

Charles H. Buhrman

(1837-1912)

Methodist Layman

Methodist layman and entrepreneur Charles H. Buhrman was the oldest of 3 children of Samuel and Mary (Gordon) Buhrman. When his father died in 1861, he inherited the Monterey Inn. He also established a general store in Rouzerville in 1871. A wealthy and generous man, he provided a furnished house and a horse and buggy as a wedding present for each of his four children that lived to adulthood. He was a long-time member and trustee of the Rouzerville Methodist Episcopal Church and maintained a key leadership position in the congregation. He supported the church in every way and donated the parsonage.

His Monterey resort connected him with many of America's most famous families, and it was in a cottage owned by Buhrman that Bessie Wallis Warfield (1896-1986) [better known as Wallis Simpson, for whom Edward VIII abdicated the throne of England in 1936] was born! Buhrman was also the chief financial backer of George Frick – the Mennonite businessman who founded the large Frick Manufacturing Company of Waynesboro that produces boilers, refrigeration equipment, steam engines and other machinery.

He is buried at Burns Hill Cemetery in Waynesboro with his first wife Anna Maria Green Buhrman (1836-1879), his second wife Eliza J. (1851-1899), and his final wife Molly J. Flanagan Buhrman (1859-1944). Also in the family plot are the graves of 2 daughters: Dean F. (1877-1894) [yes, Dean was a female!] and Fanny (1861-1863), whose cradle-shaped tombstone once contained a marble infant that has since been stolen.

Doing justice to the importance of C.H. Buhrman to the community and the cause of Methodism in the area would take more space than possible in this context. This article examines his reputation for being a legitimate Civil War hero – “a civilian who led the destruction of nine miles of rebel wagons following the battle of Gettysburg.” While the re-telling of Buhrman’s involvement in the events may have become embellished over the years, one must assume the most reliable account to be the following one given by Buhrman himself in a written response to J. Fraise Richard. Richard was the chief compiler of part II of the classic 1887 *History of Franklin County* published by Beers.

This article in *The Chronicle* consists of the letter from Buhrman to Richard, followed by an oversimplified map giving the relative positions of towns mentioned in this and other articles in *The Chronicle*, followed by the exact words from three roadside historical displays that describe the events in which Buhrman was involved.

Buhrman's Letter

Mr. J. Fraise Richard,

Rouzerville, Penn.

October 12, 1886

Dear Sir:

Your favor of the 11th instant received, and questions answered as far as I can remember. I lived at that time at Fountain Dale, Adams Co., Penn., two miles east of Monterey Springs, on the turnpike leading to Emmitsburg. I found out through a man by the name of James Embley, who came to my place and told me, that Lee's wagon train was retreating by way of the Furnace road, a mountain road leading from Fairfield to the turnpike, coming on the pike at the toll-gate near Monterey Springs. That was on Saturday afternoon, about 2 o'clock, July 4, 1863, as near as I can remember.

When I found out that Lee's wagon train was retreating, I mounted a horse and started to inform our cavalry, which I supposed would be at Emmitsburg. But two miles below my place I came to the Yankee pickets, and with them was one of Kilpatrick's scouts that I was well acquainted with. I told him of the wagon train retreating. He sent me to Gen. Custer, and Custer sent me to Gen. Kilpatrick. At that time they were just planting a cannon to shell the rebels on McMullin's Hill.

When I informed Gen. Kilpatrick, he ordered an advance at once to Monterey. I rode with the General as far as my farm, two miles east of Monterey. Just before getting to my place we met a little girl that had just left Monterey. She knew me, and told me to tell the soldiers not to go to Monterey, as the rebels had planted the pike full of cannons in front of Monterey and would kill all the soldiers when they got there. Kilpatrick laughed and remarked that they kept no account of cannons, as they just rode over them. When I got to the gate that goes into my farm, I told the General I lived there and would stop; but he requested me to go with them to Monterey and see the fun; so I went with him.

We ran against the rebel pickets at Clermont, a quarter of a mile east of Monterey. It was then getting dark in the evening. After passing Clermont about 150 yards the rebels fired three or four shots with grape and canister, and then pulled up their battery and retreated. I don't think they killed any of Kilpatrick's men with the battery, as they fired too soon, and the grape and canister went over our men's heads; but it made some of our men retreat, and caused a great deal of confusion. I told Kilpatrick if he would dismount a regiment and go down through the edge of the woods, he could flank them and capture the battery. He did so, but they had retreated by the time our men got to Monterey.

