Much printer’s ink has been expended in describing and analyzing the military aspects of the Battle of Gettysburg. The earliest examples of this genre were newspaper accounts filed from the battlefield during and shortly after the fighting. Soon, there followed more lengthy and detailed treatment beginning with Michael Jacobs’ account written a few months after the battle. The most recent book-length contribution to the story is Harry W. Pfanz’s exhaustive study of the second day’s fighting.

Michael Jacobs, it is true, devoted considerable space to the impact of the battle upon the civilian population caught in its path. But, the greater proportion of his story, like those which followed, focused attention on tactical decisions reached by generals and the movements and valor of the troops. A picture of the plight of the inhabitants of Gettysburg and Adams County and their reactions to their peril has been more often left to novelists and other fiction writers. In his recent book, *Witness to Gettysburg*, Richard Wheeler aims to tell his story “in terms both historical and human, as largely as possible in the words of the participants, both military and civilian, both male and female.” His emphasis, however, is on eyewitness accounts of military action as seen by soldiers who were participants.

Those residing at the time in Gettysburg and the vicinity, unlike those in other northern (and most southern) towns, saw the face of armed conflict at first hand. Understandably, their experience made an indelible impression. Many foresightedly kept journals during their ordeal. Sallie Broadhead wrote her diary in those days, as she declared, “with no other thought than to aid in whiling away time filled up with anxiety, apprehension, and danger.” Fannie Buehler confessed that her account,
written in 1896, was “to please my children, my grand-children, possibly my great-great-grand-children, and my friends.” She was but one of many prevailed on years afterwards to set down accounts drawn upon their memories. In letters still extant, others reported from Gettysburg to relatives and friends, painting a picture of a small and heretofore peaceful American community face to face with death and destruction.

Some recognized their limitations both as observers and chroniclers. Jennie McCreary wrote to her sister, Julia, on July 22, 1863, that “so many things have happened and in such a short time that I have gotten things confused.” Liberty Hollinger was conscious that “so many years have passed since then that of course many things have entirely escaped my memory.” Fannie Buehler disavowed writing a history either of the war or of the famous battle: “I am telling what I saw, I heard, what I know about.” But a Union officer, who talked to numerous Gettysburg citizens immediately after the battle, noted that “all had treasures of
incidents of the battle, witnessed encounters... which they were willing to share with the stranger."

Most writers’ recollections were sharp enough and accurate except in particular details. After years memories still vivid in July 1863 played tricks. Sallie Broadhead’s valuable diary entry for June 26th had General Alfred G. Jenkins’s Rebel cavalry division entering Gettysburg that day “with such horrid yells that it was enough to frighten us all to death.” On that date, Jenkins’s troopers were at Carlisle preparing to advance on Harrisburg. Agnes Barr wrote that General Jubal A. Early’s infantry division arrived at Gettysburg on June 27th (rather than the actual date, June 26th) and she reported Union General John Buford’s cavalry unit reaching the town on “June 31st.”

Two historians who wrote of the events taking place at Gettysburg in 1863 have observed that “since all history is lived in half truths, the reader... will not be dismayed by the contradictions that are sometimes apparent in the recollections of the various participants.” Doubtless, they did not include in this generalization such as the Presbyterian clergyman who allegedly spent the three days of battle in his cellar and afterwards gave public lectures as “An Eye-Witness to the Battle of Gettysburg.” One who observed him at the time admitted that “well, he did go up several times and look out the trap door.”

Whatever the shortcomings of other eyewitnesses as observers, their bias as reporters, or their faulty memories later as to details, outside of some unimportant discrepancies regarding minor events there is a general consensus as to major occurrences—how civilians responded to what they saw and heard, the prevailing atmosphere of unbelief, tension, fear, confusion, and relief in that order. Their collective testimony gives us today a generally reliable picture. We are fortunate that so many sensed the need to preserve outside of mere oral tradition the memory of those exciting days and were articulate enough to record them for posterity. Historians of today owe much to them and to those foresighted enough to encourage, collect, and preserve their narratives. We are under deep obligation to the respective editors of two of Gettysburg’s weekly newspapers, The Compiler and The Star and Sentinel, both of whom in the late 1800s and early 1900s collected and published a number of eyewitness accounts of the battle, its aftermath, and how the community was affected at the time.

Because of the near proximity of Virginia and a geographic location abutting the slave state of Maryland, Adams Countians reacted immediately and sharply in early 1861 to reports of impending armed conflict.
The outbreak of hostilities in April were thus an occasion for special alarm. Michael Colver, a student successively at Pennsylvania College and the Lutheran Theological Seminary from 1859 to 1865, recalled the town “in a state of agitation during almost all of my college and seminary life.”

According to Charles M. McCurdy, from the outset of the war “amateur scouts patroled the roads leading south into Maryland and now and then they would produce hostile troopers from unlikely sources.” Then would come a wild dash into Gettysburg with the cry, “The Rebels are coming!” Albertus McCreary remembered that in one instance a troop of horsemen was “fully among us before we discovered that they were our own men; and then such cheers as we gave!” Tillie (Pierce) Alleman reported a Gettysburg version of “Dad’s Army,” the members of which armed themselves with old rusty muskets, swords, pitch-forks, shovels, and pick-axes. “I have often sat and listened,” wrote Tillie, “to these well-meaning citizens laugh over the contemplation of their comical aspect.”

The Confederate invasion of Maryland in September 1862, terminating at Antietam Creek, barely fifty miles from Gettysburg, understandably created more tension. Less than a month later a Rebel incursion materialized in Adams County. Cavalry under Confederate General J. E. B. “Jeb” Stuart raided through Southern Pennsylvania. On October 11th, the 1,800-man force passed through Cashtown and Fairfield in Western Adams County, seizing horses, cattle, wagons, and seven unlucky citizens as hostages. The Sentinel of October 14th reported that the Rebels had approached Gettysburg as near as Latshaw’s Tavern, barely four miles to the west. When pursuing Federal troops arrived, The Compiler of October 20th noted that they gave the town “a warlike appearance,” that on their departure a day later, “the town immediately resumed its usual quiet.”

Yet, some uncertainty remained respecting the imminence of real danger. Thirteen-year old Billy Bayly remembered in after-years that “living near the border line . . . with frequent alarms as to guerilla raids, we ‘skedaddled’ on various occasions with a view to saving our horses.” Another resident, Lydia Catherine Ziegler, recalled nearly forty years later that “the spring and summer of ’63 were days in which the citizens of our quiet village were much disturbed.” But Sallie Broadhead wrote in her diary for June 15th that alarm was not felt until that date when a telegram from Governor Andrew G. Curtin arrived advising Gettysburg citizens to move their stores to more secure places as quickly as possible.
Another message from Harrisburg on June 20th called for volunteers to help defend the state's capital city and on the same day word arrived from General Darius N. Couch that residents should see to their own protection. This was sufficiently alarming to bring about a meeting at the Court House for "placing the county in a state of military organization as would be deemed most advisable." Sallie Broadhead's diary entry for that date took note of the influx of refugees crossing South Mountain from the Cumberland Valley into Adams County. She felt a bit reassured, however, when as late as June 23rd the Rebels had not yet made an appearance.

On the night of June 20th, with the sky to the south reddened by a large fire near Emmitsburg, some nervous residents wondered if it signaled a Rebel invasion. The fire had no connection with any military operation but other sources indicated a possible enemy incursion. The Compiler of June 22nd reprinted a Baltimore Sun item reporting 2,000 hostiles occupying Chambersburg but that "excitement was subsiding." On the other hand, The Sentinel thought it possible "that a great battle will be fought . . . a collision is almost certain."

Some found comfort in the assumption that any Rebel force of size would advance on Harrisburg, or Philadelphia, or even Washington rather than on so unimportant a place as little Gettysburg. As Fannie Buehler recalled, "We thought the bulk of the Union soldiers were far away . . . and no one dreamed of a battle being fought in our town." Henry Eyster Jacobs wrote that his grandmother, who had been visiting the Jacobs family, insisted on returning to her Harrisburg home to look after her children and property there. When warned of the presence of a hostile force in the area she replied with a look of scorn, "Why Julia Ann, what would the rebels ever want to come to Gettysburg for?" Jacobs admitted that at the time "we secretly agreed with her." But, Anna Mary Young wrote after the battle to her "Cousin Mina," that "the next time I hear the Rebels are coming I'll believe instead of laughing at the idea of such a thing; and I will leave this region of country if I have to walk."

Adams Countians followed newspaper accounts and listened to rumors with increasing apprehension. Sallie Broadhead's diary is especially revealing. On June 24th she had written that "we are getting used to the excitement and many think the enemy, having been so long in the vicinity without visiting us will not favor us with their presence." Yet, the following day she was concerned about the absence of any Union force "which allowed the enemy to scour the country and do as they please." She took notice of two cavalry regiments in Gettysburg,
but she concluded that they “can be of little use as they have seen no service.” Nor was she reassured at word from Harrisburg that a regiment of infantry was being sent to Gettysburg, “for they are only raw militia.”

