



“Tell Mother Not to Worry”

Soldier Stories From Gettysburg’s  
George Spangler Farm

Ronald D. Kirkwood

SB

Savas Beatie  
California

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First edition, first printing

ISBN-13: 978-1-61121-706-3 (hardcover)

ISBN-13: 978-1-61121-707-0 (ebook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kirkwood, Ronald D., 1955- author.

Title: "Tell Mother Not to Worry": Soldier Stories From Gettysburg's  
George Spangler Farm / by Ronald D. Kirkwood.

Other titles: Soldier stories from Gettysburg's George Spangler farm

Description: El Dorado Hills, CA : Savas Beatie, 2024. | Includes  
bibliographical references and index. | Summary: "The George Spangler  
farm in Gettysburg is a place of reverence. This book profiles scores of  
additional soldiers and offers new information on events and experiences  
at the farm. While also completing the story of George and Elizabeth  
Spangler's historic farm, it provides a deeper and richer understanding  
of what these men and women endured--suffering that often lingered for  
the rest of their lives"-- Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2024000164 | ISBN 9781611217063 (hardcover) | ISBN  
9781611217070 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Gettysburg, Battle of, Gettysburg, Pa., 1863. | United  
States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Hospitals. | George Spangler Farm  
& Field Hospital (Gettysburg, Pa.) | Gettysburg, Battle of, Gettysburg,  
Pa., 1863--Personal narratives. | Soldiers--United States--Biography. |  
United States. Army of the Potomac. Corps, 11th. | United  
States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Medical care. | Military  
hospitals--Pennsylvania--Gettysburg Region--History--19th century. |  
Farms--Pennsylvania--Gettysburg Region--History--19th century. |  
Spangler family.

Classification: LCC E475.53 .K573 2024 | DDC 973.7/81--dc23/eng/20240228

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2024000164>



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Maps by Derek Wachter

For Barb.

“The amputation work under an open shed presented the most ghastly sights that could be witnessed.”

— *XI Corps hospital worker William R. Kiefer, 153rd Pennsylvania*



George and Elizabeth Spangler had this photo taken in 1862 or 1863 at the studio of portrait photographer John S. Speights on West Middle Street in Gettysburg. The photo was provided by their 2X great-grandson Maurice Spangler. Maurice is a native of Kansas and a great-grandson of George and Elizabeth's son Daniel, who had prints of the photo made in the 1890s by photographer A. M. Hartung in Enterprise, Kansas.



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Maps, photos, and illustrations have been interspersed throughout the manuscript for the convenience of the reader.



## Foreword

*The* George Spangler land is tucked into its own unique corner of the sprawling Gettysburg landscape. Most battlefield visitors have never heard of the farm, let alone seen it. And that's a shame, because it is not only one of the most fascinating places on the entire field, but a haunting one. To know its history is to know its pain.

The fact that it exists today for us to see and ponder is the result of the tireless work of many people and organizations who toiled for years to save the farm, its dilapidated buildings, and its history, including the late Gettysburg hospital expert Gregory Coco and historians Kathleen Georg Harrison and Wayne Motts. In 2008, the Gettysburg Foundation bought 80 acres of this precious land within the wide V formed by Granite Schoolhouse Lane and Blacksmith Shop Road. The National Park Service, Adams County Historical Society, Keystone Preservation Group Inc., and LSC Design Inc. stepped in to help by preserving and interpreting the Spangler experience.

Author Ronald Kirkwood stands on their shoulders. After years of volunteer work at the site followed by the lonely work of researching and writing, he offered forth *"Too Much for Human Endurance": The George Spangler Farm Hospitals and the Battle of Gettysburg* (Savas Beatie, 2019). Its release added color and texture to the entire Spangler landscape by introducing untold numbers of people to what happened there. Ron based his study on a stunning collection of primary source accounts. This archival jigsaw puzzle put together, piece by painstaking piece, the story of the XI Corps field hospital complex and the mélange of people who suffered in horrific agony there, comforted by those who did all they could to alleviate the anguish of the unfortunate.

The character cast is indelible. War found George and Elizabeth Spangler and their four children when a Union officer decided their land was needed for the Army of the Potomac's Artillery Reserve. Its 106 guns, supported by hundreds of wagons and more than 2,000 men and as many horses inundated the once-tranquil landscape. The family remained on the farm throughout the fighting and thereafter, an experience that remained with them for the rest of their lives.

Among the Union wounded was a 42-year-old private named George Nixon III, whose descendant would one day become president of the United States. George was mortally wounded on the evening of July 2 with two rounds in his right side. He died days later on the Spangler farm, leaving a widow and nine children behind.

The most famous of the Confederates treated at the XI Corps hospital was Brig. Gen. Lewis Armistead, who with his hat on his sword tip crossed the stone wall into the Angle during "Pickett's Charge" before being hit. His curious death, explored in fascinating detail in *"Too Much for Human Endurance,"* warrants a second look within these pages with additional information undiscovered when the first book went to press.

One of the leading roles was played by Dr. James A. Armstrong of the 75th Pennsylvania, who served as the hospital's surgeon-in-chief. The man and hour met on those bloody acres. Armstrong treated hundreds of maimed men, authorized the Christian Commission permission to scrounge the town for lumber to keep the Spangler patients out of the mud, detailed a Buckeye musician to bury the dead and record their names, and ultimately signed off on whether an injured soldier was sufficiently fit to return to duty.

Rebecca Price was an unworldly 25-year-old when she stepped out of her normal life and into that slice of Hell. She served as a nurse to hundreds of young men clinging to life, writing their letters, bathing their faces, and holding their hands as they died. She could still see their faces and hear their voices more than a quarter-century later when she confided to her children, "Why even now . . . it makes me heart-sick to think of it."

*"Too Much for Human Endurance"* is one of those rare publications that reaches into the past to resurrect a cast of characters long gone, and into the present with a fresh set of actors, most of whom had no idea they were part of the Spangler story. Ron's dive into the family's genealogy uncovered scores of descendants—so many with so much interest that they even held their own Descendants Day gathering on the old Spangler farm. It is rare events like these that make writing a book worthwhile. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Each page of Ron's first book drove home the devastation wrought by lead and iron, the agony suffered on those acres, and the lives forever changed and

lost there. To read his book is to see Gettysburg in an entirely different light. He thought he was finished with the Spangler saga—“One and done,” as he often explained. But the pull of history wasn’t finished with him yet.

