

under command of Colonel Joseph Walker. Drayton's 51st Georgia, Phillips' Legion, the 15th South Carolina Regiment, and the 3rd South Carolina Battalion adjoined on the right of the road that led from the town to the lower bridge across Antietam Creek. James L. Kemper's 1st, 7th, 11th and 24th Virginia regiments of Jones' division were on the right of Drayton's brigade.⁴²

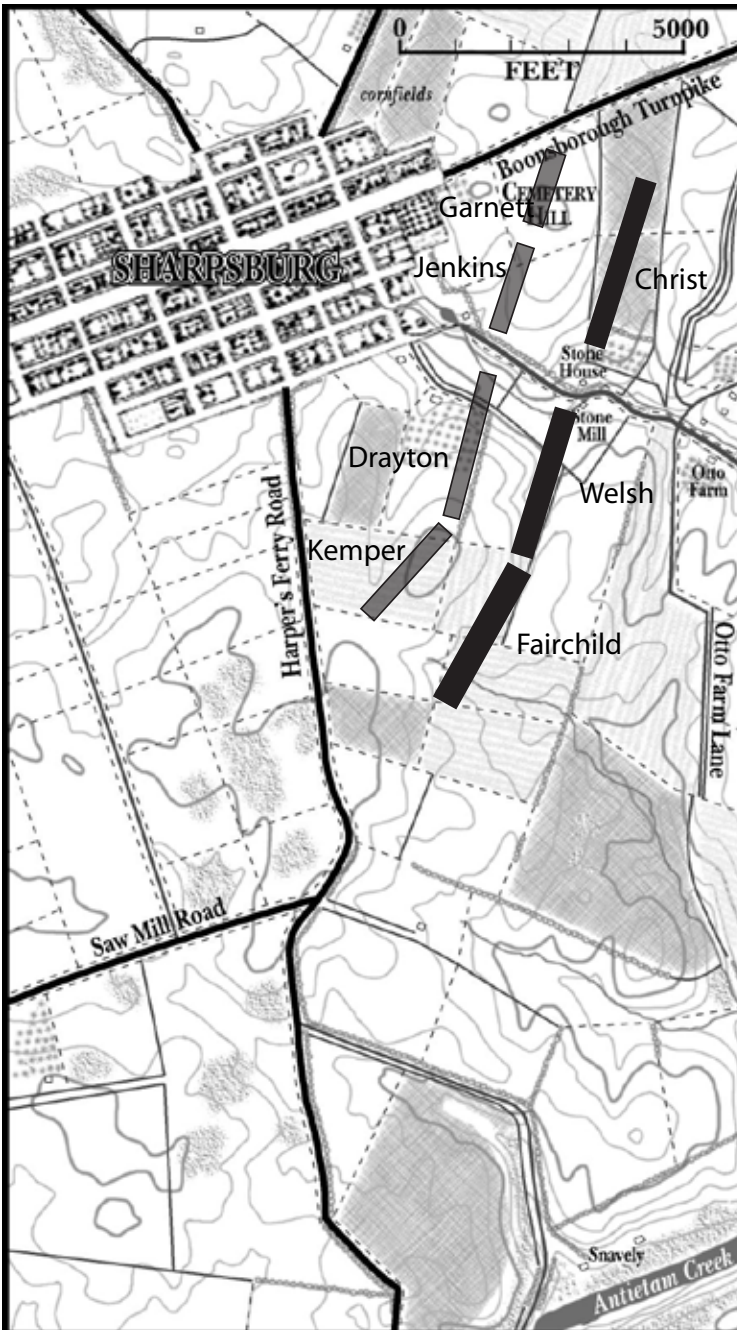
Around one o'clock, after nearly three hours of trying to force a crossing of the lower Antietam bridge, Cox ordered Brigadier Sturgis to take two regiments from Ferrero's brigade and make a column. Sturgis chose the 51st New York, commanded by Colonel Robert B. Potter, and the 51st Pennsylvania, commanded by Colonel John F. Hartranft. Ironically, the same Federal regiments that had helped drive Drayton's men from Fox's Gap and held them off at Henry Hill during the Battle of Second Manassas would be the key to the success of the Federal crossing of "Burnside's Bridge."⁴³

With the pressure on Lee's left lessening, two additional regiments of Toombs' brigade, the 17th and 15th Georgia, as well as five companies of the 11th Georgia Regiment and George Anderson's brigade, were sent to help defend the Confederate right. Before these men arrived, however, Toombs' tenacious forces, after repulsing five separate assaults at the lower Antietam bridge and exhausting their ammunition, fell back toward Sharpsburg. The lower bridge across the Antietam was now open to the Federals.⁴⁴

Once across the lower Antietam Bridge, the 51st New York and 51st Pennsylvania advanced to the crest formally occupied by the Confederates under Toombs. They were joined by the rest of Sturgis' division and Colonel George Crook's brigade, which had been brought over to strengthen the Northern line. These troops were soon joined by Brigadier General Isaac Rodman's division and Colonel Eliakim Scammon's brigade. After gaining control of Burnside's Bridge and consolidating their forces, the Federals were re-supplied in preparation for an expected Confederate counterattack. It was three o'clock before these preparations were completed.⁴⁵

