



Stone's Brigade and the Fight for the McPherson Farm

James J. Dougherty

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As part of the I Corps at Gettysburg, Stone's (Bucktail) Brigade fought one of the most desperate actions of the battle. The defense of the McPherson farm bought valuable time for more Union units to arrive in the area and deploy for the ultimate victory. The Bucktail Brigade consisted of the 143rd, 149th, and 150th Pennsylvania Volunteers. The 149th were the original "Bucktails" and became as well-known for the deer tails stuck in their hatbands as for their distinguished work as a light infantry unit in the Virginia campaign of 1862. As with many other governments, the Pennsylvania authorities sought to increase their number of elite units by expanding a renowned regiment to brigade strength. Giving two new regiments bucktails to wear, it was hoped, would create an entire elite brigade who all fought as well as the original unit. The men of the 149th took the extension of the bucktail distinction with bad grace, and the two junior regiments initially were given all the least desirable assignments. At Gettysburg on July 1st, 1863, the two new units proved themselves by their gallant stand at McPherson's Farm and the entire brigade remained highly regarded throughout the Army of the Potomac for the rest of the war. James Dougherty describes this action in unprecedented detail, with extensive reference to the surviving diaries and eyewitness accounts. The author's extensive background in emergency medical services also gives him considerable expertise in describing the fearsome wounds sustained in this action and their subsequent treatment.

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