Kilpatrick asked me which way I thought the wagon train was going, and where I supposed they would strike the river. I told him they could go by Smithsburg and Boonsboro, and cross the river at Sharpsburg, or go by Leitersburg and Hagerstown and cross at Williamsport. He asked me if there was any road that I knew of that I could take a regiment and head off that wagon train. I told him there was – that I could take them by Mount Zion and then down the

Raven Rock Hollow and strike Smithsburg, and if they had not taken that road, we could cross to Leitersburg and there we would strike them for certain. It was the 1st Vermont regiment, commanded by Colonel Preston, that I was with.

When we got to Smithsburg we found everything quiet, as the Rebels had taken the Leitersburg road. The Colonel asked me what was to be done now, as there were no Rebels there. I told him we would find plenty of them before daylight, as we must strike them at Leitersburg. We got to Leitersburg about daybreak on Sunday morning, finding the road crowded with Rebels, cattle, horses, wagons, etc. The regiment I was with captured a great many prisoners, cattle, horses, etc., and destroyed the wagon train from Leitersburg back to Ringgold.

There they met the remainder of Kilpatrick's cavalry. They had destroyed the wagon train from Monterey to Ringgold, a distance of six miles, and from Ringgold to Leitersburg, a distance of three miles more, making nine miles of wagon train captured or burned or destroyed by cutting off wagon tongues and cutting spokes in wheels. I am not able to say how much, if any, of the wagon train was destroyed between Leitersburg and Hagerstown, as I went only as far as Leitersburg with the 1st Vermont regiment, when it divided, part going toward Hagerstown, and part toward Ringgold.

I went with the part that went toward Ringgold, as that was on my way home. I left them about 8 o'clock on Sunday morning, and started home by way of Ringgold. Before I got to Ringgold I was taken by Kilpatrick's pickets. They took me for a Rebel, and all I could say would not change their opinion, as they would not believe anything I said. They took me to the schoolhouse at Ringgold, where the officers had their headquarters; but as soon as the officers saw me they recognized me, having seen me with Kilpatrick the evening before.

After leaving Ringgold on my way home, I went up a hill near the farm of George Harbaugh. When I got to the top of the hill the Rebels were coming up the other side. I saw them when I was about 100 yards from them; I turned my horse and rode slowly until I got down the hill far enough that they could not see me. Then I ran my horse to the foot of the hill and left the road and got in the woods and got away from them. I kept the woods until I came to the Germantown road, near the Germantown schoolhouse; then I took a near cut through the swamp and came out on the Sabillasville road, near Monterey.

But the Rebel pickets were stationed near Monterey at a turn in the lane. They saw me first, and had dismounted and gone around the turn of the lane where I could not see them for a very large cherry tree that stood at the corner of the lane. They let me ride up within about sixty yards of them, when four of them stepped around the turn of the lane and told me to halt. There was an orchard on the left side of the road and a high post fence on each side. I knew my horse could not jump the fence – and I did not dare to turn him and go back, as it was a straight lane for a quarter of a mile and they would have easily hit me if I had made the attempt. One of them called to me to dismount, and, as I was near the orchard fence, I "dismounted" over the fence and did some good running from

that to the Pine Swamp, about one-fourth of a mile. They shot four times at me, but missed me. I heard the balls whistle over my head, as it was down hill and they shot over me. I lost my horse, saddle and bridle.

I was in the swamp only a few minutes until they were there; but as the bushes were very thick, I soon got away from them and kept to the woods until I got home, two miles from there. It was then two or three o'clock on Sunday afternoon. I was at home only a few minutes when I saw the Rebel cavalry coming to my house. They took a near cut from Clermont, and came down the old road. They saw me at the same time I saw them. I passed in my front door and out my back door.

My orchard runs right back of my house, and one of my horses was standing under an apple tree near the house. I mounted the horse and got to the mountain before they were aware that I was not in the house. They searched the house from garret to cellar, and told my wife if they found me they would hang me to the first tree they came to. When I got to the mountain I made a halter out of hickory bark, and saved the horse in that way, as they did not find him. I kept myself hid until after the retreat of Lee's army, but lost three horses and nine head of cattle by being away.

I have given you the facts as near as I can remember.

