

Ramparts of

The Natural Fortifications of Gettysburg's

By GARRY E. ADELMAN &
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Starry night.

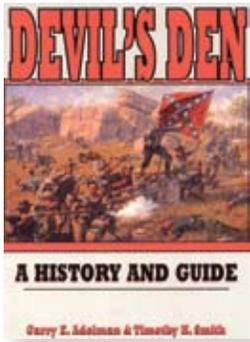
The movement of stars over Devil's Den was captured on a cold, clear evening in February 2009.

CHRIS HEISEY

Rock

Geology

FROM THE EARLIEST recorded times, people have gravitated toward the rocky areas of what is now the Gettysburg Battlefield. Native Americans camped and hunted amidst its boulders. Local civilians had pleasure outings and political rallies among the rocks of Spangler's Spring in the 1840s and 1850s. Escaping slaves are said to have used the boulders along Rock Creek for shelter. A young artist named David Forney climbed atop the tallest boulder in what would become the Slaughter Pen and carved his name into the rock in 1849. Another local man, Emanuel Bushman, who waxed philosophical about the origins of the rocks at Devil's Den, wrote, "My own opinion is that they were a solid pyramid many hundred feet high ... if they were pressed together every one would have its place to fit." Still other local people used the rocks for more practical purposes, as is evidenced by the substantial quarrying remnants across the battlefield.



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Devil's Den: A History and Guide was published in 1997 and is currently in its ninth printing.

Historians have written countless words about the Battle of Gettysburg but one geologist's take was "the Battle of Gettysburg, was essentially an effort by the Confederate army to drive the Union army" from the outcroppings of the Gettysburg Sill. According to geologists the Sill is a 200-million-year-old formation of York Haven diabase rock a mile wide and 1,800 feet deep. The Sill accounts for the boulder-strewn surface of Devil's Den, Little Round Top, Culp's Hill and other places. Ignorant of their mineral composition, Gettysburg citizens simply referred to the rocks as "Gettysburg Granite."

The soldiers who fought at Gettysburg, however, had a more immediate concern — getting around, through, atop and indeed behind these unmovable objects. Confederates wrote about the boulders on Culp's Hill and Big Round Top as obstacles to their advance, whereas Union troops wrote even more about their defensive properties. As the troops settled in, both sides built stone walls and hid behind whatever rocks were near.

After the battle, many of Gettysburg's boulders were frozen in time as backdrops for some of the Civil War's most iconic photographs — dead Confederate soldiers at Devil's Den and the Rose Farm, fortifications on Little Round Top and large, daunting boulders on Culp's Hill. More than 100 years later, using their photographs and these dia-



"Government Chiselers."

When the U.S. government chiseled out the rock carvings from boulders at Devil's Den and Big Round Top in 1894, white splotches were evident for years, and the scratches left by the "government chiselers" are still visible on the rocks today.

HISTORIC IMAGE COURTESY GARRY ADELMAN

base formations, historian William A. Frassanito precisely located the camera positions of dozens of views showing death, destruction and remnants of the fighting. By identifying when and where these images were recorded, Frassanito created a new field of study — photographs could now be used as a historical resource instead of as simply illustrations.

Rocks were also used as guideposts for interments and were major impediments to the burial crews — so much so that rocky areas were generally the last places cleared of

the dead. Even for the living, the rocks could represent the worst of things. One visitor to the hospital of the Union Second Corps recalled a "black-haired handsome youth of an Alabama regiment." In his delirium-induced "raving the prominent subject was those 'awful, awful rocks.'"

Government Chiselers

The earliest monuments on the Gettysburg Battlefield were rock carvings. By 1865, veterans had carved onto rocks the locations where two officers were shot on Little Round Top. Long after the battle, a North Carolina soldier carved his name into a boulder on Culp's Hill where he was positioned during the fight. An Alabamian had a former comrade carve his last name, "Ward," into the rock behind which he hid near Little



Battle of Culp's Hill.

Johnston's Division, CSA, takes advantage of the natural cover provided by the rocks and boulders as it attacks the Union breastworks. Sketch by Edwin Forbes.

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Soldier's Monument.

