

CONTESTED MEMORY: JOHN BADGER BACHELDER, THE MAINE GETTYSBURG COMMISSION, AND HALLOWED GROUND

BY CROMPTON BURTON

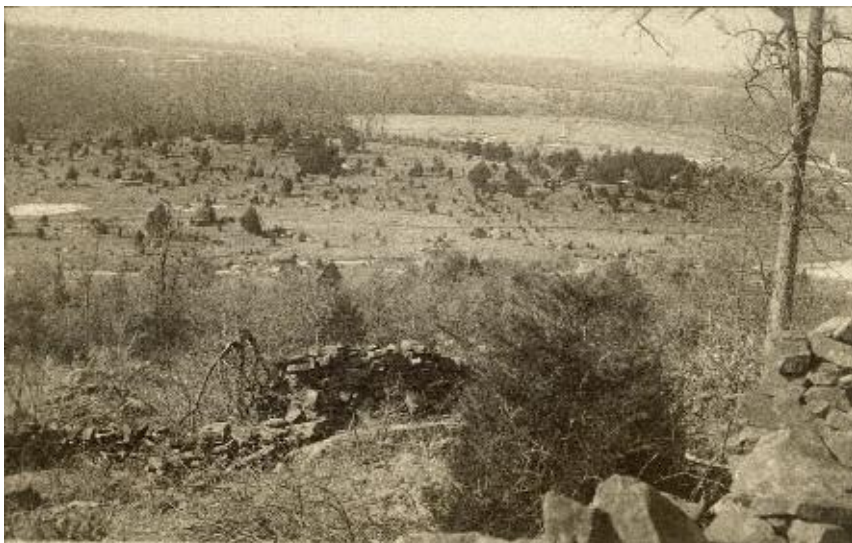
In the grim aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg, John Badger Bachelder, a young artist from New Hampshire, arrived on the field with a master plan to become the preeminent historian of the battle. However, Bachelder quickly learned he could not monopolize the memorializing of those who gave all for the Union. For the next thirty-one years, his vision for remembrance would, by necessity, become a shared one with veterans who were emotionally invested in the preservation of the hallowed ground. The consequence of this collaboration was a uniquely American approach to commemoration in which individual states formed commissions to coordinate their consecration of the ground upon which their native sons had fallen. The Maine Gettysburg Commission was typical of these state organizations. Its efforts to seek appropriate memorials and monuments to honor the sacrifice of its regiments upon the field were marked by instances of contention and controversy. The men dedicated to remembering their own service at times fought a bitter second civil war over the memory of the first. The author is associate vice president for advancement at Marietta College in Ohio; this is his twenty-fifth year of higher education administration, specializing in communications. He earned his B.A. in radio-television production from the University of Arizona, and an M.A. in journalism from Ohio University. A frequent contributor to the Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Freedom of Expression at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, he has authored numerous chapters in related works released by Purdue University Press and Transaction Press, and published an article on the Maine Civil War veteran experience in the New England Quarterly.

ON THE morning of July 5, 1863, members of the Nineteenth Maine Infantry Regiment emerged from their positions near a copse of trees not far from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Grimly, they surveyed the scene to their front where lay the wreckage of Confederate Major General George Pickett's once-proud division of Virginians.

Hundreds of dead still littered the field two days after the rebels had hurled themselves at the New Englanders and the Army of the Potomac in one last desperate attempt to break the Union center. In the wake of the charge's bloody repulse, it was left to the exhausted Federals to bury fallen enemies and comrades alike.¹ Nearby, civilians hunted for news of loved ones. Photographic artists sought subjects for their tableaux. And, in the hastily constructed field hospitals along the Baltimore Pike, the Nineteenth's wounded joined thousands of others awaiting the attention of overworked surgeons while enterprising embalmers set up shop in close proximity to the improvised wards and jostled for competitive advantage.²

Such was the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg. To one relief worker, Cornelia Hancock, it represented a "sea of anguish." To a medical officer, it was "an occasion of the greatest amount of suffering known to the nation since its birth." To a young painter from New Hampshire, John Badger Bachelder, Gettysburg in the first few days after the close of combat manifested something entirely different: the opportunity of a lifetime.³ Bachelder had been waiting to capture a battle of epic proportion on canvas since the start of the war. A thirty-eight-year-old teacher, artist, and colonel in the Pennsylvania militia, Bachelder had been disappointed in his previous stint as an observer with Union troops on the Peninsula in Virginia in 1862, and departed the army for home, but not before asking that he be given notice "of any important movements looking to a decisive engagement." He went home "to wait," as he said, "for the great battle which would naturally decide the contest: study its topography on the field and learn its details from the actors themselves, and eventually prepare its written and illustrated history."⁴ A year later, Bachelder received word of the clash in Pennsylvania and arrived shortly after the battle to execute his master plan for completing his master work.

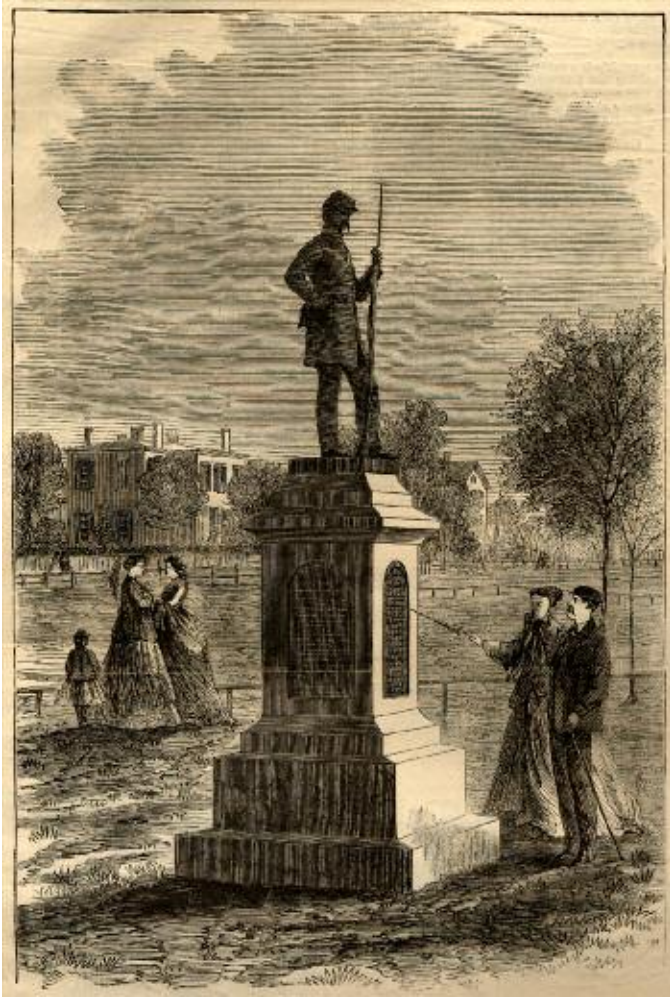
For the next eighty-four days, Bachelder tirelessly toured the field sketching details of the ground and canvassing the wounded to capture their raw and unvarnished recollections. By late fall 1863, he successfully published an isometric map featuring the position of every Union and Confederate regiment engaged in the three-day struggle. The map was only the beginning of a lifelong quest to develop and preserve the story of Gettysburg. Through his single-minded pursuit of additional facts and information Bachelder ultimately came to be known as the preeminent authority on the Battle of Gettysburg in the late nineteenth century and, in his later years, was an important catalyst for the commemoration movement.



