

A DECISIVE LEVEL OF COMMAND:  
BRIGADE LEADERSHIP IN THE ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND, 1861-1864

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I dedicate this research to my parents, Paul and Barbara White.  
Thank you for all your unwavering support and encouragement.

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## ABSTRACT

The American Civil War is too often studied from the top down, focusing on the lives of army commanders and politicians. More recent scholarship has focused on the men in the ranks and their view of the war. Left out in this are the contributions made by mid-level brigade commanders. These men represented the core of the Civil War army's command structure. Brigades were large enough to act on their own and contained enough power and force to determine the outcome of engagements. This thesis focuses on four brigade commanders – William P. Carlin, Charles G. Harker, John C. Starkweather, and August Willich – and the commands they exercised during the conflict. Through training and drill these leaders shaped their men into soldiers. By learning to work within the framework of the army as a whole these men made it possible to maneuver and fight in large units. Their influence created solid, hard fighting units responsible for winning the war.

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## INTRODUCTION

The American Civil War was unique in the nation's military history. Recent scholarship examining the conflict offers new insight into the performance of Civil War armies, the conduct of battles, and the direction of strategic policies. Much of this scholarship focuses on the top leaders – men such as Grant, Sherman, and Lee – detailing how these men fought and won or lost the war.<sup>1</sup> Several studies focus on the creation and evolution of strategy and campaigns at the highest levels.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, other historians have shifted the focus down to lower-level combat leaders and to the soldiers they commanded. They examine how the war was fought down to the level of the private. As part of their examination, they note that the fighting methods of these commanders and their men developed from the citizen-soldier ideal of American history and the long-standing fear of large armies during peacetime. As historian Wayne Wei-siang Hsieh states, “for the most part, northerners and southerners entered the Civil War with a set of cultural expectations rooted in an Anglo-American martial tradition that had glorified the civic and military virtue of the

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<sup>1</sup> Ethan S. Rafuse, *McClellan's War: The Failure of Moderation in the Struggle for the Union* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), offers a detailed biography of George B. McClellan, locating the roots of his military policies in his strict Whig upbringing. Jean E. Smith, *Grant* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), offers a recent treatment of the most important Union general, detailing his life including his controversial presidency. Ethan Rafuse, *Robert E. Lee and the Fall of the Confederacy, 1863-1865* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), details the failure of Lee's efforts in the east, beginning with the high hopes of the summer of 1863 and following his unsuccessful campaign to defeat Grant. Rafuse focuses on the James River as being the vital strategic point of the Confederacy that Lee had to defend.

<sup>2</sup> Archer Jones, *Civil War Command and Strategy: The Process of Victory and Defeat* (New York: Free Press, 1992), and more recently, Donald Stoker, *The Grand Design: Strategy and the U.S. Civil War* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2010), offer thorough and detailed discussions of the overall strategic and operational goals for both sides, as well as the evolutionary process of this strategy throughout the course of the war. Winfield Scott's Anaconda Plan of blockading and securing the Mississippi River valley became Union policy by the summer of 1863.

studiously unprofessional citizen-soldier.”<sup>3</sup> This Anglo-American tradition was complicated by West Point. According to Hsieh, academy graduates represented, “actual professional expertise, measured by the same European standards that the old army used as professional models.”<sup>4</sup> This expertise, Hsieh continues, “had more than its fair share of inadequacies, but [the academy’s] simple recognition of the practical importance of specialized military knowledge set [the graduates] apart from their fellow countrymen.”<sup>5</sup> Together, Hsieh observes, the citizen-soldier tradition and West Point prepared the ground for fighting the war.

This combination of influences had been evolving since the end of the War of 1812. Following that conflict, the old army went through organizational changes. The war illustrated the need for a larger army with more regular infantry, cavalry, and artillery branches. To do this the country would need some sort of volunteer presence to fill out the army ranks when war threatened. At the same time, West Point needed to develop a doctrine for how to lead and deploy such troops. During this period, several tactical manuals were published by leading army men, notably Winfield Scott.<sup>6</sup> These manuals incorporated the differences between heavy and light infantry and the tactical evolution for both. They schooled commanders in training and maneuvering soldiers up to the battalion level. However, they did not discuss larger troop formations and gave, “very

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<sup>3</sup> Wayne Wei-siang Hsieh, *West Pointers and the Civil War: The Old Army in War and Peace* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 2.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 39.

little guidance on where and when to use individual tactical movements, leaving those decisions to the discretion of field commanders.”<sup>7</sup> If West Point attempted to systemize army practice, the academy did not discuss the process above small-scale command.

When the Civil War began, the demands of mass-army conflict forced West Point doctrine to adapt and modify citizen-soldier tradition to what was now large-scale war. This necessary adaptation placed tremendous pressure on lower-level commanders. This study will focus on brigade command in what initially was called the Army of the Ohio – later renamed the Army of the Cumberland. The army was the Union’s second largest and operated in the western theater.<sup>8</sup> It began as a collection of volunteer regiments recruited from counties and cities throughout the Midwest. But these regiments amounted simply to a large mass of disorganized recruits. To operate effectively, the men would have to be trained and then organized in units large enough to operate on a battlefield.

Brigades and brigade leaders were the key. Made up of several regiments, brigades were compact striking forces that had enough force to operate independently in certain situations, or in close concert and coordination with other units. Because of this, brigade commanders were integral to the everyday functioning of an army, carrying out

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>8</sup> Larry J. Daniel, *Days of Glory: The Army of the Cumberland, 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 430.

tactical and operational objectives and balancing the strict discipline of army life with commanding volunteer soldiers from a democratic society.<sup>9</sup>

Historian Gerald Prokopowicz's *All for the Regiment: The Army of the Ohio, 1861-1862*, discusses the problems of recruitment and training by focusing on the regiment. The core unit of Civil War armies, the regiment was, "a self-aware community, held together by bonds based on common geographic, social, cultural, or economic identities, strengthened by months of training and campaigning as a unit."<sup>10</sup> According to Prokopowicz, the early experiences of these men in camps of instruction forged a bond in contrast to the more abstract and larger units of brigade, division, or corps. As such, says Prokopowicz, the strong regimental affiliation often left soldiers feeling less attached to the army, or so attached to their regiment that it was the only source of identity.<sup>11</sup> He argues, "identification at the regimental level made these armies so elastic that they could not be broken, yet it also made them into awkward weapons that their leaders could not wield with decisive effect."<sup>12</sup> The new citizen-soldiers were able to adapt to this small, localized unit. However, Civil War combat was mass army combat.

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<sup>9</sup> Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), challenges the idea that technology revolutionized Civil War battlefields, concluding that lack of training, coordination, and reinforcement caused stalemate. Earl J. Hess, *The Rifle Musket in Civil War Combat: Reality and Myth* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), builds on Griffith's thesis and adds to the developing scholarship dealing with actual combat, examining the rifle's role throughout the war. Hess explores the ranges of fighting and typical activities on the firing line during battle.

<sup>10</sup> Gerald J. Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment: The Army of Ohio, 1861-1862* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

The unit of transition to this mass army was the brigade. Although only a step above the local attachments of the regiment, the larger unit represented usable force in itself, and the organ of coordination with larger units. Certainly, as Prokopowicz states, “units of brigade size or larger lacked organic ties of locality, ethnicity, or even common statehood,” but this meant that brigade “cohesion and efficiency depended primarily on the quality of their leadership.”<sup>13</sup> Because, “the brigades of the Army of the Ohio were not extensions of specific civilian communities,” and did not, “develop institutional identities of their own,” the brigade commanders became the key figures who moved the men from recruits and soldiers to being a usable fighting force.<sup>14</sup>

This thesis examines four of these all-important individuals. William Passmore Carlin, Charles Garrison Harker, John Converse Starkweather, and August Willich were four brigade commanders from the Army of the Cumberland, exemplifying this largely unheralded body of commanders who turned men and regiments into usable force. All four joined up early in the conflict, training their men and performing admirably with the Army of the Ohio in the battles of Shiloh and Perryville, the portion of the war to be discussed in chapter one. All four commanders were retained during the two reorganizations preceding the battles of Stones River and Chickamauga, which will be examined in chapter two. They continued service through the Battle of Chattanooga and finally began to leave the scene of action during Sherman’s Atlanta Campaign. Willich was severely wounded at the Battle of Resaca and Harker was mortally wounded and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 13.

died only days after the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain. These events will be discussed in the concluding chapter three. The text will focus on battlefield maneuvers and command of troops in battle situations. The true merit of command and control are witnessed in the pressure packed moments of battle, so an emphasis on battle narrative is essential. This thesis will demonstrate the commanders' ability to judge situations and react to them.

William Passmore Carlin was born on 24 November 1829, the second son of William and Mary Carlin in the Richwoods neighborhood of Carrollton, Illinois. Carrollton, a small farming community, was founded by William's great-uncle Thomas Carlin and included a dual school and meeting house where young William passed the winter days learning reading, spelling, and arithmetic with other children from the town. The spring and summer months were spent working the family farm: plowing, sowing wheat, planting, cutting and shucking corn, hunting and fishing. Carlin was appointed to the United States Military Academy at West Point to report in June 1846.<sup>15</sup> His appointment began a successful military career that eventually lasted almost fifty years. He never left the service. John M. Schofield, a future Union general noted "soon after I reported...[Carlin and Hezekiah Garber,] took me under their protection in a brotherly way, and gave me some timely advice – not to take too seriously any little fun the men might make of my blue dress-coat and fancy gilt buttons, or anything like that."<sup>16</sup> This comment is illustrative of the sort of army camaraderie that Carlin relished and embraced

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<sup>15</sup> Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, Jr. and Robert I. Girardi, eds., *The Memoirs of Brigadier General William Passmore Carlin, U.S.A.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 4-5. Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 69-70.

<sup>16</sup> Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 5.

throughout his career. He graduated twentieth in his class and was reported to be an average student, earning him a second lieutenancy in the 6<sup>th</sup> United States Infantry. The early years of his army career were spent in garrison duty, but he did see active operations when he participated in William S. Harney's expedition against the Sioux in 1855 and Edwin V. Sumner's campaign against the Cheyenne in 1857.<sup>17</sup> Carlin marched with Albert Sidney Johnston in the Mormon expedition of 1858 and sarcastically noted "there was no lesson in tactics or strategy learned by the Utah expedition."<sup>18</sup> Indian fighting did not appeal to Carlin either and he requested and was given a transfer to Buffalo, New York to serve as a recruiting officer, a post he held until the beginning of the war.<sup>19</sup>

Charles Garrison Harker, born 2 December 1835 in Swedesboro, New Jersey, was orphaned at a very young age. Through a benefactor named N. T. Stratton, Harker became a clerk in a store located in Mullica Hill, New Jersey at the young age of twelve or thirteen. Stratton used his influence as a two term congressman to secure young Harker an appointment to West Point in 1854, where he was graduated in the class of 1858 at the height of the sectional crisis.<sup>20</sup> Being an orphan, Harker likely reveled in the comradeship and brotherhood that the army provided. Upon graduation, Harker was stationed on the northwestern frontier. He was called east only two years later to begin

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<sup>17</sup> Warner, *Generals in Blue*, 69.

<sup>18</sup> Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 26.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>20</sup> Warner, *Generals in Blue*, 207.

drilling and training volunteers in the state of Ohio where he was stationed at the outbreak of hostilities.<sup>21</sup>

John Converse Starkweather was born in Cooperstown, New York, 11 May 1830 and at a very young age attended the local schools in the area and helped work the family property. Attending university at Union College in Schenectady, Starkweather graduated in 1850 and began studying law with the idea of becoming an attorney. Shortly after being admitted to the bar, Starkweather pulled up stakes and moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the place that would be his adopted home and the most permanent residence of his life.<sup>22</sup> While Carlin and Harker were both part of the officer corps in the old army, attending West Point and serving in dull frontier postings, Starkweather brought a different background to the war, that of an ordinary citizen. When the Civil War broke out in April, 1861, Starkweather was prominent and respected enough that upon offering his services as a volunteer he was given command of a regiment.

August Willich, born 19 November 1810 in the Prussian city of Braunsberg, exemplifies the foreign contingent present in all Union armies, a presence particularly pronounced in the region's immigrant-rich farming districts of the west. Willich's father fought in the Napoleonic Wars. No doubt encouraged by his stories of battle and army life, young August entered the cadet house at Potsdam at the age of twelve and went on to the military academy at Berlin at the age of fifteen.<sup>23</sup> Through his drive and astute

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 472.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 565.

military bearing, Willich made first lieutenant in the Prussian army by the age of eighteen and was a young and successful captain by twenty-one. But Willich also read and embraced the writings of Karl Marx, and tried to resign his commission because of his political views. He was eventually court-martialed and permitted to leave the army following the outbreak of the 1848 revolution.

Willich became a carpenter in Baden but fled Prussia after the collapse of the uprising. Settling in New York City in 1853, Willich secured employment in the Brooklyn Naval Yard, working as a carpenter. Moving to Cincinnati in 1858, the ardent Marxist became editor of a German language newspaper, a platform that he and various soldiers under his command would use to great effect during the war, publishing letters from the front to keep the community inspired.<sup>24</sup> Like countless other immigrants, Willich offered his services to the cause of restoring the Union. He brought a decidedly Prussian flair to training. The regiments he recruited and trained would become some of the best officered and disciplined in the entire army.

These four officers brought various levels of experience to the army. Following the opening confrontation at Fort Sumter, South Carolina in April 1861 they helped recruit and raise regiments. Starting as regimental commanders, they helped train their men in preparation for the coming conflict. As the army moved into open campaigning they would be prepared to move up the ranks of command.

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<sup>24</sup> Joseph R. Reinhart, ed. & trans., *August Willich's Gallant Dutchmen: Civil War Letters from the 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana Infantry* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006), 1-3. The editor offers a good introductory essay on the German communities that produced these men.

## CHAPTER ONE: TRAINING AND INITIATION IN BATTLE

At the beginning of the conflict, commanders had to train the new volunteers. Months were spent drilling and shaping the raw recruits, preparing the men for combat. Analyzing regimental actions early in the war, particularly Willich's masterful handling of his men, is the focus of chapter one. Personal leadership was essential at this stage of the war. The commanders used their personal example through training and combat to instill leadership qualities that adhered men to their commanders and ultimately their brigades. Before the men experienced the first battle, they had to learn to march, maneuver, and fight as a unit.

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Regular army officers like Harker were familiar with the rigors of army life and the strict regulations that governed it, but the new recruits were not, and endless amounts of drill were needed to prepare them. Historian Paddy Griffith's work, *Battle Tactics in the Civil War*, discusses how drill, "in particular ...imparted two specific benefits...tactical articulation in the period leading up to close combat, and *esprit de corps* once the serious killing had begun."<sup>25</sup> Tactical articulation refers to the ability of commanders to condition their men to obey orders and listen for commands during the excitement of battle.<sup>26</sup> This concept also refers to the commanders' ability to move large numbers of troops around the battlefield without difficulty. In terms of command and control of the men, drill imparted discipline and gave the commander a sense of how long

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<sup>25</sup> Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Civil War*, 106.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

it would take to move his men to a certain point and how long it would take to deploy them once they arrived.

Repetition was the key to training Civil War soldiers. According to Griffith, “close order drill, repeated endlessly, not only taught the actual physical movements required in battle, but also did it so thoroughly that the soldier could be expected to obey his officers’ commands automatically, even under fire when every instinct of self-preservation told him to seek safety instead.”<sup>27</sup> As part of this, drill imparted a sense of community and shared experience giving the soldiers a guide as to how to operate and perform battlefield movements. The resulting *esprit de corps* refers to the comradeship developed by spending endless hours on the drill ground, learning systematically to perform the tasks and movements necessary to survive once combat was joined.<sup>28</sup> Drill was functional, teaching the men the basic elements of soldiering, but it was also communal, building bonds of comradeship that would weather the storm of battle.

