

## STOP 4. Little Round Top: Day 2 action (Warren, Vincent, Chamberlain, and Oates) and the York Haven Diabase.

Leaders: Jon D. Inners and Gary M. Fleeger.

*I saw that this was the key to the whole [Union] position.*

Maj. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren, U.S.A.

Thanks to Ted Turner's movie *Gettysburg* (1993), Little Round Top has become as well known a part of the battlefield as the "High Water Mark" and the "Bloody Angle." The exploits of Col. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain and the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine on this little diabase hill are probably familiar to almost everyone who has even a casual interest in American history. But there is much more to Little Round Top than Chamberlain and his regiment, important as was their successful defense of the extreme left of the Union line. We will attempt to visit eight specific sites on the hill (Figure 4-1), passing many more that may elicit comments about the battle here. This brief walking tour is based heavily on Adelman (2000), an excellent guide to both sites and historic events on Little Round Top.

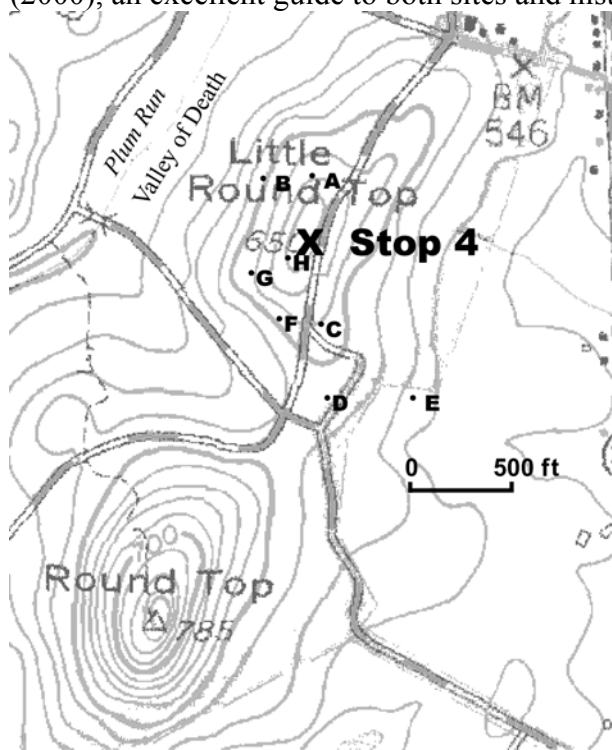


Figure 4-1. Location map for STOP 4, showing Site locations.

**Terrain.** On the second day of the battle of Gettysburg, Little Round Top was arguably (see STOP 7) the most vital position on the Union "fishhook." This rocky knob has an elevation of about 665 feet, its summit being about 150 feet above the valley of Plum Run directly to the west. Various called Sugarloaf or Signal Hill at the time of the battle and shortly thereafter (Trudeau, 2002, p. 281), it eventually took its name from Round Top, the much higher (elevation 785 feet) hill adjacent to the south—the latter becoming Big Round Top and the other Little Round Top. Because its western face was cleared of trees the year before the battle, the summit of Little Round Top "afforded the finest panorama of the countryside south of Gettysburg then available" (Frassanito, 1975, p. 154). It is likely that had the hill not been partially deforested, Warren would not have been drawn to it on the afternoon of July 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Confederates would have occupied the hill, and the Union forces would have been outflanked on their left.

**Geology.** Both Little and Big Round Tops are underlain by diabase of the northwestward-dipping Gettysburg sill, which in this part of the battlefield has a mile-wide outcrop belt stretching from about the midpoint of the field between the Peach Orchard and Stony Hill in the west to a little beyond the far base of the Round Tops in the east (Stose and Bascom, 1929). The diabase is York Haven-type—mostly fine to medium grained, and composed predominantly of white or gray plagioclase and black pyroxene. Jointing is well developed and blocky, with spacing and orientation generally irregular. Physical and chemical weathering along the joints tends to create rounded boulders and cobbles ranging in size from a foot or less to twenty feet or more. These detached masses form great ramparts at the top of the hill and thickly strew the slopes (Figure 4-2). The surfaces of the larger boulders typically exhibit an "alligator-skin" like texture caused by cracking of thin concentric weathering rinds that develop through swelling of oxidized minerals, daily and seasonal temperature changes at the rock surface, and freezing of water in fine fractures.



Figure 4-2. Rock-strewn west slope of Little Round Top as seen from across the “Valley of Death.” The prominent tower-like monument to the right center on the summit of the hill is that to the 44<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry (see *Site H*).

**The fight for Little Round Top (afternoon of July 2).** Throughout the night of July 1 and the morning and early afternoon of July 2, Little Round Top was virtually unmanned except for a small party of signalmen. On the morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Maj. Gen. Daniel Sickles’ 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps occupied the south end of Cemetery Ridge and the low topographic swale between that ridge and Little Round Top—but Sickles made no attempt of extend his line farther south. Maj. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren, Chief Engineer of the Army of the Potomac, arrived on Little Round Top at about 3:30 PM, just as Hood was deploying for action in the woods on Warfield Ridge, and found only a small detachment of signalmen on the summit. He immediately recognized the critical importance of the hill in defending the Union position. According to Warren’s later statements, he asked (signaled?) the commander of an artillery section in his front (probably Captain James Smith of the 4<sup>th</sup> New York Light Artillery [see STOP 5]) to fire a shot into the woods on Warfield Ridge. (At that time the area beyond Devil’s Den was much more open than now.) The glint of sunlight off the enemy’s muskets when they moved as the shell passed over gave away their position! Warren then dispatched members of his staff to bring reinforcements. Col. Strong Vincent’s 5<sup>th</sup> Corps brigade (20<sup>th</sup> Maine, 83<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania, 44<sup>th</sup> New York, and 15<sup>th</sup> Michigan) arrived first and deployed his men along the “military crest” on the south side of the hill (i.e., downslope from the summit where his men would have the maximum “field of fire”) in facing the extreme right of the Confederate attacking force (Figure 4-3; Grimsley and Simpson, 1999, p. 74). Warren himself then brought the 140<sup>th</sup> New York of Brig. Gen. Stephen Weed’s 5<sup>th</sup> Corps brigade and Battery D of the 5<sup>th</sup> U.S. Artillery to the summit just in time to halt a sweep of the 4<sup>th</sup> Texas Regiment of Brig. Gen. J. B. Robertson’s brigade around Vincent’s left (Figure 4-3). The rest of Weed’s brigade then took up positions to the right of Vincent’s line, facing west (Figure 4-4). Farther details of the action on Little Round Top are given in the accompanying Walking Tour.

