

## Enabling The Masonic Explorer In All Of Us.

Kansas Lodge of Research was established in 1982 to conduct research, gather and preserve Masonic information, supply speakers, and enhance Grand Lodge endeavors to promote Masonic Education. In this article Bro. Herb Merrick explores the background the first master of his lodge and reveals the high 'caliber' of an Army artillery officer who received the military's most prestigious combat decoration. Perhaps your lodge has had brothers with extraordinary accomplishments. Submit your findings to [klor@kansasmason.org](mailto:klor@kansasmason.org) or see our web page at [kansasmason.org](http://kansasmason.org).

# The Unyielding Carle Woodruff, Founding Master

I was examining the many pictures taken of our lodge founders when two such particularly attracted my interest. Both of the same man; Carle Augustus Woodruff. One was Worshipful Brother Woodruff in his York Rite Commandary uniform and the other was in the formal dress uniform of a Brigadier General adorned with the Medal of Honor on the center of his chest. The quest to know more of the first Master of Hancock Lodge No. 311 took me back to a hot July afternoon in 1864.

Smoke and confusion reigned across the gently rolling fields as Major General David M. Gregg, commander of the 2nd Cavalry Division of the Army of the Potomac, arrived at the position of M Battery, 2nd Field Artillery. Gregg was looking for an artillery officer that he could order to have the



battery displaced off the field. Five brigades of Confederate Cavalry were engaged immediately in front of the battery ready to overwhelm the one Union Regiment that was attempting to stop their advance and destroy the artillery. The General was about to get one of the biggest surprises of the day as he found Lieutenant Carle Augustus Woodruff commanding the right section of guns. Upon receiving the order, Lieutenant Woodruff laconically informed

the General exactly where he could take his order. M Battery was not going to retire. Instead the Lieutenant ordered his cannoneers to load double canister and to continue to fire into the melee of cavalry to his front. These actions gave the remnants of the other Union regiments in the area time to reorganize.

They delayed the Confederate Cavalry's attempt to join the Pickett's attack on the Union center under the command of Major General Winfield Scott Hancock. The Confederates' battle of the ridge was over.

Over the next three weeks, the Army of the Potomac would repeatedly try to re-engage the Army of Northern Virginia in another major battle. The final attempt would again involve Lieutenant Woodruff and the Acting Commander of 3rd Cavalry Division (George Custer) at Newby's Cross

Roads near Battle Mountain, Virginia. On July 24, based on Meade's orders of the 23rd,<sup>1</sup> Custer sent the Michigan Brigade, his favorite, to come to grips with the front of Lee's forces. Longstreet's and A.P. Hill's Corps were moving south through Chester's Gap being screened by Jenkins's cavalry. General Pleasanton, the Cavalry Corps Commander, hoped that Custer's force could slow the Confederate force so that Union infantry could close. The plan called for the cavalry to copy Buford's actions on the first day at Gettysburg and have the Confederate forces deploy from a marching column to a line of battle and then fight a delaying battle until Union infantry could close. This would prove to be the last chance for a second Gettysburg.<sup>2</sup>

The Michigan Brigade with M Battery supporting by section (three sections of two ordinance rifles each) attacked. Opening with his artillery Custer was able to advance upon the Confederates. He deployed two regiments of the brigade in the lead with Pennington's guns broken into 2 gun sections supporting individual regiments. He continued to attack the Confederate columns. The lead section of M Battery, under the temporary command of Woodruff, was the most forward element. The attack on what was in reality two Confederate corps (1st<sup>3</sup> and 3rd<sup>4</sup>) brought them to a stop. They begin to deploy just as Pleasanton envisioned. The mountainous terrain slowed the deployment, but did not prevent it from developing into a rolling fight. After two hours of skirmishing it became clear that Union infantry would not close up and the cavalry need to disengage and withdraw.<sup>5</sup>