The raw militia regiment en route to Gettysburg was the 26th Pennsylvania Emergency Volunteers, mustered into service only on June 19th. Its roll of 743 men included a contingent from Gettysburg—sixty-one college students and seminarians, twenty-one “townies,” and a fourteen-year old drummer boy. Since these eighty-three recruits were the first to be officially enrolled in the regiment, they had the honor of being designated “Co. A.”

With less than a week of any kind of military training, the 26th Pennsylvania was sent to Gettysburg to resist a possible Confederate advance on the town. On the morning of June 26th, after having been “bountifully fed by the citizens of Gettysburg [and] receiving the admiring attention of professors, pretty girls, etc.,” they marched out the Chambersburg Pike to confront General Jubal A. Early’s 5,000 battle-wise troops. The result was a foregone conclusion, a rout of the youthful defenders, many of whom were captured, marched back into Gettysburg, and there paroled. Members of the unit afterwards gloried in their self-proclaimed title as the first organized defenders of Pennsylvania soil in the face of the 1863 Rebel invasion.

The quick dispersal of the 26th Pennsylvania opened the way for an immediate Confederate occupation of Gettysburg. As Edward Everett observed in his oration at the Cemetery dedication on November 19, 1863, “it is impossible for a people without military organization . . . to withstand the inroads of a veteran army.” According to Robert McClean, Early’s men entered the town via Chambersburg Street, the officers brandishing their swords and the troops firing their guns into the air. To ten-year old Gates Fahnestock, who in the safety of his home peered out through the slatted shutters, the spectacle was to be enjoyed “as they would a wild west show.”

Sarah Barrett King reacted differently. To her the invaders were reminiscent of Falstaff’s recruits so ragged and hungry they looked. Michael Jacobs pictured them as “exceedingly dirty, some ragged, some without shoes, and surmounted by the skeleton of what once was an entire hat.” Albertus McCreary spotted one shoeless Rebel on horseback with spurs strapped to his bare heels.

As commander of the army of occupation, General Early called the town fathers together and presented demands for sugar, coffee, flour, salt, bacon, onions, and whiskey. He also ordered delivered 1,000 pairs
of shoes, 500 hats, and $5,000 in cash. David Kendlehart, President of the Town Council, informed the General of the citizens' inability to provide these items in the quantity specified but promised that stores and shops would remain open for trade.\textsuperscript{23} What amount of the requisitioned provisions and goods the Confederates actually received has not been recorded. One item of value they apparently did not get in satisfactory amount—information as to the locale and strength of Union forces in the neighborhood. "It is a strange thing," remarked one frustrated officer, "you people know so little." Mrs. Joseph Bayly replied to one such interrogator, "go on and you will soon find out."\textsuperscript{24}

Some hungry Rebels professed inability to understand how a people with such substantial houses and furnishings and elegant style of living could claim, when asked for food, that it was not available. The food situation was to worsen the following week as the armies struggled with each other in and around the town. Nellie Aughinbaugh recalled that destruction of the railroad bridge leading into Gettysburg cut off food supplies. When, after the Rebels had departed, wagons arrived with food "the first thing I got was an orange and I ate it skin, seeds, and all, I was so hungry." Jennie McCreary and her family had to do with "bread and molasses for breakfast & molasses and bread for dinner & the same for supper." Jennie remembered that the family did have milk on hand. Mary Fastnacht's recollection was that "after eating corncakes or something gotten quickly, we were hungry for bread." On July 4th, Mary Elizabeth Montford wrote in her diary: "We have two barrels of flour, a half gallon of molasses, a crock of apple butter, and a half barrel of fish. We eat a little fish each day and pancakes with apple butter and molasses."\textsuperscript{25} Yet, Charles McCurdy remembered that some families had plenty of food available since "the generous housekeeping usually provided something beyond immediate needs."\textsuperscript{26}

Conflicting testimony exists among town residents as to the general demeanor of Early's men. Tillie Pierce recalled them "searching and ransacking in earnest."\textsuperscript{27} According to The Sentinel of July 2nd and July 9th, the Rebels made a clean sweep of the whiskey stores discovered. "They would cheerfully throw out a barrel of flour to make room for a barrel of whiskey." The Compiler of June 29th contended, however, that during their stay in Gettysburg Early's troops "were generally civil." When some of them bought out the stock of candy in Philip Winter's shop, one of them handed over a handful to "an expectant small boy [Charles McCurdy] gazing enviously at his store." The Southerners' treatment of Gettysburg citizens, wrote Anna Mary Young, "was most courteous and kind."\textsuperscript{28} Gettysburg shopkeepers were
naturally reluctant to accept the Confederate currency offered them as payment. One officer tried to reassure Charles Wills, proprietor of the Globe Hotel. "In two months," he said, "our money may be better than yours as we may remain in your state an indefinited time."29

On the night of June 26th, loyal citizens found exasperating a Confederate band's insistence on playing "Dixie" and "other Confederate airs" at the town Square. Henry Eyster Jacobs heard the band music but heard of "no violent act or wanton destruction of property." He did note the sky "red with the reflection of the fires" set to burn the railroad bridge over Rock Creek, railroad cars, and the railway engine house. Fires always were a source of worry when hostile forces occupied a town during the Civil War. Fannie Buehler recalled that many citizens feared lest the Rebels burn down the newly erected Court House. "I think now, after many years," she confessed, "I must have thought more of the Court House than I did of my own home."30

If anyone in the community had stronger reasons for alarm at the approach of the Confederates it was the black segment of the population. One less honorable aspect of the invasion by General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in June 1863 was the practice of rounding up blacks, irrespective of their legal status, and sending them South as "captured contrabands" into slavery.31

As word spread of the slave-hunting, all blacks who could fled eastward. Tillie Pierce noted that Gettysburg's "colored people" sought safety in the Culp's Hill area. Mary Elizabeth Montford saw "Aunt Beckie" as part of a crowd pulling wagons, pushing wheelbarrows, or carrying huge bundles. "Yo ol' Aunt Beckie is going up into de hills," declared the fugitive. "No rebel is gonna catch me and carry me back to be a slave again." Another black, "Bow-legged Jack," had no confidence that he could out-run the Rebels. As he explained later, "he crep under a haystack," stayed there without food for three or four days, and, he declared, "almost starved."32

A number of whites aided in outwitting the Rebel kidnappers. Black Isaac Carter, employed as a farmhand, hid in a wagon for three days. His employer's son, he reported, "came back'ards and for'ards to bring me something to eat and make sure that everything was all right." His wife, caught at a farmhouse behind the Southern lines, escaped capture when the farmer's wife arranged to have her help nurse a wounded Confederate officer. Mary Fastnacht's mother took in and concealed the wife and daughter of "the colored minister." Mary recalled that the two later departed and the Fastnachts never learned their fate.33

Some blacks, however, did not escape the clutches of the raiders.
Albertus McCreary saw captives marched out of Gettysburg “crying and moaning.” The McCrearys’ washerwoman, Aunt Liz, managed to escape as she and others were marched down Chambersburg Street. She slipped into Christ Lutheran Church, climbed to the belfry, and remained hidden there for two days “without anything to eat or drink.” Among those not so apprehended were the fifty or so blacks enrolled in the Union armies. They represented more than ten percent of the 474 blacks counted in the county by the 1860 Federal Census takers.

Early’s Division took its departure from Gettysburg during the morning of June 27th. The town’s inhabitants had had a brief experience under enemy occupation which reminded them of their exposed situation and provided a foretaste of what they were to encounter in larger measure less than a week later. Some were sufficiently alarmed to take steps to protect their property against a return of the invaders. Charles Wills and his son, John, moved a store of foodstuffs (which had escaped discovery by the Confederates)—sugar, hams, shoulders, potatoes, and other groceries—to the loft of their Globe Hotel. This done, they excavated a trench in the back yard in which they deposited two barrels each of whiskey, gin, and brandy. Gates Fahnestock’s father leased an entire freight car in which he shipped his stock of goods to Philadelphia. And Leonard H. Gardner noted that as far away as York Springs “horses were being hid in the woods or hurried off to the river.”

Readers of The Compiler for June 29th had additional cause for their continuing fears. The destruction of the railway bridge over Rock Creek had severed railroad connections. Hugh D. Scott, the railroad’s telegraph operator, had already moved his apparatus twenty-five miles east to Hanover Junction. Moreover, as the newspaper reported, “our mail communications are cut off and hence we know nothing of what is going on in the ‘outside world.’” It is annoying, wrote the editor, “to be thus isolated.” This issue of The Compiler also reported 13,000 Rebels with twenty-three cannon and a long wagon train encamped less than five miles distant at Mummasburg.

During that night of June 29th, the people of Gettysburg could see Confederate campfires dotting the eastern slopes of South Mountain, barely nine miles to the west. No doubt they also got word of Rebel foraging parties roaming the hills and fields throughout the western part of Adams County. Billy Bayly remembered years later the “anxiety and apprehension” felt, and his mother was less fearful of battle prospects than of “the reckless raiders and their foraging expeditions.” It was
obvious that General Jeb Stuart’s raid of the previous October had not been forgotten.