View from Little Round Top, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, c. 1895. Maine veterans' groups worked with the Maine Gettysburg Commission to build and dedicate monuments to Maine regiments that fought at Gettysburg. Maine Historical Society Collections.

Yet, for all that, John Badger Bachelder remains largely unknown today. Perhaps it is because he never painted his epic portrait of the battle, never published its definitive history, and only grudgingly recognized that he would not, indeed could not, single-handedly preserve the memory of what happened at Gettysburg or monopolize the memorialization of those who fell there. Given the depth of their experience, men such as the survivors of the Nineteenth Maine believed that “they had made a unique contribution to the nation and had a unique responsibility to preserve their heritage.”⁵

As a consequence, while Bachelder remained influential in administering memorialization, he eventually was forced to yield to thousands of veterans in a sometimes collaborative, yet often contentious effort to preserve the memory of the battle. Although their shared body of work combined to produce the military park at the Gettysburg battlefield, it also created significant controversy. Historians of Civil War memory have typically argued that relative solidarity existed among Union veterans, who then later extended the olive branch to Confederate veterans by the end of the nineteenth century.⁶ Although all Union veterans undoubtedly agreed on the righteousness of the cause for which they fought, Union army veterans did not constitute a monolithic group; nor



The Soldiers' Monument in Lewiston was erected soon after the war and dedicated in February 1868. Maine veterans supported memorialization efforts in Gettysburg, but also in their own communities. Maine Historical Society Collections.

did they all get along. Civil War commemoration was fraught with difficulties. Squabbles were common – and not just between the former enemies. Many men made commemoration a personal goal, and therefore took any slights personally. There is ample evidence that much of the commemorative activities of the postwar era included idealistic and reconciliationist aspects. Yet, at Gettysburg, the matter remained as personal as it had in July 1863, and yielding ground on points of memory, let alone fact, was just as distasteful as abandoning the line along the crest of Little Round Top. Indeed, it was widely held that those who had sacrificed all deserved more from their comrades than what veteran Albion Tourgee disparagingly called “a little cheap laudation, in silly deference to a sickly sentimentality.”⁷

Upon arrival at Gettysburg the visitor is often overwhelmed by what historian Thomas Desjardin labels “the world’s largest collection of outdoor sculpture.” Those who walk the field are greeted by more than 1,300 statues, memorials, and tablets. They remain noteworthy for their number, dramatic presentation, portrayal of the past, and finally, for the purposes of this study, the all-but-forgotten but still-relevant history that describes how they came to mark the hallowed ground. “What few people realize as they read the inscriptions and walk from one to another is that there is a deep and enlightening story behind the placement of each monument,” observes Desjardin.⁸

Many of the granite and bronze renderings are, in fact, the direct result of a long abandoned approach to honoring the memory of Civil War sacrifice, commemoration by state-appointed commission. Their arduous efforts that included canvassing regimental associations, arguing for appropriations, and winning myriad approvals were, more often than not, refereed by Bachelder himself in his role as a battlefield superintendent of tablets and legends. Such a method was understandably fraught with difficulty.

Historians who have written about Civil War commemoration have typically viewed the bureaucratic process of creating such battlefield monuments as being most notable for the petty squabbles that they generated and tended to give them short shrift.⁹ However, rather than dwell upon the shortcomings of the state commissions, it is perhaps more important than ever to revisit their limited lifespans and commemorative contributions. For better or for worse, they accounted for the design and delivery of the majority of the original Gettysburg monuments, as well as the legends, inscriptions, and history etched into the stone faces. Revisiting and understanding the origins of those words and symbols is

fundamental to evaluating their validity as accurate representations of what took place during the deadly contest at Gettysburg. In learning more about the process by which they were created, we learn about the passions and concerns of the veterans who labored to ensure their legacy. That, in turn, illuminates the struggle for memory of the Civil War, which extended to the regimental level decades after the battle on the field in Pennsylvania.

The Maine Gettysburg Commission was typical of these state organizations. It was created by an act of the state legislature in 1887 and originally chartered for a term of not more than three years. Its chairman was Brevet Brigadier General Charles Hamlin, son of Abraham Lincoln's first-term vice president, Hannibal Hamlin. Born in Hampden in 1837, he was educated at the Bridgton and Bethel academies and graduated from Bowdoin College in 1857. Hamlin practiced law before the war, but suspended his legal career to enter the service, where he was commissioned a major. After earning commendation at Gettysburg, he was among those in attendance at Ford's Theatre on the evening of Lincoln's assassination; he took command of the streets of the capital to maintain order in its aftermath. After leaving the army, Hamlin returned to practicing law before entering politics. He won several terms in the Maine House of Representatives, and was later appointed to the state's Supreme Court. For all his accomplishments, he was done no favor in being awarded leadership of the Maine Gettysburg Commission, though he favored future historians and researchers by faithfully preserving his incoming commission correspondence and files among his family papers.

Far beyond mundane minutes and parliamentary procedures, the commission correspondence chronicles an all-but-lost dynamic of the country's first tentative efforts to preserve Civil War memory. Contained within the files are passionate exchanges between battle-hardened veterans engaged in a bitter second contest over memory of the conflict. There are dozens of letters that demonstrate the survivor's obsession with trivial detail and a need to get the story straight, or as straight as their recollections allowed. Finally, there is documentation of the final steps to complete the state's sixteen statues and dedicate them in a way fitting to not only the sacrifice upon the field in 1863, but the long forgotten toil of Hamlin, the commission, and the thousands of veterans who dedicated much of their remaining years to ensure the legacy of their fallen comrades as well as their own.

