

# Joshua Chamberlain Lesson Plan

**3RD PLACE, BEST LESSON PLAN CONTEST 2011-2012**

*BY CAROLYN DUPEE*

**Grade Level:** Middle School, High School

**Approximate length of time:** Four, 50-minute periods

## **Goal:**

Students will analyze and judge decisions and actions that Joshua Chamberlain took during, and at the surrender, of the Civil War.

## **Objective:**

After reading and discussing the two articles, students will create a Force Field Analysis map to weigh whether Joshua Chamberlain deserved the credit he received for his Civil War efforts.

## **Materials Used:**

All materials can be downloaded with the lesson plan on the right side of this page.

- *Defense of Little Round Top* by James Brann
- *The Last Salute of the Army of Northern Virginia* by Joshua Chamberlain
- Arrows copied on red paper and arrows copied on green paper
- Black markers
- Large, colored construction paper
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Scoring Rubric

## **Anticipatory Set/Hook:**

Was Joshua Chamberlain really a war hero?

## **Procedure:**

**Warm-Up:**

Question: What battle was Joshua Chamberlain known for?

Answer: Gettysburg and Little Round Top

Question: When did Gettysburg happen during the war and why was it important?

Answer: 1863, this is considered the turning point of the war

Question: What was Chamberlain's motto, or the quote that he lived his life by?

Answer: "Do It, that's how!"

**Day 1-2:**

1. As a class, read and discuss "Defense of Little Round Top." See discussion points below.
2. As students read, have them highlight points that support Chamberlain as a hero in one color, and points that refute that Chamberlain was a war hero in another color.
3. After reading and highlighting the article, have students summarize points from the article. Those points that support Chamberlain being a hero go on the green arrows, and those that refute that Chamberlain is a hero go on the red arrows.

**Discussion Points:**

1. Why was Little Round Top such an important aspect to the battlefield at Gettysburg?
2. The 20th Maine was not the only brigade present, so why does Chamberlain get all the credit for saving Little Round Top?
3. Chamberlain had no army experience prior to the Civil War, is it fair that he was promoted to be a commanding officer?
4. How does Chamberlain treat the mutineers from the 2nd Maine? Why do you think he did this?
5. Why might Chamberlain's account of what happened at the battle different from what other people said?
6. Should Color Sgt. Andrew Tozier have received more credit than he did for his role in the battle?

**Day 2-3:**

1. As a class read and discuss, "The Last Salute of the Army of Northern Virginia."
2. Again, have students summarize points from the article and write them on the appropriately colored arrows.

**Discussion Points:**

1. Why is it important to get Chamberlain's views on the war as well as the views of other authors?

2. Why is it significant that Chamberlain says that there aren't any official documents about the Surrender at Appomattox Courthouse?
3. Why do you think that Chamberlain says: "That night we slept as we had not slept in four years," after the South surrendered?
4. Why does Chamberlain take the time to describe how the troops were set up during the surrender?
5. Why were soldiers from both the North and South so emotional at this surrender?
6. Why is it important that Southern officers were allowed to keep their arms and horses if they were their own property? Do you believe the South would have been as chivalrous in surrender if they had won?

### **Day 3-4: Constructing and Presenting Force Field Analysis Map:**

1. Students will finish any additional arrows that they may want to do based on previous knowledge, or additional ideas from the reading.
2. Students then take a large piece of construction paper in their group and draw a black line with marker along the center. Paper should be oriented the long way.
3. Students should then cut out their arrows and place the arrowheads facing the black line on their paper. Green arrows show be below the line and face up, red arrows should be above the line and face down. Students will glue their arrows down.
4. One member of the group will serve as a reporter, and will explain the ideas with which the group determined. The group members should discuss whether they believe their map is representative as Chamberlain.

### **Closure:**

The number of arrows in green or red will determine if the group supports whether Chamberlain was a war hero or not. During presentation of their Force Field Analysis Map, students may discuss if their own opinions and those of the group differed from what they created on the map.

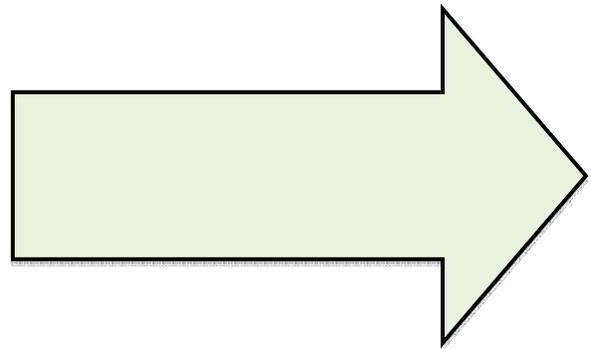
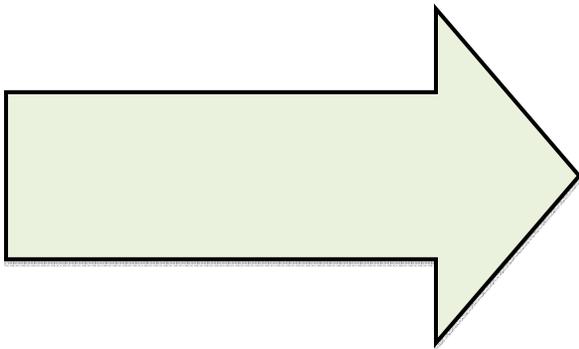
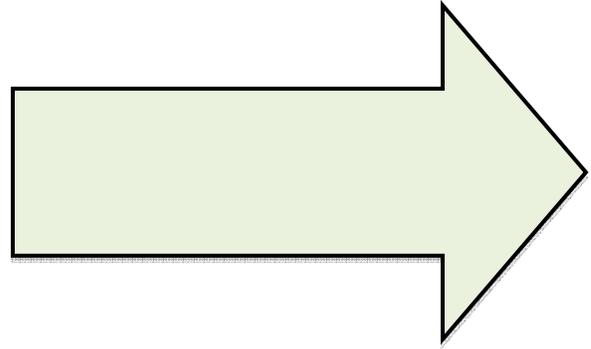
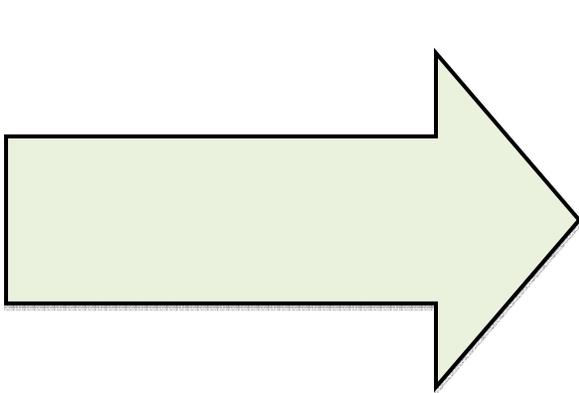
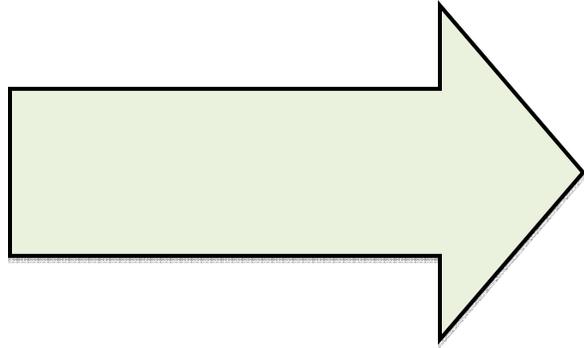
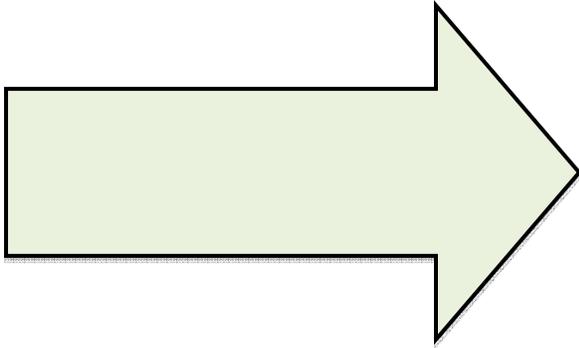
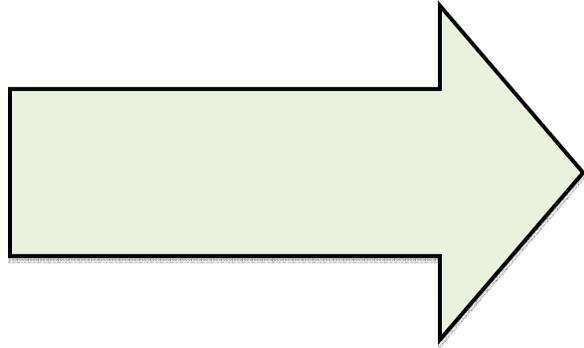
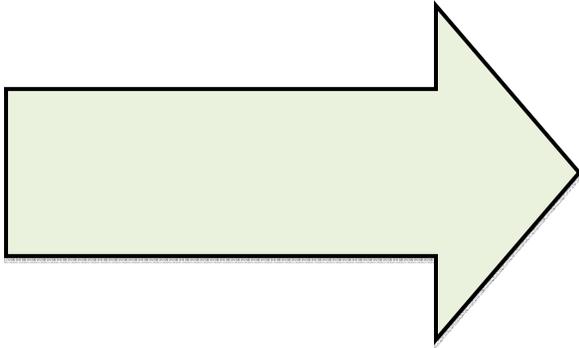
### **Modifications:**