Long after the battle, Pvt. Augustus L. Coble scratched his name into a rock near Spangler's Spring to mark the spot where he spent the long night of July 2, 1863. Finding such rock carvings today can increase our understanding of the battle

COBLE IMAGE COURTESY OF THE GETTYSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

Round Top. By 1890 the bulk of Gettysburg's Rock carvings, however, were not related to soldiers but to local citizens who labored to carve their names and initials into the hard, igneous rocks at Gettysburg. The carving became so pervasive the U.S. government commissioned the systematic removal of this "graffiti." Rocks are scratched with these chisel marks to this day, prompting the oft-heard comment that this was the work of the "Government Chiselers." Of course the government missed some carvings and some were done thereafter as well. Therefore, old rock carvings can still be found around the battlefield today.

When a rock carving just wouldn't do, monuments could be made from the rocks themselves. Many of Gettysburg's memorials, flank markers, monument bases and other park features are made from Gettysburg Granite. Numerous other monuments are made from granite imported from other states.

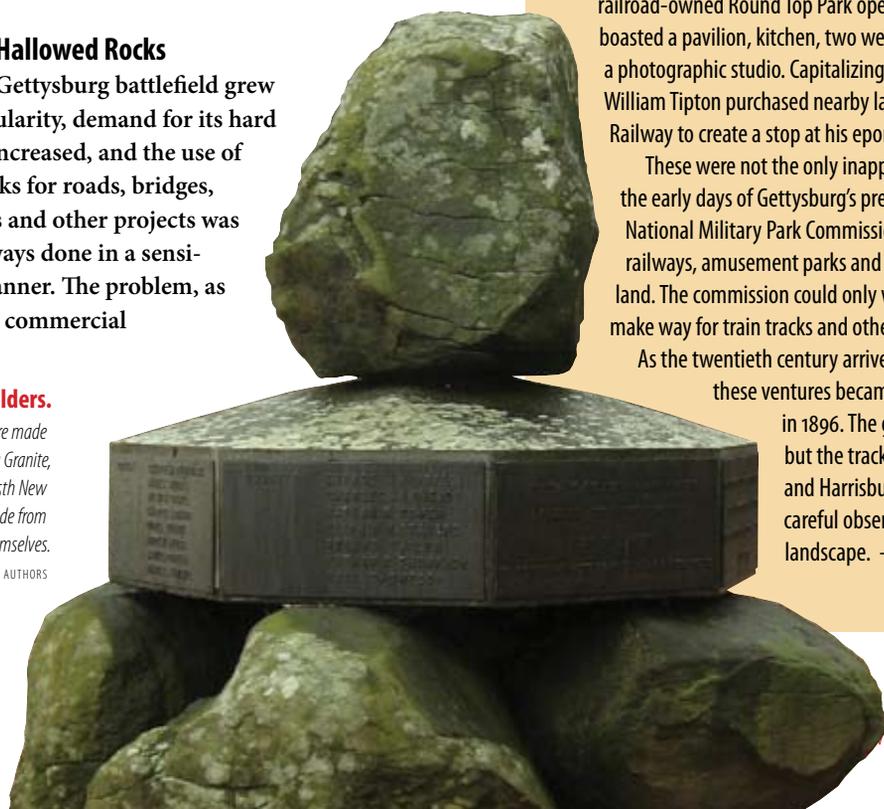
These Hallowed Rocks

As the Gettysburg battlefield grew in popularity, demand for its hard rocks increased, and the use of the rocks for roads, bridges, springs and other projects was not always done in a sensitive manner. The problem, as certain commercial

Raw Boulders.

While some monuments are made from polished Gettysburg Granite, others, such as that of the 5th New Hampshire, are actually made from the raw boulders themselves.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE AUTHORS



