

AN EXAMINATION OF STUART'S PROPOSED CAVALRY

CHARGE ON JULY 3, 1863—PART 2

John D. Wedo and Terrence L. Salada

Another thing to note about ECB is that its wide spaces would allow for cavalry to travel easily in columns of four across its entire length. However, the transition to a farm lane such as BR would consume time as the column narrowed from a column of fours (or larger) to a smaller width, such as a column of twos. Before continuing the next two legs of the proposed route, one additional segment appears first.

Low Dutch Road (2.2 miles long). The BR OF 1863 does not exist today because it is covered by the Lake Heritage Housing Development to the west of LDR: the topography today is not a reliable indicator of the topography in 1863. This segment is included to offer an idea of the type of topography typical of a farm road in the Gettysburg area, which is conveniently only one-half mile from the BR. In addition, because the authors could not enter the development, this road was the only way to travel from the Hanover Road to the Baltimore Pike.

The first section of LDR south from the Hanover Road is even, going from an elevation of 534 feet to 536 feet in the first two-fifths mile. Then over the next two-fifths mile it descends 69 feet where it crosses White Run, eventually rising 48 feet to an elevation of 514 feet before it levels off at the Baltimore Pike at 531 feet. Although gradual, the decline to White Run, crossing the creek, and the incline to the Baltimore Pike would tend to consume time for a column of troopers. Given that timing was important—the cavalry attack was to be timed to Confederate success on Culp's Hill and Cemetery

Ridge—such obstacles would be detrimental. These elevations along the route can be seen on the modern topographic map in Figure 8.

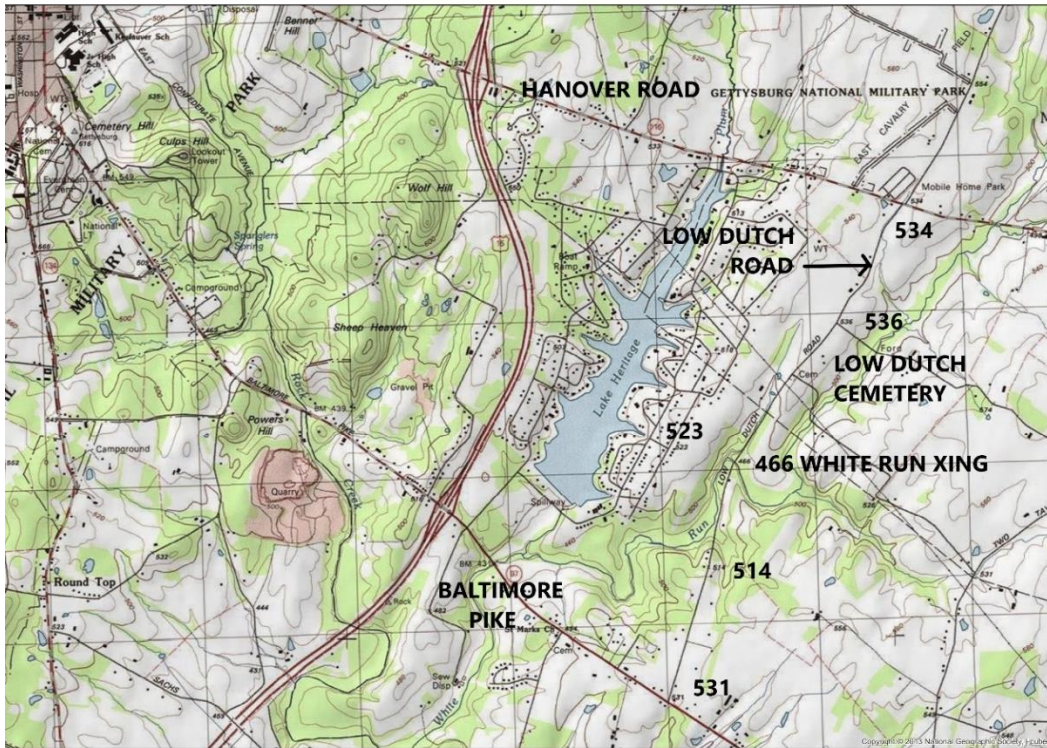


Figure 8. Elevations along LDR between Hanover Road and Baltimore Pike. Topographic map provided by Andrea Wedo using USA Topo Maps, Copyright: © 2014 National Geographic Society, i-cubed, ESRI ArcGIS Online Basemap.