*“Tell Mother Not to Worry”: Soldier Stories From Gettysburg’s George Spangler Farm* continues where *“Too Much for Human Endurance”* left off, while also doubling back on itself. Readers will delight in being introduced to soldiers and medical personnel whose stories were not shared in the first book. Other chapters circle around to flesh out added details (like those surrounding General Armistead) and add fresh stories and personalities that, so to speak, ended up on the cutting room floor during Round One.

If I shared much more, I would need to post a “spoiler alert.” Turn the pages and enjoy.

\* \* \*

I accepted Ron’s first book, collaborated with him on its edits, and published it to strong success all without ever having met him. In fact, several years passed before I was able to shake his hand, a wonderful event that transpired on the Spangler property within the shadow of the old stone house. It was there Ron told me, mostly in passing, that he was “thinking of a follow-up book.” I assured him that I was interested. Months passed without anything more, and I thought it was something he had put to the side.

I was wrong, and happily so.

Theodore P. Savas

Publisher

## Introduction



either planned nor considered a second book on the George Spangler farm. This was going to be one and done.

After “*Too Much for Human Endurance*” was published in May 2019 I spent two years writing magazine stories and giving talks on a variety of topics related to the farm: an overview presentation, Civil War-era medicine, the women who came to the rescue at Spangler, Granite Schoolhouse, and the military importance of the farm. Even during the height of the pandemic, I put on a mask and flew as far as Texas and Wisconsin and drove from Pennsylvania to Chicago, Fort Wayne, upstate New York, and Michigan for socially distanced talks. Counting pandemic-required Zoom presentations, interest in this special farm was such that Book 1 kept me busy throughout 14 states.

Then there were the Spangler descendants. I often wondered while writing “*Too Much for Human Endurance*” who was out there and what they knew. Did Spangler descendants know they were connected to this place? So I spent several months doing Spangler genealogy and found more than 100 of them, and it turns out about 95 percent of them had no idea they were descended from this historic farm, including those who grew up just down the road from it. But once they were informed, they became enormously proud. We held a Descendants Day gathering at the farm in 2022 with 65 direct descendants of George and Elizabeth Spangler in attendance, from nearby Adams County but also as far away as California, Vermont, Illinois, Kansas, and South Carolina. Today, they are fully invested, dedicated descendants.

Descendants ended up playing a key role in this sequel and the story of the farm, particularly descendants of George and Elizabeth’s son Daniel, who moved away to Kansas and built his life on the frontier. Daniel’s grandson, Norman

Spangler of Kansas, told me stories that were passed down to him through his father, George (Gettysburg George's grandson), some of which I use in the Spangler family chapter of this book. Daniel's great-grandson, Maurice Spangler of Kansas and now South Carolina, knew I was searching for a photo of George and Elizabeth and walked up to me at Descendants Day and handed me a photo of them and calmly asked if that's what I was looking for. I gasped and gave him a big, tight hug. We now all know exactly what George and Elizabeth looked like thanks to their 2X great-grandson Maurice. And once I tracked down where Daniel lived in a sod dugout in western Kansas before moving east to the town of Enterprise, Kansas, Maurice's brother, Calvin Spangler, drove across the state and met with the current landowner and took photos of the site. Calvin now travels from Kansas to Gettysburg and his family's farm once a year, bringing his son, Duncan, the 3X great-grandson of George and Elizabeth.

So I was plenty busy and grateful. And then Christopher Philip DiElsi of Ridgefield, CT, and author and historian Carolyn Ivanoff of Gettysburg and Seymour, CT, told me about Spangler hospital worker Pvt. James R. Middlebrook of the 17th Connecticut, whose story I didn't have in Book 1. That prompted two days of research at the Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford, and now an entire chapter in this book focuses on Middlebrook.

And then George Spangler Farm & Field Hospital guide and researcher extraordinaire Jim Fielden of Cleveland gently nudged me by sending medical records and pensions of some of the XI Corps hospital patients that he found interesting, prompting 17 days of research at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C., to go through pension files, Volunteer Carded Medical Records, Compiled Military Service Records, registers with wounded lists, and surgeon folders.

I was fully invested in the need for a Spangler sequel at this point with the encouragement and patient nudging of Christopher, Carolyn, and Jim. Mixed in with the 17 days in D.C. were seven days of research at the U.S. Army Heritage & Education Center in Carlisle, PA, five days at the Gettysburg National Military Park archives, three days each at the beautiful new Adams County Historical Society building, the New York Public Library, and the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick, MD, plus single days at Notre Dame Hesburgh Libraries in South Bend, Landis Valley Village & Farm Museum in Lancaster County, PA, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, New York State Library Archives in Albany, Easton (PA) Public Library, and the Gettysburg Foundation's Finrock Cottage library. Electronic research took me virtually to Kansas for the Spangler chapter, Missouri for the chapter on Confederate Brig. Gen. Lewis Armistead, and all over the country on the ever-handly Internet.

In addition, publisher Ted Savas used to jokingly/not jokingly threaten to break my first book into two if I kept sending him material, so I had good stuff left over that either got cut or abbreviated in *“Too Much for Human Endurance”* because of space concerns. For example, the stories of eight men from the 154th New York in one tent at Spangler—five of whom died—got squished into two paragraphs in Book 1. In Book 2, this tent of suffering has three chapters devoted to it. Now I can tell their dramatic stories in detail. This book gives me room to run. Now I can focus on the stories of the ordinary soldiers at Spangler.

For me, one of the most important parts of this book is not only the stories of the wounded and dying men at Spangler but also the suffering of mothers, wives, and children left behind. Just about everything that happened at Spangler impacted a loved one back home. Many stories of loved ones are told here along with the soldiers' stories after they left Spangler. An amputation might have saved a soldier's life, but it didn't end his suffering. That lasted until he died. Many of these men weren't well when they arrived in Gettysburg anyway, with often-deadly chronic diarrhea inflicted by the Army lifestyle and poor diet being the main complaint. Reading their pension files at the Archives in their own words opens your eyes to suffering that often lasted decades. Reading the pension applications of someone left destitute by the death of their son or husband at Spangler, one can only feel compassion and sympathy as they beg for and sometimes demand financial assistance from the government to ease their pain. These soldiers and their family members lived through a kind of suffering and debilitation that most of us today can never imagine or understand, and hopefully this book adequately describes their burden.

