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An Account of the Battle of Gettysburg by Hugh McClain Ziegler



Hugh M. Ziegler

Hugh McClain Ziegler (November 21, 1852- May 8, 1934) died in Newkirk, Oklahoma.
Married Alice Shelton
He was the son of Emanuel Ziegler (1824-1893), the steward of the edifice of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in 1863.

Below is an account of the Battle of Gettysburg as viewed through the eyes of a ten year old boy, Hugh M. Ziegler. The original story was apparently told orally to a stenographer in 1933. There are misspellings and errors of grammar throughout which have not been edited by this editor.

REMINISCENCE OF HUGH M. ZIEGLER OF THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG WHICH OCCURRED ON THE FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD DAYS OF JULY 1863

At the time of the battle, the town had a population of about four thousand people, consisting largely of retired farmers and people who located there on account of its educational facilities. Pennsylvania College and the Lutheran Theological Seminary, also several womens' private boarding schools were located on the outer edge of the town.

I first saw the light of day at Gettysburgh, November 26th, 1852, and remained there until 1873 when I removed to Philadelphia. The wonderful of Kansas products shown at the centennial exhibition gave me the Western fever and I migrated to Kansas in 1878 and remained there until the opening of 1893 when I made the race for the farm I secured in Kay County, five miles southwest of Newkirk, and have been a resident of the county continuously since then.

It is now near seventy years since the Battle of Gettysburgh, by General Mead in command of the northern and General Lee commanding the Confederate armies, but the memories of that time were so indelibly stamped on my mind that I will never forget them.



Toward Gettysburg from the Seminary.

The Lutheran Seminary was located just on the west edge of the town on a ridge, slightly more elevated than the land around the town, and same ridge continued to the south and east four miles to a high hill known as Round Top. My father was steward and my mother matron of this institution, it being a four story building, and I was one of five children at home at that time.

A few days before the battle, Lee had brought his army up from the South and they were bivouaced in the mountains twelve miles west of Gettysburg and their camp fires were visible from Seminary Ridge.

On the top of the Seminary building, there was a cupola from which the country in all directions could be seen for many miles, and it was used by the Union officers as an observatory. The vision to the mountains, eighteen miles west was unobstructed except by an occasional grove of trees, and the movements of Lee's army toward Gettysburg was seen on the morning of July first. They were soon routed by the Confederate shells, several of which struck the building.

There was a troop of Union Cavalry in camp about a half mile west of the Seminary and a battery of artillery on the ridge west of the camp.

The boys of the town would visit the camp and ride the soldiers horses to water and I was one of them. The morning the battle started, one of the soldier's helped me mount his horse and handed me some money to buy him a loaf of bread in the town and I rode to the most distant watering trough of which there were many along the streets fed from springs in the hill around the town. I went to a bakery and secured the bread and was riding on Chambersburg street towards the camp and got mixed up in a terrible commotion, caused by cavalrymen riding hard in the street, coming in and going out of town.

One of them called me to hurry up, slapped my mount over the rump with his saber to give him a

boost, and I arrived at the camp on a gallop. The cavalry was already formed in battle line on the ridge half a mile west, and the owner of the horse was there waiting for his horse, much excited, and he assisted me to dismount, took the bread. Got in the saddle, throwing part of the bread away and rode up on the ridge and got into line. Even then I was ignorant of the cause of all this commotion and walked over near the line of cannon on the north side of the pike leading west towards the mountains. About the time I arrived there, several of them were discharged frightening me and I started toward the Seminary and home as fast as I could run.



Railroad Cut just to the north of the Chambersburg Pike

Before I got there, several soldiers rode past me and when I arrived, my mother and several soldiers were at the pump, washing the wounds of these who had passed by me, and my mother was very much worried about my absence. Shortly after my arrival at the Seminary, we were all ordered to the cellar. We all remained in the cellar until about twelve o'clock. There being a lull in the fighting near the Seminary, we were advised to leave and go into the town, some shells had already struck the building.