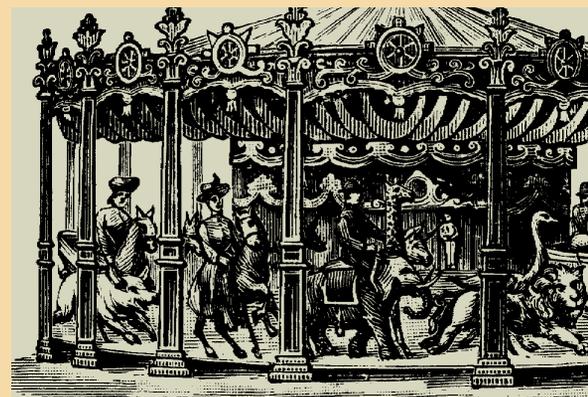
Amusement Park on Little Round Top

So momentous was the fighting at Gettysburg that efforts to protect and preserve the land began in the days immediately following the battle. Local residents purchased land adjoining their town cemetery to be a final resting place for the fallen. The Soldiers' National Cemetery was consecrated on November 19, 1863, in ceremonies that included President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Local attorney David McConaughy soon purchased approximately 600 acres of the battlefield at Culp's Hill, East Cemetery Hill and Little Round Top. In April 1864, the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association was founded, with McConaughy as its first president. The group worked to preserve the "exact form and condition" of the battlefield and soon began adding to McConaughy's private holdings.

However, with veterans eager to tangibly memorialize their comrades' sacrifice and tourists clamoring to visit the solemn ground, it was quickly apparent that monuments and commercial enterprises were bound to change the "form and condition" of Gettysburg.

Stone markers and monuments of all shapes and sizes sprung up on all corners of the field. New businesses catering to the thousands of visitors filtering into Gettysburg were far more galling to strict preservationists than the monuments, position markers and other items placed by former combatants.



In 1884 the Gettysburg and Harrisburg Railway completed construction of a spur line from downtown to the east side of Little Round Top, where, on July 4, railroad-owned Round Top Park opened to the public. The purely tourist attraction boasted a pavilion, kitchen, two wells, merry-go-round, displays of relics and even a photographic studio. Capitalizing on this successful venture, local photographer William Tipton purchased nearby land and partnered with the new Gettysburg Electric Railway to create a stop at his eponymously named amusement park near Devil's Den.

These were not the only inappropriate commercial ventures to spring up in the early days of Gettysburg's preservation. Despite protests from the Gettysburg National Military Park Commission, which now administered the park, these railways, amusement parks and even a casino could not be blocked from private land. The commission could only watch as historic ground was graded and blasted to make way for train tracks and other commercial enterprises.

As the twentieth century arrived and automobiles replaced trains and trolleys, these ventures became less viable and faded. Round Top Park closed in 1896. The government took control of Tipton's land in 1902, but the tracks weren't removed until 1917. The Gettysburg and Harrisburg tracks took even longer to disappear, but a careful observer can still find evidence of both rail beds in the landscape. — CWPT



"All Over Now."

Garry Adelman found the location of this view along the rock-choked banks of Plum Run in 1990 only to learn that a teenager had found it a few years earlier.

HISTORIC IMAGE COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

enterprisers came to realize, was that Gettysburg's rocks were hallowed in the battle, literally stained with soldiers' blood.

When a battlefield trolley was constructed in the early 1890s, veterans strongly protested the blasting of boulders and desecration of sacred ground. Nonetheless, the Gettysburg Electric Railway became a popular tourist attraction, and small

Memorializing Gettysburg

From the huge Pennsylvania State Memorial to the smallest leaf-covered line marker, more than 1,300 monuments dot the Gettysburg landscape, contributing to an atmosphere of quiet reverence and awe. But even a casual observer will soon note that Union monuments outnumber their Confederate counterparts more than five to one.

A crushed post-war economy and a reluctance to memorialize a defeat are often cited as the primary reasons behind the dearth of Southern monuments. While accurate, these explanations overlook a second clash between North and South over the fields of Gettysburg. In the decades following the Civil War, even when funds and motivation were mustered to erect a Confederate monument, the way was often blocked by remnant sectional squabbling.

Union veteran organizations faced few obstacles when it came to memorializing those who had fought and died. Their Confederate counterparts were hedged in by the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association's restrictive "line of battle rule." This guideline stated that unit monuments had to be placed where the troops entered the battle. Since Gettysburg was largely a defensive action for the Union, those monuments were placed at positions units held and defended, often for much of the battle. However, it also meant that Confederate markers had to be placed where those troops started their assaults, often a great distance from where they were bloodied by fighting. Differing first-hand accounts and

interpretations of such a straightforward-sounding prescript meant that, despite GBMA's best intentions, some monument locations were determined in court. Eventually, to counter highly unorthodox monument proposals, additional design standards and material guidelines had to be adopted.

