

and pull the piece clear. "He [Carlisle] got in the saddle and took the gun and as I stopped to pick up my field glass the gun had got so far ahead that I was unable to overtake it. On looking round I found that I was about $\frac{1}{2}$ way between the Rebel line advancing and our line retiring, when our men called to me to 'hurry up' as they could not fire for me being in the way," Thompson remembered later.³¹ He later recommended a medal for Carlisle, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in Dec. 1892, one of only five artillerymen to receive the medal at Gettysburg.³²

McGilvery ordered Bigelow's Massachusetts guns to remain behind and cover the retreat from the Trostle farmhouse. "The crisis of the engagement had now arrived. I gave Captain Bigelow orders to hold his position as long as possible at all hazards," wrote McGilvery, "and justice demands that I should state Captain Bigelow did hold his position and execute his firing with a deliberation and destructive effect upon the enemy in a manner such as only a brave and skillful officer could." Thompson watched as Bigelow's men retired their battery by prolonge under fire, just as he had done at Second Manassas. Bigelow lost four guns to Barksdale's Bde. Eight of his men were killed, 17 were wounded,

and two were captured.³³

Finding himself behind the stream that ran next to the Trostle farmhouse, McGilvery looked for the broken III Corps infantry units to rally behind. There were none to be seen. The Union line was completely broken between the south end of Cemetery Ridge and Little Round Top. There was a clear route to the Taneytown Road and beyond, if the Confederates could get there fast enough.

McGilvery made a quick decision: *hold right here*. Just east of the Trostle farm the ground dipped down into a small creek named Plum Run. Further east, the ground rose up a gentle slope to the crest of Cemetery Ridge. McGilvery ordered all the First Vol. Bde. batteries to form a line about 400 yards from the Trostle house on the east bank of Plum Run:

I formed a new line of artillery about 400 yards to the rear, close under the woods, and covering the opening which led into the Gettysburg and Taneytown road, of the following batteries and parts of batteries: Battery I, Fifth Regular, and a volunteer battery which I have never been able to learn the name of; three guns of the Fifth Massachusetts and two of Captain Thompson's Pennsylvania battery, and commenced firing on the enemy's line of infantry and artillery, which had formed in the open field only about 700 or 800

*yards in our front.*³⁴

Thompson took stock of Btry. C & F. He had one horse shot under him and 18 more were lost, and he was slightly wounded by a shell fragment. Of his original six guns, one was captured at the Sherfy farm and three were heavily damaged in the hurried withdrawal from the Peach Orchard. One man was killed, nine were wounded, and four were missing. The remaining two guns were hurriedly placed in line with the survivors from other batteries. They briefly engaged Barksdale's Mississippians and an Alabama brigade under Cadmus M. Wilcox until around 7:30 p.m. when they ran out of ammunition. Thompson asked for permission to pull back, and Btry. C & F was sent to the vicinity of Little Round Top to refit.³⁵

By the next morning, July 3, McGilvery had replenished many of his batteries and repaired broken pieces; Thompson now had five cannon. His line behind Plum Run numbered 39 guns of various types from different commands. Two of Bigelow's 9th Mass. Batry. guns were further north at the home of Abraham Bryan. Other miscellaneous batteries not under McGilvery were ranked along the ridge all the way to the cemetery. There was peace and quiet all morning. Thompson and his men could see in the distance the Confederates had put batteries into the Peach Orchard, where his guns had been less than 20 hours ago. In fact, the Confederates had positioned their own artillery line stretching more than a mile from the Peach Orchard north through open fields in front of the tree-lined ridge. *This is not going to be good*, Thompson thought to himself.

Shortly after 1 p.m. Thompson's fears were confirmed. The Confederate line opened up with a thunderous bombardment, the loudest Thompson ever heard. General Hunt ordered the Artillery Reserve to conserve ammunition by replying with counter-battery fire slowly and only when a good target could be clearly seen. In obedience



Abraham Trostle house modern day.

(Jack Melton)