THE GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN—
A LOUISIANA LIEUTENANT'S
EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT

EDITED BY MERL E. REED*

In August, 1861, J. Warren Jackson, twenty-one-year-old farmer from Cheneyville, Louisiana, enlisted in one of the two Rapides Parish units formed earlier in the summer. He was preceded by his sixteen-year-old brother, R. Stark Jackson, a cadet at the Louisiana State Seminary of Learning and Military Academy. Together the brothers served in the 8th Louisiana Infantry Regiment, part of the Army of Northern Virginia, until August, 1862, when R. Stark was wounded at the Battle of Bristow Station.

In early June, 1863, the older brother left Fredericksburg with Lee's army to take part in the invasion of Pennsylvania. Upon his return to Virginia, Second Junior Lieutenant J. Warren Jackson wrote a description of his activities to his disabled brother, who was on furlough in Richmond. The letter1 contains an interesting and fairly accurate account of the Gettysburg campaign.

Camp Hayes [sic] La Brigade July 20, 1863
Near Darksville, Virginia

Lt. R. Stark Jackson
Richmond
Va.—
My dear Brother—

Having heard, beyond doubt of your being in the great metropolis, and that you were unable to walk without pain, I conclude that you will not come out, and consequently will have to write to you and give you a somewhat better account of our proceedings than you have heard or seen in the papers. We left Fredericksburg

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1 J Warren [Jackson] to Lt. R. Stark Jackson, Boyd (David F.) Civil War Papers, 1863, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University.
[Fredericksburg] on the 5th June and by good marching arrived in front of Winchester on Saturday the 13th. We were detained nearly two days at C.C.H. [Culpeper Court House] on account of the great Cavalry battle at that place. Rodes division in front made a... to the rear of Winchester and Martinsburg. Johnson's Division was at Jordan's Spring, our division on the Valley Pike. The first day passed away without any general engagement—nothing but skirmishing—on the 14th early in the morning Capt. Dejean was killed while out skirmishing—at about 8 o'clock we withdrew all of our Divisions except Gordon's Brigade and one battery and moved out as if in retreat—but "old Jube" played foxy on Millray [Milroy] and doubled on him we went round to the rear of Winchester on Romney pike to take a pretty good position in the woods about 800 yards from one of their forts—Fort B—[West Fort] between 20 & 30 pieces of artillery were soon in position, our brigade drawn up in line—and the signal gun fired immediately the whole posse of the guns opened and kept firing as fast as possible after they had been firing ten or fifteen minutes we advanced in two lines—the 9th & 7th in the 1st line the 8th and 5th in the 2nd line the 6th on our right moving by a flank, it was the best managed affair Hayes ever had anything to do with—we drove the Yankees pell mell from their breastworks, capturing but few of them as they were rather too nimble for us—We took a battery of 6 longe [sic] range guns some few horses. a good raid and now a stove and plenty of Coffee ready made & warm—soup & light bread—we

—The cavalry battle took place at Brandy Station.
—Major General Robert E. Rodes's Division, R. S. Ewell's Corps.
—Major General Edward Johnson's Division, Ewell's Corps. The writer was attached to Jubal A. Early's Division, Ewell's Corps.
—Captain Albert Dejean, 8th Louisiana Infantry.
—Brigadier General John B. Gordon's Georgia Brigade, Early's Division.
—Brigadier General Jubal A. Early, division commander, Ewell's Corps.
—Brigadier General Harry T. Hays's Louisiana Brigade included the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th Louisiana Infantry Regiments. Of the 5th and 9th Louisiana Regiments, only Company A of the 5th and part of the 9th fought at Gettysburg. The remainder of the 5th and 9th Regiments were stationed at Orange Court House, Virginia.
—Brigadier General Harry T. Hays, the brigade commander.
evidently took our gentlemen by surprise as they were just preparing their supper. Our batteries soon came up & opened on the main fort near Winchester & continued shelling them till after dark—Our whole loss during these two days did not amount to 60—On the morning of the 15th the enemy had skedaddled but unfortunately for them, they run [sic] into Johnson & he captured the most of them—the spoils amounted to about 200 wagons 23 cannon, 7 or 8 stands of colors 1000 or 1500 horses & C & C a great quantity of clothing was captured and issued to the corps. The loss of our whole corps did not amount to 300 and we had killed wd & captured 5000.

