D-11

ROUSSEAU'S DIVISION

AT

STONES RIVER

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Historian
Stones River National Battlefield

October 1984

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Order of Battle

The division of Brig. Gen. Lovell H. Rousseau was composed of four brigades:

1st Brigade--Col. Benjamin F. Scribner

38th Indiana Infantry
2nd Ohio Infantry
33rd Ohio Infantry
94th Ohio Infantry
10th Wisconsin Infantry

2nd Brigade--Col. John Beatty

42nd Indiana Infantry
88th Indiana Infantry
15th Kentucky Infantry
3rd Ohio Infantry
1st Michigan Battery (Lt. George W. Van Pelt)

3rd Brigade--Col. John Starkweather

24th Illinois Infantry
79th Pennsylvania Infantry
1st Wisconsin Infantry

4th Brigade--Lt. Col. Oliver L. Shepard

15th U.S. Infantry, 1st Battalion
16th U.S. Infantry, 1st Battalion and Co. B., 2nd Battalion
18th U.S. Infantry, 2nd Battalion and Companies A & D, 3rd Battalion
19th U.S. Infantry, 1st Battalion
5th U.S. Artillery, Co. H (Lt. Francis L. Guenther)[1]

(Colonel Starkweather's brigade did not arrive on the field until the night of December 31.)[2]

Initial Position

Rousseau's division formed the reserve of Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas' Center Wing of the Army of the Cumberland. On the

morning of December 31, the division was in bivouacked along the Nashville Pike north of the three mile post.[3] At approximately 6:00 a.m. the lead elements moved south on the pike about one mile. The division formed line of battle, brigade front, to the right of the pike in the cotton field.[4]

The order placed Beatty in the front line, Scribner behind him and Shepard third.[5]

Movement to the Front

Between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m., Rousseau was ordered to move two of his brigades into the cedars to support the divisions of Brig. Gen. James Negley and Brig. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan.[6] Beatty's brigade, followed by Scribner, swung into column and advanced to the front of a narrow road cut through the cedar brake by the Pioneer Brigade on the previous day.[7] Shepard's brigade was committed a short time afterwards, about 9:30 a.m.[8]

Beatty's brigade marched down the road and deployed to the right.[9] Colonel Scribner, after detaching and sending the 2nd and 33rd Ohio regiments back to the cotton field to support the artillery, also shifted to the right, and formed a line of battle "near the Wilkinson Pike" with his remaining three regiments.[10] Shepard deployed only the battalions of the 15th and 16th regiments. The 18th and 19th remained near the road, and were almost immediately ordered to withdraw to

the cotton field and subsequently took position along the embankment of the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad.[11]

Exact regimental positions are hard to determine, but in general the deployed lines faced west, slightly in echelon, with Beatty on the left, Scribner in the center, and the two battalions of regulars to the right. There is no indication that these lines were in sight of each other, much less mutually supporting.

Beatty's Brigade

Beatty's brigade formed an extended line with dense cedars on either flank and open woods to the front.[12] The regiments were spaced about 75 to 100 yards apart, the 15th Kentucky on the right. Temporary breastworks were built from fallen timber. Within ten minutes or so, an advancing Confederate line was engaged by the right and right center of the brigade.[13]

The 15th Kentucky opened on the Rebels who returned a devastating volley that killed Col. James B. Foreman.[14] The regiment broke and fled, forcing Beatty to shift his front to the right and rear. From this position, the three unshaken regiments were able to resist the onslaught.[15] The Rebels advanced again and "after a fierce struggle lasting from forty to sixty minutes, we [Beatty] succeed in repelling this also." While this action was in progress, Beatty learned that the

rest of the division, including his battery, had withdrawn from his right.

When General Rousseau ordered his brigade into line, Colonel Beatty was enjoined to hold the position "till hell froze over." Discovering that his brigade was without support, the colonel concluded that "the contingency had arisen to which General Rousseau referred," and proceeded to extricate his regiments from the cedars.[16]

In this fight the Confederate force opposing Beatty was probably the brigade of Brig. Gen. Lucius Polk of Maj. Gen. Patrick R. Cleburne's division. General Polk's description of the action north of Wilkinson Pike closely follows that of the Federal sources. After an initial repulse, Polk renewed his attack on a Federal line in, "a strong position on a cedar hill". After an obstinate and bloody fight, the Federals were forced back.[17]

Colonel Beatty's decimated regiments reached the edge of the woods in fairly good order. There he found "a new line of battle," which he joined with his left. According to the historian of the 42nd Indiana Regiment this new line was reinforced by "General Hazen's [sic] brigade of regular troops."[18]

Another stubborn fight ensued. Beatty's men were pressed by the gray ranks of Polk, now reinforced by Brig. Gen. S.A.M.

Woods' brigade. General Woods reported that in this fight, "the slaughter seemed to be greater than any other."[19]

This new line was quickly compromised. Out of Colonel Beatty's sight to the left, a renewed assault by a fresh Confederate line under Brig. Gen. A. P. Stewart cracked the Regular brigade. As this line crumbled, Beatty's men reached the breaking point. A spreading panic engulfed officers and enlisted, and despite all his efforts to rally them, they bolted to gain the cover of the guns along the pike. Colonel Beatty was unable to reform his scattered troops until the early evening.[20]

Except for the 15th Kentucky, the brigade fought well. They were engaged continually for at least two hours. Their stubborn resistance prevented Cleburne's division from crushing the right and rear of Sheridan's and Negley's divisions.

Scribner's Brigade

It is difficult to reconcile the report of Colonel Scribner with the reports of his regimental commanders. There are so many contradictions that at times it is hard to believe that they fought in the same battle. The only major points agreed upon are that they followed Beatty on the Pioneer Road and then initially deployed to the right. Otherwise, little else is the same in the accounts. At most, the brigade was badly

confused and fragmented throughout the morning action.

The brigade was formed in line of battle in the open field behind Beatty. The regiments in order from right to left: 10th Wisconsin, 94th Ohio, 38th Indiana, 33rd Ohio,and 2nd Ohio. The two regiments on the right in the cedar thicket; the left resting on the Nashville Pike. About 9:00 a.m. the line swung into column behind Beatty onto the Pioneer Road.[21] Advancing a few hundred yards, the brigade came to a halt on the road and began deploying to the right. No sooner was the line formed when the two lead regiments were dispatched back to the cotton field to support Guenther's battery.[22]

Now left with three regiments, Scribner proceeded forward a short distance, until coming under artillery fire. At this juncture an order was received to withdraw the rest of the brigade to the cotton field. It is significant that none of the accounts mention sighting of engaging any Confederate infantry before falling back. Colonel Scribner and Col. S. A. Bassford, commanding the 94th Ohio, noted the artillery fire; the 38th Ohio and 10th Wisconsin reports state only that they maneuvered in the woods a short time until retiring to the right.[23]

