

GETTYSBURG 150 YEARS LATER

How Onondaga Countians fought at Gettysburg

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In July of 1863, a huge battle was fought near the small town of Gettysburg, Pa. This battle was considered by many to be the turning point of the American Civil War.

The Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, commanded by General Robert E. Lee and consisting of roughly 70,000 men, met the Union Army of the Potomac, commanded by General George Meade and consisting of approximately 90,000 men.

After pushing the Union Army back on July 1, Robert E. Lee continued to attack the strong federal position entrenched on superior high ground. On July 2, he tried both flanks without much success and at great loss.

A last-ditch attempt was made on July 3 to break the center of the Union line, in a dramatic frontal assault by nearly 13,000 men that came to be known as Pickett's Charge. It succeeded for the briefest of moments until waves of fresh Union reserves were sent in by Meade and any hope of a Confederate victory was lost.

Three units from the Syracuse area fought in the final two days at Gettysburg, the 122nd New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment, 149th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment, and Battery B of the 1st New York Light Artillery Regiment (Pettit's Battery).

Battery B was organized at Baldwinsville and named after its original commander, Rufus Pettit. On July 3, it was posted on Cemetery Ridge directly in the path of Pickett's Charge. Of the battery's 114 men who entered the battle, 16 were wounded and 10 were killed.

The two Onondaga County infantry regiments fought on Culp's Hill from the evening of July 2 through the morning of July 3. The 149th was on the front line for almost the entire fight, leaving briefly to replenish their ammunition before returning. Toward the end of the fighting, the 149th NY discovered that the 122nd NY was nearby, having been sent to reinforce the position. The chance meeting of two regiments from our county under such circumstances was extraordinary. The 149th NY suffered casualties: Six killed, 46 wounded, and three missing, while the 122nd NY had 10 killed, 32 wounded, and two missing.



Colonel Augustus Dwight, commander of the 122nd NY (OHA)