This lesson could easily be completed electronically as well.

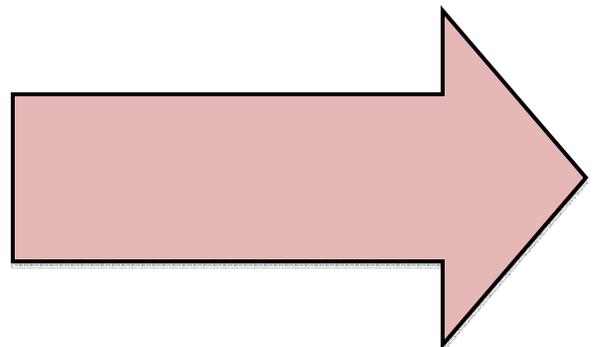
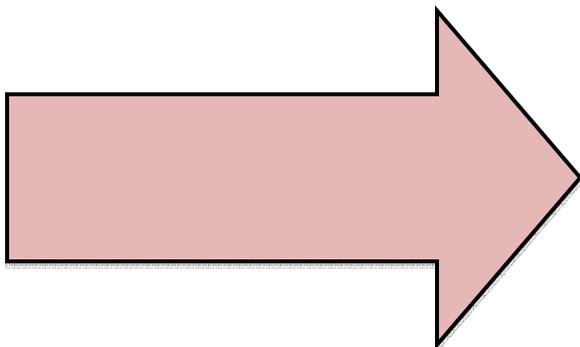
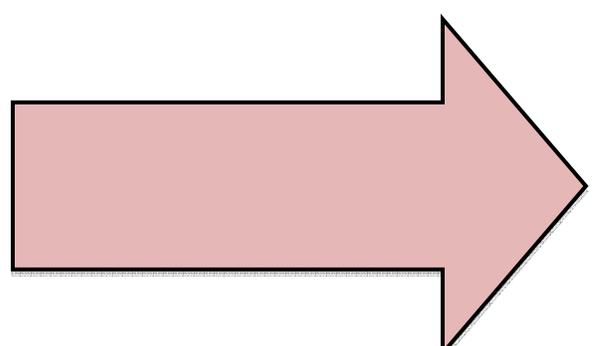
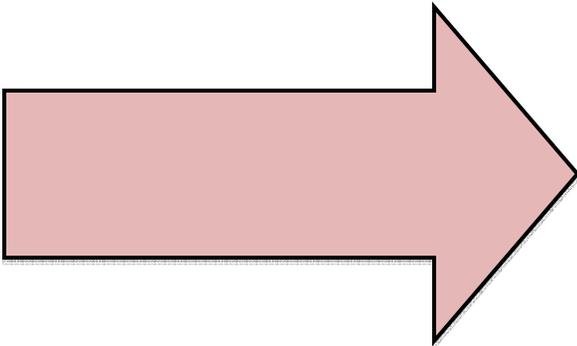
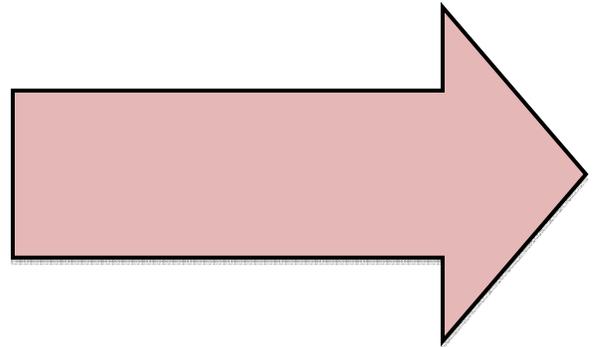
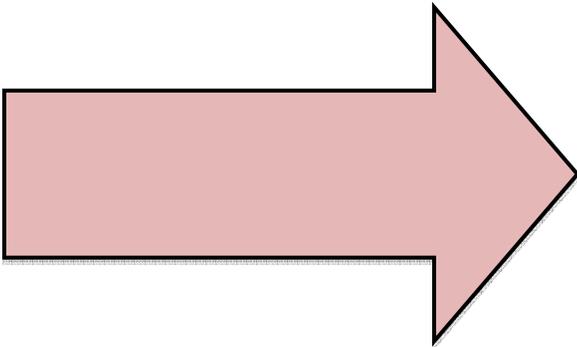
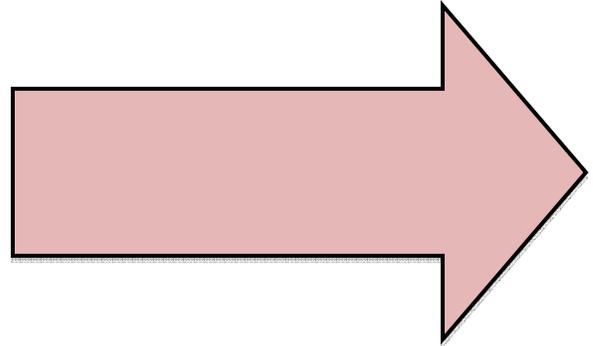
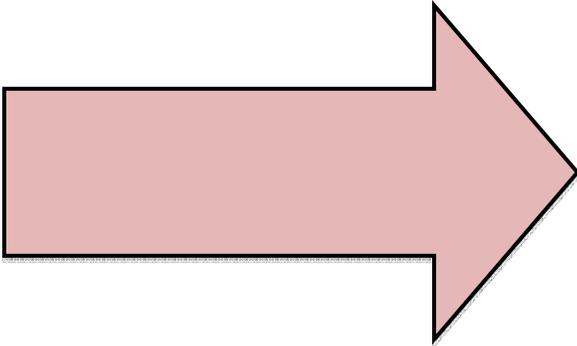
Scoring Rubric