Moving back toward the field, the right regiment (94th Ohio) emerged just as the defeated Rebels of Brig. Gen. Evander McNair's brigade were fleeing to the "northwest" [west].[24]

The 94th Ohio and the two right companies of the 38th Ohio opened fire. Colonel Scribner ordered an ill-advised pursuit of the enemy; the three regiments advancing a short distance. The 94th Ohio, still on open ground, halted at the edge of the timber. At this point the 94th was ordered (by someone other than Colonel Scribner) to fall back to the Nashville Pike. The regiment passed over a hill "near a battery" (probably the 26th Pennsylvania) and formed on the east side of the road.[25]

No sooner aligned along the pike, thou the regiment was directed to help bring up ammunition. Working at this detail for about 30 minutes, Colonel Bassford's regiment was sent by General Rousseau down the hill and into the woods. Receiving harassing fire from Confederate sharpshooters, the regiment fell back again to the field and flanked to the left and connected with the 38th Ohio.[26]

Meanwhile, the 38th Ohio and 10th Wisconsin continued on into the cedars following McNair's shattered troops to the south and west; the 10th Wisconsin on the left, the 38th Ohio on the right. It is not clear how the lines were formed, but they were at the least very confused. This is evidenced by the fact that Col. D. F. Griffin of the 38th was unaware that the 94th Ohio had disappeared from his right.[27]

The reduced brigade continued on a short distance until encountering a heavy mass of Negley's troops, which passed

through their ranks. A Confederate line was almost immediately spotted, the 38th Ohio having to wheel to the left to bring their muskets to bear.[28] This Rebel line was probably the brigade of Lucius Polk which, after driving the remnants of Beatty's troops to the edge of the cotton field, swung toward the right of the Yankee line in an attempt to flank the batteries along the Nashville Pike.[29]

The heavy Confederate fire and confusion caused the 10th Wisconsin to break to the left and rear where they stumbled on Beatty's brigade.[30] This is probably the "Michigan" regiment that Colonel Beatty mentions as joining his brigade during their withdrawl.[31] If so, then the 10th Wisconsin remained with them until the retreat to the railroad. They were not reunited with the rest of the brigade until the morning of January 1.[32]

The 38th Ohio, as well, was caught up in the overwhelming tide of fleeing Federals and advancing Rebels. According to Colonel Griffin, they changed front to support Negley, and delivered a few volleys. After a brief stand, they were ordered to retire to the pike by Colonel Scribner.[33] The presence of Colonel Scribner with this regiment could explain some of the omissions and contradictions in his report. Since the 38th was primarily engaged in the dense cedar woods, his field of vision was limited, and confined his knowledge of the

events to a narrow front.

The 38th Ohio emerged from the woods near the lines of Brig. Gen. Samuel Beatty, to the right of the Chicago Board of Trade Battery.[34]

Colonel Scribner was able to partially reform the brigade near the railroad in the afternoon. Once again, however, the reports are baffling. Apparently the 94th, 38th, and 2nd Ohio established a line to the left and front of the Chicago Board of Trade Battery. The 94th on the right; the left resting near the Nashville Pike. There they remained through the night of December 31.[35]

Shepard's Brigade

From the reports it seems clear that this brigade entered the cedars a short time after Beatty and Scribner. Initially, General Thomas ordered Rousseau to advance two brigades. Given the lapse of time necessary for those units to swing from line into column, the Regulars could not have moved for at least 30 to 40 minutes after the order was received. Assuming that Colonel Beatty's time of 9:00 a.m. is correct, Colonel Shepard could not have begun his movement much before 9:30 a.m.

The brigade line formed (before entering the woods) with the 15th; 16th; Guenther's Battery; 1st Battalion, 18th; 2nd Battalion, 18th; and the 19th from the right to left. The

column massed on the right, and with the 15th in the lead, swung onto the Pioneer Road.[36]

After advancing down the road a few hundred yards, the two lead battalions were quickly placed in line to the right.[37] The rest of the brigade halted while the 15th and 16th moved off into the woods.[38] Sending word for Maj. John King of the 15th to command the right, Colonel Shepard rode back to the road to bring up the rest of the brigade. During his absence, however, the battery and brigade had been ordered to fall back by General Rousseau.[39]

In his memoirs, Lt. Frederick Phisterer, Adjutant, 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry, stated that shortly after starting he saw General Thomas, Colonel Shepard and Lieutenant Guenther in consultation. Ten minutes after halting, the order came to retreat and the battery, supposedly in front of his battalion, could not be found.[40]

Volunteering to go to the front to find the artillery, Lieutenant Phisterer followed the fork of the wood road leading north. Riding to the sound of the guns, he soon found Maj. A. J. Slemmer, commander of the hard pressed 16th Infantry. Communicating the order to withdraw to the major, Lieutenant Phisterer "did not stand on the order of going but went." Coming our of the woods, he found his battalion drawn up on the left of Guenther's battery, near the railroad. For

this brave act, which probably saved the 15th and 16th, Lieutenant Phisterer was awarded the Medal of Honor.[41]

The 19th, being last in column, had barely gotten started when the order to withdraw was received. In his after-action report, Capt. James B. Mulligan recounted that the 19th accompanied the battery back to the pike.[42] Lieutenant Guenther, however, stated that the battery took position "in the open field, which it previously left," and does not mention any supporting infantry.[43] Approximately the same time, 1st Lt. George Estep, 8th Indiana Battery, noted that his battery, which had taken position between the the pike and the railroad, just to the left of the 1st Michigan Battery, was supported on the left by, "the Nineteenth Regiment (regulars)."[44]

All of this leads to the conclusion that, contrary to the reports and excepting the activities of the 15th and 16th, the first deployment of the Regular brigade was confused and fragmented. In justice to the brigade, it must be noted that there was a breakdown in the command structure. This was compounded by the chaos to the front and flanks of the battalions.

General Rousseau, though faced with a difficult and vague assignment, cannot escape censure. According to Lt. Alfred Pirtle, division Ordnance Officer, he saw General Rousseau

gallop from the cedars before the infantry elements of the division emerged. Lieutenant Pirtle gives this version of the story:

> A battery walking their horses at regular intervals, caught my eye as they debouched from the cedars, right in front of me, which I recognized as the First Michigan..., At the same moment General Rousseau followed by a single orderly, advanced at a gallop from the cedars.[45]

Because the 1st Michigan was ordered to the rear about the outset of the advance, it is obvious that General Rousseau was not far behind. This would in part account for Colonel Beatty's brigade being left behind and the confusion of the Regulars. Meanwhile the 15th and 16th found rough going in the woods.

The 15th and 16th in the Cedars

After moving off the Pioneer Road and forming line, the 15th on the right and the 16th on the left, skirmishers were detached to probe the dense woods. Advancing some 400 yards to the front Capt. Henry Keteltas' company of the 15th and 1st Lt. W. H. Bartholomew's company (B) of the 16th were almost immediately pounced on by a large body of advancing Rebels. Falling back on the battalions, the Confederates close on their heels, the fight was immediately taken up by the battle line. This stand did not last long, the 15th began giving way before the, "vastly superior numbers of the enemy."[46]

The two isolated units were struck by the Confederate brigade of Brig. Gen. James Rains. This mixed brigade of Georgians, Tennesseans, and North Carolinians had, unknowingly, stumbled onto the extreme right of Rousseau's extended line. After flushing the skirmishers, the 3rd and 9th Georgia battalions pushed on to engage the Union battle line. The 11th Tennessee and 29th North Carolina regiments passed to the right of the Regulars into the cotton field, the first Rebels to emerge from the cedars.[47]

The fierce combat in the woods, and the timely arrival of Lieutenant Phisterer made it obvious that the 15th and 16th were without hope of support. Flanked on the right, the disordered Regulars rushed to the left and rear through a gap between the 6th Ohio and 36th Indiana Regiments of Col. William Grose's brigade of Brig. Gen. John M. Palmer's division. The volunteers had taken position about 200 yards into the woods, as soon as the Regulars had passed down the Pioneer Road.[48]

The flight of the 15th confused the line of the 36th Indiana Regulars, as they passed "out between my left and the right of the 6th Ohio."[49] After delivering a few volleys, the volunteers were hard on the heels of the Regulars as they sought to gain the security of the batteries, now wheeled toward the oncoming Rebels.[50] The first Confederate onslaught was beaten back by the combined fire of the batteries, and the

infantry rallied along the pike.

The 15th and 16th rejoined the brigade just as a second and stronger attack by the rest of McCown's division commenced from the front and right.[51] After this attack was crushed, the brigade was finally drawn together and positioned behind Guenther's and Loomis' batteries between the railroad and the Nashville Pike.[52]

Artillery Positions

As has already been noted, neither of the division's batteries came into action in the woods. Both however, did arrive in the open field in time to help repulse the Rebels of Rains' brigade. Lieutenant Guenther unlimbered his guns in the cotton field;[53] Lieutenant Van Pelt ordered his Parrott rifles to the high ground between the pike and the railroad.[54] After the initial attack was driven back, Guenther retired his battery to the pike and took position to the right of Van Pelt.[55]

The attack of McNair's brigade was met by both batteries. In his account, Capt. William A. Cotton of the 30th Arkansas Infantry described the scene, "they [the Federals] had rallied and stood in line of battle in rear of a most powerful battery, which was planted on a hill commanding the country for some distance on their side."[56] Captain Cotton's regiment charged directly on this battery. The heavy fire of canister

broke his line, and wounded the color bearer. The flag was later recovered by the 2nd Ohio Volunteers, along with thirty Rebel prisoners.[57]

After this contest, the two batteries remained near the same position. From the commanding elevation, they helped repulse the subsequent efforts of Bragg's troops to break the line.

Summary of Early Morning Actions

It should be obvious, from the foregoing accounts, that Rousseau's division did not fight nor withdraw from the cedars as one compact unit. The confused, fluid situation and dense woodland made unified action impossible. Added factors include conflicting orders, poor communication, and General Rousseau's apparent early personal retreat.

Colonel Beatty's brigade deserves credit for retarding the Confederate advance on the right of Sheridan's scattered troops. His stubborn resistance allowed the rest of the division to retire in some semblance of order. This brigade paid a high price for their stubbornness. A total of 389 officers and men were lost at Stones River, the majority during the morning fight in the cedars.[58]

For Shepard's brigade the worst was yet to come.

The Regulars Return to the Cedars

Through the efforts of the batteries and rallied infantry

along the pike, the first Confederate assaults were sent reeling into the woods. The backbone of the new line, formed by the guns, allowed the soft masses of infantry to solidify. The first crisis had passed.

The timely arrival of Brig. Gen. Horatio Van Cleve's division to shore up the right, gave General Rousseau time to reorder the fragments of his command.[59] While Beatty was still fighting his way out of the woods, Shepard's Regulars were reformed, and Scribner began gathering up his scattered regiments. Attention then turned to the line on the south edge of the cedar brake where Negley and Palmer were heavily pressed by renewed Confederate assaults. The first time Rousseau's men went into the cedars it was to shore-up Negley's lines; now they must return to secure their escape.[60]

Just before noon, Colonel Shepard threw his brigade to the front. Advancing along the railroad and the Nashville Pike, the battalions formed "front into line on the left company,"[61] then filed across the field by the right flank and fronted into line about 50 yards in the woods.[62]

The battalions formed from right to left: 15th; 19th; 16th; 1st Battalion, 18th U.S.; and 2nd Battalion, 18th. Though Guenther's battery had accompanied the brigade, across the field, theposition was deemed too hazardous and the guns retired to the rising ground along the railroad.[63] With

Guenther's and the other batteries to their rear, the Regulars were committed to a standup, infantry fight with the oncoming Rebel hosts.

A mass of fugitives continued to stream through and around the battalions; then a lull, as the last few hurried past. Within a few brief minutes, the onrushing enemy was sighted through the dark cedars. Believing their quarry in full flight, the Rebels came on in full pursuit, until a blazing "fire by file" staggered their ragged lines.[64]

Pvt. Ruben Jones of the 19th U.S. gave a graphic description of the fight in a letter to his sister dated January 9, 1863:

> We poured such an enearing [sic] shower of bullets into their advancing columns, they returned the fire...we were only 100 feet apart in the "dark cedar woods" -- they couldn't drive us it was too mutch [sic] for flesh and blood...in another minute the Regulars were alone.[65]

The Regulars stood in the path of two Confederate brigades: Brig. Gen. A. P. Stewart's and Brig. Gen. Patton Anderson's. The fight was brief but ferocious. Col. Oscar F. Strahl of the consolidated 4th and 5th Tennessee Volunteers gives testimony from the other side, "The slaughter of the enemy was very great just at the edge of the glade, as they were slow to leave the timber and our men were close upon them, and every shot did its work."[66]

In their after action reports, the Confederates confirm the

position of Shepard's brigade. Col. F. M. Walker of the 19th Tennessee Infantry wrote, "The marks on the arms and equipment... as well as the statements of prisoners captured, show conclusively that the brigade or division which we fought was regular troops."[67] General Stewart mentioned, "Some of prisoners and wounded men stated that they belonged to the Sixteenth, Seventeeth [sic], and Eighteenth Regulars."[68]

Within 20 minutes, Colonel Shepard lost almost one half of his brigade. The loss was especially heavy in officers, with four killed and 18 wounded; among the killed, Maj. S. D. Carpenter, 19th Infantry; wounded included Majors Slemmer and King.[69]

The body of Major Carpenter was borne from the field by Pvt. Joseph Prentice, Co. E, 19th U.S. Infantry. Private Prentice described his action:

> We advanced down a field with woods on each side. The enemy had advanced and was in the woods although we did not know it. They opened a devastating fire and we retreated at a run. I saw the Major's horse pass us. A great cry went up and a call was made for volunteers to go back for the Major. I ran back and found him. I got him on my back for he was a heavy man. As I ran back the enemy kept shooting at us. I felt two bullets strike him while he was on my back. When I got back to our lines and put him down, he was dead. I was a hero for a day.[70]

Recognition for this brave act was not forthcoming, but in 1884, after the case was reopened, and facts verified, Private Prentice was awarded the Medal of Honor.[71]

The brigade could not long withstand the sheer mass of the

oncoming attack. Fire came from right, left, and center, and as a Rebel line began coiling around his flanks, Colonel Shepard ordered retreat. The retreat, alluded to by Private Prentice, was given a bit more dignified description in the official report as being "with much order as was desirable."[72] With the front now unmasked, the batteries along the railroad threw a storm of shot, shell, case, and canister into the emerging gray line. The iron hail once again halted the Rebel drive. The center of Rosecrans' line was now safe.

Summary of Casualties

Rousseau's division took but a minor part in the fighting of the following three days. The loss had been so heavy that, with the exception of Colonel Starkweather's brigade, the division was shattered. The three brigades engaged on the morning of December 31, carried an effective strength of 4,678 men,[73] total casualties numbered 1,309 or 28%.[74]

The loss is especially terrible when it is realized that it mostly occurred within three and one-half hours. The Regulars, alone, took almost one-half of the division's loss, and had the highest casualty rate of any brigade in the army at 41%. Truly a victory dearly won.

Significance to Park Resources

The story of Rousseau's division is significant to the interpretation of Stones River National Battlefield. The park

contains almost all of the ground described in the preceding report. The Pioneer Road is still traceable, and could be incorporated into the hiking tour. The two incidents that resulted in the awarding of the Medal of Honor provide human interest and personal drama.

In a larger sense, the stubborn fight by Beatty's brigade, prevented the destruction of Sheridan's and Negley's divisions. His delaying action slowed the movement of Cleburne's brigades to the right and rear of the defensive line along the Wilkinson Pike.

The fight of the 15th and 16th U.S. broke the impetus of Rains' brigade, the first Confederate unit to emerge from the woods. Later, the brigade of Regulars fought heroically to allow their comrades' escape from the center glade. The work of Guenther and Loomis' batteries along the railroad defending the improvised line, played a significant part in the rescue of Rosecrans' army from defeat.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 177 (cited hereinafter as O. R.).

[2]Ibid., p. 393.

[3]Ibid., p. 377; John Beatty, Memoirs of a Volunteer, edited by Harvey S. Ford (New York, 1946), p. 153.

[4]Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153.

[5]O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 383, 394, and 401.

[6]Ibid., p. 373; Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153.
(It is difficult to pinpoint the precise time of the movement. Most evidence indicates that General Rosecrans was informed of the rout of the right flank between 8-8:30 a.m. The reports of Rousseau and his officers, as well as other accounts, do not mention the presence of disorganized troops near the Nashville Pike when they were ordered to reinforce Negley.)

[7]O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 383.

[8]Ibid., p. 394 and 401.

[9]Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153.

[10]O. R., Series I, Volume XX, pt. 1, pp. 383 and 387.

[11]Ibid., pp. 394, 399, 401, and 405; Frederick Phisterer, "Personal Memoir," typewritten exerpt, Regimental File, Stones River National Battlefield, p. 52. (For clarity and brevity, the battalion designations of the Regular regiments will be shortened to the regimental number, except where used to differentiate the two battalions of the 18th U.S. Also, the more familiar term "battery" will be used when referring to regular artillery units, instead of "company.")

[12]Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153.

[13]S. F. Horrall, History of the Forty-Second Indiana Volunteer Infantry (Chicago, 1892), p. 167. (The Confederate formation engaged at this point was probably Brig. Gen. Lucius Polk's brigade, of Maj. Gen. Patrick R. Cleburne's division. See O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 854.

[14]William P. McDowell, "The Fifteenth Kentucky," The Southern Bivouac, Vol. II, June 1886 to May 1887 (Louisville, 1887), p. 250.

[15]Horrall, 42nd Indiana, p. 148; Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153.

[16]Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153.

[17]O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 853-54.

[18]Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153; Horrall, 42nd Indiana, p. 168.

[19]O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 846-47, 854, and 898-99.

[20]Beatty, Memoirs, pp. 154-55.

[21]O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 383.

[22]Ibid., pp. 383 and 387.

[23]Ibid., pp. 386 and 388.

[24]Ibid., pp. 383 and 390.

[25]Ibid., p. 388.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., p. 386.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., p. 854.

[30]Ibid., p. 390.

[31]Beatty, Memoirs, p. 154.

[32]O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 390.

[33]Ibid., p. 386.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid., pp. 384, 386, and 388.

[36]Ibid., p. 394.

[37]Ibid., p. 399.

[38]Phisterer, "Memoir," p. 52.

[39] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 394.

[40] Phisterer, "Memoir," p. 52.

[41] Ibid.

[42] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 405.

[43] Ibid., p. 382.

[44] Ibid., p. 476.

[45] Alfred Pirtle, "Donelson's Charge at Stones River," The Southern Bivouac, Vol. II, June 1886 to May 1887, pp. 768-69. (In this mistitled article, Liuetanant Pirtle gives a vivid description ofthe repulse of McNair's brigade by Loomis' and Guenther's batteries. His position of observation wason the site now occupied by the National Cemetery.)

[46] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 400-401.

[47] Ibid., p. 939; Robert B. Vance, "Twenty-Ninth Regiment," Histories of the Several Regiments from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-65, Vol. II, edited by Walter Clark (Goldsboro, NC, 1901), pp. 489-90.

[48] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 560,567, and 570.

[49] Ibid., p. 567.

[50] Ibid., p. 567 and 570.

[51] Phisterer, "Memoir," p. 53.

[52] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 390-95.

[53] Ibid., p. 382.

[54] Pirtle, "Attack," p. 769.

[55] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 382.

[56] Ibid., p. 954.

[57] Ibid., pp. 387 and 954. (Though the flag of the 2nd Arkansas Regiment was claimed as captured by the battery that regiment did not lose its colors at Stones River.)

[58] Ibid., p. 210; Beatty, Memoirs, pp. 154-55.

[59] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 378.

[60] Ibid., p. 408.

[61] Phisterer, "Memoir," p. 54.

[62] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 395-97, and 401.

[63] Ibid., p. 395.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ruben Jones to his sister, January 9, 1863, Regimental File, Stones River National Battlefield.

[66] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 727.

[67] Ibid., p. 729.

[68] Ibid., p. 726.

[69] Ibid., pp. 396 and 398.

[70] Joseph R. Prentice Papers, Regimental File, Stones River National Battlefield. (Private Prentice's medal is on exhibit in the park museum.)

[71] Ibid.

[72] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 395.

[73] Ibid., p. 200.

[74] Ibid., pp. 200 and 210.