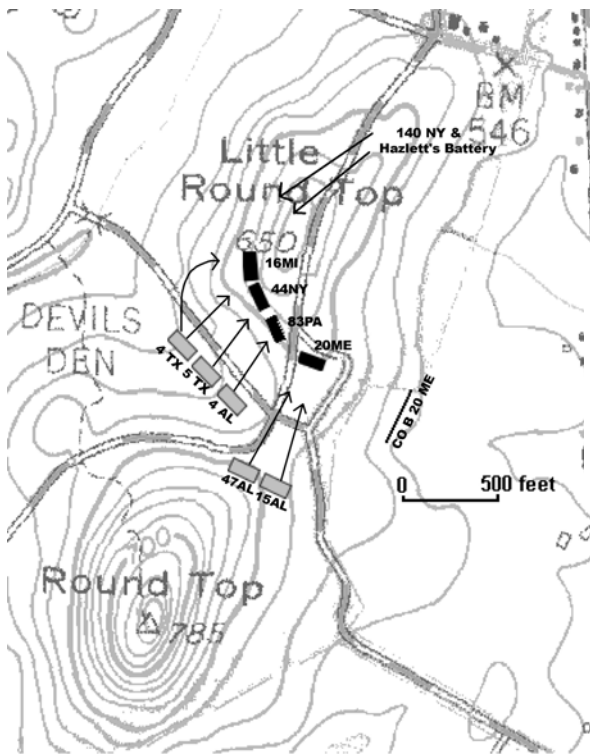


Figure 4-3. Map showing Union and Confederate troop dispositions in the early phase of the fight for Little Round Top—July 2, late afternoon (after Adelman, 2000, p. 13).

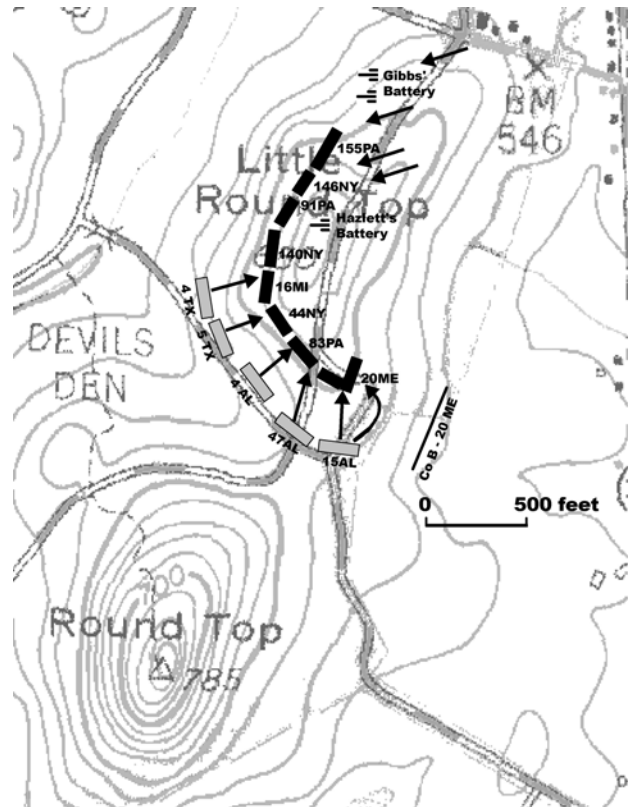


Figure 4-4. Map showing troop dispositions in the closing phase of the fight for Little Round Top—July 2, early evening (after Adelman, 2000, p. 14).

## **Walking Tour of Little Round Top**

**A. *Signal Rock and Warren Rock.*** These two large diabase boulders on the northwest side of the summit are presumably “where it all began.” U.S. Signal Corpsmen assigned here to the Round Top Mountain Signal Station were visible to most of the various Union headquarters located on the “fishhook” to the north and northeast (*frontispiece*). On the morning and early afternoon of July 2, their presence here may also have given the enemy the impression that the Union occupied the hill in force. The plaque on Signal Rock honors the 36 men of the U.S. Signal Corps who manned six stations at Gettysburg under the overall supervision of Capt. Lemuel B. Norton, chief signal officer. It was dedicated in May 1919 (Adelman, 2000; Trudeau, 2002).

The adjacent Warren Rock is surmounted by the statue of then Brig. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren (1830-1882), at the time chief of engineers in the Army of the Potomac. As noted above, it is difficult to overstate Warren’s contribution to the Union victory at Gettysburg. Indeed, the noted historian Shelby Foote called Warren’s directing of Union troops to the summit of Little Round Top “the single most important tactical decision in the American Civil War” (Jens, 2003, p. 2). Maj. Gen. Abner Doubleday wrote that “[Little Round Top] was the key to field...and nothing but Warren’s activity and foresight saved it from falling into the hands of the enemy” (1994, p. 178). Though Gouverneur Warren rose to command the 5<sup>th</sup> Army Corps for the last year of the war, he gradually fell out of favor with Meade and Grant, and Phil Sheridan was authorized to remove him from command at Five Forks on April 1, 1865. Warren stayed in the army, doing distinguished work as a civil engineer in the Midwest (see Appendix C), but fought for the rest of his life to recover his military reputation. Effectively exonerated by a court of military inquiry in November 1882, Warren had died three months earlier (Jordan, 2001). Knowing this, one can “read between the lines” of the inscription on the bronze plaque below the statue and sense the tragedy of Warren’s life:

Led to this spot by his military sagacity on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, GENERAL GOUVERNEUR KEMBLE WARREN, then chief engineer of the Army of the Potomac, detected General Hood’s flanking movement and, by promptly assuming the responsibility of ordering troops to this place, saved the key of the Union position. Promoted for gallant services from the command of a regiment in 1861, through successive grades to the command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps in 1863, and permanently assigned to that of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army Corps in 1864, Major General Warren needs no eulogy. His name is enshrined in the hearts of his countrymen. This statue is erected under the auspices of the veteran organization of his old regiment, the 5<sup>th</sup> New York Vols. Zouaves in memory of their beloved commander. Dedicated August 8, 1888.

The right of Weed’s line, marked by the monuments to the 146<sup>th</sup> New York and the 155<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania ahead to the north-northwest did not come under attack during the main battle for Little Round Top. These regiments were threatened, however, by the last Confederate attack repelled by Crawford at the end of the day (Grimsley and Simpson, 1999, p. 73; see mile 8.15).

**B. *The “Curious Rocks.”*** This crude “runic arc” of several large diabase boulders is one of the oddest natural phenomena on the battlefield (Figure 4-5). Its origin is somewhat problematical, though it may have formed through deep chemical weathering below ground, followed by subaerial erosion—as depicted in Figure 4-6.