Orderly sergeant Wilbur F. Hinman, of Harker’s 65<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry recalled a normal day at the instructional camps. “We began to drill, four times each day, as soon as we entered camp....[T]he officers went to school each evening to be instructed by the colonel, and they in turn taught us or tried to.” As a volunteer, Hinman quickly realized the officers were only slightly more prepared for combat and campaigning than they were. “All had everything to learn....Day after day, in squads and companies, we faced and marched and countermarched and charged around with an energy that gave bright

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<sup>27</sup> Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment*, 47-48.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

promise of future usefulness.”<sup>29</sup> Private L. W. Day of Carlin’s 101<sup>st</sup> Ohio Infantry agreed. He let it “be known that officers were not all among the initiated.”<sup>30</sup>

Because the soldiers were all volunteers, they did not take to instruction at first. Corporal John Henry Otto, later part of Starkweather’s brigade in the 21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin Infantry, lamented the democratic nature of his recruits. All wanted reasons for doing the things they were told to do he insisted, “others thought and said they had not enlisted to while away the time with trying to keep step, or to step off with the right foot, and keep the proper distance, or to face right of left and right about face...that would not scare the rebels they said and laughed at the whole proceeding.”<sup>31</sup> Such was the state of drilling and training free-thinking volunteers. Otto went on to note that with explanation the more willing were always ready to obey.<sup>32</sup>

However much the men grumbled, learning was essential. From drill the men mastered the manual of arms, learning to load, fire, and shoulder their arms. They learned complicated battle maneuvers such as going from column, the standard formation for marching, to line, the standard formation for battle. Griffith believes this maneuver was integral to Civil War armies because it was the most common on the battlefield and

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<sup>29</sup> Wilbur F. Hinman, *The Story of the Sherman Brigade: The Camp, the Bivouac, the Battle, and How ‘the Boys’ Lived and Died During Four Years of Active Field Service* (1897; repr., Memphis: General Books, 2010), 36. Hinman was promoted to orderly sergeant and then to lieutenant. He will be referred to according to the rank he held at the time period being discussed.

<sup>30</sup> L.W. Day, *Story of the One Hundred First Ohio Infantry: A Memorial Volume* (Cleveland: W.M. Bayne Print Company, 1894), 29.

<sup>31</sup> David Gould and James B. Kennedy, eds., *Memoirs of a Dutch Mudsill: The War Memories of John Henry Otto, Captain, Co. D, 21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

had to be completed under fire.<sup>33</sup> Units generally used the column formation to move troops along roads and across the battlefield. The tactical articulation of drill allowed the men to move from this formation of four men abreast to a line of battle two-men deep to face the enemy.<sup>34</sup> It was a complicated movement where the squads and companies filed to the right and left of the first four men in line. Soldiers learned to complete this movement because it would be performed under fire. These small-unit tactical maneuvers were ideal for teaching the men to operate in the enemy's presence. These fluid unit tactics mattered because the Civil War required disciplined combat. "The characteristic mode of combat in the Civil War was the infantry firefight at close range," states Griffith.<sup>35</sup> Once infantry lines closed with the enemy, they stood generally 100 to 300 yards apart and fired at each other until one side or the other exhausted its ammunition or its will to remain in the contest.<sup>36</sup> Infantry firefights were standup exchanges where regimental and brigade commanders maintained order in the ranks as their men loaded and fired. The initial volley of the battle line was generally the only controlled and directed fire. After delivering the first volley, men would simply load and fire at will, keeping up an incessant fire until the fight ended or ammunition ran low.<sup>37</sup>

Commanders wanted their men to close with the enemy as quickly as possible, for the purpose of delivering one coordinated volley. Withholding fire meant officers could

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<sup>33</sup> Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Civil War*, 106.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-42.

command more well-aimed volleys at close range, notes historian Brent Nosworthy.<sup>38</sup> Aiming low wasted less ammunition because men would not be firing over the heads of the enemy. Finally, the bayonet was to be used to move the enemy when the firefight progressed to the point of one side breaking and retreating or fleeing the battlefield. Nosworthy states, “when these doctrinal instructions are considered collectively, the prescribed infantry tactics could be reduced to several key elements: Withhold fire until presented with a good target, aim low with deliberation, and when circumstances were favorable for aggressive action, charge in with lowered bayonet.”<sup>39</sup> These instructions were generally given to all the men prior to going into battle. Essentially, the battle lines closed and the initial volley was intended to disorient and disorganize the enemy, paving the way for the shock action of the bayonet charge.

With all the drill and training soldiers learned to maneuver and use their weapons, but their firepower was lacking. Although the Civil War is often portrayed as more deadly than previous wars because of the rifled musket, Griffith notes that, “it is difficult to find any evidence at all to support the suggestion that Civil War musketry was delivered at ranges much longer,” than in previous wars.<sup>40</sup> The nature of the terrain and the marked absence of target practice during drill meant that most men were thoroughly versed in getting into position for the battle, but could not shoot much better than they

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<sup>38</sup> Brent Nosworthy, *The Bloody Crucible of Courage: Fighting Methods and Combat Experience of the Civil War* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2003), 271.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>40</sup> Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Civil War*, 147-49. Griffith notes that the average distance for the infantry firefight only increased by an average of fifty yards throughout the course of the war. This illustrates that the rifle did not increase the range of combat.

could when they joined the army.<sup>41</sup> As historian Earl Hess observes, citizen-soldiers gained power through discipline, standing elbow to elbow and receiving and delivering volleys of musket fire at close range without breaking.<sup>42</sup> It was such discipline rather than marksmanship that officers like Carlin, Harker, Starkweather, and Willich instilled in their men in the various camps of instruction.<sup>43</sup>

But if drill taught the men how to stand in combat as soldiers they learned these skills within regiments. “Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that soldiers soon regarded their [regiments] as families,” notes Prokopowicz.<sup>44</sup> Carlin, Harker, Starkweather, and Willich all began at this level.<sup>45</sup> Yet campaigning called for larger organizations. In early November 1861 the units gathering and training in Kentucky received a new commander, Brig. Gen. Don Carlos Buell.<sup>46</sup> Experienced and meticulous, he would lead the army through October 1862. His first act was to create a brigade system containing sixteen consecutively numbered units. As Prokopowicz notes, the old army size did not require large unit organizations, but for this new situation, “theory

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<sup>41</sup>Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment*, 50.

<sup>42</sup> Earl J. Hess, *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 111. Hess describes the psychological effects of combat on Union soldiers. According to Hess, they endured combat because of their comrades standing beside them.

<sup>43</sup> Carlin spent the early months of the war in Missouri, serving with Maj. Gen. John C. Fremont. He did not transfer to the Army of the Ohio until after the breakup of Halleck’s army at Corinth and did not serve until the Battle of Perryville, where he will enter the narrative.

<sup>44</sup> Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment*, 19.

<sup>45</sup> Appendix A contains the order of battle for these commanders from the regiments they recruited and trained to the brigades commanded by Carlin and Starkweather at Perryville.

<sup>46</sup> Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 3. The second largest Federal army was originally designated the Army of the Ohio. Following Buell’s departure it was renamed the Army of the Cumberland and would carry that designation until the end of the Atlanta campaign.

called for a force the size of the Army of the Ohio to be divided into brigades, each of two to four infantry...regiments.”<sup>47</sup> Buell would go on to combine, “his brigades into five divisions early in December 1861, [but they still] retained their unique numbers, implying that each was a subunit of the army itself and directly subordinate to the army commander.”<sup>48</sup> The organization created an odd situation not replicated in the Army of the Potomac. The numbered brigades seemed to imply direct control by Buell, making the division commanders’ role cloudy.

Unfortunately, a brigade-level training regime was never implemented with this new command structure. Harker, Willich and other regimental officers continued to train for battle at the lower level, and this would affect the marching ability of the army as well as coordination in battle in the coming campaigns. For Prokopowicz this was a critical mistake. “The lack of any meaningful training at the brigade and division levels in 1861 or early 1862 meant that the commanders of those units would have to go into battle with little experience in coordinating their regiments....[T]hey would have to learn on the job and pay for their mistakes with the lives of their men.”<sup>49</sup> Thorough, well-coordinated training at the brigade, division, and corps level would have offered these commanders and their men the opportunity to march in concert and maneuver into fighting position in these larger formations. Such exercises might have ensured less confusion on the battlefield. While this disadvantage would not hinder these regimental commanders early

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<sup>47</sup> Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment*, 38-39.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

on, when they assumed the duties of brigade command they would have to learn how to manage several regiments in a coordinated fashion.

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As the early period of preparation and training ended, the commanders were as ready as they could be to take their men into combat. In the earliest actions the men fought as regiments, a fact that offered experienced commanders like Willich the chance to shine.

Content to remain in place throughout the winter, Buell's army was finally prodded into action in early December when cavalry under Confederate Brig. Gen. John Hunt Morgan raided the railroads north of Bowling Green, Kentucky; one action partially destroyed the trestle over the Green River at Rowlett's Station.<sup>50</sup> Willich's 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana was ordered to proceed to the Green River, protect the trestle against Confederate raiders, and repair the damage already inflicted. Willich constructed a pontoon bridge and began repairing the original span. He advanced four companies of his regiment to the south side of the river, leaving the other four in reserve on the north side, and awaited Confederate forces that were reported in the area.<sup>51</sup> At noon, 17 December, Confederate Brig. Gen. Thomas C. Hindman's combined infantry, cavalry, and artillery force of 1,100 men

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 54-55.

<sup>51</sup> U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), vol. 7, pp. 16-17. Following this footnote, any references to the Official Records will be abbreviated O.R. The OR is divided between a Series One and Series Two. All citations are from series one. Some volumes for the major battles contain two parts, the part will be noted when applicable. Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 45.

arrived to contest the river crossing in the hopes of preventing a general move on Bowling Green.<sup>52</sup>

Willich was away at divisional headquarters when the fighting began, but the 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana, under Lt. Col. Henry Von Trebra, more than justified their months of drill and training. The right companies of the regiment spread out in picket formation, driving back the initial skirmishing parties of the enemy, showcasing their light-infantry training. However, newly arriving Confederate infantry forced these men back to the regimental line south of the river.<sup>53</sup> The regiment rallied with several companies on the right of the line forming hollow squares to resist repeated Confederate cavalry attacks by Col. B. F. Terry's Texas Rangers. Hollow squares were an old army tactic – preserved from the Napoleonic Wars – used to fend off cavalry. As Wayne Hsieh notes, “the vulnerability of dispersed...infantry, especially against heavy cavalry using shock tactics and the [saber or bayonet], would be a constant concern among American professionals throughout the antebellum period.”<sup>54</sup> Because of his Prussian army experience, Willich would have been familiar with the tactical manuals of Gen. Winfield Scott that contained tactics to ward off cavalry attack.<sup>55</sup> Now, when the Texas Rangers, “with lightning speed, under infernal

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<sup>52</sup> Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment*, 56.

<sup>53</sup> Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Civil War*, 137-45. Griffith gives a very good treatment of infantry tactics. Skirmishers were generally sent out in front of the regiment to draw enemy fire and expose their position. Men generally stood ten to fifteen feet apart on the skirmish line. Line of battle consisted of two ranks of men standing shoulder to shoulder, to offer concentrated volleys.

<sup>54</sup> Hsieh, *West Pointers and the Civil War*, 42.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46.

yelling...rushed upon our whole force,” the men knew what to do, as Willich said later.<sup>56</sup> Terry was killed in the last of three charges against the squares of companies K, G, and F. The Confederate commander’s death demoralized the attacking Confederates and Willich, arriving on the field at that moment, ordered the regiment to “fall back slowly.” Federal reinforcements convinced the Confederates that they could not take and hold the position with the force at hand.<sup>57</sup>

The action at Rowlett’s Station was an excellent first engagement for Willich and his men. The regiment fought well. In particular, Willich’s training had created confidence and the men’s spirits grew. William Sievers wrote to his local newspaper that he, “went into a hot battle in which my men showed themselves to be brave and courageous, and fought like lions....[T]hank our Colonel Willich, that he trained us, else we would have suffered terribly.”<sup>58</sup> Willich’s men demonstrated that competent training could make a regiment into an effective combat unit, especially in small-scale engagements. Competent training was the direct result of competent and experienced personal leadership from the commander, Willich.

However, the Army of the Ohio’s men would not fight as regiments for long. Large-scale combat was coming soon and the regiments would have to learn to fight as part of larger formations. As Prokopowicz rightly argues, “the ease with which the competent and experienced officers of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana handled their regiment in battle

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<sup>56</sup> O.R. vol. 7, p. 17.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>58</sup> Reinhart, *Willich’s Gallant Dutchmen*, 45.

gave no indication of the confusion and difficulty of communication that would be characteristic of larger engagements involving dozens of regiments, brigades, and divisions.”<sup>59</sup> As the army moved south the cohesion and leadership of brigades became paramount issues.

In spring 1862, Buell wanted to move his army directly south, in contrast to the wishes of President Abraham Lincoln and Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan.<sup>60</sup> He was pushing for a move on Nashville directly through Bowling Green, but the administration wanted him to relieve the residents of East Tennessee from continued abuse at the hands of Confederate forces in the region.<sup>61</sup> Buell did not want to move to East Tennessee, “a drive on Nashville would follow existing railroad lines,” he argued, “whereas a twelve-thousand-man expedition into the barren hill country would require a massive wagon train just to carry its own supplies.”<sup>62</sup> Without reinforcements and supply stores, “the Army of the Ohio was not ready for an offensive campaign,” into East Tennessee.<sup>63</sup> By thus refusing to follow the administration’s plans, Buell started to shift the focus of the war away from responding to the East Tennessee political situation.

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<sup>59</sup> Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment*, 60.

<sup>60</sup> Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 55-73; Rafuse, *McClellan’s War*, 25. Rafuse and Daniel note that McClellan tried to undercut Confederate morale and the secessionist impulse by occupying areas with strong Union sentiment. Buell’s trouble with the administration and East Tennessee illustrates the differences between political strategy and military invasion.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86; Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 56-73.

<sup>62</sup> Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment*, 66.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

In making this shift, Buell was joined by Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee. This campaign was initially supposed to be a cooperative venture between Buell's and Grant's formations. Grant acted first on 6 February when combined naval and land forces captured Fort Henry on the Tennessee River, opening navigation of that waterway into northern Alabama. Buell responded on 10 February by advancing the Army of the Ohio to Bowling Green, Kentucky, recently evacuated by Confederate troops pulling back to Nashville. Arriving there on 20 February, he learned of the fall of Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River four days before.<sup>64</sup> The loss of these river forts damaged the Confederate strategic position in the western theater. Confederate troops evacuated all of Kentucky and middle Tennessee, retreating as far as Corinth, Mississippi. Buell's army marched unopposed into Nashville, 25 February 1862. Together, the movements of Buell and Grant opened the south to invasion along railroad lines and rivers.

Confederate forces responded to this dramatic move with a massive concentration along the Tennessee River at Pittsburg Landing. The combined Confederate forces of Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston and Gen. P. G. T. Beauregard surprised Grant's forces in the early morning hours of 6 April. The Confederates overran the Union camps where the soldiers were cooking their breakfasts. The attack progressed well throughout the day with the rebels pushing the Union troops from position after position. However, instead of forcing Grant's army away from the Tennessee River where it could be cornered and possibly destroyed, the Confederates pushed their enemy back against the bluffs of the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 89; Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 68. Although Fort Donelson proved more difficult to take, Grant captured this fortification a few days after Fort Henry.