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The division of Brig. Gen. Lovell H. Rousseau was composed of four brigades:

1st Brigade--Col. Benjamin F. Scribner

- 38th Indiana Infantry
- 2nd Ohio Infantry
- 33rd Ohio Infantry
- 94th Ohio Infantry
- 10th Wisconsin Infantry

2nd Brigade--Col. John Beatty

- 42nd Indiana Infantry
- 88th Indiana Infantry
- 15th Kentucky Infantry
- 3rd Ohio Infantry
- 1st Michigan Battery (Lt. George W. Van Pelt)

3rd Brigade--Col. John Starkweather

- 24th Illinois Infantry
- 79th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 1st Wisconsin Infantry

4th Brigade--Lt. Col. Oliver L. Shepard

- 15th U.S. Infantry, 1st Battalion
- 16th U.S. Infantry, 1st Battalion and Co. B., 2nd Battalion
- 18th U.S. Infantry, 2nd Battalion and Companies A & D, 3rd Battalion
- 19th U.S. Infantry, 1st Battalion
- 5th U.S. Artillery, Co. H (Lt. Francis L. Guenther)[1]

(Colonel Starkweather's brigade did not arrive on the field until the night of December 31.)[2]

Initial Position

Rousseau's division formed the reserve of Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas' Center Wing of the Army of the Cumberland. On the

morning of December 31, the division was in bivouacked along the Nashville Pike north of the three mile post.[3] At approximately 6:00 a.m. the lead elements moved south on the pike about one mile. The division formed line of battle, brigade front, to the right of the pike in the cotton field.[4]

The order placed Beatty in the front line, Scribner behind him and Shepard third.[5]

Movement to the Front

Between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m., Rousseau was ordered to move two of his brigades into the cedars to support the divisions of Brig. Gen. James Negley and Brig. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan.[6] Beatty's brigade, followed by Scribner, swung into column and advanced to the front of a narrow road cut through the cedar brake by the Pioneer Brigade on the previous day.[7] Shepard's brigade was committed a short time afterwards, about 9:30 a.m.[8]

Beatty's brigade marched down the road and deployed to the right.[9] Colonel Scribner, after detaching and sending the 2nd and 33rd Ohio regiments back to the cotton field to support the artillery, also shifted to the right, and formed a line of battle "near the Wilkinson Pike" with his remaining three regiments.[10] Shepard deployed only the battalions of the 15th and 16th regiments. The 18th and 19th remained near the road, and were almost immediately ordered to withdraw to

the cotton field and subsequently took position along the embankment of the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad.[11]

Exact regimental positions are hard to determine, but in general the deployed lines faced west, slightly in echelon, with Beatty on the left, Scribner in the center, and the two battalions of regulars to the right. There is no indication that these lines were in sight of each other, much less mutually supporting.

Beatty's Brigade

Beatty's brigade formed an extended line with dense cedars on either flank and open woods to the front.[12] The regiments were spaced about 75 to 100 yards apart, the 15th Kentucky on the right. Temporary breastworks were built from fallen timber. Within ten minutes or so, an advancing Confederate line was engaged by the right and right center of the brigade.[13]

The 15th Kentucky opened on the Rebels who returned a devastating volley that killed Col. James B. Foreman.[14] The regiment broke and fled, forcing Beatty to shift his front to the right and rear. From this position, the three unshaken regiments were able to resist the onslaught.[15] The Rebels advanced again and "after a fierce struggle lasting from forty to sixty minutes, we [Beatty] succeed in repelling this also." While this action was in progress, Beatty learned that the

rest of the division, including his battery, had withdrawn from his right.

When General Rousseau ordered his brigade into line, Colonel Beatty was enjoined to hold the position "till hell froze over." Discovering that his brigade was without support, the colonel concluded that "the contingency had arisen to which General Rousseau referred," and proceeded to extricate his regiments from the cedars.[16]

In this fight the Confederate force opposing Beatty was probably the brigade of Brig. Gen. Lucius Polk of Maj. Gen. Patrick R. Cleburne's division. General Polk's description of the action north of Wilkinson Pike closely follows that of the Federal sources. After an initial repulse, Polk renewed his attack on a Federal line in, "a strong position on a cedar hill". After an obstinate and bloody fight, the Federals were forced back.[17]

Colonel Beatty's decimated regiments reached the edge of the woods in fairly good order. There he found "a new line of battle," which he joined with his left. According to the historian of the 42nd Indiana Regiment this new line was reinforced by "General Hazen's [sic] brigade of regular troops."[18]

Another stubborn fight ensued. Beatty's men were pressed by the gray ranks of Polk, now reinforced by Brig. Gen. S.A.M.

Woods' brigade. General Woods reported that in this fight, "the slaughter seemed to be greater than any other."[19]

This new line was quickly compromised. Out of Colonel Beatty's sight to the left, a renewed assault by a fresh Confederate line under Brig. Gen. A. P. Stewart cracked the Regular brigade. As this line crumbled, Beatty's men reached the breaking point. A spreading panic engulfed officers and enlisted, and despite all his efforts to rally them, they bolted to gain the cover of the guns along the pike. Colonel Beatty was unable to reform his scattered troops until the early evening.[20]

Except for the 15th Kentucky, the brigade fought well. They were engaged continually for at least two hours. Their stubborn resistance prevented Cleburne's division from crushing the right and rear of Sheridan's and Negley's divisions.

Scribner's Brigade

It is difficult to reconcile the report of Colonel Scribner with the reports of his regimental commanders. There are so many contradictions that at times it is hard to believe that they fought in the same battle. The only major points agreed upon are that they followed Beatty on the Pioneer Road and then initially deployed to the right. Otherwise, little else is the same in the accounts. At most, the brigade was badly

confused and fragmented throughout the morning action.

The brigade was formed in line of battle in the open field behind Beatty. The regiments in order from right to left: 10th Wisconsin, 94th Ohio, 38th Indiana, 33rd Ohio,and 2nd Ohio. The two regiments on the right in the cedar thicket; the left resting on the Nashville Pike. About 9:00 a.m. the line swung into column behind Beatty onto the Pioneer Road.[21] Advancing a few hundred yards, the brigade came to a halt on the road and began deploying to the right. No sooner was the line formed when the two lead regiments were dispatched back to the cotton field to support Guenther's battery.[22]

Now left with three regiments, Scribner proceeded forward a short distance, until coming under artillery fire. At this juncture an order was received to withdraw the rest of the brigade to the cotton field. It is significant that none of the accounts mention sighting of engaging any Confederate infantry before falling back. Colonel Scribner and Col. S. A. Bassford, commanding the 94th Ohio, noted the artillery fire; the 38th Ohio and 10th Wisconsin reports state only that they maneuvered in the woods a short time until retiring to the right.[23]

Moving back toward the field, the right regiment (94th Ohio) emerged just as the defeated Rebels of Brig. Gen. Evander McNair's brigade were fleeing to the "northwest" [west].[24]

The 94th Ohio and the two right companies of the 38th Ohio opened fire. Colonel Scribner ordered an ill-advised pursuit of the enemy; the three regiments advancing a short distance. The 94th Ohio, still on open ground, halted at the edge of the timber. At this point the 94th was ordered (by someone other than Colonel Scribner) to fall back to the Nashville Pike. The regiment passed over a hill "near a battery" (probably the 26th Pennsylvania) and formed on the east side of the road.[25]

No sooner aligned along the pike, thou the regiment was directed to help bring up ammunition. Working at this detail for about 30 minutes, Colonel Bassford's regiment was sent by General Rousseau down the hill and into the woods. Receiving harassing fire from Confederate sharpshooters, the regiment fell back again to the field and flanked to the left and connected with the 38th Ohio.[26]

Meanwhile, the 38th Ohio and 10th Wisconsin continued on into the cedars following McNair's shattered troops to the south and west; the 10th Wisconsin on the left, the 38th Ohio on the right. It is not clear how the lines were formed, but they were at the least very confused. This is evidenced by the fact that Col. D. F. Griffin of the 38th was unaware that the 94th Ohio had disappeared from his right.[27]

The reduced brigade continued on a short distance until encountering a heavy mass of Negley's troops, which passed

through their ranks. A Confederate line was almost immediately spotted, the 38th Ohio having to wheel to the left to bring their muskets to bear.[28] This Rebel line was probably the brigade of Lucius Polk which, after driving the remnants of Beatty's troops to the edge of the cotton field, swung toward the right of the Yankee line in an attempt to flank the batteries along the Nashville Pike.[29]

The heavy Confederate fire and confusion caused the 10th Wisconsin to break to the left and rear where they stumbled on Beatty's brigade.[30] This is probably the "Michigan" regiment that Colonel Beatty mentions as joining his brigade during their withdrawl.[31] If so, then the 10th Wisconsin remained with them until the retreat to the railroad. They were not reunited with the rest of the brigade until the morning of January 1. [32]

The 38th Ohio, as well, was caught up in the overwhelming tide of fleeing Federals and advancing Rebels. According to Colonel Griffin, they changed front to support Negley, and delivered a few volleys. After a brief stand, they were ordered to retire to the pike by Colonel Scribner.[33] The presence of Colonel Scribner with this regiment could explain some of the omissions and contradictions in his report. Since the 38th was primarily engaged in the dense cedar woods, his field of vision was limited, and confined his knowledge of the

events to a narrow front.

The 38th Ohio emerged from the woods near the lines of Brig. Gen. Samuel Beatty, to the right of the Chicago Board of Trade Battery.[34]

Colonel Scribner was able to partially reform the brigade near the railroad in the afternoon. Once again, however, the reports are baffling. Apparently the 94th, 38th, and 2nd Ohio established a line to the left and front of the Chicago Board of Trade Battery. The 94th on the right; the left resting near the Nashville Pike. There they remained through the night of December 31.[35]

Shepard's Brigade

From the reports it seems clear that this brigade entered the cedars a short time after Beatty and Scribner. Initially, General Thomas ordered Rousseau to advance two brigades. Given the lapse of time necessary for those units to swing from line into column, the Regulars could not have moved for at least 30 to 40 minutes after the order was received. Assuming that Colonel Beatty's time of 9:00 a.m. is correct, Colonel Shepard could not have begun his movement much before 9:30 a.m.

The brigade line formed (before entering the woods) with the 15th; 16th; Guenther's Battery; 1st Battalion, 18th; 2nd Battalion, 18th; and the 19th from the right to left. The

column massed on the right, and with the 15th in the lead, swung onto the Pioneer Road.[36]

After advancing down the road a few hundred yards, the two lead battalions were quickly placed in line to the right.[37] The rest of the brigade halted while the 15th and 16th moved off into the woods.[38] Sending word for Maj. John King of the 15th to command the right, Colonel Shepard rode back to the road to bring up the rest of the brigade. During his absence, however, the battery and brigade had been ordered to fall back by General Rousseau.[39]

In his memoirs, Lt. Frederick Phisterer, Adjutant, 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry, stated that shortly after starting he saw General Thomas, Colonel Shepard and Lieutenant Guenther in consultation. Ten minutes after halting, the order came to retreat and the battery, supposedly in front of his battalion, could not be found.[40]

Volunteering to go to the front to find the artillery, Lieutenant Phisterer followed the fork of the wood road leading north. Riding to the sound of the guns, he soon found Maj. A. J. Slemmer, commander of the hard pressed 16th Infantry. Communicating the order to withdraw to the major, Lieutenant Phisterer "did not stand on the order of going but went." Coming our of the woods, he found his battalion drawn up on the left of Guenther's battery, near the railroad. For

this brave act, which probably saved the 15th and 16th, Lieutenant Phisterer was awarded the Medal of Honor.[41]

The 19th, being last in column, had barely gotten started when the order to withdraw was received. In his after-action report, Capt. James B. Mulligan recounted that the 19th accompanied the battery back to the pike.[42] Lieutenant Guenther, however, stated that the battery took position "in the open field, which it previously left," and does not mention any supporting infantry.[43] Approximately the same time, 1st Lt. George Estep, 8th Indiana Battery, noted that his battery, which had taken position between the the pike and the railroad, just to the left of the 1st Michigan Battery, was supported on the left by, "the Nineteenth Regiment (regulars)."[44]

All of this leads to the conclusion that, contrary to the reports and excepting the activities of the 15th and 16th, the first deployment of the Regular brigade was confused and fragmented. In justice to the brigade, it must be noted that there was a breakdown in the command structure. This was compounded by the chaos to the front and flanks of the battalions.

General Rousseau, though faced with a difficult and vague assignment, cannot escape censure. According to Lt. Alfred Pirtle, division Ordnance Officer, he saw General Rousseau

gallop from the cedars before the infantry elements of the division emerged. Lieutenant Pirtle gives this version of the story:

> A battery walking their horses at regular intervals, caught my eye as they debouched from the cedars, right in front of me, which I recognized as the First Michigan..., At the same moment General Rousseau followed by a single orderly, advanced at a gallop from the cedars.[45]

Because the 1st Michigan was ordered to the rear about the outset of the advance, it is obvious that General Rousseau was not far behind. This would in part account for Colonel Beatty's brigade being left behind and the confusion of the Regulars. Meanwhile the 15th and 16th found rough going in the woods.