The battle started about ten A.M. and had been raging for two hours. As we passed through the town, in the center of which there is a public square formed by one-fourth of the blocks that meet at that point. At one time the court house stood in the center of the town fronting the four main streets of the town that intersect at that point. The courthouse had been razed and rebuilt in another part of town and there had been a very tall flag pole placed in the center of the square. As we were passing through the town, we came up Chambersburg street from the west and turned south on Baltimore Street, passing out of the town on the Baltimore turnpike with Cemetery Hill on our right, just at the south edge of town. We walked five miles along the road and had to get on the inside of the fields as the road was filled with Union troops, moving towards the battle front. As we passed by the public square in the center of which there was a band on horseback playing some military tune, cannon booming and shells screaming a few hundred feet above, the large American flag waving in the wind. The music made by the band, the booming cannon, screaming of the shells and the rattle of the musketry is music rarely heard and never forgotten.

We stayed at the farm of a widowed aunt of my father, located two miles south and east of Round Top, which was one of the hard contested points of the three day battle. My father who was home from the army, off on a furlough, volunteered his services with a signal corps, located on the top of Round Top, and he was familiar with all the country, he was able to render much service.

The evening of the third day, when the fighting had ceased, my father returned, and the morning of July 4th, we all got in a farm wagon and started back to the town and home, but had gone but a short distance when we were turned back on account of the danger of unexploded shells coming in contact with the feet of our team or the steel tires of our wagon.

On the morning of July 5th, we made another effort to get back to our home, walking all the way, passing many dead horses that had been shot down and were badly bloated from laying in the hot sun. Frequently, we would see a dead soldier by the road side covered by a blanket. I looked under one of them and my curiosity was quenched. They were in the same condition as the dead horses.

We succeeded in getting back to our home (the Seminary), but it was in use as a hospital, all the space in the large building was filled up with wounded



Lutheran Theological Seminary

soldiers. The doctors in charge, learning it was our home, cleared two of the rooms and we moved in and got busy helping care for the wounded. My mother took charge of the kitchen and did the cooking, and hailed by the wounded and others connected with the hospital as mother. There was one of the large rooms in the building used as a clinic, where many arms and legs were amputated and several times I was called on to carry one to the rear of the hospital and deposit with many others, that had been placed in a pile. There had been an accumulation of several days before they were taken away and buried: and the pile if arms and legs

were placed there like a pile of stove wood, would have filled a wagon bed.

All the school and public buildings were used as hospitals and many were filled to capacity. The conditions continued for several weeks while there was being built, by the erection of barracks and large army tents, a general hospital located about two miles east of town, to which all the wounded were removed.

It was a long time after the battle before the town settled down to normal.

There being no school, I, with many other of the boys, wandered over the battle field and several of them were killed by tampering with shells that had failed to explode. There were several farmers and their teams killed by plow point coming in contact with unexploded shells.

In roving over the battlefield, I collected many relics, among them was a sword that had evidently been used, as there was blood marks on the blade. A few years ago, I gave the sword to my grandson, Eugene Chappell, and it is now in his possession.

Many of the soldiers lay for several days before they were buried, and their condition mad it difficult for them to be moved. A shallow trench would be made, and the corpse buried where it was shot down. Many of them scattered in fields to be cultivated. Some of the farmers desecrated them by plowing over them. To relieve this condition, some patriotic and public spirited citizens of the town conceived the idea of gathering all of the dead in one plot and organized the Union soldiers cemetery. All of the Union dead that lay buried over the battle field were removed to this plot of ground located on Cemetery Hill, just on the south edge of town. Before the day the cemetery was dedicated, the people came from far and near. Excursion trains from Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore and other cities.

President Lincoln arrived in Gettysburg the day before and delivered a dedicatory address. The morning of the dedication the procession was formed at the public square, headed by a military escort. President Lincoln with John Burns, the historic citizen hero of the battle, by his side, and many notables and a vast number of people in the line. They all marched to the cemetery about one-half mile distant.

