

SAVING LITTLE ROUND TOP WITH THE 20TH MAINE

By First Sergeant NATHAN S.
CLARK
Co. H 20th Maine Volunteers
Levant, Pennabsco County, Maine

[Ed. note: This excerpt is from the diary of Sgt. Nathan Clark. In this passage, Clark describes the crucial action on Little Round Top that would make the 20th Maine legendary. The original diary is in the State Archives in Maine.]

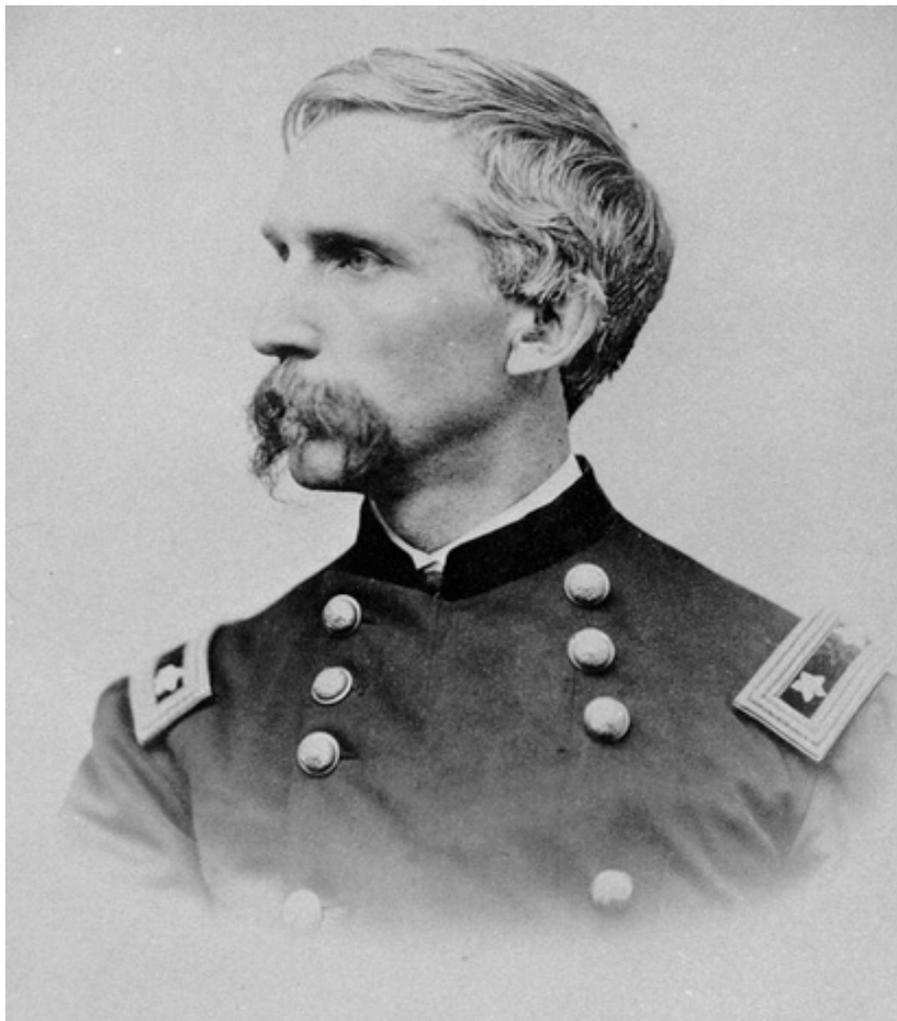
July 2 - We got up early and had inspection of arms and marched about two miles and halted in an orchard. Some firing all day. I saw John Wescot and Henry Kallach while laying there. About 4 o'clock the battle was raging fearfully when all at once the command rang out "Fall in 20th. By the right flank, forward march." We marched like horses until we reached the left of our line of battle.

"On the right by file into line" rang out from Col. Chamberlain, and the line officers, as we swung into line facing to the front and over Little round top. Orders were given to Lieut. Morrell commanding Co. B to advance and deploy as skirmishers. No sooner said than done and out went Co. B to the front and left to protect our flank and was soon out of sight in the woods. We had not been in position more than fifteen minutes when the skirmishers on our right front was forced back into the ranks and the enemy advanced close after them. When the enemy line hove in sight they were at short range and we opened fire on them and they realized with great fury. There was a dreadful roar for a time when the rebs came round on our left so that the left of our Regt. had to form a few rods to the rear to prevent a cross fire from the enemy. There we held them with heavy loss and such odds against us as that we seen it would not do to hold them much longer.

Col Chamberlain gave the order, "fix bayonets, charge bayonets. Charge." Off we went with a wild yell that surprised the enemy. They at that time being not over four rods from us. They had



James C. Rundlett was the first Sergeant of Co. G of the 20th Maine. After Gettysburg, Sgt. Clark would hold the same rank in Co. H.



*Colonel Joshua L. Chamberlain of the 20th Maine.
Chamberlain, a college professor before the war, would win
the Medal of Honor for his leadership on July 2, 1863.*

but little time to choose between surrender and cold steel, so most of their front line dropped their rifles and stepped to our rear for safety. I took two prisoners from behind a rock where I had been selecting my targets for some time and others lay there lifeless. I passed them to the rear and made my way with the rest of our survivors after the retreating foe. We took two hundred prisoners in the charge.

The prisoners say they had a whole brigade massed on our Regt. They say that their brigade was Stonewall Jackson's brigade and never was repulsed before. Two of their Regt. was the 15th Alabama and the 4th Georgia and they fought like devils. After we cared for wounded and buried the dead we had orders to advance and hold a hill that was still in our front and on we went with but little opposition.

We secured the positions as ordered and threw out skirmishers down on the front of the hills but none too soon for

the rebs were just advancing to secure the same hill that we now had in our grasp. But it was so dark that they could not see us and did not mistrust us for some time. They would challenge us and ask what Regt. and we would answer by telling them one that we had taken as prisoners. And would get them so near that we would take them in. The rebs made a blind move and marched a whole company threw our lines and was prisoners before they knew it. We staid and held the position all night.

The casualties of Co. H. 20th Me. Vols. July 2, 1863. 1st Sergt. C.W. Steel shot dead in breast. Sergt. I.W. Lathrop shot in bowels, died 4th, Corporal J.H. Liby shot in right hand, private Aron Adams in breast died instantly, Israel Lamprun shot in bowels, died the 3rd. G. W. Buck shot in the shoulder died the 4th. B.F. French wounded in left leg, amputated below knee. B.T. Clifford wounded in the face lost an eye, H. Chesley in neck, B. Hilt in shoulder. M. Ham thumb shot off. J. West arm bruised. E. Morison side slight. G.F. Walker knee bruised.