

HORSE SOLDIERS, Cavalry Operations during the Gettysburg Campaign

By Arnold Blumberg

General Lee's invasion of the North in 1863 was designed with two purposes in mind: to relieve the pressure building on the Confederate fortress at Vicksburg (under close siege by the army of General Grant) and to serve as a grand foraging expedition for Lee's army (which was finding it harder and harder to feed itself in ravaged Virginia). As part of Lee's overall plan of invasion, his cavalry force under Major General J.E.B. Stuart would have an important part to play. Stuart's mounted division (11,000 strong) was to cover the army's right flank on its advance north by moving along the east side of the Blue Ridge Mountains through the Loudoun Valley, fending off any enemy attempts to cut the army's communications with Virginia. When the Southern army entered Pennsylvania, Stuart would stop his mission of guarding the passes of the Blue Ridge range and either guard the rear of the army, or move by a roundabout route to join Lee's vanguard on enemy soil.

The first part of June saw the Army of Northern Virginia moving toward a concentration at Culpepper, with Stuart's cavalry screening it from its positions six miles away, at Brandy Station. These preparations did not go completely unnoticed by General Joe Hooker, commander of the Union Army of the Potomac. He ordered his own cavalry chief, Alfred Pleasonton, to cross the Rappahannock near Brandy Station and find out which way the Confederates were planning to move. Pleasonton launched his 8000 troopers, supported by a handful of infantry, across the river on 9 June and so initiated what was to become the largest cavalry battle ever fought on the North American continent. The battle raged for 14 hours, and at its conclusion, even though the Yankee horsemen retired, battle honors were about even for both sides. The first cavalry action of the Gettysburg Campaign had been fought.

The Horse Soldiers

Before continuing with the narrative of the mounted actions that characterized the part played by the cavalry at Gettysburg, a brief description of the opposing forces, their tactics and use is in order.

Cavalry served the mid-19th Century army as a force combining speed, flexibility and the ability to find the enemy while cloaking a friendly army. More specifically, cavalrymen could function six ways in supporting their parent army in war. They could participate offensively, adding their weight and shock to that of the foot soldiers and artillery. They could carry out reconnaissance. They could engage in counter-reconnaissance. The mounted force could delay and harass enemy advances. They could pursue and harass a retreating

opponent. Lastly, they could raid enemy rear positions and communication/supply lines.

By 1863, the majority of military leaders understood the importance of cavalry. However, in the Eastern theater of operations only the Confederates seemed to be able to exploit its power. From 1862 on, the Army of Northern Virginia projected an aggressive role for its horse soldiers, employing them offensively, in mass, and often far afield of the main body. In contrast, until the first half of 1863, the commanders of the Union army wasted their cavalry's potential by fragmenting the mounted arm into detachments of a few hundred, relegated to such unnecessary and demoralizing chores as picketing artillery and infantry camps and serving as escorts for every Union officer that happened to be wearing a star on his collar.

Although the Southern superiority in horsemanship, horse flesh and mounted tactics would continue right up to war's end, the Union troopers were usually better supported when it came to equipment and weapons. By the time of Gettysburg, the bluecoat was issued with a Model 1860 light saber, a Colt six-shooter revolver, and a Sharps one-shot breech-loading carbine. His Confederate counterpart might wield a saber, sport a brace of revolvers (or single-shot pistols) and maybe a poorly made carbine of Southern manufacture. (Robertson's two North Carolina units carried muzzle-loading Enfield rifles, while Imboden's and Jenkin's boys had to rely on smoothbore muskets or shotguns.) Federal horse artillery batteries were uniformly composed of six 3" Ordnance Rifles, while Stuart's artillery was made up of a mixture of 10, 12 and six-pounder smoothbores with a sprinkling of rifled pieces. Most of the Confederate batteries contained only four guns. All in all, the Federal cavalryman had more reliable, longer-ranged and rapider-firing weapons than his Rebel counterpart.

American cavalry, Northern or Southern, usually functioned as dragoons. That is, the horses were used to get the trooper to the battlefield, where he then would generally fight on foot. Most cavalry actions during the war were combinations of mounted and dismounted tactics. The campaign of Gettysburg was no exception, although the campaign, commencing with Brandy Station, saw more traditional mounted combat than perhaps any other during the war.