Many more monuments to Southern soldiers and units began appearing during the early 20th century. These new Confederate monuments were frequently dedicated to an entire state's troops, beginning with the towering Virginia State Memorial in 1917. Still, the 50-year delay between the end of the war and the erection of these Southern markers gives them a markedly different character from their Union fellows. Early monuments were somberly erected by veterans who remembered the horrors of battle and the comrades they had lost, but these new monuments were a generation or more removed from the fighting and could reflect a view of the war romanticized by the passage of time. — CWPT

amusement parks soon dotted the landscape near the trolley stops. In building Tipton Park at Devil's Den, local photographer and businessman William H. Tipton moved or blasted boulders to level his land. He did make more positive use of at least one rock, however, into which he cut a deep trough into which he pumped fresh spring water for his visitors. Spangler's Spring was walled in with local rock so that visitors could enjoy water from the source used by soldiers on both sides during the battle.

And the exploitation of Gettysburg's rocks continues to this day. A rock carving at Devil's Den made by local civilian Park Noel has been used to tell a ghost story of a fictitious Paulina Noel. Another ridiculous ghost yarn warned people that



For All Time. *The State of Mississippi's memorial to her soldier sons at Gettysburg.* CHRIS HEISEY

taking rocks from Gettysburg's Triangular Field would bring bad luck. So warned, readers of this tale then stole rocks from that very field, blamed their misery on the stolen rock and wrote the fable's publisher of the misfortunes of their illegal actions. To the dismay of geologists and historians, at least one artist claims the ability to identify the effects of artillery fire on particular rocks. Others have consistently tried to use rocks to pinpoint battle actions through vague and generic accounts. Would-be historians state which particular boulder was the temporary resting place of two New York field officers killed at Devil's Den. Others claim they know the rock on which Fr. William Corby stood to deliver absolution to Union troops before going into battle. Rocks provide a static connection with the past that will be used and misused by people as long as there is a park at Gettysburg.

Finding the Quarry

While rocks have taught us about the Battle of Gettysburg, they still store mysteries waiting to be solved. Gettysburg historians and enthusiasts spend countless hours each year searching for specific rocks like a hunter after his prey. Nobody knows the spots from which sketch artist Alfred Waud drew two pictures on the south end of the battlefield. Nobody knows what happened to a large boulder that appears in 1860s photographs on Culp's Hill. Nobody has



Manning Ledge.

In some cases, rocks about which soldiers wrote can be specifically identified. A few examples include the line of boulders from behind which the 15th Alabama made its final assaults on Little Round Top, a particular formation from which Confederates sniped at Union positions on Culp's Hill and this ledge of rocks at which Arkansas colonel Vannoy H. Manning was wounded in the face.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE AUTHORS



The Kitchen.

Before Tom Danninger's discovery of this image's location, the earliest known image of the Devil's Kitchen was taken in the 1880s. His finding moved the date back to 1867.

HISTORIC IMAGE COURTESY OF SUSAN BOARDMAN

Center for Civil War Photography

CCWP is a non-profit organization devoted to one of the most exciting and compelling areas of Civil War scholarship and discovery. To learn more about CCWP's mission and photographic finds still being made on a regular basis, visit www.civilwarphotography.org.



located the rock on which someone carved "Thomas Holston Baltimore" above Spangler's Spring. And these authors have spent scores of hours (without success) searching for the aforementioned "Ward" inscription dedicated to an Alabama soldier.

But other mysteries are solved each year. There are numerous instances in which William Frassanito, we and other photohistorians have located their quarry (no pun intended) and learned something about the battle or battlefield. The authors successfully identified Gettysburg's legendary "Two Rocks" in 2006. In 2008 Center for Civil War Photography member Tom Danninger located the camera position of an 1867 stereoview that had been labeled "Devil's Den" but was in fact taken at the Devil's Kitchen — a rock formation above the Slaughter Pen.

There are very few objects on the battlefield that have a direct and tangible connection with the Battle of Gettysburg. The monuments were not there, and most of the roads were built afterward. There are roughly a dozen wartime farmhouses and a few scattered trees that stand as witnesses to the battle. But all over the fields of Gettysburg there are thousands of igneous rocks, their secrets locked within and their distinctive markings unchanged by time. 📷



Spangler Spring Carving.

The location of this rock carving, supposedly "above Spangler's Spring," remains a mystery.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE GETTYSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK