

## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMER OF '64

Lee's Army, still consisting of the three corps under Lt. Generals Longstreet, Ewell and Hill were all now back with him in Virginia. Longstreet's Corps at Gordonsville was approximately one day's march from the other two which were along the Rapidan River. Longstreet's First Corps was the smallest of the three with about 10,000 men while the Ewell's Second Corps numbered about 17,000 and A. P. Hill's Third corps could muster about 22,000. With cavalry and artillery included, Lee's total strength was about 64,000 men while Meade's Army could now count approximately 117,000 men of all arms.(1) This number would total the most Lee would have while Grant could drain on an almost unlimited supply of fresh draftees.

A letter dated April 24, 1864 from Lee's Adjutant, Col. Walter Taylor, to his sweetheart, Bette, states, "A portion of our family [underlined in his letter] has been returned to us, Old Pete Longstreet is with us and all seems propitious."(2) Another proof that there was no problem between Generals Lee, nor his staff, and Longstreet over Gettysburg or any other instances. The "problem" was manufactured after Lee's death by those anxious to put the blame for Gettysburg on Longstreet.

One reason for the low count of Longstreet's Corps is that Pickett's Division of approximately 5,000 men and who had not accompanied "Old Pete" to Tennessee and was now with the force below Richmond and would not rejoin the First Corps until late in the coming campaign.(3) In addition to his two old divisions, Longstreet did have part of a division commanded by Brig. Gen. Bushrod Johnson. These troops were part of Bragg's Army that got caught with Longstreet at Knoxville and could not get back to Bragg so they accompanied "Old Pete" back to Virginia. Another reason for the low number was the losses in men due to the hard fighting of this corps through Chancellorsville, Gettysburg and Tennessee the past year.

The Federal Army was scattered north of the Rapidan and south of the Rappahannock River with Grant and Meade's headquarters being located in Culpepper City (Culpepper Court House). See the map at the end of this chapter.

"Dutch" Longstreet did not have major generals leading the two divisions that were with him since he had sent McLaws away and the one-legged Hood was in Georgia, assigned to Joe Johnston's Army of Tennessee at Dalton. Many in the army felt that Brig. General Wofford deserved to be promoted to major general; however, Lee and President Davis felt that since Wofford had not attended West Point, the Georgian was not as qualified as some, especially the Virginians.

Grant had organized his army into three corps under Meade. They consisted of the II Corps which was commanded by Mjr. General Hancock; the V Corps, lead by Mjr. General Warren (the savior of Gettysburg) and the VI, by Mjr. General "Uncle John" Sedgwick. He also had the IX Corps as a separate command. It was led by our old friend, Mjr. General Ambrose Burnside. It appears that General Burnside always turned up wherever the Legion went. In total, Grant had approximately 130,000 men when Burnside's Corps was included. The Legion had fought against Hancock's and Sedgwick's troops at Gettysburg, Chancellorsville and Salem Church. Sedgwick's VI Corps troops were also well remembered by Company B from Crampton's Gap.

The organization of the Confederate Army directly affecting Company B was as follows:

Army of Northern Virginia-	General Robert E. Lee
First Corps-	Lt. General James Longstreet
Kershaw's Division-	Brig. General Joseph Kershaw
Wofford's Brigade-	Brig. General W. T. Wofford

Cobb's Legion- Colonel Luther Glenn(?) or  
Colonel C.C. Sanders(?)  
Company B- Captain William Walker McDaniel  
(see the Appendix for listing of Majors and Lieutenants of Cobb's Legion)

At midnight on May 3, 1864, General Grant put his army, the largest ever assembled on the American continent, into motion. The summer campaign of 1864 had begun in Virginia and Sherman would follow the leader in Georgia, facing "Little Joe" Johnston's Army of Tennessee at Dalton. Led by their cavalry, the three Union corps crossed the Rapidan at lower fords on hastily built bridges and began their marches toward the Wilderness and hopefully on to Richmond.

The Wilderness is a mass of second-growth scrub oaks, pines and other undergrowth so thick that it is difficult to maneuver through. Most of the virgin growth had been cut away to make charcoal for the nearby iron furnaces. A few small farms were scattered here and there which were, for the most part, abandoned. The Wilderness is traversed by two almost parallel, main roads, the Orange Plank Road and the Orange Court House Turnpike or, better known by their more common names, the Plank Road and the Turnpike. These are the same roads that the Legion fought along closer on towards Fredericksburg during the battle of Chancellorsville-Salem Church. The Wilderness covers a fifteen or more mile square area and lies almost midway between Orange Court House and Fredericksburg. The Brock Road and the Germanna Ford Road cut the above-mentioned roads at right angles, crossing the Turnpike at Wilderness Tavern and the Plank Road about two miles to the south of the tavern. See the map at the end of this chapter.

General Lee learned of the Federal advance and had his army in motion by noon on the 4th in order to meet the attack. He sent Ewell's Second Corps marching along the Turnpike and A. P. Hill's Third along the Plank Road which ran south of the Turnpike.

The Legion and the Bowdon Volunteers were near Gordonsville at Mechanicsville approximately 30 miles away to the southwest of the future battle site in the Wilderness along with the rest of Longstreet's Corps. Early on the morning of May 5, Kershaw's Division with the Legion started toward the battle which had begun on the 4th by Ewell and Hill's soldiers. Grant, who now realized that a full-scale battle was eminent, abandoned his plan to turn the Confederates' right without coming up on the entrenched lines along Mine Run, posted his troops in defensive positions accordingly and called for Burnside to join him.

With the aid of the local sheriff, who had been raised in the Wilderness and knew every trail and woods road, the Legion and Kershaw's men followed the sheriff's shortcuts through woods, fields and back woods roads and had marched approximately 28 miles by 5:00 PM. This was one of the many difficult marches the men of Cobb's Legion endured during the war and probably one of the fastest with much of it cross-country.

They fell out for supper and a rest with orders that they would march again at midnight. The promise was kept and, promptly at that hour, they were on the march again through underbrush, briars and ditches throughout the dark night. They gained the Plank Road at dawn which made the marching much easier. Kershaw's Division was marching with his old brigade in the lead followed by Humphreys', then Wofford's with Bryan's bringing up the rear.(4) The troops had three days rations in their haversacks and 40 rounds of ammunition in their cartridge boxes with probably 20 more rounds in their pockets. They were ready for a fight although they were very tired from the long, difficult march of the day before and the night march just completed.

During the 5th, while the Legion was on its forced march, the battle was raging in the Wilderness between Grant's and Lee's forces. During the night of the 5th and the morning of the 6th, Union General Hancock had his II Corps troops ready to attack the division of R. H. Anderson of the Confederate Third Corps along the road that Kershaw, with the Legion, was approaching. Hill's Southern troops instead of entrenching had rested during the night.

After marching approximately two miles on the Plank Road, the men began seeing signs of the previous day's fight. There were field hospitals containing Hill's wounded from yesterday's fight as well as the wounded men of this morning who were already being transported or walking to the rear. They soon heard the sounds of Hancock's morning attack and hastened their march toward the sound. Longstreet was at that moment reporting his arrival to General Lee.(5)

At the crest of the hill, Kershaw deployed his men to receive the enemy, the battle-hardened II Corps troops led by the great Hancock. These are the same men the Legion had fought so hard with at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg last year. Longstreet's line was deployed across the Plank Road with Kershaw's Division on the right and General Field's Division, formerly Hood's, on the left. Wofford's, with the Legion, would form in the tangled wilderness on Kershaw's far right and Bryan was held in reserve on the road in the rear. As they formed, they had to break rank to allow the fleeing Third Corps troops who had made only a brief, feeble defense to pass through. Once the men of the Third Corps had passed through and were out of the way, Longstreet ordered his brigades to advance to meet the Blue Coats of Hancock. The two collided and heavy fighting continued to beyond nine o'clock that morning. Hancock attempted to advance but was rather well held in check by the newly arrived veterans of "Old Pete's First Corps.

General Wofford had scouted out to his right and had become convinced that he could march his troops by the right flank to the cut of an unfinished railroad that was planned to run from Orange to Fredericksburg and attack the left flank of the Federal line. He took his proposal to Longstreet who got Lee's approval. Longstreet told Wofford, "Hit hard when you start but don't start until you are ready."(6)

Everything proceeded perfectly. General M. L. Smith, Lee's engineer, had been sent to determine exactly what Wofford's route would be and he led the march along the route he had selected. Longstreet sent three brigades led by Wofford's, with the Legion and Company B, to fall on Hancock's left rear.

Longstreet stated, "----started and not to lose time or distance, moved by inversion, Wofford leading, Wofford's favorite maneuver."(7) With Wofford's being the right of Longstreet's line, he therefore would lead the way, his favorite way of doing things.

It was by now about 10 o'clock as General Smith and Longstreet's Chief of Staff, Moxley Sorrel, led them, marching by the right flank, until they reached the unfinished railroad. Here they formed in line of battle facing north with "Tige" Anderson's Georgia Brigade on the right, Mahone's Virginia Brigade in the center and Wofford's Georgia Brigade on the left. We do not know how Wofford's Brigade was aligned but the Legion's usual position was the left regiment of the brigade which, if they occupied this position today, they would be the extreme left of the attacking forces. To support the flanking column, Longstreet's troops remaining on the Plank Road were to press the enemy hard in their front once the flank attack began.