Tennessee and under shelter of the Union gunboats. Grant spent the late afternoon and evening where he established a new defensive line and awaited the arrival of Buell's reinforcements. Thus situated he hoped to turn the tide of the battle.<sup>65</sup>

Buell's army marched to the support of Grant. While the army fought for the first time as a whole, the most important actions occurred at the regimental level. The general plan was for Grant's and Buell's forces to push the Confederate army back and regain the ground lost the day before, but Buell did not know the ground and the fighting devolved into individual regiments and brigades fighting southward along the bank of the river at times linking up with Grant's forces on their immediate right.<sup>66</sup> In this particular engagement regimental commanders were forced to make decisions such as formation and placement without direction from superior officers, for the terrain was heavily wooded and communication was nearly impossible. Willich's men were ideally led for such an occasion.

Willich's 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana moved to the front around eleven o'clock and participated in fighting alongside Brig. Gen. William T. Sherman's division, connecting the Army of the Ohio and the Army of the Tennessee for the first time since the day's fighting began. A stalemate in the Confederate attack developed, offering Willich an opportunity.

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<sup>65</sup> Larry J. Daniel, *Shiloh: The Battle That Changed the Civil War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997). Daniel illustrates that Grant gained time at Shiloh due to Confederate mistakes. But his situation was perilous until nightfall. Wiley Sword, *Shiloh: Bloody April* (Harrisburg, PA: Morningside Press, 1974). Sword gives the reader a more detailed account of individual units and their movements on the battlefield. His narrative focuses more on the Confederate planning and attack with less emphasis on Federal preparation or response.

<sup>66</sup> Daniel, *Shiloh*, 265-66. Buell's Army of the Ohio was to occupy the space between Grant's army and the Tennessee River, pushing down the western bank of the river, using it as protection for Buell's left flank. The general order was to push the enemy back away from Pittsburg Landing and the Federal supply line and means of retreat.

“About this time, neither party advancing nor retreating, I asked General McCook for permission to pass...to the front and make a bayonet charge, which was granted,” Willich reported.<sup>67</sup> “The regiment formed into double column to the center, marched up about 200 yards toward the enemy, when he turned and retreated.”<sup>68</sup> The column formation placed four men abreast with the regiment lined up behind. It made for a narrow front and long trail, but was more easily maneuverable than line of battle. By choosing the column formation, Willich was probably easing the strain of battle for the men as columns were, “more attractive in broken terrain, since they gave greater maneuverability,” according to Griffith.<sup>69</sup>

As Willich made his attack, his leadership abilities were proven by steadying his men under fire. Incoming Confederate fire, “caused them [32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana] to retreat in a hasty manner, when they should have retreated slowly...bringing disorder in the whole regiment for a few moments.” The commander responded to this situation. He moved his men into a ravine and reformed it in line.<sup>70</sup> “The regiment was deployed in line of battle, made a charge with the bayonet, and succeeded, after short and heavy firing, to check the enemy’s advance [un]til reinforcements came up.”<sup>71</sup> Then Willich’s command was tested further. Like most soldiers in the ranks, the men of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana overshot

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<sup>67</sup> O.R. vol. 10, pt. 1, p. 317.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Civil War*, 152.

<sup>70</sup> O.R. vol. 10, pt. 1, p. 318. Moving only a few yards to the rear, the regiment was more confused by the friendly fire than by the enemy. Willich was able to easily reform them once under cover and out of the direct line of fire.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

their targets. Willich responded with drill. The commander later noted: “during the last charge, they fired at too great a distance, I stopped the firing and practiced them in the manual of arms, which they executed as if on the parade ground, and then reopened deliberate and effective fire.”<sup>72</sup> By stopping the regiment and drilling the men during combat Willich restored the soldier’s confidence and allowed them to continue the advance. The inexperienced men responded as Willich hoped they would. Instead of succumbing to panic they rallied and continued the fight.

Willich’s skillful handling of his men at Shiloh supports Prokopowicz’s previous claim that early in the war the army operated most soundly at the regimental level. In his after action report, Willich made no reference to superior officers except in the initial contact with the enemy when he asked for permission to charge. From this point on the 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana’s commander was on his own. But even when isolated in this way Willich maintained his composure and, more importantly, forced his men to respond. Pointing to such a well-disciplined regiment, Prokopowicz argues that the Army of the Ohio’s “success...at Shiloh indicated that man for man and regiment for regiment, it could stand the most severe punishment and give out the same in return.”<sup>73</sup>

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As the Army of the Ohio continued to campaign, battle would force the men and commanders to move up the organization and test larger units. Brigades would become

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment*, 111.

important. In late 1862, Carlin and Starkweather were elevated to brigade command.<sup>74</sup> Their leadership abilities would be proved in the next action, the Battle of Perryville.

Following the Confederate retreat from Shiloh, Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck moved the combined armies of Grant and Buell slowly toward Corinth, Mississippi.<sup>75</sup> The army that Halleck formed in front of Corinth laid siege to the railroad junction town until late May when the Confederate army retreated south and Halleck's men took the town.<sup>76</sup> After the victory, Halleck broke up his force into its respective parts and Buell was again in command of an independent Army of the Ohio. Tasked with capturing Chattanooga, Buell was ordered to rely on the Memphis & Charleston Railroad to supply his army, a stretch of track running along the southern border of Tennessee and northern Alabama. Throughout the summer months, Buell was plagued by raids on his supply lines. The army moved at a slow pace, repairing the railroad as it went and stringing troops along the line to guard against raiders.

On 14 August, a Confederate force under Maj. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith left Knoxville, on a raid into Kentucky. Then, Gen. Braxton Bragg's Army of the Mississippi followed Smith into Kentucky, forcing Buell to conform to their movements in preparation for defending Louisville, Kentucky, the main supply base for the Army of the

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<sup>74</sup> John Converse Starkweather, *Statement of Military Services of Brigadier General John C. Starkweather, of Wisconsin, Since the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, 1861* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1881), 6. Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 60.

<sup>75</sup> Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 85-86. Halleck arrived and assumed overall command, effectively relieving Grant. The armies of Halleck, Buell, and Grant would remain under Halleck's overall command until the conclusion of the Corinth campaign.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

Ohio.<sup>77</sup> As Bragg followed, this became more than a raid. Bragg wanted to liberate the pro-Confederate population, and to pull Union forces out of Tennessee.<sup>78</sup> Suddenly, the situation changed and the Confederates relocated the contested ground from Tennessee back into Kentucky.

The physically exhausting campaign progressed throughout September. “The weather was hot, the limestone turnpike dusty, water scarce...and the marching fatiguing....[T]he troops suffered considerably from that point all the way back to Louisville, Kentucky.”<sup>79</sup> For many soldiers this was the first long, forced march. “It was a hard, exhausting march on narrow, crowded roads through rugged mountains...the army straggled greatly at first...men fainted in the ranks or fell out of line to sleep along the roadside.”<sup>80</sup> Once Buell’s army beat Bragg and Smith to Louisville, the main threat to Ohio and the Midwestern states was averted, but now the armies went to battle.

Advancing on three parallel roads, Buell’s army encountered the enemy’s cavalry outposts late on 7 October. The Battle of Perryville was the first test of the army’s new brigade system. Buell never controlled the action. He remained at headquarters throughout the day. Likewise, the army’s commanders exercised little control over the action. Units simply fought when they came in contact with the enemy. As the situation unfolded, Starkweather and Carlin found themselves in the thick of the action.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 120-30.

<sup>78</sup> Kenneth W. Noe, *Perryville: This Grand Havoc of Battle* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 29-31.

<sup>79</sup> Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 55.

<sup>80</sup> Noe, *Perryville*, 63.

Starkweather's brigade marched twelve miles on 8 October, reaching the field at about 1:30 P.M. to take up a position on a hill. The battle was already under way before them on the left, center, and right.<sup>81</sup> Suddenly, desperate fighting ensued along Starkweather's line as his troops were attacked by two Confederate brigades on either flank. Using the brigade artillery to fight off the left flank attack, one of Starkweather's regiments on the right, the 21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin, lost their colonel and major to enemy fire, and then broke and headed for the rear. The regiment was located behind a cornfield that limited their visibility and broke because they could not see what was in front of their lines. Cpl. Otto complained: "the corn was at least 10-12 foot high consequently we were not aware of their coming until they were nearly upon us."<sup>82</sup> The initial volley knocked the colonel out of action and the major went down shortly after. "I looked to the right, no Colonel was not there [sic]; I looked to the left, no Major was not there [sic]...now was the moment to fix bayonet and charge...but no order of any kind...then the right of the regiment gave way and ran," lamented Otto.<sup>83</sup> The loss of their commander and the relentless pressure from their right flank forced the 21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin to retreat. "The scare speedily r[a]n along the line and soon the whole regiment was running back."<sup>84</sup> Otto's description shows a regiment disintegrating in the face of strong attacks. Starkweather's leadership qualities were tested as he attempted to save his brigade's position.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 379. Starkweather was separated from his division on the approach march. On his own initiative he moved to the heaviest fighting and took up a position on the left of the army.

<sup>82</sup> Gould & Kennedy, *Memoirs of a Dutch Mudsill*, 46.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

In the face of the 21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin's route, Starkweather immediately sought reinforcements to stop the Confederate breakthrough. His original command, the 1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin, was close at hand and Starkweather directed the men forward. "The enemy was then in the reach of the 1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin....I had great confidence in the gallantry of [this] regiment, and was not disappointed when...they drove the enemy several times with great loss," Starkweather reported.<sup>85</sup>

The brigade was still under pressure. After staying on the hill for thirty minutes, Starkweather was forced back with the other troops from his division to a new line some distance behind the former. Kenneth Noe notes that, "when flanking fire began to enfilade their fragile line...the effect was most terrific...[and] temporarily unnerved Starkweather's men."<sup>86</sup> The converging fire from two Confederate brigades began to "unnerve" the soldiers.<sup>87</sup> Two Confederate regiments advanced against both flanks, creating a fire that decimated his position.

Prudently, Starkweather "decided to withdraw...to the steeper and higher ridge behind him-the position he had occupied before," he was ordered forward.<sup>88</sup> The commander's ability to recognize the threat to his men and move them to a new position illustrates his understanding of the tactical situation. There they made a strong stand and

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<sup>85</sup> Starkweather, *Statement*, 6. The 1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin was the regiment Starkweather originally recruited and commanded. Starkweather most likely placed this regiment in reserve because he was familiar with them and could count on them in an emergency.

<sup>86</sup> Noe, *Perryville*, 256.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>88</sup> O.R. vol. 16, pt. 1, p. 1156.

Starkweather reported that, “the enemy by this time was completely routed, the firing ceased on our front and flank, and the regiments were retired to support of the batteries in their new positions, which was occupied until 12 o’clock at night.”<sup>89</sup>

The Confederate attack nearly forced the collapse of the Army of the Ohio. Maj. Gen. Alexander McCook’s corps was roughly handled by the enemy and had little in the way of battle lines or organization. But the fighting shifted further to the south and east. Brig. Gen. Philip Sheridan was commanding this portion of the field and his troops were hotly engaged and in need of reinforcement. Carlin’s brigade was ordered to this area to help stop the Confederate advances and help relieve the pressure on Sheridan’s men.

Arriving on the field at 10 A.M., Carlin was greeted by the sounds of a great battle. “Up to that time I had not heard such a continued firing of artillery or such incessant volleys of musketry,” he said later. However, his command was forced to wait behind the lines until almost 3:30 P.M. when his brigade was ordered to the right to support Sheridan’s position.<sup>90</sup> Coming into line on Sheridan’s right – the extreme right of the Federal position – Carlin attacked the Confederates in front of his position, advancing in line of battle and forcing a Confederate battery to withdraw through the town of Perryville itself. “During this advance it became so dark that it was difficult to see what was in front of or on either flank, but I continued the advance till we reached the...north side of Perryville, where my line was halted.”<sup>91</sup> Carlin reported that, “it was

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 1155-56.

<sup>90</sup> Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 63.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 64.

now so dark that we could see the campfires of the rebels to our rear and left and their men walking to and fro along their line and could hear their talk....After I had passed the rebel line and saw myself far in his rear, I longed to wheel my brigade to the left and sweep up his line.” The quote illustrates Carlin’s grasp of the situation and opportunity presented. He continues, “how I longed for two or three thousand more men!” Carlin’s aptitude for command is clear from his understanding of his situation. “I felt perfectly sure that if I could have had 5,000 men at that point that I could have wheeled to the left and taken the main body of Bragg’s army then on the field on the left flank and rear and could have driven it.”<sup>92</sup> His ideas about the use of force illustrate his ability to command higher-level units. “That was a great disappointment to me – not to have that opportunity.”<sup>93</sup>

Carlin awaited orders, which arrived at 9:00 P.M., directing him to return to his former position. This order eliminated the opportunity to secure the best road for Bragg’s army to retreat.<sup>94</sup> The presence of a portion of Buell’s army on his line of retreat caused Bragg to hesitate in the closing hours of the battle. Carlin’s advance turned the tide in favor the Army of the Ohio and forced Bragg to rethink what he had considered to be a victory earlier in the afternoon.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. While Carlin’s single brigade could hardly block Bragg’s retreat, he realized that an opportunity was lost. Reinforcements could have cut Bragg’s retreat and possibly forced a more decisive outcome. Carlin did not have the strength to hold the position, and this is what he laments in his memoirs. The battlefield was dark and nothing more could really be done on this portion of the field.

The Battle of Perryville hung in the balance for both sides on 8 October 1862. Had the Union troops been forced back any farther, their wagon trains would have been captured. In that event, withdrawal to their main supply base at Louisville was their only alternative. Bragg's army would have been free to maneuver in Kentucky, or Tennessee, and possibly recapture Nashville. However, the individual initiative of commanders like Starkweather and Carlin avoided such a decisive defeat. Their efforts secured vital sections of the Union line.

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Since the beginning of the war, Carlin, Harker, Starkweather, and Willich all dealt with varying degrees of command and control, whether in command of a single regiment or a brigade. Willich demonstrated a grasp of light infantry tactics and how to employ them to the best advantage. His men were stubborn and tough in a fight, traits they learned from their leader's Prussian training regime and the combat they faced at Rowlett's Station and Shiloh. In the latter action, Willich's men efficiently negotiated battlefield terrain, marching to the sound of the heaviest fighting. The commander deployed his men in column to move them easily through the wooded and tangled nature of the ground, and then pushed back a determined Confederate stand at a critical moment of the battle. Willich brought experience to his command from his days in the Prussian military and his men benefited from this.

Harker's men did not engage in a major fight in the opening months of the war, but they campaigned with the army through Shiloh and Perryville, and in the coming months would more than prove their mettle at Stones River and Chickamauga. His men

suffered through the monotonous training and grueling marches, but did not have the opportunity to test their training. The troops witnessed scenes of suffering at Shiloh and thus learned the benefits of supporting other units as they fought, even if the action did not always sit well with soldiers like Orderly Sgt. Hinman. Harker's men may have felt they were left out of the army's triumphs, but the coming months would offer ample opportunity for them to "see the elephant."