Although aware that Confederate forces were not far distant, many residents could not persuade themselves that further danger lay ahead. As Jennie McCreary wrote to her sister, Julia, “We never expected a battle.” Perhaps an artillery duel “or something of that kind” might occur, but hardly anything more. Daniel Skelly recalled that on the night of June 30th, with Federal cavalry occupying the town, “the people of Gettysburg settled down in their houses with a sense of security they had not enjoyed for days and with little thought of what the morrow had in store for them.” But Sallie Broadhead felt less secure. In her diary for June 30th she noted that “this morning the Rebels came to the top of the hill overlooking the town on the Chambersburg Pike and looked over our place.” It begins to look, added Sallie, “as though we will have a battle soon and we are in great fear.”

The Confederates seen by Sallie were officers of Pettigrew’s Brigade of General A. P. Hill’s Third Corps. They had paused on Seminary Ridge to survey the prospect before leading their troops into the town. Their mission was “to search the town for any supplies (especially shoes) and return to camp the same day.” But Pettigrew espied a Federal cavalry unit (General John Buford’s two divisions) entering Gettysburg from the south. Under orders not to provoke a fight at this juncture, he retired with his men to their bivouac at Cashtown.

Given the circumstances, others must have shared Sallie Broadhead’s nervousness. At least they accorded a warm welcome to Buford’s troopers, distributing sandwiches, pieces of pie, cold meat, bread, cakes, cups of coffee, and bottles of water to the hungry and thirsty men. Tillie Pierce and others of “us girls” sang patriotic songs which, she believed, appeared to delight and encourage the soldiers. In turn, Buford succeeded in quieting the worst fears of the townspeople whom he described as “greatly excited” over the appearance of hostile forces at the town’s outskirts. The troops, so Hugh M. Ziegler recalled, provided entertainment for young boys who visited their camp and were privileged to ride the cavalry horses to water.

Anxious to maintain discipline among his troops, Buford had The Sentinel printing office prepare placards to be posted prominently on street corners throughout the town. They read in part, “The sale of spirituous liquors of any kind in this town during its occupation by the troops is strictly forbidden.” Moreover, “any violation of this order will be promptly and severely punished.” Finally, “the giving away of liquor will be punished the same as if a sale.”
One citizen reported that “the only [alcoholic] drink obtainable in the town that night was Maryland applejack, confiscated by the cavalry and deposited in their canteens against a time of need.” But, some soldiers “helped out thirsty citizens.” John C. Wills testified that until stopped by the military authorities he sold whiskey to Buford’s men during the night of June 30th and the morning of July 1st.

Generally, Gettysburg residents seemed innocent of knowledge that two huge armies, altogether about 170,000 men, were converging on their little town. Surrounding farmlands to the west and north soon were overrun by Confederate soldiers who trampled fields, tore down fences, seized horses and wagons, rounded up cattle and swine, raided chicken coops, and appropriated whatever other foodstuffs they could find. One of Lee’s infantrymen, John Dooley, was distressed at the damage done to wheatfields, “everywhere nearly ripe for harvesting.” He added that “we destroy nothing uselessly, but in self-defence (on account of the roads) are obliged to cut a passage through the fields of wheat.”

Even the passing of friendly troops left a mark. An artillery officer in the Army of the Potomac, Colonel Charles S. Wainwright, wrote in his diary for June 30th that Pennsylvania farmers “are running with complaints if a single rail is burned.” One of them, continued the Colonel, “wanted half as much as his land was worth for the poor crop of clover destroyed.” As a contrast, the Colonel recorded one Maryland farmer’s willingness to see his farm destroyed “if you will only whip the rebels.” There exists a great difference between Marylanders and Pennsylvanians, Wainwright declared. “Pennsylvanians do not give us an over-warm welcome; they are much more greedy than the Marylanders and . . . in general fully maintain their reputation for meanness.” Most of the Pennsylvanians encountered by the Colonel were Adams Countians.

A York Springs merchant gained some protection for his property by entertaining Confederate General Alfred G. Jenkins at dinner on the evening of July 1st. For his hospitality he received a special guard over his store of possessions. Most, however, suffered losses and damage similar to that of citizens in nearby Franklin and Cumberland Counties.

The failure of Pettigrew and his brigade on June 30th “to get those shoes” did not discourage his superiors. That Gettysburg in 1863 had a shoe and boot factory is a myth that will not die. If Pettigrew and his associates believed it they should have concluded that Early’s Division five days earlier would have cleaned out any supply of footwear.
Actually, the shoe supply would not have exceeded what might have been expected in any other town of 2,400 population. In any event, General A. P. Hill permitted General Henry Heth's Division, about 5,000 or 6,000 infantrymen, to approach Gettysburg early on the morning of July 1st. About 8:00 A.M. they made contact with Buford's 3,000 horsemen posted along McPherson Ridge a mile west of the town. It marked the beginning of the three-day engagement.

Rev. Michael Colver in later years declared that on July 1, 1863 Gettysburg's citizens "were entirely ignorant of the near approach of the main body of either army." Fannie Buehler suggested that it required news accounts in New York newspapers to make it clear that a battle was being fought at Gettysburg. Whatever ignorance prevailed as the morning began citizens were rudely awakened to reality by what they heard emanating from McPherson Ridge.

For most, the day had begun quietly enough. Professor Michael Jacobs walked to the College to meet his class but their "recitation" was interrupted by Union signal corpsmen climbing the stairs to the building's cupola. Jacobs accompanied them and pointed out "the strategic importance of Cemetery Hill." One student, Horatio J. Watkins, remembered that his class also was disrupted by the commotion. "Amid repeated failures on the part of the class," Watkins wrote later, "our professor remarked, 'We will close and see what is going on for you know nothing about the lesson anyhow.'"

The sound of gunfire to the west drew Watkins and his classmates to the Seminary building where they mounted to its cupola "to see what was going on." Soon, however, they descended with alacrity "when a cannon ball told us of our danger." Later, Seminary Ridge was lined with men and boys from the town, "all eager to witness a brush with the Confederates and not dreaming of the terrible conflict that was to occur on that day." One of the boys, Robert McClean, confessed years afterward that "my curiosity, interest, and gazing all were terminated suddenly by passage overhead of a fiercely sounding missile." It brought him to "a hasty descent from my lofty perch and return to my father's house." Indeed, "the awful crack of shot and shell and of apparently impending death" led him, as he remembered, "to a quickly increased interest in a copy of the New Testament."

Albertus McCreary did not join the gathering on Seminary Ridge. Instead, the young lad perched with a few companions on a fence and watched Union soldiers marching through the town toward the ridge. He was impressed. He remembered saying that "there were enough soldiers here to whip all the Rebs in the South." Another indication of
unawareness of peril to civilians were the housetops crowded, so recalled Anna Mary Young, "with ladies, as well as gentlemen, watching the battle." Hugh M. Ziegler reported that the sound of a military band performing in the Square combined with that of booming cannon and screaming shells to produce "music rarely heard and never forgotten."

By late morning these onlookers could see wounded men struggling to the rear or being carried there. Carrie Sheads, who conducted a school for young girls in her home beside the Chambersburg Pike (today's Buford Avenue) "found herself converted from the principal of a young ladies' seminary into the lady superintendent of an army hospital." Before Jennie McCreary and her family fully realized the magnitude of the battle in process "wounded men were brought into our house." The sight of disabled and mutilated men, recalled John C. Wills, brought some women to tears. No doubt none of them shed tears at the sight of Confederate General James J. Archer and members of his brigade marching through the streets as prisoners-of-war. To some spectators, they appeared sullen, all seemed "disheartened and humiliated."

One battle casualty carried into town that afternoon was an elderly eccentric, John Burns, later popularly dubbed "the civilian hero of Gettysburg." So much legend surrounds the story of this septuagenarian and town character that it is difficult to separate fact from fiction. But he did leave his Chambersburg Street house with his musket to join the 150th Pennsylvania on McPherson Ridge and fire away at the Rebels. Wounded three times, he was transported back to his home by Confederates who were unaware of his previously hostile activities.

It is hardly surprising that some could never forget their frightening experience. Amelia Harmon remained with her aunt in their home, "The Old McClean Place," overlooking Willoughby Run. A party of Union troops took possession of the house in mid-morning of July 1st. They sent the two women to the cellar from which Amelia could hear the tumult above, "the crack of rifles, the hurried orders, and outside the mingled roar of heavy musketry, galloping horses, yelling troops, and the occasional boom of cannon." Above all the noise "we could hear the beating of our hearts." When later the house was torched by Confederates, Amelia and her aunt were forced into open fields amidst the battle. They managed to work their way to the Confederate rear where they received food. As Amelia wrote, "We were doubtless the only persons on the Union side who were fed from General Lee's commissary during the battle of Gettysburg."

Others also saw combat uncomfortably close at hand. Alice Powers
watched a nearby fierce hand-to-hand struggle for possession of the 150th Pennsylvania's regimental flag. At the other end of the battle arena on July 2nd Tillie Pierce was an unwilling spectator during an encounter between Pennsylvania Reserves and their foes. Tillie passed along the story of little Laura Bergstresser peering through a second-story window of her Baltimore Street home as a shell tore through it and lodged unexploded in the wall opposite. Although terrified, Laura escaped injury. Catherine Foster, serving water to thirsty soldiers passing by, had the roof of the porch on which she was standing demolished by a shell. Like Laura, she was unhurt.59

The growing sense of insecurity felt by the town's inhabitants was intensified by mid-afternoon as the Union lines north and west gave way before the Confederate assaults. An officer rode up to the McCreary residence and warned, "All you good people go down to your cellars or you will be killed." Albertus McCreary wrote that "we obeyed him at once." Soon, hundreds of blue-clad soldiers were fleeing through the streets and alleys hotly pursued by the triumphant Rebels. Although Anna Mary Young recalled that "it was not until I saw the fences on our premises torn down and cannon placed all around us, one battery in our back yard, that I began to realize our danger," Sallie Broadhead's diary that night spoke of "bustle and confusion" and that "no one can imagine what extreme fright we were in when our men began to retreat." Union General Abner Doubleday, Commander of the First Corps, later described how as his battered men passed through the town to the south, panic-stricken women begged them not to abandon them to the Rebels.60

Soon, Gettysburg streets were filled with a horde of men clad in butternut or gray or nondescript clothing which passed as their uniforms. With their town now under Rebel occupation, many residents feared the worst. By sundown, however, relative quiet prevailed as exhausted troops from both armies settled down to an uneasy rest. Six-year old Mary McClean leaned out of a window of her East Middle Street home and with all the force she could muster sang "Hang Jeff Davis on a Sour Apple Tree." The probably amused Southern soldiery offered no interference. When importuned by Confederates for tunes, Liberty Hollinger and her sisters responded also with Union songs.61

Mrs. Peter Thorn, whose husband was not at home, displayed a different level of courage. In contrast to some men who feared for their safety, she rode with Union General Oliver O. Howard along the lines on the evening of July 1st, pointing out to him the main roads radiating
from Gettysburg. By her account, written in 1905, she that evening also served supper to three Union corps commanders—Howard, Henry W. Slocum, and Daniel E. Sickles. She wrote that she won the plaudits of General Howard who assured her that she had provided them “with the best supper he ever ate in his life.”

Other housewives in the community were also occupied handing out food at the request of the hungry Confederates in the streets or feeding their officers in their kitchens. Miss Jane Smith reluctantly served tea to Confederate General Richard S. Ewell and staff in late afternoon of July 1st in the Benner farmhouse (still standing) along the Harrisburg Road. She wrote in her diary that her unexpected and unwelcome guests “got plain fare.” She apparently exhibited sufficient grace to induce the General to seek breakfast at the house the following morning. Agnes Barr’s mother provided supper in her home on Baltimore Street for “rebel sergions” who were using the nearby Presbyterian Church as a military hospital.

The Broadhead family, which like most had sought refuge in the cellar, emerged on the evening of July 1st to find Chambersburg Street “strewn over with clothes, blankets, knapsacks, cartridge boxes, dead horses, and the bodies of a few men, but not so many as I expected to see.” That evening Sallie and her family watched the looting of a house across the street. “The family had left sometime during the day,” Sallie testified, “and the robbers must have gotten all they left in the house.” She observed the looters going from garret to cellar and loading their plunder into a large four-horse wagon before driving off. She expected the Rebels to come at any minute and break down the Broadhead’s front door, “but they did not come near us.”

Gettysburg residents later recorded a variety of impressions gained respecting the Southerners in their midst. The noise made by the Powers’ family chickens perched in nearby peach trees attracted the attention of hungry Confederates. Mrs. Powers succeeded in intercepting the flock’s captors and persuading them that the fowl were intended “for the poor wounded Southerners in her house.” She secured their help in rounding up the poultry and, as her daughter, Alice, later recalled, “they complied without protest.” When Sophia Culp Epley found soldiers about to seize her cow she shook her fist at them, explaining the need for the cow’s milk for her two young children. “You can’t take this last cow!” she expostulated. The story is that the men straightway left without it.

Encounters such as these did much to dispell the previously formed
impression that the Southern soldiers were somehow sub-human. Rosamond Rhone eventually concluded that “they were just men, or rather boys, just like our own boys.” Mrs. Joseph Bayly later wrote that “as a rule, they were good humored and courteous,” at least until their retreat began. Daniel Skelly paid tribute to “the perfect discipline” and the “gentlemanly and courteous” behavior they exhibited. “I never heard an instance to the contrary in Gettysburg,” he wrote. Salome Sallie Stewart remembered that “during the entire time the Northern and Southern soldiers were in Gettysburg I never heard a disrespectful word uttered by one to any woman.” Liberty Hollinger suggested that her father’s “silvery head” and the notice taken of her attractive fourteen-year old sister, Julia, deterred one group of Southerners from turning their horses into “the flourishing patch of corn” at the rear of the Hollinger house.

Albertus McCreary saw and admired the appearance of General Robert E. Lee and his staff, “a fine looking set of men—at least they seemed so to my youthful eyes.” Two Union officers voiced admiration for Confederate officers and men whom they met at Gettysburg. In a letter dated July 7th, the gravely wounded General Francis C. Barlow, a prisoner in Rebel hands, wrote to his mother that his captors were “pleasant fellows.” He continued: “I saw a good many of their men . . . and was much pleased with them.” He considered them “more heroic, more modest, and more in earnest than we are.” Colonel Wainwright wrote in his diary for July 1st, “Lee may well be proud of his infantry. I wish ours was equal to it.”

In their frantic retreat through the town during the afternoon of July 1st, Union troops found themselves in danger of capture by pursuing Confederates. Some fugitives were successful in seeking concealment in houses during the next three days. Residents “secreted, sheltered, fed, and aided in every way” those men hidden in attics, cellars, and closets. Especially during the night of July 1st the relative quiet of households was interrupted by loud raps on doors and brisk demands for entrance to search for hidden Yanks. Tillie Pierce’s father returned to his home after an absence to confront a squad of Confederates at the door about to search the house. He persuaded them that no Union hideaways were on the premises only to find upon entering the house a half dozen of them sheltered therein. Colonel Wainwright passed on a story of one of his artillery-men, “who spoke a little American Deutsch,” taken in by an elderly householder who dressed him in his own son’s civilian attire. The Bayly family experience was a bit different. In response to a knock
on the door, Mrs. Bayly found “a little fellow in a gray uniform” who declared himself weary of the war and sought concealment. Mrs. Bayly provided him with some of her son, Billy’s, clothing. The following day he mixed with the family helping hand out cherries to his erstwhile comrades-in-arms who were passing by.69

The often harrowing experiences of this first day of the great battle were to continue in different guise for another forty-eight hours. That first night cries and calls for succor from the yet unattended wounded and those in the hastily improvised hospitals disturbed the rest of many residents. Henry Eyster Jacobs never forgot “a frantic call with its unmistakable Southern mark: ‘Watah! watah! watah!’”70

The dawn of July 2nd brought new dangers, particularly for those residing in the southern part of the town. Rebels commandeered some houses for sharpshooting purposes, seemingly unconcerned that danger might befall civilian occupants caught in sniper fire exchanged with Union riflemen on Cemetery Hill. Anna Garlach told of a Rebel soldier who burst into her family’s Baltimore Street residence and mounted to the second floor. Her mother protested, “You can’t go up there. You will draw fire on this house full of defenceless women and children.” For this or for some other reason the man departed. John Rupp’s home at 449 Baltimore Street sheltered sharpshooters from both armies simultaneously. “Our men occupied my porch and the rebel the rear of the home,” Rupp wrote to his sister shortly after the battle. He, himself, kept to his cellar “so you can see that I was on neutral ground.” He added that his presence was known to the Northern but unknown to the Southern marksman.71

With snipers of both armies firing at anything they saw moving in the town, Gettysburg citizens were in real danger. The story of Virginia “Jennie” Wade is familiar enough. A claim has been made that the fatal bullet which struck her came from a house on Baltimore Street a few yards from the Garlach home. The Sentinel of July 9th, while concluding that she was somehow felled “by our own sharpshooters,” reported that “several of our citizens were severely wounded from sharpshooters during the three days firing.”

Liberty Hollinger recalled that her father, dressed as his wont in his favorite gray suit, came under fire from the Union side until he replaced it with a black suit. Billy McClean’s curiosity almost cost him his life. He opened the shutter of a second-story window for a better look and, as he described the experience, he turned away just before a minie ball came through it “in direct line with where my breast had been a few
seconds before."\(^2\) The David McCreary home at the Southwest corner of Baltimore and West High Street was particularly beset. Albertus McCreary remembered that:

> We did not dare to look out of the windows on the Baltimore street side [since] sharpshooters from Cemetery Hill were watching all the homes for Confederate sharpshooters and picking off every person they saw. From that distance they could not distinguish a citizen from a soldier. On the High street side [however] we could stay out on the porch during the heavy artillery firing.\(^3\)

A lull in the fighting (only partial since it was constantly punctuated by sharpshooter activity) lasted from late afternoon of July 1st to about 4:00 P.M. the following day. About that hour, Southern divisions under General James Longstreet’s command launched a massive assault on the line occupied by Union General Daniel E. Sickles’ Third Corps. It stretched from the Peach Orchard sector to the Devil’s Den. The Confederate infantry advance was preceded by an intense artillery barrage. To Sallie Broadhead, “it seemed as though heaven and earth
were being rolled together.” Five miles farther north the Bayly farmhouse shook and windows rattled from the reverberations. The sound of shells passing overhead led little “Allie” Buehler to inquire of his mother, “Listen, Momma, do you hear the birdies?”

