Run and climbing the hill.

This book does not claim to contain a detailed history of Little Round Top. Rather, it provides a framework for linking historical facts with the actual site, and offers a general narrative of the fighting at Little Round Top and information about the hill itself. For more specific details about the men and units that fought at Little Round Top, the reader is referred to the many histories already written, especially *The Attack and Defense of Little Round Top*, by Oliver Wilcox Norton and Chapter 10 of *Gettysburg: The Second Day*, by Harry W. Pfanz.

Naturally, I could not have completed this work without the assistance and guidance of others. The first person I must acknowledge is my mentor and good friend, William A. Frassanito. Had I not, in 1983, taken a casual glance through his *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day*, my life might have taken a much different path. Through his “then and now” presentations, analysis of early photographs at Gettysburg, and meticulous research, he has taught me more about Little Round Top than any other person.

Second, I would like mention my good friend and “walking encyclopedia” Timothy H. Smith. There is nobody who knows more of the physical resources of the changing Gettysburg Battlefield. Our discussions of and ramblings on Little Round Top were invaluable

to me. He assisted me in reading over the manuscript and helped to design the tour route as well.

As is evident in reading the photo captions in this book, Ken and Sue Boardman of the Antique Center of Gettysburg, graciously allowed me access to and use of their enormous collection of Gettysburg photographs. Without these wonderful photographs, this book would be far less interesting.

Of course this work would not have been completed without the help of my co-workers at Thomas Publications. Dean Thomas, Jim Thomas, Sally Thomas, Lori DeCusati, and Kay Stockton, I thank you.

Other individuals and institutions were most helpful as well. They include: the Adams County Historical Society, Joseph Brunner, Fields of Glory, Ralph Forney, George Gargus, Gettysburg National Military Park, Rob Gibson, Justin A. Shaw, Paul V. Tierney, and Andrew Wolf.

For walking the entire tour route with me, for assisting with modern photographs, for tolerantly bearing my obsession with the Gettysburg Battlefield, and for making me happy in general, I must thank Jennifer Lynn Dangle. She has been patient and supportive throughout the entire process.

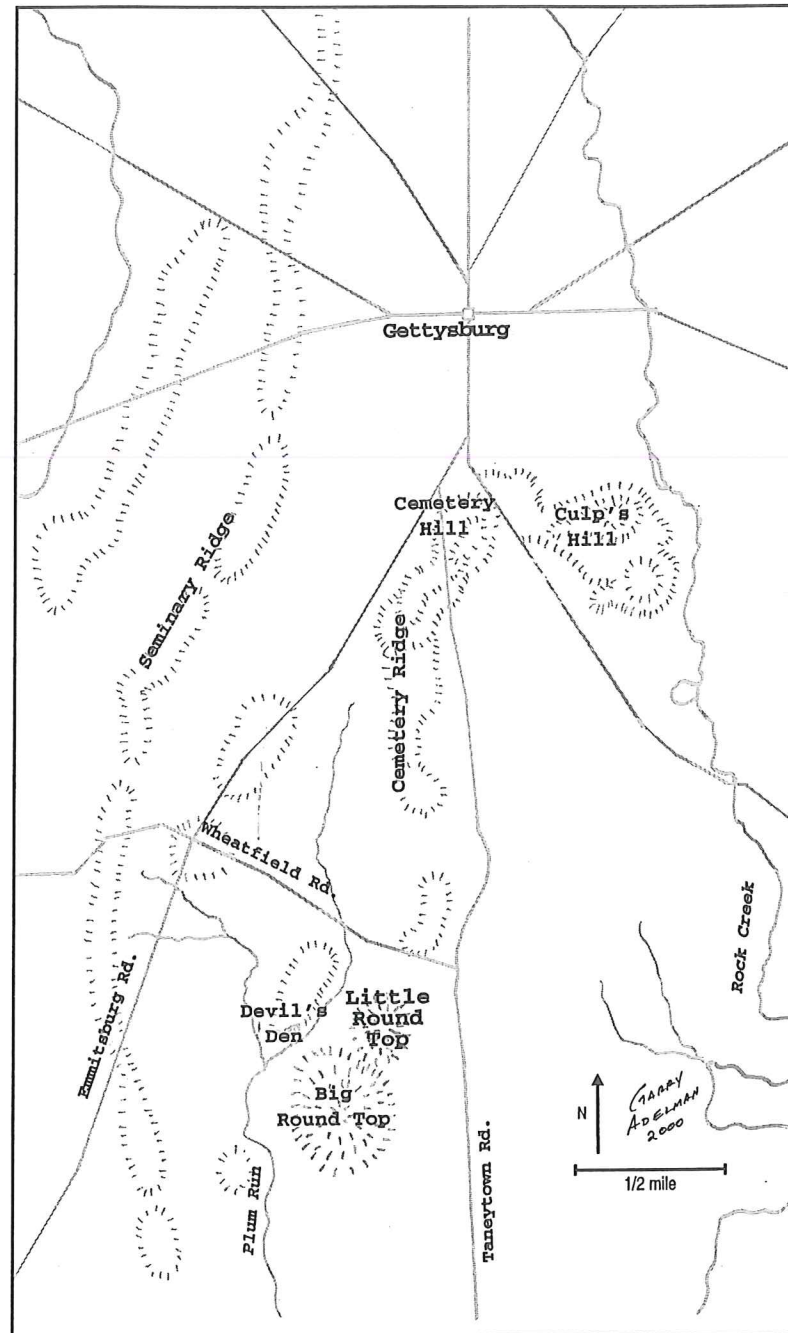
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania  
February, 2000

## The Battle of Gettysburg and the Defense of Little Round Top

Just two months after his stunning victory at the Battle of Chancellorsville, Confederate General Robert E. Lee seemed as if he were about to achieve another at the crossroads town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The date was July 1, 1863. A quick concentration of his command, the Army of Northern Virginia, allowed him to overwhelm portions of the Union Army of the Potomac, commanded by Major General George Gordon Meade.<sup>1</sup> But Meade's army took position on the heights south of the town and on the next day posted an impressive defensive line with which it hoped to repel any Confederate assault.

By the time the fighting began on the afternoon of July 2, 1863, the Northern army outnumbered the Southerners by about twenty percent.<sup>2</sup> General Lee decided to attack the numerically superior Union Army on its flanks. He ordered a "demonstration" on the Union right flank, positioned on a rugged elevation known as Culp's Hill. His main thrust, however, was to be made against the Union left, which rested near an unnamed, rocky hill now known as Little Round Top.