Standard assessed	4 (Exceeds)	3 (Meets)	2 (Partially Meets)	1 (Does Not Meet)
<p><b>RSS 6-8. 1.</b> Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.</p> <p><b>2.</b> Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.</p>	<p>-Group paraphrases information from the reading for all arrows. If a quote is included, it's meaning is also summarized.</p> <p>-Group includes additional information on Chamberlain not from the texts.</p> <p>-Students correctly determine and judge all statements for and against Joshua Chamberlain being a hero.</p>	<p>-Group includes both quotes from both texts and information that is paraphrased.</p> <p>-Students correctly determine and judge most statements for and against Joshua Chamberlain being a hero. (1 may be incorrect.)</p>	<p>-Group does not include quotes or paraphrased information from both texts.</p> <p>-Students incorrectly determine and judge most statements for and against Joshua Chamberlain.</p>	<p>-Group does not include quotes or paraphrased information from both texts.</p> <p>-Students complete arrows, but do not judge them or complete the map.</p>

(Green Arrows)



(Red Arrows)

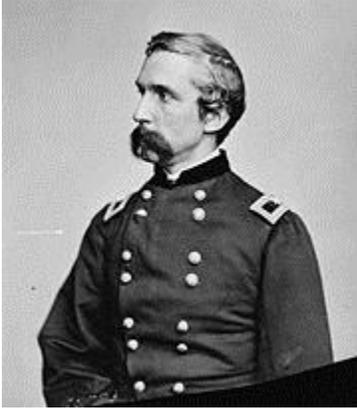


# Defense of Little Round Top

July 2, 1863

*From America's Civil War Magazine* ([historynet.com](http://historynet.com))

BY JAMES R. BRANN



Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain (Library of Congress)

Late in the afternoon of July 2, 1863, on a boulder-strewn hillside in southern Pennsylvania, Union Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain dashed headlong into history, leading his 20th Maine Regiment in perhaps the most famous counterattack of the Civil War. The regiment's sudden, desperate bayonet charge blunted the Confederate assault on Little Round Top and has been credited with saving Major General George Gordon Meade's Army of the Potomac, winning the Battle of Gettysburg and setting the South on a long, irreversible path to defeat.

For many years, historians and writers have given the lion's share of the credit for the 20th's dramatic action on Little Round Top to Chamberlain. Numerous books and even the popular movie *Gettysburg* have helped fuel adulation for the Union officer. But did Chamberlain really deserve the credit he received? Or, to put it another way, did he deserve *all* the credit? Answering that question adequately requires taking another look at the Battle of Gettysburg and the hell-raising fighting that occurred among the scattered stones of Little Round Top.

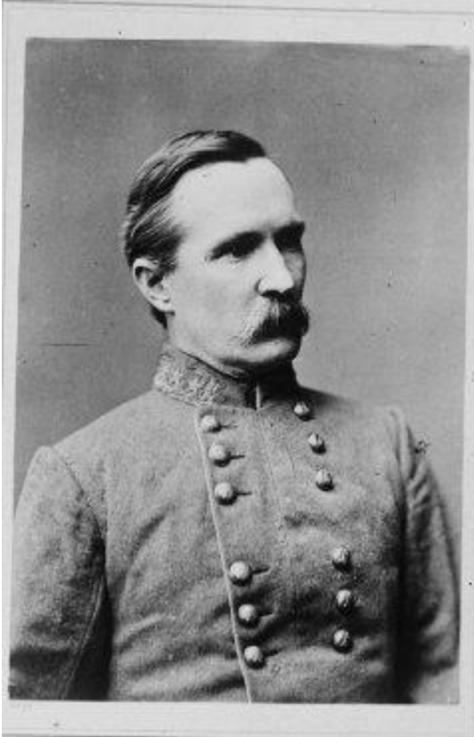
On June 3, 1863, Confederate General Robert E. Lee began the Army of Northern Virginia's second invasion of the North. Lee's main objective was to move across the Potomac River and try to separate the Union forces from Washington. When the Army of the Potomac's commander, Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker, belatedly became aware of the Confederates' movement, he began to force-march his army north, trying to keep Lee to the west and screen Washington from the Rebel troops. On June 28, as the bulk of the

Federal troops enjoyed a brief respite near Frederick, Md., Meade replaced Hooker as commander of the Army of the Potomac.

Meade faced a daunting task. By June 30 Lee's forces, including those of corps commanders Lt. Gens. James 'Pete' Longstreet and Ambrose P. Hill, were marching on the Chambersburg Road in southern Pennsylvania, while Lt. Gen. Richard S. Ewell was leading his corps westward from York. Major General J.E.B. Stuart, directing Lee's cavalry, had not returned to the main Southern column from his screening mission around the Union forces. In fact, Stuart would not return until July 2, a crucial error in judgment.

Lacking adequate intelligence from his scouting forces, Lee directed his army to gather at Gettysburg. The general did not want to fight at Gettysburg, but alert Union horsemen had reached the area — a fact that would put a wrinkle in Lee's plans. When Confederate Brig. Gen. James J. Pettigrew approached the town leading a 2,584-man brigade that was part of Maj. Gen. Henry Heth's division, he became aware of the Union cavalry force positioned there. Pettigrew withdrew his troops and then reported back to Heth. The next day, July 1, Heth headed toward Gettysburg with four brigades of infantry to drive off the reported Union troopers and secure the town.