One feature from the map is the high ground to the west of LDR. South of the Low Dutch Cemetery, notably near the White Run Crossing, the elevation rises steeply from 466 ft to 523 feet over a distance of a few hundred feet. This elevation is covered with brush and trees and can be seen in the background of this photo taken from the bridge over White Run looking west (Figure 9). This elevation is more prominent on the lower

half of this section of LDR, and can be seen clearly on Figures 10, 11, and 12, which are topographic maps with grades greater than or equal to (\geq) 10 percent, 15 percent, and 20 percent, respectively, highlighted in red. This feature will have more meaning in the discussion of BR.



Figure 9. View from Low Dutch Road looking west from White Run Bridge. Photo taken by Terrence Salada, March 2019.

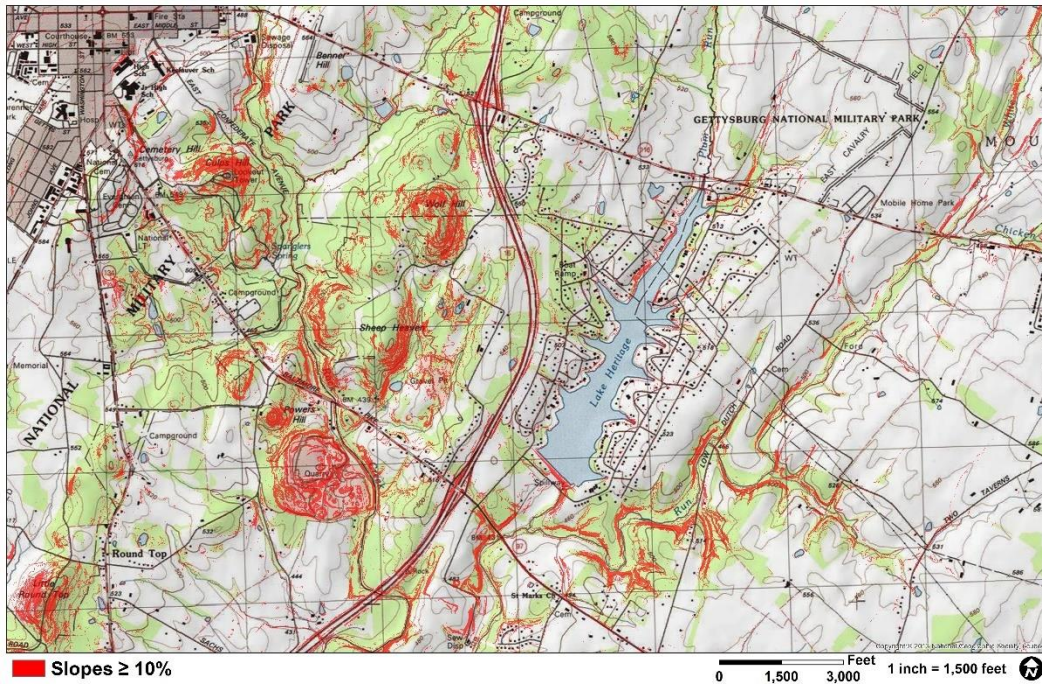


Figure 10. Topographic map of cavalry area showing grades ≥ 10 percent. Topographic map provided by Andrea Wedo using USA Topo Maps, Copyright: © 2014 National Geographic Society, i-cubed, ESRI ArcGIS Online Basemap.