Little Round Top rises 150 feet above the valley to the west. Covered in boulders ranging in size from that of a basketball to that of a small house, it is a position difficult to ascend but easily defended, once gained.<sup>3</sup> In terms of 19th-century warfare, Little Round Top dominated much of the ground around it. Cannons placed atop the height could lob explosive shells upon an enemy to the north, west or southwest. Dense woods prevented a field of fire to the south and east. Just 600 yards to the south of Little Round Top lies its larger counterpart, Big Round Top. Over 120 feet taller and far more massive, the larger hill was covered with trees. These woods would prevent any substantial use of the height as an artillery position, and thus rendered Little Round Top the key to that part of the battlefield.



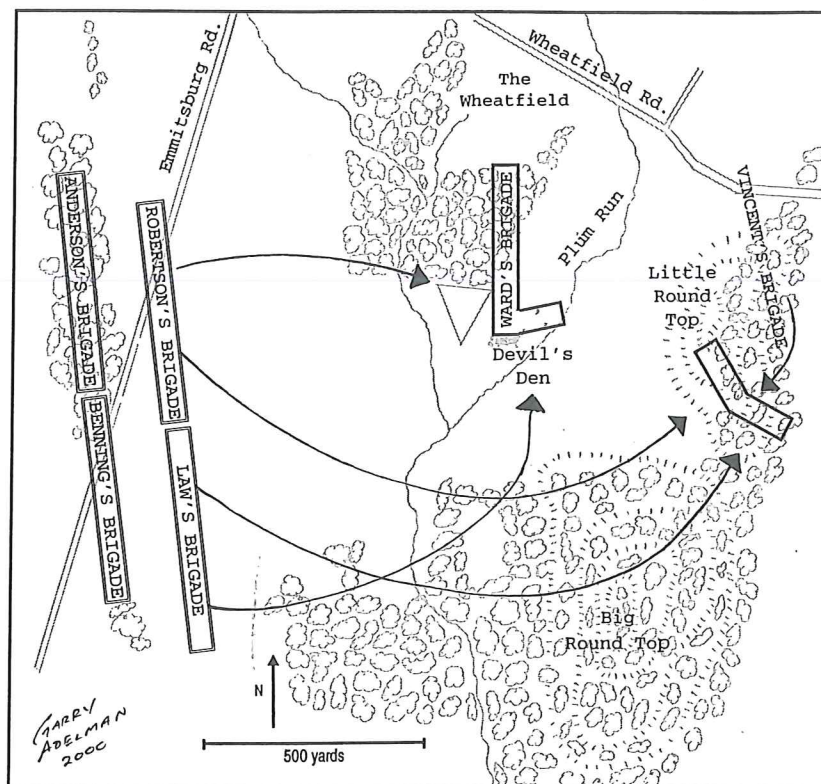
The Gettysburg Battlefield.

On the afternoon of July 2, 1863, the Union Army was formed in the shape of a three-mile-long fishhook, with Little Round Top at the eye of the hook. Early in the afternoon, however, the hill was abandoned by the 3rd Corps commander, Major General Daniel Sickles. The New York general enjoyed the defensive nature of Little Round Top but was concerned about the wooded low ground to the north of it. Sickles felt he could not adeptly place his artillery in that area and feared that his command might be surprised easily. He thus positioned his troops, about ten thousand in all, near Devil's Den, the Peach Orchard and the Emmitsburg Road where he might use his artillery more effectively. While achieving better fields of fire, he found himself well in front of the rest of the Union Army and dangerously close to the enemy. Most importantly, however, his left flank, and thus the potentially vulnerable left flank of the Army of the Potomac, was not on Little Round Top, but on the easily flanked position at Devil's Den.<sup>4</sup>

Upon being informed of Sickles' movement, Union Army commander General Meade was furious, but saw that the Southerners were ready to attack in that sector and felt it too dangerous to pull the Third Corps back from its advanced position. He therefore needed to support Sickles to the fullest. Weakening other parts of his line throughout the afternoon, Meade would eventually send over 20,000 soldiers to assist Sickles.<sup>5</sup>

The Southerners, weary after marching through the heat and dust that week, prepared to do battle with the Yankees in the afternoon. General Lee was heard to say of the enemy, "I am going to whip them or they are going to whip me."<sup>6</sup> In this spirit, the battle plans were made. Lee's main thrust against the Union left flank was to be made by the 20,000-strong 1st Corps under Lee's trusted subordinate, Lieutenant General James Longstreet. The troops who would come to attack Little Round Top included portions of General Evander Law's Alabama Brigade and General Jerome Robertson's Texas Brigade.

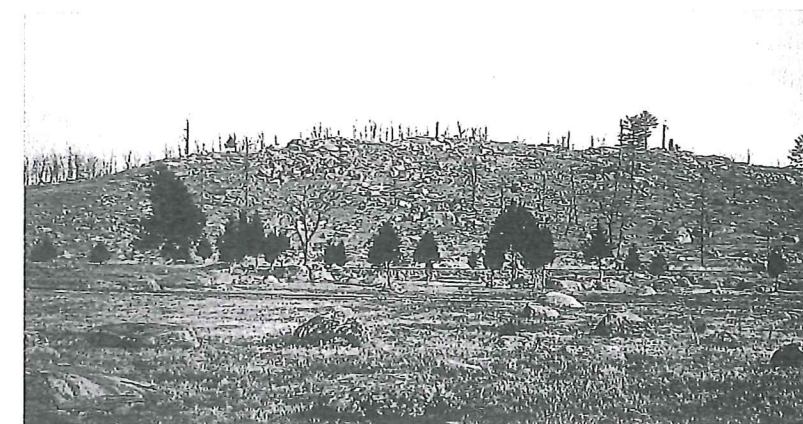
In the moments just prior to the Southern attack, Little Round Top was unoccupied, except for a few Union signalmen waving their flags. As fate would have it, General Gouverneur Warren, Chief Engineer for the Union Army, arrived on Little Round Top at this time and gave the position an engineer's appraisal. It took him but a moment to assess Little Round Top's importance. If lost to the Confederates, the



*Hood's advance.*

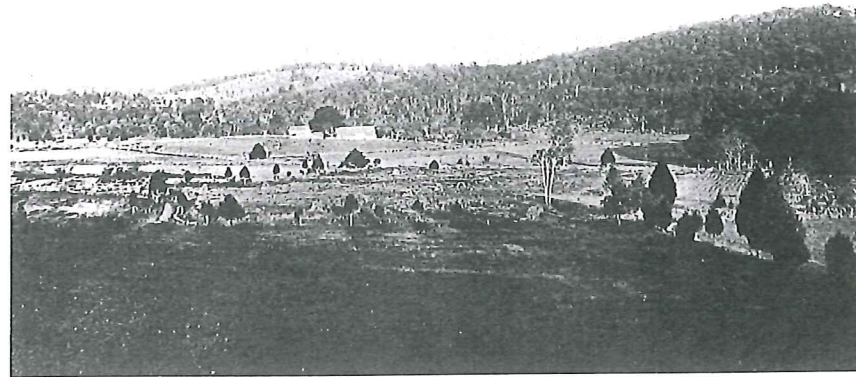
remainder of the Union line would be compromised. Warren quickly noticed that the Southern line, now positioned along Seminary Ridge, extended far beyond the Union left flank at Devil's Den. This would facilitate the easy occupation of Little Round Top by the Southerners and the day might be lost. Through Warren's efforts, support came quickly.<sup>7</sup> One 5th Corps brigade of some 1,300 men from the states of Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania and Maine, under Colonel Strong Vincent, arrived at the hill first. Vincent occupied the southern slope of Little Round Top, and thus became the extreme left flank of the Union army at that time.

