



1-6-2014

## Heckman's Hidden Heroes: Battery K, First Ohio Light Artillery, 11th Corps

Brianna E. Kirk  
*Gettysburg College*

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Kirk, Brianna E., "Heckman's Hidden Heroes: Battery K, First Ohio Light Artillery, 11th Corps" (2014). *The Gettysburg Compiler: On the Front Lines of History*. 24.

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# Heckman's Hidden Heroes: Battery K, First Ohio Light Artillery, 11th Corps

## **Abstract**

The corner of Lincoln and Carlisle Streets is home to a frequently overlooked historical monument on the Gettysburg battlefield. Located on the campus of Gettysburg College, many students walk past this monument dedicated to Battery K of the 1st Ohio Light Artillery every day and are unaware of the significance of its placement and the story behind the words etched into the majestic Light Quincy granite stone. Battery K's story, though only lasting a mere thirty minutes during the battle, surely should not go unnoticed. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

The Gettysburg Compiler, Civil War, 150th Anniversary, Gettysburg, Battery K, 1st Ohio Light Artillery, German immigrants

## **Disciplines**

History | United States History

## **Comments**

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## ON THE FRONT LINES OF HISTORY

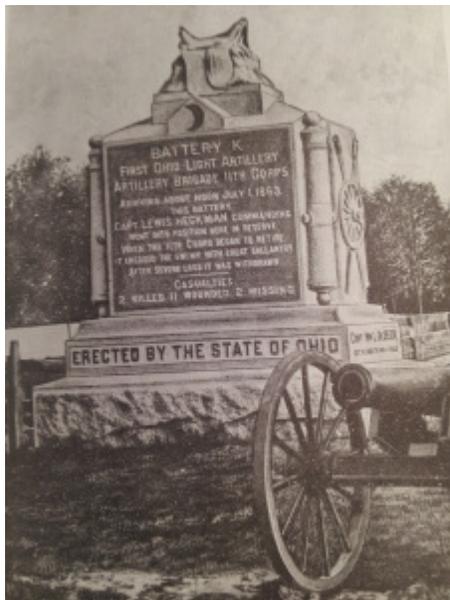
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## Heckman's Hidden Heroes: Battery K, First Ohio Light Artillery, 11th Corps

January 6, 2014

By: Brianna Kirk, '15

The corner of Lincoln and Carlisle Streets is home to a frequently overlooked historical monument on the Gettysburg battlefield. Located on the campus of Gettysburg College, many students walk past this monument dedicated to Battery K of the 1st Ohio Light Artillery every day and are unaware of the significance of its placement and the story behind the words etched into the majestic Light Quincy granite stone. Battery K's story, though only lasting a mere thirty minutes during the battle, surely should not go unnoticed.



Captain Louis Heckman, a German-born baker in his forties, was in command of Battery K, 1st Ohio Light Artillery during the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863. When the 11th Corps position north of the small town began to crumble and retreat, it was Heckman's battery that was called out of reserve on Cemetery Hill to offer artillery support to their fellow comrades. Upon arriving at Lincoln and Carlisle Streets, the corner of what was then Pennsylvania College, Heckman and his battery worked against the tide of retreating 11th Corps soldiers to take up position near where Huber Hall stands today. Brigadier General Henry Hays' Confederate infantry, known as the Louisiana Tigers, fresh from assisting the defeat of Barlow's

division on Barlow's Knoll, pressed forward on the heels of the retreating 11th Corps through Gettysburg. Seeing only a single battery with virtually no infantry support guarding the entrance to the town, the Confederates saw the perfect opportunity to overrun and capture the four twelve-pounder Napoleon guns.

Heckman thought otherwise. Realizing the small amount of time his battery had before it was overrun, Heckman ordered the guns to be unlimbered, and immediately began to fire case shot and canister towards the approaching Confederates. Battery K's fire power cut deep into the lines of the men in gray, but did not stop the advance. The Confederates pushed forward, getting so close to the guns that Heckman's men reported that some of the enemy was obliterated at the guns' muzzles. Heckman's battery held their position for upwards of thirty minutes, sustaining waves of advancing enemies and firing 113 rounds of ammunition.

Hays' brigade and the 6th North Carolina under Colonel Isaac Avery began to flank Battery K after a fierce half-hour fight, triggering Heckman to call a quick retreat of the guns. The sheer proximity of the Confederates to Battery K, combined with the number of horses killed, forced Heckman to leave half of his battery in enemy hands. One of Heckman's sergeants commented that the two Napoleon guns left behind were rendered useless before retreating, ensuring the Confederates could not make use of them. With only two guns left in Battery K and after significant casualties were endured, Heckman and his men retreated from their position on Lincoln and Carlisle Streets and worked their way back through the town of Gettysburg and back to their original position on Cemetery Hill. They remained there in reserve for the rest of the battle. Battery K's contribution to the Battle of Gettysburg ended on July 1st.

The story of Captain Louis Heckman's Battery K 1st Ohio Light Artillery is nowhere near as popular as the stories of Gettysburg heroes like Joshua Chamberlain, the Union Colonel who is revered for his bravery on Little Round Top on July 2nd. The placement of Battery K's monument is far removed from what one would consider part of the Gettysburg battlefield, and therefore, it goes unnoticed. Yet, the service and bravery of Heckman and his men who marched against the flow of retreating Union soldiers to the edge of Pennsylvania College to hold and stop the advancement of the Confederate Army should not be discounted. Despite their ultimate retreat, Heckman's Battery K prolonged the Confederate advance on the Union Army, potentially saving the 11th Corps from further casualties during their flight through the town. That, in itself, is deserving of recognition on the long list of brave and heroic men who fought during the Civil War's bloodiest battle.

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Images:

Battery K 1st Ohio Light Artillery Monument, found in “Ohio Memorials at Gettysburg.” Report of the Gettysburg Memorial Commission. Columbus: Nitschke Bros Press. 1887.