Hill's 3rd Corps advanced two brigades



Top: Monument to Battery M east of Gettysburg, Bottom: Carle Woodruff

Map: East Gettysburg Battlefield

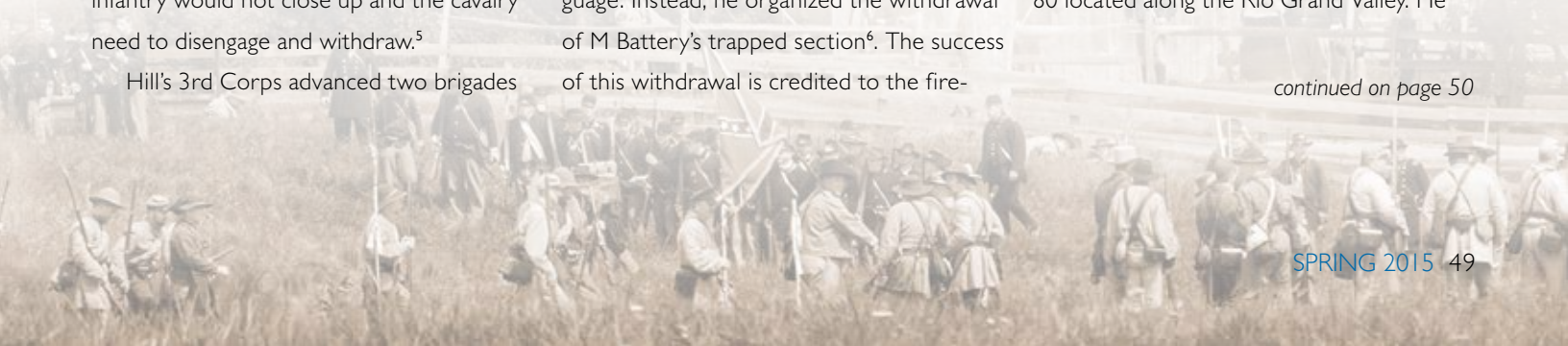


pinning the 5th and 6th Michigan cavalry and the section of M Battery under Woodruff on the left and rear of the main action. The Confederates continued the pressure and were clearly about to surround the Union force. Custer as the division commander ordered the cavalry and artillery to break out and, if necessary, abandon the guns. Woodruff repeated his actions from Gettysburg refusing to leave his support of the cavalry or even consider abandoning his guns. Even after a second direct order to abandon the guns Woodruff refused, in what has been reported as colorful language. Instead, he organized the withdrawal of M Battery's trapped section<sup>6</sup>. The success of this withdrawal is credited to the fire-

power of the Spencer rifles of supporting cavalry (1st and 7th) and to the extremely accurate shelling of the other four guns of M Battery. General Custer, in his formal report, credited Woodruff with "skill and judgment that saved the day"<sup>7</sup>. Woodruff would eventually be awarded the Medal of Honor<sup>8</sup> for his actions on that day.

He would go on to a long career in the Army rising to command the 2nd Artillery Regiment when it was assigned to Fort Leavenworth Kansas. He eventually rose to the rank of Brigadier General. Woodruff was raised in 1880 in Brownsville Lodge No. 80 located along the Rio Grand Valley. He

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remained a member there until he demitted in 1888 to join twenty six other Masons on Fort Leavenworth and form Winfield Scott Hancock Lodge No. 311.

While in Kansas Woodruff was active in a number of appendant bodies including the York Rite Commandary in Leavenworth. He was a charter member of Abdallah Shrine

along with fellow regimental commander and Medal of Honor recipient Arthur MacArthur Woodruff, would serve as the first Chief Rabban at Abdallah. In 1899 he was assigned to Raleigh North Carolina. While there he demitted from Hancock to join Hill Lodge No. 218 and in 1906 Hiram No. 40. He was also active in the Scottish Rite. In fact

his involvement was such that the Raleigh Chapter of Rose Croix is named for him. He served as assistant Grand Marshal at the 1907 Cornerstone laying of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina. He retired in Raleigh but in 1908 he demitted the Hiram No. 40 and rejoined Hancock where he was a member until his death on July 20th, 1913.

1 "Report of MG Meade to the General in Chief 7 P.M. 25 July," The Miscellaneous Documents of the House of Representatives for the First Session of the Fifty-First Congress 1889-90 in Forty Seven Volumes Washington GPO 1891 TWOFTREBELLION: A compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies Series I Volume xxvii part I 1889 GPO page 100

2 Thom Hatch, Clashes of Cavalry; The Civil War Careers of George Armstrong Custer and JEB Stuart (Stack Pole Books, 5067 Ritter Road, Mechanicsburg PA 17055). P 144.

3 George L. Harrington 1842-1864 Diary of George L. Harrington 1863, "Met Longstreet's Corps and have a Sharp skirmish the Rebs have a Superior number we retreat back to Amissville with but small loss Capture a few Prisoners" (Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan 2006).

4 "Report of JEB Stuart Major General CSA" Twenty Seven Volumes Washington GPO 1891 TWOFTREBELLION: A compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies Series I Volume xxvii part I 1889 GPO page 609

5 Longacre, Edward G. Custer and His Wolverines: The Michigan Cavalry Brigade, 1861-1865 (Da Capo Press. 2004), p 153

6 **General Orders:** September 1, 1893 **Action Date:** July 24, 1863 "The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to First Lieutenant (Field Artillery) Carle Augustus Woodruff, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism on 24 July 1863, while serving with Horse Battery M, 2d U.S. Artillery, in action at Newbys Crossroads, Virginia. While in command of a section of a battery constituting a portion of the rear guard of a division then retiring before the advance of a corps of Infantry, First Lieutenant Woodruff was attacked by the enemy and ordered to abandon his guns. He disregarded the orders received and aided in repelling the attack and saving the guns."

7 "**Report of Brig. Gen. George A. Custer, U.S. Army, commanding Second Brigade of, and Third Division. Battle of Gettysburg July 24**".--**Was engaged with the enemy at Battle Mountain, near Newby's Cross-Roads, Lieutenants Clarke, Woodruff, and Hamilton in this, as in every other engagement, performing their duties with skill and judgment. G.A. Custer BG Commanding Battle of Gettysburg HEADQUARTERS SECOND BRIGADE, THIRD DIVISION, September 9, 1863.** The Miscellaneous Documents of the House of Representatives for the First Session of the Fifty-First Congress 1889-90 in Forty Seven Volumes Washington GPO 1891 TWOFTREBELLION: A compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies Series I Volume xxvii part I 1889 GPO

8 **General Orders:** September 1, 1893 **Action Date:** July 24, 1863

#### About The Author

Rick Carver is the Past Master of Inner Quest Lodge 456 (Traditional Observance) and current Secretary and perpetual life member of Shawnee Lodge 54. He is also a member of Scottish Rite, York Rite, Kansas Lodge of Research and several other Masonic organizations. You can read some other works by Brother Carver on the Inner Quest Lodge web site at [innerquest456.org](http://innerquest456.org).