At about the same time, 5th Corps Chief of Artillery, Captain Augustus P. Martin, recognized the importance of the position and sent a battery of six guns to gain the crest of the hill. The precipitous nature of the ground made the ascent difficult; the cannons had to be hauled up by hand.<sup>8</sup>



*Little Round Top from the Valley of Death, F.J. Severence, c. 1900.*  
(New York at Gettysburg)

Meanwhile, Warren, without support and seeing the enemy closing in, galloped off to see to it himself. He did not have to go far. As chance would have it, the first unit Warren encountered happened to be the 140th New York Infantry, part of a brigade formerly under his command. Taking responsibility for detaching the 140th from the remainder of General Stephen Weed's Brigade, Warren directed them to the top of the hill. The regiment, under its young colonel, Patrick O'Rourke, moved toward the crest.<sup>9</sup>

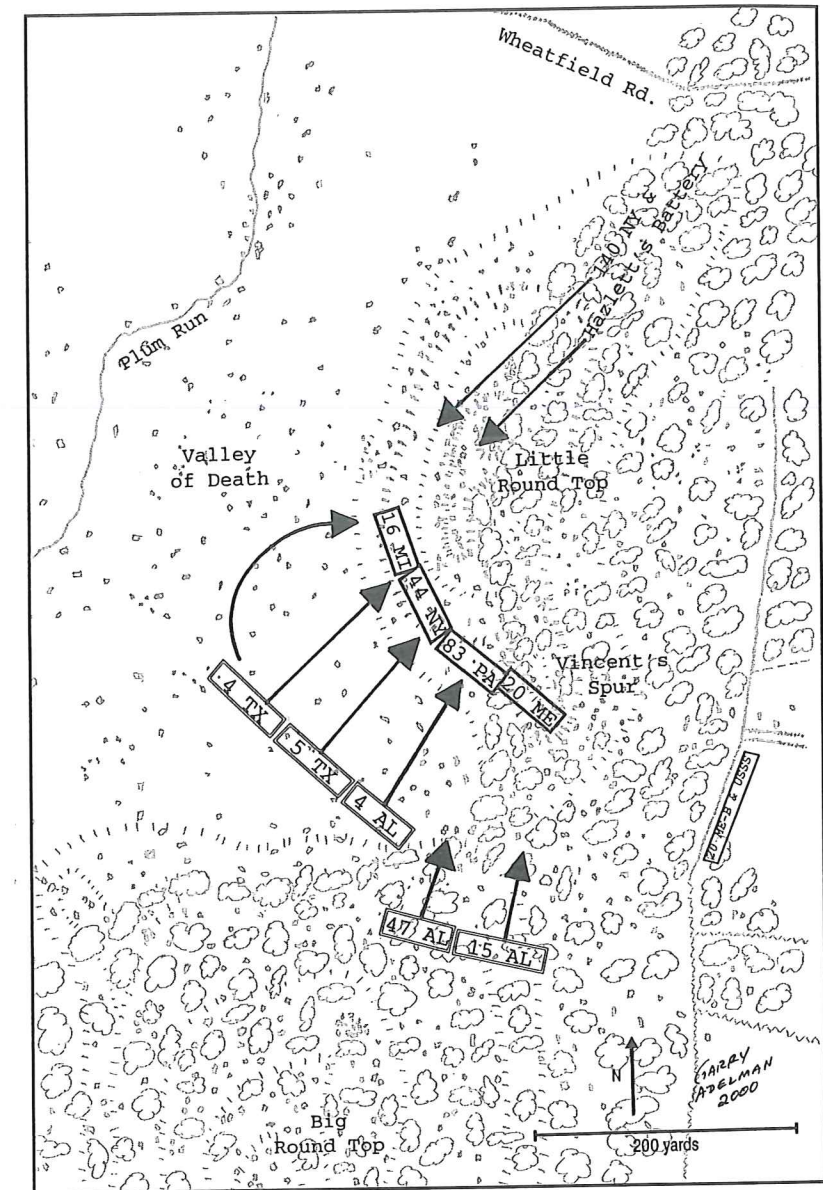


View of the Round Tops from the Confederate line, J.I. Mumper, c. 1900.  
(New York at Gettysburg)

As these supports were enroute to Little Round Top, the Southerners were pushing aside Union skirmishers. But the advance was difficult, the ground rugged, and enemy artillery fire plowed the ground around them. To make matters worse, by the time the Alabamians and Texans reached the base of Little Round Top, neither brigade had all of its regiments together. The Texans were at half strength while the Alabamians were at about two-thirds. This brought some 1,850 Southerners into line to attack Little Round Top on the afternoon of July 2.<sup>10</sup>