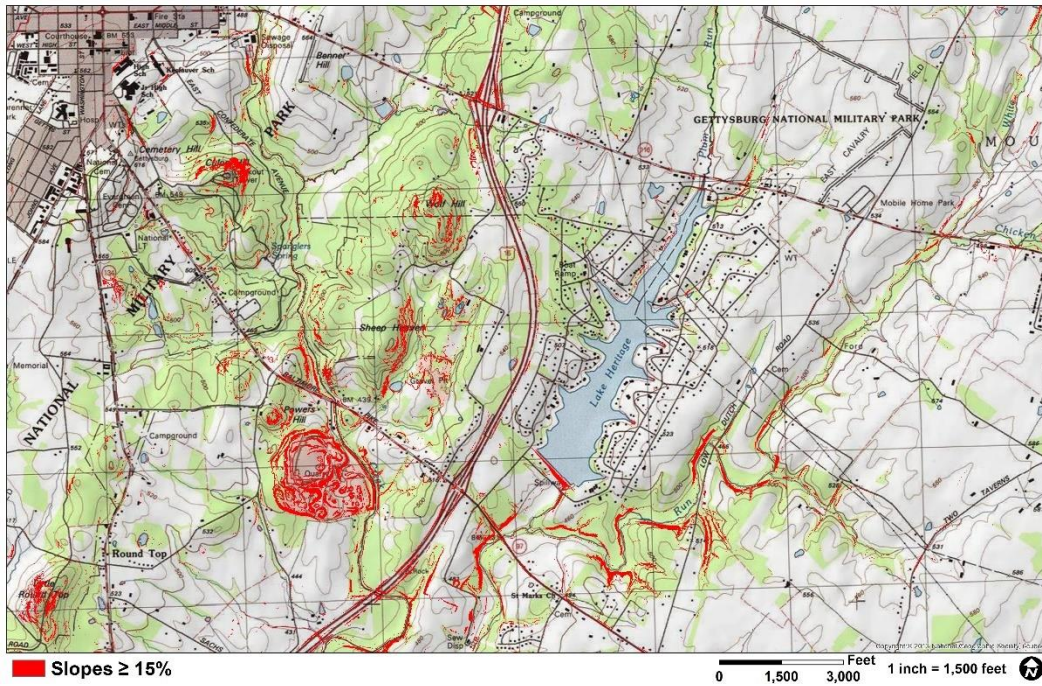


Figure 11. Topographic map of cavalry area showing grades \geq 15 percent. Topographic map provided by Andrea Wedo using USA Topo Maps, Copyright: © 2014 National Geographic Society, i-cubed, ESRI ArcGIS Online Basemap.