Resumption of the fighting on July 2nd which lasted until after dark sent Gettysburg families again to their cellars. Sallie Broadhead lamented that “we gain no information from the Rebels and are shut off from all communication with our soldiers.” Wrote Daniel Skelly, “The Confederates maintained a clam-like silence.” Olivia Gilbert’s family, she revealed, guessed the winning side from “the predominance of blue or gray legs hurrying past the cellar window.” Hardly a scientific survey, it doubtless helped divert minds from unpleasant possibilities.

The blood-letting of July 2nd had largely ended by ten o’clock that evening. In Gettysburg, there yet was no clear indication as to victor and vanquished. “To us,” wrote Michael Jacobs, “the result seemed doubtful and gloomy forebodings filled our minds.” He noted, however, a sense of discouragement pervading the ranks of the Rebels occupying the town. There was “an entire absence of that elation and boastfulness which they manifested when they entered the town in the evening of July 1st.”

Many women and girls of the community had other things on their minds. They had been pressed into service to tend the needs of hundreds of wounded and suffering men. At the Jacob Wekert house just off the southern extremity of Cemetery Ridge, Tillie Pierce labored to supply bread, beef tea, and whatever other care she could provide. She witnessed the rough surgery with its accumulating piles of amputated limbs just outside the door. She took note of the “numerous rough boxes” placed nearby alongside the road. “Ominous and dismal as was the sight presented,” she wrote later, “it nevertheless did not prevent some of the soldiers from passing jocular expressions.” On the way home the morning of July 2nd from a mission of mercy with bandages and other supplies, Mrs. Joseph Bayly saw a field full of men “whom I found to be prisoners and that they expected to start south any hour.” She wrote that “they swarmed around me like bees, begging me to take charge of letters to their friends.”

With the outcome of the battle still in doubt, Gettysburg residents greeted the dawn of Friday, July 3rd, with no less apprehension than before. Most must have heard, as did Sallie Broadhead, the heavy cannonading from the Culp’s Hill area beginning around four o’clock that morning. She wrote in her diary that night that shortly afterward “we were told to leave this [west] end of the town for likely it would be
shelled.” Who gave this warning, why such shelling was likely, and by which army, Sallie does not record. But the family, although yet fearful, decided to remain in their Chambersburg Street home.

In the early afternoon came the artillery duel which preceded the climactic action of the battle, the infantry assault known as Pickett’s Charge. The approximately 230 cannon involved created a roar which seemed to Sallie Broadhead “as if heaven and earth were crashing together.” For nearly an hour and a half it continued, appearing to the Broadhead family as though “the terrific sound of the strife” would never cease. The din, it has been said, was heard in Chambersburg and Carlisle, respectively twenty-five and thirty miles distant.79

Soon came an ominous silence as the Confederates massed 12,000 men for what has been called “the greatest infantry assault of the Civil War.” It was directed at the Union center on Cemetery Ridge. Henry Eyster Jacobs wrote that he joined his father to watch the action from the garret window of their home. By four o’clock that afternoon the attack had been repulsed and organized combat at Gettysburg came to an end.

The town’s civilian population could not have known that the battle was over. Throughout the evening hours they waited fearfully. “It would ease the horror,” Sallie Broadhead told her diary, “if we knew our arms were successful.” She took note of the lack of boasting by the Rebels and the fact that “they look uneasy and by no means exultant.” The Bayly family also saw signs of a great change in “the temper of our guests.” During the evening of July 3rd, according to Billy, wagon trains, stragglers, and camp followers began “drifting back in the direction whence they came.” Some of them inquired as to “the nearest route to Hagerstown.” On the following morning, according to Billy, the Baylys found “that our host of visitors had, like the Arab, folded their tents and quietly stolen away.”80

During the evening of July 3rd sounds emanating from Gettysburg streets indicated movement of wagons and artillery pieces. Alice Barr’s family was hopeful but did not dare to issue forth to confirm their hopes. About four o’clock the following morning Daniel Skelly’s family awakened to the music of fife and drum. From their windows they saw a band “with the glorious Stars and Stripes fluttering at the head of the lines.” Their reaction: “Ye, gods! What a welcome sight for the imprisoned people of Gettysburg.” As the morning progressed and the Rebel evacuation clearly was underway the townsfolk were, in the words of Robert McClean, “a happier set of people you never saw.”81
Yet, tension did not disappear completely. Henry Eyster Jacobs noted that throughout July 4th pickets for both armies continued to fire upon each other to the peril of non-combatants.82 "We were between two fires," Sallie Broadhead wrote in her diary that night. No one dared venture outside, she added, "or even look out of the windows on account of the bullets being fired at every moving object." To compound her anxiety, came additional rumors of Rebel warnings to women and children to leave before Rebel shelling began. Not until the following morning of July 5th when it became clear that at last the invaders had indeed departed could Sallie feel relief. "What a beautiful morning!" she wrote in her diary that night. She added, however, that "it seemed as though nature was smiling on thousands of suffering."

The three-day ordeal had indeed strained nerves. A prominent merchant, John L. Schick, confessed that "I smoked 21 cigars in one day." A housewife judged that she must have "lost one-fourth of my flesh in the few days of suspense in rebel lines."83 There was, however, worse to follow—several weeks of coping with the aftermath of the bloody battle waged in and around the town of Gettysburg. Even though the sense of immediate peril had passed, residents quickly became aware of the Herculean task which they confronted. "We were glad that the storm had passed and that victory was perched on our banners," wrote Tillie Pierce, "but, oh, the horror and desolation that remained."84

One of the earliest and most indelible impressions recorded by almost everyone dealt with the noxious odors which filled the air everywhere. Corporal William T. Livermore of the 20th Maine took a walk over the battlefield during the morning of July 4th. He described what he saw in a letter to his brother: "A thousand dead horses that were all swollen [sic] and the smell of the horses and men was dreadful." Cornelia Hancock, the young Quakeress from New Jersey who came early to help nurse the wounded, recoiled at first from "the sickening, overpowerful, awful stench."85 Twelve-year old Mary Elizabeth Montfort declared that "the terrible smell all through the town is more than the time we found a dead rat behind the loose boards in the cellar." Albertus McCreary’s memories included the bottles of pennyroyal and peppermint carried by everyone to ward off the stench. A week after the battle Sallie Broadhead was describing an atmosphere "loaded with the horrible smell of decaying horses and the remains of slaughtered animals and, it is said, from the bodies of men imperfectly buried." She feared lest pestilence should take control "for every breath we draw is made ugly by the stench." Jennie
Croll referred to “the plague of flies . . . the immense quantity of dead and decaying matter, the filth of all kinds, and the excessive heat.” She was certain that all this explained why “fevers were prevalent.”

It is little wonder that within a week two of the town’s weekly newspapers were calling upon citizens to provide horses, wagons, and manpower to help “bury the dead and to cleanse the streets in such a thorough way as to guard against pestilence.” Apparently those called upon responded adequately enough since there is no record of unusual sickness among the civilian population in the town. Apparently, chloride of lime was used so freely that Nellie AUGHINBAUGH found it unnatural “when we smelled it no longer.” The only thing “that saved the town from an epidemic,” she thought, “was a heavy rain that came (I think) the third day.”

The conditions of the town’s streets appalled many. Henry Eyster Jacobs wrote that “all through the streets . . . there lay with the slain all sorts of debris.” He counted muskets, swords, sabers, knapsacks, haversacks, cartridges, boxes of loose cartridges, articles of clothing, testaments, letters, photographs, and “the remains of meals.” Leonard Gardner rode northward along Baltimore Street on July 4th and found it lined with unburied men and “other pictures of destruction which will never fade from my mind.” But, damage to property in Gettysburg was less than might have been anticipated. Shells did fall within the town but, as suggested by one long-time resident, cannoneers on Seminary and Cemetery Ridges were too occupied firing at each other than to train their guns on the town. Those shells that fell short of their targets were duds or perhaps the result of simple miscalculation.

Testimony as to the ratio between damage done deliberately and inadvertently is conflicting. Some witnesses viewed the scene through partisan eyes. Frank A. Haskell charged the invaders with “their work of pillage . . . in spite of the smooth-sounding general order of the Rebel commander,” an order which, he judged, “would sound marvelously well abroad or in history.” One can well understand the complaints of John L. Tate, proprietor of Tate’s Hotel, who enumerated his losses as including twenty gallons each of ginger brandy, cognac, and cherry wine plus sixty gallons of gin and two cases of regular brandy. Albertus McCreae reported many houses vandalized and Robert McClean bitterly assailed the occupying forces. He claimed that “during their possession of the town they committed every act of theft, extortion, indecency, and destruction imaginable.”