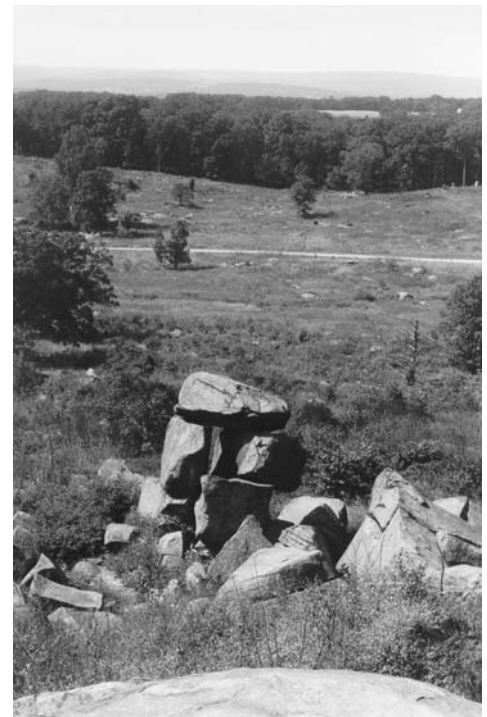
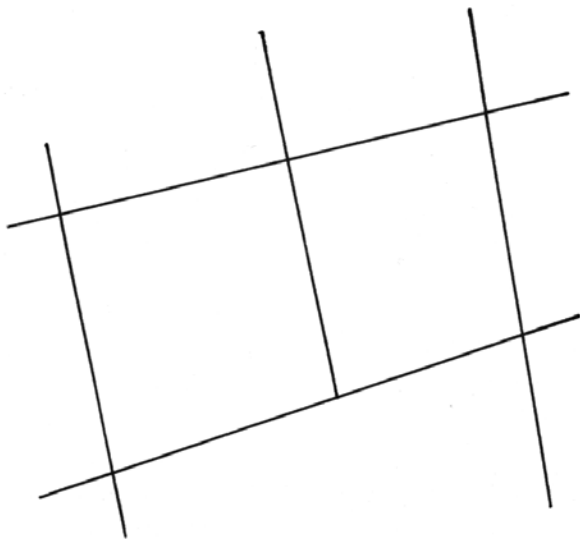
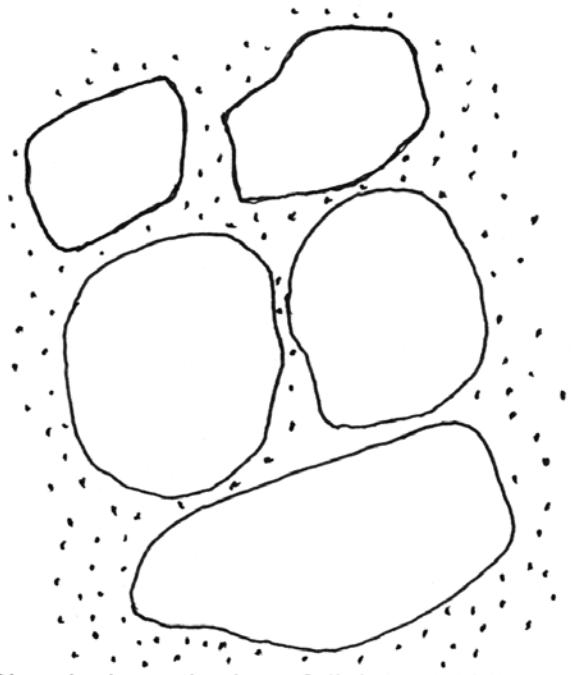


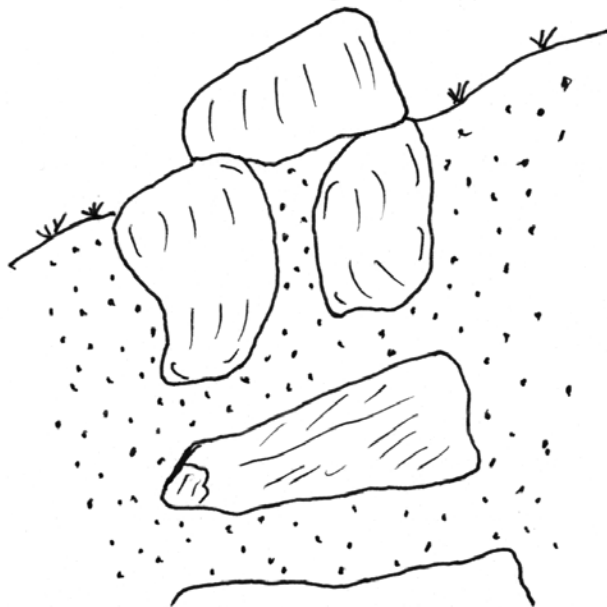
Figure 4-5. The “Curious Rocks” on the west slope of Little Round Top (*Site B*), looking downslope. The Warren Map of the battlefield suggests, but does not conclusively show, that this small natural arch may have been included into the original stone breastworks constructed by Weed’s brigade (Adelman, 2000).



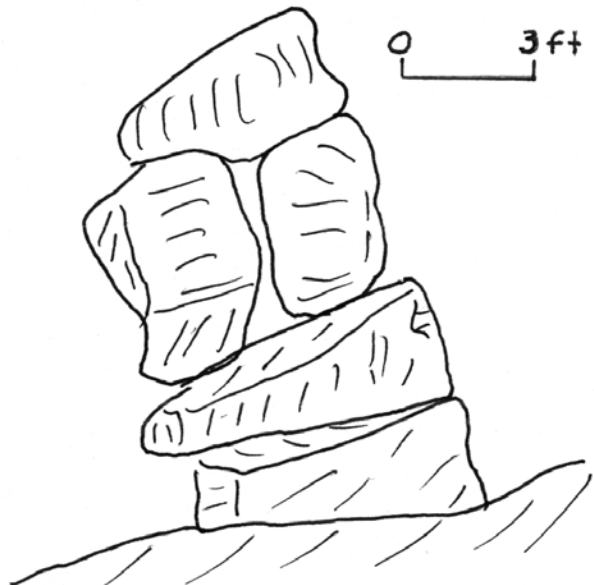
Fractured diabase bedrock, 10's of feet below ground surface.



Chemical weathering of diabase within soil zone results in formation of crudely rounded boulders surrounded by orange-brown, silty clay loam soil.



As hillslope erosion takes place, boulders are gradually let down to rest on those underneath.



While most boulders become detached and tumble down slope as erosion proceeds, a few remain in contact with their neighbors, and form the "Curious Rocks."

Figure 4-6. Generalized diagram showing possible stages in the development of the "Curious Rocks."

**C. The stone wall on old Chamberlain Avenue.** As noted by Adelman (2000), most stone walls on the battlefield were erected by farmers before the Civil War. While nearly all of the walls on Little Round Top were erected by soldiers to serve as breastworks, none were in place at the time of the fighting—there just was not enough time after the arrival of Union troops on the hill before the Confederates attacked. The stone wall here was mostly like put up on July 3 by the Pennsylvania Reserves under Col. Joseph Fisher. For more details on the times of construction of walls on the battlefield, see Adelman (2000, p. 23).

**D. The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Monument.** On the late afternoon of July 2, the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine, mustered into United States service in August 1862, held the extreme left of the Union line (Figure 4-7). Their stalwart defense of the south slope of Little Round Top against repeated assaults by the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama regiment under Col. William C. Oates (1833-1910) concluded in a more or less spontaneous bayonet charge down hill that put the exhausted Alabamians to flight (Chamberlain, 1994; Perry, 1997). Though Col. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain may not have specifically ordered the charge that has sealed his fame in military annals (Desjardin, 1999; Trudeau, 2002), his actions early in the fight were calculated and effective. Acting on a suggestion by Major Ellis Spear, his second in command, Chamberlain decided to “refuse” the line on his extreme left (that is, to bend it back at a right angle [see Figure 4-4]). But his front did not extend far enough along the hill to do this effectively. His solution is well described by Trudeau (2002, p. 354):

Faced in the heat of battle with a tactical problem requiring a quick solution, he coolly came up with an unconventional riposte. Ordering his men to maintain a steady fire to their front, he simultaneously directed them to sidestep to their left, so the second rank merged with the first. By this means, the standard-double ranked lines of battle were transformed into a much longer single line, which Chamberlain then bent back at the place where his left flank had formerly ended. This enabled him to extend his refused flank along a larger perimeter than would have obtained if he had merely bent back the double line, as Ellis Spear had proposed.