This book also continues to describe sad and gory scenes and smells at the XI Corps and 1st Division, II Corps hospitals on Spangler land. One soldier who had an arm amputated before arriving at Spangler describes what it felt like to wake up during that amputation when the chloroform wore off. New information is added to familiar faces such as Armistead, Capt. Fred Stowe, Henry Van Aernam, Marilla Hovey, and the men of the Artillery Reserve. Dozens of new stories retell both the suffering and the courage of surgeons, chaplains, ambulance drivers, the wounded, the dying, and the Spanglers themselves. Two chapters reveal the seemingly always-ignored Granite Schoolhouse hospital and a chapter is devoted to events on the Spanglers' Powers Hill, another location that usually receives little attention. More wounded and dead have been added to the XI Corps hospital's count and there's a partial wounded list for the First Division of the II Corps in this book. I'm particularly pleased that the last chapter of the book is devoted to George and Elizabeth's descendants, whom I happily now claim as friends. Deliberately,

little was repeated from the first book in this one, other than to extend or continue the original story.

This book is aided greatly by the contributions of experts from across the country. If there was a medical condition that I didn't understand or if I felt the reader would benefit from a more detailed look at something, such as the hay trolley in the Spanglers' barn, then I asked for professional help, and in every single case I received that help in a timely, friendly, and encouraging manner.

Little did I know after writing "*Too Much for Human Endurance*" that there was still so much more to tell about what happened at George Spangler's farm. Little did I know that I still had so much more to learn. Research for this book has taught me that. I do know, though, that we'll never get the full story of this farm. We'll never know it all. But this book gets us closer to that elusive full picture. And by telling the stories of this place and its soldiers and their family members during and after the battle, we also are telling the stories of what happened at other hospitals throughout the Civil War.

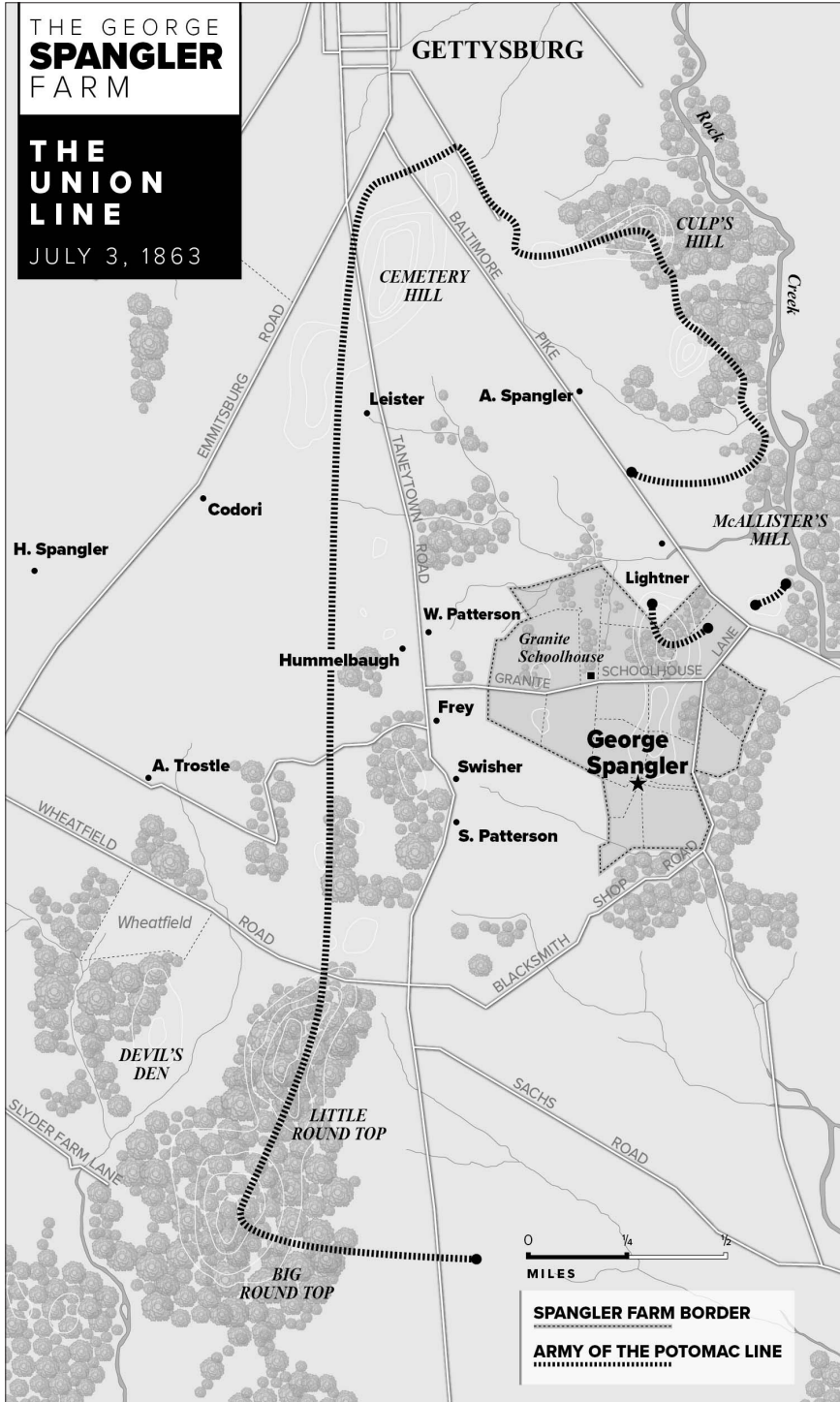
My Spangler infatuation started in 2013 in my early days as a Gettysburg Foundation volunteer when Volunteer Coordinator Ray Matlock told me that the Foundation was opening the George Spangler farm to the public and he asked if I would be interested in being a guide out there. I said sure, but what's the George Spangler farm? I was hooked quickly once I got out there, and that beginning with Ray—as inauspicious as it was—led me to begin research on the farm in 2016 with the full intent of writing a book. Since then, George and Elizabeth and their farm have become my full-time job in retirement. If I'm not researching it I'm writing about it or I'm telling stories about it or leading tours there. It's a part of me now, a labor of love, and for that I couldn't be more grateful. It's been a wonderful adventure and a high privilege. And really, I have Ray Matlock to thank for that.

Barring a dramatic discovery of some kind, this book ends my eight years of George Spangler farm research and book work. But I'm glad now that I decided to do a second book and that the story is being continued. And I'm grateful to Christopher, Carolyn, and Jim for planting the seeds. I'm glad now that it didn't turn out to be one and done after all.

THE GEORGE  
**SPANGLER**  
FARM

**THE  
UNION  
LINE**

JULY 3, 1863






## Chapter 1

# Was Armistead Treated Unkindly at Spangler?

“[Armistead] often begged that he might be moved from the door but was not.”