To Heth's surprise, waiting for him was Union Brig. Gen. John Buford, who had dismounted and deployed his cavalry on McPherson's Ridge, west of Gettysburg. Buford's forces fired first, temporarily halting Heth's force and starting the Battle of Gettysburg. Both sides sent dispatches to inform their superiors of the confrontation. Meade reinforced his Union position with the I Corps, which was now led by Maj. Gen. Abner Doubleday since Maj. Gen. John Reynolds had been mortally wounded earlier that day. Additional Union reinforcements came from Maj. Gens. Henry W. Slocum's XII Corps and Daniel Sickles' III Corps. Throughout the morning, Confederate pressure continued to build against the Union line.



General Henry Heth. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress.)

Although spread thinly, the Union troopers held their ground with repeating carbines. As the fighting intensified, both sides added more infantry divisions to the battle. The Confederates managed to exploit weaknesses in the Federals' deployment, and their attacks caused heavy losses to the Union troops, who were forced to retreat. Confederate General Ewell's failure to carry out his orders and attack Cemetery Hill on the afternoon of July 1 wasted a golden opportunity for a quick, decisive victory. The Union had lost 4,000 men by that time — and the town of Gettysburg itself — but Meade quickly moved reinforcing divisions onto the high ground south of Gettysburg. The two armies spent a restless night.

The Union defensive line on aptly named Cemetery Ridge resembled an inverted fishhook, extending from Culp's Hill on the north, down Cemetery Ridge and southward toward Big and Little Round Tops. Although the 650-foot-high Little Round Top was overshadowed by its larger neighbor, its position was more important because much of the hill was cleared of trees and it could better accommodate troops. Strategically, Little Round Top held the key to the developing battle. If the Southern troops could take and hold the hill, they could theoretically roll up the entire Union line.

On the morning of July 2, Little Round Top proper held perhaps just a handful of Federal soldiers. Pennsylvania native Brig. Gen. John W. Geary's division was aligned just north of the hill and was the largest Union force in the immediate area. Geary was ordered to rejoin the rest of his XII Corps at Culp's Hill after elements of Sickles' III Corps took his place. In the confusion of shifting troops, however, Geary pulled his men out too soon, before Sickles' men had moved to replace them. Little Round Top was left uncovered.

Later, when Sickles' infantry did arrive, the controversial general moved his men, without orders, westward toward the Emmitsburg Road. Once again Little Round Top went wanting for protectors in blue.



*The Warren Statue atop Little Round Top (Photo: Rob Shenk)*

Robert E. Lee, with his eerie sense of a battlefield, was hastily assembling a force to attack the Union left, but it would take him the greater part of the day to get his men ready to strike. Meanwhile, Meade also sensed something significant about the two adjacent hills to his left. That afternoon he sent his chief of engineers, Brig. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren, to assess the situation. To his utter chagrin, Warren found Little Round Top completely undefended. He hastily sent messengers to Meade and Sickles, requesting immediate assistance. Sickles, by that time hotly engaged with elements of Longstreet's corps, had none to spare. But Colonel Strong Vincent, who commanded the 3rd Brigade of Brig. Gen. Charles Griffin's 1st Division of the V Corps, received word from a harried courier about the threat to Little Round Top and led his men to the hill at the double-quick. Vincent's brigade included the 44th New York, 16th Michigan, 83rd Pennsylvania and the 358-man 20th Maine under Joshua L. Chamberlain.

The 34-year-old Chamberlain was one of the most interesting figures in the Civil War. A highly cultured, somewhat sedentary professor of modern languages at Maine's exclusive Bowdoin College, he had sat out the first year of the war on Bowdoin's stately campus. But in July 1862, sensing perhaps that the war was going to last a good deal longer than he had first believed, Chamberlain offered his services to the Union cause. I have always been interested in military matters, he informed Maine Governor Israel Washburn, and what I do not know in that line, I know how to learn. He was given command of the newly formed 20th Maine, a unit comprised of extra men left over from other new regiments. It was not, Chamberlain noted, one of the state's favorite fighting units — No county claimed it; no city gave it a flag; and there was no send-off at the station.



Colonel Strong Vincent

The 20th Maine had been organized under President Abraham Lincoln's second call for troops on July 2, 1862. The regiment initially fielded a total complement of 1,621 men, but by the time of the Battle of Gettysburg the stress of campaigning had reduced the regiment's ranks to some 266 soldiers, and the 20th was considered a weak link in Vincent's brigade. Fortune, however, was to smile on Chamberlain's regiment in the form of unexpected reinforcements.

On May 23, 1863, 120 three-year enlistees from the 2nd Maine Infantry were marched under guard into the regimental area of the 20th Maine. The 2nd Maine men were in a state of mutiny and refused to fight, angry because the bulk of the regiment — men with only two-year enlistments — had been discharged and sent home, and the regiment had been disbanded. The mutineers claimed they had only enlisted to fight under the 2nd Maine flag, and if their flag went home, so should they. By law, however, the men still owed the Army another year of service.

Chamberlain had orders to shoot the mutineers if they refused duty. Fortunately for the men of the 2nd Maine, Chamberlain was born and grew up in Brewer, the twin city to Bangor across the Penobscot River where the 2nd Maine regiment was recruited. The mutineers were not just soldiers but also Chamberlain's childhood neighbors. Instead of shooting them, Chamberlain wisely distributed the 2nd Maine veterans evenly to fill out the 20th Maine's ranks and integrate experienced soldiers among the untested 20th Maine. He sympathized with the mutineers and wrote to Maine Governor Abner Coburn, asking that he write to the men personally about the mix-up in three-year versus two-year contracts they had signed. On Little Round Top the 120 experienced combat veterans from the 2nd Maine brought the 20th's ranks up to 386 infantrymen and helped hold Chamberlain's wobbling line together.

As he arrived on Little Round Top, Colonel Vincent chose a line of defense that started on the west slope of the hill. When the first regiments reached the rocky outcrops in that area, Vincent put them into line. The 16th Michigan took up a position on the right flank,

and the 44th New York and 83rd Pennsylvania held the center. Later in life, Chamberlain wrote that his regiment was the first in line, but it actually took up its position last, curving its line back around to the east and forming the Union Army's extreme left flank.

The last thing Vincent told Chamberlain was: This is the left of the Union line. You are to hold this ground at all costs! Chamberlain ordered the regiment to go on line by file. He deployed Company B, recruited from Piscataquis County and commanded by level-headed Captain Walter G. Morrill of Williamsburg, forward to the regiment's left front flank as skirmishers. Company B, with its 44 men, was subsequently cut off by a flanking attack by the enemy, leaving the 20th with only 314 armed men on the main regimental line.

Also helping to defend Little Round Top were Major Homer R. Stoughton's 2nd U.S. Sharpshooters, armed with .52-caliber breechloading rifles. These sharpshooters' skirmishing abilities were unequalled in the Union Army, and a 14-man squad was attached to Company B. The men took up a position in a ravine east of Little Round Top.