Figure 4-7. Monument of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Infantry Regiment at *Site D*. Note how far down the south slope of Little Round Top the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was positioned. This spot gave a good view of the ravine running between Big and Little Round Top, providing better protection for an enemy flanking movement. The monument (of Maine Hallowell granite) was erected in 1886 on the boulder where Color Sgt. Andrew stood with the regiment’s flag (Hawthorne, 1988). Note the Maltese cross, insignia of the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps, which appears on many monuments on Little Round Top.

Though Chamberlain was an “amateur” soldier, he undoubtedly had an exceptional military mind. His unorthodox decision to lengthen his line during the thick of the fight on Little Round Top set the stage for the grand concluding maneuver, later described by an observer as “a great right wheel swinging as a gate on a post” (Desjardin, 1999). Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain won a Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions at Gettysburg, rose to command a brigade in the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps, fought like a lion through the Overland Campaign and Petersburg (where he was severely wounded twice), and as a brevet major general accepted the formal surrender of Lee’s veterans at Appomattox (Chamberlain, 1993).

***E. Oates’ Ledge of Rocks and the stone wall at the Company B Marker.*** In the woods within about 500 feet of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Monument are two features—one natural, the other man-made—that figured prominently in the fight between the Mainers and the Alabamians. First encountered along the path leading east is a north-south running, bouldery ledge of diabase from which the Confederates poured an enfilading fire upon the left flank of Chamberlain’s men, forcing him to refuse his line as noted above (Adelman, 2000).

About 200 feet farther on is a granite monument, backed by a north-south-aligned stone wall (Figure 4-8). This marks the position of Company B of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine (42 men under Capt. Walter Morrill), which was deployed by Chamberlain (under orders from Vincent) to add further protection to the Union flank. Morrill’s men (reinforced by about a dozen U. S. Sharpshooters who had been driven off Big Round Top) hid behind this wall until the final regimental bayonet charge—and then rose up to deliver a devastating volley into the fleeing Confederates. Unlike the wall at C, this one was erected prior to the battle and once divided the woods from an open field to the east (Adelman, 2000; Trudeau, 2002).



Figure 4-8. Marker to Co. B of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine (*Site E*) in front of the stone wall behind which the men (including some marksmen from the 2<sup>nd</sup> United States sharpshooters) concealed themselves until the climactic Union bayonet charge led by Col. Chamberlain. The inscription reads:  
Position of Company B 20<sup>th</sup> Me. Vols. Capt. Walter G. Morrill, detached as skirmishers, attacking the enemy’s right flank, afternoon of July 2, 1863.

**F. The 83<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania Memorial.** This imposing granite monument is surmounting by a bronze statue of Col. Strong Vincent (1837-1863), commander of the brigade that so stoutly defended Little Round Top. The 83<sup>rd</sup> was posted just to the right of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine and fought off repeated attacks of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Alabama Regiments. Most of the men in the regiment were from western Pennsylvania. Prior to the reorganization of the Army of the Potomac after the battle of Chancellorsville, Strong Vincent, himself from Erie County in the extreme northwest corner of the Commonwealth, had been commander of the 83<sup>rd</sup>. Vincent fell mortally wounded on the brigade's right at about 5:45 PM as he tried to rally the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan. He died five days later, having been promoted to brigadier general on July 3 (Adelman, 2000, Trudeau, 2002; Faust, 1986, p. 786).

**G. 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan Monument.** The 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan, the smallest of Vincent's regiments with only 263 men (Trudeau, 2002, p. 573; Adelman, 2000), held the right flank of the brigade's position. Heavy pressure from the front and a flanking movement by the 4<sup>th</sup> Texas (see Figure 4-4), forced the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan back to the crest of the hill and would have broken the Union line had not the 140<sup>th</sup> New York (Site H) arrived just in time to push the Confederates back.

On the slopes east and southeast of the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan Monument are stone breastworks originally probably built by the 140<sup>th</sup> and 44<sup>th</sup> New York (Site H) on the night of July 2 (Figure 4-9; Adelman, 2000; Frassanito, 1975). Also in this area is the Vincent Marker, marking the "officially recognized" spot where Strong Vincent was mortally wounded rallying the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan (Figure 4-10).

**H. The 44<sup>th</sup> and 140<sup>th</sup> New York Monuments and Hazlett's Position.** The two granite monuments honor infantry regiments from two different brigades, each of whom had vital roles in the successful defense of Little Round Top. The 44<sup>th</sup> New York, the largest of Vincent's Brigades (Trudeau, 2002, p. 573), was positioned between the 83<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania and 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan. Commander of the 44<sup>th</sup> was Brig. Gen. James C. Rice, who took charge of the brigade after Vincent was wounded and kept the defensive line intact.

The 140<sup>th</sup> New York (Figure 4-11) was one of four regiments assigned to Brig. Gen. Stephen H. Weed's 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade (2<sup>nd</sup> Division, 5<sup>th</sup> Corps), the others being the 146<sup>th</sup> New York, the 91<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania, and the 155<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania). Weed's Brigade was summoned to Little Round Top by General Warren himself, who claimed not to have seen Vincent's men arrive on the scene (Jordan, 2001). Just as the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan began to give way, the 140<sup>th</sup> New York, under Col. Patrick O'Rorke burst over the crest of the ridge and pushed the 4<sup>th</sup> Texas back. O'Rorke sacrificed his life in the effort (Trudeau, 2002). Monuments to the other three regiments, who were not as heavily engaged as the 140<sup>th</sup> are situated on the slope to the north (see Adelman, 2000, p. 41-44).

The four Parrott Rifles and plaque at the summit of Little Round Top here mark the position of Lieut. Charles E. Hazlett's Battery D, United States Artillery. Just after Vincent's Brigade arrived on the south slope, Hazlett's battery was brought into position on the summit through the almost superhuman assistance of infantrymen from Weed's Brigade. (Movement of the battery to this position was apparently in part on Hazlett's own initiative, as Warren was of the opinion that the top of the steep western slope was a poor place to bring artillery to bear on attacking troops [Trudeau, 2002].) Not long after the battery's six 3-inch Parrott guns began blasting away at the Confederates in the Plum Run Valley below, both Hazlett and brigade commander Stephen Weed (1831-1863), who was directing the battery's fire, were killed (Adelman, 2000; Faust, 1986).



Figure 4-9. Stone breastworks on slope of Little Round Top between *Sites G* and *H*. How much of this stonework is original is debatable, but the walls are apparently in their original positions as built by men of the 44<sup>th</sup> and 140<sup>th</sup> New York on the night of July 2/3 (Adelman, 2000).



Figure 4-10. Monument to Col. Strong Vincent about 50 yards east-southeast of *Site G*, the “officially recognized” of two spots where he was supposedly killed. (The other is marked by a inscription carved into a boulder just north of the 44<sup>th</sup> New York Monument at *Site H*.)