Advance to Pennsylvania

The 10th of June witnessed Lee's army begin its march north, and by the 17th the army stretched some thirty miles long from the Rappahannock to the Shenandoah Valley, Stuart's cavalry now moved to block the passes in the Blue Ridge Mountains through which enemy forces east of that natural barrier might attempt to spy on the Confederate columns moving north. The 17th was to see the first of several hard-fought battles between the Blue and Grey horsemen, the former attempting to slip through the gaps in the range to discover the location of the Rebel mass, and the latter determined to do their best to forestall them.

The first clash of cavalry occurred near Aldie Gap at the northern end of the Bull Run Mountains that day. General

Kilpatrick's Union brigade, later supported by the rest of David Gregg's division, met Fitz Lee's cavalry brigade (temporarily commanded by Colonel Thomas Munford) in repeated mounted saber assaults, interspersed with determined dismounted combat. Although Lee's men had to withdraw, the Federals failed to follow up on their success and thus missed the chance to discover the presence of Longstreet's corps marching through the Loudoun Valley at the time. This same day saw the destruction of the First Rhode Island cavalry regiment which, while on a scout at Middleburg near Aldie, was struck by the combined weight of Chambliss' and Robertson's brigades. Only 60 of the 275 Federal troopers escaped the fight.

On the 19th, Gregg's division of Union cavalry, with Gamble's brigade from Buford's division, headed for the passes of the Blue Ridge. They started from Aldie and reached Middleburg by midmorning. Just west of the village stood Stuart's main force guarding the mountain gap, with Confederate infantry to the west of them. Gregg's division struck Stuart's men head-on with no effort made to envelop and so turn them out of their position. After repulsing several mounted charges, Stuart initiated his own. But like the Union attacks, it was brought to a standstill by dismounted fire and mounted counterattacks. By darkness, without any interference from Gregg, the Confederate troopers backed further west toward Upperville to better protect the passes and the hidden army marching north behind them. This "Battle of Middleburg" had cost each side about 100 men (perhaps 10% of the total forces engaged). No one was sure who the victor was, but what was certain was that harder fighting was sure to follow.

In another attempt to break through the enemy screen and see what was west of the mountains, Pleasanton gathered all his cavalry and some infantry for a frontal assault on Stuart down the Middleburg-Upperville Pike. While Gregg's unit would forge ahead down the road, Buford's would flank the Rebs on their left. After an effective artillery bombardment, followed by infantry and cavalry advances, Stuart's line was pulled back yet again, through Upperville, but not before Hampton's and Kilpatrick's brigades had at each other in the town's streets. Mounted charge followed mounted charge until sundown found the opposing forces retiring to opposite ends of the village. Soon after, Stuart retired slowly towards Ashy's Gap. The Federals did not pursue, but stayed close to Upperville.

Following the fight at Upperville, both mounted forces were worn down but in good spirits (feeling that they had given better than they had received). In the period of 17-21 June, Stuart's cavalry had had 500 casualties to Pleasanton's some 860. Adding the losses at Brandy Station to the toll brought it to over 1,000 Rebs and 1,700 Yankees killed, wounded and missing.

Stuart's Expedition to Hanover

As early as 20 June Stuart had suggested to General Lee that the cavalry be allowed to conduct a strong raid that would slow down the pursuit by the Army of the Potomac, Stuart argued that such a move into the enemy's rear area would disrupt his communications, secure much needed supplies, and be useful in

gathering intelligence about the enemy. Lee gave his approval for what was supposed to be a ride around Hooker's army, at the end of which Stuart was to link up with Ewell's infantry corps at York, Pennsylvania.

Starting from Salem, near the Blue Ridge Mountains, on 25 June Stuart moved out with the brigades of Hampton, Fitz Lee and Chambliss (about 6,000 troopers). The cavalry brigades of Jones and Robertson were left with the main army to continue to provide cavalry support. The raiders crossed the mountains and immediately bumped into units of Hancock's 2nd Union Infantry Corps. Side-stepping to the south, the Confederates reached Fairfax Virginia on the 27th and discovered signs of another Federal corps, the 6th, Stuart had miscalculated. They were not moving around the Union army, but through it!

By late morning of the 28th, the Rebel force crossed the Potomac River into Maryland. Stuart realized that the Army of the Potomac was moving after Lee's army and not standing still as the Confederate command had thought, He had to accelerate his march if his troopers were to rejoin the main force in Pennsylvania and inform Lee that the enemy army was stirring and heading north.