The 15th and 16th in the Cedars

After moving off the Pioneer Road and forming line, the 15th on the right and the 16th on the left, skirmishers were detached to probe the dense woods. Advancing some 400 yards to the front Capt. Henry Keteltas' company of the 15th and 1st Lt. W. H. Bartholomew's company (B) of the 16th were almost immediately pounced on by a large body of advancing Rebels. Falling back on the battalions, the Confederates close on their heels, the fight was immediately taken up by the battle line. This stand did not last long, the 15th began giving way before the, "vastly superior numbers of the enemy."[46]

The two isolated units were struck by the Confederate brigade of Brig. Gen. James Rains. This mixed brigade of Georgians, Tennesseans, and North Carolinians had, unknowingly, stumbled onto the extreme right of Rousseau's extended line. After flushing the skirmishers, the 3rd and 9th Georgia battalions pushed on to engage the Union battle line. The 11th Tennessee and 29th North Carolina regiments passed to the right of the Regulars into the cotton field, the first Rebels to emerge from the cedars.[47]

The fierce combat in the woods, and the timely arrival of Lieutenant Phisterer made it obvious that the 15th and 16th were without hope of support. Flanked on the right, the disordered Regulars rushed to the left and rear through a gap between the 6th Ohio and 36th Indiana Regiments of Col. William Grose's brigade of Brig. Gen. John M. Palmer's division. The volunteers had taken position about 200 yards into the woods, as soon as the Regulars had passed down the Pioneer Road.[48]

The flight of the 15th confused the line of the 36th Indiana Regulars, as they passed "out between my left and the right of the 6th Ohio."[49] After delivering a few volleys, the volunteers were hard on the heels of the Regulars as they sought to gain the security of the batteries, now wheeled toward the oncoming Rebels.[50] The first Confederate onslaught was beaten back by the combined fire of the batteries, and the

infantry rallied along the pike.

The 15th and 16th rejoined the brigade just as a second and stronger attack by the rest of McCown's division commenced from the front and right.[51] After this attack was crushed, the brigade was finally drawn together and positioned behind Guenther's and Loomis' batteries between the railroad and the Nashville Pike.[52]

Artillery Positions

As has already been noted, neither of the division's batteries came into action in the woods. Both however, did arrive in the open field in time to help repulse the Rebels of Rains' brigade. Lieutenant Guenther unlimbered his guns in the cotton field;[53] Lieutenant Van Pelt ordered his Parrott rifles to the high ground between the pike and the railroad.[54] After the initial attack was driven back, Guenther retired his battery to the pike and took position to the right of Van Pelt.[55]

The attack of McNair's brigade was met by both batteries. In his account, Capt. William A. Cotton of the 30th Arkansas Infantry described the scene, "they [the Federals] had rallied and stood in line of battle in rear of a most powerful battery, which was planted on a hill commanding the country for some distance on their side."[56] Captain Cotton's regiment charged directly on this battery. The heavy fire of canister

broke his line, and wounded the color bearer. The flag was later recovered by the 2nd Ohio Volunteers, along with thirty Rebel prisoners.[57]

After this contest, the two batteries remained near the same position. From the commanding elevation, they helped repulse the subsequent efforts of Bragg's troops to break the line.

Summary of Early Morning Actions

It should be obvious, from the foregoing accounts, that Rousseau's division did not fight nor withdraw from the cedars as one compact unit. The confused, fluid situation and dense woodland made unified action impossible. Added factors include conflicting orders, poor communication, and General Rousseau's apparent early personal retreat.

Colonel Beatty's brigade deserves credit for retarding the Confederate advance on the right of Sheridan's scattered troops. His stubborn resistance allowed the rest of the division to retire in some semblance of order. This brigade paid a high price for their stubbornness. A total of 389 officers and men were lost at Stones River, the majority during the morning fight in the cedars.[58]

For Shepard's brigade the worst was yet to come.

The Regulars Return to the Cedars

Through the efforts of the batteries and rallied infantry

along the pike, the first Confederate assaults were sent reeling into the woods. The backbone of the new line, formed by the guns, allowed the soft masses of infantry to solidify. The first crisis had passed.

The timely arrival of Brig. Gen. Horatio Van Cleve's division to shore up the right, gave General Rousseau time to reorder the fragments of his command.[59] While Beatty was still fighting his way out of the woods, Shepard's Regulars were reformed, and Scribner began gathering up his scattered regiments. Attention then turned to the line on the south edge of the cedar brake where Negley and Palmer were heavily pressed by renewed Confederate assaults. The first time Rousseau's men went into the cedars it was to shore-up Negley's lines; now they must return to secure their escape.[60]

Just before noon, Colonel Shepard threw his brigade to the front. Advancing along the railroad and the Nashville Pike, the battalions formed "front into line on the left company,"[61] then filed across the field by the right flank and fronted into line about 50 yards in the woods.[62]

The battalions formed from right to left: 15th; 19th; 16th; 1st Battalion, 18th U.S.; and 2nd Battalion, 18th. Though Guenther's battery had accompanied the brigade, across the field, theposition was deemed too hazardous and the guns retired to the rising ground along the railroad.[63] With

Guenther's and the other batteries to their rear, the Regulars were committed to a standup, infantry fight with the oncoming Rebel hosts.

A mass of fugitives continued to stream through and around the battalions; then a lull, as the last few hurried past. Within a few brief minutes, the onrushing enemy was sighted through the dark cedars. Believing their quarry in full flight, the Rebels came on in full pursuit, until a blazing "fire by file" staggered their ragged lines.[64]

Pvt. Ruben Jones of the 19th U.S. gave a graphic description of the fight in a letter to his sister dated January 9, 1863:

> We poured such an enearing [sic] shower of bullets into their advancing columns, they returned the fire...we were only 100 feet apart in the "dark cedar woods" -- they couldn't drive us it was too mutch [sic] for flesh and blood...in another minute the Regulars were alone.[65]

The Regulars stood in the path of two Confederate brigades: Brig. Gen. A. P. Stewart's and Brig. Gen. Patton Anderson's. The fight was brief but ferocious. Col. Oscar F. Strahl of the consolidated 4th and 5th Tennessee Volunteers gives testimony from the other side, "The slaughter of the enemy was very great just at the edge of the glade, as they were slow to leave the timber and our men were close upon them, and every shot did its work."[66]

In their after action reports, the Confederates confirm the

position of Shepard's brigade. Col. F. M. Walker of the 19th Tennessee Infantry wrote, "The marks on the arms and equipment... as well as the statements of prisoners captured, show conclusively that the brigade or division which we fought was regular troops."[67] General Stewart mentioned, "Some of prisoners and wounded men stated that they belonged to the Sixteenth, Seventeeth [sic], and Eighteenth Regulars."[68]

Within 20 minutes, Colonel Shepard lost almost one half of his brigade. The loss was especially heavy in officers, with four killed and 18 wounded; among the killed, Maj. S. D. Carpenter, 19th Infantry; wounded included Majors Slemmer and King.[69]

The body of Major Carpenter was borne from the field by Pvt. Joseph Prentice, Co. E, 19th U.S. Infantry. Private Prentice described his action:

> We advanced down a field with woods on each side. The enemy had advanced and was in the woods although we did not know it. They opened a devastating fire and we retreated at a run. I saw the Major's horse pass us. A great cry went up and a call was made for volunteers to go back for the Major. I ran back and found him. I got him on my back for he was a heavy man. As I ran back the enemy kept shooting at us. I felt two bullets strike him while he was on my back. When I got back to our lines and put him down, he was dead. I was a hero for a day.[70]

Recognition for this brave act was not forthcoming, but in 1884, after the case was reopened, and facts verified, Private Prentice was awarded the Medal of Honor.[71]

The brigade could not long withstand the sheer mass of the

oncoming attack. Fire came from right, left, and center, and as a Rebel line began coiling around his flanks, Colonel Shepard ordered retreat. The retreat, alluded to by Private Prentice, was given a bit more dignified description in the official report as being "with much order as was desirable."[72] With the front now unmasked, the batteries along the railroad threw a storm of shot, shell, case, and canister into the emerging gray line. The iron hail once again halted the Rebel drive. The center of Rosecrans' line was now safe.

