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The Gibraltar Brigade on East Cemetery Hill: Twenty Five Minutes of Fighting-Fifty Years of Controversy

Gary George Lash

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Gary George Lash : The Gibraltar Brigade on East Cemetery Hill: Twenty Five Minutes of Fighting-Fifty Years of Controversy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Gibraltar Brigade on East Cemetery Hill: Twenty Five Minutes of Fighting-Fifty Years of Controversy:

12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Book DescriptionBy A CustomerThe savage fighting that burned across the rolling terrain of central Adams County, Pennsylvania, during the first three days of July 1863, has frequently been recounted by participants in conflicting ways. Though the veterans are long gone, many of the debates continue to captivate Gettysburg enthusiasts. One such little-described polemic involved men of Colonel Samuel Sprigg Carroll's Second Corps brigade, the Gibraltar Brigade, a "western" unit composed of regiments from Ohio, West Virginia and Indiana. The hard-bitten veterans of the Gibraltar Brigade had little time to relax after their hard march to Gettysburg. Early in the evening of July 2, three of Carroll's regiments were ordered from where they lay near Ziegler's Grove toward East Cemetery Hill which was under Confederate assault. The tired Ohioans, Indianians and West Virginians arrived at the Evergreen Cemetery Gate on the Baltimore Pike to find part of General Howard's Eleventh Corps line retreating up the east slope of the hill. The fiery Carroll deployed his men into line of battle and drove more than 50 Confederates from Captain R. Bruce Ricketts' Pennsylvania battery thereby securing this part of

the Federal line. Or so it seemed, for unbeknown to those involved, disparate opinions of what actually happened in the July 2 gloom were soon to erupt into a sometimes caustic feud that pitted Second Corps veterans against General Howard's men and partisans. The dispute over who actually saved the Federal batteries on East Cemetery Hill commenced before the start of the Spring 1864 Campaign and endured into the twentieth century. Though such debates as the Meade-Sickles and Hancock-Howard controversies have received extensive coverage, little has been written on the Carroll-Howard quarrel. More than anything else, the protracted disagreement between the Second and Eleventh Corps veterans recounted in *The Gibraltar Brigade on East Cemetery Hill* reveals how comrades in battle could differ on specifics of that fighting and for such a long time. It also demonstrates how fervently these veterans contended for the honor of their regiments and corps.

Gettysburg is the one Civil War battle that most Americans claim to know a lot about. But Lash's book takes place far away from the better-known contests of Little Round Top and Pickett's Charge. "Of all the different aspects of Gettysburg, East Cemetery Hill gets the least amount of attention," says Lash. It was there on July 2, 1863, that Confederate troops attacked the Army of the Potomac's 11th Corps. The most prominent members of the 11th were ethnic German or German immigrants. One regiment, the 153rd Pennsylvania, was made up largely of Pennsylvania German troops from Northampton County. The focal point of Lash's book is the performance of these ethnic German troops in battle and the aid given to them by the Second Brigade of the Second Division, Second Corps of the Army of the Potomac. It was made up of battle-tested veterans from Ohio, Indiana and West Virginia. They got the name Gibraltar Brigade for their rock-like defense of the so-called "Bloody Lane" Road at the battle of Antietam in September 1862. Their commander, Col. Samuel Sprigg Carroll, was an officer who believed in seeking out the enemy and fighting him. Ethnic prejudice against the Germans was at high tide in the 1860s. Almost to a man, the Union Army officers, in many cases New England Yankees, did not like foreigners of any type. Germans were called "Dumb Dutch," who could talk a good fight but would run away if approached by the enemy. The officers had their prejudices confirmed first at the battle of Chancellorsville on May 2, 1863, and the first day of Gettysburg, when the 11th Corps retreated under heavy fire.