— *First Lieutenant Thomas C. Holland, 28th Virginia, on Confederate Brig. Gen. Lewis Armistead's placement in George and Elizabeth Spangler's summer kitchen*

 step into the Spanglers' summer kitchen is a step back in time. The white plaster walls with the black soot are original and attest to the smokiness of 19th-century cooking. The fireplace stone is original as installed by George and Elizabeth Spangler, as is the severely charred wood immediately outside the fireplace, which becomes less charred the farther you step away from the intensity of another era's fires. More than 90 percent of the sturdy, well-made window panes in the summer kitchen have stood the test of time, and the wood ceiling is original. Only the floor is new because it was collapsing, but the Gettysburg Foundation used a similar color to the original when rehabbing the building.

Those sooted walls, that fireplace, that charred wood, that ceiling, and those marked window panes have all borne witness to the XI Corps hospital that occupied this property from July 1 to August 6, 1863. They were there when Confederate Brig. Gen. Lewis Armistead and Army of the Potomac Capt. Frederick Stowe occupied that little room. Today, thanks to the Gettysburg Foundation's rehabilitation of the farm and these features' survival through many generations and many farm owners since the Spanglers, we can see what Armistead and Stowe saw as they lay in there. It seems it really is possible to go back in time in this summer kitchen.

And now, thanks to new research relating to Armistead, we can even see his approximate view in the building because we now know that his place of death on July 5, 1863, was on the floor directly in front of the door inside the summer kitchen.



Confederate Brig. Gen. Lewis A. Armistead

*Gettysburg National Military Park*

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The house served as the VIP wing for the XI Corps hospital and there wasn't much room. Only Union officers with the rank of colonel or above were treated in the small two-bedroom, two-story house, and the Spangler family of six occupied one of those bedrooms. That left the little summer kitchen for those considered the next most important wounded, which would be Armistead and Stowe, the son of well-known abolitionist author Harriet Beecher Stowe of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* fame. Armistead was placed in the summer kitchen because of the hospital staff's respect for him and his rank, even though

he fought for the enemy. Combined with Stowe, that 12-foot by 17-foot space hosted two of the best-known names in the hospital.

Stowe arrived before Armistead on July 3 and likely was placed along the north wall inside the summer kitchen beneath the two windows and in front of the Spanglers' large fireplace. Anything of the Spanglers' worth eating or using would have by then been removed from the kitchen by the food- and supply-starved hospital staff and replaced by hospital goods. Protected storage space was hard to come by. That meant there would not have been much space for Armistead, which is why he was placed literally in front of the door on the kitchen's south side opposite Stowe.

Estimates on what time Armistead arrived at Spangler vary. Dr. Daniel G. Brinton said 4 p.m. and Dr. Henry Van Aernam said dusk (about 8 p.m. in 1863 in the era before daylight saving time). Both surgeons said they were among Armistead's two or three primary caregivers. First Lieutenant Thomas C. Holland of the 28th Virginia, Brig. Gen. Richard B. Garnett's brigade, was one of the few Confederates still standing and fighting who followed Armistead across the stone wall at the end of Pickett's Charge on the afternoon of July 3. Like Armistead, the 23-year-old Holland was struck down, taking a Minie ball that entered his left cheek and exited through the back of his neck. Also like Armistead, he was taken to Spangler. "I was a little to his [Armistead's] left and had passed only a few



The Spanglers' summer kitchen today. *Ron Kirkwood*

paces when I fell, unconscious as to what was going on,” he recalled later. “During that afternoon General Armistead and myself, and quite a number of officers were removed to the temporary hospital over beyond Cemetery Heights.” Holland said his ambulance was directed to Spangler by an ambulance officer or surgeon.<sup>1</sup>

The solid wood summer kitchen door probably was taken down soon after the Spanglers’ farm was seized for the hospital on July 1 because it was the perfect size and weight for an operating table. If not an operating table, there were plenty of other uses for that door in that hospital, even if only for firewood. Armistead’s head and upper body lay close to or in front of where the wood door once stood, meaning he possibly had a view of the Spanglers’ front yard and access to fresh air. But this also meant every single hospital staffer entering the little room had to step over him. Holland paid particular attention to the eminent Confederate officer.

“I have omitted one cruel act done by the Enemy and it’s almost too sad to dwell on at all,” Holland wrote in his journal after the war. “Brig. Gen. Armistead was badly wounded in arm & leg about the same time I was and taken to the 11th

1 Interview of Van Aernam, Aug. 4, 1890, Edwin Dwight Northrup Papers, Box 35, Carl A. Kroch Library, Cornell University; David L. Ladd and Audrey J. Ladd, *The Bachelor Papers: Gettysburg in Their Own Words, Jan. 5, 1863 to July 27, 1880*, Vol. 1 (Dayton, OH, 1994), 358. Brinton told Bingham, “I am obliged to depend on my memory, as I kept no notes of the wounded I treated”; Holland, “With Armistead at Gettysburg,” *Confederate Veteran Magazine* 29 (February 1921): 62.

Corps Hospital where he laid across a door that every person had to step over. Being exposed in this way & an excitable man besides he was so distressed & so uneasy that he finally died. He often begged that he might be moved from the door but was not.”<sup>2</sup>

Holland remembered Armistead telling XI Corps doctors and staff to “please don’t step so close to me” as he lay on a cot in the shade of Spangler trees after his arrival, but it seems logical with this new information about Armistead’s placement and discomfort by the summer kitchen door that he could have said it there.<sup>3</sup>

Holland said he witnessed Armistead’s burial at Spangler and provided his rank for the inscription on the piece of wood used to mark his grave. He said Armistead’s remains were placed “in a rough box” and buried. A Philadelphia embalmer had Armistead’s body exhumed within a month of his burial, embalmed him, had him reburied, and notified Armistead’s relatives in Baltimore that they could have his body for \$125, or about \$3,000 today. Included for the \$125 was a “common outside case” with “a zinc coffin sealed” inside. The zinc blocked air flow and greatly reduced the speed of decomposition. Armistead’s relatives paid up and had his body exhumed again and shipped to Baltimore in October 1863, where he now rests downtown in Old St. Paul’s Cemetery on busy Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, only five or six blocks from modern-day Oriole Park at Camden Yards.<sup>4</sup>

Holland’s criticism of the treatment of someone at Spangler who would evolve after death into a beloved Confederate symbol is understandable but perhaps not entirely fair. Armistead was given special treatment befitting his rank with placement in the summer kitchen and was cared for by multiple XI Corps surgeons. While most wounded at the farm on July 3 suffered in the filthy and cramped barn or in open fields without tents when the thunderstorms hit, Armistead remained dry, closely monitored, and enjoyed the respect of his attending doctors and nurses.

