

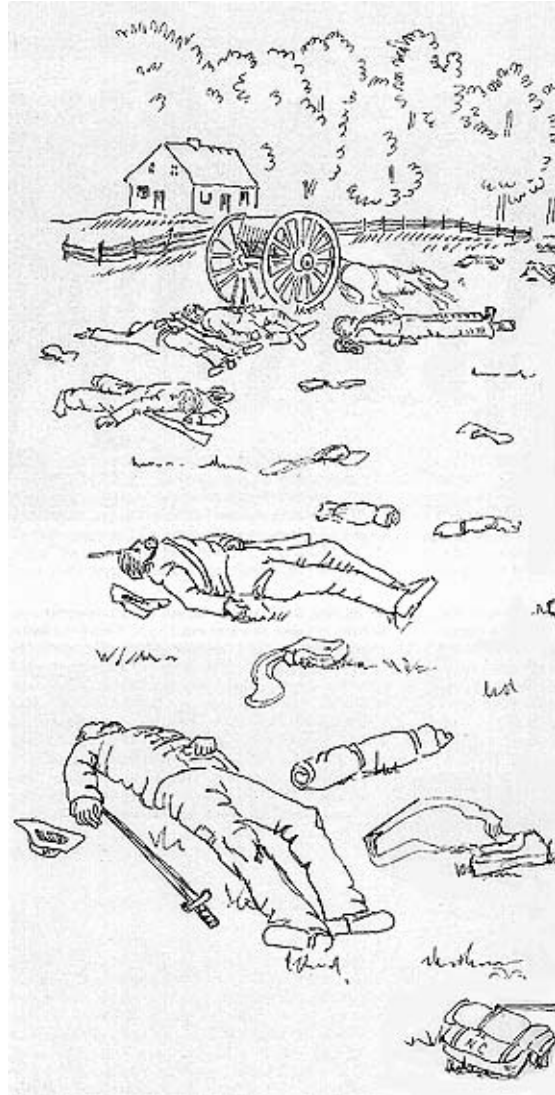
Iverson's Pits

The largest land battle ever fought in North America took place during the Civil War. It began on July 1, 1863, in and around the small Pennsylvania town of Gettysburg. For three days thousands of Confederate and Federal soldiers battled. At the end of the clash about 28,000 Confederate troops were listed as dead, wounded, or missing in action. One-fourth of them came from North Carolina. This is the story of what happened to one unit of North Carolinians.

Brigadier General Alfred Iverson commanded a brigade made up of four North Carolina regiments. Many of the soldiers in the brigade disliked their leader, a cold and distant man from Georgia. Iverson had joined the Confederate army at the start of the war. He was sent to Wilmington, where he raised one of four regiments that became part of a new brigade. When the brigade commander was killed in late 1862, Iverson was promoted to brigadier general, and the unit became known as "Iverson's brigade."

During the Battle of Gettysburg, the men of the brigade approached John Forney's farm outside town. Union troops were hiding in front of them, but where? General Iverson ordered his unit to stop, form a battle line, and move forward. But instead of leading the line, he stayed behind. This angered the soldiers. If a battle started, they would be without their commander. What's more, Iverson had not sent out a skirmish line or scouts to draw enemy fire before committing all his troops. He wasn't following even basic military strategy!

Suddenly hundreds of Federal soldiers rose up from behind a stone wall and poured volley after volley into the line. Scores of Tar Heels died and fell to the ground. At last General Iverson arrived to survey the battle scene. He cursed his men and called them cowards for hugging the ground for safety. An officer who had survived the slaughter angrily told the general that the men were not alive but dead from his poor leadership. That night four long ditches were dug and the soldiers were rolled into their shallow graves. After the battle people began calling the graves "Iverson's Pits."



Gettysburg soon became known as a place with strange sightings. The first ghostly appearances took place at Iverson's Pits on the Forney farm. Farm laborers felt uncomfortable working there and always left before dark. Only the bravest souls passed by at night, and they spoke of mysterious lights and a milky-colored mist rising from the burial grounds. Some people said it was the angry, restless spirits of the North Carolina soldiers who had sacrificed their lives needlessly.

Thousands of tourists visit Gettysburg each year to study the battle and explore the area. Some visitors sign up for ghost tours that take them to "haunted" town and battlefield sites, including Iverson's Pits. People still report an eerie presence and unexplained sightings in the fields of Forney's farm. Do the ghosts of Tar Heel soldiers killed at Gettysburg walk those fields today?