Summary of Casualties

Rousseau's division took but a minor part in the fighting of the following three days. The loss had been so heavy that, with the exception of Colonel Starkweather's brigade, the division was shattered. The three brigades engaged on the morning of December 31, carried an effective strength of 4,678 men,[73] total casualties numbered 1,309 or 28%.[74]

The loss is especially terrible when it is realized that it mostly occurred within three and one-half hours. The Regulars, alone, took almost one-half of the division's loss, and had the highest casualty rate of any brigade in the army at 41%. Truly a victory dearly won.

Significance to Park Resources

The story of Rousseau's division is significant to the interpretation of Stones River National Battlefield. The park

contains almost all of the ground described in the preceding report. The Pioneer Road is still traceable, and could be incorporated into the hiking tour. The two incidents that resulted in the awarding of the Medal of Honor provide human interest and personal drama.

In a larger sense, the stubborn fight by Beatty's brigade, prevented the destruction of Sheridan's and Negley's divisions. His delaying action slowed the movement of Cleburne's brigades to the right and rear of the defensive line along the Wilkinson Pike.

The fight of the 15th and 16th U.S. broke the impetus of Rains' brigade, the first Confederate unit to emerge from the woods. Later, the brigade of Regulars fought heroically to allow their comrades' escape from the center glade. The work of Guenther and Loomis' batteries along the railroad defending the improvised line, played a significant part in the rescue of Rosecrans' army from defeat.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 177 (cited hereinafter as O. R.).

[2]Ibid., p. 393.

[3]Ibid., p. 377; John Beatty, Memoirs of a Volunteer, edited by Harvey S. Ford (New York, 1946), p. 153.

[4]Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153.

[5]O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 383, 394, and 401.

[6]Ibid., p. 373; Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153.
(It is difficult to pinpoint the precise time of the movement. Most evidence indicates that General Rosecrans was informed of the rout of the right flank between 8-8:30 a.m. The reports of Rousseau and his officers, as well as other accounts, do not mention the presence of disorganized troops near the Nashville Pike when they were ordered to reinforce Negley.)

[7]O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 383.

[8]Ibid., p. 394 and 401.

[9]Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153.

[10]O. R., Series I, Volume XX, pt. 1, pp. 383 and 387.

[11]Ibid., pp. 394, 399, 401, and 405; Frederick Phisterer, "Personal Memoir," typewritten exerpt, Regimental File, Stones River National Battlefield, p. 52. (For clarity and brevity, the battalion designations of the Regular regiments will be shortened to the regimental number, except where used to differentiate the two battalions of the 18th U.S. Also, the more familiar term "battery" will be used when referring to regular artillery units, instead of "company.")

[12]Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153.

[13]S. F. Horrall, History of the Forty-Second Indiana Volunteer Infantry (Chicago, 1892), p. 167. (The Confederate formation engaged at this point was probably Brig. Gen. Lucius Polk's brigade, of Maj. Gen. Patrick R. Cleburne's division. See O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 854.

[14]William P. McDowell, "The Fifteenth Kentucky," The Southern Bivouac, Vol. II, June 1886 to May 1887 (Louisville, 1887), p. 250.

[15]Horrall, 42nd Indiana, p. 148; Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153.

[16]Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153.

[17]O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 853-54.

[18]Beatty, Memoirs, p. 153; Horrall, 42nd Indiana, p. 168.

[19]O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 846-47, 854, and 898-99.

[20]Beatty, Memoirs, pp. 154-55.

[21]O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 383.

[22]Ibid., pp. 383 and 387.

[23]Ibid., pp. 386 and 388.

[24]Ibid., pp. 383 and 390.

[25]Ibid., p. 388.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid., p. 386.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., p. 854.

[30]Ibid., p. 390.

[31]Beatty, Memoirs, p. 154.

[32]O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 390.

[33]Ibid., p. 386.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid., pp. 384, 386, and 388.

[36]Ibid., p. 394.

[37]Ibid., p. 399.

[38]Phisterer, "Memoir," p. 52.

[39] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 394.

[40] Phisterer, "Memoir," p. 52.

[41] Ibid.

[42] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 405.

[43] Ibid., p. 382.

[44] Ibid., p. 476.

[45] Alfred Pirtle, "Donelson's Charge at Stones River," The Southern Bivouac, Vol. II, June 1886 to May 1887, pp. 768-69. (In this mistitled article, Liuetanant Pirtle gives a vivid description ofthe repulse of McNair's brigade by Loomis' and Guenther's batteries. His position of observation wason the site now occupied by the National Cemetery.)

[46] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 400-401.

[47] Ibid., p. 939; Robert B. Vance, "Twenty-Ninth Regiment," Histories of the Several Regiments from North Carolina in the Great War 1861-65, Vol. II, edited by Walter Clark (Goldsboro, NC, 1901), pp. 489-90.

[48] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 560,567, and 570.

[49] Ibid., p. 567.

[50] Ibid., p. 567 and 570.

[51] Phisterer, "Memoir," p. 53.

[52] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 390-95.

[53] Ibid., p. 382.

[54] Pirtle, "Attack," p. 769.

[55] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 382.

[56] Ibid., p. 954.

[57] Ibid., pp. 387 and 954. (Though the flag of the 2nd Arkansas Regiment was claimed as captured by the battery that regiment did not lose its colors at Stones River.)

[58] Ibid., p. 210; Beatty, Memoirs, pp. 154-55.

[59] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 378.

[60] Ibid., p. 408.

[61] Phisterer, "Memoir," p. 54.

[62] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, pp. 395-97, and 401.

[63] Ibid., p. 395.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ruben Jones to his sister, January 9, 1863, Regimental File, Stones River National Battlefield.

[66] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 727.

[67] Ibid., p. 729.

[68] Ibid., p. 726.

[69] Ibid., pp. 396 and 398.

[70] Joseph R. Prentice Papers, Regimental File, Stones River National Battlefield. (Private Prentice's medal is on exhibit in the park museum.)

[71] Ibid.

[72] O. R., Series I, Vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 395.

[73] Ibid., p. 200.

[74] Ibid., pp. 200 and 210.