June 22 I will now proceed with my trip & give you some idea of Md & Penna. We marched to the Potomac after the battle of Winchester arrived near Sheperdstown [Virginia] on the 19th & found the river [Potomac] so high that we could not cross so we lay by until the 22d then waded across, the water was waist deep & quite swift. I fell twice in crossing and of course got wet, we marched on that day and passed thro Sharpsburgh. I did not have time or I would have gone over the battlefield—We went on thro Edithville a nice little village . . . we camped about 3 miles from Boonesboro on the Hagarstown [Hagerstown] pike. I came near “playing out” that day my feet were very sore and I straggled a little—on [June] 23d we turned off pike passed thro Cavetown—Smithtown—Ringgold & at ½ past 3 struck the Penna line we shook Md dust off our feet and marched into the Union to the tune of “Dixie,” the men were quite lively & joked the cits [citizens] by telling them that we had eat up the last mule we had and had come over to get some beef & bacon, others said that we were going back into the union at last—We went on passed thro Waynesboro [Pennsylvania]—a very pretty little town & camped near it. Some of the company went out foraging and got apple butter lightbread chickens milk & C & C. The people were afraid of us and gave the men everything they asked for—one of the 7th La (a nice young man not a raw) went into a house near camp and asked the lady of the house for some milk and bread she told him to take a seat & she would go and get the articles—but says she [“]What regt do you belong to?” “The 7th La—[“] Oh-h and the poor thing fainted. The bewildered soldier went to work trying to revive the
lady and while he was at it, the husband stepped in and enquired what he was about, he told him that his wife had fainted very unexpectedly and he could not explain why or wherefore. The old man asked him what he said to her—"Why I told her that I belonged to the 7th La"—Oh—that explains the matter. He then told him that the cavalry, when they passed thro, told everybody that the La tigers would kill, burn & destroy everything & everybody in the country and it was some time before Mr. 7th could convince the lady that he was not a cut throat &—

[June] 24th Passed thro Waynesboro again—Quincy Frankstown & Caledonia Iron Mines—The property of Thaddeus Stevens—Greenwood camped near that latter place—

[June] 25th laid in camp all day cooking rations

[June] 26th Recd order to march early but owing to a rain did not start till 10 A. M.—burned the Ironworks near Greenwood also the property of Stevens—crossed the mountains—& run the militia out of Mammasburg [Mummasburg] caught some of them—went on to Gettysburg and captured between 3 & 400 "Melish" [militia]—camped in sight of town & drew rations of whiskey. The whole brigade got drunk. I never saw such a set in my life—

[June] 27th Put off at daylight on back track thro Mammasburg,—Hunterstown—New Chester—Hampton—Berlin in the mud nearly Knee deep & straggling by the hundreds—We camped for the night on the other side of Berlin

[June] 28th Left early and passed thro Wagglestown [Weigelstown]—skirted York & camped 2 miles from the City

[June] 29th McGimsey and self took a french leave and went into town, had lots of fun, saw some pretty girls—and amused ourselves extensively until 10 P. M.—got back to camp that night & found that we would have to mch [march] before day—York is a place of about 15,000 inhabitants and has some magnificent buildings in it, the streets are very regular & well paved—The people are mostly Dutch and were very friendly—Confederate money was taken at par and I shall ever remember York with pleasure

[June] 30th Started on backtrack. I rode all this day in an

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12 Second Lieutenant William C. McGimsey, Company A, 8th Louisiana Infantry.
ambulance. We went 26 miles & camped. Lewis\(^{13}\) put Mc [Gimse]y] and I under arrest for our trip to York—

