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Nathaniel Claiborne Wilson Diary
Manuscript # 0490
June 25 – July 3, 1863
Gettysburg Campaign

1st Day
Pennsylvania

On the 25th of June Pickett's Division (the Division to which I belong) crossed the Potomac into Maryland & encamped about one mile north of Williamsport, a town of about 500 inhabitants. This place is situated on the north bank of the Potomac in one of the most fertile regions of the state, little or no sympathy was shown us by the citizens of the town. Before going into camp we executed a Private from the 18th Va. Regt. for desertion. The Division waded the river, the water taking most of the men under the arms.

2nd Day
Pennsylvania
26th June

Orders to move in the direction of Hagerstown at 4 o'clock, do not get off until 10, delay occasioned by the passing of A. P. Hill's Corps to the front. Whisky rations issued (it being a very wet morning), every man in spirits, both good & bad. Marched through Hagerstown into Franklin Co. near Greencastle, Pa, passed through Middleburg, a small place on the Md. & Pa. line. Hagerstown is about 7 miles from the river & about 5 from the Pa. line & contains between 4500 and 5000 inhabitants a large majority of whom are ultra unionist in sentiment.

3rd Day
Pennsylvania
27th June

Marched out of camp in the direction of Chambersburg, passed through Greencastle & Marion small villages, unworthy of note. The country from the Md. Line to Chambersburg is rather rugged & the soil not half so fine as that portion of Maryland we passed over on yesterday. There is a great quantity of the limestone & it is too near the surface. The country immediately around Chambersburg is as pretty & well cultivated as any country we have traveled through. All the farms are on a small scale, but are finely cultivated. Private dwellings are all neat & conveniently built, but no elegance of style whatever. Chambersburg has about 3000 inhabitants situated on the railroad leading from Hagerstown Md. to Harrisburg Pa. The town is handsomely laid off with a number of beautiful residences on its eastern outskirts. This is an abolition den with very few sympathizers for the Southern cause. My regiment was halted in this place & made the Provost Gd for the town, the remainder of the Division passed through in

the direction of Carlisle & encamped about 3 miles north of the place.

4th Day

Pennsylvania

Sabbath, June 28

Remained as Provost Guard for the town during the day, nothing of interest occurring. The day was spent in securing supplies for the army. Richmond papers of the 24th (26th?) recd. Report the enemy repulsed with slaughter near Vicksburg. News recd of the capture of Carlisle by Genl. Ewell, the citizens prepared for him & 5000 of his troops a feast, Yankees mode of courting favor. Met today with Captain [left blank by Wilson] of the Austrian Army just arrived at Genl Lee's HdQrs, a spectator in the present struggle sent over by his government to witness any military operations. He expresses admiration for our soldiers & thinks Genl Lee the greatest Genl of the age. A six or seven year old boy came into our office at 11 o'clock at night inquiring for the Provost Marshal. Says he is badly treated at home (his mother being dead & his father absent for the past three years, he knows not exactly where) and desires to join us. We offer to send him back to his home, but he refuses to go & asks permission to stay with us for the night. Sleeps with the surgeon on the floor.

5th Day

Pennsylvania

June 29th

Our regiment is relieved this morning by Col. Griffin's Mississippi regt. & we report to our Division 3 miles north of the town. The Division under marching orders. Marched at 4 o'clock P.M. back in the direction of Chambersburg, encamp at night 2 miles south of the town on the Hagerstown road. Nothing of interest occurring.

6th & 7th Days

Pennsylvania

June 30th

In camp. Nothing of interest occurring through the day. One party sent out this morning to destroy the railroad from Hagerstown to Harrisburg, another sent out to purchase Qr. Master & Commissary stores.

July 1st

Troops engaged in destroying public property in the town of Chambersburg & tearing up the railroad. Four roll calls a day ordered to be had to prevent the troops straggling from camp.

July 2nd, Pennsylvania

Ordered to march in the direction of Gatesburgh [Gettysburg]. Marched within 4 miles of the town a distance of 25 miles from our camp. Heard before we arrived at Gatesburgh [Gettysburg] that our advance had heavy fighting around that place. Report correct. Six thousand prisoners taken and the enemy driven one or two miles. Number of killed and wounded not known. Loss heavy on both sides.

July 3rd

In line of battle expecting to move forward every moment. With our trust in God we fear not an earthly enemy – God be with us.

Wilson was killed later that day, on July 3, 1863.