Starkweather brought discipline to his troops and commanded them well at Perryville. His brigade fought stubbornly and was only forced from its positions by troops on their flank. Starkweather was in the thick of the fighting, personally directing units to areas that were threatened and recognizing the advantages of the terrain. He depended on his own regiment, the 1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin, because he was familiar with the men from training and learning how to be a soldier with them. His performance did not go unnoticed by his commanders and he would participate in the coming campaigns and battles with the same skill he displayed at Perryville.

Carlin's performance at Perryville secured the right of the Union position and possibly secured it from collapse. He maneuvered and directed his men well and seized a crucial piece of ground that could have offered decisive results for the Union army. His sense of command on the ground level must have demonstrated to Carlin that the corps and army commanders were not always in touch with the situation on the ground, and in the future, more initiative might be needed to insure results commensurate with the struggles of his men. Like Harker, Carlin would continue to campaign with the army and

would rise in command until he was the only one among these men to remain at the war's end.

The progression of the war to this point highlighted training, commanding citizen-soldiers, and personal leadership of different commanders. The regimental commanders demonstrated the ability to mold volunteers into soldiers, depending on the close ties at the regimental level. Individual regiments fought highly efficient engagements because of the leadership and direction of their commanders. However, up the chain of command the major battles were fought without coordinated effort. "As long as its members indentified themselves primarily with their regiments, the army remained a decentralized aggregation of military communities," states Prokopowicz.<sup>95</sup> But the commanders made the most of this way of operating. Their personal leadership turned citizen-soldiers into highly efficient regiments. In several engagements their deft handling of their men illustrated an understanding of command and leadership. The coming months of war required more from these commanders and their men. The emphasis would have to rise above the level of the regiment. The brigade commanders had to create an army out of a collection of regiments.

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<sup>95</sup> Prokopowicz, *All for the Regiment*, 188.

## CHAPTER TWO: INDEPENDENT COMMAND AND MASSED ARMY COMBAT

The end of Buell's command of the Army of the Cumberland ushered in Maj. Gen. William S. Rosecrans and witnessed two of the most severe battles that the Army of the Cumberland fought.<sup>1</sup> Battles at Stones River and Chickamauga, with the Tullahoma Campaign between, tested the leadership skills of Carlin, Starkweather, Willich, and Harker. Although the new phase of army operations involved large-scale combat, much of the important fighting still highlighted independent brigade command. This chapter analyzes the major roles these commanders played on these fields. In the battles of Stones River and Chickamauga the army fought for its survival after withstanding concerted Confederate attacks. In the Tullahoma Campaign Rosecrans used maneuver to pry the Confederate Army of Tennessee out of Middle Tennessee, but this opened the door for the Battle of Chickamauga. Brigade command was vital in all these engagements.

The two battles and the Tullahoma Campaign are indicative of an army moving as a whole. Corps, divisions, and brigades operated within the framework of the army, marching and fighting together. However, the campaigns and battles put brigade commanders in situations where they had to act independently. In essence, battles and campaigns broke down into a series of local fights. The actions commanders took and

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 183. Rosecrans took command in late October. He enjoyed success at Corinth early in the war. While eccentric, Rosecrans was a good organizer and proved a more inspiring and visible commander than his predecessor.

the ways they responded to these various developments and pressures is the focus of this chapter.

In order to understand their role in these battles and campaigns one needs to distinguish independent command from massed army combat. Independent command refers to officers who had to fight on their own away from the general army. This included combat while the army was on maneuver rather than concentrated for battle. Independent command encouraged swift thinking and demanded steady action because support was usually far away. Massed-combat command refers to commanders operating their units as part of the army as that army engaged the enemy as a whole. In either situation brigades were critical.

At both Stones River and Chickamauga the Union army was disoriented by attack. The critical point for brigade commanders was their ability to diagnose the situation and place their men in position to make a fight or execute an orderly withdrawal. During the Tullahoma campaign the army spread out in order to accomplish strategic objectives, forcing brigade commanders to operate independently away from the directing hand of superior corps and army commanders. Acting independently, brigade commanders had to consider their tactical control of the men. Most notably, brigade commanders had to think beyond the tactical manuals, linear combat, or the usual regimental formations. They had to reinvent, deploying in rapidly changing and threatening circumstances.

The most inventive individual tactician was Willich, as he demonstrated during the Tullahoma campaign. The campaign was intended to force Bragg's Confederates out of a strong defensive position behind the Duck River between Murfreesboro and Chattanooga. Willich's brigade moved with McCook's corps toward Shelbyville on the left of Bragg's defensive line. This movement was intended to force the Confederates out of a set of passes in a barrier known as the Highland Rim, allowing the Union forces to occupy these key places. This, in turn, would threaten Bragg's left flank located directly south in Shelbyville. While these operations were underway, two other corps from Rosecrans's army would move around Bragg's right. This flanking column would come up in the rear of Bragg's troops, cutting off their communications and forcing battle or retreat.<sup>2</sup>

In late June, 1863 Rosecrans moved the Army of the Cumberland out of Murfreesboro and headed south in the direction of Bragg's two corps encamped around Shelbyville and Wartrace, Tennessee.<sup>3</sup> McCook's XX Corps was tasked with taking Liberty Gap, one of the important passes in the Highland Rim. Willich would play a large part in the operation, leaving Murfreesboro early on 24 June and making it to the vicinity of Liberty Gap by 2:00 P.M. The 39<sup>th</sup> Indiana Mounted Regiment screened his

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 266-67.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 246-64. Daniel offers a chapter-long explanation of the political pressure Rosecrans was under at the time. Grant was on the verge of capturing Vicksburg with no assistance from Rosecrans. Lincoln and Halleck became increasingly frustrated as time passed and Rosecrans was threatened with removal if he did not move against Bragg or in the direction of Chattanooga or East Tennessee.

brigade's movements and reported a strong force of Confederate infantry guarding the pass.<sup>4</sup>

Willich's primary objective was to take the gap and hold it until other portions of the army could use it. He deployed his brigade into two battle lines. The 49<sup>th</sup> Ohio and 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana were sent to the left of the road running through the pass, while the 15<sup>th</sup> Ohio and 89<sup>th</sup> Illinois went right. The enemy retreated deeper into the pass and awaited attack, positioning on a partially wooded ridge line. Willich deployed the 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana, extending it left to feel for the flank of the defending Confederates.<sup>5</sup> The 32<sup>nd</sup> reconnoitered and found the Confederate line extending further than Willich's regiments. Willich immediately ordered his mounted contingent further to the left to "protect [that] flank and to flank the enemy's right." The regiment "went there in full gallop, and arrived just in time to drive back about 200 infantry, who were advancing toward our flank," the brigadier later commented.

As the battle developed Willich was given command of the Second Brigade as well as his own by division commander Brig. Gen. Richard Johnson. This was done because the brigadier was in immediate contact with the enemy and needed to be able to shift troops to threatened positions on the flank, and then push the attack vigorously if his men gained the numerical advantage. Willich ordered two regiments from the Second

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<sup>4</sup> O.R. vol. 23, pt. 1, 486.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. The 15<sup>th</sup> Ohio in front did not extend far enough in battle line to reach the end of the Confederate flank, forcing Willich to move the 32<sup>nd</sup> to the left of the 15<sup>th</sup> Ohio, extending the line farther to the left overall.

Brigade to extend the left and turn the enemy's line, securing the gap for Union forces.<sup>6</sup> The movement was executed with precision and when the regiments on the left were engaged Willich advanced his troops along the road, pushing aside the Confederate resistance and capturing the gap. Willich performed this turning movement with combined mounted and conventional infantry. He identified the weakness of his opponent and exploited it with mobile, mounted infantry. Finally, when given more men, he overpowered the Confederates by further extending his lines.

But Willich had more to do. His brigade was tested again on 25 June when Confederate forces repeatedly attacked, attempting to dislodge his men. Deploying for a defense in depth by companies, Willich found, "that the enemy was in certain force before us, and we...guard[ed] against surprise."<sup>7</sup> He directed individual companies into the firing line, shifting from the standard long lines to a defense by groups. Willich could launch effective counterattacks from this formation by using company-sized units as small forces. This defense in depth by companies became a noted part of the action at Liberty Gap.

The Official Records detail this intricate maneuver. As described there, Willich moved his brigade out of Liberty Gap on the southern side to ground along the road to Bell Buckle because the place provided an excellent defensive position. On the left of the road he deployed the 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana with the 15<sup>th</sup> Ohio in reserve; to the right, the 89<sup>th</sup> Illinois was closely supported by the 49<sup>th</sup> Ohio. The lines were anchored on small

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<sup>6</sup> O.R. vol. 23, pt. 1, 486-87.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 487.

wooded hills to the right and left of the road, offering a concentrated space allowing for his defense in depth. As Willich stated, “I did not form the picket line as a mere line of observation, as laid down in Gen. Butterfield’s work, but a sound skirmish line, with support companies and reserves.”<sup>8</sup> Maj. Jacob Glass, commanding the 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana, took the description further, noting the deployment of single companies in the first line, specifically five in total, I, K, F,G, and H.<sup>9</sup> Being on the left side of the road, Glass was able to extend his picket line to the small wooded hill with an additional five companies in reserve. This deployment would allow Glass to feed companies of men into the fight wherever Willich needed them. As such it created a concentrated defense – no thin lines of troops – as well as the ability to use the companies for counterattack.

At 2 P.M. the enemy advanced with strong skirmish lines, which were driven back. He repeated his attack, bringing up lines of battle, even columns, and planting one battery in front of our left and two small pieces in the center, but was not able to break our picket line, which was reinforced by our support companies, who charged repeatedly against the forward pressing lines of the enemy, and drove him as often as he advanced.<sup>10</sup>

In this way Willich defended the pass in depth. When attacked in the afternoon, Glass moved two supporting companies forward to support the front line, increasing the firepower. He moved two other companies around the base of the hill and, “ordered them to advance toward the enemy in a left wheel, which they executed gallantly, by which movement the enemy was compelled to fall back.”<sup>11</sup> Willich likewise maneuvered his

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Reinhart, *Willich’s Gallant Dutchmen*, 146.

<sup>10</sup> O.R. vol. 23, pt. 1, 487.

supporting companies into line, extending to the left and right of the road. In this way he was never forced to commit bulky whole regiments, but could deploy company by company.<sup>12</sup> He could act and react speedily. As Willich noted, his quick company-size counterattacks, “charged repeatedly against the forward pressing lines of the enemy, and drove him as often as he advanced.”<sup>13</sup>

As the defense in depth continued into the afternoon, Willich employed revolving, or alternating fire as part of the counterattacks when ammunition ran low around 3:00 P.M. In response to attack the commander immediately ordered the supporting regiments forward while maintaining the company skirmish line formation. The companies’ alternated fire on the front line, with one company firing by volley as other companies reloaded. Willich explains how the “first rank delivered a volley, then the fourth, third, and second in succession took the front and delivered their fire.”<sup>14</sup> The regiments fought in this fashion, alternating fire by companies until sunset, defeating every Confederate attack that attempted to retake Liberty Gap.<sup>15</sup> The defense created successive waves of volley-fire that continually checked the advancing Confederates.

Like Willich, John Starkweather had to operate his command independently – in his case during the opening phases of the Battle of Stones River. This fight occurred on

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<sup>11</sup> Reinhart, *Willich’s Gallant Dutchmen*, 146.

<sup>12</sup> O.R. vol. 23, pt. 1, 487.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

31 December 1862 as the battle began.<sup>16</sup> In the main action the Confederate army unleashed an overwhelming surprise flank attack on the Union right designed to drive the Federals away from the roads back to Nashville, the army's base. Starkweather was ordered to defend wagon trains on the main turnpike, the critical line of supply and retreat. Fighting a rearguard action by himself, the brigadier's initiative saved the army supply wagons and kept the road to Nashville open.

Starkweather's brigade was pounced on by a large detachment of Confederate cavalry under the command of Brig. Gen. Joseph Wheeler who was attempting to capture the wagon train. Personally directing the 24<sup>th</sup> Illinois, 79<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, 1<sup>st</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin, Starkweather first ordered the 21<sup>st</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin detached as skirmishers. The two regiments were ordered behind the wagon train and into the fields to the west – the direction of the Confederate attack.<sup>17</sup> Then, the 24<sup>th</sup> Illinois was sent a short pace up the road to guard a bridge over a river crossing that secured the wagon train's access to the rest of the army further down the Nashville Turnpike.<sup>18</sup> He immediately recognized the need for keeping the bridge intact and clear, and so Starkweather sent the 24<sup>th</sup> Illinois for this purpose even though he sent the men beyond his immediate control. Through his quick work he helped ensure that the road was kept open.

Starkweather also used terrain to his advantage. Having already deployed the 1<sup>st</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin, the commander formed the 79<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania into a second line and

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<sup>16</sup> O.R. vol. 20, pt. 1, 391. Starkweather incorrectly notes the battle taking place on 30 December, the records make note of his mistake.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 222.

<sup>18</sup> O.R. vol. 20, pt. 1, 391.

marched to the front with them. As the advance commenced, the 21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin “being pressed severely by the enemy in front and on the left...passed to the right of the highway and occupied a hill, upon which was a log-house, giving them a good fighting position.”<sup>19</sup> Watching this move, Starkweather then deployed the 1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin and 79<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania in line of battle supporting the advance troops.<sup>20</sup> In this way Starkweather secured high ground on the hilltop, and so gained a considerable advantage before the fighting became a general engagement. He had time to place the troops and did not have to rush into a defensive posture as his brigade had been forced to do in their previous engagement at the Battle of Perryville. Moreover, the deployment of one regiment in the front line and two in the second allowed the formation to be in position to withstand a concerted cavalry charge by the enemy. Wheeler’s men would be diverted away by the wedge-shape that Starkweather’s lines had adopted. The 21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin was not isolated on the hill.

With Starkweather’s men fully prepared and in position the engagement heated up. Capt. John Otto’s 21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin, “went into the field deployed in line and went for [the Confederates]...[The enemy] began a spirited fire...[but] we reached a fence running across the field and within fire range of the Rebs and at once began to retaliate with a will.”<sup>21</sup> The Confederate cavalry was fighting dismounted, as they normally would, but Starkweather’s front line troops repulsed them repeatedly. Having placed the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 392.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Gould & Kennedy, *Memoirs of a Dutch Mudsill*, 80.

79<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania and 1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin at the base of the hill in excellent supporting distance, the brigadier had also placed the 1<sup>st</sup> Kentucky Battery on the right of the 21<sup>st</sup> at the top of the hill. With the men thus disposed the engagement lasted two hours, and Confederate casualties far outweighed his own: a fact confirmed when Otto identified eighty-two dead and wounded in front of his regiment.<sup>22</sup> The Confederate cavalry eventually tired of trying to defeat Starkweather's troops and so retreated. The brigade had protected the train and the road.<sup>23</sup>

While localized and minor in comparison to what the army as a whole faced at Stones River, this engagement was a great victory in the larger scheme of the campaign. Bragg used his cavalry to threaten the Nashville Turnpike and the Federals' supplies. Had the train been destroyed, the Army of the Cumberland would have been forced to withdraw from the loss of supplies and ammunition. Starkweather, like Willich at Liberty Gap, showed initiative in the face of the enemy and deployed his troops advantageously and unconventionally in a dangerous situation.

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Although Stones River and Chickamauga were large-scale battles, at certain points in each action individual brigade commanders were forced to act in isolation, often in reaction to an emergency. In each case, the Confederate attacks disorganized and disoriented the Union Army. Because of the nature of the attacks and subsequent

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> O.R. vol, 20, pt. 1, 391-93. Gould & Kennedy, *Memoirs of a Dutch Mudsill*, 80. Otto notes the loss of upwards of eighty wagons, but admits to being told this figure by other members in his command, a note of the rumors that could run wild through camp.

confusion brigade commanders were forced to act in desperate circumstances which required innovative thinking.