*1907 view of Little Round Top and Big Round Top from the Valley of Death on the Gettysburg Battlefield. (Photo: Library of Congress)*

Shortly after the Federals had taken up their positions, the 824 men of the 4th and 5th Texas regiments of Maj. Gen. John B. Hood's division hammered up the slope of Little Round Top, pushing toward the center and right of Vincent's line. During that assault, Captain James H. Nichols, the commander of the 20th Maine's Company K, ran to alert Chamberlain that the Confederates seemed to be extending their line toward the regiment's left. Chamberlain called his company commanders together and told them his battle plans. With the new information from Nichols, Chamberlain ordered a right-angle formation, extending his line farther to the east.

Meanwhile, Colonel Vincent tried to rally his 3rd Brigade as the 16th Michigan staggered under the heavy assault by the 4th and 5th Texas. Just when the Federals were on the verge of collapse, Colonel Patrick O'Rorke led the 140th New York Zouaves into the gap to save Vincent's brigade. Both Vincent and O'Rorke paid with their lives for their heroism.

Elements of Hood's division, the 15th and 47th Alabama, then began to smash into the Maine troops. Hood ordered these regiments, led by Colonel William C. Oates, to find the Union left, turn it and capture Round Top.

Twenty-five-year-old Color Sgt. Andrew J. Tozier of the 2nd Maine quickly emerged as an unlikely hero, and he was later awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery. It had been Chamberlain's idea to elevate Tozier to the post of color sergeant for the 20th Maine, a move designed to instill a new esprit de corps in the mutineers. Color sergeant was a dangerous but coveted position in Civil War regiments, generally manned by the bravest soldier in the unit. As the 20th Maine's center began to break and give ground in the face of the Alabama regiments' onslaught, Tozier stood firm, remaining upright as Southern bullets buzzed and snapped in the air around him. Tozier's personal gallantry in defending the 20th Maine's colors became the regimental rallying point for Companies D, E and F to retake the center. Were it not for Tozier's heroic stand, the 20th Maine would likely have been beaten at that decisive point in the battle.

When their ammunition had almost run out, Chamberlain decided to fix bayonets and charge down into the two Alabama regiments. Chamberlain later said he communicated his decision to counterattack to Captain Ellis Spear, the acting battalion commander of the unit's left flank. Spear, however, claimed he received no such orders.



*The 20th Maine Monument on Little Round Top. (Photo: Rob Shenk)*

Corporal Elisha Coan, a member of the 20th Maine's color guard, claimed that 1st Lt. Holman S. Melcher, the acting commander of Company F, actually conceived the idea to advance the colors and that Colonel Chamberlain initially hesitated, fearing that it would be extremely hazardous. Coan said other officers joined Melcher in urging a forward movement.

Chamberlain — whose right foot had been pieced by a shell fragment or a stone chip — then limped along the regimental line giving instructions to align the left side of the regiment with the right. After Chamberlain returned to the regimental center, Melcher asked permission to retrieve his wounded from the front. Chamberlain replied, Yes, I am

about to order a right wheel forward of the whole regiment. (Chamberlain himself claimed later to have said, yes, sir, in a moment! I am about to order a charge.)

Chamberlain ordered a right-wheel maneuver and took up a place behind Tozier. There is some disagreement about exactly what Chamberlain said to order the bayonet charge. One story is that he screamed: Bayonet! Forward to the right! Chamberlain claimed later that one word — Bayonet! — was enough and that it was vain to order Forward because no one could hear it over the noise. Nor was there time. Right wheel or Bayonet! Forward to the right was perhaps someone's post-war idea of what Chamberlain would have said if time permitted. The state-appointed Maine commission that later gathered facts regarding Maine's contribution to the Battle of Gettysburg maintained that Melcher sprang forward as Chamberlain yelled, Bayonet! and that Chamberlain himself was abreast of the colors.

With all the confusion and noise on Little Round Top that day, if anything other than bayonet had been said it probably would not have mattered, anyway. An infantryman who is out of ammunition, faced with being cut down on the next enemy charge, and hearing the metal-to-metal sound of bayonets being put on en masse knows the intent of the upcoming order without actually hearing it. In all likelihood Lieutenant Melcher conceived the idea to advance the colors to retrieve the wounded, but Chamberlain expanded upon the idea, deciding to have the whole regiment conduct a bayonet attack. In doing so, Chamberlain exercised effective battle command.

After Chamberlain ordered Bayonet! the Union line hesitated until Melcher sprang out in front of the line with his sword flashing. Captain Spear said he never received a formal order to charge — he charged only after he saw the colors start forward.

The Rev. Theodore Gerrish, then a private in Company H, stated that Melcher led the men down the slope when the enemy was only 30 yards away. Corporal Coan said the men hesitated when Melcher ordered them forward because they were not sure if the colonel had sanctioned the attack. Chamberlain claimed there was no hesitation and said that the line quivered for the start. Captain Nichols wrote in 1882 that Company K never hesitated. Perhaps Company H did hesitate on the left because they were taking heavy fire when the charge started. Company K probably did not delay since the right side of the regiment was not experiencing heavy fire at the time. Most evidence indicates that Chamberlain ordered the charge, and Melcher was the first officer down the slopes. Melcher was an inspiration to the tiring regiment as he sprang a full 10 paces to the front with his sword glittering in the sunlight.

Another crisis soon faced the Maine soldiers when the left side of the regiment drew even with the right, short of its planned position. Melcher broke this momentary disruption by running down the slope screaming: Come on! Come on boys! with Tozier beside him and Chamberlain not far behind.

Great responsibility also fell upon Captain Spear, whose flank was to start the attack — otherwise the charge would not pivot and work to its fullest potential. But Spear gets

curiously little credit for marshaling and organizing the tactics of the left flank of the 20th. Spear literally controlled half the regiment during the climactic counterattack. The lack of credit perhaps helped create the rift that later developed between him and Chamberlain.



*Line of the 20th Maine - Little Round Top (Rob Shenk)*

During the charge, a second enemy line of the 15th and 47th Alabama tried to make a stand near a stone wall. For a moment it looked as though the Confederates might succeed in halting the Unionists and breaking their momentum. But, using the classic element of surprise, Captain Morrill's Company B rose up from behind a stone wall and fired a volley into the Confederates' rear, breaking the will of the enemy troops. Confederate reports showed that the Union company had been magnified into two regiments. According to Confederate Colonel Oates, it was the surprise fire of Company B that caused the disastrous panic in his soldiers. Chamberlain, for his part, wrote incorrectly to his wife that his regiment had been attacked by a whole brigade.

Chamberlain seemed to have been blessed with both good timing and luck. He not only had made the right command decisions but also had managed to survive when by all rights he should have been dead. An Alabama soldier twice failed to pull the trigger of his rifle because he had second thoughts about killing the brave colonel. Then a pistol aimed and fired by a Southern officer misfired only a few feet from Chamberlain's face.