Remembering the battle in the same way in which federal troops fought it—in ranks arranged and organized into state regiments and



Perhaps best known as Hannibal Hamlin's son, Charles Hamlin was a major in the Union army during the war and later served in the Maine legislature and on the state supreme court. He was actively involved with the memorialization efforts of Maine veterans, and became head of the Maine Gettysburg Commission. From the Hamlin Family Papers. Courtesy of Fogler Library Special Collections, University of Maine.

even brigades—actually began only days after the field was cleared and the Union army moved off in a tentative pursuit of the retreating Confederates. Pennsylvania's governor, Andrew Gregg Curtin, first toured the battlefield even as Bachelder made his exhaustive survey and quickly surmised that from the widespread burial sites there would need to be an organization of efforts to properly inter the dead and create a central cemetery to honor their memory. Curtin appointed Gettysburg attorney David Wills to act as his agent, instructing him to purchase land, correspond with elected officials from other Union states, and secure the funds necessary to move forward.¹⁰

At a meeting in Harrisburg on December 17, 1863, state-appointed

commissioners met to advance plans for the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg. Maine dispatched Major Benjamin W. Norris, a paymaster of volunteers, to represent its interests and, through his efforts and those of his colleagues in Augusta, 104 Maine soldiers were buried in the new cemetery. Over the next eight years, until care of the cemetery was transferred to the U.S. government, some \$4,300 was appropriated to cover the state's share of creating and maintaining its plot. The precedent was set: states, often through their legislatures, would furnish the resources with which memorialization initiatives would be launched and carried forward.¹¹

Not long afterwards, the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association (GBMA) was formed in April 1864. Governor Curtin placed his signature on its charter in response to the interests of local citizens desiring to "hold, and preserve the battlegrounds of Gettysburg." Modest in its initial efforts to buy small parcels of land on Little Round Top, Cemetery Hill, and Culp's Hill, the association remained largely dormant until organizing a reunion of officers from the Army of the Potomac in 1869. In this John Bachelder played an active role, announcing the gathering in several newspapers to boost attendance. For five days in August, Bachelder walked the field with more than one hundred Union officers and a handful of Confederate veterans, all the while driving numbered stakes into the ground to mark unit positions based upon the memory of his companions.¹²

By the end of the 1870s, the nation experienced a revival of interest in the Civil War; its collective imagination became dominated by the war as its survivors grew to middle and old age. One veteran, Carleton McCarthy, mused, "A real good hearty war like that dies hard. No country likes to part with a good earnest war. It likes to talk about the war, write its history, fight its battles over and over again, and build monument after monument to commemorate its glories."¹³ Nowhere was this more the case than at Gettysburg. The first monument placed on the field beyond the boundaries of the cemetery was a small tablet designed by Pennsylvania veterans in 1878 to commemorate the spot where Colonel Strong Vincent was mortally wounded on Little Round Top. The first regimental monument was erected by the Second Massachusetts in 1879.¹⁴

At about this time, Bachelder, still laboring to write the battle's official history, became something more than an ex-officio member of the Battlefield Memorial Association, with a formal appointment to its board in June 1880. Within two years, his unmistakable influence became apparent as the organization began clever initiatives to enlist veter-

ans as advocates for the organization's commemorative cause. In a savvy move to awaken the public to the desperate need for new funding, the GBMA placed cheap sign-boards to locate *only* the positions of the Pennsylvania and First Minnesota regiments. Care was taken to ensure that these markers were highly visible to those attending battlefield reunions and, by summer 1882, the move achieved the "desired effect." The association's official history noted, "Visitors from other States, in passing over the field, would inquire with indignation whether there were no other troops than Pennsylvanians engaged in the battle, and, upon being informed that only the States of Pennsylvania and Minnesota had made appropriations, naturally became desirous of having their States properly represented. Public interest was thus gradually being awakened."¹⁵

Among those taking notice during a reunion organized by Bachelder in 1882 were Ellis Spear and Howard Prince. Veterans of the Twentieth Maine, they saw the markers and returned home to report them to their comrades. The two officers advocated for the Twentieth Maine Regimental Association to erect its own monument on Little Round Top. This idea met with the approval of the association, which soon dispatched a committee of seven to the battlefield in October 1882 to select an appropriate site for the memorial. The task completed, masons at the Hallowell Granite Works near Augusta fashioned the monument for Little Round Top, delivered it to Gettysburg, and set it in 1886, with dedication ceremonies deferred to a later date.¹⁶

Bachelder approved the location, design, inscription, and placement of the memorial in his new capacity as the GBMA's Superintendent of Tablets and Legends. His appointment to that position in July 1883 paralleled new guidelines adopted by the association requiring all monument proposals be submitted for review. The Twentieth Maine's was likely advanced with minimal discussion or delay. There was little in its draft inscription to excite either controversy or even revision and after the GBMA secured purchase of the ground upon which the monument would be placed the organization was prepared to move forward to coordinate dedication ceremonies as appropriate.¹⁷

Such would not always be the case. Bachelder had many bitter battles during which veterans challenged his authority and judgment. Denial of an Ohio regiment's design, advocacy for relocating statues, and ultimately rancorous conflict with the Seventy-second Pennsylvania over the location of its monument occupied a great deal of his time and left him profoundly upset and pointedly vengeful. The latter dispute with

the Pennsylvanians became so heated the regimental association filed a law suit against the GBMA that was eventually taken up by the state's Supreme Court, with the final ruling finding for the plaintiffs.¹⁸

Somehow, in the midst of writing his history, reviewing monument proposals, and advocating for the GBMA, Bachelder became a member of the organization's Committee on Legislation as well. Joining with colleagues Louis Wagner and John Mitchell Vanderslice, he sought to "correspond with the officials and Legislatures of the several States, urging appropriations, and to adopt other measures to awaken more general interest, especially among soldiers, in the work of the Association." By the time the Twentieth Maine erected its memorial on Little Round Top in 1886, the committee had successfully engaged state commissions from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Minnesota in active programs of funding, land purchase, and monument design and placement.¹⁹

By late fall 1886, at regimental reunions and Grand Army of the Republic posts around Maine, Union army veterans began to discuss the current state of commemorative efforts. In particular, the men discussed the Twentieth Maine's new monument, as well as the progress of commissions in other states. Realizing others were perhaps stealing a march, General Hamlin carried a strong sense of urgency with him to a public hearing before the legislature in Augusta on January 27, 1887, during which he argued for a generous appropriation for the placement of memorials in honor of Maine's sacrifice at Gettysburg. In this, he was aided by influential veterans sharing his strong sense of the need for immediate action. Colonel Edward Moore and Major W.H. Green of the Seventeenth Maine and the Honorable J.W. Wakefield, former quartermaster of the Nineteenth Maine, were particularly persuasive and representative of the strength of the veteran lobby in moving legislatures toward support of commemorative efforts, not just in Maine, but around the North as a whole.²⁰

The state legislature's Committee on Military Affairs looked favorably upon his appeal and, on February 25, 1887, approved \$2,500 for the GBMA's purchase of land and \$12,500 for the creation of monuments with expenditures to be supervised by a commission of no fewer than sixteen members made up of "one member of each regiment, battery, battalion, company or staff officer, who were present at the battle, to be appointed by the Governor." The roster of the Maine Gettysburg Commission was full of prominent veterans including Hamlin, Charles Tilden, Greenlief T. Stevens, and Selden Connor, along with General