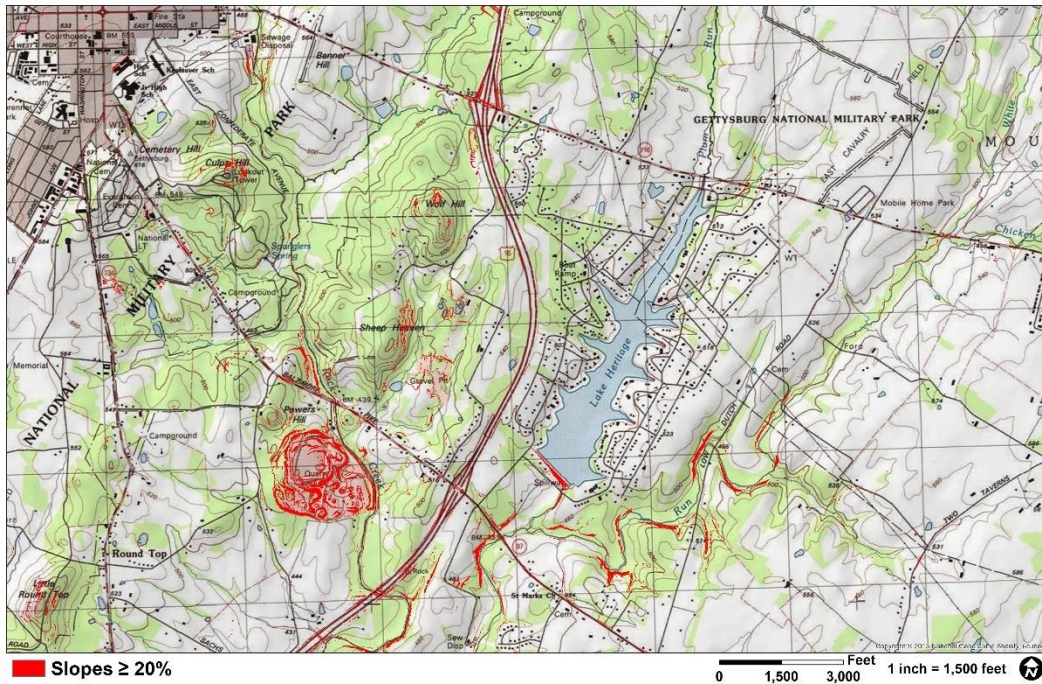


Figure 12. Topographic map of cavalry area showing grades \geq 20 percent. Topographic map provided by Andrea Wedo. Topographic map provided by Andrea Wedo using USA Topo Maps, Copyright: © 2014 National Geographic Society, i-cubed, ESRI ArcGIS Online Basemap.

On all three maps, Powers Hill sits prominently in the lower left. Other features that stand out are the prominent slopes to the west of the lower part of Low Dutch Road and the heights of Sheep's Haven and Wolf Hill to the east of Lake Heritage, which sits over the former location of BR.

Leg Number 2: "Bonaughton Road" (2.1 miles long). This is the second leg of the proposed cavalry route. A check of the three topographic maps above shows that the high ground west of LDR is east of BR. This means that, like LDR, once a cavalry column reaches about one mile down the road, it is committed to complete the ride to the BP: it

cannot maneuver before it reaches it. From Bachelder's maps of the East Cavalry Battlefield, the topography of this road becomes visible. This is shown in Figure 13.