What absolutely cannot be disputed is the importance of Holland’s observations of Armistead’s placement and treatment at Spangler and their discovery in 2022 in relation to Spangler nearly 160 years after the battle. For that, we owe much gratitude to Thomas C. Holland. His story prior to his arrival at Spangler, at Spangler, and for years afterward is also worthy of note, and part of it was even honored for decades with a marker on the Gettysburg battlefield.

2 Journal of Thomas C. Holland, provided by the Kingdom of Callaway Historical Society in Fulton, MO. Journal provided by the Gary Altheiser family.

3 Holland, “With Armistead at Gettysburg,” *Confederate Veteran* 29, 62.

4 Journal of Thomas C. Holland; [www.in2013dollars.com/1860-dollars-in-2017?amount=125](http://www.in2013dollars.com/1860-dollars-in-2017?amount=125), accessed March 7, 2023; Gettysburg Field Hospital Research #5, Surgeons, US and CS, Surgeons, Civilian, Box B72-2, Folder B-72-2-250 Dr. J. W. C. O’Neal, Gregory A. Coco Collection, Gettysburg National Military Park Archives (hereafter “GNMP”).

Confederate 1st Lt. Thomas C. Holland  
*"The Hollands and Their Kin: History and Heritage,"*  
 by Isham C. Holland, and Kingdom of Callaway  
 Historical Society (Fulton, MO)

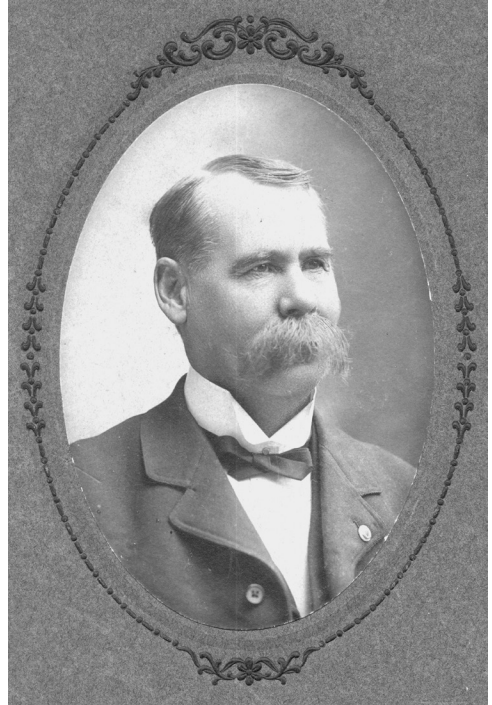
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Holland was shot through both thighs at Gaines Mill on June 27, 1862, and left on the field presumed dead for a day. He was eventually picked up and recuperated for four months before returning to his unit in time for the fight at Gettysburg.<sup>5</sup>

Of Gettysburg and Pickett's Charge, he remembered, "I advanced about 10 paces farther" than Armistead after crossing the stone wall on July 3 until being knocked out by a Minie ball that entered his left cheek, broke his jaw, and exited the right side of the back of his neck. He was taken to the Army of the Potomac XI Corps hospital, where he was treated during his entire stay at Spangler by 54th New York surgeon Charles W. Hagen. Holland said, "I was treated kindly by him as long as I remained at Gettysburg."<sup>6</sup>

Holland called his wound "a very bad one and in a very dangerous place [face & neck]" but in typical minimizing fashion it was called a "flesh wound" with treatment by "water dressing," as noted in the XI Corps hospital register.<sup>7</sup>

Holland was transferred from Spangler to Baltimore on July 12 and was also treated and held in Philadelphia, Davids Island in Long Island Sound outside of New York City, and Johnson's Island in Lake Erie near Sandusky, Ohio, before being exchanged in March 1865. A part of his jawbone was cut out and buried at Davids Island. After the war he moved from Lynchburg, Virginia, to Callaway County, Missouri, where he went to college, taught school, ran a successful business, and raised a family.<sup>8</sup>



5 From a family history written by the Rev. I. C. Holland, the grandson of T. C. Holland, provided by the Kingdom of Callaway Historical Society in Missouri (hereafter "Holland family history").

6 Holland journal.

7 Ibid.

8 Holland family history.

Holland returned to Gettysburg for the 50-year anniversary of the battle in 1913 and the National Park Service featured him on the now-removed “Lee’s Shattered Army” marker near the Virginia monument. He reflected on a moving anecdote that happened at the anniversary: “While at the peace meeting in Gettysburg in 1913, standing where General Armistead fell, a man and his wife approached the spot where I fell just fifty years before, this being to the left of where Armistead fell and some ten steps in advance, where I stuck a stick in the ground to indicate the place.

“The man proved to be a member of Cushing’s Battery of Philadelphia, if I am not mistaken. He said to his wife, ‘Here is where I killed the only Rebel I know of during the war. I may have killed others, but this is the only one I know I killed.’ She said: ‘It is too bad that you killed him.’

“At this I knew I was the one referred to, and I thought I would relieve his mind. So I said to him: ‘I am the man you killed, but I am a pretty lively corpse.’ He stepped back, and I saw he was shocked, so I said: ‘Here is where the ball entered my left cheek, and here is where it came out at the back of my head.’

“He then grasped my hand and inquired my name and gave me his. He introduced me to his wife, and they very insistently invited me to go over to the hotel where they were stopping and take dinner with them. But, owing to pressing business at the time, I could not go. I had been made adjutant general of Pickett’s Division for the bogus charge and was pressed for time. However, this man and I began a correspondence and kept it up.”<sup>9</sup>

Holland died at age 84 in Missouri in 1925, 62 years after crossing that wall and keeping a protective eye on the Confederate general as he lay in front of that door in the summer kitchen.