In large-scale battles the flank attack was a preferred tactic. A mass of men against an exposed or weakly held position was the quickest way to unhinge an opponent's battle lines. In such situations brigade commanders often found themselves alone against large concentrations of the enemy. In these circumstances brigade commanders used counterattacks, terrain, and cooperation with neighboring units to slow down the enemy and save their units. The key issue was a brigade commander's ability to deploy and operate within the division, specifically deployment within the framework of massed combat. As well, commanders had to foresee problems that might arise from deployment and be able to deal with those problems decisively. Their ability to recognize the benefits of good terrain and place their men accordingly could be the difference between holding the ground and retreating.

During the Battle of Stones River Willich and Carlin found their brigades isolated and in danger. The two commanders faced the full weight of the Confederate flank attack on the morning of 31 December 1862. Neither brigade had been properly deployed by their corps commander McCook. Neither command was placed to receive attack or to defend any sort of fallback position. Ironically this was the result of the army commander's attempt to fool the enemy. Rosecrans had ordered McCook to extend campfires past the flank of his corps in an effort to deceive Bragg as to the length of the Union lines. The deception did not have the desired effect; Bragg shifted more of his troops to extend his attack thereby lapping past the Union right. When the Confederate

corps lined up for action during the night, they thus placed themselves in perfect position to devastate the Union troops.

The soldiers felt that something was wrong. Pvt. L.W. Day in Carlin's brigade reported that, "all night long we could hear the movement of artillery and troops to our right. So serious did this seem to us that we several times sent word to Regt. Headquarters calling attention to the fact."<sup>24</sup> McCook went to bed with his troops in line, but with no added protections of breastworks. Throughout the night, troops in Carlin's brigade and the surrounding commands sent messages to commanders informing them that enemy troops and artillery were moving across their front, "but nothing was done about it," lamented Day.<sup>25</sup> "Similar reports were sent from other parts of the picket line, but to no effect... [T]o this day it seems strange that no attention was given this matter."<sup>26</sup> The level of unpreparedness in this portion of the Union line was unforgivable.

Willich's brigade of Brig. Gen. Johnson's 2<sup>nd</sup> Division occupied one of the most exposed of McCook's positions. Being an old soldier with a great deal of battlefield experience, Willich should have recognized the important and perilous position of his regiments – the 89<sup>th</sup> Illinois, 15<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> Ohio, and 32<sup>nd</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> Indiana.<sup>27</sup> The brigade was positioned correctly, facing to the west, while the main Union line faced south. In this configuration, the flank of the army was refused, and the brigade had clear fields of

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<sup>24</sup> Day, *Story of the 101<sup>st</sup> Ohio*, 82.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 81-82, 220.

fire in front.<sup>28</sup> But no preparations had been made to receive an attack, even though the enemy was heard throughout the night. Neither Willich nor his superiors ordered battle lines formed, and did not instruct the men to prepare any kind of defensive works. Simple entrenchments would have offered a ready-made place to defend.<sup>29</sup> So little did they anticipate their danger that the men were ordered to stack weapons for the night.

The troops were up and making breakfast by 5:30 A.M. when a staff officer from Johnson approached Willich and reminded him to have his men up and under arms by dawn. The staffer was somewhat surprised when Willich responded, “They are so quiet out there that I guess they are no more here.”<sup>30</sup> Willich’s statement is interesting, to say the least, because the entire Union army was aware of the presence of Bragg’s Confederates. The brigade commanders under McCook may have been operating under the same confidence McCook had in Rosecrans’s plan. The commanding general had his own flank attack under preparation designed to hit the Confederate right.

Shortly after making his remark, Willich headed to division headquarters to confer with Johnson, leaving Col. William Gibson of the 49<sup>th</sup> Ohio in command, promising to return as quickly as possible.<sup>31</sup> Willich could have requested a conference with Johnson at his position, surely a better way for either man to determine the tactical

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<sup>28</sup> Refusing the flank refers to bending the end of the line back, usually by 90 degrees, forming a right angle and creating a defined end to the line.

<sup>29</sup> Later in the war, veteran soldiers knew better than to expose themselves this way. Ordered to or not, they would have constructed cover of some kind.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>31</sup> O.R. vol. 20, pt. 1, 303.

situation. Since Willich left no official report because he would be captured during the ensuing battle, it is hard to understand the true meaning behind his departure. Historian Peter Cozzens notes, “Willich should have known better....[H]e was among the eldest and most experienced officers in the Army of the Cumberland.”<sup>32</sup> Presumably, he was going to inform Johnson of the enemy presence and preparations in front of his brigade position. With reports throughout the night of enemy movement, it is almost careless behavior for Willich to have disregarded the reports even if the general plan of battle which called for his men to hold while the main attack came from the other flank of the army.

The Union troops were surprised when Confederate battle lines, four ranks deep, emerged from the darkness at 6:22 A.M.<sup>33</sup> Most were cooking breakfast when the picket lines came streaming back into the camps. The attack was coordinated and overwhelming. An entire Confederate corps advanced on two divisions of McCook’s right wing. The Confederate lines greatly outstretched the Union alignments because of their movement left during the night. Brig. Gen. Edward N. Kirk’s brigade was hit first and disintegrated quickly. Willich’s brigade was the next target of the charging rebels. Returning to his command, Willich heard the sounds of battle and was captured moments into the attack when he rode too far forward attempting to rally his men. He was surrounded and taken captive by a regiment of Texas cavalrymen.<sup>34</sup> “When the capture

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die: The Battle of Stones River* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 82-83.

<sup>33</sup> Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 82.

<sup>34</sup> O.R. vol. 20, pt. 1, 304-05.

of the general was made known, both brigades dissolved almost completely and offered the enemy only weak resistance.”<sup>35</sup> Col. William H. Gibson, 49<sup>th</sup> Ohio, quickly took command of the brigade but could only watch as the lines, “yielded to an assault which no troops in the world could have withstood.”<sup>36</sup> Gibson could not execute an orderly, directed retreat, and the brigade did not reform until later in the day. The brigade simply dissolved.

As Willich’s men scattered in the face of the Confederates, Carlin’s men, to their left, were next in line. The men in this brigade heard Willich’s fight and were more prepared. During the night Carlin had posted his troops to the left of Willich’s and had put his regiments in line of battle.<sup>37</sup> The 38<sup>th</sup> Illinois was on the left, the 101<sup>st</sup> Ohio in the center and 15<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin on the right. The 21<sup>st</sup> Illinois was posted in reserve. When the attack commenced the 21<sup>st</sup> Illinois moved to the right when Johnson’s division on Carlin’s right broke and left the ground.<sup>38</sup> Carlin called on the 21<sup>st</sup> Illinois to move there and extend the flank of the 15<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin. “I still determined to do all that was possible to hold my position, and to that end started to the right of my brigade to see...[the] 21<sup>st</sup> Illinois, to ascertain how [they] were faring, and to give orders the state of affairs might

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<sup>35</sup> Reinhart, *Willich’s Gallant Dutchmen*, 130.

<sup>36</sup> O.R. vol. 20, pt. 1, 304-05.

<sup>37</sup> Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 76-77. The Confederate attacks progressed *en echelon*, meaning they hit the lines at different points. Willich’s men were breaking while Carlin’s first encountered the enemy. This allowed him time to mount a short defense before flank pressure overwhelmed his men.

<sup>38</sup> O.R. vol. 10, pt. 1, 279-80.

require.”<sup>39</sup> Carlin had reacted to the situation and immediately looked for a rally point to hold the position.

But even Carlin’s quick thinking could not save the immediate situation. During his movement the commander’s horse was shot out from under him and he was struck by a spent bullet.<sup>40</sup> Carlin was stunned by this and upon regaining his senses ordered an immediate withdrawal of the brigade.<sup>41</sup> “The time had come, under the general instructions from Rosecrans to fall back, contesting every inch of ground,” he states.<sup>42</sup> Deploying the 15<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin to the right, Carlin used these veterans to allow time for his remaining regiments to pull out behind covering fire. The 15<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin successfully checked the advance of the enemy troops, allowing Carlin time to pull back his other units.<sup>43</sup>

Although the brigade was retreating, Carlin was preserving the order of his command. He moved 200 yards to the rear and was able to rally the disciplined regiments to make a stand and fire several volleys at the oncoming Confederates. The men made this stand at a fence bordering an open field. The 101<sup>st</sup> Ohio made a dash for the fence and arrived there as the Confederates began crossing the field. “Before we had

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 280. Carlin was almost immediately engaged on the right by the Confederate troops that had overrun Willich’s brigade minutes before.

<sup>40</sup> O.R. vol. 20, p. 280; Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 79. Carlin claimed his troops had fought for almost two hours when he was injured. He later explains that the time went by very slowly for him in the early stages of the battle and that when he finally began reforming his troops in the Union rear he thought it was late afternoon. In fact it was around 9:30 A.M.

<sup>41</sup> Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 77.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>43</sup> O.R. vol. 20, pt. 1, 281; Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 78-79.

fully reached our new position, the rebel lines again advanced, but were more respectful – they did not come so close...we opened a galling and to all appearances very discouraging fire upon them,” stated Pvt. Day.<sup>44</sup> Rallying and delivering well-aimed volleys checked the advance of the enemy. Carlin’s men were able to sustain a fighting retreat by finding places the men could rally and deliver volleys that momentarily checked the Confederate advance.

Having kept order in a deteriorating situation, Carlin at this point received orders from division commander Davis to withdraw.<sup>45</sup> Obeying the command, the brigadier moved his men further to the rear. “I retired my command about half a mile to our rear, and again endeavored to rally the men.” Yet, further orderly retreat proved a problem. As Carlin noted, “it was evident that [the men] were so utterly discouraged that no substantial good could result.”<sup>46</sup>

Carlin’s troops had been able to make a stand initially, but they were being continually outflanked on the left by advancing Confederates. Carlin’s brigade had no support and did not have enough men to counter the overwhelming number of Confederate units. “We had all we could take care of directly in front of us, and we would have held that line until now—but assailed in front, flank and rear, we did well to fall back when we did,” reported Pvt. Day.<sup>47</sup> Under fire, Carlin removed his men. “We

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<sup>44</sup> Day, *Story of the 101<sup>st</sup> Ohio*, 86.

<sup>45</sup> Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 78.

<sup>46</sup> O.R. vol. 20, pt. 1, 281.

<sup>47</sup> Day, *Story of the 101<sup>st</sup> Ohio*, 87.

were constantly in the presence of the enemy,” the Confederates all the time threatening the right and rear of the brigade line, Pvt. Day continued.<sup>48</sup> Carlin had kept his brigade together and had slowed the Confederate advance, but his few regiments were simply overmatched.

At this point, Carlin was in line with Sheridan’s division on the left, the only Union division in McCook’s wing to offer substantial resistance during the early stages of the battle. Sheridan rode to the left and observed the brigadier, commenting later that, “the calm and cool appearance of Carlin, who at the time was smoking a stumpy pipe, had some effect and was in strong contrast to the excited manner of [his division commander], who seemed overpowered by the disaster that had befallen his command.”<sup>49</sup> But if Carlin was calm, his men were not. The brigadier had managed to keep his regiments in line, but now, under continued attack from the Confederates, the troops managed to fire one volley before they, “broke without orders. I conducted them to the rear, passing through the lines of our reserves, and halted at the railroad, where we remained during the afternoon collecting our scattered men.”<sup>50</sup>

Carlin’s command of his brigade on 31 December was the best that could be hoped for under the circumstances. He managed a fighting withdrawal until the continual pressure demoralized the men. The continuous flanking movements of the enemy provided no opportunity to construct a fallback position. Eventually Carlin was able to

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>50</sup> O.R. vol. 20, pt. 1, 281.

extricate his regiments and rally them well in the Union rear. There they could recover, collect stragglers, and prepare for more combat. The Confederate attack had shattered the Union right flank, throwing the divisions and brigades into confusion and scattering many of them. Carlin's brigade was handled more skillfully than most on this section of the Union line, and he brought his command off the field intact.

Certainly, Willich and Carlin had no chance in the face of the rebel assault. However, in Willich's case, the commander was captured early and the unit was destroyed within moments of the start of the action. The brigadier's poor preparation paved the way for this disintegration. Carlin's situation was different. Although the attack was overwhelming, his presence kept the men together and moving to positions where they could make momentary stands. A measure of preparation and the presence of a trusted commander counted for a great deal.

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Depending on the circumstances, brigade commanders isolated in the middle of battle could use counterattacks to try to save the situation or delay the enemy. On the first day of Chickamauga, 19 September 1863, Willich's brigade used such a counterattack to check a Confederate advance that was threatening to break the Union line. In a similar situation, Harker's brigade fought off an enemy advance at the Battle of Stones River.

Willich's brigade was called to aid a threatened portion of the Union line early in the fighting at Chickamauga. The Confederate attack on the morning of 19 September

was meant to outflank the Union army, forcing it away from the safety of Chattanooga to the north. The weight of the attack fell on Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas's XIV Corps, which quickly needed reinforcements.<sup>51</sup> Willich's men marched to the aid of Thomas's men, along with the rest of the troops in Johnson's division.<sup>52</sup>

Willich's brigade passed behind the army's left flank from his position in the center to reach the fighting in the vicinity of the Lafayette Road. Moving to the threatened portion of Thomas's line, Willich was ordered to fill a gap in this line that had been created by units shifting position during the early morning fighting. Willich deployed the 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana and 49<sup>th</sup> Ohio in the front line and the 89<sup>th</sup> Illinois and 15<sup>th</sup> Ohio directly behind in support. Willich placed his men in line in a position of strength. With two regiments in front and two in support, the brigade's power was maximized by having the men occupy less space than an extended, or single line of regiments would have. Skirmishers were placed in front of the regiments and immediately engaged Confederate troops to their front.

His troops thus disposed, Willich ordered an attack. He later stated that after several minutes, "having sufficiently shaken the enemy's infantry line, I ordered a bayonet charge."<sup>53</sup> This disrupted the Confederate advance. He advanced steadily at the

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<sup>51</sup> Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 315-19.

<sup>52</sup> Peter Cozzens, *This Terrible Sound: The Battle of Chickamauga* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 146; O.R. vol. 30, pt. 1, 538.

<sup>53</sup> O.R. vol. 30, pt. 1, 538.

head of his brigade, calling for the 89<sup>th</sup> Illinois to wheel left, extending the brigade front and sweeping away a portion of Maj. Gen. Benjamin Cheatham's Confederate division.<sup>54</sup>

The skill with which Willich moved and directed his men in this operation impressed Sgt. Alexis Cope of the 15<sup>th</sup> Ohio:

Usually in military operations the regiment was the unit. But with Gen. Willich in command...the brigade was the unit. The regiments...were skillfully commanded...but in time of action all looked to Gen. Willich as the directing mind, trusted him with the utmost confidence and followed him implicitly.<sup>55</sup>

Maj. W.D. Williams voiced similar praise:

General Willich came forward and standing in front of the regiment and amid a shower of bullets poured into us, complimented the regiment for its advance, calmed their excitement, instructed them how to advance firing, and maintain their alignment with the advance of the brigade, and by his own inimitable calmness of manner restored order and confidence in the regiment.<sup>56</sup>

Following the successful bayonet charge, Willich tried to do more. He instructed the regiments to advance thirty paces to the edge of an open field, the position they occupied for the next two hours, constantly under fire.<sup>57</sup> The surprise of this forward thrust from the Union lines disrupted the Confederate

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 538-39.