Nearing Rockville, eight miles from Washington, Stuart's raiders captured an enemy supply train numbering some 125 wagons. Even though he was behind enemy lines, and it was imperative that he rejoin the main army to provide it with cavalry support (scouting and screening), and despite the fact he was already badly behind schedule, Stuart chose to drag the captured wagons along, further retarding his efforts to link up with the army somewhere around York. The greycoat cavalry occupied Westminster, Maryland on 29 June after a brief but sharp little mounted fight with a squadron of Union troopers in the town's streets. Stuart's wayward column then turned for Hanover, Pennsylvania on the morning of the 30th ... and their next fight with the cavalry of the North.

Pursuit to Pennsylvania

On 26 June Hooker finally got his army lurching north on the trail of the Army of Northern Virginia, As per his orders, the Union cavalry corps was split up in order to assist the different infantry corps during their march. Buford's men guarded the 1st Corps as it crossed the Potomac on the 25th-26th of June, while Gregg's division did the same for the rest of the army and its supply train.

On the 28th, George Meade, who authorized Pleasanton to reorganize the cavalry corps, replaced Hooker as commander of the army. Now the 12,000 man force would be divided into three divisions: Buford's, Gregg's and a new force composed of the brigades of Custer and Farnsworth under the command of Kilpatrick. The 28th saw the Federal cavalry fan out from Frederick, scouting ahead of the main army while also guarding its flanks and rear. Kilpatrick covered the center, Gregg the right and rear, Buford the left. By dawn on the 30th Buford was heading towards the crossroads of Gettysburg with the brigades of Gamble and Devin. Gregg meanwhile entered Westminster, as Kilpatrick was entering Hanover.

By mid-morning of the 30th, the brigade of Farnsworth had cleared Hanover on its way to York; Custer's men were a little further ahead. As the last regiment of the brigade was traveling through the town, it was struck by Stuart's column, which was looking for Ewell. Stuart had not been looking for a fight, but in order to save time he wanted to pass through Hanover to link up around York, as per his orders. Chambliss offered to clear the town of Yankees, but was unable to do so when Custer's boys were ordered back to the town to support Farnsworth. The Confederates were themselves subsequently reinforced by Fitz Lee's and Hampton's men, and a fierce fight for control of the town and area northwest of it raged for a good part of the day. Realizing that time was pressing, Stuart broke off the combat and pulled out toward York during the night. He accomplished this without any interference from Kilpatrick, who dallied around Hanover until 2 July.

July 1st found Stuart's troopers brushing past York in their quest to locate Ewell's infantry corps. From there they marched to Hunterstown, reaching that place on 2 July, about five miles northeast of Gettysburg and the battle raging there. During the day, Hampton clashed with Custer outside Hunterstown. This small action prevented the full weight of the Confederate cavalry from supporting Ewell's infantry in its attack on Culp's Hill that day, (Both Hampton and Kilpatrick considered this action of vital importance in history. Hunterstown was on Ewell's left as well as Slocum's right flank).

Gettysburg, July 1-2

While Kilpatrick's division was blocking Stuart's return, other Union cavalry was helping to shape the course of the battle at Gettysburg. Buford's men entered Gettysburg on 30 June and immediately spread out to the west and north in order to locate the Rebel army thought to be in the vicinity. On 1 July, Buford's soldiers stalled the Confederate advance units as they tried to take the town and its important road network, thus gaining time for the Army of the Potomac to arrive on the battlefield and occupy the heights east of town.

On 2 July, Gregg's cavalry arrived three miles southeast of town where the Hanover Road intersects with Low Dutch Road. By that afternoon, Buford's division had been ordered to Westminster to guard the army trains there, and Kilpatrick was just engaging Hampton at Hunterstown. The next day would witness the most important cavalry fight of the entire campaign.

East Cavalry Field, 3 July

In support of General Lee's massive frontal assault on Federal lines (known as Pickett's Charge). Stuart's cavalry was merely to protect the Confederate left and be in position to threaten the Union rear in case the infantry assault proved a success. But Stuart had other ideas. In order to make up for the disappointing effects of his raid, he hoped to turn his task of guarding the army's flank into a mounted attack on the enemy's rear,

On the morning of the 3rd, Stuart moved his division of cavalry (now numbering about 7,000 in four brigades) south along a ridge line, Cress Ridge. He hoped to move undetected to the Baltimore Pike in the rear of the Yankee army and cut its supply lines that ran along the pike. Meanwhile, parts of Gregg's cavalry division, which were in the fields south and east of Cress Ridge, spotted the Confederate move toward the Union right.