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### One Final Note

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First Lieutenant Thomas C. Holland of the 28th Virginia was grateful for the care he received at Spangler from 34-year-old, German-born surgeon Charles W. Hagen of the 54th New York. Holland remembered, “I was treated kindly by him as long as I remained at Gettysburg.” What Holland might not have known at the time, though, is Hagen became sick himself at Spangler.<sup>10</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Hans Boebel of the 26th Wisconsin was shot twice in the right leg on July 1 and, in his words, spent “four days among the idiots in

9 Holland, “With Armistead at Gettysburg,” *Confederate Veteran* 29, 62.

10 Holland journal.

the County Poor House near Gettysburg.” His wounds went untreated, and an ambulance picked him up and took him to Spangler on July 4, where Dr. Hagen amputated his leg that same day. Hagen, however, sliced his right index finger while examining Boebel’s wounds and soon after developed blood poisoning, a common and deadly illness in Civil War hospitals. Blood poisoning is caused by bacteria entering the bloodstream, resulting in shivering, fever, fast heartbeat, rapid breathing, heart palpitations, low energy, confusion, and extreme pain. It can develop into sepsis, a life-threatening infection in the major organs.<sup>11</sup>

It’s not known how long Hagen stayed at Spangler, but he was declared unfit for duty in August. He remained in the army until October 1864, but the illness still troubled him. He didn’t practice from 1864 to 1872 because of it and received a pension due to “blood poisoning and its effects.” He said in 1880, “I was [and am still in some degree] suffering from blood poisoning resulting from the examination of a gunshot wound through the knee joint of Hans Boebel.” In 1888, a fellow surgeon testified that Hagen “was forced in consequence of ill health to give up his practice sometime ago and has been unable to leave the house for over three months.” An examination in 1890 found him to be emaciated with sallow and clammy skin. The five-foot-ten-inch Hagen saw his weight drop from 185 pounds in 1881 to 140 in 1892.<sup>12</sup>

Hagen lived to age 80 despite suffering from ill health for most of his adult life after that finger slice at Spangler in 1863. He died of a stroke in 1909 in Newark, New Jersey. Like Hagen, Boebel was born in Germany. After Hagen saved his life with the amputation and post-surgical treatment in the Spanglers’ house, Boebel went on to become a civic leader in Milwaukee and lived to age 73.<sup>13</sup>

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### Spangler Farm Short Story

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By Richard D. Schroeder, M.D., LBG #166  
and Francis P. Feyock, CRNA, LBG #104

The sudden death at Spangler of Confederate Brig. Gen. Lewis Armistead two days after what seemed to be survivable wounds requires consideration that a pulmonary embolism caused his death. An embolism is a blood clot that forms

11 F. J. F. Schantz, “Recollections of Visitations at Gettysburg After the Great Battle in July, 1863,” in Ralph S. Shay, ed., *Reflections on the Battle of Gettysburg*, Vol. 13, no. 6 (Lebanon County, PA, 1963). “Recollections” is an address written by Schantz in 1890. The manuscript was provided by Agnes S. Haak and Mildred C. Haak, granddaughters of the Rev. Schantz; Charles W. Hagen Invalid Pension Claim 182065, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. (hereafter “NARA”); [www.familydoctor.org/condition/blood-poisoning/](http://www.familydoctor.org/condition/blood-poisoning/), accessed Jan. 21, 2023.

12 Hagen invalid pension claim, NARA.

13 Ibid; Ancestry.com.

elsewhere in the body, often in the veins in the legs, and then travels to other locations. An embolism lodges in a blood vessel and leads to the blockage of the blood vessel. A pulmonary embolism (PE) occurs when a blood clot that originated somewhere else in the body travels into the lungs and blocks the circulation through the lungs.

Blood clots form due to three reasons:

1) Slow blood flow. An example of this is when someone sits or lies down for a long period of time and doesn't move their legs to help with blood flow, as undoubtedly happened with Armistead.

2) Abnormalities in how blood normally clots can also result in abnormal formation of clots. Some diseases change the number of clotting cells.

3) Finally, an injury to the blood vessel wall could result in blood clot formation. Normal clotting of blood is an essential bodily function that prevents persistent bleeding. However, blood clots can form in abnormal circumstances and cause health problems.

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is a blood clot that forms in the deep veins of the body, usually in the legs, and is a common source of pulmonary embolism. One of the most common causes of DVT is inactivity and a lack of mobility. This occurs often after injury or surgery. Inactivity can cause blood to stagnate and pool within the body, especially the legs. As a clot develops, it can increase in size, break free in the leg veins, and travel to the lungs. As the clot, now a pulmonary embolism, increases in size, blood flow is obstructed to the lungs.

Decreased delivery of oxygen can cause many symptoms, including restlessness, confusion, and sudden unexpected death. Surgeon Henry Van Aernam of the 154th New York described Armistead as "wild nervous flighty" at Spangler and Confederate 1st Lt. Thomas C. Holland of the 28th Virginia said Armistead was "distressed" and "so uneasy" in the summer kitchen. Those descriptions could indicate Armistead suffered a lack of oxygen delivery.<sup>14</sup>

Armistead's wounds should not have been fatal. He was largely immobile while in the summer kitchen at the Spangler farm, which increased his risk of developing a pulmonary embolism. His surgeons were surprised by Armistead's sudden death. This death, given the injuries to his arm and leg and his lack of mobility, could be explained by a pulmonary embolism.

The normal function of the human body relies on the delivery of oxygen to the cells and the removal of carbon dioxide. This delivery and removal system is accomplished by the heart and lungs. The rhythmic patterns of breathing accompanied by the constant flow of blood produced by the heart accomplish this task with amazing efficiency over long periods of time.

<sup>14</sup> Edwin Dwight Northrup interview of Henry Van Aernam, Aug. 4, 1890, in Edwin Dwight Northrup Papers, #4190, Box 35, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Carl A. Kroch Library, Cornell University; Holland journal.





Armistead was placed at the door of the summer kitchen. *Ron Kirkwood*

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However, this system has limited reserve for oxygen delivery and carbon dioxide removal. Human brain cells are susceptible to a loss of oxygen and begin to die within 4 minutes of the disruption of the supply. A pulmonary embolism can produce a sudden and catastrophic disruption in oxygen delivery to the human body.

DVT and PE remain significant concerns in modern medicine after injury or surgery, so aspirin and other blood thinners as well as devices such as compression stockings are prescribed to try to prevent their development. However, a small percentage of patients still develop PE and a very small number of people die from this complication. Given the state of medical knowledge in 1863, there is good reason to consider that Armistead died of a pulmonary embolism on the George Spangler farm.<sup>15</sup>

15 [www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/pulmonary-embolism](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/pulmonary-embolism), accessed December 2022.

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## Chapter 2

# First Order of Business: The Shell Fragment in Fred Stowe's Head

"You may imagine the anxiety with which we waited for news from you after the battle."

— Harriet Beecher Stowe in a letter sent to her son at Gettysburg<sup>1</sup>

*Doctor*

Daniel G. Brinton could see the Confederate shell fragment encased in blood in Fred Stowe's head when the 23-year-old son of world-famous author Harriet Beecher Stowe arrived at the George Spangler farm on July 3. This was no glancing blow in which the fragment struck and fell to the ground. The fragment penetrated Stowe's head. Stowe, the assistant adjutant general for Brig. Gen. Adolph von Steinwehr (Second Division, XI Corps), took the direct hit while standing only a few feet from Von Steinwehr on Cemetery Hill during the cannonade prior to Pickett's Charge. Stowe must have been unconscious or squirming in agony or a combination of both after such a blow upon his arrival at the XI Corps hospital following a quick ambulance ride.