Figure 4-11. Monument of the 140<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry at *Site H*. Though the monument is to the entire regiment, the bronze bust of and inscription to Col. Patrick H. O’Rorke are its most prominent features. He was fatally shot near this spot as he led his men over the brow of the hill and down into the maelstrom on the west slope.

## STOP 5 and Lunch. Devil's Den: Day 2 action and the York Haven Diabase.

Leaders: Jon D. Inners, Robert C. Smith, II, and Helen L. Delano.

[The enemy] battery was situated...on a rugged cliff which formed the abrupt termination of a ridge that proceeded from the mountain, and ran in a direction somewhat parallel with it, leaving a valley destitute of trees and filled with immense boulders.

Col. William F. Perry, C.S.A.  
(Quoted in Luvass and Nelson, 1986, p. 94)

Devil's Den (Figure 5-1) is for good reason the most storied site on the Gettysburg battlefield. In a three-or-four-hour period in the afternoon and early evening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day, this spectacular, broken outcrop of bare rock witnessed some of the bloodiest fighting of the battle, well documented by the names given to parts of the adjacent Plum Run valley—the “Valley of Death” and the “Slaughter Pen.” The Den itself is well described in writings of some of those who fought there. To a Pennsylvania soldier it appeared “as though nature in some wild freak had forgotten herself and piled great rocks in mad confusion together.” A New Yorker was somewhat more descriptive: “[I]ts huge boulders, some of them as large as a small house, rest in an irregular, confused mass, forming nooks and cavernous recesses suggestive of its uncanny name” (Trudeau, 2002, p. 314-315).

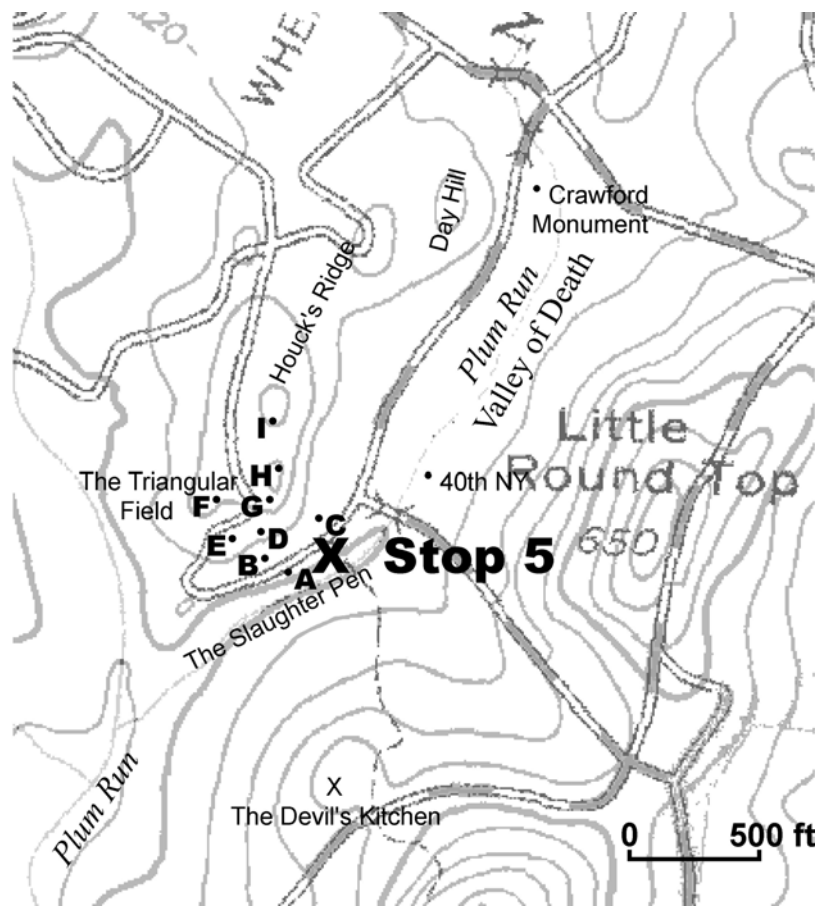


Figure 5-1. Location map of STOP 5, showing Site locations. Some other monuments and features, noted on the Roadlog, are also marked.

**Geology.** Because of the sheer size of the outcropping ledges and boulders here, Devil’s Den is the best place on the Gettysburg battlefield to observe the York Haven Diabase *en masse* and to examine details of its mineralogy, weathering, and mass wasting. The York Haven Diabase is a high TiO<sub>2</sub>, quartz–normative, continental tholeiite (Froelich and Gottfried, 1999). Dominant minerals are clinopyroxene (pigeonite in the groundmass, augite as microphenocrysts) and calcic-plagioclase (labradorite, An<sub>57±3</sub>), with orthopyroxene abundant in the “stratigraphically” lower part of the York Haven sheets (Smith et al., 1975). At Devil’s Den the rock is coarsely crystalline, with the mineralogy being particularly evident on weathered surfaces—the pyroxene crystals standing in relief as the plagioclase crystals weather back (see *Site B*). The most striking weathering features of the diabase at Devil’s Den, however, is the extensive open-fracture network that divides the rock mass into huge blocks (typically with rounded edges). Another weathering phenomenon here, not quite as prominent but clearly visible to an observant eye, is the massive exfoliation of the ledges and boulders. The rounded weathering partings not only form as thin scales on the surface, but also occur several feet down in the diabase masses (see Figure 6-4). Disruption of the exposed diabase mass takes place by gradual opening of the large-scale fractures and breakage of the rock along the exfoliation surfaces. It is possible that much of the break-up of the rock at Devil’s Den is a relict of periglacial conditions that existed in this area about 18,000 years B.P.

**The fight for Devil’s Den.** On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps’ advance from the south end of Cemetery Ridge westward to higher ground to the west between about noon and mid-afternoon of July 2, Brig. Gen. J. H. Hobart Ward’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade of Maj. Gen. David Birney’s 1<sup>st</sup> Division occupied Devil’s Den and Houck’s Ridge. Ward’s brigade—about 1500 men—reached their position about 3:30 PM. The first Confederates—from Robertson’s Brigade—appeared about 4:50 PM (Grimsley and Simpson, 1999). In defending Devil’s Den-Houck’s Ridge area, Ward’s brigade lost one-third of its men, but inflicted heavy losses on the attacking enemy. After Ward was driven out, Devil’s Den was held by the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Georgia of Brig. Gen. Henry L. Benning’s Brigade. Supporting troops of Brig. Gen. George T. Anderson wheeled north to support the Confederate attack in the Wheatfield (Editors of Time-Life Books, 1996).

Grimsley and Simpson (1999) give a good analysis of the military significance of the area defended by Ward’s brigade:

Although the Confederates needed to seize it so as to continue Longstreet’s main assault, the Houck’s Ridge-Devil’s Den position was of little intrinsic importance. Riflemen took up positions among the boulders from which to blaze away at Little Round Top, but the open Plum Run valley offered poor ground for a direct attack on that vital Union bastion. The position also had scant effect on the fighting that continued unabated to the north, in the Wheatfield and Peach Orchard (p. 85).