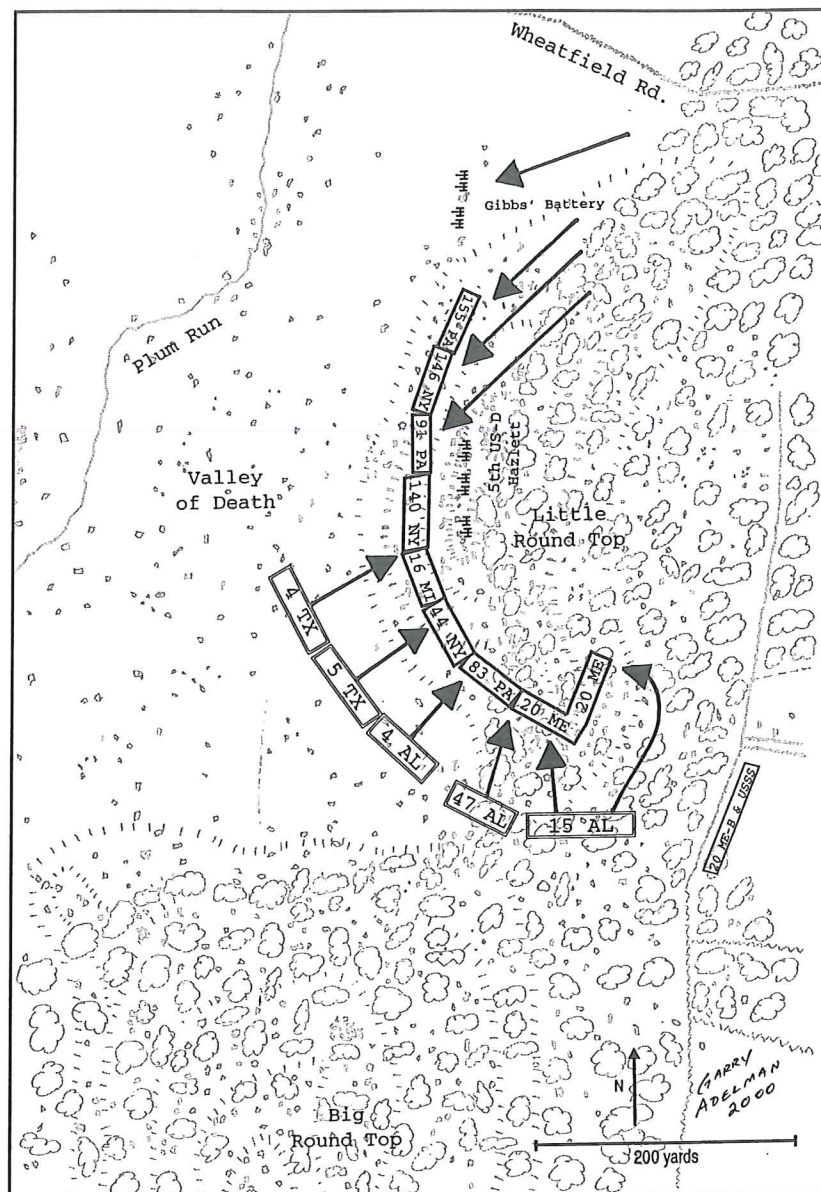
Vincent's Union Brigade arrived just before the Rebels and had no time to build the impressive stone walls which stand upon the hill today. They loaded their weapons, formed their lines, and readied themselves for battle. Vincent was outnumbered, but had the advantage of position, of remaining on the defensive, and of fighting on Northern soil. The latter point cannot be overemphasized. Being in Northern territory illustrated the vulnerability of their homes and families. With such an incentive, the Yankees fought with greater determination—much as the Confederates did in the South. Vincent himself, just before the battle, was said to have gazed upon a Pennsylvania flag and say, "What death more glorious can any man desire than to die on the soil of old Pennsylvania fighting for that flag?"<sup>11</sup>

The Confederates made valiant attempts to break the Union line. Elements of the 4th Texas succeeded in gaining a portion of a plateau just below the crest and were about to capture the hill when O'Rourke's 140th New York arrived and pushed them back after a sharp struggle.



The attack and defense of Little Round Top. Map 1.





The attack and defense of Little Round Top. Map 2.

As the Southerners continued their assaults against the seemingly impregnable position, the fight became most intense on the very flank of the Union army. Colonel Joshua Chamberlain's 20th Maine held that position and resisted repeated Confederate attacks. After several charges, the Maine men, having already used the ammunition from their dead and wounded comrades, were running out of options. Unable to defend by the muzzle of the rifle, Colonel Chamberlain ordered his unit to fix bayonets and charge into the exhausted Southerners. Scores of Alabamians were captured and the rest retreated whence they came. This was the final assault on the slopes of Little Round Top.<sup>12</sup>

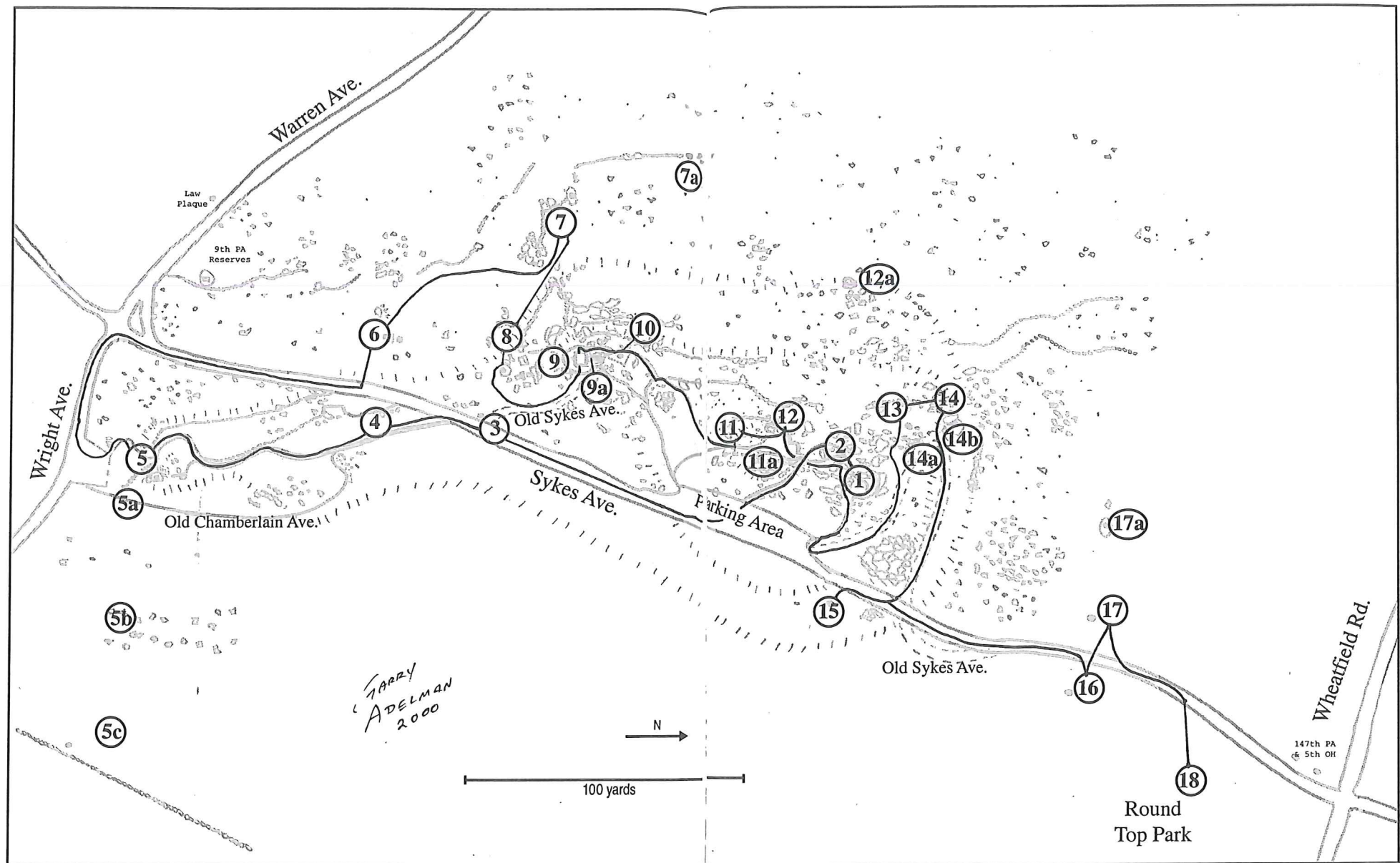
Little Round Top, however, was the scene of lively skirmishing and played host to thousands of additional Union troops throughout the evening of July 2. The three remaining regiments of Weed's Brigade, five regiments of Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry, as well as an Ohio battery of six guns, fortified the position.<sup>13</sup>

But a far more significant number of Union troops would pass over or near Little Round Top enroute to nearby contested areas such as Houck's Ridge and the Wheatfield. Before darkness covered the vicinity, thousands of Federal troops of the 2nd, 5th, 6th, and 12th Corps had either paused on or passed by Little Round Top.