Other inhabitants suffering less damage to their possessions, having been less inconvenienced, felt less aggrieved and thus harbored less
resentment. The invaders had about cleared out Mary McAllister’s store but, as she remembered it, “the rebels were actually good to us.”93 The Star and Banner’s editor, proudly Republican as he was, reported of the Rebels that “they done no considerable damage to private property and the only annoyance our citizens experienced was their hateful presence.” A week later, he noted that during the Rebel possession of his office, they “freely used our type and press to print their army blanks.” On departing, they perpetrated the ultimate insult to a newspaper editor, “they pied a great deal of our type.”94 It is not known whom Charles Wills blamed for the water leaking into his hastily buried barrels of spirits at the Globe Hotel. “We disposed of it,” his son reported, “by selling some off cheap, and giving it away, and throwing some out.” George Arnold, prominent merchant, wrote to a friend on August 15th that “almost everybody has suffered more or less from the invasion, but we have cause to be thankful that it is not worse.”95

Adams County farmers, particularly those cultivating their fields in what became combat areas, had less reason for thankfulness than did Arnold or their other town-dwelling neighbors. Robert McClean wrote to his cousin on July 17th that Confederate artillery “made roads over the grain fields, destroyed fences, injured the barn, and did other damage.” Yet, “taking it altogether . . . we have suffered very little compared with some farmers.”96 In fact, many farm properties were a shambles. The Compiler of July 20th took note of “The Ravages of War” which included houses and barns destroyed or damaged, fields now unfenced, crops destroyed, homes pillaged, and stock strayed or otherwise vanished. A local historian, writing in 1886, declared that “so completely were the farm fences destroyed that, we are told, you could start at Gettysburg and ride, following any point of the compass, to any part of the county unobstructed, so far as a farm fence was concerned.” He observed further that “the enemy had respected private property . . . to a degree perhaps never before known by an armed force in the enemy’s country. But, soldiers . . . will forage more or less.”97 The Star and Banner on July 9th bemoaned the destruction of so many barns with all their contents.

On the northern end of Cemetery Ridge lay the twenty-acre plot of ground tilled by Abraham Brian, a mulatto, and his family. The house and shed survived shelling on the third day of the battle, but on returning to his farm Brian found his house “torn and riddled” and that Union army horses had consumed his entire four and a half tons of hay.98 A few hundred yards to the south the Widow Leister fared much
worse. Not only was her tiny frame house appropriated to serve as General George Gordon Meade’s headquarters, but the Confederate shot and shell which on the third day had rained down around it had created havoc. She recounted her woes to a visitor:

Coverlids and sheets and some of our clo’es [were] all carried away. They got two ton of hay from me. . . . I’d put in two lots of wheat that year and it was all trampled down and I didn’t get nothing for it. I had seven pieces of meat yit, and them was all took. All I had when I got back was jest a little bit of flour yit. The fences was all tore down. . . . and the rails was burnt up. One shell came in under the roof and knocked a bedstead all to pieces for us. There was seventeen dead horses on my land. They burnt five of ’em around my best peach tree and killed it. . . . The dead horses spi’led my spring, so I had to have my well dug.99

Among the widow’s catalog of injuries was that at the time (August 1865) she had received no compensation other than from the sale of the horse bones and even then she had to wait “’till this year for the meat hadn’t rotted off yit.”100

The scene of intense hand-to-hand combat on the evening of July 2nd, “the once beautiful Evergreen Cemetery,” so reported The Sentinel of July 21st, now “presents a sad appearance with overturned tombstones and graves turned up by ploughing shot.” Mrs. Peter Thorn, wife of the Cemetery Keeper, returned to her Gatehouse home to find window panes gone, family possessions missing, and three bloody featherbeds left by the soldiers. A few days after the battle Frank A. Haskell saw the flowers trampled “and black with cannon’s soot.” A dead horse lay beside a marble shaft, “such are the incongruities and jumblings of battle.” In August 1865, John Burns told a visitor that just after the fighting “the ground was all covered with dead horses, and broken wagons, and pieces of shells, and battered muskets, and everything of that kind, not to speak of the heaps of dead.”101

By far the most distressing aftermath of the battle were the thousands of dead, dying, and wounded men left behind by the departing armies. Of the approximately 170,000 troops at Gettysburg, one of every four was a casualty—killed, wounded, or reported missing. How many of the more than 27,000 wounded survived the rough surgery and the less than skilled nursing care is uncertain.102 Without counting noses the 2,400 inhabitants of the town knew they were a multitude. Citizens faced what
a medical officer present described as “an occasion of the greatest amount of suffering known to the Nation since its birth.”

There exists ample contemporary testimony to support this medical officer’s picture. “The appearance of things here,” wrote Mrs. John Harris, one of the many women who came from the outside to lend assistance, “beggars all description.” She declared that many dead lay unburied with thousands wounded “still naked and starving.” To conceal exposed skeletons Liberty Hollinger collected army coats laying about “and placed them on the bones.” Fannie Buehler found the sights and sounds of the hospital established in the Court House across the street from her home “too horrible to be described.”

As *The Star and Banner* noted in its July 9th issue, the town had become “one vast hospital” with little red flags hanging from second story windows of those houses sheltering wounded men. In his diary for July 4th, Colonel Wainwright wrote that “every house and church was full of wounded.” Sallie Broadhead’s diary entry for July 12th observed that “this is Sunday, but since the battle we have had no Sunday. The
churches have all been converted into hospitals.” In a letter to his sister, written on July 19th, John Rupp confirmed Sallie’s statement: “We have had no Sunday for four weeks.” Every church and hall is taken for hospitals.105

The surrounding countryside also was a part of the “one vast hospital.” William McClean walked out to the McPherson barn, scene of fierce combat west of town.

When I entered the barn [he wrote] it was crowded with the wounded of both armies. Some of them had fallen four days before and without having any food except in some cases a little hardtack in their haversacks, and without any surgical attention to their wounds.106

A mile east of the town the Shealer barn sheltered twenty-two Confederate wounded lying unattended in the filth of the barn floor. Another feature of the countryside, according to Isaac Carter, were the buzzards which came, “a multitude of ’em—and oh my! they were the biggest ever seen.” But another Gettysburg resident, Samuel M. Bushman, denied that unusual numbers of buzzards appeared immediately. He insisted that it was several months before they gathered at Gettysburg.107

From the outset of the fighting women in the community volunteered their services as nurses. Even before it began, The Star and Banner of July 2nd (not distributed to readers until July 9th) had warned of a great battle in the neighborhood and urged that ladies “go to work at once and prepare lint, bandages, and other articles that may be useful in the hospital.” Such home-based activity proved insufficient for many women. Included among them were Harriet Bayly, Sallie Broadhead, Carrie Sheads, Tillie Pierce, Salome Myers, Fannie Buehler, and Nellie Aughinbaugh. They risked death or physical injury in the unfamiliar and nerve-wracking task of comforting the dying and succoring the wounded. Sallie Broadhead’s diary entry for July 7th is instructive:

This morning we started out to see the wounded with as much food as we could scrape together and some old quilts and pillows.... I assisted in feeding some of the severely wounded when I perceived that they were suffering on account of not having their wounds dressed. I did not know whether I could render any assistance in that way, but thought I would try.

Sallie’s reservations as to her effectiveness were no doubt shared by other Gettysburg women but did not prevent them from offering their admittedly amateur ministrations. Such included presence at bedsides,
holding hands, writing letters, administering medicines, providing water, and at times distributing dainties. Fannie Buehler's friends from elsewhere, "knowing that I was on the ground, sent me many boxes and barrels of supplies . . . wine and pickles, oranges and lemons, sugar . . . tea, coffee, beef tea" for distribution. Nellie Aughinbaugh found herself unprepared for the sight of blackened Rebel corpses. From inexperience she came up with an unique explanation. The Confederates before the battle had been given whiskey mixed with gunpowder to make them "fight like demons." The result was that after death "they would turn quite black."¹⁰⁸

Gettysburg physicians such as Drs. J. W. C. O'Neal and Robert Horner also turned out to minister to the wounded. As did the volunteer nurses, they appear to have made no distinction between friend and foe. Virginia-born Dr. O'Neal carefully recorded the names and burial places of Confederate dead, a service which later proved invaluable to Southern families seeking word of them. For this practice Dr. O'Neal came under suspicion in some patriotic circles of being tainted with "copperheadism." The labors of citizens of both sexes in caring for the suffering mass of humanity persuaded the editor of The Sentinel that "when the history of this war is written by future historians," the Christian charity of the people of Gettysburg would not be forgotten.¹¹⁰

While Tillie Pierce later wrote that "my native townsmen during their terrible struggle acted as patriotic and bravely as it was possible to
act," the hypercritical Colonel Wainwright thought otherwise. In his diary entry of July 4th he conceded that "Gettysburg may hereafter be classic ground," but he held strong reservations as to the behavior of the town's inhabitants. They had "damned themselves with a disgrace that can never be washed out," he declared. Had it not been for the women and children in it he would have rejoiced if the town had been levelled. “Instead of helping us,” he wrote, “they were coming in shoals with their petty complaints of damages.” One man, Wainwright reported, “demanded twenty dollars for bringing half a dozen wounded cavalrymen some seven miles.”

Almost immediately help began arriving from outside. Much of what we know of the conditions which prevailed within the stricken community comes from recollections set down by women who answered the call for help. Among the earliest to reach Gettysburg were the Sisters of Charity, members of an order from nearby Emmitsburg. As Colonel Wainwright’s artillery unit departed Gettysburg on July 5th it passed “several large waggons [sic] filled with Sisters of Charity... with good things they were taking to the wounded.”