Details of the fighting at Devil’s Den are given below at the individual *sites* of the Walking Tour.

### **Walking Tour of Devil’s Den**

**A. Overview from parking area.** The “rugged cliff” of Devil’s Den—25 to 30 feet high—is directly west of the parking area on Sickles Ave. (Figure 5-2). Just to the east are Plum Run and the “Slaughter Pen,” a bouldery area along the creek that extends up to the foot of Big Round Top. Though it is uncertain whether the latter name was coined by soldiers or early observers, it is significant that Alfred Waud (1828-1891), “the most prolific of Civil War combat artists,” noted in the caption for a sketch of the area that it was “called by the soldiers the Slaughter Pen” (Faust, 1986; Adelman and Smith, 1997).

**B. The “Devil’s Den.”** According to Adelman and Smith (1997), this open fracture in the face of the massive diabase outcropping is the actual “Devil’s Den” from which the entire feature now takes its name (Figure 5-3). Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Gettysburg historian John Batchelor, who was instrumental in the founding of the National Military Park, pinpointed this exact spot as the origin of the name, describing it as “a hole in the ground” which is “very difficult to get into.” He noted that a spring once flowed through the opening. Considering all of the many fracture openings in the entire “rock formation”—



Figure 5-2. Devil’s Den, looking west from the nearby parking area (*Site A*). Note the rounding, due to exfoliation, of all the large diabase masses.

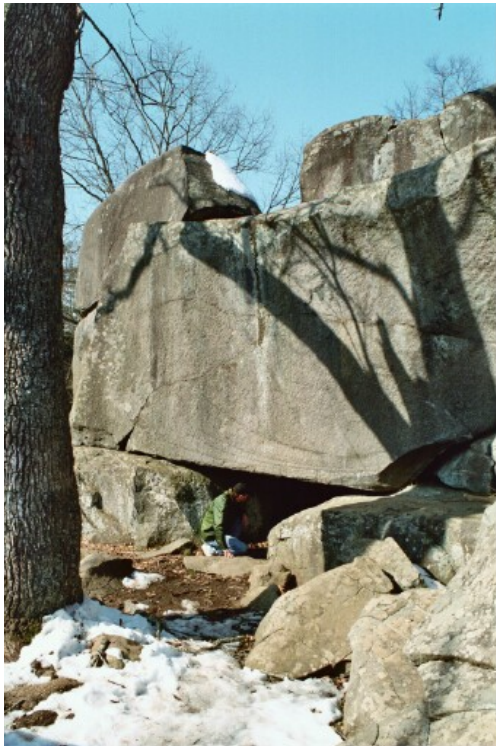


Figure 5-3. The real “Devil’s Den,” according to historian John Batchelor (*Site B*). This joint cave can be followed back for at least 20 or 25 feet. Note the curved exfoliation surfaces in the caprock of the opening.

several of which seem more impressive than this one, such specific identification rings somewhat hollow. It seems more likely that the name was always more or less applied as it is today.

On the irregular ledge above and to the left of the “Devil’s Den” is a good surface to observe the micro-weathering of the diabase (as described under **Geology**). Just to the right of that, a large block has broken off an overhanging ledge, one of the fracture surfaces being a curved exfoliation parting (Figure 5-4).

**C. Table Rock.** This interesting formation could also be dubbed “Charles Atlas Rock” as one’s first impulse for a “photo op” here is to pose in the open fracture and attempt to “lift” the large, flat boulder overhead (Figure 5-5). This was also a favorite spot for 19<sup>th</sup>-century photographs (Frassanito, 1975, p. 170; 1995, p. 302-305; Adelman and Smith, 1997, p. 91, 93, 113, etc.), and, indeed, the preferred name comes from the caption of a stereo-view taken by a local photographer in 1867. On these old photographs can be seen numerous “scratch-outs,” marking spots where late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, carved graffiti was removed after the creation of the Gettysburg National Military Park in 1895 (see especially Adelman and Smith, 1997, p. 98-100). Table Rock is basically a larger-scale version of “The Curious Rocks” at Little Round Top and probably formed in a similar manner (see STOP 4, *Site B*).

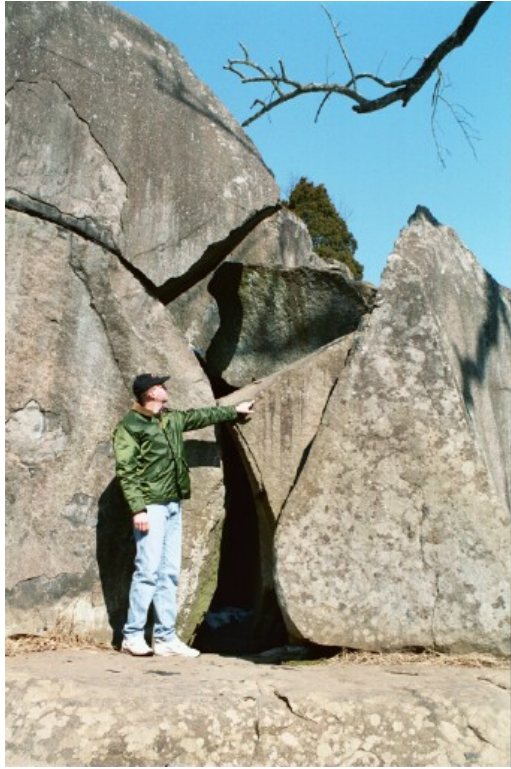


Figure 5-4. Exfoliation in action near *Site B*. Note the triangular block that has fallen from the huge xfoliated “sheet” above the person’s head.

**D. The top of the Den.** At this point, a wooden bridge crosses a large open, subvertical fracture trending  $N30^{\circ}W$ . An intersecting open fracture here trends  $N70^{\circ}E$  and is also subvertical. Note the profusion of polygonal exfoliation cracks, as well as the presence of numerous parallel grooves trending  $N20-35^{\circ}W$ . This spot also affords an excellent view of Little Round Top, the crest of which (at about 665 feet) towers over Devil’s Den (at 520 feet). Though we often hear of how Confederate sharpshooters on Devil’s Den made life miserable for Union infantrymen and artillerymen on Little Round Top, consider also that the Yankees, firing down from an eminence more than 125 feet higher, must have made it quite hazardous for any Rebel to stick his head out (Adelman and Smith, 1997).

Immediately after the battle, the crevasses of the Den provided temporary graves for many Confederate soldiers who died there—the bodies being simply tossed into the open fractures “in lieu of burial” (Adelman and Smith, 1997, p. 118). Although there exist several “posed” pictures of supposed dead at Devil’s Den (see Frassanito, 1995, p. 296-297), apparently none of actual dead are known.