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, General Francis Heath, and General Thomas Hyde, among others. The work was to be completed by November 1, 1890, although the commission later sought to accelerate its efforts in hopes of dedicating its memorials on the occasion of the battle's twenty-fifth anniversary.²¹

Maine governor Joseph Robinson Bodwell convened the commission's first meeting at Gettysburg in May 1887, appointing an executive committee to guide the organization's large membership. The committee was obliged "to supervise the work of the Commission, receive designs, etc., for the monuments, contract for their construction and erection, arrange for their dedication, publish a report of their proceedings, and, in general to have charge of all such matters pertaining to the Commission as may be done by an Executive Committee." Before departing Pennsylvania, members of the commission were accompanied by a representative of the GBMA on a tour of the battlefield during which they agreed upon suitable locations for the Maine monuments. Their guide that spring day was none other than John Bachelder.²²

The selection of Hamlin as chair at a subsequent meeting in Augusta proved especially fortuitous, as he assumed his duties with enthusiasm and energy. In June 1887, Hamlin instructed the commission's secretary, Major Greenlief T. Stevens, to draft and distribute a circular to each regimental association. Modest in its scope, the document invited designs and legends for each unit's monument indicating that the amount earmarked for each would be \$840, at the most, although it could be increased or enhanced by private subscription.²³

The Twentieth Maine Regimental Association had already erected a monument on the field at its own expense the year before and was at a loss as to how to reply. When the response did come from General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain late in the fall, it was testy, if not telling, in terms of diminished regard for the work of the GBMA and Bachelder. "I wish the 'Association' so omnipotent now at Gettysburg had been in existence in July '63 to furnish rules as to how we should make, or mark, history," he wrote. Chafing at the GBMA's exercise of control and bureaucracy as impediments to a funding scheme for a proposed second monument on Big Round Top, Chamberlain continued, "I infer from your letter that everything – material, design, inscription, work, etc. – must suit the ideas of various parties who now control the whole matter. Could we not in some way purchase our freedom of them, so that we could use our appropriation most economically and effectively?"²⁴

From the Sixth Maine Infantry Regiment came recommendations



Members of the Grand Army of the Republic in the Skowhegan area on parade in front of former governor Abner Coburn's house in Skowhegan, c. 1885. The GAR was an influential veterans' organization in the late nineteenth century. Courtesy of the Skowhegan History Museum & Research Center.

on granite options for the construction of its monument. Major Dow of the Sixth Maine Battery forwarded instructions on how the inscription for his unit's monument should read and hoped that special mention of the unit's gallantry at Gettysburg might be included in the carved legend and pass muster with Bachelder and the GBMA committee. Like his contemporaries in other northern states heading similar commissions, Hamlin soon became a collector of designs and inscriptions, a coordinator of correspondence, and, in the winter of 1888, the last word on which company would be awarded the contract for the construction of the monuments.²⁵

Hamlin had been approached the previous spring by A.B. Amringe of Boston's Smith Granite Company, who asked for his commission roster so that he might promote his firm's interests directly to the organization's members. He need not have bothered. There was little doubt who would get the bid. Governor Bodwell owned the Hallowell Granite Works and his foreman was General Charles W. Tilden, a member of the

commission and former commander of the Sixteenth Maine. Tilden had already been busy reviewing monument specifications and inscription drafts for weeks before the Hallowell concern was officially awarded the contract during a commission meeting on February 22, 1888. Five days later, Amringe wrote to Hamlin, "Heard today that all the Maine contracts for the Gettysburg monuments had been let. I cannot believe the rumor true for several reasons. Will you kindly write me if the rumor is correct?"²⁶

Amringe was a formidable competitor for the monument contract and rightly indignant at the way in which the Maine contract was eventually awarded, without even so much as an invitation for the Boston company to bid. The Smith Granite Company had already cut dozens of Gettysburg monuments for commissions in New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Massachusetts, and could have been excused for expecting at least the opportunity to make a presentation before the Maine Gettysburg Commission. Amringe's outrage is a reflection of the value of such contracts and the lucrative business that commemoration represented during the 1880s.²⁷

But the Maine Gettysburg Commission had precious little time to favor Amringe with an explanation while attempting to meet its October 1888 deadline for dedication. As the summer wore on, Hamlin and his commission struggled with the process. On July 12, Stevens wrote that he had been informed by the GBMA that the first two new Maine monuments erected at Gettysburg had been installed without approval of their inscriptions. The memorials of the Sixth Maine Battery and Seventeenth Maine Infantry were, as a consequence, unauthorized and still required proper approval. Stevens suggested that someone hurry to Hallowell, gather all the inscriptions, and forward them to Gettysburg for immediate review.²⁸

Even as Hamlin wrestled with that unexpected turn, he was in receipt of more troubling news from another member of his commission, General James A. Hall of the Second Maine Battery. His issue was not whether the legend on his association's monument would comply with the GBMA's ever-expanding list of conventions, such as requiring casualty figures and unit service records, but rather whether his own name would appear in the inscription. Contrary to the tradition of using the commanding officer's name at any given time to designate each artillery unit in the Army of the Potomac, twenty members of the Second Maine signed a petition stating that since the battery had several commanders while in the service, "it would be unjust, as well as in bad taste, to select

any of their names to appear on the monument.” Hall was astonished and laid the blame squarely upon one of the petitioners and a former comrade, General Davis Tillson, whose company had not been selected to deliver the memorial. Hall requested that the commission ignore the petition and inscribe “2nd Maine Battery, James A. Hall Captain Commanding.” He closed: “I only want to prevent a selfish man, who was not himself in the action at Gettysburg, and who is smarting under his failure to get some business advantage by making our monument, from doing me a gross injustice.” In the end, Hall won; the legend on the monument to the Second Maine Battery read: “HALL’S 2ND MAINE BATTERY. 1ST BRIG. 2ND DIV., 1ST CORPS. JULY 1, 1863.”²⁹

Prophetically, just two days after Hall wrote to Hamlin, Bachelder was in touch indicating he had heard a rumor Maine proposed to designate some of the artillery monuments by the name of their commanders and others by the number of the unit. Whether Hamlin had sought such a compromise in answer to the dispute between Hall and Tillson is unclear. But Bachelder, who had resigned as superintendent of tablets due to the increasing workload, was not bashful in suggesting the convention of using the names be continued. He admitted, “It may not have been the best thing to do to put the name of the commander on any battery monument.”³⁰

Such a concession was little solace to Hamlin, who was left to mediate the conflict, which turned out to be a harbinger of things to come. He had more pressing problems. With such delays it was little wonder that the Hallowell Granite Works informed the Maine Gettysburg Commission on August 28 that making the October dedication deadline was out of the question. An inventory of progress revealed that only three monuments were in place, all but one of the others well short of completion in the quarry, and the last, the Twentieth Maine’s, not even begun in the absence of having received any design from its regimental association. With great reluctance, Hamlin and his executive committee postponed “Maine Day” dedication ceremonies until the following year, 1889.³¹

In the ensuing twelve months, Hamlin and the commission sought additional appropriations for new GBMA initiatives, such as flanking markers and to secure a share of Bachelder’s pet project - the High Water Mark monument to commemorate the repulse of Pickett’s Charge at The Copse of Trees. They also dealt with another truculent missive from Chamberlain, who finally forwarded a design for the new Twentieth Maine monument on Big Round Top and lobbied for additional funds.