Night soon fell upon the bloody battlefield and the Yankees on Little Round Top used the time to strengthen their already strong position. Building stone breastworks and sending reinforcements, the Northerners also occupied Big Round Top to the south. Thus, as dawn broke on July 3, the possibility of a successful Confederate assault at Little Round Top was gone forever.

But Little Round Top was still a dangerous place to be on July 3. A lively exchange of fire between Union forces on Little Round Top and Southern troops on Houck's Ridge and at Devil's Den filled the air throughout the day. Later in the afternoon, the guns of Hazlett's Battery, now under the command of Lieutenant Benjamin Rittenhouse, fired into the flank of Pickett's Division during Longstreet's Assault, more commonly known as Pickett's Charge.

Troops were positioned on and around Little Round Top throughout July 4. The following day, the Army of the Potomac was in full pursuit of the Army of Northern Virginia. Little Round Top was no longer an important military position. Those intense hours in early July 1863, however, changed the hill forever. Upon its slopes heroic deeds were performed, lives were lost, and, very possibly, a nation was saved.



Little Round Top: the tour route.

(For greater detail of the crest of Little Round Top see page 33.)

## Little Round Top: The Tour Route

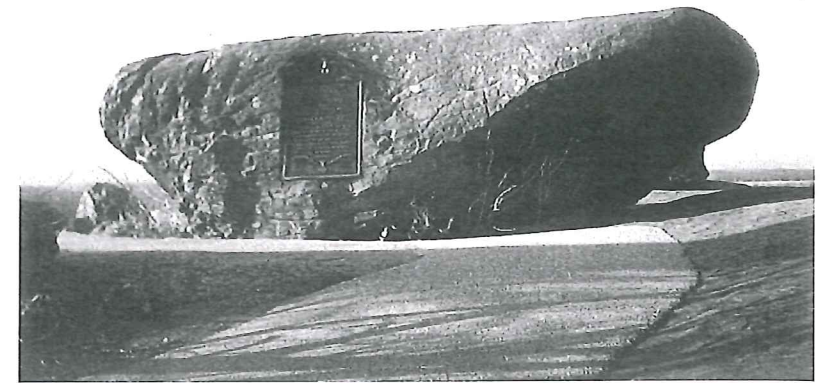
The following tour is designed to acquaint the reader with the physical resources on Little Round Top while linking these resources to historic events.<sup>1</sup> In an attempt to generally follow the chronology of the battle, the tour will skip over certain features, only to return to them later, so that they may fit more properly into a historical context. The reader should feel free, however, to follow the tour in whatever order desired. If every stop is visited, the tour is approximately one mile in length. Based on one's level of interest, however, the time it takes the reader to complete the tour will vary. Note that there are no restroom or water facilities on Little Round Top. Please arrive prepared.

With its rocky terrain, Little Round Top can be a dangerous place. Please use caution while touring the area. At the time of this writing, the National Park Service, in an attempt to control erosion on the face of Little Round Top, may temporarily limit access to certain sites along this tour route. **Please obey all NPS signs.** Removing rocks from Little Round Top, altering stone walls, littering, and hunting for relics all detract from the long-term preservation of this unique and beautiful site.

### STOP #1 — THE SIGNAL ROCK

The United States Signal Corps is woven into the story of Little Round Top. There were just a few men of the Signal Corps on Little Round Top as the Southerners began their grand assault on July 2, 1863. While Union infantry were on the way to the hill, these men did their duty in acquiring and transmitting information to the army and corps headquarters. The waving of flags in the face of the enemy gave the impression of Union strength on Little Round Top.

Known as the Round Top Mountain Signal Station during the battle, this was one of several stations on the Gettysburg Battlefield. Stations were also located, at least temporarily, at Pennsylvania (now Gettysburg) College, General Meade's headquarters, Culp's Hill,



*The Signal Rock*

Powers' Hill and Cemetery Hill. Of the locations, however, this position provided the best view of the battlefield. Chief Signal Officer Captain Lemuel B. Norton wrote in an official dispatch on July 2, "This is a good point for observation." Considering the commanding view from Little Round Top, this was certainly an understatement.<sup>2</sup>

The plaque on this rock was dedicated in May 1919 to honor the men of the U.S. Signal Corps at Gettysburg. Some 36 men were performing this duty under six signal officers at Gettysburg. Two of the flagmen were slightly wounded during the battle.<sup>3</sup>

### STOP #2 — THE WARREN ROCK

On the afternoon of July 2, Maj. Gen. Gouverneur Kemble Warren, Chief Engineer of the Union Army, was inspecting the left of the Union line along with Commanding General George Gordon Meade. They quickly observed that the Union left, under Major General Daniel Sickles, did not reach all the way to Little Round Top. Realizing that there was no time to rearrange Sickles' line due to the impending Confederate attack, Meade sent Warren to Little Round Top to have a look.

Had Warren not gone to the hill upon which you are standing, the United States might be a much different place today. On that afternoon, Warren ascended Little Round Top and put his trained eye to the terrain. He later recalled:

There were no troops on it and it was used as a signal station. I saw that this was the key to the whole position and that the troops in front of it could not see the ground in front of them, so that the enemy would come upon them before they would be aware of it. The long line of woods on the west side of the Emmitsburg Road, which road was along a ridge, furnished an excellent place for the enemy to form out of sight....<sup>4</sup>

Warren saw that the Southern line greatly overlapped the Union left. He quickly sent a note to Meade, requesting that at least a division be placed on Little Round Top. Meade directed the entire 5th Corps to the vicinity of Little Round Top. Soon afterward, the charge of Hood's Division commenced. Warren immediately became a major player in the climactic struggle of the day.