**E. The “sharpshooter’s position.”** This is the site of one of the most famous photographs of the Civil War, the dead Confederate sharpshooter behind a stone rampart on the back side of Devil’s Den (Frassanito, 1975, p. 190; 1995, p. 269). Though taken only a few days after the battle and actually

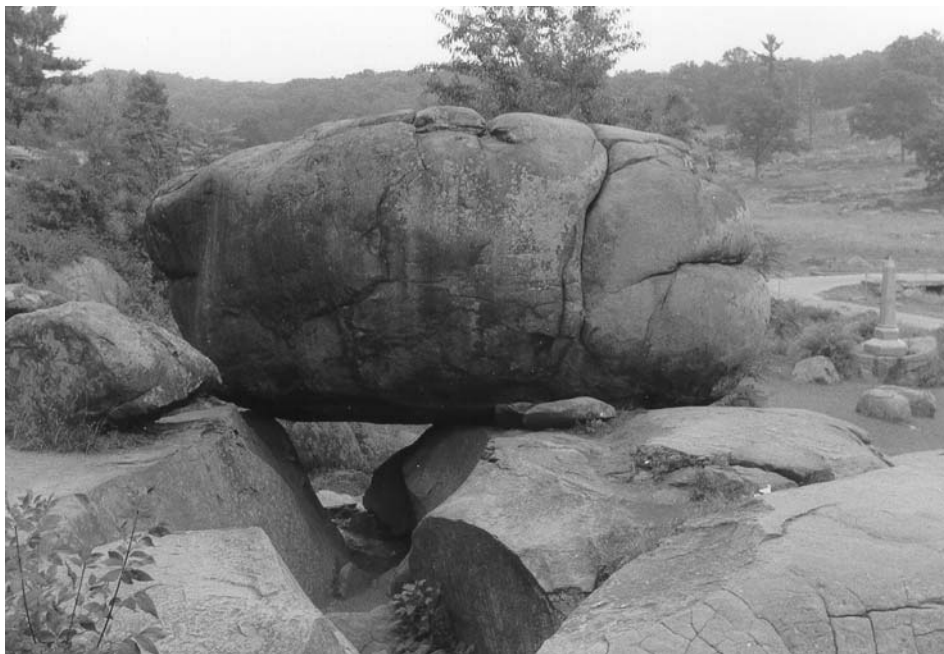


Figure 5-5. Table Rock (*Site C*), looking northeast. On the right is the monument to the 4<sup>th</sup> Maine Infantry. Behind that can be seen the bouldery lower slope of Little Round Top on the other side of the Valley of Death.

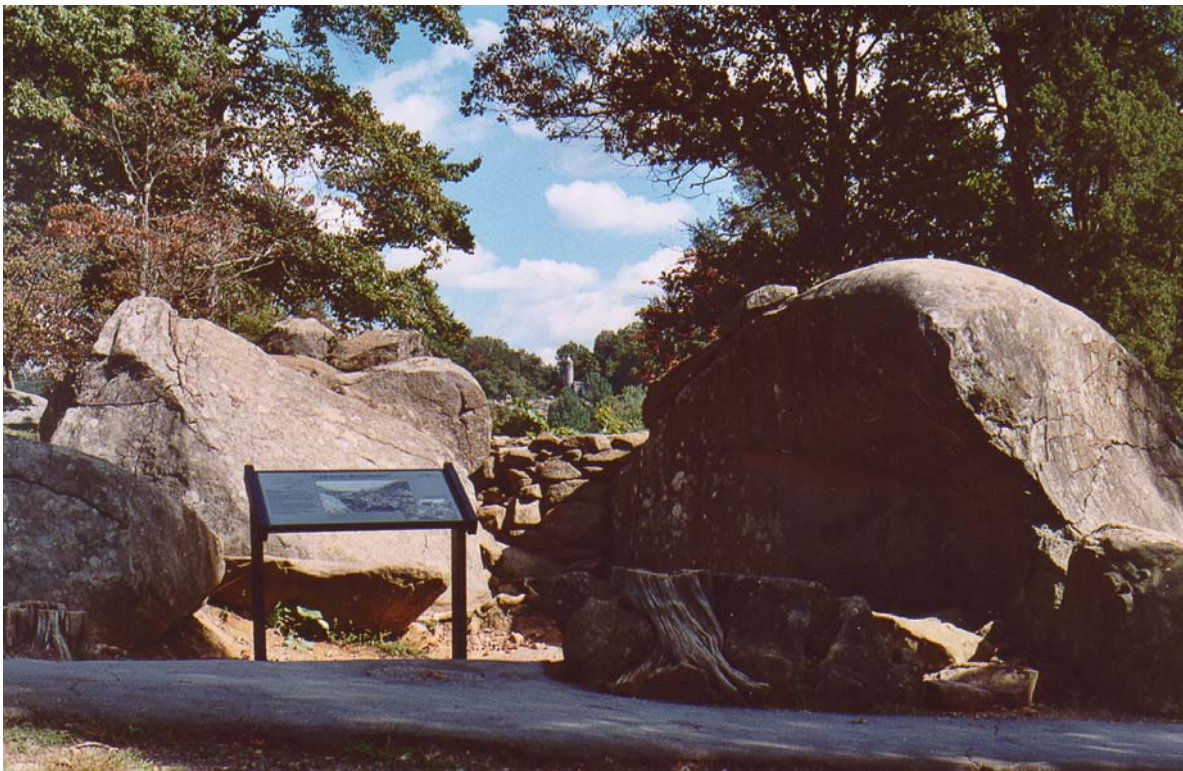


Figure 5-6. The “sharpshooter’s position” (*Site E*). Note the splendid view of the summit of Little Round Top, the monument tower being that of the 44<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry (*Site H* of STOP 4).

picturing a dead Rebel soldier behind a wall almost certainly constructed during the night of July 2/3, the photo is an “historical distortion.” Through the analysis of a series of photographs taken by Alexander Gardner and his assistants, William A. Frassanito (1975, 1995) has shown that the body was actually dragged from a spot 72 yards away and placed in the “sharpshooter’s coven.” The picture was completed by propping a rifle (not the kind a sharpshooter would use) against the wall.

As shown in Figure 5-6, the position does provide an excellent view of the summit of Little Round Top. Certainly someone “hid” here and fired at the enemy about 500 yards away—a distance that approximates the maximum effective range of a Civil War rifled musket (Grimsley and Simpson, 1999, p. 192).

**F. The “triangular field.”** At the time of the battle, this diabase-strewn field (Figure 5-7) was owned by farmer George W. Weikert, who may have used it as a cattle or hog pen. Low stone walls bounded the tract on the north and southwest side, with a wooden fence on the east side next to the present road (later replaced by a stone wall). Across this small, relatively inconspicuous real estate, both Rebels and Yankees launched bloody attacks and counterattacks that left the ground strewn with the bodies of dead and wounded men. Initially the 1<sup>st</sup> Texas struck from the west against the 124<sup>th</sup> New York at the south end of Houck’s Ridge. Then the 124<sup>th</sup> New York hit back and drove the Texans back beyond the edge of the field, but were themselves then driven back to the crest of Houck’s Ridge (see *Site H*)—with the Texans capturing Devil’s Den. As the confusing melee continued, the 4<sup>th</sup> Maine pushed the Texans into the woods northwest of the “triangular field.” At this point, Benning’s Georgia Brigade arrived on the scene, and the 20<sup>th</sup> Georgia (under Col. John A. Jones) attacked across the open field. Though initially stalled by withering fire from the 4<sup>th</sup> Maine and Smith’s Battery (see *Site G*), the 20<sup>th</sup> Georgia and other units of Benning’s and Brig. Gen. Evander M. Law’s Brigades eventually drove the now greatly outnumbered Northerners from Devil’s Den and off Houck’s Ridge. The remnants of the 4<sup>th</sup> Maine, the 124<sup>th</sup> New York, and the rest of Ward’s Brigade retired to the south end of Cemetery Ridge, where, with other shattered 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps units, they took up a position not far from where they had been early on the



Figure 5-7. The “triangular field,” looking west (*Site F*). During the proper season, when the trees are in leaf and the grass is green, this open, rocky slope probably looks much like it did at the time of the battle. Here fell Col. Ellis and Maj. Cromwell of the “Orange Blossoms.” Brig. Gen. Henry L. Benning (1814-1875), whose Georgians charged across this field, was aptly and affectionately known as “Old Rock.”

afternoon of July 2—before Sickles had ordered his ill-fated advance to the “high ground” on his front! (Adelman and Smith, 1997; Grimsley and Simpson, 1999; Trudeau, 2002).