Without the private stand of Sergeant Tozier inspiring others to close up and bolster the sagging middle of the regiment, the Confederate attacks could have eliminated the 20th Maine as a fighting force. Tozier's bravery sparked the 20th Maine and changed the

course of the engagement. Without Tozier, there would not have been an opportunity for Chamberlain to attack.

Spear, who would later become a brevet brigadier general, believed that all the officers at Little Round Top shared in the battle fully and honorably, but that the bayonet charge was a success largely due to the spirit of the enlisted men. He was convinced that only the tenacity of the 358 Maine men had enabled Chamberlain to defeat Oates' two Alabama regiments.

Captain Howard L. Prince, former 20th Maine quartermaster-sergeant, considered Captain Morrill the coolest man in the regiment — a man who had no superior on the skirmish line. Morrill led his unit at the decisive point of the bayonet charge without orders. His contingent created the impression of two regiments rushing through the woods, though it consisted only of 44 Company B soldiers and 14 U.S. Sharpshooters. It was this group that Oates believed caused panic in his men. Without Morrill's up-front leadership, Chamberlain's attack probably would have been spoiled and pushed back.

Others who merited more credit than they received were Gouverneur Warren, who conducted one of the best reconnoitering jobs of the war, and Strong Vincent, who unhesitatingly put his brigade on Little Round Top and rallied that brigade under intense fire until he fell mortally wounded. Colonel Patrick O'Rorke was also one of the heroes, as his 140th New York reinforced Vincent's brigade and saved it from early defeat. Both Vincent and O'Rorke gave their lives at Gettysburg, and if not for those two men and others, Chamberlain probably would be remembered today as only a minor figure in a major Union disaster.



*The Strong Vincent Marker on Little Round Top. This simple marker has far fewer visitors than the nearby 20th Maine Monument. (Photo: Rob Shenk)*

Ellis Spear later suggested somewhat bitterly that the abundance of articles written by Chamberlain himself indirectly led to Chamberlain receiving sole credit for the victory. Much of the primary information about Little Round Top does come directly from Chamberlain, who published 25 separate writings on the battle. Chamberlain also was a member of the official Maine at Gettysburg Commission and wrote the organization's chapter on the 20th Maine.

The problem with becoming a legend is that deeds may become distorted inadvertently due to commercial profits, hero worship and the sheer passage of time. Many American junior officers still look up to Chamberlain. Some take his deeds out of context, however, and mythologize him.

Chamberlain's vivid personality overshadows the regiment that made him famous — even though it was the regiment that saved the day. There is a Chamberlain museum in Brunswick, Maine; Chamberlain Pale Ale produced in Portland, Maine; and a Chamberlain Bridge exists in Bangor, Maine — yet no commercial product commemorates the 20th Maine Volunteer Infantry. Chamberlain overshadows the 20th Maine in the way that George S. Patton overshadows the U.S. Third Army in World War II.

The valorous defense of Little Round Top will always belong to the 20th Maine Infantry and to Joshua L. Chamberlain as the regimental commander. But after weighing all the evidence, it seems fair to say that without the contributions of the 2nd Maine Infantry, Andrew J. Tozier, Company B and Holman Melcher, Chamberlain clearly and convincingly would have been defeated. Strong Vincent, Patrick O'Rorke and Ellis Spear also deserve greater recognition for their contributions. Joshua Chamberlain deserves much acclaim, but not to the exclusion of many others whom history has so far — and so unfairly — underrated.

# The Last Salute of the Army of Northern Virginia

*Boston Journal, May 1901*

*The following is an article which provides General Joshua Chamberlain's comments and memories concerning the Army of Northern Virginia's Surrender at Appomattox.*

The Last Salute Of The Army Of Northern Virginia.

From the *Boston Journal*, May, 1901

Details of the Surrender of General Lee at Appomattox Courthouse, April 9th, 1865.

LENIENT TERMS OF GENERAL GRANT.

By General J. L. Chamberlain.

It is an astounding fact that among the thousands of official documents bearing upon the Civil war in the National Archives at Washington there is absolutely nothing dealing with one of the most dramatic features of the great four years' internal struggle--the actual ceremonies attendant upon the formal surrender by General Lee's army of all Confederate property in their possession at [Appomattox Courthouse](#) thirty-six years ago.

When General Lee surrendered to General Grant, April 9th, 1865, the war was virtually over, but of the details of the surrender, the pathetic sadness on the one side, the jubilant satisfaction on the other, and, more particularly of the precise arrangements, the mode of procedure and the Northern army officer whose duty it became to take charge of the rebel arms and the rebel battleflags as they were given up--of all this our official war records tell not a word.

Why this is so the chief actor in the closing scene of the bloody drama, General [Joshua L. Chamberlain](#), of Brunswick, Me., set forth in a pithy sentence to a *Boston Journal* writer the other night: "The war was over when Lee signed the terms of surrender, and with the closing of the war all official record-writing ceased."

And just as it is true that there are no official records bearing upon this notable surrender scene, so also is it true that there are no official records describing the really remarkable disbandment of the Southern military and its departure in fragments for home. Only recently, in fact, has this matter been treated of, and that by a magazine almost four decades after the event!

Truly, some of the most absorbing history is, in the minting, slow quite beyond belief. Passing strange it seems almost that upon a writer of a generation which has no intimate connection with the Civil war should devolve the not unpleasant, nor in the light of facts, ill-timed, task of setting down in complete detail that story which long ago should have

had a full official telling.

In that great national tragedy of the Civil war there has been for years much effort, always in a more or less unostentatious and secretive way, to eliminate the merit which was due to prominent actors. It has been said recurrently that officers other than the actual one who commanded on the impressive occasion, and, to cite one case, a general officer, who, from 1863, was never connected with the Army of the Potomac, was frequently banqueted and toasted as the soldier who received the surrender of General Robert E. Lee. This was, to be sure, an unfair acceptance, but it was accepted in silence, and even at later times assented to in subsequent remarks. But, be it said, such pretense of merit deserves and surely ought to receive the censure of every loyal comrade.

The man who did command the Union soldiery that stood immovable for hours near Appomattox Courthouse on that eventful day while Rebel arms and colors nodded "conquered" has never sounded in public or in private his own acclaim. Major-General Joshua L. Chamberlain, of Maine, he was in the old days, and still he bears that honorable title.

As a conspicuous New Englander whose life has been an integral part of the educational history of his beloved Pine Tree State, which he has represented as Governor as one of the legislators, as President of Bowdoin College, and particularly as a soldier, his long and eventful life has come to be well known to the people of the entire country--his life excepting that part he played in the last act of the war.

This is somewhat in detail the entire story as summarized by General Chamberlain:

"The [Battle of Five Forks](#), which occurred on the 1st of April, 1865, served to prove to General Grant the fact which [General 'Phil' Sheridan](#) had advanced that the cutting of railroad lines between Petersburg and the South had made exceedingly difficult, if not practically impossible, the provisioning of the Confederate army, and that the departure of that command and its march toward Lynchburg might soon be expected.