Wilcox's division relieved Sturgis, and as soon as the fresh troops reported and could be put in line, the order was given to advance. Wilcox's division formed the right; Colonel Benjamin C. Christ's brigade (28th Massachusetts, 8th and 17th Michigan, 79th New York and 50th Pennsylvania) was north and Colonel Thomas Welsh's brigade (8th Michigan, 46th New York, 45th and 100th Pennsylvania) was south of the road leading from Burnside's Bridge to the town of Sharpsburg. Colonel Crook's brigade of the Kanawha division supported Wilcox. Rodman's division formed on the left, and Colonel Edward Harland's brigade was the reserve for Rodman at the extreme left. Sturgis' division held the crest of the hill above the bridge.⁴⁶

In front of the town of Sharpsburg, Kemper's and Drayton's brigades waited anxiously for the Federals to come up from Otto's farm lane.



Kemper's and Drayton's brigades waited anxiously for the Federals to come up from Otto's farm lane. Map by Tim Belshaw, (SCDAH.) (1) (7) (12)



Sergeant James Henry Bruns, Company A, 15th South Carolina, wounded in action at Sharpsburg, September 17, 1863. (2)

Drayton's men were behind a stone wall on the edge of an orchard. The 51st Georgia was likely on Drayton's left and the 15th South Carolina in the middle, many with .69 caliber muskets firing "buck and ball." The Phillips' Legion was probably on the right of Drayton's battle line with Kemper's brigade to its right.⁴⁷

As Colonel Harrison Fairchild's Federal brigade (9th, 89th and 103rd New York) came over the hill sixty yards away, Drayton's and Kemper's men fired at once. Their fire staggered the Yankees, and the blue-coated soldiers fell in squads. Facing

the 15th South Carolina muskets were the 9th New York Zouaves in their bright red pants and blue jackets. For another ten minutes, Drayton's and Kemper's men resisted fiercely. The New Yorkers approached to within thirty yards of the Confederate position and fired several volleys. The men who were left in the 9th New York Regiment bravely scrambled to their feet. Trampling dead and wounded alike, the New Yorkers rushed toward Drayton's Confederates at the stone wall along the orchard west of the mill house. Colonel Thomas Welsh's brigade kept pace with Fairchild's men and helped drive Drayton's men away from the stone wall.⁴⁸

It was during this fighting that the 15th South Carolina's Army of Northern Virginia battle flag was most likely captured by the Federals. The flag, with a red background and a star-studded blue cross of St. Andrew, was an Army of Northern Virginia 2nd bunting issue. It had been given to DeSaussure's regiment when Drayton's brigade joined Lee's army two months earlier. The 15th South Carolina flag was captured in front of the stone wall, just south of the orchard near the town of Sharpsburg, by Private Thomas Hare of Company D, 89th Regiment New York Volunteers, 1st Brigade, 3rd Division, IX United States Army Corps. Private Hare was killed later in the day, but he would be posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor (as would all men in the Union army who captured Confederate battle flags) for capturing the 1st Army of Northern Virginia battle flag issued to the 15th South Carolina Infantry.⁴⁹

Overcoming desperate resistance on the part of the Confederates, Fairchild's Federals crossed the stone wall behind which the 15th South

Carolina had been fighting and gained the heights in front of Sharpsburg. From there, they drove Kemper's and Drayton's Southerners back towards town. According to General Jones, the 15th South Carolina under Colonel DeSaussure fell back toward the town, "slowly and in good order, forming the nucleus on which the brigade rallied." After reaching Sharpsburg, the 15th South Carolina took up positions behind some stone houses on the edge of the town, where they held back the Federals' determined advance. Colonel Bradley T. Johnson later remembered that DeSaussure's men were "holding on with desperate tenacity to the stone barn and houses." The 15th South Carolina was "all that stood between Lee and route." Around half past four, A. P. Hill's column came up the Harpers Ferry road and deployed at the double-quick. DeSaussure's South Carolinians, along with remnants of Drayton's other units and some of Jones' and Toombs' other troops, joined in the counter attack with Hill's men, exhausted from a seventeen-mile march begun at sunrise. Together they plowed into the exposed left flank of the Federals under Rodman and Wilcox, saving the day for Lee's Confederates.⁵⁰

Generals Lee and Longstreet were greatly relieved when "Little Powell" Hill's men came up on the Confederate right and formed a junction with Jones' men. Hill's arrival, aided by Jones' troops, drove the Federals west of Burnside's Bridge back toward Antietam Creek. As McIntosh's Confederate artillerymen raced back to their abandoned pieces, Richardson's, Pegram's and



Battle flag of the 15th South Carolina captured at Sharpsburg. The flag was an Army of Northern Virginia second bunting issue. (14)