

**Document A: George Meade, "Pipe Creek Circular," July 1, 1863 (excerpt)**

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,

Taneytown, July 1, 1863.

From information received, the commanding general is satisfied that the object of the movement of the army in this direction has been accomplished, viz, the relief of Harrisburg, and the prevention of the enemy's intended invasion of Philadelphia, &c., beyond the Susquehanna. It is no longer his intention to assume the offensive until the enemy's movements or position should render such an operation certain of success.

If the enemy assume the offensive, and attack, it is his intention, after holding them in check sufficiently long, to withdraw the trains and other impedimenta; to Withdraw the army from its present position, and form line of battle with the left resting in the neighborhood of Middleburg, and the right at Manchester, the general direction being that of Pipe Creek. For this purpose, General Reynolds, in command of the left, will withdraw the force at present at Gettysburg, two corps by the road to Taneytown and Westminster, and, after crossing Pipe Creek, deploy toward Middleburg. The corps at Emmitsburg will be withdrawn, via Mechanicsville, to Middleburg, or, if a more direct route can be found leaving Taneytown to their left, to withdraw direct to Middleburg. . . .

The time for falling back can only be developed by circumstances. Whenever such circumstances arise as would seem to indicate the necessity for falling back and assuming this general line indicated, notice of such movement will be at once communicated to these headquarters and to all adjoining corps commanders.

Corps commanders, with their officers commanding artillery and the divisions, should make themselves thoroughly familiar with the country indicated, all the roads and positions, so that no possible confusion can ensue, and that the movement, if made, be done with good order, precision, and care, without loss or any detriment to the morale of the troops.

The commanders of corps are requested to communicate at once the nature of their present positions, and their ability to hold them in case of any sudden attack at any point by the enemy.

This order is communicated, that a general plan, perfectly understood by all, may be had for receiving attack, if made in strong force, upon any portion of our present position.

Roads and ways to move to the right or left of the general line should be studied and thoroughly understood. All movements of troops should be concealed, and our dispositions kept from the enemy. Their knowledge of these dispositions would be fatal to our success, and the greatest care must be taken to prevent such an occurrence. . . .

By command of Major-General Meade:

**Document B: Capt. David Beem to wife, July 5, 1865 (excerpt)**

July 5, 1863

My dearest Hala—

The Army of the Potomac has again met the enemy, and after three days' desperate fighting have achieved the most glorious victory of the war. The fighting ceased on the evening of the third, but until now have had no chance to write, and even now my facilities for writing are very poor, but I will give you the best narrative of events I can. . . . When arrived within a few miles of this town, we ascertained that the First Army Corps had that day engaged the enemy, and it with a portion of the Eleventh Corps was badly defeated, the rebels outnumbering them. They fell back a mile to the East and North of Gettysburg . . . Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps got within two miles on Wednesday, the 1<sup>st</sup> on the morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> we took our place in the line of battle, and without having time to eat breakfast we were ready for the great conflict. We had a splendid position. . . .

On Thursday the 2<sup>nd</sup> with the exception of occasional cannon, all was quiet until about 3 o'clock P.M. when the rebels opened all the batteries on our left. The firing was awful, and proceeded from left to right, . . . until the whole line sent up one grand roar and dense cloud of smoke. At 4 P.M. the artillery slackened, and for a few moments it seemed the demonstration was for that day over. In a few moments, however, our pickets commenced a rapid musketry fire on the extreme left. They soon came hurrying back to the lines, and in a moment the rebels, massed in tremendous columns, rushed with loud cheers upon the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps, commanded by Sickles. Bravely did these gallant veterans meet and with the timely assistance of other forces this part of the line was made as strong as a mountain, which all the desperate energy of the rebels could not sway. . . .

At 4 ½ in the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Friday, they made a desperate effort was made to break our right, which rested on a range of hills. The fighting was nearly all of musketry, and for six long hours the crash and roar of close fighting was kept up with greater desperation than has perhaps been witnessed in this war. Time and again the rebels charged our line, which sometimes swayed backwards, but only to come forwards again. At 10 o'clock, finding that they could not break our right wing, they fell back. Comparative quiet then prevailed until about five in the evening. At this time, they massed all their forces for a last bold dash. It seems that every available man was put in their column for this desperate onslaught. The attack was made a little to the left of our center, and they came on with tremendous power. They had to pass over open fields under our artillery which opened with a roar of thunder upon them, and thinned their ranks. Three times were they repulsed. Again they swept forwards while our infantry advanced upon the open plain to meet them, and then commenced the last and bloodiest conflict. It was soon decided. Our men swept the field like a tornado, left it strewn with the dead and dying, captured several thousands, and were victors on the bloody field. This was a grand and glorious moment. All our banners floated, and from one end of our line to the other, tens of thousands sent up their cheers. Thus ended the three days' conflict—Fighting a desperate foe for three days on the 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> + 3<sup>rd</sup> of July the Army of the Potomac, long resting under the disgrace of public opinion, celebrated the glorious 4<sup>th</sup> of July with their guns still black with powder, and on the very field where they had vindicated their bravery—

I have not been over the battle field, to a great extent. But every where may be seen all the horrific remains of a bloody day. . . . All the boys of Co. H were in the engagement and all did their whole duty. Our flag has many scars, and I shall send it home for safe keeping soon.

David Beem, 14<sup>th</sup> Indiana Volunteers

## Document C: Abraham Lincoln to George Meade, July 14, 1863

Executive Mansion,

Washington, July 14, 1863.

Major General Meade

I have just seen your despatch to Gen. Halleck, asking to be relieved of your command, because of a supposed censure of mine—I am very—very—grateful to you for the magnificent success you gave the cause of the country at Gettysburg; and I am sorry now to be the author of the slightest pain to you-- But I was in such deep distress myself that I could not restrain some expression of it-- I had been oppressed nearly ever since the battles at Gettysburg, by what appeared to be evidences that your self, and Gen. Couch, and Gen. Smith, were not seeking a collision with the enemy, but were trying to get him across the river without another battle. What these evidences were, if you please, I hope to tell you at some time, when we shall both feel better.

The case, summarily stated, is this. You fought and beat the enemy at Gettysburg; and, of course, to say the least, his loss was as great as yours. He retreated; and you did not, as it seemed to me, pressingly pursue him; but a flood in the river detained him, till, by slow degrees, you were again upon him. You had at least twenty thousand veteran troops directly with you, and as many more raw ones within supporting distance, all in addition to those who fought with you at Gettysburg; while it was not possible that he had received a single recruit; and yet you stood and let the flood run down, bridges be built, and the enemy move away at his leisure, without attacking him. And Couch and Smith! The latter left Carlisle in time, upon all ordinary calculation, to have aided you in the last battle at Gettysburg; but he did not arrive. At the end of more than ten days, I believe twelve, under constant urging, he reached Hagerstown from Carlisle, which is not an inch over fifty-five miles, if so much. And Couch's movement was very little different.

Again, my dear general, I do not believe you appreciate the magnitude of the misfortune involved in Lee's escape. He was within your easy grasp, and to have closed upon him would, in connection with our other late successes, have ended the war. As it is, the war will be prolonged indefinitely. If you could not safely attack Lee last Monday, how can you possibly do so South of the river when you can take with you very few more than two thirds of the force you then had in hand? It would be unreasonable to expect, and I do not expect you can now effect much. Your golden opportunity is gone, and I am distressed immeasurably because of it.

I beg you will not consider this a prosecution, or persecution of yourself. As you had learned that I was dissatisfied, I have thought it best to kindly tell you why.

Abraham Lincoln