Reunion of the Twentieth Maine at Gettysburg in 1889. A monument is pictured in the background, on the left side of the image. General Joshua L. Chamberlain and the men of the Twentieth were very active in building monuments at Gettysburg. Maine Historical Society Collections.

Chamberlain, interested in what he believed appropriate recognition for his beloved regiment, argued for a rare second marker. “I see no over-indulgence in granting this,” he declared. “To be sure, the Regiment does not make its history in the placing of stones on that ground after these years; but I believe the State of Maine should be willing to assist the survivors of this Regiment in marking suitably the location of historic facts which have honored her name, as well as its own.”³²

Such distractions notwithstanding, Hamlin and his colleagues concentrated on planning for the dedication ceremonies and, by May 1889, reserved October 3 as “Maine Day” at Gettysburg. Their prescience in acting well in advance was fortunate as the Pennsylvania and Vermont commissions, along with a group of Boston veterans, each sought to secure the first week of the month for their own ceremonies and observances. At noon on Tuesday, October 1, 1889, hundreds of Maine veterans and friends of the regiments embarked for Pennsylvania upon a special train of the Portland and Penobscot Railroad. After an overnight steamer passage from Providence to Jersey City, and several stops later, they arrived at Gettysburg. The entourage was an impressive one. It included Governor Edwin Chick Burleigh, Hannibal Hamlin, and a cluster

of generals including Selden Connor, J.L. Chamberlain, and Charles Tilden. The next day, Thursday, October 3, the Maine contingent spent the morning and afternoon dedicating the individual monuments and holding regimental reunions before convening for formal exercises at the County Court House at 8 p.m.

Chamberlain, serving as President of the Day, opened the program, which was attended by more than four hundred veterans and scores more local citizens. Chamberlain gave an opening address and then yielded the podium to his regimental comrade, Theodore Gerrish, for a brief prayer. Hannibal Hamlin followed with remarks that set off a prescribed sequence in which the state commission formally transferred its monuments to the momentary care of Governor Burleigh before he, in turn, presented them for future administration to the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association. Selden Connor closed with a special oration that was quoted extensively by reporters at the ceremony for newspapers back home in New England such as the *Boston Globe*, *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, *Bangor Daily Commercial*, *Lincoln County News*, and *Portland Daily Press*. Said Connor: "Cut from the granite of our native hills, we bring hither memorials of valor and patriotism and implant them on the soil – thank God! – of our common country." He continued, "Pillar and shaft and block, so long as time shall spare them they will bear mute but impressive witness of the glorious fall of those who died the thrice-blessed death of the patriot." After the final benediction by the Nineteenth Maine's George R. Palmer, the exercises were adjourned.³³

Palmer and his comrades from the Nineteenth had reason to be satisfied as they departed for home the next day. Fashioned from Hallowell stone, their imposing granite cube of a monument occupied a prominent position just west of Hancock Avenue not far from The Copse of Trees and Bloody Angle. Its inscription described the regiment's heroic repulse of a Confederate attack along the Emmitsburg Road on the second day of the battle and the regiment's role in meeting the assault of Pickett less than twenty-four hours later.³⁴

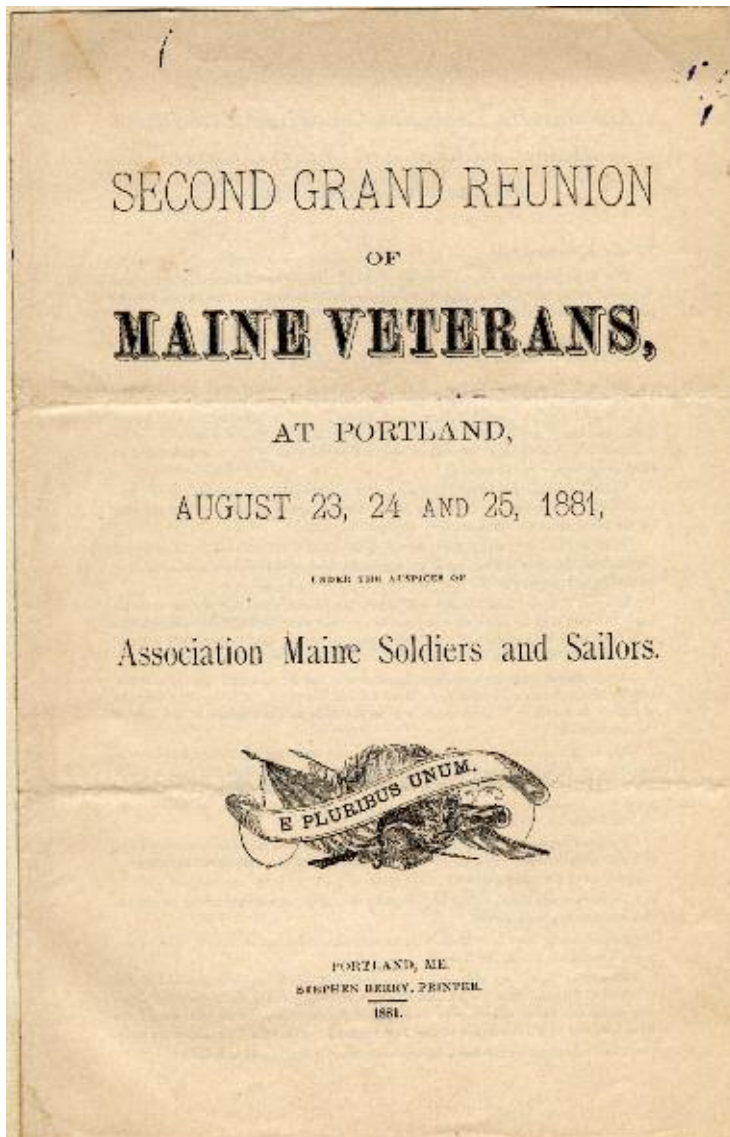
In the aftermath of the emotional October ceremonies, however, not everyone was so pleased. One source of consternation was the debate about what occurred at The Wheatfield during the battle. This debate involved a question of time. Quartermaster Howard Prince of the Twentieth Maine drew Bachelder's attention to what he perceived as a glaring lack of consistency in marking the approximate hour at which each unit became engaged. Wrote Prince: "As the monuments increase in number, this becomes more manifest and the regimental watches or recollections

of commanders rather than historical records seem to have been followed in their legends.” Prince was particularly annoyed by the inscription on the Seventeenth Maine memorial, which placed the regiment at its stone wall position as early as 3:10 p.m. “Now you know that no infantry or other fighting began at the wheat field at any such hour; and the legend is at least an hour too early,” chided Prince.³⁵

Ultimately, Prince’s concern, born of an overwhelming need to get the story straight and render timekeeping more consistent if not correct, forced Hamlin and the Maine Gettysburg Commission to revisit the reference. As a result, an updated bronze tablet was added to the monument to more accurately reflect the time the Seventeenth actually arrived at its position on the second day of the battle. Yet, even as Hamlin and his colleagues worked to address Prince’s issues, those of Lieutenant Edward N. Whittier came to light. The tone and rancor of his representations over the next eight months would prove to be a particular thorn in the side of the panel and its chairman.