The fragment stretched from in front of Stowe's right ear to above and behind the ear. Doctors measured it at two to two-and-a-half inches in length and a quarter-inch wide, plenty big and violent enough to cause great damage to a human head. Stowe was chloroformed, and Brinton took out the fragment by the route it went in, "with difficulty through the orifice of entrance," a Spangler surgeon reported in Stowe's 1866 pension claim.<sup>2</sup>

Brinton told his mother in a letter home that Stowe had been hit "in the parastoid process of the temporal bone, by a fragment of shell which I extracted on

1 Harriet Beecher Stowe to Fred Stowe at Gettysburg, July 11, 1863, Sterling Library, Yale, New Haven, CT.

2 Frederick W. Stowe Invalid Pension Claim 69920, NARA.



Harriet Beecher Stowe

*Library of Congress*

July 3. Though I left him doing well, I am not without anxiety as to the result.” The temporal bone protected Stowe’s brain and undoubtedly saved his life.<sup>3</sup>

Stowe was loaded with painkillers and placed in the Spanglers’ summer kitchen. Both he and the mortally wounded Confederate Brig. Gen. Armistead were undoubtedly in no condition or mood to converse when Armistead joined Stowe in that space later on July 3. Back home

in Massachusetts, Mrs. Stowe and her husband—the Rev. Calvin Ellis Stowe, a respected scholar and theologian—knew nothing of Fred’s status for days, an agony amplified for these parents of seven by the fact that they had already suffered devastating deaths of two children: Samuel at age 18 months in a cholera epidemic and Henry at 19 in a swimming accident.<sup>4</sup>

Happily, they saw a list on Page 3 of the July 6 *Lewiston (Maine) Sun Journal* that reported, though not entirely accurately, “The son of Professor Stowe is wounded in the head, but not dangerously.” Then the Stowes heard from family friends and a nephew and later a Christian Commission agent at Spangler that Fred was recovering. Further family tragedy ensued, though, as related in Mrs. Stowe’s letter to Fred in Gettysburg:

July 11, 1863

My Dear Fred.

You may imagine the anxiety with which we waited for news from you after the battle. The first we heard was on Monday morning from the paper, that you were wounded in the head. On hearing this your Father set off immediately to go to you and took the twelve o’clock train to Boston and the five o’clock New York cars to go right on to Baltimore.

3 Brinton to his mother, July 9, 1863, in Dr. Daniel Garrison Brinton Papers, 1863-1899, Ms. Coll. 177, Chester County Historical Society Library, West Chester, PA.

4 [www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org/harriet-beecher-stowe/harriet-beecher-stowe-life](http://www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org/harriet-beecher-stowe/harriet-beecher-stowe-life), accessed Nov. 21, 2021; [www.findagrave.com/memorial/92647337/henry-ellis\\_beecher-stowe](http://www.findagrave.com/memorial/92647337/henry-ellis_beecher-stowe), accessed Nov. 21, 2021.

Capt. Frederick Stowe

*Harriet Beecher Stowe Center*

Before he left Andover we got a telegraph from Robert [nephew Robert Edes Beecher] saying that you were wounded, but not dangerously and would be sent home in a few days.

At Springfield that night a gang of pick pockets hustled your father among them as he was getting out of the cars and took from him his pocket book containing 130 dollars and all the letters which your sisters and I wrote to you.

He went on to Baltimore and when he arrived there was so sick as to have to send for a Doctor who told him that he was going to be very sick and must go back immediately where he could be taken care of. He how ever saw a Mr Clark (uncle of one student Clark) who was going on to Gettysburg to attend to the wounded, and Gen H. Wilson, who both promised to look for you.

Several other friends also volunteered and Papa returned to Brooklyn where Jack Howard nursed him and this morning Saturday the 11th he is home and in bed—quite unwell but not so but what good news from you would revive him. Do get some one to write for you and tell us how to direct, and what we shall do for you. Do let us know when we may expect you. We have been looking for you every night all your sisters waiting at the cars. We must see you and return thanks together that your life is saved God bless you. At last you have helped win a glorious victory the cause is triumphant! God be thanked!

Your loving mother,

H B S

Mrs. Stowe added: “We have heard of you thro Mr. Wood and Miss Gillis. Why did you not write to us and send us your address instead of to them? We got it thro them or we should not be able to write now.”<sup>5</sup>



5 Harriet Beecher Stowe to Fred Stowe, July 11, 1863, Sterling Library, Yale.

The Christian Commission agent replied for Fred that “He is quiet and cheerful, longs to see some member of his family, and is, above all, anxious that they should hear from him as soon as possible.”<sup>6</sup>

Fred was transferred from Gettysburg to a New York City hospital in mid-July, but a full recovery would never come. Dr. Brinton wrote in November 1863 that, “I do hereby certify that I have carefully examined this officer and find that he is suffering from the sequelae [after-effects] of a shell wound of the mastoid process of right temporal bone, consisting in partial deafness of that side, chronic Inflammation of the mastoid cells, and occasional attacks of severe cerebral pain, exacerbated by exposure and fatigues, the wound having been received in the performance of his duty at the Battle of Gettysburg, July 3, 1863.”<sup>7</sup>

The lingering effects of the injury would remain apparent. His brother, Charles, recalled “After weary months of intense suffering it [is] only imperfectly healed; the cruel iron had too nearly touched the brain of the young officer.”<sup>8</sup>

A surgeon testified in August 1864: “Hearing of that ear is destroyed entirely. Applicant looks well but shows satisfactory evidence that his general health is poor; he has a good deal of headache & is unable to do much of any kind of work.”<sup>9</sup>

Mrs. Stowe wrote to a friend in November 1864 and talked of a plan to send her son to sea: “I left my poor Fred at home. I do hope he will get a good ship. The sea air works marvels in our family. That wound in his head will never heal unless by a general tonic to the whole system. . . . I feel a weight of solicitude for the poor fellow.”<sup>10</sup>

Mrs. Stowe’s worries continued through February 1865: “My other daughters are with me, and my son, Captain Stowe, who has come with weakened health through our struggle, suffering constantly from the effects of a wound in his head received at Gettysburg, which makes his returning to his studies a hard struggle.”<sup>11</sup>

And then there was another surgeon’s examination report in 1866: “Long attacks of lethargy. . . . He enlisted again after being first discharged, against the knowledge of his parents, but could not do the duty. . . . His ambition and patriotism were altogether beyond his strength. He is now engaged in the study of medicine, in which it is evident his wound causes great difficulty. . . . He has

6 Charles Edward Stowe and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe: Compiled From Her Letters and Journals* (London, 1889), 372.