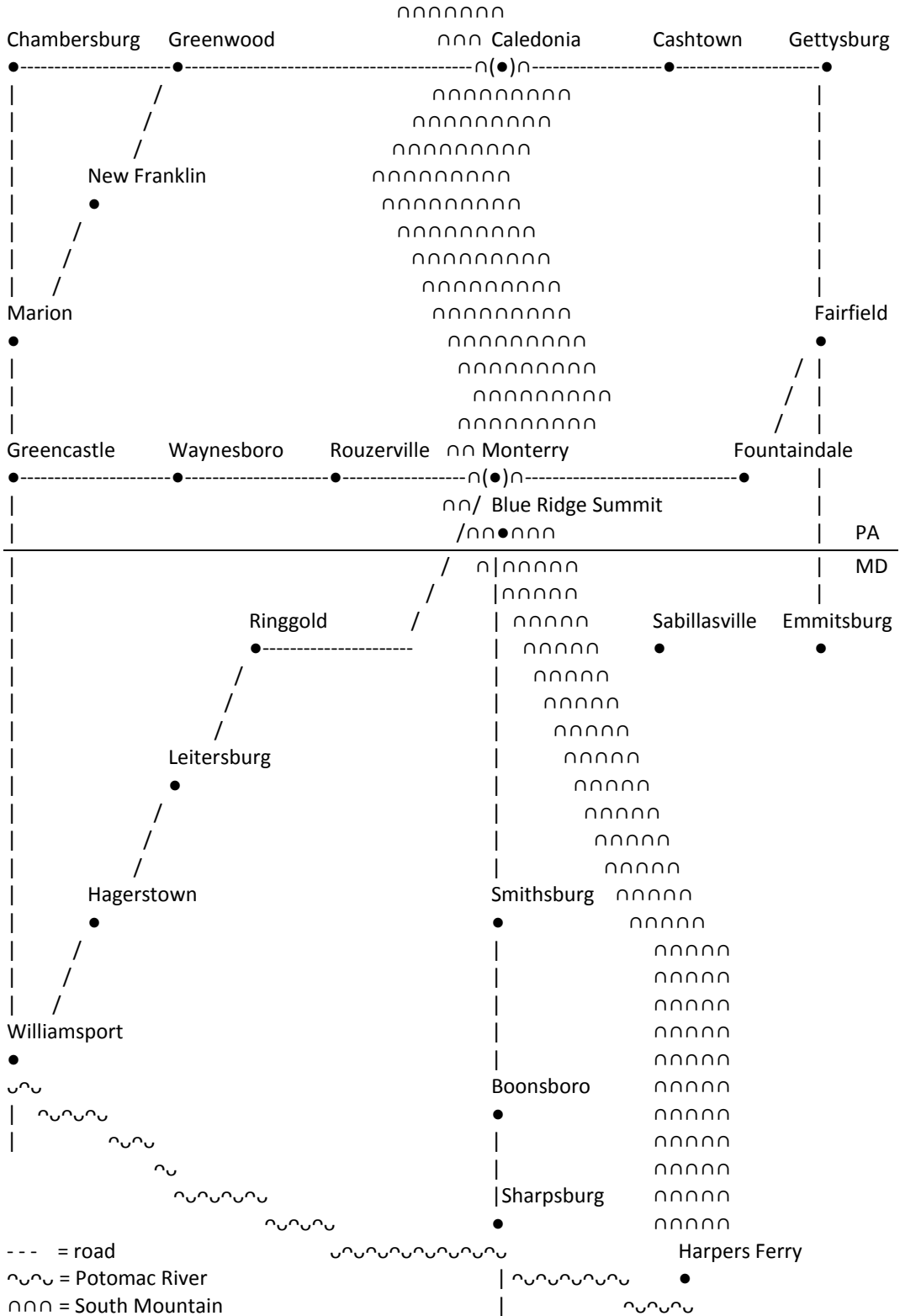
Yours very respectfully,

C. H. BUHRMAN



The Monterey Pass Toll House
used as a hospital following the Battle of Monterey Pass and still standing in 2012

Simplified Map of the Monterey Area



Accounts of the Eastern Branch of the Gettysburg Retreat

The main Confederate retreat from Gettysburg went west toward Chambersburg, crossing South Mountain at Caledonia [modern US route 30], and then following the valley south [modern US route 11] to cross the Potomac at Williamsport MD. Secular accounts of the portion of the Confederate army that retreated from Gettysburg through Fairfield and Fountain Dale to cross South Mountain at Monterey Pass [present PA route 16] support the details in Charles Buhrman's letter. The following three statements, taken *verbatim* from roadside historical displays, give the chronology of the events.

1. Battle of Monterey Pass

marker at 1340 Old Waynesboro Road, near Fountain Dale PA

On the morning of July 4, Union General Judson Kilpatrick's Cavalry Division consisting of General George Custer and Colonel Nathaniel Richmond's Brigades were ordered from Gettysburg to attack the wagon trains that were moving on the road between Fairfield and Waynesboro near Monterey Pass. General Kilpatrick's men rode into Emmitsburg at three o'clock in the afternoon, Kilpatrick was then reinforced by Colonel Huey's Brigade and Battery "M" of the 2nd U.S. Artillery.