The bronze statue to General Warren at this tour stop was dedicated in August 1888. This rock, the only boulder on the Gettysburg Battlefield upon which visitors are specifically forbidden to stand, is supposed to be one upon which General Warren stood on July 2nd. Erected just six years after Warren's death under the auspices of his old regiment, the 5th New York Volunteers, it pays "tribute to the spotless name and memory of Gouverneur K. Warren."<sup>5</sup> A topographical engineer and instructor until the Civil War, he was 33 years old when he performed his "monumental" service at Gettysburg. He was slightly wounded in the neck on Little Round Top but survived until 1882. General Warren is now remembered as one of the heroes of Little Round Top.<sup>6</sup>

Looking westward from this position you can see the Valley of Death immediately in front of Little Round Top. On the opposite side of the Valley is Houck's Ridge, named



*Statue of General G.K. Warren,  
Mumper & Co., c. 1890.*

(Boardman Collection)

after its owner at the time of the battle. Beyond is Rose Woods, where intense fighting occurred after the fight for Little Round Top had subsided. The next tree line, about one mile away, marks Seminary Ridge, the right of the Confederate line on July 2.<sup>7</sup>

**As You Walk** to the next stop you will travel along Sykes Avenue, which was first constructed in 1897. Most of the roads on the battlefield that are called "avenues" are roads that were constructed after 1863. These avenues generally bear the names of officers who figured prominently in that particular area.

The road system on the battlefield has been altered numerous times. Even the road upon which you are walking has been changed. It used to have many twists and turns, which are clearly visible in the accompanying photograph. The same is true for many of the roads on the battlefield. This is due to the changes in battlefield stewardship over the years. The Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association had a certain way of laying roads. When the War Department took over in 1895, they switched to a different system and so on. If you look closely, you can still see old roadbeds crossing many points on the Gettysburg Battlefield.<sup>8</sup>



*Aerial view of Little Round Top showing part of original Sykes Avenue,  
W.H. Tipton, c. 1925. The old roadbed is still visible in many places.*

(Boardman Collection)

This road is named for the commander of the Union 5th Army Corps—Major General George Sykes. General Sykes' name is not one that most visitors hear on a trip to Gettysburg. He took command of the 5th Corps only days before the battle and was not particularly prominent afterwards. He is one of the few Union corps commanders at Gettysburg without a statue in his likeness, yet his corps fought valiantly on Little Round Top and has been well-remembered.<sup>9</sup>

### STOP #3 — THE VINCENT BRIGADE PLAQUE

Colonel Strong Vincent found himself on Little Round Top as a result of both the high command's desire to have troops there and of his own duty to assist the Union Army however he could. Today, the southern portion of Little Round Top (across the road and to the south), is named Vincent's Spur in his honor.

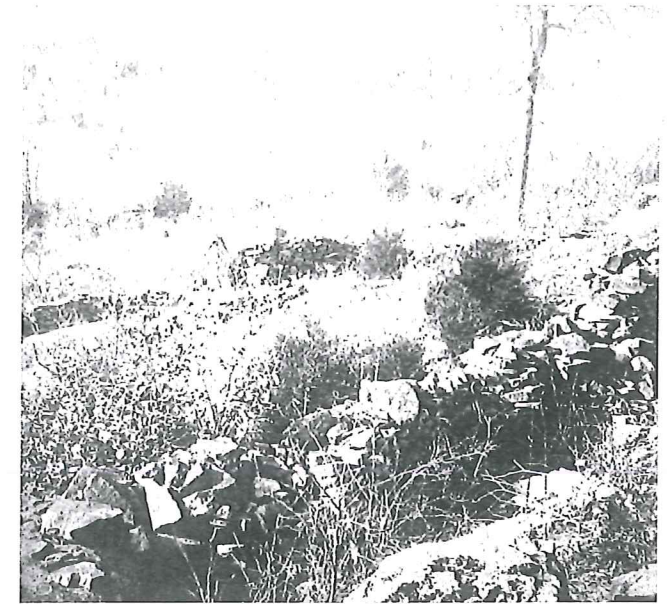
On July 2, 1863, the men of Vincent's Brigade, over 1,300 strong, arrived on Little Round Top just in time to save the hill from certain Confederate occupation. The brigade contained four regiments from just as many states. The 83rd Pennsylvania, 20th Maine, 44th New York, and the 16th Michigan had been brigaded together since the Battle of Antietam.<sup>10</sup>

Its commander, Colonel Strong Vincent, is one of whom nothing but praise is written. Born in June 1837, he graduated from Harvard when he was 22 and was a lawyer when the Civil War began. Lacking a military education, he nonetheless was a natural soldier. Generally strict, yet caring when appropriate, he was trusted and respected by his men.<sup>11</sup>

The plaque at this site was erected by the War Department early in the 20th century. At least one plaque of this sort describes the action of every Union and Confederate brigade at Gettysburg.

### STOP #4 — STONE WALLS ON LITTLE ROUND TOP

There are many miles of rebuilt stone walls on the battlefield. Most of these stone walls were erected before the Civil War by the farmers who inhabited Adams County, Pennsylvania in the 19th century. Other walls, however, represent those thrown up by the soldiers who fought here. Almost all of the walls on Little Round Top are of the latter sort. None of these breastworks were built, however, in time to play a role in the heavy fighting on July 2. Such is the case with the wall where you are standing.



*Breastworks on Little Round Top, W.H. Tipton, stereo. These defenses were built by the men of Weed's Brigade on the evening of July 2 and the morning of July 3.*

(Boardman Collection)

This wall was erected, not by the men of Vincent's Brigade, but by other troops on July 3—most likely the Pennsylvania Reserves under Colonel Joseph Fisher. Most of the walls on Little Round Top were built by either the Pennsylvania Reserves on July 3 or by the men of General Stephen Weed's Brigade on the evening of July 2. By examining period photographs and maps, it is clear that some walls are in the exact place that they were at the time of the battle but many have been relocated to accommodate modern features such as roads or monuments. Still others have been erected since the battle for purely esoteric purposes.

The walls on the battlefield, however, are historic structures. Some date as far back as the 18th century. Most of the walls were rebuilt by the War Department in the 1890s and 1900s and again by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.

Along the stone wall at which you are standing, you can plainly see the right flank marker of the 20th Maine Regiment. Most Northern units that erected memorials also placed flank markers for the

purpose of telling future generations specifically where they fought at Gettysburg. The left flank marker of the 20th Maine used to be near the old Chamberlain Avenue (See stop #5a) but it disappeared at some point. Its current whereabouts have not been established with certainty.