It was about noon, and Custer's brigade, who held a position supported by artillery along and anchored on the Hanover Road, had reinforced Gregg's division. Stuart, meanwhile, had set up his guns on the northern edge of the ridge and sent Jenkin's men to occupy the Rummel farm. Hampton and Fitz Lee, on the left, and Chambliss and part of Jenkins soldiers on the right, remained under cover of woods,

At 1300, McIntosh's Union brigade arrived and Custer was ordered to take his men and rejoin Kilpatrick. Custer warned McIntosh to be prepared for an attack on his right or rear at any time. Heeding this advice, McIntosh sent two of his regiments to the area of the Lott farm. In the distance could be heard the Confederate artillery bombardment that heralded Pickett's Charge.

At 1400, McIntosh set out a skirmish line to the Rummel farm to see what enemy was in the vicinity. This prompted a Confederate response in the form of rifle fire, and a hot shooting match between the opposing dismounted cavalymen commenced. McIntosh fed more dismounted troopers into the fight, and moved two mounted squadrons into the woods near the Lott farm. In response to these Union moves, Stuart moved more dismounted men to the Rummel farm, and a battery of artillery located behind the farm buildings was ordered to start shelling McIntosh's lines. That Union officer countered by bringing up some of his own artillery and calling for reinforcements. General Gregg, sensing the seriousness of his division's position, ordered Custer's return and sent him to help McIntosh at the farms.

At the Rummel place, the fire-fight grew in intensity as each side extended the battle lines with dismounted troopers, Union horse artillery south of the Hanover Road joined in the battle and forced a Confederate artillery battery to withdraw. Meanwhile, a dismounted Rebel attack, supported by a newly positioned regiment from Chambliss' brigade, was beaten back by men of the 5th Michigan (Custer's brigade) armed with Spenser repeating rifles. During a short lull in the fight, when some of McIntosh's men left the lines to go rearward for more ammunition, Stuart (thinking the enemy retreating) sent forward in a charge the mounted 1st Virginia Cavalry Regiment. To meet this formidable threat, Custer led the 7th Michigan in a countercharge. Other bluecoats, mostly dismounted, supported Custer by firing into the Confederate flanks. Seeing how the 1st Virginia was suffering from dismounted enemy fire, some of Jenkins' men came to their aid on foot. The 7th Michigan was driven back. The 1st Virginia pursued them toward the Federal guns near Low Dutch Road, but finally had to break back under the fire of those guns and small arms, as well as a mounted charge from the 5th Michigan and rallied 7th. In their turn, the Yankees beat a hasty retreat when parts of Chambliss' and

Hampton's brigades came to the rescue of the retreating Virginians. A lull in the fighting followed,

A little after 1500, the Federals could see the massed brigades of Fitz Lee and Hampton forming up along Cress Ridge. The Rebels were going to make a grand saber charge in the tradition of the Napoleonic wars. As the enemy horsemen slowly advanced, the Federal artillery opened up, tearing gaps in the line. General Gregg ordered McIntosh to strike the enemy columns in the left flank, while Custer would hit them in the center and right. As the grey cavalry advanced with increasing speed, Gregg ordered the 1st Michigan to meet the enemy head-on with sabers. The flamboyant Custer rode up to lead them personally. As the two forces neared each other, the artillery ceased its firing. The charging brigades crashed into each other. For nearly ten minutes the opposing cavalymen hacked and pistol shot at each other, until some 500 Michigan troopers penetrated right through Hampton's men. In the meantime, scattered bodies of Federal horse hit the Confederates on both flanks, despite the best efforts of Lee's and Chambliss' men who were supporting Hampton on his left and right. Soon the entire Confederate assault was in confusion and the Union troopers pursued their adversaries to the Rummel farm and through the Cress Woods, taking many prisoners.