Like Prince, Whittier wanted an existing inscription to be amended, and as in the case of Hall and the Second Maine Battery, the principal bone of contention was the name of the commander inscribed on the unit’s monument. For him, it was a question of who commanded the Fifth Maine Battery at the *actual* time of its greatest contribution to the Union stand atop Cemetery Hill on the battle’s second day. To lay claim for his own name to replace that of Major Greenlief T. Stevens on the Fifth’s memorial, Whittier wrote Hamlin on November 28, 1889, and boldly cited correspondence from General Abner Doubleday and Bachelder himself as compelling evidence for the commission to consider a correction. In the letters, both the general and the government historian praised Whittier’s command of the guns after Stevens had been wounded and taken from the field. Doubleday even went so far as to promise that in the upcoming second edition of his book, *Chancellorsville and Gettysburg*, he would make the adjustment. “I regret that you have never had justice done you for the brilliant service that the battery performed while under your direction at Gettysburg, in repelling, or rather crushing, the attack of the Texan troops in their attempt to make a permanent lodgement among the 11th Corps on Cemetery Hill,” Doubleday wrote. He concluded: “In the next issue of my book, I will see that the correction suggested by you is made.”³⁶

In February 1890, Whittier was again in contact with Hamlin and this letter to the chair of the commission revealed an escalating sense of urgency. “I hereby enter a formal protest against the inscriptions as they



Program for a Maine veterans' reunion, held at Portland in August 1881. Maine Historical Society Collections.

now stand on the monument recently erected on the ground defended by the 5-th Battery at Gettysburg, and I demand that proper action shall be had and that satisfactory corrections be made," he demanded. "The inscriptions are unjust, unhistorical, and unauthorized." On the latter point, Whittier argued that the text for the legend on the monument had never been reviewed by the Fifth Maine Battery's association.³⁷

Although Doubleday had proven malleable, Whittier underestimated Hamlin's commitment to commission protocol and failed to anticipate the resolve of the man he sought to supplant in stone, Major Greenlief T. Stevens. Mentioned in dispatches for gallantry at Cold Harbor, Petersburg, the Shenandoah Valley, and Cedar Creek, Stevens was also a Harvard-educated attorney and more than prepared to answer the arguments Whittier printed in a circular letter to the Fifth Maine Battery Association later in the spring of 1890. Stevens' own letter to the association, posted shortly after Whittier's missive made its rounds, read like a legal brief; Whittier's arguments wilted under the cross examination. When the commission met in Portland's Falmouth Hotel on July 26, it politely heard Whittier's complaints, but declined to make any adjustment on the monument to the Fifth Maine Battery.³⁸

The obsession with minute detail and appropriate credit that characterized the conflict between Whittier and Stevens manifested itself yet again in the final task that lay before the commission. Following the example of other states that had published reports of their commemorative efforts at Gettysburg, Hamlin and his colleagues turned their attention to the compilation of meeting minutes and regimental information for their own work, although they struggled mightily to secure responses from unit historians. Even after Hamlin and Stevens authored some of the chapters and articles to keep the project moving, it was discovered that not enough material existed to "make a book of desirable size and worthy of publication as a suitable report."³⁹

At the suggestion of Captain C.E. Nash, two unique features were proposed: comprehensive regimental sketches and rosters of men present including casualty lists of those killed in action, wounded, and missing. That such suggestions were offered is not surprising, even if these additional elements of the report ultimately tied up the commission for another seven years. By the early 1890s, old soldiers wore their military record as a badge of honor and, as historian Thomas Desjardin has noted, "participation in particular battles or service in particular units became a source of pride for veterans." In addition, they remained adamant about the need "to 'get the story right' – or 'to correct errors,' as

they frequently said – because they believed that accuracy about the war determined how future generations would understand what had happened and who was responsible for victory and defeat.”⁴⁰

Nobody took this work more seriously than Chamberlain, who was enlisted to try to sort out the stories and muster rolls for the Fourth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth regiments. He spent weeks at a time in the pursuit of the definitive record because, as biographer John J. Pullen writes, “As he and the nation grew older and as memories of the battle came to have almost sacred meaning, this work seemed very important to him. If there was any evidence at all that a man was on the hallowed field, Chamberlain wanted him to have credit for it, even if by this policy absentees got mixed into the list of those present.” The challenge in identifying who was present in the line, present but on detached service, or absent was captured in Chamberlain’s letter to Hamlin on January 20, 1897, in which he indicated that after spending hours seeking lists from an officer of the Sixteenth, he received yet another roster that resembled the other not at all. “But it is a remarkable fact, and one which illustrates the difficulty of arriving at the exact truth even in plain matters of fact in preparing ‘war histories,’ that the two lists so carefully made up differ so much as to [be] almost unrecognizable as intended for the same,” wrote Chamberlain.⁴¹

A month later, Chamberlain was in front of the executive committee of the commission in Augusta to submit the papers of the Sixteenth and finding no rubber stamps anywhere in sight. Before the panel for more than twelve hours, he became exasperated with its predisposition to cut, edit, and otherwise criticize his labors, and in appealing to Major Abner Small for assistance, he signed his letter of February 25, “yours (in not very good humor), J.L. Chamberlain.” A week later, he suggested Hamlin not try to include regimental sketches in the commission’s report. He advised, “These have no proper place in such a report as this; and they take up more space than any other papers.”⁴²

Hamlin chose to ignore Chamberlain’s counsel. The regimental service summaries remained and became a part of the commission’s 602-page report, which rolled off the presses in Portland in 1898. With the issue of the three thousand leather- and paper-bound copies, the last responsibility of the Maine Gettysburg Commission had been met. It stood adjourned more than a decade after it was originally chartered by the legislature, four years after Bachelder passed away, and a full three years after the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association transferred supervision of the field and all its monuments to the authority of the

Secretary of War, by act of the Senate and House of Representatives in February 1895.⁴³

Bachelder, who in his final years belatedly advocated for the marking of Confederate lines and positions for a price, died at his Massachusetts home of heart failure in 1894. Once acclaimed as his time's greatest authority on the battle, his legacy was not assured. By the late 1950s, few historians knew of him or cited his work, and far fewer Americans appreciated the value of his treasured recollections, first-person narratives, maps, and other materials.