[July] 1st  We set out passed thro Heidelberg [Heidlersburg] and arrived at Gettysburg at 3 P. M.—formed line of battle and loaded—could see Rodes on our right driving the Yankees before him like sheep—it was the prettiest sight I ever saw.\(^{14}\) at 5 minutes past 3 we started forward—and marched slowly in line of battle for 1½ miles before we got to any Yankees we crossed about 20 fences & 1 creek [Rock Creek] and at last came right slap up on "11th corps & battery.\(^{15}\) The Yanks fired a volley & then ran or rather walked off, we shot them down, bayoneted them & captured more prisoners than we had men in the brigade. We also captured 2 pieces out of the battery—we ran them thro town & caught hundreds of them in the houses & cellars—Gen Reynolds\(^{16}\) was killed—Gen Schimmelpennig [Schimmelfennig]\(^{17}\) hid in a house & escaped our notice—Our loss this day was very slight . . . We formed line of battle in town & Co. I had to go out as skirmishers. The enemy were posted on Cemetery Hill about 600 yds from town & had command of every place near town or around it—our position was a poor one and as we deployed we were subjected to a galling fire from their sharpshooters—nobody hurt—and we soon laid low in the grass but their position was such a good one that they could see us and they kept up their firing and I spent about 2 hours as miserably as I ever did in my life—that night Co. E commanded by Lt. McGalliard\(^{18}\) reinforced us and we lay out there all night—early in the morning of the 2nd we posted some advance skirmishers & placed the reserve behind a plank fence near town, and there

\(^{13}\) Colonel Trevanion D. Lewis, Commander, 8th Louisiana Infantry.

\(^{14}\) Since the distance was over a mile, Jackson could have seen Rodes only with great difficulty. Between Jackson's unit and Rodes's Division were the Louisiana 5th, 6th, and part of the 9th Regiments, and J. B. Gordon's Brigade, the latter having arrived at Gettysburg ahead of Hays's Brigade. Jackson may have mistaken Gordon's Brigade, which was assaulting Barlow's Knoll at the time, for Rodes's Division.

\(^{15}\) Major General Oliver O. Howard's XI Corps.

\(^{16}\) Major General John F. Reynolds, commander of the Federal I Corps, and George G. Meade's second in command.

\(^{17}\) Brigadier General Alexander Schimmelfennig, commander of the 1st Brigade, 3rd Division, XI Corps. Schimmelfennig was wounded and separated from his command, but managed to evade capture. A variety of unauthenticated stories purport to explain where he hid in the town.

\(^{18}\) Second Lieutenant William M. McGalliard, Company E, 8th Louisiana Infantry.
we had to stay—if anyone showed themselves or a hat was seen above the fence a volley was poured into us, we had two of Co. \(E\) slightly wounded while lying there late in the evening—we concluded to back out of our position and go to the right—we had to crawl about 60 yds in the bushes then jump & run like "... [?]" for about 30 yds.—We all got into town & round to the regt. which had advanced and was posted behind a hill about 600 yds from the enemy. At \(\frac{1}{2}\) past 4 a most tremendous cannonading began and lasted till dark—Johnson on our left also at \((\frac{3}{4})\) began pushing the enemy but couldn't make much headway. At 6 or a little after our brigade with one N. C. Regt from Hoke's Brigade\(^{19}\) was ordered to charge the heights in front of us—I felt as if my doom was sealed—and it was with great reluctance that I started my skirmishes forward—the moment the line made its appearance on the top of the hill (behind which they had laid all day) 18 pieces of artlly & 3000 Inftry opened on them but “Old Harry” [Hays] shouted forward and on we went over fences, ditches, thro marshy fields and we “fotched up” at a stone fence behind which Mr. Yank had posted himself and he did not want to leave—but with bayonets & clubbed guns we drove them back, by this time it was dark & we couldn't tell whether we were shooting our own men or not. Some of our men went on up to the battery Duchamp\(^{20}\) the color bearer was wd & Leon Gusman\(^{21}\) carried the colors up to the battery and planted them on the breastworks, he was then wd or taken & our colors lost—Willis\(^{22}\) had a hand to hand fight with a Yank and took his colors away from him—We captured some few prisoners, & sent them to rear. Harry soon gave the order to fall back which we did in tolerable good order. Johnson's Division, which was in a bad fix got out of it by the Yankees drawing off their forces from his flank to oppose us\(^{23}\)—so that the lives of our men were sacrificed to save his Division.\(^{24}\) ... 