"The victory of Fire Forks was so complete in every way as to wholly paralyze General Lee's plan for further delay, and it is not too much to say that the decision was at once made for the western movement of the Army of Northern Virginia toward a new supply base.

The battle of Sailor's Creek, with Ewell's surrender, and that of Farmville, followed quickly after, the Confederates being hard pressed on their left flank, and for them there was little rest owing to the continual hounding by Sherman's forces which seemed quite eager for constant combat.

"The Fifth Army Corps had been detailed to work with Sheridan's cavalry division. The subsequent relief of General Warren is a matter of history, which there is no need of repeating.

"General Griffin succeeded to command, and aided by the 6th, the 2d, and portions of the Army of the James, with other corps as fast as they could get to the scene, the military movements of that time form some of the most absorbing chapters of the Civil War which history has placed on record. Since the approach to Appomattox--for a hundred miles or more along this stream there had been terrible fighting--brought the head of each army very frequently in view, the strange spectacle of one army pressing with all energy in pursuit, while its antagonist was using its best efforts to get away and reach its delayed base of supplies, was presented to both sides.

"On the terrible march to Appomattox Courthouse the Federal troops were ever shrouded in smoke and dust, and the rattle of firearms and the heavy roar of artillery told plainly of the intense scene which threatened to bring on yet one more general engagement.

"Then came a moment which to me, at least, was more thrilling than any that had gone before. As we were hurrying on in response to Sheridan's hastily scribbled note for aid, an orderly with still another command from 'Little Phil' came upon our bedraggled column, that of the 1st Division of the Fifth Army Corps, just as we were passing a road leading into the woods. In the name of Sheridan I was ordered to turn aside from the column of march, without waiting for orders through the regular channels, and to get to his relief.

"The orderly said in a voice of greatest excitement that the Confederate infantry was pressing upon Sheridan with a weight so terrible that his cavalry alone could not long oppose it.

"I turned instantly into the side road by which the messenger had come, and took up the 'double-quick,' having spared just time enough to send to General Gregory an order to follow me with his brigade.

"In good season we reached the field where the fight was going on. Our cavalry had even then been driven to the very verge of the field by the old 'Stonewall' Corps. Swinging rapidly into action the first line was sent forward in partial skirmish order, followed by the main lines, the 1st and 2d brigades. Once, for some unknown reason, I was ordered back, but in the impetuosity of youth and the heat of conflict, I pushed on, for it seemed to me to be a momentous hour. We fought like demons across that field and up that bristling hill. They told us we would expose ourselves to the full fire of the Confederate artillery once we gained the crest, but push on we did, past the stone wall behind which the 'Stonewall Corps' had hidden, driving them back to the crest of the ridge, down over it, and away.

"We were gathering our forces for a last final dash upon the enemy. From the summit of the hill we could see on the opposite ridge a full mile across the valley the dark blotches of the Confederate infantry drawn up in line of battle; the blocks of cavalry further to our right, and lower down more cavalry, detached, running hither and thither as if uncertain just what to do.

"In the valley, where flowed the now narrow Appomattox, along whose banks we had fought for weary miles, was a perfect swarm of moving men, animals, and wagons, wandering apparently aimlessly about, without definite precision. The river sides were trodden to a muck by the nervous mass. It was a picture which words can scarce describe.

"As we looked from our position we saw of a sudden a couple of men ride out from the extreme left of the Confederate line, and even as we looked the glorious white of a flag of truce met our vision. At that time, having routed the Confederate forces on the hill, my brigade was left alone by Sheridan's cavalry, which had gone to the right to take the enemy in the flank.

"I was on the right of the line as we stood at the crest of the hill. Near by us was the red Maltese cross of the Hospital Corps, and straight toward this the two riders, one with the white flag, came.

"When the men arrived, the one who carried the flag drew up before me, and, saluting with a rather stiff air--it was a strained occasion --informed me that he had been sent to beg a cessation of hostilities until General Lee could be heard from. Lee was even then said to be making a wide detour in the hope of attacking our forces from the rear. The officer who bore the flag was a member of the Confederate General Gordon's staff, but the message came to me in the name of General Longstreet.

"At that time the command had devolved upon General Ord, and I informed the officer with the flag--which was, by the way, a towel of such cleanliness that I was then, as now, amazed that such a one could be found in the entire Rebel army--that he must needs proceed along to our left, where General Ord was stationed. With another abjectly stiff salute the officer with his milk-white banner galloped away down our line.

"It was subsequently learned that General Ord was situated some distance away at my left with his troops of the Army of the James, comprising Gibbon's Second Army Corps and a division of the Twenty-fifth Army Corps. His line quite stretched across the Lynchburg road, or 'pike,' as we called it then.

"Well, as I have said, the flag of truce was sent to Ord, and not long afterward came the command to cease firing. The truce lasted until 4 o'clock that afternoon. At that time our troops had just barely resumed the positions they had originally occupied when the flag came in. They were expecting momentarily to be attacked again, and were well prepared, yes, eager, for a continuance of the battle.

"And just then the glad news came that General Lee had surrendered. Shortly after that we saw pass before us that sturdy Rebel leader, accompanied by an orderly. He was dressed in the brilliant trappings of a Confederate army officer, and looked every inch the soldier that he was. A few moments after that our own beloved leader, General Grant, also accompanied by an orderly, came riding by. How different he was in appearance from the conquered hero. The one gay with the trappings of his army, the other wearing an open blouse, a slouch hat, trousers tucked into heavy, mud-stained boots, and with

only the four tarnished golden stars to indicate his office! They passed us by and went to the house where were arranged the final terms of surrender. That work done neither leader staid long with his command, the one hurrying one way, the other another.

"That night we slept as we had not slept in four years. There was, of course, a great deal of unrestrained jubilation, but it did not call for much of that to be a sufficiency, and before long the camp over which peace after strife had settled was sleeping with no fear of a night alarm. We awoke next morning to find the Confederates peering down into our faces, and involuntarily reached for our arms, but once the recollections of the previous day's stirring events came crowding back to mind, all fear fled, and the boys in blue were soon commingling freely with the boys in gray, exchanging compliments, pipes, tobacco, knives and souvenirs."

In the last days of fighting, which ended in Lee's surrender, General Chamberlain was wounded twice. That his service was gallant in the extreme may be judged when it is told that both General Sheridan and General Grant commended him personally. This the General cared to dwell on but little. But when it came to describing the final scenes of the war, the gray-haired army leader grew ardent with enthusiasm for his subject:



McLean House (Library of Congress)

"On that night, the 10th of April, in 1865, I was commanding the 5th Army Corps," he said. "It was just about midnight when a message came to me to report to headquarters.