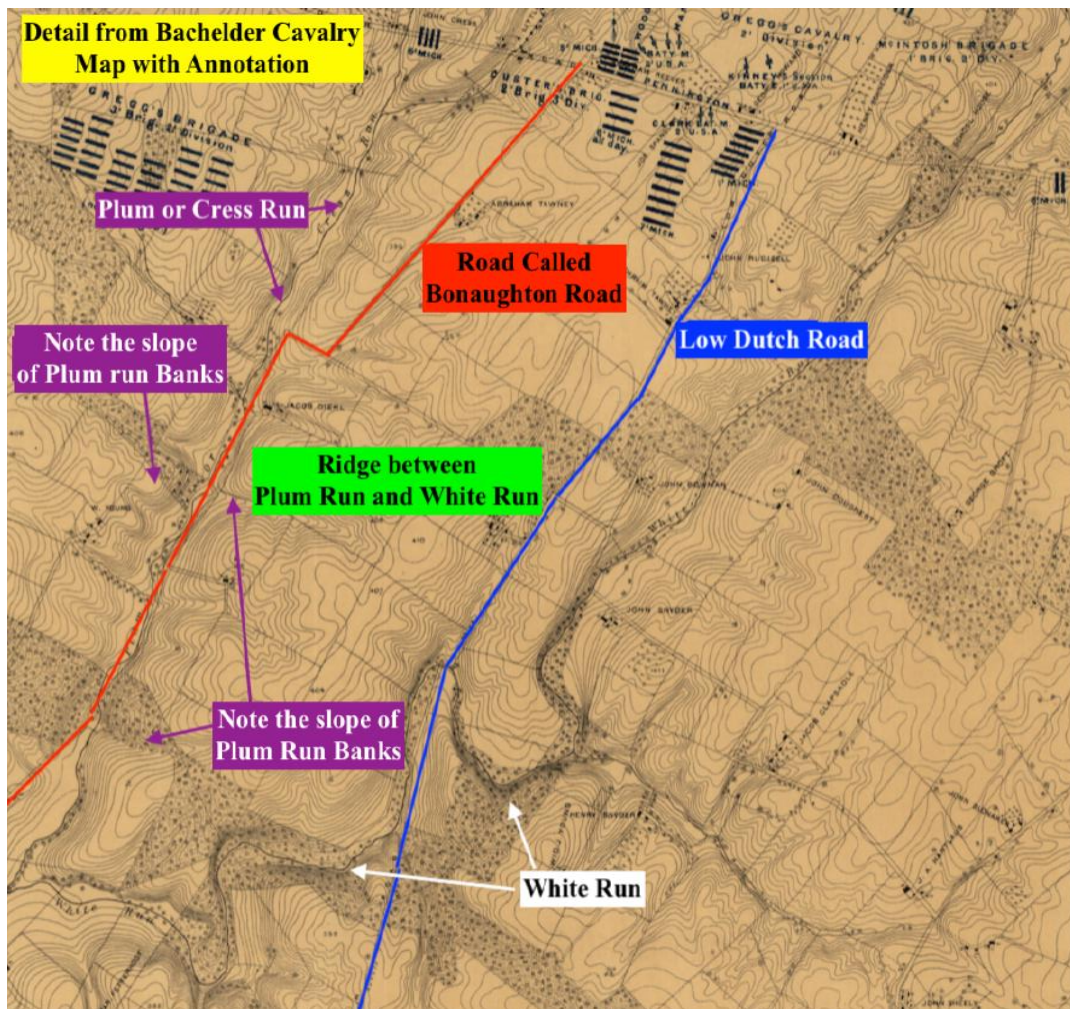


Figure 13. Bachelder map of East Cavalry Battlefield annotated for topography of “Bonaughton Road,” from Library of Congress web site, “Map of the field of operations of Gregg's (Union) & Stuart's (Confederate) cavalry at the battle of Gettysburg, July 3, 1863,” No. 11. 11 A.M. – 2 P.M., July 3 (third map out of four), accessed July 31, 2019, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3824g.cw0327000/?r=0.518,0.461,0.258,0.213,0> , search on ‘Bachelder map Gettysburg Library of Congress’, go to Images tab.

On this map, LDR is in blue on the right and BR is in red on the left. “Bonaughton Road” follows (or parallels) Cress/Plum Run closely, as indicated by the notations in purple. The main feature of this map is the slope on both sides of Cress/Plum Run, also noted in purple. The contour lines along both sides of this creek are steep on both sides, amounting to a small gorge. It should be noted that this is the same area under water today as part of the man-made Lake Heritage. Although the steep sides along the gorge might seem to offer some measure of protection for an infiltrating force, it is not sound tactically to move a large force into a gorge: the sides are steep enough to prevent any transverse movement in or out, an unsound tactical situation.

Military historians should know that this is similar to the ground on which the Battle of Oriskany was fought in the American Revolutionary War in August 1777 as part of the Saratoga campaign. And they should also know that the Colonial force under General Nicholas Herkimer was ambushed and beaten by an inferior force of Loyalists and Indians while moving through a ravine. As noted above, Wittenberg suggested that Stuart was too smart a commander to consider operating on that ground (especially with no recorded reconnaissance), and this leg of the route provides vindication of that statement. The aspect of reconnaissance is important because regardless of whatever maps Stuart possessed, this was not Virginia so nothing could be taken for granted.

Leg Number 3: Baltimore Pike (1.7 miles long). This is the last leg of the proposed cavalry route. It was a turnpike, an improved road allowing for all-weather travel and heavy transport.⁸⁶ And it probably had strong fences on either side of it. According to Carhart, this leg is to be an equine sprint to the attack, a “race” up to Culp’s Hill. Remember that as an improved road, its surface might damage horseshoes; also, macadam

roads absorb more heat than dirt roads, and this is not conducive to horses or their shoes. Unlike the previous legs of the ride, photos do exist of this leg. In addition, any cavalry column riding north could not deploy into tactical attack formations until it crossed Rock Creek (at a point near Powers Hill) because of the slope of the banks on either side. This is shown in Figure 14, taken from the BP bridge, which shows the south bank of Rock Creek.