<sup>55</sup> Alexis Cope, *The Fifteenth Ohio Volunteers and its Campaigns* (Columbus: Edward T. Miller Co., 1916), 319.

<sup>56</sup> Cope, *The Fifteenth Ohio*, 320.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

attack enough that the remainder of Cheatham's division broke off contact, relieving this portion of the line. Once the charge ended and the lines were reformed, Willich was a mile ahead of his supporting division to the left. In his after action report he lamented that the division on his left did not attack in concert with him. Willich felt they could have swept away all the Confederate resistance on this portion of the field.<sup>58</sup>

Like Willich at Chickamauga, Harker's brigade executed a similar counterattack at the Battle of Stones River on 31 December 1862. Unfortunately, Harker handled his brigade poorly, leaving questions about deployment and cooperation with neighboring units. The concerted Confederate attack in the morning at Stones River shattered the army's right flank. Because McCook's corps was decimated by the early morning attacks, Rosecrans was forced to call on his reserve troops to shore up the situation.<sup>59</sup> As his right flank collapsed, Rosecrans personally directed Harker's Third Brigade from Brig. Gen. Thomas Wood's division to move to the disintegrating right flank and into the battle. Once there he was to counterattack, disorienting the Confederate offensive enough to provide space and time to establish a new defensive line and rally the scattering troops.<sup>60</sup>

Harker began intelligently and in excellent formation to move across a battlefield littered with wounded and retreating men. He marched across the battlefield with his

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 539-40.

<sup>59</sup> Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 130.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

brigade deployed in three lines. The first contained the 51<sup>st</sup> Indiana and 65<sup>th</sup> Ohio. He placed the 6<sup>th</sup> Ohio Independent Artillery a short distance behind this front line. The 64<sup>th</sup> Ohio and 73<sup>rd</sup> Indiana formed the second line of infantry, while the 13<sup>th</sup> Michigan created a last line.<sup>61</sup> Adopting this formation was very advantageous under the circumstances. By moving in three compact battle lines, Harker was able to limit his brigade's width, allowing the passing stragglers to move around his men. The Union flank had crumbled and the thousands of men were streaming rearward. They could have easily broken his alignment or scattered the artillery battery horses. Hinman recalled, "Through this mass of frenzied men and animals we threaded our way, still on the double-quick....[W]e saw many wounded making their way to the rear, unaided, or borne upon stretchers, or in ambulances....[T]he crucial test was before us."<sup>62</sup> The move thus commenced with little difficulty and Harker passed to the front, only complaining of Confederate artillery fire annoying the advance.<sup>63</sup>

Harker's movement began to go wrong when he placed himself in line on the right of Col. James Fyffe's Second Brigade of Brig. Gen. Horatio Van Cleve's Third Division of Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden's Corps.<sup>64</sup> Because these troops were not of the same division, Harker and Fyffe did not communicate with each other upon taking up their positions.<sup>65</sup> Harker simply reported, "a staff officer from the command upon my left

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<sup>61</sup> O.R. vol. 20, pt. 1, 502.

<sup>62</sup> Hinman, *The Sherman Brigade*, 205.

<sup>63</sup> O.R. vol. 20, pt. 1, 502.

<sup>64</sup> Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 226.

reported a strong force of the enemy in his front....I replied that my right was in danger.”<sup>66</sup> Immediately after locating an area between Fyffe and a large ridge Harker redeployed his men to the top of the ridge, a much more advantageous defensive position. Harker’s move to better ground made sense, but he failed to communicate or coordinate the move with Fyffe. As Peter Cozzens observes, “without consulting Van Cleve or notifying Fyffe, he marched his brigade by the right flank to the northwestern slope of the Widow Burris’ house ridge.”<sup>67</sup> Harker’s move thus created a gap in the line that neither he nor Fyffe could cover.

The Confederates quickly made Harker pay for his faulty deployment. By this time the Confederate troops of Lieut. Gen. William Hardee’s corps appeared in view preparing for an attack. Harker deployed the 65<sup>th</sup> Ohio on the right and the 51<sup>st</sup> Indiana on the left in his front line on the crest of the hill to meet this threat. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Indiana supported the 65<sup>th</sup> Ohio and 64<sup>th</sup> Ohio supported the 51<sup>st</sup> Indiana. His fifth regiment, the 13<sup>th</sup> Michigan was placed behind at the base of the hill to move toward either exposed flank. Hinman notes that after seeing the enemy advance it only took the Confederates five minutes to cross the intervening space where the brigade was, “at the edge of the storm.”<sup>68</sup> Harker noted that, “the position selected proved a most fortunate one,” completely ignoring the gap created by his movement.<sup>69</sup> It proved less fortunate for

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<sup>65</sup> O.R., vol. 20, pt. 1, 501.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 502.

<sup>67</sup> Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 148.

<sup>68</sup> Hinman, *The Sherman Brigade*, 205.

<sup>69</sup> Cozzens, *No Better Place to Die*, 148.

Fyffe on the left; the gap in the line between his men and Harker's was large and the Confederates were moving right toward it. Fyffe called on Harker to close the gap three times, but three times received the response that he was too hard pressed to shift troops in Fyffe's direction.<sup>70</sup> Harker could move no further, he said, because all his regiments were on line.<sup>71</sup> He could have ordered his reserve regiments to the left to fill the gap, but he was immediately in trouble himself as the Confederate attack outstretched his own flank by several hundred yards. He moved his reserve regiments to the right, lengthening his lines even further away from Fyffe. The Confederates took advantage.

Why did Harker not at least extend the 13<sup>th</sup> Michigan in the direction of Fyffe's men? The answer is not readily available. He moved the 64<sup>th</sup> Ohio to a refused position of the right flank. The formation would seem to prove the crisis was met since no other troops were sent to that sector. Hinman notes, "at length the brigade of Van Cleve's division upon our left, gives way before a charge of the enemy and falls back....By its recession our brigade, which is the extreme right of the line, is seriously compromised, both its flanks being now exposed."<sup>72</sup> That the brigade did not give way until Fyffe's men on the left retreated means the right flank was not in jeopardy and the 13<sup>th</sup> Michigan could have been used to fill the space between the brigades.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 148. O.R., vol. 20, pt. 1, 501-02. Reference to the calls from Fyffe were the first time Harker mentioned being in contact with him after he reached the battlefield.

<sup>72</sup> Hinman, *The Sherman Brigade*, 206.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 207.

Harker's brigade was quickly forced into a fighting retreat based on his poor deployment. Fyffe's brigade on the left was enveloped and retreated rearward and Harker soon found his brigade attacked from the front, right, and left with increasingly more fire coming in from behind. "After a brief but fierce struggle at the fence we are again flanked upon the left and our decimated line is torn by a biting enfilading fire, there is no alternative and again we fall back, with the advancing rebels at our heels," lamented Hinman.<sup>74</sup> The men retreated toward the Nashville Turnpike. "On and on we went, at the greatest possible speed...every man was in his place, his nerves wrought up to the highest tension, and none thought of weariness."<sup>75</sup>

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Relatively early in the war Union and Confederate commanders learned the fundamentals of Napoleonic mass-army campaigning and combat, adopting the French emperor's original formulation to American conditions. But the maneuver of armies and deployment of corps in fluid situations exposed lower-level commands to dangerous situations. Whether it was faulty placement at higher level command or concerted Confederate offensives, there were times when brigade commanders were in tight spots. When faced with such circumstances brigadiers generally had the tools to maintain their unit's cohesion and combat effectiveness. The commanders were also learning how to use the men to the best advantage with novel tactics like shifting counterattacks and

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 205.

concentrated and directed fire.<sup>76</sup> If they exercised command properly, brigadiers could be firmly in control of their men even in situations of seeming chaos. Through their commanders' leadership, the men were developing as soldiers and were increasingly aware of what they needed to do. They developed methods and fighting formations that best suited the situation they were in.

In the closing months of the war, the campaigning to Atlanta elevated control to higher levels of command. More than before brigade commanders would operate within larger formations of divisions and corps. Higher ranking officers began to exercise more comprehensive control over the formations under their command. Increasingly the Army of the Cumberland's brigadiers had to work within the army as a whole.

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<sup>76</sup> Harry W. Pfanz, *Gettysburg: Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 299. In the eastern theater, Brig. Gen. George Greene's New York brigade successfully defended Culp's Hill at the Battle of Gettysburg using similar tactics. Greene's men used a defile behind the line to shelter troops while cleaning and loading rifles.

### CHAPTER THREE: MASS ASSAULTS AND ATTRITION

The Battle of Chickamauga ended Rosecrans' tenure as commander of the Army of the Cumberland. Following the defeat, the army retreated to Chattanooga, took up defensive positions, and allowed Bragg's Army of Tennessee to lay siege to the city using the dominant elevations of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge.<sup>1</sup> At this point the final phase of the war began for Carlin, Willich, and Harker because they would fight the large-scale battles at Chattanooga, Resaca, and Kennesaw Mountain in northern Georgia.<sup>2</sup> These actions marked a turning point. Throughout these battles brigade commanders would operate as part of their larger commands. The army now maneuvered and fought as a coordinated whole on the offensive. Previously brigade commanders had operated on their own initiative, but as part of Sherman's combined force the brigade commanders deployed and fought their men as part of divisions and corps.

Unlike Rosecrans, Sherman did not expose his army to counterstrokes. His maneuvers were compact. For his part Confederate Gen. Joseph E. Johnston countered this with combat engineering. Johnston and Sherman exercised more control over their armies by keeping units more concentrated in space. But this concentration also

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 352-54. Rosecrans lost the confidence of the administration in Washington because of his strained mental condition following Chickamauga. He went through periods of depression, followed by days of optimism. He was replaced by Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas, with Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant taking command of overall operations for the western armies. The condition of the army and the nature of the siege, coupled with Grant's success at Vicksburg made him the obvious choice for overall command.

<sup>2</sup> Starkweather acted in a reserve role at Chattanooga and did not participate in Sherman's Atlanta Campaign. His active field service was effectively over after Chickamauga.

increased the prospect of frontal assaults. Although this phase of the Army of the Cumberland's career would begin with the most successful frontal assault of the war – Missionary Ridge – harsher encounters would follow, Kennesaw Mountain in particular. Brigade commanders were put in new situations where they had to deploy and fight in constricted positions. In these situations, initiative was replaced by preparation.

Brigade commanders were not asked to plan frontal assaults against prepared positions. They were told to follow orders. The merit of an attack was not their domain anymore; they were simply to do their jobs. Brigade commanders were expected to deal with local conditions along their front and to coordinate with other, neighboring units. Commanders were also responsible for maintaining alignment with their neighboring brigades in order for the attack to have a sustained and unbroken front.

Because of the conspicuous visibility of brigade commanders during these offensive operations, casualties among the officer corps could not be avoided. Willich and Harker in turn were wounded (Harker fatally) in their respective attacks, depriving the army of two of its finest and most promising officers. Brigades depended on their leaders and attrition at the command level endangered morale and effective fighting. These were the hardest casualties to take because Civil War armies depended on these low-ranking general officers for cohesion and direct leadership. These losses proved debilitating to certain brigades, especially if the officer was long serving and well-liked.

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Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's campaign to take Atlanta in the summer of 1864 was for the most part a series of flanking movements that forced Johnston's army from position after position. Johnston was able to force confrontations with Sherman's forces at Resaca and Kennesaw Mountain.<sup>3</sup> The two battles removed Willich and Harker from the war.

Willich's brigade participated in the Battle of Resaca on 13-15 May 1864.<sup>4</sup> The army was in line of battle facing Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee along the Oostanaula River in north central Georgia. Sherman's supply line, the Western and Atlantic Railroad tied the army to the railroad bridge over the river at Resaca. Johnston constructed a line of well-laid entrenchments north of town and appeared unwilling to retreat any further without a fight.<sup>5</sup> Sherman's plan for 15 May was to attack Johnston along the railroad with a demonstration planned for Maj. Gen. Oliver Otis Howard's IV Corps further to the west.<sup>6</sup>

Willich's brigade took position with Wood's division at 11 a.m. Wood ordered Willich to attack two lines of entrenchments. As part of the plan Willich was to connect

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 394-96.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Willich's brigade was part of Brig. Gen. Thomas Wood's Division of Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard's IV Corps, Army of the Cumberland.

<sup>5</sup> Albert Castel, *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 168-70.

<sup>6</sup> Richard M. McMurry, *Atlanta 1864: Last Chance for the Confederacy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 70. Sherman elected to engage Johnston at Resaca in the hopes of holding the Confederate army in position while the Federal pontoon train arrived at a place where Sherman could cross the river with cavalry and attack the railroad further south at Calhoun, Georgia.

his flanks with the brigades on both sides and advance in a general battle line. Enemy skirmishers held the first line of works backed up on a ridge by another line of rifle pits and fortified artillery positions. In response to his orders, Willich formed the brigade with “the 49<sup>th</sup> Ohio on the right and the 15<sup>th</sup> Ohio on the left of the front line, the 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana and 89<sup>th</sup> Illinois...forming the second line, and the 35<sup>th</sup> Illinois and 15<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin, in double column closed in mass in the third line.”<sup>7</sup> The final two regiments, closed in column, formed a mass of troops with each company lined up behind each other, giving the formation depth. The two regiments closed in column could be quickly brought forward or sent to the flanks of the brigade to aid in a breakthrough should one occur.<sup>8</sup> At the order to advance the brigade moved forward over “very broken country, covered with a dense...undergrowth and after advancing about 600 yards, the enemy’s skirmishers were encountered, driven in a gallant manner, and pressed back...until within their main line of works.”<sup>9</sup> Having easily moved his brigade across the field and rather handily taken the first line of Confederate works, Willich had to decide to press forward or withdraw.<sup>10</sup>

After several minutes rest for the men Willich ordered the second line – 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana and 38<sup>th</sup> Illinois – forward to attempt to ascertain the strength of the enemy still

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<sup>7</sup> O.R. vol. 38, pt. 1, 390. Col. Charles T. Hotchkiss, 89<sup>th</sup> Illinois, submitted the brigade report due to Willich’s subsequent wounding.

<sup>8</sup> Castel, *Decision in the West*, 157-58. Attacking columns usually adopted this formation because the front line closed with the enemy and could overrun the defenders; the second line could provide reserves and exploit any breakthrough that occurred.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> O.R. vol. 38, pt. 1, 391. Col. Hotchkiss makes no reference to having contact with his division commander during the assault, so it can be inferred that Willich was making his own command decisions by this point.

present in the works.<sup>11</sup> Sgt. Cope, in the trenches with the 15<sup>th</sup> Ohio, witnessed the “line advance only a short distance when a terrific direct and cross fire of musketry and artillery swept over the open field.”<sup>12</sup> The command quickly retired to the safety of the rifle trench. Willich moved to the front of the 38<sup>th</sup> Illinois and mounted the parapet of the trenches in order to see the Confederate line. He was hit immediately, wounded severely in the arm, the ball passing through and lodging in his chest. “He was evidently suffering severe pain, but he loved ‘his poys,’ as he called them, and as they crowded about him, he exhorted them in broken English to do their duty as well without him as if he were present.”<sup>13</sup> The command devolved to Col. William Gibson, 49<sup>th</sup> Ohio and the brigade repulsed an attempt by the enemy to retake the first line of entrenchments.<sup>14</sup> Overnight the Confederate army evacuated their positions at Resaca. Johnston fought long enough to allow his wagon train to cross the river; the infantry followed.<sup>15</sup> The marches and maneuvering resumed.<sup>16</sup>

At Resaca Sherman attempted to fix Johnston in position and so move around his flank and cut him off from the river crossings.<sup>17</sup> He was attempting to push Johnston back with force and destroy a good part of the Confederate Army. The frontal attacks

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<sup>11</sup> Reinhart, *Willich's Gallant Dutchmen*, 162.