Hitting dismounted Confederate lines, the Yankees halted their pursuit. Skirmishing and some artillery fire continued until dark, but the battle had really been decided by the break-up of the massed cavalry charge. By nightfall, both sides held about the same ground that they had when the fight began. The cavalry engagement at East Cavalry Field was costly to both. Out of the 7,000 Confederates some 41 were killed, 50 wounded and 90 captured or missing. (This does not include the losses to Jenkins brigade, which are not known.) Union casualties amounted to some 30 killed, 149 wounded, and 75 captured or missing. All in all, Stuart's activity on the field east of Gettysburg had no real influence on the battle. As things turned out, it was a sideshow and a waste of manpower,

On the other end of the battlefield of Gettysburg, several minor cavalry clashes occurred which resulted in the destruction of a Union regiment at Fairfield (southwest of Gettysburg) by the brigade of "Grumble" Jones, and the mauling of Farnsworth's brigade near the Round Tops. Both the blue and the grey cavalry would experience harder fighting as Lee's army retreated back to Virginia. But the fighting both had taken part in between 9 June and 3 July 1863 would prove to be the hardest encountered by either during the war,

EAST CAVALRY FIELD, The Variant

"East Cavalry Field" is a variant based upon Avalon Hill's newest operational Civil War game, *GETTYSBURG '88*. All of the game's basic and optional rules may be used when playing this variant, With the exception of the new mapboard (found on the insert of this issue) which extends the original map to cover the area where the action took place (about three miles east of the town) and which can be readily linked to the map included in the game, no new components are need to play.

The variant mapboard provided represents the area that the Federal and Confederate cavalry under Gregg and Stuart fought over on 3 July 1863. All rules affecting movement and combat found in the *GETTYSBURG '88* game apply to this extension mapboard.

Victory Points on the variant map are located in the following bases: H16, N16, N17 and O14. Victory conditions in the variant scenarios are governed by the same rules as in Rule 6a5 in the *GETTYSBURG* Battle Manual. At the start of each variant scenario, all VP hexes on the map are deemed controlled by the Union Player.

All basic and optional rules found in the original *GETTYSBURG '88* game are in force. There are no new variant rules that add to or alter any of the basic or optional rules of the game, unless specifically listed under the Special Rules section of the scenario being gamed.

Scenario A East Cavalry Field

This scenario represents the historical fight that took place east of Gettysburg between opposing cavalry on 3 July. This scenario may be played as a separate game.

- NUMBER OF TURNS: Turn 19 through Turn 23
- UNION SET-UP:
 - Custer (N16)
 - McIntosh (IT16)
 - Gregg HQ (P16)
 - Robertson's Horse Artillery (L16)
- UNION REINFORCEMENTS: Gregg enters at Hex H16 on Turn 22
- CONFEDERATE SET-UP:
 - Fitz Lee (R13)
 - Hampton (Q12)
 - Stuart HQ (Q12)
 - Chambliss (P12)
 - Jenkins (O12)
 - Beckham Horse Artillery (Q13)
- CONFEDERATE REINFORCEMENTS: None
- SPECIAL VARIANT RULES: None
- VICTORY CONDITIONS: Same as found in the Battle Manual under Rule W.

Scenario B East Cavalry Field

This hypothetical scenario represents the cavalry fight between Gregg and Stuart on 3rd July, but at an earlier time in the day when Stuart starts his ride to gain the rear of the enemy army. It is meant to be used in conjunction with the full "Third Day's Battle" game.

- NUMBER OF TURNS: Turn 17 through Turn 24
- UNION SET-UP: As per the set-up found on page 12 of the Battle Manual, with the exception that Buford and Devin and Gamble are not used in play. (Place Robertson on Hex I11, as per errata.)
- UNION REINFORCEMENTS: Merritt enters at Hex A8 on Turn 20

- CONFEDERATE SET-UP: As per the set-up found on page 12 of the Battle Manual.
- CONFEDERATE REINFORCEMENTS: Imboden enters at Hex S1 on Turn 19; Jones and Robertson enter at Hex S1 on Turn 20.

SPECIAL VARIANT RULES:

1. Place the variant map in line with the *GETTYSBURG '88* map. For set-up purposes, both are used, At the end of each game turn, The Union player must always have as many cavalry/horse artillery units on the original game map as the Confederate player has, For each game turn he does not, the Union player must deduct one Victory Point from his total.

2. Only a player's cavalry units (including horse artillery, but not leaders) may claim control of a hex that contains VP on the variant mapboard. For VP purposes, any player whose cavalry unit (including horse artillery but not leaders) which claims control of a hex that contains VP on the *GETTYSBURG '88* mapboard is awarded double the printed value for it.

VICTORY CONDITIONS: Same as found in the Battle Manual under Rule 6a5.

NOTE: Variant board images is contained in the G88 Vassal module but is not currently configured into a scenario. The image will be linked on the www.wargameacademy.org/G88 website.