**G. Monument to the 4<sup>th</sup> New York Independent (Smith’s) Battery.** Captain James E. Smith’s battery played a pivotal, though somewhat controversial role in the battle for Devil’s Den and Houck’s Ridge—as is well documented in Adelman and Smith (1997). The 4<sup>th</sup> New York Battery consisted of six Parrott rifles, manned by more than 120 men. Two sections of the battery (four guns) went into position near the south end of Ward’s line on the crest of Houck’s Ridge, apparently just north of the exposed, rocky ramparts of Devil’s Den and in front of the 124<sup>th</sup> New York and 4<sup>th</sup> Maine (Adelman and Smith, 1997, p. 26). The other section was placed with the caissons and horses 150 yards in the rear to cover the Plum Run gorge (Luvass and Nelson, 1987). (According to Smith, the position atop the hill had room for only four of his guns.) After an artillery duel lasting about 45 minutes, in which Smith’s men suffered little because of the many protecting boulders, the Confederates launched a ferocious attack on the Union position. By the time the surging Confederates of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arkansas and 1<sup>st</sup> Texas (Robertson’s Brigade) neared his guns, the Union artillerymen had exhausted their case shot and shrapnel. Informed of this, Smith exhorted, “Give them shell; give them solid shot; damn them; give them anything!” (Adelman and Smith, 1997, p. 29). Smith’s four main guns were eventually captured, then retaken—and finally at about 5:45 PM, Benning’s and Anderson’s Georgians drove Ward’s Brigade off Houck’s Ridge and finally captured three of Smith’s advanced cannons—the fourth having been sent to the rear disabled (Grimsley and Simpson, 1999; Luvass and Nelson, 1987). Smith himself had previously left the position on the crest of the Houck’s Ridge to go to his rear section of guns, which fired on the Confederates advancing northward through the Plum Run gorge before falling back.

Adelman and Smith (1997) note that the position of this monument is most likely in error, Smith's four advanced guns probably having been positioned on the crest of the Houck's Ridge near where the monument of the 99<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania now stands.

**H. Monuments to the 99<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania and 124<sup>th</sup> New York Regiments.** The 99<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania was recruited mainly from Philadelphia and Lancaster Counties and numbered 339 officers and men at Gettysburg, 110 of whom were casualties. The regiment—commanded by Maj. John W. Moore—was originally posted along Houck's Ridge at the extreme right of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade's line, but was later moved to the left between the 124<sup>th</sup> New York and the 4<sup>th</sup> Maine (posted in the "Slaughter Pen" along Plum Run) where they took a position "as firm as the rocks beneath their feet" on top of Devil's Den. From this elevated rampart, the 99<sup>th</sup> blasted away at the 44<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Alabama Regiments below and temporarily stabilized the Union line (Adelman and Smith, 1997). The monument itself is coarsely crystalline, black-speckled, hornblende granite that contains a high percentage of quartz. Note that this granite appears to be spalling faster than some of the other monument stones, such as the Westerly and Quincy granites, probably due in part to its coarse grain-size.

The 124<sup>th</sup> New York (Figure 5-8) was a three-year regiment raised mainly from Orange County in the "Tri-States area" along the Delaware and Neversink Rivers. Their first action was at the battle of Chancellorsville, where they suffered 40 percent casualties and were immortalized (though unnamed) in Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (LaRocca, 1995). In the course of that battle, their commander, Col. A. Van Horne Ellis had dubbed his men "the Orange Blossoms"—and this colorful name has fittingly come down through history (Grimsley and Simpson, 1999, p. 80). After the "Orange Blossoms" fought off repeated attacks of the 1<sup>st</sup> Texas, Col. Ellis and Maj. James Cromwell, both mounted, led a charge across the Triangular Field at about 5:00 PM that momentarily broke the Texas line. At the far end of the field, the Texans turned and fired a withering volley that killed or wounded a quarter of the New Yorkers, including Cromwell (killed). Benning's Brigade then hit the Yankees and drove them back to the crest of Houck's Ridge, Ellis falling dead along the way, a bullet through his head (Grimsley and Simpson, 1999; Adelman and Smith, 1997).

**I. Houck's Ridge.** Looking north from this highest point on the ridge encompasses much of the field of action of some of the later fighting on Sickles' left flank (Figure 5-9). Ward's original line angled off through the woods to the left, its right (just south of the Wheatfield) being held originally by the 99<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania and later by the 20<sup>th</sup> Indiana (Adelman and Smith, 1997). After the Union forces had been driven from the Wheatfield early in the evening, Brig. Gen. Samuel Crawford led part of his 3<sup>rd</sup> Division of the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps on the spirited counterattack described at mile 8.15. Though Crawford's charge carried to the Wheatfield, his Pennsylvania Reserve Regiments were soon driven back. From then till their retreat on July 4/5, the Confederates retained possession of Devil's Den, Houck's Ridge, and the Wheatfield (Adelman and Smith, 1997; Jorgensen, 2002).

In 1872 Crawford himself purchased Devil's Den and much of the land visible from here. Up to the time of Crawford's death in 1892, this 47-acre tract of land was known as Crawford Park. He never followed through on his promise to deed or will his land over to the Gettysburg Battlefield Association—an omission that resulted in gross commercialization of this part of the battlefield (see Adelman and Smith, 1999, p. 78-91).



Figure 5-8. Monument to the 124<sup>th</sup> New York Infantry (*Site H*). Col. Ellis calmly surveys the “triangular field,” waiting for the Confederates’ next attack. According to Hawthorne (1988), this monument—carved from St. Johnsbury Vermont granite—is the only one on the battlefield that contains a full-length portrait stature of a regimental commander.



Figure 5-9. Houck’s Ridge (left) and the Valley of Death (right) from *Site I*. The woods in the right distance mark Cemetery Ridge. Many of the granite monuments and markers on Houck’s Ridge are to U.S. Infantry Regiments of Brig. Gen. Romeyn B. Ayres 2<sup>nd</sup> Division of the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps. The Regulars fought over this ground as part of the hours long engagement at the Wheatfield—and in retiring across the Valley of Death after being driven off Houck’s Ridge, suffered “staggering” casualties (Jorgensen, 2002).