



7-2-2014

## O'er Silent Fields

Bryan G. Caswell  
*Gettysburg College*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/compiler>

 Part of the [Military History Commons](#), [Public History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

**Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.**

---

Caswell, Bryan G., "O'er Silent Fields" (2014). *The Gettysburg Compiler: On the Front Lines of History*. 58.  
<https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/compiler/58>

This is the author's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/compiler/58>

This open access blog post is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact [cupola@gettysburg.edu](mailto:cupola@gettysburg.edu).

---

# O'er Silent Fields

## **Abstract**

Followers of the Compiler may remember a piece I wrote in the early autumn of 2013 on the last stand of the 16th Maine Regiment of Volunteer Infantry on the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg. As I am living in Gettysburg this summer while I work as a Brian C. Pohanka intern in Gettysburg College's Special Collections, I of course could not miss the chance to hike up to the location of that stand on Oak Ridge to pay tribute to those boys from Maine. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

The Gettysburg Compiler, Civil War, 150th Anniversary, Gettysburg, Civil War Memory, Sesquicentennial, 16th Maine

## **Disciplines**

History | Military History | Public History | United States History

## **Comments**

This blog post originally appeared in [The Gettysburg Compiler](#) and was created by students at Gettysburg College.

# THE GETTYSBURG COMPILER

## ON THE FRONT LINES OF HISTORY

---

### O'er Silent Fields

July 2, 2014

by Bryan Caswell, '15

Followers of the *Compiler* may remember a piece I wrote in the early autumn of 2013 on the last stand of the [16<sup>th</sup> Maine Regiment of Volunteer Infantry](#) on the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg. As I am living in Gettysburg this summer while I work as a Brian C. Pohanka intern in [Gettysburg College's Special Collections](#), I of course could not miss the chance to hike up to the location of that stand on Oak Ridge to pay tribute to those boys from Maine.

As I crested the ridge just north of town, I was struck by the historical dissonance of the panorama in front of me. So much has occurred in 151 years. Ribbons of tar and asphalt stretch across the gently sloping hills; great mechanical beasts wind their way around mute stone

sentinels; the chatter of children lurks ever in the background.



Yet as I stood on Oak Ridge and looked out over those fields in front of me, all these distractions faded away, one by one, into the deepest recesses of my consciousness. Gone were the sounds of the cars and the voices of tourists. I was left with the gentle rustling of the wind and the soft chirping of birds. Soon, even these disappeared, and I was left with perhaps the greatest historical dissonance of all: silence.

Only silence, where 151 years ago two titans struggled mightily over the Pennsylvania farmland; where the roar of musketry and the deafening thunder of cannon rent the very air with death and destruction; where Rebel yells and Union “huzzahs” mingled with curses and moans.

Only silence, where a desperate General William Robertson had ordered 275 men from Maine to “hold at all costs;” where Colonel Charles Tilden turned to his men, telling them simply, “You know what that means.” Only silence, where those 275 men quietly and resolutely followed their orders.

Only silence.

<http://gettysburgcompiler.com/2014/07/02/oer-silent-fields/>