The soldiers are buried in a semi-circle with a large monument in the center; at the base of the monument, on each corner, a large marble statue and towered by the Goddess of Liberty.

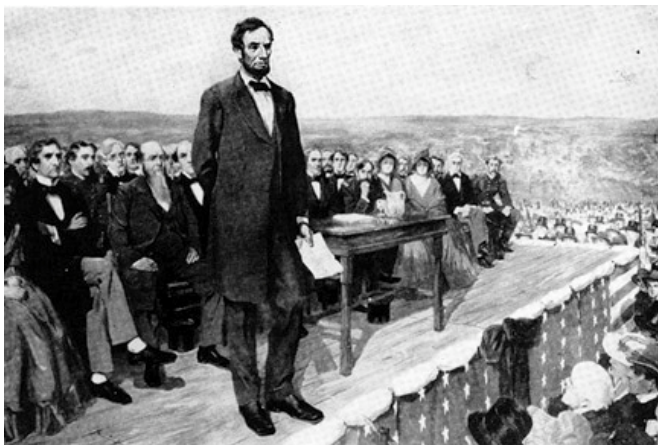
In front of the monument, there was a large platform erected and



occupied by Lincoln and many notables.

John Burns Civilian Hero

The opening address was delivered by Edward Everett, one of the great orators of the time, and it consumed nearly two hours to deliver, and followed by President Lincoln's dedicatory address.



Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

There was a vast audience of people assembled there to assist Mr. Lincoln do honor to the soldiers that lay buried there.

When Lincoln had finished his address and taken his seat, the people stood as if dumbfounded, not by what had been said, as by its briefness. As I remember, it was the general topic of conversation for a long time. Little did they realize that it would go down in history as one of the greatest addresses ever delivered by man and is now on of the classics of the age.

By diligent reading and proper analyzing, one will find more thoroughness displayed in that speech of three minutes, than most people could inject into one of an hour's duration.

That address has been quoted more times than any other ever delivered by man and will continue to be quoted as long as the republic endures. Any eighth grade school boy can commit it to memory in ten minutes time.

The government has acquired most of the ground over which the battle was fought, built avenues and erecting markers showing the position of the troops. Many monuments have been erected by states in honor of their soldiers who died there.

The Gettysburg battlefield is now one of the great attractive sights of the country and is visited by thousands of people each year. Many of the original defenses and land-marks have been preserved.



Jenny Wade

Few of the citizens were injured and but one was killed. Jenny Wade who was in her kitchen baking bread for the soldiers was killed by a stray bullet that came in at one of the windows.

The commissary and hospital supplies of the army was inadequate for there needs, and the citizens of the town shared their larders with the soldiers, and the women gave up their bed linen and other articles for bandages and helped to care for the wounded.

The town of Gettysburg is located in the southeastern part of Pennsylvania, eight miles from the Maryland line, and fifty-two miles north of Baltimore. The town is very old, being one of the first to be

organized in the state, and all of my ancestors for three hundred years back are lying buried in its cemeteries. The greater number of the buildings are constructed of brick and many of them display the shells that struck them while the battle was raging. Neither of the armies shelled the town directly, but many shells that had been aimed to points beyond the town, having spent their force, dropped therein.

The Battle of Gettysburg was the only major engagement north of the Mason and Dixon line, between the Union and Southern armies, during the Civil War, and historians claim that it was the beginning of the end of that long four years contest.

The sacrifice of good American blood by both sides in that four years contest was great, but the achievement has been greater for it cemented the Union into a more compact government which has expanded and is now the leading government on the earth.

Would be pleased to hear from anyone reading this article who lived in or near Gettysburg at the time of the battle.

Letter addressed to Newkirk, Oklahoma should reach me.

Editor's Note:

In an apparent earlier draft of Hugh's Account there appears additional personal and other information that have been edited from the final account. Two of these paragraphs are literally drawn through with squiggly lines to excise them from the notarized account. I find this information more valuable than much of the other material preserved in the final account. I present below the full text of that presumed earlier draft.