7 Stowe pension claim, NARA.

8 Annie Fields, *Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (Boston, 1897), 278.

9 Stowe pension claim, NARA.

10 Fields, *Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, 274.

11 *Ibid.*, 277.

been at times compelled to suspend his studies, and finds it much more difficult to concentrate his thoughts than previous to the injury." The pain in his head grew constant, "permanently incapacitating him for business," and he began to receive a pension of \$10 a month in August 1866.<sup>12</sup>

The Stowes kept trying to help Fred. He sailed to Spain with his father in 1868, "mainly for the health of the young man." Later, the Stowes purchased a plantation in Florida for Fred to manage, hoping the fresh air would revitalize him. After only a short stint in Florida he fled to California in 1870 and was never heard from again.

"That he reached [San Francisco] in safety is known," brother Charles said, "but that is all. No word from him or concerning him has ever reached the loving hearts that have waited so anxiously for it, and of his ultimate fate nothing is known."<sup>13</sup> "Where is my poor Fred?" Mrs. Stowe agonized. "I never forget my boy. Can a woman forget her child?"<sup>14</sup> A family that devoted itself to fighting society's evils always seemed to attract such devastating family misfortune.<sup>15</sup>

Fred would have been about 30 years old if he indeed died in San Francisco in 1870. The family that had done so much for their country and fought so hard against slavery had now seen three sons die young.

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### One Final Note

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Widow Sarah Monfort of York Street in Gettysburg wrote an intriguing letter to a relative in Ohio in July 1863. She wrote that she went to the XI Corps hospital at Spangler and at some point Fred Stowe left the hospital and was taken to her home for treatment for "about 10 days." There are no medical or pension records that support this claim and on the surface it seems unlikely. The practice, after all, was for ambulances on July 4–5 to search town and take wounded men from homes to the field hospitals, not the other way around. But there is a documented case at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C., of Capt. William J. Rannells of the 75th Ohio doing just that. Rannells was wounded in the left buttock on Barlow Knoll on July 1, taken to a Confederate hospital, and then picked up and removed to Spangler after the Confederate retreat. But he only spent one night at Spangler before he was taken to a residence in town where he was treated by a surgeon who was "a stranger to him." The reason for

12 Stowe pension claim, NARA.

13 Fields, *Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, 333.

14 *Ibid.*, 333.

15 *Vermont Journal*, July 11, 1868.

the transfer remains unknown. Another fact that backs Widow Monfort's story is that Stowe's first cousin—1st Lt. Fred Beecher of the 16th Maine—was being treated next door at the home of Widow Monfort's mother after his wounding on Cemetery Hill. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote to her brother, Henry Ward Beecher, on August 20, 1863: "Fred Beecher not yet fully recovered from a wound. . . . Rob escaped unhurt—he writes that Fred and he were side by side when he was struck down—the wound was not dangerous however, and he got into a private house at Gettysburg where a widow and her daughter nursed him carefully."

"Rob" was Fred Beecher's brother, 2nd Lt. Robert Beecher, who was on Cemetery Hill with the 73rd Ohio and another first cousin of Fred Stowe, who like his cousins was on Cemetery Hill at the time of his wounding. Mrs. Stowe's letter raises the possibility that Widow Monfort confused cousins Fred Stowe and Fred Beecher, and that Stowe remained all the while at Spangler. But even though such a scenario makes sense, the most likely case is that Widow Monfort got it exactly right and Fred Stowe spent a few days at Spangler, then she had him taken to her house after visiting the XI Corps hospital because his first cousin was next door, after which he transferred to an Army general hospital in New York City from York Street just a couple of blocks from his departure point at the Gettysburg train station. Perhaps Spangler surgeons considered Stowe to be out of danger after a few days in the summer kitchen and determined that joining up with his cousin would do him good. Widow Monfort mentioned in a later letter that doctors boarded with her, so they might have joined her in caring for Stowe.<sup>16</sup>

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### Spangler Farm Short Story

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Blacksmith Shop Road was officially so named by Cumberland Township in 1963, exactly 100 years after it was used by thousands of Army of the Potomac troops to rush from the Baltimore Pike and the Spangler farm to the Union line. Prior to that, the Spanglers and anyone else living on what is now Blacksmith Shop Road simply had an address of RD 1. After 1963, the Andrew family and today's owner, the Gettysburg Foundation, were assigned the address of 488 Blacksmith Shop Road. Other well-known Cumberland Township roads to receive names in 1963 include Hospital Road, Black Horse Tavern Road, Herr's Ridge Road, and Sachs Road. Granite Schoolhouse Lane—the other road cutting through the Spanglers' farm to the line both then and today—is believed to have been named in the late 1800s.<sup>17</sup>

16 [www.sparedshared22.wordpress.com/2021/05/18/1863-sarah-elenor-thompson-monfort-to-henry-jacob-brinkerhoff/](http://www.sparedshared22.wordpress.com/2021/05/18/1863-sarah-elenor-thompson-monfort-to-henry-jacob-brinkerhoff/), accessed Feb. 8, 2023; William J. Rannells Invalid Pension Claim 198116, NARA.

17 *The Gettysburg Times*, May 30, 1863.





This blacksmith shop once stood at the modern-day intersection of Blacksmith Shop Road and the Taneytown Road. *Ron Kirkwood*

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The blacksmith shop featured in the road's name was owned by prominent Gettysburg-area resident John W. Epley. It sat on the west side of the intersection of Blacksmith Shop Road and the Taneytown Road, parallel to Wheatfield Road. The oldest part of the building was constructed about 1870, with enlargements after that. Epley owned the shop from 1904 until his death at age 81 in 1960, and his resume included being the master farrier for the world-famous horse breeder Hanover Shoe Farms.<sup>18</sup>

The shop was carefully taken down in 1969 and put back together piece by piece at Landis Valley Village & Farm Museum in Lancaster County, PA, where it can be visited today. Epley's tools hang from the ceiling and sit on work benches just like they did decades ago and are in use by modern-day Landis Valley blacksmiths, working over the same hearth Epley did in the historic building that gave Blacksmith Shop Road its name.<sup>19</sup>

18 Landis Valley Village & Farm Museum; *The Gettysburg Times*, Aug. 1, 1960.

19 Landis Valley Village & Farm Museum.