<sup>12</sup> Cope, *The Fifteenth Ohio*, 434-35. This fire resulted from a slight bend in the second-line of Confederate works that allowed the defenders the advantage of converging fire.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 435-36.

<sup>14</sup> O.R. vol. 38, pt. 1, 391.

<sup>15</sup> McMurry, *Atlanta 1864*, 72.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

here were demonstrations to weaken resistance to the troops executing the main thrust of the assault.<sup>18</sup> While the attacks were not disastrous to the army, they were to the men of Willich's brigade. They lost their beloved commander for the duration of the war.

Harker's command suffered the loss of their commander a month later on 27 June 1864 at Kennesaw Mountain. The brigade was part of Brig. Gen. John Newton's division of Howard's IV Corps at Resaca.<sup>19</sup> The situation here was similar to Resaca, the exception being the Confederate works were much stronger. The Southern line was situated on a series of ridges that culminated at the mountain itself. Sherman ordered Thomas's Army of the Cumberland to attack. The selected point of attack featured a salient, or bulge in the Confederate line capped by an earth and log breastwork. Thomas spent most to the day reconnoitering the position and he deemed it to be the most likely place for success.<sup>20</sup> The position was considered the weakest point along the sector Thomas was ordered to attack.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, the area was defended by Maj. Gen. Patrick Cleburne, commanding some of the best troops in the Army of Tennessee.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> O.R. vol. 38, pt. 1, 390. There is no mention of divisional command direction. Brig. Gen. Wood is not mentioned in the official report, and does not appear to have been in contact with his superiors.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 446.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 408-9.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* Daniel states that Thomas was resigned to making the attack because relations between him and Sherman were strained. Thomas had previously been rebuked on every suggestion of strategy he put forward to Sherman, he simply decided to follow the orders without protesting.

<sup>22</sup> McMurry, *Atlanta 1864*, 109.

Harker deployed his brigade in column within the area he was assigned to occupy.<sup>23</sup> Due to the compact nature of the Federal lines on Harker's section of the battlefield, his regiments were unable to deploy in line of battle side by side. Instead, Harker was forced to stack the regiments, much like Willich did with his reserve at Resaca.<sup>24</sup> The speed of the attack counted as the troops encountered three rows of obstacles: "first, chest high 'tanglefoot,' then sharp-pointed pine poles planted four inches apart and slanting forward at a forty-five-degree angle, and finally...logs crisscrossed with pointed stakes that have been inserted through holes bored with augers."<sup>25</sup> The position was formidable but the orders were to go forward. Offering a conspicuous target, Harker rode into the assault, hoping to better direct his brigade.<sup>26</sup>

Harker's attack was well coordinated and fast. Following a fifteen-minute artillery barrage the brigade moved ahead. Harker's men "swept like an avalanche through a ravine and up a long, steep slope, the summit of which was crowned by the enemy's works," reported Lt. Hinman of the 65<sup>th</sup> Ohio.<sup>27</sup> Harker ordered the brigade to advance at the double-quick. The speed brought them into the first line of rifle pits and they captured a large number of Confederate pickets who did not have time to retreat. Harker allowed no halt, but spurred his men forward, leading them toward the main

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<sup>23</sup> O.R. vol. 38, pt. 1, 355. The reports in the O.R. and secondary sources make no reference to the specific regimental alignment of Harker's command. They simply note that the units were massed in column.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>25</sup> Castel, *Decision in the West*, 315.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Hinman, *The Sherman Brigade*, 311.

Confederate line and the remaining defenses. “As we came within short musket range, the rebels delivered from the shelter of their entrenchments a most deadly and destructive fire,” complained Hinman.<sup>28</sup> Historian Albert Castel notes: “As they emerge[d] from the belt of timber and brush...rifle and artillery fire from...Cleburne’s division literally [blew] away the heads of the narrow columns, which quickly dissolve[d] into haphazard clusters of men following their regimental flags.”<sup>29</sup> The column formation offered weight and depth but the narrow front left a small target for the defenders and their concentrated fire began to blunt the attack. Unlike Emory Upton’s column attack at Spotsylvania Courthouse, Harker’s assault lacked the element of surprise.<sup>30</sup> The defenders knew they were coming and fired on Harker’s men as soon as they cleared the woods.

With the attack Harker had to move the men forward again or order a retreat. He chose the former. Pushing forward to the head of the column Harker called to his men, “Come on boys!”<sup>31</sup> He was immediately hit. “While animating his men, far up the slope, he was stricken down by a ball which passed through his arm and into the breast.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Castel, *Decision in the West*, 315.

<sup>30</sup> Earl J. Hess, *Trench Warfare Under Grant & Lee: Field Fortifications in the Overland Campaign* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 55. In Virginia at Spotsylvania Courthouse, May 1864, Col. Emory Upton, faced with strong entrenched positions, massed 5,000 men in column formation. Upton’s column attacked a reconnoitered portion of the Confederate line that was deemed weak. The depth of the attacking force allowed Upton’s men to overrun the first line of entrenchments, but the breach was sealed by counterattacks and Upton’s attack faltered because no Union reinforcements exploited the break in the line.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Hinman, *The Sherman Brigade*, 312.

Brig. Gen. Luther Bradley assumed command following Harker's wounding. The brigade fought on for only a few moments after watching their beloved commander fall. The order was given to retreat "when it was seen that there was no hope for success."<sup>33</sup> The most dramatic and affecting event in both Harker and Willich's attack was the wounding of the commander.

The massive frontal assaults at Resaca and Kennesaw cost the army two veteran and dependable officers. The gains in both assaults were minimal. The commanders executed their orders to the best of their ability. The alignment of their brigade formations was sound and well suited to the terrain. At Resaca, Willich fronted his regiments in the area they were to occupy and kept a two regiment reserve in column formation. This allowed him to move regiments to threatened portions of the attacking line, or strengthen the flanks. At Kennesaw Mountain, Harker was forced to align his brigade on a narrow front. His use of the column formation aided in the swiftness of the attack but failed to bring sufficient width, offering a narrow target on which the defenders could concentrate. Cleburne's division could focus fire from their entire line against one point. The column formation might have worked if Harker had the advantage of surprise. Attacking as they did and against Cleburne's rugged division, Harker's assault was doomed.

In the end, both Harker and Willich failed. The portions of entrenched lines that they attacked were simply too strong and too well defended, offering very little chance of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 311.

success. Historian Brent Nosworthy believes such failures seem foolish.<sup>34</sup> Bad attacks were made throughout the war, but the same kind of assault could also be decisive when properly coordinated in a more favorable situation. Unfortunately for tacticians like Willich the frontal assault offered little opportunity to display command acumen. The commanders often faced situations they did not control and simply reacted as best they could.

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The Battle of Chattanooga in November 1863 illustrates the decisive results of an assault by veteran, well-led troops. Following almost two months of idleness and near starvation in Chattanooga, the Army of the Cumberland commanded by Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas, took part in Grant's overall operations.<sup>35</sup> The plan called for troops on the Union right to attack the Confederate left at Lookout Mountain, while Sherman's Army of the Tennessee would attack Bragg's right flank on the northern end of Missionary Ridge.<sup>36</sup> Thomas's Army of the Cumberland faced the front of this ridge and was not to be used save as a diversion. On 24 November 1863, Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker's corps fought the "Battle Above the Clouds" on Lookout Mountain which "was a wonderful spectacle," according the Sgt. Cope in Willich's brigade.<sup>37</sup> "Dawn of the

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<sup>34</sup> Nosworthy, *The Bloody Crucible of Courage*, 276-77.

<sup>35</sup> Wiley Sword, *Mountains Touched with Fire: Chattanooga Besieged, 1863* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 61-62.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Cozzens, *The Shipwreck of Their Hopes: The Battles for Chattanooga* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 143-45.

<sup>37</sup> Cope, *The Fifteenth Ohio*, 370.

25<sup>th</sup> disclosed the stars and stripes floating from the point of the mountain, evoking prodigious cheers,” remembered Lt. Hinman in Harker’s command.<sup>38</sup> However, even though Sherman continued to attack Bragg’s lines on northern Missionary Ridge throughout the day, he was continually repulsed.<sup>39</sup>

To break the stall, Grant called for Thomas to make a demonstration by taking the first line of Confederate rifle pits at the bottom of Missionary Ridge. Hopefully this would divert troops from other portions of the battlefield. The Confederate entrenchments running on top of the ridge in front of Harker, Willich, and Carlin appeared formidable. “Arrayed along a front slightly less than three miles long were the better part of four rebel divisions and nine batteries of artillery—approximately sixteen thousand men defending seemingly impregnable heights against an attacking force of some twenty-three thousand that had nearly a mile of largely open ground to cross,” notes historian Peter Cozzens.<sup>40</sup> The charge was to be made by four divisions of the army including Carlin’s brigade in Johnson’s division, Harker’s in Sheridan’s division, and Willich’s in Wood’s division from right to left, respectively.<sup>41</sup>

Though this seemed a desperate move, Cozzens notes that the attacking troops were facing a patchwork line in the Confederate defenses however powerful they looked. The artillery and infantry were placed in segments. Their “sorry state” represented their

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<sup>38</sup> Hinman, *The Sherman Brigade*, 266.

<sup>39</sup> Cozzens, *The Shipwreck of Their Hopes*, 242-45.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>41</sup> Sword, *Mountains Touched with Fire*, 261.

commander's poor preparation, a "misplaced faith of Bragg...that any serious Federal attack would come *only* against the army's flank."<sup>42</sup>

The Confederates had redeployed this defensive line only days before the battle. The rifle pits at the bottom of the ridge were replaced by a newly laid out line on the crest of the ridge. However, the rifle pits at the bottom of the ridge were not abandoned entirely, further diluting the strength of the Confederate forces and position. Moreover, the new line rested on the geographic crest of the ridge and not the military crest. The military crest of the ridge was several yards below the former and offered better fields of fire for the infantry. Worse, the latter position silhouetted the defending troops against the sky behind them, creating easy targets for Union artillerists. As well, the defenses were not fully connected to each other in certain places, creating gaps in the line. Finally, during the redeployment Confederate artillery was placed on top of the ridge, meaning that the artillerists had very few clear fields of fire and could not depress their cannon barrels enough to fire on the onrushing Union ranks. All these factors gave the attackers a clear advantage.<sup>43</sup>

With the order to attack given, Carlin, Harker, and Willich aligned their brigades. Because these officers acted as part of a massive charge by 23,000 men, they had little influence in maneuver or freedom of movement. They aligned their men as they thought best and then hoped to advance them as quickly as possible to close with and break the enemy line.

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<sup>42</sup> Cozzens, *The Shipwreck of Their Hopes*, 249.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

Carlin's brigade occupied the extreme right flank of the attacking force. Hooker's men on Lookout Mountain were the nearest to Carlin, situated on the other side of the mountain at the time of the attack. Assuming the position selected for his attack, Carlin placed four regiments in his front line and three to the right and in *en echelon* behind the first line.<sup>44</sup> The formation placed three supporting regiments on the right, at 200 yard intervals staggered behind each other.<sup>45</sup> The formation was well suited for the open terrain.

To the left of Carlin was the division containing Harker's brigade. Harker's position was situated in the middle of the attacking column. His brigade was solidly anchored by Col. Francis T. Sherman's brigade on the right and Brig. Gen. George D. Wagner's brigade on the left.<sup>46</sup> Because of the large number of regiments in his brigade, Harker had retrained his men. "In order to facilitate drilling, marching, and maneuvering in front of the enemy, I had, with the consent of the general commanding the division, divided it into demi-brigades...the first commanded by Col. Emerson Opdycke, 125<sup>th</sup> Ohio...the second demi-brigade commanded by Col. Nathan H. Walworth, 42<sup>nd</sup> Illinois."<sup>47</sup> The demi-brigades were positioned with Opdycke's on the left with two

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<sup>44</sup> Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 445. When the army was reorganized following Chickamauga, Carlin transferred to the command of another brigade consisting of the 104<sup>th</sup> Illinois, 38<sup>th</sup>, 42<sup>nd</sup>, and 88<sup>th</sup> Indiana, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 33<sup>rd</sup> and 94<sup>th</sup> Ohio, and the 10<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin. Due to the Federal practice of recruiting entirely new regiments, older units dwindled to small-sized units, sometimes only a hundred men. Consolidating these smaller regiments into brigades meant the brigades were the standard size; they simply contained a larger number of regiments than previous brigades.

<sup>45</sup> Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 115.

<sup>46</sup> Cozzens, *The Shipwreck of Their Hopes*, 266-67. Following the reorganization and consolidation of brigades Harker's command consisted of nine regiments: 22<sup>nd</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 42<sup>nd</sup>, 51<sup>st</sup> and 79<sup>th</sup> Illinois; 64<sup>th</sup>, 65<sup>th</sup> and 125<sup>th</sup> Ohio, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Kentucky.

regiments in the front line and three trailing 300 yards behind. Walworth's command was aligned in the same fashion to the right, the difference being that he commanded two regiments in the first line and two in the second. Harker's division of command was excellent considering the terrain and width of his line. He would be able to manage the brigade from the rear, ensuring the advance was well paced and matched the progress of the troops to this right and left. With Opdycke and Walworth in command of half the attacking column, Harker would be able to communicate with wing commanders. "By their good conduct, and the faithful discharge of every duty devolving upon them, they have rendered me invaluable assistance," the brigadier acknowledged.<sup>48</sup> This command structure created easy transmission of orders. Harker could relay commands without going to nine different regimental commanders.<sup>49</sup>

Willich's brigade deployed as part of Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Wood's division. The unit gained new regiments during the reorganization. Consisting of all veteran regiments, Willich's brigade now included the 25<sup>th</sup>, 35<sup>th</sup> and 89<sup>th</sup> Illinois, 32<sup>nd</sup> and 68<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin, 8<sup>th</sup> Kansas, 15<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> Ohio, and 15<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin.<sup>50</sup> The unit had been posted on an open hill and was deployed with four regiments in the first line and four in a second with the final as the "last reserve."<sup>51</sup> Willich was able to bring his men into the traditional line

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<sup>47</sup> O.R. vol. 31, pt. 2, 228.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* Harker's official report notes that he asked and received permission from divisional headquarters to create this organization.

<sup>50</sup> Sword, *Mountains Touched with Fire*, 361.

<sup>51</sup> O.R. vol. 31, pt. 2, 264.

formation, connecting with Brig. Gen. William B. Hazen's brigade on the right and Brig. Gen. Samuel Beatty's brigade on the left.

Willich commanded the brigade from behind the first line and directly in the middle, using a small silver bugle he carried throughout the war, which he used to allow his men to distinguish his commands and follow his directions.<sup>52</sup> The bugle revealed Willich's fine-tuned attention to the details of combat command. In Civil War combat, the commander could only react to what he saw, and could direct only by some form of vocal communication. Willich's innovation gave him an unrivaled control over his unit.<sup>53</sup> Pvt. Otto said as much:

The brigade was known as the bugle brigade, because Willich carried a little silver bugle with him with which he directed most all movements of the brigade during action. This was a great advantage as in the roar of battle even the most powerful voice cannot always be heard, or if heard, not plainly understood; but that little bugle could always be distinguished amidst the noise and din.<sup>54</sup>

With these various deployments, Thomas ordered his men forward. As the action began Carlin observed that, "my instructions were not very definite...we first advanced over the open plain til within less than half a mile from the top of the ridge, and were under fire here for some time."<sup>55</sup> When Carlin's men cleared the tree line in their front the Confederate artillery opened on them, causing some disorder in the ranks and

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<sup>52</sup> Gould & Kennedy, *Memoirs of a Dutch Mudsill*, 174.