Presumed Early Draft of Hugh M. Ziegler Account of the Battle of Gettysburg

I was born at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, November 26th, 1852, and was living in Gettysburg at the time of the battle which occurred the first, second and third days of July, 1863, at which time I was ten years of age.



A view of Gettysburg after the battle.

The town of Gettysburg had a population at the time of about 3500, my mother was matron for the Lutheran Theological Seminary which was located west of the town and I was living with my mother at the Seminary. The battle started in the morning, Thursday, about ten o'clock; I was at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at the time.

Two or three days before the battle started, some cavalry of the Union forces, being of General Reynolds Division, were camped in a grove just west of the Seminary. The boys of Gettysburg,

including myself, would often ride the soldiers' horses, or cavalry horses to the watering trough down in the town, and sometimes they would give us money to buy them knick-knacks or something to eat, and we would often ride the horses to the farthest watering trough because we could get to ride that much farther, and the morning of the battle I was riding, with the other boys, a horse to water and a soldier had given me some money to buy a loaf of bread and as I came up the Chambersburg Road out of Gettysburg, I noticed a great deal of confusion, soldiers riding both ways, and finally one soldier boy hit my horse with a saber and said, "Hurry up with those horses," and as soon as I got up to the camp, I dismounted, gave the loaf of bread to the soldier who tore out a piece of the bread, jumped on his horse and fell into line.

Evidently, the Confederates had been seen coming on the Chambersburg Road, and by the time I arrived there, the cavalrymen were all in regular formation to start towards where the Confederates were seen. When I dismounted and turned the horse over to the soldier, I then walked to the north of the turnpike where there had been some Union cannon stationed, and not realizing what was going on, I got very close to the cannon, and finally some of them were fired. This frightened us and then I started running back towards home or to the Seminary, and when I was on my way, I noticed Union soldiers passing me with blood streaming from their faces and when I arrived at the Seminary, my mother was out at the pump where several wounded soldiers were, washing the blood from their hands and from their faces, and then orders came for the family to go to the cellar there at the Seminary which we did. We stayed in the cellar until sometime in the afternoon when there was a lull in the battle, and it was then that we were ordered to leave Gettysburg. Several shells hit the Seminary before we departed.

(Scratched out text begins here for the following two paragraphs - Editor.)

At the time we left, there were seven children in the family, five of us at home. My father had been taken by the Union soldiers to Little Round Top with the Signal Corps because he was familiar with the country. Before that, he had been in the service as a Union soldier but he was not at that particular time, and he was not at home when we left the Seminary. My brother John, was a baby in arms. We went afoot through Gettysburg and to the south and east, going about seven miles from Gettysburg to an aunt of my father's. We stayed there the rest of the day, Thursday Friday and Saturday. The battle being over, the next day, Sunday, the parties with whom we were staying started back with us in a wagon, bringing us back to our house, but we were turned back and were not permitted to enter Gettysburg because of the danger of the unexploded shells. We then returned to the aunt's and came to Gettysburg the next day, Monday, but we walked all the way.

When we arrived at the Seminary, which had been taken for a hospital, it was so congested with wounded that even the hallways were jammed with wounded soldiers. When they learned that we lived there, they cleared out two rooms and put us in and mother went to work helping to take care of the wounded and cooking for them, and she did this until they afterward established a general hospital by putting up barracks and tents and relieving the congestion of the town, all the public buildings having been taken for hospital use.

(Scratched out text ends here - Editor.)

The battle of Gettysburg covered a radius of twenty miles of country. The dead soldiers lay scattered over the battlefield. Some of them lay in the middle of the harvest field, *-for several days they buried in shallow graves-* *(written in longhand between the lines - editor)* and the farmers, when they started to cultivate, in some places would desecrate those graves by driving over them, and some public spirited men of Gettysburg conceived the idea of taking them up and putting them all in one place, and therefore they organized this cemetery which was afterwards taken over by the government.