Up on South Mountain at Monterey Pass, Confederate soldiers captured Mr. Jacob Daniel Baer along with David Miller. As they were held at the Monterey Inn, Mr. Baer had come in contact with Ms. Susan Lookabaugh and told her to get help. She managed to walk by the Confederate pickets and headed toward Fountain Dale, where she came across James Embley. Ms. Lookabaugh told Mr. Embley about the situation at Monterey Pass and asked him to get help.

Near the hamlet of Fountain Dale, Charles H. Buhrman a local farmer received a message from Mr. Embley about the capture of several local men that were being held at the Monterey House. Mr. Buhrman also learned about the Confederate retreat at Monterey Pass. Mr. Buhrman mounted his horse and came across one of General Kilpatrick's scouts near Fountain Dale. Union soldiers escorted Mr. Buhrman to General Custer and the information was reported to General Kilpatrick.

As Mr. Buhrman rode with General Kilpatrick, the 1st Michigan Cavalry came across a 12-year-old girl name Hetty Zeilinger, who told Mr. Buhrman that the Confederates had placed a cannon near the Clermont House on top of the mountain.

She knew Mr. Buhrman and begged him to tell General Kilpatrick not to go up to Monterey Pass. One of the 1st Michigan Cavalry soldier lifted the 12-year-old Hetty into his saddle and they traveled up the mountainside. It was about sundown when General Custer's Brigade was at the base of the mountain. The 5th Michigan Cavalry under General Custer was the first of Kilpatrick's Cavalry Division to climb the mountain.

As Kilpatrick's Cavalry began to ascend the eastern side of the mountain, Kilpatrick saw the conditions of the road as his troops moved westward. On his right was Monterey Peak, which was a rough rugged portion of Monterey Pass. To the left was a steep ravine and to his front was a road too narrow to deploy his artillery.

2. 10,000 Soldiers Fight at Monterey Pass

marker at Rolondo Woods Park, Charmain Road, in Monterey PA

During a fierce thunderstorm on the evening of July 4, 1863, a nine-mile-long wagon train of supplies, livestock and wounded soldiers made its way from Fairfield through Monterey Pass. This was the advance of the Confederate retreat column from Gettysburg. That same night Union Cavalry met a local 12-year-old girl, Hetty Zeilinger, walking on the road to her home near Monterey Pass. Hetty warned them that Confederates with artillery were blocking the pass. The brave girl offered to guide the troopers through the pass, around the Confederate forces. One of the soldiers lifted her into his saddle. On they rode, leading a column of Union Cavalry through the darkness and rain, seeking to harass the Confederate's rear and flanks as they withdrew back toward the Potomac.

Approximately 10,000 soldiers fought around Monterey Pass. The battle lasted more than six hours, as they struggled in some of the most bewildering combat of the war. In the lightning, gunfire, and confusion, many of the terrified teams of horses and mules bolted down the side of the mountain, crushing the occupants of the wagons. More than 1,500 Confederates were taken prisoner. Next to Gettysburg, Monterey was the largest Civil War action fought in Pennsylvania.

3. War Returns to South Mountain

marker at PenMar Park, PenMar High Rock Road, north of Cascade MD

During the Battle of Gettysburg, detachments of Gen. Robert E. Lee's army occupied key roads and gaps in South Mountain behind the Confederate line. Monterey Pass, just north of here was one of those vital gaps. On the night of July 3, defeated at Gettysburg, Lee ordered his supply and ambulance trains through the gaps to clear the roads for the army's retreat.

The next night, probing between the Confederate army and South Mountain, Union Gen. H. Judson Kilpatrick's cavalry division caught up with the Confederate wagon train and its defenders at Monterey Pass. He attacked Capt. George H. Emack's Co. B, 1st Maryland Battalion, which Gen. William E. "Grumble" Jones had reinforced with two cavalry regiments and an artillery battery. In pitch dark and pouring rain, a chaotic, vicious fight began around 9 P.M., illuminated by cannon fire, small-arms fire, and lightning bolts. It raged for more than five hours until Kilpatrick's force broke through the defenders and headed in this direction while the Confederates continued their retreat.

Kilpatrick ordered the 1st Vermont Cavalry to pursue the wagon trains to your left along the western base of South Mountain in the valley below. Local resident C.H. Buhrman guided the regiment through Raven Rock Pass to Smithsburg (to your left). After capturing several wagons at Leitersburg, the Vermonters rejoined Kilpatrick at Ringgold and rode south to Smithsburg. Soon the division was in another fight, this time with part of Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry corps.

The Confederate ambulances, supply wagons, artillery caravans, and herds of cattle, sheep, and hogs stretched for more than 50 miles along Pennsylvania's roads. Adding to the misery of the thousands of wounded men who moaned or screamed at every jolt of the wagons, the heavens opened and rain turned the dirt roads to muddy soup.