Hamlin, for his part, was remembered in his home state primarily as the son of a vice president, competent Union staff officer, accomplished postwar attorney, and savvy politician, but not as chair of the Maine Gettysburg Commission. In its mention of Hamlin in association with the storied battle itself, the *Historical Times' Encyclopedia of the Civil War* references his multiple magazine articles and notes only that he "contributed to the book, *Maine at Gettysburg*." Yet, by the time his service concluded more than a decade after his appointment, Hamlin had more than justified the trust of his comrades in his determined execution of the office.⁴⁴

John Badger Bachelder and Charles Hamlin do not conjure images of commemoration at Gettysburg for generations of Americans. Instead, one of the most popular pictures of remembrance comes from a clip of grainy film captured on the occasion of the battle's seventy-fifth anniversary in 1938, during which aged Confederate veterans re-enacted Pickett's Charge. In the short and obviously staged feature, they are met at a stone wall by their Union counterparts, but instead of engaging in hand-to-hand combat as they did that scorching hot July day of so many years before, they lingered to pay their respects to one another with a symbolic handshake of shared admiration and reconciliation.

Such is the enduring picture of preservation at Gettysburg for millions of Americans to the exclusion of such key players as Bachelder and Hamlin. Perhaps that is because the photo opportunity of Billy Yanks and Johnny Rebs putting their differences to rest is preferable to the contention and controversy of the commissions and their work. As a consequence, it may be argued that the cruelest twist of history is not that one is remembered incorrectly, but rather that one is remembered not at all. Such appears to be the case for both men, at least in relation to Gettysburg, and, perhaps, is not unfounded given that in some aspects of their work, each failed. Bachelder never personally painted the epic portrait of the battle and never published its definitive history. Hamlin presided

over a panel often consigned to mediating petty squabbles between cantankerous veterans seeking to gain credit or deny it to others, that missed the deadline to dedicate Maine's Gettysburg statues on the battle's twenty-fifth anniversary, and that took ten years to complete its report.

Taken individually, Bachelder and Hamlin suffer from both real and perceived shortcomings, but considered in tandem, their collective contributions to the commemorative effort are less in question. In point of fact, one empowered the other. Bachelder's early work awakened a nation of Union veterans to both the need and the opportunity for memorialization at Gettysburg and eventually placed Hamlin in a position to be an agent by which Maine's role in the battle was forever captured in granite and bronze. For all their faults, these statues present enduring testimony to those who sacrificed all to preserve the Union and to the dedication of those who sought remembrance for their comrades. As Hamlin argued in the preface to *Maine at Gettysburg*, "The time and labor thus spent have . . . aided in setting forth the facts more fully, accurately, and reliably, and in a manner justly due to the memory of those who so freely gave their lives to their country on this eventful field."⁴⁵

That hundreds of thousands of Americans annually visit Gettysburg and walk among the monuments, experiencing first-hand the history that they portray, further validates the notion that despite their shared challenges Bachelder, Hamlin, and their colleagues did manage to preserve a lasting legacy for succeeding generations. Those among the masses willing to accept the invitation of Desjardin to explore further and ponder the story behind the location of the statues and the origins of the legends carved into their many faces gain even more. Besides their understanding of events in 1863, they stand to develop an appreciation for a postwar period populated by the likes of John Badger Bachelder and General Charles Hamlin and to encounter all the contention, controversy, and complexities of a second civil war over memory of the first.

Notes

1. Patricia Faust, ed., *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), p. 307; George R. Stewart, *Pickett's Charge: A Microhistory of the Final Attack at Gettysburg, July 3, 1863* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 263; William F. Fox, *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War: 1861-1865, A Treatise on the Extent and Nature of the Mortuary Losses in the Union Regiments* (Albany, NY: Albany Publishing Company, 1893), p. 134.

2. John Day Smith, *The History of the Nineteenth Regiment of Maine Volunteer Infantry, 1862-1865* (Minneapolis: Great Western Printing Company, 1909), p. 93.
3. Jack McLaughlin, *Gettysburg: The Long Encampment, the Battle, the Men, the Memories* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1963), pp. 178, 180.
4. Richard Allen Sauers, "John B. Bachelder: Government Historian of the Battle of Gettysburg," *Gettysburg Magazine* 3 (1990): 116.
5. Larry M. Logue, *To Appomattox and Beyond: The Civil War Soldier in War and Peace* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), pp. 101-102.
6. On sectional reunion, see, for example, Paul Buck, *The Road to Reunion, 1865-1900* (Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1937); and David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). For a historian who argues that Union and Confederate veterans retained separate memories of the war into the twentieth century see Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).
7. David W. Blight, "Decoration Days: The Origins of Memorial Day in North and South," in *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*, eds., Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 122.
8. Thomas A. Desjardin, *These Honored Dead: How the Story of Gettysburg Shaped American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: De Capo Press, 2003), pp. 153, 176.
9. Timothy B. Smith, *The Golden Age of Battlefield Preservation: The Decade of the 1890s and the Establishment of America's First Five Military Parks* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2008), p. xviii; Ronald F. Lee, "The Origin and Evolution of the National Military Park Idea," World Wide Web site of National Park Service, online article available December 5, 2011, http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/history_military/nmpidea1.htm].
10. John Mitchell Vanderslice, *A History of the Gettysburg Battle-Field Memorial Association* (Philadelphia: Memorial Association, 1897), pp. 166-167. See also McLaughlin, *Gettysburg: The Long Encampment*, pp. 186-187.
11. Because of the number of unknown or unidentified, it is almost certain that many more Maine men than the 104 officially listed are interred at Gettysburg. See Vanderslice, *A History of the Gettysburg Battle-Field Memorial Association*, pp. 168, 180, 196.
12. Vanderslice, *A History of the Gettysburg Battle-Field Memorial Association*, p. 200. See also Sauers, "John B. Bachelder: Government Historian of the Battle of Gettysburg," p. 117.
13. Blight, *Race and Reunion*, p. 171.
14. There seems to be a disagreement on this point as Desjardin references the Third Massachusetts as placing the first regimental monument while Vanderslice awards the honor to the Second Massachusetts and its efforts to commemorate its charge at Spangler's Meadow. For the purposes of this study, the Vanderslice reference is utilized as it comes directly from the actual minutes of the GBMA and it also includes mention of where it was placed and for what pur-

pose. See Vanderslice, *A History of the Gettysburg Battle-Field Memorial Association*, p. 211; and Desjardin, *Those Honored Dead*, p. 154.