Evergreen Cemetery Gatehouse

I want to state that when we were forced to leave the Seminary the first day of the battle, my mother left in the oven a beef roast, she having prepared it for dinner, and we were forced to leave it and years after the war had ceased I met a soldier who was in the Battle of Gettysburg who was telling me about finding the beef roast in the oven at the Seminary and he helped eat it.

As we passed from the Seminary, in the center of the town was a public square. At one time the courthouse building stood in this public square and faced four different streets, but this courthouse had been removed and there was a flag pole there with an American flag waving, and a band on horseback underneath playing some military tune, and the shells were flying over the top of the town making peculiar noises.

Two or three days after the battle, boy-like, I wandered over the battlefield, seeing many of the dead soldiers, frequently seeing a blanket nearby, would go and raise the blanket and would find a dead soldier thereunder who had turned black because of exposure. They were unable to take care of the dead or bury them, and a great deal of sickness in Gettysburg resulted after that. One day, wandering over the battlefield back of the Seminary, I picked up a sword which I took home with me and preserved. Two or three years ago, I gave this sword to my grandson, Gene Chappell, who still has it.

There was only one woman killed during the battle, a young girl named Jennie Wade who lived in a small brick house in the southeast part of Gettysburg. I was acquainted with the family, I don't especially remember her. She was kneading bread and a stray bullet entered through two different doors, standing ajar, killing her.

My grandfather, Hugh Craig, being my grandfather on my mother's side, who had passed away sometime before, was buried in the cemetery south and east of Gettysburg, and the tombstone had been erected at his last resting place, and it had been hit with shot and shells and had been broken off during the battle.

I remember distinctly seeing General McFarlane whose arm was amputated and he afterwards died, he was from Pennsylvania.

I was well acquainted with John Burns who was constable or night watchman at Gettysburg, and when the soldiers marched out to battle the first day, while he was not a soldier, he went out with them with his rifle but he was finally ordered back because of the danger and he got into the public press at the time, poetry had been written about him and a monument, which is practically a life size stature of him, was erected to his memory in the northwest part of Gettysburg where the first day's battle took place.

These soldiers that were picked up on the battlefield were buried in a plat of ground near the old cemetery to the north and west of it, and they were buried in a circular form, and those who (illegible) title to this burial place for that purpose, afterwards turned it over to the government, and they held dedicatorial services there on the 19th of November, 1863, at which time Abraham Lincoln appeared



Dedication of National Cemetery

in person.

It was a great day for Gettysburg, and I remember it distinctly as if it was only yesterday. People came for hundreds of miles, special trains were run, people knowing that the President, Abraham Lincoln, would be there to give an address.

Lincoln walked from from Gettysburg to the scene of the dedicatorial services. I have heard different times about Lincoln riding to the cemetery where the dedicatorial services were held, but this is a mistake. He walked in the procession arm in arm with John Burns who has been converted into a hero of the battle of Gettysburg. I was nothing but a boy running along the sidelines, and I remember distinctly seeing him.

Edward Everett who was a noted orator in those days, and chaplain of the United States Senate was to give an address as well as Lincoln. Edward Everett spoke for about two hours and then was followed by Abraham Lincoln who spoke for about two minutes. The address of Edward Everett had been long forgotten, but the address of Lincoln has become a classic. I was present and heard him give the address and I presume that I am the only person living today that heard Lincoln give his Gettysburg address, at least I know of no other one.