\(^{19}\) Brigadier General Robert F. Hoke's North Carolina Brigade. Hoke did not command his brigade at Gettysburg.

\(^{20}\) Captain Charles DuChamp, Company C, 9th Louisiana Infantry, color bearer for Hays's Brigade.

\(^{21}\) Private Leon Gusman, Company A, 8th Louisiana Infantry.

\(^{22}\) Private Holmes P. Willis, Company I, 8th Louisiana Infantry.

\(^{23}\) Actually, Federal forces had been drawn off Johnson to stop Longstreet's advance rather than Hays's.

\(^{24}\) Johnson was in no serious trouble on July 2. However, on the morning of July 3 his left and rear were threatened.
[July] 3rd  Went back into town and lay there all day—the enemy tried to charge Gordon today but were repulsed—The inhabitants of Gettysburg will never forget the 3rd day of July or the La Brigade—tremendous cannonading & musketry on our right—Longstreet & A. P. Hill were repulsed with heavy loss.

[July] 4th  moved out of town about 2 miles and formed lines—preparations were made during the day for falling back—rained during the day & I passed a miserable time of it, I was placed in command of Co. D on the 3rd and command it yet—

[July] 5th  At 2 A.M. We began our retreat and marched along very leisurely our Division brought up the rear. In the evening when near the foot of the mountains the Yankee Cavalry attacked us but nobody was hurt—We were 18 hours marching 7 miles and through the mud & water our march was orderly & well conducted but we paid no respect to fences or grain Our badly wounded were all left behind—

[July] 6th  crossed the mountains and marched to our old camp near Waynesboro—all this time we had had nothing scarcely to eat and were pretty well starved out but that night we drew ample rations—

[July] 7th  Marched thro Waynesboro—Lightersburg [Leitersburg, Maryland] and arrived near Hagarstown [sic] at 2 P. M. Camped about 2 miles from town   [July] 8-9th  Laid in camp   [July] 10th—at 7 P. M. marched out & thro Hagarstown & camped 1 mile from town on a very high hill

[July] 11th  At 10 A. M. moved to the right & took our position in line of battle, and I tell you what—Mr. Yank would have smelt powder & ball before getting us out of the breastworks we had there.

[July] 12th  lay in breastworks all day and at night moved to the right & supported Penders Division our brigade lay behind Gen Thomas’ Ga. Brigade—[July] 13th  lay in reserve all day at 8 P. M. moved out & took Williamsport [Maryland] road moved along in the rain, slush & mud at a snails pace—our Brigade (as usual) the rear guard of the whole concern at Williamsport we took to the left (we arrived at Wpt [Williams-

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\(^{26}\) Pickett’s Charge.

\(^{27}\) Major General William D. Pender’s Division, Hill’s Corps.

\(^{28}\) Brigadier General Edward L. Thomas.
port] at daylight [July] 14th) and went on to Pontoon bridge
we were rear guard for some sixty odd pieces of artillery—
when we arrived near the river [Potomac] we found part of
A. P. Hill's Corps & Longstreet's still on that side. We pushed
on and by permission of Gen Lee, crossed & joined our division
which had crossed at Williamsport—waded up to their armpits
—[July] 15th marched thro Martinsburg & camped . . .
I believe I have given you a pretty good idea of what we done
and of our movements. The conduct of our troops while in the
enemy's country was very good, in fact they behave worse in Va.
than they did in Penna. the effect of our retreat is not dis-
couraging to them. Some few grumblers but that's always the
case— . . . I will now close this as I've writ [sic] up all my
papers, but will keep it a day or two for we are marching on
down [up] the Valley & probably may stop about C. C. H. (Cul-
peper Court House) . . .
Goodbye—All join me in love to you.
Your brother
J Warren28

28 Second Junior Lieutenant Joseph Warren Jackson, Company D (before
July 3, Company I), 8th Louisiana Infantry. Sources: Andrew B. Booth,
comp., Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers and Louisiana Confederate
Commands, 4 vols. (New York, 1920); National Archives Microfilm Publica-
tions, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in
Organizations from the State of Louisiana (Washington, 1960); The War of
the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Con-