The flanking movement was a complete surprise to Hancock and his men and met with perfect success. Longstreet said that it was "executed with rare zeal and intelligence." The enemy made a short stand and then fell back in utter collapse, with heavy losses, to a position about three quarters of a mile from the frontal attack. James Reynolds of the 16<sup>th</sup> Ga. of Wofford's Brigade, wrote that his regiment "drove them like a storm" while another member of the brigade wrote: "some few of them fired, and a good many of them ran, throwing down their guns as they went: some lay flat on the ground." This was some of the fiercest fighting of the war with both sides suffering heavily. The action by Wofford, with the Legion and Company B along, was probably the single most important action of the day and helped turn a possible defeat of General Lee's army into a victory or, at least, to another drawn battle.(8) After the war, the popular Hancock told Longstreet, his friend, "Your assault rolled us up like a wet blanket". He evidently was speaking of Wofford's flank attack.

This left only the Federal troops to the left of the road still holding and they soon, after the killing of their division commander, the millionaire General Wadsworth, gave way. The day had been saved. General Lee was greatly relieved and Longstreet and his officers were congratulating each other on the success.

Just then, some of Mahone's Virginia troops, coming back from Wofford's flank march and seeing the Federal troops giving way on the left of the road, crossed over to that side and got ahead of all the other Southern forces. They were trying to return to find their proper place in the line when they were mistaken for a counterattack by the enemy. The woods had been set on fire and with the dense smoke plus the underbrush and thick trees it was very difficult to tell friend from foe. They were fired on by their own comrades and they, thinking that they were being fired on by the enemy, returned the fire. Just at the very moment of this unfortunate occurrence, Longstreet and his staff plus Generals Kershaw and Jenkins with several of their staff and couriers, rode into this crossfire. Jenkins was mortally wounded and two of Kershaw's staff were killed and several others were wounded, including Longstreet who took a bullet through his neck and right shoulder. He was able to remain in the saddle but was soon helped to the ground by a companion. Kershaw fortunately was not hurt and was able to stop the shooting by calling out, "Friends!"(9) Some reports state that Gen. Wofford was among the group having returned from his successful flank attack. If he was present, he was not injured.

Soon General R. H. Anderson and General Lee came up and Anderson, as senior division commander, was given command of the wounded Longstreet's First Corps and would remain in command of it including Cobb's Legion and Company B until after the Valley campaign of 1864.

Longstreet, "The Bull-of-the-Woods", was shot by his own troops only a few miles from the spot where General "Stonewall" Jackson had met a similar fate. Longstreet, unlike Jackson, would survive his misfortune but it would be a slow and difficult recovery. Litter bearers carried "Old Pete" to the rear and then he was taken to a farm house hospital until he could be put aboard a train to Lynchburg. As soon as he was able, he went to Augusta, Georgia where he stayed for some time and then he went to friends at Union Point, Georgia. In October, five months after he was wounded, he returned to Richmond and was assigned the command of all the troops on the north side of the James River as well as Pickett's Division which was posted on the south side in Bermuda Hundred.

Company B had now lost their first captain, killed in Kentucky; their first major, killed at Gettysburg; their first colonel, killed at Fredericksburg; their division commander, exiled to Georgia by Longstreet and their corps commander who was disabled by a bullet from his own men. The attrition rate was alarming.

The fighting on the Confederate right, the section that Wofford and the Legion were involved with, had raged since sunrise and would continue until dusk. When his "Old War Horse" fell, General Lee took personal charge and thought it wise to halt all the advances on both sides of the road and to straighten his line which was broken in several areas. This adjustment took several hours, giving General Hancock time to collect his beaten troops and to get them into a strong defensive line. Lee and Anderson renewed the attack after this delay and the rest of the day was spent in battering the Federal defenses in a bitter but futile attempt. Wofford's Brigade, with Company B along, was involved on the right for the remainder of the day.

We believe that during the day Private James W. Carpenter of Company B was killed and 1st Lt. Ephriam Fouse was seriously wounded which necessitated his discharge. Several members were wounded and several captured. See the Appendix for details.

While this terrible fighting was going on all day long on Lee's right, the left, commanded by General Ewell with his favorite divisional commander, Jubal Early, was doing little if anything. Had this corps cooperated at the time Wofford's flank march routed Hancock, Grant's Army could well have been defeated and the summer of '64 would be a decidedly different story. General Lee rode to Ewell's sector and asked if there was not something "Old Baldy" could do to help relieve the pressure on the right. The one-legged Ewell did not believe there was. Late in the day, General John B. Gordon of Georgia and General Early's subordinate, did convince General Lee, over Ewell's and Early's objections, that he could get beyond the enemy's right and that Ewell and Early were wrong in believing Burnside's troops were where they could attack Gordon's troops as they made this movement. Lee was only too glad to allow Gordon to make the attempt. Gordon was successful in this movement but, by now, it was dark and was too late for them to continue.