#### STOP #5 — THE 20TH MAINE MONUMENT

Although the left flank of the Union Army rested in several places on July 2, you are standing at the most well-known of them. The 20th Maine Regiment was hurried to Little Round Top along with the rest of Vincent's men and positioned here on the left of the brigade. This placed them at the extreme left flank of the Union Army at that time. The rugged Maine men fought intensely as the weary Confederates from Alabama attacked their position. Back and forth the fight raged until both Mainers and Alabamians had suffered heavily. Almost out of ammunition and fearing the loss of their position, the 20th Maine charged down the slope in front of you and finally decided the contest at the point of the bayonet. Scores of Southerners were captured as the Maine men seemed to be heading all the way to Richmond. Shortly thereafter, the 20th Maine was ordered to advance upon the larger hill in your front—Big Round Top, where they spent the night of July 2.<sup>12</sup>

The 20th Maine was recruited from throughout the state, and was mustered into United States service on August 29, 1862. It marched to Gettysburg under Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain. Chamberlain was certainly one of the most unlikely heroes of the Battle of Gettysburg. A professor before the war, he had been a full colonel for less than two weeks at Gettysburg and was later given the Medal of Honor for his actions there. He rose rapidly through the ranks in the Union Army and was mustered out less than a year after the war. Serving as governor of Maine from 1866-1870, he later served as president of his alma mater, Bowdoin College. Chamberlain died in February of 1914 and was buried in the state he had served so loyally.<sup>13</sup>

This monument was placed in June 1886 on a rock near where the colors of the 20th Maine stood during the battle. Another monument was placed near the summit of Big Round Top three years later, near a stone wall which was reportedly erected by the 20th. Yet another marker was placed, which will be discussed at Stop #5c.<sup>14</sup>

For enthusiasts of Turner Network's 1993 production, *Gettysburg*, it is important to note that you will not find Joshua Chamberlain's friend, Buster Kilrain named on the monument. Like many aspects of that film, Kilrain is an entirely fictional character. The terrain is also substantially different than in the movie, for it was not filmed on this site. Although scenes of the movie were, indeed, filmed on the Battlefield (and even on Little Round Top), most of the film was shot about three miles west of here.<sup>15</sup>

#### STOP #5A — CHAMBERLAIN AVENUE

You are standing on the site of one of the numerous battlefield avenues that have been removed. As is apparent, however, removal of a road does not obliterate its existence. In fact, the same is true of all deleted avenues—they leave clear remnants. Chamberlain Avenue was constructed in 1902, and ran a total of 1,050 feet in length. The avenue was removed in the 1930s.

If you would like to visit the next two stops, enter the woods, go east some 40 yards and you will see ledges of boulders. If you do not care to see stops 5b and 5c, simply proceed to the 83rd Pennsylvania Monument at stop #6.



*Chamberlain Avenue, looking south, W.H. Tipton, 1902. The 20th Maine Monument is visible at right. Big Round Top, to where the 20th pursued Oates' fleeing Alabamians, is in the center distance.*

(Gettysburg National Military Park)

**STOP #5B — OATES' LEDGE OF ROCKS**

After the Battle of Gettysburg, many surviving officers wrote official reports about the role of their units in the battle. Scribed by those who played a part in this drama, these *Official Records* remain the historian's primary resource for gathering information on the actions of Civil War units. Some reports contain references to terrain features. Unfortunately, many of these references are far too general to be of much help. It is thus the historian's task to identify these landmarks as closely as possible.

The 15th Alabama was on the far right of the Southern line and was the primary unit that attacked the 20th Maine. Their commander, Colonel William C. Oates, wrote his official report on August 8, 1863. He described his fight with the 20th Maine and the need to change the front of his regiment.

I halted my regiment as its left reached a very large rock, and ordered a left-wheel of the regiment, which was executed in good order under fire, thus taking advantage of a ledge of rocks, running off in a line perpendicular to the one I had just abandoned, and affording very good protection to my men. This position enabled me to keep up a constant flank and cross fire upon the enemy, which in less than five minutes caused him to change front.<sup>16</sup>

These ledges are almost certainly those to which Oates referred. From this position, it is not difficult to picture Yankees atop the hill firing down upon the weary Alabamians.

Walk about 50 yards further east until you see a stone wall. If you are keen, you may spot the foot path which takes you to the next stop.

**STOP #5C — THE COMPANY B MARKER**

Behind this stone wall hid the 43 officers and men of Company B, 20th Maine and some stragglers from the 2nd United States Sharpshooters during the whole of the fighting on Vincent's Spur. Colonel Chamberlain had dispatched Company B, under Captain Walter Morrill to watch for a possible flanking maneuver by the Confederates.<sup>17</sup>

The men waited behind the stone wall for the right moment, which presented itself soon after the main body of the 20th began its



*Marker to Company B, 20th Maine.*

charge. While the 15th Alabama was retreating, Company B and the sharpshooters delivered an unexpected and destructive fire, throwing the Southerners into confusion.

This stone wall was erected prior to the Battle of Gettysburg. At the time of the battle, the ground beyond the wall (to the east) was an open field.

**As You Walk** to the next stop take note of the vast area which has been disturbed in the laying of this modern intersection. The photograph on the next page helps to illustrate how many boulders were obliterated and how much ground was graded in the laying of these roads.

Also, feel free to visit the 9th Pennsylvania Reserves monument (erected in 1890) and the advanced plaque to General Law's Brigade (erected in 1910-11). Both memorials are on Warren Avenue, just west of Sykes Avenue.

**STOP #6 — THE 83RD PENNSYLVANIA MONUMENT**

The 83rd Pennsylvania fought gallantly on July 2. From near this position, it repulsed the attacks of portions of the 4th and 47th



*Construction of a retaining wall on Sykes Avenue, W.H. Tipton, 1897. The large rock at right center is quite visible today along Sykes Avenue.*

(Gettysburg National Military Park)

Alabama Regiments. Due to its more secure position in the left center of the brigade, however, it lost fewer men than Vincent's other three regiments.

It took less than five weeks for nearly one thousand men of western Pennsylvania to respond to the call for more troops in the summer of 1861. These men were officially mustered into United States service on September 8 as the 83rd Pennsylvania.<sup>18</sup>

At the Battle of Gettysburg, the 83rd was without a single field officer and was under the command of Captain Orpheus S. Woodward. Woodward and the 83rd did their duty at Gettysburg, repulsing the Southern assaults, capturing scores of prisoners and collecting hundreds of discarded weapons. The slope of the hill presented a ghastly scene after the fight. Captain Amos Judson said,

I counted, several days afterwards, over forty dead bodies within a circle of fifty feet in circumference. They laid in every conceivable position among the rocks, in that low, swampy ground, some crouched behind rocks as if about to fire, some laying upon their faces, and some stretched upon



*The 83rd Pennsylvania Monument, W.H. Tipton, c. 1890. Colonel Vincent stands atop the memorial. Note how free of timber the southern slope of Little Round Top was a century ago.*

(Pennsylvania at Gettysburg)



their backs, like corpses laid out for a funeral, as if they had determined to observe the propriety of attitude, even in the hour and article of death.<sup>19</sup>

This monument was dedicated on September 11, 1889. The main address was the oration of Lieutenant Oliver Wilcox Norton, who would later write the classic, *The Attack and Defense of Little Round Top*. Strong Vincent stands atop the monument as firmly as he stood on Little Round Top so long ago. One difference today, however, is that the woods around you were much thinner during the battle and when the monument was erected.