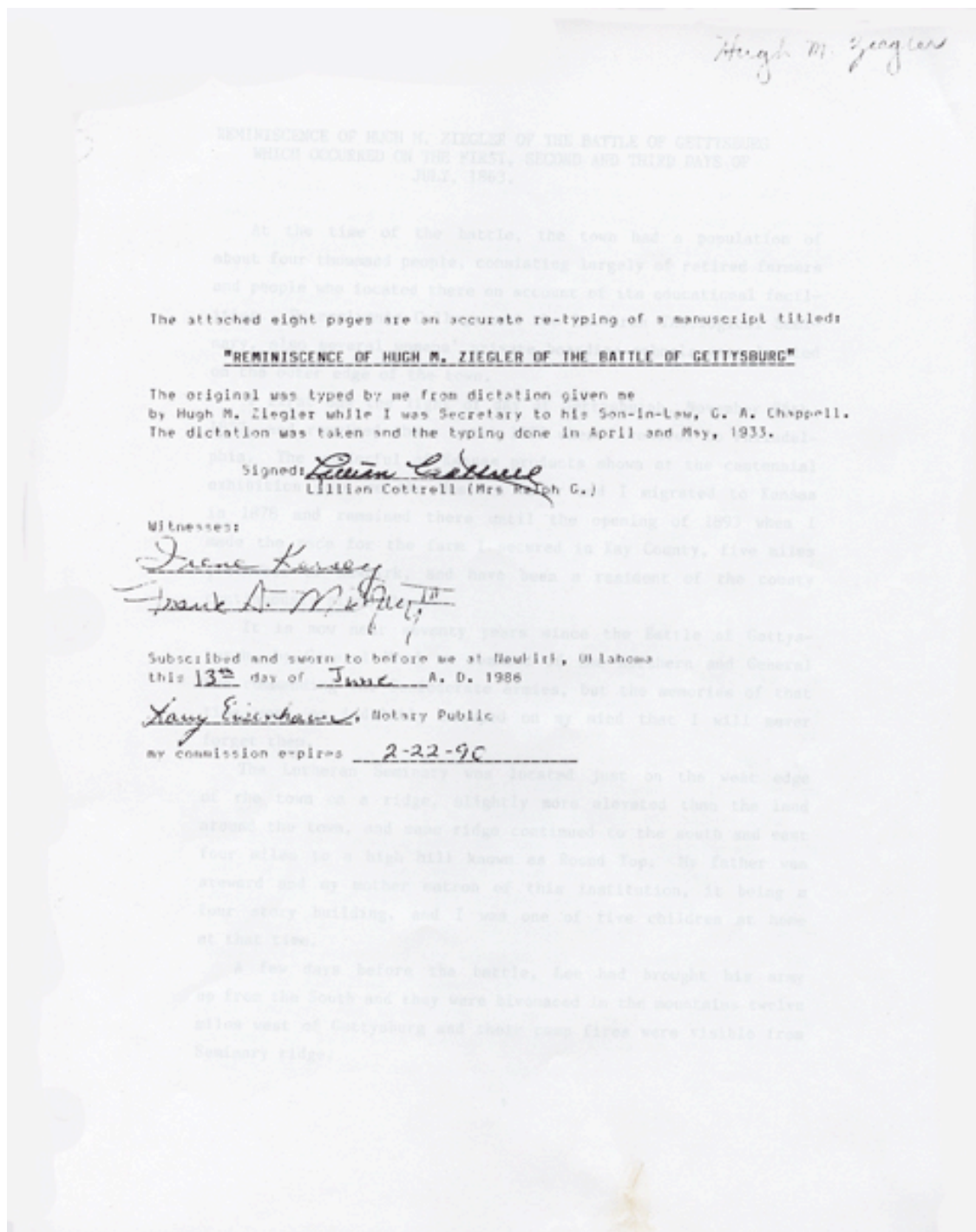
Dated this the 13th day of May 1933.



The Family of Hugh McClain Ziegler
(L to R) William (1890-), Grace (1892-), (standing) Mary (1886-), Kate (1883-), (sitting) wife Alice (1859-1914)

Fred (1895-), Hugh McClain Ziegler, son of Emanuel Ziegler.
Photo courtesy of Carol Renwick

Below is a scanned copy of a notarization of the Hugh M. Ziegler Account. Since I have no legal training, I am wondering why a reminiscence document was notarized. Also why was it was notarized at such a late date. No one alive could validate any specific concerns of authenticity in this document. Does anyone have an opinion? If so, please correspond with the webmaster blake@blake-ziegler.com



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