Sister Camilla wrote that on their arrival in the town that evening “we didn’t see a woman.” The following day, however, women appeared in their homes looking like ghosts “so terrified were these poor creatures during the frightful battle.” Sister Camilla was moved to comment, “No wonder!”

Among those who came was Dorothea Dix, appointed in June 1861 as “Superintendent of Female Nurses” by President Abraham Lincoln. Cornelia Hancock reported seeing the controversial Miss Dix as she “stuck her head in tents,” but, Cornelia added, “she did not work at all.”

Liberty Hollinger noted that the famous Dr. Mary Walker with “her low silk hat, with bloomers, and a man’s coat and collar,” was on hand.

Although the shooting had stopped, perils remained in the plentitude of unexploded shells, bullets, and the still loaded guns found on the battlefield. They included a reported 24,000 of them, some containing more than one unfired charge. Both Albertus McCreary and Hugh Ziegler reported boys killed by unexploded shells. Ziegler noted also that “there were several farmers and their teams killed by plow points coming in contact with unexploded shells.”

The Star and Banner of July 9th announced the death of young Edward McPherson Woods and added that “we publish this as a warning to others who may be visiting the battlefield.”

Not fatal to anyone but nonetheless a burden to residents was the task
of tending to the wants and needs of a multitude of outsiders who descended upon the town. Some came to find word of a loved one who had been engaged in the combat. Most, however, appear to have been attracted by sheer curiosity. Whatever their motives, they represented another troublesome July 1863 invasion of the stricken town.

As early as July 4th, according to Colonel Wainwright, “hundreds from the country around . . . came down in their waggons [sic] to see the sights, stroll over the ground, and gaze and gape at the dead and wounded.” On picket duty on the Susquehanna River’s West Shore opposite Harrisburg, Private William H. Rupp of the 26th Pennsylvania saw “hundreds of people from all parts of the country going to and coming from the Battle field at Gettysburg.” Sallie Broadhead’s diary noted on July 13th that “the town is full as ever of strangers,” and it observed that “the old story of the inability of a village of twenty-five hundred inhabitants, overrun and eaten out by two large armies, to accommodate from ten to twelve thousand visitors, is repeated almost
hourly.” Leander H. Warren remembered that the town’s “few public houses” were not able to handle the crowds and that “many of the people had to walk the streets all night.”

The numbers of sight-seers at times interfered with the labors of those ministering to the wounded. The Pennsylvania militia units on guard duty in the town were forced to declare a 4:00 P.M. curfew in the hospital tent areas. Guardsmen also had other responsibilities to intercept some visitors and confiscate souvenirs picked up on the battlefield. Rev. F. J. H. Schantz and four companions arrived on July 8th and departed the following day with a collection of “mementos.” They were stopped just outside of the town but the clergyman was allowed to keep what he had collected while others were not.

As late as August 17th, according to The Compiler of that date, “the town is full of inquiring relatives.” It reported also that local undertakers had constructed 600 or 700 coffins purchased by relatives to transport some of the dead to their homes. John C. Wills noted that some local citizens “made quite a good thing out of the gruesome business” of exhuming bodies and then “preparing them for shipment,” a business eventually halted until freezing weather arrived in October.

The influx of visitors continued but by the end of the war those who came were generally tourists rather than grieving relatives. One of them was J. T. Trowbridge, a journalist, who in August 1865 lodged in the McClellan House on the Square. “I inquired the way to the battleground,” he wrote. “‘You are on it now’, said the landlord with proud satisfaction.” Trowbridge also chose John Burns as his battlefield guide. Without realizing it, perhaps, the battle’s “civilian hero” helped inaugurate a unique, distinctly individualistic, and somewhat lucrative occupation for some Gettysburg citizens.

The task of caring for the wounded seemed never-ending. As late as August 3rd The Compiler was listing articles still needed—butter, eggs, chickens, apple-butter, dried beef, potatoes, onions, and pickles. Also called for were sheets, pillows, cushions, ring-pads, shirts, drawers, socks, and slippers. By this time, however, hospital trains were departing each day with men now fit to endure the rigors of transportation and with this came an end to all but a few of the hordes of visitors.

An unexpected post-battle sight was the presence of Confederate soldiers freely walking Gettysburg streets. Most were paroled prisoners of war and some were stragglers gathered together after the Confederate departure. James F. Crocker, a Virginian and graduate of Pennsylvania College in 1850, had served in the 9th Virginia. Wounded during Pickett’s Charge he was yet ambulatory. As a trusted prisoner, Crocker
obtained a pass into town and, as he recalled, “I went alone, unattended, the fields and woods . . . open to me.” He ended his visit to town by having dinner with his old professor, President Henry L. Baugher of the College.  

As in any community, there were in Gettysburg’s civilian ranks heroes and heroines and some less heroic. “Few good things can be said of Gettysburg farmers,” wrote one woman who had come to help nurse the wounded. “I can only use Scripture in calling them ‘evil beasts,’” she declared. “One old Dutchman,” when asked if he had helped resist the invaders replied in the negative that “a feller might’er got hit.” As seen, Colonel Wainwright had a low opinion of Pennsylvanians and little respect for Gettysburg’s adult males, nine-tenths of whom, he charged, “had cleared out, leaving the women behind them, and gone off to look after their own safety.” No one of them, the Colonel wrote in his diary, “had courage enough to take a musket in hand for defence of his own home.” Apparently he had not met nor heard of John Burns. Such accusations, which also appeared in the metropolitan press, were indignantly denied by Michael Jacobs. 

Nothing can be more remote from the truth [Jacobs wrote] than the gratuitous slander put forth by some reckless newspaper scribblers and extensively published abroad that the male inhabitants ran off like a set of cowards and permitted women and children to do the best they could . . . No one, so far as we know, had forsaken his home and family through fear or cowardice. 

And the women so critical of Gettysburg farmers described Gettysburg’s women as “kind and faithful to the wounded and their friends and the town was full to overflowing of both.” 

Gettysburg citizens sensed quickly that something of transcendent historical importance had occurred at their doorsteps. But, they at first found it difficult to grasp fully what had occurred. Fannie Buehler declared that it had required receipt of the New York newspapers with their accounts of the fighting to make clear to people “that a battle was being fought in Gettysburg.” Henry Eyster Jacobs adds an incredible observation that “strange as it may seem, it was only gradually that the magnitude of the battle dawned upon us.” Again it was a newspaper story in the Baltimore Sun, he wrote, that provided Gettysburg people “their first connected account of the battle and information of those who had fallen.”

It did not take long to persuade Gettysburg’s citizens that the battle had brought renown to their formerly obscure and modest community.
One of the first was Michael Jacobs whose narrative, not at first intended for publication, first appeared in print in November 1863. Already he recognized a competition for preeminence among Civil War engagements:

The fall of Vicksburg and of Port Hudson, which followed immediately after the battle of Gettysburg, though of highest importance to the country, is, nevertheless, not equal in its influence to the breaking of the power of an army which was striking a blow at the heart of the nation.

Jacobs' judgment on this matter is disputed today by some historians, but it reflected local pride and is in line with convictions held by most of the town's population since then. For unlettered and unsophisticated people it was enough that something had happened in their town. "My grandmother would always refer to the battle as 'the war'," wrote Nellie Aughinbaugh. "Mother would tell her, 'this is not the war..."
"WE NEVER EXPECTED A BATTLE"

Mother! It is only one battle', but she would reply, 'It is all the war I ever want to see.'

The battle and its aftermath inspired second thoughts in some. John C. Wills recalled a conversation with a Southern officer who declared that had the people north and south before the war hanged about a dozen men—"abolitionists and fireeaters"—the war would never have taken place. In the 1930s (significantly a decade in America in which the desirability, necessity, and efficacy of war was questioned) Gates Fahnestock, recalling his experience as an eyewitness at Gettysburg, told a New York audience that "we never . . . will be reconciled to the thought that individuals or nations can by standing on opposite lines and shooting each other to the death rightly decide any question."

NOTES


4. Sallie M. Broadhead, The Diary of a Lady of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, from June 15 to July 15, 1863 (Privately printed, [n.d.]), p. 3; Fannie T. Buehler, Recollections of the Great Rebel Invasion and One Woman's Experiences During the Battle of Gettysburg (Gettysburg, Pa.: Star and Sentinel, 1896), p. 1. Both the Broadhead and Buehler accounts are available in typescript at the Adams County Historical Society (Hereinafter cited as ACHS).


7. A detachment of Jenkins' men had on June 21st raided the Fairfield area eight miles west of Gettysburg. Perhaps Sallie Broadhead assumed simply that any Rebel horsemen in the neighborhood were members of Jenkins' command.


15. Lydia Catherine (Ziegler) Clare, “A Gettysburg Girl’s Story” (Unpublished Manuscript dated “about 1900” on file at the ACHS).


18. According to Michael Jacobs (Notes, p. 11), this unit was the Philadelphia City Troop, commanded by Samuel J. Randall, which had reached Gettysburg on June 21st.

19. The adventures (or mis-adventures) of Company A are narrated in Samuel G. Hefelbower’s History of Gettysburg College, pp. 182–203.