**As You Walk** to the next stop you may be able to see the two metal poles sticking a few feet out of the ground along the stone wall to your left. These posts once held the plaques of the 22nd and 18th Massachusetts Regiments. These regiments were part of Colonel William S. Tilton's Brigade who fought near the Wheatfield on July 2 and were moved to this position on July 3.<sup>20</sup>

The plaques were vandalized some time ago. The plaque of the 22nd was located by the writer and his comrade Timothy Smith in 1998. Still in good condition, it had been shoved under some nearby boulders and left for decades until the recent clearing of brush in the area revealed its hiding place. The damaged plaque of the 18th Massachusetts is in National Park Service storage.



*The writer pointing to the vandalized marker to the 22nd Massachusetts, October, 1998. The post from which it was broken, may be seen in the distance, directly above the writer's head.*

#### STOP #7 — THE 16TH MICHIGAN MONUMENT

The right flank of Vincent's line was held by the 263 men of the 16th Michigan. Thus, the smallest regiment of the brigade was given a very exposed position and one of great importance.

Organized in Detroit in September 1861, the 16th Michigan was a seasoned regiment with plenty of experience. On Little Round Top, superior enemy strength and perhaps a mistaken order by a member of the 16th, forced a portion of the regiment back to the crest of the hill at a critical moment in the fighting. While trying to rally the retreating men of the 16th, brigade commander Vincent was mortally wounded.

This monument was erected on the afternoon of June 12, 1889. About thirty members of the regiment were present and an emotional address was delivered. This scene, however, would have taken place about twelve yards to the southeast of this position. Initially, this monument sat at ground level, but the monument was later elevated and moved to its current position.<sup>21</sup>

Between the position where you are standing and the base of the hill to the west, there were no Union troops while the 16th Michigan was fighting. The Southerners were happy to exploit such a gap and were only slowed for a time by the two rifled cannons of Smith's Battery in the Valley of Death to the west.<sup>22</sup>



*View looking northwest showing original base for the 16th Michigan Monument. The monument, atop its rocky perch today, looms in the background.*

**STOP #7A — THE 1ST AND 2ND UNITED STATES  
SHARPSHOOTERS, MICHIGAN COMPANIES MONUMENT**

If you are adventurous, you may want to creep across the slope much as elements of the 1st and 2nd USSS did on July 3, 1863. Your journey, however, might require a bit less bravery. The sharpshooters had to do so under intense Confederate fire that some said filled the air around them. You might have to deal only with thorn bushes.

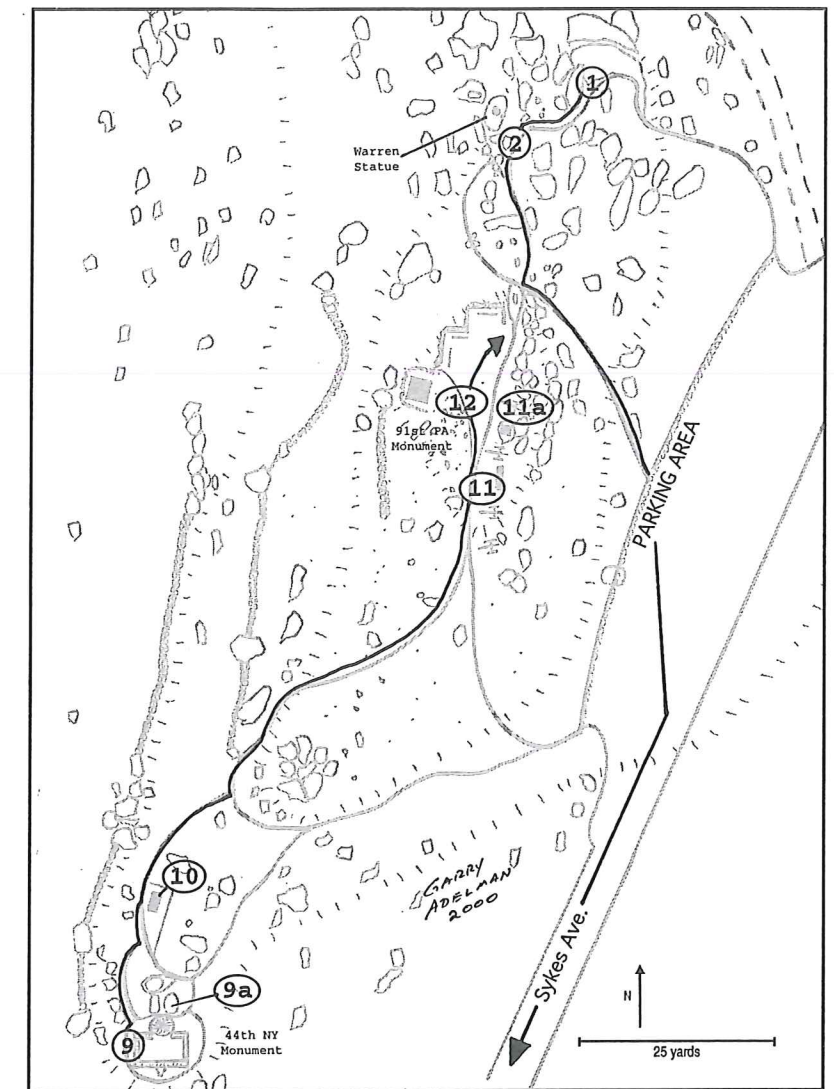
The 1st and 2nd USSS were known collectively as Berdan's Sharpshooters, after their commander, Colonel Hiram Berdan. Each man had to pass a qualifying test of marksmanship. Hence, the sharpshooters were well-suited for the task of picking off Southerners from their concealed positions at Devil's Den and on Houck's Ridge.

This monument was erected before June 12, 1889. There was no formal dedication as only Hiram Berdan and less than a dozen survivors were present. The monument commemorates the deeds of Michigan Companies C, I, and K of the 1st USSS and Company B of the 2nd USSS.<sup>23</sup>

**STOP #8 — THE VINCENT MARKER**

As Vincent's Brigade fought off the Confederates, there were many moments of uncertainty. One of them came in this area as the Southerners tried to outflank the 16th Michigan Infantry. Vincent hurried to the point and recklessly exposed himself to do his part in holding the position. He was struck down, mortally wounded, soon after.

*The Vincent marker and the south slope of Little Round Top, Mumper & Co, c. 1880s. The marker is facing in the opposite direction as it does today. (Boardman Collection)*



*Tour map detail: the crest of Little Round Top.*