<sup>53</sup> Reinhart, *Willich's Gallant Dutchmen*, 171.

<sup>54</sup> Gould & Kennedy, *Memoirs of a Dutch Mudsill*, 174.

<sup>55</sup> Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 115-16.

speeding the advance as the men hurried forward. The troops overran the first set of rifle pits at the base of the hill and began firing on another line of entrenchments halfway up the slope. The firing became “very animated,” and the brigade was checked momentarily and exchanged fire with the Confederate defenders.<sup>56</sup> Carlin’s three left-wing regiments fired two volleys at the line of entrenchments and advanced, carrying the line. The brigade followed with the right-wing still in *en echelon* formation until the crest of the ridge was reached. The defenders were unprepared for the speed of the advance and Carlin’s men quickly overran their defenses. “The lines were somewhat disordered by the ravines and ridges, rifle-pits and felled trees encountered,” and Carlin paused momentarily to adjust.<sup>57</sup> Only one Confederate regiment, the 38<sup>th</sup> Alabama attacked on Carlin’s right flank. Calling on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ohio to lead his right-wing regiments forward, Carlin’s command smashed into the oncoming Alabamians, which straightened Carlin’s line and secured the ridgeline in his sector.<sup>58</sup> The formation of the brigade allowed Carlin to swiftly move the right-wing forward to counter the threat posed by the Confederate counterattack.<sup>59</sup> While one regiment was hardly a threat to Carlin’s brigade, the alignment shift quickly and easily dealt with the threat to the flank.

Harker’s advance steamrolled across the open plain in the same way as Carlin’s had. “At the given signal, the lines moved forward quite handsomely...the brigade on my left...moved in double-quick time, which was conformed to by my command,”

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<sup>56</sup> O.R. vol. 31, pt. 2, 463-64; Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 115-16.

<sup>57</sup> Hughes & Girardi, *Memoirs*, 116.

<sup>58</sup> O.R. vol. 31, pt. 2, 464.

<sup>59</sup> Cozzens, *The Shipwreck of Their Hopes*, 259-60.

reported Harker.<sup>60</sup> The brigade swept the Confederates from the first line of rifle pits. Harker stopped the command to rest for a moment, commenting that, “we reached it...much fatigued and somewhat disorganized from the rapid march across the plain and the severe artillery firing to which we had been exposed.”<sup>61</sup> After only a brief halt, Harker’s two demi-brigades began ascending the slope. Lt. Hinman, “went right up directly in the teeth of a rebel battery...many officers and men being killed or wounded by grape and canister...the [men] kept on up the ridge and [were] soon comparatively well covered from the artillery fire.”<sup>62</sup> The brigade had reached a point where the Confederate batteries could no longer depress their muzzles to fire on them.

At this point Harker’s support to the left began to retire. He quickly refused Opdycke’s demi-brigade on the left flank and sent for orders from Maj. Gen. Sheridan.<sup>63</sup> Sheridan immediately ordered all brigades forward and Harker’s command, “obeyed with alacrity.”<sup>64</sup> Harker rushed his men forward arriving at the top of the ridge at the same time as the troops on his right and left. The portion of the Confederate line that Harker attacked was directly in front of Bragg’s headquarters. The brigade overran an abandoned battery at the position.<sup>65</sup> Harker reported:

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<sup>60</sup> O.R. vol. 31, pt. 2, 230.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Hinman, *The Sherman Brigade*, 267.

<sup>63</sup> Cozzens, *The Shipwreck of Their Hopes*, 305-07.

<sup>64</sup> O.R. vol. 31, pt. 2, 230.

<sup>65</sup> Sword, *Mountains Touched with Fire*, 300-01.

The crest thus gained, the most unbounded enthusiasm I had ever witnessed then prevailed throughout the entire command, and though the enemy was but a short distance in our front, endeavoring to secure his train and a portion of his artillery, it was with difficulty that we could sufficiently control the men so as to reform our line, and follow up the retreating foe.<sup>66</sup>

Apparently the excitement extended beyond the enlisted men as Lt. Hinman recalled. “Five guns of a battery were seized in an instant...and Col. Harker leapt astride one of the cannon, swinging his sword with one hand and his hat with the other, shouting like one demented.”<sup>67</sup> The attack succeeded through swiftness of action and the momentum created by the charge. The brigade was easily put back into line and the raw excitement of victory propelled the men to the crest of the ridge and ultimate victory.

Willich’s brigade on the left of the attacking force had a relatively easy time advancing and capturing their section of the Confederate line. Due to a bulge in the Federal position, Willich’s men were closer to the Confederates than were Harker and Carlin.<sup>68</sup> “The ascent was (in the closer quarters) defended by one battery to the right and two batteries to the left, on two sallying points,” reported Willich.<sup>69</sup> Many men fell out exhausted from climbing the slope, but

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<sup>66</sup> O.R. vol. 31, pt. 2, 231.

<sup>67</sup> Hinman, *The Sherman Brigade*, 267.

<sup>68</sup> Cozzens, *The Shipwreck of Their Hopes*, 258.

<sup>69</sup> O.R. vol. 31, pt. 2, 264. Parenthetical emphasis in the original text.

that was the only resistance encountered.<sup>70</sup> The line was lightly defended at this point, the rebel troops having been shifted to meet Sherman's attack to the north. The right of the brigade reached the enemy line first and settled into the Confederate position after overrunning an artillery battery. The Confederate troops counterattacked the right of the brigade. Willich wheeled the left three regiments to meet the Confederate attack and took the enemy in flank, checking their advance and forcing a withdrawal.<sup>71</sup> They displayed swiftness in their advance and closed with the enemy before they lost momentum.

The assault on Missionary Ridge stands as a lasting testament to the offensive power of the massed assault and the all-out hammer blow it was capable of delivering. Carlin, Harker, and Willich determined the formations and alignments for the attack. In the face of fortified positions they launched their brigades headlong across open ground and swiftly and decisively brought them in contact with the enemy. The battle lines advanced at the same time – a wave of 23,000 men crossing the field and ascending the ridge. Historian Paddy Griffith notes that, “the Union attack possessed little subtlety and against the strong fortifications of Missionary Ridge it deserved to be roughly repulsed; yet by near-miracle it actually became a devastating success...the further Grant's men ventured up the slope, the quicker the defenses crumbled.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

Faith in the possibility of a successful assault was not misplaced. Civil War soldiers were still using primitive muzzle-loading rifles, the machine guns of World War I were not here and troops could close on their targets with far less damage than would be inflicted in the future. The problem with failed assaults was the engineering that went into establishing formidable defensive positions. The Union army learned this lesson at Kennesaw Mountain. The combat engineering there was much better laid out and manned than the Confederate lines at Chattanooga.

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Even though Civil War military history has changed dramatically in the last generation, the temptation remains to submerge brigadiers underneath discussions of strategy and army commanders. These lower-level officers turned untrained and locally focused men into veteran soldiers. As well, they had to learn how to command on the job. When training, battles, and campaigns are examined in detail, it becomes readily apparent that brigade commanders served as a link between the army hierarchy and the enlisted men. These officers fought battles or smaller unit actions through to conclusion. Too often a battle plan adopted by the army commander unraveled during combat; it was a chaotic environment in which to carry out precise orders. This was compounded by the enemy's ability to disrupt or counteract the battle or campaign plan.

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<sup>72</sup> Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Civil War*, 46. Griffith argues that like most battles the victorious army was unable to follow up and destroy the opposing forces because of lack of a mobile *corps de chasse*. This force would have allowed for victories to be more easily followed up. In his view, such a unit was never developed by Civil War armies, and this produced indecisive battles.

Consequently brigade commanders were often faced with fighting on their own. The brigades studied here were fortunate to have quality commanders for most of the war.

Early in the war brigade commanders directed the course of battles when superior officers were not present or could not be found. Communication on a Civil War battlefield could not be conducted in real time. Couriers on horseback or foot delivered messages and the information often changed during transit of the message, leaving brigade commanders to interpret and carry out the orders as best they could. Brigadiers had to direct events based on what they knew and what they could see in front of them. Necessarily, the flow of battle fell to the brigadiers. This in turn forced these commanders to be creative. Willich was the most adept of the officers examined here. He used his silver bugle to great effect and invented formations to counteract a Civil War army's lack of firepower.

Unionists and Confederates created volunteer armies of vast size in order to fight their war. Consequently, many brigadiers – Starkweather, for example – gained their commands because of political connections and so had to learn their craft on the job. Many of these volunteer officers managed to create cohesive units through constant drill and training. Professional soldiers like Carlin and Harker were better prepared for combat command, but not on the scale of the Civil War. They had to learn on the job, too.

This learning mattered because brigadiers had to bring personal command to a powerful unit. They commanded the formation sizeable enough to operate

independently. As well, they controlled enough men to make a difference in the flow of battle. On the spot in tough situations, they rarely could wait under fire for clear instructions from superiors. They had to act according to the situation they saw in front of them. As such, they were volunteer commanders who learned from their successes and failures and molded a citizen, volunteer army into an efficient and deadly fighting force.

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## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A

Order of battle for the engagements involving Carlin, Harker, Starkweather, and Willich.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Battle of Shiloh (6-7 April 1862)**

Second Division, Brig. Gen. Alexander McD. McCook

-Sixth Brigade, Brig. Gen. Richard W. Johnson

- 32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana Infantry, Col. August Willich

Sixth Division, Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Wood

-Twentieth Brigade, Col. Charles G. Harker

-64<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-65<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-51<sup>st</sup> Indiana Infantry

-13<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry

Carlin and Starkweather were not with the army at the Battle of Shiloh

### **The Battle of Perryville (8 October 1862)**

I Corps, Maj. Gen. Alexander McD. McCook

-Third Division, Brig. Gen. Lovell H. Rousseau

-Twenty-Eighth Brigade, Col. John C. Starkweather

-24<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-79<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry

-1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin Infantry

-21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin Infantry

II Corps, Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel, *Days of Glory*, 437-40.

-Sixth Division, Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Wood

-Twentieth Brigade, Col. Charles G. Harker

-51<sup>st</sup> Indiana Infantry

-73<sup>rd</sup> Indiana Infantry

-13<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry

-64<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-65<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

III Corps, Maj. Gen. Charles C. Gilbert

-Ninth Division, Brig. Gen. Robert B. Mitchell

-Thirty-First Brigade, Col. William P. Carlin

-21<sup>st</sup> Illinois Infantry

-38<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-15<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Infantry

-101<sup>st</sup> Ohio Infantry

### **The Battle of Stones River (31 December 1862 to 2 January 1863)**

Right Wing, Maj. Gen. Alexander McD. McCook

-First Division, Brig. Gen. Jefferson C. Davis

-Second Brigade, Col. William P. Carlin

-21<sup>st</sup> Illinois Infantry

-38<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-101<sup>st</sup> Ohio Infantry

-15<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Infantry

-Second Division, Brig. Gen. Richard W. Johnson

-First Brigade, Brig. Gen. August Willich

-89<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana Infantry

-39<sup>th</sup> Indiana Infantry

-15<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-49<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

Center, Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas

-First Division, Maj. Gen. Lovell H. Rousseau

-Third Brigade, Col. John C. Starkweather

-24<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-79<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry

-1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin Infantry

-21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin Infantry

Left Wing, Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden

-First Division, Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Wood

-Third Brigade, Col. Charles G. Harker

-51<sup>st</sup> Indiana Infantry

-73<sup>rd</sup> Indiana Infantry

-13<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry

-64<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-65<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

### **The Battle of Chickamauga (19-20 September 1863)**

XIV Corps, Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas

First Division, Brig. Gen. Absalom Baird

-Second Brigade, Brig. Gen. John C. Starkweather

-1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin Infantry

-21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin Infantry

-24<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-79<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry

XX Corps, Maj. Gen. Alexander McD. McCook

-First Division, Brig. Gen. Jefferson C. Davis

-Second Brigade, Brig. Gen. William P. Carlin

-21<sup>st</sup> Illinois Infantry

-38<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-81<sup>st</sup> Indiana Infantry

-101<sup>st</sup> Ohio Infantry

-Second Division, Brig. Gen. Richard W. Johnson

-First Brigade, Brig. Gen. August Willich

-49<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-39<sup>th</sup> Indiana (detached and mounted)

-3<sup>rd</sup> Indiana Infantry

-15<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

XXI Corps, Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden

-First Division, Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Wood

-Third Brigade, Col. Charles G. Harker

-3<sup>rd</sup> Kentucky Infantry

-64<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-65<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-125<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-73<sup>rd</sup> Indiana Infantry

### **The Battle of Chattanooga (23-25 November 1863)**

IV Corps, Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger

-Second Division, Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan

-Third Brigade, Col. Charles G. Harker

-22<sup>nd</sup> Illinois Infantry

-27<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-42<sup>nd</sup> Illinois Infantry

-51<sup>st</sup> Illinois Infantry

-79<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-3<sup>rd</sup> Kentucky Infantry

-64<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-65<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-125<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-Third Division, Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Wood

-First Brigade, Brig. Gen. August Willich

-25<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-35<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-89<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana Infantry

-68<sup>th</sup> Indiana Infantry

-8<sup>th</sup> Kansas Infantry

-15<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-49<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-15<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin

XIV Corps, Maj. Gen. John M. Palmer

-First Division, Brig. Gen. Richard W. Johnson

-First Brigade, Brig. Gen. William P. Carlin

-104<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-38<sup>th</sup> Indiana Infantry

-42<sup>nd</sup> Indiana Infantry

-88<sup>th</sup> Indiana Infantry

-2<sup>nd</sup> Ohio Infantry

-33<sup>rd</sup> Ohio Infantry

-94<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-10<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Infantry

-Third Brigade, Brig. Gen. John C. Starkweather

-24<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-37<sup>th</sup> Indiana Infantry

-21<sup>st</sup> Ohio Infantry

-74<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-78<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry

-79<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry

-1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin Infantry

-21<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin Infantry

### **The Atlanta Campaign (30 April 1864)**

IV Corps, Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard

-Second Division, Brig. Gen. John Newton

-Third Brigade, Brig. Gen. Charles G. Harker

-22<sup>nd</sup> Illinois Infantry

-27<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-42<sup>nd</sup> Illinois Infantry

-51<sup>st</sup> Illinois Infantry

-79<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-3<sup>rd</sup> Kentucky Infantry

-64<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-65<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-125<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-Third Division, Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Wood

-First Brigade, Brig. Gen. August Willich

-25<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-35<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-89<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-32<sup>nd</sup> Indiana Infantry

-8<sup>th</sup> Kansas Infantry

-15<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-49<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-15<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Infantry

XIV Corps, Maj. Gen. John M. Palmer

-First Division, Brig. Gen. Richard W. Johnson

-First Brigade, Brig. Gen. William P. Carlin

-104<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry

-38<sup>th</sup> Indiana Infantry

-42<sup>nd</sup> Indiana Infantry

-88<sup>th</sup> Indiana Infantry

-2<sup>nd</sup> Ohio Infantry

-33<sup>rd</sup> Ohio Infantry

-94<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry

-10<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Infantry

-15<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Infantry