

south. These were the brigades of Gen. Joseph B. Kershaw, with six regiments of S.C. infantrymen, and Gen. Paul J. Semmes following Kershaw with four regiments of Georgians. McGilvery, watching from a position north of the orchard behind his gun line, noted that:

At about 5 o'clock a heavy column of rebel infantry made its appearance in a grain field about 850 yards in front, moving at quick time toward the woods on our left, where the infantry fighting was then going on. A well-directed fire of all the batteries was brought to bear on them, which destroyed the order of their march and drove many back into the woods on their right, though the main portion of the column succeeded in reaching the point for which they started, sheltering themselves from the artillery fire. In a few minutes another and larger column appeared at about 750 yards, presenting a slight left flank to our position. I immediately trained the entire line of our guns upon them, and opened on them with various types of ammunition.²⁶

Thompson's four guns in the orchard immediately opened fire on the advancing rebels. Firing at the left flank of Kershaw's Brigade as it moved northeast across the Emmitsburg Road, Thompson reported "The four guns in [the] orchard continued firing until the rebel infantry was within a few yards of us. Our [2nd New Hampshire] got in front of our guns and charged the rebels and drove them back several times and [we] could not fire for our men were in front."²⁷ The infantry regiments in the orchard were pressed hard by the advancing Confederates and began to pull back.

Thompson's two south-facing sections in the orchard came under enfilading fire from the west. Confederate gunners easily targeted McGilvery's five batteries lined up in a row on the road. Rebel shells overshooting one battery would burst over the next. Captain Hart of the 15th N.Y., next to Thompson, remembered "being subjected to a cross-fire which killed

3 men and wounded 5."²⁸ McGilvery watched as Kershaw's Bde. pressed forward from the south toward his line:

At about a quarter to 6 o'clock, the enemy's infantry gained possession of the woods immediately to the left of my line of batteries, and our infantry fell back both on our right and left, when great disorder ensued on both flanks of the line of batteries. At this period of the action, all of the batteries were exposed to a warm infantry fire from both flanks and front...²⁹

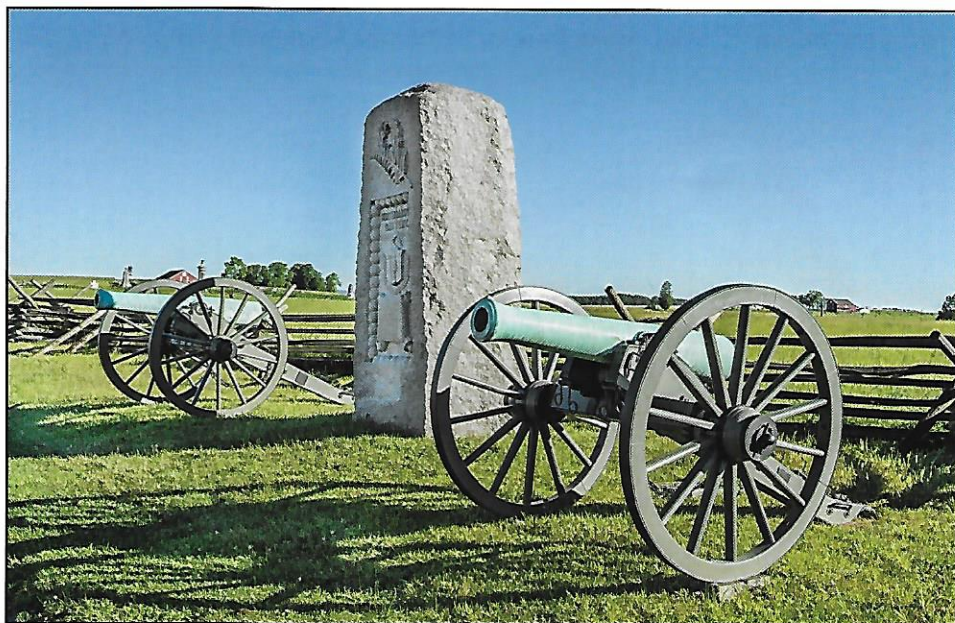
A third Confederate brigade emerged from the woods to the west, four Mississippi regiments under fiery former congressman Gen. William Barksdale. They quickly covered the short distance to the Sherfy farm and overwhelmed the four infantry regiments there. As the Federal infantry was overrun from the south and west, Brig. Gen. Charles Graham, commanding the brigade in the orchard, was wounded and captured by the Confederates. In the absence of a commander, each regiment supporting McGilvery's artillery began to withdraw.

Reluctantly, McGilvery ordered his batteries "to retire 250 yards and renew their fire." First to pull back was Hart's battery, by sections, moving

across the open ground north and east of the orchard.³⁰ Next were Thompson and Phillips' 5th Mass. and the 10th N.Y. "[S]eeing that our line in our rear along the pike were falling back and that we could not hold the ground, I sent them back a section at a time, with orders to come into action some distance in rear," Thompson reported later.

Confederate fire from Barksdale's Mississippians overwhelmed Thompson's right section at the Sherfy farm. Gunfire cut down the horse team for one gun in Stephenson's section, immobilizing both gun and limber, allowing it to be captured. The other piece barely escaped capture, being moved by hand across the open field. Thompson guided his men back toward the farmhouse by the stream they had passed earlier in the afternoon.

One of Thompson's men, Pvt. Casper Carlisle of Btry. F, showed extraordinary courage in removing Thompson's last gun from the field after its crew was wounded. Now under Confederate fire from Barksdale's men from the west and Kershaw's brigade to the south, Carlisle stopped to cut the harnesses off four dead horses. Thompson helped him harness the gun to a surviving horse



Monument to the 9th Massachusetts Battery is off Wheatfield Road east of Sickles Avenue on the Gettysburg Battlefield. There are 12-Pdr. Napoleon smooth-bore cannon on each side of the monument. (Jack Melton)