15. Vanderslice, *A History of the Gettysburg Battle-Field Memorial Association*, pp. 215-216.

16. Thomas A. Desjardin, *Stand Firm Ye Boys from Maine: The 20th Maine and the Gettysburg Campaign* (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 1995), p. 137.

17. See Sauers, "John B. Bachelder: Government Historian of the Battle of Gettysburg," p. 118; The Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg: Report of Maine Commissioners* (Portland, ME: The Lakeside Press, 1898), pp. 249-250.

18. Bachelder denied the requests of the Ohio Commission to place the XX Corps insignia on monuments of regiments that ultimately became a part of that organization later in the war. In addition, he sought to mediate on the placement of monuments from the One Hundred Fortieth, One Hundred Sixteenth, and Twenty-eighth Pennsylvania regiments on the knoll west of The Wheatfield, and he stubbornly refused to honor the request of the Seventy-second Pennsylvania to place one of its positions at the stone wall at The Bloody Angle. These are just a few examples of the role that he played in the "monumentation" process at Gettysburg. See, Sauers, "John B. Bachelder: Government History of the Battle of Gettysburg," pp. 118, 122-125; and John P. Nicholson, ed., *Pennsylvania at Gettysburg: Ceremonies at the Dedication of the Monuments Erected by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, Vol. I (Harrisburg, PA: Wm. Stanley, State Printer, 1904), pp. 412-413.

19. See Vanderslice, *A History of the Gettysburg Battle-field Memorial Association*, pp. 207-208, 218; and Maryland Gettysburg Monument Commission, *Report of the state of Maryland Gettysburg monument commission to his Excellency E.E. Jackson, governor of Maryland, June 17th, 1891* (Baltimore: William K. Boyle & Son, 1891), p. 17.

20. See The Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg: Report of Maine Commissioners*, pp. 586-587.

21. The Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg: Report of Maine Commissioners*, pp. 587-588.

22. The Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg: Report of Maine Commissioners*, p. 588.

23. The Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg: Report of Maine Commissioners*, p. 589. See also Greenlief T. Stevens, *Circular to Maine Regimental Associations*, Series III, Hamlin Family Papers, Special Collections, Raymond H. Fogler Library, University of Maine (hereafter UM), Orono.

24. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain to Charles Hamlin, December 9, 1887, Series III, Hamlin Family Papers, UM.

25. A.B. Sumner to Charles Hamlin, November 3, 1887; and Edwin Dow to Charles Hamlin, November 25, 1887, Series III, Hamlin Family Papers, UM.

26. W.B. Amringe to Charles Hamlin, February 27, 1888, Series III, Hamlin Family Papers, UM.

27. Monumental Guide Map with Interesting Data Relating to the Battlefield of Gettysburg, PA, Series III, Hamlin Papers, UM.

28. Greenlief T. Stevens to Charles Hamlin, July 12, 1888, Series III, Hamlin Family Papers, UM.

29. The Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg*, p. 14; James A. Hall to Charles Hamlin, July 24, 1888, Series III, Hamlin Family Papers, UM.

30. John B. Bachelder to Charles Hamlin, July 26, 1888, Series III, Hamlin Family Papers, UM.

31. Hallowell Granite Works to Charles Hamlin, August 28, 1888, Series III, Hamlin Family Papers, UM.

32. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain to Charles Hamlin, March 20, 1889, Series III, Hamlin Family Papers, UM.

33. The Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg*, p. 579. See also *Boston Globe*, October 4, 1889; *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, October 4, 1889; *Lincoln County News*, October 10, 1889; *Bangor Daily Commercial*, October 3, 1889; and *Portland Daily Press*, October 9, 1889.

34. The Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg*, p. 289.

35. Prince actually became aware of the Seventeenth Maine's inscription not by having examined it during the exercises at Gettysburg, but rather after having read it in *Portland Press* accounts of the "Maine Day" commemoration. Ultimately, it appears that Prince and his representations influenced the GBMA and the commission to make an adjustment. The original legend on the monument placed the Seventeenth at the stone wall as early as 3:10 p.m., but the commission's final report included mention of an updated bronze tablet on the memorial that corrected the text to read that the regiment was in position no earlier than 4:10 p.m. See Howard L. Prince to John B. Bachelder, November 2, 1889, in *The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. III, David L. and Audrey T. Ladd, eds., (Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1994), pp. 1665-1667; Edward Moore to Charles Hamlin, December 27, 1889, Series III, Hamlin Family Papers, UM.

36. Abner Doubleday to Edward N. Whittier, November 16, 1889, Series III, Hamlin Family Papers, UM.

37. Edward N. Whittier to Charles Hamlin, February 14, 1890, Series III, Hamlin Family Papers, UM.

38. The circulars of Whittier and Stevens are quite remarkable documents in which battle lines were drawn over such issues as appropriate credit, proper or due diligence, and accuracy of detail. They further demonstrate the resolve of veterans to ensure their legacy for future generations and the lengths to which they would go to prevail in contentious arguments over issues both large and small. See Edward N. Whittier, *Circular Letter to the Members of the 5th Maine Battery Association*, 1890, Hamlin Family Papers, UM. See also, Major Greenlief T. Stevens, *Letter to the Members of the Fifth Maine Battery Association*, 1890, Series III, Hamlin Family Papers, UM; and the Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg*, p. 590.

39. The Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg*, p. 592.

40. Thomas Desjardin, foreword to *The 20th Maine at Fredericksburg: Conflicting Accounts of General Joshua L. Chamberlain and General Ellis Spear* (Union, ME: Union Publishing Company, 1989), p. 5. See also Blight, *Race and Reunion*, p. 186.

41. John J. Pullen, *Joshua Chamberlain: A Hero's Life & Legacy* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1999), p. 147. See also Jeremiah E. Goulka, ed., *The Grand Old Man of Maine: Selected Letters of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 156.

42. Goulka, ed., *Grand Old Man of Maine*, p. 159.

43. Eighteen months before the GBMA officially transferred governance of the park to the War Department, a three-man commission had been appointed by Secretary of War Daniel Lamont to assist the Memorial Association. A member of the GBMA and veteran of Gettysburg, Lieutenant Colonel John P. Nicholson was tabbed by Lamont as a charter member and he guided work at Gettysburg for nearly thirty years. A significant element of the commission's work included taking on a task advocated by Bachelder in his later years: the marking of the Confederate lines. Eventually, the battlefield passed to the supervision of the Department of the Interior, National Park Service in 1933. See The Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg*, p. 595. See also Sauers, "John B. Bachelder: Government Historian of the Battle of Gettysburg," p. 117; Vanderslice, *A History of the Gettysburg Battle-Field Memorial Association*, p. 320; Smith, *The Golden Age of Battlefield Preservation*, pp. 148, 161.

44. Arthur Douglas Stover, *Eminent Mainers* (Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House, 2006), p. 236; and Faust, *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War*, p. 333.

45. The Executive Committee, *Maine at Gettysburg*, p. v.