27. Tillie (Pierce) Alleman, At Gettysburg, p. 22.

28. Charles McCurdy, Gettysburg: A Memoir, p. 13; Anna Mary Young in Catherine Merrill, A Soldier of Indiana, p. 119.


38. Sallie Broadhead’s “our place” was the family home located in what is today 216 Chambersburg Street in Gettysburg.


41. Tillie (Pierce) Alleman, *At Gettysburg*, p. 7. Tillie and other Gettysburg girls had acquired a repertoire of soldier and other patriotic songs from the “Porter Guards,” a Federal militia unit assigned briefly to the town early in the war.


43. J. Howard Wert in *The Compiler*, March 15, 1912; John C. Wills, “Reminiscence.”

44. There existed a tendency later among Gettysburg citizens to overestimate the size of the invading force. Michael Jacobs, in his *Notes* (p. 45) puts the number of Confederates at 90,000 and for the Union at 60,000. These figures are almost the reverse of the respective strengths of the two armies. See Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign* (pp. 242–250) for an authoritative discussion of this matter.


50. So wrote Michael Jacobs’ son, Henry Eyster Jacobs in his *Memoirs* (p. 54). Henry conceded that “the strength of that position [Cemetery Hill] is such that it must have attracted any trained military eye.” Tillie Pierce stated (*At Gettysburg*, p. 16) that Professors Jacobs and Martin L. Stoever joined in calling attention to this “impregnable position.” In his own *Notes* (p. 25), Michael Jacobs wrote simply that “one of the officers of the College” so assisted the military observers.


57. In his account, written within two weeks after the end of the battle, Frank A. Haskell reported that “I saw ‘John Burns,’ the only citizen of Gettysburg who fought in the battle.” See Haskell’s *The Battle of Gettysburg*, p. 11. Haskell was in error. *The Sentinel* on December 29, 1863 carried an item: “Mr. Branson went forth to fight to invaders but, not being wounded, is probably the reason why he did not receive the notice that our old friend, John Burns, did.”


64. As Michael Jacobs wrote in his *Notes* (p. 29), the Confederates generally did not enter occupied houses. Those from which the occupants had fled were more likely to be ransacked. Some families, like Albertus McCreary’s, decided not to attempt flight under the impression that Confederates surrounded the town.

65. Alice (Powers) Barr, in *The Compiler*, July 1, 1903; Sophia Culp Epley (Unpublished Manuscript on file at the GNMP).
“WE NEVER EXPECTED A BATTLE” 197


67. Albertus McCreary, McClure’s Magazine (July 1909), p. 246. The original of the Barlow letter is deposited in the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston. The extract cited is available in copy at the ACHS. For Colonel Wainwright’s comment see Allan Nevins, ed., A Diary of Battle, p. 236.


70. Henry Eyster Jacobs, Memoirs, p. 56.

71. Anna (Garlach) Kitzmiller, “Mrs. Kitzmiller’s Story,” The Compiler, August 23, 1905; John Rupp’s letter to his sister, Anne, is dated July 19, 1863, a copy of which is on file at the ACHS. Albertus McCreary reported that “many rebel sharpshooters [were] killed in various houses throughout the town.” See McClure’s Magazine (July 1909), p. 248.


77. Tillie (Pierce) Alleman, At Gettysburg, pp. 15, 19; Richard Wheeler, Witness to Gettysburg, p. 175. Tillie also provided details of the death of General Stephen H. Weed, who fell in the defense of Little Round Top.

78. Mrs. Joseph Bayly, “Stories of the Battle,” Compiler Scrapbook. Albertus McCreary also took down the names of Union captives being held in his home and told them that he would write to their friends. See McClure’s Magazine (July 1909), p. 246.

79. Jacob Hoke in his The Great Invasion of 1863, or General Lee in Pennsylvania (Dayton, Ohio: The Otterbein Press, 1913), p. 508 marshals testimony “from men of undoubted intelligence and veracity [that] the reports of guns was heard as far as . . . one hundred and forty miles away.”


82. Henry Eyster Jacobs, Memoirs, p. 59.
83. Sarah Barrett King, "A Mother's Story."
84. Quoted in Richard Wheeler, Witness to Gettysburg, p. 255.
87. The Sentinel, July 7, 1863; The Star and Banner, July 9, 1863.
88. Nellie Aughinbaugh, Personal Experiences, p. 27. The rainstorm to which Nellie refers came on July 4th.
90. L. W. Minnigh, Gettysburg: What They Did Here (Gettysburg: Copyrighted by L. W. Minnigh, 1924), pp. 155-156. It may be that Union artillerymen had no desire to shell a friendly population while Southerners did not want to endanger their own troops occupying the town. Some home owners in Gettysburg today are proud to point to shell holes in the walls or even balls still implanted in them.
94. The Sentinel, July 7, 1863; The Star and Banner, July 2, 9, 1863. The editor had other reason for lament. In his paper's issue of July 2nd (not distributed until July 9th), he wrote: "We are completely cut off from railroad and telegraphic communication." The Sentinel of July 7th told its readers that "We need scarce apologize . . . for not making our usual visit to their homes last week." The editor thought, however, that "the unusual interest of the present number, owing to the glorious news [victory at both Gettysburg and Vicksburg] contained therein will more than make amends."
95. John C. Wills, "Reminiscences"; George Arnold to W. T. King, August 15, 1863. The original of this Arnold letter is filed at the ACHS.
99. More than 3,000 horses were killed or had to be destroyed at Gettysburg. Pouring kerosene over them and burning them was the usual method of disposing of them. It was said that for weeks people downwind from the area had to endure the odor of burning horse flesh.
100. J. T. Trowbridge, Atlantic Monthly (November 1865), p. 623. In his "Notes on the History of Adams County, Pennsylvania" (Unpublished Notes on file at the ACHS), the late Dr. Robert Fortenbaugh wrote (p. 21): "The county suffered loss and destruction for which it was not compensated in any considerable amount. On the other hand, the fame and consequent benefit which has accrued to this whole area because of the events of '63 have long since far outweighed the original loss and damage." It is doubtful that either the Widow Leister or Abraham Brian, or any other of the county's farmers, would have found much comfort contemplating future benefits for a later generation.
“WE NEVER EXPECTED A BATTLE”

102. In his *The Gettysburg Campaign*, Edwin B. Coddington states (p. 537) that the Confederates left 6,802 of their men at Gettysburg. Michael Jacobs referred in his *Notes* (p. 46) to “the large numbers of his [Lee’s] wounded which were literally emptied out of wagons into farmhouses and barns in his hasty retreat.” Traditional and popular accounts set the total of battle casualties for both armies at 51,000 Careful students of the battle place the figure closer to 43,000.


105. Allan Nevins, ed., *A Diary of Battle*, p. 251; A copy of John Rupp’s letter is on file at the ACHS.


109. Dr. Jonathan Letterman, Medical Director of the Army of the Potomac, reported to the Surgeon General that the local physicians at Gettysburg “were of little use” since they expected too many creature comforts and “did not operate well under drastic field conditions.” Quoted in Jeffrey B. Roth, “Civil War Medicine at Gettysburg,” *The Gettysburg Hospital Quarterly* (Spring 1985), p. 2.


112. The experiences of some of them at Gettysburg are related in Frank Moore, *Women of the War*, pp. 48–49, 123, 130–147, 159, 201, 289.


115. Cited in Miers and Brown, *Gettysburg*, p. 278. For a more complimentary picture of Miss Dix at Gettysburg see Ruth W. Davis, “Behind the Battle of Gettysburg,” *Pennsylvania Heritage* 13 (Fall 1987): 10–15. Ms. Davis also has Clara Barton at Gettysburg (p. 13). If true, the fact has escaped Clara Barton biographers.


117. *The Sentinel* of January 22, 1867 stated that “in one Springfield rifle twenty-three separate and distinct charges were found, while one smooth-bore musket contained twenty-two bullets and sixty buckshot rammed in promiscuously.” Quoted in *The Gettysburg Times*, February 10, 1970.


120. William A. Rupp’s diary entry for July 10, 1863. The original Rupp diary is deposited in the Archives Room of the Gettysburg College Library.


123. F. J. H. Schantz, “Recollections of Visitations at Gettysburg After the Great Battle in July 1863,” reprinted in Ralph S. Shay, ed., *Recollections*, p. 291. Schantz had collected “a bible without a cover, a broken lock of a musket, and a bayonet that was greatly bent by hard use.” Possibly, they were thought to be devoid of any further military value.


127. Tillie Pierce’s father took up his rifle and assisted in rounding up stragglers. See Tillie (Pierce) Alleman, *At Gettysburg*, p. 28.


134. Others, also, thought something important had happened at Gettysburg, important enough to be understood and remembered. The 2,000 copies of the first edition of Jacobs’ *Notes* “quickly disappeared like snowflakes,” reported his son, Henry Eyster Jacobs. The 1864 edition of 10,000 copies, Henry declared, was exhausted within a year or two. See Henry Eyster Jacobs, *Memoirs*, p. 62.

135. Michael Jacobs, *Notes*, p. 47. In his *The Battle of Gettysburg*, Frank A Haskell concluded (p. 153) that “for the next hundred years Gettysburg will be rich in legends and traditions of the battle.”