"I went thither directly and found assembled in the tent two of the three senior officers whom General Grant had selected to superintend the paroles and to look after the transfer of property and to attend to the final details of General Lee's surrender. These were General Griffin of the 5th Army Corps and General Gibbon of the 24th. The other commissioner, General Merritt of the cavalry, was not there. The articles of capitulation had been signed previously and it had come to the mere matter of formally settling the details of the surrender. The two officers told me that General Lee had started for Richmond, and that our leader, General Grant, was well on his way to his own headquarters at City Point, so called, in Virginia. I was also told that General Grant had decided to have a formal ceremony with a parade at the time of laying down of arms. A

representative body of Union troops was to be drawn up in battle array at Appomattox Courthouse, and past this Northern delegation were to march the entire Confederate Army, both officers and men, with their arms and colors, exactly as in actual service, and to lay down these arms and colors, as well as whatever other property belonged to the Rebel army, before our men.

"I was told, furthermore, that General Grant had appointed me to take charge of this parade and to receive the formal surrender of the guns and flags. Pursuant to these orders, I drew up my brigade at the courthouse along the highway leading to Lynchburg. This was very early on the morning of the 12th of April.

"The Confederates were stationed on the hill beyond the valley and my brigade, the 3rd, had a position across that valley on another hill, so that each body of soldiers could see the other. My men were all veterans, the brigade being that which had fired the first shot at Yorktown at the beginning of the war. Their banners were inscribed with all the battles of the army of the Potomac from the first clear through the long list down to the last.

"In the course of those four eventful years the makeup of the brigade had naturally changed considerably, for there had been not alone changes of men, but consolidations of regiments as well. Yet the prestige of that history made a remarkably strong *esprit du corps*.

"In that Third Brigade line there were regiments representing the States of Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, regiments which had been through the entire war. The Bay State veterans had the right of line down the village street. This was the 32d Massachusetts Regiment, with some members of the 9th, 18th, and 22d Regiments. Next in order came the First Maine Sharpshooters, the 20th Regiment, and some of the 2d. There were also the First Michigan Sharpshooters, the 1st and 16th Regiments, and some men of the 4th. Pennsylvania was represented by the 83d, the 91st, the 118th, and the 155th. In the other two brigades were: First Brigade, 198th Pennsylvania, and 185th New York; in the Second Brigade, the 187th, 188th, and 189th New York.

"The First and Second Brigades were with me then, because I had previously commanded them and they had been very courteously sent me at my request by my corps and division commanders.

"The arrangement of the soldiery was as follows: The Third Brigade on one side of the street in line of battle; the Second, known as Gregory's, in the rear, and across the street, facing the Third; the First Brigade also in line of battle.

"Having thus formed, the brigades standing at 'order arms,' the head of the Confederate column, General Gordon in command, and the old 'Stonewall' Jackson Brigade leading, started down into the valley which lay between us, and approached our lines. With my staff I was on the extreme right of the line, mounted on horseback, and in a position nearest the Rebel soldiers who were approaching our right.

"Ah, but it was a most impressive sight, a most striking picture, to see that whole army in motion to lay down the symbols of war and strife, that army which had fought for four terrible years after a fashion but infrequently known in war.

"At such a time and under such conditions I thought it eminently fitting to show some token of our feeling, and I therefore instructed my subordinate officers to come to the position of 'salute' in the manual of arms as each body of the Confederates passed before us.

"It was not a 'present arms,' however, not a 'present,' which then as now was the highest possible honor to be paid even to a president. It was the 'carry arms,' as it was then known, with musket held by the right hand and perpendicular to the shoulder. I may best describe it as a marching salute in review.

"When General Gordon came opposite me I had the bugle blown and the entire line came to 'attention,' preparatory to executing this movement of the manual successively and by regiments as Gordon's columns should pass before our front, each in turn.

"The General was riding in advance of his troops, his chin drooped to his breast, downhearted and dejected in appearance almost beyond description. At the sound of that machine like snap of arms, however, General Gordon started, caught in a moment its significance, and instantly assumed the finest attitude of a soldier. He wheeled his horse facing me, touching him gently with the spur, so that the animal slightly reared, and as he wheeled, horse and rider made one motion, the horse's head swung down with a graceful bow, and General Gordon dropped his swordpoint to his toe in salutation.

"By word of mouth General Gordon sent back orders to the rear that his own troops take the same position of the manual in the march past as did our line. That was done, and a truly imposing sight was the mutual salutation and farewell.

"At a distance of possibly twelve feet from our line, the Confederates halted and turned face towards us. Their lines were formed with the greatest care, with every officer in his appointed position, and thereupon began the formality of surrender.

"Bayonets were affixed to muskets, arms stacked, and cartridge boxes unslung and hung upon the stacks. Then, slowly and with a reluctance that was appealingly pathetic, the torn and tattered battleflags were either leaned against the stacks or laid upon the ground. The emotion of the conquered soldiery was really sad to witness. Some of the men who had carried and followed those ragged standards through the four long years of strife, rushed, regardless of all discipline, from the ranks, bent about their old flags, and pressed them to their lips with burning tears.

"And it can well be imagined, too, that there was no lack of emotion on our side, but the Union men were held steady in their lines, without the least show of demonstration by word or by motion. There was, though, a twitching of the muscles of their faces, and, be it said, their battle-bronzed cheeks were not altogether dry. Our men felt the import of the

occasion, and realized fully how they would have been affected if defeat and surrender had been their lot after such a fearful struggle.

"Nearly an entire day was necessary for that vast parade to pass. About 27,000 stands of arms were laid down, with something like a hundred battleflags; cartridges were destroyed, and the arms loaded on cars and sent off to Wilmington.

"Every token of armed hostility was laid aside by the defeated men. No officer surrendered his side arms or horse, if private property, only Confederate property being required, according to the terms of surrender, dated April 9, 1865, and stating that all arms, artillery, and public property were to be packed and stacked and turned over to the officer duly appointed to receive them.

"And right here I wish to correct again that statement so often attributed to me, to the effect that I have said I received from the hands of General Lee on that day his sword. Only recently, at a banquet in Newtown, glass., of the Katahdin Club, composed of sons and daughters of my own beloved State, it was said in press dispatches that a letter had been read from me in which I made the claim that I had received Lee's sword. I never did make that claim even, as I never did receive that sword.

"As I have said, no Confederate officer was required or even asked to surrender his side arms if they were his personal property. As a matter of fact, General Lee never gave up his sword, although, if I am not mistaken, there was some conference between General Grant and some of the members of his staff upon that very subject just before the final surrender. I was not present at that conference, however, and only know of it by hearsay.

"But, as I was saying, every token of armed hostility having been laid aside, and the men having given their words of honor that they would never serve again against the flag, they were free to go whither they would and as best they could. In the meantime our army had been supplying them with rations. On the next morning, however, the morning of the 13th, we could see the men, singly or in squads, making their way slowly into the distance, in whichever direction was nearest home, and by nightfall we were left there at Appomattox Courthouse lonesome and alone."

Source: Southern Historical Society Papers, Vol. XXXII, Richmond, Va., January - December. 1904.