



Union General Judson Kilpatrick

During the early morning hours of July 4, 1863, Confederate Major General Robert E. Lee ordered the withdraw of his Confederate Army from Gettysburg. General Lee had decided to use Monterey Pass as the main route for the retreat. Monterey Pass was the shortest and most direct route from Gettysburg, PA to Williamsport, MD, for access to the Potomac River. The first to leave Pennsylvania were the wagons trains. At Monterey Pass, the reserve wagon train under the command of Major John Harman was the first to move. Following behind was the wagon train of General Richard Ewell's Corps. A portion of a wagon train belonging to General A. P. Hill's Corps was bringing up the rear. A total of about fifty miles worth of wagons would travel through Monterey Pass.

During the same afternoon, seven miles to the east of Monterey Pass at Emmitsburg, Maryland, Union General Judson Kilpatrick's cavalry division came into town. Kilpatrick's cavalry division was ordered to locate, harass, and block the avenue of retreat at South Mountain. By 3:00 p.m., Kilpatrick's cavalry, consisting of 5,000 mounted soldiers and sixteen pieces of rifled artillery, left Emmitsburg and headed toward the mountain.

Toward evening, at Fountaindale, Charles H. Buhrman, a local farmer, learned of the Confederate retreat at Monterey Pass, as well as the capture of several local citizens. He mounted his horse and traveled toward Emmitsburg looking for Federal soldiers in area. He came across one of General George A. Custer's scouts and reported the situation on top of the mountain near Monterey Pass. With General Custer's brigade in the advance, they moved quickly to the base of the mountain, arriving at dusk in the rain.

The 5th Michigan Cavalry was the first of Kilpatrick's cavalry division to climb the mountain. As darkness and worsening weather conditions began to set in, Custer's men were blinded by the surprise muzzle blast from a Confederate cannon. The first shot was fired directly into the head of the 5th Michigan Cavalry, causing confusion and chaos in the ranks of the cavalymen. Two more shots were again fired by Confederate artillerymen. After the confusion subsided, Captain George Emack's small squad, Co. B, 1st Maryland Cavalry charged and drove the Federals back.

Fearing another Union advance, the Confederates withdrew and redeployed near the Monterey Inn, positioned on both sides of the road. Meanwhile, Captain Emack rode toward the Maria Furnace Road that the wagons were on, trying desperately to get them moving as fast as they could, while struggling to get the other half of the wagon train that was approaching the pass to stop.

General Custer's brigade reorganized and advanced toward the summit. For the next several hours in the rain and darkness, the opposing forces engaged in some of the most confusing and chaotic fighting of the Civil War. In some instances, the soldiers could only tell where the enemy was by flashes of the muzzle from their guns, the cannon, or lightning in the sky that illuminated their positions. Gaining the eastern side of the summit, Kilpatrick ordered the 1st Vermont Cavalry to Leitersburg in order to attack the Confederate wagons as they came off of South Mountain. He also ordered a portion of the 1st Michigan Cavalry to attack Fairfield Pass, one mile east of Monterey Pass. Near the Monterey Inn, General Kilpatrick deployed a section of artillery and shelled the Confederate battle lines that were positioned near modern day Route 16.



Union General George A. Custer

By 3:00 a.m., along Red Run, just west of the Monterey Inn, Custer's men, supported by artillery, dismounted and attacked the Confederate cavalry near the Tollgate house. The Confederate cavalry received infantry re-enforcements. During the thickest of the fight, General Grumble Jones, commanding the fight, ordered his couriers and staff officers to get into the fight, as well as the wounded who could fire a gun.



Confederate General Grumble Jones

General Custer's brigade dismounted, and fought several hours throughout the night. By 3:30 a.m., on July 5, the 1st West Virginia Cavalry and a portion of the 1st Ohio Cavalry were ordered to the front to support Custer's battle line. The West Virginians and Ohioans charged the Confederate cannon, tumbling it down the embankment and began destroying wagons and taking on prisoners. Major Charles Capehart of the 1st West Virginia Cavalry would later receive the Medal of Honor for his actions at Monterey Pass.

As soon as the West Virginians cleared the pass and began its charge down the mountainside, Custer and his troopers finally began storming through the long line of wagons "like a pack of wild Indians," overturning many wagons and setting fire to others as the Union cavalry collected their bounty until dawn. In some instances, panic stricken horses with no where to go fell off the mountain cliffs and overturned their wagons into the steep ravines.

More Confederate re-enforcements arrived, forcing General Kilpatrick to give up the fight and dash for Maryland. The fight then continued into Maryland, making this battle the only one fought on both sides of the Mason and Dixon Line. Once Kilpatrick was at Ringgold, Maryland he ordered his cavalry to halt. The wagons that were not destroyed were burned in the open fields at Ringgold.

Nine miles of Confederate wagons were destroyed or captured and 1,300 Confederate soldiers were killed, wounded or captured. The Union cavalry suffered just fewer than 100 casualties during the Battle of Monterey Pass. With Monterey Pass still in possession of the Confederates, the main portion of Lee's army would begin its retreat from Gettysburg, with the last Confederate soldier marching through Monterey Pass during the afternoon of July 6, 1863.



Planning Your Visit

The Museum: This facility houses Civil War artifacts from the Battle of Monterey Pass, as well as well as artifacts of the time period. Interpretive panels in the museum orientate park visitors about the importance of the Battle of Monterey Pass. We do offer several PowerPoint presentations that tell the story of Monterey Pass during the American Civil War. Hours of operations are weekends only from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., April - November.

When planning your trip, please keep in mind that there are no food facilities, so please plan ahead. The Monterey Pass Battlefield Park is a trash free park. Overflow parking and oversize vehicles such as buses or trucks with trailers must park at Rolando Woods Lions Club Park off of Charmian Road.

No food, drinks, or pets are allowed in the museum. However, service dogs are welcome. Shirt and shoes must be worn at all times in the museum. Flash photography is strictly prohibited, as flash can be damaging to the artifacts. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times. The museum is handicap accessible. We appreciate your cooperation.



The Battlefield Park: The Monterey Pass Battlefield Park is currently owned by Washington Township, and is accessible from 8:00 am to dusk. Walking trails will open in 2016.



Touring the Battlefield: Several wayside exhibits are located along the battlefield at the Fountaindale Fire Department, Hawley Memorial Presbyterian Church, Pen Mar Washington County Park and Leitersburg, MD. Touring the battlefield takes about two to two and a half hours, and covers the key portions of the battlefield, although much of the battlefield is in private ownership. Be sure to pick up a self guided tour brochure. The tour itself is roughly 22 miles and covers some of the most rugged mountain roads in the Monterey area. Please use caution when traveling these roads. The best time of the year to tour the Monterey area is from March to mid November.

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projects, cultural activities, and special projects that benefit the preservation and interpretation of lands with a historical significance of the Monterey Pass Battlefield, to include the retreat from Gettysburg. Help us support preservation and become a member today!

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