Figure 14. South bank of Rock Creek, taken from bridge on Baltimore Pike over Rock Creek. Photo by Terrence Salada, March 2019.

The photo shown in Figure 15 was taken circa 1878. It shows the BP looking south with the house and barn of Nathaniel Lightener in the foreground and Powers Hill behind the house. Lightener owned the property in 1863 and when the photo was taken. Two things to note in the photo:

- 1) The relatively smooth surface of the pike (the light strip between the fences coursing from the lower right of the photo), indicating that it is an improved road.

2. The fences. Those to the left of the road appear to be worm fences and those to the right, post-and-rail. The number of fences in the photo, indicated by the annotations, attests to the proliferation of fences in the area where the charge was to have occurred.

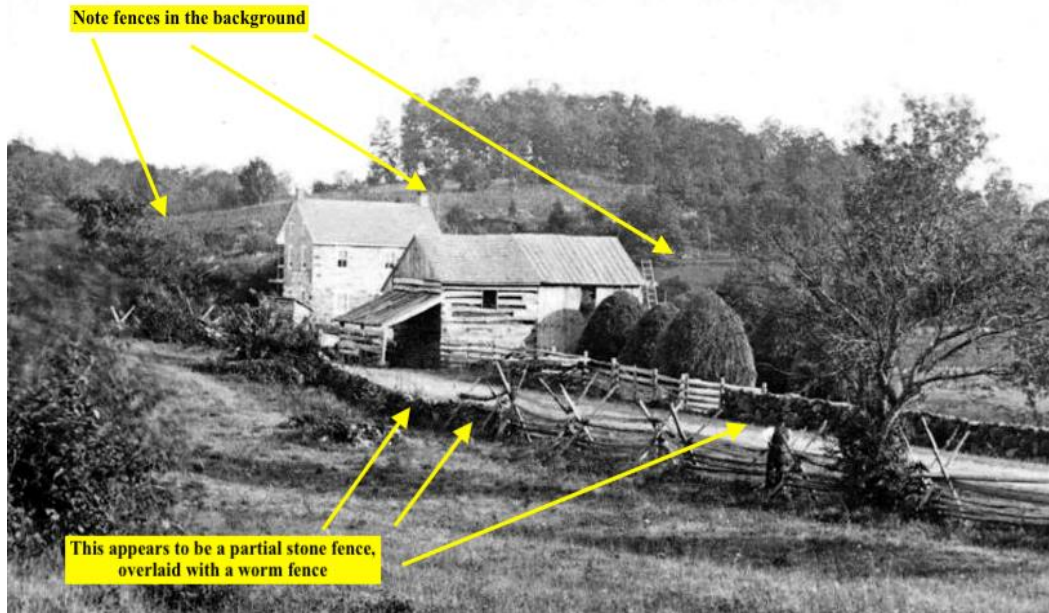


Figure 15. Photo made circa 1878 showing the Baltimore Pike looking south with the house and barn of Nathaniel Lightener in the foreground and Powers Hill behind the house. Photo annotated for this paper, accessed February 26, 2019, “Powers Hill Tree Removal Part 3,” *Gettysburg Daily*, November 29, 2011, <https://www.gettysburgdaily.com/powers-hill-tree-removal-part-3/>, image from Gettysburg National Military Park, search on ‘Gettysburg Daily Powers Hill tree removal’, go to Images tab.

REFERENCES

Much of the historical information in this paper is of a general nature and can be found in most works on the subject; therefore, no footnotes are provided for these data. However, they do appear for quotes and for the more obscure items herein. Note: For this split document, some of the endnotes in this part have their full citation in Part 1.

⁸⁶ Coddington, Edwin B., *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1968, p. 265.